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## Patriarchy and machismo: Political, economic and social effects on women

Luis Antonio Prado

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PATRIARCHY AND MACHISMO: POLITICAL, ECONOMIC,  
AND SOCIAL EFFECTS ON WOMEN

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A Thesis  
Presented to the  
Faculty of  
California State University  
San Bernardino

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirement for the  
Master of Arts  
in  
Social Sciences

---

by  
Luis Antonio Prado  
March 2004

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AND SOCIAL EFFECTS ON WOMEN

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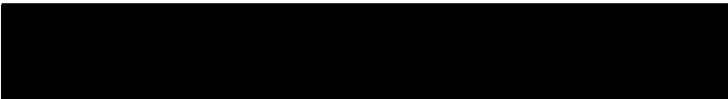
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by  
Luis Antonio Prado  
March 2004

Approved by:

  
Michael LeMay, Ph. D., Political Sciences

2/12/04  
Date

  
Randi L. Miller, Ph. D., Chair, Sociology

## ABSTRACT

Within the North American and Latin American societies, Patriarchy and Machismo, the products of cultural adaptations have been the most influential cultural instruments through which men have traditionally achieved control over the social, political and economic systems. The development of this control has been possible through cultural and religious indoctrination on both men and women. ~~In religion for instance, the Bible, which most Christians live by, states boldly that women should be submissive to men.~~ With that in mind and those beliefs instilled in cultures, women face strong obstacles in gaining strength in their gender and its potential in our world. Departing from this observation, ~~women constantly must fight for their rights and struggle~~ to survive confronting the power and domination of men. This thesis will focus on Patriarchy and Machismo and the long lasting political, economic, and social effects that their practice has had on women in the United States and Latin America.

It will present a brief historical overview on the historical development of these cultural systems based on

traditional customs and religious beliefs that have survived the passing of time molding the lives of men and women alike. The religious influences based on a God's ordained ~~order have maintained women socially and economically dependent on men.~~ Moving to examine Machismo, the thesis questions the role of the Catholic Church, the importance of the family's preference for a male against a female child, and the differences in molding male and female children for their adulthood.

In examining Patriarchy and Machismo as political instruments, it once again focuses on how these deep-seated cultural beliefs have been used in the control of the majority of women in society, and how through the division of gender roles and social stratification men have achieved social predominance. While questioning the value of legislation on behalf of women, it examines the importance of women's activism. It addresses the possibility that Latin American men have emulated the American political machinery to fit the macho image, and the differences in constitutional rights and freedoms of American versus Latin American women.

When dealing with social and economic issues affecting both groups of women, it studies the subordination of women to allow the most educated men the control of employment and power in society, and how a husband's control over his wife displayed the idea of women subordination to men. Moreover, it examines the manner in which the industrial revolution reinforced the notion that women's rightful place was in the home, and discusses the development of women's social consciousness and how successful they have been in the achievement of education and economic goals. It will question the values of legislation in narrowing the existing wage gaps between men and women, the effectiveness of prevention programs and laws against domestic violence, and the social and cultural influences that contribute to spouse abuse in both the United States and Latin America. The thesis maintains a critical view of Patriarchy and Machismo, their similarities and differences as both legal and cultural traits, to determine the type of influence they have had on past and present generations to arrive to a sound conclusion.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Dr. Joyce A. Hanson, Department of History

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## DEDICATION

To my beloved wife, Esperanza, for her understanding,  
for giving me the strength to continue long after  
I had decided to give up, and for believing in me,  
and to our granddaughters  
Yasmin and Erika Prado



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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

The Oxford English Dictionary defines machismo as the quality of being macho; the display of manliness, male virility, or masculine pride. Other definitions are more or less similar but associate machismo with a stronger or exaggerated pride or in conspicuous display of maleness or masculinity, which could lead to a form of sexist and abusive behavior. Machismo does not exclusively belong to the human species since it can also be observed throughout the animal kingdom, especially during the mating season where only the best fitted wins the right to reproduce. However, within the human species, this attitude keeps man in an intense state of competition, with good as well as bad connotations. Machismo encourages man to take charge, lead, and protect his family, and when exaggerated, to abuse those he was supposed to protect as well as others of his own gender. Machismo is present in all spheres of human life, including social, economic, and political environments. In this manner, everyone, at one time or another, has experienced the consequences of its influence.

Source

Although machismo has been historically linked with the exaggerated macho attitude of Latin American men, by no means does Latin America hold a monopoly on machismo. In the United States for instance, the deeply ingrained cultural influences of a patriarchal system can be observed with the arrival of the first settlers and later in the development of the American society, in both Northern and Southern colonies. Considered innately inferior to men, women were deprived of property, control of wages, and barred from most occupations and advanced education through the legal concept of coverture inherited from the English law. Men included religious arguments invoking passages from the Bible in the defense their dominant position, insisting that biological difference in God's natural order determined separate social roles for men and women.

Similarly, for most of the twentieth and even at the wake of the twenty-first century, different forms of machismo behavior continue to be present in all social spheres all over the world. In Muslim countries, or in the Middle and Far East for instance, it is common knowledge that women are not allowed to walk next to their men, talk to them in public, or participate in

religious practices when men are present. This practice of male dominance in liturgical celebrations is also predominant everywhere the Roman Catholic Church is present as the most important religious influence. Consequently, the Church's leadership is primarily founded on the notions of paternalism, to instill in its believers there is a God-ordained natural order which can not be transgressed. Therefore, until not long ago, only men were allowed in the altar area during religious ceremonies, while women were relegated to take an inferior place. It was only because of a decline in men's participation that religious leaders from Rome initiated reforms allowing women more active participation in the liturgy of the mass. Notwithstanding their increased participation in the religious rituals and ceremonies, women continue to play a secondary role.

Under male dominated societies such as in the United States and Latin America, although the rights of women have improved, especially during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the excesses of patriarchy based on a God's given order have not ended. Patriarchy continues to be deeply ingrained in family traditions like women

*Source*



taking the name of their husbands, the preference for a male child, and children carrying the father's last name. In this manner, men assume the dominant role again and women are encouraged to subsume their identity. Men's political machinery has continued to disregard the importance of women's legal claim for equality even after the notion of God-given order of male dominance has began to lose its political value. The devaluation of this idea has been further emphasized when women began questioning the persistence of sexual and cultural domination and the absence of gender equality. This thesis will focus on both Patriarchy and Machismo, and the long lasting political, economic, and social effects that their practice has had on women, in both the United States and Latin America.

This thesis has been divided in five separate chapters; the first chapter will serve as a road map to describe the sequence of the successive chapters each of which will focus on the separate analysis of issues pertaining to the discussion. The second chapter will focus on a brief historical overview of Patriarchy and Machismo, the manner on which both of these culturally imposed systems have developed throughout history. How

these cultural practices based on traditional customs and religious beliefs have survived the passing of time molding the lives of men and women alike to maintain the supremacy of men within and without the family spheres. Moreover, it will also analyze how patriarchal beliefs based on the religious influence were used to maintain men's dominant position while relegating women to a secondary place. Through a notion of women as weak-willed individuals and men's arguments to a God's ordained order, men have set the basis to maintain women economically and socially dependent. It will question the contrasting ideas of Sir Robert Filmer and John Locke, two important political thinkers of the Enlightenment, who although recognizing the existing inequalities between men, failed to address the inequalities between the sexes. In relation to machismo, will discuss the macho idea and its development in Latin America, the colonial influences, which include the role of the Catholic Church, and its similarities or differences with patriarchy in the United States. The importance of the family's preference for a male child in comparison to a female child, the importance of the parent's roles in the education of their children, and

the differences in molding male and female children for their adulthood will also be examined.

The third chapter will deal with the roles of Patriarchy and Machismo as political instruments. In doing so, this chapter will discuss how deep-seated cultural beliefs such as Patriarchy and Machismo have been used by their proponents in the maintenance of monopolistic control in the destinies of the majority of women in society. Through a division of gender roles and social stratification man has put himself in a predominant position. It will question the value of Rousseau ideas in relation to women's subordination. It will also question the value of early legislation on behalf of women rights, and the importance of women's political activism, their struggle and aspirations, including arguments about the Equal Rights Amendment. In discussing Machismo, the chapter will address the possibility that Latin American men have emulated the American political machinery to fit the men's macho image to maintain their dominant position even when the constitutional rights of women have been infringed. It will look into the differences between the constitutional rights and freedoms of American versus Latin American

women, and why Latin American women have not been more politically successful. Finally, the chapter will include an analysis of the role the Catholic Church in the subordination of Latin American women and how this indoctrination continues to affect their everyday life in all aspects, social, economic, and political.

The Fourth Chapter will focus on social and economic issues affecting women in both the United States and Latin America. This chapter will take a look on deep-seated cultural beliefs such as Patriarchy and Machismo and how these beliefs have been used in the subordination of women thus allowing the most educated men the control of employment and power in society. It will show how a husband's legal control over his wife displayed the ideology of women's subordination to men within the marital and family relationship<sup>1</sup> while wives traditionally lost their identity. It will examine how the industrial revolution, through the division of labor, reinforced the notion that women's rightful place was in the home. In addition, the chapter will discuss pertinent issues in the development of women's social

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<sup>1</sup> Janice Knight, *Orthodoxies in Massachusetts Rereading American Puritanism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 105.

consciousness and how successful women in the United States and Latin American have been in the achievement of education and economic goals. It will study the type of influence legislation has had in narrowing wage gaps between men and women in the labor market. And finally, it will question the effectiveness of prevention programs and laws against domestic violence and the social and cultural influences that contribute to spouse abuse in both the United States and Latin America.

In the final chapter, it is my intent to maintain a critical view at both of Patriarchy and Machismo, their similarities or differences as both legal and cultural traits, to determine the type of influence they have had on past and present generations to arrive to a sound conclusion.

CHAPTER TWO  
PATRIARCHY AND MACHISMO

Introduction

This chapter gives a brief historical overview of Patriarchy and Machismo and the manner in which both of these culturally imposed systems have developed throughout history. Deeply ingrained cultural practices, based on religious beliefs, traditional laws, and customs, have been able to survive the passage of time and have been able to mold the lives of both, men and women alike. It is my intent to maintain a critical view of both of these systems, their similarities or differences as both legal and cultural traits, to determine the type of influence they have had on past and present generations to arrive at a sound conclusion.

Definition of Patriarchy

Patriarchy is defined as "a state or stage of social development characterized by the supremacy of the father in the clan or family in both domestic and religious functions, the legal dependence of wife, or wives, and children, and the reckoning of descent and inheritance in

the male line."<sup>2</sup> The word *patriarchy* comes from the Latin word *pater*, which means *father*. Although it originally referred to the male power and authority in the family, it now most often refers to the political power and authority of males in a society. Patriarchy is best defined as power and control by men; the opposite is matriarchy, which means women hold power within in the family and society. The culture of the United States and many other countries is patriarchal. Men have the power and control the social, political, and economic systems. Patriarchy is the nearly universal social system by which a group of men dominate women. As a power system, patriarchy, combined with the nature of humanity, misogynist attitudes toward women, and the aggressive nature of some males, has produced many injustices.

A society is considered patriarchal when men establish or inherit a social order, where they dominate positions of power and authority, or when important achievements and historical events are attributed solely to the actions of men. The Roman Catholic Church for example, believes that God the Father passed down his

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<sup>2</sup> The Oxford English Dictionary (1989), s.v. "Patriarchy."

authority to the bishops, who are sometimes called patriarchs. Hence, in the Roman Catholic Church, by claiming that the Apostle Peter had set the basis for the Church's patriarchy, only men are promoted into positions of higher authority, such as priests, bishops, cardinals, and popes, thus maintaining male hegemony.

In the United States the men who signed the Constitution are referred to as "founding fathers," ignoring the fact that behind every influential man was an influential woman. Abigail Adams, the wife of the third President of the United States John Adams, is a vivid example of such a woman. Although considered by her husband an intellectual, they could discuss politics only in the privacy of their home, and she could not expect to be more than a private observer and supporter of her husband's political life. In March 1776, while the founding fathers were writing the United States Constitution, hoping for more humanized laws to protect women from abusive husbands, Abigail wrote to her husband:

I desire you would Remember the Ladies, and be more generous and favourable to them than your ancestors. Do not put such unlimited power into the hands of



the Husbands. Remember all Men would be tyrants if they could. If particular care and attention is not paid to the Ladies we are determined to foment a Rebellion, and will not hold ourselves bound by any Laws in which we have no voice, or Representation.<sup>3</sup>

Abigail was not asking for equality but for a legal system that would protect women's well being and happiness in their roles as wives and mothers. Nevertheless, her pleas did not find the expected response from her husband. Notwithstanding her responsibilities as a mother of five children, Abigail Adams faithfully encouraged her husband in his patriotic duty, never lost her personal identity, and proudly identified herself with the revolution as a daughter of America, who as much as other revolutionaries was against tyranny, oppression, and murder.

Defining patriarchy helps to explain the reasons for the treatment of women through the ages and what it means to their future and success in life. Patriarchy not only explains how our society functions, but how it controls women. Women constantly must fight for their rights and

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<sup>3</sup> Charles W. Akers, *Abigail Adams: An American Woman* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1980), 31-47.

struggle to survive while confronting the power and authority of men.

### Religious Influences

Patriarchy, as it has been practiced in the United States, has its roots in Christianity. The Bible, by which most Christians ostensibly live, states boldly that women should be submissive to men in passages that can be found in the book of Genesis 3.16. With that in mind and those beliefs instilled in cultures, women face strong obstacles in gaining strength in their gender and its potential in our world. Notwithstanding arguments of influential women such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton, who through the example of Esther argued in favor of women's power and authority, such biblical examples only represent the exception and not the norm. As a result, the Bible has provided men with the instrument from which they legitimate their dominant position in society ignoring women's arguments.

These patriarchal beliefs based on the Christian religious zeal were further influenced by the emergence of Puritanism in Europe and were later transplanted to North America with the arrival of English immigrants

fleeing from religious persecution. Puritanism found its most complete expression, both politically and theologically, in North America.<sup>4</sup> The term *Puritanism* is also used in a broader sense to refer to attitudes and values considered characteristic of the Puritans, and it has often been used to symbolize rigid moralism, the condemnation of innocent pleasure, or religious narrowness. Therefore, in America, Puritan moralism and its sense of an elect people in covenant with God deeply affected the national character.

From the Puritan point of view then, the story of Adam and Eve related in Genesis 2-3 can be understood as playing a role in defining the new subordinate status of women.<sup>5</sup> Eve is made almost as an afterthought. Concerned that man was alone and lonely in the garden, God decided to make a "helper fit for him" and brought before him "every beast of the field and every bird of the air." It is only after Adam fails to find a suitable companion among them that God thought of creating a woman. Consequently, God created a woman from one of

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<sup>4</sup> Ralph Barton Perry, *Puritanism and Democracy* (New York: The Vanguard Press, 1994), 33-34.

<sup>5</sup> Gerda Lerner, *The Creation of Patriarchy* (Oxford: Oxford university Press, 1986), 211.

Adam's ribs. She was created specifically to serve as Adam's helper, a subordinate position that God makes clear is to be her lot in life.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, it may be argued that Genesis 2-3 both marks the historical shift to an increasingly patriarchal social and religious institution, and also serves as a key document in support of the new patriarchal order by claiming it to be divinely ordained. Figure 1 reflects the manner in which men's religious beliefs were used to support patriarchy.

Although women have used the book of Genesis 1.27-29, where men and women appear to be "created and blessed in God's image as equals ... to be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth," to argue they were created to stand next to and not to follow men, men conveniently have omitted the passages. Notwithstanding the passage in Genesis 1.28, clearly states that both men and women were created equal, the story told in Genesis about Eve and the serpent has a larger religious and political context, which would be used to further argue the establishment of man's dominant position as God's ordained order.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Lerner, 181-183.

<sup>7</sup> Lerner, 185-188.



Figure 1. The Creation of Adam by Michelangelo

Source: Photo by Chris Wahlberg/ Gamma Liaison, for Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia 99.

In the story of the temptation and fall in Genesis 3, the serpent is exposed as a seducer and deceiver and

as God's evil adversary. The point of Genesis 3 is not only to make this otherwise obvious link, but to show how the serpent in fact deceived and betrayed the woman. It is also noteworthy that in the scene of the temptation, which has been frequently exposed through religious art as in Figure 2, the serpent approaches not Adam, but Eve. This already established religious association between the serpent and the woman has therefore been used to explain the fact that Eve, and by extension all women, was more weak-willed than Adam and therefore more susceptible to temptation.<sup>8</sup>

The first mention of man ruling over woman occurred after Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit.<sup>9</sup> It was not part of God's original design, but resulted from their sinful, fallen condition. Adam's independence from, and blame toward Eve, created an imbalance in their relationship in which her love for and reliance upon him was not reciprocated in the same measure. This relational imbalance has enabled men to dominate their

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<sup>8</sup> Kathryn Kish Sklar, Thomas Dublin, *Women and Power in American History, A Reader Vol. 1 to 1880* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1991) 24.

<sup>9</sup> Lerner, 196.

wives, who tolerate their husband's behavior in order to preserve the relationship.



Figure 2. Engraving of *Adam and Eve* by Albrecht Durer

Source: The Bettmann Archive, for Microsoft Encarta encyclopedia 99.

Obedience and a sense of subservience were requirements of which wives were continuously reminded, as can be observed on the following quotation from "the woman's great and chief commandment."

"The man (we know) was first created, as a perfect creature, and not the woman with him at the same instant, as we know both sexes of all other creatures were contemporary. Not so here. But after his constitution and frame ended, then she was thought of. Secondly, she was not made of the same matter with the man equally, but she was made and framed of the man by a rib taken from the man. And thirdly, she was made for the man's use and benefit as a meet helper."<sup>10</sup>

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, a wife was legally a chattel. Her person and her property were under the control of her husband, who had the right to rule over her, to dispose of her property, to teach and chastise her, even to beat her.<sup>11</sup> Although wealthy, aristocratic girls were trained more on social and

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<sup>10</sup> Suzanne W. Hull, *Women According to Men: The World of Tudor-Stuart Women* (Walnut Creek, California: Altamire Press, 1996), 40.

<sup>11</sup> Hull, 20, 31-32.



management responsibilities, women of all classes had certain common skills to learn. Before women's education and training consisted primarily of domestic duties and responsibilities.<sup>12</sup>

This notion of subordination of women, arrived with the new European immigrants who becoming wives, by the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries had experienced the economic changes brought by the development of the industrial revolution that was taking place in England. Europeans brought with them conventions about family life, including beliefs, practices, and expectations that defined the roles appropriate to each member of the family. Religion, education, and law sustained these role expectations to be followed without question.<sup>13</sup>

Women's dependence on men's economic activity was expected, and their productive role even when performed outside the home was considered of secondary importance. Notwithstanding the economic and productive interdependence between husband and wife predominant in

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<sup>12</sup> Nancy F. Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: Woman's Sphere in New England, 1783-1835* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 26.

<sup>13</sup> Akers, 1.

the nineteenth century, women were constantly oriented to the needs of others, especially men.<sup>14</sup>

#### Women as Wives

European men living in a patriarchal society that indoctrinated in them the responsibility to protect and care for members of their family brought the idea of control of women and children with them when they began settling into Colonial America in the 1600s. This control developed into a system of male dominance that continued to expand and become more powerful as the Colonies grew. As the need for cheap labor increased, wealthy landowners developed a system of "indentured servitude" that enabled poor male and female Europeans, who were facing political and economic deprivation, to get to the Colonies. Workers of all genders agreed to exchange the costs of their transportation across the Atlantic, and room and board after arrival, for their toil.

Since the majority of the first colonists to arrive to America were men, it became obvious that in order for colonization to succeed through the build-up of a native

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<sup>14</sup> Cott, 21-22.

population of British descent, women had to be present, so women were encouraged to venture out to America.<sup>15</sup> Therefore, beginning in 1619, several groups of young women were sent to the early settlements in the Chesapeake region to be sold as wives for the planters.<sup>16</sup> Company officials instructed these women that they were to become wives by their own consent and "were not married against their wishes."<sup>17</sup> In effect, the arrival of the first women in America was constituted by the need for wives for the settlers of the new land who could acquire a wife at the price of what it cost for them to get to the colonies. However, those women who were not acquired as wives, became indentured servants, with the promise to work for their master for anywhere between five to seven years to pay the cost of their transportation.<sup>18</sup> In addition, due to the unbalance in sex ratio, women were too valuable and a prospective husband could buy their remaining time and they could

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<sup>15</sup> Sklar, 63.

<sup>16</sup> Carole Pateman, *The Sexual Contract* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988), 121-122.

<sup>17</sup> Abbot Emerson Smith, *Colonists in Bondage: White Servitude and Convict Labor in America 1607-1776* (University of North Carolina Press, 1965), 12-13.

<sup>18</sup> Lois green Carr and Lorena S. Walsh, "The Planter's Wife: The Experience of White Women in Seventeenth-Century Maryland," William and Mary Quarterly Vol. 34 No. 4 (October 1977), 542-571.

marry before the conclusion of their contract. However, those women whose time was not purchased by a prospective husband, had more liberty in making their choice from the more numerous men available.

According to Carr and Walsh (1977), assuming that the 112 servant women who left London between 1683 and 1684 for Maryland and Virginia served the full length of the contract, according to records, only 1.8 percent married before age twenty, and 68 percent after age twenty-four. In a similar manner, if the 141 women who arrived in Charles County between 1666 and 1705 served the full term of their contract, none married before age twenty-two, and half were twenty-five or older when they married.<sup>19</sup> However, the age of marriage may differ when making adjustment for those women who married before the expiration of their contract.

Colonial women within the family were quite aware of the limitations they faced based on gender. However, to these women, the limitations were considered responsibilities for the survival of their families instead of disadvantages. Nevertheless, it can not be ignored that female subjugation was actively endorsed by

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<sup>19</sup> Sklar, 55.

religions.<sup>20</sup> All religions barred women from the ministry, with the exception of the Quakers who allowed women to teach and preach the precepts of their religious beliefs, although in separate meetings. Puritans argued that since the original covenant, which could not be broken, was signed between God and man, only men were qualified to worship God directly,<sup>21</sup> and that allowing women the same rights to conduct religious ceremonies was a direct insult to Him. Men used biblical passages from the First Epistles of Paul to Timothy 2. 13-14, to argue it was unlawful for a woman to usurp over a man, and, moreover, that women were more subject to error than men,<sup>22</sup> as can be observed in the letter to Timothy by Paul, which states: "For Adam was first formed then Eve; and Adam was not beguiled, but the woman being beguiled hath fallen into transgression." Consequently, since women were perceived as unable to control their unlimited desires because of their innate inclination to sin, men feared that if women were permitted to teach, they would become seducers. As a result, if women had desires to

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<sup>20</sup> Hull, 32.

<sup>21</sup> George M. Waller, *Puritanism in Early America* (Lexington: D. C. and Heath Company, 1973), 55.

<sup>22</sup> Carl Holliday, *Woman's Life In Colonial Days* (Detroit: Gale Research Company, 1970), 35.

learn, they were to do so at home from the teachings of their husbands.<sup>23</sup>

### Wives and the System of Coverture

Through the system of coverture inherited from England, husbands became full owners of their wives' personal property upon marriage, owed nothing to their wives beyond maintenance and dower rights, and were legally free to appropriate any and all of their labor and earnings.<sup>24</sup> Wives and unmarried adult daughters were not chattels in early America, but neither were they legally free. Legal freedom for women came only with widowhood, an irony of sorts, since the loss of one's life-mate could exact a steep price, if not in grief, then often in penury.

Under rules of coverture, freehold land that a woman brought into a marriage came under the management, but not the ownership, of her husband. Freehold land refers to land that is inherited or held for life, in contrast with property that refers to personal possessions which include tangible and intangible effects. Rights of

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<sup>23</sup> Sklar, 34.

<sup>24</sup> Pateman, 114-118.

inheritance in that land belonged to her children, although her husband could continue to benefit from it if he outlived her. Although legally, upon marriage, the husband and wife were treated as one entity, in essence, the wife's separate legal existence disappeared as far as property rights were concerned.<sup>25</sup> Under coverture wives could not control their property unless specific provisions were made before marriage, they could not file lawsuits or be sued separately, nor could they execute contracts. Therefore, if no specific provisions were made before marriage, a husband could use, sell or dispose of her property without her permission. Moreover, under the doctrine of coverture wives had no identity as individuals under the law, and as such, men could by law demand sex rights, and that women's bodies in flesh and representation be available to them.<sup>26</sup> The following statement by Sir William Blackstone, in his 1765 authoritative legal text, *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, focuses on the legal rights of married women under the codes of coverture.

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<sup>25</sup> Pateman, 119-120.

<sup>26</sup> Pateman, 14.

By marriage, the husband and wife are one person in law: that is, the very being or legal existence of the woman is suspended during the marriage, or at least incorporated and consolidated into that of the husband: under whose wing, protection, and cover, she performs every thing; and is therefore called ... a feme-covert....<sup>27</sup>

#### The Enlightenment View of Women

In the seventeenth century some political thinkers drew a comparison between the power of the father and the power of the king.<sup>28</sup> According to Filmer, all powers and authority trace back to the first man, Adam, who was granted authority by God the Father.<sup>29</sup> Based on this belief, Filmer argued that children were born to obey their fathers therefore political subservience to a male authority was a natural condition.

English philosopher John Locke, who was an opponent of patriarchal rule in relation to monarchical government over men, refuted Filmer's works in the late seventeenth

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<sup>27</sup> Encyclopedia Britannica 1999, "Coverture, *Encyclopedia of Women's History*" <<http://allaboutwomenhistory.commbiopage.htm>> [June 11, 2003].

<sup>28</sup> James Daly, *Sir Robert Filmer and English Political Thought* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979), 68.

<sup>29</sup> Daly, 57-62.



century.<sup>30</sup> Locke believed that government authority came from the people and was not the God-given right of kings,<sup>31</sup> thus separating paternal power from political power. In Locke's view, paternal power is a nonpolitical form of natural subjection that has no place in the conventional civil society. Locke's political power theory did not extend to the family environment because he, as well as Filmer, assumed that women were naturally and voluntarily subservient to their fathers and husbands.<sup>32</sup>

Political thinkers of the twentieth century believed patriarchy referred to a form of government that had ended in the late seventeenth century with the rise in the notion of individual rights and personal freedom. However, when these political thinkers talk about personal freedom, they as much as those thinkers of the seventeenth century, refer to the individual rights and personal freedom of men and not of women, as a result, their argument fails to explain why sexual inequality

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<sup>30</sup> Perry, 165-171.

<sup>31</sup> Ian Harris, *The Mind of John Locke: A Study of Political Theory in its Intellectual Setting* (Great Britain: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 192-193; J. W. Gough, *John Locke's Political Philosophy* (Great Britain: Oxford University Press, 1973), 72-73.

<sup>32</sup> Harris, 17, 232-233.

persisted. Consequently, they continue to be challenged by the inconsistency of their arguments.

From this analysis of patriarchy it becomes clear how through the use of this cultural practice based on deeply ingrained religious beliefs, traditional laws, and customs, men have historically been successful in pushing women to a secondary political, economic, and social class status. Hence, men have succeeded in blocking women from their righteous place in society not only as individuals but also as productive members of society. This attitude has been very damaging to women who have had to endure political, economic, and social disadvantages when striving for progress in a primarily male dominated environment. Consequently, it could be asserted that within the North American society, Patriarchy, the product of a cultural adaptation, has been the most influential cultural trend in the development of the United States from its original thirteen British colonies. Patriarchy, as an influential social power, was not the result of a developing society but a transplantation of cultural and religious beliefs deeply ingrained in European immigrants arriving to the New World.

## Defining Machismo

Defining machismo in Latin America requires an examination of the historical events that unfolded during the conquest of Mexico as well as the subsequent administrative and religious influences that modified the social behavior of its population. Specifically focusing on Mexico in this discussion does not imply that machismo is a monopoly of the Mexican people; it is a form of simplification since what has historically evolved in Mexico is practicably applicable to most of Latin America and vice versa.

The following is one of the several definitions of macho and its derivative machismo.

"The macho is the masculine ideal in Spanish American culture and society. Regardless of social position, the macho is admired for his sexual prowess, action orientation, and aggressiveness. Stridently masculine, the macho is allegedly sure of himself, conscious of his inner worth, and prone to gamble everything on his self-confidence."<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Marvin Goldwert, *History as Neurosis: Paternalism and Machismo in Spanish America* (Lahnam, MD: University Press of America, Inc., 1980), 31.

This description strongly ties the macho with the image of the Spanish conquistadores, who displayed the first recorded acts of machismo in the conquest of the Americas. For instance, Hernand Cortes' expedition was born out of his rebellion against established authority when he clandestinely left Cuba without permission from the Spanish governor.<sup>34</sup> Cortes further embodied the macho when he wrecked his ships after landing in what is now Veracruz, Mexico, to prevent his crew from returning to Cuba.<sup>35</sup> Cortes and his followers were self confident, brave, and aggressive. Having crossed the ocean without women, they manifested a lusty sexuality. This fact is clearly observed because after their arrival and as result of their sexual intermingling with native women, the mestizos, the product of sexual contact between Spanish men and Indian women, was added to the American environments. Indeed, due to their aggressiveness, courage, and lust, the Spanish conquerors personified the macho ideal.

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<sup>34</sup> Michael C. Meyer and William H. Beezley, *The Oxford History of Mexico* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 37-38.

<sup>35</sup> Bernal Diaz Del Castillo, *The Conquest of New Spain* (Great Britain: Hazell Watson & Viney Ltd., 1973), 130; Michael C. Meyer, William L. Sherman, and Susan M. Deeds, *The Course of Mexican History, Six Edition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 102.

## Colonial Influence

Similarly as patriarchy in the United States, colonial paternalism has been an influential cultural trait in the development of Latin American society, and as consequence, in the way in which Latin Americans recognize male and female gender roles. Over three hundred years of colonization has contributed and influenced the development of the Mexican society and culture, including machismo.

The social structure of the new colonies in New Spain (Mexico) was hierarchical in nature. It included the King and the Church at the top of its configuration, where the monarch represented the paternal figure at the top of the family, the church was responsible for the administration of government, and the subjects were the children who owed obedience and loyalty to king and church.<sup>36</sup> This hierarchical structure was supported by divine sanction and the church was the most important agent and effective instrument of civil power.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Colin M. MacLachlan, and Jaime E. Rodriguez O. *The Forging of the Cosmic Race: A Reinterpretation of Colonial Mexico* ( Berkeley, University of California Press, 1980), 84-87, 101, 141-143.

<sup>37</sup> E. Bradford Burns, *Latin America: A Concise Interpretative History* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1994), 39.

The Catholic Church encouraged a blind faith in God and King as the head of the patriarchal family. The notion of "potestad paterna,"<sup>38</sup> a Moorish doctrine of the subjection of women emerged to establish the position of the father as the patriarch.<sup>39</sup> Through this doctrine, the father was the lord whose opinions constituted orders, his orders were to be blindly obeyed, and his will prevailed. In other words, complete absolutism in exchange of family unity and stability.

This form of paternalism in the Latin American colonies was prevalent until the change of dynasty from the House of Habsburg (1516-1700), who considered the clergy their allies, to the Bourbons (1700-late1890s), who alienated them by embarking on administrative and political reforms.<sup>40</sup> Hence, the House of Habsburg considered the new conquered territories as vassal kingdoms, where colonists still were considered Spanish subjects who enjoyed freedom of action in their affairs,

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<sup>38</sup> The Concept of "potestad paterna" refers to the jurisdiction, power-patria potestad, parental jurisdiction that according to law fathers have over their unmarried children. This concept was extended to the king and his territorial possessions, including subjects living in the colonies.

<sup>39</sup> Goldwert, 13.

<sup>40</sup> Jose M. Sans Puig, *Historia de Espana* (Barcelona, Editorial Ramon Sopena, S.A. 1994), 720.

while Spain maintained complete control as the mother country. In contrast, the Bourbons used administrative reforms to transform the colonies into territories that they used to extract as much economic revenue as possible<sup>41</sup> without regards to those who also considered themselves Spanish subjects living away from home. This change caused the ties that united the colonies to the mother country to disintegrate to the point that independence presented the only solution to a people who saw paternalism turn absolutism.<sup>42</sup>

The banishment of the king as the head of the patriarchal structure resulted in the loss in the people's conception of paternal control. Hence, after independence, machismo in the figure of the *hacendados*<sup>43</sup>, *caudillos*,<sup>44</sup> generals, and politicians emerged to compete against each other for political leadership. It was the absence of the king as a paternal figure that allowed the

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<sup>41</sup> Mark A. Burkholder & Lyman L. Johnson, *Colonial Latin America* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1998), 248-301.

<sup>42</sup> Octavio Paz, *The Labyrinth of Solitude: Life and Thought in Mexico* (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1961), 117-118.

<sup>43</sup> Hacendado: Owner of a Spanish landed estate, who throughout the nineteenth century emerged as strong man to influence political affairs some times through favors, sometimes through their economic power.

<sup>44</sup> Caudillo: Spanish for strong regional man, a leader of a rebellion, the head of the state.

emergence of machismo as the dominant behavior in the region.<sup>45</sup> As a result, machismo has remained an influential force to the present time.

#### Emergence of *Caudillos* as Machos

Violence has been the predominant behavior in Mexico since the beginning of the war for independence from Spain in 1810, through the several civil wars until present day. During this time, the *caudillos* emerged as important and dominant figures rebelling against the authority of the elites, even though they often were a part of this dominating class. This type of social and political phenomena has been possible because *caudillos* generally have enjoyed the admiration of the masses who were readily attracted by their charismatic personality and selfless courage in search of social recognition.<sup>46</sup>

Although it is impossible to deny the important role that *caudillos* played in the development of the political affairs of their time, since through their rebellious actions major social changes were possible, it is their behavior that must be questioned. Thus, names such as

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<sup>45</sup> Paz, 82.

<sup>46</sup> H. Ernest Lewald, *Latino America: Sus Culturas y Sociedades* (New York: Murray Printing Co., 1973), 125.



Benito Juarez, who as President of Mexico from 1858 to 1872, began the separation between Church and State,<sup>47</sup> and Emiliano Zapata and Francisco "Pancho" Villa, who fought for a more equitable distribution of land, would become important in history.<sup>48</sup> However, their excesses against those considered their political foes and the degree of violence committed against their families give reasons to question their behavior.

#### Machismo and the Family

Although present in other societies around the globe, in the male dominated Mexican society, machismo is also expressed in the preference for male children to carry the name of the family.<sup>49</sup> But this preference is more complex than the simple continuity of the family name since male children are mainly expected to grow up into "little conquistadores"<sup>50</sup> facing the difficulties that life may bring without fear. This is exemplified

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<sup>47</sup> Mark Wasserman, *Everyday Life and Politics in Nineteenth Century Mexico: Men Women, and War* (Albuquerque: The university of New Mexico Press, 2000), 93- 132.

<sup>48</sup> Meyer, *The Course of Mexican History*, 483-491.

<sup>49</sup> Charles Wagley, *The Latin American Tradition: Essays on the Unity and the Diversity of Latin American Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), 70.

<sup>50</sup> Marvin Goldwert, *Machismo and the Conquest: The Case of Mexico* (Lenham: University Press of America, 1983), 3.

throughout their entire childhood when male children are encouraged to show signs of courage, aggressiveness, and unwillingness to run away from a fight as doing otherwise would lead to the emasculation of his manhood. Moreover, the prevalent double standard in male-female relations is always present, especially when relating to the male sexual behavior. Thus, while male children are encouraged to capitalize on sexual opportunities, female children are usually discouraged because it brings dishonor to the family.<sup>51</sup>

Hence, the development and acceptance of Mexican machismo as it is known today has its roots in complex mixtures and adaptations of Spanish social and religious beliefs. This is understandable since the colonization of Mexico, in contrast with the colonization of the United States, included a complex social division, which included the interracial mixing of European with natives and other peoples. As a result, new groups of people emerged, which in the eyes of the conquerors were of inferior social status.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Wagley, 70-71.

<sup>52</sup> Colin MacLachlan and William H. Beezley, *El Gran Pueblo: A History of Greater Mexico* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1994), 1; MacLachlan, *The Forging of The Cosmic Race*, 199.

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However, the definition of machismo generally continues to be accepted in accordance to social class and personal experiences. Therefore, while on the one hand, some may identify machismo with the irresponsible actions of an abusive womanizer,<sup>53</sup> on the other hand, others may relate machismo with the tenderness of their fathers, or any other male figure who represents a good, kind, strong, and responsible man.<sup>54</sup> The figure of the irresponsible and abusive womanizer has achieved consensus among the masses in Latin America, however, and has been used in the commitment of abuses against women, and has been extended against others, who may be perceived as easy prey as well.

As a result, the concept of machismo has in general been misused in its interpretation. This is somehow expected, since those who generally analyze the relationships between men and women have usually been men. Since the solution to the problems affecting Latin American women has not yet arrived, it is important to consider the causes behind this predisposition for male

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<sup>53</sup> Fernando Benitez, *The Century After Cortes* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1962), 69.

<sup>54</sup> Rick Najera, *The Pain of the Macho and other Plays* (Houston: Arte Publico Press, 1997), 13.

aggressiveness. In an environment where the social overshadows the individual through the cult of machismo, the relegation of women to a passive and servile state becomes a necessity to reaffirm men's social position through an unequivocal show of masculinity.<sup>55</sup>

As can be deduced from the analysis of patriarchy and machismo, both had been used by the powerful in the control of the weakest, and this unfortunately, includes women. In the United States the patriarchal system has been successful in depriving equality not only to women who constitute at least fifty percent of its population, but also to prevent other less influential groups from sharing a say in what evolves around their lives. Social, political, and religious influence over women, however, could not have been possible without a hierarchical stratification of society and the willingness of women to accept the designs that men have imposed on them.<sup>56</sup> Thus, as a reflection of Max Weber's sociological theory, men through a monopolistic claim to

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<sup>55</sup> Lewald, 123.

<sup>56</sup> J. E. T. Eldridge, ed. *Max Weber: The Interpretation of Social Reality* (London, Michael Joseph Ltd. 1970), 91-92.

power, have created a hierarchical system that puts them on a dominant position.<sup>57</sup> Women had been unfairly denied equality in "the most democratic nation of the world," that in addition has extended this denial to deprive minorities from their constitutional rights.

Like Patriarchy, Machismo has been used to achieve and maintain control of the political destinies of most Latin American countries through the use of rational, traditional, and charismatic types of authority,<sup>58</sup> in the commitment of intimidation and abuses against the weakest sectors of society. This not only includes women, although they constitute its main victims, but also other marginalized social groups such as homosexuals and lesbians. This type of behavior has also been very damaging to Latin American women who for the most have been forced to survive in a very hostile environment. In many cases women have been denied the most basic civil rights, including education, and the sharing of political decisions with men.

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<sup>57</sup> Wolf Heydebrand, ed. *Max Weber: Sociological Writings* (New York: The Continuum Publishing Company, 1994), 23-27.

<sup>58</sup> Heydebrand, 28-32.

## CHAPTER THREE

### PATRIARCHY AND MACHISMO AS POLITICAL INSTRUMENTS

#### Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to identify the different political aspects that have been used by proponents of Patriarchy and Machismo in the maintenance of monopolistic control in the destinies the majority of women in society. By dividing the roles of both male and female in society, man has for the most part put himself in a predominant position. Patriarchy and Machismo as institutionalized systems of control over women have survived despite women's activism and laws enacted on their behalf both in the United States and Latin America. It will analyze the possibility that Latin American men have emulated the American political machinery to fit the men's macho image to maintain their dominant position even when the constitutional rights of women have been infringed. It uses this information to explain the arguments in the final analysis.

#### Natural Gender Roles

Historically, upper-class men to monopolize political and economic power without opposition, have

used patriarchal beliefs. They have used these beliefs to perpetuate their predominant position over others, although with the passing of time they have been forced to share their power with other men who also share their beliefs of political domination. They have been able to continue this dominance over women, not because women are inferior in any way, but because women have been denied the necessary economic resources and political knowledge to fight back.

In this manner, women have been denied of their most basic rights and have been forced to continue in their struggle even after those rights have been achieved and become part of the constitutional laws. This fact can be clearly observed through the multiple examples of women's movements throughout American history. Since patriarchy as a political system can only achieve functionality with the full cooperation of women, men have historically assured this cooperation in a variety of ways. In the United States women's cooperation has been achieved by gender indoctrination, educational deprivation, denial of historical knowledge, by dividing women from each other,

and by denying access to economic resources and political power.<sup>59</sup>

Consequently, women in the United States have shaped their lives in accordance to patriarchal designs, where the supremacy in the relationship between men the dominant superior group and women the inferior subordinate group is somewhat mitigated by mutual obligations and reciprocal rights. Departing from this explanation, it is not difficult to deduce how men have been able to manipulate women's lives to suit their will through the use any one of these strategies, since they controlled both the political and economic means.

However, those who historically have enjoyed the benefits of political and economic power would rarely willingly renounce them. This is in fact what has happened with patriarchy in the United States. Men in power do not want to share their predominant position, much less to renounce it. This attitude, although unreasonable, is understandable since any movement that threatens to disturb men's dominance presents a challenge to their position of power and therefore has to be

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<sup>59</sup> Lerner, 217.



stopped. While women have struggled to achieve equality, men have done their best if not to deny women their goals, at least to delay them from happening, because equality means the end of their predominant political and economic status in the United States as in any other patriarchal society.

### Women and the Concept of Equality

By late eighteenth-century, when philosophers and political theorists in an attempt to remedy the existing inequalities among men asserted that all "men" were created equal and therefore were entitled to equal treatment under the law, they clarified that women were not included. Most Enlightenment thinkers had little to say about the position women held in society, and many of their followers assumed that the concepts of liberty, equality, and political representation applied only to men. For example, one of the most influential writers from this period, French philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau, claimed that women were sentimental and

frivolous and therefore were naturally suited to be subordinate companions of men.<sup>60</sup>

The problem, however, was not that women were sentimental and naturally suited to be subordinate companions as Rousseau and his followers thought. The problem was rooted in the deeply ingrained patriarchal beliefs of men, which has denied women the opportunities to better education and economic independence. Whenever women have had opportunities, they have been able to capitalize from the profits that better education provides, thus, enhancing their economic and political status.

In response to Rousseau and other influential philosophers who belittled the role of women in society, English writer Mary Wollstonecraft wrote *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1791). In her book, Wollstonecraft argued that, like men, women were naturally rational but their inferior education often taught them to be silly and emotional.<sup>61</sup> Education, she believed, should cultivate

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<sup>60</sup> Peter V. Conroy Jr., *Jean-Jacques Rousseau* (New York: Simon & Schuster Macmillan, 1998), 97-98.

<sup>61</sup> D.L. Macdonald & Kathleen Scherf, ed., *The Vindications: The Rights of Men The Rights of Woman, Mary Wollstonecraft* (Ontario, Canada: Broadview Press, 2001), 166, 202.

the natural reasoning capacity in girls.<sup>62</sup> She also claimed that the best marriages were marriages of equals, in which husband and wife were friends as well as legal partners. Wollstonecraft argued that equality in marriage would only come about with equality of education.<sup>63</sup>

The leaders of the Enlightenment were right in arguing that all individuals were born with natural rights that made them free and equal, arguing that all inequalities that existed among citizens were the result of an inadequate education system and an imperfect social environment. They were also correct in questioning traditional ideas basing the rights of citizens on their wealth and social status, and in recognizing that improved education and more egalitarian social structures could correct these inequalities. But when they belittled women and ignored their arguments for equality, they only demonstrated that they also were the products of the same system they were striving to correct, and, that in their endeavor to change it, which was of paramount importance, they must change themselves.

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<sup>62</sup> Macdonald, 183, 201, 203.

<sup>63</sup> Macdonald, 249, 307.

Notwithstanding that such radical ideas about equality and the rights of citizens helped inspire both the American Revolution in 1775 and the French Revolution in 1789, the ideas of the Enlightenment initially had little impact on the legal and political status of women. Until the 19th century, the denial of equal rights to women met with only occasional protest and drew little attention from most people. Because most women lacked the educational and economic resources that would enable them to challenge the prevailing social order, women generally accepted their inferior status as the only option. At this time, women shared these disadvantages with the majority of working class men, as many social, economic, and political rights were the monopoly of the wealthy elite.

#### Women's Legal Status in the Nineteenth-Century

In the early 19th century, the vast majority of married women throughout Europe and the United States still had no legal identity apart from their husbands. This legal status—known as *coverture*—prohibited a married woman from being a party in a lawsuit, sitting on a jury, holding property in her own name, or writing a will.

Moreover, in child custody disputes, courts routinely granted permanent custody of children to the father.<sup>64</sup> In addition, institutionalized patriarchy in the form of religion and state and federal laws that discriminated against women, posed some of the most significant obstacles to securing women's rights. The earliest campaigns to improve women's legal status in the United States centered on gaining property rights for women.<sup>65</sup> As the century progressed, governments in Europe and North America began to draft new laws guaranteeing equality among men, and although significant numbers of women—and some men—began demanding that women be accorded equal rights as well, their petitions were ignored.

Beginning in the 1830s, institutionalized patriarchy such as state legislatures, began passing laws and statutes that gradually gave married women greater control over property. For instance, New York State passed the Married Women's Property Act in 1848, allowing women to acquire and retain assets independently of their

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<sup>64</sup> Rita J. Simon and Gloria Danziger, *Women's Movements in America: Their Successes, Disappointments, and Aspirations* (New York: Praeger Publications, 1991), 1, 98.

<sup>65</sup> Simon, 101.

husbands.<sup>66</sup> This was the first law that clearly established the idea that a married woman had an independent legal identity from men, and was hoped it would inspire all other states to eventually pass similar legislation, however, that was not the case since not all the states adopted the idea with the same goal in mind. Although some states followed suit, as was the case of Pennsylvania, they also had added what they called "dependent conditions" which although giving women the right to own property did not mean that they could have control of their income. For example, in 1853, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court ruled that under these conditions, "the husband was still entitled to the person and labor of his wife."<sup>67</sup> In the opinion of the court, the women's property law of 1848 did not mean that they were entitled to their own income, the product of their industry and economy.

The influences of patriarchy continued to be present in other parts of the world even when men and women were partners of the same political enterprises. England

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<sup>66</sup> Kathryn Cullen-DuPont, *Makers of America: Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Women's Liberty* (New York: Facts On File, 1992), 50.

<sup>67</sup> Sklar, 116, 237.

presents a perfect example, for instance, when in 1840 Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton traveled to London to attend the World Anti-Slavery Convention. These two influential abolitionists were barred from participating in the conference and forced to sit behind a curtain.<sup>68</sup> This experience of discrimination, however, had unanticipated results since instead of discouraging these women, it inspired them to organize the first women's rights convention in Seneca Falls, New York, on July 19 and 20, 1848.<sup>69</sup>

Against all opposition at a time when the growth of female autonomy, power and control of the home, prohibited them from freely acting in the public sphere,<sup>70</sup> the Seneca Falls Convention attracted more than 200 women and approximately 40 men. For the convention, Stanton, Mott, and several others wrote a *Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions*, often considered the founding text of the American women's rights movement.<sup>71</sup> Based on

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<sup>68</sup> Karen O'Connor and Larry Sabato, *The American Government: Roots and Reform* (Needham Heights, Massachusetts: Allyn & Bacon, 1996), 124.

<sup>69</sup> Carol Faulkner and Beverly Wilson Palmer, "Women and Social Movements in the United States 1830-1930" <<http://womhist.binghamton.edu/mott/intro.html>> [28 February 2000].

<sup>70</sup> Sklar, 237.

<sup>71</sup> "Seneca Falls Convention, July 19-20, 1848" <<http://www.npg.si.edu/col/seneca/senfalls1.htm>> [February 28, 2000]

the Declaration of Independence, the *Declaration of Sentiments* stated that men and women were created equal and that, like men, women were born with certain natural rights. The document criticized men for denying women the right to vote, the right to hold property, equal terms in a divorce, and custody of children. It also criticized men for blocking women's access to higher education, the professions,<sup>72</sup> and "nearly all the profitable employments." The declaration also faulted the church for excluding women from the ministry.<sup>73</sup>

Public reaction to the Seneca Falls convention presaged a stormy future for the new movement. Although many prominent Americans, including the famed editor Horace Greeley and the abolitionist leader William Lloyd Garrison, warmly supported it,<sup>74</sup> many citizens and the great majority of newspapers responded with ridicule, fury, and vilification. Suffragists were called the shrieking sisterhood, branded as unfeminine, and accused of immorality and drunkenness. Later, when suffragist

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<sup>72</sup> Jack E. Holmes, Michael J. Engelhardt, and Robert E. Elder, Jr., *American Government: Essentials & Perspectives* (New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1994), 38.

<sup>73</sup> "Declaration Of Sentiments"

<<http://www.rochester.edu/SBA/declare.html>> [February 28, 2000]

<sup>74</sup> Holmes, 39.



leaders undertook speaking tours in support of women's rights, temperance, and abolition, they were often subjected to physical violence.<sup>75</sup> Meetings repeatedly were stormed and disrupted by gangs of street bullies. Notwithstanding, intimidation failed to falter their resolution, the woman suffrage and abolitionist movements continued for some years to grow side by side.

The fact that most of the abolitionists working to end slavery in the United States were women presented a great challenge to white men's prominence even among these institutions. Even when writing the history of antislavery movements, by focusing on leadership and representations in antislavery conventions, historians have ignored the great contributions of women to the movement. Some historians have singled out some women abolitionists for closer scrutiny, focusing not on their activities and contributions but on their supposed deviance.<sup>76</sup> Notwithstanding their unselfish work in benefit of others, these brave women faced opposition, ridicule, attack, and disapproval.<sup>77</sup> For that reason, to

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<sup>75</sup> Cullen-DuPont, 58.

<sup>76</sup> Sklar, 173-174.

<sup>77</sup> Sklar, 181.

be fair to women's contributions as abolitionists, we must recognize that it was their inspiration on Quaker tradition of equality for all people that led them into the movement.

### Protective Legislation

During the nineteenth-century increasing numbers of women began to enter the industrial labor force. Some social reformers grew concerned about the impact of long hours and poor working conditions on women's health. The National Consumers' League, founded in 1899, and the Women's Trade Union League, founded in 1903 spearheaded efforts to limit women's work hours and the types of work they could perform.<sup>78</sup> Thanks to their efforts, by 1908 several laws had been passed by the states limiting work hours or abolishing night work for women.

Notwithstanding protective legislation, poor working conditions continued to plague the working environment and the tragic fire that in 1911 killed 146 women trapped in the Triangle Shirtwaist Company's clothing factory in

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<sup>78</sup> Kenneth C. Wolensky, Nicole H. Wolensky, and Robert P. Wolensky, *Fighting for the Union Label: The Women's Garment Industry and the ILGWU in Pennsylvania* (The Pennsylvania State University, 2002), 16-17.

New York,<sup>79</sup> is a reflection of the lack of importance given to such regulations.

With the emergence of World War I, between 1914 and 1917, even greater numbers of women entered the workforce, prompting the establishment of the Women's Bureau of the Department of Labor in 1920, and the passage of legislation to protect working women.<sup>80</sup> However, in an environment of economic competition where industry focused in reducing production costs, twentieth-century capitalists were more careful in protecting their profits than women's rights, and protective legislation for women meant less profit for their deep pockets. In opposing protective legislation they argued that sex-based labor legislation upheld stereotypes of women as weak and defenseless, limited their options for employment, and reinforced the notion that women belonged in the home.<sup>81</sup>

These facts can be observed in the many cases in which protective legislation was challenged in the

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<sup>79</sup> Carol Berkin et al, *Making America: A History of the United States* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1997), 439; Wolensky, 17-19.

<sup>80</sup> Amy E. Buttler, *Two Paths to Equality: Alice Paul and Ethel Smith in the ERA Debate, 1921-1929* (Albany: University of New York Press, 2002), 2, 79-80.

<sup>81</sup> Buttler, 2, 62-63, 93.

courts. In *Ritchie v. People* (1895), the Illinois Supreme Court ruled that limiting women's work day to eight hours infringed upon a woman's right to contract for her labor, and thus violated her 14th Amendment right to equal protection under the law. In *Lochner v. New York* (1905) the Supreme Court deemed all protective labor legislation to be unconstitutional. The *Lochner* decision was revised three years later in *Muller v. Oregon* (1908). In that case, American jurist Louis D. Brandeis argued that women's role as mothers required that they be given special protection in the workplace.<sup>82</sup> American courts repeatedly struck down statutes establishing minimum wages for women. In *Adkins v. Children's Hospital* (1923), the Supreme Court decided that a minimum wage for women violated the right to freedom of contract.<sup>83</sup>

The concept of *The Split Labor Market*, by Edna Bonacich, presents a model of the constant struggle that exists between a dominant working sector, the capital, and the cheap labor, which although focused across the racial/ethnic lines, could also be applied to the

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<sup>82</sup> Gary B. Nash, et al. *The American People: Creating a Nation and a Society, Volume Two, Since 1865* (New York: Harper & row, Publishers, 1986), 695; O'connor, 131-132.

<sup>83</sup> Buttler, 102-103.

existing inequalities between genders. The class conflict that takes place between the capital and the dominant groups focuses in the maintenance of wage levels through the defense of whatever control the dominant workers have on production. Racial and ethnic conflict takes place between dominant and cheap labor workers in an effort of the former to prevent the latter from decreasing the price of labor.<sup>84</sup> Racial and ethnic conflict however, is not racially motivated, but as result of pre-existing differences between the cost of racially defined labor. In Bonacich's reasoning, capital does not engage in enhancing its control over labor, but instead, benefit from the ever present pool of cheap labor that creates an incentive for lowering wages and increasing profits.<sup>85</sup> As a result of the dominant labor resistance to lower wages, capitalists are forced into accommodations they could not otherwise choose to make.<sup>86</sup> As Bonacich further explains:

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<sup>84</sup> Edna Bonacich, "A Theory of Ethnic Antagonism: The Split Labor Market," American Sociological Review Vol. 37 (October 1972), 547-559.

<sup>85</sup> Bonacich, "A Theory of Ethnic Antagonism, 553.

<sup>86</sup> Edna Bonacich, "Advanced Capitalism and Black/ White Relations in the United States: A Split Market Interpretation," American Sociological Review Vol. 41 (February 1976), 34-41.

"Capital turns toward the cheap labor pool as a more desirable work force, a choice consistent with simple pursuit of higher profits. Higher priced labor resists being displaced, and the racist structures they erect to protect themselves are antagonistic to the interest of capital"<sup>87</sup>

In a similar manner, through Bonacich's *Split Labor Market*, an explanation of how by concentrating women in low paying clerical and service jobs—despite women's achievements in the professions and occupations—could be found. Thus, by replacing the racial and ethnic conflict between workers with a conflict between workers of different sex, we can observe that it is not by accident that women continue to be exploited and on the average earn less for doing the same work as men. Consequently, when opponents of protective legislation argued that especial rules for women would inhibit women's struggle for equality with men, even when the legislation related only to labor laws, it is clear that the opposition was not protecting women's rights to equality. The truth behind this opposition is thus based on economics since

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<sup>87</sup> Michael Omi & Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 33.

working women were paid much less than were working men, their labor represented huge savings in labor expenses and protective legislation would increase those costs. To be able to better accommodate for men's wage demands, capitalists had to lobby against any type of protective legislation that threatened their economic interests.

Through the analysis of reports from different organizations, including records from the Census Bureau, a trend to keep women in lower paying positions can be observed and is reflected in the amount of money they are paid in comparison to men in comparable occupations. For instance, while in the mid-1960s women averaged 69 cents for every dollar men made, after thirty years of struggle in the labor force, by 1996, women earned 76 cents out of every dollar men receive. Out of the twenty million of mothers that work, 44 percent of single mothers remain below poverty level, and two out of three adults in poverty are women.<sup>88</sup> Moreover, according to the United States Census Bureau (September 2003), the median wage for males working full time is about 37,057 dollars, while the median wage for females working full time is

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<sup>88</sup> Michael Parenti, *Democracy for the Few* (Boston: Haddon Craftsmen, Inc., an R. R. Donnelley & Sons Company, 2002), 23.

about 25,458 dollars, figures that show that women earn about 69 cents for every dollar a man makes. The gap between men and women as head of households living in the United States is significant when comparing the total amount of people living below poverty against the different racial groups. As can be observed in Table 1, while Whites constitute the great majority of the population, only about 9.1 percent of them are affected by poverty. On the other hand, 24.9 percent of Blacks, and 22.6 percent of Hispanics live below the poverty line,<sup>89</sup> and the gap will probably increase if the head of household not only happens to be a woman but also a member of a minority group such as Black or Hispanic. Then, assuming that Bonacich's arguments are correct, and capitalists only take advantage of a situation, which allows them to profit from a pool of cheap labor, by allowing the segregation of women into occupational niches, capitalists are in fact contributing to women's exploitation.

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<sup>89</sup> Sandra Lucket Clark, et al. "Comparing Employment, Income, and Poverty: Census 2000 and the Current Population Survey, September 2003." <<http://www.census.gov/hhs/www/income.html>> [October 30, 2003].



Table 1. Comparing Employment, Income, and Poverty

Census 2000				
Characteristics	Below Poverty Level		%	90%C.I. (+/-)%
	Total	Number		
Total. . . . .	273,882,232	33,899,812	12.4	0.01
People in				
Families . . . . .	231,874,934	25,158,289	10.8	0.01
Age				
Under 18 years.. .	70,925,261	11,746,858	16.6	0.02
18 to 64 years.. .	169,610,423	18,865,180	11.1	0.01
65 years and				
older.. . . . .	33,345,548	3,287,774	9.9	0.02
Race and Hispanic Origin				
White. . . . .	206,259,768	18,947,674	9.1	0.01
Non Hispanic.. . .	189,785,997	15,414,119	8.1	0.01
Black. . . . .	32,714,224	8,146,146	24.9	0.04
Asian and Pacific				
Islanders/2. . . . .	10,344,872	1,321,795	12.8	0.05
Hispanic/3.. . . .	34,450,868	7,797,864	22.6	0.03
Families				
All Families.. . . .	72,261,780	6,620,945	9.2	0.01
Married couples. .	55,458,451	2,719,059	4.9	0.01
Male householder				
no wife present. .	4,302,568	585,970	13.6	0.06
Female householder				
no husband present.	12,500,761	3,315,916	26.5	0.05

Source: Sandra Lucket Clark, et al. *Comparing*

*Employment, Income, and Poverty: Census 2000 and the*

*Current Population Survey, September 2003. Abstract from*

Table 24 U.S. Census Bureau (2000).

## "We the People"

Although the constitution begins with the ringing words "We the People," the truth is that women were not included within the "people" concept. As Betty Friedan wrote it so eloquently, "The men who made the American Revolution and the Constitution that embodied it intended to establish and preserve beyond possible threat the right to political participation."<sup>90</sup> Hence, in spite of women's arguments for the cause of the voting rights, their struggle was destined to be a long and arduous one. Therefore, women's rights of citizenship continued to be obstructed by men's manipulative ways when dealing with the politics of empowerment.

When the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> amendments became part of the constitution, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony argued that the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment conferred women with constitutional equality and full rights of citizenship. They also insisted that the 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment be expanded to enfranchise women.<sup>91</sup> However, in spite of the legality of their claims, their pleas were ignored, because there

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<sup>90</sup> Betty Friedan, *"It Changed my Life" Writings on the Women's Movement* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1998), 219.

<sup>91</sup> O'Connor, 126-127.

were other matters, such as the enfranchisement of former slaves, which were considered of more importance.<sup>92</sup>

Therefore, although the 15th Amendment guaranteed the rights of citizens to vote regardless of race, color or previous condition of servitude, the term male was added to clarify that women were not included.<sup>93</sup> Ironically, the extension of democracy to a broader base of men represented a double setback for women. By definition, laws giving only men the right to vote now excluded women solely on the basis of their gender. In addition, with the elimination of property ownership as a requirement for voting, women were deprived of the only legal claim for a right to vote that they had previously had.

#### Women's Political Struggle

The case of women's struggle in the political arena is another of the great dilemmas ever present within the American society. After years of political activism to achieve full constitutional rights and to end slavery, the enactment of the 15th Amendment represented another

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<sup>92</sup> Nash, 544.

<sup>93</sup> O'Connor, 51.

setback in women's aspirations to achieve enfranchisement. American women, however, were not the first in experiencing this type of rejection from the white, Anglo-Saxon, and Protestant (WASP) ideology of men in the American society, and surely, they will not be the last. As Dr. Michael C. LeMay, (1985), explains in his model of civic incorporation, there are several factors influencing the rate at which different groups achieve political incorporation in a dominant society. According to LeMay:

"The rate of assimilation varies in speed according to the level of acculturation that a given minority group has achieved at any given point in time. That level of acculturation is determined by two variables: (1) tolerance, the majority willingness to accept acculturation by the members of the minority; and (2) adaptability, the minority members' ability to acculturate."

Tolerance in turn is determined by three functions. First, the majority's fear function; the degree of the majority's perception of the minority seeking to assimilate, second, the size of the minority function,

which influences the majority society's willingness to accept the minority acculturation. Third, the time of entry function, which depends on the majority's perception of the minority. In a similar manner, adaptability is also determined by three functions. First, the minority's ability to organize function will either help or obstruct the group's ability to cope with prejudice and discrimination in the process of acculturation. Second, the greater the number of marginal membership the faster the rate of acculturation. Finally, if the two cultures have similar basic norms, customs, and values, it is easier for the minority culture to acquire the majority culture and for the majority to adopt some aspects of the incoming culture.<sup>94</sup> Figure 3 is a very helpful flowchart in the explanation of LeMay's model of civic incorporation.

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<sup>94</sup> Michael C. LeMay, *The Perennial Struggle: Race Ethnicity, and Minority Group Politics in the United States* (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc. 2000), 34-53.

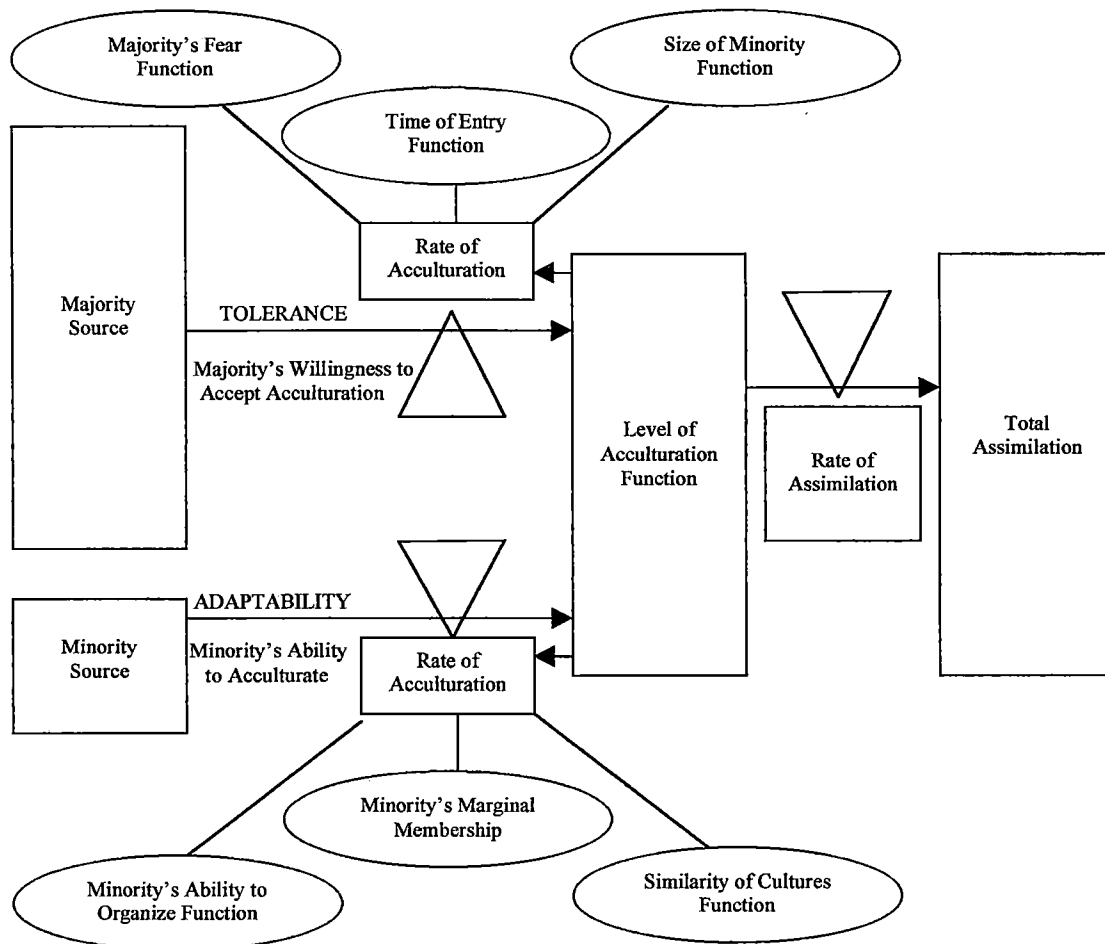


Figure 3. Lemay's A System Model of Assimilation

Source: Copied, by permission, from Michael C. LeMay, *The Perennial Struggle: Race and Ethnicity, and Minority Group Politics in the United States*, (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc. 2000), 38.

Milton M. Gordon's (1961) *Assimilation in America: Theory and Truth*, presents another important study about minority assimilation in the United States. In his view,

the ideologies of Anglo Conformity, the Melting Pot, and Cultural Pluralism, are important in explaining how a nation largely white, Anglo-Saxon, and Protestant have absorbed immigration from many sources. While Anglo conformity had set the basis that future immigrant were expected and encouraged to conform, immigrants from other European non-English speaking nations such as Germany, Sweden, and France, influenced changes through a blending known as the Melting Pot.<sup>95</sup> As a result of this blend between different nationalities, White Protestantism has replaced the White, Anglo-Saxon, and Protestant dominant group. However, the Anglo core group's interests continued to influence cultural preferences, and economic and political interests in America.<sup>96</sup> Finally, Cultural pluralism, focuses on the persistence of ethnic groups to conduct their primary group relations within an ethnic context, although most of these groups have already adopted the key elements of the mainstream culture.<sup>97</sup> In the end, all of these ideologies have a common denominator; immigrants have to conform with the designs

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<sup>95</sup> Adalberto Aguirre, Jr., David V. Baker, ed. *Race and Ethnicity* (Guilford, Ct. McGraw-Hill/Duskin, 2001), 71-81.

<sup>96</sup> Martin N. Marger, *Race and Ethnic Relations: American and Global Perspectives* (Stamford, Ct. Wadsworth Thomson Learning, 2000), 148.

<sup>97</sup> Aguirre, 77-81.

of the white establishment. The feeling of Anglo conformity is further reflected in a letter that John Quincy Adams wrote when he was secretary of state (1818), to Baron von Furstenwaerther in reply to his inquires:

"They [immigrants to America] come to life of independence, but to a life of labor—and, if they cannot accommodate themselves to the character, moral, political and physical, of this country with all its compensating balances of good and evil, the Atlantic is always open to them to return to the land of their nativity and their fathers. To one thing they must make up their minds, or they will be disappointed in every expectation of happiness as Americans. They must cast off their European skin, never to resume it. They must look forward to their posterity rather than backward to their ancestors; they must be sure that whatever they own feelings may be, those of their children will cling to the prejudices of this country..."<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Aguirre, 73-74.



The term minority however, could be applied not just to single out ethnic minorities for unequal treatment on the basis of their cultural or physical differences, but also to a variety of social groups. Thus to equate minority with highly visible ethnic traits is to ignore the many other groups present in a complex society such as the United States. Sex, for instance, is a distinguishable characteristic that most societies use to generally single out women for differential treatment.<sup>99</sup> Thus, women could in fact be identified as a minority group. Hence, it is not accidental that traditionally women have seldom occupied places of great political or economic power, have been denied entrance into many professional occupations, and have been excluded from many aspects of social life. As a result, it is clear that even when the majority of women were part of the Anglo-Saxon, and Protestant dominant society, they also have to experience the same process of political incorporation that other immigrant groups have experienced in the United States.

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<sup>99</sup> Marger, 44.

Therefore, notwithstanding that The National American Woman Suffrage Association was born in 1890, focusing the women's rights movement almost exclusively on attaining the right to vote,<sup>100</sup> women also had to confront the traditional dominant ideologies. The American suffragist movement scored its climactic victory shortly after World War I, when in August 18, 1920, the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment was finally ratified with the provision that the rights of American citizens shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or any State on account of sex.<sup>101</sup> The ratification of the 19th Amendment granting women this right, however, was not a guarantee to other minorities, such as African-American men and women who continued to face restrictions such as literacy tests and other measures that discouraged them from registering to vote.<sup>102</sup>

The struggle for the passage of the two editions of The Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) are prime examples of patriarchal political domination over women, and that men were not really working to provide equality under the law

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<sup>100</sup> O'Connor, 131.

<sup>101</sup> Peverill Squire, et al., *Dynamics of Democracy* (Madison, Wisconsin: Brown & Benchmark Publishers, 1997), 149-151.

<sup>102</sup> O'Connor, 129.

because it would be detrimental to their economic and political dominance. Therefore, when by 1923 the U.S. Congress introduced the ERA under the influence of the National Women's Party, the Amendment failed to gain significant support and its defeat was assured.<sup>103</sup>

Similar result, could be observed after the new version of the ERA was introduced in 1972, at a time when almost every activist hoped for its final adoption.

Unfortunately, in 1982, it failed to be ratified by three of the thirty-eight states needed for its approval.<sup>104</sup>

In 1923, there were not only disagreements between women's organizations but also even those who had previously supported the ERA relinquished their support for fear that its ratification would be harmful to the working-class women.<sup>105</sup> In other words, ERA would benefit the political status of the middle and upper classes at the expenses of the lower working class.<sup>106</sup> The disagreement over this issue between Alice Paul and Ethel M. Smith, two important women in the movement to equality, presents a vivid example. Although both Paul

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<sup>103</sup> Butler, 90-106.

<sup>104</sup> Berkin, 684.

<sup>105</sup> Buttler, 92-93, 101.

<sup>106</sup> Buttler, 91, 106.

and Smith incessantly worked for the achievement of equality, Paul's strategies focused on eradicating the prejudices limiting the opportunities of *professional* women,<sup>107</sup> while Smith focused on the interests of the *wage-earning* women. While Paul's efforts aimed at the legislative enactment of ERA to eradicate legal discrimination based on sex,<sup>108</sup> Smith, as the majority of union women, supported legal change through the implementation of piecemeal legislation addressing specific issues.<sup>109</sup>

Moreover, in both instances (1923 and 1972), male opposition argued that ERA would not provide women with any new rights they have not already enjoyed. If men's arguments were correct, and ERA did not provide women of any other rights they didn't already have, why did they argue so much about its passage as a legislative act? Why have the States constitutions failed to recognize it? After all, as men so hotly argued, if women were already equal, then there was nothing to fear by enacting this

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<sup>107</sup> Kathryn Kish Sklar and Thomas Dublin, ed., *Women and Power in American History: Volume II from 1870* (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2002), 155, 234-235.

<sup>108</sup> Buttler, 2, 57, 109.

<sup>109</sup> Brigid O'Farrel and Joyce L. Kornbluh, *Rockin the Boat: Union Women's Voices, 1915-1975* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1996), 4, 6-7.; Buttler, 23, 75, 107, 109.

bill as a constitutional law. The reality was different, and men, although recognizing the existing inequalities, did not want to throw away whatever amount of political and economic control they have enjoyed for so long. In fact, the approval of ERA could open up what men fear could be a "Pandora's box" full of surprises, since it signified full equality under the law for women, and that would mean the surrendering of some of men's political and economic power.

As LeMay suggests, by examining men's political tolerance in relation to their fear, perception, and time of entry of women as the group in search of assimilation,<sup>110</sup> it becomes clear that women had better opportunities to achieve assimilation during economic expansion when men's fear to share with others was minimal. Consequently, women were able to achieve enfranchisement in August of 1920 because of the nation's economic recovery after World War I. By contrast, between 1972 and 1982, when the nation experienced a long economic stagflation, the recognition of ERA was destined to be defeated.

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<sup>110</sup> LeMay, 38-39.

## Patriarchy and Antifeminism

Hiding behind the notion of patriarchal society's "traditional differences," opponents of ERA argued that it threatened to further confuse men and women of their distinct and respective roles in society (roles that have been created and historically emphasized by men). The argument on defense of the patriarchy, or the God-given natural order, is further emphasized by antifeminist like Phyllis Schlafly, who idealized the traditional white upper-middle-class patriarchal family with the woman as a housewife and the man as the income provider. Founding her belief in sexual hierarchy instead of sexual equality, Schlafly viewed ERA as a threat to the women's right to become a housewife and mother, but ignored the rights of those women who did not want to pursue "socially imposed traditional roles." Hence, she equated femininity with positivism, feminism with negativism (because it negated women's womanhood), goodness with justice, and evil with sexual equality.<sup>111</sup>

Schlaffly further argues that women's difference from men makes them economically dependent, and as such

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<sup>111</sup> Zillah R. Eisenstein, *Feminism and Sexual Equality: Crisis in Liberal America* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1984), 170-174.

they need to be protected and provided as wives and mothers, and that equality before the law ignores this reality of the housewife. However, in her appeal to maintain the God-given order or traditional family life, she overlooked the fact that many people in the United States do not live in traditional families, and that this concept is rapidly losing its material foundation. Schlafly's argument ignored the fact that ERA does not destroy the housewife role, but by recognizing the economic rights of women in the marketplace, it gives women a choice which they did not have before.<sup>112</sup> The problem with Schlafly's reasoning is that even though she continues to defend the patriarchal system, her personal actions are in clear contradiction with her position, because although she argues that women's rightful place is the home, she continues to be a public figure herself. Hence, her actions diminish credibility to her arguments in defense of what she believes to be the traditional family life since she failed to practice what she was preaching to be the social norm.

Notwithstanding the many arguments on the validity of God's given natural order, the fact is that women's

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<sup>112</sup> Eisenstein, 176-178.

inferiority is nothing else but a myth created by men to keep women in a subservient status to maintain unchallenged men's feelings of superiority. Without doubt, it could be asserted that behind the myth of women's inferiority is a social system which has successfully fostered inequalities, discriminations, and degradation against them.<sup>113</sup> Although men would not like to accept it, women's inferiority is as much a myth as is the superiority of men over them.

Therefore, the patriarchal roots of the American government have in fact influenced the way that men react when they see their dominant position in jeopardy. This type of social stratification does not happen by accident. As a structure of inequality, it is supported by institutions such as government, education, and religion, working to justify the position of various groups in society.<sup>114</sup> As a result, patriarchy, as a political instrument, has enabled men to manipulate women's actions by separating them into different social classes and turning women's organizations against each

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<sup>113</sup> Marger, 40-42.

<sup>114</sup> Eldridge, 86-88; Marger, 37.



other, to facilitate their political control.<sup>115</sup> Consequently, men, as the dominant group, have used political power to advocate and sustain an ideology that legitimizes this inequality upon women on the basis of gender differences.

### Machismo as Reflection of Patriarchy

The political events in Latin America portray a faithful reflection of the political events unfolding in the United States during the last two hundred years of history. In fact, most if not all, of the Latin American nations after the achievement of their independence from the European powers, had based their constitutions on the preamble of the American Constitution. Therefore, it could be asserted without fear of equivocation that they have emulated, each in their own ways, the American political machine to fit men's macho image, which is no other than the same patriarchal system dominant in the United States. However, the dominant position of machismo in the Latin American environment, has acquired a more pervasive quality than patriarchy in the United States. These characteristics could be attributed,

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<sup>115</sup> Eldridge, 87-88.

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perhaps, to the great differences in social and power between these two regions,<sup>116</sup> differences, have molded the way in which the "traditional"

~~roles are perceived and have traditionally been imposed on women and the more disadvantaged majority.~~

Consequently, it is in Latin America where the erroneous concept of machismo has found a convenient niche to perpetuate its existence and therefore continue its dominance of politics almost without challenge.<sup>117</sup>

One of the prime examples of the differences is found in the constitutional rights that United States citizens enjoy. These constitutional rights provide the American people with the freedom to protest against continuous abuses of government or other national or private institutions. In Latin America, however, these freedoms, although part of their constitutional laws, continued to be ignored, favoring mostly those who have the political and economic power on their side.<sup>118</sup>

<sup>116</sup> Robert F. Adie and Guy E. Poitras, *Latin America: The Politics of Immobility* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1974), 5.13,17.

<sup>117</sup> Burns, 179.

<sup>118</sup> Jacques Lambert, *Latin America: Social Structures & Political Institutions* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), 273.

However, although machismo is a persistent problem in Mexico, it is not a monopoly of the Mexican nation, since what evolves in Mexico can be applied all over Latin America. Consequently, throughout Latin America, the political influence of machismo can be observed from their beginning as independent Republics.

#### Latin American Politics

Most of the Mexican and Latin American histories revolve around the mixing of numerous cultural, ethnic, and political influences. These include contributions from several major indigenous civilizations, Spanish influences from the period of colonial rule, and a significant African heritage resulting from the slave trade of the early colonial era.<sup>119</sup> It is undeniable that the value systems of a people directly influence their political activities. That is the case of Mexico and most Latin American nations, which have been shaped by over three hundred years of colonial life under Spanish influence, distinct from any other area of the world.<sup>120</sup> As a result, the elements of machismo, which have emerged

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<sup>119</sup> Adie, 2.

<sup>120</sup> Adie, 1.

after the independence from Spain, have been incorporated into the Latin American political environment and continue to be present today. Hence, the high correlation between the successful politicians with their strong public image as machos. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that politicians in Latin America display outward manifestations of personal bravery, characteristics, which embody maleness and courage, required in the show of a public air of inflexibility.<sup>121</sup>

Similarly as with other Latin American nations, the history of Mexico's postindependence period has been characterized by the violent turbulence of its political life, to include Civil Wars, foreign interventions, and long domestic dictatorships.<sup>122</sup> The invasion of Mexico by United States (1846-48; 1916),<sup>123</sup> the French intervention (1861),<sup>124</sup> the intervention of France and Great Britain in Argentine and Uruguay (1838-1850), Germany, Great

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<sup>121</sup> Paul Kramer and Robert E. McNicoll, *Latin American Panorama: An Anthology* (New York: Capricorn Books, 1969), 389.

<sup>122</sup> Meyer, *The Course of Mexican History*, 373-87, 398, 402; Meyer, *The Oxford History of Mexico*, 339, 381-384.

<sup>123</sup> Mark Wasserman, 77-90.

<sup>124</sup> Meyer, *The Course of Mexican History*, 374.

Britain, and Italy in Venezuela (1902-1903),<sup>125</sup> and the wars between and within these nations are faithful reflection of Latin America turbulent history. In addition, Latin America has been highly influenced by the continuous political interference of the United States based on its economic supremacy.<sup>126</sup>

Although the influences of machismo have been present in one way or another throughout history in Latin America, there are two salient epochs when it has been more significant in recent history. On the one hand, by the beginning of the twentieth-century, there was a resurgence of revolutionary feelings among the proletariat masses of people who began uprising against what they thought was subjugating them economically and politically.<sup>127</sup> Although these uprisings had little or nothing to do with the domination of women, it brought to light the influence of the macho among the masses in revolting against tyranny. The end result was a complete, and at times chaotic political struggle that

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<sup>125</sup> Federico G. Gil, *Latin America—The United States Relations* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1971), 30-43.

<sup>126</sup> Herbert L. Matthews, *The United States and Latin America* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1963), 147-155; Gil, 88.

<sup>127</sup> Lewald, 240-241.

lasted for most of the first half of the twentieth-century.

On the other hand, the second half of the twentieth-century witnessed the resurgence of machismo in the political realm of Latin America. This second phenomena was characterized by the emergence of the military leaders as head of governments as a result of the unfounded fears against the spread of communism throughout the Latin American regions.<sup>128</sup> Therefore, in Latin America, with the exception of Mexico, the majority of the nations were governed by "Juntas Militares," military alliances, which although may had have the best intentions in mind, succeeded in leaving most of the nations in economic and political chaos.<sup>129</sup> Moreover, the brutality and the absolutism of regimes such as in Chile, Brazil and Argentina, have left large lists of criminal charges such as the imprisonment, torture, and execution of thousand of political dissidents, that continued to be unanswered. Figure 4 reflects the suffering that mothers of Argentina have been forced to endure with the loss of their loved ones.

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<sup>128</sup> Adie, 3.

<sup>129</sup> Lambert, 247-256; Adie, 213, 222.



Figure 4. Women's Protest in Buenos Aires, Argentine

Source: Photo by Margaret Feitlowitz, for Microsoft

Encarta Encyclopedia 99.

As a result, although by the middle of the twentieth-century women have gained voting rights in the majority of Latin American countries, most of them continue to face problems at the moment of capitalizing on those rights. While men have been able to achieve their goals with the support of the legal system and the reinforcement of their religious beliefs,<sup>130</sup> women who had historically been denied not only education but also

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<sup>130</sup> Burns, 179-185; Marger 37.

economic and political participation, had little or no way to fight back against these inequalities.<sup>131</sup> Since most women, or for that matter most of the Latin American population, is composed of peasantry, they become easy prey to professional politicians who take advantage to fulfill their personal political ambitions.<sup>132</sup> In a manner that resembles the American political environment of the late nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries, politicians continue to use suspicious tactics, to include bribery, intimidation, and in many instances violence, to get elected to positions of power.<sup>133</sup> For these reasons, the majority of Latin American politicians have historically been able to act freely and without responsibility to their electors.

#### Latin American Women Activism

Contrasting with the early women's activism in the United States, women in Mexico and the rest of Latin America did not experience similar political activity. In fact most of the legislation enacted on behalf of the working class, which also included women, has been as

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<sup>131</sup> Marger 43.

<sup>132</sup> Adie, 35-42.

<sup>133</sup> Burns, 196.



consequence of the revolutions that occurred at the beginning of the twentieth-century.<sup>134</sup> As consequence, the political changes that in theory have been focused to the achievement of equality across the board, as in the United States, in the end, had failed to be implemented by those in power. This trend could be attributed to the fact that although Latin American women have been politically active, they have not been as successful as women in the United States have been, because they have been forced to confront machismo.<sup>135</sup> Therefore, these legislative acts, similar to those in the United States, have not been able to reduce the existing inequalities between classes much less between men and women. Economic inequality, added to the few education opportunities for women, have made them both economically dependent on men and vulnerable to domestic crime when their lives revolve around abusive relationships. As a result, women, especially those in the working class, have been affected the most.

Perhaps one of the greatest contrasts between women in the United States and women in Latin American is found

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<sup>134</sup> Burns, 200, 244-247.

<sup>135</sup> Burns, 179.

in the political activism of both groups. Thus, while in the United States women began the struggle for the achievement of their rights during the nineteenth-century, most Latin America women didn't have the education nor the economic means to present a struggle. Although by the middle of the twentieth-century Latin American women had achieved some considerable political achievements and contributions, they have been too few to threaten men's political dominion.<sup>136</sup> These facts have been advantageous to men's goals and men have used them to keep women under control, thus delaying the recognition of their rights.<sup>137</sup> Additionally, while in the United States women continued in their struggle in spite of the set backs they experienced, in Latin America it seems that middle class women grew complacent of their class status and economic means, while the majority of the lower class women suffered the consequences.<sup>138</sup> Therefore, although there were some exceptions and some women did emerge as leaders to help their lot especially among the poor and needy, generally, there was little or

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<sup>136</sup> Burns, 247-248.

<sup>137</sup> Lambert, 123-125.

<sup>138</sup> Alfredo Mirande, *Hombres y Machos: Masculinity and Latino Culture* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1997), 131.

no challenges to the "macho" status of the dominant social structure.<sup>139</sup> The damaging influences of machismo have been perpetuated in the oppression of women and other groups, such as lesbians and gays. This fact is especially prevalent in macho societies, such as Mexico for instance, where the definition of lesbianism and homosexuality differs from that of the United States.

In an environment of economic instability such as the one existing throughout Latin America, LeMay's system of assimilation once again could be applied to explain the reasons behind the failure of Latin American women in the achievement of their political goals.<sup>140</sup> Throughout Latin America social and cultural influences have greatly contributed to victimization of women, in a society where economic and social processes directly or indirectly support a male-dominated social order and family structure.<sup>141</sup> These cultural and social factors have contributed to the subordination and oppression of women by focusing on what men perceive to be the "inferior status" of women's role in society.<sup>142</sup> As a result, there

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<sup>139</sup> Marger, 43.

<sup>140</sup> LeMay, 36-39.

<sup>141</sup> Eldrigde, 91.

<sup>142</sup> Kramer, 388-394.

continues to be a complete disregard for women's well being. These facts are clearly observable by the contrasting differences between the individual rights that American women enjoy when compared to their Latin American counterparts. Although in the United States, women have still not achieved complete equality, at least most of them have achieved partial economic independence to provide them with choices that Latin American women do not have, and move away from violent relationships. However, in Latin America, women continue to be oppressed, with few opportunities for advancement, and with few prospects to achieve economic independence from men. They are thereby forced to stay within the bounds of their oppressive partners in life.

#### The Catholic Church's Influence

The Catholic Church has played an important role in shaping virtually every aspect of life in colonial Mexico and the rest of Latin America. The Church, by demanding from women complete obedience to fathers and husbands, has created a culturally ingrained passive and servile

state that has been sustained and passed onto new generations of women.<sup>143</sup> This deeply ingrained behavior of submissiveness can still be observed throughout Latin America in all social and economic classes without exception, although it is more visible among the lower social strata.<sup>144</sup> Based on this submissiveness, and reinforced by the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church, machismo has played its major role as political power in the maintenance of traditional gender roles between men and women.<sup>145</sup> As with patriarchy, machismo has historically deprived women of their most basic rights of citizenship, and, without distinction to social classes, men have been able to perpetuate their dominant position.<sup>146</sup>

Although women in politics are perceived as being more honest than are men, cultural factors leading to women's submissiveness, influenced by deeply rooted religious beliefs, continuously work against them all over the Latin American political environment. Machismo is not only deeply ingrained in Latin American men; Latin

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<sup>143</sup> Heydebrand, 11-12, 24-27, 31.

<sup>144</sup> Lewald, 247-248.

<sup>145</sup> Marger, 42.

<sup>146</sup> Marger, 43-48.

American women also share the responsibility in the perpetuation of this behavior. This behavior can be fully observed when Latin American women endeavor in fields which have primarily—and at times exclusively—been reserved for men, such as politics. In the views of Marta Lagos, director of MORI Latin opinion research in Santiago, Chile, Latin American women see the presidency as a tough political office and, since they see themselves as weak, they don't want a woman president.<sup>147</sup> As Howard LaFranchi's *Candidate Battles Machismo—in Women* conveys, women in politics not only have to overcome the attitude of other candidates but also the challenges of other women who do not see it proper for women to aspire to the presidency, as was the case of Lourdes Flores in Peru.<sup>148</sup> Even when enjoying men's support, Flores' feminine support was divided, while some believed in her strength to fight machismo head on, others argued that they were not ready for a woman president.<sup>149</sup>

Although by the 1970s and 1980s, Latin American women have achieved gains in the professional and

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<sup>147</sup> Howard LaFranchi, "Candidate battles machismo—in women," Cristian Science Monitor Vol. 93 Issue 92 (April 6, 2001): 2.

<sup>148</sup> LaFranchi, 1.

<sup>149</sup> LaFranchi, 3.

political arena, and that a number of them have been elected as presidents, majors, and congressional representatives,<sup>150</sup> they have not been able to overcome the cultural pressure of machismo. Notwithstanding these few exceptions, women in their majority still have not achieved equality in their work, and only one out of every hundred hold a managerial or executive position.<sup>151</sup> Although women in much of Latin America have gained significant legal rights, it is the belief of many people that women still do not have complete political, economic, and social equality with men.<sup>152</sup>

Consequently, the political status of Latin American women today varies dramatically in different countries and, in some cases, among groups within the same country, due to ethnicity and or social classes divisions. Although women have been granted the right to vote in most nations, women's share in governmental decision-making remains limited. Despite the fact that in 1994 women headed the governments of 10 countries in the world, more than 100 countries had no female members in

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<sup>150</sup> Burns, 247-248.

<sup>151</sup> Burns, 249.

<sup>152</sup> Meyer, *The Course of Mexican History*, 590-591, 690-691.

their legislative bodies. Women constitute approximately 9 percent of parliamentary representatives in industrialized countries and 12 percent in developing countries, where Latin American countries are grouped. Thus, assuming that 50 percent of the United States voting population is made up by women, then according to the U. S. Census Bureau Table 24 (see Table 1), women still are disproportionally underrepresented when compared to men. Notwithstanding the lack of clear information on the number of Latin American voting population, a similar reasoning could be made when relating to Latin American women. Although their representation is a little higher than their American counterpart, it is still unequal. Consequently, although at different degrees, women in the United States and in Latin American, continue to experience political inequalities.



CHAPTER FOUR  
SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC ISSUES

Introduction

This chapter will focus on how deep-seated cultural beliefs, such as Patriarchy and Machismo, have been used in the subordination of women in both the United States and Latin America. It will also discuss topical issues on the development of women's social consciousness and how successful they have been in the achievement of education and economic goals. It will address what type of influence legislation has had in narrowing wage gaps between men and women in the labor market. And finally, it will question the value of laws against domestic violence and the social and cultural influences that contribute to spouse abuse in both the United States and Latin America.

Cultural Beliefs

Throughout much of the history of Western civilization, because of men's deep-seated cultural beliefs, women have been allowed only limited roles in society. Basing these beliefs in patriarchal principles, men believed that women's natural inferiority made them

suitable for their roles as mothers and wives. They considered women to be better suited for childbearing and homemaking rather than for involvement in the public life of business or politics, which was considered to be exclusively men's realm. As a result, a widespread belief that women were intellectually inferior to men led most societies to limit women's education to learning domestic skills, and for these reasons, well-educated, upper-class men controlled most positions of employment and power in society. The image of the male in early civilization that emerges from this model is very impressive. Men were able to invent legal and religious systems to establish and preserve their privileges against the countervailing force of women's perspective and experience. Using strength, imagination, and organizing skills, man was also evil enough to oppress the women who gave life to him and his children.

#### Patriarchy in America

In the culture transferred to the New World, patriarchy gave the father authority over his household, his control over other men's access to the women of his household, and his right to punish family members and

laborers.<sup>153</sup> Marriage was first and foremost fact in a girl's future. It took place early and very frequent, women who had previously been married were in demand, because they were then thought of as being experienced *housekeepers*, and *child raisers*. Marriage was synonymous of "civil death" for women.<sup>154</sup> They [women] had absolutely no rights in the relationship. They could own nothing, not even clothes, for their husbands owned the clothes they wore.

A husband's legal control over his wife displayed the ideology of women's subordination to men within the marital and family relationship.<sup>155</sup> Wives traditionally lost their own identity when they took their husband's name, and their children have to carry their father's last name. Although there were certain obligations that were to be maintained by both partners, they were certainly not equal. Husbands were required to protect and provide for their wives. Wives, in exchange, were to submit to male authority and to assist their husbands by productive behavior and frugality.<sup>156</sup> Not all colonial

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<sup>153</sup> Smith, 226-233, 270-276; Heidebrand, 26-27.

<sup>154</sup> Pateman, 119.

<sup>155</sup> Knight, 105.

<sup>156</sup> Pateman, 51.

groups contained such a controlling demeanor against their own people. Quakers held women in high regards because keeping the sexes equal was one of their teachings. Women in the Quaker church were allowed to hold high positions and take part in the business end as well. They were even accepted as missionaries, and they often went out to go off to teach.<sup>157</sup>

Although some women made progress in the arts and politics, this progress did not have a wide impact on the standing of women in the Colonial Era, because they were perceived of as the exception and not the rule.<sup>158</sup>

Although colonial women were strong, and they were able to stand up for what they believed in, it did not change the fact that men still saw them as inferior.

Until the nineteenth-century, the denial of equal rights to women met with only occasional protest and drew little attention from most people. Because most women lacked the educational and economic resources that would enable them to challenge the prevailing social order, women generally accepted their inferior status as their

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<sup>157</sup> Holliday, 40.

<sup>158</sup> Lerner, 224-225.

only option.<sup>159</sup> At this time, women shared these inequalities based on social stratification with the majority of working class men, as many social, economic, and political rights were held exclusively by the wealthy elite. Only recently women have questioned male dominance in most areas of social life.<sup>160</sup>

#### Division of Labor and Protective Legislation

Before the Industrial Revolution most people worked in farming or in crafts, both of which took place in or near the home. Men and women usually divided the numerous tasks among themselves and their children. The Industrial Revolution in Europe and North America further divided the roles of men and women, when male workers moved in search of employment outside of the home in factories and other large-scale enterprises. This growing split between home and work reinforced the patriarchal idea that women's *rightful place* was in the home, while men belonged in the public world of

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<sup>159</sup> Lerner, 218.

<sup>160</sup> Marger, 41-42.

employment and politics.<sup>161</sup> This argument has been used to deny women equality not only as citizens, but also in the labor force. To this day, they continue to receive *less pay for equal work* regardless of legislative acts demanding *equal pay for equal work*.

The time when unemployed women were regarded as the norm and women in the workforce as the deviant has passed. Since the 1950s the number of women moving into the workforce has continually increased to the point that the reverse is more recognizable as the norm.<sup>162</sup> It is important to note that although women's presence in the labor market has increased, they continue to have inferior job opportunities than do men. According to the Bureau of Census (1997), between 1950 and 1996 the percentage of married women with preschool age children who worked outside the home rose from 12 to 62.7 percent. Yet, women's wages are still significantly lower when

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<sup>161</sup> Susan Mendus and Jane Randall, *Sexuality and Subordination: Interdisciplinary Studies of Gender in the Nineteenth Century* (London: The Guernsey Press, 1989), 233-234; Christine Stansell, *City of Women: Sex and Class in New York, 1789 - 1860* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 30.

<sup>162</sup> John F. Zipp and Eric Plutzer, "From Housework to Paid Work: The Implications of Women's Labor Force Experiences on Class Identity," *Social Science Quarterly* Vol.81 No 2, (June 2000): 538-552.

compared to men's wages.<sup>163</sup> Although facts supporting this argument could be found at all levels of the labor environment, including the professional level, the American education institutions provide a great example. Here women have to confront institutional gendered assumptions when competing for positions of leadership, which are generally assumed to be masculine jobs,<sup>164</sup> notwithstanding the clear majority of female teachers throughout the nation.

Despite the passage of the many legislative acts created to eliminate unfair conditions designed to maintain men's institutional supremacy over women, the fact is that these laws have not been very effective. The National Fair Labor Standards Act (1938), The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (1969), the Equal Pay Act (1964), the Title VII of the Civil Rights Act (1964), and the later version of the Equal Rights Act (1972), have failed to achieve the goals for which they were created. Their failure, however, cannot and must not be

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<sup>163</sup> Claire M. Renzetti and Daniel J. Curran, *Women, Men, and Society* (Boston, Allyn & Bacon, 1999), 198; Mary Romero, "Making Time and Progress," Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society Vol. 25, No 4, (Summer 2000): 1013-1016.

<sup>164</sup> Susan E. Chase, Colleen S. Bell, "Ideology, Discourse, and Gender: How Gatekeepers Talk about Women School Superintendents," Social Problems Vol. 37, No 2, (May 1990): 163-175.

attributed to the complexity of the goals that these acts were set to achieve, but to the patriarchal oriented bureaucracy in charge of their implementation, which may be perceiving these legislative acts as social or economic threats on behalf of women.<sup>165</sup>

It can be seen that the new laws had little effect on narrowing the wage gap between the sexes, and that most female workers have remained in jobs traditionally held by women, offering low wages and little prospect for advancement.<sup>166</sup> For example, while in 1963 the average female worker's wages in the United States were equivalent to 58.9 percent of the average male worker's earnings, by 1995 women's earnings had increased significantly, but were still only 71.4 percent of the amount that men earned.<sup>167</sup> Moreover, a report from the United States Census Bureau (September 2003), shows that women's earnings once again have decreased to about 69 cents for every dollar a man makes (see Table 1).

Although Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 declared unlawful the practices of job segregation

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<sup>165</sup> LeMay, 38.

<sup>166</sup> Bonacich, *Advanced Capitalism*, 36-38.

<sup>167</sup> Parenti. 23.



through states' regulation for the protection of women, change would not occur overnight. Unfortunately, throughout the 1970s and 1980s, women continued struggling against the problem of occupational segregation, which according to some analysts, has been "culturally conditioned" in the American society.<sup>168</sup> In this manner, when moving into the job market, women have been culturally conditioned to perform jobs they have been performing at home.<sup>169</sup> Thus, a majority of women who enter the labor force often find themselves forced into low paying jobs such as secretaries, maids, and child-care workers, which traditionally have been held by women. Even when performing professional jobs, their ability to rise to the top of the corporate ladder has been limited by a glass ceiling.<sup>170</sup>

Despite the large numbers of women enrolling in colleges and universities and moving into traditional male professions during late 1970s and early 1980s, the gap between female and male earnings remains wide. This fact is further supported by the men's argument that

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<sup>168</sup> Eldridge, 91-92.

<sup>169</sup> Hoyt Gimlin, ed., *The Women's Movement: Agenda for the 80s* (Washington: Congressional Quarterly Inc., 1981), 4-5.

<sup>170</sup> Squire, 155.

since women are less committed to their jobs, women's hiring is viewed as temporary.<sup>171</sup> On the other hand, men are highly preferred since they are less likely to leave for family reasons. They enjoy higher opportunities for advancement and consequently higher salaries.<sup>172</sup>

Many disparities persist between women's legal rights and their economic status. Women, today, constitute nearly 70 percent of the world's poor, despite international efforts to compensate women and men equally in the workplace. While women made up about 32 percent of the world's labor force in 1990, the percentage of women in positions to make important decisions was far lower. The following table (Table 2), published by the U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 1996, p.160, indicates the Mean Monthly Income by Sex and Educational Attainment for Persons Age Eighteen and Older, 1993. This table not only reflects that women's earnings are significantly lower than men's, but also the "assumption that women's work entails lower skill and responsibility than traditional men's work."<sup>173</sup> Hence,

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<sup>171</sup> Zip, 540-541.

<sup>172</sup> Gimlin, 6-7.

<sup>173</sup> Renzetti, 220.

even after women have made major gains in skilled jobs, 70.4 percent of the skilled workers are men. Although women provide the bulk of the labor force, especially in the service sector, men seem to have gained more than have women workers.<sup>174</sup> In the mid-1990s, women held only 8 percent of top managerial positions in U.S. corporations. Women comprised only 1 percent of executives in the 1000 largest corporations outside the United States.<sup>175</sup>

Table 2. Mean Monthly Income by Sex and Education

Level of Educational Attainment	Earnings	
	Female workers	Male Workers
Not a high school graduate	\$ 621	\$ 1,211
High school graduate	1,008	1,812
Some college, no degree	1,139	2,045
Vocational	1,373	2,318
Associate's degree	1,544	2,561
Bachelor's degree	1,809	2,561
Master's degree	2,505	4,298
Professional degree	3,530	6,312
Doctorate	4,020	4,421

Source: Claire M. Renzetti and Daniel J. Curran. *Women, Men, and Society*. (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1999), 220.

<sup>174</sup> Thomas L. Stieger and Mark Wardell, "Gender and Employment in the Service Sector" *Social Problems* Vol. 42, No 1, (February 1995); 103-105.

<sup>175</sup> Squire, 154-155.

Consequently, a trend of female patriarchal dependency continued to be observed, highly suggested, and admonished during the 90s. For instance, in the United States, men who traditionally have assumed the role of family breadwinners usually resent the idea that women could rise to positions of importance above them. Thus, not surprisingly, even when dealing with the aspects of everyday life such as personal safety, women are advised to use discretion and not to stimulate interest in their contact with strangers to avoid being the targets of crime.<sup>176</sup> Then again, since these suggestions do not apply to men, it could be argued they are focused at keeping women at home, the place they traditionally have "belonged," to maintain them economically dependent on men.

#### Domestic Violence

For much of history and throughout the world, social and legal traditions have tolerated or even promoted the physical assault of women by men. In ancient Rome for

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<sup>176</sup> Carol Brooks Gardner, "Safe Conduct: Women, Crime, and the Self in Public Places," Social Problems Vol. 37 No. 3, (August 1990): 311-325.

instance, a husband could legally divorce, physically punish, or even kill his wife for behaviors that were permitted for men. Punishment of wives was called chastisement, a term that emphasized the corrective purpose of the action and minimized the violent nature of the behavior.<sup>177</sup> Under medieval English common law, a husband could not be prosecuted for raping his wife because the law provided that a wife could not refuse consent for sex to her husband.<sup>178</sup> Because much of the United States law has been modeled on English common law, this definition of rape remained in effect in the United States until the 1970s, when many (but not all) states modified their rape statutes. Although at present time, all states have criminal laws prohibiting forced sex between a husband and wife, 33 states exempt husbands from prosecution for rape under certain circumstances, especially because of difficulties in proving nonconsensual sex in a marital relationship.<sup>179</sup>

Although laws in the United States have always prohibited wife beating, by not enforcing these laws, the

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<sup>177</sup> Tamara L. Roleff, ed., *Domestic Violence: Opposing Viewpoints* (San Diego: Greenhaven Press, Inc., 2000), 75.

<sup>178</sup> Lerner; 8, 102.

<sup>179</sup> Renzetti, 263-264.

patriarchal political structure was in fact condoning domestic violence. Furthermore, laws prohibiting assault and battery set different standards for guilt if the victim was the wife of the assailant, therefore, Courts treated victims of domestic assault differently because the husband had a "legal" right to chastise his wife.<sup>180</sup> As a result, to be found guilty of a crime for hitting his wife, a husband had to more severely strike and more seriously injure her than if she had been hit by a stranger.

Experts agree that domestic violence is a widespread problem. Its actual extent is difficult to measure. Researchers believe that the extent of violence between intimate partners is much higher than reported. Data based on official documents, such as police or hospital records, tend to underestimate the extent of violence because many instances of abuse are never reported.<sup>181</sup> Surveys of individuals generally produce higher estimates of violence than official records, and even they are

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<sup>180</sup> Roleff, 76.

<sup>181</sup> Robert J. Meadows, *Understanding Violence and Victimization* (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1998), 31.

assumed to underestimate the actual extent of domestic violence.

Although experts and lay people use the terms *domestic violence* and *spouse abuse* interchangeably, some scholars and activists consider the term spouse abuse inappropriate. They assert that because the term is gender-neutral—that is, it can refer to abuse of either husband or wife—it gives the impression that men are as likely as women to be victims of abuse. Police and hospital records, however, indicate that the overwhelming majority of victims of domestic violence are women. Some experts use the term *violence toward women* to refer to domestic violence, which is used as coercive control of women by their partners.

No single factor explains why men and women assault and abuse their partners. The factors most closely related to spouse abuse are youth of both the offender and the victim, low income, growing up in a violent family, alcohol or substance abuse, unemployment, sexual difficulties, and low job satisfaction.<sup>182</sup> Low income and poverty place women at higher risk of victimization,

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<sup>182</sup> Meadows, 54-59; Renzetti, 183.

because for battered women, leaving their partners means becoming homeless and unable to support themselves and their children. Leaving an abusive partner does not guarantee that the abuse will stop. On the contrary, research shows that abuse often escalates when a woman tries to leave or after she has left.<sup>183</sup> While no single personality factor causes domestic violence, offenders committing the most serious abuse tend to have antisocial personality disorders.<sup>184</sup> Abuse between intimate partners can take many forms. It may include emotional or verbal abuse, denial of access to resources or money, restraint of normal activities or freedom (including isolation from friends and family), sexual coercion or assault, threats to kill or to harm, and physical intimidation or attacks.<sup>185</sup>

Social and cultural influences also contribute to spouse abuse. Because most victims of intimate violence are women, researchers who analyze social factors contributing to spouse abuse often focus on the role of women in society. In most societies, economic and social

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<sup>183</sup> Renzetti, 184.

<sup>184</sup> Ximena B. Arriaga and Stuart Oskamp, ed., *Violence in Intimate Relationships* (Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, Inc., 1999), 46.

<sup>185</sup> Meadows, 59



processes operate directly and indirectly to support a male-dominated social order and family structure, thus linking patriarchy with the subordination or restriction to inferior status, and oppression of women.<sup>186</sup>

Some analysts believe that patriarchy accounts for the historical pattern of violence directed against women in intimate relationships. The violence is often institutionalized, or formalized in societal structures, for instance in traditional laws and customs that permit husbands to physically punish their wives. In addition, analysts view patriarchy as a contributor to the lower economic status for women, which may make women dependent on men.<sup>187</sup> This dependence may increase a woman's likelihood of becoming involved in an abusive relationship or may limit a victim's ability to leave such a relationship.<sup>188</sup>

Victims of domestic violence experience physical injuries that range from bruises, cuts, and burns to broken bones, stab wounds, miscarriages, and death. In addition, victims experience depression and other psychological distress, eating disorders, and alcohol and

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<sup>186</sup> Lerner, 239.

<sup>187</sup> Lerner, 218.

<sup>188</sup> Arriaga, 140.

substance abuse problems, and they are more likely than other people to contemplate or attempt suicide.<sup>189</sup> The woman in Figure 5 is a faithful reflection of the physical damage that most victims of domestic violence are forced to endure.



Figure 5. Female Victim of Domestic Violence

Source: Photo by Mark C. Burnett, for Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia 99.

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<sup>189</sup> Arriaga, 140-142, 163-176.

Moreover, Children who witness domestic violence experience depression and psychological distress and are more likely than other children to be physically violent, hence, insuring the perpetuation of this vicious circle.<sup>190</sup> A prime example of this argument is presented in Figure 6, where a mother and her children who at their young ages have been already afflicted by domestic violence.



Figure 6. Woman and Children in Shelter for Domestic Violence Victims

Source: Photo by David H. Wells, for Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia 99.

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<sup>190</sup> Roleff, 11-12.

Most experts agree that economic and cultural factors play an especially powerful role in contributing to and perpetuating repeated abuse of women. Because women, as a group, tend to have less power in society, they are more likely to be victims and are less able to end abuse once it begins. Traditional beliefs, customs, and laws restrict the roles women may play and limit their economic opportunities, contributing to their dependence on men.<sup>191</sup> Some scholars assert that the process of socialization teaches boys and girls a belief system that devalues women—especially unmarried women—and creates a sense of female responsibility for the maintenance of the family. Consequently, women who equate the end of a relationship or of a marriage with a personal failure are less likely to leave abusive relationships.<sup>192</sup>

In America today, the physical, emotional, spiritual and sexual abuse of women and girls is unintentionally enabled by legal authorities and religious organizations

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<sup>191</sup> Renzetti, 183-184.

<sup>192</sup> Arriaga, 13.

that fail to confront abusers or correct the patriarchal belief system they use to justify their behavior. Therefore, today as in the past, inequalities between the gender lines continue to be a problem that fetters a society that proclaims equality for all without distinction of sex, religion, race, or social status. These facts can not be ignored when analyzing official government statistics, even though they may inadvertently underestimate the magnitude of the problem.

According to the United States Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Statistics (1995), about 450,000 incidents of family violence occur in this country every year, and about 57 percent of these incidents involve married couples or ex-spouses.<sup>193</sup> Moreover, along the lines of a study published in 1998 by the Department of Justice, in 1996 women experienced 840,000 nonlethal incidents of violence committed by intimate partners, including rape, physical assault, and robbery. These statistics are not an accurate reflection of reality, since it is estimated that only 6.7 percent of cases involving domestic violence are reported since

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<sup>193</sup> Renzetti, 182.

many victims are reluctant to pursue their abusers. Similarly, in accordance with the Federal Bureau of Investigation report (1996), each year, husbands, ex-husbands, or boyfriends kill about 33 percent of female homicide victims, while wives, ex-wives, or girlfriends kill about 3 percent of male homicide victims. An independent study by sociologist Murray Straus (1993) supports the FBI's report. In Straus' view, for every 1,000 couples in the United States, there are 246 assaults each year; 122 of them involve assaults by husbands, while 124 of them involve assaults by wives, hence, partner abuse is usually *mutual abuse*.<sup>194</sup> However, since husband's violence is typically initiated to control or punish their wives, generally women are more seriously injured. As a result, "women's and men's violence against their intimate partners differs in both quantity and quality."<sup>195</sup>

#### Prevention Programs

In the United States, the vast majority of programs that deal with intimate violence—such as shelters, police

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<sup>194</sup> Renzetti, 182.

<sup>195</sup> Renzetti, 183.

intervention programs, and treatment groups--are implemented after a severely abusive incident. The most widespread prevention programs have been community and national public awareness campaigns that identify intimate violence as an important social problem.<sup>196</sup> In addition, an increasingly common response to domestic violence has been the establishment of treatment programs for offenders. Courts often require offenders who are found guilty of physically or sexually assaulting their partners to attend these programs as a condition of their sentence.<sup>197</sup> It seems that these programs are a reaction to the problem and has nothing to do with its prevention. Instead, there is a need for more strict laws to discourage people from continuing with this damaging behavior.

The laws of all 50 U.S. states provide that domestic violence is a crime. These laws have made it easier for victims to obtain protective or restraining court orders that prohibit offenders from having contact with them. Also, laws in most states allow police officers to arrest

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<sup>196</sup> Leonore Loeb Adler and Florence L. Denmark, ed., *Violence and the Prevention of Violence* (Westport Connecticut: Praeger Publishers, 1995), 134-141.

<sup>197</sup> Roleff, 142-148.

people suspected of committing domestic violence without the victim filing charges. Before the 1980s, however, arrests were uncommon, not only because many victims were unwilling to press charges,<sup>198</sup> but also because many law enforcement officials were reluctant to make arrests. Instead, officers typically attempted to calm the violent parties down or to restore order, perhaps because they perceived cases of domestic violence as something normal within the domestic realm.<sup>199</sup> Hence, in view of the increase in domestic violence, as response to criticism by feminist activists, and as a result of research indicating that arrests seemed to reduce subsequent violence, many cities changed their intervention policies to pay more attention to the laws created to punish and discourage this crime.<sup>200</sup>

#### Latin American Paternalism

A defining characteristic of colonial Mexico was the position and power of the Roman Catholic Church due to the Catholic missionaries who entered the country with the Spanish conquerors and immediately began working to

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<sup>198</sup> Roleff, 114.

<sup>199</sup> Roleff, 109.

<sup>200</sup> Roleff, 110-111.



convert Native Americans to Christianity.<sup>201</sup> Another factor that enabled the Church to spread its influence throughout the colonies was the acquisition of enormous wealth, which they used to provide loans maintaining their grip on the economy.<sup>202</sup> The Catholic Church was an effective extension of the king's government away from Spain, and was able to influence the spiritual needs of its followers while controlling their economy and by extension, their political life as well.

The Catholic Church affected virtually every aspect of life in colonial Mexico. Social services—including education, hospital care, and assistance for the elderly, the poor, or the mentally disturbed—were offered primarily by the church rather than the colonial government or private operations.<sup>203</sup> The church provided loans for some business ventures and kept records of births, deaths, and marriages.<sup>204</sup> Priests taught in primary and secondary schools, as well as in universities, and they frequently counseled colonial

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<sup>201</sup> Lynn V. Foster, *A Brief history of Mexico* (New York: Fact On File, Inc., 1997), 64-72.

<sup>202</sup> Burkholder, 249.

<sup>203</sup> Meyer, *The Course of Mexican History*, 228-229.

<sup>204</sup> Wasserman, 7-8, 104.

officials on government matters.<sup>205</sup> Consequently, it can be observed how the effects of the Catholic Church's teachings have been able to survive continuing its influences on people's lives today. As a result of this paternalistic influence of over three hundred years of colonial experience, Mexico and the rest of Latin America are characterized by sharp class and social divisions.<sup>206</sup> These characteristics are obvious when observing that a small upper class controls much of the country's property and wealth while the majority of Mexicans live in poverty.<sup>207</sup>

However, the Church's control over Mexican private affairs of its parishioners would come to an end after the War of the Reform (1855-1860), which succeeded in separating state and church and secularizing education, and made marriage a civil contract.<sup>208</sup> The secularization of private affairs only meant that the responsibility was transferred from one paternalistic institution to another, not that the paternalistic influences ingrained by the church would disappear. Despite efforts to

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<sup>205</sup> Burns, *The Course of Mexican History*, 212-215.

<sup>206</sup> Burkholder, 194-198, 329.

<sup>207</sup> Aguirre, 62.

<sup>208</sup> Wasserman, 9, 100, 107, 127.

restrict religious influences, especially in primary schools, the deep-rooted influences of the Catholic Church can still be observed today.<sup>209</sup>

#### Women's Status in Latin America

Like the American patriarchal system, in the early Mexican paternalism, most women have historically lacked an identity of their own. While they were part of their nuclear family, women were usually identified as the daughters of someone, and as such must defend their honor [Virginty] at all costs,<sup>210</sup> after they were "given" in marriage women were to adopt their husband's name, becoming part of his property. Therefore, they were usually addressed as "senora de ..." denoting their dependence on men as their property. This custom continue to be practiced all over Latin America without social distinctions. Despite the fact that at marriage the husbands acquired similar responsibilities as their North American counterparts, Latin American men have usually found ways to ignore their responsibilities, often in complicity with authorities in charge of

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<sup>209</sup> Burns, 99.

<sup>210</sup> Lewald, 10.

implementing the laws. Although marriage was not known as "civil death" as in the United States, in Latin America it might as well have been, since in essence it was the exact same thing. Unfortunately, while the damaging effects of this practice has somehow diminished in the United States, in Latin America it has continued perpetuating inequalities and further affecting women's lives in all aspects, political, economic, and social.<sup>211</sup>

Although the rights of women have improved, especially over the last three decades of the twentieth century, the excesses of machismo have not ended. Women remain at a distinct social and economic disadvantage. With the exclusion of the United States, where education is free and mandatory at least through the secondary level, in Latin America, the reality is quite different. While primary school enrollment for girls now roughly equals that of boys, women constitute about two-thirds of the world's one billion illiterate adults. Of the more than 100 million children who drop out of school before

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<sup>211</sup> Burns 179.

completing the fourth grade in the world, two-thirds are girls.<sup>212</sup>

Despite the fact that discrimination against girls and women remains pervasive in most societies, women who are benefited with the opportunity of higher education are entering colleges and universities in increasing numbers. This fact is clearly visible in Latin America, and the Caribbean, where more women than men have enrolled in institutions of higher education during the 1990s.<sup>213</sup> Therefore, one can only deduce that women in fact are not inferior than men in any shape color or form, and that given the opportunity, they are as capable as men are in achieving progress. However, one can not help but question why even after women's achievements in higher education, they continue to receive lower wages than do men who may be equal or less qualified for the jobs they are performing.<sup>214</sup>

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<sup>212</sup> UNESCO-EFA Global Monitoring Report 2003/4, "Why are Girls Still Held Back,"

<[http://portal.unesco.org/education/ev.php?URL\\_ID=24152&URL\\_DO=...](http://portal.unesco.org/education/ev.php?URL_ID=24152&URL_DO=...)>  
[Nov. 20, 2003]

<sup>213</sup> UNESCO-International Bureau of Education (1998), "World Data on Education," <<http://www.ibe.unesco.org/>> [Dec. 3, 2003].

<sup>214</sup> Burns, 248-249.

## The Macho Culture

Being macho in Latin America, as in any other part of the world, is essentially a learned and conditioned behavior, a behavior usually acquired from the imitation of characteristics from other males around the individual. The forces that condition this type of male behavior had for the most attracted positive as well as negative connotations. Consequently, alcohol abuse, abuse against women, and raising hell, had been mistakenly taken as reflection of what is a macho.<sup>215</sup> Unfortunately, these negative behaviors have conditioned the new generation of youngsters who have not yet learned the real essence of maleness, contributing to the excesses of male behavior.

Both father and mother play important roles in the formation of their children, and male children usually learn from their male elders the characteristic masculine behavior that is evolving in their environment. It is not surprising that male children learn to act tough and disregard the well being of females if that is the example that they had learned to follow from their father

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<sup>215</sup> Ray Gonzalez, ed., *Muy Macho: Latino Men and Their Manhood*. (New York: Ankor Books Doubleday, 1996), 59-60.

or other influential males of their family.<sup>216</sup> Male children learn to be number one, and when their childhood evolves around poor and oppressed environment, they are taught to be tough, not to show weakness, not to cry. Women by contrast are taught to be submissive and to bear with their suffering. Mothers are also very influential in the formation of male children. For this reason, when we make references about the macho, by necessity we are also making references to the role women have played in men's lives. Latin American mothers by being the providers of food, protection, and affection, and by being their first confidants, exert great influence in the way male children learn the "macho" role.<sup>217</sup> The way mothers' behavior had been shaped play a crucial role in the way they will raise their children. A more integrated man will emerge from a mother whose behavior had been shaped within a pleasing familiar environment, while a more dysfunctional one will emerge from mothers whose behavior has been conditioned by an oppressive male oriented atmosphere. A clear double standard can be

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<sup>216</sup> Gonzalez, 64-65, 67.

<sup>217</sup> Gonzalez, 67-68.

observed in the manners in which male and female children are indoctrinated throughout their life.

This double standard, according to *Living la vida loca*, a journal published by the Economist (12/18/99), exists at every level of society, including the family nucleus to the political arena. For instance, when Jose Narro, a candidate running for governor of Zacatecas, Mexico, promised to work for rights equality of his electors, there was no reason to believe he was including gay or lesbian rights in his agenda.<sup>218</sup> This double standard is also noticeable when defining who is a homosexual and who is not. Latin American homosexual men are viewed as effeminate and passive, while he who takes the active masculine role is not seen as bisexual or homosexual, but as a man who is so macho that he does it to another man;<sup>219</sup> a very particular way of seeing maleness through the macho mentality, when in reality, both the passive as much as the active partners should be considered either homosexual or bisexual.

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<sup>218</sup> *Living la vida loca*. Economist Vol. 353 Issue 8150, (Dec. 18, 1999): 81-88.

<sup>219</sup> *Living la vida loca*, 83.



This attitude towards homosexuality is also present in the family sphere, where parents, brothers, sisters, and even friends try to deny what is evolving in front of their eyes. It is not uncommon that parents of a homosexual man or woman who shares his bedroom with another man or woman act as if they were completely ignorant of what evolves in their relationship. Not surprisingly, gay women, "who are less visible than gay men the world over, practically vanished in Latin America." As Sergio Abboud, a Brazilian anthropologist explains, since women's sexuality is denied, people don't usually find anything suspicious when two women live together. In people's view, if a forty-year-old man remains single it is either because he is too sexually demanding or gay. By contrast, a woman of similar age could be considered frigid, asexual, or unwanted, but not that she is lesbian.<sup>220</sup>

The application of a double standard continues. Women are further divided between good and bad. While the good are reserved to fill the respectable places of mother, wife, daughter, and sister, the bad are only good

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<sup>220</sup> *Living la vida loca*, 84.

to enjoy sexual pleasures with. They could only be taken as mistresses, which are necessary to satisfy the macho's sexual desire.<sup>221</sup> These absurdities serve to perpetuate the belief that while men need to satisfy their sexual needs, women do not, because they can live without sexual intercourse. These ideas, bonded with the idea of Dona Marina's<sup>222</sup> betrayal in her contact with Cortes, have been a constant concern of the Mexican mestizo, who sees in women the constant reminder of Mexican machismo insecurity.<sup>223</sup>

#### The Macho as Conqueror

Some have suggested there is a close resemblance between the macho figure with the Spanish conquistador. In fact, the European conqueror with his display of virility and daring action has in a singular way influenced to the formation of this prototype of aggressive and at times exaggerated masculinity throughout Spanish America.<sup>224</sup> The effects of this behavior can be clearly observed in the way that both

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<sup>221</sup> Goldwert, 2.

<sup>222</sup> Dona Marina was the Indian girl who was given to Hernand Cortes upon his arrival to Mexico and later became his wife

<sup>223</sup> Goldwert, 35.

<sup>224</sup> Goldwert, Machismo and Conquest, 1.

male and female children are groomed in a prevailing male-oriented society, where the female is less valued than the male. This trend within Latin American societies is more salient in the parent's desire for male children, because this assures the continuation of their family's name. From early age, male children are encouraged to engage in rough and aggressive games, where the male child is able to show his unwillingness to run away from a fight or to break a deal. This trait continues through the male adolescence when the game evolves into a measure of his virility, physical strength, and audacity. As a result, the young macho enjoys the freedom to engage in sexuality to the complacency of his father and the secret pride of his mother. Although differences in the macho attitude between social classes clearly exist, the end result is the same, the subordination of the female.<sup>225</sup>

Not everyone in Latin America glamorizes the macho attitude and that brings hope that this type of abusive behavior will change in the future. This can be deduced from the experiences that Xavier Mirande shares with the

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<sup>225</sup> Goldwert, *Machismo and Conquest*, 6.

readers of his book *Hombres y Machos; Masculinity and Culture*. Mirande revives his personal experiences in regards with his uncles in his native Mexico, who portrayed the typical tough guys, abusive, and without respect for others, contrasting their behavior with that of his father who represented the opposite. As he suggests, his uncles' attitude was not an image to be proud of.<sup>226</sup>

Mirande, in his analysis finds that there were machismo tendencies among Aztec societies long before the arrival of the Spanish conquistador. Therefore, it becomes clear that both the Aztecs and the Spanish conquerors were warring, conquering, predatory, military nations in which men were dominant and women subordinate.<sup>227</sup> By contrast, Aztec women's role was largely domestic. Women were allowed only limited social and religious participation, and the performance of their duties determined their social status.<sup>228</sup> While men were to struggle as warriors in the battlefield, women were to struggle at home, which included their procreative

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<sup>226</sup> Mirande, 5.

<sup>227</sup> Mirande, 55-56.

<sup>228</sup> Mirande, 56-57.

function. Although fidelity was expected and monogamy the prevailing pattern, polygyny was allowed to those who could afford more than one wife, but women were not allowed to have more than one husband.<sup>229</sup>

It is undeniably that the pre-Columbian heritage has substantially influenced the development of the modern Latin American culture and its expression of masculinity. Since the Spanish influence is also undeniable, it becomes clear that the modern Latin American machismo in its most negative form, is the result of an amalgamation of both cultures. Though there was not a direct transplant of machismo and its immediate adoption by the natives, they slowly absorbed the many culturally exaggerated masculine traits that the Spanish conquerors displayed.<sup>230</sup>

Hence, as result of the different and contrasting views of the real meaning of the "Mexican macho," machismo could also be viewed as a positive cultural trait. Although in the general view Mexico presents a prototype society influenced by exaggerated machismo, we can not generalize thinking that everyone acts in the

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<sup>229</sup> Mirande, 49-52.

<sup>230</sup> Mirande, 57.

same manner because there is a marked difference of opinion on the true meaning of what to be macho means among Mexicans. As a result, while for some a macho goes around procreating several children with several different women and raising hell; for others, this line of thought is not only erroneous, but also irresponsible. For them, being macho means to care for their families and to be responsible for their acts.<sup>231</sup> There are positive traits of fatherhood present among millions of Mexican men despite the negative image of a hard drinking, irresponsible Mexican working class, created perhaps unintentionally by some anthropologists. Matthew C. Gutmann, from the University of California, Berkeley, experienced such positive traits first hand when strangers approached him and his wife to see their seven week old daughter, volunteering advice for her well-being, and showing a genuine understanding of parenthood as a life-long experience.<sup>232</sup>

Though, there is a noticeable difference in the way people from different social classes see their parenting

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<sup>231</sup> Matthew C. Gutmann, *The Meanings of Macho; Being a macho in Mexico City* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 2.

<sup>232</sup> Gutmann, 2-5.

responsibility, this does not mean that their responsibility is diminished in any way. The rich, for instance, had indirect participation in their child's nursing because they can afford hiring someone to care for their children. However, people from the popular classes can not afford such luxuries, so they are more actively involved with their children when they are growing up.<sup>233</sup> Nevertheless, it becomes clear that male-dominated societies are also capable of producing good and responsible people. Why is it, then, that only the wrong behavior is visible and is usually taken as the norm?

#### Domestic Violence in Latin America

While it is impossible to deny that domestic violence is present all over Latin America, it is clear that this problem, although focused mainly on women, directly affects the lives of the children who grow up in this type of violent environment. In Latin America, across the social strata, there is a large population of men in whom the belief of male superiority and the subordination of women has been deeply ingrained and

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<sup>233</sup> Gutmann, 85.

therefore, has become customary. Within these groups, the abuse of women and the abandonment of children without economic support are notorious, and all of these occur in complete complicity with the existing institutional structure, which mostly ignores women's plea for assistance despite enacted laws for their protection. In such an environment where the victims have no protection from the authorities who are responsible of implementing the law, there is no way to prevent the reoccurrence of the crime.

Notwithstanding the advances made in the legislation of most countries around the world, the fact is that domestic violence continues to plague society, and its eradication has proven to be difficult, if not impossible, to achieve. According to a report published by Abraham Lama, although from 1985 onwards Latin American countries have adopted specific legislation to prevent and crack down on domestic violence, it continues affecting society without control. Even though a measurement on the degree of domestic violence is difficult to obtain because of the limited studies on this question, according to United Nations statistics, one out of every four women have suffered physical abuse



by a family member in industrialized nations. This figure however, is higher in the less developed nations, as is the case of Peru where 7 out of 10 women have reported to be victims of mistreatment in their homes, and of Ecuador where 60 percent of the women interviewed have experienced domestic abuse by their husbands or partners.<sup>234</sup> It can be asserted without equivocation that, indeed, domestic violence is rampant despite new laws. Examples like the one that follows are a faithful reflection of the violence experienced by women and children in Latin America today. It should be noted, moreover, that examples of similar nature can be found everyday all over the world.

I was horrified by one of the cases reported by Laura in America, a talk show from Lima, Peru. It was a case where a man, intoxicated by alcohol, was beating his wife, he accidentally kicked his five-year-old daughter's head, who after being in coma five days, died.<sup>235</sup> The question arose whether this monster was guilty of a crime or if the crime should be considered an accident. If I

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<sup>234</sup> Abraham Lama, "Domestic Abuse Still Rampant Despite New Laws," Nov. 27, 2000 <newsdesk@igc.apc.org> [October 3, 2003]

<sup>235</sup> Laura Bosso, Laura in America: Violencia Domestica y Abuso Infantil, produced by Telemundo, 60 minutes, May 30, 2002, Talk Show.

was the judge, there is no question in my mind; this man is a criminal of the worst kind. Unfortunately, since no one reported the crime to the authorities, mainly because the wife fears repercussion from her husband, this man is free to continue with his destructive behavior against others, perhaps another of his own children, who do not deserve such a destiny.

As can be observed, the problem of domestic violence turns worse when the violence affects the lives of the innocent victims, the children. Some men not only victimize their wives, but in most cases their children accidentally became victims when trying to aid their mothers from their father's rage. In addition, the low opinion these women have about themselves, which when combined with the poor education and lack economic independence, makes them more vulnerable in their relationship with men.<sup>236</sup> These women think they cannot survive without a man by their side because of their economic dependence on men. As a result, women confound love with violence, and the brutality within the family environment continues to be perpetuated. The result is a

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<sup>236</sup> Daniel Gatti, "Violence Grows with Social Inequality," Dec. 3, 1998, <[http://www.hartford\\_hwp.com/archives/...](http://www.hartford_hwp.com/archives/...)>[April 12, 2003].

vicious circle from where women often leave only by death, and children grow up learning this sickening behavior, which will all too often be repeated in their personal relationships as adults. It is really inconceivable that women, in the name of what they have been culturally conditioned to recognize as love, disregard not only their personal safety but also that of their children. Domestic violence, the most pervasive crime against women all over the world continues to exist almost without impunity.<sup>237</sup>

In this social dilemma both the victim [excepting children who are innocent victims] and the criminal generally are guilty, the first, for allowing it to happen, and the second, for believing that they are acting within their rights to punish their partners in life. It is as if in this plot both parties believe the roles they are playing in life are the roles imposed on them by some kind of predestination according to their gender. One cannot help but wonder when this ignorance that blinds people will come to an end. However, it is clear it will never stop by itself. To overcome it,

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<sup>237</sup> Adler, 121-126.

changes must occur at all levels of society, but it must first and foremost begin with education within the family environment with the full support of their governments.

Without distinction of social classes, Latin American men have always seen in women the "other," who in the future and in their own right, could present the most powerful challenge to men's prominent position, position which could be real or imaginary. Consequently, it is of no surprise that men will continue in their efforts to subordinate women. Unfortunately, in most Latin American countries, perhaps for the continuous economic and political problems that had plagued them since the beginning of republican life, this subordination of women has been more visible than in the United States. By denying women the benefits that education could provide, women are also been denied their economic independence, and as consequence, from achieving political empowerment. Although it could rightfully be argued that women have long achieved enfranchisement and with it political decision making, how could uneducated individuals—men and women alike—make sound political choices that will benefit them? Therefore, I find it absurd to argue that political rights alone could provide

women with the protection necessary in a male dominated society.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSIONS

Although it is of common knowledge that the British colonies emerged at a much later time than Spanish colonies in the New World, the fact is that these colonies did not exist in isolation and that there was continuous exchange of ideas between them. Since the political systems and administration of both colonial systems were closely linked to European monarchies, they also shared the ideologies, religious beliefs, and cultural practices prevalent in their mother countries, and this included the belief of male supremacy. When comparing the prevalent social, economic, and political systems as basis for the cultural development that molded men's rationality in relation to women, there are more similarities than differences between the British and Spanish colonies. This rationality of women's subordination, however, has been heavily conditioned and supported by both the religious and legal systems, thereby securing its preservation despite challenges. The official view of women's role in society during the nineteenth and first part of the twentieth centuries is clearly reflected in the ruling of the Supreme Court

denying women the right to practice law in Illinois through the following statement by Justice Joseph Bradley.

The harmony... of interest and views which belong, or should belong, to the family institution is repugnant to the idea of a woman adopting a distinct and independent career from that of her husband.. The paramount destiny and mission of a woman are to fulfill the noble and benign offices of wife and mother. This is the law of the creator.<sup>238</sup>

Thus, whichever label we decide to use, whether Patriarchy, Paternalism, or even Machismo as is the case of Latin America, Patriarchy is the nearly universal social system by which men have historically achieved the subordination of women and other less influential groups.

It has been written that men's aggressiveness make them more suited for the world of business and politics. By contrast, women because of their innate weakness belonged at home, to preserve the religious and moral principles of the family. This view does not do justice to women's dedication to their family and especially to

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<sup>238</sup> Squire, 148.

their children. Perhaps their innate weakness is the basis for their strength that makes them not only different but also more responsible than many men in society. This has been the case in the past, when women were forced to take the responsibility for the survival of their families, and no doubt it can also be the case in the present. This fact is easily supported by the reports from the Census Bureau (see Table 1), otherwise how could we explain the fact that there are almost six times as many female householders in comparison to male householders in the United States?

Many would disagree in making comparisons between two cultural practices such as Patriarchy and Machismo from the point of view that while Patriarchy as practiced in the United States has been for the most viewed as a successful political and economic cultural trait, Machismo has not. This reasoning could be based on the belief that while Machismo is viewed as a negative trait where the show of exaggerated maleness is predominant, Patriarchy has historically been viewed as a moral system able to produce responsible citizens. This argument, however, does not reflect the fact that Patriarchy and Machismo in essence have been used as methods of social



control, or social domination proposed and legitimized by men for the sole benefit of men. But, why is social control necessary? The answer is simple, to control power. Those who control power, by extension have control of every aspect of social life, which includes religion, economics, and politics. Consequently, when analyzing them against the effects they have had on women, it could be asserted that both are nothing else than the two sides of the same coin. Both have developed from deeply ingrained cultural and religious roots.

Power, however, can often be unequally distributed and abused to the detriment of the weakest groups. A prime example of unequal distribution of power is present in the degree of political representation women have in the United States and Latin America despite the fact that they constitute at least half of the population of both environments. Another example is based on the differences in wages that women make in comparison to men's wages, despite laws enacted to prevent such differences from happening. Moreover, when men confuse authority with physical power, they often commit crimes against society; domestic violence is one such crime. Domestic violence in both the United States and Latin

America is often institutionalized, or formalized in societal structures through traditional laws and customs that permit husbands to physically "punish" their wives. Since traditionally women have been affected by their lower economic status, they have been economically dependent on men. Thus their ability to leave abusive relationships has been limited. In addition, children who witness domestic violence experience depression and psychological distress and are more likely than other children to be physically violent, thereby insuring the perpetuation of this vicious circle.

Many arguments based on religion, customs, and traditional laws, have been raised to rationalize the subordination of women in society. Nonetheless, I have been deeply disturbed in understanding the argument that since women are different in comparison to men they must be inferior and therefore subordinate to them. In fact, there are many ways in which human beings are different from each other, thus we can argue that there are biological differences between male and female, or that every individual is a different world, and still be equal in essence as human beings. It is a well known fact that the only differences between men and women had been

cultural differences imposed on female children from their childhood, when they are taught to be more feminine, more submissive, and are more protected than are male children. By contrast, male children are usually encouraged to be aggressive, and given more freedom of action in their environment. These are, however, cultural impositions, which have been useful social instruments to condition the characters of individuals to their "different gender roles in life." Then again, cultural trends can be modified. Although male and female roles in life continuously change, it is clear that cultural impositions have not, and will not change unless there are common efforts to modify people's behavior at every social level, starting with the family. This is a great task for future generations.

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