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THE DISSONANCE BETWEEN DEMOCRACY'S PROMISE AND ITS GENDERED  
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THE DISSONANCE BETWEEN DEMOCRACY'S PROMISE AND ITS GENDERED  
REALITY

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COLLEGE OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

BY

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## **Abstract**

In international development discourse and political science literature, there appears to be consensus that democratic governance contributes to gender equality. As a result, democracy and women's rights are often articulated as complementary development objectives. However, empirical studies grounded in feminist international relations scholarship argue that liberal democratic governance is not a necessary nor a sufficient condition for creating gender equality. This thesis asks what can explain this discord between democracy's promise and its gendered reality. In response to this ambitious research question, I argue that the even though women do indeed benefit from the civil and political rights associated with the democratic governance, they do so at a slower rate than men. Therefore, I hypothesize that democratic governance alone does not alleviate underlying patriarchal social norms.

This thesis assesses the political, economic, and social components of gender equality in three Latin American countries with different relationships to liberal democracy. The comparative analysis of Costa Rica, an established democracy, Chile, a recently formed democracy, and Cuba, an established authoritarian regime, indicates preliminary support for the argument that democracy unequally advantages men. The findings of this thesis imply that there is an intervening variable, which transcends regime types and impacts gender equality. As such, this thesis emphasizes the need for scholars and policy analysts to continue to research the relationship between regime type and women's issues.

## I. Introduction

### I. A. Overview

In 2017, the Pew Research Center published a dataset that demonstrated strong global support for democratic governance.<sup>1</sup> This commitment to democracy implies a widespread belief in democratic values, including the liberal principles of justice, equality, and human rights. For over half a century, there has been a corresponding push for democratization across the globe. Conventional wisdom and mainstream political theories pertaining to liberal democratic regimes suggest that democratization produces liberal outcomes, especially by reducing systemic human rights violations and promoting equality in principle and practice.<sup>2</sup> The international development discourse represents the same sentiment given its promotion of liberal democracy and women's rights as complimentary development objectives.<sup>3</sup> Despite the widespread support and promotion of democracy, women and girls continue to experience gender-based inequality, violence, and discrimination. Contrary to our conventional political theories, these inequalities exist even under the world's oldest and most established democracies.

What can explain this discord between democracy's promise and its gendered reality? If it is true that democracy categorically benefits the marginalized, to what extent does gender inequality persist in democratic regimes? How can one best characterize the relationship between

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Wike et al., "Globally, Broad Support for Representative and Direct Democracy" (Pew Research Center, 2017).

<sup>2</sup> See Bruce Bueno de Mesquita et al., "Thinking inside the Box: A Closer Look at Democracy and Human Rights," *International Studies Quarterly* 49, no. 3 (2005): 440; Christian Davenport, "State Repression and the Tyrannical Peace," *Journal of Peace Research* 44, no. 4 (July 2007): 488, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343307078940>; Christian Davenport and David Armstrong, "Democracy and the Violation of Human Rights: A Statistical Analysis from 1976 to 1996," *American Journal of Political Science* 48, no. 3 (July 2004): 538; Neil A. Englehart, "State Capacity, State Failure, and Human Rights," *Journal of Peace Research* 46, no. 2 (March 1, 2009): 169, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343308100713>; Peter Haschke, *Human Rights in Democracies* (Abingdon, Oxon; New York, NY: Routledge, an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, 2018), 2.

<sup>3</sup> See United Nations Development Program Sustainable Development Goals; USAID Democracy, Human Rights and Governance Promotion

regime type and gender-based inequality? What best explains the persistence of gender-based inequality across regime types? Throughout this thesis I argue that the existence of liberal democracy does not inherently yield positive outcomes for women. Though women do indeed benefit from the civil and political rights associated with the democratic governance, they do so at a slower rate than men under the same regime. Instead, I hypothesize that there are underlying factors transcending borders, regime types, and governments that contribute to the persistence of gender inequality, especially patriarchal social and cultural norms.

In the introductory sections that follow, I outline the prevailing puzzles and theoretical framework related to democratic regimes and gender. I then detail the methodology and approach for this study. Next, I define the significance of this project and its implication for both political science scholarship and feminist IR literature. Finally, I provide an overview for the chapters that follow.

## **I. B. Puzzles and Theoretical Framework**

This project addresses the marked disagreement between theories of liberal democracy and the reality of women's issues in varying regime types. Contemporarily, the discourse of international development organizations explicitly expects that democratization is coterminous with the promotion of gender equality. Similarly, dominant political theories suggests that liberal democratic governance contributes to the elimination of human rights deficits and gender inequality, especially where civil society is robust.<sup>4</sup> Policies aimed at democracy promotion and

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<sup>4</sup> See Larry Jay Diamond, "Toward Democratic Consolidation," *Journal of Democracy* 5, no. 3 (1994): 5, <https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.1994.0041>; John Schwarzmantel, "Democracy and Violence: A Theoretical Overview," *Democratization* 17, no. 2 (April 1, 2010): 220, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13510341003588641>; Paula Wyndow, Jianghong Li, and Eugen Mattes, "Female Empowerment as a Core Driver of Democratic Development: A Dynamic Panel Model from 1980 to 2005," *World Development* 52 (December 2013): 34.

the general discourse on the topic echo these expectations of liberal democratic governance.<sup>5</sup> In contrast, a number of feminist scholars rejects the claim that the existence of liberal democracy is a necessary or sufficient solution to gender inequality.<sup>6</sup>

Note that international actors have alluded to the fact that that women's rights are human rights as early as 1915 at the First International Congress of Women at the Hague.<sup>7</sup> The discursive link between human rights and women's rights has intensified since this time. In 1993, states officially recognized that "The human rights of women and of the girl-child are an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of universal human rights."<sup>8</sup> Thus, academic and policy-oriented conversations addressing human rights promotion also necessarily reference women's

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<sup>5</sup> See Sheila Carapico, "Foreign Aid for Promoting Democracy in the Arab World," *Middle East Journal* 56, no. 3 (2002): 380; Thomas Carothers et al., "A Quarter-Century of Promoting Democracy," *Journal of Democracy* 18, no. 4 (October 2007): 126; Isobel Coleman, "The Payoff from Women's Rights Essay," *Foreign Affairs* 83 (2004): 80; James M. Scott and Carie A. Steele, "Sponsoring Democracy: The United States and Democracy Aid to the Developing World, 1988–2001," *International Studies Quarterly* 55, no. 1 (March 1, 2011): 53, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2478.2010.00635.x>; Peter van Tuijl, "NGOs and Human Rights: Sources of Justice and Democracy," *Journal of International Affairs* 52, no. 2 (1999): 494.

<sup>6</sup> See Sara E. Davies, Nicole George, and Jacqui True, "The Difference That Gender Makes to International Peace and Security," *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 19, no. 1 (January 2, 2017): 1–3, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616742.2017.1279904>; Mala Htun and S. Laurel Weldon, "When Do Governments Promote Women's Rights? A Framework for the Comparative Analysis of Sex Equality Policy," *Perspectives on Politics* 8, no. 01 (March 2010): 207; Jane Mansbridge, "Reconstructing Democracy," in *Revisioning the Political: Feminist Reconstructions of Traditional Concepts in Western Political Theory*, ed. Nancy J. Hirschmann and Christine Di Stefano, Feminist Theory and Politics (Boulder, Colo: Westview Press, 1996); J. Ann Tickner, *Gender in International Relations: Feminist Perspectives on Achieving Global Security*, New Directions in World Politics (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992); Manon Tremblay, "Democracy, Representation, and Women: A Comparative Analysis," *Democratization* 14, no. 4 (August 2007): 534, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13510340701398261>; Jacqui True, "Mainstreaming Gender in Global Public Policy," *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 5, no. 3 (November 1, 2003): 369, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1461674032000122740>; Mino Vianello, "Gender and Democracy," in *Gender and Power: Towards Equality and Democratic Governance*, ed. Mino Vianello and M. E. Hawkesworth (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire ; New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

<sup>7</sup> See Jane Addams, Emily Greene Balch, and Alice Hamilton, *Women at the Hague: The International Congress of Women and Its Results* (Macmillan, 1915); Jutta Joachim, "Women's Rights as Human Rights," *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of International Studies*, March 1, 2010, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190846626.013.430>.

<sup>8</sup> The World Conference on Human Rights, "Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action" (UN General Assembly, July 12, 1993), A/CONF.157/23.

issues. Those arguments that address human rights while simultaneously ignoring women's issues are inherently narrow frameworks, as they "exclude much of women's experiences."<sup>9</sup>

A related complexity with the disconnect between the bodies of literature is in the way that existing theories have framed the discussion of authoritarian regimes. Some of these political theories argue that authoritarian regimes limit women's rights.<sup>10</sup> Critical feminist scholars have complicated this assertion, arguing that authoritarian regimes have sometimes championed progressive women's rights policies.<sup>11</sup> Similar analyses demonstrate that communist authoritarian regimes have historically promoted women's rights with more success than democracies according to measures of labor force participation, gendered wage gap, and the societal role of women.<sup>12</sup>

This brief review of the disagreement between scholars working on democratic regimes and feminist scholars reveals a deep divide in the literature. That is, conventional political science and international development discourse appears to accept—or at least does not challenge—traditional conceptions of gender difference and gender roles. This principle is directly in conflict with feminist international relations scholarship, which focuses in part on gender-based disadvantages and the economic, social, legal, and political obstacles that emerge

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<sup>9</sup> Charlotte Bunch, "Women's Rights as Human Rights: Toward a Re-Vision of Human Rights," *Human Rights Quarterly* 12 (1990): 487.

<sup>10</sup> See Chuck Hagel, "A Republican Foreign Policy Essay," *Foreign Affairs* 83 (2004): 69-70; Neil J. Mitchell and James M. McCormick, "Economic and Political Explanations of Human Rights Violations," *World Politics* 40, no. 4 (July 1988): 478.

<sup>11</sup> See Daniela Donno and Anne-Kathrin Kreft, "Authoritarian Institutions and Women's Rights," *Comparative Political Studies*, September 10, 2018, 2, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414018797954>; Mala Htun, *Sex and the State: Abortion, Divorce, and the Family under Latin American Dictatorships and Democracies* (Cambridge, U.K.; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 3; Jane S. Jaquette, ed., *The Women's Movement in Latin America: Participation and Democracy*, 2nd ed, Thematic Studies in Latin America (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994); Lois M. Smith and Alfred Padula, *Sex and Revolution: Women in Socialist Cuba* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

<sup>12</sup> See Anna Pollert, "Women, Work and Equal Opportunities in Post-Communist Transition," *Work, Employment and Society* 17, no. 2 (June 2003): 332; Marilyn Rueschemeyer, ed., *Women in the Politics of Postcommunist Eastern Europe* (Armonk, N.Y: M.E. Sharpe, 1994); Renata Siemieńska, "Gendered Perceptions: Women in the Labour Market in Poland," *Women's History Review* 5, no. 4 (December 1, 1996): 554.

as a result of regime change.<sup>13</sup> The purpose of this thesis is to situate these seemingly competing bodies of literature conversation with each other in order to deepen our collective understanding of the relationship between regime type and women's issues.

## **I. C. Methods and Approach**

This thesis will attempt to isolate democracy's effect on the quality of women's lives in two ways. First, I explore the conceptual parameters and existing theoretical work on the topic. Next, I evaluate the political, economic, and social outcomes for women in a comparative perspective. The cases evaluated in this study were chosen using the most similar case design, meaning that the cases are similar in a few important ways but are distinct in their level of democracy and degree of present democratic consolidation.

To best understand the effect of regime type on women's issues, I chose to select one country that has undergone a recent transition to democracy, one established democracy, and one established authoritarian regime.<sup>14</sup> The factors that were most important to keep constant across the three cases were geographical region, language, population, GDP per capita, colonial history, racial and ethnic demography, and religion. Of course, there are few cases that are similar according to all of these parameters; however, Chile, Cuba, and Costa Rica can be categorized similarly across these metrics. For this reason, I selected Chile as the country that underwent a recent transition to democracy, Costa Rica as the established democracy, and Cuba as the authoritarian regime.

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<sup>13</sup> Merike Helena Blofield and Liesl Haas, "Defining a Democracy: Reforming the Laws on Women's Rights in Chile, 1990-2002," *Latin American Politics & Society* 47, no. 3 (2005): 36-7.

<sup>14</sup> "Recent transition to democracy" is used here to describe a country that underwent its democratic transition in the period following the arrival of the women's movement in the region.

Chile, Cuba, and Costa Rica are all former Spanish colonies that primarily speak Spanish. The populations of these contemporary states range from 4.8 million inhabitants in Costa Rica to 17.9 million inhabitants in Chile. Each state is composed of between 80% to 90% white or mestizo populations.<sup>15</sup> All countries are between 55% and 62% Catholic, though Costa Rica is the only state with Catholicism as its official religion. The most significant disparity between Cuba, Costa Rica, and Chile is in their GDP per capita. Between 2016-17, Cuba, Costa Rica, and Chile's GDP per capita were estimated to be \$11,900, \$17,200, and \$24,600, respectively. Admittedly, this disparity in GDP per capita is larger than desired; however, there are rarely cases that are perfectly suited for social science research. As such, it is important to recognize that while this disparity in GDP constitutes a weakness in study design, I argue that the cases are similar enough to accept the conclusions of this thesis.

As previously mentioned, this thesis will measure and compare the political, economic, and social conditions for women in Costa Rica, Chile, and Cuba to reveal the relationship between women's issues and regime type. This thesis analyzes political, economic, and social measurements as indicators of women's wellbeing for a two reasons. First, changes in political rights and behaviors are most commonly associated with regime transitions. Second, there is significant sociological research indicating that economic and social conditions along with "subjective indicators" define and measure quality of life.<sup>16</sup> Thus, these indicators help to establish a well-rounded understanding of the lives of women under varying regime types.

After establishing that this thesis examines women's issues through a political, economic, and social lens, it is necessary to define each indicator in more detail. Moreover, it is necessary

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<sup>15</sup> *The World Factbook 2016-17* (Washington, D.C.: Central Intelligence Agency, 2016), <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/index.html>.

<sup>16</sup> Ed Diener and Eunkook Suh, "Measuring Quality of Life: Economic, Social, and Subjective Indicators," *Social Indicators Research* 40, no. 1 (January 1, 1997): 190, <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1006859511756>.

to establish how this thesis will measure regime type and democracy. In the section that follows, I define democracy and detail how this thesis will categorize regime type. Additionally, I describe the political, economic, and social indicators in turn. First, I detail how these metrics are measured. Next, I describe how they should be interpreted. Finally, I address the significance of each indicator in the context of this thesis.

### ***Defining and Measuring Democracy***

Despite thousands of years of debate, discussions about the precise definition of democracy persists in the literature. That is, scholars have interpreted democracy differently over time depending upon the context in which it is used.<sup>17</sup> The concept of democracy is typically interpreted as either an ideal or as a form of government. Democracy as an ideal connotes liberal values including justice, equality, and human rights. Thus, the ideal is commonly associated with the expansion of human rights, fairness, and freedom.<sup>18</sup> In contrast, one of the most influential definitions of democracy as a regime type follows in the tradition of economist Joseph Schumpeter's minimalist interpretation. Schumpeter defines democracy as an "institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people's votes."<sup>19</sup>

Though Schumpeter's approach is noteworthy, his interpretation has been criticized in the literature because it establishes a low threshold for democratization and excludes other key democratic norms.<sup>20</sup> Feminist scholars have rightly identified mass participation as a crucial

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<sup>17</sup> Jørgen Møller and Svend-Erik Skaaning, *Democracy and Democratization in Comparative Perspective: Conceptions, Conjunctures, Causes and Consequences*, Democratization Studies (New York: Routledge, 2013), 40.

<sup>18</sup> José Álvaro Moisés, "Quality of Democracy and Political Inclusion," in *Gender and Power: Towards Equality and Democratic Governance*, ed. Mino Vianello and M. E. Hawkesworth (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 235–7.

<sup>19</sup> Joseph A. Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, Eighth (London: Unwin University Books, 1974), 269.

<sup>20</sup> Møller and Skaaning, *Democracy and Democratization in Comparative Perspective: Conceptions, Conjunctures, Causes and Consequences*, 38.



democratic norm with particular significance for underrepresented populations. For this reason, the feminist position argues that minimalist interpretations of democracy “largely ignore discrimination against women.”<sup>21</sup> In line with this criticism and in an effort to bridge the gap between the ideal and the regime type, this thesis interprets liberal democracy as a system of government that embodies democratic values, norms, and institutions. More specifically, Mechkova et. al suggest that a government is a liberal democracy if “in addition to those conditions of freedom and competitiveness surrounding elections, a country boasts the rights-securing rule of law as well as effective judicial and legislative constraints on executive power.”<sup>22</sup>

In order to measure the extent to which a regime is a liberal democracy, this thesis makes use of the Varieties of Democracy Project (V-Dem) “liberal democracy index.” This index evaluates the extent to which liberal democracy is achieved in each country. The creators of the index clarify:

The liberal principle of democracy emphasizes the importance of protecting individual and minority rights against the tyranny of the state and the tyranny of the majority. The liberal model takes a ~negative~ view of political power insofar as it judges the quality of democracy by the limits placed on government. This is achieved by constitutionally protected civil liberties, strong rule of law, an independent judiciary, and effective checks and balances that, together, limit the exercise of executive power. To make this a measure of liberal democracy, the index also takes the level of electoral democracy into account.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Moisés, “Gender and Power,” 239.

<sup>22</sup> Valeriya Mechkova, Anna Lührmann, and Staffan I Lindberg, “How Much Democratic Backsliding?,” *Journal of Democracy* 28, no. 4 (2017): 163, <https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2017.0075>.

<sup>23</sup> Michael Coppedge et al., “V-Dem Country-Year Dataset 2018” (Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) Project, 2018), <https://doi.org/10.23696/vdemcy18>.

After this analysis of this thesis's definition of democracy and the ways in which it will be measured, it is possible to examine other metrics that are used as indicators of women's well-being. Therefore, the next sections will detail the ways that this thesis will evaluate women's equality as it pertains to their political, economic, and social lives.

### ***The Political Indicator of Women's Equality***

The political indicator examines the quality of the political rights afforded to women. It also measures the extent to which women have power over the policies that affect them. One of the most important elements of this marker is the degree to which women participate in politics. Political participation is generally understood as engagement in activities to influence policy and decision-making through formal political structures, meaning traditional or official processes.<sup>24</sup>

For the purpose of this study, the political indicator will be evaluated in two ways. First, I analyze and compare the voting behavior of women to men across Cuba, Chile, and Costa Rica. I use available data where possible but incorporate secondary analyses from the literature where necessary. Next, I examine the proportion of seats held by women in the national parliament using data and statistical measures from the World Bank and the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA). This data reveals whether women's political participation increases, decreases, or stays the same relative to its level of democracy, which is a necessary component of understanding the extent to which women are included in decision-making in governmental procedures.

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<sup>24</sup> Iasonas Lamprianou, "Contemporary Political Participation Research: A Critical Assessment," in *Democracy in Transition*, ed. Kyriakos N. Demetriou (Berlin, Heidelberg: Springer Berlin Heidelberg, 2013), 21–42, <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-642-30068-4>.

There are potential two related limitations to this indicator of women's equality that are important to note. Namely, this thesis evaluates measures of women's formal political participation, which excludes the meaningful informal ways in which marginalized groups access political power. Additionally, if elections are not competitive or parliament is not a key decision-making body, then women's inclusion appears to be merely symbolic, which makes the exclusion of informal political participation more problematic. Though I acknowledge the importance of analyzing informal political participation, data limitations prevent a meaningful analysis of its relationship to the promotion of gender equality. However, there is support in the literature that inclusion in formal political processes does indeed matter, even if that participation is nominal.<sup>25</sup> This discussion of the interplay between formal and informal participation will be discussed in more depth in the chapter that follows.

### ***The Economic Indicator of Women's Equality***

This indicator is concerned with the economic effects that democratization produces for women. Feminist scholarship attempts to explain phenomena outside of androcentric presumptions at the intersection of economics, political science, sociology, and gender.<sup>26</sup> This study takes root in the tradition of this formative body of feminist literature because power, politics, and gender dynamics affect economic outcomes. Moreover, there are theories that suggest that women will do better economically in more democratic countries.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Joanna Kerr, "Women's Rights in Development," *Development* 49, no. 1 (March 2006): 9, <https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.development.1100220>.

<sup>26</sup> Georgina Waylen, "Gender, Feminism and Political Economy," *New Political Economy* 2, no. 2 (July 1997): 205–20, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13563469708406297>.

<sup>27</sup> See Eric Neumayer and Indra de Soysa, "Globalisation, Women's Economic Rights and Forced Labour," *The World Economy* 30, no. 10 (October 2007): 1521, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9701.2007.01060.x>; Amartya Kumar Sen, "Democracy as a Universal Value," *Journal of Democracy* 10, no. 3 (1999): 10, <https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.1999.0055>.

To measure this effect, I examine data detailing the average gap in wages between women and men. Second, I analyze the female labor force participation rate (FLPR) to identify the percentage of women who participate in the formal economy relative to men. This metric is significant because “women’s labor force status relative to that of men is an important benchmark of their status in society.”<sup>28</sup> There is evidence that FLPR leads to a number of advantageous outcomes for women, including increased bargaining power inside the home, improved self-esteem, and increased investment in women’s education.<sup>29</sup> Put differently, increased FLPR is generally thought to be welfare enhancing and may be linked to democratic governance.<sup>30</sup> Finally, I examine the types of jobs that women are likely to obtain as participants in the formal economy. That is, this metric examines whether women likely to obtain jobs of the same quality as men, which may reveal the extent to which patriarchal norms pervade the labor market.<sup>31</sup> This section also addresses significant disparities in the education of labor force participants where they are present. Incorporating this analysis contributes to an understanding of the gender roles that affect women’s propensity to seek formal employment.

### ***The Social Indicator of Women’s Equality***

The third marker characterizes the amount of equality women experience in their social lives. Social equity can be thought of as a function of family structure and the role of women in the home. This indicator also includes an evaluation of social attitudes towards women and the prevalence of violence against women/girls (VAW/G), including threats against women’s

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<sup>28</sup> Kristin Mammen and Christina Paxson, “Women’s Work and Economic Development,” *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 14, no. 4 (November 2000): 141, <https://doi.org/10.1257/jep.14.4.141>.

<sup>29</sup> Ghazal Bayanpourtehrani and Kevin Sylwester, “Democracy and Female Labor Force Participation: An Empirical Examination,” *Social Indicators Research* 112, no. 3 (2013): 750.

<sup>30</sup> José Tavares and Romain Wacziarg, “How Democracy Affects Growth,” *European Economic Review* 45, no. 8 (August 2001): 1343, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0014-2921\(00\)00093-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0014-2921(00)00093-3).

<sup>31</sup> Joan Acker, “Hierarchies, Jobs, Bodies: A Theory of Gendered Organizations,” *Gender & Society* 4, no. 2 (1990): 140-1, <https://doi.org/10.1177/089124390004002002>.

physical, sexual, and psychological security. Put differently, the social indicator of women's equality is a measurement of the extent to which a society or state exhibits patriarchal norms.

Measuring social equity is a challenge due to a lack of available data. States rarely release official statistics detailing gender parity, and international groups have not been able to reliably aggregate and describe patriarchal norms across state contexts. In an effort to overcome this limitation, this thesis relies on gathering available data from UN reports, scholarly articles, and NGOs and non-profit organizations. These reports and data are useful because they provide a holistic picture of patriarchy in a particular country. This thesis also incorporates primary data, including surveys, interviews, and opinion polls concerning attitudes towards women. These data illustrate public attitudes, which speak to the actual gendered experience of women. Finally, this thesis incorporates the Global Gender Gap Report, which “benchmarks 144 countries on their progress towards gender parity across four thematic dimensions: Economic Participation and Opportunity, Educational Attainment, Health and Survival, and Political Empowerment.”<sup>32</sup>

The Global Gender Gap Report provides a useful aggregate measurement of the relative levels of equality in each country, which may reveal the extent to which a society is committed to embodying feminist norms. Still, the index does not explicitly aim to measure patriarchy. The lack of reliable data and measurement of the strength of patriarchy constitutes a significant obstacle to this study. This thesis has not worked to create a comprehensive dataset detailing patriarchy across states; however, there is a need for scholars and policy analysts to address this data deficit. In the next section, I discuss the importance of this study, which affirms the need for more analysis on the topic.

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<sup>32</sup> “The Global Gender Gap Report” (Geneva, Switzerland: World Economic Forum, 2017), [http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_GGGR\\_2017.pdf](http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2017.pdf).

## **I. D. Significance**

This thesis is situated between feminist international relations and political science scholarship. As such, I aim to contribute to the body of literature that lies at the intersection of gender and democratic theory. By addressing the dynamics and consequences of democracies and democratization, this thesis belongs to several academic disciplines and subfields. Namely, this thesis applies to democratic theory, political economy, women and gender studies, international relations, Latin American studies, and sociology. While this thesis certainly makes an important academic contribution, understanding the social, political, and economic effects that regime change has on gender also holds deeply significant implications for a government's leadership and policy makers.

Understanding the interaction effect of gender, politics, and the economy is crucial for policy makers and government officials. The foreign policy strategists responsible for democracy building interventions must be informed of the consequences of the humanitarian or military engagements they design and implement. Next, the strategists and government officials dedicated to overseeing the progress of newly issued democracies must understand the effect that new regimes and political conditions have on the rights and status of women. Third, this thesis is relevant to economic officials and finance officers who seek an understanding of women's participation in the formal economy of existing and newly transitioned regimes. Fourth and finally, stakeholders in the international community must recognize the interaction effect of democracy and democratization on the rights of women so that they can empower these populations while holding regimes accountable to international norms and rules.

It is important for the advancement of gender equity that political science scholars and feminist international relations experts continue to investigate this nexus of gender politics and

democratic governance. The relationship between these two bodies of literature is not only important for the edification of interested academic parties. In fact, the implications of this research are far reaching and are also applicable in the practice of international relations, especially for drafting policy and enforcing international rules. For these reasons, the role of democracies and democratization on gender is a necessary component of our collective understanding of politics. For these reasons, gender issues should continue to be the topic of scholarly research in the future.

### **I. E. Chapter Overview**

In the first chapter, I provide a framework for understanding women's rights in the context of democracies. This conceptual analysis will take the form of a literature review. More specifically, I discuss scholarship related to democratic regime types, measuring patriarchy, how policies shape gender, human rights in democracies, violence against women, and women's movements. The literature review also addresses scholarship dealing with women in politics, women's family and social lives, and women in the economy. In the three empirical chapters that follow, I explore the unique histories of Cuba, Costa Rica, and Chile while identifying the political, social, and economic quality of women's lives according to the previously mentioned metrics. Finally, the conclusion explores the three cases in a comparative context in order to understand the relationship between regime type and gender equality. The conclusion will also summarize the implications of this thesis for the broader study of gender and democracy studies.

## II. Conceptual and Theoretical Premises

### II. A. Overview

Before examining regime type and women's issues in a comparative context, it is necessary to outline the scholarly debate around key concepts. There is a great deal of literature dealing with both democracy and gender politics; however, there are empirical disagreements among scholars working in different traditions on these topics. In fact, a review of the existing literature reveals a disconnect between democracy and feminist IR scholarship. Again, the dominant international development discourse links democracy and women's rights as complementary goals.<sup>33</sup> Certain theories of democracy have argued that democratic governance produces positive outcomes for women.<sup>34</sup> These theories argue that "support for gender equality is a consequence of democratization. It is part of a broad cultural change that is transforming many aspects of industrialized societies and supporting the spread of democratic institutions."<sup>35</sup>

Some feminist scholars were optimistic that the expansion of liberal democracy would have positive results for women.<sup>36</sup> In contrast, other feminist scholars have more muted expectations about democracy's ability to eliminate gender parity.<sup>37</sup> Montecinos explains that "those who are concerned with securing equality for women insist that the process of democratization be accompanied by transformations in the political culture and innovative

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<sup>33</sup> Michelle Bachelet, "Democracy and Gender Equality" (UN Women, May 4, 2011), <http://www.unwomen.org/news/stories/2011/5/democracy-and-gender-equality>.

<sup>34</sup> See Diamond, "Toward Democratic Consolidation, 5"; Wyndow, Li, and Mattes, "Female Empowerment as a Core Driver of Democratic Development: A Dynamic Panel Model from 1980 to 2005," 34.

<sup>35</sup> Pippa Norris, Christian Welzel, and Ronald Inglehart, "Gender Equality and Democracy," *Comparative Sociology* 1, no. 3 (December 1, 2002): 322, <https://doi.org/10.1163/156913302100418628>;

<sup>36</sup> Caroline Beer, "Democracy and Gender Equality," *Studies in Comparative International Development* 44, no. 3 (September 2009): 212, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12116-009-9043-2>.

<sup>37</sup> See Andrea Cornwall, "Revisiting the 'Gender Agenda,'" *IDS Bulletin* 38, no. 2 (March 2007): 69, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1759-5436.2007.tb00353.x>; Deniz Kandiyoti, "Political Fiction Meets Gender Myth: Post-Conflict Reconstruction, 'Democratisation' and Women's Rights," *IDS Bulletin* 35, no. 4 (October 2004): 134-6, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1759-5436.2004.tb00168.x>.



institutional reforms at the state level, in electoral politics, in local governments as well as in social practices. It is not the *consolidation* of democracy that advocates of women's rights envision, but its *transfiguration*.<sup>38</sup> Cornwall et. al further this concern in their argument that “women everywhere are having to fight to get their voices heard, despite new emphases on democracy, voice and participation”<sup>39</sup> Moreover, feminist scholars argue that the promotion of women’s rights is highly dependent on factors other than regime type, including levels of patriarchy and socially constructed notions of gender difference.<sup>40</sup>

This cursory introduction reveals that the lack of communication between these disparate literatures obscures our understanding of the relationship between regime type and women’s issues. The literature review in this section aims to decode this disconnect by establishing a dialogue between these distinct literatures. Through this analysis I explore the key arguments relevant to the relationship between regimes and the advancement of women’s issues. In the following sections, I position conventional political science theories of democracy and democratization with feminist scholarship on women’s relationship to the state. First, I evaluate the definitions of democracy and patriarchy. Next, I review the most important literature and theory on human rights in democracies, gender-based violence, and women’s political, familial, and economic lives.

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<sup>38</sup> Verónica Montecinos, “Feminists and Technocrats in the Democratization of Latin America: A Prolegomenon,” *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 15, no. 1 (2001): 177.

<sup>39</sup> Andrea Cornwall, Elizabeth Harrison, and Ann Whitehead, eds., “Introduction,” in *Feminisms in Development: Contradictions, Contestations and Challenges* (London: Zed Books, 2007), 2.

<sup>40</sup> Kerr, “Women’s Rights in Development,” 9.

## II. B. Literature Review

### *The Social Construction of Gender Difference*

A fundamental principle of feminist IR scholarship is the notion that gender difference is socially constructed and reproduced through formal and informal mechanisms in society. It is critical to understand the societal construction of gender because it reveals linkages between governance and the creation and perpetuation of gender difference. To clarify, gender in this context references the belief that there is meaningful difference between men and women and their respective roles in society. The constructivist approach to international relations, which argues that norms, rules, and institutions are historically and socially created, is a useful framework for understanding the way that gender is constructed.

In particular, constructivist theory on the “agent-structure” problem is a useful framework for understanding the “mutually constitutive” nature of human agents and system structure.<sup>41</sup> Constructivists argue that societal norms, institutions, and agents are co-constructed, over time, through the interactions that take place within social contexts.<sup>42</sup> Intervening factors, including culture, history, and religion affect the construction of gender across contexts in unique ways. Governments and polities also affect gender through a variety of mechanisms, notably through policies and the means by which they are enforced.<sup>43</sup> The rules and norms produced through these policies further shape government action and policy implementation. Because of the interconnectivity between norms and behavior, gendered policies are deeply related to the

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<sup>41</sup> Alexander E. Wendt, “The Agent-Structure Problem in International Relations Theory,” *International Organization* 41, no. 03 (June 1987): 335, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S002081830002751X>.

<sup>42</sup> Alexander Wendt, “Anarchy Is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics,” *Int Org* 46, no. 2 (1992): 391–425, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818300027764>.

<sup>43</sup> Elisabeth Prügl, “Diversity Management and Gender Mainstreaming as Technologies of Government,” *Politics & Gender* 7, no. 01 (March 2011): 71–89, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1743923X10000565>.

treatment of sex and gender in society.<sup>44</sup> Therefore, at the same time that gender is formed from the top-down, gender binaries, unequal power relations, and policies also influence behavior and replicate norms at the individual level.<sup>45</sup>

### ***Understanding Patriarchy***

In order to interpret the relationship between regime type and women's issues, it is necessary to establish a theoretical basis for understanding power dynamics between men and women. Patriarchy is deeply important to understanding the interaction of women in political, social, and economic spaces. The concept of patriarchy rose in popularity during the 1970s with the rapid growth of critical feminist scholarship. The most formative scholars in this field have made progress towards measuring and understanding the interaction of patriarchy on societal norms, rules, and institutions.<sup>46</sup> From these analyses, it is clear that patriarchy is not a stagnant concept that is applied equally across space and time. Rather, it is "a set of social arrangements that privilege men, in which men as a group dominate women as a group, structurally and ideologically."<sup>47</sup>

Patriarchy is dynamic, created over time, and varies according to geographical context.<sup>48</sup> Therefore, understanding levels of patriarchy in a society demands that the analysis is rooted in

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<sup>44</sup> Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink, "International Norm Dynamics and Political Change," *International Organization* 52, no. 4 (1998): 887–917.

<sup>45</sup> J. Ann Tickner, *Gender in International Relations: Feminist Perspectives on Achieving Global Security*, New Directions in World Politics (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992).

<sup>46</sup> See Shelley Feldman, "Exploring Theories of Patriarchy: A Perspective from Contemporary Bangladesh," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 26, no. 4 (July 2001): 1097–1127, <https://doi.org/10.1086/495649>; Holly M. Hapke, "Theorizing Patriarchy: Development Paradoxes and the Geography of Gender in South Asia," *Gender, Technology and Development* 17, no. 1 (January 2013): 12, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0971852412472121>; Gwen Hunnicutt, "Varieties of Patriarchy and Violence Against Women: Resurrecting 'Patriarchy' as a Theoretical Tool," *Violence Against Women* 15, no. 5 (May 2009): 553–73, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077801208331246>; Sylvia Walby, *Theorizing Patriarchy* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995).

<sup>47</sup> Hapke, "Theorizing Patriarchy," 12.

<sup>48</sup> Amy C. Alexander and Christian Welzel, "Eroding Patriarchy: The Co-Evolution of Women's Rights and Emancipative Values," *International Review of Sociology* 25, no. 1 (January 2, 2015): 144–65, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03906701.2014.976949>.

the context of “gender relations in broader economic, political–legal, social, and cultural–ideological processes.”<sup>49</sup> As such, analyses of women’s issues are necessarily sensitive to the socially constructed norms, rules, and institutions, which are influenced by varying levels of patriarchy. In all, patriarchy is constructed over time and is indeed evident in the social norms, rules, and institutions of a society. Because this thesis evaluates the extent to which distinct regime types advantage women, it is necessary to examine the relationship between human rights and democracy in the literature.

### ***Human Rights and Democracies***

According to its popular usage, “democracy” may connote the promotion and development of human rights.<sup>50</sup> In fact, there exists an extensive body of literature that details the association between democratic regimes and trends in human rights violations.<sup>51</sup> Political science studies have shown a probabilistic correlation between democratic governance and respect for human rights.<sup>52</sup> Research on this topic is largely focused on the specific democratic norms and institutions that advance human rights within a society. Bueno de Mesquita et al. argue that the institutions of participation, multi-party elections, and accountability are highly related to the proliferation of human rights.<sup>53</sup> The findings of Bueno de Mesquita et al. are not necessarily surprising, and the feminist literature does not contest this notion. However, feminist IR scholars have argued that liberal democratic principles of governance have been associated

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<sup>49</sup> Hapke, “Theorizing Patriarchy,” 11.

<sup>50</sup> Michael Goodhart, “Human Rights and Global Democracy,” *Ethics & International Affairs* 22, no. 4 (December 2008): 395–420, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1747-7093.2008.00177.x>.

<sup>51</sup> See Davenport, “State Repression and the Tyrannical Peace”; Davenport and Armstrong, “Democracy and the Violation of Human Rights: A Statistical Analysis from 1976 to 1996”; Michele R. Decker et al., “Gender-Based Violence Against Adolescent and Young Adult Women in Low- and Middle-Income Countries,” *Journal of Adolescent Health* 56, no. 2 (2015): 188–96, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2014.09.003>; Freeman, *Human Rights*; Haschke, *Human Rights in Democracies*; Hayes, “Human Rights Discourse, Gender and HIV and AIDS in Southern Malawi.”

<sup>52</sup> Goodhart, “Human Rights and Global Democracy,” p. 33.

<sup>53</sup> Bueno de Mesquita et al., “Thinking inside the Box: A Closer Look at Democracy and Human Rights.”

with “legitimizing, cloaking, and mystifying the stratifications of society achieved by capitalism and achieved as well by racial, sexual, and gender superordinations.”<sup>54</sup> This analysis indicates that the deeply rooted patriarchal norms that persist in democracies may affect regimes’ ability to advance women’s position in society.

### ***Violence against Women/Girls (VAW/G)***

Of course, an important subsection of human rights is physical security, including and especially for women and girls. The UN defines violence against women and girls (VAW/G) as “any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.”<sup>55</sup> The UN’s definition is widely accepted within the context of international academic debate; however, this commitment to the institutions and practices of human rights protection at the global level is less evident in political and social practice. This thesis concurs with the UN’s interpretation in part because the definition is deliberately broad to include the countless manifestations of VAW/G. For this reason, it is also necessary to identify specific expressions of VAW/G with more specificity.

The broad label of VAW/G most commonly connotes sexual or intimate partner violence, sexual harassment, emotional and psychological abuse, and political violence. Other expressions of VAW/G include, but are not limited to, female genital mutilation (FGM), femicide, prenatal sex selection, female infanticide, economic abuse, elder abuse, dowry-related violence, acid-throwing, and honor-related violence.<sup>56</sup> Before continuing, note that this thesis in

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<sup>54</sup> Brown, Wendy. “Neo-Liberalism and the End of Liberal Democracy.” *Theory & Event* 7, no. 1 (2003). <https://doi.org/10.1353/tae.2003.0020>.

<sup>55</sup> General Assembly Resolution 48/104 (*Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women*, 1993).

<sup>56</sup> The research on honor related violence and killings belongs to a distinct and rich body of literature. Tahira Khan’s *Beyond Honour: A Historical Materialist Explanation of Honour* is a fantastic exploration into this topic.

no way attempts to draw comparisons or presume a “hierarchy” across the different types of violence. Rather, it is the contention of this thesis that the different types of violence listed above are equally abhorrent and ought to be evaluated as such.

An inherent complication to studying VAW/G is the relative invisibility of the various expressions of violence. For this reason, the scholars who research this topic must contend with the overwhelming challenge of quantifying and describing these highly sensitive occurrences. While NGOs, IGOs, and other government entities have become increasingly aware and responsive to instances of gendered violence, the available data on the topic is highly influenced by distinct cultural and political climates.<sup>57</sup> For this reason, the majority of mainstream feminist literature on VAW/G is shaped by the availability and reliability of data.<sup>58</sup> This data deficiency has contributed to an important gap in the literature that can only be solved through the mainstreaming of gendered violence in the global consciousness.

### *Political Violence*

As a complication to the conventional wisdom on human rights and violence, feminist scholars argue that sexual and physical violence against women is often used as a political tool.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Sara E. Davies and Jacqui True, “The Politics of Counting and Reporting Conflict-Related Sexual and Gender-Based Violence: The Case of Myanmar,” *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 19, no. 1 (January 2, 2017): 4–21, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616742.2017.1282321>.

<sup>58</sup> See Claudia García-Moreno et al., *Global and Regional Estimates of Violence against Women: Prevalence and Health Effects of Intimate Partner Violence and Non-Partner Sexual Violence* (Geneva, Switzerland: World Health Organization, 2013); Mona Lena Krook, “Violence Against Women in Politics,” *Journal of Democracy* 28, no. 1 (2017): 74–88, <https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2017.0007>; Sara Meger, “Toward a Feminist Political Economy of Wartime Sexual Violence: THE CASE OF THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO,” *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 17, no. 3 (July 3, 2015): 416–34, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616742.2014.941253>; Shannon Drysdale Walsh, “Engendering Justice: Constructing Institutions to Address Violence Against Women,” *Studies in Social Justice* 2, no. 1 (2008): 48–66, <https://doi.org/10.26522/ssj.v2i1.967>; S. Laurel Weldon, *Protest, Policy, and the Problem of Violence against Women: A Cross-National Comparison*, Violence against Women (Pittsburgh, Pa.: Pittsburgh, Pa.: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2002).

<sup>59</sup> See Haschke, *Human Rights in Democracies*; Elizabeth Jelin, Eric Herschberg, and Joint Committee on Latin American Studies, eds., *Constructing Democracy: Human Rights, Citizenship, and Society in Latin America* (Boulder, Colo: Westview Press, 1996); Laura Sjoberg, “Women and the Genocidal Rape of Women: The Gender Dynamics of Gendered War Crimes,” in *Confronting Global Gender Justice: Women’s Lives, Human Rights*, ed. Debra B. Bergoffen et al. (London; New York: Routledge, 2011), 21–34.

Democracy scholarship has focused on broadly tracking political violence and its implication for regime categorization and performance.<sup>60</sup> The feminist literature on political VAW/G is largely dedicated to categorizing the origins, spread, and consequences for women.<sup>61</sup> For example, rape is a type of violence that scholars have investigated for as more than a violation of human dignity. In fact, there is considerable research on the political significance of rape. Louise du Toit argues that “rape has political significance, not simply because and when it sometimes forms a deliberate part of a war strategy or because it can be construed as a weapon of genocide, but because it is a concrete way in which an extreme form of power is exerted, mostly by a man or men over women or children, more rarely over other men.”<sup>62</sup> This analysis illustrates that VAW/G is often a concerted effort to subordinate women as a category. As a result, scholarship that uncritically analyzes VAW/G in the context of societal crime may provide limited insight into the social structures and norms that produce violence.

Laura Sjoberg is a leading contributor to the conversation about the gendered nature of war crimes and rape. Sjoberg’s work challenges traditional conceptions of VAW/G by framing the issue as a form of deliberate gender subordination. Moreover, she argues that there is a

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<sup>60</sup> See Michael J Boyle, “Between Freedom and Fear: Explaining the Consensus on Terrorism and Democracy in US Foreign Policy,” *International Politics* 48, no. 2 (March 1, 2011): 412–33, <https://doi.org/10.1057/ip.2011.1>; Rachel Briggs, “Hearts and Minds and Votes: The Role of Democratic Participation in Countering Terrorism,” *Democratization* 17, no. 2 (April 1, 2010): 272–85, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13510341003588690>; John Schwarzmantel, “Democracy and Violence: A Theoretical Overview,” *Democratization* 17, no. 2 (April 1, 2010): 217–34, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13510341003588641>.

<sup>61</sup> See Sara E. Davies and Jacqui True, “The Politics of Counting and Reporting Conflict-Related Sexual and Gender-Based Violence: The Case of Myanmar,” *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 19, no. 1 (January 2, 2017): 4–21, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616742.2017.1282321>; Mona Lena Krook, “Violence Against Women in Politics,” *Journal of Democracy* 28, no. 1 (2017): 74–88, <https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2017.0007>; Sara Meger, “Toward a Feminist Political Economy of Wartime Sexual Violence: The Case of the Democratic Republic of Congo,” *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 17, no. 3 (July 3, 2015): 416–34, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616742.2014.941253>; Erik Melander, “Political Gender Equality and State Human Rights Abuse,” *Journal of Peace Research* 42, no. 2 (March 1, 2005): 149–66, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343305050688>; Marysia Zalewski and Anne Sisson Runyan, “Taking Feminist Violence Seriously in Feminist International Relations,” *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 15, no. 3 (September 2013): 293–313, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616742.2013.766102>.

<sup>62</sup> Louise du Toit, “How Not to Give Rape Political Significance,” in *Confronting Global Gender Justice: Women’s Lives, Human Rights*, ed. Debra B. Bergoffen et al. (London; New York: Routledge, 2011), p. 88.

distinction between rape and genocidal rape. Sjoberg argues that “rape is a crime against its victim and women generally, and genocidal rape is such a crime used as a weapon against an ethnic or national group, attacking racial purity, national pride, or both.”<sup>63</sup>

Sjoberg’s work has also been pivotal in categorizing the role of women in patriarchal social institutions. Sjoberg and Caron Gentry argue that women can (and often do) advance levels of patriarchy in political and social contexts.<sup>64</sup> The notion that women can act as participants in gender subordination through forms of gendered violence is a massive contribution to the literature. Future academic works must incorporate this notion in order to push international relations literature towards a gender-conscious theory of global violence.<sup>65</sup>

This evaluation reveals that physical security violations against women are complex expressions of patriarchal norms and attitudes that have been internalized at the individual level. The feminist literature echoes this sentiment through arguments that VAW/G is political in nature. Because VAW/G has deeply significant social and political consequences, this thesis, which measures women’s equality, necessarily seeks to include empirical analyses of violence where data allows.

### *Declining Global Violence Thesis*

Another relevant body of literature related to human rights and democracy is the discussion of the declining global violence thesis, or the belief that global violence in the developed world is decreasing. As with the other topics explored in this section, there is a noticeable difference between the conventional and feminist treatment of the declining global violence thesis. “Declinist” scholars principally argue the theoretical and empirical arguments

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<sup>63</sup> Sjoberg, “Women and the Genocidal Rape of Women: The Gender Dynamics of Gendered War Crimes”, p. 21.

<sup>64</sup> See Laura Sjoberg and Caron E Gentry, *Mothers, Monsters, Whores: Women’s Violence in Global Politics* (London; New York: Zed Books; Distributed in the USA by Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31.



about the historical causes and present-day implications of violence. Proponents of this thesis argue that the expansion of liberal ideology, centralization of state power, and the empowerment of women is contributing to the gradual erasure of violence from human society.<sup>66</sup> In support of this thesis, leading declinist scholars including Steven Pinker and Joshua Goldstein analyze the rates of deaths per capita and deaths through war and violent conflict, a declining trend relative to the global population.<sup>67</sup>

In contrast, feminist scholars assert that the declining global violence thesis is argued in the context of a problematic framework.<sup>68</sup> Jacqui True is among the most influential critics of this position, claiming that a feminist conceptual understanding of international relations precludes the adoption of declinist theory. She argues that declinist literature highlights flawed theoretical assumptions about the nature of violence.<sup>69</sup> True contends that declinists distract “attention from noticing and analyzing violence which is often not publicly reported, recorded or counted, and which is a large part of the violence being perpetrated today.”<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> See Jared M. Diamond, *The World until Yesterday: What Can We Learn from Traditional Societies?* (New York: Viking, 2012); Nils Petter Gleditsch, “The Decline of War - The Main Issues,” ed. Nils Petter Gleditsch et al., *International Studies Review* 15, no. 3 (September 2013): 396–419, <https://doi.org/10.1111/misr.12031>; Joshua S. Goldstein, *Winning the War on War: The Decline of Armed Conflict Worldwide* (New York: Dutton, 2011); Ian Morris, *War! What Is It Good for? Conflict and the Progress of Civilization from Primates to Robots* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2014); Steven Pinker, *The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence Has Declined* (New York: Viking, 2011).

<sup>67</sup> Goldstein, *Winning the War on War*; Pinker, *The Better Angels of Our Nature*.

<sup>68</sup> See Caramazza, Elena. 2015. “Feminine Creativity and Masculine Power.” In *Gender and Power: Towards Equality and Democratic Governance*, edited by Mino Vianello and M. E. Hawkesworth, 137–53. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan; Sara E. Davies, Jacqui True, and Maria Tanyag, “How Women’s Silence Secures the Peace: Analysing Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in a Low-Intensity Conflict,” *Gender & Development* 24, no. 3 (September 2016): 459–73; Heidi Hudson, “Peacebuilding Through a Gender Lens and the Challenges of Implementation in Rwanda and Côte d’Ivoire,” *Security Studies* 18, no. 2 (June 12, 2009): 287–318, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09636410902899982>; Jacqui True, “Are War and Violence Really in Decline?,” *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 68, no. 5 (October 20, 2014): 487–94, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10357718.2014.947354>; Jacqui True, “Explaining the Global Diffusion of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda,” *International Political Science Review* 37, no. 3 (June 2016): 307–23, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0192512116632372>.

<sup>69</sup> True, Jacqui. 2015. “Winning the Battle but Losing the War on Violence: A Feminist Perspective on the Declining Global Violence Thesis.” *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 17 (4): 554–72.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 554.

The types of violence that frequently go unreported or are routinely silenced often involve women. As such, the claim that human violence writ large has decreased dismisses the daily violence that women and girls experience due to their gender. Declinist literature and its failure to sufficiently account for VAW/G constitutes an important disconnect between feminist literature and conventional political science scholarship. In the section that follows, this thesis explores the literature that explicitly examines women in politics with a focus on gender quotas and political participation.

### ***Women and Politics***

Mainstream political science literature draws a stark distinction between political and social forces.<sup>71</sup> In the context of this study, this separation is problematic because the relationship between women and politics is far more complex than the traditional framework allows. More specifically, feminist scholars have emphasized that women participate in politics through both formal political institutions and through informal social forces, including grassroots organizations, marches, and demonstrations. Thus, women's political participation is highly entangled with activism and civil society. For this reason, the following section will address political participation as a category while attempting to discern a framework for the relationship between women's political activism and regime type.

### ***Electoral Gender Quotas***

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<sup>71</sup> See Mark R. Beissinger, "'Conventional' and 'Virtual' Civil Societies in Autocratic Regimes," *Comparative Politics* 49, no. 3 (2017): 351-2; Suh Doowon, "Civil Society in Political Democratization: Social Movement Impacts and Institutional Politics," *Development and Society* 35, no. 2 (December 2006): 174-5; Thomas Ertman, "Democracy and Dictatorship in Interwar Western Europe Revisited," *World Politics* 50, no. 03 (April 1998): 478-9, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0043887100012880>; M. Steven Fish and Michael Seeberg, "The Secret Supports of Mongolian Democracy," *Journal of Democracy* 28, no. 1 (2017): 135, <https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2017.0011>; Robert M. Fishman, "How Civil Society Matters in Democratization: Setting the Boundaries of Post-Transition Political Inclusion," *Comparative Politics* 49, no. 3 (2017): 391; Lucan Way, "Civil Society and Democratization," *Journal of Democracy* 25, no. 3 (2014): 35-43.

In the context of governance and public policy, gender quotas refer to policies that establish “minimum thresholds for the nomination of female candidates.”<sup>72</sup> In recent years, a number of countries across the world have adopted electoral gender quotas which has contributed to an increase in the number of women in the national legislature or parliament.<sup>73</sup> Despite this progress, in 2015, only 22% of members of parliament or the national legislature were women across the world.<sup>74</sup> The literature is divided on the desirability of these policies.<sup>75</sup> Still, an empirical analysis reveals that gender quotas, where properly implemented and enforced, have made a meaningful difference in the number of women that are elected to the national legislature.

The scholars that view gender quotas as a net benefit to the advancement of women argue that women face serious obstacles to getting elected to position of power. Therefore, gender quotas are a means to create a level playing field for female political participation.<sup>76</sup> This argument is based on the premise that gender quotas signal a shift towards the changing international norms and attitudes towards women.<sup>77</sup> There appears to be a general consensus in the literature that gender quotas are advantageous in theory, but poor policy formation and implementation has produced unequal effects for women. Still, there are critics of gender quotas

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<sup>72</sup> Mona Lena Krook, “Electoral Gender Quotas: A Conceptual Analysis,” *Comparative Political Studies* 47, no. 9 (August 2014): 1268–93, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414013495359>.

<sup>73</sup> Susan Franceschet, Mona Lena Krook, and Jennifer M. Piscopo, eds., *The Impact of Gender Quotas* (Oxford University Press, 2012), <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199830091.001.0001>.

<sup>74</sup> Hawkesworth, “Gender and Democratic Governance: Reprising the Politics of Exclusion,” p. 215.

<sup>75</sup> See Caroline C. Beer and Roderic Ai Camp, “Democracy, Gender Quotas, and Political Recruitment in Mexico,” *Politics, Groups, and Identities* 4, no. 2 (April 2, 2016): 179–95, <https://doi.org/10.1080/21565503.2015.1120223>; Franceschet, Krook, and Piscopo, *The Impact of Gender Quotas*; Krook, “Electoral Gender Quotas; Jennifer M. Piscopo, “Democracy as Gender Balance: The Shift from Quotas to Parity in Latin America,” *Politics, Groups, and Identities* 4, no. 2 (April 2, 2016): 214–30, <https://doi.org/10.1080/21565503.2015.1084936>; Tània Verge and Maria de la Fuente, “Playing with Different Cards: Party Politics, Gender Quotas and Women’s Empowerment,” *International Political Science Review* 35, no. 1 (January 2014): 67–79, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0192512113508295>.

<sup>76</sup> Medha Nanivadekar, “Are Quotas a Good Idea? The Indian Experience with Reserved Seats for Women,” *Politics & Gender* 2, no. 01 (March 2006), <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1743923X06241011>.

<sup>77</sup> Mona Lena Krook, “Gender Quotas, Norms, and Politics,” *Politics & Gender* 2, no. 01 (March 2006), <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1743923X06231015>.

who argue that gender quotas are not desirable because they reinforce gendered difference and problematic gender norms.<sup>78</sup> For this reason, these scholars claim that gender quotas are actually ineffective policies to advance the position of women.

The body of literature on gender quotas and their implications is relatively limited, so there is a considerable amount of research that needs to be done to glean a normative conclusion. Fortunately, there appears to be increasing global support for gender quotas, particularly in Latin America. More research needs to be conducted on the desirability of these policies, but it appears that scholars are increasingly paying attention to these policies and their implications for women's equality. Next, this section focuses on women and their formal political participation in politics as distinct from election to the national legislature.

### *Formal Political Participation*

The characteristics and effects of women's movements in democracies is a hugely relevant topic in the context of regime changes and outcomes for women. Since the 1970s, feminist scholarship on democracy and civil society has emphasized that women's movements are often highly influential in the outcome of political revolutions.<sup>79</sup> The importance of these mass movements may be a result of women's institutionalized disadvantage in law and governmental bodies. The extensive research on the gendered nature of politics has informed the

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<sup>78</sup> See Mark P. Jones, "Gender Quotas, Electoral Laws, and the Election of Women: Evidence From the Latin American Vanguard," *Comparative Political Studies* 42, no. 1 (January 2009): 56–81, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414008324993>; Guillaume R. Fréchette, Francois Maniquet, and Massimo Morelli, "Incumbents' Interests and Gender Quotas," *American Journal of Political Science* 52, no. 4 (October 2008): 891–909, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-5907.2008.00349.x>.

<sup>79</sup> See Sonia E. Alvarez, *Engendering Democracy in Brazil: Women's Movements in Transition Politics* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1990); Zin Mar Aung, "From Military Patriarchy to Gender Equity: Including Women in the Democratic Transition in Burma," *Social Research* 82, no. 2 (2015): 531–51, 554; Elisabeth Johansson-Nogués, "Gendering the Arab Spring? Rights and (in)Security of Tunisian, Egyptian and Libyan Women," *Security Dialogue* 44, no. 5–6 (2013): 393–409; Vickie Langohr, "Women's Rights Movements during Political Transitions: Activism against Public Sexual Violence in Egypt," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 47, no. 1 (2015): 131–35; Rita K. Noonan, "Women against the State: Political Opportunities and Collective Action Frames in Chile's Transition to Democracy," *Sociological Forum* 10, no. 1 (March 1, 1995): 81–111, <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02098565>.

“theory of gendered institutions.” The theory of gendered institutions holds that men are disproportionately privileged and represented in politics, the law, the economy, and other formal structures.<sup>80</sup> It is important to note that this theory hypothesizes that the gendering of institutions is not a historical accident. Instead, lawmakers “have used the state to create laws that privilege men.”<sup>81</sup>

Both mainstream political science scholarship and critical feminist literature acknowledge emphasize the importance of organized feminist movements in promoting women’s political representation.<sup>82</sup> Though women can and often do act to advance levels of patriarchy in society, an empirical study in Brazil showed that higher levels of female participation in political institutions contributed to the passage of feminist policies.<sup>83</sup> However, there is debate about the notion that higher levels of women in the national legislature alone can contribute to gender equality. An empirical study conducted by Mala Htun and Laurel Weldon in 2012 demonstrated that organized feminist movements were more meaningful contributors to progressive policy change.<sup>84</sup> Faxon, et al. argue that feminist movements contribute to democratic stability and

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<sup>80</sup> See Acker, “Hierarchies, Jobs, Bodies: A Theory of Gendered Organizations,”; Sally J Kenney, “New Research on Gendered Political Institutions,” *Political Research Quarterly* 49, no. 2 (1996): 445–66, <https://doi.org/10.1177/106591299604900211>; Valentine Moghadam, “Democratization and Women’s Political Leadership in North Africa,” *Journal of International Affairs* 68, no. 1 (2014): 59–XIV; Ronnie Steinberg, “Gender on the Agenda: Male Advantage in Organizations,” *Contemporary Sociology* 21, no. 5 (1992): 576, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2075532>; Tara O’Connor Shelley, Melissa Schaefer Morabito, and Jennifer Tobin-Gurley, “Gendered Institutions and Gender Roles: Understanding the Experiences of Women in Policing,” *Criminal Justice Studies* 24, no. 4 (December 2011): 351–67.

<sup>81</sup> M. E. Hawkesworth, “Gender and Democratic Governance: Reprising the Politics of Exclusion,” in *Gender and Power: Towards Equality and Democratic Governance*, ed. M. E. Hawkesworth and Mino Vianello (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire ; New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), p. 217.

<sup>82</sup> Caroline Beer, “Left Parties and Violence against Women Legislation in Mexico,” *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State & Society* 24, no. 4 (December 1, 2017): 512, <https://doi.org/10.1093/sp/jxx017>.

<sup>83</sup> Kenneth J. Meier and Kendall D. Funk, “Women and Public Administration in a Comparative Perspective: The Case of Representation in Brazilian Local Governments,” *Administration & Society* 49, no. 1 (January 28, 2016): 121–42, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0095399715626201>.

<sup>84</sup> Mala Htun and S. Laurel Weldon, “The Civic Origins of Progressive Policy Change: Combating Violence against Women in Global Perspective, 1975–2005,” *American Political Science Review* 106, no. 03 (August 2012): 548–69, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055412000226>.

female empowerment.<sup>85</sup> Similarly, Caroline Beer argues in her 2017 study of Mexican leftist parties that women's movements are stronger indicators of progressive feminist policy implementation.<sup>86</sup>

One possible explanation for the importance of women's movements over participation in the formal legislature is that organized movements are more visible, which makes global actors more likely to internalize and reproduce pro-feminist norms and rules. However, there is support for the notion that "integration of 'gender experts' into mainstream bureaucracy is essential because they act as 'communicators and facilitators between the lobbying activities of the women's movement and policy-makers within the bureaucracy.'"<sup>87</sup> These analyses indicate that producing favorable outcomes for women is highly dependent on the existence of a democratic regime with equitable female political participation and a local cultural context that incorporates feminist norms and social networks.

### ***Gender Roles, the Family, and the Economy***

As previously mentioned, conceptions of gender difference are deeply related to policy formation. In turn, these policies affect the role of women in the household and economy. For example, consider policies that affect women, children, and families. In many societies, women are the primary care givers of children and are responsible for the bulk of household duties. Therefore, "state policies concerning child bearing and rearing are determined by, and are simultaneously highly consequential for, gender inequality and women's place in the family, the labor market and civil society."<sup>88</sup> These profoundly entrenched notions of gender roles make

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<sup>85</sup> Hilary Faxon, Roisin Furlong, and May Sabe Phyu, "Reinvigorating Resilience: Violence against Women, Land Rights, and the Women's Peace Movement in Myanmar," *Gender & Development* 23, no. 3 (September 2, 2015): 463–79, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13552074.2015.1095559>.

<sup>86</sup> Beer, "Left Parties and Violence against Women Legislation in Mexico."

<sup>87</sup> Kerr, "Women's Rights in Development," 9.

<sup>88</sup> Eva Fodor et al., "Family Policies and Gender in Hungary, Poland, and Romania," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 35 (2002): 475–90, p. 476.

discriminatory labor force and compensation policies possible. In turn, patriarchal family policies constitute the legislative basis for the disadvantage of women in the economy and within their social lives.

## **II. C. Conclusion**

In this chapter, I explored the conceptual and theoretical scholarship related to regime type and women's experiences in society. Through this analysis, I highlighted the areas in which feminist literature deviates from political science canon, including scholarship on declining global violence. This review of the most important conceptual literature also revealed a few important deficits in the literature.

Political science and international relations scholars should mobilize the gaps and disconnects in the literature to build a more comprehensive understanding of the interaction effect of regime type and the lives and experiences of women. There are two primary insights to be understood from this conceptual chapter. The first and most important insight is that patriarchal social norms pervade individual beliefs and behaviors as well as societal rules and institutions. The second related insight is that policies matter because they meaningfully affect women's equality.

In an attempt to contribute to this body of knowledge, the chapters that follow aim to demonstrate this interaction in practice. By evaluating democratic governance and feminist theory in the context of women's experiences in Cuba, Costa Rica, and Chile, this thesis will build an empirical analysis in order to deepen our understanding of democracy's effects on women.

### III. Democracies and Democratization in Practice: Costa Rica

#### III. A. Overview

A popular national myth emanating from the small state situated between Nicaragua and Panama is that “Costa Rica es diferente.” Indeed, Costa Rica is quite distinct from its Central American neighbors despite their shared colonial history, similar economies, and regional particularities.<sup>89</sup> Costa Rica is an outlier from other countries in the region particularly with respect to development indices, including health care, economic development, literacy, and ecology. More importantly is that Costa Rica is also considered one of the most egalitarian societies in Central America and is the “region’s longest surviving democratic regime.”<sup>90</sup>

Since 1949, Costa Rica has been classified as a liberal democracy, meaning the country “embodies those conditions of freedom and competitiveness surrounding elections” and “boasts the rights-securing rule of law as well as effective judicial and legislative constraints on executive power.”<sup>91</sup> This classification is important because the conventional political science scholarship would lead one to believe that women enjoy the most rights and freedoms under strong, stable liberal democracies. Thus, the same literature would predict that Costa Rica outperforms other countries and regimes according to political, social, and economic metrics.

This chapter will evaluate the history and realities of women under Costa Rican liberal democracy. In effect, this chapter establishes a standard against which it is possible to compare varying regime types. Because this thesis hypothesizes that regime type is not the most significant driver of the quality of women’s lives, I expect to find that the issue of gender in

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<sup>89</sup> John A Booth, *Costa Rica: Quest for Democracy* (Westview Press, 1998), 29.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>91</sup> Valeriya Mechkova, Anna Lührmann, and Staffan I Lindberg, “How Much Democratic Backsliding?,” *Journal of Democracy* 28, no. 4 (2017): 163.



Costa Rica is more complicated than conventional political science framework predicts. In order to establish conclusions about women's quality of life in Costa Rica, it is first necessary to trace the historical and cultural roots of democracy and democratization in the country. Following this historical analysis, I will evaluate the current strength and trajectory of democracy in Costa Rica. Finally, I analyze the political, economic, and social indicators in order to reveal the quality of women's lives in the context of Costa Rica's democratic regime.

### **III. B. Historical Context**

The Spanish Empire conquered Costa Rica in 1561 and incorporated the territory into the Kingdom of Guatemala in 1568.<sup>92</sup> Colonial Costa Rica was largely poor, isolated, and primarily composed of a large mestizo population. Costa Rica faced challenges with economic development due to poor infrastructure and received little attention from the imperial metropole. These factors may have given the ruling class and "political elites experience with self-governance" and created the prototypes for political parties.<sup>93</sup>

The social hierarchy in Costa Rica was primarily based on ancestral heritage and did not meaningfully denote distinctions in economic wealth; however, "noble lineage, race, commercial wealth, and ethnicity intertwined to define a status hierarchy topped by a highly self-conscious Creole aristocracy."<sup>94</sup> The relatively low level of economic differentiation in the colony "probably contributed to the development of egalitarianism in the social culture."<sup>95</sup> Further, governance by the creole aristocracy coupled with high degree of civilian agency meant that

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<sup>92</sup> John A Booth, "Costa Rica: The Roots of Democratic Stability," in *Democracy in Developing Countries. Latin America*, ed. Larry Jay Diamond, 2nd ed (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1999), 431.

<sup>93</sup> Booth, *Costa Rica: Quest for Democracy*, 35.

<sup>94</sup> Booth, "Costa Rica: The Roots of Democratic Stability," p. 431.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

militarism, though still present, played a much less important historical role in Costa Rican than in other Central American states.<sup>96</sup> Note, however, that this relatively egalitarian society was not democratic. In fact, participation in politics was limited to the aristocracy.<sup>97</sup>

Costa Rica gained independence after Spain's defeat in the Mexican War of Independence that concluded in 1821. Booth argues that colonial Costa Rica laid the roots for the stable democracy for which the country is recognized today. First, he notes that Costa Rica's failure to develop a "quasi-feudalistic hacienda system" meant that the elite class did not depend on military forces to ensure the availability of cheap labor, which was a driver of militarism and authoritarianism in other Central American states.<sup>98</sup> Second, Booth argues that the remoteness of the province helped spare Costa Rica from war and civil conflict that ravaged the other states. Instead, Costa Rica experienced low levels of internal political conflict that was not as affected by the development of a politicized army because the elites had "already acquired a habit of civilian rule."<sup>99</sup>

Costa Rica's early national life was riddled with problems. Between 1821 and 1905, "wealthy largeholding coffee barons usually dominated the political scene" and "militarism, conflict, and dictatorial rule became increasingly common as the nineteenth century advanced."<sup>100</sup> Interestingly, coffee cultivation in Costa Rica played an important role in the formation of state politics, and society. Though the coffee boom helped to develop the new state economically and create linkages with the globalizing world, the low level of economic diversification increased economic inequality in the burgeoning society.<sup>101</sup> When the economy

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Booth, "Costa Rica: The Roots of Democratic Stability," 431.

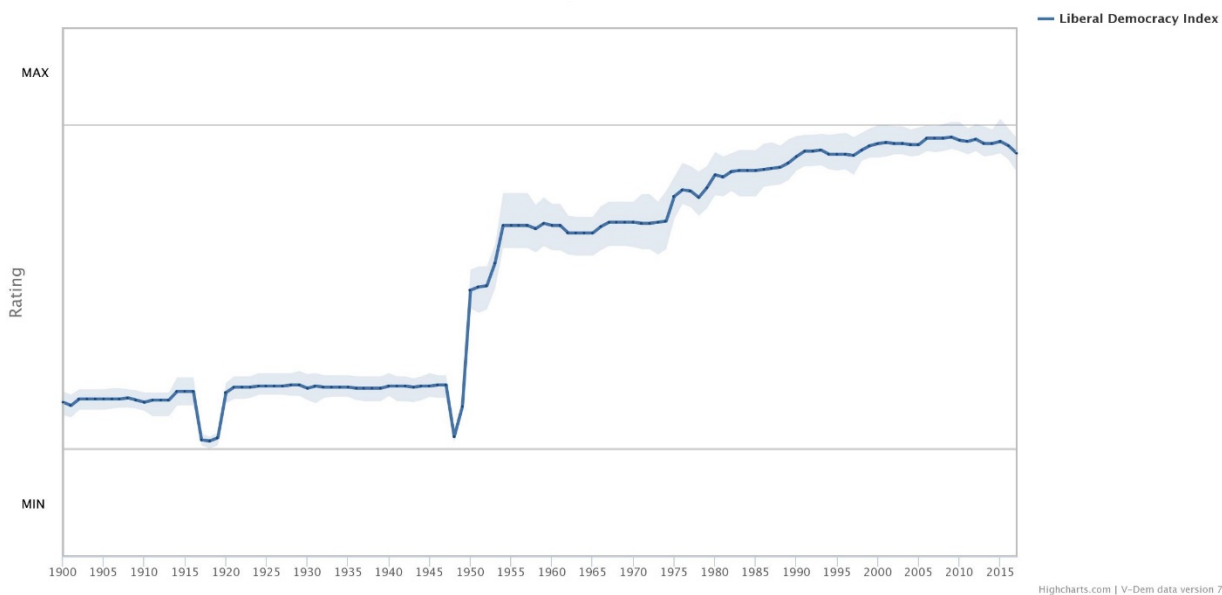
<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 432.

<sup>100</sup> Booth, *Costa Rica: Quest for Democracy*, p. 36.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 36-37.

and society diversified because of increased foreign trade in the late nineteenth century, labor organizations and special interest groups began to form while the nation became more industrialized. Note that this economic diversification and civil society growth corresponds to increasing levels of liberal democracy, as illustrated by Figure 3.1.



*Figure 3.1: Rating of Liberal Democracy in Costa Rica from 1900-2015.*<sup>102</sup>

The ruling coffee aristocracy is credited with the development of liberal democratic norms, rules, and institutions at this time. Their efforts to consolidate political power and protect their political influence in Costa Rica drove the coffee establishment to “promote parties, elections, and suffrage.”<sup>103</sup> Note that this increase in popular political participation did not include women, who were excluded from voting until 1949. At the same time that the coffee aristocracy consolidated power, class divides and inequality became more deeply entrenched in Costa Rican society. Booth argues that “an increasingly complex class structure widened the distribution of power resources throughout society and produced new class and political forces.”

<sup>102</sup> Data sourced from Michael Coppedge et al., “V-Dem Country-Year Dataset 2018” (Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) Project, 2018), <https://doi.org/10.23696/vdemcy18>.

<sup>103</sup> Booth, “Costa Rica: The Roots of Democratic Stability,” 435.

These new social and political forces were the principal drivers of democratization.<sup>104</sup> As these relationships deepened, political and civil conflict intensified and brought about a civil war in 1948. In 1949, Costa Rica consolidated democracy and adopted a new constitution. With the passage of the new constitution, voting became compulsory for all Costa Rican citizens aged eighteen or older, including women and other marginalized populations. Around this time, civil society expanded rapidly as the number and type of labor, professional, trade, and advocacy groups increased in number and type.<sup>105</sup>

The Costa Rican state under the new democratic constitution created a regime with distinct advantages and unique structure from other Central American states. According to Booth, one strength of the new Costa Rican government was the lack of a large, politicized military force. This characteristic facilitated continuity in policy enforcement and permitted “political flexibility.”<sup>106</sup> Markedly high levels of political legitimacy, compounded by a political culture of compromise and inclusion constituted another institutional advantage of the Costa Rican regime. Finally, the Costa Rican constitution included provisions for the distribution of power which prevented one branch of government from consolidating authority.

This brief history of Costa Rica illustrates the strong foundations for democracy in the norms, rules, and institutions of the state. The interaction effect between this regime and its rich, egalitarian history is ideal for the study of gender issues. The sections that follow assess the political, economic, and social realities of women in the current Costa Rican state. The analysis of the Costa Rican case provides some preliminary support for the conventional political science literature on the relationship between democracy, human rights, and gender equality. However,

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 436.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 436.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 444.

the case also shows that, despite formal rights to political participation and increasing economic opportunity, women still lag behind on social indicators of equality because of individually and institutionally internalized patriarchal norms.

### III. C. Political Indicator

#### *Voting behavior*

One of the most common institutions associated with inclusion, equity, and democratic governance is formal elections. As such, analyzing voter turnout is useful for measuring the degree to which a citizenry is engaged with politics. Scholars acknowledge that many factors affect voter turnout, including economic development, adherence to social norms, socioeconomic status, racial and ethnic demographics, and perceptions of governmental legitimacy.<sup>107</sup> However, this thesis notes that there is a gap between male and female voter participation for two important reasons. First, this comparison can establish the degree to which women feel empowered to participate in the political process. Second, voter turnout is a significant metric for the degree to which women influence policies and governance.<sup>108</sup>

Voting in Costa Rica is legally mandated, though the measure is not enforced. An analysis of the voter turnout from 1953-1987 reveals that women constituted 45-50% of the vote.<sup>109</sup> Desposato and Norrander's study on the gender gap in political participation echoes this

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<sup>107</sup> See Desposato and Norrander, "The Gender Gap in Latin America;" Mark N. Franklin, *Voter Turnout and the Dynamics of Electoral Competition in Established Democracies since 1945* (Cambridge, UK ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004): 156; Alan S. Gerber, Donald P. Green, and Christopher W. Larimer, "Social Pressure and Voter Turnout: Evidence from a Large-Scale Field Experiment," *American Political Science Review* 102, no. 01 (February 2008): 34, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S000305540808009X>..

<sup>108</sup> Desposato and Norrander, "The Gender Gap in Latin America," 141,

<sup>109</sup> Alda Facio Montejo, "Redefining Political Equality: More Than Including Women," in *The Costa Rican Womens Movement: A Reader*, ed. Ilse Abshagen Leitingner (University of Pittsburgh Press, 1994), 130, <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt9qh7kj>.

finding, arguing that the disparity between male and female turnout rate is insignificant.<sup>110</sup> The equitable distribution between male and female voter turnout rates may be attributable to compulsory voting laws and a highly egalitarian culture. Still, this data shows that Costa Rican women play an active role in the formal political processes, which constitutes an advantage that is facilitated by democratic institutions. This provides some support for the argument that democracy reduces gender gaps; however, I argue that democratization alone does not account for this outcome. Costa Rica's egalitarian culture is at least partly responsible for crafting concurrent social change in addition to the existence of liberal democracy.<sup>111</sup>

### ***Women in the national legislature***

Costa Rica is one of the twenty-two countries in the Americas that have implemented election quotas to promote gender equity in democratic elections. The country implemented quotas following petitions from the national women's organization in 1997. These petitions argued that the existing electoral process allowed political parties to discriminate against women by placing them at the bottom of electoral lists.<sup>112</sup> In response, the country instituted three distinct provisions for gender parity in its elections.<sup>113</sup> That is, there are legislated quotas for the national legislature, municipal elections, and voluntary measures that political parties are incited to adopt. Because this thesis focuses on women's participation in the national legislature, this section will focus on the provision pertaining to the *Asamblea Legislativa*, the unicameral national legislature.

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<sup>110</sup> Desposato and Norrander, "The Gender Gap in Latin America," 144.

<sup>111</sup> See Alexander and Welzel, "Eroding Patriarchy"; Hunnicutt, "Varieties of Patriarchy and Violence Against Women."

<sup>112</sup> Julie Ballington, Azza M. Karam, and International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, eds., *Women in Parliament: Beyond Numbers*, Rev. ed, Handbook Series (Stockholm, Sweden: International IDEA, 2005), 119.

<sup>113</sup> Mark P. Jones, "Quota Legislation and the Election of Women: Learning from the Costa Rican Experience," *The Journal of Politics* 66, no. 4 (November 2004): 1203–23, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0022-3816.2004.00296.x>.

According to the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA), women were elected to 46% (26/57 seats) under Costa Rica's legislated candidate quotas. These legislated candidate quotas reserve places on electoral lists for female candidates. According to the provision in Costa Rican law, the nominations for elections must follow standards of parity and alternation. In practice, this law requires that an even number of candidates belong to each gender. The law also stipulates that the list of candidates must be organized such that male and female candidates alternate. Finally, parties are incented to promote gender parity through financial incentives.

In review, gender quotas are generally regarded as an important advancement for women's rights; however, the policies have produced irregular improvements because of a lack of enforcement and "institutionalized pathologies," including "corruption, inefficiency, low accountability."<sup>114</sup> Scholarship pertaining to legislated candidate quotas in Costa Rica indicate that the policies are well-designed and implemented, which has contributed to more representation from women in the national assembly.<sup>115</sup>

The principles of democracy—inclusivity, equity, and participation—influenced the successful implementation and enforcement of gender quotas in Costa Rica. The country's stable democratic institutions seem to be an important condition for increasing the number of women in the national legislature. Finally, Costa Rica's robust political and civic culture that emphasizes diversity and equity is a probable contributor to the success of gender quotas.

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<sup>114</sup> Mala Htun and Mark P. Jones, "Engendering the Right to Participate in Decision-Making: Electoral Quotas and Women's Leadership in Latin America," in *Gender and the Politics of Rights and Democracy in Latin America*, ed. Nikki Craske and Maxine Molyneux (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York, N.Y.: Palgrave, 2002), <http://site.ebrary.com/id/10704422>, p. 33.

<sup>115</sup> Mark P. Jones, "Gender Quotas, Electoral Laws, and the Election of Women: Evidence From the Latin American Vanguard," *Comparative Political Studies* 42, no. 1 (January 2009): 56–81, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414008324993>; Richard E. Matland and Michelle M. Taylor, "Electoral System Effects on Women's Representation: Theoretical Arguments and Evidence from Costa Rica," *Comparative Political Studies* 30, no. 2 (April 1997): 186–210, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414097030002003>.

### III. D. Economic Indicator of Women's Equality in Costa Rica

#### *Wage Gap*

In addition to the fact that democratic governance has led to relative equality with respect to civil and political rights, Costa Rica's gender gap average is among the lowest in the OECD's 34-member countries. In the OECD, the average disparity between male and female pay is almost 15%, while, more broadly, women earn 19% less than men on average in emerging economies.<sup>116</sup> This gap has been attributed primarily to intervening sociopolitical factors, including the pervasiveness of patriarchal social norms.<sup>117</sup> . According to the OECD, the difference between female and male median earnings divided by the male median earnings in Costa Rica is about 3%.<sup>118</sup> Put differently, the average disparity between male and female earnings is 3%. The data indicates that Costa Rica performs well according to this metric. Indeed, this measurement illustrates that women in Costa Rica enjoy a certain level of equality. This parity is perhaps attributable to the egalitarian culture of Costa Rica, which the literature indicates would contribute to equality in the labor market. In order to more fully understand women's economic rights in Costa Rica, the next section analyses the extent to which women participate in the labor market.

#### *Characterizing Women's Inclusion in the Labor Force*

Economists have argued that it possible that the female labor force participation rate (FLPR) could be lower in democracies because increased freedoms may allow people to

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<sup>116</sup> OECD, *OECD Employment Outlook 2016*, OECD Employment Outlook (OECD Publishing, 2016), [https://doi.org/10.1787/empl\\_outlook-2016-en](https://doi.org/10.1787/empl_outlook-2016-en).

<sup>117</sup> Eva Fodor et al., "Family Policies and Gender in Hungary, Poland, and Romania," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 35 (2002): 475–90; Ania Plomien, "From Socialism to Capitalism: Women and Their Changed Relationship with the Labor Market in Poland," in *Globalization, Uncertainty, and Women's Careers: An International Comparison*, ed. Hans-Peter Blossfeld and Heather Hofmeister, 2006, 247–74.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.



voluntarily exit the labor market.<sup>119</sup> In contrast, political science literature argues that democratic regimes facilitate an increase in FLPR because they benefit the marginalized. That is, women and other disadvantaged groups would be able to participate in the labor force as a result of decreased discrimination.<sup>120</sup> Feminist IR literature seems to indicate that an increased FLPR is a byproduct of freedom and liberation for women.<sup>121</sup> Therefore, one would expect the FLPR to be higher in democracies than in non-democratic regimes.

The World Bank and International Labor Organization's model of the "labor force participation rate, female (% of female population ages 15-64)" in Costa Rica indicates an increase from 35.2% FLPR in 1990 to 51.2% in 2017. In contrast, 87% of males participated in the labor force compared to 81% of males in 2017. It is evident that the social, political, and economic conditions have facilitated women's participation in the economy, though men are far more likely to participate in the formal economy than women. FLPR is a useful statistic, but it is also necessary to detail FLPR with a higher level of specificity by analyzing the degree of male privilege in the workplace. More specifically, are women able to secure the same types of jobs as men? Also, what percentage of women hold the top executive jobs in Costa Rica's democracy? Finally, what does this examination of the quality of women's participation in the Costa Rican economy indicate about the relationship between democracy and the emancipation of women?

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<sup>119</sup> Bayanpourtehrani and Sylwester, "Democracy and Female Labor Force Participation: An Empirical Examination."

<sup>120</sup> Caroline Beer, "Democracy and Gender Equality," *Studies in Comparative International Development* 44, no. 3 (September 2009): 212–27, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12116-009-9043-2>; Stephanie Seguino, "Plus Ça Change? Evidence on Global Trends in Gender Norms and Stereotypes," *Feminist Economics* 13, no. 2 (April 2007): 1–28, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13545700601184880>.

<sup>121</sup> See Beer, "Democracy and Gender Equality"; Nancy Folbre, "Reforming Care," *Politics & Society* 36, no. 3 (September 2008): 373–87, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0032329208320567>; Shelly Lundberg and Robert A. Pollak, "Separate Spheres Bargaining and the Marriage Market," *Journal of Political Economy* 101, no. 6 (December 1993): 988–1010, <https://doi.org/10.1086/261912>; Rhona Mahony, *Kidding Ourselves: Breadwinning, Babies, and Bargaining Power* (New York, NY: BasicBooks, 1995).

An analysis of global labor market trends reveals that men and women are not included equally across the labor market. Rather, the convergence of “neoliberalism and its attendant governance structures (democracy) expose fundamental contradictions between the formal gender neutrality of market citizenship and its unspoken reliance on women’s unpaid work in social reproduction.”<sup>122</sup> Further, the types of jobs that one can secure is often highly related to one’s gender. These androcentric labor market trends also persist in the Costa Rican economy. Costa Rican women are far less likely to study and work in STEM-related fields. In fact, women comprise only 7% of tertiary-level graduates in STEM-related fields.<sup>123</sup> The sectors in which men are employed typically pay more than the jobs that women are able to secure. Additionally, women in Costa Rica only occupy about 34% of top management positions, which suggests that patriarchal norms persist despite the presence of democracy.<sup>124</sup> The discourse of international development and democracy literature does not explicitly suggest that the advent of liberal democracy would generate gender equality in STEM fields; however, these literatures do indicate that liberal democracy should advantage women. As such, one would predict a higher level of gender parity in Costa Rica’s labor market.

In all, Costa Rica’s increasing FLPR is a promising trajectory, though men continue to dramatically outpace women’s participation in the formal economy. One explanation for this disparity between female and male LFPR is related to patriarchal social norms and gender roles, which reinforce cultural stereotypes of women in the home and men in the workforce. This explanation confirms this thesis’s hypothesis that regime type is not the most significant driver

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<sup>122</sup> Isabella Bakker, “Neo-Liberal Governance and the Reprivatization of Social Reproduction: Social Provisioning and Shifting Gender Orders,” in *Power, Production and Social Reproduction: Human In/Security in the Global Political Economy*, ed. Isabella Bakker and Stephen Gill (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2003): 67, [https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230522404\\_4](https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230522404_4).

<sup>123</sup> UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) Institute for Statistics (2018), Data Center, <http://data.uis.unesco.org>.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

for the comprehensive advancement of women's rights. Instead, the preconceived notions of gendered difference and patriarchal cultural norms are more meaningful vehicles of gender inequality in the economy. In order to evaluate these social norms, the next section evaluates the women's experience in their social lives, as distinct from political and economic activity.

### **III. E. Social Indicator of Women's Equality in Costa Rica**

It is possible to address the quality of women's lives in society through an examination of the predominant sociocultural notions of gender. This section seeks to characterize the extent to which patriarchal norms and rules dominate women's social, familial, and cultural lives. In a similar manner to the other indicators, political science scholarship would predict that democratic societies are more socially cohesive, less violent and more equitable than other regime types. The analysis that follows deviates slightly from these theories by showing that women

To begin, Costa Rica was ranked number 32 out of 144 on the Global Gender Gap Index's list of the world's most equal countries. This ranking is relatively high, which is unsurprising given the relative equality of men and women with respect to civil, political, and economic rights. Still, a common association between Latin America and gender is the monolithic culture of machismo. Though there is variation from within the distinct countries, cultural attitudes in Costa Rica are deeply patriarchal in many ways.<sup>125</sup> Men generally assume the role of provider while women are considered responsible for the family and household. According to a survey of nearly 5000 individuals from Costa Rica, 40% of men thought it was

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<sup>125</sup> Judith L. Gibbons and Sandra E. Luna, "For Men Life Is Hard, for Women Life Is Harder: Gender Roles in Central America," in *Psychology of Gender Through the Lens of Culture*, ed. Saba Safdar and Natasza Kosakowska-Berezecka (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2015), 307–25, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-14005-6\\_15](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-14005-6_15).

the mother's role—more than the father's—to take care of children.<sup>126</sup> The same study found that 43.4% of men and 31.2% of women agreed to the statement that the man should always be ready for sex.<sup>127</sup> These data illustrate the toxic masculinity that pervades Costa Rican society despite stable democratic governance.

Though the Costa Rican government has not published any official statistics on violence against women and girls, NGOs, IGOs, and news outlets have reported an increase in domestic violence and, more broadly, VAW/G. It is true that reporting instances of VAW/G has increased as some international actors have worked to engender global public policy and as women have become more aware of the rights that they have and the legal recourse that may be available to them. Still, international organizations and the Costa Rican government alike have acknowledged the pandemic of femicide, or the killing of women for gender-based motives, in Costa Rica.<sup>128</sup>

### **III. F. Conclusion**

Throughout this chapter, I have explored gendered outcomes through the lens of Costa Rica's stable and high-performing democracy. In each sub-section, I compared the dominant political theory with the reality of women according to that metric. This process revealed important truths that should be incorporated into the larger body of knowledge about democracies and gender. First, democratic institutions are useful for their ability to facilitate public discourse and participation in governance, which produces an increase in civil and

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<sup>126</sup> Manuel Ortega Hegg, Rebeca Centeno Orozco, and Marcelina Castillo Venerio, "Masculinidad y Factores Socioculturales Asociados Al Comportamiento de Los Hombres: Estudio En Cuatro Países de Centroamérica" (Managua: United Nations, 2005).

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> "Gender Violence Forces Costa Rica to Declare State of Emergency." TeleSUR. May 03, 2018. Accessed September 25, 2018. <https://www.telesurtv.net/english/news/Gender-Violence-Forces-Costa-Rica-to-Declare-State-of-Emergency-20180503-0020.html>.

political rights. Even though the Global Gender Gap report indicates that women and men are relatively more equal than many other societies, women seem to have benefitted to a lesser extent from democratic norms, rules, and institutions. This indicates that rather than regime type alone, the degree to which a society internalizes patriarchal norms at the individual and institutional level is a more significant influencer for women's quality of life.

Costa Rica is an interesting case to study at the nexus of gender and democracy. It is clear that the relatively high degree of egalitarianism is an important factor with respect to the progressive female policies that the government has been able to enact. Despite elevated levels of social parity, Costa Rica did not necessarily perform as well as one would expect with respect to the economic indicators. The lack of data notwithstanding, the country still faces significant obstacles with respect to maximizing freedoms for women.

Moving forward, this thesis will examine Costa Rica in a comparative perspective to understand the degree to which liberal democracies improve the quality of life for women. Is it possible that governments with lower degrees of institutionalized democracies can produce similar or better outcomes for women? If so, what does the notion that gendered outcomes are not necessarily tied to regime type imply for the body of literature as a whole? In the next chapter, I examine Chile as a case of recent democratization. With this regime type in mind, political science theories would predict that women in Chile face a number of challenges related to changing regimes. As such, we would predict most metrics to be less promising than Costa Rica but more optimistic than Cuba.

## IV. Democracies and Democratization in Practice: Chile

### IV. A. Overview

Chile is a popular area of focus for political science scholars because of its complex historical relationship with democracy.<sup>129</sup> Though the 2018 re-election of President Sebastián Piñera may illustrate a change in the political culture and the escalating conservative movement in Chile, the country remains a highly rated democracy.<sup>130</sup> A combination of Cold War politics, international interventions, and dynamic sociocultural conditions have shaped the current political landscape in Chile. As such, the case poses a unique opportunity for analysis in the context of this thesis.

The theories of democracy outlined in Chapter 1 would indicate that established democracies like Costa Rica are the best types of government for the advancement of women's rights.<sup>131</sup> This chapter examines the recently democratized Chilean government and evaluates the extent to which *new* democracies can benefit women and maximize human rights.<sup>132</sup> While conventional political science literature argues that democratic regimes are the chief proponents of human rights, there is a subset of mainstream democratization literature that argues

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<sup>129</sup> See Alan Angell, "The Transition to Democracy in Chile: A Model or an Exceptional Case?," *Parliamentary Affairs* 46, no. 4 (October 1993), <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordjournals.pa.a052442>.

<sup>130</sup> Some scholars suggest that the emergence of right-wing politics may also indicate the erosion of democratic norms and institutions. See Ignacio Arana Araya, "Chile 2016: ¿El Nadir de La Legitimidad Democrática?," *Revista de Ciencia Política (Santiago)* 37, no. 2 (2017): 305–34, <https://doi.org/10.4067/s0718-090x2017000200305>; Camila Jara, "Democratic Legitimacy under Strain? Declining Political Support and Mass Demonstrations in Chile," *Revista Europea de Estudios Latinoamericanos y Del Caribe / European Review of Latin American and Caribbean Studies*, no. 97 (2014): 25–50; Sara Niedzwiecki and Jennifer Pribble, "Social Policies and Center-Right Governments in Argentina and Chile," *Latin American Politics and Society* 59, no. 03 (2017): 72–97, <https://doi.org/10.1111/laps.12027>.

<sup>131</sup> See Bueno de Mesquita et al., "Thinking inside the Box: A Closer Look at Democracy and Human Rights"; Davenport, "State Repression and the Tyrannical Peace"; Davenport and Armstrong, "Democracy and the Violation of Human Rights: A Statistical Analysis from 1976 to 1996"; Englehart, "State Capacity, State Failure, and Human Rights"; Freeman, *Human Rights*; Hayes, "Human Rights Discourse, Gender and HIV and AIDS in Southern Malawi."

<sup>132</sup> Note that this thesis defines a recent democratic transition as the consolidation of democracy in the years following the arrival of the women's movement in the region.

democracies are complex regimes that may not maximize human rights during their early stages.<sup>133</sup> This study of Chilean democracy supports the case that regime type is not the only significant driver of women's rights, nor is democracy an immediate causal factor for pro-women social outcomes. Further, this case alludes to the existence of patriarchal social norms, which affects the extent to which women are empowered and advantaged by the advent of democracy in Chile.

The primary argument of this thesis is that the relationship between regime type and the advancement of women's issues is more complex than dominant political science theories suggest. That is, the existence of democracy is often an ineffective predictor of the advancement of women's positions. Though there are often occasions where women benefit from democratic deliberation and governance, there are other deeply significant factors that affect women's experiences, especially the degree of patriarchal norms and history of social inequity, stratification, and exclusion.<sup>134</sup> This thesis contributes to democratic theory and feminist political science scholarship by comparing women's experiences in varying regimes types.

This chapter evaluates the quality of women's lives in the context of Chile's recent transition to democracy. Throughout this chapter, I will trace the political and sociocultural history of Chile to inform the discussion of modern Chilean democracy. Following this history, I

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<sup>133</sup> See Christian Davenport, "Multi-Dimensional Threat Perception and State Repression: An Inquiry into Why States Apply Negative Sanctions," *American Journal of Political Science* 39, no. 3 (August 1995): 683, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2111650>; Christian Davenport, "Human Rights and the Democratic Proposition," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 43, no. 1 (February 1999): 92–116, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002799043001006>; Adam Przeworski, "Some Problems in the Study of the Transition to Democracy," in *Transitions From Authoritarian Rule*, ed. Guillermo O'Donnell, Philippe C. Schmitter, and Laurence Whitehead, vol. 3 (The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986).

<sup>134</sup> See Brown, "Neo-Liberalism and the End of Liberal Democracy;" Wendy Brown, "American Nightmare: Neoliberalism, Neoconservatism, and De-Democratization," *Political Theory* 34, no. 6 (December 2006): 690–714, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0090591706293016>; R. W. Connell, "The State, Gender, and Sexual Politics: Theory and Appraisal," *Theory and Society* 19, no. 5 (October 1990): 507–44, <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00147025>; Jocelyn Viterna and Kathleen M. Fallon, "Democratization, Women's Movements, and Gender-Equitable States: A Framework for Comparison," *American Sociological Review* 73, no. 4 (August 2008): 668–89, <https://doi.org/10.1177/000312240807300407>.

will situate the dominant theoretical framework detailing the capabilities of new democracies against the reality of women's status in Chile. Finally, I will place the theory and practice of democracy in Chile in a conversation with one another to more accurately interpret the effect that regime type has on women.

#### IV. B. Historical Context

Before assessing governance and women's rights in contemporary Chile, it is necessary to explore the events and conditions that have shaped the modern state. The section that follows addresses this history by tracing the key developments in political culture and systems of governance. In addition to providing useful background information, this historical context may reveal important parallels that can help to explain prevailing sentiments or trends in modern Chile. This context begins at the time of Chile's conquest and traces the history of political and social trends until the consolidation of democracy in 1990.

Pedro de Valdivia conquered Chile for the Spanish empire in the 1540s. Like Costa Rica, Chile was established as a small, poor, agrarian colony in the periphery of the Spanish-American empire; however, society in Chile was highly stratified by ethnicity and national origin.<sup>135</sup> The Spanish empire apportioned natives to Spanish settlers throughout Chile as *encomiendas*. This practice was a part of a system in which *encomenderos* (the holders of *encomiendas*) "civilized" natives in exchange for hard labor and the forced payment of tribute.<sup>136</sup> This system of labor laid the foundation for the modern Chilean state, for the formation of "great estates rule by a land-owning elite and worked by a semi-servile rural population...lies at the heart of the growth of

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<sup>135</sup> Simon Collier and William F. Sater, *A History of Chile, 1808-2002*, 2nd. ed, Cambridge Latin American Studies 82 (Cambridge [England] ; New York, N.Y: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

<sup>136</sup> German A. de la Reza, "How Spanish America Disintegrated: Selected Cross-National Factors," *Revista de Historia de America*, no. 140 (2009): 9.



Chilean culture and nationality.”<sup>137</sup> That is, the distinct social and political inequities of modern Chile can be traced to the historical roots of the *encomienda* system.<sup>138</sup>

The *encomienda* system of labor was detrimental to the population of indigenous communities in colonial Chile. The declining number of natives able to support the *encomienda* system required Spanish settlers to secure labor forces through alternative methods. In order to preserve ranching, which was the “mainstay of the Chilean economy by the seventeenth century,” colonists began to draft forced labor from neighboring regions.<sup>139</sup> With the rise of forced labor and the consolidation of land into *haciendas*, or agricultural estates, class and ethnic divides became more pronounced in Chile.<sup>140</sup>

During this period of history, is appropriate to describe Chile as a rural country in which “the small creole upper class coexisted with the great mass of the laboring poor.”<sup>141</sup> The ethnic division between the “predominantly mestizo (Spanish-Amerindian) majority and the more definitely European upper class consisting of ‘creoles’ (Spanish-Americans) and *peninsulares* (Spaniards from Spain)” became an important factor for the formation of Chilean national identity.<sup>142</sup>

Chile formally declared its liberation from Spain in 1810, which gave rise to a war of independence. Chilean forces defeated Spain and became independent in 1818; however, the new

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<sup>137</sup> Collier and Sater, *A History of Chile, 1808-2002*, 7.

<sup>138</sup> David E. Hojman, “Poverty and Inequality in Chile: Are Democratic Politics and Neoliberal Economics Good for You?,” *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs* 38, no. 2/3 (1996): 76-77, <https://doi.org/10.2307/166361>.

<sup>139</sup> Collier and Sater, *A History of Chile, 1808-2002*, 9.

<sup>140</sup> See: Collier and Sater, *A History of Chile, 1808-2002*; Brian Loveman, *Chile: The Legacy of Hispanic Capitalism*, 3rd ed, Latin American Histories (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001); Claudio Robles-Ortiz, “Agrarian Capitalism and Rural Labour: The Hacienda System in Central Chile, 1870-1920,” *Journal of Latin American Studies* 41, no. 3 (2009): 493–526; Heidi Tinsman, *Partners in Conflict: The Politics of Gender, Sexuality, and Labor in the Chilean Agrarian Reform, 1950-1973*, Next Wave (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002).

<sup>141</sup> Collier and Sater, *A History of Chile, 1808-2002*, 8-9.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

state struggled and failed to institute democratic institutions and norms at this time. Instead, a bloody civil war erupted, dividing Chileans along religious and ideological lines into liberal federalists and conservative centralists. During this period, the new Chilean government alternated between authoritarian dictatorial rule and the lack of political order altogether.<sup>143</sup> The civil war ended in 1830 with the conservative coalition emerging victorious. The new governing powers made progress towards instituting political order in Chile and drafted a constitution in 1833; however, “coup attempts and conspiracies continued to plague Chile.”<sup>144</sup> The fifty years that followed marked an era of development. During this period, the Chilean state expanded its administrative capabilities and made progress towards developing the infrastructure and national economy.<sup>145</sup>

The latter half of the nineteenth century also brought about a patent shift in the political climate of Chile. Rising discontent with the authoritarian government became increasingly evident as ideological, political, and regional divisions intensified.<sup>146</sup> Inspired by the Revolution of 1848 in France, a sect of thinkers began to oppose the autocratic regime in favor of liberalization and secularization.<sup>147</sup> Conservatives adopted a “liberal creed” in a strategic effort to maintain control of the state. As a result, conservatives championed a series of reforms, which included legitimizing the electoral process, restricting presidential power, and marginally expanding suffrage.<sup>148</sup> While these reforms were important steps towards democratization in

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<sup>143</sup> Arturo Valenzuela, “Chile: Origins and Consolidation of a Latin American Democracy,” in *Democracy in Developing Countries. Latin America*, ed. Larry Jay Diamond, 2nd ed (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1999), 194.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, 194.

<sup>145</sup> Valenzuela, “Chile: Origins and Consolidation of a Latin American Democracy,” 196.

<sup>146</sup> See Loveman, *Chile*, 122; Valenzuela, “Chile: Origins and Consolidation of a Latin American Democracy,” 196.

<sup>147</sup> Valenzuela, “Chile: Origins and Consolidation of a Latin American Democracy,” 196.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, 197.

Chile, there were still those, including President José Manuel Balmaceda (1886-1891), who resisted their implementation.<sup>149</sup>

Congressional forces eventually prevailed in 1891, which eventually ushered in an era of parliamentary government until 1927. This period of Chilean history signals another significant change in the political culture and processes of the state. One of the most important consequences of this change was the shift in the “center of gravity of the political system...from the executive to the legislature, from the capital to local areas, and from state officials and their agents to local party leaders and political brokers.”<sup>150</sup> In other words, the parliamentary government was responsible for liberalization and increased democratization. Another notable consequence of this shift in politics was the expansion of the influence of parliamentary parties to “national networks with grassroots organizations.”<sup>151</sup> Thirdly, increased levels of liberal democracy coupled with changes in the social structure contributed to the creation of class-based electoral parties.<sup>152</sup>

In 1924, economic distress as a result of the failure of the nitrate industry compounded by failures in the “cumbersome and venal Parliamentary Republic” led to a military junta’s ascension to power.<sup>153</sup> A new constitution was adopted in 1925, but the Chilean state remained politically turbulent until the elections of 1932. The elections of 1938 marked another significant change in the political landscape. In the decade following these elections, the government “expanded social-welfare policies, encouraged the rise of legal unionism, and actively pursued import-substituting industrialization.”<sup>154</sup> The polarizing politics of the Cold War abroad and the

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<sup>149</sup> Collier and Sater, *A History of Chile, 1808-2002*, 145.

<sup>150</sup> Valenzuela, “Chile: Origins and Consolidation of a Latin American Democracy,” 198.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, 198.

<sup>152</sup> Collier and Sater, *A History of Chile, 1808-2002*, 197.

<sup>153</sup> Valenzuela, “Chile: Origins and Consolidation of a Latin American Democracy,” 199.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, 200.

success of domestic collectivist policies culminated in the 1970 election of the world's first democratically elected Marxist president, Salvador Allende. From 1970-1973, Allende made attempts to move Chile towards a socialist economy with varying degrees of success.<sup>155</sup>

The subsequent breakdown of Chilean democracy was a complex process that is deeply engrained in the memory of the state and the global community at large. Polarization and extremism plagued the country as did the failure of certain economic policies. Rising military discontent was first converted into action in late June 1973 and neared its end one month later.<sup>156</sup> Democracy in Chile disintegrated rapidly, no doubt exacerbated by the "external meddling" of international actors, especially the United States.<sup>157</sup> On September 11, 1973 the collapse of democracy was confirmed and the state "abruptly transformed from an open and participatory political system into a repressive and authoritarian one."<sup>158</sup>

The military dictatorship led by General Pinochet engineered a government that would rectify the "inherent weaknesses of liberal democracy, which they believed encouraged corruption, radicalism, and demagoguery."<sup>159</sup> The militant regime implemented strict policies of political repression and economic cutbacks to establish "political control and achieve economic stabilization."<sup>160</sup> In 1975, the government continued to consolidate power through intensified securitization and policing efforts. These deeply repressive and violent policies notably included thousands of instances in which individuals posing a threat to the regime were "disappeared." Additionally, the regime adopted "shock treatment" economic policies, which involved the

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<sup>155</sup> Collier and Sater, *A History of Chile, 1808-2002*, 325-352.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, 354.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, 335. See also Valenzuela, "Chile: Origins and Consolidation of a Latin American Democracy," 220; Loveman, *Chile*, 257-258.

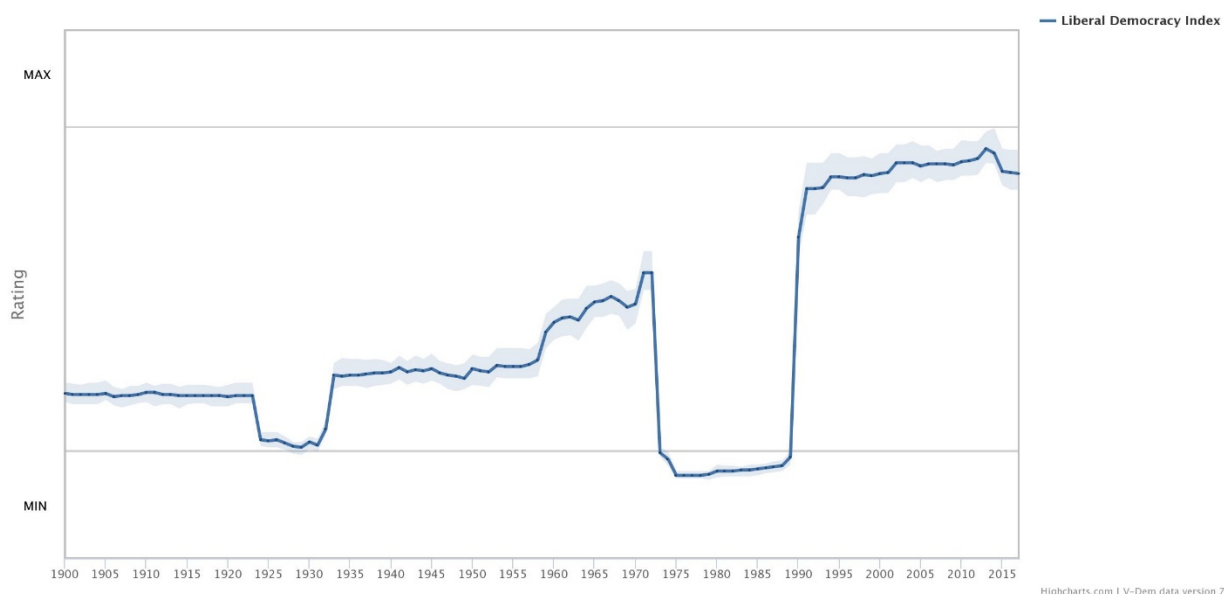
<sup>158</sup> Valenzuela, "Chile: Origins and Consolidation of a Latin American Democracy," 222.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, 222.

<sup>160</sup> Loveman, *Chile*, 263.

drastic application of neoliberal monetary and fiscal policy in conjunction with “politically motivated cuts in particular government agencies and public enterprises.”<sup>161</sup>

In 1980, the militant authoritarian dictatorship drafted a constitution that is still in use today, though amendments have since been added. In 1988, Pinochet lost a referendum on whether he should stay in power.<sup>162</sup> General Pinochet stepped down as Chile’s head of state in 1990 but remained in power as commander-in-chief of the country’s armed forces. Patricio Aylwin succeeded Pinochet as president and set the country on a path towards the reestablishment of democracy.<sup>163</sup> After four years of dramatic social, economic, and political reforms, Eduardo Frei Ruiz Tagle succeeded Aylwin as the President of Chile and contributed to the country’s recent trend of “widening democracy.”<sup>164</sup>



*Figure 4.1: Rating of Liberal Democracy in Chile from 1900-2015.*<sup>165</sup>

<sup>161</sup> Ibid., 264.

<sup>162</sup> Valenzuela, “Chile: Origins and Consolidation of a Latin American Democracy,” 230.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid., 232.

<sup>164</sup> Collier and Sater, *A History of Chile, 1808-2002*, 389.

<sup>165</sup> Data sourced from Michael Coppedge et al., “V-Dem Country-Year Dataset 2018” (Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) Project, 2018), <https://doi.org/10.23696/vdemcy18>.

Why is a historical overview of Chile's major social and political transformations important to the relationship between democracy and positive outcomes for women? Put simply, this analysis illustrates a history of constitutionalism complicated by the more recent memory of Pinochet's traumatic dictatorship. This thesis seeks to answer how this history and present relationship with democracy can be mobilized to explain the status gender equality in Chile. Is the fact that Chile is presently a consolidated democracy the most important factor for the advancement of women's rights and freedoms? On the other hand, is the country's legacy of militarism, social repression, and masculinity also relevant with respect to women's issues? The sections that follow attempt to characterize the extent to which men and women are equal in Chilean society. The aim of this study is not to show that the political, economic, and social indicators are contrary to mainstream political science theory in all cases. Instead, this chapter supports the argument that even where democracy is present, men and women are unequal. As such, it is reasonable to conclude that the presence of democracy is not a sufficient condition for creating gender quality.

#### **IV. C. Political Indicator of Women's Equality in Chile**

This section examines female political participation in order to gauge women's involvement in the political process, which helps to reveal the level of gender equality in Chile . In order to arrive at a holistic description of women's political lives, this section relies on existing datasets, which may be limited in scope and availability. Data limitations notwithstanding, this analysis reveals that women participate unequally in politics because Chilean gender norms portray women as political outsiders.”<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>166</sup> Lisa Baldez, *Why Women Protest: Women's Movements in Chile* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511756283>, 12.

### *Voting behavior*

The first analysis of formal political participation describes the voting behavior and turnout of women. Recall that there are a number of factors which may affect voter turnout, including economic development, adherence to social norms, socioeconomic status, racial and ethnic demographics, and perceptions of governmental legitimacy.<sup>167</sup> Disaggregating voter participation by gender enables a study of whether one group is more likely to participate in politics than another. These analyses are important because they help to reveal the factors contributing to gender inequity in political participation.

The government of Chile does not report voter turnout disaggregated by gender, which complicates this study. Still, there are a number of viable sources of information, which illustrate the extent to which women are engaged in formal political processes. According to the Sixth wave of the World Values Survey (2010-2014), males in Chile were between 1-2% more likely to answer ‘always’ to the question: “Do you vote in national elections?” This difference is marginal but does constitute an inequality between men and women’s voting behavior.

The disparity between men and women’s likeliness to vote poses a serious problem for mainstream democracy theorists’ explanation of political equality under democratic regimes. That is, these theories would argue that democratic regimes uniquely allow for all citizens to participate in politics equally, making them the only fully legitimate type of government.<sup>168</sup> Because there is a gender difference in the rate at which men and women participate in politics, it is likely that there is an intervening condition that prevents or complicates women’s inclusion in political processes. In order to complete this description of the gap between men and women in

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<sup>167</sup> See Desposato and Norrander, “The Gender Gap in Latin America,” 156; Franklin, *Voter Turnout and the Dynamics of Electoral Competition in Established Democracies since 1945*; Gerber, Green, and Larimer, “Social Pressure and Voter Turnout,” 34; Lehoucq and Wall.”

<sup>168</sup> Steven Wall, “Democracy and Equality,” *The Philosophical Quarterly* (1950-) 57, no. 228 (2007): 417.

formal processes of political decision-making, the sub-section that follows will detail the degree to which women occupy positions of power in the national legislature.

### ***Women in the national legislature***

In order to determine women's ability to exercise power in politics, it is necessary to analyze the extent to which women occupy positions of political power. Despite the supposed strengthening of Chile's democracy, there is a significant disparity in gender representation in the country's national legislature. In 1997, 7.5% of the legislature was composed of female representatives. This disparity has decreased over time, yet, according to the World Bank, only 15.8% of national legislative representatives in 2017 were female. To contextualize the extent to which politics in Chile are inequitable, the world average of women in the national legislature is 23.7%.

In an effort to address the significant disparity between male and female representation in politics, women have pushed for electoral gender quotas since the late 1990s. Despite this activism and the spread of such policies across the region, Chile has not adopted legislated gender quotas.<sup>169</sup> While some political parties have instituted voluntary electoral quotas, these policies have failed to eliminate Chile's significant gender disparity in the national legislature for a few reasons.<sup>170</sup> First, the implementation of these policies has been unequal. Second, the adoption of voluntary gender quotas has been largely limited to "internal elections of the party leadership rather than for general election slates."<sup>171</sup> Finally, a survey of electoral habits reveals

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<sup>169</sup> Melanie M. Hughes, Mona Lena Krook, and Pamela Paxton, "Transnational Women's Activism and the Global Diffusion of Gender Quotas," *International Studies Quarterly* 59, no. 2 (June 2015): 357–72, <https://doi.org/10.1111/isqu.12190>.

<sup>170</sup> See Tricia Gray, "Electoral Gender Quotas: Lessons from Argentina and Chile," *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 22, no. 1 (January 2003): 52–78, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1470-9856.00064>; Jennifer M. Piscopo, "States as Gender Equality Activists: The Evolution of Quota Laws in Latin America," *Latin American Politics and Society* 57, no. 03 (2015): 27–49, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1548-2456.2015.00278.x>.

<sup>171</sup> Gray, "Electoral Gender Quotas." 55.



that both men and women are more likely to vote for male candidates.<sup>172</sup> The negative gender bias in electoral politics is a result of Chile's traditional, patriarchal social norms.<sup>173</sup>

Before analyzing the landscape of women's economic participation, it is necessary to reassert the importance of the demonstrable gap between male and female political participation. Equal access in the political decision-making of one's government is increasingly recognized by political science scholars and the United Nations as a necessary condition for democratic governance.<sup>174</sup> It is possible that this constitutes an important contribution to the definitional debate surrounding operational democracies; however, this thesis does not propose a new definition for democracy. Rather, this thesis argues that it is necessary to gender our understanding of democratic governance and adjust democratic theories accordingly.

#### **IV. D. Economic Indicators of Women's Equality in Chile**

Because power, politics, and gender dynamics affect economic outcomes, this section analyzes the economic effects that democratization produces for women. To arrive at a description of women's experience in the economy, this analysis includes a description of the difference between median male and female earnings. Moreover, this section details female participation in the labor force relative to male participation. Finally, this section examines whether men and women are able to secure the same types of jobs. The data below reveals that women in Chile are at a disadvantage in the economy despite democratization.

##### ***Wage Gap***

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<sup>172</sup> Francisco Pino, "Is There Gender Bias Among Voters? Evidence from the Chilean Congressional Elections" (University of Chile, Department of Economics, May 2017), <https://EconPapers.repec.org/RePEc:udc:wpaper:wp444>.

<sup>173</sup> B. R. Ruiz and R. Rubio-Marin, "The Gender of Representation: On Democracy, Equality, and Parity," *International Journal of Constitutional Law* 6, no. 2 (March 21, 2008): 287–316, <https://doi.org/10.1093/icon/mon007>.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid.

An analysis of democracy's effect on women's economic participation begs a discussion of the gender wage gap in Chile. The gender wage gap, or the difference between median earnings of men and women relative to median earnings of men, shows variable degrees of inequity for women in Chile. Alarming, the gender wage gap in Chile is trending towards inequality.<sup>175</sup> According to the OECD, the discrepancy between male and female median earnings in Chile was 14% in 1998. From 1998 to 2017, the trend in gender wage inequality briefly decreased before rising once again. Today in Chile, the median male salary is 21% higher than female's salaries.

The disparity between male and female median earnings constitutes a significant disadvantage for women in Chile's economy. The deeply gendered nature of the economy contrasts the assumptions of conventional political science literature because these literatures would suggest that democratic governance ought to decrease gender inequality over time. To more fully understand the landscape of gender difference, the analysis that follows analyses female labor force participation and the quality of women's economic participation.

### ***Characterizing Women's Inclusion in the Labor Force***

As previously discussed, theorists expect that democratization results in an increased female labor force participation rate (FLPR).<sup>176</sup> Though the gap between male and female participation in the labor force has slowly decreased over time, the FLPR in Chile continues to show significant gender disparity. The World Bank and International Labor Organization's model of the Chilean "labor force participation rate, female (% of female population ages 15-64)" reveals an increase in FLPR from 35.1% in 1990 to 57.5% in 2017. Comparatively, male

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<sup>175</sup> OECD, *OECD Employment Outlook 2016*, OECD Employment Outlook (OECD Publishing, 2016), [https://doi.org/10.1787/empl\\_outlook-2016-en](https://doi.org/10.1787/empl_outlook-2016-en).

<sup>176</sup> Bayanpourtehrani and Sylwester, "Democracy and Female Labor Force Participation: An Empirical Examination."

participation in the labor force has remained largely unchanged since 1990. That is, 80% of males participated in the labor force in 1990 compared to 79% of males in 2017. One possible explanation for this disparity between male and female labor force participation, at least in the short run, is patriarchal cultural attitudes.<sup>177</sup>

In addition to women's significantly lower rate of employment relative to men, the types of jobs which women secure in Chile are "feminized" and are typically of a lower quality than men's jobs. The OECD estimates that women in Chile are twice as likely to be employed in low-paying jobs.<sup>178</sup> Further, women in Chile are less likely than men to pursue STEM careers regardless of educational attainment. Finally, according to the World Bank, women led only 4.5% of firms in 2010 compared to a global average of 18.6% and a regional average of 21.6%. The way that jobs are gendered in favor of men Chile reveals that in addition to being employed to a lesser extent than men, women obtain worse, lower-paying jobs.<sup>179</sup>

How should we interpret this disparity in wages and labor force participation? Moreover, what does this difference mean for the way that scholars should treat democracy and gendered economic outcomes? Because theories of democratic governance argue that these regimes promote equality, it is necessary to test that assumption in the context of Chile's economy. The disparity between male and female labor force participation and the median earnings casts doubt on the conventional political science view by demonstrating a marked difference between the extent to which citizens can expect equal economic opportunities. It is important to note that because Chile is a relatively new democracy, it is possible that wages and FLPR will become

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<sup>177</sup> Dante Contreras and Gonzalo Plaza, "Cultural Factors in Women's Labor Force Participation in Chile," *Feminist Economics* 16, no. 2 (April 2010): 27–46, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13545701003731815>.

<sup>178</sup> See Contreras and Plaza, "Cultural Factors in Women's Labor Force Participation in Chile;" OECD, ed., *Closing the Gender Gap: Act Now* (Paris: OECD, 2012).

<sup>179</sup> Georgina Waylen, "Gender and Democratic Politics: A Comparative Analysis of Consolidation in Argentina and Chile," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 32, no. 3 (2000): 765–93.

more equitable to men over time. Still, economic disparities between male and female is a global phenomenon, even in the world's most established democracies. The Chile case seems to confirm that democratization without shifts in social conceptions of gender difference or other intervening factors does not necessarily result in equitable economic outcomes.

#### IV. E. Social Indicator of Women's Equality in Chile

After analyzing Chile's relatively low performance with respect to political participation and economic agency, it is necessary to trace the social conditions that affect women in this context. The conditions evaluated in this section may reveal explanations for the unequal treatment demonstrated by the economic and political indicators. Conventional democracy theory does not explicitly state the extent to which democratic regimes should embody hegemonic patriarchal norms; however, studies show that highly patriarchal democracies create stratification and inequality in societies despite their regime characteristics.<sup>180</sup> Thus, the extent to which a society or state exhibits patriarchal norms is deeply related to the positive outcomes of democratization expected by the literature on democracy and democratization. This section evaluates the social norms, beliefs, and behaviors of Chile to determine the extent to which the society can be characterized as embodying hegemonic masculine and patriarchal norms.

As previously discussed, the literature indicates that Chile is a highly patriarchal society.<sup>181</sup> According to a survey conducted by the United Nations Development Program in 2010, 62% of Chileans were opposed to achieving full gender equality. The Global Gender Gap

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<sup>180</sup> See Htun, *Sex and the State : Abortion, Divorce, and the Family under Latin American Dictatorships and Democracies*; Deniz Kandiyoti, "Bargaining with Patriarchy," *Gender & Society* 2, no. 3 (September 1988): 274–90, <https://doi.org/10.1177/089124388002003004>; Chung-Hee Sarah Soh, "Sexual Equality, Male Superiority, and Korean Women in Politics: Changing Gender Relations in a ?Patriarchal Democracy?," *Sex Roles* 28, no. 1–2 (January 1993): 73–90, <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00289748>.

<sup>181</sup> Angela J. Niernan et al., "Gender Role Beliefs and Attitudes toward Lesbians and Gay Men in Chile and the U.S.," *Sex Roles* 57, no. 1–2 (August 2, 2007): 61–67, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-007-9197-1>.

Report reveals that Chile was ranked 70<sup>th</sup> globally with respect to gender equality. This ranking is consistent with the notion that deeply patriarchal norms exist within Chile's society.

Interestingly, there have been a variety of social policies that have been introduced with the aim to empower women, which may be a product of democratic governance. However, these policies have been largely ineffective at lessening negative attitudes towards women or reducing gendered inequality.<sup>182</sup>

Though democracy ended the official patriarchal ideology of Pinochet's regime, the family structure and gender roles still embody male-centric values.<sup>183</sup> The family structure in Chile has been described as predominately authoritarian with a "preference for the paternal figure, which confers upon him the power to make decisions and outline possible or prohibited fields in function of prevailing images of gender."<sup>184</sup> Men are typically considered the provider whereas women are largely linked with domestic and familial duties.

While these data confirm that Chile's society embodies patriarchal norms, it is important to note that no masculinity looks the same across geographical and sociocultural contexts. In fact, there are some indications that Chilean society is also liberal, especially with respect to public opinion regarding divorce and single-parent households.<sup>185</sup> Though democracy may have contributed to the liberalization of certain aspects of Chile, it is impossible to view these beliefs in isolation. That is, it is evident that there are harmful social attitudes towards women that contributed to the construction of binding gender roles and notions of female difference.

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<sup>182</sup> These policies include a measure to expand childcare coverage and parental leave, increased penalties for femicide, and a law aimed at tackling gender pay gaps. See Ricardo Hausmann, Laura D. Tyson, and Saadia Zahidi, *The Global Gender Gap Report: 2012* (Geneva: World Economic Forum, 2012).

<sup>183</sup> See Rebecca Pearse and Raewyn Connell, "Gender Norms and the Economy: Insights from Social Research," *Feminist Economics* 22, no. 1 (January 2, 2016): 30–53, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13545701.2015.1078485>; Tinsman, *Partners in Conflict*.

<sup>184</sup> Contreras and Plaza, "Cultural Factors in Women's Labor Force Participation in Chile," 32.

<sup>185</sup> Contreras and Plaza, "Cultural Factors in Women's Labor Force Participation in Chile," 34.

#### IV. F. Conclusion

The political, economic, and social evaluation of women's issues in Chile reveals high degrees of inequity that appears to be increasing over time. Chile's historic performance on the Global Gender Gap Index confirms this trend, dropping in international rankings from 65 in 2008 to 87 in 2012.<sup>186</sup> Though women are constitutionally afforded the same political rights as men, women do not participate in formal political structures to the same extent as men. Attempts to legislate progressive social policies certainly demonstrate a step in the right direction, but the failure of these policies to translate into meaningful change seems to indicate a deeply significant social obstacle.

The case of Chile complicates the primary argument of this thesis. It seems to be clear that the existence of democracy as a system of governance does not inherently promote equality, human rights, or social equity. The democracy theories that argue or presuppose this trait of democratic regimes are limited because they ignore dominant sociocultural beliefs and attitudes towards gender, which affects the extent to which women can participate equally in society. Still, Chile has made a number of strides with respect to civil and political rights. Theories of democracy without engaging with critical feminist literature are unable to explain the persistence of inequality and hegemonic masculinity in Chile; however, the deeply interrelated nature of social norms and societal institutions and rules offers a clearer explanation for interpreting women's

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<sup>186</sup> Hausmann, Tyson, and Zahidi, *The Global Gender Gap Report*.

## V. Democracies and Democratization in Practice: Cuba

### V. A. Overview

The political, economic, and social dynamics of post-revolution Cuba continues to hold a firm grip on the imagination of scholars and policy analysts. Indeed, the Cuban Revolution, a militant revolt against authoritarian rule, sparked a series of reforms that dramatically altered civil and political life.<sup>187</sup> The popular revolution led to the nationalization of the Cuban economy during the Cold War era, which transformed foreign relations with regional and international actors.<sup>188</sup> It is clear that the revolution did not deliver democratic institutions. Since the Revolution, the Cuban state has been deeply repressive with respect to civil and political rights, especially freedom of expression, freedom of the press, freedom of organization, and freedom to oppose one's government. In spite of the regime's notable and deeply troubling failings, the reforms did improve certain aspects of Cuban life, particularly for women.<sup>189</sup> It is this fascinating interaction between a undemocratic, infamously oppressive regime and liberal social outcomes that threatens the soundness of conventional political science democracy theories. This chapter evaluates the conventional wisdom on undemocratic regimes and human rights in the context of women's issues in Cuba.

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<sup>187</sup> See John Foran, "Theorizing the Cuban Revolution," *Latin American Perspectives* 36, no. 2 (March 2009): 16–30, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0094582X09331938>; Saul Landau, "The Cuban Revolution: Half a Century," *Latin American Perspectives* 36, no. 1 (January 2009): 136–38, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0094582X08329181>; Marifeli Pérez-Stable, *The Cuban Revolution: Origins, Course, and Legacy*, 2nd ed (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

<sup>188</sup> See Jorge I. Domínguez and Richard E. Welch, "Cuba in the International Arena," ed. Fidel Castro et al., *Latin American Research Review* 23, no. 1 (1988): 196–206; Jaime Suchlicki, *Cuba: From Columbus to Castro and Beyond*, 5th ed (Washington, D.C: Brassey's, 2002).

<sup>189</sup> See Foran, "Theorizing the Cuban Revolution;" Ilja A. Luciak, *Gender and Democracy in Cuba*, Contemporary Cuba (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2007).

Mainstream political science theories reason that democratic regimes are the forms of governance that best protect human rights and ensure gendered and societal equality.<sup>190</sup> Because Cuba is a country that is persistently undemocratic according popular indices, conventional regime theories would suggest a dismal picture of women's rights in Cuba. In actuality, an analysis of women's political, economic, and social rights reveals that there is a high degree of gender parity in Cuba relative to other countries in the region and across the world. If we are to accept the validity of these data, it logically follows that the relationship between regime type and women rights is at least more complex than popular political science literature assumes. It is also possible that these data are an indication that regime type is an insufficient explanatory variable if one is attempting to understand the relationship between sex and society. The Cuban case constitutes a meaningful challenge and complication to the conventional wisdom on democracies, autocracies, and human rights protection.

In a similar approach to the previous chapters, the chapter begins with a history of the Cuban state beginning with its colonial origins. The history section examines trends in politics, society, and culture to add context to modern phenomena and realities. The following section situates the dominant political science theories, which argue that authoritarian regimes are less capable than democracies to produce positive human rights outcomes, in the context of women's rights in Cuba. Finally, I synthesize the economic, political, and social indicators to show that the conventional wisdom on democracies and regime type is an incomplete framework for interpreting regime type and women's rights.

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<sup>190</sup> Bueno de Mesquita et al., "Thinking inside the Box: A Closer Look at Democracy and Human Rights"; Davenport and Armstrong, "Democracy and the Violation of Human Rights: A Statistical Analysis from 1976 to 1996"; Decker et al., "Gender-Based Violence Against Adolescent and Young Adult Women in Low- and Middle-Income Countries"; Freeman, *Human Rights*; Goodhart, "Human Rights and Global Democracy"; Haschke, *Human Rights in Democracies*; Hayes, "Human Rights Discourse, Gender and HIV and AIDS in Southern Malawi."



## V. B. Historical Context

To understand the extent to which women are free in contemporary Cuban society, it is essential to trace the historical conditions which have produced the modern state and citizenry. This section provides this history by describing the most influential political and social trends as well as developments in the culture and institutions of Cuba. This historical context serves two important purposes. First, the historical context makes this study in Cuba accessible to those who are not content experts in this field of study but are interested in political science and gender issues. Second, and more importantly, this section helps to uncover distinct sociocultural undercurrents, which can be used to help explain the status of women's issues in modern Cuba. This context begins with the arrival of Spanish conquistadors and ends with an analysis of the modern Cuban state.

Christopher Columbus claimed the island of Cuba for the Spanish empire in 1492. At the time that Spain claimed Cuba, the island was inhabited by at least three distinct cultural groups, the Guanahatabeyes, the Ciboneyes, and the Taínos. A marked trend among many native groups prior to colonial settlement, the Taíno people in particular rarely designated social or economic roles along gender lines.<sup>191</sup> In 1511, Spanish conquistador Diego de Velasquez established the first permanent settlement at Baracoa and made plans to conquer the rest of the island.<sup>192</sup> The brutality and violence of colonialism is well documented in the literature; most natives were “annihilated, absorbed, or died out as a result of the shock of conquest.”<sup>193</sup>

From 1513-1542, the indigenous peoples who survived conquest were apportioned into *encomiendas* to Spanish elites. The *encomienda* system was a tool used by the Spanish crown to

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<sup>191</sup> Kathleen Deagan, “Reconsidering Taíno Social Dynamics after Spanish Conquest: Gender and Class in Culture Contact Studies,” *American Antiquity* 69, no. 04 (October 2004): 597–626, <https://doi.org/10.2307/4128440>, 601.

<sup>192</sup> Suchlicki, *Cuba*, 16.

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

consolidate power over Cuba's native populations. The *encomenderos*, holders of *encomiendas*, "overlooked the provisions about Christianization, abused the Indians, and extracted from them an unreasonable amount of labor."<sup>194</sup> In the early years of colonization in Cuba, Spaniards exploited the mineral riches of Cuba, especially gold. The population of natives continued to dwindle as a result of the introduction of new diseases and Spanish brutality.<sup>195</sup> In 1526, the leaders of the colony turned to importing slaves from other Caribbean islands and Africa to Cuba as a way to boost the dwindling labor supply.<sup>196</sup>

The Spanish failed to establish a firm economic foothold in Cuba for many years. Therefore, the importation of slaves during the early colonial period was ongoing but uneven due to the high expense.<sup>197</sup> Despite high costs, slaves constituted half of the total population by 1606.<sup>198</sup> During the seventeenth and part of the eighteenth century, the majority of Cuba was occupied by large ranches, or *haciendas*, primarily dedicated to cattle ranching or tobacco farming.<sup>199</sup> In the latter half of the eighteenth century, the sugar industry exploded, which established a renewed demand for imported slave labor from West Africa. By 1825, demand for labor on sugar plantation increased the population of forced laborers such that slaves soon outnumbered colonialists.<sup>200</sup>

Slavery and ethnic differentiation coupled with the success of the tobacco, cattle, and sugar industries contributed to high degree of inequality and fragmentation in Cuban society during the colonial period. The success of these industries helped to shape society into distinct

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<sup>194</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>195</sup> Peter Hulme, *Colonial Encounters: Europe and the Native Caribbean, 1492-1797* (London ; New York: Methuen, 1986), 225.

<sup>196</sup> Richard Gott, *Cuba: A New History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 18.

<sup>197</sup> Suchlicki, *Cuba*, 26.

<sup>198</sup> Gott, *Cuba*, 26.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>200</sup> Gott, *Cuba*, 47; Suchlicki, *Cuba*, 26.

social classes between which there was very little social mobility.<sup>201</sup> Ethnicity was a decisive factor in socioeconomic division. The socioeconomic elite group of wealthy, land-holding industrialists was not ethnically homogenous, so “colonial policy produced significant divisions within this group.”<sup>202</sup> The Spanish-born *peninsulares* “directly benefitted from the colonial condition of Cuba” and consequently “suffered many fewer restrictions than the creole bourgeoisie vis-à-vis the colonial administration.”<sup>203</sup> According to scholars, inequitable socioeconomic conditions, deeply strained race relations, and conflicts with Spain over property ownership and taxation played a decisive role in the Cuban quest for independence.<sup>204</sup>

The first of the three wars for liberation that Cuba fought was the Ten Years War from 1868 to 1878. This conflict was centered specifically around the colony’s desire for independence, with a special focus on labor relations and involvement in governance. The Ten Years War concluded in the Pact of Zanjón, in which Spain promised to enact significant political and administrative reforms and made guarantees of greater autonomy in exchange for a ceasefire.<sup>205</sup> Though the peace treaty nominally required Spain to “extend the 1876 Constitution to Cuba, as well as to democratize and reform the administration on the island,” the result was insufficient in the eyes of many Cubans.<sup>206</sup> Thus, the pact also created even more divides in the already fragmented Cuban society. Unsatisfied separatists “refused to renounce armed struggle as the means of securing Cuba's independence from Spain,” which made another war for liberation was inevitable.<sup>207</sup>

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<sup>201</sup> Ibid., 37.

<sup>202</sup> Joan Casanovas, *Bread Or Bullets: Urban Labor and Spanish Colonialism in Cuba, 1850–1898* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 1998), 2.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>204</sup> Gott, *Cuba*, 72; Suchlicki, *Cuba*, 38.

<sup>205</sup> Louis A. Pérez, *Cuba Between Empires, 1878-1902* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2007), 4.

<sup>206</sup> Casanovas, *Bread Or Bullets*, 124.

<sup>207</sup> Pérez, *Cuba Between Empires, 1878-1902*, 11.

A short-lived conflict, which became known as “La Guerra Chiquita,” broke out in 1879 and lasted until 1880. Once more, separatists lost the struggle and were promised reforms that were largely unmet. Fifteen years passed before the Cuban War of Independence erupted in 1895. Convinced that Spanish forces were involved in the 1898 explosion of the USS Maine near Havana, the United States declared war on Spain.<sup>208</sup> The Cuban War of Independence and the Spanish-American War were brought to an end within the year. As a result, Spain signed ceded control of Cuba to the United States.<sup>209</sup> United States military occupation of Cuba lasted from 1899 to 1902 when, “under the terms of the Platt amendment, Cuba was forced to acquiesce to limitations on national sovereignty, agreed to U.S. intervention, and was obliged to cede national territory to the United States for a naval station.”<sup>210</sup>

The decades of violence and revolution had a profound effect on the politics, economy, and society of Cuba. Unemployment skyrocketed following the war with the decline of the sugar industry. Even though unemployment improved in the first months of U.S. occupation, labor conditions failed to progress.<sup>211</sup> Likewise, living conditions and wages were terrible, particularly in rural areas. Spain’s withdrawal from the island left Cuba with weak institutions that were ill-equipped to deal with these economic and social calamities. Moreover, politics remained highly polarized and society deeply fragmented along racial and ethnic lines.<sup>212</sup>

Between 1898 and 1928, the United States repeatedly exercised the provisions of the Platt amendment, which “[institutionalized] U.S. hegemony in Cuba.”<sup>213</sup> During this period, Cuba was subjected to the rapid expansion of North American economic and political intervention. This era

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<sup>208</sup> Philip S. Foner, *The Spanish-Cuban-American War and the Birth of American Imperialism Vol. 2: 1898–1902* (NYU Press, 1972).

<sup>209</sup> *Ibid.*, 378.

<sup>210</sup> Jorge Ibarra, *Prologue to Revolution: Cuba, 1898-1958* (Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998), 1.

<sup>211</sup> Foran, “Theorizing the Cuban Revolution,” 486.

<sup>212</sup> Frank Andre Guridy, “‘War on the Negro’: Race and the Revolution of 1933,” *Cuban Studies* 40 (2010): 49–73.

<sup>213</sup> Foran, “Theorizing the Cuban Revolution,” 12.

in Cuban history was marked by the “establishment of U.S. financial capital in the sugar industry, which was dependent on foreign owners.”<sup>214</sup> At the same time, protests against discrimination, inequality, and foreign intervention underscored life and society in Chile.<sup>215</sup> Despite mass mobilization in an effort to craft a more equitable society, the structure and norms of Cuban society was highly driven by the patriarchal culture of *machismo*. In response to discontent with governance, the Socialist Party formed in 1925, which formed the basis for the Communist Party.

The years between 1929 and 1958 constituted a period of “economic contraction and structural readjustment to a diminishing role of North American capital, even as U.S. cultural forms and normative systems continued to play a dominant role within the national system.”<sup>216</sup> During this period, a convergence of societal stressors in the form of “mass mobilization, revolution, economic crisis and the threat of foreign intervention from the United States” forced the political elite to reckon with renewed revolutionary demands from the working class.<sup>217</sup> In a span of two months in 1933, Cuba experienced two revolts which disrupted an already dysfunctional political and social climate. The second of the 1933 uprisings was U.S. backed revolt orchestrated by General Fulgencio Batista. Batista’s forces succeeded in toppling the existing dictatorship and instituting a new political order.

Batista ruled with the support of the police and military through a series of puppet leaders from 1933 to 1940 when he was elected to the presidency. Under the leadership of Batista, the regime promoted a political culture characterized by its authoritarian, reformist, nationalist, and

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<sup>214</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>215</sup> Graciella Cruz-Taura, “Women’s Rights and the Cuban Constitution of 1940,” *Cuban Studies* 24 (1994): 123–40.

<sup>216</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>217</sup> Robert Whitney, “The Architect of the Cuban State: Fulgencio Batista and Populism in Cuba, 1937-1940,” *Journal of Latin American Studies* 32, no. 2 (2000): 436.

populist principles.<sup>218</sup> In 1940, the government issued a new constitution, which “proclaimed political democracy, the rights of urban and rural labor, limitations on the size of sugar plantations and the need for systematic state intervention in the economy, while preserving the supreme role of private property.”<sup>219</sup> Per the new constitution, Batista was ineligible to hold the office of president once more; the dictator allowed for the transition of power to Carlos Prío Socarrás.

Batista was unsuccessful in his bid for the presidency in 1952. Following this failure, Batista staged another coup and brought Cuba’s “twelve-year experiment in constitutional democratic government” to an end.<sup>220</sup> Batista struggled to legitimize his rule following the illegal means by which he consolidated power. As revolutionary sentiments against the oppressive dictatorship increased, Batista severely limited civil liberties utilizing such coercive tactics as “increasing censorship, police brutality, reprisals and terror.”<sup>221</sup> After a number of attempts, a group of guerillas led by Fidel Castro successfully overthrew the Batista dictatorship in 1959.

The Cuban Revolution of 1959, often referred to as the 26<sup>th</sup> of July Movement, intended to create a new social order based on the principle of equality in all spheres of Cuban society. Following the consolidation of the new socialist state, the government initiated a series of economic and social reforms, which redistributed wealth on a massive scale. As a result, “Cuba became one of the most egalitarian societies in the world.”<sup>222</sup>

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<sup>218</sup> Ibid., 441-442.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid., 438.

<sup>220</sup> Samuel Farber, *The Origins of the Cuban Revolution Reconsidered*, Envisioning Cuba (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 28.

<sup>221</sup> Cole Blasier, “Studies of Social Revolution: Origins in Mexico, Bolivia, and Cuba,” *Latin American Research Review* 2, no. 3 (1967): 28–64, 36.

<sup>222</sup> Lois M. Smith and Alfred Padula, *Sex and Revolution: Women in Socialist Cuba* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 4.

The role of women in creating this new state cannot be overlooked.<sup>223</sup> Women played a distinctive and crucial role in the mobilization of civil society during the first half of the twentieth century.<sup>224</sup> Indeed, women were essential to the revolutionary effort to depose the dictatorial regime of General Fulgencio Batista.<sup>225</sup> The triumph of the Cuban Revolution was intended to establish equality between men and women through socialism. Castro created the *Federación de Mujeres Cubanas* (FMC) in 1960 to address sexual discrimination and “mobilize and monitor an important sector of society.”<sup>226</sup> In reality, the revolution and the FMC has both “benefited and hampered” the advancement of women’s issues.<sup>227</sup>

On the one hand, there are many instances of the use of state power that improved women’s conditions, security, and opportunities. Since its establishment, the FMC has pushed for legislation to increase the presence of women in positions of national power and influence. The FMC was responsible for creating a nationwide network of daycares, dressmaking academies, and other programs, which allowed housewives to “escape patriarchal control.”<sup>228</sup> Likewise, the FMC worked to eliminate problematic pre-revolutionary institutions and practices, including domestic service and prostitution. Unfortunately, these structures were eliminated without “questioning the patriarchal structures and habits that engendered such practices.”<sup>229</sup>

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<sup>223</sup> See: Sonia E. Alvarez, *Engendering Democracy in Brazil: Women’s Movements in Transition Politics* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton, N.J. : Princeton University Press, 1990); Khedija Arfaoui and Valentine M. Moghadam, “Violence against Women and Tunisian Feminism: Advocacy, Policy, and Politics in an Arab Context,” *Current Sociology* 64, no. 4 (April 13, 2016): 637–53, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0011392116640481>; Jaquette, *The Women’s Movement in Latin America*; Langohr, “Women’s Rights Movements during Political Transitions: Activism against Public Sexual Violence in Egypt”; Noonan, “Women against the State: Political Opportunities and Collective Action Frames in Chile’s Transition to Democracy.”

<sup>224</sup> See Cruz-Taura, “Women’s Rights and the Cuban Constitution of 1940”; Jaquette, *The Women’s Movement in Latin America*; Luciak, *Gender and Democracy in Cuba*; Wylie and Shoker, “Cuba: Women’s Complicated Political Participation and Representation.”

<sup>225</sup> Luciak, *Gender and Democracy in Cuba*, 1.

<sup>226</sup> Smith and Padula, *Sex and Revolution*, 36.

<sup>227</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>228</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>229</sup> Ibid., 39.

Despite efforts to advocate for gender equality, the Revolution was ultimately a movement “whose interests were defined by a male elite” influenced by the culture of *machismo*.<sup>230</sup> So, even though the revolution was committed to equality between men and women in principle, the application of these ideals were uneven.

From 1959 to 1989, there were several developments of importance to this study. During this period, the Communist Party of Cuba continued to consolidate power and enforce ideals of the Revolution. Still, economic calamity continued to plague the island such that in 1972, “Cuba had little choice but to adopt Soviet models in return for guaranteed aid and advantageous trade.”<sup>231</sup> The Cuban Constitution of 1976 divided political leadership into two chief structures: the Communist Party of Cuba and the Organs of People’s Power (Organos de Poder Popular, or OPP).<sup>232</sup> Internationally, Cuba faced antagonism from capitalist states. The Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962 is perhaps the most infamous example of this hostility.

In coordination with the demise of the Soviet Union, Cuba entered an era of prolonged economic recession beginning in 1989 known as the Special Period. The recession peaked in the early to mid 1990s and was accompanied by widespread famine. In response to this economic crisis, the constitution was amended in 1992 to remove provisions against foreign direct investment and allowed corporations to establish joint ventures with the Cuban government on the island. This transition away from revolutionary ideals towards a less centralized state structure is significant, though Cuba remains a socialist state.

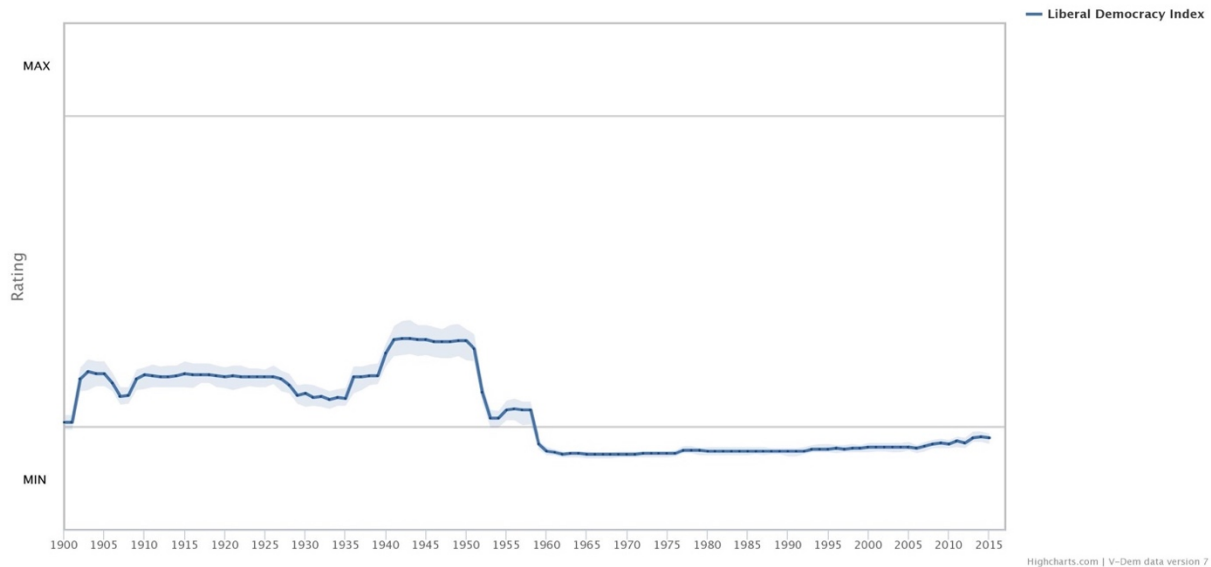
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<sup>230</sup> Ibid., 45.

<sup>231</sup> Landau, “The Cuban Revolution,” 136.

<sup>232</sup> Ilja A. Luciak, “Party and State in Cuba: Gender Equality in Political Decision Making,” *Politics & Gender* 1, no. 02 (June 2005), <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1743923X05050063>, 244.





*Figure 5.1: Rating of Liberal Democracy in Cuba from 1900-2015.*<sup>233</sup>

This thesis seeks to answer how the history of Cuba coupled with its presently undemocratic regime explains the quality of women’s political, economic, and social lives and freedoms. Can Cuba promote gender equality and progressive feminist policies even if the state is undemocratic? Or, is it more important for women’s rights that the state of Cuba expresses at least a nominal commitment to ensuring gender equality? In the sections that follow, this thesis tests the extent to which women are guaranteed and exercise political, economic, and social liberties.

Because mainstream political science theories argue that undemocratic states like Cuba produce illiberal outcomes, studies incorporating those frameworks would expect to identify a society in which women are disadvantaged and society is highly stratified. This chapter identifies discrepancies between the Cuban case and conventional theories of regime and women’s rights. That is, Cuba is an undemocratic regime that performs better than many democracies according

<sup>233</sup> Data sourced from Michael Coppedge et al., “V-Dem Country-Year Dataset 2018” (Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) Project, 2018), <https://doi.org/10.23696/vdemcy18>.

to the gender equality metrics and indices examined throughout this thesis. This inconsistency supports the argument that there are deeply important intervening factors that affect the quality of women's lives. Namely, these intervening factors are the existence of patriarchal social norms and cultural attitudes towards women.

### **V. C. Political Indicator of Women's Equality**

In the context of economic and social rights, Cuba performs at the top of gender equity indices. Though it is clear that Cubans have faced significant hardship following the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Cuban state has continued to ensure that women and men are equally represented in the national legislature. Though there is a qualification to strength of this measurement in the context of gender equality, the analysis below details a state that has shown the state's nominal commitment to women's rights, which has moved the society towards gender equality.

The conventional political science literature evaluated through this thesis suggests that democracy is the only regime type can facilitate equitable political participation between the sexes. This section challenges that assumption by focusing on two distinct metrics. The first metric asks whether women vote are as likely to vote in formal elections as men. Assuming that there is no legislated difference in the voting rights of men and women, a disparity in this metric indicates the existence of an intervening sociocultural barrier to women's participation. The second metric asks whether women are included as decision makers in the public space. The evidence from the literature and international organizations may reveal an equitable gender landscape even though Cuba is not categorized as a democracy.

### *Voting behavior*

Although voting in Cuba is not compulsory, turnout in municipal, national, and provincial elections has hovered around 90% of eligible voters since the 1970s. Citizens aged 16 and older vote directly from a slate of candidates preselected by the Communist Party of Cuba and similar organizations.<sup>234</sup> The government of Cuba does not release official statistics on the voting behavior disaggregated by gender. However, there is a discernable bias among both male and female voters to cast their ballot for men instead of women in elections with more than one candidate eligible for election. This preference stems from the belief that electing women to office is an undue burden considering their role as the primary care giver for children and other domestic responsibilities. Additional reservations about electing female candidates to office is rooted in Cuba's *machista* culture.<sup>235</sup> That is, voters desire a strong leader, which is far more likely to be assigned to men rather than women.

Despite the cultural barriers associated with men and women voting for female candidates, the Communist Party of Cuba has control over the slate of candidates. Further, even though voters in Cuba cast their ballot directly for their chosen candidate, the Party controls the vote in the case of the National Assembly because there is only one candidate for every seat in parliament. Thus, the governing structures can ensure that "gender—or any other characteristic—of a particular candidate was not a factor in the voter's choice."<sup>236</sup> As a result, the government ensures that an equitable percentage of women enter the national legislature despite cultural biases. The following section examines the proportion of women that are elected to serve in the national legislature more closely.

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<sup>234</sup> Luciak, "Party and State in Cuba," 244-245.

<sup>235</sup> Ibid., 251.

<sup>236</sup> Ibid., 252.

### *Women in the national legislature*

In order to evaluate the extent to which women are included in state policy formation and political decision making, this subsection evaluates the extent to which the national parliament is composed of female representatives. Whereas the proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments in the Latin American region is 29.28%, 48.9% of the national legislature in Cuba is composed of women. Cuba is at the top of regional and global rankings for this metric. In a comparative perspective, the World Bank and Inter-Parliamentary Union reported in 2017 that Cuba has the third largest proportion of women in the national legislature in the world.

While Cuba has one of the world's highest percentages of women in its national parliament, it is probable that this number “obscures the gendered relationship between Cuba's national and municipal levels of government, along with the role of the Communist Party of Cuba in setting policy.”<sup>237</sup> That is, women are better represented in the national parliament rather than in municipal levels of government where there is more direct engagement from the voting population. Moreover, women are noticeably underrepresented in the Communist Party of Cuba. That is, less than one third of Party members are women.

So, what can explain the dramatic disparity between women's involvement at the national level and the municipal and party level? Moreover, how can one reconcile the impressive performance of women in the national legislature against the clear societal preference for male candidates? It is the position of this thesis that the revolutionary ideas of 1959 is the driving mechanism behind gender equality mandates. At the same time, the legacy of violence, masculine hegemony, and patriarchal cultural norms have complicated the realization of equality

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<sup>237</sup> Lana Wylie and Sarah Shoker, “Cuba: Women's Complicated Political Participation and Representation,” in *The Palgrave Handbook of Women's Political Rights*, ed. Susan Franceschet and Mona Lena Krook (New York, NY: Springer Berlin Heidelberg, 2018), 406.

between men and women. The result of this movement both towards and away from gender equality is a societal contradiction, which may explain the counterintuitive performance of the Cuban state. The section that follows will analyze the extent to which the Cuban state's nominal commitment to women's issues has pushed society towards gender equality in the economy.

#### **V. D. Economic Indicator of Women's Equality**

The definition of liberal democracy does not necessitate that democratic states abide by the principles of neoliberal economics; however, there is a strong historical association between democratic regimes and capitalist economies.<sup>238</sup> Cuba is neither a democracy nor a capitalist state. Despite the popular supposition that the highest degree of equality can only be produced under democratic governance, this section shows that the Cuban regime has established a labor market that is at least nominally more equitable than the economies of many established democracies. Note that it is not the position of this thesis that Cubans fare well economically. In fact, reports of Cubans' well-being pertaining to poverty, mental health, and security are deeply problematic. The analysis in this section relates specifically to gender equality in the Cuban economy. Therefore, the analysis that follows addresses the extent to which women are able to participate equitably in the Cuban economy and labor force by examining disparities between male and female wages, female labor force participation rate relative to males participation, and the types of jobs that women occupy compared to men.

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<sup>238</sup> Bakker, "Neo-Liberal Governance and the Reprivatization of Social Reproduction: Social Provisioning and Shifting Gender Orders"; Brown, "American Nightmare," 691-3; Hojman, "Poverty and Inequality in Chile"; Lawrence P. King and Aleksandra Sznajder, "The State-Led Transition to Liberal Capitalism: Neoliberal, Organizational, World-Systems, and Social Structural Explanations of Poland's Economic Success," *The American Journal of Sociology* 112, no. 3 (2006): 751.

## ***Wage Gap***

In accordance with the ideals of the Cuban Revolution, wages in socialist Cuba were organized by the government with a formal upper limit above which employees were unable to earn.<sup>239</sup> A trend has emerged in Cuba that has moved the country towards a market system and away from certain tenets of socialism.<sup>240</sup> More specifically, Cuba announced in 2008 that it would be restructuring the way in which workers are compensated. Under this new system, laborers are paid according to their productivity and upper limits to wages no longer exist. The state of Cuba still distributes wages, though salaries are now bracketed according to the type of job that a worker holds.

This description of the Cuban economic system indicates prompts two important discussions regarding the level of equality in the Cuban economy. First, gender is not a factor in the governmental calculation of wage earnings. Therefore, women in the same occupational roles as men are paid the same wage. Despite the state controls over women's earnings in the Cuban economy, there is still a question as to the equality of access in the labor market. In order to analyze this factor more closely, the next section will address the degree to which women are included in the labor force and the quality of jobs that women typically occupy.

## ***Characterizing Women's Inclusion in the Labor Force***

Nondemocracies like Cuba should have a more exclusionary labor market than democratic societies according to the theory that democracies are best positioned to benefit marginalized groups.<sup>241</sup> In reality, the female labor force participation rate (FLPR) is higher in

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<sup>239</sup> Härkönen, Heidi. "Politics, Care and Uncertainty in Contemporary Cuba." *Journal of the Finnish Anthropological Society* 40, no. 3 (2016): 45–40.

<sup>240</sup> Gabriele, Alberto. "Cuba: From State Socialism to a New Form of Market Socialism?" *Comparative Economic Studies* 53, no. 4 (December 2011): 647–78. <https://doi.org/10.1057/ces.2011.26>.

<sup>241</sup> Bayanpourtehrani and Sylwester, "Democracy and Female Labor Force Participation: An Empirical Examination."

Cuba than in many democracies, including Chile. The World Bank and International Labor Organization's model of "labor force participation rate, female (% of female population ages 15-64)" reveals an increase in FLPR from 40.8% in 1991 to 50.4% in 2017. Similarly, male participation in the labor force is trending upward since 1991. 70.3% of males participated in the labor force in 1991 compared to 78.6% of males in 2017.

Despite this progress, occupational roles in Cuba appear to be gendered. In a similar pace to comparative regional and international trends, "women make up the majority of students in social studies, medicine, and pedagogy but are a minority in the natural sciences, math, and technical studies."<sup>242</sup> Women in Cuba are more likely to occupy jobs in the governmental sector than men, which is problematic because jobs in the state sector pay less than jobs in the private sector. Women are highly represented in the educational sector as well, often occupying top administrative positions in higher education.<sup>243</sup>

It is evident that there are persistent problems with the Cuban economy. The state continues to suffer the consequences of the economic crisis of the 1990s. Moreover, the state has inched towards the privatization of industry and begun to turn away from the Marxist principles upon which it was founded, which may or may not positively affect women's rights in Cuba. Despite these widespread problems, the metrics evaluated in this thesis illustrates a society that has made significant progress towards gender equality. The disparity between female and male participation in the labor force seems to confirm the hypothesis of this chapter. That is, the nominal commitment to gender equality translates to meaningful shifts in policy, social attitudes,

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<sup>242</sup> AAUW, "Gender Equity and the Role of Women in Cuban Society" (The American Association of University Women, 2013).

<sup>243</sup> Ibid.

and gender relations. Still, it is important that scholars continue to research and ideate other means by which economic progress can be evaluated in the Cuban context.

In all, the economic metric indicates that women in Cuba are reasonably advantaged relative to women in an international or regional context. The section that follows tests the extent to which patriarchal social norms underscore the routines, daily lives, and relationship of women in Cuba. It is clear from the literature that Cuban society, like many other Latin American countries, has internalized and replicated *machista* culture. Therefore, the next section seeks to add more context to the way that patriarchal cultural and social norms have presented in Cuban society.

#### **V. E. Social Indicator of Women's Equality**

As is the case with the other metrics evaluated in this chapter, an evaluation of equality in the social sphere of women's lives in Cuba yields mixed results. While the government has enacted a number of reforms that have promoted gender equality, Cuba's *machista* social norms govern much of women's familial and social lives. This section addresses these social factors more closely by analyzing positive social initiatives that have liberated women in contrast to the negative societal attitudes towards women.

In large part due to the Cuban Revolution's emphasis on free and universal education, women in Cuba enjoy a high degree of educational attainment. Women in Cuba are often better educated than men. In fact, 80% of college students and 68% of college graduates in Cuba are women.<sup>244</sup> The Cuban Family Code, which created equality among spouses for housework and "increased economic contribution to the household," has afforded women more authority in the

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<sup>244</sup> AAUW, "Gender Equity and the Role of Women in Cuban Society."



home.<sup>245</sup> Despite this progress, there has been a reemergence of traditional gender roles in Cuba. Indeed, many Cubans continue to be influenced by the patriarchal *machista* attitudes.<sup>246</sup> Though the state does not reveal official statistics on the rate of violence against women and girls, international and domestic human rights organizations report that domestic violence is a persistent problem in Cuba.<sup>247</sup>

## V. F. Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, I have examined the validity of mainstream theorizations of democratic regimes through the lens of women's rights in Cuba. The empirical findings of this study are echoed in the 2017, the World Economic Forum data set entitled the Global Gender Gap Report. This study ranked Cuba 25 out of 144 countries, meaning that Cuba was identified as more equal than Chile, Costa Rica, and the United States. This analysis of the performance of the authoritarian Cuban state compared to old and new democracies suggests that existing frameworks for explaining human rights in terms of regime type are necessarily limited in scope.

There are a few important insights to glean from this investigation into the relationship between women's rights and regime type. First, even though Cuba is considered deeply authoritarian by popular regime typologies, the state performed as well or better than a number of democracies according to the metrics identified in this study. Second, the nominal commitment to equality of communist and socialist systems does matter and is capable of producing positive outcomes. Third, social norms and conceptions of gender difference are

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<sup>245</sup> Safa, "Economic Restructuring and Gender Subordination."

<sup>246</sup> See Michael Hardin, "Altering Masculinities: The Spanish Conquest and the Evolution of the Latin American Machismo," *International Journal of Sexuality and Gender Studies*, 2001, 22; Ruth Pearson, "Renegotiating the Reproductive Bargain: Gender Analysis of Economic Transition in Cuba in the 1990s," *Development and Change* 28, no. 4 (October 1997): 671–705, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-7660.00060>.

<sup>247</sup> AAUW, "Gender Equity and the Role of Women in Cuban Society."

important in any discussion of women's rights. This analysis of gender, power, and politics in Cuba reveals a deeply patriarchal social structure typified by *machista* cultural norms.<sup>248</sup> Though the Cuban state has established a number of policies to that have somewhat successfully improved women's issues, women continue to lack equal access to opportunities. The Cuban case supports the primary argument of this thesis, for it demonstrates that regime type and structure are not the most important drivers of women's equality. Instead, there are governing social and cultural norms and rules which are more significant drivers of political, economic, and social equality for women.

The Cuban case constitutes a discord between the conventional wisdom of democracies and the performance of certain autocracies in human rights indices. Critically studying the status of women's rights and freedoms casts doubt on the applicability of mainstream democratic theory. Even though there are still significant problems with the Cuban regime and societal conditions, the country performed highly according to gender parity indices and the metrics identified in this study. One possible explanation for the continued existence gender-based issues not captured by measurements of gender equality is the persistence of patriarchal norms in Cuban society. Still, this case study shows that the Cuban regime's stated commitment to gender equality is meaningful, and may be a step towards full gender parity.

In the next chapter, I analyze the Cuban case in a comparative context with Costa Rica and Chile in order to determine the extent to which democracy theories are applicable in practice. Further, the next chapter identifies potential explanations for the results of this study. Finally, the

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<sup>248</sup> Guridy, "'War on the Negro': Race and the Revolution of 1933"; Hardin, "Altering Masculinities: The Spanish Conquest and the Evolution of the Latin American Machismo"; Luciak, "Party and State in Cuba"; Luciak, *Gender and Democracy in Cuba*; Nazzari, "The 'Woman Question' in Cuba"; Pearson, "Renegotiating the Reproductive Bargain"; Safa, "Economic Restructuring and Gender Subordination."

concluding chapter identifies the limitations of this study and suggests areas in which other scholars can contribute to this important body of work.

## VI. Conclusion

In the introductory chapter, I outlined an ambitious goal. Throughout this thesis, I have sought to reconcile the theoretical expectations of democracies with their empirically puzzling performance in the context of women's issues. More specifically, I addressed the relationship between regime type and gender-based inequality to explain the persistence of gender-based inequality across regime types. An analysis of three Latin American states, similar in all ways except for regime type, reveals that democracy is indeed insufficient for the creation of gender equality.

Table 6.1 illustrates the annual Global Gender Gap index, which assigns values to women's issues and compares those findings in a global context. These results and rankings are in line with the empirical case studies highlighted in this thesis, but the question remains: How can we reconcile the theoretical underpinnings of democracy studies with the empirical analysis of this study? In short, this thesis suggests that existing conceptual understandings of democratic regimes are limited in their capacity to explain the effect that social norms and cultural attitudes have on women in society.

**Table 6.1 Comparative Democracy and Global Gender Gap Scores**

COUNTRY	LIBERAL DEMOCRACY SCORES (2017)	GLOBAL GENDER GAP INDEX - VALUE	GLOBAL GENDER GAP INDEX - RANKING
Costa Rica	0.83/1.0	0.736/1.0	34
Chile	0.79/1.0	0.699/1.0	70
Cuba	0.08/1.0	0.74/1.0	27

**Table 6.2 Comparative Political and Economic Data**

COUNTRY	LEGISLATED GENDER QUOTAS	PARTICIPATION IN NATIONAL LEGISLATURE (% OF LEGISLATURE)	FLPR (% OF FEMALE POPULATION)
Costa Rica	Yes	46.0%	51.2%
Chile	No	15.8%	57.2%
Cuba	Yes	48.9%	50.4%

This thesis has revealed a number of interesting insights. In line with the democracy literature discussed in the conceptual chapter, one finding is that democracy does indeed produce positive benefits with respect to civil and political rights. The Costa Rican and Chilean cases reveal that consolidated democracies can create political equality, especially where there are gender quotas. Still, democracy unequally produces benefits for men and women, which implies that there is a significant intervening variable that impacts the degree of gender equality in a society.

The second finding of this thesis is that the commitment to pro-women policies matters for the establishment of gender equality in society. The analysis in this thesis indicates that the creation and maintenance of democratic structures alone does not explain why an authoritarian regime like Cuba outperforms Costa Rica in terms of gender equality. The literature reveals that access, visibility, and prominence in political spaces is key to bridging the gender gap in societies. As such, gender quotas and other policies that create equality, even nominally, are important considerations for legislators and policy analysts.

Third, social norms are deeply significant to any discussion of women's issues and gender equality. Additional research needs to be conducted to determine whether patriarchy is indeed the intervening variable that explains the persistence of gender inequality in consolidated

democracy. There are a few explanations in the literature for why the presence of a democratic regime is an insufficient criterion to produce equitable gender conditions. Feminist economic and IR scholarship suggests that democracy does not inherently cause an improvement in women's issues due to the existence and internalization of patriarchal social norms.<sup>249</sup> Another possible explanation for Cuba's higher comparative performance according to gender equality indices lies in its economic system. That is, socialist regimes commit, at least nominally, to the eradication of gender inequality and utilize state resources to legislate those changes. While policy does not necessarily generate corresponding social norms, the Cuban case shows that the existence of state policies is capable of producing positive outcomes despite problematic cultural perceptions.

There are some limitations to the design of this study. First, the metrics in this study aim to be comprehensive in scope, which is useful for tackling a broad topic like the one addressed in this thesis. However, breadth is often achieved at the expense of depth. Thus, the measurements of economic, political, and social equality are potentially too broad to provide the level of analysis necessary to completely understand the nature of women's issues in these countries. The availability of data is another significant obstacle to this type of research design. In particular, data related to the intimate details of women's lives is often difficult or impossible to obtain. Moreover, states are often reluctant to release these types of reports, which makes analyzing women's issues more difficult.

This analysis of the interplay between regime type and gender is of critical importance to both scholars and policy analysis. There is still a great deal of work to be done on understanding the specific social constructs which affect women's issues in various regime types. Moreover,

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<sup>249</sup> Alexander and Welzel, "Eroding Patriarchy"; Aung, "From Military Patriarchy to Gender Equity: Including Women in the Democratic Transition in Burma"; Feldman, "Exploring Theories of Patriarchy"; Hapke, "Theorizing Patriarchy"; Hunnicutt, "Varieties of Patriarchy and Violence Against Women"; Kandiyoti, "Bargaining with Patriarchy"; Walby, *Theorizing Patriarchy*.

there is a need to develop an effective measurement of patriarchal social norms and to validate the social factors that affect women's issues. This topic deserves more attention from intellectuals, and should be brought to the center of discussions of regime type and human rights outcomes.

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