

BOOK REVIEWS

**Alejandra Ramm and Jasmine Gideon (eds.),  
*Motherhood, Social Policies and Women's Activism in  
Latin America***

**(Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), pp. xx + 296, £89.99,  
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In *Motherhood, Social Policies and Women's Activism in Latin America*, Alejandra Ramm and Jasmine Gideon address a contested issue in feminist writing about gender and social policies: the advantages and disadvantages in using maternalism as a strategy for achieving gender equality and improving women's position in society. While this issue has been extensively debated in Europe and the United States, it has only recently been researched in Latin America. For this reason, this book is an important and necessary contribution to the theoretical debate and knowledge base on gender and social provision in the region.

The book is composed of twelve chapters that can be read independently. The first chapter (Gideon and Ramm, 'Motherhood, Social Policies and Women's Activism in Latin America: An Overview') provides a brief Introduction to the concept of maternalism and presents the structure of the volume. The next two chapters (Ramm, 'Latin America: A Fertile Ground for Maternalism', and Jadwiga Pieper Mooney, '"Taking the Nature out of Mother": From Politics of Exclusion to Feminisms of Difference and Recognition of Rights') provide a substantive reflection on two different positions about maternalism and social policies: the first highlights the strategic role that maternalist discourses play in improving women's position in society and the second argues that, on the contrary, maternalist discourses have been used not only to reinforce women's subordination, but also to promote an agenda contrary to women's rights.

The following nine chapters address the different ways in which maternalism operates in social policies and women's activism in Chile – the focus of the book's empirical perspective. The chapters are grouped into three areas. The first area is related to policies on maternal and children's healthcare, where emblematic cases in Chilean social policy are analysed: the state milk programmes for children (Jael Goldsmith Weil, 'Constructing Maternalism from Paternalism: The Case of State Milk Programs'); policies on family planning and maternal health (María Soledad Zárate, 'To Not Die in Childbirth: Maternal Health and State Policy, 1930–1980'), and recent laws and public programmes on sexual and reproductive rights

(Gabriela Álvarez, 'Resistance to Sexual and Reproductive Rights: Maternalism and Conservatism'). The second area covers the domestic realm, with chapters that analyse the environmental activism of mothers in the north of Chile who suffer the consequences of toxic mining waste (Evelyn Arriagada, "*Las madres del plomo*": Women's Environmental Activism and Suffering in the Northern Chile); changes in housing policies where targeting moves from men to women, particularly lone mothers (Ramm, 'Technocracy and Strategic Maternalism: Housing Policies, 1990–2014') and a critical review of programmes against domestic violence and their exclusion of LGBTQ groups (Hillary Hinner, 'LGBTQ-IPV and the Case for Challenging Maternalist Family Violence Paradigms'). The third and final area of analysis refers to policies associated with paid and unpaid work, highlighting issues like female labour force participation in highly masculinised economic sectors, such as large-scale mining (Nicolás Angelcos, 'Women Miners: Motherhood, Labor Integration, and Unionization'); programmes aimed at promoting female employment (Catalina de la Cruz, 'The Persistent Maternalism in Labor Programs') and policies that seeks to construct the ideal of modern women as entrepreneurs in right-wing governments (Carmen Godoy, *et al.*, 'Economic Modernization and Redefining Womanhood: Women, Family and Work in a Center Right-Wing Government'). Unfortunately, the volume lacks a closing chapter to sum up the main findings of the case studies, leaving the reader without closure.

The hallmark of this book is the capacity to coherently integrate conflicting views on the role played by maternalism in feminist policymaking and women's activism. This integration relies on rigorous theoretical and empirical grounds, considering the criticisms from those who see major problems with the use of maternalism. Two arguments are highlighted in this regard. Firstly, the idea that maternalist discourses essentialise the link between motherhood and women, reproducing gender inequality and the subordination of women in society. Secondly, the notion that maternalist discourses tend to homogenise women's circumstances, overlooking their differing experiences of oppression and multiple identities. These arguments contrast with more optimistic views on maternalism, which value its strategic use as a political narrative that contributes to the achievement of women's autonomy and gender equality. Both perspectives coexist in this volume, providing a comprehensive and varied range of empirical evidence for the Chilean case.

Another important contribution of this book is to reveal some of the paradoxes of the effects of maternalist discourses in social policies on the situation of women. At the theoretical level, it is argued that the use of maternalist discourses in social policies could result in women's increased autonomy, but without necessarily achieving a reduction in gender inequalities. Ultimately, however, women's autonomy would find its limits in the persistence of gender inequalities, as an unequal distribution of power and resources between men and women would hamper women's independence. This leads us to see that women's autonomy and gender equality are not only different concepts, but also different political goals, which must be considered separately when designing and evaluating policies aimed at strengthening the position of women in society.

At the empirical level, the case studies of this volume reveal another paradox. It is shown that Chilean social policies have contributed to reinforcing the autonomy of women, either through promoting their participation in the labour market, or

favouring a greater access to specific social benefits. However, at the same time, these policies have not questioned traditional gender roles, some of which have reinforced women's role as main caregivers and have relied on their unpaid work for policy implementation. This highlights the importance of moving from women's autonomy policies towards gender equality policies, aimed at ensuring that men and women effectively share equal opportunities and responsibilities in productive and reproductive work.

Ramm and Gideon's book provides an undoubtedly valuable contribution not only to Latin American scholarship on the relations between women and the state, but also for the understanding of Latin American socio-political dynamics from a gender and feminist perspective.

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**Kristin M. S. Bezio and George R. Goethals (eds.),  
*Leadership, Populism and Resistance*  
(Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2020), pp. 256, £90.00 hb**

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*Leadership, Populism and Resistance* is a well-crafted compilation of individually authored chapters employing a multidisciplinary approach to cumulatively explain the evolution of populism and social movements. Through a cross-regional and historical exploration of populism, Kristin Bezio and George Goethals contend that contemporary leadership is being transformed. Specifically, the protection of democratic ideals is losing its political allure. Instead, the increasingly exclusionary nature of populism is being weaponised by political leaders. Extremist views by civil society on issues like immigration are being exploited by public officials as a means of garnering electoral support. The point is exemplified repeatedly throughout the book with US President Donald Trump. Thus, according to the authors, the rise of right-wing populism has led to a 'crisis in leadership' (p. 6) – one that needs to be addressed if democracy is to be preserved.

As a whole, the book presents an innovative analysis of populism. It combines traditional theoretical frameworks with an exploration of the contemporary influence of social media on popular movements. The authors seek to demonstrate that the role of traditional media outlets in tandem with the growing use of social media handles (particularly Twitter) has substantially altered the political saliency and visibility of popular movements. Most interestingly, it demonstrates how social media are being employed more aggressively as a political tool. For example, Allison Archer documents how during the run-up to the 2016 presidential elections and throughout his time in office, Trump employed his social media accounts in