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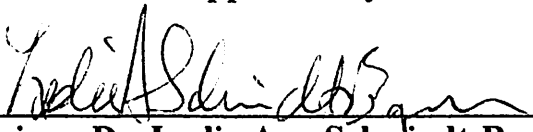
*An Examination of the Gender Relations and Causes of Gender Inequality in the Latin American Workforce*


**By Kimberly L Kilpatrick**

**A thesis submitted to the faculty of the University of Mississippi in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Sally McDonnell-Barksdale Honors College**

**Oxford  
April 2006**

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**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

<b>List of Tables and Figures</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Overview</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Chapter 1: Gender Relations in the Workforce</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Chapter 2: Causes of Inequality: Socio-Economic Factors</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Chapter 3: Causes of Inequality: Cultural Factors</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>Chapter 4: Causes of Inequality: Obstacles in the Work Place</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>References</b>	<b>64</b>

## LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

### TABLES

<b>Table 1.1: GDI and HDI Measurements and Ranks of Latin America</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Table 1.2: GEM Measurements and Ranks of Latin America</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Table 1.3: Percentage of Women in the Labor Force (1987-2002; 5 yr. increments)</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Table 1.4: Change in Percentage of Female Labor Force (1987-2002; 5 yr. increments)</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Table 1.5: Economic Activity Rates in Economic Sectors (Men and Women)</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>Table 1.6: Percentage of Men and Women in Different Economic Sectors in Paraguay</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Table 2.1: Percentage of Women in Tertiary Schooling Enrolment</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>Table 2.2: Distribution of Women in Upper Levels of Employment</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>Table 3.1: Total Work Time and Time Allocation between Market and Non-Market Activities (Men and Women)</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>Table 4.1: Ratio of Female Earned Income to Male Earned Income</b>	<b>57</b>

### FIGURES

<b>Figures 1.1- 1.4: Geert- Hofstede Cultural Dimensions</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Figure 1.1: Cultural Dimensions for Latin America</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Figure 1.2: Cultural Dimensions: World Average</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Figure 1.3: Cultural Dimensions for Norway</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Figure 1.4: Cultural Dimensions for Japan</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Figure 1.5: Cluster Chart of Degree of Masculinity for Certain Countries</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Figure 1.6: Sector Division of Women in Corporate Hierarchy</b>	<b>27</b>

<b>Figure 1.7: Women in Corporate Hierarchy (Select Countries)</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Figure 2.1: Ratio of Female to Male Education Attainment</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>Figure 2.2: Female Economic Activity Rate as a Percentage of Male Rate</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>Figure 2.3: Percentage of Women Occupied in Different Economic Sectors (Latin America)</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>Figure 2.4: Sector Distributions of Women at the Corporate Level</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>Figure 4.1: Ratio of Female Earned Income to Male Earned Income</b>	<b>58</b>

*An Overview of Gender Relations and Causes of Gender Inequality in the Latin American Workforce*

In recent years, gender issues have come to the forefront of society. Many studies have been conducted in order to address gender inequality's existence within society and the economy. Gender differentiation is a problem in every region of the world. However, more inequality exists between men and women in developing regions, especially Latin America. The daily lives of women reflect the inequality in Latin America. Latin American women experience sexual harassment on the streets, violence in the home, and segregation in the employment sector. Every aspect of gender inequality needs to be addressed, but the one factor that will be examined in this thesis is the gender segregation in the employment sector. When women are able to infiltrate and achieve success in employment, the gender situation improves overall. Not only does women's economic situation improve, but women also gain respect, which has significant impact on eliminating the sexual harassment and gender violence that occur in Latin America.

This research will take a look at a wide range of factors and determine how different aspects of society hinder women in employment in Latin America. The first section of this research establishes the employment situation for Latin American women. This shows the outcome of the different obstacles and the lack of women at upper-level employment. The second section begins to explain the overall situation of women by examining different socio-economic factors of women's lives at the basic level. This helps reveal any background information that could greatly hinder their ascent up the corporate ladder. The third section looks at two major aspects of Latin American culture.

The examination of the culture demonstrates the hardships that women could face in gaining promotion to upper-levels due to societal circumstances. The cultural hindrances, unlike socio-economic ones, are factors that are completely out of a woman's control, and are obstacles that society must remove in order to promote gender equality at the upper-levels of employment. The last chapter points out the main consequences in the workforce due to Latin America's culture. These cultural outcomes demonstrate the influence culture has on Latin American business. This research will reveal the many obstacles Latin American women face on a daily basis in employment.

### **Glass Ceiling Effect**

There have been numerous observations and theories developed to describe the gender inequality in the workforce. The "Glass Ceiling Effect" is a phenomenon that has been observed many times throughout the world. The "Glass Ceiling Effect" describes "an unofficial or unacknowledged barrier to personal advancement, especially a woman or a member of an ethnic minority in employment" ("Reference Question of the Month." <http://www.ilr.cornell.edu/library/research/QuestionOfTheMonth/archive/glassceiling.html>. 2004.). The barriers only increase while a woman progresses and eventually she will reach a point where she cannot go any further because she is a woman. Janeen Baxter and Erik Wright, the discoverers of this phenomenon explain, "not only is it more difficult for women than for men to be promoted up levels of authority hierarchies within workplaces, but also that the obstacles women face relative to men become greater as they move up the hierarchy"(Baxter, 275). Nora Frankiel states,

Women have reached a certain point-- I call it the glass ceiling.

They're in the top of middle management and they're stopping and getting stuck. There isn't enough room for all those women at the top. Some are going

into business for themselves. Others are going out and raising families.

(Frenkiel, "The Up-and-Comers; Bryant Takes Aim at the Settlers-In." qtd. in

"Reference Question of the Month."

<http://www.ilr.cornell.edu/library/research/QuestionOfTheMonth/archive/glassceiling.html>. 2004.)

This effect has been examined world-wide, especially in the United States and Western Europe, yet it has not been extensively examined in the Latin American region of the world.

### **"Glass Ceiling" Effect in Latin American Business**

Gender inequality at the basic levels of employment shows that women face disparity throughout society. Gender differentiation becomes even greater when women enter the business sector and try to advance. During the Global Summit for Women 2005 in Mexico City, the Corporate Women Directors International published a statistical report involving the status of Latin American women in executive positions. Latin American businesses lag far behind businesses worldwide. Within the *Fortune Global* 200 businesses, 10.4% have women directing their boards and 73.5% have women board members (Global Summit of Women, 2005). This report's information stated that only 36% of the "100 largest, publically- listed companies in Latin America" have women on their board of directors. Out of those companies, only 5.1% of these companies have women as their board director.

Women in Latin America seem to hold high level positions in only certain areas of business. The article "Women Business Leaders in Latin America" compiled by the Center for Gender in Organizations reports that women in upper positions tend to be employed in firms in the service and commerce sectors of the business world, more



specially in the areas of human resources and marketing (Center for Gender in Organizations, 2002). The severity of gender discrimination in businesses varies from country to country. According to the Corporate Women Directors International's report, Brazil has the most women board members, 7.8%; while only 4.3% of all board members in Mexico are women. "Mexico has the greatest number of companies with no woman directors (24 companies)...None of Argentina's top five companies have women directors" (Global Summit of Women, 2005). In 1997, only 50 women occupied high-level positions out of the 2,500 positions in the top 500 companies in Chile (Htun, 1998). Depending on the country, women face different levels of inequality in the high-level business sector.

Latin American women in employment experience a high degree of discrimination. An assessment of the workforce environment, possible explanations, and outcomes of these potential bases for workforce segregation is vital for understanding of work relations in Latin America. This knowledge may be used in order to improve women's situation in Latin America's workforce.

## ***Chapter 1: Gender Relations in the Workforce***

Before answering the question why gender inequality exists in Latin America's workforce, the overall gender situation in Latin American society must be described. When looking at the workforce, there are many different sectors to evaluate. A description of the business structure must be given to show the basic situation women enter. Gender indices compiled by the United Nations measure and demonstrate the basic and upper-level societal inequality women face. Furthermore, a historical analysis of women's involvement reveals the recent increase of women's participation in the workforce and the different sectors in the economy women occupy. These different sectors draw an overall picture of women in Latin American employment. It not only shows some of the apparent obstacles that women face, but also women's movement towards participation in employment.

### **Structure of the Workforce**

Latin America's business structure makes it very difficult for women to claim authoritative positions. In Latin America's business sector, high-level positions reflect a more autocratic style of leadership. The Geert Hofstede Cultural Dimensions Analysis, which is used among market analysts to determine the attractiveness of a market, describes the cultural effect in different regional markets ("ITIM International," [www.geert-hofstede.com](http://www.geert-hofstede.com)). The analysis examines the structural dimensions of business in different countries. It gives an overview of how individuals should view the market and describes the infiltration of a country's culture. The first dimension is the Power Dimension Index (PDI). The PDI measures the relationship between the upper and lower levels of a business. Latin American businesses have a high power distance. This

means that the top positions in a business, such as managers and presidents, have a strong amount of control over the employee's actions. Businesses in Latin America might not promote women to higher positions due to the significant amount of power concentrated at upper employment levels. The other important dimension in the Geert Hofstede analysis is the masculinity (MAS) evaluation. This aspect measures the:

degree the society reinforces, or does not reinforce, the traditional masculine work role model of male achievement, control, and power. A High Masculinity ranking indicates the country experiences a high degree of gender differentiation. In these cultures, males dominate a significant portion of the society and power structure, with females being controlled by male domination. A Low Masculinity ranking indicates the country has a low level of differentiation and discrimination between genders. In these cultures, females are treated equally to males in all aspects of the society.

("ITIM International," [www.geert-hofstede.com](http://www.geert-hofstede.com))

Latin America, as Figure 1.1 demonstrates, has a high level of masculinity. Therefore, the gender differentiation is high in Latin American business. Figures 1.1 through 1.4 show the totals of the Geert- Hofstede measurement for the world average, Latin America, a European country (Norway), and an Asian country (Japan). These figures show Latin American measurements in relation to the rest of the world. Latin America is average in its masculinity dimension when compared with the rest of the world. Figure 1.5 is a cluster chart which shows the different degrees of masculinity and femininity worldwide according to the Geert-Hofstede measurements. Most Latin American countries fall into the masculine sector with the exception of Brazil, Chile, and Peru, which are categorized with a low feminine dimension. The Latin American business structure's masculine influence provides a difficult situation for women's assertion in the work force.

## **Describing Gender Inequality of Latin America through Gender Indices**

### **GDI**

The United Nations Development Programme gender indices measure women's equality through the combination of certain socio-economic factors. The first index is the Gender Development Index or GDI. This index evaluates the inequalities between men and women of each country by calculating gender differences in health, education, and income. The GDI of a country helps explain gender disparity in employment. Women face a higher degree of discrimination at the basic and upper- levels in society when a country has high gender inequality. It is not only harder for a woman to gain access to high level employment, but to gain employment will be difficult as well.<sup>1</sup>

No country has attained total equality for women. Table 1.1 shows the GDI of many different countries. Norway and Iceland are shown to compare Latin America to the worldwide standard. Many countries are close such as Norway and Ireland with a

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<sup>1</sup> The calculations of the Gender Development Index are as follows: it begins by comparing the female life expectancy and the male life expectancy. After the evaluation of the life expectancy, the index evaluates the distribution of education in a country by comparing the literacy rate and the gross enrolment ratio between men and women. The last factor in the gender- related development index is the comparison of men and women's average incomes. The female and male earned incomes are estimated by using the ratio of "female non- agricultural wage to male non- agricultural wage; male and female shares of the economically active population; total male and female population; and the GDP [gross domestic product] per capita" (Technical note 1, Human Development Report by the United Nations Development Programme). After the different sectors of health, education, and income are computed, they are combined and this is the figure that the gender-related development index reports. The closer the number is to zero, the further away a country is from obtaining social gender inequality.

0.96 and a 0.939, respectively. However, Latin American countries fall far from this type of equality. The average GDI for Latin American countries, excluding the Caribbean, French Guiana, Suriname, and Guyana, is 0.768. Compared globally, Latin America's rank falls around 74. The country with the highest GDI is Argentina with 0.854. The country with the lowest GDI that has information available is Guatemala with a total of 0.649. The United Nations Human Development Indicators (HDI) shows the difference between countries' rank in HDI and the GDI. The HDI evaluates the same factors as the GDI, but measures these factors for a country's total population. As shown in Table 1.1, Latin America's GDI scores are lower than the HDI scores. Latin American countries either fell in rank or remained at zero. Argentina, Chile, and Peru all dropped by 2, 3, and 5, respectively. Therefore, women do not receive the same opportunities in relation to the whole population in Latin America. While gender inequality in Latin America is not the worst when compared world wide, vast improvement must take place for women to achieve significant societal advancement.

## **GEM**

The other important index that evaluates gender inequality in Latin America is the Gender Empowerment Measurement or GEM, computed by the United Nations Development Programme. This measurement is different from GDI because it calculates women's involvement in government and the economy. The computations of the GEM show the degree of inequality women face in upper employment levels. Therefore, the GEM demonstrates the strength of the glass ceiling in a country.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> The first section of this index is the evaluation of female political participation and the comparison of that evaluation with male political participation. It calculates the political participation by multiplying the

The GEM measurement varies within the Latin American countries and its calculations are lower than the GDI. GEM focuses on the participation of women at the higher levels of the economy rather than the basic overall equality of women. Table 1.2 shows the GEM for each Latin American country and the average for Latin America. The GEM for Norway and Iceland helps compare the ranks of Latin America to the rest of the world. The average GEM measurement for Latin America, where the information was available, is 0.519 and would rank between 47 and 48 when compared worldwide. The country with the highest GEM is Costa Rica with 0.668. Argentina follows closely behind Costa Rica with 0.665. On the opposite end, Honduras has a GEM measurement of 0.356 and Chile, one of Latin America's strongest economies and second highest HDI score, has a GEM measurement of 0.475. The GEM measurement is a better indicator for the topic of women at upper-level employment positions than the GDI since it calculates the number of women who hold high positions in the economies. The GEM shows the gender disparity within the Latin American countries at higher societal levels.

Even though the GEM does include upper-level positions, it also includes political participation which skews the data when evaluating upper-level employment. According

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share of the population of each gender with the percentage of parliamentary seats each gender holds. After the computation of the distribution of political participation, the GEM compares the economic participation between men and women. This index evaluates the percentage of positions as legislators, senior officials, and managers and also the percentage of professional and technical positions of both males and females. After calculating the economic participation index, the GEM computes the equal distribution index for income. This evaluation is different than the GDI income index because it uses unadjusted values (in the GDI it uses the logarithm for this index). After the GEM combines the sums of the evaluations in each sector, it then divides this figure by three to obtain the average.

to Sylvia Maxfield author of *Women on the Verge: Corporate Power in Latin America*, the United Nations' definition of "women in management is so broad as to be useless, counting all administrative and managerial workers" (Maxfield, 14). The statistics from the United Nations do not show the true absence of upper-level employed women because it includes those who merely hold managerial positions which do not have large degrees of power.

The GDI, which evaluates women's situation in society as a whole, is higher than the GEM. Latin America's lower GEM score proves that women in upper-level employment face greater inequality than women in overall society.

### **Recent Infiltration of Women in the Workforce**

Women in Latin America face gender inequality at the basic levels of the workforce. Women's employment participation has increased in the past decade due to globalization and implementation of neo-liberal reforms in Latin America. William Robinson in his article, "Latin America in the Age of Inequality: Confronting the New 'Utopia,'" describes the current economic situation in Latin America,

Globalization has major implications for the sexual division of labor, for gender relations, and for the transformation of the family itself. The percentage of women in the labor force has grown in most regions of the world under globalization. (54)

Even though men's participation in the employment sector is higher than women, Latin American women comprise a substantial percentage of the workforce. In Uruguay, about 49% of women participate in the workforce and around 44% of Brazilian women participate in the workforce (United Nations, Human Development Report 2005). Even

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though these numbers are lower than men's, it is important to observe change of participation rates over time in order to get an overall view of gender segmentation in the work force. Table 1.3 shows the World Bank Development Indicators data of women that participate in the labor force in five-year increments from 1992 to 2002. Women's percentage of the Latin American labor force has increased in the past decade. The data from the United States and Switzerland are used to show that in recent years Latin American women's percentage of the workforce has reached levels that are normal around the world. Also, women's change in percentage overtime shows the steady increase of women infiltrating the workforce. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women's (CEDAW) report on Chile discusses the dramatic change of women's participation rate:

Women's participation in the labour force has risen sharply over the last decade, from 28.06% in 1992 to 35.57% in 2002, for an increase of more than seven percentage points. By contrast, the labour force participation rate for men declined by 1.49 percentage points over the same period. (CEDAW, Chile, 11)

This pattern of increasing women's participation occurs in other Latin American countries as well. The CEDAW report confirms this phenomenon in Costa Rica as well.

Women in Costa Rica show a rising net rate of labour-market participation and are accounting for an ever larger share of the labour force. Since 1995 the female economically active population has grown faster than its male counterpart (19.1 percent, compared to 10.2 percent) and also faster than the total employed population (18.6 percent compared to 10.4 percent). (CEDAW, Costa Rica, 92)



However, the increase of workforce participation in general does not mean that there is an increase of women in upper-levels of Latin American employment. Figure 1.6 shows the percentage of women at different levels of upper-level management in relation to different sectors. This figure shows that most women are at the lowest level of management positions within a business. Figure 1.7 shows the percentage of women at different upper-level positions in different countries, Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, and Mexico. It combines the different percentages within the separate sectors into one figure. Women occupy a large number of area or department head positions; yet, they are almost non-existent in the president or vice president position of a company. As the figure shows, no woman occupies a president or vice president position in Argentina. In fact, “women hold only 3 percent of Mexican companies’ board seats. In Argentina, women constitute 7 percent of board positions and in Venezuela 19 percent of companies had more than two female board members” (Maxfield, 4). Even though more women are entering the workforce in Latin America, there is a clear gender gap in upper employment levels. This signifies that the glass ceiling phenomenon is present in Latin America.

### **Gender Differentiation expressed in Sectors of Employment**

Gender segregation exists in different sectors of employment. Women are not evenly distributed throughout the different economic sectors. The majority of Latin American women are concentrated in the service sector. The service sector is “generally the most poorly paid sector of the economy” (Ruiz Abril, 2). Table 1.5 shows the difference between men and women in the major economic sectors in Latin America. Latin American men are not concentrated in one certain sector. There are high

percentages of men who occupy the other economic sectors, especially the industrial sector. On the other hand, women do not permeate the other sectors. According to the International Labour Organization, in 1991 women in Brazil dominated certain employment sectors such as nannies, administrative and office assistants, cashiers, social workers and teachers (International Labour Organization, LABORSTA Internet. 1991). Therefore, women in the workforce occupy lower levels in the economy.

Furthermore, very few Latin American women are located in the administrative and managerial sector. Table 1.6 shows the breakdown of the different sectors divided by gender in Paraguay for 1990. The careers with the largest percentage of women are service workers, at 71.8%, followed by professional and technical workers, (51.2%) (CEDAW, Paraguay, 47). Service workers are defined as “persons employed in protection services...in hotels and restaurants, in domestic and personal services, etc.” (CEDAW, Paraguay, 51). Professional and technical workers are “persons who perform work of an intellectual nature or who have undergone specialized training” (CEDAW, Paraguay, 50). The fact that the technical and professional sector is the second largest sector with the highest concentration of women demonstrates the gender disparity within Paraguay. The third lowest sector of women’s occupations, right above farmers and stockbreeders, and operatives and labourers, is the manager section. The table shows that only 16.1% of managers in business are Paraguayan women. Even though women make up a large number of professional workers, they do not occupy high management positions within this sector. Women continue to remain at the lower level. Chilean percentages are relatively similar to Paraguay’s with 60.1% of the women in the

professional and technical positions, 13.3% as service personnel, and only 1.9% of Chilean women are employers or “bosses” (CEDAW Chile, 42).

The pattern of women concentrated in the lower-levels of business is not an isolated incident, but illustrates the pattern that persists across Latin America. The International Labour Organization’s statistical data for Mexico in 2000 shows 17,000 women were considered professional workers (*profesionales*) compared to 323,000 men. On the other hand, Mexican women accounted for 819,000 domestic workers (*trabajadoras domésticas*) and there were only 99,000 men in the same sector (International Labour Organization, 2000). The report by Mala Htun describes this segregation within the Latin American economy, “In Brazil, 50 percent of women work in occupations where one finds only 5 percent of the male labor force; equally, 50 percent of men work in areas where only 5 percent of the female labor force works” (Htun, 1998). This segregation within the economic sectors furthers the hardships and inequality that women face in the workforce. The service and low-level business sectors have the greatest concentration of women; yet they are the least paying sectors within the Latin American employment. Latin American women are unable to permeate to the occupations where promotion and pay are available.

### **Conclusion**

Many factors in the Latin American economy demonstrate gender disparity in the workforce. The structure of Latin American business allows little room for women. Individuals at upper-level positions have a large degree of power. Women may not advance to authoritative positions as often due to the large amount of control upper positions have. In addition, masculinity infiltrates the business sector. Thus, women in

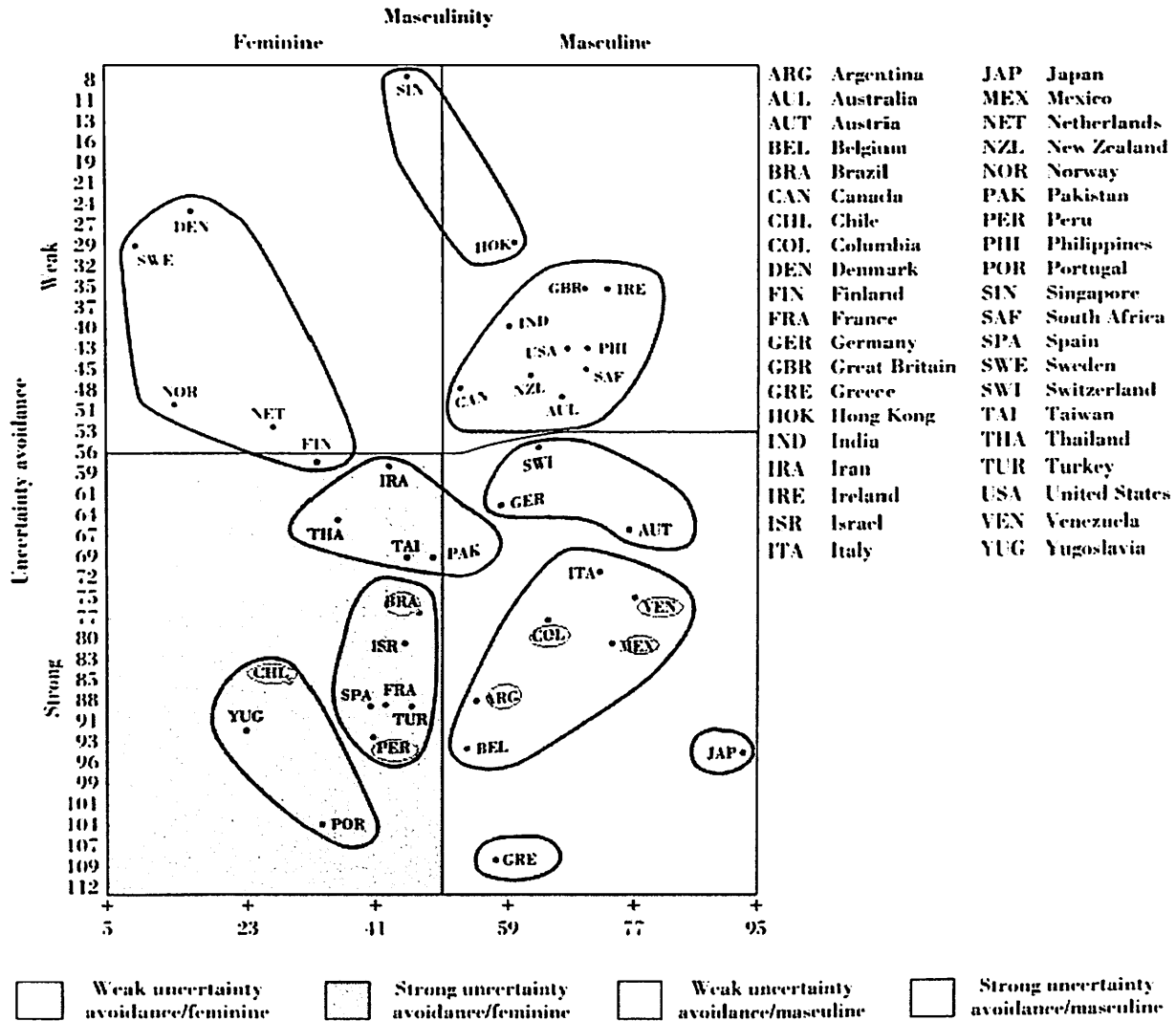
upper-levels are placed in a male dominated atmosphere. Being in the minority makes it harder for women to advance in employment. The indices calculated by the UNDP show that women overall face hardships and have fewer opportunities than the overall population. Also, the GEM demonstrates that this lack of opportunity only increases as women participate, or attempt to, in the higher societal and employment levels. In the past decades, women have entered the workforce in high numbers, yet they remain at the lower-levels of business. Latin American women are highly segregated in the service sector. Within this sector, women occupy the lower paying jobs such as domestic workers, nannies, teachers, and secretaries. Therefore, the Latin American workforce is highly segregated according to gender. There are many factors within Latin America's society that may explain why the gender inequality is so high in employment.



**Figure 1.5: Cluster Chart of Degree of Masculinity for Certain Countries**

**The Positions of the 40 Countries on the Uncertainty Avoidance and Masculinity Scales**

Source: Geert Hofstede, "The Position of the 40 Countries on the Power Distance and Individualism," *Culture's Consequences*, published by Sage Publications, Inc., © 1980 by Geert Hofstede. Reprinted by permission of the author.



Source: [www.geert-hofstede.com](http://www.geert-hofstede.com)

Latin American countries are encircled in red.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> PDI: Power Distance Index: "focuses on the degree of equality, or inequality, between people in the country's society. A High Power Distance ranking indicates that inequalities of power and wealth have been allowed to grow within the society. These societies are more likely to follow a caste system that does not allow significant upward mobility of its citizens. A Low Power Distance ranking indicates the society de-emphasizes the differences between citizen's power and wealth. In these societies equality and opportunity for everyone is stressed."

IDV: Individualism: "focuses on the degree the society reinforces individual or collective achievement and interpersonal relationships. A High Individualism ranking indicates that individuality and individual rights are paramount within the society. Individuals in these societies may tend to form a larger number of looser relationships. A Low Individualism ranking typifies societies of a more collectivist nature with close ties

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between individuals. These cultures reinforce extended families and collectives where everyone takes responsibility for fellow members of their group.”

MAS: Masculinity: see paper

UAI: Uncertainty Avoidance Index: focuses on the level of tolerance for uncertainty and ambiguity within the society - i.e. unstructured situations. A High Uncertainty Avoidance ranking indicates the country has a low tolerance for uncertainty and ambiguity. This creates a rule-oriented society that institutes laws, rules, regulations, and controls in order to reduce the amount of uncertainty. A Low Uncertainty Avoidance ranking indicates the country has less concern about ambiguity and uncertainty and has more tolerance for a variety of opinions. This is reflected in a society that is less rule-oriented, more readily accepts change, and takes more and greater risks.

LTO: Long-Term Orientation: “focuses on the degree the society embraces, or does not embrace, long-term devotion to traditional, forward thinking values. High Long-Term Orientation ranking indicates the country prescribes to the values of long-term commitments and respect for tradition. This is thought to support a strong work ethic where long-term rewards are expected as a result of today's hard work. However, business may take longer to develop in this society, particularly for an "outsider". A Low Long-Term Orientation ranking indicates the country does not reinforce the concept of long-term, traditional orientation. In this culture, change can occur more rapidly as long-term traditions and commitments do not become impediments to change.” (“ITIM International.” [www.geert-hofstede.com](http://www.geert-hofstede.com))





**Table 1.2: GEM Measurements and Ranks of Latin America**

Country	GEM	% of Female Legislators, senior officials, and managers	Rank in GEM	Difference of GDI and GEM Ranks
Norway	0.928	30	1	0
Iceland	0.834	29	4	1
Latin America	0.519	28.9	N/A	N/A
Costa Rica	0.668	29	19	25
Argentina	0.665	25	20	14
Mexico	0.583	25	38	8
Panama	0.563	40	40	7
Bolivia	0.525	36	47	42
Peru	0.511	23	48	19
Colombia	0.5	38	52	3
Ecuador	0.49	26	55	N/A
Uruguay	0.504	35	50	-8
Chile	0.475	24	61	-23
El Salvador	0.467	32	62	18
Venezuela	0.441	27	64	-6
Paraguay	0.427	23	65	7
Honduras	0.356	22	74	N/A
Brazil	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Nicaragua	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Guatemala	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

**Source: United Nations Human Development Report, 2005. (303-306)**

Table 1.3: Percentage of Women in the Labor Force (1987–2002; 5 yr. increments)

Country	Labor force, female (% of total labor force)			
	1987	1992	1997	2002
Argentina	28.23	29.46	31.82	34.36
Bolivia	35.82	37.06	37.5	37.98
Brazil	32.88	34.96	35.32	35.5
Chile	28.82	30.66	32.52	34.52
Colombia	32.99	36.5	37.92	39.12
Costa Rica	25.91	28.7	30.2	31.64
Ecuador	23.39	25.44	27.04	28.7
El Salvador	30.07	32.6	35.06	37.3
Guatemala	23.1	24.52	27.28	30.06
Honduras	26.95	28.54	30.6	32.56
Mexico	29.07	30.68	32.3	33.76
Nicaragua	30.47	32.54	34.64	36.64
Panama	31.65	33	34.46	35.74
Paraguay	27.61	28.4	29.4	30.44
Peru	26.42	28.34	30.28	31.88
Switzerland	38.45	39.4	40.02	40.78
United States	43.31	44.66	45.52	46.2
Uruguay	36.61	39.66	41.02	42.2
Venezuela, RB	29.92	32.02	33.78	35.36

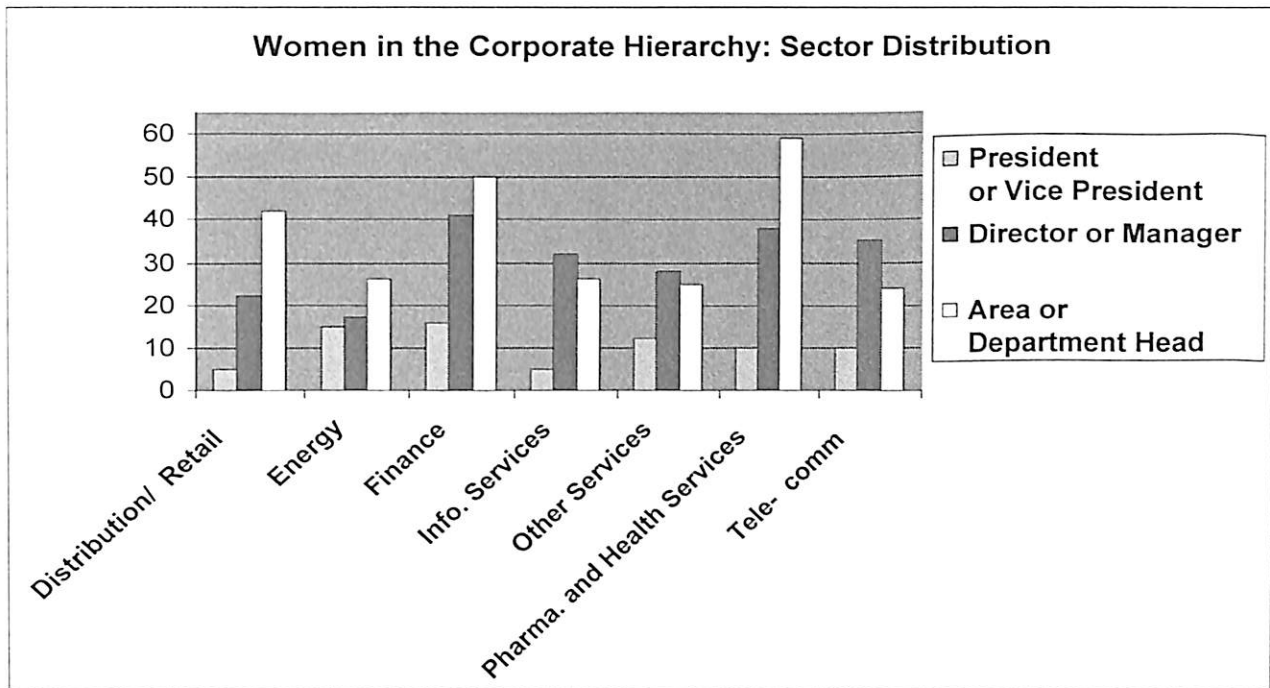
Source: World Bank Development Indicators 2004 Database. (Compiled by author through selection of years, countries, and type of data)

Table 1.4: Change in Percentage of Female Labor Force (1987-2002; 5 yr. increments)

Countries	Labor force, female (% of total labor force)			
	1987	1992	1997	2002
Argentina	..	4.36	8.01	7.98
Bolivia	..	3.46	1.19	1.28
Brazil	..	6.33	1.03	0.51
Chile	..	6.38	6.07	6.15
Colombia	..	10.64	3.89	3.16
Costa Rica	..	10.77	5.23	4.77
Ecuador	..	8.76	6.29	6.14
El Salvador	..	8.41	7.55	6.39
Guatemala	..	6.15	11.26	10.19
Honduras	..	5.9	7.22	6.41
Mexico	..	5.54	5.28	4.52
Nicaragua	..	6.79	6.45	5.77
Panama	..	4.27	4.42	3.71
Paraguay	..	2.86	3.52	3.54
Peru	..	7.27	6.85	5.28
Switzerland	..	2.47	1.57	1.9
United States	..	3.12	1.93	1.49
Uruguay	..	8.33	3.43	2.88
Venezuela, RB	..	7.02	5.5	4.68

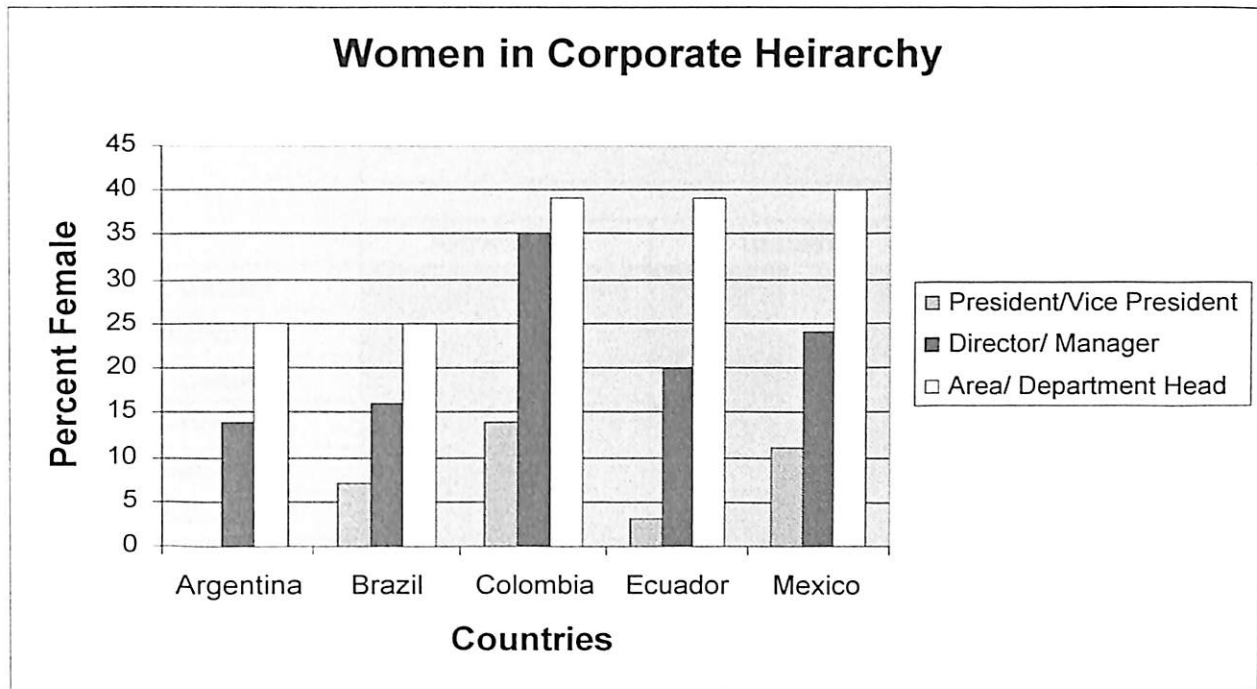
Source: World Bank Development Indicators 2004 Database.  
(Compiled by author through selection of years, countries, and type of data)

Figure 1.6



Source: Figure based on data from Sylvia Maxfield's *Women on the Verge: Corporate Power in Latin America*, 2004. (5).

Figure 1.7



Source: Based on data from Sylvia Maxfield's *Women on the Verge: Corporate Power in Latin America*, 2004. (3).

\*It should be noted that according to this figure, Argentina has no women at the presidential or vice presidential level in corporations.

**Table 1.5 Employment by economic activity**  
**Percentage Rates of Men and Women by Country**

Employment by Economic Activity (%)

Country	Agriculture		Industry		Services	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Argentina	1	..	30	12	69	87
Chile	18	5	29	13	53	83
Uruguay	6	2	32	14	62	85
Costa Rica	22	4	27	15	51	80
Mexico	24	6	28	22	48	72
Panama	29	6	20	10	51	85
Brazil	24	16	27	10	49	74
Colombia	33	7	19	17	48	76
Venezuela	15	2	28	12	57	86
Peru	11	6	24	10	65	84
Ecuador	10	4	30	16	60	79
Paraguay	39	20	21	10	40	69
El Salvador	34	4	25	22	42	74
Bolivia	6	3	39	14	55	82
Honduras	50	9	25	21	30	67
Guatemala	50	18	18	23	27	56

Source: United Nations Development Programme Human Development Report 2005. (311-314).

**Table 1.6: Percentage of Men and Women in Different Economic Sectors in Paraguay**

Occupation	Men	Women
Professional and technical	48.8	51.2
Managers- administrators	83.9	16.1
Office employees	55.4	44.6
Commercial/ sales personnel	52.9	47.1
Farmers, stockbreeders, etc.	89.3	10.7
Drivers and the like	100	
Artisans	77.5	22.5
Other artisans	82.8	17.2
Operatives and labourers	95	5
Service workers	28.2	71.8

Source: Convention on Elimination of Discrimination against Women  
Report: Paraguay, 1990. (47).

## ***Chapter 2: Causes of Gender Inequality: Socio-Economic Factors***

Women in Latin America experience a participation gap and discrimination in employment. There is not a distinct explanation as to why this segregation persists in Latin America. Many reasons could explain the vast gender inequality in employment. These possible factors need to be evaluated in order to comprehensively explain the gender differentiation in Latin American employment. Women's background situation could be the main contributor to the glass ceiling. Socio-economic factors include the quantitative information about individuals that could contribute to their level of employment and standard of living. The evaluation of an individual's basic information shows how one's background affects employment positions a person obtains. Each area measured in the gender indices (GDI and GEM) shows the impact of certain background factors on women's employment. These sectors include women's education, participation rates in the formal sector, and occupation of different sectors in the workforce. Evaluation of these different factors demonstrates the impact, or lack thereof, a woman's background has in determining employment advancement in Latin America.

### **Education**

Education is the main aspect that determines one's placement in the workforce. Most high positioned individuals in the workforce earn at least an undergraduate degree at a college or university, and many have graduate-level degrees. If women's education is less than men's, then this obstacle would explain the lack of women at the upper-levels of employment. Women would, technically, be under qualified for high managerial positions. However, according to the United Nations Human Development Indicators, women and men are equal when it comes to education at the primary, secondary, and



even tertiary level. As shown in Table 2.1, women all exceed men in tertiary enrollment in Argentina, Costa Rica, Uruguay, Cuba, Panama, Venezuela, Brazil, Colombia, Paraguay, El Salvador, and Honduras. In Chile and Mexico, women are not far behind, with a ratio of around 0.95 females to males (United Nations, Human Development Report 2005). However, current education trends are not enough to evaluate the situation of women in the Latin American workforce. Women who graduated from higher education during the 1980s and 1990s are the majority of women now employed. Also, these women have remained in the workforce long enough to achieve promotion within a company. Figure 2.1 from the Latin American and Caribbean Gender Unit Database shows the increase of women's overall education throughout the 1980s and 1990s. In the 1980s, women, while not equal to men, were almost at the same level of participation in education as men. In the 1990s, the number of women in education rose and in some cases, equaled or surpassed men's participation. Maria Elena Ruiz Abril in her World Bank Report, "Challenges and Opportunities for Gender Equality in Latin America and the Caribbean" states "Boys [in Latin America] enroll less, abandon school more, and have a worse academic performance than girls" (Ruiz Abril, 5). Also, these statistics show that education is relatively equal between business men and women. Therefore, the level of women's education is not an obstacle towards achievement of upper-level achievement.

Another hindrance in women's education could be the type of high educational degrees pursued. Women might receive a relatively high level of education, but their fields received could be areas where women would not strive for high managerial positions such as education or science degrees. However, the book *Mujeres ejecutivas*

(Women Executives) which was published in 1995 states women are shifting toward business degrees and away from education and science degrees (Arango, 13). In 1974, of the women enrolled in universities in Colombia, 9 percent studied business administration and in 1986, 29 percent of enrolled women studied business administration. In Chile, the percentage of women pursuing degrees in education has dropped. In the 1970s, 45.7 percent of women were pursuing an education degree, and in 1990, only 27 percent of women were pursuing an education degree (Arango, 13). In the past, women concentrated on studies in education or science. Now women pursue business-oriented degrees. Therefore, more women should reach upper-levels of Latin American employment.

### **Women's Participation in the Workforce**

Another obstacle in obtaining high-level employment positions may be women's participation rate in the overall work force. If women do not participate in the workforce at a high rate, then few women would hold high positions in employment. According to the United Nations Human Development Report, women do not participate in Latin American economies as much as men. As Figure 2.2 demonstrates, there are about half as many women in the workforce as men. This could be a major reason why women do not occupy the upper-levels of employment. However, Figure 2.3 shows the percentage of women in the economic sectors. Women "comprise barely 10 percent of corporate presidents or vice presidents while they make up slightly more than 35 percent of all corporate employees" (Maxfield, 3). While not as much as men, women do participate in the corporate workplace. The lack of participation cannot fully explain the minute participation of women at the upper echelons of employment.

## **Women's Participation in Different Sectors of Employment**

An important socio-economic factor that could affect women's advancement in employment is the different economic sectors in which women work. Economic sectors have different levels of advancement individuals can achieve. The sub-sectors in business have more fluidity in advancement than other sectors within the economy. A comparison between female employees in different sub-sectors and the percentage of high-positioned women in those sectors shows the difficulty of obtaining promotions in different areas. Figure 2.4 shows the distribution of women in different occupations within the Latin American economy. Overall, most women occupy pharmacy and health services and the finance sectors, while fewer women have positions in the energy sector. However when compared to the other economic sectors, the pharmacy and health services and finance sectors have fewer women in managerial positions. Table 2.2 shows the distribution of women at the upper-levels of each sector. The distribution of women in high employment positions does not coincide with the concentration in each economic sector. Even though 52% of employees in the pharmacy and health service sector are women, only 10 percent of the presidents or vice presidents in this sector are women. On the opposite end, the energy sector which has the lowest percentage of women has 15 percent of the presidents or vice presidents in this sector as women. Therefore, women's advancement in positions is harder in certain occupational sectors than others. The different occupational sectors that women make up do influence women's advancement in employment.

## **Conclusion**

The observance of different socio-economic factors shows that the exact cause of workforce's gender inequality is still unclear. Women in Latin America receive more education than men. Based solely on education, women are qualified, if not more qualified than men to obtain high level positions. There has been a significant shift in women's upper-level education to concentrate on business and economics. Therefore, women desire to enter the economic sector where advancement is readily available. Women do participate at a lower rate than men, but they are underrepresented. According to the report at the "Global Summit of Women," "The majority (64%) of the 100 largest publicly-listed companies in Latin America do not have women on their boards of directors" (Global Summit of Women, 2005). Women should at least be somewhat represented in the high levels of employment. Even though women occupy every sub-sector of business, the sector with the highest percentage of women is the sector with one of the lowest representation of women in the corporate hierarchy.

Women's lesser participation in the work force contributes to the lack of women at the upper echelons. However, their participation is at a high rate and the lack of women at higher levels is greater than the participation gap between men and women. The lack of economic participation combined with concentration of women in certain sectors contributes to the gender inequality in the workforce, but does not explain the phenomenon in full.

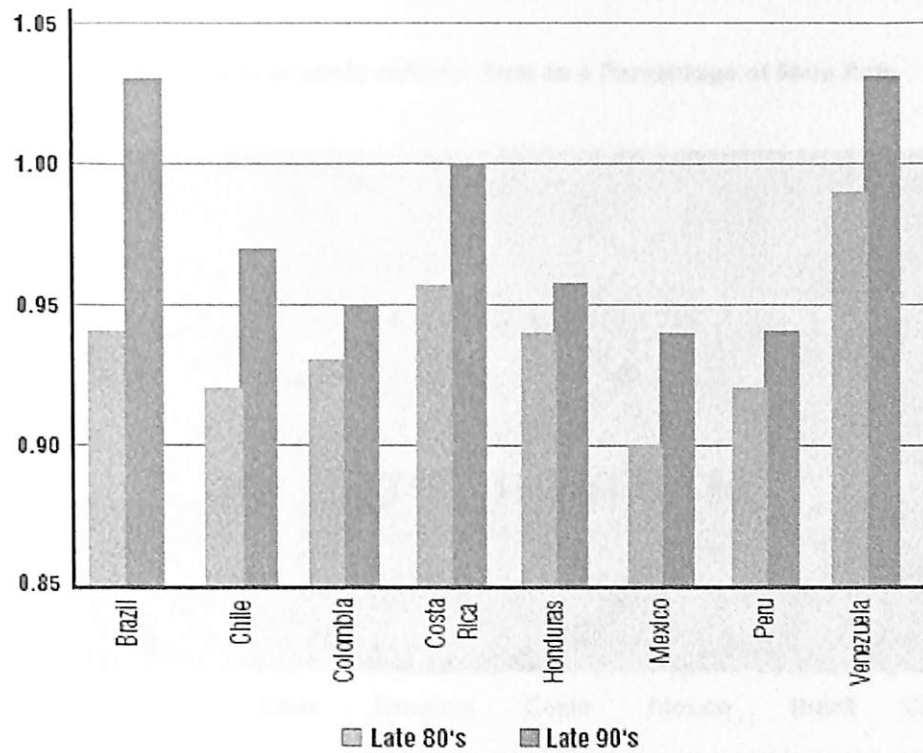
**Tables and Figures for “Causes of Gender Inequality: Socio-Economic Factors”**

**Table 2.1: Percentage of Women in Tertiary Schooling Enrolment**

Country	Gross Tertiary Enrolment (%)	
	Female	Ratio of Female to Male
Argentina	72	1.49
Chile	44	0.94
Uruguay	50	1.95
Costa Rica	21	1.16
Mexico	22	0.97
Panama	55	1.69
Brazil	23	1.32
Colombia	25	1.09
Venezuela	42	1.08
Peru	33	1.07
Ecuador	N/A	N/A
Paraguay	31	1.39
El Salvador	19	1.21
Nicaragua	19	1.1
Bolivia	22	0.55
Honduras	17	1.31
Guatemala	8	0.78

Source: United Nations Development Programme Human Development Report, 2005. (307-310).

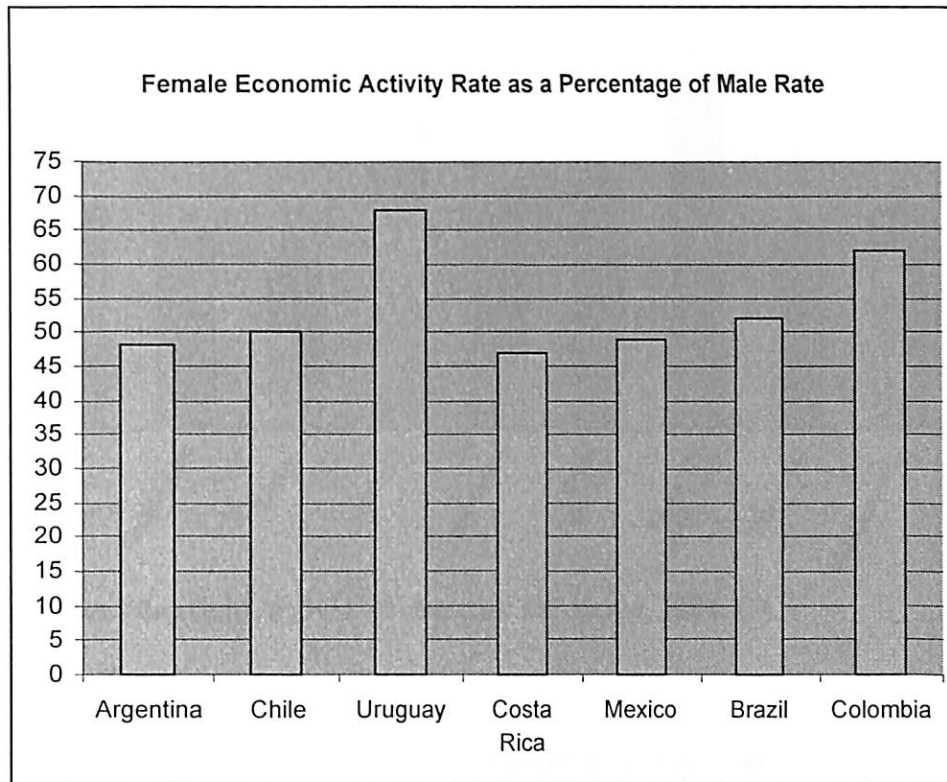
**Figure 2.1: Ratio of Female to Male Education Attainment**



*Note: Ratio of years of female to male educational attainment for the urban population ages 15-65.*

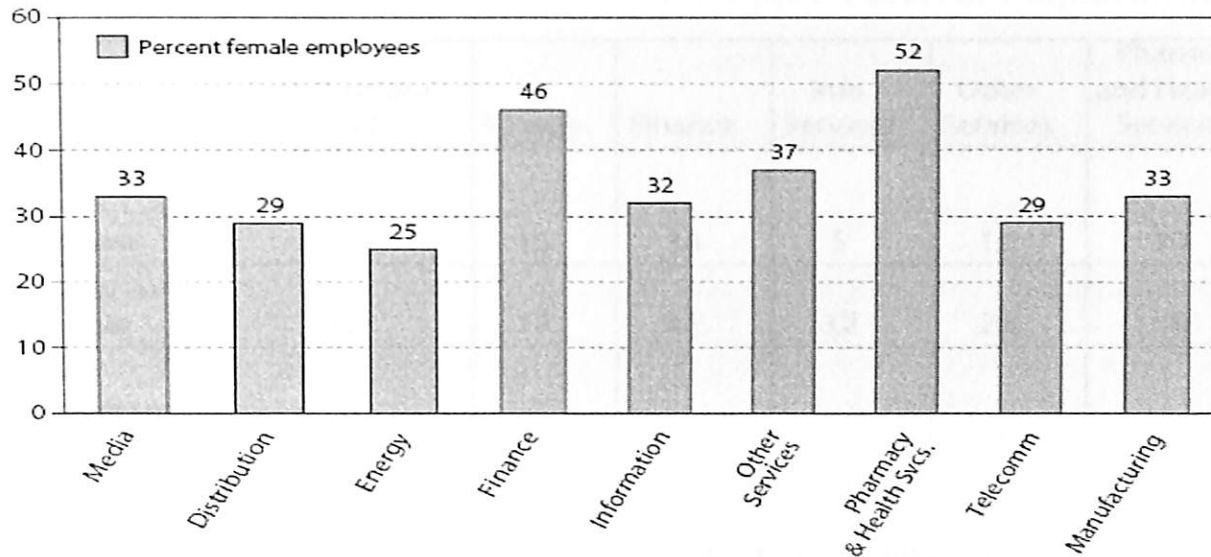
*Sources: LAC Gender Unit database, World Bank*

Figure 2.2



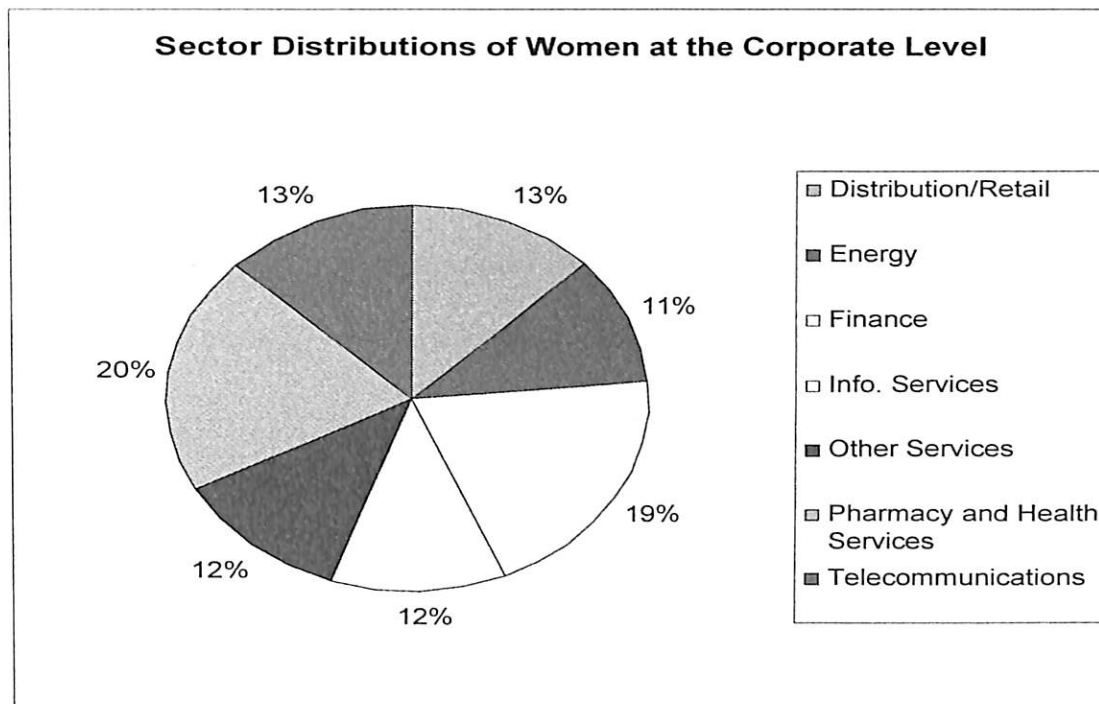
Source: United Nations Development Programme, Human Development Report 2005, (311-314).

**Figure 2.3: Percentage of Women Occupied in Different Economic Sectors in Latin America**



Source: Maxfield, Sylvia. *Women on the Verge*. 2004. (5).

**Figure 2.4**



Source: Maxfield, Sylvia. *Women on the Verge*. 2004. (5).



<b>Table 2.2: Distribution of Women in the Upper-Levels of Employment</b>							
	Distribution/ Retail	Energy	Finance	Info. Services	Other Services	Pharma. and Health Services	Tele- comm
President or Vice President	5	15	16	5	12	10	10
Director or Manager	22	17	41	32	28	38	35
Area or Department Head	42	26	50	26	25	59	24

\* Women as percent of total.

**Source: Maxfield, Sylvia. *Women on the Verge*. 2004. (5)**

### ***Chapter 3: Causes of Gender Inequality: Cultural Factors***

The culture of a society influences that society. The examination of Latin America's culture helps explain the gender gap at upper employment levels and other barriers women face in the workforce. Two major aspects in Latin American culture could influence women's participation. The notion of *machismo* defines societal norms of daily gender interaction. The *machista* culture establishes strict boundaries of interaction between men and women. It is important to see how *machismo* affects the workforce and how gender roles are defined not only in society but in the occupational sector as well. The double burden of women describes women's difficulty to balance their occupation and their domestic responsibilities. The double burden women face might influence their decisions when considering promotions or demanding careers. Therefore, these two cultural aspects could be major factors in explaining the persistent glass ceiling in Latin America's economic sector.

#### **The Role of Machismo in Latin America's Workforce**

One characteristic of Latin America's society is men's domination over women. The word "*macho*," which is known world-wide, describes a domineering male and originates in the Spanish-speaking region of the world. The *machismo* idea defines appropriate interaction between men and women in Latin America. According Andrea Jeftanovic, "machismo designates the male obsession of the predominance and masculinity that manifests itself in the sexual conquest of the woman...the macho is an oversexed man that affirms this through unrestrained exercise in his sexuality and furthermore, the domination over the woman" (qtd. in Jeftanovic, Fuller, 1997, 37).

*Machismo* strictly defines men's duties as financial and women's duties as domestic.

According to the *Dictionary of Mexican Cultural Code Words*,

“*Machismo* meant the repudiation of all ‘feminine’ virtues such as unselfishness, kindness, frankness, and truthfulness. It meant being willing to lie without compunction, to be suspicious, envious, jealous, malicious, vindictive, brutal, and finally, to be willing to fight and kill without hesitation to protect one’s manly image. *Machismo* meant that a man could not let anything detract from his image of himself as a man’s man, regardless of the suffering it brought on himself and the women around him...The proof of every man’s manliness was his ability to completely dominate his wife and children, to have sexual relations with any woman he wanted, to never let anyone question, deprecate or attempt to thwart his manhood, and never to reveal his true feelings to anyone lest they somehow take advantage of him” (qtd. In Soong, 1999)

Therefore, machismo allows very little room for women to assert themselves in Latin American society because men are supposed to dominate all areas of society.

### **Origin of Machismo**

There are many different theories on the emergence of machismo in Latin America. However, most analysts have concluded that the relationship between Latin American men and women is rooted in the conquest of the Americas. Europeans came over to the Americas by force. They took over the land, possessions, and women that were “New World” natives. European men treated the indigenous women as sexual slaves. They used indigenous women at their disposal and returned to Europe or simply moved on to the next woman. Many times they impregnated the women. Therefore, the normal family in the Americas transformed into the “absent father, powerful mother” relationship. The male offspring created distant heroes such as, “*el macho, el chingón, el*

*rico, y el dictador*” (the strong, robust male, the badass, the rich, and the dictator) because a male role model was absent in the home (Word Reference, 2005). The father is viewed as irresponsible and uncontrollable. The male offspring adopt these machismo characteristics. The Latin American male stereotype remains a dominant oversexed figure. Since the mother meets the needs of the children, a man believes that his mother is a saint and his partner or wife is treated as nothing more than a sexual object.<sup>4</sup> The *machismo* culture still permeates today’s Latin American society.

### **Effects of Machismo in Latin American Society**

Latin American women are subordinate to men throughout modern society. *Machismo* has negatively affected Latin American society. One effect of *machismo* is its contribution to violence against women. The *machista* culture establishes men as the family’s financial providers. However, due to the economic crisis in recent decades, women have entered the workforce at high levels to provide sufficient income for the household. Now with the necessity for women to enter the workforce, men believe that their domain and role within the family and society is in jeopardy. Violence against women has become the outlet for most men. “Violence against women was one manifestation of men’s attempt to reassert traditional authority and cope with economic crisis,” according to the position paper, “Violence Against Women in Latin America” (MADRE, “Violence Against Women in Latin America”). Maria Elena Ruiz Abril in her article, “Challenges and Opportunities for Gender Equality in Latin America and the Caribbean,” addresses the impact machismo’s definition of gender roles has on Latin America’s society, “social norms and expectations around gender roles, and male gender identity, often foster men’s violent behavior against women...a man is perceived to have

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<sup>4</sup> All of the information about *machismo* was found in the information of Jeftanovic, 2005

the right to use violence against a woman if she does not comply with certain unwritten norms” (Ruiz Abril, 6-7). Gender violence in Latin America is a massive problem. The origin of this violence is rooted in the recent increase of women’s workforce participation.

The subordination of women is also reflected in the overall work force. Latin American women enter the work force and “encounter a gender-segmented labor market in which women are disproportionately concentrated in low-wage employment and excluded from high-wage employment” (Robinson, 55-56). Also, at the most basic levels of labor, women in Latin America are placed in harsher factory conditions than men. Women are stereotypically viewed as submissive, and employers believe that women are easier to control. *Maquiladoras* in Central America demonstrate this stereotype. A *Maquiladora* is a “production facility that processes or assembles components into finished products” (“Maquiladora.” International Trade Data System.). In these factories, women are forced to work long, labor-intensive hours for very little pay. In Maria Patricia Fernández-Kelly’s article, “Political Economy and Gender in Latin America: The Emerging Dilemmas,” a manager of a *maquiladora* states “[Because of] their mothering instincts, women are...more responsible than men; they are raised to be gentle... so they are easier to deal with...They don’t get tired of doing the same thing nine hundred times a day” (qtd. in Robinson, 54). This notion is common throughout Latin America. William Robinson states, women are “disproportionately-- and in some cases, exclusively-- engaged in unskilled, labor-intensive phases of globalized production” (Robinson, 55). Women face extreme discrimination and exclusion in employment at the basic levels of the workforce.

### **Impact of the “Double Burden”**

As discussed earlier in the section of *machismo*, Latin American women’s role is stereotyped as the “homemaker” and their main duty is to make all decisions on domestic issues. A woman must not only have children, but her main role is care for her children. Since women began to enter Latin America’s workforce, they encountered a “double burden.” Women’s “double burden” problem is a lack of balance between their occupation and domestic duties. The International Labor Organization defines this “double burden” by stating

Family responsibilities are still very much assigned to women. When they have to combine child-care raising activities with work activities, women are required to find a solution for balancing the two roles. Role incompatibility is likely to be a greater problem for women in wage employment” (Schmidt, 10).

This double burden has become an obstacle for women in high employment. Women realize that they cannot advance in their jobs without compromising their family life.

### **Double Burden’s Shaping of Businesswomen’s Characteristics**

The double burden has transformed many characteristics in business women. Senior businesswomen have different characteristics than younger women climbing the corporate ladder. They are “more likely to be married and more likely to have children” (Maxfield, 8). High- level businesswomen’s careers have been trade-offs for their families’ welfare. Most women either sacrifice time with their families for their careers or their careers for their families. The younger women are now facing this double burden and evaluating the consequences seen in senior businesswomen’s lives. Women interviewed for Sylvia Maxfield’s article *Women on the Verge* discuss the topic in detail. Some Colombian women stated that “they were not interested in continuing to climb the

corporate ladder because it would jeopardize their family life;" a Venezuelan business woman even said, "she would not be unhappy to step back from her executive role because it would give her more family time" (Maxfield, 11). Sixty percent of the Argentine women who were interviewed for this report stated that their children and family were "as or more important than their work" (Maxfield, 11). Women consider their families to be more important than their careers. Women stop progressing in business due to the double burden's impact.

A high employment position demands many work hours. According to Businessweekonline.com, high level employees work on average fifty hours per week in the United States. This contrasts with the normal worker in Latin America who works thirty-five hours per week (International Labour Organization, 2005). If women believe that their duty as a mother and wife is more important than their career, an increase of ten more working hours is not an option. Women would rather work less at a lower employment position than receive promotion and compromise their family life.

The United Nations *Human Development Report 2005* calculations demonstrate women's conflict between work and family. Women's lack of balance between family and work is constant worldwide. Table 3.1 shows the breakdown of men and women's total work time in minutes per day, the percentage of female work time to male's, and men and women's total work time divided into market and non-market activities. Latin America's work burden distribution is consistent with the developing regions in the world. However, more developed countries such as the United Kingdom and Germany have equal share between men and women of the work burden. Data from the Netherlands and Canada is opposite of Latin America: men work harder than women.

This figure demonstrates that on average women work more hours than men, the majority of their work being inside the home. This could be why many Latin American women are unable to advance in the workplace. Their work burden is already higher than men when they have normal workweeks. An increase to fifty-hour work weeks would dramatically impact their life. Women's viable concern is what will happen to their family life when their job is more demanding and time-consuming.

### **Conclusion**

The notion of machismo has existed in Latin America since the Europeans came and conquered. Therefore, machismo has deeply impacted all aspects in Latin America's way of life. Women's role is the head of domestic chores, while men handle everything else. Machismo and its ideals have had negative impacts on Latin America. Domestic violence has recently spread through Latin America due to the threat to men's traditional role. Machismo has increased the gender segmentation. Women are placed in more labor-intensive and lower-paying work, especially in Central America where *maquiladoras* are prevalent.

The conflict between a woman's work and her family decreases the percentage of women in high level occupational positions. Women have to work more hours than men due to additional domestic duties. As individuals advance to higher positions, their work load and work-related responsibilities increase. Therefore, many senior businesswomen and advancing women find it difficult to balance their family and their work. Both of these Latin American cultural aspects affect the workforce's atmosphere and percentage of employed women in many ways.



**Table for “Causes for Gender Inequality: Cultural Factors”**

**Table 3.1: Total Work Time and Time Allocation between Market and Non-Market Activities (Men and Women)**

Country	Total Work Time		Female Work Time (% of Male)	Time Allocation (%)		Time Spent by Men	
	Women	Men		Market Activities	Non-Market Activities	Market Activities	Non-Market Activities
Colombia	399	356	112	24	76	77	23
Kenya	590	572	103	41	59	79	21
Indonesia	398	399	109	35	65	86	14
Venezuela	440	416	106	30	70	87	13
United Kingdom	413	411	100	37	63	68	32
Germany	440	441	100	30	70	61	39
Netherlands	308	315	98	27	73	69	31
Canada	420	429	98	41	59	65	35

**Source: United Nations Development Programme. United Nations Human Development Report 2005. (315).**

#### ***Chapter 4: Causes of Inequality: Obstacles in the Workplace***

The influence of *machismo* can be viewed in many different situations throughout Latin American employment. Even though many businesses denounce discrimination towards women, it still is very prevalent in the work force. Latin America's promotion process, lack of assistance programs, men and women's different management styles, and the gender wage gap all demonstrate the influence *machismo* has on Latin American business. These consequences of *machismo* reflect the greatest hindrances to women in Latin America's workforce. The outcomes reveal that their underlying origin, the culture of *machismo* in Latin America, is the main inhibitor to gender equality in Latin America.

#### **Structure of Promotions**

Latin America's process of promotion is an obstacle in women's promotion. Businesses require employees to work long, hard hours without significant time-off in order to receive recognition and consideration for advancement. The corporate ladder demands that a person either progress within the company or leave. This rigid structure offers no opportunity for maternity leave or the occasional attendance of a soccer game or school play. *The Economist* article, "The Conundrum of the Glass Ceiling" discusses women's access to top position levels world wide and points out that promotions have become scarcer in the workforce. There are "fewer opportunities for people to re-enter the workforce at higher levels. And many women inevitably need to take time off during their careers" ("The Conundrum of the Glass Ceiling," *Economist*, 2005). Therefore, women drop out of the workforce instead of re-entering at a lower position after their leave. For example, in Mexico, Sylvia Maxfield reports that "women leave their jobs for alternative pursuits, often related to family life, while men leave to seek better positions

with other business enterprises.” In Latin America overall, young women pursuing high level careers viewed “the decision to get married and have children as a dilemma because they felt it would hurt their potential to climb the corporate ladder” (Maxfield, 12). Once women begin going after high employment positions, they cannot start a family and continue their ascent within the workforce at the same time. They would have to stop their employment advancement and settle for lower level occupations. Therefore, business’ structure of advancement hinders Latin American women from achieving promotions by not allowing more time off for women advancing within a company.

### **Lack of Assistance Programs**

The Latin American work place, also, has not implemented many programs to assist women with their work and family burden. These programs encourage women to remain in the workforce, especially at high position levels and are vital to many corporations. Companies in developed countries realize how important women’s contributions are in business. Women create diversity within companies which is considered a competitive advantage (Maxfield, 12). Also, women “form an important part of the talent pool... [and] can be a large part of the customer base” (Maxfield, 12).

Even though many gender diversity programs are implemented in businesses worldwide, Latin American corporations rarely offer these types of programs. Sylvia Maxfield reports that out of the companies interviewed, only twenty-five percent had programs to ease women’s double burden. The majority of these facilities, however, minimally assist women in balancing work and family. Typical Latin American gender diversity programs offer flex-time and celebrations of Mother’s Day and International Woman’s Day. Fewer Latin American companies offer “on-site childcare, family

counseling for women, or women's health assistance" (Maxfield, 13). A lack of women's assistance in Latin American businesses further discourages women to advance within the workforce.

### **Obstacles of Pregnant Women and Mothers**

Women face many obstacles in the Latin American workforce. However, the obstacles increase when a woman is pregnant or a mother. Even though Latin American countries, prodded by international organizations, have established laws to shrink the gender equality gap between men and women, Latin American companies rarely enforce them.

Women find it difficult to integrate back into the workforce after maternity leave. Therefore, many Latin American countries have established laws that require maternity leave. These laws offer "protection from being fired for getting pregnant...and requires that businesses with a certain number of women workers provide day care services on the premises" (Htun, 1998). However many business are avoiding or simply ignoring gender equality laws. Mala Htun describes some of these discriminatory actions, "In Colombia, a 1994 resolution issued by the Ministry of Labor prohibits businesses from requiring pregnancy tests from job applicants. Nevertheless, pregnancy tests are frequently administered as part of the basic medical exams used to evaluate workers' health, in clear violation of the law" (National Directorate, 1998, qtd. in Htun, 1998). If women are pregnant then, "some companies are reluctant to employ women full-time, and resort to strategies like sub-contracting, part time employment, and paying for piece work done at home. Others pay women less than men to compensate for non-salary costs" (Htun, 1998).

Many businesses are also cautious to hire women due to the stereotype that women leave work to take care of their family. While this may be true for some women, the *Economist* article, “Helping Women Get to the Top” points out that “it is implausible to believe that all, or even most, career-minded women feel this way. Given the chance, many would be just as ambitious to do to jobs as men” (“Helping Women Get to the Top,” *Economist*, 2005). Due to the unstable situation of women’s careers, many are reluctant to use the facilities and programs companies offer because they “fear that using flextime, for example, might derail their promotion process” (Maxfield, 12). Therefore, obstacles and discrimination in the work force increase for pregnant women and mothers.

### **Gender Differentiation Reflected through Management Styles**

The different leadership styles men and women reflect the gender differentiation in Latin America. Women are viewed differently than men in high employment positions. Even though Latin American high-level individuals tend to take a more authoritative approach, the majority of women in upper employment positions take on a non-aggressive role. Most women in head positions are perceived as nurturing, loving, and motherly; while men in head positions are viewed as controlling and demanding (Osland, 1998). A study of managerial styles in Costa Rica and Nicaragua conducted by Joyce Osland, Monteze Snyder, and Leslie Hunter found that male managers were characterized as “autocratic, impersonal, cold, and abrupt, and less assessable than women” (Osland, 63). In the same study, women were characterized as “more understanding and concerned about employees, relationship-oriented, participative, communicative, flexible, and more likely than men to use positive motivation, teamwork, and a coaching style” (Osland, 63). Osland, Snyder, and Hunter state that the differences

in characteristics are consequences of the “predominant feminine stereotype and the reluctance of many Latin American men to take orders from women” (63). This stereotype demonstrates why many women take on a less threatening, non-aggressive leadership role. One female manager interviewed in the comparative study of Osland, Synder, and Hunter stated, “I speak with [men] in a very calm manner. I put myself on their level so they don’t notice any difference or feel that a woman is superior to them, because men have their machismo complex” (63). The different male and female approaches to leadership reflect the male oriented Latin American culture. In order to maintain the relations within a company and carry out their leadership responsibilities, managerial level women in Latin America conform to the traditional female stereotypes to maintain unity and confirm their leadership abilities within the workforce.

### **Gender Wage Gap**

Women in Latin America have different professional goals than their male counterparts. In Sylvia Maxfield’s *Women on the Verge*, Latin American women stated that the main forces driving their careers were not financial concerns. Many analysts believe this is the main reason women earn less than men in the same occupational positions. According to Christina Bruschini in Mala Htun’s report, “Women’s Rights and Opportunities in Latin America: Problems and Prospects,” “employers seek to justify paying women lower wages than men on the grounds that women’s wages serve to complement a male breadwinner’s earnings, rather than sustain a family on their own” (Htun, 1998). In Chile, women’s estimated earned income is 5,442 (PPP US\$) and men’s estimated earned income is 14,256 (PPP US\$). In Peru, women’s estimated earned

income is 2,105 (PPP US\$) and men's estimated earned income is 7,875 (PPP US\$) (United Nations, 2005). The CEDAW on Paraguay reports that,

Although the Labour Code expressly lays down that men and women must receive equal pay for equal work, it is found that in all occupations men earn more than women...men's earnings exceed those of women by percentages varying between 40.8 and 55.8 percent- i.e., men earn 40.8 to 55.8 percent more than women (44).

Table 4.1 and Figure 4.1 show the different ratios of female to male earned incomes in the different Latin American countries. The ratios in Norway, Iceland, United States, Germany, and Spain are also shown to help compare Latin America globally. Overall, Latin American women's earned income is drastically lower than in countries outside the region. In only four out of sixteen Latin American countries, women make at least half of what men make. Women earn less than a third of men's income when compared to men in these countries; while in more developed regions of the world, women have an income around 70% of what men earn. It is widely known that the wage gap is quite significant at the lower level of the workforce. This wage gap remains persistent even at the upper levels of employment. Women in managerial and administrative positions in El Salvador "earn 22 percent less than their male counterparts. The wage gap for CEOs is 39 percent for similar sized firms" (Maxfield, 9). A Colombian woman interviewed in *Women on the Verge* believes that "because women do not care about job titles they stay longer than men. Men, by contrast, company-hop in search of more senior title jobs and, presumably, higher pay" (Maxfield, 9). Even when women obtain higher education, such as a university degree, they still earn less than men. In Venezuela, women who received tertiary level education earned 17 percent less than

men in any position and field (Maxfield, 9). The gender wage gap is an indicator of gender inequality in Latin America's workforce.

### **Higher Standards**

Women at higher levels of employment must meet different standards than men. Latin American women noted that "their colleagues, subordinates and superiors test them in overt and subtle ways more frequently than they test men, and implicitly hold women to a higher standard than men" (Maxfield, 9). However, when women are questioned about gender discrimination that they face in the workforce, they completely deny that it exists and often "reject the idea of quota policies and affirmative action" (Maxfield, 11). A Salvadoran woman interviewee stated, "men are intelligent, they know there is no room for discrimination" (Maxfield, 10). While women notice that they have to work about twice as hard to receive recognition and they receive less pay than men, they will not admit the fact that the extra scrutiny and harder work is a type of gender discrimination (Maxfield, 9). Even though they face many obstacles, women deny the fact that gender discrimination exists in the workforce. Women not admitting to inequality they face demonstrates the power *machismo* has in the Latin American workforce.

### **Conclusion**

Machismo has infiltrated in the upper employment levels Latin America. In order for a person to be considered for promotion in Latin American business, he or she must work long, demanding hours. Women require more absences from their occupation than businesses allows for promoted individuals. By not allowing time-off, this business structure hinders women seeking promotion.



Lack of women's assistance facilities and programs increases the gender gap in the work force. Businesses also discriminate against pregnant women and mothers during the hiring process. Discrimination against pregnant women and mothers allows Latin American companies to avoid implementation of mandatory women programs. The combination of long hours and Latin American corporations' noncompliance is a major factor why Latin American women do not hold top occupational positions.

Even though most Latin American employers have an authoritative and controlling manner, women at the upper levels cannot head a company or even a division through the aggressive manner. Many businesswomen take a nurturing and motherly approach to their leadership. Latin American businesswomen with this managerial style claim that they do this to reassure men of their dominant societal role. Even when men and women occupy equal positions, women earn less than men. The idea that men are the financial providers is the basis for the gender wage gap that exists at all levels. Women also work harder to maintain their place in the workforce. Many women at the upper- levels state that they have to prove to men that they can handle the job.

*Machismo* influences the structure and management styles in business. Women now are experiencing less spare time between their work and domestic chores. This has led to many women facing the decision of whether to continue work without raising a family or terminating their jobs with no hope of returning. Without complying with certain female needs, women continue to remain outside the upper levels of Latin America's workforce. Gender segmentation defined by *machismo* is the underlying factor as to why these outside obstacles for women exist in Latin America's workforce.

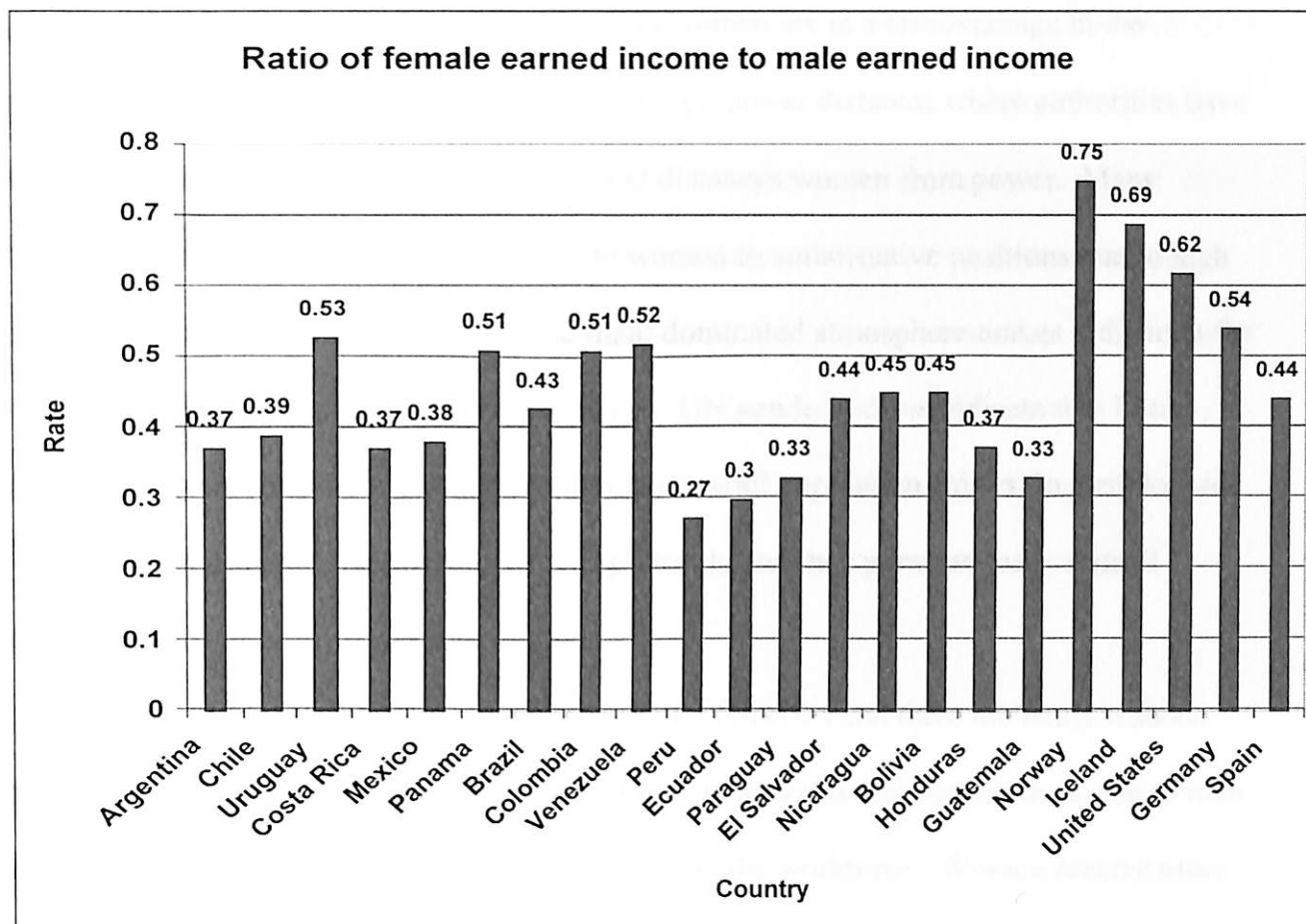
**Tables and Figures for “Results of Cultural Factors in the Work Place”**

**Table 4.1: Ratio of Female Earned Income to Male Earned Income**

<b>Country</b>	<b>Ratio of female earned income to male earned income</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Ratio of female earned income to male earned income</b>
<b>Argentina</b>	<b>0.37</b>	<b>Paraguay</b>	<b>0.33</b>
<b>Chile</b>	<b>0.39</b>	<b>El Salvador</b>	<b>0.44</b>
<b>Uruguay</b>	<b>0.53</b>	<b>Nicaragua</b>	<b>0.45</b>
<b>Costa Rica</b>	<b>0.37</b>	<b>Bolivia</b>	<b>0.45</b>
<b>Mexico</b>	<b>0.38</b>	<b>Honduras</b>	<b>0.37</b>
<b>Panama</b>	<b>0.51</b>	<b>Guatemala</b>	<b>0.33</b>
<b>Brazil</b>	<b>0.43</b>	<b>Norway</b>	<b>0.75</b>
<b>Colombia</b>	<b>0.51</b>	<b>Iceland</b>	<b>0.69</b>
<b>Venezuela</b>	<b>0.52</b>	<b>United States</b>	<b>0.62</b>
<b>Peru</b>	<b>0.27</b>	<b>Germany</b>	<b>0.54</b>
<b>Ecuador</b>	<b>0.3</b>	<b>Spain</b>	<b>0.44</b>

**Source: United Nations Development Programme. United Nations Human Development Report 2005. (303-306).**

Figure 4.1



Source: United Nations Development Programme. United Nations Human Development Report 2005. (303-306).

*What Does This All Mean and Why Does It Matter?*

Women in Latin America face many disadvantages. The overall workforce gender relations in Latin America show that women are at a disadvantage in the workforce. In overall business activities, a high power distance, where authorities have the most control, and a masculinity context distances women from power. Many businesses might be reluctant to promote women to authoritative positions due to high degree of power in management. The male dominated atmosphere makes it difficult for women to establish a reputation in business. UN gender indices indicate that Latin American women lack opportunities that the overall population enjoys. In past decades, women have entered the workforce at high levels; yet they penetrate only a small percentage of economic sectors overall.

The “glass ceiling” is persistent in Latin America and there are many reasons why. Evaluation of socio-economic factors demonstrates that women are equal to men in almost every sector that influences equality in the workforce. Women receive more education than men and pursue business and economic oriented degrees. However, women do not participate as much as men. On average, about half of women are in the workforce compared to men. As a result, women might not permeate the upper levels of employment because of their small numbers within the workforce. Also, women are concentrated in economic sectors where little fluidity seems available. Women mostly occupy pharmacy and health, and finance sectors. However, very few women, around ten percent instead of fifteen percent in other sectors, acquire top management positions within these sectors. Out of the socio-economic factors, women’s participation and occupation of certain sectors are contributors to the gender inequality in the workforce.

Latin America's culture has certain aspects that contribute to the gender inequality in the workforce. The notion of *machismo* greatly influences Latin American society. *Machismo* establishes the norm for daily gender interaction. It revolves around the idea that men are dominant over women in every area of life. Men provide financially for the family while women provide care and cleanliness in the home. This notion that originate centuries ago still dominates Latin American gender relations. Another aspect of Latin America's culture that hinders employed women is the "double burden" dilemma. The "double burden" is women's inability to balance her occupation and her domestic responsibilities. "Double burden" coupled with *machismo* consequences decreases women from seeking promotions in employment which decreases gender inequality.

Other outside contributors to gender inequality can be seen in many areas of the workforce. Latin American business structure allows little room for women. The promotion process demands employees work extensive hours without time off. Due to women's "double burden," promotion is an infeasible option. Women with domestic duties cannot put in many workforce hours without some time off. This promotion structure hinders women from seeking advancement within the workforce. In order to remedy this problem, Latin American businesses could implement assistance programs such as day care centers. Nevertheless, many businesses do not enforce assistance programs that potentially aid women in advancing towards higher level positions. When businesses do have support programs for women, they barely aid women with their "double burden."

*Machismo* influences the workforce through discrimination of pregnant women and mothers. Even though Latin American governments pass anti-discriminatory laws, businesses continue to avoid hiring women with children. Businesses evade hiring these women so they do not have to implement mandatory programs the anti-discriminatory programs demand. They also ignore certain laws that state that businesses cannot force women to take pregnancy tests. Businesses do not want to hire women with children because they believe that mothers will eventually abandon their job to meet more demanding work in the home. *Machismo* influences the business structure in Latin America and makes it more difficult for women to establish high employment positions.

*Machismo* also influences the personalities of Latin American businessmen and women. Management in Latin American business has a high degree of power above other employees. As a result, most managers have an assertive, controlling personality. However, many women in management positions supervise in a different manner. They conform to traditional roles that Latin American society defines. Research has found that a lot of women in management take a more motherly and nurturing approach. These women state that they exude a motherly attitude so men in lower positions do not feel that their role is threatened. Thus, the majority women and men conform to their societal gender roles in the workforce.

Other consequences of *machismo* in the workforce are the gender wage gap and higher standards for women in Latin America. Women in all areas of the workforce receive less pay than men. Businesses justify paying women less because they are not the main financial provider in the family. Businesswomen also state that they must work

harder and more efficient than men to prove to their colleagues that they can perform the job.

Latin American women face discrimination in all workforce areas. Even though women do not participate at the same level as men and occupy separate sectors, these factors alone do not completely explain the great gender inequality. Latin America's culture is the driving force behind the gender discrimination in its workforce. *Machismo* establishes strict, traditional gender roles for Latin America's society.

There could be other factors such as a lack of competition in the workforce or other economic driving forces not examined in this research that also influences women's positions in business. However, this research shows that even if all other factors, such as women's participation, were equal to men's, Latin America's culture would still hinder women from reaching management positions. All other factors and barriers that affect women's participation in higher levels of the workforce can be explained through Latin America's culture. A potential, and viable, reason women's lack of workforce participation is their gender role in society. Society enforces that women should remain in the home away from the work place. Therefore, if a family is economically stable, then many women might see work as unnecessary and not an option for them. A reason the majority of Latin American women occupy service sectors could be that women's gender role is exerted through their work. Businesses state that they pay women less because they are not the main family financial provider. Latin American corporations avoid hiring mothers because they believe that they would eventually leave the workforce. All of the reasons for barriers point back to high gender segmentation in Latin America's society.

When Latin American women desire to reach high levels in the business arena, they face many hardships that exist due to culture. The only way to diminish these obstacles for women is for Latin American businesses to recognize the advantage women offer to the workforce and the danger of gender discrimination in their employment. Through this realization, Latin American businesses can implement programs to help reduce women's barriers. Addressing the influence and strength of Latin America's culture is the only way to increase women's participation at the upper-levels in the workplace.



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