



# GENDERED PATTERNS OF ECONOMIC MARGINALIZATION AND ITS IMPLICATIONS ON WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN LATIN AMERICA

ALINA CLAY

UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE, KNOXVILLE

## 1. Introduction

Embedded economic inequalities persist in Latin America and significantly hinder women's political participation in activities such as voting and working with political parties, even though women have made recent advancements in political representation (Morgan & Buice, 2013). Furthermore, public policy mechanisms do not generally exist and those that do are not effective in fully engaging women in politics. Political and economic oppression of women in this region have historical roots and thus are deeply entrenched within society.

Working with Dr. Jana Morgan, I explore how gendered patterns of economic marginalization affect women's political participation in Latin America. The data here focus on indicators of income to confirm that these patterns of economic disparity exist. My analysis shows that gender inequality across Latin America has gradually decreased over the past three decades and that variation over time within countries is larger than cross-national variation. The data presented provide the foundation to draw connections between these economic patterns of inequality and women's political participation.

## 2. Research Question and Methods

- Are differences in gender inequality within Latin America more pronounced over time or cross-nationally?

To answer this question, I use indicators of Between Gender Inequality (BGI) to analyze cross-national data throughout 1979-2009 on income distribution in Latin America. Here I showcase two indicators: one represents the overall differences in income between men and women and the other displays the proportion of the gendered differences in income captured by the Gini coefficient. The Gini coefficient reports the gap between perfect equality and actual observed income distribution.

While both cross-national and over time data reveal gradual decreases in gender inequality, over time data specifically show to what extent income has disproportionately advantaged men over women in Latin America and how these patterns have evolved over time. Providing this insight allows researchers to better analyze patterns of change in gender inequality in Latin America, as well as helps policy makers identify effective ways to increase women's economic and political participation.

## References and Acknowledgments

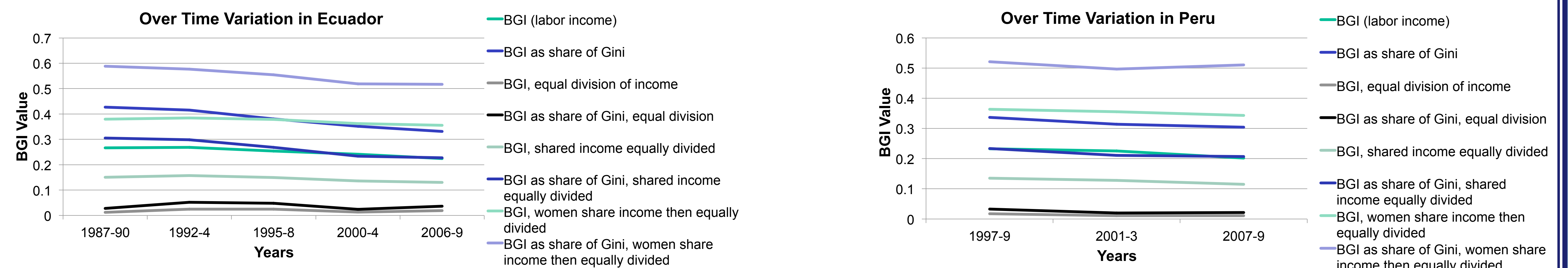
Morgan, J. & Buice, M. (2013). Latin American attitudes toward women in politics: The influence of elite cues, female advancement, and individual characteristics. *American Political Science Review*, 107(4), 644-662. Retrieved February 1, 2015, from <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0003055413000385>

Cross-national household income data is from the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), which Dr. Jana Morgan compiled during her trips to Latin America.

BGI values calculated by Dr. Jana Morgan and Dr. Nathan Kelly.

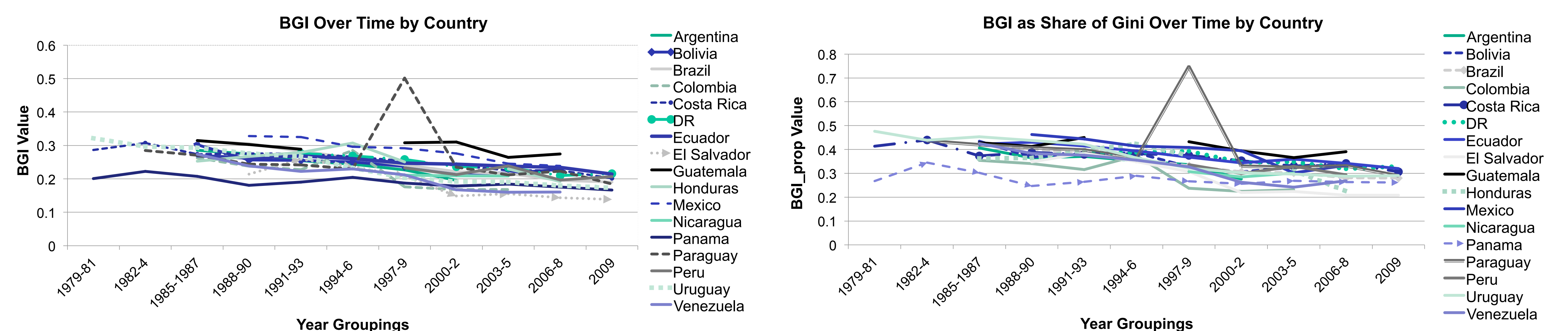
Special thanks to Dr. Morgan for her continued guidance and research mentorship.

## 3. Over Time Variation in Peru and Ecuador



In these graphs, I group together several years for each indicator and then calculate the averages of each group. The eight indicators listed are various definitions of income that illustrate degrees of income disparity between men and women. Ecuador and Peru reveal negative or constant slopes over time for each indicator. Citing other research that has shown that income disparity is a primary contributor to gender inequality, gender inequality here appears to have slowly decreased over three decades as income disparity has diminished. Comparing these two countries' variation over time is representative of that in other Latin American countries (not shown). Over time variation allows one to observe fluctuations in income distribution and subsequently research the sociopolitical and economic factors that shape these patterns.

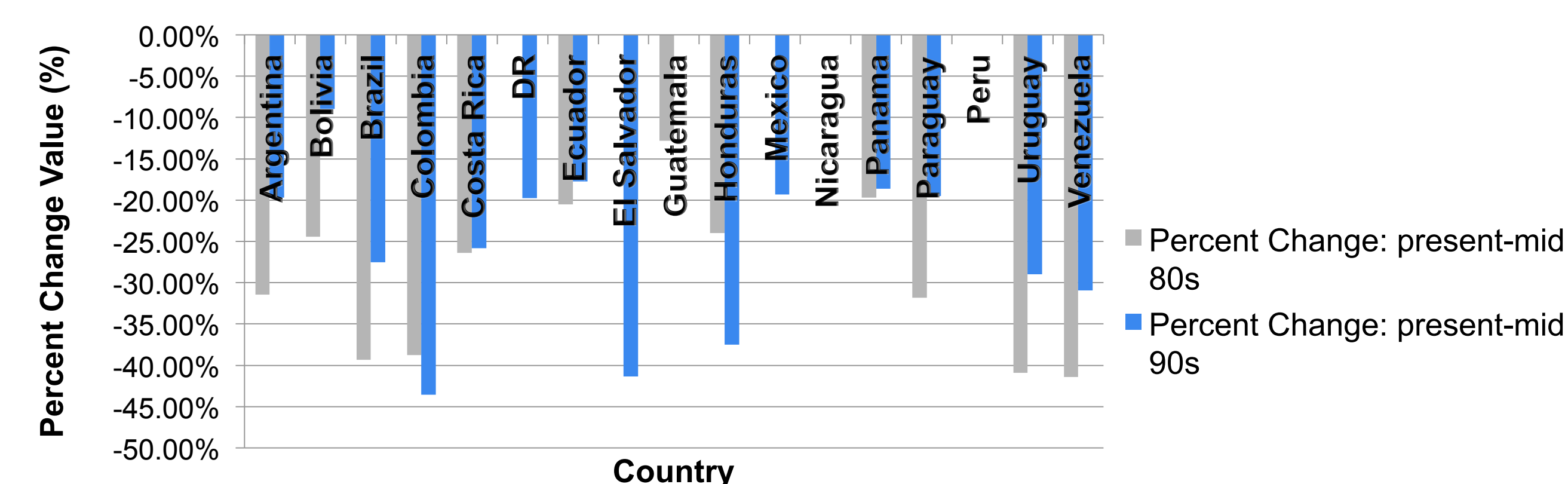
## 4. Between Gender Inequality Over Time



BGI values are shown in three-year periods that span from 1979-2009. The majority of the countries display general decreases in BGI throughout time in both graphs. No significant differences exist between Gini proportion values and individual income values, which underscores the close relationship between income disparity and gender inequality. These graphs also reveal significant changes in income distribution between men and women within countries in a single time period and thus highlight more pronounced differences in the region over time.

## 5. Cross-National Analysis

Percent Change from Present-mid 80s and Present-mid 90s for BGI By Country



This graph displays cross-national percent changes, which reiterates that income inequality has decreased. However, analysis across countries does not reveal as much variation as does analysis over time. Therefore, cross-national data support our expectation that gender inequality has overall decreased but do not illustrate as much variation in income disparity nor patterns that show the extent to which women have been economically disadvantaged.

## 6. Conclusions

This analysis provides the foundational research needed to determine if patterns of economic marginalization and women's political participation correlate in Latin America. The data support the widespread belief that income distribution is critical to shaping gender inequality by displaying indicators of income inequality to observe changes cross-nationally and over time. While both cross-national and over time analysis show that gender inequality has decreased, over time variation within countries depicts more pronounced differences in gender inequality. In turn, one is able to analyze the specific political and economic contexts during certain years to identify underlying causes for these various income patterns. Future research on this topic will attempt to find direct correlations between women's economic marginalization and political participation in Latin America.