

ELISABETH J. FRIEDMAN: *Unfinished Transitions: Women and the Gendered Development of Democracy in Venezuela, 1936-1996*. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000.

Elisabeth Friedman's book, *Unfinished Transitions: Women and the Gendered Development of Democracy in Venezuela, 1936-1996*, makes significant contributions on a number of levels. Her work is useful to scholars interested in issues ranging from democratization to social movements. In particular, this is a valuable work because Venezuela has been traditionally understudied by Latin Americanists and Venezuelan women rarely appear in scholarly works. The narrative that Friedman provides has been up to now a story largely untold. Furthermore, because Venezuela's democratic transition began earlier than in most of Latin America, it provides potential insight into what is in store for other Latin American countries.

In her first chapter, Friedman provides a theoretical framework for the rest of the book. First, she looks at the role of political parties, social movements, and women's organizing in the democratization process in Latin America. In particular, she notes that most studies have failed to examine the demobilization of women during the transition from authoritarianism to democracy, an issue she will tackle throughout the book. Second, Friedman looks at the political opportunity structure approach in order to better understand the effects of regime change on social mobilization. She points out that while many studies of social movements take a micropolitical view, it is also important to take a macropolitical view by looking at external circumstance such as regime change. Third, because the political opportunity approach does not necessarily explain why women's organizations arise, she looks at gendered opportunities of democratization. Here Friedman discusses gender relations and how they play out in the political arena. Fourth, the author discusses how gender interests and forms of organizing influenced the ways in which Latin American women have responded to political opportunities in the region.

In Chapter 2, Friedman examines the years from 1936 to 1948, including a period of "liberalized authoritarianism" after the death of dictator Juan Vicente Gómez and the "first transition to democracy" after 1945. Here, she looks at the makeup of women's groups of the era and the issues that were important to them. She also traces the issues for which women's groups fought, including reform of the Civil Code and the suffrage movement. Then, Friedman explains the seemingly paradoxical situation in which women's movements thrived under the more authoritarian rulers of the 1936-1945 period, but largely disappeared under the democratic government that ruled

from 1945-1948. Political parties tended to institutionalize gender bias, thus denying women much of a voice in the political arena.

Friedman outlines a similar process in Chapter 3, demonstrating the opportunities for women to organize against the dictatorship of Marcos Pérez Jiménez and then the contraction of political space for women during Venezuela's second transition to democracy after 1958. As feminist activist Argelia Laya points out, in the Venezuelan case, *machismo* proved to be stronger than any military dictatorship.

In Chapter 4, the author examines the place of women's organizing in the period she terms the "consolidation of democracy" (1974-84). During this period, Venezuelan women attempted to bring their concerns to the forefront of the political arena after having them largely ignored. Their organizational efforts resulted in the 1982 civil code.

Friedman looks at the period from 1984-1990 in Chapter 5, which she concludes was the most successful period of women's mobilization in Venezuela. From both within and outside of the State, Venezuelan women were successful in increasing awareness of three key issues: poor single motherhood, labor, and female representation in politics. Here Friedman also points to limitations of the movement, most notably the continued exclusion of poor women. I would have liked to see more follow-up on the case of Inés María Marcano, the poor single mother who was charged with child abandonment.

In Chapter 6, Friedman evaluates the relationship between women's organization and the period of great economic and political upheaval in Venezuela from 1989 to 1995. It was during these years that Venezuelans witnessed urban riots in 1989, two coup attempts in 1992 and the impeachment of President Carlos Andrés Pérez. Furthermore, Venezuelans no longer enjoyed a booming oil economy. In this chapter, Friedman also provides a look at the role that poor women began to play in Venezuelan politics.

Chapter 7 serves as a conclusion to Friedman's work. Here the author first compares women's organizations to neighborhood organizations in Venezuela in order to see how other groups have challenged the traditional political system in the country. Friedman then concludes by placing her findings on Venezuela in a broader Latin American context.

Overall, Friedman's book is an excellent one. While in the past scholars of Latin American politics have been attracted to Venezuela's democratic system, almost no attention has been given to the role of, and opportunities for, women in the country's politics. Friedman has done a fine job of filling the void. The author nicely combines narrative with analysis. She has placed the Venezuelan case in a larger Latin American perspective, while at the same

time telling the "story" of Venezuelan women's role in their country's political process and providing a useful periodization. The book is particularly strengthened by the author's intimate knowledge of the organizations, seen through numerous interviews she conducted in Venezuela. Friedman also provides a nice selection of illustrations.

Hopefully, Friedman's book will inspire others to continue to examine gender issues in Venezuela. For example, a book on women's roles during the dictatorship of Juan Vicente Gómez begs to be written. Indeed, Friedman's book might have included more on the pre-1936 period than the two and a half pages in Chapter 2. An examination of Venezuelan women who have remained outside of organized movements also merits study. For example, we see little on poor women until Chapter 6. What of the role of nationality? In the post-WWII era, Venezuela has seen waves of immigrants from European countries such as Italy, Spain, and Portugal as well as from neighboring Latin American countries such as Colombia. And what about the role of race? Another potentially rich topic to explore is the participation of women in the regime of current Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez. While he has shaken traditional Venezuelan politics, have women's roles changed, or does *machismo* continue to be stronger than any political transformation?

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**TIMOTHY J. POWER: *The Political Right in Postauthoritarian Brazil: Elites, Institutions, and Democratization.*** University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000.

More than fifteen years after the return to civilian rule, why do starkly unequal political and social structures persist in Brazil? In a detailed examination of the impact of military dictatorship on democracy, Timothy Power puts his finger on important answers to this question. While some theoreticians suggest that so-called conservative transitions from authoritarianism can be beneficial to democracy, Power clearly establishes the Brazilian case as a significant counter-example. Authoritarian rule and the slow transition (1964-1985) not only asphyxiated democratic expression; they also provided right-wing politicians with disproportionate influence and the ability to stay entrenched in positions of power at least into the late 1990s. Instead of a fully consolidated democracy, Brazilians experience "a perverse situation in which, instead of the right accommodating itself to the rules of the new democracy, the rules of the new democracy must accommodate the right" (p. 239). The Brazilian right blocks the kind of legislative initiative