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 through 1979-2009 on income distribution in Latin America. Here I showcase two indicators: one represents the 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 inequality has 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.

References and Acknowledgments


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.

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5. Cross-National Analysis

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.