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The Persistence of Patriarchy in Latin America: An Analysis of Negative and Positive Trends

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**The Persistence of Patriarchy in Latin America:
An Analysis of Negative and Positive Trends**

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ABSTRACT

The Persistence of Patriarchy in Latin America

The last 25 years have seen the rise of women as political leaders in Latin America. There are now three female presidents, including Michelle Bachelet (Chile), Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner (Argentina), and Dilma Rousseff (Brazil). This socio-political progress owes its success to the consolidation of democratic institutions, a strong feminist movements such as Argentina's "Movimiento Nacional de Mujeres" and a strong regional push towards egalitarian legislation. According to ECLAC there are a number of important feminist movements in the region that catalyze egalitarian legislative changes. #NIUNAMENOS is one of such campaigns promoting zero tolerance against gender violence and aims is to decrease femicides. The presence of women movements is essential to Latin America's democracy.

Nevertheless, the reality of the majority of women in the region is still precarious, and the gendered experience of inequality among women in Latin America is incongruent with the democratic governance structures they live with. Violence against women rose 50% in the last decade and the region is responsible for 50% of the femicides worldwide. Seven of the countries in the region have criminalized femicides and violence against women, yet women experiencing gender violence are usually discouraged to seek help.

The common denominator between the two experiences just described is the prevalence of patriarchy, a "system of social structures" and "practices" in which men create an oppressive gender gap that is expressed in violent forms. In Latin America violent practices keep women in an inferior position in society and disempower them. Gruber and Szoltysek (2012) proposed important markers to measure the intensity of

patriarchy in a society. These markers include levels of literacy, age of marriage, and death rates of women. To measure and analyze this data is crucial to understand the clear contrasts in the experience of different women in the region. The purpose of my thesis is to navigate the social relations amongst genders in Latin America to illustrate the experience of women in the labor force, the household, and society with regards to violence and civil and political rights. The chapters identify different patriarchal mechanisms that subject women in the region. They also evaluate the impact that patriarchy has as a neutralizer that prevents an egalitarian experience for all women in Latin America.

The experience of women in the labor market and in the household can be predicted by some of the markers of patriarchy proposed by Gruber and Szoltysek (2012). Illiteracy rates of women compared to men is 46.6%, and this significance gap creates a predisposition for more men than women to be suitable for the labor market. A study by UNICEF revealed that 29% of underage women get married in Latin America compared to 11% in Europe. The high illiteracy rates coupled with underage marriage increase the intensity of patriarchy in a society, and in the case of Latin America the indicators are significant enough to illustrate how women are at a disadvantage compared to men early in their lives.

This reality reinforces gendered violence because gender gaps justify the inferiority of females when compared to males. This is especially palpable in capitalist societies where the unpaid labor of women in the household (Silvia Federici) remains both invisible and ignored, an invisibility that devalues the worth of women. Furthermore, Latin America's class structures place a significant part of women at a

disadvantage. In fact 53% of the poor in Latin America believe that their next generation will not enjoy from a prosperous social mobility (CEPAL Social Panorama 2014, 113). The social preconditions just outlined clearly condemn women to face discrimination and disadvantages in the workplace, the household, and individually.

My thesis will expand on the assessment of markers of patriarchy in dominant social relations in Latin America. Identifying and assessing such markers allows to map patriarchy quantifiably and qualitatively to understand its influence on the sociopolitical experience of different groups of women. The topic is especially relevant because it brings forth a dichotomous reality of societies that have successfully democratized but that are still colonized by patriarchy, in such a way that there is a space for some women to become leaders while most remain oppressed. The drastic contrast of both experiences are unique to the region of Latin America, making this study an important observation of both social progress and the effects of patriarchy on that progress. The research is also relevant in a global perspective because progress made by women in Latin America can help women struggling for rights in other regions. Latin America is clearly exemplifies the positive outcomes of social progress, but it is also a portrayal of the negative effects of high levels of patriarchy.

Taking all into consideration, the sociopolitical reality of women in Latin America will be analyzed through the lens of patriarchy as defined above. The study is structured as follows. Chapter 1 provides an overview of women's reality in Latin America using data and statistics to contextualize current trends. In Chapter 2 I use an up-to-date data set to perform a means difference and regression analysis to provide a novel and original investigation of women's reality in Latin America. A means difference

analysis reveals the averages between two main groups and indicates if the difference is statistically significant.¹ Due to the fact that chapter 2 reveals a positive growth in women's political rights in Latin America, chapter 3 will explore the reasons for this growth. Finally, chapter 4 will synthesize and conclude the study above, providing closing remarks.

¹ When we compare the reality of women that of other regions this method is better than others to depict a significant difference when using data to compare them. This method is better than comparing to averages because it provides information regarding the level difference and also if that difference is compelling or not.¹

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I. Introduction

Maria Eugenia Vidal became, on October 2015, the first female governor of the Buenos Aires province, in Argentina, with over 60% of the votes. At the age of 42, Vidal took office in December 2015 in the midst of a political overhaul in Buenos Aires, a political hub for corruption. According to Global Competitiveness Report by the Economic Forum Argentina ranked 145 out of 152 countries, making it the eighth most corrupt country when compared to the rest of the world. Vidal's credentials include a bachelor's degree in Political Science, and an extensive career in the PRO Party of Argentina. Her political victory debunks traditional mechanisms of clientelism in the Buenos Aires province, as entrenched as traditions of *machismo*. Vidal's electoral victory needs to be inscribed as part of the recent but steady rise of women to executive office across Latin America.

Female leaders started this positive political transformation in 1990 with Violeta Chamorro in Nicaragua. Now 25 years later the list includes: Mireya Moscoso (Panama), Michelle Bachelet (Chile), Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner (Argentina), Laura Chinchilla (Costa Rica), and Dilma Rousseff (Brazil). As part of a new generation of women in politics, Vidal is not married to nor is the daughter of a powerful politician, as it was the case for many women in the past. In this regard, she represents something new, and can become a catalyst to the current political reality of women the region. Moreover, Vidal trumped over well-established and heavily funded politicians, bringing hope to a significant corrupted bureaucratic structure in Buenos Aires, and a new light to true

democracy. As a female leader, she represents a positive political trend in both social and political spheres of the region. In the last fifteen years, Latin America has experienced an increase in female political participation of more than fifty percent (Buvinic, Roza 2004).

Alongside the increase in female leadership there is a larger framework of democracy to consider when evaluating the reality of most women in Latin America. All the countries in the region, except for Cuba, subscribe to democracy and this governmental structure opened constitutional pathways for women to participate in politics. After the wave of dictatorships of the 60's and 70's, the lack of growth in the 80's, and the consequences of neoliberal imposition in the 90's democracy in Latin America is now better established and a viable medium to express different political views (Ibester, 2011). Latin American democracies and their constitutional political structure encourages women to be in leadership political posts. Amongst other political structures most countries are subject to gender quotas, and most countries meet them and some like Bolivia (60% + female parliamentary female participation) exceed them (Etniru 2004) . At the same time patriarchy is still a traditional structure that acts as a barrier for egalitarian progress.

Then, democracy in Latin America limits its own ability to enact fundamental social changes that materialize the rights of oppressed groups like women. At the same time, the fight for gender equality of different groups like the “Movimiento Nacional de Mujeres” (Freidman-NCLA Report, 2014-2015) comprises a wave of development for female rights in the region, but its presence is mostly in the legislative realm. The 2013-2014 U.N. Human Development Report stresses a focus on social policies to decrease the main deterrent to development: Violence. The violence is described as a range of criminal

violence and gendered violence. The report identifies an increase of 50% of violence in the last decade. With regards to women's rights the report acknowledges that all countries in Latin America already include in their constitutions laws that ensure gender equality, but their ability to enforce them is weak. The document then advises an increase in accountability to the laws that are already in place (Human Development Report 2013-2014, 17). Otherwise, the conditions will continue to prevent most women in Latin America from becoming political leaders, even when they have sitting female presidents as role models. Thus, the study follows the socio-political history of Latin America, in order to trace the progression of feminist thought that allows some women in the region attain professional success today.

The consistent enforcement of legislation is key to the development of both democracy and its people. In Latin America, traditionalist tropes such as patriarchy prevent the region from making its legislation a medium that reflects a woman's civil reality at large. This study evaluates the impact of patriarchy on the reality of women and their political participation in Latin America today. More specifically, the latest Human Development Report motivates further analysis on the relationship between the social progress made on paper (specifically development related to women's rights) and the discouraging reality that most women face when their rights are violated. The irony follows that most women in the region are condemned to a society that strongly subscribes to a patriarchal ideology, which prevents most women from attaining strong leadership positions like the ones attained by Bachelet or Rousseff.

Still, the strong presence of female political leaders in the region establishes a precedent for the world and in doing so builds on a tradition of social progress through

social resistance. In Latin America resistance is better exercised through street demonstrations since it is the most popular way in which masses organize to seek change (Inter American Development Bank 2009). Women of the region developed an identity to express demands and assess progress in street protests, conferences, and other meetings and activities. Among them, annual popular conferences and workshops have become institutionalized. These meetings are conventions where arguments are held in order to evaluate the current reality of women and critique the different forms of oppression women endure. Thus the movements become tools for women to advance progressive agendas, which have become more influential now due to the number of participants and the visibility they have gained because of the growth in the number of participants.

An evaluation of the role of women in Latin America is in order to pinpoint the obstacles that inhibit gender equality in the household, the workforce, and at a personal level: reproductive rights. This conversation is pertinent today because of the controversy that exists around debates of equal pay, reproduction, and the role of women with relation to families even in the most advanced countries of the world. In addition the unequal reality of regions like Latin America is perplexing because there is an increasing number of female leaders in it whilst the region houses high numbers of female presidents vs. high illiteracy, and the highest number of femicides in the world as well (Revisit: Defining Patriarchy). Latin America carries more than half the number of femicides in the world (Rodriguez). Femicides can be defined as the killing of women for being women and this phenomenon was first brought to light in Latin America. These trends alone portray a violent female experience, but also a progressive one where women are appointed important positions in society to enhance its socioeconomic development (at

least from a capitalist point of view). Nevertheless the reality of women within the narrative of patriarchy condemns them and ultimately justifies their exploitation.

Taking all into account, it is necessary to define patriarchy. Walby (1990) characterizes patriarchy through the lens of dominance due to its hierarchical nature. In any hierarchy there are identities that sustain more power than their subordinate counter parts. Historically, the identities that sustain more power in society have been men, thus marginalizing women and their potential to develop leadership skills. Walby further specifies that the social dynamic where one participant has more power than the other is best enforced in the structure of families. The ancient Greeks built their political entities, the polis, around the oikos, the home. In doing so women were relegated the care of their children and household work. The ancient social construct still resonates with women's reality and expectations today even in the political realm. Thus, these patterns eventually develop into social traditions, which perpetuates and accentuates power relations where men easily oppress women. This resonates strongly within Latin America, a region heavily driven by conservative family traditions.

Furthermore, women adopt the natural demands of reproduction and men take on the production of goods and services (Amoros 1991). So-called "natural" demands include reproductive labor and the investment of time and money demanded by child rearing. This refers to the time of gestation, and after birth the dependence that the child demands until he/she can fend on her own. In addition the natural demands also refers to the ancient times when women would take care of agricultural harvesting for the home while the men hunted.

In what follows, the sociopolitical reality of women in Latin America will be

analyzed through the lens of patriarchy as defined above. Chapter 1 provides an overview of women's reality in Latin America using data and statistics to contextualize current trends. In Chapter 2 I use an up-to-date data set to perform a means difference and regression analysis to provide a novel and original investigation of women's reality in Latin America. A means difference analysis reveals the averages between two main groups and indicates if the difference is statistically significant.² Due to the fact that chapter 2 reveals a positive growth in women's political rights in Latin America, chapter 3 will explore the reasons for this growth. Finally, chapter 4 will synthesize and conclude the study above, providing closing remarks.

² When we compare the reality of women that of other regions this method is better than others to depict a significant difference when using data to compare them. This method is better than comparing to averages because it provides information regarding the level difference and also if that difference is compelling or not.²

II. Women's Reality in Latin America: Democracy and Patriarchy in the Region

Defining Patriarchy

In order to contextualize the effects that patriarchy has on the modern Latin American woman it is imperative to define patriarchy qualitatively after the mathematical analysis made above. Sylvia Walby defines patriarchy as follows (pg. 20):

A system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress, and exploit women. The use of social structure is important here, since it clearly implies rejection both of biological determinism, and the notion that every individual man is in a dominant position and every woman in a subordinate one.

Defining Patriarchy with Mathematics

Gruber and Szoltysek (2012) provide a mathematical benchmark from which we can understand patriarchy from data. Working from Walby's (1990) methodology, Gruber et.al produce a patriarchal index from census and micro data. The authors argue that the combination of the following elements discussed by previous scholars can be used to quantitatively measure patriarchy (pg. 2):

Dominance of patrilineal descent, patrilocal or patrivirilocal residence after marriage, power relations that favour the domination of men over women and of the older generation over the younger generation, customary laws that sanctioned these patterns, the absence of an interfering state that could mitigate their

influence, and an inert traditional society that emanated from these conditions.

To develop such index, the authors use census data from two historical family societies from East Europe. For the census data, the authors compute well-specified variables, and then look at the correlation between them. Hence, the authors define the intensity of patriarchy as a function of the following indicators:

- Proportion of female household heads (Leadership Status)
- Mortality rates (Higher mortality of women)
- Ratio of female to male illiteracy rates (Age awareness and quantitative literacy status)
- Proportion of relative in the household on the wife's side
- Lower age at marriage for women (Age at marriage status)
- Larger age gap between spouses
- Ratio of females to males proportions of people with unknown age
- Proportion of people living in multiple households
- Proportion of elderly people living with at least one married child

Thus, with this benchmark in mind, one can closely look at the data in Latin America and understand better the high intensity of patriarchal structures in the region. Not all data is readily available, but it is still possible to look at the representative indicators discussed above: Proportion of female head of household, mortality rates, ratio of female to male illiteracy rates, and age at marriage for women.

In terms of percentages of female head of household, Gruber et.al suggest a negative correlation with patriarchal intensity. This is because in truly patriarchal societies, women would not become head of household unless there was no other choice.

A study conducted by TGI Latina Survey in 2001, shows that on average, 24.8% of women are head of household in Latin America. Although this number has increased (according to the most recent Argentinian census for example, they report a 70% increase in female head of household to account for total 40% of female head of household, but other countries in the region remain stagnated), it is still evident that men are head of household 4 times as much as women are. Moreover, it is important to note that although this indicator has been on the rise, it might not be due to gender equality. The common social construct used to premise the ideal family is upon division of labor: The husband is the principal wage-earner, and the wife a stay-home mother. In some cases, the wife also works, but earns a lower wage than the husband (Latina Survey 2001). Thus, a female head of household may earn a wage as well as work on the chores at home. In this set-up, a female head of household may not be ideal, as it can be representative of abandonment, divorce, or unmarried motherhood (TGI Latina Survey, 2001).

The next indicator of interest is female mortality rates in Latin America. Gruben et.al assumes a positive correlation between female mortality rates and patriarchal intensity. This measure can be deceiving, due to the fact that on percentages, more men die than women (a quick glance at World Bank indicators shows this). Hence, instead of using a pure female mortality rate, we can analyze femicide rates. This indicator correlates with male violence towards women. Thus, a higher femicide rate is positively correlated with a more patriarchal society. A study performed by Small Arms Survey in 2012 shows that Latin America is the region with the countries that have the highest femicide rates. El Salvador leads the charts with 12 women killed for every 100,000 women. Over 7 countries in Latin America are between the “High” and “Very High”

category for femicide in this study (see Appendix A.1).

Next, the ratio of female to male illiteracy rates is clearly unfavorable for women. A study performed by SITEAL in 2008 shows a clear imbalance between illiteracy rates between men and women (see Appendix A.2)

As it can be seen from the data, on average in Latin America, women are 46.6% more illiterate than men. Gruber et.al argues that patriarchal societies perpetuate gender inequality, which in turn aggravates educational inequality. Patriarchal societies tend to suppress women from studying, and as such, statistics such as this reflect the patriarchal nature of Latin America.

Finally, a study performed by UNICEF in 2012 shows that in Latin America, 29% of underage women get married, compared to 11% in Europe. Gruber et.al argue the following (pg.18):

We assumed that increasing levels of patriarchy would have led to lower ages at marriage for women, because lower ages among brides tends to reinforce male domination of the household (De Moor and Van Zanden 2010).

Thus, it is evident from this indicator that the intensity of patriarchy in Latin America is at least twice as high as it is in Europe.

The definition provided by Walby is important to the case study of Latin America because the social structures that dominate in the region are very much focused on issues of class. Historically class was closely linked with *machismo* in Latin America.

Machismo can be considered as a variant or a social expression of patriarchy that places the value of men over that of women in such a way that the male gender surpasses the female gender based on normalized social expectations of gender roles and makes men

feel entitled to exert gendered power over women. In many cases this behavior is expressed in the form of violence. Class and *Machismo* can be characterized as the two main drivers that allow for the concentration of wealth in social sectors comprised of powerful male heads of households (Aguinaga 1994). Hierarchical social structures limit the fair redistribution of resources in the region. *Machismo* on the one hand, prevents the family's economy from flowing to the female members of the family.

Class on the other hand, is still the main marker that recycles poverty in the region. In fact 53% of the poor in Latin America believe that their next generation will not enjoy a prosperous social mobility (CEPAL Social Panorama 2014, 113). People in the higher classes maintain the poor in poverty through weak governmental structures that favor clientelism and only effectively respond to the needs and wants of the few in power and economically rich. It is also the system of clientelism (Auyero 1999) that keeps most women from recurring to the authorities when their rights (as shown in the Human Development Report) are violated (Fregoso 2010). Women of lower class status in the region are further discouraged because they are aware that the power of class and the oppression of patriarchy are permanent barriers for them to claim their constitutional egalitarian rights.

In addition to the main definition, Sylvia Walby conceives patriarchy (defined above) as a "system of social structures." Furthermore she does not conceive patriarchy as a structure itself, but as a system under which practices develop, and in this process the result (of said development) is that of different patriarchal structures. Walby identifies the following 6 structures: patriarchal production, patriarchal relation in the workplace, the state as a patriarchal state, male violence, and patriarchal relations in sexuality,

patriarchal cultural institutions. All the structures outlined by Walby are pertinent to the reality of women in Latin America regarding their experience in the labor force, the household, and the state with respect to different individual decisions.

The Socio-political Reality of Women Latin America:

The political link between a woman's reality in the region with respect to the state's political and economic structures is within feminist movements. As mentioned before, one of its salient manifestations, the "Movimiento Nacional de Mujeres" is a strong feminist movement that has international reach. This movement alone has influenced Latin American social progress since the 1980's. Its history and main goals are detailed in the last chapter of this thesis to depict the progress made by it in the region. The vibrancy and accomplishment of this movement is in its ability to redefine its goals and also in its unending inclusion of different groups (Freidman NCLA 2014). Participants range from conservative military women to liberals and progressives that want their reproductive rights to be legalized.

With the six structures that Walby defines in mind and the data analyzed above it is clear that the progress achieved by legislation and cultural institutions such as the feminists movements is trumped by patriarchal structures that permeate the home, the jobs, and the decision making process of women in the region. Also, to define the current sociopolitical situation of women it is important to bring visibility to the disparities between gender whilst pinpointing the underlying structural and philosophical frameworks that lead to the perpetration of gender inequality.

According to Marso (2015) feminist movements attempt to translate cultural and

social experiences into political and economic structures. The link described above is key to define in order to fully understand the dichotomous reality in Latin America. In addition feminist movements tend to group women and their beliefs, which to some extent politicizes the experience of the individual (Marso 2015). In the end, the relationship between the political and the social for women in the region has to be as comprehensive as possible because of the enormous diversity that the region contains. Also, only in a united manner can women make significant change at a constitutional level. In a sense women have to let go of their individuality further to enact social change.

In reality patriarchy is constantly combated in the region as it has seen the conception of a number of feminist coalitions. The campaigns like the one denominated “Únete” (CELAC 2008), is quite a key precursor to female rights, which aimed to capitalize on the legal efforts to end all types of violence towards women. This campaign along with others like the recent #NIUNAMENOS condemn tolerance towards gender discrimination and violence. Also, The convention that dealt with the legislation of women’s rights in the region was The Convention of Belém do Para and it specifically produced a set of norms that required for states to protect women and their rights. Nevertheless, surveys later show results that put into question the ability of these laws to translate to the local communities and their social constructs based on traditions.

The native communities that many Bolivian women belong to are already threatened by modernity and constantly questioned by governments that want to advance economically primarily. This sets up societies like the ones in Latin America to legitimize traditions like that of “Machismo.” For example, Rafael Correa (Ecuador’s current head

of State) publicly scorned a female journalist and labeled her as “nasty fat woman” based on alleged criticism the journalist had voiced about the president (El Universo 2007). Not even educated men are clearly not held to the same standards as they are allowed to label their female colleagues and political counterparts with remarks that often contain sexualized derogatory nuances.

In addition, there are a large number of stories across the region of women being abused, segregated and killed for being women. In particular, there is the story of a Bolivian Council Woman who was killed back in 2012 after a long fight for women’s rights and corruption. She endured in her post for two years, but after the death threats became violent she resigned. She was pushed down a ravine shortly after, and the authorities have not taken that case to evaluate as premeditated murder, and the killers have not been prosecuted. Before her death she had been attacked numerous times in an open plaza and knew she would be killed because the municipality openly declared discomfort with her having a position of power. In other words she had become aware of information that was too important for a woman to have access too. The awareness of her imminent death shows the prevalence of intolerance towards women in power and politics (Rodriguez 2014).

As seen above, 29% of women in the region marry underage, which cuts a woman’s educational development and in turn surpasses them in the educational realm, which is correlated with the 46% with which women surpass men when measuring illiteracy in the region. These numbers are clear indicators of concurrent male suppression of women. This is especially the case when women prioritize their career over a traditional early marriage. In addition, this particular case sheds some light on the

conclusions that Dominguez et al. came to. The lack of a proper investigation to prosecute the murderers is not only lacking, but also expected by the community.

Moreover, seven countries in Latin America have criminalized femicide and other abusive behaviors towards women in the workplace, and legal counselors are witness to the overwhelming evasion to treat these cases seriously by the police, unions and courts. CELAC's data for 2013-2014 gives a detailed account of the international efforts the region has made in order to establish legal grounds for the protection of women's violation at an individual state level. The report does so by establishing that gender discrimination is a priority for Latin American states and their development (2000's-Present).

Furthermore, the legal boundary of accountability for women may be attributed to machismo as the entity that drives gender prioritization. In other words machismo does not allow government officials to prioritize women's issues. Also, the legal atmosphere neglects women through wording and categorization of gender. Dominguez et al. identify a categorization of women as mothers or daughters in legal transcripts. Presumably this places the civil state of women in relation with her reproductive capabilities. The law on the other hand, objectively regards men because male gender belongs to the normative gendering of the market. For women, such wording reinforces their sociopolitical roles and boundaries within these too. For the male counterpart mothers and daughters resonate with a vulnerable identity compared to him.

In Latin America the ultimate goal, according to the UN's Human Development Report, is a state that comprises a legal code that clearly materializes into freedom of autonomy according to CELAC's (2013-2014) report on regional human development.

CELAC directly quotes the definition of autonomy developed by the United Nations in 2005. Autonomy was defined as a right expected to be provided for all women, and within this right women are free to choose to participate, by their own accord, amongst all realms of power and at both individual and collective levels. In practice this translates into the concrete terms where women are not exposed to any kind of violence, but most importantly they are able to own and generate resources (CELAC 2013-2014). In the case of Argentine Governor Vidal, as discussed above, she was able to exploit her preparation and is now in a position of power where she will be generating resources in the form of services for the people of Buenos Aires. In contrast, women like the Bolivian local leader represent the prevalent trend that condemns women to violent resistance when their political views fervently defend gender equality. More importantly, the state institutions that claim to respond to the transgression of laws that vow to protect gender equality many times exclude minority groups and are ultimately dismissed by the leaders that preach to be the brave actors of their establishment in the first place.

Latin American Women and Politics:

The average number of women in parliament positions in South America is still low in comparison to other regions of the world like Scandinavia: Only 24.8 percent in 2014 and 29 percent in 2015 are female (World Bank, 2015), against approximately 60% in Scandinavian countries. This means that for every woman in a political seat, there are 3 men. The argument follows that even though women have successfully breached many barriers of inequality in the workforce, patriarchy perpetuate the oppression of Latin American women and inhibit them from attaining full participation in society and

ultimately in politics (Revisit: Defining Patriarchy).

As analyzed above there is a correlation between high number of femicides and higher intensity of patriarchy. This translates into the Latin American reality with the highest intensity of patriarchy in the region. This reality also reinforces dichotomies where women are pushed to attain leadership positions by a leftist/progressive global trend. At the same time, the other end of the dichotomy presents a reality where the bulk of the population is driven by patriarchal ideologies that prevent the growth of women in all aspects related to society. The first end of the dichotomy is hardly is hard to pinpoint, may be attributed to a global push for egalitarianism which has sparked an international conversations.

The reality of women in Latin America illustrated above mirrors in many ways the reality of women across all nations but international media outlets repeatedly overlook the region. In fact, only 6.5% of news reports are about Latin America (Friedman 2013). Even now, when Latin America harbors important feminist campaigns that are internationally recognized like “Movimiento Nacional,” and houses the largest number of elected presidents, the media’s focus does not lie in the region. Most research sustains a sluggish increase in female political leadership. There is also a notion that Nordic countries and South Asia are the representative regions with more female political leaders (World Bank 2015). In addition, most of the analysis done by the World Bank and American Research from sites like DePaw does not recognize an important egalitarian socio-political trend in Latin America. The lack of attention to all the efforts Latin American campaigns have collected undermines, to some extent, their legitimacy. Due to this there is a desperate need of visibility, study and recognition of the region.

Theorizing Gender and the Family:

Theoretically, women of all backgrounds have transitioned from reproductive assets to being recognized as important elements of society. This is palpably evident ever since the civil rights movement in the sixties where women fought for rights that included suffrage. Decades later this movement provides the venue through which women across the world live a socioeconomic reality closer to that experienced by men. Even though this is regarded as a positive trend the current reality of most women is still vulnerable.

According to CELAC's latest report, 50% women in Latin America are part of the work force. Conversely, 80% of men are part of the region's workforce, which creates a significant gap of 30% between the two genders. Based on the data, half of the female population in the region is not even part labor market, which makes them inactive both economically and politically, by default. The disparity between gender experiences in the region calls for a theoretical understanding of the root that segregates genders and how this impacts today's societies. Celia Amoros is a feminist scholar that evaluates gender through different dimensions, and her perspective sheds some light on the historical explanations and the constant oppression of females across societies. She particularly creates a parallel between a philosophical perspective and an economic perspective of gender. From the philosophical point of view, males separate themselves from women to define women by pointing out the differences between genders. This exercise can extrapolate to all female-male relationships with respect to all socio-economic outcomes. Complementing the philosophical perspective of Amoros, the economic perspective that men have of women draws a scenario of opposites that compete in the market on the

grounds of what defines gender.

Modern rhetoric (that separates women and men based on their economic contributions to the household), then favors men in this context because presumably the production of goods and services is given more social value than the reproductive labor generally in charge of women. In the context of today's capitalism the space between men and women not only define one another, but it further estranges them.

A direct byproduct of this estrangement is then a power play that places women inevitably in an inferior position when compared to men. In Latin America, state institutions perpetuate gender discrimination, which undermines their ability to enforce progressive laws. Beyond that, women heads of state like Michelle Bachelet and Christina Kirchner produced the same results (CELAC 2013-14) as their neighboring countries when it comes to improving women's conditions in the region, and at the same time they have both been reelected. Insofar, the gender of the president does not seem to make a difference in the reality of Latin America's female populations. The CELAC report evaluates the last ten years of social progress in the region, which is also the period in which most female presidents were elected. There is no significant difference among the countries run by women either and do not show an outlier between Latin American countries either. This is evident in the fact that other countries in the region with male presidents still have advanced the same agenda regarding women's rights but don't show a significant difference in governance or accountability of the issue.

Moreover, the divisive illustration amongst genders that Amoros' work paints is important for this study because it clearly outlines the underlying mechanisms that lead to patriarchy as the structure that relates men and women. Patriarchy is the primer that

justifies the disparity between men and women. The disparity that patriarchy creates is palpable in all aspects of the lives of women. Even today the disparity is justified mainly in gender differences concerning issues of reproductivity, but also issues of emotion and logic. Furthermore, just like logic is more revered than emotions logic is usually paired with masculinity and emotionality with femininity. It is important to mention these differences because they are part of a discriminatory language that reaches the executive and legislative ranks of a state. An example that clearly outlines the common discriminatory language used to describe women in power are the derogatory remarks made by José Pablo Feinman, a well known Argentinian philosopher, when discussing Vidal's governance. Feinmann's assessment did not focus on her merits and aptitudes based on experience, but instead he attributed her election to her good looks. The language used by lawmakers also victimizes women when usually referring to them from a nurturing point of view that genders their rights (Fergoso 2010). Both examples present a rhetoric that justifies the abuse of women because of their supposed inferiority to men and therefore when they are brought into the labor force they are still seen as such.

Theorizing Women and Capitalism:

At the cusp of modernity and civilization women and their socioeconomic role compared to their male peers is still at the center of heated arguments at a global level. Even though the narrative in the media reflects a liberal agenda that pushes for the inclusion of all members of society into the labor force and the global economy, statistics and the social experience of most women indicate a disparity that resembles the gender inequalities of the ancient patriarchal world. The female experience in society is

schizophrenic because the image she has to fit is politically progressive due to an increase in the number of women in the workforce, and it is significant when compared to any other period in history. At the same time the expectations drawn out for the women are still very much traditional. Added to this puzzle is the fact that workingwomen that develop their skills in the dominant economic system of capitalism find themselves exploited by the system itself.

Capitalism can be regarded as the medium through which traditionalist societal structures such as the family oppress women, and even though there are a few sectors in society that let women in the workforce (more prominently) these are usually ones in which their sexuality can be exploited. This not only deepens inequality between genders, but places one gender further away from one another. Even though this perspective may seem to dismiss the progress achieved by feminist movements the aim of the following thesis is to acknowledge the evident progress of women across socio political aspects in Latin America.

To some extent the feminist movements of the region have done so, but there has to be a global awareness of our current political systems and political leaders without tainting this awareness with our current state as a developing region. The rhetoric has to continue to be positive and celebratory, but most of all it has to spread further, the 6.5% of coverage that the region gets (as mentioned above) is bellow levels of mediocrity and have to rise as our nations develop further.

Silvia Federici is at the forefront of studying women from through a Marxist lens and this allows elucidates the economic aspect of female oppression. Based on her feminist studies, she shows how capitalism coopted the labor of women into a mechanism

of double exploitation where the unpaid labor that they perform subsidizes the low wages given to other family members that do participate in the labor market and at the same time their unpaid labor at home is not recognized (Federici 2015). This describes, in simple terms, the reality of most women around the world. The condition of women of Latin America is not only of a wage disparity, but of living in a patriarchal society that enforces violence and discrimination against powerless, and uneducated women (Refer to section two on literacy and violence rates). Gender disparity can be best explained through a historical lens where the structure of the family can be used as the focal point to analyze women within this basic unit of society.

The theoretical appraisal of women's reality in Latin America calls for assessing the correspondence between qualitative and quantitative data. Such an analysis aims to elucidate discrepancies among the experience of women across the region. To convey the pervasive dissonant realities of women in the region the next chapter draws on data gathered through surveys pertaining to CIRI. CIRI is a data set used by scholars and students in order to evaluate human right violations around the world. The markers of the analysis include civil, economic, and political rights to analyze the extent to which egalitarian legislation about gender materializes across the region. In turn, such an analysis offers a comprehensive understanding of the progress made by the region. Finally, a quantitative analysis of the region's reality in terms of gender conditions offers valuable insight to plan for a better way in which socio-political progress can advance further.

III. Women's Political, Economic and Social Rights: Statistical Analysis

This chapter explores the development of women's political, economic, and social rights in Latin America through an econometrical and statistical lens. The breakdown of these three categories helps to contextualize the paradoxical progress feminist movements achieved in Latin America over the past decades. As identified previously, it is clear that women achieved milestones in the political sphere with a wave of female presidents, and meeting the female quotas (suggested by the UN) in government branches. Nevertheless, despite these achievements, the reality of women in the region is still dichotomous: Women can obtain power in politics, yet others succumb to poor economic conditions, machismo and femicide.

The CIRI Human Rights Data Project allows us to explore these differences: "The CIRI Human Rights Dataset contains standards-based quantitative information on government respect for 15 internationally recognized human rights for 202 countries, annually from 1981-2011." (CIRI, 2015). The data is readily used by scholars and students alike that are interested in studying the implications of a number of human rights violations globally. The dataset is also employed by policy makers who are interested in adapting policy changes regarding human rights violations in their state. These professionals usually measure: "democratization, economic aid, military aid, structural adjustment, and humanitarian intervention" (CIRI, 2015) with CIRI's dataset. From this

dataset, I³ analyze specifically the variables listed in their dataset as Women's Political Rights, Women's Economic Rights and Women's Social Rights for all Latin American countries in the sample period stated above.

Index Construction and Measurements

The variable Women's Political Rights draws on a variety of internationally recognized rights, including "the right to vote, the right to run for political office, the right to hold elected and appointed government positions, the right to join political parties and the right to petition government officials" (CIRI, 71). The main two factors in assigning a country a value are the "extensiveness of laws pertaining to women's political rights" and government practices towards women, or how effectively the government enforces the laws. Hence, the coding scheme is as follows:⁴

- (0): None of women's political rights are guaranteed by law. There are laws that completely restrict the participation of women in the political process.
- (1): Political equality is guaranteed by law. However, there are significant limitations in practice. Women hold less than five percent of seats in the national legislature and in other high-ranking government positions.
- (2) Political equality is guaranteed by law. Women hold more than five percent but less than thirty percent of seats in the national legislature and/or in other high-ranking government positions.

³ Special thanks to Pierre Castro for helping me understand this dataset

⁴ see <http://www.humanrightsdata.com/p/data-documentation.html>

- (3) Political equality is guaranteed by law and in practice. Women hold more than thirty percent of seats in the national legislature and/or in other high-ranking government positions.

Furthermore, the variable Women's Economic Rights considers a country's labor conditions for women. It looks to measure primarily the environment for women in the work force under the lens of characteristics such as equal pay for work, flexibility to choose any profession and labor benefits without the consent of men. Moreover, this index measures if women are treated unfairly in the process of getting hired when compared to men, as well as gender discrimination to obtain promotions. Finally, it measures the degree of sexual harassment women experience in the work force. (CIRI, 77). Thus, the coding scheme is as follows⁵:

- (0): There are no economic rights for women under law and systematic discrimination based on sex may be built into the law. The government tolerates a high level of discrimination against women.
- (1): There are some economic rights for women under law. However, in practice, the government DOES NOT enforce the laws effectively or enforcement of laws is weak. The government tolerates a moderate level of discrimination against women.
- (2): There are some economic rights for women under law. In practice, the government DOES enforce these laws effectively. However, the government still tolerates a low level of discrimination against women.

⁵ see <http://www.humanrightsdata.com/p/data-documentation.html>

- (3): All or nearly all of women's economic rights are guaranteed by law. In practice, the government fully and vigorously enforces these laws. The government tolerates none or almost no discrimination against women.

Next, the variable Women's Social Rights considers the holistic social environment of women. This includes inheritance rights, equal terms of marriage with men, bureaucratic rights such as obtaining a passport, initiate a divorce and the liberty to travel abroad without men consent. Moreover, it measures the degree of freedom women enjoy to provide a legacy to children such as citizenship and capital goods. Furthermore, it measures the extent to which women enjoy liberties to participate in social, educational and cultural events, and freedom from female genital mutilation without her consent (CIRI, 93). With these parameters in mind, the coding scheme is as follows⁶:

- (0): There are no social rights for women under law and systematic discrimination based on sex may be built into the law. The government tolerates a high level of discrimination against women.
- (1): There are some social rights for women under law. However, in practice, the government DOES NOT enforce these laws effectively or enforcement of laws is weak. The government tolerates a moderate level of discrimination against women.
- (2): There are some social rights for women under law. In practice, the government DOES enforce these laws effectively. However, the government still tolerates a low level of discrimination against women.

⁶ see <http://www.humanrightsdata.com/p/data-documentation.html>

- (3): All or nearly all of women's social rights are guaranteed by law. In practice, the government fully and vigorously enforces these laws. The government tolerates none of almost any discrimination against women.

With these three variables in mind, I proceeded to do a means difference analysis between Latin America and the rest of the world, as well a regression analysis of these three variables in Latin America across time. The means difference analysis will reveal the current position of Latin America in comparison to the rest of the world, whereas the regression analysis will elucidate the growth of each of these indicators in the region since 1981. The mean differences analysis allows us to not only compare averages in level terms, but also identify if such average differences are significant or not. The regression analysis allows us to look at the correlation between time and each index's growth.

Means Difference Analysis

To perform the means difference analysis, I created a dummy variable called Latin America. If a given observation corresponded to a Latin American country, it took the value of 1, 0 otherwise. In this way, I divided the sample in such a manner that the averages for each indicator could be calculated exclusively for Latin America, and exclusively for the rest of the world. The results are presented in Table 3⁷:

⁷ Special thanks to Pierre Castro for giving me a 5 hour class on basic Econometrics to perform this analysis

Table 3: Mean Difference in Women Rights (1981-1991 and 1996-2007)

	Latin America		Rest of the World		Mean Difference	
	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.		
Women Political Rights Index	1.93	0.450774	1.766	0.6667874	0.17142	***
Women Economic Rights Index	1.31	0.02	1.32	0.01	-0.01	
Women Social Rights Index	1.276786	0.0240344	1.242328	0.0158468	0.034457	

All averages presented above are the historical averages for each index. The first result that the means difference analysis reveals is that, the only significant statistical difference between the average in Latin America and the average of the rest of the world is in the Women Political Rights Index. Table 3 shows that this index is 0.1714 higher in Latin America, when compared to the rest of the world, and it is statistically significant at the 1% confidence level. Moreover, the Women Economic Rights Index in Latin America is lower when compared to the rest of the world by -0.01, and the Women Social Right Index average is higher in Latin America than in the rest of world by 0.0344. None of these two differences are statistically significant, but nonetheless it delineates a divide between a woman's economic autonomy in Latin America when compared to the rest of the world.

The immediate conclusion one can draw from these results is that, statistically speaking; women enjoy more political rights in Latin America than in the rest of the world. This means women in Latin America have more rights to vote and more opportunities to run for political office, as well as to be held in government positions and political parties. This pattern is also reflected in the fact that the index with the highest average in Latin America is that of Women's Political Rights (1.93 vs. 1.766 for Economic Rights and 1.27 for Social Rights). Furthermore, it is important to note that the Women Political Right index average in Latin America is close to a score of 2, which means political equality is guaranteed by law, and women hold between 5 and 30 percent of legislative seats in congress.

Given the pattern depicted above, it is clear that the Women Political Rights index in Latin America stands out, given that not only is this index's average higher and statistically significant in Latin America when compared to the rest of the world, but this index has the highest average in Latin America when compared to the other 2 indexes. Thus, it is important to investigate how these indexes have evolved across time to try to understand if indeed there is a trend of growth for women's political rights in Latin America.

Regression Analysis

To conduct the regression analysis, I looked at the development of each index across time in Latin America. To do so, the regression took each index as the dependent variable, and time as the independent variable. Once again, the sample was restricted to only Latin American countries. The results of the regression are presented in Table 4:

Table 4: Growth in Women Rights (1981-1991 and 1996-2007)

	Slope	Standard Error	Statistical Significance	Probability Value
Women Political Rights Index	0.0258816	0.0017691	***	0.000
Women Economic Rights Index	0.0032142	0.0024272		0.186
Women Social Rights Index	0.0107901	.0032137	***	0.001

The first result we get is that, since 1981, all indices have a positive slope. This means that Women's Political, Economic and Social rights have been growing at a steady rate (0.0258, 0.0032, 0.010 respectively). Out of these three coefficients, only the Political Rights and Social Rights have statistical significance.

This means that, if these rates would to remain, in 50 years the Women's Political Rights index average score would grow from around a 2 to a perfect score of 3. Thus, in 50 years, political equality will be fully guaranteed and protected by law and in practice, and women in Latin America will hold more than 30% of legislative seats.

Similarly, but half as quick as the political rights, the Social Rights index score average would increase from around a 1 to a 2, which means that in 100 years governments in Latin America would change from not enforcing social rights for women

at all, to effectively enforcing them. This encompasses enforcing the rights such as allowing women to travel abroad and obtain a passport, the right to confer citizenship to children and freedom from genital mutilation without her consent.

Unfortunately, the Economics Rights Index shows growth but no statistical significance. And even if we assume statistical significance, the coefficient is so small that it would take about 340 years for the average score on Economic Rights to increase by 1 point. This suggests that equal pay for work, as well as free choice of profession or employment without husband consent is limited in the region. Also, the right to be free from sexual harassment in the workplace is low in Latin America.

The importance of this result is that it brings awareness about the positive trend in Latin America with respect to women's political rights. Awareness is the first step for further progress as it encourages an overarching conversation. Further, as a result of raised awareness, it is easier to materialize progressive legislation that will guarantee women's political rights in the region. To maximize the effects of the positive trend in Latin America, it is important to increase media coverage in the region (Wolfsfeld, 2011). As mentioned earlier, Latin America, along with Africa, are two of the most under covered regions by media in the world, and since politics is first and foremost a contest, and the news media are the central venue for viewing that contest, media plays a pivotal role to bring political change (Wolfsfeld, 2011). Hence, if awareness regarding the positive strides Latin America is taking with women's political rights reaches a global arena, it could become a catalyst for change around the globe. And more importantly, if Latin America becomes a beacon for change for women's political rights, it would

reinforce the progress made and even accelerate it. This will hopefully bring about a more inclusive, global feminism.

Complemented with this, the results show the importance of using data rigorously to understand the reality of women. It is crucial to coopt for more microeconomic measurements of patriarchy to understand better the extent to which it prevails in Latin America. Nevertheless, it is unsettling to see how stagnated women's economic rights are. However, this result allows us to delve into how we can improve women's economic rights in Latin America.

The key to obtain a change is in social disruption in the form of manifestations. It is crucial for women in Latin America to challenge the patriarchal structures that clearly govern the private and public sector,, and as a result, legislation. Like mentioned before, demonstrations of discontent at the work place will raise awareness, and once again, the coverage of media is crucial for the proliferation of the message of change (Wolfsfeld, 2011).

Thankfully, Latin America hosts a strong tradition of feminist movements compared to other regions in the world. They bring awareness to issues such as femicide with campaigns like “#NiUnaMenos”. For example, #NiUnaMenos is campaign that brings women together to protest cases of femicide. Moreover, they have a network, which protects women from potential abusers. Their main engine for operations is social media, which allows them to penetrate into the heavily stratified society of Latin America and reach a significant and diverse audience.

The effect of these movements in legislation influenced governments to pass laws that eventually translated to the high women political rights we see in the results above.

Thus, it is quintessential to evaluate and explore the history of feminist movements in Latin America to contextualize the results of the analysis presented in this chapter.

IV. Latin American Feminism and the Expansion of Women's Political Rights

The Socio-Political development of Feminist Movements of Latin America

After presenting an overview of socioeconomic gender inequalities in the region, in chapter three I showed dominant trends in matter of women's political rights, clearly placing Latin America above the average achieved by other regions of the world. This positive trend may explain the numerous success stories of women in positions of power. In the last twenty-five years the region has seen more than five women become president. Even though these women are still few when compared to the large populations they belong to, they are still strong representations the paths opened by egalitarian legislation the region harbors. Social progress in the region is due to the high influence feminist movements have today. The "Movimiento Nacional de Mujeres" is the most prominent movement to date with an international following across the region.

Historically, women in Latin America were systematically driven out of the political arena due to class and gendered oppression. There are a diverse presence and a long tradition of different movements but the most expansive one is "Movimiento Nacional de Mujeres." Feminist tradition in Latin America tradition goes all the way back to the beginning of the 20th century. The presence of "Movimiento Nacional de Mujeres" in the region became an essential medium, in the eighties, for women to voice a gender equality revolution. Based on the research (detailed in the introduction) it is clear that the

diversity of the region itself presented both a challenge and a benefit for the development of truly inclusive feminist movements. The presence of strong grassroots movements coupled with strong female political leaders illustrates a clear progression, as a region, towards equality. At the same time the region is still very much affected by imperialist vestiges of *machismo* and class hierarchies.

The striking contrast between progressive leadership and grassroots movements does not cohere with data that shows the clear struggle that women face to be recognized as equals even when there is legislation backing them up. It is extremely important to trace the history of feminist movements in the region, as well as the success stories of powerful women to pinpoint to the inconsistencies between the women that benefit from progress and those that do not. The imagery that the contrast between the experiences of different women in the region illustrates no correlation between these experiences, which is exactly why they should be reviewed in conjunction to be better understood.

Virginia Vargas illustrates the political arena of Latin America as an experimental lab where authoritarian governments of the 60's and 70's emulated imperialist practices traumatized its populations. Pinochet is one of the most salient authoritarian leaders of the time, and his alone is responsible for the torture, disappearance and or death of approximately 10,000-30,000 people (Reel and Smith, 2006). As a response the region experimented with socialism, populism and at present a hybrid of liberal rhetoric coupled with socialist policies (Vargas 197). According to Vargas' analysis the swift ideological shifts sparked and trumped social movements like that of feminism. Furthermore, she delineates the political circumstances surrounding the birth_of international feminist encounters, which creates an important context that helps review the possible disconnect

between successful female politicians and marginalized lower class women.

Populism attracts massive support, which resulted in the strengthening of a sense of community, and in Latin America it is especially targeted towards the poor and vulnerable sectors of society such as women. The rhetoric that populist leaders spread is passionate, personal and aims to strike a tone of empathy with the poor (The Economist, 2006). It is through the rhetoric of the populist leaders that historically marginalized sectors, like women, were given a platform to express activist messages. At the same time the countries that subscribed to socialism increased the sense of community especially for the disfranchised. The negative effect of both populism and socialism, includes the well known criticism of these systems, which is its inability to spark long lasting innovation and economic stability. Nevertheless, given the political ambience between the 60's and the 80's in the region of Latin America, the shifts in ideology from a predominantly authoritarian school of thought to a socialist and inclusive rhetoric the oppressive traditional hierarchies opened a door for women organize and start a social revolution that soon became political.

The Birth of Feminism in Latin America

Feminism in Latin America was deeply influenced by the premises of American Feminism (Vargas). On the one hand, it adopted the notion that the personal became political when it came to uncovering gender inequalities (Shaw and Lee). In that sense feminism has the function of bringing light to the importance that each individual has in a community, while at the same time making *her story* an important part of the overall political composition. According to The World Fact Book Latin America houses eight

different ethnicities of which white is the predominant ethnicity. These statistics reflect the social hierarchies that dominate the area where 33% of whites is the predominant race (The World Fact Book 2014-2015). Like the United States, male whites (of Spanish and Portuguese background) are usually the type of persona that rise to power as presidents and any leadership positions. On the other hand, the socialist and populist rhetoric during the 60's-80's allowed for women to unite under the realm of democracy (Vargas 199), and again this for women to coalesce and discuss the urgency of social changes.

One of the most immediate challenges that feminist coalitions face as they form is to be truly inclusive. According to Vargas and her experience with the rise of Movimiento Nacional she identified that most of the participants at the beginning were white middle class women. These women were mostly intellectual (1970's) and even though they plead for equality they were not reflective of all female experiences themselves. Moreover, as the movement became more prominent and inclusive there was a tendency for the participants to pitch in their interpretation of feminism based on their needs and experiences. This marginalized some participants during the first encounters, but now the movement is much more inclusive. Thus, the history of the movement itself depicts the gradual unfolding and acceptance of the movement and this progress is parallel to the rise of strong female political leaders as well. The process depicts the conjunction of these social phenomena where some women are able to cultivate strong political careers in a region that has a high intensity of patriarchy, as I showed in chapter 2. The parallel between women in power and poor masses brings forth the positive extent to which Latin America has advanced when compared to other regions of the world with more clarity and through a historical lens.

The first encounter of Movimiento Nacional happened in Bogotá Colombia in 1981. The attendance of said encounter exceeded the expectations. 150 women were expected and 230 arrived at the convention. The encounter allowed for the establishment of common partner ideologies that surrounded the movement itself. These were socialism and Marxism, which set the tone for the upcoming growth of the movement itself. It is important to mention Movimiento Nacional, and trace its history because to date it is the biggest organization that promotes gender equality at a regional level. There are other well-established movements in countries like Venezuela and Mexico, but non match the extensive outreach of Argentina's movement.

Vargas brings in the perspective of Kirkwood (another participant in the convention) and her perspective on their experience in Bogotá. She remarks that the first encounter was received as a popular reunion that celebrated a conversation that placed women as a social priority for the first time. It also introduced Latin America to the feminist traditions of other regions of the world. Bogotá, she recalls, conceived future trend that aims to reclaim a woman's body and a woman's place in society. She said that the rebellious questioning of a woman's place in society in terms of space, role and identity was an evident "assault on order" (Kirkwood 1986).

Moreover, this that Kirkwood mentions space may be regarded as the public space, which is mostly occupied by male leaders to organize society. The aim in such a structure is to grant the male participant more power than that given to the female. Women of the region and around the world comply with social norms such as those that maintain them in a bubble of domesticity because of their subordination to men. Most women in the region are still oppressed by underage marriage, illiteracy and violence. The harsh reality

that most women experienced at the time motivated a movement such as Movimiento Nacional de Mujeres. The space Kirkwood refers to further encapsulates a female lens through which misogynistic societal norms were openly challenged. Furthermore, these women set the groundwork for further resistance against persistent gender discrimination, which also characterized the region of Latin America at large.

The time at which the first encounter took place coincides with a palpable disempowerment of the Catholic Church in terms of its historical influence on the region's governments. Kirkwood describes such a moment as the time when "reason was de-sacramentalized and put in its place." The imagery can also be read as a social rejection of social norms when Kirkwood employs the term de-sacramentalized. Again, women reclaim a political space, which was traditionally for men, and used the platform provided by the politicians of populist political discourses in order to rally and recruit more women. Furthermore, Kirkwood also describes the first encounter as a "vivid experiment" where a number of women were brought together "shattering" all expectations of society in the process (Kirkwood 1986). In these summit women of the region united through personal experiences that resonated with tropes of abuse, discrimination, and marginalization and as a result, made it into a political issue.

In addition, the first reunion in Bogotá was contentious for some Latin women as well. The rhetoric that the movement promoted at the time was heavily charged with messages of female autonomy. To some women, the rhetoric alone marginalized a large portion of the female population in the region that were structurally bound to be dependent on others in order to survive. At the same time, the consequent reunions brought women of more backgrounds together. Today the movement is accurately

characterized by the variety of women attracts and ultimately recruits. The first encounter also gave the movement a character of double militancy where its loyalty was both with the individuals exclusively and at the same time with the grouped goals the movement promoted as universal.

The following years the region witnessed the growth of the movement and the second reunion took place in Lima, Perú in in 1983. Like the first encounter the one in Perú expected 350 participants and ended up hosting 650. The fact that the number of feminist thinkers rose significantly alone is a marker to that motivates further observation of socio-political norms that discriminate parts of the populations based on gender ideals. Notwithstanding, the second encounter left the participants disappointed because of their ambitious philosophical agenda. The second encounter was tainted with a sense of lack of accomplishments because of the universal questions they wanted to resolve (Vargas 204). In particular, they aimed to tackle issues that included the questioning of persistence of patriarchy in the region.

The persistence of patriarchy in Latin America, as discussed in chapter 2, may be owed to its widely accepted presence in all sectors of society. The second chapter also points out the dangers the high intensity of patriarchy of the region, which are related to the way patriarchy, was measured in the first place. These markers included high illiteracy rates, underage marriage, and the current highest number of femicides. In addition, the second encounter also dealt with questions of the constant permeation of patriarchy in all sectors of society in Latin America (Vargas 204). Again, chapter two of this thesis discusses the social dynamics of such class as a vehicle socioeconomic discrimination. The second encounter tackled the same issues the movement deals with

today, but today there is a better understanding of socio-political dynamics, and increasing tolerance for progressive legislation. The advancement is evident in the election of three women as heads of state in the last decade.

The third encounter of Movimiento Nacional de Mujeres was held in Brazil in the year of 1985. Like the past two conventions this one attracted more recruits than expected. The expected number of women was seven hundred and one thousand arrived instead. The larger theme of the conversation at the convention discussed the evils of social hierarchies and the innate subordination of women in that structure (Vargas 205). Today, the issues of class in the region and around the world are very much interlinked with issues of gender discrimination. Nevertheless, the high intensity of patriarchy expressed in the lack of economic autonomy that women experience in the region becomes the main factor that prevents a lot of women from obtaining independence and personal growth. This is evident in the rigorous analysis made in chapter three which shows that the region is behind in granting economic rights when compared to the rest of the world. At the same time, those women that are privileged enough to obtain high levels of education, are able to construct their economic autonomy while developing a successful career. Clear examples of success story are presidents such as Michelle Bachelet.

The Movimiento Nacional de Mujeres kept growing and the next significant gathering took place in Mexico where one 1,500 participants attended. The very next summit was held in Argentina, where the movement was conceived, and this time 3,000 participants showed up (Vargas 202). The main topic of the reunion in Mexico resembled that of the last conventions as it sought to discuss universal truths of social and gender

constructs. Moreover, undertone of the gathering encouraged a message of individuality for women. Even though the message had been criticized as a vehicle to marginalize women of different walks of life, this convention stood out as it received the most diverse group of women compared to all the other. Inclusion is now one of the most important aspects that the Movimiento Nacional de Mujeres promotes. This is evident in the visual memorabilia available in social media sites, which document the more recent marches and encounters of the movement. Those pictures show women in military uniforms, nuns wearing their habits, topless women that want to reclaim their bodies, professors, indigenous women, and students of all ages to mention a few distinct groups.

The legacy of the first encounters of movements like the Movimiento Nacional de Mujeres includes a number of legislative reforms discussed in chapter 2 and all belong to the UN's Human Report. All these progressive reforms place Latin America above all other regions in terms female political rights. This is evident in the statistical analyses shown in chapter 3. With that being said, it is important to explore the careers of those women that successfully navigated social space provided by the influence of movements such as the Movimiento Nacional de Mujeres. The movements functioned as actors to bring awareness to the profound effects the persistence of patriarchy has on all societies of the region. Moreover their work further challenged social norms that eventually brought egalitarian legislation to Latin America as an emergency measure to combat crimes such as femicides.

Female Latin American Presidents of the last Decade

The following section carefully outlines the life of Michelle Bachelet as exemplars

of a middle class woman that brought herself up to power on her own merit. At the same time Christina Fernandez de Kirchner, was president of Argentina for two terms, but was seasoned by her husband before she became president herself. Some even argue that her presidency is owed to her husband's political influence. Chile and Brazil respectively hosted two female strong leaders very recently and analyzing their upbringing is key to the current thesis. It specifically brings awareness to the gendered political progress made in Latin America when compared to the lack female representation in others regions of the world. This will provide the thesis with a precise depiction of the extent to which the change in legislation correlates with an overall social progression of the region.

Michelle Bachelet: President of Chile: (2006-2010, and 2014-current)

According to Fundación CIDOB Michelle Bachelet was born in September 29, 1951. She was raised in a household where her father was a Brigade General. The article depicts her household as one that was very *machinista* (Fundación CIDOB, 2007) presuming due to the hyper masculinization of her father's career. As a child Michele was brought up as in a number of Air Force Bases due to her father's military career. She was also exposed to American culture when her father was appointed as a representative in the Chilean embassy in the U.S., and lived there for two years. Regardless of a chaotic and oppressive atmosphere Bachelet was encouraged to study and develop her own career. She started her medical degree in Universidad de Chile, but the economic instability in 1973 prevented her from graduating.

Michele found herself in a middle of political strife in 1973 when the military orchestrated a military coup d'état to depose President Salvador Allende. Her father

opposed these political processes and was tortured then killed as a result (La Nación 2007). The political event propelled a number of moves for Michele; she moved to Germany and got married with a member of the Chilean Socialist Party (La Tercera, 2006). Eventually Michele returned to Chile after her exile and obtained a degree in medicine from Universidad de Chile in 1983. She then developed a career while working for the ONG PIDEE, an organization for the protection of kids. Her job consisted to work in the medical committee of the organization (Fundacion CIDOB, 2007). It is important to highlight that Bachelet kept a low profile against Pinochet's dictatorship in the 80's, whilst being an active member of the Chilean Socialist Party (La Nacion, 2007).

Michele Bachelet was brought up in a privileged household in the sense that she was encouraged to study and pursue a career that is very much praised by society (Medicine). Even though it is mentioned that her father was a machista male figure, their position in society alone provided her with the opportunity to obtain a well-rounded education, and thus, a springboard into the political realm.

In contrast, a female member of low socioeconomic status is usually not encouraged to pursue higher education. They are encouraged to stay within the domestic role within the family structure. Moreover, this helps explain why there exists a large market for domestic maids in the region. The reason being is that, because they don't obtain a proper education, and marry young, they are forced to look for a low paying job that fits patriarchal expectations.

Moving forward, it was in the 90's when Bachelet's political career gained momentum. This was because in the 90's the Democratic Party won the first elections post dictatorship. She was incorporated in the Public Health system as an epidemiologist.

Between 1994 and 1997 she became the counselor for the Health Minister of Chile. Simultaneously, Bachelet obtained a degree in Continental Defense at Colegio Interamericano de Defensa in Washington DC (La Nacion, 2007). Her first significant leadership position came in 2000 when she was appointed by the elected president Lagos as Health Minister. As Health Minister she managed to increase public hospital efficiency by reducing significantly the waiting times across the country. This achievement was extremely commendable, and popular among Chileans. Taking all into consideration, this was Bachelet's political springboard into a renowned political figure.

Michelle Bachelet eventually became the first woman to be elected president of Chile. Before her, Chile like most Latin countries of the region was victim to military coups, and a milieu of male presidents of different political affiliations. This accomplishment is symbolic of a direct rejection of patriarchal cultural constructs. Based on the definition of patriarchy alone Bachelet should always be subordinate to a male figure because of her gender (Walby 1990). Bachelet literally rejects a widely cultural system that prevented her from obtaining the presidency in the abstract. Bachellet's ascension to the most powerful public position in the country is a symbolic triumph to all women around the region and the world. Her involvement into public work is rooted in her passion for service. She exploited her opportunities and capitalized on the legislative freedom that of Chile that allow all citizens to postulate for all leadership positions.

In addition, she was granted a global perspective when she traveled and lived in both the east and western hemisphere of the world. All these experiences are privileges that most women of the region are not able to attain as a result of structural poverty and social discrimination. Subsequently, Michelle became the first woman to hold the

position of UN Women Executive Director (UN News Center 2013). With that position she was personally involved with the advancement of an egalitarian agenda for Latin America. Her background as president allowed her to advance the civil rights of women across the world. The Secretary General Ban Ki-moon described Bachelet's accomplishments at the time of her appointment. These included a program to decrease gender violence towards women and new advances regarding health. Nevertheless, her most commendable project, while she was UN's women's executive director, was to push the UN to focus solely on the advancement of women's rights. The Secretary General depicted her passion on the issue as key and also added "Her fearlessness in advocating for women's rights raised the global profile of this key issue. Her drive and compassion enabled her to mobilize and make a difference for millions of people across the world." (UN News Center 2013).

Michele Bachelet left her post in the UN in 2013 and was reelected as a Chilean president in 2014 (UN News Center 2013). Her position both as president and UN official inspire change in the social matrix that inhibit women from obtaining positions of leadership. Bachelet was not bound by social expectations that aimed to make her a young wife and soon after stay at home mother. On the contrary, Bachelet became the international representative of her nation and later on a representative of all women across the globe. She is not only living example with which we need to defeat machismo and patriarchy, but she is part of a growing crowd of strong educated women that are ready to take on the world. Unfortunately Michele is also the face of privilege, and belongs to a still select group of women that are provided with opportunities like the ones she enjoyed. Her privilege is partly granted by accident of birth, her family, and strong

feminist movements that have fought for women's rights during the last century. Today women of the region are also fortunate enough to be supported by an outstanding egalitarian legislation. The challenge is to find the best way to democratize the egalitarian reality only privileged women enjoy. The rise in female leadership Michele Bachelet's role in the UN is slowly starting to open a conversation to incite an approach that is more proactive, and produce better results.

V. Conclusions

This thesis analyzed the current sociopolitical reality of women in Latin America under patriarchal structures. Walby (1990) defines patriarchy as a power relation in which men dominate women and older generations dominate over younger ones. It is reinforced by the absence of government intervention that could help reduce the influence of men over women, but more importantly, it is perpetuated by a traditional society that was created under these conditions.

Gruber and Szoltysek (2012) expand Walby's definition of patriarchy to produce a mathematical benchmark to measure patriarchy. They use indicators ranging from Female to male illiteracy rates and lower age at marriage for women. Then, by surveying countries based on these indicators, they create a 'patriarchy intensity' index.

In the spirit of Gruber and Szoltysek (2012), the first chapter of this thesis outlines the contrasting realities in which women live in Latin America. It is mentioned that most women live in a restrictive reality due to the persistence of a traditionalist patriarchal culture. At the same time, the chapter illustrates the factor that makes the region unique. Latin America has raised a number of female presidents in the last 25 years unlike most other regions. This makes the civil reality of the region stand out as an interesting research center regarding women's rights when compared to others.

To understand better the juxtaposition described above, chapter 3 of this thesis performed a statistical analysis on three indexes measured by the CIRI Human Rights Project. The three indexes were Women's Political Rights, Women's Economic Rights and Women's Social rights. Women's political index measures the involvement of

women on the governmental sphere, and the freedoms women enjoy to enroll into political parties. The index on economic rights focused on labor conditions for women, focusing on gender equality at the workplace, and social rights focuses on how strong is the power relation exerted from men towards women in forms like genital mutilation without a woman's consent.

The first analysis was a means difference comparison between the historical average of Latin America for each index compared to the historical average for each index of the rest of the world. The results delineate two patterns: First, Latin America's historical average for Women's Political Rights is higher than the rest of the world, and it is statistically significant. Secondly, the index with the highest historical average in Latin America is that of Women's Political Index.

Next, I ran a regression analysis to understand the pattern for each of these indexes in Latin America. The results show that the index that has grown the fastest is that of Women's Political Rights. The coefficient suggests that in 50 years, this index will get to a perfect score of 3. This is incredibly remarkable and commendable, and it only highlights the positive strides Latin America is taking towards gender equality and eradicating patriarchy. Latin America can become a catalyst for change if this pattern of growth persists, and if it's complemented by the right amount of media coverage, it can create a more global feminist movement. Unfortunately, the Women's Economic Rights index and Women's Social Rights index have not followed the same growth as political rights. Nevertheless, these results are significant because it shows the area that Latin America needs to improve the most. It is necessary for feminist movements to challenge the patriarchal status quo that exists at the enterprise level, to be able to achieve economic

equality.

The fourth chapter maps the sociopolitical development of the movement *Movimiento Nacional de Mujeres*. Its international cross-geographical reach after its conception in Argentina is testament to its influence on legislative progressive reforms. More importantly, its history is put into a context regarding the political developments that took place while the movement grew in order to understand its role in opening a civil space for women to express discontent regarding social structures. In addition the chapter employs the career of Michelle Bachelet as an illustrative example of the political freedoms Latin American women enjoy compared to the rest of the globe. She is clearly an example that inspires women to pursue personal development especially in the professional realm. She is also regarded as an exceptional example of leadership because her accomplishments were all conceived on her own merit.

In conclusion, the main contributions of this thesis are as follows: Women in Latin America are marginalized and oppressed because the acculturation of patriarchy as the norm. Nevertheless, Latin America is also one of the few regions that elected a woman to be president through democratic electoral systems. The region then becomes a beacon for further research. After a rigorous study through the lens of political economy the region of Latin America becomes the host of a social paradox. In it most women are subjected to live within traditional gender roles that oppress them, but at the same time it is also an epicenter for the reproduction of strong female political leaders. Certainly, Latin America and its cultures call for more study and media coverage in order to shed some light on the progress made and to condemn the gendered crimes, as well.

Appendix

A.1

Figure 2 Average femicide rates per 100,000 female population in 25 countries and territories with high and very high rates, 2004-09



A.2.

TABLA 2. TASA DE ANALFABETISMO DE LA POBLACIÓN DE 15 AÑOS Y MÁS POR ÁREA GEOGRÁFICA Y SEXO. CCA. 2008.

Países	TASA DE ANALFABETISMO								
	URBANA			RURAL			TOTAL PAÍS		
	Hombre	Mujer	Brecha Muj/Hom	Hombre	Mujer	Brecha Muj/Hom	Hombre	Mujer	Brecha Muj/Hom
Argentina	1,0	1,4	1,3	.	.	.	1,0	1,4	1,3
Bolivia	2,0	8,9	4,5	10,3	33,5	3,2	4,7	16,8	3,6
Brasil	7,2	7,9	1,1	26,2	22,2	0,8	10,4	9,9	1,0
Colombia	2,2	3,7	1,7	15,5	15,7	1,0	7,1	7,4	1,0
Chile	2,5	3,2	1,3	11,0	10,8	1,0	3,7	4,1	1,1
Rep. Dominicana	7,6	8,2	1,1	16,3	16,6	1,0	10,2	10,5	1,0
Ecuador	3,1	4,8	1,5	12,5	18,2	1,5	12,6	17,8	1,4
El Salvador	7,9	13,7	1,7	22,6	29,4	1,3	12,9	18,6	1,4
Guatemala	8,9	18,2	2,0	28,1	45,7	1,6	18,2	31,1	1,7
Honduras	7,7	9,3	1,2	26,4	25,3	1,0	17,6	17,0	1,0
México	4,0	5,8	1,4	13,5	19,8	1,5	6,0	8,6	1,4
Nicaragua	9,7	12,7	1,3	32,3	33,5	1,0	19,7	20,7	1,1
Paraguay	3,0	4,5	1,5	10,3	13,0	1,3	6,0	7,7	1,3
Perú	2,5	8,5	3,5	12,1	35,5	2,9	5,2	15,5	3,0
Uruguay	2,2	1,6	0,7	4,0	1,9	0,5	2,3	1,6	0,7

Fuente: Bases de Datos del SITEAL

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