

Abstract

Title of Dissertation: DEVELOPMENT BEGINS AT HOME:
WOMEN AND THE DOMESTIC ECONOMY IN
BRAZIL, 1945-1975

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A number of historians of twentieth-century Latin America have identified ways that national labor laws, civil codes, social welfare programs, and business practices contributed to a gendered division of society that subordinated women to men in national economic development, household management, and familial relations. Few scholars, however, have critically explored women's roles as consumers and housewives in these intertwined realms. This work examines the Brazilian case after the Second World War, arguing that economic policies and business practices associated with “developmentalism” [Portuguese: *desenvolvimentismo*] created openings for women to engage in debates about national progress and transnational standards of modernity. While acknowledging that an asymmetry of gender relations persisted, the study demonstrates that urban women expanded their agency in this period, especially over areas of economic and family life deemed “domestic.” This dissertation examines periodicals, consumer research statistics, public opinion surveys, personal interviews, corporate archives, the archives of key women’s organizations, and government officials’

records to identify the role that women and household economies played in Brazilian developmentalism between 1945 and 1975. Its principal argument is that business and political elites attempted to define gender roles for adult urban women as housewives and mothers, linking their management of the household to familial well-being and national modernization. In turn, Brazilian women deployed these idealized roles in public to advance their own economic interests, especially in the management of household finances and consumption, as well as to expand legal rights for married women, and increase women's participation in the workforce. As the market for women's labor expanded with continued industrialization, these efforts defined a more active role for women in the economy and in debates about the trajectory of national development policies.

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Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Maryland, College Park in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
2016

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Acknowledgements

If it takes a village to raise a child, it takes another to complete a dissertation. I could not have completed this study without the advice, support, and feedback of many. I thank my advisor, Daryle Williams, for his guidance and encouragement over the last seven years. He has shepherded me through research and writing, sharing insights into relevant archives, reviewing numerous grant and fellowship applications and chapter drafts, helping me to identify blind spots in my arguments, and putting me in touch with experts in Brazil and the United States. Karin Roseblatt provided valuable feedback on my research and writing throughout the project. David Sicilia assisted me with adapting a chapter of the dissertation for publication and helped introduce me to the field of business history. I also thank the other members of the dissertation committee. Bryan McCann was generous with his time and expertise at important stages of the study, and David Kirsch provided helpful feedback to make the dissertation more relevant to a broader audience.

My research would not have been possible without the generous support of several organizations. At the University of Maryland, the Department of History, the Latin American Studies Center, and the Graduate School provided several grants for travel to collections and conferences as well as funds while I drafted my prospectus and the dissertation itself. I thank the Fulbright program for the fellowship that allowed me to conduct a year of research in Brazil and the Hagley Museum and Library for the dissertation writing fellowship that provided me with time and space to draft the bulk of the dissertation. The Hagley, Duke University Libraries, and the Conference on Latin American History also provided travel grants that were crucial to the exploratory research for this study.

I thank my friends and colleagues at Maryland who read my chapter drafts and provided both helpful comments and encouragement, especially Brandi Townsend, Alda Benjamen, Allison Finkelstein, Harrison Guthorn, and Josh Furman. I also thank my friends and colleagues in Brazil, especially Ana Mauad and Rodrigo Cesar da Silva Magalhães, who encouraged my research and helped me find my way around Rio. I thank all of the archivists and librarians who have helped me to navigate their collections, and the many colleagues at academic conferences and colloquia who have been generous with their comments and advice.

Finally, I thank my family for their love and support. My father nurtured my fascination with history from a young age. My mother, in addition to raising me, inspired my love of learning and encouraged me at every step of my academic and professional career. Over the last four years, Nancy Diaz has been remarkably supportive, caring, and patient as I conducted my research and drafted the dissertation. For this, I owe her my unending gratitude.

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Introduction

The three decades following the Second World War were a time of dramatic socioeconomic changes in Brazil. Between 1945 and the mid-1970s, the largest nation in South America underwent rapid transformation due to population growth, industrialization, and urbanization. The creation of urban jobs in industry, construction, commerce, and services, combined with regional droughts and poverty, prompted large segments of the rural population to migrate to urban centers, especially Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. Brazil's annual rate of internal migration increased from 2.94% of the population in the 1940s to 5.51% in the 1950s and 4.49% in the 1960s.¹ Urban development—planned and unplanned—sprawled outward and upward from historical urban cores.

This period also witnessed substantial change in Brazilian gender norms as the sexual revolution, youth culture, and international feminism challenged conservative ideas about marriage and gendered divisions of labor. Structural changes presented new challenges to urban women, who found their roles within the household and national economies at the center of public debates about the trajectory of socioeconomic development. This dissertation explores the relationship between structural change, evolving gender norms, and women's political and economic agency in Brazil in a period that has been called the era of “developmentalism.”

As a national project whose reach extended far beyond economic policy, developmentalism [Portuguese: *desenvolvimentismo*] outlined roles for men and women

¹ Migration was most significant out of the drought-stricken Northeast, which experienced negative net migration of 9.78% in the 1950s and 5.08% in the 1960s. Werner Baer, *The Brazilian Economy: Growth and Development*, 6th ed. (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2008), 251.

to participate in development as workers and consumers, linking gendered divisions of labor and consumption² within private households to the broader economic and social development of the nation. Advocates of developmentalism in government, business, and media exerted substantial influence over public discourse about men and women's gendered roles in development and developmentalist policies contributed to substantial structural changes that affected women's lived experiences. However, changes in national discourse regarding women's roles in national development and broader shifts in gender norms between 1945 and 1975 cannot be reduced to the changing views of political and business elites or to a natural consequence of structural change. Rather, this dissertation demonstrates that women activists played a pivotal part in shaping postwar Brazilian gender roles. Diverse groups of urban women invoked idealized feminine gender roles to engage in public debates about policies and laws that affected their daily lives. Changes in women's gender roles over the thirty years following the Second World War were thus a product of negotiation as women activists used developmentalist rhetoric to envision broader roles for women in Brazilian society as a response to structural, political, and cultural change. In the process of actively shaping national discourse about feminine gender roles, these activists shifted the trajectory of developmentalist economic and social policies in ways that encouraged women's increased participation in the paid workforce and increased women's legal and economic power within marriage.

² Consumption can be defined broadly or narrowly. Consumer culture, broadly defined as a web of symbolic meaning associated with consumption, is important to this dissertation. However, when describing historical perceptions of consumption, it is important to establish how contemporary observers defined the term. Economists, sociologists, and government officials were primarily interested in consumption of food, housing, and consumer durables. Social scientists, advertisers, and government officials also measured Brazilians' use of various media, including radio, television, newspapers, and magazines, and linked this use with consumer behavior. Although of less interest to government officials, advertisers also paid for detailed analyses of consumer preferences for various branded disposable goods, as will be described later.

Developmentalism and Gender Discourse

Developmentalism is commonly recognized as both an approach to economic policy that favors government intervention in the economy to spur industrial growth, as well as an ideology that holds economic development to be the central objective of government policies and institutions. In the decades following the Second World War, developmentalist economic policies were promoted by the UN Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA, f.1948), which quickly became influential in the formation of economic policy in Brazil and other Latin American nations. ECLA's policy recommendations were heavily influenced by the theories of Raúl Prebisch (1901-1986) and Hans Singer (1910-2006), social scientists who promoted import-substitution industrialization (ISI) as a means for poorer nations reliant on commodity exports to escape deteriorating terms of trade with early industrializers.³ In the postwar era, Brazilian economic policymakers were encouraged by the relative success of ISI policies, often adopted as emergency measures in the 1930s and early 1940s, and were influenced by a growing international consensus favoring deepened domestic industrialization as the key to economic prosperity for Latin America and other less-industrialized nations.

From 1945 to the 1970s, developmentalism was a potent ideological current in Brazilian political-economic thought and practice. Developmentalist economic and social policies were primarily shaped by political elites, government bureaucrats, and leaders of Brazil's industrial and commercial associations. However, as an ideology that promised a bountiful future through economic growth and social modernization, developmentalism also shaped the goals and discourse of Brazil's urban middle- and working classes.

³ Joseph Love, "Economic Ideas and Ideologies in Latin America since 1930" in *The Cambridge History of Latin America* Vol. 6, ed by Leslie Bethell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 415-428.

Brazil's modernization was celebrated in advertisements aimed at increasingly sophisticated consumers; trade unions framed campaigns for higher wages around realizing the promised benefits of economic growth. Influenced by modernization theory and a Latin-American postwar consensus favoring ISI, the expansion of wage labor, the welfare state, and democratic rule, advocates of developmentalism in business and government sought to transform Brazil into an advanced industrial economy and consumerist society with living standards similar to those found in North America and Western Europe.

Under postwar populist administrations and the military regime installed by a coup in 1964, developmentalism shaped social, economic, and wage policies, and idealized urban middle-class standards of consumption and cultural modernity.⁴ During this period, populists, nationalists, centrists, traditional conservatives, and anti-communists differed over a range of issues relating to economic and social policy, including budget, labor, and wage policies, the scope of the welfare state, and regulations on foreign capital. Left and Right differed over how the state should best promote development and how the fruits of economic growth should be distributed. Nonetheless, few questioned the notion that the state should play a prominent role in economic and social development. A broad consensus favored protective trade policies, state investments in infrastructure, and state coordination of loans to key industries. Developmentalist policies succeeded at spurring industrialization and rapid economic growth, with Brazilian GDP growing at an average annual rate of 7.1% from 1946 to

⁴ Although democratic rule initially distinguished postwar developmentalism from the populist but authoritarian Estado Novo of the 1930s and 1940s, developmentalist approaches to social and economic policy survived the fraying of postwar political alliances and the 1964 coup, shaping the military regime's policies into the 1980s.

1975.⁵ However, this growth came in booms and busts that resulted in high inflation, periodic political instability, and economic inequality.

Many urban women became keenly aware of the contradiction between developmentalism's promise of economic prosperity for Brazilian families and everyday hardships caused by developmentalist policies. Although postwar populist developmentalism was marked by repeated appeals to socio-economic uplift and political inclusion, developmentalist policies disproportionately benefitted industrial and commercial elites, the urban middle classes, and segments of the industrial working classes. Developmentalist policies exacerbated regional, racial, and class inequalities⁶ and stoked inflation, especially in food prices, making it difficult for urban women to purchase food for their households. Although populist politicians and businessmen promised a prosperous future for all, postwar official efforts to lift up the least fortunate were often half-hearted and the benefits of development proved illusory for many. With the 1964 coup, developmentalist discourse and policies became more authoritarian and less concerned with social uplift for working-class Brazilians, but continued to emphasize industrialization and expanding household consumption in urban centers. Stagnant salaries for working class men, expanding consumer desires, and inflation placed increasing pressure on women seeking to balance family budgets. Throughout the postwar era, government officials, businesses, and mass media encouraged urban women

⁵ Calculated from values provided in Baer, *The Brazilian Economy*, 54, 405.

⁶ Barbara Weinstein has demonstrated that even though proponents of developmentalism sought to address regional inequalities, they tended to view inequality as natural. Further, Brazilian developmentalist policies did not reverse regional inequalities; they instead contributed to the continued concentration of industrialization in south and southeastern Brazil. See Barbara Weinstein, "Developing Inequality," presidential address, Annual Meeting of the American Historical Association, Washington, DC, 2008. For more on racial inequality in Brazilian development, see Peggy Lovell, "Development and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in Brazil, 1950-1991," *The Journal of Developing Areas*, Vol. 33, No. 3 (Spring 1999): 395-418.

to embrace feminine roles within development as custodians of the household economy. However, as this dissertation will demonstrate, women activists and workers often sought to reshape roles within and outside the home to increase their influence on the national economy and politics.

In this dissertation, I argue that developmentalism repurposed traditional gender roles for both middle- and working-class urban women by connecting these women's stewardship of their households to the economic and social modernization of the Brazilian nation. In turn, I argue that women actively responded to the structural changes and dislocations caused by developmentalist policies, redefining feminine gender roles in the process. Urban women revealed that they would not be passive in the face of economic and political instability or restrict their participation in society to activities within the home. Diverse groups of women deployed their moral authority as mothers and wives in public to advance a variety of political and social causes. Working- and middle-class women demanded price controls on food. Feminists leveraged ideas of modernity and international treaties to expand married women's rights. Conservative women agitated against the perceived threats of communism. Women with a variety of ideological orientations and objectives invoked their roles as mothers and wives to garner public support for nominally non-partisan campaigns, demonstrating that this form of feminine politics represented an effective alternative to advancing policy changes through political parties. Parallel to this activism, many women embraced new roles in the economy or chose to pursue professions that had previously been dominated by men. Through political activism and professional development, urban women expanded their participation in the economy and their influence on politics.

This dissertation demonstrates that from the 1950s to 1970s, shifting portrayals of women in transnational consumer culture also reshaped popular and elite conceptions of what constituted modern femininity in a developing society. As women in Western Europe and the United States increasingly entered the paid workforce and pursued careers previously dominated by men, traditional elites became increasingly receptive to feminist arguments that social and economic modernity could only be obtained if women pursued careers outside of the home. Feminists found increasing media support for these arguments despite the military regime's authoritarian and patriarchal interventions into civil society. Some domestic consumer goods companies and multinational corporations, including the American cosmetics firm Avon, found that encouraging women to participate in the economy and exercise greater control over personal and household consumption was essential to expanding sales of consumer products. By the time that the military regime began to relax censorship of public discourse in 1974, and the United Nations facilitated the emergence of Brazilian second-wave feminist organizations in 1975, intellectual, business, and government elites were already promoting women's paid labor as a driver of economic growth.

In many respects, developmentalist policies succeeded at transforming Brazil's economy and society. However, postwar populist promises of a more egalitarian society through development went largely unrealized as government officials prioritized industrialization and economic growth over measures to promote social equality.⁷ Nonetheless, populist rhetoric associated with developmentalist planning created a

⁷ Social welfare spending certainly expanded in this period, but it benefitted a limited number of urban Brazilians and did little to counteract growing inequality in the distribution of wealth and income, as later chapters will reveal.

discursive opening for women to make demands on the government and businesses when promised wage growth, worker protections, or affordable food did not materialize. As women increased their influence in the economy and politics, a postwar vision that eventually both working- and middle-class men would earn a “family wage” sufficient to support dependent wives and children gradually gave way to a new idea of social modernity centered on a dual-income household with women wielding greater control over their own and their families’ economic decisions.

Historiographic Review

This dissertation makes a number of interventions in the historiography on development and gender in Brazil, and in Latin America more broadly. A number of scholars have identified and examined national projects that attempted to reshape or repurpose traditional gender roles in the name of economic and social modernization in other nations in Latin America⁸ and other periods in Brazilian history.⁹ Given that the

⁸ Much of this literature has focused on projects of national modernization and state expansion in the early to mid-twentieth century in Latin America. Karin Roseblatt has argued that Chilean politicians and male-headed unions both privileged patriarchal nuclear families in an effort to increase male union members' economic power and subordinate women within families. Roseblatt, *Gendered Compromises: Political Cultures and the State in Chile, 1920-1950*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000). Marta Raquel Zabaleta argues that Peronism in Argentina steered social welfare benefits to working-class males as heads of households, thus effectively subordinating women in both politics and private life in *Feminine Stereotypes and Roles in Theory and Practice in Argentina Before and After the First Lady Eva Perón* (Lewistown: Edwin Mellen Press, 2000). Examining gender relations in a later period, Heidi Tinsman has explored how neoliberalism and consumerism influenced Chilean gender relations in *Buying into the Regime: Grapes and Consumption in Cold War Chile and the United States* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014).

⁹ Historians of Brazil interested in the relationship between modernization projects and gender have mostly focused on the period from the end of the First World War through the Estado Novo dictatorship of Getúlio Vargas (1937-1945). Sueann Caulfield has examined elite preoccupations with women’s sexual purity in the face of modernity and Susan Besse has argued that elites attempted to modernize patriarchal gender norms to accommodate industrialization and urbanization. See Besse, *Restructuring Patriarchy: The Modernization of Gender Inequality in Brazil, 1914-1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996) and Caulfield, *In Defense of Honor: Sexual Morality, Modernity, and Nation in Early-Twentieth-Century Brazil* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000). For the period after 1975, the relationship between structural change and its effects on gendered discourses is often framed by analysis of the politics of feminism, redemocratization, and debt-crisis related inflation. See Maria Lygia Moraes, *Mulheres em movimento: o balanço da década da mulher do ponto de vista do feminismo, das religiões e*

mid-twentieth century was a period of substantial structural and social change in Brazil, one might expect a similar level of interest in the relationship between developmentalism and gender in this period. However, compared with studies on the influence of the state and economy on gender norms from 1914 to 1945 or after 1975, scholarship on the effects of mid-century economic development and state policy on gender norms is far less developed.

Unlike populism and the Estado Novo's cultural projects in the 1930s and early 1940s, Brazilian postwar developmentalism has been examined for its effects on the economy, political stability, social inequality, the labor movement, and the working class, but has only recently been seriously considered for its cultural implications.¹⁰ Since the works of Fernando Henrique Cardoso and Enzo Faletto in the 1960s and 1970s, dependency theorists have rejected the idea that developmentalist policies could free Latin American economies from their economic dependency on the industrially developed economies of the United States and Western Europe.¹¹ Dependency theory's influence on cultural studies also produced a number of critiques of consumer capitalism and the influence of US and Western European mass culture on Latin America,¹² but

da política (São Paulo: Nobel, 1985) and Maureen O'Dougherty, *Consumption Intensified: The Politics of Middle-Class Daily Life in Brazil* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002).

¹⁰ Leandro Benmergui's work stands out as a strong example of recent work on the relationship between developmentalism, housing policies, and working-class lived experience in Rio de Janeiro and Buenos Aires. His dissertation examines developmentalist attempts to modernize urban working-class Brazilian lifestyles through government housing projects that were funded in part by the Alliance for Progress. See Benmergui, "Housing Development: Housing Policy, Slums, and Squatter Settlements in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil and Buenos Aires, Argentina, 1948-1973," PhD Dissertation, University of Maryland, 2012.

¹¹ Fernando Henrique Cardoso and Enzo Faletto, *Dependency and Development in Latin America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979).

¹² In many ways, these critiques inverted the arguments of modernization theorists, arguing that the proliferation of mass media and consumerism rendered Latin Americans ever more dependent on US and European cultural products. For a well-known example of this type of analysis, see Ariel Dorfman and

these were less interested in examining how Latin American political and business elites themselves shaped national cultures in the postwar years.¹³ Reflecting the persistent influence of structuralist theory, many Brazilian scholars have assumed that urbanization, industrialization, and the rise of consumerism have been the primary reasons for the appearance of more liberal sexual mores and increasing popular acceptance of women's paid labor. However, for the mid-twentieth century, these arguments rely more often on theory and casual observation than empirical evidence.¹⁴

Although scholars of Brazil have been interested in how structural change affects culture, few have examined developmentalism as an enduring cultural project. Although scholarship on macroeconomic policy has identified significant continuity between developmentalist policies before and after 1964, most of the historiography on Brazilian developmentalism as both a political and cultural discourse has focused on the presidency and legacy of Juscelino Kubitschek.¹⁵ Scholars who study Kubitschek's presidency have drawn connections between large-scale developmentalist economic projects, such as the construction of Brasília, and a broader trend toward the idealization of modernity that influenced elite and mass culture. However, developmentalism has rarely been approached as a project that sought to shape national culture. Joel Wolfe's *Autos and*

Armand Mattelart, *How to Read Donald Duck: Imperialist Ideology in the Disney Comic* (New York: International General, 1984).

¹³ A notable exception to this statement is that dependency theorists often argue for a more vigorous role for the state in protecting and promoting national or local cultures.

¹⁴ For an example of this see João Manuel Cardoso de Mello and Fernando A. Novais, "Capitalismo tardio e sociabilidade moderna" in *História da vida privada no Brasil, Vol. 4: Contrastes da intimidade contemporânea*. Novais, Fernando and Lilia Schwarcz, eds. (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1998), 559-658.

¹⁵ For a recent example of this tendency see Rafael Ioris, *Transforming Brazil: A History of National Development in the Postwar Era* (New York: Routledge, 2014).

Progress is an example of a more recent effort to examine how advocates of developmentalism sought to promote mass consumer culture in the name of modernization and political stability.¹⁶

Despite a scholarly consensus that postwar elites promoted mass consumption, the economic, social, and cultural implications of postwar consumerism and its relationship to developmentalism have yet to be thoroughly investigated. In part, this reflects a tendency in the historiography to privilege analysis of processes linked to production over those linked to consumption.¹⁷ Given the degree of social and economic changes that the country with Latin America's largest economy and population underwent from 1945 to 1975, and given the prominent roles that political and business elites played in the postwar period,¹⁸ mid-century elite efforts to "modernize" Brazilian gender roles merit further investigation. Import substitution industrialization in Brazil after 1945 relied heavily on the domestic consumption of the urban working and middle classes because industrialization in this period was centered on the production of consumer durables and the capital goods used to produce them.¹⁹ Influenced by modernization theory,²⁰

¹⁶ Joel Wolfe, *Autos and Progress: The Brazilian Search for Modernity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

¹⁷ The emphasis on production over consumption is also reflected in a sparse literature on Latin American middle-classes. This tendency is explored by Michael Jiménez in "The Elision of the Middle Classes and Beyond: History, Politics, and Development in Latin America's 'Short Twentieth Century'" in *Colonial Legacies: The Problem of Persistence in Latin American History*, ed. Jeremy Adelman (New York: Routledge, 1990), 207-228. Consumption has been an important marker of Brazilian middle-class identity, as explored by Brian Owensby in *Intimate Ironies: Modernity and the Making of Middle-Class Lives in Brazil* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999).

¹⁸ A number of scholars have observed that federal and state governments intervened substantially in Brazil's economy through lending, direct investment, and protective trade policy, often to favor multinational companies and large domestic companies. For a recent examination of government and business alliances that steered development projects in this era, see Marshall Eakin, *Tropical Capitalism: The Industrialization of Belo Horizonte, Brazil* (New York: Palgrave, 2002).

¹⁹ Latin American governments had addressed problems related to consumption, especially food scarcity, during and before World War II, but existing broad-based demand for goods like textiles,

economic policy makers partially measured development by families' access to food and durable consumer goods.

In examining the gender ideology of Brazilian developmentalism, this dissertation builds on a growing scholarship that explores the relationship between consumerist development projects and gender in the Americas. Lizabeth Cohen's work on the politics of the postwar consumer economy in the United States demonstrates that US business and political leaders upheld expanding consumption of mass-produced goods as a solution to continued industrial expansion following the Second World War.²¹ Within the US, a consensus emerged that high wages for male employees and access to cheap mass-produced goods was an effective answer to the purported material security and social egalitarianism of Soviet-style communism. Consumerist capitalist development promised to provide prosperity for all, but Cohen demonstrates that women and African-Americans were excluded from policies that primarily targeted white men. Elaine Tyler May has also examined the influence of Cold War politics on American households, arguing that postwar mores that favored containing women's labor, consumption, and sexuality within the home reflected a broad desire for security and a fear that uncontained sexuality could

pharmaceuticals, bottled beverages, and canned food was sufficient to drive early-stage import substitution industrialization without substantial government intervention. By contrast, expanding the production of consumer durables after the war required an expansion in the number of households that consumed these goods. This increased the importance of middle- and working-class consumption to economic planning.

²⁰ Modernization theorists such as Talcott Parsons, Bert Hoselitz, and W.W. Rostow argued that the diffusion of what they perceived to be modern social values and practices to developing nations through mass media and consumer culture would contribute to social and economic modernization. These theorists further argued that "familism" constrained individual initiative and promoted smaller nuclear families as the key unit in a modernizing consumerist society. For more on modernization theory and the family see A.V. Margavio and S.A. Mann, "Modernization and the Family: A Theoretical Analysis" *Sociological Perspectives*, Vol. 32, No. 1 (Spring 1989): 109-127.

²¹ Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003).

undermine American values and facilitate communist subversion.²²

The Cold War also shaped Brazilian developmentalism. Elite support for developmentalism was in part a response to Cold War tensions and ideological competition for the loyalty of Brazilian citizens. Brazilian policymakers and businessmen saw developmentalism as offering an alternative to communism²³ and argued that consumer-oriented industrialization represented the best way to attain an industrial economy and standard of living similar to those in the consumerist societies of Western Europe and North America.²⁴ Joel Wolfe has noted that in much of the twentieth century, Brazilian elites believed “that the development of a consumer-based democratic society would ease racial and class tensions” and provide for a stable society.²⁵ Industrialization and the expansion of consumer goods markets would offer urban Brazilians a higher standard of living and hope for a more prosperous future. Political and business elites were optimistic that state-coordinated capitalist development would be capable of providing urban workers with enough material benefits in the form of expanded consumption to maintain their disciplined labor and ensure that few turned to radical politics.

Developmentalist rhetoric that envisioned prosperity through feminine labor and

²² Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1988).

²³ Under President Dutra, the Partido Comunista Brasileiro was banned in 1947. In the late 40s, state and federal police cracked down on unions and civil-society organizations affiliated with the PCB and the radical left. See French, *The Brazilian Workers' ABC*. Although tempered during the administrations of Vargas and Kubitschek in the 1950s, anti-communism reemerged as a potent ideological current in the early 1960s.

²⁴ In this sense, developmentalist narratives of consumerist prosperity in the home reflected a Cold-War debate between East and West on how to raise standards of living that was encapsulated in the Kitchen Debate between Richard Nixon and Nikita Krushchev in 1959.

²⁵ Joel Wolfe, *Autos and Progress*, 4.

consumption within Brazilian homes paralleled North American rhetoric that viewed mass consumption and feminine household management as innoculative against communist subversion. Politicians and businessmen promoted consumerism modeled on a North American ideal, complete with nuclear families and stay-at-home mothers and wives who would serve as custodians of the domestic economy. Barbara Weinstein has demonstrated that industrialists in the 1940s and 1950s embraced social welfare organizations as instruments to modernize workers' homes, promote "social peace," and increase worker productivity. She observes that these organizations promoted a gendered division of labor and sought to increase male worker productivity and discipline by teaching working-class women home economics and conservative social values.²⁶ This dissertation demonstrates that these efforts continued into the 1970s. In contrast to industrialists' efforts to promote frugality in working-class households, advertisers sought to loosen urban women's purse strings. Increasingly ubiquitous advertisements celebrated consumption of new mass-produced goods as a driver of Brazil's social and economic modernization.

Recent scholarship has highlighted the importance of consumption to populist politics and economic planning in other postwar Latin American nations. Eduardo Elena underscores the importance of working-class standards of living in postwar Argentina to Juan Perón's presidency (1946-1954).²⁷ Peronist policies used wage policies and price controls to support the purchasing power of working-class families. Elena's analysis

²⁶ Weinstein argues that despite industrialist rhetoric, class status significantly limited access to an idealized feminine role as a housewife in Brazil and Latin America. Barbara Weinstein, *For Social Peace in Brazil: Industrialists and the Remaking of the Working Class in São Paulo, 1920-1964* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996).

²⁷ Eduardo Elena, *Dignifying Argentina: Peronism, Citizenship, and Mass Consumption* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2011).

reveals that the Argentine government promoted a role for women within families as disciplined consumers who could maximize the efficiency of family budgets through thrift.²⁸ Brazilian industrialists and government officials adopted similar rhetoric about feminine household management.

Julio Moreno's examination of postwar developmentalism in Mexico also presents a useful comparison for this dissertation.²⁹ Moreno's work reveals that consumerism was an important element of a national project to industrialize the Mexican economy and modernize popular culture. As in Brazil, advertising agencies and multinational companies played important roles in the promotion of consumerist values. Further, Moreno's establishes that cosmetics companies sought to define a middle ground between traditional Mexican and modern transnational feminine gender roles in their advertisements, effectively expanding the boundaries of socially acceptable behavior for Mexican women. Moreno's work is part of a larger body of scholarship that has identified ways that business practices were shaped by national modernization projects in twentieth-century Latin America,³⁰ but his argument that advertising contributed to a liberalization of feminine gender norms contrasts with other studies that indicate employment practices reinforced conservative gender relations by excluding women from better-paying

²⁸ Ibid., Chapter 5.

²⁹ Julio Moreno, *Yankee Don't Go Home!: Mexican Nationalism, American Business Culture, and the Shaping of Modern Mexico, 1920-1950* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003).

³⁰ In his examination of international and Brazilian advertising firms in the 1930s, James Woodard argues that advertisements celebrated modernity, progress, and consumption while simultaneously supporting Brazilian racial and class hierarchies. James Woodard, "Marketing Modernity: The J. Walter Thompson Company and North American Advertising in Brazil, 1929-1939" *Hispanic American Historical Review*, Vol. 82, No. 2 (May, 2002): 257-290.

positions in commerce and industry.³¹ Employment practices in Brazil generally discriminated against women workers, treating them as a reserve labor pool. However, as in Mexico, some consumer goods companies, like Avon, also contributed to redefinitions of women's traditional gender roles and sought to modify popular views on what constituted socially-acceptable feminine behavior. This reflected the rapid evolution of international standards of modernity, views on women's labor, and ideas about sexual morality.

In this dissertation, I argue that transnational standards of consumption and modernity shaped Brazilian developmentalism. In the late 1940s and 1950s, business, political, and intellectual elites in Brazil could point to women's exclusive devotion to motherhood and housewifery as characteristic of modern North American and European nuclear families, but dramatic social changes in the industrialized West in the 1960s and 1970s made traditional feminine gender roles seem outdated in Brazil by the early 1970s.³² Women's growing participation in professions, international feminism, and the sexual revolution redefined ideas of modern gender relationships abroad leading some Brazilian intellectuals and activists to challenge conservative gender roles and the

³¹ For Brazil, Susan Besse identifies ways that businesses reserved white collar jobs for educated middle- and upper-class women. Susan K. Besse, *Restructuring Patriarchy: The Modernization of Gender Inequality in Brazil, 1914-1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996). For examples of the influence of populist patriarchal gender discourses on gendered employment practices in Chile and Venezuela, see Thomas Klubock, *Contested Communities: Class, Gender, and Politics in Chile's El Teniente Copper Mine, 1904-1951* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998) and Ann Farnsworth-Alvear, *Dulcinea in the Factory: Myths, Morals, Men and Women in Colombia's Industrial Experiment, 1905-1960* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000).

³² Gilbert Joseph maintains that the construction of gender, like race or class, has constituted a contact zone in which both North Americans and Latin Americans have actively shaped ideas about gender through a process of negotiation. See Gilbert Joseph, "Close Encounters: Toward a New Cultural History of U.S.-Latin American Relations" in *Close Encounters of Empire: Writing the Cultural History of U.S.-Latin American Relations* eds. Gilbert Joseph, Catherine Legrand, and Ricardo Salvatore, 3-46 (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998).

patriarchal family as a hindrance to national progress. International media and transnational consumer culture also transmitted shifting ideas about sex and gender to everyday Brazilian consumers.³³ Much as in other countries in Latin America,³⁴ the 1960s and 1970s witnessed the rise of urban youth culture, further contributing to the popularization of new ideas about sex and family structure.

Similar to the comparatively sparse scholarship on postwar developmentalism's effects on gender roles in Brazil, women's participation in mid-century public discourse has received far less attention than the suffrage movement of the 1930s or post-1975 feminism. Scholarship on mid-century women's participation in public discourse is fragmented and unevenly developed, in part because most of this scholarship has been subsumed into competing historiographic concerns. Gendered discourses and women's agency are examined within labor,³⁵ within the political left,³⁶ or even within the

³³ Although on an earlier period, Joanne Hershfield's work is a good example of how historians have explored ways in which Latin American women interpreted and selectively adopted new gender roles transmitted through transnational consumer culture. Hershfield argues that the Mexican variant of the New Woman that appeared in Mexican mass media in the 1920s reflects both the influence of transnational gender norms and the continued importance of national cultures in shaping these norms. Joanne Hershfield, *Imagining La Chica Moderna: Women, Nation and Culture in Mexico, 1917-1936*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2008.

³⁴ For example, Valeria Manzano examines how blue jeans evolved from a symbol of class differentiation between working-class young men who purchased domestically-manufactured and branded blue jeans and middle-class male consumers of imported jeans in the late 1950s and early 1960s, to a symbol of international youth culture in the late 1960s and 1970s. In this later period, both male and female Argentine youth wore jeans as a symbol of more liberal public interaction between men and women and as a symbol of resistance to an authoritarian regime. Valeria Manzano, "The Blue Jean Generation: Youth, Gender, and Sexuality in Buenos Aires, 1958-1975," *Journal of Social History*, 42, no.3 (Spring 2009): 657-676.

³⁵ A number of scholars have noted women's participation in union protests against inflation and for an increase in the minimum salary in the late 1940s and 1950s, but Joel Wolfe's examination of women's participation in the São Paulo labor movement remains one of the most detailed accounts on the subject. Joel Wolfe, *Working Women, Working Men: São Paulo and the Rise of Brazil's Industrial Working Class, 1900-1955* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993).

³⁶ For a recent examination of women's mid-century participation in activism linked to the Partido Comunista Brasileiro, see Elza Dely Veloso Macedo's doctoral dissertation, "Ordem na casa e vamos à luta!: Movimento de mulheres: Rio de Janeiro, 1945-1964," (Universidade Federal Fluminense, 2001).

anticommunist right,³⁷ but few have investigated broader trends in women's activism that links these different areas of research. The application of gender analysis to studies that address a variety of historiographic concerns continues to yield new insights into women's participation in various sectors of public life. However, as this dissertation will reveal, many commonalities existed in the rhetoric and objectives of otherwise disparate women's organizations. Although most scholars would caution against studying women as a unitary category, it is important to recognize that contemporary activists from both left and right invoked womanhood—and especially motherhood—as a universal condition with inherent private and public responsibilities and moral authority. A long-standing narrative that mid-century Brazilian women's organizations were feminine, but not feminist³⁸ has until recently dissuaded scholarship on these activists, who for many years have been portrayed as advancing class interests, but not women's agency. Recent scholarship on women's participation in labor and the left has begun to challenge this narrative, but many middle-class women's organizations, including clearly feminist ones such as the Conselho Nacional de Mulheres do Brasil (National Council of Brazilian Women, CNMB, f. 1947), have yet to be seriously studied.

This dissertation argues that the frequent invocation of idealized and traditional

Victoria Langland has examined how the sexual revolution shaped women's participation in radical student politics in Brazil in "Birth Control Pills and Molotov Cocktails: Reading Sex and Revolution in 1968 Brazil," in *In from the Cold: Latin America's New Encounter with the Cold War*, edited by Gilbert M. Joseph and Daniela Spenser, 308-349 (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008).

³⁷ Margaret Power has contributed to a recent trend in scholarship on anti-communist women that approaches these women as deliberate, self-aware, and effective political agents. See Power, "Who But a Woman? The Transnational Diffusion of Anti-Communism among Conservative Women in Brazil, Chile, and the United States during the Cold War," *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 47, no.1 (February, 2015): 93-119.

³⁸ A distinction made by Paul Singer in "O feminino e o feminismo" in Paul Singer and Vinícius Caldeira Brant, orgs., *São Paulo: O Povo em Movimento* (Petrópolis: Vozes, 1980), 109-141, that continues to be repeated by many Brazilian historians.

feminine roles by diverse groups of women in this period should not be misconstrued as evidence that these women accepted social, economic, or political subordination. Political and business elites may have believed that promoting women's labor within the home could help contain radical leftist activism. However, this dissertation demonstrates that women activists on both left and right invoked their moral authority as mothers and wives in public to increase their political and economic agency. In general, these women's activism was in direct response to inequality as well as political and economic instability exacerbated by developmentalist policies.

This interpretation contributes to a growing body of scholarship on feminine organizations that invoked idealized feminine gender roles to expand their political agency. Notably, Temma Kaplan has examined early-twentieth century working-class Spanish women's deployment of their roles as mothers and consumers to participate in politics. Kaplan argues that women in Barcelona embraced feminine roles (especially food procurement and preparation) in a traditional division of labor, an ideological orientation that while apparently conservative, also empowered these women to publicly demand price controls and raid grocery stores in response to inflation in the 1910s, activities that Kaplan identifies as revolutionary.³⁹ A number of scholars have identified instances in which Latin American women adopted feminine roles within populist political and labor organizations to advance their economic interests.⁴⁰ Margaret Power's

³⁹ Temma Kaplan, "Female Consciousness and Collective Action: The Case of Barcelona, 1910-1918," *Signs* 7, no. 3 (Spring, 1982): 545-566.

⁴⁰ For examples of the range of scholarship on women's agency within populist movements in Latin America, see Karen Kampwirth, ed., *Gender and Populism in Latin America: Passionate Politics* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010) and also Daniel James and John French, eds., *The Gendered Worlds of Latin American Women Workers: From Household and Factory to the Union Hall and Ballot Box* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997).

examination of anti-communist women's groups in Brazil and Chile has found that these women invoked idealized feminine gender roles to claim moral leadership of the civilian anti-communist movements that supported the coups against the governments of João Goulart and Salvador Allende.⁴¹ This dissertation demonstrates that the deployment of feminine roles in public discourse was a strategy used by a variety of different women's organizations in this period, indicating that this strategy was an effective response to elite discourses regarding women's gendered roles within development.

This dissertation also contributes to a broader body of scholarship on gender and the public sphere. Jürgen Habermas outlines a theoretical explanation for the rise and demise of a bourgeois public sphere, which he defines as a space of public discourse related to matters of the state and civil society and distinct from the private sphere of commerce, personal interests, family, and the home. He argues that the expansion of mass media, advertising, and public relations in the twentieth century represented a degradation of the public sphere and a threat to democracy as public participation in political debate declined and business and political elites sought to manufacture consent.⁴² Habermas' work has been critiqued and adapted by scholars studying topics related to gender, the family, and women's participation in public discourse. Scholars have observed that Habermas' definitions of the public and private spheres reflected social hierarchies that historically excluded women, minorities, and the poor from public discourse. These scholars have offered alternative ways to examine these actors' political

⁴¹ Power, "Who But a Woman?" Chapter 5 of this dissertation further examines the gendered rhetoric of Brazilian anti-communist women's organizations both before and after the coup.

⁴² Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991).

and social agency.⁴³ In practice, the public and private spheres remain important theoretical categories for scholars who explore how divisions and connections between the public and private sphere have historically been made and remade in ways that are gendered.

This dissertation contributes to our understanding of how gender operates in the public and private spheres while offering a critique to Habermas' argument that the expansion of advertising and mass media in the twentieth century degraded the public sphere. In mid-twentieth century Brazil, gendered divisions of labor and consumption within the nominally private world of the family were the subject of public discourse that linked women's roles within the household economy to the development of the nation. Although postwar developmentalism initially prescribed gender roles that largely excluded women from leadership roles in the public sphere, women across the political and ideological spectrum were able to use developmentalism's idealization of feminine roles within families as moral authority to shape public discourse. To the extent that mass media and advertising promoted women's feminine duties within the home—whether to encourage household consumption or in response to the rhetoric of women's organizations—they contributed to a discursive opening for middle-class women to claim leading roles in debates about issues affecting the family and the household economy. Magazines and newspapers supported by advertising also served as an important space for activists and advice columnists to publicize their arguments, and for a growing number of women to pursue careers in media. In this sense, the expansion of Brazilian

⁴³ Nancy Fraser includes a review of feminist criticisms of Habermas alongside her own critique in "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy," *Social Text*, Vol. 25/26 (1990), 56-80. Although Fraser shares Habermas' concern about the degradation of democratic exchange, she proposes that scholars should consider a theoretical framework that embraces the idea of multiple interrelated public spheres in order to better identify non-elite agency and thought.

mass media and advertising increased opportunities for women to participate in the public sphere.

This dissertation approaches Brazilian developmentalism from a new perspective, highlighting the importance of women's role in the household economy to the developmentalist project and examining women's ability to shape the trajectory of developmentalist discourse. A modernizing discourse that closely linked women's participation in household consumption to national progress, developmentalism survived the 1964 coup and shaped the subsequent military regime's political rhetoric and economic policies. Although developmentalist discourse in the 1940s and 1950s was bounded by patriarchal gender norms, by the 1970s, feminists and feminine women's organizations had largely succeeded in shifting public perceptions of modern gender roles so that national development and modernization became inextricably linked in public discourse with greater legal and social equality for women.

Sources and Methodology

This study makes use of a broad range of archival materials located in Brazil, the United States, and digital collections. Sources have been selected to explore the effects of structural change on women's lived experiences, the idealization of specific feminine roles within developmentalist discourse, and women's deployment of feminine roles in public discourse.

Periodicals of various kinds are important sources for the dissertation. Widely-circulated periodicals such as newspapers and magazines are excellent sources for examining mainstream and elite discourses about development and gender, identifying examples of women engaging in public debate, and exploring trends in consumer culture.

Carla Bassanezi Pinsky has analyzed magazines and newspapers to examine the evolution of patriarchal norms and the influence of the sexual revolution on print journalism in the 1950s and 1960s, but analysis of the relationship between developmentalist discourse and the portrayal of feminine norms in these publications remains understudied.⁴⁴ Scholars who have studied gendered discourse in Brazilian print media in the 1950s and 1960s have argued that capitalist development led to shifting representations of women, but tend to rely on broad generalizations and structuralist theories to explain this change rather than identifying empirical evidence to support their arguments.

More narrowly circulated publications, such as associational, social service, or union publications and company newsletters provide insights into the positions and rhetoric of industrialists, multinational corporations, women's organizations, and unions. Some of these sources, such as union newspapers and industrialist publications, have previously been examined by scholars who have explored how these publications reveal women's gendered participation in labor and industrialists attempts to domesticate urban workers.⁴⁵ Other publications, like *O Momento Feminino* (1947-1956) have been examined to identify women's participation in the Partido Comunista Brasileiro (Brazilian Communist Party), but only briefly considered for their relevance to broader society, including the movement against inflation. This dissertation is the first study to examine Avon's Brazilian newsletters from the 1960s and 1970s. Periodicals are analyzed

⁴⁴ Carla Bassanezi, "'Mulheres dos Anos Durados'" in *História das mulheres no Brasil*, org. Mary Del Priore (São Paulo: Contexto, 1997), 607-639. For a more recent iteration of her analysis, see Pinsky's essays in *Nova História das Mulheres no Brasil*, edited by Carla B. Pinsky and Joanna M. Pedro (São Paulo: Editora Contexto, 2012).

⁴⁵ See discussion of Barbara Weinstein and Joel Wolfe's work in the historiography above.

both for their textual and visual content, as discourses about gender and consumer culture are often visually represented in illustrations and advertisements.

The dissertation makes recurring use of statistical data to outline the effects of development on household patterns of consumption and women's lived experiences. The Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística (Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics, IBGE) has digitized the *Anuário Estatístico do Brasil*, allowing for analysis of the classic measurements of development such as urbanization trends, employment, income, and education, broken down by age, gender, and geographic location. In contrast with the practice of most historians who have studied measurements of development from this period, the dissertation makes use of the original statistical data collected in the *Anuário Estatístico do Brasil*, rather than relying on limited data previously published by the IBGE in book form such as that found in the *Estatísticas históricas do Brasil*.⁴⁶ Direct access to the data collected by the IBGE has allowed for statistical analysis of data at both the state and national level that would not have been possible using *Estatísticas históricas do Brasil* alone. The archive of the Instituto Brasileiro de Opinião Pública e Estatística (Brazilian Institute of Public Opinion and Statistics, IBOPE), held at the Arquivo Edgard Leuenroth at the Universidade Estadual de Campinas (UNICAMP), contains statistical data on consumption of a wide variety of consumer goods, along with information on family size, composition, and income, sorted by class and geographic location. Finally, the IBOPE collection contains a variety of public opinion surveys measuring popular views on masculine and feminine gender roles in the 1950s, 60s, and 70s. Scholars have only recently begun to closely examine the IBOPE archives.

⁴⁶ Fundação Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística, *Estatísticas históricas do Brasil: séries econômicas, demográficas e sociais de 1550 a 1988* (Rio de Janeiro: IBGE, 1990).

Government official, women's organization, company, and legislative archives are also used in the dissertation to provide insights into how various actors approached development and its relationship to feminine gender roles. Published monographs and other secondary sources provide important contextual information on economic policy, law, labor activism, feminist activism, and contemporary gender norms.

Chapter Summary

Chapter One outlines the goals and scope of postwar developmentalism from 1945 to the early 1960s, examining how advocates of developmentalism idealized US and European standards of consumption, and how business and political elites linked women's performance of feminine gender roles to the economic and social modernization of the nation. Developmentalism in this period was colored by populism as both political and business leaders portrayed industrial development as way to expand the middle class, increase working-class wages, and provide a growing number of Brazilian families with a standard of living that would be comparable, if not equal, to that found in North America and Europe. The fifteen years following the Second World War also witnessed a rapid expansion in the Brazilian media and communication industries, which disseminated transnational consumer culture and ideas about what constituted modern gender roles. Advertisers and columnists vied for women's attention by providing advice on efficient household management and the latest consumer goods that promised to help women be better mothers and housewives. Industrialists in São Paulo took a similar, if narrower interest in women's domestic lives. In home economics classes and publications, they idealized housewifery for working-class women, hoping to legitimize unequal pay for women and promote frugality that would restrain workers' demands for higher wages.

Chapter 2 examines urban women's organization responses to food shortages and price inflation caused by developmentalist economic policies in the 1950s. Although developmentalism promised to raise Brazilian standards of living and populist national labor laws, social welfare policies, and minimum wage policy were designed to provide assistance to male-headed nuclear families, the benefits of economic growth and social policy were unequally distributed. Urbanization and industrialization was geographically concentrated in southern and southeastern Brazilian cities while rural Brazilians were largely excluded from the benefits of social welfare policy and labor protections. Though concentrated in urban areas, domestic workers also experienced greatly diminished opportunities to partake in the benefits and protections of the welfare state. In addition to exacerbating regional, class, and gender inequalities, developmentalist policies contributed to food scarcity as urban demand outpaced growth in the supply of foodstuffs. Urban women from across the political spectrum organized around the issue of food scarcity and price inflation, or *carestia*, invoking their moral authority as mothers and housewives to demand that the government ensure adequate supplies of food at accessible and predictable prices. They promoted their campaigns on the streets and in the press, and were able to shape policy decisions by new government agencies tasked with ensuring adequate and affordable food supplies.

Chapter 3 considers how the female attorney Romy Medeiros da Fonseca (1921-2013) and women affiliated with the Conselho Nacional de Mulheres do Brasil invoked the fulfillment of women's roles within the modern family as reason to reform the 1916 civil code to grant married women equal rights to their husbands in a campaign that culminated with passage of the 1962 Estatuto da Mulher Casada (Statute of the Married

Woman). Fonseca and the CNMB argued that married women's legal inequality debased the institution of marriage, was incompatible with modern society, and contrary to international treaties. These feminists made effective use of the press, professional organizations, and political contacts to advance legislation that expanded married women's rights over communal property and children. Although opposition from conservative Catholics stalled reform for ten years, Fonseca and the CNMB were able to maintain favorable publicity for their campaign and win passage of an amended bill in both chambers of a politically divided Congress. This success indicated that feminists could achieve limited expansions of women's rights by appealing to the voting public's desire to support women's ability to perform feminine roles within the home.

Chapter 4 examines multinational cosmetics firm Avon's adaptation to Brazil from 1958 to 1975. Avon represents an example of a business that promoted expanded roles for women in business, families, and the consumer economy. Avon's business model relied on women leaving their homes to sell cosmetics and personal care products. This model clashed with traditional middle-class standards of feminine respectability, compelling the company to communicate to the public that Avon sales were respectable and compatible with women's roles as mothers and housewives. Although Avon's business organization was centered on a gendered division of labor between male managers and female saleswomen, manager reliance on saleswomen for their on-the-ground experience made managers receptive to saleswomen's adaptations to Avon's original marketing strategy. Sales representatives' legal status as independent contractors granted them substantial autonomy over their activity, and commissions from Avon sales granted more active saleswomen increased economic agency within their families. The

extension of Avon sales to rural, working-class, and Afro-Brazilian consumers mitigated inequalities in access to and knowledge of cosmetics and hygiene products, indicating that the expansion of mass consumer culture did not always exacerbate regional, class, or racial inequalities.

Chapter 5 investigates the gendered discourse employed by anti-communist women's organizations in their support for the 1964 coup and subsequent military regime. The chapter also explores how developmentalist discourse and policies after the coup reflected the priorities of the new regime. Although developmentalist economic policies after the coup remained reliant on expanding urban consumption and policymakers remained preoccupied with the effects of policy on middle-class households, the new regime was far less interested in promoting working-class standards of living than previous governments. Anti-communist women's organizations like Rio de Janeiro's Campanha da Mulher pela Democracia (Women's Campaign for Democracy, CAMDE) publically invoked their adherents' moral authority as mothers and housewives to oppose perceived communist threats. Although CAMDE members supported the military regime instituted with the ouster of João Goulart in 1964, they maintained that their support was out of non-partisan concern for their families and maintained that the military itself represented a non-partisan institution capable of saving Brazil from communism. CAMDE's activism in the five years following the coup promoted conservative but public roles for middle-class and elite women in philanthropy, civil society, and the fight against inflation. Paralleling CAMDE's promotion of elite and middle-class women's civic engagement, magazines like *Manchete* devoted increasing attention in the 1960s to elite women's participation in business, industry, and

philanthropy but elided working-class women's participation in the industrial economy.

Chapter 6 explores a transition in the discourse of the Brazilian feminist movement regarding women's participation in politics and the economy from the mid-1960s to early 1970s. In this period, Fonseca and the CNMB promoted the creation of a women's civil service as a way to increase women's participation in development. Although these efforts were stymied by regime opposition, Fonseca and the CNMB contributed to a discourse in Brazilian media that increasingly favored women's participation in the paid workforce. Parallel to the CNMB's efforts, psychologist and columnist Carmen da Silva (1919-1985) argued in the women's magazine *Claudia* that women should pursue professional careers and demand greater social equality with men so that they could be better mothers and wives. In the context of growing fears that traditional marriage and parenthood was under threat from legal separation and the sexual revolution, Silva and other feminists in the Brazilian press maintained that greater gender equality would both modernize and save marriage. The chapter concludes by identifying how the loosening of regime censorship in 1974 and United Nations institutional support for discussion of women's rights in the context of International Women's Year in 1975 provided an opening for a new generation of feminists that would more directly challenge the idea that gender should shape women's participation in the economy and society.

The conclusion reviews the arc of postwar developmentalist rhetoric on feminine gender roles and the ways that different groups of women effectively shaped this discourse to expand their social, economic, and political power. Although traditional elites may have initially believed that promoting housewifery and motherhood could preserve patriarchal gender norms while modernizing the Brazilian economy, a broad

range of women activists repeatedly deployed these idealized roles in public debates in ways that effectively expanded women's influence in Brazilian society in the thirty years following the Second World War. The conclusion also points to the significance of the discursive strategies employed by postwar women activists to later feminist and feminine activism and highlights parallels between developmentalist efforts to shape feminine gender roles and recent government programs that channel resources to working-class mothers in order to combat poverty and improve child education.

Chapter 1 - Development Begins at Home

*Way down among Brazilians
Coffee beans grow by the billions
So they've got to find those extra cups to fill
They've got an awful lot of coffee in Brazil*

Frank Sinatra, "The Coffee Song," 1946.⁴⁷

In 1946, Frank Sinatra made his first recording of "The Coffee Song," a whimsical piece about Brazilian coffee consumption. Most likely inspired more by the perception that Brazil was the leading producer of coffee in a glutted market than any direct observation of Brazilian coffee habits, the song imagined Brazilians, egged on by coffee planters, going to great lengths to consume all the coffee the nation produced. As the song went, other beverages were hard to find, coffee was used to flavor pickles, and a politician's daughter was "fined for drinking water." North American listeners would have been particularly attuned to a song about drinking Brazilian coffee, since 1946 marked the peak year in US per capita coffee consumption⁴⁸ and Brazil remained the world's largest coffee producer.⁴⁹ The year also marked a watershed in Brazil as a new national constitution established the framework for a postwar republican government that would oversee a new period of economic growth and development. Whimsical though it may have been, "The Coffee Song" reflected a reality that future Brazilian economic growth would not come from increased coffee production. Global demand was

⁴⁷ Frank Sinatra, "The Coffee Song," Bob Hilliard and Dick Miles (Composers), Arranged by Axel Stordahl, from *The Columbia Years: 1943-1952, The Complete Recordings*, Columbia Legacy CD: CXK 48673, 1993, compact disc. Recorded in 1946.

⁴⁸ International Coffee Organization, "The Story of Coffee," http://www.ico.org/coffee_story.asp, accessed July 3, 2014.

⁴⁹ Ana M. López, "coffee," in *Encyclopedia of Contemporary Latin American and Caribbean Cultures*, eds. Daniel Balderston, Mike Gonzalez, and Ana M. López (New York: Routledge, 2000), 377.

insufficient to maintain profitable prices for the crop in the face of increased production from growers in multiple countries.

In an example of life imitating art, Brazil's finance minister, José Maria Alkmin, proposed a campaign in 1958 to increase domestic coffee consumption and coffee's export price by increasing the size of Brazilian coffee cups. An article in the news and general interest magazine *Manchete* light-heartedly covered his campaign, endorsed by journalists and editors at the Rio Daily *Jornal do Brasil*, to enlist Brazilians to destroy their traditional small coffee cups in favor of larger mugs. "Drinking more coffee is the civic obligation of every Brazilian."⁵⁰ Dishware factory owners supported the campaign as did notable figures in the arts. The article featured pictures of the Brazilian screen actress Rosângela Maldonado and the American rock star Bill Haley smashing the small demitasse cups that had been a familiar mainstay of Brazilian coffee consumption. A housewife appeared alongside the two celebrities, dutifully destroying a small cup in her kitchen.

The campaign and images reflected a reality that Brazil's economy, whose growth had just a few decades earlier been propelled by foreign consumption of agricultural exports like coffee, now increasingly relied on domestic consumption to fuel ongoing economic expansion. The images also pointed to the rising symbolic importance of American styles of consumption and mass culture, and the growing economic importance of the Brazilian housewife on whose consumption the Brazilian economy depended.

Following the Second World War, upwardly-mobile urban Brazilians yearned for the best of modern global culture and the newest consumer goods. Brazilian political and

⁵⁰ Carlos Lemos, "Havendo patriotismo, qualquer instrumento serve para quebrar," *Manchete*, May 17, 1958, 22-23.

business leaders promised to deliver both by expanding mass production and mass consumption. As the cup-smashing campaign demonstrated, mass media such as magazines and newspapers were an important space for public discussion of consumer economics at both the national and household level. As agents for their families' consumption, urban women were the target of various campaigns to shape their domestic labor and influence their consumer choices. In the postwar period, industrialists and politicians expected married women to participate in economic and social development by boosting male worker productivity and managing household consumption. Through advertising, consumer goods companies also appealed to these feminine roles, selling mass-produced goods as modern solutions that eased women's domestic chores or fulfilled their families' needs.

Lizabeth Cohen has observed that following the Second World War, mass consumption became a critical element of a postwar consensus among US labor unions, business leaders, and politicians that consumer spending would fuel economic expansion and wage growth that would in turn facilitate more consumer spending in a virtuous cycle. While American men received expanded wages and new government benefits that encouraged consumption, married women were expected to return from jobs they had held during the war to a life at home as housewives in male-led households.⁵¹ Postwar Brazilian developmentalism reflected a similar consensus that favored expanding mass consumption and mass production concentrated in Brazil's urban South and Southeast. Susan Besse has demonstrated that patriarchal norms favoring a gendered division of labor between married couples and within places of employment had already become

⁵¹ Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic*, Chapter 3.

established in urban Brazil by the end of the Estado Novo (1937-1945),⁵² but in the postwar era, women's roles as consumers and housewives became more important to discourses about national development as Brazil's economy became increasingly reliant on domestic consumption of mass-produced goods.

Brazilian elites in the postwar era believed that women could contribute to economic and social development through the performance of traditional feminine gender roles. In the fifteen years following the Second World War, a gendered division of labor between male earners and female housewives could still appear to be perfectly modern to Brazilians looking to North American and Western European standards. Urban women's efficient management of their households would improve worker productivity and child education. Further, women were perceived to be the primary purchasing agents for their family's consumption. As such, their consumer decisions would drive demand for manufactured goods and earn the devoted attention of advertisers seeking expanded sales.

This chapter examines populist developmentalism in Brazil's postwar republic to identify how developmentalism shaped elite and middle-class discourse about women's roles in families and the national economy. The chapter focuses on the intentions and rhetoric of advocates of developmentalism in government, industry, commerce, and the media. It begins by outlining the essential characteristics of postwar developmentalism and explaining why the performance of feminine roles within urban households was important to the developmentalist project. Although expanding urban consumption was important to economic policymakers, the government left much of the public promotion of consumerism to businesses and mass media. The chapter continues by examining

⁵² Besse, *Restructuring Patriarchy*.

advertisements in broadly-circulated magazines as important sites for the promotion of consumerism and for the public elaboration of developmentalist discourse regarding women's roles as consumers and housewives. The chapter then identifies industrialist attempts to shape working-class women's domestic labor and consumer choices in order to increase the productivity of male workers and temper the demands of organized labor. The chapter concludes by considering how coverage of the economy in magazines like *Manchete* also linked women's decisions as consumers and housewives to national development.

Populist Developmentalism and the Consumer

In addition to witnessing the end of the Second World War, 1945 marked the end of the Estado Novo (New State) of president-dictator Getúlio Vargas (1882-1954) and the democratic election of Eurico Gaspar Dutra (1883-1974), one of the generals who had deposed Vargas. During the war, Brazil had amassed a substantial foreign exchange reserve of \$708 million by exporting supplies and raw materials to the Allies. The Dutra administration initially established minimal government interventions in currency exchange mechanisms and continued to overvalue Brazil's currency, the cruzeiro. This policy was intended to avoid deflation due to currency devaluation and facilitated the satisfaction of pent-up demand among both consumers and businesses for imported goods that had been scarce due to the war.⁵³ More valuable cruzeiros could purchase more imported goods.

Dutra's economic team appears to have underestimated demand for imports. By 1947, consumers rushing to purchase the latest mass-produced conveniences from the US

⁵³ Baer, *The Brazilian Economy*, 53-55.

and Europe had depleted Brazil's dollar-denominated currency reserves. In June, 1947, the government responded by enacting foreign exchange controls, making consumer goods imports more expensive in order to halt the depletion of currency reserves and lessen Brazil's foreign trade deficit. These exchange controls effectively functioned as trade protections for consumer goods companies and were the first postwar step toward developmentalist policies that incentivized industrialization of the Brazilian economy.⁵⁴ The rapid depletion of foreign currency reserves from 1945 to 1947 also signaled to government officials the substantial demand for mass-produced consumer goods and the importance of considering Brazilian consumers in future economic planning. Consumers would play an important role in Brazilian developmentalism.

The years following the Second World War found Brazilian political and business elites particularly receptive to developmentalist ideas. Government officials and industrialists had grown accustomed to the idea of national projects to decrease reliance on agricultural exports and encourage industrialization during the years of Getúlio Vargas's first presidency, and a growing international consensus favored national industrialization projects. Economic planners and businessmen alike were supportive of developmentalist economic policies centered on state-coordinated investments in industry and infrastructure. As a product of an international consensus favoring democratic regimes, the expansion of social welfare policies, wage labor, and consumer capitalism, postwar developmentalist policies and discourses reflected populist priorities.

In the imaginations of many politicians, government officials, and businessmen, developmentalism promised to be more than a style of macro-economic planning. In

⁵⁴ Ibid. See also Thomas Skidmore, *Politics in Brazil, 1930-1964: An Experiment in Democracy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), 70.

public, these elites often implicitly and explicitly linked developmentalism to the modernization of not only the Brazilian economy, but also Brazilian society and culture. Many Brazilians wanted what North Americans had: a stable democracy, an industrialized economy, and a standard of living marked by mass ownership of automobiles and modern consumer appliances. For populist politicians, developmentalism was an engine of economic growth that could back promises of expanding social welfare benefits and good-paying jobs for Brazil's urban working and middle classes. Populist developmentalism promised social uplift for urban Brazilians. In the context of the Cold War, politicians could point to populist developmentalist policies as effective ideological alternatives to communism so long as the economy supplied an abundance of the new consumer goods that working-class and middle-class consumers desired. For industrialists and other business leaders, developmentalism was key to the expansion of their businesses and their influence in Brazilian society. For advertising firms and multinational consumer goods companies, developmentalism promised cultural modernity, and modernity was a powerful sales pitch to consumers.

Developmentalist industrialization needed more than elite support and government investment to take off. Factories needed disciplined workers and markets required consumers. Influenced by Brazilian traditions, contemporary sociological theory,⁵⁵ and the example of North American and Western European consumer societies, business and political elites considered families to be the key unit of Brazilian society

⁵⁵ Prominent Latin American academics, such as the sociologist Gino Germani, promoted and articulated modernization theory in the social sciences. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, Germani advanced the argument that the function of the family in Latin America would have to change to support social and economic development, and that smaller, less hierarchical families were an important component of modern social structures. For more on Gino Germani's career, see Joseph Kahl, "Gino Germani, 1911-1979," *Latin American Research Review* Vol. 16, No. 2 (1981): 185-190.

that would supply the economy with both workers and consumers. Where the populism of the 1930s had valorized labor by portraying urban workers as national heroes, postwar developmentalism made the middle-class and working-class consumer the new hero of national development. Through consumption of mass-produced goods, urban working and middle-class families would become culturally and materially modern while providing demand for further industrial development.

Elites generally perceived work and consumption in gendered terms, and sought to influence both male and female gender norms to promote behavior that would support development. Under the populist ideal, men would work outside of the home, providing labor for industry and commerce, and income to support their families. Ideally, expanding male wages through industrialization and populist labor policies would allow women to devote themselves primarily to domestic labor at home, childcare, and household economic management. Within this feminine sphere, women were expected to make most of the consumer choices for their families. Regardless of whether male wages were actually sufficient to allow most urban women to remain at home, women's gendered participation in the economy, especially as consumers, made them an important, if rarely recognized constituency in elite developmentalist plans.

Brazilian household consumption of mass-produced goods was vital to the success of economic plans centered on import-substitution industrialization (ISI). ISI was first pursued in Brazil in the 1930s as a response to the crisis of global trade and the international economy. The collapse of commodity markets revealed that prior economic policies, which had relied on exports of a handful of commodities (chief among them, coffee, sugar, and rubber) to drive economic growth, were unsustainable in the short-

term. In the long term, a reliance on these exports exposed the Brazilian economy to excessive risk due to fluctuating commodity prices. In the 1930s and early 1940s, the Vargas regime initiated policies to protect Brazilian industries from foreign competitors and coordinate investment in industry and infrastructural development. Due to national protective trade policies and the collapse in production in industrial nations in the northern hemisphere, Brazilian industry faced limited competition for Brazilian consumers in the 1930s. Industrial production and exports surged during the Second World War in response to Allied demand for Brazilian textiles and rubber, and the Brazilian armed forces' own demand for arms and supplies. Much of the expanded production during this period was based on industrial capacity that already existed in 1929, since Brazil had only begun to develop a substantial industrial goods sector and capital goods were scarce on the international market during the Great Depression and Second World War.⁵⁶

Following Vargas's return to power as Brazil's democratically-elected president in 1951, his administration began a number of ISI policies that were furthered and deepened during the administration of President Juscelino Kubitschek (1902-1976) between 1956 and 1961. The new postwar ISI policies were geared to a substantially different context than the 1930-1945 period. The consumer rush on imported goods from 1945-1947 demonstrated that there was no longer a scarcity of these goods on the international market, prompting policymakers to raise tariffs and establish unfavorable exchange rates for consumer goods imports to protect domestic production and foreign exchange

⁵⁶ Werner Baer notes that even though industrial capacity only began to expand from 1929 levels in the second half of the 1930s, the growing relative value of industrial products to agricultural products and the increasing production of capital goods products indicated that by 1939, Brazil had entered a period of industrialization where expanding industrial production led economic growth. See Baer, *The Brazilian Economy*, 39-42.

reserves. With capital goods comparatively abundant on the world market, Brazilian policymakers encouraged capital goods imports and foreign direct investment by providing favorable exchange rates for capital goods and coordinating loans for industrial investments.⁵⁷

North American and Western European multinationals saw potential for growth in Brazil's urban centers and proved willing to invest in industrial capacity in Brazil's South and Southeast to reach the nation's protected consumer markets. Multinationals operating in Brazil and domestic industrialists were both highly reliant on Brazilian consumers as very few of the goods produced in Brazil's factories could compete on quality or price with North American or Western European goods in the global market. Consumer goods were rarely exported and industrial goods were needed in Brazil. Consequently, policymakers and businessmen alike were highly aware of the importance of expanding domestic consumption of consumer goods to maintain the pace of industrial development and economic growth. Demand for consumer durables like electronic appliances and automobiles, which required advanced manufacturing technology and intermediate goods to produce, would be particularly important for the expansion of Brazilian industry. Expanding consumption was aided by populist political efforts to extend some of the benefits of industrialization to urban workers by substantially raising the legal minimum salary⁵⁸ at regular intervals beginning in 1951. This wage policy, along with other economic policies, contributed to high rates of inflation, which will be examined in Chapter 2. As the national government invested in infrastructure to promote national

⁵⁷ Baer, *The Brazilian Economy*, 56-66.

⁵⁸ The national government and the press generally referred to a minimum monthly salary, although the minimum salary regulations also established minimum daily and hourly wages for non-salaried employees.

integration, which included integration of the market for agricultural, mineral, and industrial goods,⁵⁹ businesses invested in marketing to integrate urban and national consumer goods markets.

In Brazil, the expansion of mass production relied on the expansion of mass consumption. Developmentalism's advocates perceived urban nuclear families as the key to providing industry with labor, markets with consumers, and politicians with votes. As their families' economic custodians, caretakers of their homes and family wellbeing, women were recognized by businessmen and government officials alike as playing an important role in Brazilian development. Populist politicians promised policies that would benefit Brazilian families and government officials maintained and promoted policies that subordinated women's labor and economic rights, as Chapters 2 and 3 identify. However, in public discourse, advertisers and industrialists were more prominent boosters of consumerism and of feminine roles within consumerist development.

Advertisers, Magazines, and the Modernization of the Home

Mass media promoted the diffusion of consumer culture and ideas about development and the modernization of the Brazilian family. Part of the rapid postwar expansion of mass media, broadly circulated magazines like *O Cruzeiro* and *Manchete* were particularly important sites of consumerist and developmentalist discourse. Published by Assis Chateaubriand's Diários Associados media conglomerate since 1928, *O Cruzeiro* was the most broadly circulated weekly magazine into the 1950s, when *Manchete*, launched in 1952 by Adolpho Bloch, began to outsell it. As the head of a large conglomerate, Assis Chateaubriand was one of the most prominent businessmen in

⁵⁹ Joel Wolfe examines the role of transportation infrastructure and automobility in the development programs of Getúlio Vargas and Juscelino Kubitschek in Chapters 4 and 5 of *Autos and Progress*.

postwar Brazil and had numerous political connections. *Manchete* served as the cornerstone for the development of Adolpho Bloch's media empire over the coming decades. *Manchete* generally portrayed Juscelino Kubitschek's policies in a favorable light and Bloch developed close ties to Kubitschek following his presidency. While the editorial decisions of these magazines appear to have been primarily driven by the complementary objectives of expanding distribution and advertising revenue, they also reflected their owners' support for developmentalist policies.

Like daily newspapers, weekly and monthly magazines contained a range of content that targeted broad cross-sections of the urban middle class and literate working class. Compared with newspapers, however, magazines circulated more broadly, contained more pages of content per issue,⁶⁰ more advertising space, allowed for color lithographs or photographs, and contained more content that targeted women readers with tips on fashion, efficient household management, and the use of new consumer goods. Years before television ownership became widespread among Brazilians in the 1960s, magazines were a vehicle for the diffusion of mass culture that offered consumer goods companies the ability to reach broad audiences with sophisticated advertisements. When combined with coverage of fashion, economic development policies, and women's advice columns, advertisements made magazines an unparalleled site for the diffusion of mass consumer culture and discourses about women's role in national development.

Although government officials and industrialists were strong proponents for the industrialization of the Brazilian economy, advertisers were often the most prominent boosters of developmentalism. Advertisements heralded the benefits of industrialization

⁶⁰ Issues of *Manchete* and *O Cruzeiro* regularly exceeded 100 pages in length.

to consumers on a regular basis, turning consumer goods into symbols of both material and cultural progress. In promoting the benefits of advertisements to potential clients and the general public, advertising professionals staked out a role for themselves as educators to the consuming public, capable of expanding demand for goods that would fuel economic development and prosperity for all. As in the United States in the two decades following the Second World War,⁶¹ Brazilian advertisers viewed the nuclear family as the main unit of consumption and crafted their messages to appeal to married women as their families' purchasing agents.

As advocates for the corporate producers of modern consumer goods, advertisers were the champions of consumer culture and modernity. They considered it their job to teach consumers the benefits of industrialization and modern capitalism. They imagined Brazil as a rapidly modernizing nation in which multinational and domestic businesses worked hand in hand to construct a prosperous future. They also informed consumers about new product features, benefits, and cultural uses. New products promised to lessen women's housework; make people healthier, more attractive, and more productive; and allow anyone with disposable income to live a glamorous life or signal their upward social mobility.

Although advertisers often promoted mass consumption as a key feature of a democratic society, advertisements contained images of class, race, and gender that drew deeply from traditional and hierarchical social structures. Advertisements prior to the 1970s generally portrayed consumers as white, middle-class, and urban. Aspirational

⁶¹ Lizabeth Cohen examines how postwar market researchers in the US and the Department of Labor evaluated the gendered dynamics of household consumer decision-making in *A Consumer's Republic*, 148-151.

advertisements promoted economic and social mobility by turning products and travel into symbolic markers for class status. Advertising professionals touted status definitions based on consumption as more egalitarian than inherited social status. To participate in the latest fashions, consumers needed only money and taste. Even poor Brazilians could purchase inexpensive consumer products that would allow them to emulate the middle class or realize escapist fantasies in which they could briefly live like movie stars. Nonetheless, advertisements reflected the unequal outcomes of developmentalist policies, whose benefits went primarily to fair-skinned, urban, middle- and working-class Brazilians.

The Brazilian advertising industry made substantial advances in professionalization following the Second World War and advertisers sought to highlight their profession's social and economic importance. The Brazilian advertising profession was heavily influenced by developments in the United States. US-based firms like J. Walter Thompson (JWT) and McCann Erickson had played an important role in introducing modern advertising practices to Brazil in the 1930s and 1940s and continued to shape advertising practices.⁶² Brazilian advertising professionals looked to the United States for the latest in industry standards. There they found inspiration in the role that increased consumption played in business narratives about the US economy.⁶³ Following the Second World War, advertising became more prolific as the advertising budgets of consumer goods firms grew alongside the expansion of newspapers, magazines, and

⁶² James Woodard, "Marketing Modernity: The J. Walter Thompson Company and North American Advertising in Brazil, 1929-1939," *Hispanic American Historical Review* Vol. 82, No.2 (May 2002): 257-290.

⁶³ For more on the role that advertisers played in the postwar US consensus favoring high wages and expanding consumption, see Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic*, chapter 3.

radio.

Two significant advertising institutions existed prior to 1945: the Associação Brasileira de Propaganda (Brazilian Advertising Association, ABP, f.1937)⁶⁴ and the Instituto Brasileiro de Opinião Pública e Estatística (Brazilian Institute of Public Opinion and Statistics, IBOPE), established in 1942 to conduct market research.⁶⁵ In addition, the advertising trade publication *Propaganda*, later renamed *PN: Propaganda e Negócios*, was established in 1940.⁶⁶ PN functioned as a forum in which advertisers could discuss the latest trends in advertising and the role of their profession in the economy. In 1949, the Associação Brasileira de Agências de Publicidade (Brazilian Association of Publicity Agencies, ABAP) was founded and subsequently played a major role in the standardization of advertising practices and the codification of professional ethics.⁶⁷ At advertisers' insistence, universities began to offer courses in publicity and marketing in the early 1950s. In 1953, the Escola de Administração de Empresas da Fundação Getúlio Vargas in São Paulo was the first university program to offer undergraduate and graduate degrees in marketing, with courses initially taught by professors from Michigan State University.⁶⁸

Like their counterparts in the United States, Brazilian advertising professionals

⁶⁴ Augusto de Angelo, "A longa jornada da institucionalização," in *Historia da propaganda no Brasil*, eds. Renato Castelo Branco, Rodolfo Lima Martensen, and Fernando Reis, (São Paulo: T.A. Queiroz, 1990), 26.

⁶⁵ Octavio da Costa Eduardo, "O desenvolvimento da pesquisa de propaganda no Brasil" in *Historia da propaganda no Brasil*, 100.

⁶⁶ James Woodard, "Marketing Modernity," 286.

⁶⁷ de Angelo, "A longa jornada da institucionalização," 27-28.

⁶⁸ Franciso Gracioso, "Marketing no Brasil: evolução, situação atual, tendências," in *Historia da propaganda no Brasil*, 88.

argued that national prosperity depended on advertising to provoke the expansion of consumer demand. Cicero Leuenroth, the founding president of Standard Propaganda—one of the larger Brazilian advertising agencies—explained the centrality of advertising in consumerist development: "Factors of every kind enter into this process of the growth of production and consumption, combining to form a sound economic building. Publicity is present, in this case, as one of the girders."⁶⁹ By educating the consuming public, advertisers would contribute to the modernization of both Brazilian homes and the national economy. Advertising firms would help multinational firms navigate the Brazilian market, would give domestic consumer goods firms the latest tools to compete with multinationals, and would educate Brazilian consumers. Renato Castelo Branco, the first Brazilian president of JWT do Brasil and a prominent figure in the Brazilian advertising profession in the 1950s, elaborated advertising's idealized function:

Aggressive and intelligent advertising of a product or service, while it serves the self-interest of the producer through increased profitable sales, at the same time contributes in an important manner to the national economy, educating a greater number of people, raising them to a higher standard of living. This raises consumption to higher levels and, consequently, (raises) production and wealth.⁷⁰

Brazilian advertisers were not alone in linking advertising to expanded consumption and economic prosperity.

Brazilian advertisers drew from the consensus of advertisers and the business community in the United States when identifying their role in the Brazilian economy. The ABP, *Publicidade e Negocios*, and international firms operating in Brazil transmitted North American views on the advertising profession to Brazil. In many respects, the

⁶⁹ "Publicidade – 1958," *O Observador Econômico e Financeiro*, November, 1958, 24.

⁷⁰ Renato Castelo Branco, "A evolução econômica do Brasil e a contribuição da propaganda" in *Historia da propaganda no Brasil*, 71.

views of Brazilian advertisers echoed those of their counterparts in the US, where a postwar consensus had emerged that expanded consumption across social classes would fuel economic growth and contribute to a more egalitarian society.⁷¹

Advertisers' perception of their role in development and their connection to the housewife consumer are illustrated in a public relations ad from the Associação Paulista de Propaganda that appeared in a 1956 issue of *Manchete*. A woman with a shopping cart, presumably a housewife, asked the reader "But in the end, what does advertising do for the people?" In response, the piece enumerated the many ways that advertising enabled the consumer's attainment of cultural modernity and economic prosperity. In addition to lowering the cost of newspapers and advertisements, advertising brought the best of modern global culture to consumers via radio and television: "The artists, those famous people who are brought from the greatest capitals of the world that you host in your parlors, through the image of your television ... Those singers, football matches, news programs..." Advertising also benefited consumers economically by increasing production and competition to lower consumer prices and educated consumers about the advantages of the best products. The advertisement's most grandiose claim established advertising as the driving force of modernization:

Advertising is the great force in the modern world: its greatest wish is to see money in the hands of all, comfort in every home, well-being and security, development and progress spread to all(,) see men happy, men buying and buying with satisfaction, to be at every instant better, at every instant richer!⁷²

Despite the reference to men, the housewife in the ad clearly indicated that women would play a central role in these modernizing purchases.

⁷¹ Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic*, chapter 3.

⁷² Associação Paulista de Propaganda, advertisement, *Manchete*, Dec. 1, 1956, 10.

While men frequently appeared in advertisements in magazines for automobiles, cigarettes, and alcohol, advertisements for food, cleaning products, and electronic appliances predominantly featured middle-class female consumers. These women were portrayed in traditional domestic roles as housewives and mothers in charge of the household budget, food preparation, household cleanliness, and childcare; activities that collectively constituted the commonly referred-to household or “domestic economy.” Many advertisements pointed to the ability of products to save women time and money when going about their domestic chores.

A 1947 advertisement for Cerapó powdered floor wax is an example of one of these advertisements from the early post-war period.⁷³ Below a picture of a woman on her hands and knees, wearing high heels and waxing the floor with a pained expression on her face, the advertisement copy told the reader how Cerapó would resolve the woman’s problems and take the pain out of waxing the floor because it was easy to apply, long lasting, served double-duty as a pesticide, and was less expensive than the competition. “CERAPÓ prevents the forced position and the inevitable back pains. CERAPÓ is the modern housewife's best friend.” The advertisement appears to have targeted middle-class women, who could afford to stay home and shine floors, but could not afford a maid. The advertisement’s emphasis on decreasing a woman’s physical labor reflected a lower-middle-class and working-class definition of “dona de casa” as a laboring housewife rather than a supervisor for paid domestic servants. Although saving labor was a frequent theme in advertisements, later ads for cleaning products and

⁷³ Cerapó Advertisement, *O Cruzeiro*, Dec. 6, 1947, 34. The advertisement can be located in a digital copy of *O Cruzeiro* at the Biblioteca Nacional’s Hemeroteca Digital via this link: <http://memoria.bn.br/DocReader/docreader.aspx?bib=003581&PagFis=52137>

appliances rarely portrayed housewives in such a physically subordinated position.⁷⁴

A 1953 advertisement for an Arno floor waxer was more typical of advertisements aimed at housewives in that it visibly displayed a woman using a product to avoid more arduous domestic labor. Reflecting the increased production and purchase of electric floor waxers by 1953, this advertisement portrayed the floor waxer doing “all the work in much less time” thanks to its “ultra-modern” design.⁷⁵ Arno was a Brazilian brand that produced a variety of appliances. Arno advertisements regularly emphasized the modernity of the company’s products, both reflecting a common desire to modernize the home and Arno’s effort to portray its products to be just as advanced as those produced by multinationals like General Electric. The advertisement pictured a girl reaching out to her mother to identify a significant benefit of the Arno floor waxer: “Mommy has time left over to play with me.” The ad also featured an image of a girl following her mother around as she cleaned the floor with an Arno waxer. Unlike the Cerapó ad, domestic labor was portrayed as a pleasant family activity, transmitted from one generation of women to the next. The Arno ad assumed that a mother would use any time saved by using the waxer to spend with her children, rather than working outside the home. The floor waxer would thus help women to fulfill their ideal roles as mothers and wives.

These were not the only feminine domestic roles that advertisements catered to. An advertisement for a Climax refrigerator that appeared in a 1957 issue of *Manchete* emphasized that a woman could fulfill her roles as custodian of her family’s budget by

⁷⁴ The woman’s position could be seen as sexually charged, but it is unlikely that this meaning was intended by the advertiser given the relatively conservative themes in most advertisements in the late 1940s. Her gender subordination, however, is clear.

⁷⁵ “Nossa Enceradeira elétrica Arno,” advertisement, *O Cruzeiro*, Feb. 28, 1953, 67. The advertisement can be located in a digital copy of *O Cruzeiro* at the Biblioteca Nacional’s Hemeroteca Digital via this link: <http://memoria.bn.br/DocReader/docreader.aspx?bib=003581&PagFis=85403>

choosing a Climax refrigerator instead of a more expensive brand. Like most appliance ads, the adjective “modern” makes an appearance in reference to a refrigerator manufactured in Brazil with a US-made compressor. However, the advertising copy emphasized thrift. The ad announced in large bold letters that “Money doesn’t grow on trees.” The copy went on to explain how the refrigerator fit into a household budget:

For this reason, (money) should be saved and always well spent. In the budget of every Brazilian family, there is room for the purchase of a CLIMAX refrigerator, given its exceptionally low price. With the same advantages of the best refrigerators, CLIMAX always represents high quality for the lowest price.⁷⁶

The presence of a woman in a pencil-skirt and high heels standing beside the fridge and money tree indicated that the refrigerator was suitable for middle-class women tasked with managing household finances. The copy’s appeal to thrift and “every Brazilian family” also indicate an attempt to sell beyond the middle-class to working class Brazilians who might have been able to afford a refrigerator as wages rose, installment plans became more common, and consumer durables became less expensive. Advertisers and producers became aware of the potential for expanding sales to working-class Brazilians thanks to modern market research.

Market Research and Class Segmentation

Advertisers adopted marketing strategies prevalent in the United States and adapted them to the Brazilian market. These strategies included class-based market segmentation, which sought to match products to consumers’ purchasing power and standards of consumption. Advertisers in Brazil targeted those audiences they thought most likely to buy their products: primarily the literate middle and upper classes located in prosperous South and Southeast Brazil (and later, Brasília), and for inexpensive

⁷⁶ Climax advertisement, *Manchete*, Oct. 26, 1957, 9.

products,⁷⁷ the urban working classes in these regions. Although advertisers relied on market research that measured product ownership by consumers in different classes, advertisements in the postwar period usually featured middle-class settings and standards of consumption to appeal to a broad audience. Advertisers relied on mass media such as newspapers, nationally distributed magazines, radio, and television to distribute their messages. These media generally targeted a mass audience prior to the 1960s, when more specialized publications began to target narrower market segments.⁷⁸

IBOPE represented the most advanced market research organization in Brazil following the Second World War. Founded in 1942 to measure radio listenership, in 1945, IBOPE reorganized itself to become a civil society with membership extended to advertisers, experts in market research, businessmen, capitalists, and consumer goods companies. With the initiation of its *Serviço X* in 1945, followed by its *Serviço de Pesquisa entre Consumidores* (Consumer Research Service) in 1952, IBOPE expanded its household surveys to measure consumption of a variety of consumer goods. These included packaged foods, personal hygiene products, cosmetics, and consumer durables and their ownership was measured alongside readership of newspapers and magazines. In 1946, IBOPE's membership included all of the largest advertising firms operating in Brazil, including JWT, McCann Erickson, Standard, Inter-American, and Grant, as well

⁷⁷ Products such as foodstuffs, cosmetics, and even some appliances could be profitably marketed to working-class Brazilians with limited disposable incomes. With expanding wages and access to credit, increasing numbers of working-class Brazilians in the 1950s and 1960s could purchase more expensive appliances like refrigerators and televisions.

⁷⁸ Prior to the 1960s, daily newspapers often reflected their editors' ideological orientation, but even those publications favoring the political left, like *Última Hora*, targeted middle-class readers in addition to the working class. Narrower publications circulated by unions, civic organizations, and political parties did not attract significant advertising expenditures.

as the cosmetics and hygiene products companies Colgate Palmolive, Gessy, and Coty.⁷⁹

In addition to providing its members with regular surveys of consumption across a large number of goods by brand ownership in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, IBOPE also conducted public opinion polling and performed commissioned research for clients.

IBOPE's market research extended beyond tracking brand popularity to examine and define classes of consumers capable of purchasing different types of products.

IBOPE hailed the importance of market research and the capabilities that it offered to clients:

The great majority of sales and advertising problems can be resolved by way of market studies and public opinion research.

Whether to study the product, the way in which the public perceives it, the class of people that can acquire it, its defects and qualities; whether to define a specific consumer market, delimiting classes and territories to cover in distribution and sales plans; whether conducting research in support of advertising, in order that it should become more efficient; or whether yet to investigate the details of product distribution to retailers; there is always the necessity to resort to market and public opinion research.⁸⁰

IBOPE was instrumental in identifying and segmenting the Brazilian market for consumer goods. The institute's market research provided regular information on fluctuating consumer tastes and helped advertisers and other businesses track and measure the size and purchasing power of different social classes.

Reflecting contemporary views on consumption, IBOPE measured consumption at the family level and treated women as the primary agents responsible for household consumption. Descriptions of IBOPE's survey methods clearly identified its reliance on

⁷⁹ "O que é IBOPE?" in SX-003, *Serviço X*, São Paulo Oct-Dec 1945, IBOPE collection, Arquivo Edgard Leuenroth, UNICAMP, Campinas, SP (Hereafter, IBOPE).

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 2.

interviews with housewives,⁸¹ from the initiation of *Serviço X* in 1945⁸² to as late as 1960.⁸³ Even after the *Serviço de Pesquisa entre Consumidores* ceased to explicitly refer to housewives, IBOPE continued to measure consumption by “family units” within different classes into the early 1970s and housewives likely continued to make up the majority of interviewees in IBOPE consumer surveys.⁸⁴ Measuring consumers by family unit and relying on interviews with housewives also indicates that IBOPE’s regular consumer surveys ignored consumers who were single.⁸⁵ IBOPE’s focus on housewives as consumers for their families reveals these women’s importance to advertisers and consumer goods companies. Businesses measured the success of their products and marketing strategies by women’s descriptions of their families’ consumer behavior.

IBOPE segmented families by their household earnings into classes. The income bands that IBOPE used to define classes of consumers fluctuated over time, but were divided into Class A “rich,” Class B “middle class,” and Class C “poor” consumers. In the 1940s and 1950s, class composition in each market was only loosely defined,⁸⁶ but by

⁸¹ IBOPE translated the Portuguese term “dona de casa” into “housewife” in English sections of *Serviço X*. It is worth noting that in Portuguese, the term does not necessarily refer to a married woman, but a female “head” of the house (not to be confused with the male head of the family). Nonetheless, single women who lived independently of a husband or their families made up a small percentage of all households in mid-twentieth-century Brazil, so most donas de casa responding to IBOPE interviews were likely married.

⁸² SX-003, *Serviço X*, São Paulo Oct-Dec 1945, IBOPE.

⁸³ SPC-018, *Serviço de Pesquisa entre Consumidores*, São Paulo Jan-Feb 1960, IBOPE.

⁸⁴ IBOPE began using the term “family units” as early as 1956 (see SPC-010, São Paulo Dec 1955-Jan 1956, IBOPE) and continued to use it as late as 1971 (see SPC-038, São Paulo Jan. 1971, IBOPE).

⁸⁵ This was not always true of client-commissioned consumer studies and opinion surveys.

⁸⁶ For example, a survey in 1955 in Rio de Janeiro weighted the results of each class as though Class A reflected the top 10% of income earners, Class B the next 40%, and Class C the bottom 60%, but did not attempt to measure whether this weighting accurately reflected the universe of consumers in the city. As urban centers with higher average incomes, Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo contained a higher proportion of Class A and B consumers than most other markets in Brazil. SPC-009, *Serviço de Pesquisa entre Consumidores*, Rio de Janeiro Dec-Jan 1956, IBOPE.

1960, IBOPE had introduced a fourth strata, Class D “bottom poor” consumers, and more clearly defined the degree to which their class definitions reflected the universe of consumers. Class A “rich” consumers represented the top 1-2% of income earners in Rio and São Paulo, Class B “middle class” consumers represented approximately the next 32% of income earners, followed by Class C “poor” and Class D “bottom poor” consumers representing 32% and 34% of income earners respectively.⁸⁷

IBOPE’s surveys revealed a broad readership of magazines and newspapers and broad ownership of radios in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. In 1946, IBOPE measured whether or not consumers purchased any magazine or any newspaper, and whether they owned a radio.⁸⁸ The results, displayed below, indicate a broad audience for these media. Even most Class C or “poor” consumer households either owned a radio or regularly purchased a newspaper or magazine.⁸⁹ The breadth of this audience made it easy for advertisers to reach consumers in the two largest urban markets in Brazil.

⁸⁷ "Serviço de pesquisa entre consumidores," IBOPE. Class composition percentages are averaged from 1961, 1965, and 1971 percentages for Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo.

⁸⁸ SX-004 and SX-005, *Serviço X*, São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, Apr-Jun 1946.

⁸⁹ Not everyone in a household owning a magazine or newspaper would necessarily be fully literate, but many functionally illiterate consumers would have been able to follow pictorial advertisements and anyone within earshot of a radio would have been exposed to radio advertising.

Serviço X	Rio de Janeiro			São Paulo			
	Apr. - Jun. 1946	Newspaper	Magazine	Radio	Newspaper	Magazine	Radio
Class A		99	87	91	100	100	100
Class B		84.7	78.6	82.7	99	96	89.3
Class C		74.5	66	72	76.5	55.5	63
All Classes		83.7	76	80.4	91.7	83.2	82.3

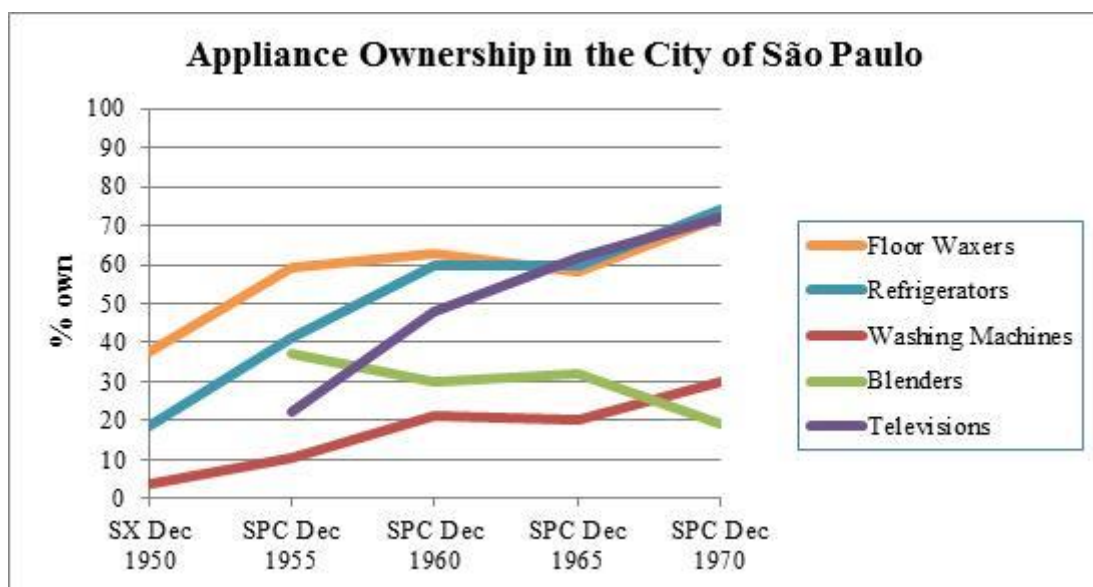
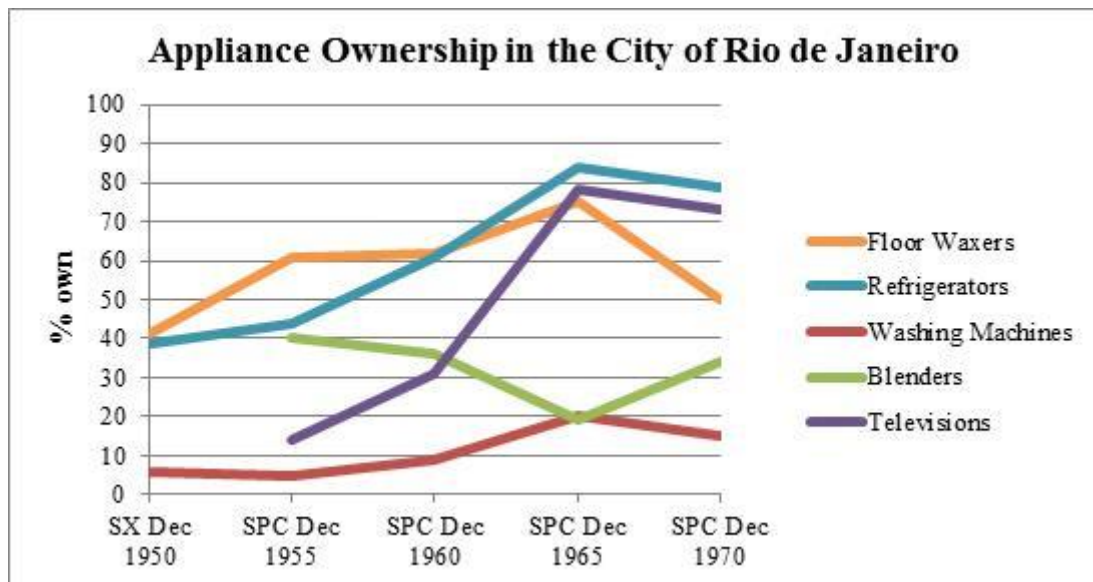
Table 1.1. Percent of consumer households who regularly purchase a newspaper or magazine, or own a radio, April-June, 1946. Source: SX-004 and SX-005, *Serviço X*, São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, Apr-Jun 1946, IBOPE, Arquivo Edgard Leuenroth. Own elaboration.

Whether or not consumers in Rio and São Paulo were convinced by advertisements, they certainly expanded their purchases of appliances from 1950 to 1970. Figures 1.1 and 1.2 reveal the expansion in household ownership in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo of five of the consumer appliances often featured in advertisements: floor waxers, refrigerators, washing machines, blenders, and televisions.⁹⁰ As working-class wages expanded⁹¹ and appliances became more available with increased domestic production, ownership of floor waxers, refrigerators, and televisions expanded rapidly from 1950 to 1965,⁹² while blenders and washing machines remained less-widely owned.

⁹⁰ *Serviço X* and *Serviço de Pesquisa entre Consumidores*, Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, 1950-1970, IBOPE. It is important to note that IBOPE surveys measured whether or not consumers owned a good, but not how much of a good they owned or how frequently they purchased it. Ownership rates are therefore only an approximation of the overall size of a market for any type of product.

⁹¹ The real value of the minimum wage in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo more than tripled from 1952 to its peak in 1960. See Gustavo Gonzago and Danielle Carusi Machado, “Rendimentos e preços,” in *Estatísticas do século XX*. (Rio de Janeiro: Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística, 2006) (unpaginated).

⁹² Slowing growth in ownership in São Paulo from 1960 to 1965 was most likely due to that period’s slower rate of economic growth and high rate of inflation. Increased appliance ownership in São Paulo after 1965 was offset by declines in Rio de Janeiro, which may have been due to a decline in the real value of the minimum salary under the military regime installed in 1964. Gonzago and Machado, “Rendimentos e Preços.”



Figures 1.1 and 1.2. Percentage of respondents who own various types of consumer appliances in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, 1950-1970. Source: Serviço X and Serviço de Pesquisa entre Consumidores, Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, 1950-1970, IBOPE. Own elaboration.

Since appliances are purchased infrequently when compared to food, cleaning products, or toiletries, expanded appliance consumption is more easily identified in increased overall ownership figures reported by IBOPE surveys. By contrast,

many personal hygiene, cleaning, and food products were already broadly consumed in the late 1940s and rates of consumption for these products could often be driven more by fluctuations in product usage by existing consumers than expansion of the consumer base, making rates of consumption harder to identify in IBOPE surveys measuring ownership of non-durable consumer goods.

Consumption of all mass-produced goods was amplified by the rapid urbanization of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. As rural Brazilians flocked to these two major metropolitan centers in search of jobs in industry and commerce, their populations increased dramatically. Table 1.2, below, illustrates the expansion of the combined urban populations of the states of Rio de Janeiro and Guanabara (the former federal district, coterminous with Rio de Janeiro city),⁹³ and the urban population of São Paulo state from 1950 to 1970. In both Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, the urban population more than

		1950	1960	1970	Average annual growth, 1950-1970
Urban Population	States of Rio de Janeiro and Guanabara	2,212,211	5,252,631	7,906,146	6.58%
	State of São Paulo	4,804,211	8,044,377	14,276,239	5.60%
Urban and Rural Population	Brazil	51,944,397	70,191,370	93,139,037	2.96%

Table 1.2. Population in Urban Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo vs. Brazil, 1950-1970. Source: IBGE, *Anuário estatístico do Brasil*, vol. 38 (1978): 74. Own elaboration.

tripled and grew at an annual rate roughly twice the national rate. This provided

⁹³ The State of Guanabara replaced the Federal District when Brazil's capital was moved to Brasília in 1960.

advertisers and consumer goods companies with two large and rapidly growing metropolitan markets for their products.

Although affluent and middle-class consumers purchased most of the appliances for sale in Rio and São Paulo in the late 1940s and early 1950s, working-class consumers represented a majority of the population of these cities and rapidly expanded their share of appliance ownership. By 1960, Class C (“poor”) and Class D (“bottom poor”) consumers, as categorized by IBOPE, represented more than half of the owners of blenders, refrigerators, and floor waxers in Rio. Class C and D consumers constituted the majority of owners of floor waxers, refrigerators, televisions, and blenders in both Rio and São Paulo by 1970. Only washing machines remained a product owned primarily by a minority of middle-class and affluent consumers throughout this period.⁹⁴

Consumer goods companies responded to the growing numbers and purchasing power of working-class consumers primarily by encouraging them to imitate middle-class standards of consumption through advertising. Advertisements, such as that for the Climax refrigerator, often portrayed relatively expensive appliances as affordable for anyone willing to make room in their budget for them. Portraying modern consumer goods as within reach to any hard-working and frugal consumer was consistent with populist promises that industrialization would increase both working and middle-class standards of living.

Consumer goods companies also had a vested interest in continuing to

⁹⁴ Serviço X and Serviço de Pesquisa entre Consumidores, Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, 1950-1970, IBOPE.

match consumer goods production to middle-class consumer standards. Warner Baer has noted that multinational corporations invested in productive capacity to match the existing, narrowly-concentrated market for goods, and many had an interest in marketing consumer durable goods like autos and appliances to less-affluent consumers through advertising and extending consumer credit. This marketing altered working-class consumption patterns, influencing them to spend a disproportionate share of their income on consumer durables.⁹⁵ The same argument applies to domestic consumer durable goods companies like Arno or Climax that competed with multinationals for market share and were encouraged to produce modern consumer goods by government protections, loans, and favorable exchange rates on capital goods for domestic industry. Rapid population growth in Brazil's urban centers also allowed companies to expand sales without having to substantially adapt products or pricing to the limited budgets of poor and rural Brazilians.

Modernizing Femininity

As companies geared production of consumer goods to service middle-class consumer tastes and encouraged working-class consumers to stretch their budgets to imitate middle-class standards of consumption, advertisements also encouraged women to imitate idealized feminine gender roles centered on domestic labor and motherhood. IBOPE survey designs reveal that market researchers perceived women to be the primary purchasing agents for families and many consumer goods, especially household appliances, were intended to be used

⁹⁵ Baer, *The Brazilian Economy*, 199-200.

by women at home. It was therefore in many consumer goods companies' interest to encourage both middle-class and working-class women to embrace shopping for the household and domestic labor, even though the middle-class lifestyles that these companies advertised would have been difficult for single-income working-class families to afford. For this reason, in the 1950s and 1960s, women were rarely portrayed in a workplace setting in advertisements appearing in general interest magazines like *Manchete* or *O Cruzeiro*. In those advertisements that did portray women in office settings, the ads were generally for hygiene or cosmetics products that implicitly promised to help a young, unmarried woman find a husband. By contrast, already married women, and especially mothers, were expected to devote their labor to the home.

Carla Bassanezi has observed that in the 1950s and early 1960s, magazines targeting young women and girls like *Querida* and *Jornal das Moças* and the women's section of the general interest magazine *O Cruzeiro* maintained conservative views on feminine gender roles and women's labor. Advice columns in these publications repeatedly emphasized that marriage and motherhood should be the objective of every young woman and that married women belonged at home tending to children and household chores. Bassanezi notes that these publications portrayed good housewifery as necessary to maintain a happy marriage.⁹⁶

In her analysis of magazines, Bassanezi also identifies increased acceptance of women's paid labor by the early 1960s. She attributes this shift to the increasing influence of capitalism, new standards of consumption, and the

⁹⁶ Carla Bassanezi, "Mulheres dos anos dourados" in *História das mulheres no Brasil*, org. Mary Del Priore, Second ed., (São Paulo: Contexto, 1997), 607-639.

embrace of modernity in Brazilian society.⁹⁷ However, industrial capitalism, new standards of consumption, and modernity were strongly represented in these publications in the 1950s, as the advertisements discussed earlier clearly reveal. Although it may be tempting to identify industrial capitalism and modernity as undermining conservative gender norms, advertisements and magazine columns portrayed women's engagement with housewifery and motherhood as both promoting the modernization of the Brazilian economy and society and consistent with the gendered division of labor in more "developed" societies in North America and Western Europe.

Articles and advice columns in magazines like *Manchete* portrayed the gendered division of labor between working husbands and stay-at-home housewives in the US and Europe as highly modern. In 1956, Elsie Lessa, author of a recurring feminine advice column in *Manchete*, idealized this division of labor in the "more civilized countries" of Europe and the US. Lessa maintained that women from these nations "Know that the task of raising children is a 'woman's job.' The husband makes an effort, out there. She inside the house. And she does not let him lose nights of sleep, nor leave poorly fed to perform his difficult labor. In the end, everything works out. This way, the man has better odds of winning in life, making a career, [rather] than accumulating functions that are not suited to him."⁹⁸ Lessa proposed that upon reaching age 18, all Brazilian women should be obligated to train for one year to become better housewives as a

⁹⁷ Carla Bassanezi, *Virando as páginas, revendo as mulheres: Revistas femininas e relações homem-mulher, 1945-1964* (Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 1996), 214.

⁹⁸ Elsie Lessa, "Aprendendo a ser mulher de verdade..." *Manchete*, 18 August 1956, 59.

service to the nation. *Manchete* also often focused on US and European celebrity marriages and domestic life. For example, a 1958 article on the French celebrity and international sex symbol Brigitte Bardot pictured her in a domestic setting, announcing that “The housewife can also have ‘sex-appeal’.”⁹⁹

In addition to foreign celebrities providing examples of modern women engaged in motherhood and housewifery, Brazilian columnists often couched their support for traditional feminine gender roles in scientific or psychological language. Many argued that women were naturally predisposed to motherhood and care for the home, and that these roles were natural extensions of their biological capacity for childbirth. In a 1955 column in *Manchete* about women in the workforce, Elsie Lessa wrote: “The woman’s place—and it wasn’t women or men who decided this, it was old mother Nature—is in the home, having children, caring for them, watching them. And within these three simple items there is room for an entire life, full and fertile.” Lessa went on to state her support for a woman pursuing a career, or work involving “tasks she is not destined for,” so long as her work did not interfere with her duties as a mother.¹⁰⁰

Another *Manchete* columnist, Ida Lisbóá, prefaced her 1955 article “Você é uma boa esposa?” (“Are you a good wife?”) by citing the authority of foreign experts: “From the United States press comes the collaboration of specialists in education and psychology.” Based on this expert opinion, Lisbóá offered a few recommendations echoed in many other advice columns: “Men are vain and they

⁹⁹ “A dona-de-casa também pode ter ‘sex-appeal’,” *Manchete* 21 December 1958, 77.

¹⁰⁰ Elsie Lessa, “Mulheres que trabalham,” *Manchete*, August 6, 1955, 48.

become proud of the pretty and always-groomed wife. It is therefore indispensable to maintain a good appearance, always looking the best possible.” “Try to make your home a comfortable, quiet, and nice place, so that when he returns from tiring work he also finds an appetizing, well-presented dinner.” In addition to these professional tips about a good wife’s appearance and domestic duties, Lisbóá recommended that women should encourage their husbands if they were not making enough money and warned wives that “Experience has taught me that family should not intrude themselves into a couple’s private life.”¹⁰¹ In this respect, Lisbóá’s advice echoed American modernization theorists’ arguments that nuclear families should be the basic unit of society within consumer capitalism.¹⁰² Free from the interference of extended family, a husband and wife were more likely to realize their full economic potential.

By linking housewifery and motherhood to both the timeless immutability of nature and modern theories of education and psychology, columnists seeking to contribute to women’s moral and practical education hailed faithful adherence to conservative gender roles as the key to achieving marital happiness and social advancement. Tying conservative gender roles to nature and science was not new in Brazil the 1950s. Susan Besse has observed that educators and intellectuals in the 1910s to 1930s, influenced by the principles of eugenics, perceived education

¹⁰¹ Ida Lisbóá, “Você é uma boa esposa?” *Manchete*, June 25, 1955, 62-63.

¹⁰² Modernization theorists such as Talcott Parsons, Bert Hoselitz, and W.W. Rostow argued that developing nations were in part held back by traditional social structures and practices that impeded economic development. They argued that the diffusion of what they perceived to be modern social values and practices to developing nations through mass media and consumer culture would contribute to social and economic modernization. Modernization theorists argued that “familism” constrained individual initiative and promoted smaller nuclear families as the key unit in a modernizing consumerist society. For more on modernization theory and the family see A.V. Margavio and S.A. Mann, “Modernization and the Family: A Theoretical Analysis” *Sociological Perspectives*, Vol. 32, No. 1 (Spring 1989): 109-127.

to be a tool to teach women about their “natural” domestic roles. These intellectuals believed that this education would contribute to improved women’s health, more efficient household management, and better child rearing.¹⁰³ While eugenics had lost much of its appeal following the Second World War, columnists repeated similar claims about the value and scientific purpose of women’s “natural” domestic roles well into the 1960s. However, by the late 1940s, the purpose of advancing evolution had been replaced with the goal of modernizing the Brazilian economy, society, and standards of living. Women would play an important role in economic modernization through their use of new mass-produced consumer goods like electrical appliances.

Media narratives about national development increasingly focused on the consumer goods industry as industrialization progressed. Although national economic plans; major infrastructural projects such as dam, port, and highway construction; and the construction of Brasilia received the lion’s share of economic reporting in mainstream national media in the 1950s, the consumer appliance industry began to attract greater attention as a major driver of industrialization in the early 1960s. The increasing prominence of the consumer appliance industry was largely due to the fruition of government policies to encourage the domestic production of appliances using parts manufactured in Brazil.

A 1962 article in *Manchete* profiled the rapid expansion of the consumer appliance industry and trumpeted this expansion as a national achievement and a

¹⁰³ Besse, *Restructuring Patriarchy*, 110-111.

benefit for Brazilian consumers. The article's title, "O Milagre brasileiro: 100% Nacional" (The Brazilian Miracle: 100% Domestic), highlighted the increasing number of appliances made entirely in Brazil as a point of national pride.¹⁰⁴ The article emphasized how far the appliance industry and Brazil had come:

Around fifteen years ago, few people in Brazil knew, for certain, what a blender was. It was said—with a certain air of magic—to be an apparatus capable of transforming fruits and vegetables into succulent liquids.[. . .] Today, however, the blender—one hundred percent Brazilian-made—is found in both the houses of workers and the houses of the upper crust. The floor waxers, vacuum cleaners, washing machines, radios, televisions, mixers, etc., that we make are as good as imports.¹⁰⁵

In addition to touting the almost magical capabilities of modern appliances and the quality of Brazilian-made wares, the article linked the expansion of consumption with increased standards of living. Brazil's increase in national population from 1950 to 1960 provided the economy with "21 million more consumers and the standard of living of the median man rose 33 percent. The industrial leap that occurred in Brazil during the last decade, allied to this extraordinary capacity to consume, resulted in [...] the largest electric appliance industry in Latin America," concentrated in Brazil's South and Southeast.¹⁰⁶ No definition of the median man or measurement for the standard of living was provided, but the assertion added to the perception of rapidly improving living standards. The article was no less optimistic in its assertion that "one of the explanations for the great Brazilian industrial miracle is the fact that the country is

¹⁰⁴ Aluizio Flores, "O Milagre brasileiro: 100% Nacional," *Manchete*, February 10, 1962, 30-33.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 31.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 33.

capable of consuming everything that it produces.”¹⁰⁷

“O Milagre brasileiro” established women as the primary consumers of electric appliances by featuring them in images shopping for and using these goods. Photos of children next to appliances also linked appliance use to motherhood. In addition to describing the production of several types of appliances (the production of 600,000 electric irons and 400,000 refrigerators was forecast for 1962) and listing a total of twenty-two types of appliances in production, the article identified the benefits to housewives of two appliances that would be produced in Brazil for the first time in 1962. With the introduction of the dishwasher, “the housewife will only have the job of placing the dirty plates in the machine and taking them out, minutes later, clean and dry.”¹⁰⁸ A remote-controlled oven would allow her to bake a chicken while conversing with a guest in the living-room.

Despite the concentration of industrialization in south and southeastern Brazil and continued widespread inequalities in Brazilian society, “O Milagre brasileiro” portrayed consumer appliances as attainable for all Brazilians, with refrigerators present in the “most humble homes.” Even rural men could take the money they earned from the harvest to the city, select an appliance, and pay for it “at once.”¹⁰⁹ This assertion both hinted at the new abundance of installment plans for appliances available to consumers and exaggerated rural workers’ participation in prosperity. Chapter 2 will examine how ISI policies contributed to increasing inequalities between rural and urban Brazilians.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

Brazilian Industrialists

Unlike advertisers and journalists, industrialists were more sensitive to the limited purchasing power of working-class households. Unions often cited their families' standard of living in campaigns for higher wages, which led industrialists to address the issue of household consumption in ways that would contain working-class demands. In contrast with advertisements that highlighted women's domestic roles to expand consumption, industrialists sought to train working-class women to limit household expenses.

Manchete covered the Dia do Trabalho (May 1st) in 1955 with an article on a workers' parade sponsored by the Serviço Social da Indústria (Industrial Social Service, SESI).¹¹⁰ SESI was founded in 1946 by a decree from president Dutra, as the culmination of efforts by the São Paulo industrialist leader Roberto Simonsen to combat inflation and protect against potential communist infiltration of the working classes. Although representatives of state and federal government officials sat on the governing councils that directed SESI's state and national operations, representatives of industrialist federations also sat on the councils and SESI was funded by contributions collected from industrial firms, giving industrialists substantial influence over the service.¹¹¹

Although the *Manchete* article devoted little text to describing women's participation in the parade, it featured photos of women marching and carrying flags and a picture of Antônio Devisate, the Federação das Indústrias de São Paulo

¹¹⁰ "O 1º de Maio no Vale do Anhangabaú," *Manchete*, 15 May 1955, 10-11.

¹¹¹ Barbara Weinstein, *For Social Peace in Brazil*, 111-112.

(FIESP) president, dancing with the “Queen of the Workers” at a commemorative ball the night before the parade. As head of FIESP, Devisate exerted substantial influence over SESI. Although it is unclear whether the “Queen of the Workers” was herself a worker or a worker’s wife, Devisate’s dance was symbolic of industrialists’ courtship of working-class women through SESI.

Like advertisers and consumer goods companies, leading industrialists encouraged working-class women to adopt feminine gender roles centered on motherhood and domestic labor. However, in contrast to advertisers, these industrialists promoted conservative gender roles as a way to contain and discipline working-class consumption, not encourage expensive new consumer tastes. Industrialists sought to influence feminine gender roles and women’s domestic behavior through SESI. Barbara Weinstein has observed that SESI provided instruction in home economics while ignoring women workers who were expected to withdraw from the workforce upon getting married. SESI instructed cleaning and food preparation techniques that did not require the use of expensive consumer appliances but would still contribute to good nutrition and a sanitary household environment. Weinstein notes that industrialists believed working-class women’s domestic labor would both increase male worker productivity and decrease men’s expenditures by encouraging them to stay at home.¹¹²

An examination of SESI’s monthly publication *SESI-Higiene* in the early 1960s reveals that like advertisers, SESI tasked women with modernizing homes.

¹¹² Ibid., 231-242.

However, *SESI-Higiene* emphasized scientific management of the home rather than the use of modern consumer appliances. In doing so, SESI sought to contain inflation and working class demands for higher wages by instructing women on how to make do with less and be content with their social position. *SESI-Higiene* emphasized low-cost methods of household management, providing tips on clothing maintenance and repair, cleaning with basic supplies, inexpensive food preparation, how to save on groceries, and how to make clothing, basic Christmas gifts, and decoration.

Beyond instruction in home economics, *SESI-Higiene* maintained that being satisfied with a limited family income and subordinate class status was essential to good mental health. A 1961 article on how to “Control your nerves” asserted that “nervousness” or neuroticism was caused by frustration with unobtainable objectives, the “sensation of not being in the social position one deserves,” fixation on overly complex ideas, keeping company with friends in substantially better material conditions, and feelings of inferiority to others in one’s own social class. To address these symptoms, the article recommended that the reader “avoid exaggerated ambitions,” “adapt to the social group to which one belongs,” and look to make friends with “people of the same profession, religion, political ideas, economic level and social position.”¹¹³ *SESI-Higiene* also had advice for working-class men on how to remain mentally fit. A 1963 article on “mental hygiene” described a mentally healthy person as someone who “does not make rivers of

¹¹³ “Controle seus nervos,” *SESI-Higiene*, May 1961, 4-5.

money, but what he attains every month suffices” and someone who does not entertain “vast plans to reform the world.”¹¹⁴

Both these articles dissuaded members of the working-class from adopting radical political views or participating in labor movements. Further, they argued that accepting class subordination and making do with a limited income were important to mental health. The two articles, when combined with recurring admonishments for working-class women to be frugal in their management of family finances, revealed that industrialists believed they could contain working-class political and economic demands by shaping the domestic labor and behavior of working-class married women.

In addition to attempting to shape their domestic labor, SESI also sought to instill conservative ideology and conservative feminine gender roles in working-class women. A 1961 *SESI-Higiene* article advertised classes taught by SESI’s Divisão de Assistência à Família, created in 1959, for women at Centros de Aprendizado Doméstico (Centers of Domestic Learning, CADs). In addition to classes on cooking and nutrition, hygiene and health education, sewing, and “domestic arts,” CADs offered classes on “Human relations in the family” and “Preparation for marriage.”¹¹⁵ The description for the latter class provided unmarried women instruction in conservative gender roles:

Provides students moral and social formation, preparing them for the mission of a daughter, mother and wife, revealing to them the Christian sense of life, even when the woman is engaged in work. Through these teachings, the student will comprehend that she should maintain the

¹¹⁴ “Como fazer higiene mental,” *SESI-Higiene*, Sept.-Oct. 1963, 3.

¹¹⁵ “Centros de Aprendizado Doméstico,” *SESI-Higiene*, May 1961, 10-12.

stability of the family, her responsibility to her offspring and society[...].¹¹⁶

To underscore that CAD classes would prepare a woman to become an ideal housewife, often referred to in contemporary Brazilian media as the “queen of the home,” a photograph below the article pictured a man crowning a young woman as queen in a pageant, perhaps even “Queen of the workers.” These classes sought to impart conservative values and gender roles on working-class women who SESI perceived to have limited moral education, a deficiency that was perhaps exacerbated by working before marriage.

Another *SESI-Higiene* article from 1961 outlined behaviors that SESI asserted would help wives keep their husbands for more than a year. The article recommended that a wife should be “caring, gentle, sweet” and “maintain your house comfortable, clean, and tidy” to keep her husband happy. The article also identified efficient management of the household budget as the duty of a good wife by asking “Do you know how to use the domestic budget or spend everything, without further thought, simply assuming that it is your husband’s duty to make more when the money falls short?”¹¹⁷ The last thing that SESI wanted was for working-class wives to press their husbands to demand higher wages. Instead, SESI tasked these women with controlling working-class budgets to adapt to inflation and framed this task as the duty of a good wife and the key to a long, happy marriage.

Industrialists perceived it to be in their interests to portray the lifestyle of a

¹¹⁶ Ibid, 12.

¹¹⁷ “Casamento por um ano,” *SESI-Higiene*, Sept. 1961, 8-9.

stay-at-home housewife as accessible to working-class married women. If properly instructed, industrialists hoped that these women could contain inflation by relieving pressure on men to demand more wages. Housewives' labor would also encourage men to spend more time at home, reducing their personal spending. If SESI could instill conservative ideological values in these women, industrialists hoped that women could also serve to counteract the spread of radical and communist political ideologies and stem labor unrest by soothing working men's dissatisfaction and educating working-class children in conservative values. As other scholars have noted, portraying labor outside the home as temporary and not suited to women's moral duties as mothers also allowed industrialists to effectively treat women as a lower-paid contingent labor force¹¹⁸ even though Article 157 of the 1946 Constitution declared that women should receive equal pay for equal work. Although SESI portrayed being a housewife as within the financial capability of frugal working-class women, industrialists preferred that these women be satisfied with their class status, unlike advertisers who hoped that working-class women would aspire to middle-class standards of consumption.

SESI's influence on women's behavior and views is difficult to measure. Weinstein has observed that the CADs in São Paulo were among SESI's most popular programs, granting 214,000 certificates of completion to women between 1948 and 1959, and likely enrolling many more who did not complete the

¹¹⁸ In addition to Weinstein's observation that São Paulo industrialists viewed women's labor as temporary and contingent in *For Social Peace in Brazil*, Susan Besse maintains that early twentieth-century Brazilian employers exploited gender norms that devalued women's labor by paying them less and restricted women's employment opportunities to occupations deemed to be feminine. See Besse, *Restructuring Patriarchy*.

program. Weinstein also notes that women in the program did not always conform to SESI's expectations, with many of the participants in sewing courses, which produced 51,000 graduates in this period, claiming that they used the skills they acquired to supplement their husbands' incomes.¹¹⁹ Further, SESI's influence beyond enrollees in CAD was clearly more limited. As Chapter 2 will reveal, working-class women in this period did not refrain from participating in Communist Party-affiliated organizations, the labor movement, or broader political mobilization to demand higher wages and anti-inflationary measures from local and federal government agencies. However, SESI's activities do reveal that like advertisers, industrialists viewed women as playing an important role in development and endorsed their position as custodians of the household economy.

Conclusion

Following the Second World War, Brazilian business and political elites embraced a project of economic and social development centered on the creation of an industrialized economy and consumerist society. These elites imagined that women would play an important and feminine role in development. Although they sometimes prioritized consumption and domestic labor differently, advertisers, industrialists, and magazine columnists believed that they could educate urban women to contribute to the modernization of Brazil through modern forms of consumption, efficient household management, and committed parenting. This mission to modernize urban women linked activities that had traditionally been part of the feminine private sphere of the home to public concerns of economic and national development. Although the proponents of

¹¹⁹ Weinstein, *For Social Peace in Brazil*, 245.

developmentalism in the home advocated feminine roles that were consistent with traditional conservative gender norms, they couched their advocacy in scientific language. They portrayed housewifery and motherhood as thoroughly modern feminine pursuits, consistent with gender norms and standards of living in the modern, industrialized consumer societies of North America and Western Europe. This “modern” yet patriarchal gendered division of labor would remain largely unchallenged in Brazil until the 1960s when intellectuals began to more openly discuss ideas advanced by feminists in Europe and the United States.

Although advocates of developmentalism embraced a gendered division of labor within urban nuclear families, by linking women’s actions in the private sphere of the home to public concerns, developmentalism also provided women with new opportunities to enter the public sphere. Despite widespread optimism about the benefits of industrialization, national economic policies solidified existing inequalities and created new pressures on urban household budgets. Chapter 2 will examine these inequalities and ways that women derived moral authority from their domestic roles to enter public debates about the trajectory of developmentalist policies. The press was more than a vehicle for advertisements and elite discourse about development; it was also a space for the public to voice dissatisfaction with the outcomes of developmentalist policies.

Chapter 2 - Women Organize against *Carestia*, 1945-1960

In an October 1953 edition of *Manchete*, a satirical cartoon lampooned the effects of government economic policy on married women's efforts to purchase food for their families. Titled the "Victory of Civilization," the cartoon opened by indicating that long ago, when civilization was less advanced, men had awoken early in the morning to hunt wild animals so that they could provide meat for their families at home. The second half of the cartoon illustrated how modern civilization had allowed for women to assume this role in their regular purchases of meat. The cartoon illustrated that all was not well with this arrangement; women waited in a two kilometer line to buy meat from a truck operated by the Comissão Federal de Abastecimento e Preços (Federal Commission of Supply and Prices, COFAP), an agency created in 1951 by president Vargas to ensure adequate food supplies and regulate food prices. Text explained: "Woman! Far from the dangers of the primitive jungle, it is she who easily acquires succulent little pieces of meat of some bull, killed only a few weeks earlier, without having given the husband any work—and all thanks to the most advanced state of things!"¹²⁰ The "advanced state" of Brazilian civilization was clearly not friendly to housewives: the cartoon illustrated the dangers of shopping in perilous urban streets by showing one of the women in line being run over by a bus.

The cartoon pointed to the reality of long lines, food shortages, and low-quality food in urban centers like Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. Although advocates of developmentalism heralded industrialization and the resulting increased availability of modern consumer goods as signs of progress and a prosperous future, it is easy to

¹²⁰ "A Vitória da civilização," *Manchete*, 10 October 1953, 2.

understand how many women dealing with the daily consequences of developmentalist economic policies could feel like they were being run over in the process. Policies promoting import substitution industrialization favored investment in industry and export agriculture over investment in expanding Brazil's domestic food supply, resulting in recurring urban food shortages and inflation in the price of food and other basic consumer goods. While advocates of developmentalism promised an abundance of new consumer goods to make women's domestic lives easier, in practice, these policies often made life more difficult for both middle- and working-class women trying to cope with the rapidly rising cost of living in urban centers.

These policies also contributed to the migration of uneducated rural workers displaced by agricultural mechanization to urban centers in southern and southeastern Brazil in search of work. Many of these migrants were young single women who found limited employment opportunities in the cities and often took low-paying jobs in domestic service as maids, washerwomen, and cooks. These women experienced development and modern household consumer culture far differently than their middle-class and elite employers. The daily lives of women working in low-paying jobs in commerce and industry were also quite different from the rosy picture of motherhood and middle-class housewifery portrayed in magazines. Despite constitutional guarantees of equal pay, legislation providing for paid maternal leave, and provisions in the *Consolidação das Leis do Trabalho* (Consolidation of Labor Laws, CLT, issued in 1943) to protect women from being fired due to pregnancy or marriage, working women found that employers often flouted the law, making it difficult for mothers and married women to maintain steady employment or earn enough income to support their families.

From the late 1940s to early 1960s, urban middle- and working-class women responded to the disparity between populist rhetoric and the realities of economic development by invoking their moral authority as mothers and wives to demand that government institutions like COFAP take steps to address the economic difficulties facing Brazilian families. This response leveraged populist developmentalism's idealization of women's roles within the household and domestic economies. Since women were widely recognized as having control over their families' food purchases and were tasked with ensuring their children's well-being, women were able to assume central roles in campaigns to press local, state, and national government officials to take measures to contain the cost of living, especially the cost of food. Middle- and working-class women were also closely involved with campaigns to improve protections for married or pregnant women from being unfairly dismissed, equal pay and earlier retirement for women workers, and efforts to create public and employer-provided childcare centers. These issues were particularly important to women affiliated with the political left and labor unions. However, containing the cost of living mobilized broader support among women (and men) across classes and across the political spectrum. Nonpartisan appeals to women's prerogatives as economic custodians and defenders of their families presented an alternative to traditional partisan politics that mobilized broad coalitions around an issue affecting most urban households. This mobilization made the cost of living a major political issue in the 1950s and early 1960s and led the federal government to attempt a number of interventions in the economy to contain the cost of food and basic consumer goods.

Historians of twentieth-century Brazil have most often examined inflation, the

cost of living, and wages from either a macroeconomic perspective—by identifying production and supply bottlenecks, highlighting the limitations of ISI, or highlighting ways that economic policy contributed to heightened socioeconomic inequalities¹²¹—or in examinations of labor movements and the formation of working-class identity.¹²² The narratives that emerge from this scholarship generally portray inflation—as a technical obstacle for economic policymakers or a mobilizing cause for working-class Brazilians affiliated with unions and the political left.¹²³ However, in the republican period of 1945 to 1964, inflation and *carestia* (food shortages and increases in the cost of living) mobilized broad sectors of both the middle and working classes across party lines and led to the creation of coalitions that lobbied government institutions to contain inflationary pressures on food stuffs and basic consumer goods. Inflation and *carestia* repeatedly surfaced as central issues in debates about government economic policies. The prominence of these issues led populist presidents Getúlio Vargas, Juscelino Kubitschek, and João Goulart to attempt to adjust minimum wage policy to keep up with inflation and institute measures to directly contain the price of food and basic goods.¹²⁴

An emphasis on working-class social movements has also colored analysis of women's political activity and identity in this period. Historians have identified women's

¹²¹For example, inflation is a recurring concern in Baer's macroeconomic analysis of the Brazilian economy. He addresses inflation's role in industrial development and social tensions in the postwar period on p. 71 of *The Brazilian Economy*.

¹²² See Joel Wolfe, *Working Women, Working Men*, and Murilo Leal, *A Reinvenção da Classe Trabalhadora (1953-1964)* (Campinas: Editora da Unicamp, 2011).

¹²³ Rafael Ioris, "Fifty Years in Five and What's in It for Us? Development Promotion, Populism, Industrial Workers and *Carestia* in 1950s Brazil," *Journal of Latin American Studies*, Vol. 44 No. 2 (May 2012): 261-284.

¹²⁴ Jânio Quadros also attempted to contain inflation, but through more orthodox measures that included a freeze of the minimum salary.

organizations from the mid-twentieth century as being feminine but not feminist,¹²⁵ and have characterized women's political activity as reflecting broader class interests and not focused on concerns specific to women.¹²⁶ However, women from both the middle and working classes with diverse political orientations participated in women's organizations and protests against carestia. In categorizing Brazilian women's organizations as primarily reflecting broader class interests, historians have generally failed to recognize that these organizations addressed concerns—containing carestia, providing daycare, reforming the civil code to grant married women greater legal rights, and protecting women from being fired for marrying or becoming pregnant—that were particularly important to women. Although these organizations did not overtly challenge contemporary gender norms, they nevertheless sought to expand women's economic, legal, and political agency.

This chapter will first examine how developmentalist economic policies contributed to geographic and socioeconomic inequality and burdened urban family budgets with inflation. The chapter will then explore how middle- and working-class women, through their participation in women's organizations, unions, and street protests, invoked their moral authority as mothers and housewives in campaigns against carestia, against unequal treatment of women workers, and for government-mandated childcare centers. Appealing to women's prerogatives and duties within families proved to be most

¹²⁵ A distinction made by Paul Singer in "O feminino e o feminismo" in Paul Singer and Vinícius Caldeira Brant, orgs., *São Paulo: O Povo em Movimento* (Petrópolis, Ed. Vozes, 1980), 109-141, that continues to be repeated by many Brazilian historians.

¹²⁶ For recent examples of historians discounting women's organizations prior to the 1970s as non-feminist, see Tatau Godinho, "Democracia e Política no cotidiano das mulheres Brasileiras" in Gustavo Ventri, Marisol Recamán, and Suely de Oliveira, orgs. *A mulher brasileira nos espaços público e privado* (São Paulo: Editora Fundação Perseu Abramo, 2004), 149-150; and Maria Lygia Quartim de Moraes, "Cidadania no Feminino," in Jaime Pinsky and Carla Bassanezi Pinski orgs., *História da Cidadania*, 3rd ed. (São Paulo: Contexto, 2005), 509.

effective in efforts to pressure government officials to establish price controls and food cooperatives to contain the cost of living. Women's organizations made particularly effective use of press coverage to publicize their campaigns against *carestia*, demonstrating that mass media was an important site for women's interventions in developmentalist discourse.

Developing Inequality

Postwar proponents of developmentalism in business and politics promoted a future of consumer abundance and good jobs through industrial development. In the first two decades following the Second World War, developmentalist policies promoted rapid growth in the industrial sector, which grew from 19.8% of GDP in 1947 to 32.5% of GDP in 1964.¹²⁷ With industrialization, the economy grew rapidly, averaging more than 6% average GDP growth from 1947 to 1962.¹²⁸ Industrial growth and urbanization also led to an expansion of employment in industry and services: the percentage of workers engaged in these sectors grew from 34.1% of the national workforce in 1940 to 46.3% in 1960.¹²⁹ With industrialization, modern consumer appliances became more abundant in the homes of Brazilians in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo.¹³⁰ However, although import-substitution industrialization policies contributed to the expansion of industry and the creation of new jobs, the benefits of industrialization were geographically concentrated in urban centers in Brazil's south and southeast¹³¹ and industrialization did not come without hardship for

¹²⁷ Baer, 67, 405.

¹²⁸ Baer, 66.

¹²⁹ IBGE, *Anuário estatístico do Brasil*, vol. 32 (1971): 40.

¹³⁰ As illustrated in Chapter 1, Figures 1.2 and 1.3.

urban families.

Economic development policies initiated during the second Vargas and Kubitschek administrations subordinated agriculture to industrial development. A report from the Conselho Coordenador do Abastecimento, a national council established under Kubitschek, issued a report in 1958, at a time when Kubitschek was under substantial popular pressure to contain rising food prices,¹³² that analyzed the causes for “one of the problems of greater persistence in the current phase of national economic development – the progressive elevation of food prices, which affects, indiscriminately, the domestic budget of Brazilian families.”¹³³ In addition to acknowledging the social consequences of inflation in food prices, the report identified ways that food production and distribution had been relatively neglected and negatively affected by ISI policies. Whereas in some regions, like the northeast, food scarcity could be attributed to drought, food scarcity and price inflation in urban centers in the south and southeast were primarily due to imbalances in the economy caused by national industrialization policies.

After first noting that industrialization and urbanization had outpaced agricultural production, the authors observed that little capital had been invested in agriculture and subsistence agriculture was particularly underdeveloped: “To the rapid advance of industry and basic services on the path to mature capitalism, the agrarian economy

¹³¹ Baer has observed that from 1945 to 1958, national economic development plans concentrated investments in the already more-developed southeast. The apparent bias of these plans, combined with a drought in the northeast in 1958, led to the creation of SUDENE to improve agricultural production in the Northeast. SUDENE was largely unsuccessful at meeting its goals. Baer, 259-260.

¹³² As will be examined later in this chapter.

¹³³ Conselho Coordenador do Abastecimento, “Análise da conjuntura do abastecimento,” i(preface), in Roberto Campos personal archive, RC e cd 58.12.00 p. I. 2, CPDOC.

responds with its generally pre-capitalist structure.”¹³⁴ The authors also observed that the existing infrastructure for food transportation and storage was inadequate, and that the structure of commercial distribution was plagued by speculative business practices, an excessive number of intermediaries, price manipulation by domestic and foreign monopolies and oligopolies, and extortionate lending to farmers by intermediaries.¹³⁵

To a certain extent, these conditions were a consequence of government neglect of the agricultural sector. For example, commercial intermediaries were able to exploit farmers due to the scarcity of lending to agriculture. Lacking the ability to directly market their goods or secure loans from banks, a small-holder farmer would often turn to “an intermediary to obtain ... advances at extortionate interest, at lousy prices, submitting himself to the conditions of dependency that are imposed upon him.”¹³⁶ Although national economic policies had contributed to expanded urban employment opportunities, they had done little to alleviate unequal relationships between poor farmers and food distributors.

Beyond neglecting agriculture, the report further noted that a major reason for rising food prices was an imbalance between supply and demand created by the success of industrialization policies in expanding urban employment and wages. The increase in consumer demand for food was explained by the fact that:

[T]he liquid income generated by urban companies continues to remain around 50% of the national income, more than 2/3 of which is applied to the compensation of employees and administrators. Moreover, to this employment income should be added the growing purchasing power created by outlays for

¹³⁴ Ibid., iii-iv.

¹³⁵ Ibid., iv, 5-6.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 18.

salaries paid by the Public Sector in the large [urban] centers.¹³⁷

The authors observed that rural migration to the cities further hampered food production and contributed to a growing urban demand associated with a rapid increase in living standards from previous levels. Consequently, even though agricultural production outpaced population growth, it could not keep up with demand.¹³⁸

In addition to stimulating increased demand for food, the authors observed that many elements of ISI policies directly contributed to higher food prices. Sales taxes and taxes on rail and maritime transportation that helped to cover national budget deficits caused a considerable and cumulative increase in the price of foodstuffs as they were assessed in exchanges between intermediaries at every stage of the supply chain.¹³⁹

Differential currency exchange rates designed to increase the export prices of many agricultural commodities in order to earn foreign exchange reserves for capital goods imports “could not fail to influence the elevation of prices of these foodstuffs in the internal market.”¹⁴⁰ Similarly, while the importation and domestic production of mechanized agricultural equipment like tractors had resulted in some mechanization of agricultural production, this equipment was concentrated on large farms devoted to export crops where farm owners could both afford and efficiently employ expensive equipment. The study observed that large farms produced 60.8% of agricultural exports while smaller farmers, who had less access to credit or modern equipment, were

¹³⁷ Ibid., 5.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 4-5.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 6, 9.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 9.

responsible for 57.7% of agriculture destined for domestic consumption.¹⁴¹ Thus, although agricultural mechanization benefited from and helped to support ISI by expanding export crop production, mechanization exacerbated rural inequalities and had only a limited impact on food production for the domestic market.

The centerpiece of President Juscelino Kubitschek's five year development program (for 1956-1961), the “Plano de Metas” (Targets Plan), was the construction of a new national capital in the Central Plateau that would serve as a central hub connecting Brazil's regions with newly constructed highways. While the five year program only earmarked 2% of development funds for investment in agricultural production, 32% was earmarked for investments in transportation infrastructure.¹⁴² Kubitschek's administration perceived the new capital and highway system as a way to integrate the interior of Brazil with the nation's urban centers, thus expanding the market for manufactured goods and providing better access to food for urban populations and raw goods for industry.¹⁴³

This could have served as an opportunity to provide additional lands for smallholder farmers, as had occurred during Vargas's “Marcha para o Oeste” (March to the West) campaign to settle Brazil's interior in the early 1940s, but Vânia Maria Losada Moreira has observed that Kubitschek allowed rural elites to gain control of lands in the interior that were newly accessible due to highway construction.¹⁴⁴ Although the new highways put new land into agricultural production, the new fields were farther from

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 41.

¹⁴² Baer, *The Brazilian Economy*, 65.

¹⁴³ Vânia Maria Losada Moreira, “Os Anos JK: industrialização e modelo oligárquico de desenvolvimento rural” in *O Brasil Republicano* Vol. 3, organized by Jorge Ferreira and Lucília de Almeida Neves Delgado, 176. (Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 2003).

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 185.

major urban centers. As Werner Baer has observed, most of the increase in agricultural production in the postwar period came from new land distant from urban centers. Inefficiencies in transportation and marketing infrastructure led to the loss of as much as 20% of agricultural production.¹⁴⁵ Thus, although the new highway system contributed to increased agricultural production, it did not diminish rural socioeconomic inequalities and in the short term did not substantially diminish inefficiencies in food transportation and marketing.

Just as economic development policies displayed clear indications of regional concentration, national labor policies also favored workers in Brazil's urbanized south and southeast. The minimum salary was not evenly distributed across Brazil; it varied substantially from state to state and was highest in the cities of Rio and São Paulo. For example, from 1954 to 1956, the minimum salary in the city of Macapá, a smaller city on the Amazon River in what was then the federal territory of Amapá (which achieved statehood in 1988), was only 31.3% of the minimum salary in the city of Rio de Janeiro.¹⁴⁶ Policymakers justified this variation in minimum salaries based on higher costs of living, especially in the Rio-São Paulo axis. However, maintaining higher minimum salaries in urban centers ensured that the cost of living would remain higher there in the future, justifying continued wage disparities between the urbanized South and Southeast and the rest of Brazil that would ensure future rural-to-urban migration.

In addition to contributing to geographic disparities in income, minimum salary policy did not live up to populist principles established in the 1946 constitution. The

¹⁴⁵ Baer, *The Brazilian Economy*, 71.

¹⁴⁶ IBGE, *Anuário estatístico do Brasil*, vol. 34 (1973): 641.

constitution required that a minimum salary be sufficient to meet the needs of a worker and his or her family, but this principle was not applied in practice. Although laws since 1936 had provided for a small supplement to the minimum salary called the “family salary” to be added to a worker’s paycheck for each dependent child, this amount was never very substantial (equaling 5% of the minimum salary beginning in 1963) and did not provide for a dependent spouse. In practice, many workers were paid below the minimum salary and not all workers were protected by the CLT. These disparities were formalized in law and reflected a tacit political compromise between politicians representing urbanized regions and those representing rural elites willing to support industrialization projects and populist wage and labor policies so long as they did not dramatically increase the cost of rural labor or impinge on elite control over rural labor. Rural elites had successfully ensured that when the CLT was promulgated in 1943, rural workers were excluded from its protections and rural employers were not required to pay a minimum salary to workers.¹⁴⁷ Rural workers did not receive a minimum salary until Lei 4.214, passed during the administration of João Goulart in 1963, extended some basic labor protections to the countryside. Domestic workers, most of whom were women, were similarly excluded from receiving a minimum wage and were not covered by the CLT’s labor protections. Domestic workers only began to receive basic labor protections with Decreto nº 71.885 in 1973 and did not begin to receive a minimum salary until they were extended additional labor protections under the 1988 constitution.

The continuous stream of poorly educated, low-skill rural migrants moving to

¹⁴⁷ “Cidadania nos anos 50,” CPDOC, <http://cpdoc.fgv.br/producao/dossies/AEraVargas2/artigos/EleVoltou/CidadaniaAnos1950>, accessed 8/27/14.

Brazil's urban centers created a large pool of reserve labor that gave employers substantial leverage against employees in jobs like construction and domestic labor that required little training. While the law formalized unequal access to labor protections and the minimum salary, employers frequently ignored the CLT altogether, paying workers below the minimum salary. Although the CLT granted numerous protections to workers in theory, in practice, the law was not actively enforced. The disparity between the provisions of the law and its enforcement has led John French to conclude that the officials who drafted the CLT never intended that its promises would be kept and that workers' labor rights were only upheld when workers fought for them.¹⁴⁸ With the surplus of low-skilled labor created by rural migration to urban centers, many migrant women lacking a basic education or specialized skills took jobs as domestic laborers, often receiving meager wages. Between the workers formerly excluded from protection by the CLT and those whose employers ignored its provisions, 72.5% of the working population in Brazil in 1960 made less than the minimum salary.¹⁴⁹

Many provisions of the CLT were nominally designed to protect women workers but lax enforcement encouraged employers to flout the law. The widespread perception that income from women's labor might supplement but should not replace men's earnings facilitated employer's general practice of paying women less than men, and often less than the minimum salary. Although Art. 157 of the 1946 constitution prohibited a difference in salary between sexes "for the same work," Art. 5 of the 1943 CLT used a

¹⁴⁸ John French, *Afogados em leis: a CLT e a cultura política dos trabalhadores brasileiros* (São Paulo: Editora Fundação Perseu Abramo, 2001), 10.

¹⁴⁹ Paul Singer, "Interpretação do Brasil: uma experiência histórica de desenvolvimento" in *História Geral da Civilização Brasileira Vol.4: O Brasil Republicano*, org. Boris Fausto (São Paulo: Difusão Européia do Livro, 1984), 239.

looser definition, requiring equal salaries for work “of equal value.” This loose definition encouraged employers to create gendered divisions of labor to pay women workers less than men.¹⁵⁰ Additional clauses in the CLT, nominally designed to protect women from dangerous labor, effectively served to exclude women from higher-paying hazardous jobs and prohibited women from working night shifts in most occupations.¹⁵¹ Maternity leave requirements in the CLT made women employees less attractive to employers who did not want to pay potential mothers for time off.¹⁵²

Substantial increases to the minimum salary in the 1950s and early 1960s only narrowly benefitted those workers who either received the minimum salary or could otherwise expect their incomes to be adjusted upward for inflation. Getúlio Vargas instituted a substantial increase to the legal minimum salary in 1952, more than doubling the minimum salary in Rio de Janeiro and tripling it in São Paulo. However, this increase created intense inflationary pressures leading to several recurring increases in the minimum salary in attempts to compensate for inflation under Vargas and his populist successors prior to 1964. Subsequent increases further contributed to inflation which quickly eroded the value of nominal gains.¹⁵³

Although only a minority of workers received even a minimum salary or could expect that their salary would be adjusted to match inflation, everyone had to live with

¹⁵⁰ Maria Valéria Junho Pena, *Mulheres e trabalhadoras: Presença feminina na constituição do sistema fabril* (Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1981), 172.

¹⁵¹ Maria Izilda Matos and Andrea Borelli “Espaço feminino no mercado produtivo” in *Nova História das Mulheres no Brasil*, orgs. Carla B. Pinsky and Joanna M. Pedro (São Paulo: Editora Contexto, 2012): 141-142.

¹⁵² Pena, *Mulheres e trabalhadoras*, 172.

¹⁵³ Gustavo Gonzago and Danielle Carusi Machado, “Rendimentos e preços” in *Estatísticas do século XX* (Rio de Janeiro: Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística, 2006), unpaginated.

inflations' consequences. Similarly, while not all Brazilians benefitted from the development projects in Kubitschek's Targets Plan, the substantial public expenditures on the construction of Brasília and corresponding budget deficits increased inflation across the country.¹⁵⁴ The inflation rate fluctuated, but generally increased from 9.2% in 1950 to 27.1% in 1954 and 35.9% in 1959.¹⁵⁵ For consumers in Brazil's urban centers, the slow growth in food production and inefficient food distribution made inflation even worse. Based on food price inflation observed in August 1958, the report of the Conselho Coordenador do Abastecimento projected a 43% increase in food prices in the city of Rio de Janeiro from September 1958 to February 1959, far outstripping the overall inflation rate.¹⁵⁶

Substantial government economic coordination during the Second World War had created a precedent for government intervention in the economy to control prices and ration food to ensure that urban denizens received an adequate food supply.¹⁵⁷ In response to popular protests against inflation in the postwar period, populist politicians used existing legislation and agencies, and created new ones, to address the increasing cost of living. In practice, these agencies often proved reluctant to create or enforce price controls and incapable of ensuring both low prices and adequate food supplies for any

¹⁵⁴ The inflationary and broader economic effects of the construction of Brasília in the late 1950s has been examined at length by Emily Fay Story in her doctoral dissertation, "Constructing Development: Brasília and the Making of Modern Brazil," (Vanderbilt University, 2006).

¹⁵⁵ Baer, *The Brazilian Economy*, 410.

¹⁵⁶ Conselho Coordenador do Abastecimento, "Análise da conjuntura do abastecimento," 27.

¹⁵⁷ During the war, the Coordenação da Mobilização Econômica, the agency responsible for coordinating Brazil's wartime economy, intervened in agriculture and distribution to control food prices and supplies. "Coordenação da Mobilização Econômica," in *A Era Vargas: dos anos 20 a 1945*, FGV-CPDOC, <http://cpdoc.fgv.br/producao/dossies/AEraVargas/anos37-45/OBrasilNaGuerra/MobilizacaoEconomic>, accessed October 28, 2014.

appreciable amount of time. Indeed, food shortages were often the immediate result of any attempt to control food prices. Nonetheless, the very existence of legislation nominally tasked with controlling food prices provided popular organizations with moral standing to demand that the government fulfill its duties and also indicated specific agencies to which activists could direct their frustrations.

Tasked with managing household budgets and food preparation as part of their roles as housewives and mothers, women were particularly affected by food price inflation. Working-class women in low-skilled jobs such as those available in the textiles industry were also especially vulnerable to illegal employment practices. However, women's organizations and unions drew attention to the disparities that existed between populist rhetoric and economic reality and between the provisions of labor laws and common employer practices to demand that government officials address these apparent injustices. The problem of high rates of inflation in the prices of food and other basic consumer goods led both middle-class and working-class women with diverse political orientations to pressure local and national government officials to enact policies that would contain the cost of living.

Leftist Women's Organizations in the Fight against Carestia and Social Injustice

In the late 1940s and early 1950s, women's organizations affiliated with the political left in Rio de Janeiro organized a number of efforts to contain the cost of living, secure government programs to aid working-class and poor women, and highlight the unequal treatment of women in the law and at work. The most thorough examinations of these groups have focused on their ties to the Partido Comunista Brasileiro (the Brazilian

Communist Party, PCB).¹⁵⁸ It is clear that the PCB lent material and informal support to these organizations, that many of their leading members were also affiliated with the PCB or other elements of the political left, and that these organizations often promoted causes that were supported by the left. However, it would be a mistake to consider these feminine associations and women's neighborhood associations as solely feminine extensions of the political left. These organizations reached out to women of all classes to address the broader problems and concerns of urban women, not just those of the political left. Since these organizations were nominally non-partisan and organized campaigns that targeted a range of issues affecting women, they attracted the participation of women with diverse political orientations.¹⁵⁹

The intermittently-issued newspaper *O Momento Feminino*, launched in 1947, promoted the activities of Rio de Janeiro's feminine and neighborhood associations. This women's newspaper reflected the substantial participation of women associated with the PCB,¹⁶⁰ such as co-founder Arcelina Mochel, who in 1947 was elected to be a councilwoman in the Federal District on a PCB ticket.¹⁶¹ The participation of women

¹⁵⁸ Perhaps the most thorough examination to date of leftist women's participation in these organizations can be found in Elza Dely Veloso Macedo's doctoral dissertation "Ordem na casa e vamos à luta!: Movimento de mulheres: Rio de Janeiro, 1945-1964," Niteroi, Universidade Federal Fluminense, 2001.

¹⁵⁹ Rachel Soihet has observed that women of different social classes and political orientations participated in the feminine associations, but that the presence of communists in their ranks led opponents to brand all women participating in the associations as communists in order to justify police actions against their mobilizations following the outlawing of the Communist Party in 1947. See Soihet, "A conquista do espaço público," in Pinsky and Pedro, *Nova História das Mulheres no Brasil*, 229-231.

¹⁶⁰ Reflected in frequent reports on the activities of women's organizations in communist nations and in articles that praised social policies in the USSR, such as one titled "A Glorious Life: Stalin, emancipator of millions of women" ("Uma Vida Gloriosa: Stálin, emancipador de milhões de mulheres," *O Momento Feminino*, March-April, 1953, 12).

¹⁶¹ "Arcelina Mochel," Centro de Documentação e Memória Fundação Maurício Grabois, http://grabois.org.br/portal/cdm/revista.int.php?id_sessao=33&id_publicacao=27&id_indice=428, accessed September 12, 2014.

with ties to the PCB in *O Momento Feminino* was evident even after the PCB was banned in 1947 and politicians elected on a PCB ticket were removed from office in 1948. However, the paper also featured articles by women who were clearly not communists, such as Lígia Maria Lessa Bastos, also elected to the Federal District's legislature in 1947 as a member of the center-right União Democrática Nacional (National Democratic Union) party.

O Momento Feminino outlined public roles for women to address issues that affected them and their families. In an introduction to its first issue, Arcelina Mochel outlined the publication's goal to promote women's collaboration in "all the moments of national life" and to aid in "intellectual, political, and economic uplift in our homeland." The article called on women's public participation to address broad social problems such as illiteracy, hunger, infant mortality, and disease and to address those problems that particularly impacted women's lives. Of these carestia represented "women's greatest preoccupation; that is the culminating point of their organized struggle, because we all comprehend that it is necessary to overcome the calamitous transition the nation is going through."¹⁶² By focusing on problems, like carestia, that particularly affected women, the paper sought to motivate a broad cross-section of urban women to participate more actively in public life. The first issue also portrayed women taking positions of leadership on issues related to feminine gender roles by featuring interviews with four councilwomen in Rio de Janeiro (including Mochel and Bastos) in which they called for programs to contain the cost of food and housing and provide higher-quality primary

¹⁶² Arcelina Mochel, "Nossos Problemas," *O Momento Feminino*, 25 July, 1947, 1.

education.¹⁶³

O Momento Feminino argued that women's stewardship of their families' resources necessitated their active involvement in public life. Writers for the publication considered the identity and problems of the housewife to transcend class lines and portrayed married women in terms that were consistent with their traditional roles within families:

Amidst all the difficulties that the people go through, the housewife is the most burdened. It is almost always she who most directly faces the increasing cost of living, and the lines, performing miracles with husbands' diminished wages or salaries. It is the housewives who must care for providing food, clothing, and medicine for the entire family, confronting the shortage of milk, meat, schooling, and recreation for their children.¹⁶⁴

This rhetoric emphasized women's traditional roles as caretakers and custodians of the family budget to claim moral authority for women to participate in public debate. Presenting problems like carestia as universal to all women also helped the publication to recruit women of all classes to join campaigns that demanded government action to address these problems. In this way, the publication linked women's experiences within household economies to public campaigns to shape government policies.

Writers for *O Momento Feminino* devoted substantial and sustained attention to efforts to address the increasing cost of living in the nation's capital. Recurring articles on carestia highlighted how "women in general, and principally, housewives, are most affected, in these difficult times in which items of first necessity disappear, mysteriously, from the market."¹⁶⁵ Carestia, food shortages, and the existence of a black market where

¹⁶³ Maura de Sena Perena, "Falam as eleitas do povo," *O Momento Feminino*, 25, July 1947, 5-6.

¹⁶⁴ "Convite às donas de casa do Distrito Federal," *O Momento Feminino*, Number 56 (undated), 1949, 7.

¹⁶⁵ "Carestia," *O Momento Feminino*, 27 February, 1948, 3.

food circulated for prices far above official limits proved to be issues that effectively motivated women's organizations in Rio. Fighting carestia was the recurring goal of campaigns by recently-formed feminine associations in the Zona Sul neighborhoods of Catete, Flamengo, Laranjeiras, Glória, and Botafogo in the late 1940s. In February, 1948 these associations announced a campaign against carestia, calling on "all the women living in their neighborhoods" to "fight, united against carestia and the black market."¹⁶⁶

The feminine neighborhood associations moved quickly to pressure municipal and national government officials to more effectively contain the price of food. To commemorate Brazil's Dia da Mulher (Woman's Day), on March 8, 1948, the associations organized a large demonstration at Rio's municipal legislature, demanding lower prices for bread and meat. There, they received a sympathetic response from council members.¹⁶⁷ Later that month, members of the União Feminina de Botafogo and the União do Flamengo, Catete e Glória appeared as representatives of housewives in Rio de Janeiro at the Comissão de Agricultura da Câmara Municipal, where they met with council members and butchers' representatives. The women denounced the butchers for increasing prices and charging first-rate prices for second-rate meat. Their efforts achieved some success, leading council members to deny the butchers an official increase in meat prices. Some council members even declared their support for the nationalization of the meatpacking industry.¹⁶⁸

While *O Momento Feminino* gave Rio de Janeiro's municipal legislature

¹⁶⁶ "Apêlo das Uniões Femininas Flamengo, Catete e Olaria (sic) Botafogo e Laranjeiras Águas Férreas," *O Momento Feminino*, 27 February, 1948, 3.

¹⁶⁷ "Concentração de Mulheres na Camara Municipal: Manifestação contra a carestia de vida," *Correio da Manhã*, 9 March 1948, 16.

¹⁶⁸ "Carestia: Confessaram os Açougueiros," *O Momento Feminino*, 25 March 1948, 4.

favorable coverage for its initial responses to the feminine associations' pleas, the paper was much more critical of national agencies charged with regulating food prices. The paper accused the primary national agency then in charge of regulating prices, the Comissão Central de Preços (Central Price Commission; CCP) of "always serving the sharks¹⁶⁹ that make up the government." The paper failed to see how a newly created Comissão Interministerial de Preços (Inter-ministerial Price Commission) would be successful where other commissions had failed. "Before, we had the Coordination. Then the Supply Commission. Followed by the Central Price Commission[...] Despite so many commissions and replacements of those responsible, prices never stopped their upward march."¹⁷⁰ Portraying the commissions as failures reflected popular frustrations with the rising cost of living and allowed *O Momento Feminino* to highlight campaigns organized by Rio's feminine associations as an alternative to passive acceptance of new government initiatives.

O Momento Feminino also identified other problems that affected urban women and called for government action to address them. Articles frequently focused on the miserable conditions in which many mothers lived in Rio's favelas and profiled various feminine associations' efforts to organize women in favelas. For example, one article by Ana Montenegro described the lack of food and water in the Morro do Querosene¹⁷¹ and the inability for single mothers to obtain work so long as they had to care for their

¹⁶⁹ "Tubarões" was a term frequently used in the press to describe the wealthy and powerful who preyed upon the rest of the population. It was frequently applied to merchants involved in the supply of food and basic goods.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Not to be confused with the contemporary Morro do Querosene in São Paulo. The article indicated that this favela was located south of Estácio, between Centro and Tijuca in Rio de Janeiro.

children alone. Montenegro denounced “the authorities that criminally maintain them in revolting misery” and called on the women to “force these authorities, through unity and organization” to provide the favela with water and a childcare facility that would allow women to work.¹⁷² A later article profiled the efforts of the União Feminina de Catumbi to organize women in a nearby favela to oppose efforts to have the city government demolish the favela.¹⁷³ These efforts to reach out to Rio’s poorest women demonstrate that feminine neighborhood associations organized women across class lines to address a variety of problems that women faced on a daily basis.

Although writers for *O Momento Feminino* encouraged women to work, they did not challenge other contemporary standards of femininity or the notion that women should also continue to perform traditional duties as mothers and housewives. Indeed, much like contemporary mass-circulated magazines, *O Momento Feminino* featured recurring advice on women’s fashions and home economics topics from cooking recipes to home decoration tips. However, unlike other publications, this advice was often tailored to fit the budgets of women with limited means.

O Momento Feminino demonstrated a similar interest in identifying the difficulties facing Rio de Janeiro’s women textile workers. Articles frequently identified dangerous working conditions and poor pay for women textile workers. One such article identified these difficulties in its invitation for women textile workers to attend the Primeira Convenção Feminina do Distrito Federal: “[W]omen textile workers face an ever more difficult situation. They receive the tiniest salaries, while the owners’ profits

¹⁷² Ana Montenegro, “Morro do querosene,” *O Momento Feminino*, 16 January 1948, 4.

¹⁷³ “A Semana das associações femininas,” *O Momento Feminino*, 25 March, 1948, 4.

are immense. They work in unhealthy conditions, in an unhygienic environment that every day increases the number of the sick, principally those with tuberculosis.”¹⁷⁴

Subsequent articles discussed the particular problems of workers at the textile factories *Fabrica Confiança* and *Manufatura Fluminense*.¹⁷⁵ In profiling the problems of women textile workers and seeking their participation in conventions and campaigns organized by feminine neighborhood associations, *O Momento Feminino* established ties with women in Rio’s labor movement.

With the participation of both the feminine neighborhood associations and the Instituto Feminino para o Serviço Construtivo (Feminine Institute for Constructive Service), a feminist organization founded in 1946, the Primeira Convenção Feminina do Distrito Federal led to the creation of two new organizations, the Associação Feminina do Distrito Federal (Feminine Association of the Federal District, AFDF) and the Federação de Mulheres do Brasil (Women’s Federation of Brazil, FMB). The AFDF essentially united Rio’s various feminine neighborhood associations under a single banner and continued to advance their prior objectives of defending household economies, protecting children, and promoting world peace.¹⁷⁶ The FMB sought to represent women’s organizations throughout Brazil in national politics and at international forums such as the Women’s International Democratic Federation.¹⁷⁷ The FMB shared many of the AFDF’s goals. Both organizations were influenced by the participation of women

¹⁷⁴ “Convite às tecelãs Cariocas,” *O Momento Feminino*, Number 56, 1949, 6.

¹⁷⁵ Raquel Lobo, “Com as 1.683 mulheres da Fabrica Confiança,” *O Momento Feminino*, Number 56, 1949, 11; “Conversamos com as operarias da Manufatura Fluminense,” *O Momento Feminino*, 30 August 1949, 13.

¹⁷⁶ Macedo, “Ordem na Casa,” 165-166.

¹⁷⁷ Soihet, “A Conquista do Espaço Público,” 230-231.

associated with the Brazilian Communist Party, but the FMB's leadership was also composed of women with nationalist and center-right political affiliations.¹⁷⁸

The activities of Rio's feminine associations narrowed and began to taper off beginning in the early 1950s. This may in part have been due to authorities clamping down on women's protests. In contrast with the municipal government of Rio's prior warm reception of feminine neighborhood associations, when the Associação Feminina do Distrito Federal gathered to protest the increasing cost of milk in October, 1949, they were dispersed by police who categorized them as subversives.¹⁷⁹ In the same month, Alice Tibiriça, president of the FMB, was arrested along with five other women after police prohibited a roundtable meeting against carestia and sprayed participants with fire hoses.¹⁸⁰ This suppression of women's open protest against ineffective or non-existent government efforts to contain food prices reflected the rising tide of labor suppression and anti-communism during the second half of the Dutra administration.¹⁸¹

In the early 1950s, *O Momento Feminino* and the AFDF substantially shifted their priorities, devoting less attention to the issue of carestia and emphasizing public declarations of support for world peace. This may have been in part due to police suppression of the organizations' public protests against carestia in 1949, or may reflect a willingness to give Getúlio Vargas' attempts to address food prices in the early 1950s a chance to work. More clearly, these organizations shifted their efforts to increase public

¹⁷⁸ Macedo, "Ordem na Casa," 204-205.

¹⁷⁹ "A Polícia impediu a concentração das donas de casa," *O Momento Feminino*, 30 October 1949, 5.

¹⁸⁰ "D. Alice Tibiriça, vítima de arbitrariedades em S. Paulo," *O Momento Feminino*, 30 October 1949, 12.

¹⁸¹ For more on police repression of labor and the political left in the late 1940s, see John French, *The Brazilian Workers' ABC: Class Conflict and Alliances in Modern São Paulo* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), Chapter 9.

opposition to the possibility that Brazil might participate in the Korean War, which broke out in June 1950. While the issue of World Peace may have motivated these organization's leftist activists and was consistent with sentiments expressed in international conventions of women's organizations, pacifism appears to have animated less popular involvement than the fight against carestia had in previous years.

The FMB remained active in protests against carestia and often coordinated with union protests in the early 1950s. Notably, the organization played a key role in mobilizing women's participation in the 1953 *Passeata da Panela Vazia*, a large protest against carestia that preceded the *Greve dos 300 mil* (Strike of the 300 Thousand) in São Paulo.¹⁸² However, the FMB also appears to have shifted its priorities toward other issues by the mid-1950s. *O Momento Feminino* began to publish less and less frequently, petering out in the mid-1950s as the AFDF and FMB became less influential in popular politics. Although these organizations became less relevant to debates about carestia, others took their place in the 1950s.

Many Agencies, Not Enough Food: The Politics of Food Supply and Prices

Rio de Janeiro's feminine neighborhood associations were not the only women's organizations in Brazil's second-largest city engaged in public campaigns against carestia. The *Associação das Donas de Casa* (Association of Housewives, ADC) also played a prominent role in protests against carestia in Rio de Janeiro. Unlike the leaders of the various feminine neighborhood associations or the editors of *O Momento Feminino*, the members of the Association of Housewives did not demonstrate any apparent ties or support for leftist political organizations like the Communist Party.

¹⁸² Céli Regina Jardim Pinto, *Uma história do feminismo no Brasil* (São Paulo: Editora Fundação Perseu Abramo, 2003), 44.

Founded in 1944, the ADC cooperated with government efforts to distribute milk, lard, fabric, and other basic supplies toward the end of the Second World War.¹⁸³ The association engaged in a number of campaigns against carestia in the 1950s, many of them targeting the actions of various government agencies designed to address the problem of food price inflation and food shortages. An alphabet soup of various local and national agencies were tasked with addressing the problem of carestia, giving the association a number of avenues to pursue its agenda.

The Comissão Central de Preços was the primary organization of the national government tasked with containing the price of basic goods in the 1940s. In addition to this organization, the Serviço de Alimentação da Previdência Social (Social Welfare Food Service, SAPS), founded in 1940, distributed information on basic food nutrition and operated discounted restaurants for workers and their families in cities throughout Brazil.¹⁸⁴ In 1951, with the approval and financial support of the federal government, the municipal government of the federal district provided for the construction of a new refrigerated food storage facility and provided funds that would expand the activities of SAPS in Rio de Janeiro to include providing small merchants with low-cost food, and direct sale of inexpensive food to the public at SAPS booths and food posts.¹⁸⁵ Beyond these two national government organizations, by the late 1940s, a number of other municipal, state, and national commissions also addressed the availability or cost of food

¹⁸³ “Decidido Concurso na Luta Contra a Carestia da Vida,” *Última Hora*, 4 August 1955, 10.

¹⁸⁴ Ana Maria da Costa Evangelista, “O Serviço de Alimentação da Previdência Social: Trabalhadores e políticas públicas de alimentação (1940-1967),” XIV Encontro Regional da ANPUH-RIO, 2010. http://www.encontro2010.rj.anpuh.org/resources/anais/8/1277294268_ARQUIVO_ResumoetextoANPUH2010OServicodeAlimentacaodaPrevidenciaSocial_SalvoAutomaticamente_.pdf Accessed 9/20/14.

¹⁸⁵ Jesus Soares Pereira, “Defesa contra a escassez e a especulação,” *Voz Trabalhista*, JSP Pereira, J.S. 1951.06/3, CPDOC.

in some manner.

Like the writers at *O Momento Feminino*, in late 1951, the Association of Housewives highlighted the government's failure to enact policies that would ensure that housewives could acquire food for their families at affordable prices. The organization criticized the Comissão Central de Preços, and the other various organizations tasked with ensuring an affordable food supply, for their apparent failure to contain the cost of food and other basic goods. Nini Miranda, the founder and leader of the ADC, called for the consolidation into a single agency of "all the government departments that address the feeding of the people, SAPS, CCP, Comissão Local de Preços, Departamento de Abastecimentos da PDF,¹⁸⁶ Delegacia de Economia Popular, all these departments addressing the vital problem, and the food does not appear!" Miranda proposed that such an agency should cut out intermediaries, directly selling small-holder farmers' produce to consumers. She also asked that recently-elected President Getúlio Vargas replace ineffective men in his government.¹⁸⁷ In this way, Miranda directly linked the president's decisions to the welfare of urban households.

In response to public criticisms of the government's failure to ensure adequate food supplies or contain food price inflation, Vargas issued Decreto Lei 1.522 on 26 December 1951, which created the Comissão Federal de Abastecimento e Preços (COFAP), replacing the CCP. In addition to transferring the CCP's mandate to establish price controls on food and basic consumer goods to COFAP, the law granted COFAP the authority to directly purchase goods from producers and sell them to the

¹⁸⁶ Polícia do Distrito Federal, the police of the federal district (the city of Rio de Janeiro).

¹⁸⁷ "Apelo Sentido das Donas de Casa: Mobilização de Todos os Recursos Para Resolver o Abastecimento" *Última Hora*, 29 November 1951, 2.

public. In this respect, the creation of COFAP responded to the ADC's desire for direct government intervention in the economy to supply food at affordable prices. However, COFAP did not replace agencies beyond the CCP and the new law created state-level and municipal-level commissions (COAAPS and COMAPS, respectively) to coordinate with COFAP. Despite its legal mandate, COFAP would come under frequent criticism from the ADC and the press for its apparent failure to ensure an adequate food supply at affordable prices.

The Association of Housewives eventually became one of the biggest critics of COFAP actions. In November, 1953, the new president of the ADC, Yayá Silveira, observed that the commission had done some good things for consumers, like providing low-cost food stalls, but she decried the COFAP's decision to increase the list price for milk by 40% as a threat to the diets of children and the elderly.¹⁸⁸ In January 1955, when the president of COFAP was unreceptive to the ADC's concerns about the price of meat in a phone call with Silveira, she responded in the press: "Now, if the president of COFAP allows himself to be a prisoner of the occult forces that threaten to leave the City without meat if their interests in higher prices are not met, logically, we have to open a second front in the carestia battle." The ADC launched a campaign calling on housewives to buy as little meat as possible as a way to suppress demand and force prices lower. In this way, the association sought to harness housewives' collective economic power to affect market prices and pressure the government to change its policies. The Rio de Janeiro newspaper *Última Hora* portrayed this campaign as a war on the president of

¹⁸⁸ "Na COFAP Hoje o Aumento de 40% no Preço do Leite," *Última Hora*, 5 November 1953, 2.

COFAP.¹⁸⁹

COFAP's inability to ensure adequate supplies of meat at controlled prices reflected the national government's economic prioritization of industrial development over investment in food production and distribution. While the commission could attempt to set price controls for food and make limited interventions to directly purchase and resell food, such efforts could not compensate for the structural deficiencies of Brazil's food distribution network and underinvestment in food production near urban centers. Establishing price controls in cities did not make food less expensive to produce or transport. Instead, controls generally led to long lines at SAPS and COFAP distribution centers and food shortages everywhere else as merchants refused to sell products for prices below their cost of replacement. Among many letters and telegrams addressed to Vargas concerning COFAP, a 1954 letter from the organization representing meatpackers in São Paulo demonstrated this problem. The meatpackers complained that the commission had raised controlled prices for cattle without raising the sales price of butchered meat and that even after the increased price for cattle, raw meat could not be obtained at the controlled prices. Consequently, the meatpackers disregarded the regulations, purchasing and reselling meat above the prices established by COFAP.¹⁹⁰

Economic planners within the presidential administration recognized the limited efficacy of government attempts to control food prices. In 1958, the Conselho Coordenador do Abastecimento recognized that the government could not effectively maintain price controls for extended periods and acknowledged that the controls

¹⁸⁹ "As Donas de Casa Declaram Guerra ao General," *Última Hora*, 6 January 1955, 3.

¹⁹⁰ Letter to Vargas from the Sindicato da Indústria do Frio, 7 August 1954, OA cp 1954.08.07 (F575-581), CPDOC.

contributed to food shortages. “In effect, the freezing of retail prices prevents merchants from raising prices to the so-called ‘cost of replacement’ [...] [O]bviously, the retailer seeks to obtain profits at least equivalent to those previously obtained.” Failing to earn these profits because of price controls, merchants withheld goods to force the government to revise or remove the controls: “[T]he merchant cancels sales, hides stock or results to the ‘lockout,’¹⁹¹ in this way drastically reducing supply and forcing revisions to the [controlled price list], to avoid the more prejudicial practices of the black market and to avoid rationed consumption, [which is] difficult to establish if not in a war economy.”¹⁹² Price controls were much more difficult to maintain in a nominally democratic society with a market economy in the postwar era than under Brazil’s authoritarian government during the Second World War. Government officials, faced with popular demands that they intervene in the economy to control prices as the national government had during the Second World War, were also aware that consumers would not tolerate rationing. They instead prioritized delivering economic growth through industrialization over combating inflation. However, consumers, and women in particular, were not content to silently pay the price for industrial development as the cost of living in urban centers continued its inexorable rise.

Women were not only among the most vocal critics of government agencies like SAPS and COFAP, they were also widely perceived by both the government and the media to be the primary consumers of these agencies’ services. This was revealed in articles covering carestia, but also in cartoons such as the one discussed at this chapter’s

¹⁹¹ The practice of closing shop, or “locking” customers out, to retain stocked products in the hopes of selling them later at a higher price.

¹⁹² Conselho Coordenador do Abastecimento, “Análise da conjuntura do abastecimento,” 27.

opening. The government agencies tasked with addressing carestia also regularly framed their efforts as benefitting families in general and housewives in particular. For example, a 1954 advertisement for a SAPS supermarket clearly indicated that housewives, symbolized by a woman with a shopping cart, were the primary consumers at its stores.¹⁹³ The perception that women were the primary consumers to interact with government food providers on behalf of their families provided women with the authority to demand that these agencies meet their needs for affordable food. This perception also allowed some housewives to obtain the status of popular heroes in their efforts to combat carestia.

Media coverage of the ADC's activities by publications such as *Última Hora* raised the organization's profile and turned its leader, Silveira, into a minor celebrity. Run by Samuel Wainer, *Última Hora* was a Rio daily that favored left-wing politicians and labor, and provided favorable coverage for the association. One *Última Hora* article in 1952 observed that the ADC operated one of the few agencies for domestic workers in Rio de Janeiro that ensured that they were treated ethically and not exploited.¹⁹⁴ Another article from the paper noted that in addition to its efforts to combat carestia, the association provided subsidized housing in a moral environment and medical assistance for 70 single women so that they could pursue work.¹⁹⁵ *Última Hora* also covered the ADC's creation and operation of its own food cooperatives to provide food at lower

¹⁹³ "Supermercado do SAPS" advertisement, *Manchete*, 11 September, 1954, 46.

¹⁹⁴ Edmar Morel, "120,000 Serviçais Exploradas Por Verdadeiras Quadrilhas e Agravando os Problemas Diários Das Donas de Casas" *Última Hora*, 21 January 1952, 8. The advertisement can be located in a digital copy of *O Cruzeiro* at the Biblioteca Nacional's Hemeroteca Digital via this link: <http://memoria.bn.br/DocReader/docreader.aspx?bib=386030&PagFis=48802>

¹⁹⁵ "Decidido Concurso na Luta Contra a Carestia da Vida," *Última Hora*, 4 August 1955, 10.

prices in the northern zone of Rio de Janeiro.¹⁹⁶ The coverage of these programs indicated that the ADC primarily identified itself as an organization of middle-class housewives that provided services such as food cooperatives and domestic worker recruitment to housewives, but was also concerned with the welfare of poor, single women who had recently arrived in Rio de Janeiro and were vulnerable to sexual and economic exploitation. Favorable coverage of the ADC's activities raised Yayá Silveira's profile to the status of an icon among consumers and housewives, leading the coffee brand Café Palheta to seek Silveira and the association's endorsement in a 1958 advertisement.¹⁹⁷ The ad featured Silveira representing coffee consumers' interests alongside sketches of a white housewife and her Afro-Brazilian maid, reflecting the ADC's symbolic status at the intersection between labor and consumption within the domestic economy.

Although the ADC complained of being shut out of COFAP decision-making in 1955, the national government grew more willing to listen to the association and the ADC was able to influence Rio de Janeiro's municipal government in the late 1950s. In a December 1958 meeting with the Ministro de Trabalho and the president of COFAP, Silveira suggested the creation of a feminine police force under COFAP to monitor the sale of food to ensure that price controls were obeyed and consumers were not defrauded. Silveira invoked women's roles as housewives and a traditional gendered division of labor within marriage to justify her proposal. According to Silveira, the woman working for COFAP would act "in defense of the economy of heads of families. Every feminine inspector will be, before anything else, a housewife attentive to families' nutritional

¹⁹⁶ "Cooperativas das Donas de Casa Para Combater os Especuladores," *Última Hora*, 29 February 1952, 2.

¹⁹⁷ "Aos consumidores e revendedores de Café Palheta" advertisement, *Última Hora*, 23 June 1958, 5.

problems.”¹⁹⁸ Although COFAP did not create such a force, the police in Rio de Janeiro were more receptive to Silveira’s proposals. After an August 1959 meeting with the ADC, Rio’s chief of police announced that 40 police would coordinate with housewives to fight crimes against the “Popular Economy.” Housewives would keep an eye out for fraud, violations of price controls, and exploitation of minors in Rio’s open-air markets and other commercial establishments and report these crimes to police for a rapid response.¹⁹⁹

The Association of Housewives’ campaign to police price controls in 1958 and 1959 reflected increased popular concern with rapidly increasing food prices. Midway through Juscelino Kubitschek’s presidency, inflation began to increase rapidly in 1958. Increases in public transit fares led to violent protests in the states of São Paulo, Rio Grande do Sul, Santa Catarina, Minas Gerais, and Ceará in October and November of that year, leading Kubitschek to announce new price controls.²⁰⁰ As many historians studying the labor movement in São Paulo have observed, carestia featured prominently in union-organized street protests in 1958 and 1959.²⁰¹ However, concerns about carestia were not limited to the working class or São Paulo. Inflation in the cost of living was widely covered in newspapers and magazines as an issue affecting all consumers. In March, 1959, *Manchete* observed that the price controls that Kubitschek had sought had largely failed to contain the cost of food. The cost of flour had increased 59% and bread 42% in four months, leading the magazine to observe that the “social cataclysm” of

¹⁹⁸ “Donas de Casa Vão Virar Polícia e Fiscalizar o Comércio de Gêneros,” *Última Hora*, 20 December 1958, 11.

¹⁹⁹ “Donas-de-Casa e Polícia: Campanha Contra Exploração Nas Feiras,” *Última Hora*, 6 August 1959, 2.

²⁰⁰ “Agitação bate à porta de JK,” *Manchete*, 6 December, 1958, 8.

²⁰¹ For a recent analysis of union-organized protests against carestia, see Leal, *A Reinvenção da classe trabalhadora*, Chapter 5.

increasing food prices threatened to derail government development plans by bringing “instability and unrest to a Government full of goals.” Criticism of the government’s failure to contain food prices came from all quarters:

Pronouncements and warnings are not lacking. In commissions or in the mail, they arrive daily to Catete Palace or the Ministry of Labor—in petitions, in letters, in telegrams, in manifestos signed by union leaders, by housewife associations, by student leaders, or by representatives of commerce and industry, by civil and military leaders and, lately, even by candidates to the Presidency of the Republic in 1960.²⁰²

This broad spectrum of dissatisfaction stemmed from the widely-felt consequences of inflation on family budgets.

Newspapers and magazines revealed a public consensus that housewives bore the brunt of inflation’s negative consequences and had a vested interest in addressing the problem. In August, 1959, *Manchete* reproduced the spirit of countless conversations among women waiting in lines across the nation. A fictional account of four housewives arguing about food prices, shortages, fraud, and government failures featured a cigarette-smoking Frenchwoman who complained that Rio was nothing like she had imagined it: “I am in Rio de Janeiro, which I saw for the first time in a Walt Disney film, full of marvelous colors. That Walt Disney, to me, is the biggest trickster in the world.”²⁰³ An October article made the point more explicit “The man makes the money, but the woman is the one who parcels it out. That being so, the problem with prices is more important to the woman than the man. Consequently, the housewife is the one who should govern the

²⁰² “Objetivo da ‘Operação Contenção’: fazer o que o decreto de congelamento não fez ha quatro meses,” *Manchete*, 14 March 1959, 10.

²⁰³ “As primeiras reações são diferentes, mas o desânimo e a revolta crescem igualmente em tôdas as donas-de-casa,” *Manchete*, 29 August 1959, 12.

cost of living.”²⁰⁴ Many women shared this sentiment and demanded that they play a direct role in the agencies that set food prices.

In addition to the ADC’s attempts to be involved in policing the enforcement of price controls in Rio de Janeiro, housewives attempted to become more directly involved in broader campaigns against carestia. In São Paulo in 1959, the ADC cooperated with the Pacto de Unidade Intersindical (Pact of Inter-union Unity) in marches, protests, and assemblies in a campaign to contain the cost of living.²⁰⁵ In October 1959, as participants in the Frente Popular Contra a Carestia (Popular Front against Carestia) and in partnership with the Confederação Nacional dos Tabalhadores na Indústria (National Confederation of Workers in Industry), housewives demanded that they, along with student and union representatives, be included in the leadership of COFAP.²⁰⁶ While these efforts were unsuccessful in placing housewives at the helm of COFAP, the female mayor of São Leopoldo, a city in Rio Grande do Sul with a population of 80,000 inhabitants, thought it was a good idea. She packed the city’s seven-member COMAP with six housewives to bring a feminine perspective to the coordination of price controls and food supplies in the city. The decision received broad popular support.²⁰⁷

Stories about the middle-class housewives of the ADC replaced those about leftist feminine associations in Rio’s newspapers in the 1950s. Like the feminine associations, the ADC used rhetoric that emphasized women’s roles as their families’ traditional

²⁰⁴ Erno Schneider, “A COFAP de Saias,” *Manchete*, Oct 7 1959, 58.

²⁰⁵ “Trabalhadores Vão Lutar Contra os ‘Tubarões’: Planos em Estudos,” *Última Hora*, 15 August, 1959, 8.

²⁰⁶ “Travada a Batalha Contra a Carestia: Operários, Estudantes e Donas de Casa no Conselho da COFAP,” *Última Hora*, 15 October 1959, 1º Caderno, 9.

²⁰⁷ Erno Schneider, “A COFAP de Saias,” *Manchete*, Oct 7 1959, 58-60.

economic custodians to press local and national government officials to control the price and supply of food. Although the ADC did not seek to directly mobilize working-class women in the manner that the feminine neighborhood associations had, women affiliation with labor unions independently made similar demands.

Women's Concerns in the Labor Movement

Women made up a substantial portion of the urban workforce in some industrial sectors such as textiles. Joel Wolfe has observed that women played important roles in industrial work councils in São Paulo in the 1950s.²⁰⁸ However, union leadership continued to be dominated by men in the 1940 and 1950s. With occasional exceptions in industries, such as textiles, where women made up the majority of workers, male dominance within unions generally resulted in giving women's complaints about workplace gender discrimination a lower priority than broader demands for wage increases and improved labor conditions. Nonetheless, women began exercising a more vocal role in organized labor in the mid to late 1950s to demand that labor campaigns address issues affecting women workers. They also took prominent roles in union campaigns against carestia.

In 1956, women from national and international union organizations and the Federação das Mulheres do Brasil organized and convened the Conferência Nacional de Trabalhadoras in Rio de Janeiro. The three day conference was attended heavily by members of textiles unions from Rio and São Paulo. The two principal themes of the conference were to and address the complaints of urban and rural women workers and to promote the "effective participation of women workers in the life and activity of their

²⁰⁸ See Wolfe, *Working Women, Working Men*.

respective organizations.”²⁰⁹

In elaborating the first theme, Yolanda Pincigher Silva, a conference organizer and international textiles union representative, observed that the legal equality and labor protections afforded to women workers by the 1946 constitution and the CLT were largely ignored by employers. She observed that employers exploited a gendered division of labor that devalued women’s labor. Employers “look for ways to circumvent the law and pay women less, based on the realization of a subtle propaganda campaign in which feminine labor appears as complementary labor. [...] A tendency also arises to develop specialized jobs in which only women work. They are the textile workers, primary school professors, office employees, saleswomen, etc., who always receive a salary that is less than a man’s.”²¹⁰ Women union participants were clearly aware of the forms of gender discrimination that employers practiced to pay women less than men.

The conference participants identified collective action through unions as the best means to address problems facing women workers. The conference outlined a number of objectives that labor unions should pursue including: equal pay for equal work as prescribed by the constitution, an increase to the minimum salary, respect for laws protecting pregnant women, guarantees against dismissal for pregnant women, a maternity remittance equal to one month’s minimum salary, full retirement benefits for women after 25 years of service or after attaining the age of 45, the installation of childcare facilities in large workplaces and worker neighborhoods, and a campaign

²⁰⁹ *Documentos: Conferência Nacional de Trabalhadoras*, Rio de Janeiro May 18-20, 1956, Arquivo Edgard Leuenroth, UNICAMP, 2.

²¹⁰ Yolanda Pincigher Silva, “Direitos e Reivindicações das Trabalhadoras das Cidades e dos Campos,” *Conferência Nacional de Trabalhadoras*, 5.

against carestia.²¹¹ Several of these objectives addressed employer practices that discriminated against elderly, married, or pregnant women. The calls to raise the minimum salary and combat carestia reflected these women's daily struggle to provide for their families in the face of wages that did not keep up with the rapidly increasing cost of living.

In her discussion of the second theme of the conference, Creuza de Souza Moura, an Afro-Brazilian representative of the textiles union federation in the state of Rio de Janeiro, stressed that recruiting women into the labor movement and increasing their active participation in unions was the key to addressing the problems that women workers faced. Moura observed that women's participation had been critical in recent labor initiatives: women made up 59% of all textile workers and women workers played prominent public roles in campaigns against carestia.²¹²

However, to increase their participation in the labor movement, a systematic campaign to recruit and organize women was needed.²¹³ Moura proposed the creation of feminine departments within unions as an effective approach to increase women's recruitment and participation in union leadership:

These Feminine Departments should have as their defined objective to study women workers' demands and bring them to the union directorship and general assemblies, so that they become a battle flag for the entire organization, promoting, in this way, unionization.

Such Departments, structured within union organizations, constitute an element of reinforcement for them. They will be the instruments capable of attending the particular situation of women workers who face difficulties organizing themselves, as they depart quickly from factories and offices to attend to their

²¹¹ "Resolução Geral," *Conferência Nacional de Trabalhadoras*, 22-23.

²¹² Creuza de Moura, "Participação efetiva das trabalhadoras na vida e na atividade de suas respectivas organizações," *Conferência Nacional de Trabalhadoras*, 15-16, 18.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, 19.

domestic affairs.²¹⁴

Moura observed that feminine departments could meet at hours compatible with women's domestic duties.²¹⁵ Like the writers for *O Momento Feminino*, women union organizers sought to increase women's participation in organized labor and public debate, but did not challenge traditional gendered divisions of labor within families, seeking instead to accommodate women's domestic labor.

Following the conference, women's union participation and concerns began to receive greater attention in *O Trabalhador Textil*, the newspaper for the largest textile union in Brazil, the Sindicato dos Trabalhadores na Indústria de Fiação e Tecelagem de São Paulo. For example, the December 1957 edition featured an article in which a woman recalled her earlier participation in a strike, another that described a woman's successful lawsuit before a labor court that compensated her for being illegally fired, another explaining provisions in the CLT protecting pregnant workers, and a list of rights granted by the CLT to women workers.²¹⁶

In January 1958, the union leadership invited women to participate in the formation of a Feminine Department, indicating that the Rio conference had influenced the union.²¹⁷ In February, the department was installed and its leadership elected. While supposedly designed to address women workers' problems—in the words of *O Trabalhador Textil*, “organizing the beautiful sex, bringing it to the union headquarters in

²¹⁴ Ibid., 20.

²¹⁵ Ibid., 20.

²¹⁶ “Recordando,” “Sobre as listas para não trabalhar,” “Em defesa da gestante,” “Direitos da trabalhadora,” *O Trabalhador Textil*, December 1957, 2, 3, 6. . Arquivo Edgard Leuenroth, UNICAMP.

²¹⁷ “Convite,” *O Trabalhador Textil*, January 1958, 6.

order to discuss its problems”²¹⁸—it was clear from its founding that the department would play a minor role in union decisions and would serve primarily as a recreational organization for working women and wives of union members. The inaugural ceremony featured live performances, a prize drawing for a doll created by the union’s sewing instructor, a cocktail reception, and a dance, with festivities sponsored by food and beverage companies such as Brahma, Coca-Cola, and Rum Montilla. *O Trabalhador Textil* described the department’s recreational objectives to “improve [women’s] spiritual and physical health, and provide distraction and happiness to young women textile workers tired by daily toil, exploited in their work, receiving miserable salaries that make other forms of distraction impossible.”²¹⁹ Aside from organizing a conference for women interested in learning psychological methods to experience “birth without pain,”²²⁰ the department’s most notable subsequent activity observed by *O Trabalhador Textil* was the organization of another ceremony, cocktail reception, and children’s ballet performance at the department’s next election in April, 1960.²²¹ The paper did not identify any instances of the department playing a significant role in union decisions.

The department’s low profile did not indicate that the union was uninterested in women’s problems or recruiting women to join the union. It appears more likely that the department’s emphasis on recreation was intended to address obstacles that union leaders encountered in recruiting women by providing a recreational incentive for women’s

²¹⁸ “Departamento Feminino,” *O Trabalhador Textil*, February 1958, 8.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²²⁰ Hilda Faura de Oliveira, “Conferência sobre o ‘Parto sem dor,’” *O Trabalhador Textil*, September 1959, 5.

²²¹ “Festividades no Sindicato,” *O Trabalhador Textil*, March 1960, 2.

participation in union activities. Luís Firmino de Lima, Secretary of the Federação dos Texteis do Estado de São Paulo in 1958 and President of the Sindicato dos Trabalhadores na Industria de Fiação e Tecelagem de São Paulo beginning in October 1959, wrote several articles over the course of 1958 and 1959 addressing the problems that women workers faced in the textiles industry and calling for their increased participation in the union.

In February 1958, de Lima outlined what he perceived to be the causes of women's meager participation in unions: union leaders did not dedicate enough attention to demands specific to women. Labor activists underestimated women's capacity to assume active roles within unions. Once women joined a union, they often suffered an inferiority complex that prevented them from being more active in the union. Union leaders, insensitive to women's domestic duties, often overburdened relatively inexperienced women activists with obligations, leading them to quit the union.²²² This combination of obstacles thoroughly depressed women's participation in union leadership. In the 1959 First Convention of Textile Workers in the State of São Paulo, a convention of unions from an industry in which women were a majority of workers, only 25 out of 221 delegates were women.²²³

De Lima expressed his frustration with difficulty in recruiting women in a front page article in October 1959 and identified women's internalization of conservative gender roles as the main impediment to joining a union. "This happens because women do not seek to know their rights and only know their duties." After expressing his

²²² Luís Firmino de Lima, "As Mulheres e os sindicatos," *O Trabalhador Textil*, February 1958, 9.

²²³ "Dados Estatísticos da I Convenção dos Trabalhadores Texteis do Estado de São Paulo," *O Trabalhador Textil*, March 1959, 7.

frustration with young women's preference for reading romantic fiction magazines over union participation, he further explained:

Often in conversation with girls at the factory gates and upon inviting them to go to the Union and join it, I hear some of them say that their parents do not let them go; others allege that their fiancée prohibits it, and so forth. Married women are another example. When invited to become Union members, the majority say that they cannot, because they need to prepare food, wash clothing, attend to the children, that they live far away, that their husband does not want them to go to the Union.²²⁴

Clearly, women's commitment to domestic roles inhibited their willingness to join the union, as did the opinions of their parents and male partners, whether out of general social conservatism or out of fear of the sexual dangers that an unaccompanied woman might be exposed to at the union hall.

Despite women's limited participation in the textiles union, *O Trabalhador Textil* nonetheless revealed a broadening of textile union efforts to address problems facing women workers in the late 1950s. Although the participation of women delegates was limited, the 1959 First Convention of Textile Workers in the State of São Paulo outlined demands for employment stability for pregnant women and guarantees for women's labor rights.²²⁵ The 1959 First National Congress of Textile Workers also outlined demands specifically related to women's labor: employment stability for pregnant women, compensatory pay if a workplace did not maintain childcare facilities, paid leave for mothers to care for sick children, and limiting the length of women's workdays to six hours.²²⁶ In addition, in the late 1950s, numerous articles in *O Trabalhador Textil* noted

²²⁴ Luís Firmino de Lima, "Os Direitos das mulheres e o sindicato," *O Trabalhador Textil*, October 1958, 1.

²²⁵ "Trabalhadores Texteis," *O Trabalhador Textil*, January 1959, 8.

²²⁶ "Importantes teses serão apresentadas ao Primeiro Congresso Nacional dos Trabalhadores Texteis," *O Trabalhador Textil*, March 1959, 2.

demands for women's early retirement or equal pay, while others featured women participating in strikes or lawsuits against employers.

Although women's participation in urban union leadership was limited in the 1950s, women nonetheless played prominent roles in union protests against carestia and were able to influence textiles unions to more directly address problems facing women workers. Both public protests against carestia and union demands for better treatment of women workers reflected a shared rhetoric that reforms were needed to allow working women to fulfill their obligations as mothers and housewives. Although union leaders sometimes identified traditional gender norms as an impediment to recruiting women to join unions, they based their demands for better treatment of women workers on ensuring their ability to perform feminine gender roles. These demands nonetheless sought to improve pay and working conditions for women, who were vulnerable to unfair labor practices.

Conclusion

Although elites in the postwar period promised Brazilians improved standards of living through industrial development, in practice, the benefits of development were narrowly concentrated. Developmentalist economic policies and Brazilian labor laws contributed to heightened inequalities between regions, between rural and urban workers, and between male and female employees. Economic policies that prioritized industrialization in the urban South and Southeast over developing Brazil's food supply and food distribution infrastructure, contributed to rural-to-urban migration and rapid food price inflation.

In the postwar republic, many women demonstrated that they were not content to

accept workplace inequality or difficulties feeding their families. Through a variety of organizations, women of diverse backgrounds highlighted apparent disparities between populist rhetoric of egalitarian prosperity and the realities of social inequality and household economic difficulties to demand change from government officials. Women invoked their moral authority as mothers and housewives to take prominent roles in protest movements against carestia and unequal treatment of women workers. These efforts met with limited success, demonstrating these women's ability to influence government policy.

Government officials reacted to popular protests against food shortages and price inflation by expanding the number and legal authority of agencies tasked with controlling food prices and supplies. However, these agencies' efforts were largely ineffective at halting food price inflation and often caused the food shortages they were tasked with preventing. Policies that focused primarily on regulating retail food prices were incapable of dealing with structural imbalances between supply and demand, nor could they compensate for Brazil's underdeveloped and overly complex food distribution networks.

Women only modestly expanded their participation in urban unions, but were able to influence the priorities of textiles unions to address problems that narrowly affected women workers. These priorities did not result in sweeping changes to the law or dramatic improvements for women's working conditions, but women nonetheless benefitted from general wage increases won by unions and were occasionally successful in suing their employers for violating labor laws.

Campaigns against carestia and to improve women's labor conditions were not the only efforts that women participated in to address problems they faced on a daily basis in

the postwar period. The fight against carestia would provide a model for other nominally non-partisan campaigns that invoked women's moral authority as their families' economic custodians and moral defenders. As Chapter 3 will demonstrate, middle-class feminists argued that women's ability to adequately perform their roles as mothers and wives required a reform of the 1916 Civil Code to grant married women greater legal and economic rights. Women's prominent participation in Brazilian politics also continued into the 1960s, but became more polarized. Jânio Quadros won the 1960 presidential election in part based on promises to arrest inflation.²²⁷ The failure to contain inflation under his presidency or that of his successor, João Goulart, helped to fuel political instability and criticism of the government by conservative women such as those in the *Campanha da Mulher pela Democracia* (Women's Campaign for Democracy). Like the women who campaigned against carestia in the 1940s and 1950s, anti-communist women would claim moral superiority to politicians and invoke the defense of their families in the public sphere, this time in opposition to Goulart, as will be examined in Chapter 5.

²²⁷ Murilo Leal observes that most poor voters who voted for Quadros in the 1953 São Paulo gubernatorial election did so for his promises to fight carestia and notes that Quadros' campaign represented a cross-class alliance against carestia, exploitation, and poor living conditions and for government reforms in the 1960 presidential election. See Leal, *A Reinvenção do Trabalhismo*, 437-440.

Chapter 3

Romy Medeiros da Fonseca and the Statute of the Married Woman

In 1951, attorney Romy Medeiros da Fonseca had been designated by the Brazilian government to represent Brazilian women at an Inter-American Assembly of Women meeting in Santiago de Chile sponsored by the Organization of American States. However, Fonseca's husband, Arnaldo Medeiros da Fonseca, then president of the International Bar Association, wanted her to accompany him to a meeting of the association in Paris, France instead. Fonseca refused:

I am tired of going to Paris, all those places. I have been a very good wife, but this time I am not going with you to Europe, because I will represent the Brazilian woman in an inter-American diplomatic conference of the OAS. And then, he said the following: 'You will not go without my authorization.' And really, I waited until the last moment, and could only leave Brazil to officially represent the Brazilian woman when he decided to authorize my departure from Brazil...²²⁸

Fonseca was legally unable to leave the country without her husband's authorization due to provisions in the 1916 Civil Code that required that wives obtain their husband's authorization to perform a number of acts, including travel abroad. The apparent absurdity of a woman selected as an official representative of the Brazilian government at a diplomatic conference requiring her husband's authorization to attend the conference underscores the apparent legal inequalities that married women faced in postwar Brazil. Fonseca's refusal to obey her husband also reflects the determination with which she and other middle-class feminists affiliated with Conselho Nacional de Mulheres do Brasil (National Women's Council of Brazil, CNMB) would pursue a reform of the civil code to grant women equal rights within marriage.

²²⁸ Vera Regina Ferreira, "Entrevista de História Oral com Dra. Romy Medeiros da Fonseca," 1 May 1978, Romy Medeiros da Fonseca papers, Library of Congress (Hereafter referred to as RMF), Box 7, Folder 5.

Their efforts ultimately culminated in passage of the 1962 Estatuto da Mulher Casada (Statute of the Married Woman). Many historians of feminism and other women's movements in Brazil continue to overlook the law, only briefly note its relevance, or ignore Fonseca and other women's roles in the law's creation.²²⁹ This is likely the result of a broader trend in the historiography, discussed in Chapter 2, that generally characterizes women's movements between 1945 and 1975 as feminine but not feminist.²³⁰ The statute has received closer attention from legal scholars, although these have generally focused on the provisions of the law itself, noting its provisions and limitations, but discussing the circumstances of its passage in only limited detail.²³¹

The most detailed analysis to date of the history surrounding the statute's passage can be found in an article coauthored by Teresa Cristina de Novaes Marques and Hildete Pereira de Melo that examines the legislative and political process involved in its drafting and passage. Although they interviewed Fonseca, Marques and Melo portray the statute as primarily the product of a bill drafted by federal deputy Nelson Carneiro. Focusing on

²²⁹ Some recent surveys of women's history or the history of feminism briefly note Fonseca's role in pressing for the reform, but do not examine her participation in depth. For example, in her brief survey on the history of Brazilian feminism, numbering a little over one hundred pages in length, Céli Regina Jardim Pinto notes in two paragraphs that Fonseca and her organization, the Conselho Nacional de Mulheres do Brasil (CNMB), were instrumental in passage of the law and identified how the law expanded married women's legal rights. See Pinto, *Uma história do feminismo no Brasil* (São Paulo: Editora Fundação Perseu Abramo, 2003). By contrast, a recent 555 page edited volume on the history of Brazilian women, edited by Carla Bassanezi Pinsky and Joana Maria Pedro, does not make a single mention of Fonseca or the CNMB despite containing an essay by Rachel Soihet on women's participation in the public sphere from 1891 to 1964 and another by Joana Maria Pedro on feminism in the 1960s and 1970s. Although in her essay on laws affecting women's rights, "A Trilha Legislativa da Mulher," Iáris Ramalho Cortês briefly notes that the 1962 statute "radically changed the lives of wives in Brazil," she does not mention women's role in shaping the law or lobbying for it. See Pinsky and Pedro, eds. *Nova História das Mulheres no Brasil* (São Paulo: Contexto, 2012).

²³⁰ Limited scholarship on the CNMB may also be partially a result of the fact that Fonseca and the CNMB's archives remain in a largely unprocessed collection at the Library of Congress, beyond easy access for most Brazilian historians and unknown to most Brazilianists.

²³¹ For an example of this scholarship, see Florisa Verucci, *A Mulher e o Direito* (São Paulo: Nobel, 1987).

debates between Carneiro and opponents to the bill, Marques and Melo argue that feminists and the press were not actively involved in discussions of the bill—an argument that this chapter refutes—and that the bill’s eventual passage was primarily due to legislators’ hope that they would be rewarded by women voters at the ballot box.²³²

In fact, Fonseca and her feminist allies played a central role in drafting elements of the statute and rallying support for the bill in the press. In their tactics, organization, and priorities, Fonseca and the CNMB shared many similarities with an earlier generation of feminists active in the Federação Brasileira pelo Progresso Feminino (Brazilian Federation for Feminine Progress, FBPF), led by Berta Lutz.²³³ Like the FBPF, the CNMB was primarily concerned with promoting women’s legal equality through legislation and aimed their arguments at the educated middle-class and national elites. Like women engaged in campaigns against carestia, Fonseca and the CNMB presented the reform of the civil code as a non-partisan issue that affected all women. As advocates of developmentalism sought to harness traditional gender roles for the modernization of Brazil’s society and economy, Fonseca and her allies argued that married women’s legal inequality inhibited their ability to perform these roles in a modern, industrialized consumer economy. Indeed, the 1916 Civil Code narrowly circumscribed and subordinated married women’s legal rights and supported a gendered division of labor in which wives were largely expected to care for children and the home while husbands

²³² Marques and Melo, “Os direitos civis das mulheres casadas no Brasil entre 1916 e 1962. Ou como são feitos os leis,” *Revista Estudos Feministas*, vol.16 no.2 (May/Aug.), 2008. [Marques and Melo appear to have arrived at their conclusions without closely examining the text of the Mozart Lago bill drafted by Fonseca and Orminda Bastos \(discussed later in this chapter\).](#)

²³³ The FBPF was most active in the 1920s and 1930s, and succeeded in reforming the electoral code in 1933 to allow for women’s suffrage and eligibility for elected office. As many scholars have observed, Lutz and the FBPF grew less active during the Estado Novo dictatorship of Gétúlio Vargas (1937-1945) and were marginal to Brazilian politics in the postwar era.

earned the bulk of the family's income.

Casa, Casar, Casamento: Housewives Bound to the Home

A clear relationship exists between the Portuguese words *casa* (house), *casar* (to marry), and *casamento* (marriage). In most contemporary democracies the act of marriage can be seen as the symbolic creation of a home shared between spouses and often establishes communal claims to real property. In 1940s and 1950s Brazil, the home was of particular legal importance as both a symbolic and physical space that was central to the institution of marriage. While social welfare benefits, minimum salaries, and labor protections were unequally and narrowly distributed in postwar Brazil, all married women were subject to marital laws that not only subordinated them to their husbands within marriage, but also bound their labor to the home.

Although the 1946 Constitution made broad gestures towards women's legal equality with men, married women's legal rights continued to be circumscribed by the civil code passed thirty years earlier.²³⁴ The civil code held married women to be incapable of exercising full legal rights, placing them in a legal status comparable to that of minors, indigents, and Indians.²³⁵ Based on this principle, the code made husbands responsible for providing materially for and legally representing their families, giving them the power to administer communal property, determine the location of the family home,²³⁶ and exercise exclusive parental rights over children, except when a husband was in some way incapacitated.²³⁷ In contrast, the code prohibited married women from

²³⁴ Lei N° 3.071/1916.

²³⁵ Ibid., Art. 6.

²³⁶ Ibid., Art. 233.

²³⁷ Ibid., Art. 380.

engaging in contracts, incurring debts, initiating litigation, or entering employment without their husbands' authorization.²³⁸ Similar restrictions did not apply to unmarried adult women.

The civil code reflected and reinforced societal expectations that husbands would materially provide for their families and wives would devote their labor to their children, husbands, and homes. Although women could not incur debts or initiate contracts without their husbands' authorization, Article 247 granted married women their husbands' presumed authorization to purchase, borrow, or contract debt to acquire "the things necessary to the domestic economy," that is, food and other items necessary to maintain the family home. Women's paid labor was also assumed to be supplemental to their husbands' as indicated by the provision that wives were free to dispose of their own earned income once their families' material needs had been met.²³⁹ While this provision granted married women limited economic agency, marriage nonetheless legally bound wives to their husbands' homes.

Married women were required to live in their husband's homes unless authorized by their husbands to live elsewhere.²⁴⁰ Leaving a husband's home or refusing to move with a husband to a new residence could constitute "abandonment" of the home or children, resulting in substantial legal consequences. If a woman refused to return home, a husband could cease providing her with material support and could petition a judge to sequester his wife's wages to provide for himself and the couple's children.²⁴¹ Failure to

²³⁸ Ibid., Art. 242.

²³⁹ Ibid., Art. 246.

²⁴⁰ Ibid., Art. 233.

²⁴¹ Ibid., Art. 234

return for two years was grounds for a husband to petition for *desquite* (legal separation within marriage),²⁴² and if a woman's separation from the home was determined to constitute abandonment of her children, she would lose her parental rights over them (limited as they were).²⁴³

Although postwar populism and developmentalism promised to protect women workers and improve material living conditions for urban families through economic development, politicians were reluctant to modify legal relationships within families. As Chapter 1 demonstrates, elites instead hoped that conservative gender norms could be repurposed to support the modernization of the Brazilian economy and society and that drudgery associated with women's domestic labor could be minimized through education in household management or effective use of consumer appliances. Middle-class feminists, however, were not content to pin their hopes for women's emancipation on electric floor waxers and demanded that the civil code be reformed.

Early Steps Toward a Reform of the Civil Code

In the years immediately following the end of the Second World War, the CNMB appeared less ambitious and less aggressive than women's organizations affiliated with the left in Rio de Janeiro. The statutes establishing the CNMB in 1947 listed as its three primary objectives universal peace, protection of mothers and children, and combatting sex trafficking of women and children.²⁴⁴ However, in its first few years, the CNMB was not highly active and did not attract substantial media attention.

By comparison, in *O Momento Feminino*, Nice Figueiredo repeatedly challenged

²⁴² Ibid., Art. 317.

²⁴³ Ibid., Art. 395.

²⁴⁴ "Estatutos do Conselho Nacional de Mulheres do Brasil," 17 July, 1947, page 2, RMF Box 13, Folder 2.

women's unequal legal rights. In one such column, Figueiredo declared *O Momento Feminino's* opposition to women's legal status under the 1916 Civil Code:

We are against marriage as outlined by our civil law. [...] Against marriage that diminishes woman [from her fully capable status] and places her in an inferior position, against marriage that, in the service of tradition and convention, invents the supremacy of the male husband and decrees the subordination of the female wife...²⁴⁵

Figueiredo highlighted inequalities in the law that affected all married women, regardless of their class status.

The CNMB would become more central to the effort to reform the civil code when Fonseca took a leading role in the organization in the early 1950s. Fonseca's interest in reforming the civil code stemmed from her professional engagement in legal associations and her own experiences as a married woman. Fonseca's husband was a prominent attorney and legal scholar in Rio de Janeiro, and her affiliation with him presented her with numerous opportunities to participate in international legal conferences where issues related to family law and women's rights were being discussed in the 1940s and 1950s. Although Fonseca established strong ties with professional and political elites through her participation in professional associations, international diplomacy, and the CNMB, she never claimed substantial wealth and generally presented herself as a nonpartisan advocate for the concerns of middle-class women.

In 1949, Fonseca was already actively using her status as an attorney to promote a reform of the civil code. In May, she accompanied her husband to the Sixth Conference of the Inter-American Bar Association in Detroit as a Brazilian delegate, where she advocated for uniformly equal legal capacity for women in American civil codes. In

²⁴⁵ Nice Figueiredo, "Contra o Casamento," *O Momento Feminino*, 27 February, 1948, 7.

December, she suggested that the Instituto dos Advogados Brasileiros (Institute of Brazilian Attorneys, IAB) propose a bill in Congress to revoke the clause in Article 6 of the civil code that established married women's inferior legal capacities.²⁴⁶ Her activism attracted the attention of the *Diário de Notícias*, where she gave an interview in April, 1950.

Here, Fonseca did not argue that a reform of the civil code would help to modernize social relations. To the contrary, a reform was needed to defend married women's traditional roles as mothers and wives. Noting that single, legally separated, and widowed women effectively enjoyed full legal equality with men, while married women did not, Fonseca denounced married women's unequal status in the civil code:

The married woman [...] is in a situation equal to minors under the age of 21, indigents, and Indians. This debasement of the woman's character is by virtue of marriage and not sex, which makes it nonsense, implicating an orientation against the collective interest. [...] Society, whose foundation is the institution of the family, based on marriage, cannot undervalue woman when she most elevates and ennobles herself by investing in her highest mission which is that of wife and mother.²⁴⁷

Making note of married women's inequality when compared with unmarried women allowed Fonseca to frame her arguments for increasing married women's legal rights as a defense of women's traditional feminine roles in a conservative society.

Fonseca also took advantage of developmentalist rhetoric that linked the performance of traditional feminine gender roles with national development to reinforce her arguments for reform. Pointing to the promises of legal equality between men and women in the 1946 constitution, Fonseca linked women's legal equality with national

²⁴⁶ Romy Martins Medeiros da Fonseca, "Capacidade Jurídica da Mulher," *Diário de Notícias*, 30 April, 1950 (unpaginated press clipping).

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

progress and called on educated women to support expanding women's access to higher education.

It is necessary that all intelligent and educated Brazilian women convince themselves of the great reality of the moment. And that, there no longer being differences of sex, color, or religion, those women who have the capacity, the idealists and the workers should collaborate with men for a more progressive and educated Brazil. The children of prepared women will be performe better instructed than those of women without culture, illiterate and useless. Those who have the opportunity to enroll in higher education have the responsibility to realize, within or outside the home, any constructive action.²⁴⁸

While valorizing expanding women's access to education, Fonseca's rhetoric also betrayed a degree of elitism. Unlike the leaders of the Rio's neighborhood feminine associations who emphasized partnerships with working-class women, Fonseca placed her faith in the ability of educated middle-class and elite women to expand rights for all women, much as an earlier generation of middle-class feminists in the FBPF had secured women's suffrage. "We, women lawyers, have the duty to claim these rights in the name of many others who, for lack of vocation or resources, did not have the joy of being able to take courses in an advanced school." This belief in educated women's capacities helps to explain why Fonseca's campaigns to expand women's rights generally focused on mobilizing educated women and engaging Brazil's intellectual and political elites. She employed both tactics in her campaign to reform the civil code.

In 1952, Fonseca, now president of the CNMB, took the opportunity of the Eighth Annual Conference of the Inter-American Commission of Women in Rio de Janeiro, a policy forum sponsored by the Organization of American States, to propose a package of reforms to the civil code. As official delegates of the Brazilian committee at the Commission, Fonseca and Ormind Bastos drafted a proposal for a bill with several

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

provisions aimed at granting married women legal equality with their husbands. They presented this draft bill at the conference and found a legislative sponsor in Mozart Lago, a senator representing the federal district, who submitted it as a bill in the upper chamber of Congress.

Proposed Reforms

The draft bill was ambitious. Its first article provided “Women and men have equal legal capacity, consequently any and all legal restrictions to civil capacity, whether by reason of sex or reason of marriage, are abolished.”²⁴⁹ Its provisions revoked the civil code’s designation of married women’s legal incapacity. It eliminated requirements that a wife receive her husband’s authorization to assume inheritances, legal guardianship, trusteeship, or any public office or employment, or initiate litigation. Where under the 1916 code husbands had exercised exclusive parental authority except when absent or incapacitated, the draft bill provided that parental authority was exercised “by the parents, the husband exercising it with the collaboration of the wife.” In cases of disagreement, the husband’s opinion would still hold, but his wife could appeal his decision to a judge. Under the draft bill, wives retained parental rights over children from previous relationships and maintained control over these children’s property. The draft bill also provided that a family’s domicile would be determined by an agreement between the spouses, rather than by the husband alone.²⁵⁰

²⁴⁹ Romy Martins Medeiros da Fonseca and Orminda Bastos, “O Novo Estatuto Civil da Mulher Casada no Brasil,” page 1, ca. 1958 (copy of 1952 original) RMF, Box 7, Folder 3.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 1-3.

Fonseca and Bastos justified these provisions, designed to grant married women equal rights within marriage,²⁵¹ as measures to reform the civil code so that it was in keeping with international legal norms and standards of legal equality established in other areas of Brazilian law. The authors staked their claims in part on treaties to which Brazil was a signatory. “The present draft bill is inspired by the proposition of complying with the disposition of an international convention, of which Brazil was a signatory, and duly ratified—The Bogotá Convention.” Here Fonseca and Bastos referred to the Inter-American Convention on the Granting of Civil Rights to Women, signed at the Ninth International Conference of American States in Bogotá, Colombia, March 30-May 2, 1948. They also noted that the orientation of international law called for legal equality between the sexes, pointing to the provisions of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Further, legal equality between the sexes had been affirmed in several clauses of Brazil’s 1946 constitution. “The first Republican Constitution of 1891 already provided that single women, widows and legally separated women had the same civil and political rights as men. The impairment they have suffered came from custom, tradition, and not constitutional text.”²⁵² They observed that the *Consolidação das Leis de Trabalho* (Consolidated Labor Laws, CLT) did not recognize any difference in capacity between married and unmarried women, and that women could vote and be voted for under the constitution.²⁵³

The draft bill also justified its provisions with conservative rhetoric valorizing

²⁵¹ It should be observed that notable gender hierarchies clearly remained, as in the exercise of parental authority.

²⁵² *Ibid.*, 4.

²⁵³ *Ibid.*, 5.

women's roles as wives and mothers that Fonseca had earlier employed in 1950:

It is not by debasing the wife to the condition of a minor, incapable and dependent, that marriage is valorized and the family defended. To the contrary, it creates in the home an environment of authoritarianism, perhaps of violence, that poisons relationships between spouses and destroys the respect and affection that children owe their parents. It is through the elevation of the wife to full equality of rights with the husband, and by honoring her that marriage can found the stable family.²⁵⁴

Here Fonseca and Bastos anticipated conservative critiques that the bill would erode family hierarchy and stability by arguing that its provisions provided support for women's traditional gender roles and parental authority that was lacking in current law.

The most radical change proposed by Fonseca and Bastos was to make a spouse's legal status as head of household and legal representative, or "chief of the family," dependent on the spouse's relative financial contribution to supporting the family rather than the spouse's sex. Under the draft bill's provisions, a woman could assume status of "chief of the family" if she contributed more than her husband to family expenses. Instead of establishing equal status for wives in their family's legal representation and administration of community property, or the less ambitious approach the draft bill took to parental rights—that a husband's opinion would prevail unless a wife had his decision overturned in court—the draft bill created the possibility that wives contributing more than their husbands to family budgets could replace men as heads of household in the family's legal representation and administration of community property.²⁵⁵ A husband's leadership of the family was not assumed, but had to be demonstrated by making the largest contribution to the family budget.

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

²⁵⁵ Ibid., 1-2.

These provisions could be interpreted as a progressive, modernizing impulse to adjust the civil code to reflect women's participation in the labor market, or in the words of the authors, "to the social reality of our time."²⁵⁶ However, Fonseca and Bastos portrayed women's leadership in household finances as an exception to the norm that men would provide for their families:

In large part, it being the husband who sustains the wife and the children, it is his duty to administer communal goods and legally represent the family. But in all the cases, increasingly numerous, in which the wife maintains the house and educates the children with her labor, it is logical and natural that, assuming the family's responsibilities, she assumes the consequences of the new situation. The simple fact of making more money than the husband does not confer such a right to the wife, but the fact of shouldering the weight of maintaining the home does.²⁵⁷

Although the draft bill would create the possibility that wives could take over their families' legal and fiscal administration, the authors portrayed this as an elimination of legal discrimination based on sex and a necessary measure to ensure that mothers and wives could fulfill their feminine obligations within the family if a husband did not provide for the family's expenses.

The draft bill, submitted to the Senate by Mozart Lago in June, was not the only legislation seeking to reform the civil code under consideration in 1952. Deputy Nelson Carneiro, then representing the state of Bahia,²⁵⁸ had submitted his own bill to the Chamber of Deputies seeking similar changes to the civil code in April of that year. The bill, a reprisal of an earlier attempt by Carneiro to reform the civil code in 1950, was

²⁵⁶ Ibid., 5.

²⁵⁷ Ibid., 6.

²⁵⁸ Carneiro later served as a federal deputy for the federal district (1959-1963) and Guanabara State (1963-1971), and was elected Senator for Guanabara (1971-1979) and Rio de Janeiro (1979-1995). Although Carneiro's served his initial term from 1947 to 1950 as a member of the UDN, he changed his party affiliation to the PSD in 1950.

more conservative than the one drafted by Fonseca and Bastos and sponsored by Lago. Like the Lago bill, Carneiro's bill revoked the clause that established married women's legal incapacity and provided that wives would only need authorization from their husbands to perform acts their husbands could not without their wives' consent. However, the initial draft of the bill also gave a husband recourse to, within 60 days of his wife taking new employment, sue to prohibit his wife from exercising a profession if he could demonstrate that the exercise of her profession was inconvenient to the "interests of the home" or family. Unlike the Mozart bill, the Carneiro bill did not provide for the possibility of a wife assuming "chief of family" status.²⁵⁹

Conservative Opposition and Feminists' Conservative Rhetoric

Carneiro's bill was not his only effort to reform elements of the civil code. Carneiro also attempted to extend social benefits that the law afforded to men's wives to unmarried women companions, categorized in Brazilian law as "concubines," in 1947²⁶⁰ and to amend the constitution so that marriage was no longer defined as insoluble in 1952. In the Chamber of Deputies, these efforts attracted the staunch opposition of deputy and Catholic priest Monsenhor Arruda Câmara, a representative from the Partido Democrata Cristão (Democratic Christian Party). With the support of his socially conservative allies, Câmara defeated both measures and extended his opposition to Carneiro's bill to expand the rights of married women.²⁶¹

Câmara did not object to the revocation of the clause that established married

²⁵⁹ Nelson Carneiro, "Projeto N° 1.804/1952," *Diário do Congresso Nacional*, 1 April 1952, 2557.

²⁶⁰ Marques and Melo have characterized this effort as an attempt to extend protections and benefits to women in relationships not officially recognized in marriage, a situation increasingly common among Brazil's poor. See Marques and Melo, "Os direitos civis das mulheres casadas."

²⁶¹ Marques and Melo, "Os direitos civis das mulheres casadas" (unpaginated).

women's legal incapacity, but opposed the clauses of Carneiro's bill that would make married women equal to their husbands within marriage. Referring to clauses giving both spouses equal rights, Câmara maintained that: "In effect, with the declaration of equal rights, and with the suppression of hierarchy and the husband's authority, two heads are established for the same small society—the family marching itself to anarchy."²⁶² Câmara portrayed increasing wives' legal rights as a threat to family order and, more broadly, to the stability of Brazilian society. Having failed to amend the bill in committee, he succeeded in a session of the full Chamber in passing amendments that restored the requirement that wives obtain their husbands' authorization to initiate litigation or exercise a professional activity. Câmara's amendments were later stripped and the spirit of Carneiro's original bill was restored in committee. When returned to the full Chamber of Deputies in November, the bill passed and was sent on to the Senate. However, both the Lago and Carneiro bills stalled in the senate, with Mozart Lago absent after losing his reelection bid in 1954.²⁶³

Fonseca was well aware of the opposition that her draft bill would face once it reached the Chamber of Deputies and sought to portray the reforms that she and Bastos proposed as nonpartisan and as supporting traditional gender norms. When interviewed about the bill by *O Correio da Manhã* in July 1952, she repeated verbatim the arguments made in the bill that increasing wives' legal rights would valorize their familial roles and strengthen parental authority. She further argued that giving women status as their families' legal representatives and economic administrators was needed to allow women

²⁶² *Diário do Congresso Nacional*, 7 October 1952, 10473.

²⁶³ Marques and Melo, "Os direitos civis das mulheres casadas."

to fulfill their roles as mothers and wives when they were also the primary providers for their families.²⁶⁴ Fonseca's appeal to conservative gender norms to justify passage of the bill was persistent; she would use the same language describing how the bill strengthened women's familial roles yet again six years later when interviewed by the *Jornal do Commercio*.²⁶⁵

This conservative rhetoric appears to have contributed to relatively favorable treatment of the bill by the mainstream press. Coverage by *Manchete*, which in the 1950s published women's advice columns that stressed traditional feminine gender roles, presents evidence of favorable reception of Fonseca's appeals. Although in 1952 *Manchete* had mockingly covered the 8th Annual Conference of the Inter-American Commission of Women where Fonseca and Bastos presented their draft bill as a forum of over-opinionated women who "argued and talked too much,"²⁶⁶ in 1953, the magazine featured a largely favorable three-page profile of the Lago bill.²⁶⁷ Proponents of the bill were prominently featured in the piece, in which both Bastos and Fonseca emphasized that the bill would strengthen the institution of marriage. Said Bastos, "The draft does not envision, as it has been rumored, the loosening of family ties or, even less, the dissolution of the family. To the contrary, it aims to strengthen the mutual relations between husband and wife, principally on the basis of affection, reinvigorating absolute equality between

²⁶⁴ "Debatem as mulheres a reforma do Código Civil," *O Correio da Manhã*, 27 July 1952, unpaginated press clipping from RMF, Box 1, Folder 9. Fonseca's arguments were exact reproductions of those presented in the Lago draft bill.

²⁶⁵ "A mulher brasileira em luta pela atualizaçã do Direito," *Jornal do Commercio*, 31 May, 1958, unpaginated press clipping in RMF, Box 2, Folder 8.

²⁶⁶ "Congresso das Mulheres," *Manchete*, 23 August 1952, 33.

²⁶⁷ Eládio Marques, "Aí vêm os novos direitos da mulher," *Manchete* 12 September 1953, 10-12.

them.”²⁶⁸ Bastos’ quote reveals her concern that opponents were tying the Lago bill to Nelson Carneiro’s other efforts to reform the civil code and his attempt to amend the constitution to allow for future legislation to legalize divorce.

Fonseca’s arguments in *Manchete* indicated that reform was needed to preserve and reinforce the strength of marriage as an institution. Fonseca characterized the proposed provisions granting a woman the capacity to be considered “chief of the family” if she contributed more than her husband to family expenses as a way to discipline lazy, disloyal, or profligate husbands: “The draft bill will avoid legal separation being the only legal solution capable of avoiding the poorly administered dissipation of communal goods and the family’s misery for the benefit of the spouse who supervises the administration of the couple’s goods.”²⁶⁹ Fonseca argued that wives should not be expected to yield administration of communal property or legal representation of the family to husbands who were not up to the task:

“The chief of the family is the married man who through his character, morality, and work is important to the wife and children. The gambling, alcoholic, irresponsible husband will never be considered by the wife to really be a chief. And it will not be the law that requires her to sincerely recognize him as such.”²⁷⁰

Fonseca used a similar argument to justify the bill’s provision that wives would participate in deciding the location of the family home: “In truth, a woman cannot be required to live with the husband when he does not furnish her the required material necessities of life, nor a convenient home in accord with her conditions, assuring her the

²⁶⁸ Ibid., 10.

²⁶⁹ Ibid., 12.

²⁷⁰ Ibid.

defense of her dignity and her honor.”²⁷¹ The proposed reforms would thus reinforce wives’ traditional role as defenders of family morality. Further, Fonseca’s empowerment of wives would support the developmentalist objective of disciplining male labor.

In contrast with the conservative sentiments Fonseca and Bastos expressed to *Manchete*, Senator Lago appeared to feel freer to portray his bill as a reform of the civil code that made it compatible with international norms and the realities of modern society. Lago observed that provisions of the civil code were incompatible with Brazil’s actions in international conferences and its commitments to international treaties. Further, “The Brazilian Civil Code crystalized these traditions from the [era of] national formation, without any innovation that would assure women their full legal capacity in conjugal society. To the contrary, it maintained restrictions that are no longer compatible with the actual state of things or with these solemnly assumed commitments.”²⁷² Although these sentiments were clearly expressed in Fonseca and Bastos’ draft bill, both women emphasized more conservative rhetoric following the contentious debate over Carneiro’s bill in the Chamber of Deputies. This approach may also reflect their awareness of the tendency for *Manchete* to publish conservative feminine advice columns. Indeed, the most vigorous criticism of the bill expressed in the *Manchete* article came from feminine advice columnist Elsie Lessa, who opposed expanding women’s rights: “I do not have the least enthusiasm for the acquisition of new rights for women[...] I find feminine labor outside the home a sad consequence of a society wrong from head to toe [...] Woman’s place is inside the home, having many and beautiful children and caring for them. The

²⁷¹ Ibid.

²⁷² Ibid., 10.

rest is tiring and a spiritual affliction.”²⁷³ To the extent that Lessa represented conservative women’s opinions, Lago, Fonseca, and Bastos still had work to do to sway public opinion in support of their bill.

In 1956, Senator Attílio Vivácqua began hearings on the Lago bill, calling Bastos and Fonseca to testify before the Senate. In an interview about her testimony, Fonseca expressed her concern that conservative opponents were confusing the Lago bill with Carneiro’s efforts to legalize divorce. Fonseca emphasized that her bill had nothing to do with divorce. To address conservative women’s fears about the consequences of a reform, she argued that conservative women were free not to exercise their rights should the Lago bill pass: “If there is some woman in this immense country who prefers to continue living in a situation of inferiority and dependence, without taking advantage of the rights that the law confers, we will not be the ones who are injured or sorry.”²⁷⁴ Framing the exercise of women’s legal rights as a personal choice and not a mandate downplayed conservative concerns that the bill sought to undermine the institution of marriage.

The Lago bill did not make further progress in 1956, but media interest in the bill continued, as demonstrated in a 1957 *Manchete* article that linked the bill to women’s expanded participation in the workforce since 1940. The article, by Marcelo Guimarães, opened by quoting Mozart Lago: “The principal objective of my bill... is to free married Brazilian women who work, of the barriers and shackles that make activity outside the home very difficult.”²⁷⁵ The bill’s relevance, Guimarães observed, was grounded in open

²⁷³ Ibid. 11.

²⁷⁴ “Nós, as Mulheres de 1956, Não Queremos Continuar Equiparados aos Menores, Pródigos e Silvícolas,” press clipping from unidentified newspaper, 1956, RMF, Box 1, Folder 9.

²⁷⁵ Marcelo Guimarães, “Mulher Moderna Topa Qualquer Parada,” *Manchete*, 2 March 1957, 52.

public discussions about the role that women should play in Brazilian society. “It is often discussed, today, in homes, in offices, in public offices, everywhere, ‘what women should be and do.’” Guimarães attributed this public discussion to the parallel increase in demand for urban labor and increasing household expenditures to meet new middle-class standards of consumption. These two trends lead many women “single or married to begin to feel that they should contribute to the household budget” by working outside the home. This would allow their families to afford “movies, the radio, the refrigerator, the car, the television and an infinite number of pleasures and comforts.”²⁷⁶ Although Guimarães somewhat exaggerated the novelty of women’s entry into the Brazilian workforce, his article nonetheless indicated that consumerism, encouraged by populist politicians and businessmen alike, was encouraging a growing number of both married and single middle-class women to enter the workforce. Open public discussion of women’s evolving economic roles helped keep interest in the Lago bill alive, even as it was barely addressed in the Senate.

Senator Vivácqua clearly remained interested in the Lago and Carneiro bills and kept them moving through the legislative process. In September 1958, Vivácqua requested that both the Lago and Carneiro bills be considered by the Senate simultaneously and this motion was approved by in August 1959. In December of that year, Vivácqua determined that the Carneiro bill had precedent to be considered first, and the bill began a tortuous path through the Senate. The bill remained under consideration

²⁷⁶ Ibid., 55.

by the Senate from 1960 to 1962, in a process that outlasted Vivácqua, who died in 1961.²⁷⁷

The revival of the civil code reform legislation in the Senate attracted additional, increasingly favorable coverage in the press. *Manchete*, although still a fairly conservative publication, continued to publish articles favoring some kind of reform. In 1959, *Manchete* journalist Gasparino Damata linked the need to reform the civil code to the increasing economic and social demand for women's paid labor. Damata's article clearly favored a reform of the civil code, arguing that the provisions of the code requiring that wives receive their husbands' authorization to work, denying remarried women parental rights over children from previous relationships, and denying the possibility of women legally representing their families were incompatible social reality. Damata observed that women participated broadly in the workforce, in liberal and technical professions, and took leading roles in business.²⁷⁸ "The Code, however, equates married women to the insane and Indians, only granting them rights if their houses are visited by the misfortune of the death of their husbands, or if the failure of their marriage leads to their legal separation. This is a contradiction that does not have any acceptable justification."²⁷⁹

Damata maintained that paid labor did not defeminize women, but was often based on "necessity that does not recognize any discrimination. [Women] want their rights to correspond to this sacrifice."²⁸⁰ Damata thus linked the increasing visibility of women in

²⁷⁷ Marques and Melo, "Os direitos civis das mulheres casadas."

²⁷⁸ Gasparino Damata, "Carta de Alforria para a Mulher Casada," *Manchete* 25 April 1959, 94-97.

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 95.

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 96.

the workforce to the need for civil code reform, even as he maintained that women's paid labor was primarily motivated by the economic needs of the traditional family.

Fonseca's PR Campaign

Fonseca took advantage of renewed interest in the reform legislation to launch a sustained campaign to influence public opinion through the press from 1959 to 1961. Referring to her testimony before the Senate in October 1957, Fonseca noted in a newspaper column that advocates faced difficulty convincing male legislators to advance the bill and called on women to persuade legislators to support the bill. "I know very well that the majority did not yet perceive the social significance of this important legislative reform. I believe, however, that the affective influence of wives, mothers, and relatives of these legislators can still awake their enthusiasm for these human rights." She further identified her strategy to advance the legislation by swaying elite opinion: "The clarification of the basic points of the Bill to the feminine elites therefore becomes indispensable. To achieve this objective, the press will be our principal ally."²⁸¹

Fonseca's decision to appeal to middle-class and elite opinion through the press both reflected her understanding of middle-class norms of political debate and represented a reasonable strategy given her limited political resources. Fonseca cultivated a public persona that highlighted her professional achievement and intellectual authority as an attorney in order to establish herself as an expert in the field who could draft legislation, offer expert testimony, and represent Brazilian women in international forums. As her earlier press coverage reveals, she generally prevailed upon Brazil's educated elites as both most capable of understanding the need for legislative reform and

²⁸¹ Romy Medeiros da Fonseca, "A Reforma do Código Civil—II," unidentified press clipping, 14 August 1959, RMF, Box 1, Folder 4.

best able to represent the needs of less-educated Brazilians who might not recognize the importance of civil code reform or be in a position to do anything about it. Further, unlike carestia, in the 1950s, a reform of the civil code was not the kind of pressing issue that could motivate large numbers of women to engage in public protest. As president of the CNMB, Fonseca could argue that a national women's organization with many high-achieving members in a variety of professional fields supported civil code reform, but the CNMB membership was itself too small to organize large public demonstrations. What Fonseca and the CNMB did have were substantial political and professional connections and standing in the press as legitimate representatives of the women's rights movement.

Fonseca went on to write no less than nine opinion columns in one paper in her effort to educate women and the broader public on the issue of civil code reform.²⁸² In her fourth column in this series, Fonseca observed that under the current civil code, men could accuse their wives of abandoning the home if they failed to accompany their husband when he designated a new family home, a legal power that husbands could easily abuse. Comparing the situation in the 1950s to that in the 1920s, Fonseca maintained:

Although the ideal in both [decades] would be the same, that is, living at home, providing care and comfort to the husband and to the children, these days, because the husband's salary or income does not suffice to cover the costs of sustaining and maintaining the home, [a wife] is obliged to help him outside the domestic sphere, in detriment to her secular and traditional vocation. It is for this reason that we cannot permit that the Code continues to declare that the husband can determine and change the family domicile.²⁸³

²⁸² Romy Medeiros da Fonseca, "A Reforma do Código Civil—IX," unidentified press clipping, 23 October 1959, RMF, Box 1, Folder 3. The column was published by a Rio de Janeiro newspaper. Given her earlier coverage in *O Correio da Manhã*, it is possible that this was the paper that published her column.

²⁸³ Romy Medeiros da Fonseca, "A Reforma do Código Civil—IV," unidentified and undated press clipping, ca. 1959, RMF Box 1 Folder 10.

Here Fonseca echoed Damata's argument that women worked primarily out of economic necessity and embraced conservative feminine gender roles as an ideal, albeit one that was increasingly difficult for many women to realize.

Fonseca continued to emphasize her support for traditional gender roles into the early 1960s, most likely in response to continued opposition to civil code reform from social conservatives and broader conservatism regarding gender roles among the general public. In a 1960 article in *O Globo*, Fonseca emphasized that women's professional activity could be consistent with the performance of traditional feminine gender roles at home and that the civil code would help married women perform these roles. When a *Globo* journalist asked her if a woman's work outside the home hindered her ability to be a housewife, Fonseca responded: "I find that the woman who exercises a profession is much more organized within the home, because she, in general, has a methodical daily program, so that everything runs in order and without complication in her absence."²⁸⁴ Referring to the need for married women to retain parental rights over their children from previous relationships, Fonseca argued that "[A] mother is always a mother and always is capable of overseeing and educating her children." In addressing possible concerns that her proposed reforms went too far in undermining male authority, Fonseca maintained that most men should not be concerned about her proposal to grant "chief of family" status to women who contribute more to family expenses than their husbands because "those who provide the support for their home and take responsibility for it will never lose this chiefdom."²⁸⁵

²⁸⁴ "Feminista, Sim; 'Mandona', Nunca," *O Globo*, 4 August, 1960, unpaginated press clipping, RMF, Box 2, Folder 2.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

Press coverage of the reform legislation extended to the relatively new medium of television. In November 1961, Fonseca appeared on the television program “O Globo na TV” to debate the merits of a reform of the civil code with author Dina Silveira de Queirós and Clóvis Paulo da Rocha, a representative of the Instituto dos Advogados Brasileiros giving testimony before the Senate. The three agreed on the need to reform the code to remove the provision holding married women to be legally incapacitated and those provisions that required them to secure their husband’s authorization to enter contracts or practice a profession. Queirós observed that she was not even able to cash royalty checks made out to her without her husband’s authorization. However, both Queirós and Rocha maintained that husbands should always remain “chiefs of the family,” over Fonseca’s objections that irresponsible husbands should not retain this power.²⁸⁶ While Fonseca was able to attract support from various sectors of the Brazilian professional class for many of her proposed reforms, granting women the ability to be legally considered as family chiefs appears to have been a step that most Brazilians were unwilling to take in the early 1960s.

In 1962, the Senate returned the Carneiro Bill to the House of Deputies with a number of amendments, most of which were reproduced from the Lago bill that Fonseca and Bastos had drafted. These amendments revoked married women’s legal incapacity, eliminated provisions in the code that required wives to obtain their husband’s authorization before performing a number of financial or legal actions, allowed married women to retain parental rights over children from a previous relationship, established

²⁸⁶ “Uma Líder Feminista, um Jursita e uma Escritora Debatem, na TV, a Reforma da Código Civil,” unidentified press clipping, 22 November 1961, RMF Box 2, Folder 11.

that husbands exercised parental authority over children with their wives' collaboration, and established that wives could appeal to a judge in cases of disagreement over parental decisions. However, a number of the provisions drafted by Fonseca and Bastos in the Lago bill did not survive as amendments. The provisions that granted married women legal capability equal to their husbands and allowed women to become their family's legal representative and administrator were not included as amendments. Further, the amendments did not establish that wives and husbands had equal say in establishing or changing the family's place of residence and legal domicile, but did allow women the ability to appeal a husband's decision regarding domicile location before a judge. Notably, the amendments went further than the Lago bill in one respect: they established that wives could freely dispose of all earnings they acquired from work once the material needs of the home and family had been met and controlled goods purchased with these earnings.²⁸⁷

Although the Senate's amendments to the Carneiro bill did not contain some of the more controversial elements of the Lago bill, they still faced the determined opposition of Arruda Câmara in the Chamber of Deputies. Câmara, who served as commentator on the bill for the Chamber's Comissão da Constituição e Justiça (Commission on the Constitution and Justice), argued that the bill undermined natural order within the family.

Two heads in the same home with equal powers, equal prerogatives, equal authority, represent the principle of chaos and anarchy. Who is the boss in the end? Who governs the house? Who do the children obey in case of disagreement? The natural order, established by the Creator, is the subordination of the wife and

²⁸⁷ "Projeto N° 1.804-E-52 Emendado no Senado," 1962, Documentos Avulsos, Câmara dos Deputados, accessed October 21, 2014, <http://www.camara.gov.br/proposicoesWeb/fichadetramitacao?idProposicao=196374>

of the children to the husband and the father.²⁸⁸

The maintenance of a patriarchal gender hierarchy within Brazilian families remained one of Câmara's stated goals in opposing the reform.

Ten years of discussion of women's place in society had not changed his views. Instead, Câmara feared that without the requirement that wives seek their husband's authorization to obtain employment or practice a profession, women could expose themselves to sexual danger, impugn their family's dignity, betray their husbands, or become prostitutes:

A woman can, without the authorization of her husband: *reside outside the common home*, even in a suspect house, accept any profession, even those most perilous for the stability of the home, the well-being of the children and honor and dignity proper. She can without her husband's authorization exercise the most degrading profession.²⁸⁹

Although Câmara's fear that otherwise honest wives would easily become morally debased if given the opportunity may seem unfounded, and even preposterous, this argument reflected a common fear of the sexual dangers of the street.²⁹⁰

Câmara touched on another contemporary anxiety, arguing that the proposed legislation would not only undermine the traditional Brazilian family, but also pave the way for communism: "It would be more: anarchy in the homes and legal incentive for their dissolution, a type of community of spouses taken from the *Manifesto* of Karl

²⁸⁸ "Projeto N° 1.804-G-1952, Paracer da Comissão da Constituição e Justiça sobre emendas do Senado," p.5, 10 July, 1962, Documentos Avulsos, Camara dos Deputados, accessed October 21, 2014, <http://www.camara.gov.br/proposicoesWeb/fichadetramitacao?idProposicao=196374> Accessed October 21, 2014.

²⁸⁹ Ibid., 10-11.

²⁹⁰ For this reason, Avon initially encountered substantial resistance to engaging in door-to-door sales among many women, as revealed in Chapter 4.

Marx.²⁹¹ This allegation was particularly pointed given heightened political polarization and the recent constitutional crisis that had almost prevented the leftist-populist João Goulart from becoming president in the wake of Jânio Quadros' resignation in 1961.

Given the polarization of Brazilian politics in 1962, it may appear somewhat surprising that the Senate's amendments largely survived intact and the amended bill passed both houses of the legislature and was signed into law as Lei N° 4.121 by President João Goulart on 27 August 1962. Marques and Melo venture that broad support for the bill across political parties was likely based on politicians' expectation that their support would be rewarded by female voters.²⁹² This may very well have been the case, but Fonseca's public campaign in support of reform and favorable press coverage played important roles in keeping public attention on the issue. Given that the more radical elements of Fonseca and Bastos' original bill were not included in the final draft, legislators may also have felt more comfortable voting for it as a moderate reform measure. Fonseca's efforts to distance the bill from party politics and from Carneiro's other proposals may also have helped the bill avoid more substantial opposition.

Conclusion

Unlike women's neighborhood associations or middle-class housewife associations, Fonseca and the women of the CNMB did not organize street protests or attempt to mobilize working-class women to support their objective of reforming the civil code. However, like other women attempting to influence public policy in Brazil's postwar republic, Fonseca and her allies used the nonpartisan rhetoric of supporting

²⁹¹ Ibid., 11.

²⁹² Marques and Melo, "Os direitos civis das mulheres casadas."

women's traditional gender roles to demand that legislators address social inequality, in this case unequal rights for married women. Much as the anti-carestia campaigns highlighted the failure of the national government to live up to populist promises, Fonseca and Bastos identified ways that the Código Civil of 1916 contradicted promises of legal equality made in the 1946 constitution and Brazil's participation in international treaties. Further, feminists and their allies in the press and legislature argued that a reform of the civil code was necessary for married women to perform their traditional gender roles in the context of a modern, industrialized consumer economy.

The fact that advocates for a reform of the civil code succeeded at passing the New Statute of the Married Woman in the context of a highly polarized political climate is itself remarkable. The influence of conservative Catholicism on social policy was still quite substantial and social conservatives were able to delay passage of reform for ten years. That reform was kept alive for ten years and then passed in 1962 with support from legislators across the political spectrum despite partisan gridlock on most other legislation indicates that politicians' self-interest in seeking support from women voters is itself an inadequate explanation for the bill's passage. Fonseca and other supporters of reform of the civil code made effective use of the press to inform the public about the legislation and increase public support for reform, especially among the educated middle-class. Without Fonseca and other feminists' efforts to draw attention to the legislation, it is doubtful that the Carneiro or Lago bills would have survived a decade-long postponement and passed a legislature riven by partisan division.

Although they often used conservative rhetoric to support their arguments and the final reform law was fairly conservative in its outlook on women's rights, it would be

inaccurate to dismiss Fonseca and her allies as feminine but not feminists. Fonseca self-identified as a feminist and advanced a reform that expanded married women's legal rights, even if the final law did not give them complete legal equality with their husbands.

Observations that the new statute may not have immediately affected most women's lives due to most Brazilian women's limited knowledge of the law and limited access to the courts are valid.²⁹³ However, the law did remove substantial legal barriers to women pursuing careers and seeking to increase their financial independence. Further, educated women could make use of the law to protect their assets and their children from irresponsible or abusive husbands. While the law's immediate benefits to most women may have been limited, it constituted the most substantial reform to laws affecting women's status within marriage until the 1988 Constitution and the subsequent passage of a new civil code in 2002.²⁹⁴ It is hard to imagine a substantial reform of the civil code occurring in the first decade following the military coup of 1964. Indeed, although the Geisel administration introduced a proposal to draft a new civil code in 1975, the new code took 27 years to complete. The 1962 statute thus represented a reform that would support married women's professional development and financial independence for the following 26 years. Even if most women were initially unaware of their new legal rights, feminists and attorneys would help to inform them in the coming years.

²⁹³ See, Verucci, *A Mulher e o Direito*, 62.

²⁹⁴ Lei 10.406/2002.

Chapter 4- Try it at Home: Avon and Gender in Brazil, 1958-1975 ²⁹⁵

When US-based cosmetics firm Avon first arrived in Brazil in 1958, the company had a clear strategy that it had already successfully executed in other Latin American markets. It recruited male American-born managers to implement a direct-to-home distribution system developed in the United States. Avon's marketing strategy targeted middle- and upper-class consumers in Brazil's two largest metropolitan centers: São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. Male managers would divide these urban centers into sales territories and recruit middle-class saleswomen to work them. Once established in the country's two largest markets, Avon would expand to other urban centers and deepen market penetration by extending sales to working-class consumers with discretionary income.

Not everything went according to plan. Brazilian consumers were not accustomed to receiving door-to-door saleswomen, and managers found it difficult to convince middle-class women to sell Avon products. The saleswomen they did recruit largely ignored sales territories and Avon products turned up hundreds of miles from Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. Avon would become very successful in Brazil, but first, management had to adapt the company's business practices and marketing strategy to account for local socioeconomic conditions and cultural norms. Although industrialization, urbanization, and developmentalist discourse that promoted women's role in mass consumption created favorable conditions for Avon's entry into the Brazilian

²⁹⁵ This chapter is adapted from the following article: Shawn Moura, "Try it at Home: Avon and Gender in Brazil, 1958-1975." *Business History* 57:6 (2015): 800-821. Readers are encouraged to refer to the article, which contains images not included in this chapter. A link is available here: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00076791.2014.982103>

market, conservative middle-class gender norms also presented Avon with unexpected challenges.

Like advertising agencies, São Paulo industrialists, and other proponents of developmentalism, Avon pursued an active role in the modernization of Brazilian society and sought to shape feminine gender roles to influence women's economic activity both inside and outside the home. The Brazilian national government's creation of a protected consumer goods market encouraged multinational enterprises like Avon to enter the Brazilian market, bringing with them not only capital, but also the "know-how" to contribute to the formation of mass markets and introduce modern and cosmopolitan consumer tastes. However, in contrast with other proponents of developmentalism and other consumer goods companies, Avon was not primarily concerned with modernizing women's labor within the home. Company decisions were not attuned to women's purchasing decisions outside the home. Instead, the company introduced a form of feminine labor that was new to Brazil, recruiting saleswomen as the company's principal agents to introduce women to modern cosmetics in the privacy of their own homes. In this way, the company contributed to a broader transformation of feminine gender roles underway in the 1960s.

This chapter examines Avon's operations in Brazil from 1958 to 1975 to demonstrate that gender was central to the company's labor practices, business organization, marketing strategy, and adaptation to the Brazilian market. Avon's direct-to-home distribution system and large family of products gave its Brazilian branch a competitive advantage, but managers soon discovered that local standards of feminine respectability presented obstacles to a strategy centered on door-to-door sales. Avon's

success in Brazil relied on managers' ability to adapt the company's recruitment and marketing practices to prevailing gender norms²⁹⁶ and on their responsiveness to saleswomen's efforts to expand distribution beyond the company's initial target markets.

Existing studies of multinational consumer goods companies reveal that they were closely involved in the transnational evolution of women's gendered consumption and labor since the late nineteenth century. These multinationals often had to navigate differences in women's gender roles from country to country. Andrew Gordon has demonstrated that Singer marketing materials in early twentieth-century Japan balanced the portrayal of sewing machines as granting access to modern, western-style dress with depictions of the machines helping women to fulfil traditional gender roles as good wives and mothers, despite the increased economic independence that many women derived from machine-assisted sewing.²⁹⁷ Similarly, Julio Moreno has identified how Colgate Palmolive, Max Factor, Tangee, and Ponds advertised toiletries and cosmetics to Mexican women in the 1930s and 1940s by appealing to a middle ground between traditional local gender norms and modern cosmopolitan beauty ideals that emphasized women's seductive power. Moreno argues that cosmetics advertisements expanded the boundaries of socially acceptable behavior for Mexican women.²⁹⁸ This argument contrasts with the more common observation by historians that private sector labor practices tended to both

²⁹⁶ Avon's entry in Brazil coincided with broader debates about Brazilian gender norms regarding work in the early 1960s. By the mid-1970s, women's independent participation in the workforce was much more broadly accepted than it had been a decade before.

²⁹⁷ Andrew Gordon, *Fabricating Consumers: The Sewing Machine in Modern Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), Chapter 3. Uri Kupferschmidt has also noted that sewing machine ownership allowed many women in the early twentieth-century Middle East to pursue economic activities that increased their financial independence. Kupferschmidt, "The Social History of the Sewing Machine in the Middle East," *Die Welt des Islams*, Vol. 44, No. 2 (2004): 209.

²⁹⁸ Moreno, *Yankee Don't Go Home!*, 142-146.

exploit and contribute to gender inequality in early to mid-twentieth century Latin America,²⁹⁹ but is consistent with Geoffrey Jones' observation that norms in cosmetics use vary substantially from country to country and cosmetics multinationals have often allowed for substantial variation in branding strategies to adapt to local contexts.³⁰⁰

The beauty industry's virtues and vices have been a frequent topic of debate. Feminists have criticized the industry as being an instrument of gender repression that entraps women in a destructive obsession with their self-image³⁰¹ and both Geoffrey Jones and Denise Sutton have noted that global cosmetics advertising has historically idealized whiteness as a beauty ideal.³⁰² However, scholars have also observed that women have played an active and prominent role in shaping cosmetics use and the cosmetics industry. Both Jones and Kathy Peiss point to women's participation as entrepreneurs and business leaders in the cosmetics industry and cosmetics use's close association with women's entry into the workforce to argue that, on balance, the beauty industry has expanded women's agency and contributed to more flexible gender roles for women. Peiss also observes that black women entrepreneurs in the US, such as Madame

²⁹⁹ In *Dulcinea in the Factory*, Ann Farnsworth-Alvear argues that Colombian textile factories scaled back women's employment in response to populist national labor policies centered on expanding wages for male heads of household. Susan Besse maintains that early twentieth-century Brazilian employers exploited gender norms that devalued women's labour by paying them less and restricted women's employment opportunities. See Besse, *Restructuring Patriarchy*. Barbara Weinstein's examination of São Paulo industrial federations in *For Social Peace in Brazil* reveals that industrialists viewed women's employment as only temporary and promoted home economics classes that trained working-class women to be effective and efficient housewives.

³⁰⁰ Geoffrey Jones, *Beauty Imagined: A History of the Global Beauty Industry* (New York: Oxford University Press), 3, 222. Jones argues that brand variation between countries became the norm in the 1950s and 1960s.

³⁰¹ Naomi Wolf, *The Beauty Myth: How Images of Beauty are Used Against Women* (New York: Morrow, 2002).

³⁰² Geoffrey Jones, "Blond and blue-eyed? Globalizing beauty, c. 1945-c.1980." *Economic History Review*. Vol. 61, No. 1 (2008): 125-154.; Denise Sutton, *Globalizing Ideal Beauty: Women, Advertising, and the Power of Marketing* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

C. J. Walker and Annie Turnbo Malone, crafted an alternative black beauty culture and created job opportunities for poor African-American women.³⁰³

Avon has attracted the attention of scholars interested in examining how the company both shaped and was shaped by women's gender roles. Katina Manko has observed that Avon's management structure, company culture, and marketing materials in the United States in the first half of the twentieth century reflected conservative gender norms. However, Manko notes that female district and city sales managers were largely responsible for crafting Avon's motivational sales management system and that recruitment campaigns justified women's entry into the economy as business owners in the 1930s and 1940s.³⁰⁴ Building on Manko's observation of Avon's gendered business organization in the United States, Lindsey Feitz argues that Avon exported a gendered division of labor and management practices when the company expanded into Spanish-speaking Latin America in the 1950s and 1960s. Feitz maintains that the company portrayed selling cosmetics as compatible with women's obligations as mothers and wives and ideal for fair-skinned, middle-class women.³⁰⁵

Although Feitz observes that Avon used local sales representatives' cultural knowledge to introduce Latin American women to North American beauty culture, her study does not thoroughly evaluate the company's effect on local gender norms or

³⁰³ Jones, *Beauty Imagined*, 2, 364-5; Kathy Peiss, *Hope in a Jar: The Making of America's Beauty Culture*. (Philadelphia:University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 5-8, 269. Like Jones and Peiss, Sutton has highlighted the important role that women played in shaping the cosmetics industry as advertising copywriters. Sutton, *Globalizing Ideal Beauty*.

³⁰⁴ Katarina Manko, "Ding Dong! Avon Calling!: Gender, Business, and Door-to-Door Selling, 1890-1955." PhD Dissertation, University of Delaware, 2001. 231, 240, 283.

³⁰⁵ Lindsey Feitz, "Democratizing Beauty, Avon's Global Beauty Ambassadors and the Transnational Marketing of Femininity, 1954-2010." PhD Dissertation. University of Kansas, 2010, 57-60.

cosmetics use.³⁰⁶ Jones argues that in Latin America, Avon's system of direct sales 'provided a bridge between the modern commercial beauty industry and the traditional worlds of local neighborhoods and societal structures' that provided many women with a source of income and served as an instrument of social change.³⁰⁷ However, Avon's experience in Brazil reveals that building this bridge was not easy. Local social mores were not supportive of women's engagement in direct sales and Avon's business strategy required significant adaptation to the Brazilian market.

This chapter's examination of Avon's entry into the Brazilian market provides a new perspective on debates about how gender shapes business and business shape gender. Since Avon's business model was centered on a gendered division of labor, Avon's expansion into Brazil offers an opportunity to evaluate the extent to which the company modified its business practices to adapt to Brazilian gender norms. This chapter also examines Avon's effect on Brazilian gender norms and women's lives. A casual observer of Avon's business organization and marketing materials from the 1960s might conclude that the company did little to alleviate gender, racial, and class inequalities in Brazil. Women were excluded from middle and upper management positions, Avon's recruiting and marketing materials emphasized conservative roles for women as mothers and wives, and advertisements portrayed Avon cosmetics as glamorous consumer goods for fair-skinned middle-class and elite women.

However, a closer investigation reveals that the company's relationship with Brazilian women was more complex. Avon created a large number of direct sales

³⁰⁶ Feitz's research on Avon's Latin American operations is primarily based on company archives at the Hagley Museum and Library that contain limited documentation on the cosmetics market or the experiences of Avon personnel in Latin America.

³⁰⁷ Jones, *Beauty Imagined*, 231.

positions that were novel in Brazil, were reserved exclusively for women, and conflicted with prevailing ideas about feminine respectability that frowned on women working in the street.³⁰⁸ Despite the company's conservative rhetoric regarding feminine gender roles, selling Avon expanded many women's economic agency. Avon's exclusion of women from middle and upper management positions made male managers more reliant on women for their sales experience, giving saleswomen substantial influence in shaping sales practices and marketing strategy. Women played an important role in adapting Avon's marketing strategy and recruitment practices to the Brazilian market. These adaptations ultimately expanded economic opportunities and access to cosmetics for working-class, rural, and Afro-Brazilian women in the 1960s and early 1970s.³⁰⁹ In the early to mid-1970s, Avon began to reorganize the operations of its Latin American branches and new feminist organizations directly challenged traditional gender norms, marking the beginning of a new phase in Avon's business organization and its relationship with Brazilian women.

³⁰⁸ Brazilian gender norms reflected class hierarchies that valorized a middle-class standard of feminine domesticity that few outside of the middle class could attain. In her study of gender discourse in 1950s Brazilian magazines, Carla Bassanezi has observed that to maintain their respectability prior to marriage, middle-class women were expected to avoid being seen alone with men in public. Once married, to remain "preserved from the streets," middle-class women were not expected to work unless it was economically necessary, and were admonished to avoid frequent excursions in public without the presence of their husbands. Bassanezi, "Mulheres dos Anos Dourados," *História das mulheres no Brasil*, 610-612, 625, 628.

³⁰⁹ 'Afro-Brazilian' is used here to describe Brazilians of African descent who in the 1960s would likely have self-identified as either *preta* (black) or *pardo* (brown). For more on Brazilian racial identity and race relations in this period, see Michael Hanchard, *Orpheus and Power: The Movimento Negro of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, Brazil, 1945-1988* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

Establishing Avon in Brazil

David McConnell developed Avon's direct-to-home sales distribution system when he launched the California Perfume Company (renamed Avon in 1929) in 1886. McConnell directly marketed perfume to women by employing respectable saleswomen who could avoid the negative impressions that door-to-door salesmen had left on many consumers.³¹⁰ Although early recruiting materials emphasized saleswomen's entrepreneurship and increased economic independence, Avon's rapid expansion in the 1950s and 1960s corresponded with the decision to portray Avon sales as being compatible with women's roles as housewives.³¹¹ In 1950, Avon accounted for over 70 percent of cosmetics sales in the US direct-sales market.³¹²

Avon's expansion beyond the United States and Canada began in Latin America. In 1947, the company launched a joint venture in Panama, and opened branches in Puerto Rico, Mexico, Venezuela, and Cuba between 1954 and 1958.³¹³ These branches were largely successful and helped fund additional international expansion. Feitz notes that Latin American saleswomen's knowledge of local cultures allowed them to effectively broker North American beauty culture directly to consumers in their homes.³¹⁴ In 1958, Avon began the process of opening a branch in Brazil.

Multinationals that established manufacturing operations in Brazil following the Second World War generally enjoyed capital and technological advantages that domestic

³¹⁰ Feitz, "Democratizing Beauty," 18-19.

³¹¹ *Ibid.*, 23-24.

³¹² *Ibid.*, 24.

³¹³ Feitz, "Democratizing Beauty," 45, 49.

³¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 89.

competitors could not match. Avon opened its Brazilian branch under exchange rate and tariff policies that created a protected market for its goods and encouraged foreign capital investment. From 1957 to 1961, the Brazilian government established multi-tiered exchange rates and tariffs that favored the importation of capital goods and raw materials while discouraging the importation of finished consumer goods.³¹⁵ Although policies designed to combat inflation and encourage exports included reformed exchange controls and lower tariffs under both the presidency of João Goulart (1961-1964) and the military regime installed by a coup in 1964, substantial protective tariffs remained in place into the early 1970s. In addition to protecting multinationals producing consumer goods in Brazil, policymakers encouraged capital goods imports by overvaluing Brazil's currency, the cruzeiro.³¹⁶ Multinational enterprises that opened manufacturing facilities in Brazil, as Avon did, were often the most visible beneficiaries of these policies.

When Avon entered Brazil, international brands were already prominent in the market for cosmetics and toiletries, which Unilever estimated to be worth \$38 million in 1959.³¹⁷ Consumer statistics collected by Brazil's largest consumer research organization, the Instituto Brasileiro de Opinião Pública e Estatística (Brazilian Institute of Public Opinion and Statistics, IBOPE), reveal that in Rio de Janeiro in 1961, Pond's cleansing cream and compact powder, Tangee lipstick, Cutex nail polish, Helen Curtis shampoo, and Aqua Velva aftershave were owned by more consumers than any other competitor in their respective product categories while Colgate and Unilever soaps and toothpastes

³¹⁵ Baer, *The Brazilian Economy*, 58-60.

³¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 60-61; 181-182.

³¹⁷ Jones, "Blond and blue-eyed?," 131.

were also widely owned.³¹⁸ In addition to technological and trade policy advantages for multinationals producing in Brazil, international cosmetics companies benefited from the consumer tastes modelled by North American and Western European celebrities who were idolized in Brazilian popular magazines like *O Cruzeiro*, *Capricho*, and *Manchete*. These magazines not only featured color pictures of celebrities sporting the latest trends in cosmetics, they also provided instruction in cosmetics trends and application.

Avon officially began setting up a corporate office in Brazil in 1958 and sales began after the inauguration of its São Paulo plant in July 1959. As the largest cosmetics company in the world by sales volume, Avon could afford to invest 150 million cruzeiros (roughly \$12 million in 2014 dollars) in modern equipment and for the construction of its plant in the Santo Amaro neighborhood of São Paulo.³¹⁹ Few of the processes in the Santo Amaro plant were automated and workers used hand-operated devices to assemble and package goods. Despite costs from importing ingredients and inefficiencies in manual assembly, the plant's size allowed economies of scale for a wide range of products, supporting Avon's branding as "the best possible line of products at an attractive price."³²⁰ For example, in January 1960, the sale price for lipstick, Cr\$70, represented 1.2% of the legal minimum monthly salary in the states of Rio de Janeiro and

³¹⁸ Instituto Brasileiro de Opinião Pública e Estatística, "Serviço de pesquisa entre consumidores," Rio de Janeiro, Jan. 1961, IBOPE collection, Arquivo Edgard Leuenroth, Universidade Estadual de Campinas, hereafter cited as IBOPE. IBOPE measured whether consumers owned a brand or type of product, but not how often they purchased it. For this reason, ownership figures from IBOPE are not exact measures of market share.

³¹⁹ Press clippings from "Brazil 1959 Scrapbook," Avon Products Inc., Records, Hagley Museum & Library, Wilmington, hereafter cited as AVON. The provided estimate is based on the favourable "cambio de custo" exchange rate of Cr\$100 per dollar in January 1959. See Baer, *The Brazilian Economy*, 58-60. January 2014 dollars calculated using the US Department of Labor's Historical Consumer Price Index Table, <http://www.bls.gov/cpi/#tables>, accessed 21 May 2014.

³²⁰ Jones, *Beauty Imagined*, 228.

São Paulo, while the non-discounted price of Cr\$140 was only 2.4% of the minimum salary, both well within the purchasing power of most consumers in those states. Ten years later, the sale price of lipstick had increased to 2.4% of the minimum salary and the non-discounted price remained at only 3.1% of the minimum salary, virtually unchanged in relative value since 1960, considering that the real value of the minimum salary in Rio had declined more than twenty percent in that time.³²¹ The plant also produced a wider range of cosmetics and toiletries, from less-expensive items like lipstick and deodorant to pricier products like perfume, than any of Avon's competitors in Brazil. The company marketed products in nineteen out of thirty-two categories measured by IBOPE for Rio de Janeiro in 1961, compared to eleven for Coty and Helena Rubenstein, the brands with the next largest range of products.³²² Avon's ability to market all of these goods under one brand added to its competitive advantage by lowering the marginal marketing costs associated with each individual product.³²³

As the first large company in Brazil to employ direct-to-home distribution, Avon's business model offered it a number of advantages over its competitors. Geoffrey Jones has observed that in the mid-twentieth century, it was often hard for cosmetics firms operating in a foreign country to secure access to distribution channels.³²⁴ Avon created

³²¹ Product pricing information from Panoramas 1959-1960 and Campaign Mailings 1-7, 1970, AVON. Percentages relative to minimum salaries listed in Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística (IBGE), *Anuário estatístico do Brasil*, vol. 34 (1973): 641. Information on the declining value of the minimum salary from Gonzago and Machado, "Rendimentos e preços."

³²² "Serviço de pesquisa entre consumidores," Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, Jan. 1961, IBOPE. Avon also maintained the largest range of products in São Paulo, where IBOPE tracked fewer product categories.

³²³ For more on how "family" branding contributed to companies' marketing advantages in the twentieth century, see Susan Strasser, *Satisfaction Guaranteed: The Making of the American Mass Market* (Washington: Smithsonian Books, 1989).

³²⁴ Jones, *Beauty Imagined*, 232.

its own distribution channel. Orders through sales representatives gave Avon direct access to consumers without having to locate and contract appropriate retailers such as department stores or pharmacies. Without the need to stock products beyond central warehouses, direct distribution ensured low overhead. Saleswomen kept ordered products in their own homes until they delivered them.³²⁵ Direct distribution reinforced Avon's family brand strategy, allowing representatives to market the company's full range of products without having to risk stocking inventories of less popular goods until an order was placed. As Avon only paid saleswomen by commission, it was able to minimize its employment costs and contract large numbers of representatives.³²⁶ Direct access to consumers, low overhead and low employment costs gave Avon a distinct advantage over both local and multinational competitors. Avon's Brazilian branch did not face competition from another direct sales cosmetics company until the Brazilian company Natura adopted a direct sales model in 1974.

Avon's Brazilian operations opened under the supervision of American-born managers. Herbert Moss served as Brazil's first General Manager, Paul Warner as the branch Vice President and President of Sales, and Nick Neckleby as operations manager. Collectively, these Americans possessed many years of experience in Brazil. Herbert Moss had worked in Brazil for Sydney Ross from 1947 to 1948 and Johnson & Johnson from 1948 to 1957.³²⁷ Paul Warner was a naturalized Brazilian and had spent several

³²⁵ Ademar dos Santos Seródio Interview, Museu da Pessoa, "Avon – Memória dos 50 anos de Brazil," Digital Collection, accessed October 15, 2011, www.museudapessoa.net, hereafter cited as "Avon – Memória."

³²⁶ For more on the cost advantages of a contracted salesforce to direct-sales organizations, see Nicole Woolsey Biggart, *Charismatic Capitalism: Direct Selling Organizations in America*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

³²⁷ Press clippings from "Brazil 1959 Scrapbook," AVON.

years in Brazil prior to working for Avon.³²⁸ Although these first managers were American-born, they relied on native Brazilians to staff their branch's office and factory.

Gender and local control in Avon Brazil

Avon's International Division in Rye, New York transmitted a gendered organizational structure and company culture to its Brazilian branch, but gave branch managers considerable autonomy in managing local operations, recruiting, and marketing. Once branch managers were trained and Avon's direct sales system had been established at a branch, the International Division granted a degree of autonomy to foreign branch managers and encouraged promoting local men into management as a way to address differences between national cultures, economies, and regulations.³²⁹

Avon's paternal corporate culture took shape in frequent references to the company as a family. Company relations of all types were portrayed as familial relations, whether between factory and office employees, within the salesforce, or even between foreign branches and Avon's US headquarters. In his keynote address before the 1963 International Division General Manager's Conference, Harold Naideau, the head of Avon's International Division, asked each branch's General Manager to conceive of Avon as one large family:

We talk a lot about the Avon Family when we talk about our Representatives. Is it not then equally important to talk about and live as an Avon Family of Operating branches in the United States, Canada and International. (sic) These Branches or businesses that you operate are not independent or separate organizations. They are a member of the Avon Family Group and as such, are subject to the normal parental discipline. Being a sort of different child, however, because we are

³²⁸ Albertina de Araújo Dias Interview, "Avon – Memória."

³²⁹ Christopher Bartlett and Sumantra Ghoshal have noted that multinationals selling branded packaged products benefit from granting national branches substantial autonomy so that they can successfully respond to varying cultural, regulatory, and economic conditions. Bartlett and Ghoshal, *Managing Across Borders: The Transnational Solution*. (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1998), 23-25.

foreign, perhaps they don't always understand us, but they do love us and they do support us in everything we do.³³⁰ (Emphasis in the original)

Naideau's analogy to a family asserted the authority of the International Division over branches that were international extensions of the Avon corporation, but allowed for cultural differences between Avon's foreign branches and its home office.

The International Division granted branch managers substantial discretion, but expected them to act in a paternal role in the supervision of their employees. Naideau instructed branch managers to give due recognition and consideration to all employees.³³¹ In his speech on personnel at the same meeting, Alfred Kemper outlined a disciplinarian role for branch managers to police the sexual morality of male staff to avoid domestic problems that might reflect poorly on the company. "At times like these, the General Manager often has to be a father confessor, a watchful guardian and, perhaps, a Dutch uncle."³³² If followed, Kemper's advice could also serve to protect the honor of Avon's female employees from the sexual dangers that unruly male employees might pose.

Concerns for the paternal supervision of both male and female employees reflected the substantial number of women who worked at each branch headquarters. This was true of the Brazilian branch headquarters, where women were hired for administrative office positions and work on the factory floor. Factory positions offered women higher pay than in comparable Brazilian-owned factories. In the 1960s, Avon maintained a gendered division of labor on the factory floor. Ruth Pacheco, a factory

³³⁰ Naideau, "Keynote Address," International Division General Manager's Conference, Rye, NY, 24-28 June 1963, p. 6, AVON.

³³¹ Ibid., 7.

³³² Kemper, "Branch Personnel Management Policies & Objectives," International Division General Manager's Conference, Rye, NY, 24-28 June 1963, p. 11, AVON.

worker for Avon for more than 40 years, recalled that women were generally given jobs that required greater manual dexterity. For example, lipstick assembly was performed by women when lipstick was still assembled using hand tools. After the introduction of a machine that automated the first steps of assembly, a man operated the machine while women finished any manual assembly.³³³

Corporate benefits distributed at the Avon headquarters reinforced company paternalism. In addition to an employee cafeteria, the Santo Amaro plant maintained a medical office staffed by a doctor and nurses to attend to the plant workers' health. After a substantially larger plant opened in São Paulo's Interlagos neighborhood in 1970, these facilities expanded to include a gym, childcare, a game room, and access to a dentist and gynecologist, demonstrating Avon's interest in supporting workers' families. These services combined with a congenial company culture to foster a feeling of community among company employees. For this reason, Ruth Pacheco and other workers at the Avon headquarters often referred to their co-workers and Avon as “family.”³³⁴

As Avon created new jobs at its branch headquarters, the company offered more informal economic opportunities to saleswomen. Avon directly hired women to be 'promoters,' to recruit, train, and direct saleswomen, providing them with the latest information on campaigns and new products. These promoters served functions similar to Avon's female district and city sales managers in the United States, but lacked a manager's title.³³⁵ Unlike promoters, however, saleswomen were not official company

³³³ Ruth Pacheco Interview, “Avon – Memória.”

³³⁴ Ruth Pacheco Interview, “Avon – Memória.”

³³⁵ For more on female district and city sales managers in the US, see Manko, “Ding Dong! Avon Calling,” Ch. 5.

employees and were legally considered independent contractors. Saleswomen were paid commissions on their sales and were rewarded with prizes, usually in the form of consumer goods given as part of regularly recurring sales contests.³³⁶ Promoters answered to male regional sales managers but neither promoters nor sales managers could exercise direct control over saleswomen because of their technically independent status.

Instead, Avon established status hierarchies within its salesforce to motivate saleswomen to meet sales targets and encourage them to follow promoter recommendations.³³⁷ The company outlined sales campaigns, introduced new products, and motivated representatives in honor rolls that accompanied a regular representatives' newsletter titled *Panorama*. Successful representatives were conferred a rank of prestige and were more likely to be pictured and profiled in the honor roll. In many of these profiles, successful saleswomen thanked their promoter for their help and encouragement, regardless of the status they had achieved as representatives.³³⁸

Another example of this gendered status hierarchy is evident in a 1968 sales contest that rewarded promoters and every saleswoman working under them with bonuses for the most productive territories in the country. *Panorama* called on saleswomen to make their promoter the queen of Avon's anniversary party and encouraged each woman to step up their sales activity so that they could 'Be an

³³⁶ *Panorama*, Campaign Mailings 1-11, 1967, AVON.

³³⁷ Nicole Woolsey Biggart has identified status hierarchies to be an important organizational characteristic of direct sales organizations. Companies can use status to motivate and exercise loose control over nominally independent sales representatives without having to spend substantial resources on sales management. Biggart, *Charismatic Capitalism*, 8, 90-91.

³³⁸ "Lista de Honra: Vendas Até a Campanha 13, 1966," Campaign Mailings 1-11, 1967, AVON.

anniversary princess.³³⁹ An illustration portrayed a promoter's coronation as she sat on a raised platform above an audience of applauding and smiling saleswomen. Although saleswomen shared their promoter's achievement, her status above them and her accomplishment were emphasized. A man with a streak of grey in his hair crowned the promoter queen, affirming her matriarchal authority and recognition by Avon's male executives. The man's presence reflected both a company culture that naturalized male executive leadership and the fact that even though Avon's promoters and salespeople were always women, national and regional sales management positions were reserved for men until the 1980s.

As Avon's Brazilian operation expanded and its staff developed experience, the branch's leadership gradually brought native-born Brazilian male employees into management positions. Branch managers reserved many management positions for Brazilian men who started in the branch's accounting department. Paul Warner recruited João Bosco Maggioli, who was then working in industrial cost accounting, to become the sales manager for the new Rio Grande do Sul office in Porto Alegre in 1963.³⁴⁰ Warner then recruited Ademar dos Santos Seródio, who had been promoted from accounts to the branch's budget supervisor, to open Avon's Bahia operations in Salvador.³⁴¹ Maggioli and Seródio later attained leading positions in the Brazilian branch and Latin America in the 1980s and 1990s.

Maggioli and Seródio's promotions were representative of official company policies on personnel development in foreign offices that supported a patriarchal

³³⁹ *Panorama*, Campaign Mailings 1-11, 1968, AVON.

³⁴⁰ João Bosco Maggioli Interview, "Avon – Memória."

³⁴¹ Ademar dos Santos Seródio Interview, "Avon – Memória."

corporate structure with male management and a female salesforce. At the 1963 International Division General Manager's Conference, Alfred Kemper outlined a series of hiring and promotion practices that the International Division recommended. He cited increasing difficulties that Avon faced getting visas for American personnel and organizational advantages to recruiting and promoting local staff as reasons to develop national employees at branch offices. Recruits that might make good managers, he argued, should be placed in areas of the company, such as sales accounting or operations, where they could gain first-hand experience with Avon's operations.³⁴² Kemper observed that in addition to offering substantial opportunities for training and employee evaluation prior to promotion into management, promoting from within the company 'gives us people who are more indoctrinated in Avon philosophy.'³⁴³ Avon's personnel policies thus encouraged the development of male Brazilian office staff and managers who would remain loyal to Avon and could potentially enjoy lifetime careers with the company. Since they targeted male office staff for promotion, these personnel policies also clearly excluded the possibility of promoting successful saleswomen into management positions. This policy paralleled the exclusion of women from Avon's upper management in the US until the 1980s.³⁴⁴

Local recruitment and training was part of Avon's corporate strategy to gradually decentralize some managerial decisions to respond more effectively to local conditions. Harold Naideau explained the need for flexibility in local branch practices: 'Many complex factors, such as language, habit, traditions, standard of living, cultural

³⁴² Alfred Kemper, "Branch Personnel Management Policies," 2-6.

³⁴³ Ibid, 6.

³⁴⁴ Manko, "Ding Dong! Avon Calling!," 215.

background, industrial development, peculiar sensitivities and Nationalism make each marketing area peculiar unto itself.³⁴⁵ To address the peculiarities of each market, Naideau outlined a gradual shift towards greater branch autonomy over operations and marketing: “Our basic philosophy is, and I underline this, to make each Branch as completely self-sufficient and independent as possible[...] [F]rom actual experience and exposure, you General Managers know that it takes time to develop people to where you can do this in the traditions of Avon and in the traditions and needs of your own market.”³⁴⁶ In addition to granting branch managers leeway over operations and personnel, Avon allowed for product adaptations and innovations in each market. Key elements of Avon’s business organization and direct sales system along with the company culture and overall family branding strategy remained consistent from branch to branch, but Avon embraced substantial local variation in product offerings.³⁴⁷

In Brazil's case, branch management encountered cultural differences in gender and class norms from Brazilian staff and consumers that led management to adapt Avon’s recruiting and marketing policies in response to middle-class concerns about the respectability of women engaging in door-to-door sales.

Selling sales to Brazilian women

Despite efforts by feminists to expand women’s legal rights and participation in the workforce in the 1950s and 1960s, most Brazilians maintained conservative views on women’s labor. Faced with skepticism that door-to-door sales were a respectable feminine activity, Avon framed these sales as being both profitable business ventures and

³⁴⁵ Harold Naideau, "Keynote Address," 3.

³⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 5.

³⁴⁷ Jones, *Beauty Imagined*, 228.

compatible with Brazilian gender norms. In this way, Avon sales did not overtly threaten men's position as recognized family breadwinners nor raise the specter of moral lassitude. This message was consistent with the company's promotion in the United States of the Avon saleswoman as both a business owner and housewife, two ideal social roles in post-war America.³⁴⁸

Avon's recruitment of saleswomen paralleled feminists' efforts to grant married women new legal rights and increase women's participation in the Brazilian economy. Romy Medeiros da Fonseca succeeded in lobbying the national government to pass the Married Women's Statute in 1962. As Chapter 5 will demonstrate, Carmen da Silva, a psychologist and prominent columnist on women's issues, argued that for women to make good wives and mothers, they needed to gain a broader appreciation of the world by working outside of the home. Despite the effort of feminists like da Silva and Medeiros, most Brazilians remained skeptical of the suitability of women's non-domestic labor. An IBOPE survey from 1967 indicated that even in the cosmopolitan cities of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, only 21% of female respondents thought women should work, compared to 21% who did not and 52% who believed that women should only work if it was economically necessary.³⁴⁹ The diffusion of feminist ideas was further curtailed by censorship under the military regime installed in 1964.³⁵⁰

In order to address widespread conservative views on women's labor, Avon

³⁴⁸ Manko, "Ding Dong! Avon Calling!," 13, 265.

³⁴⁹ "Pesquisa sobre o comportamento e a situação global da mulher," 1967, Pesquisas especiais, IBOPE.

³⁵⁰ In a prominent example of censorship, copies of the January 1967 edition of the magazine *Realidade*, which addressed the controversial topics of abortion, single motherhood, and prostitution were confiscated in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. See "A apreensão de Realidade," *Realidade*, N° 11 (February, 1967): 3-4.

managers had to portray direct sales as a respectable activity compatible with marriage. Direct door-to-door sales were not common prior to Avon's arrival, and many Brazilians did not look favorably on women walking unaccompanied in the street or into strangers' homes. Women who regularly walked alone in the street were likely to be perceived as poor domestic workers, street peddlers, or prostitutes, and likely targets for both middle-class and elite men seeking casual sexual relationships with less-affluent women.³⁵¹ Husbands were particularly protective of their wives' and their own reputations and reluctant to support them taking up Avon sales, a problem that Avon also encountered in the United Kingdom.³⁵² João Maggioli recalled that when he opened the Rio Grande do Sul office, a major obstacle to recruiting promoters was convincing their husbands that the work was respectable:

The salary was good, the work was very good, but there was this complication of having to work in the street, she didn't have an office, she didn't have anything and a part of the time she was accompanied by the sales manager who ended up directing her work. And I lost a lot of great candidates, in that time period, for the fact that the husband wouldn't agree: 'Ah, this going out with the manager to work, I don't agree with it. What will my neighbor say? That my wife went out with a man to work.'³⁵³

The fact that Maggioli conducted his interviews out of hotels further complicated matters, prompting many of the candidates to bring their husbands with them to the interview to maintain respectability.³⁵⁴

The strategy that Avon brought from the United States to portray sales as compatible with roles as housewives also helped the company overcome resistance to

³⁵¹ Bassanezi, "Mulheres dos anos dourados," 613-614.

³⁵² Jones, *Beauty Imagined*, 229.

³⁵³ João Bosco Maggioli Interview, "Avon – Memória."

³⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

recruiting and sales in Brazil by expanding the definition of respectable feminine activities. Marketing and recruitment materials indicated that sales occurred in nominally safe domestic settings, were primarily between saleswomen and female clients, and were conducted by women who dressed and acted respectably. Sales training materials and advertisements evolved over time, but they consistently portrayed Avon saleswomen in conservative clothing, usually with collars that revealed little below the neck and hemlines that fell well below the knee. Like other saleswomen, Ângela Maria Rocco Prates da Fonseca recalled that when she went on sales calls, she was always dressed very properly.³⁵⁵ Maggioli recalled that to overcome recruiting difficulties in Rio Grande do Sul, he brought in promoters from São Paulo who could demonstrate through their behavior that selling Avon was a respectable activity.³⁵⁶ Avon's recruiting strategy thus attempted to subtly shift the boundaries of what constituted feminine respectability for middle-class women.

Panorama sought to motivate saleswomen by linking sales to income and increased independence as business owners. Several *Panoramas* from the 1960s listed representatives who had achieved various awards for their sales performance. Honor rolls featured pictures of successful representatives along with brief quotes where they described their experiences in sales, their motivations, and the benefits they received from Avon. These quotations frequently framed commissions as profits and being a representative as owning a business. Vicentina Ferrucci Leite described her positive experience from selling Avon in São Paulo for the previous six years: ‘I have been able to

³⁵⁵ Ângela Maria Rocco Prates da Fonseca Interview, “Avon – Memória.”

³⁵⁶ João Bosco Maggioli Interview, “Avon – Memória.”

reach my objectives, obtaining good profits and a large circle of friends among my clients, which makes my own business very pleasant.³⁵⁷ Emphasizing autonomy and business ownership encouraged representatives to take pride in their role as saleswomen and helped justify a contractual relationship in which Avon sales representatives received commissions on products supplied by Avon but had to pay for their own catalogues, flyers, and product samples.

Avon often emphasized the income that representatives could derive from cosmetics sales. A 1960 *Panorama* indicated a woman could make Cr\$3200 in a week by selling an average of Cr\$400 per customer visit (equivalent to two to four items on offer) and selling to two customers every hour for twenty hours a week at a 20% commission.³⁵⁸ Extrapolated to a monthly income, this would be equivalent to 143% of the minimum salary in Rio de Janeiro in the last quarter of 1960.³⁵⁹ As noted in Chapter 1, IBOPE divided consumers into four class categories: Class A “rich” consumers who represented the top 1-2% of income earners in each market, Class B “middle class” consumers who represented approximately the next 32% of income earners, followed by Class C “poor” and Class D “bottom poor” consumers representing 32% and 34% of income earners respectively.³⁶⁰ The income outlined by *Panorama* alone would place a household in the middle of Class C consumers in Rio and São Paulo. When combined with income from a husband making the minimum wage, this level of sales earnings could elevate a

³⁵⁷ “Lista de Honra: Vendas Até a Campanha 13, 1966,” Campaign Mailings 1-11, 1967, AVON.

³⁵⁸ *Panoramas*, 1959-1960, AVON.

³⁵⁹ IBGE, *Anuário estatístico do Brasil*, vol. 34 (1973): 641.

³⁶⁰ “Serviço de pesquisa entre consumidores,” IBOPE. Class composition percentages are averaged from 1961, 1965, and 1971 percentages for Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo.

household from the working poor to the middle class as defined by IBOPE.³⁶¹ The figure outlined by *Panorama* did not factor in expenses for catalogues and samples, and most women would have sold substantially less.³⁶² Even so, the earnings for a very active Brazilian saleswoman could be significant in the context of Brazil's low wage economy. This marks a contrast with Avon sales in the US, where according to Katina Manko, even the earnings of very active saleswomen were not substantial when compared with male wages.³⁶³

Although Avon promoted women's potential sales earnings, *Panorama* portrayed sales as compatible with traditional Brazilian gender roles at home. Earnings examples, like the Cr\$3200 amount given in 1960, were based on a flexible, part-time schedule that could accommodate a housewife's domestic activities. Avon also encouraged its salesforce with prizes for strong sales performance, usually in the form of domestic consumer goods. A 1967 *Panorama* featured a full-page photograph of the prizes available to successful representatives. An array of consumer goods was laid out before the reader, next to the headline 'Marvelous Awards for You!' With the exception of the grand prize, a Volkswagen Fusca, almost all prizes on display were consumer goods that evoked associations with a feminine private sphere and household labor: pots and pans, a floor waxer, a refrigerator, a sewing machine, a hamper, dishes, and silverware.³⁶⁴ As Avon encouraged women to leave their homes to make sales, the company also linked

³⁶¹ Ibid., Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, Jan. 1961.

³⁶² US company data from the 1930s and 1940s revealed that average representatives only served ten to thirty customers. Manko, "Ding Dong! Avon Calling," 226.

³⁶³ Ibid., 288-289.

³⁶⁴ *Panorama*, Campaign Mailings 1-11, 1967, AVON.

this activity with improving the home and the saleswomen's feminine domestic roles.

Avon used saleswomen's testimonials to demonstrate that sales were compatible with women's family duties. In honor rolls, several married women highlighted their improved ability to contribute to various household expenses. Maria Sinai Bevilacqua, a saleswoman from Belo Horizonte, used her income to help her husband with the household budget and provide money for their children's education.³⁶⁵ Maria de Lourdes Ramalho, a saleswoman from São Paulo was proud that she was able to use the money she made from Avon so that her husband could purchase an apartment with her 'small help'.³⁶⁶ These women's narratives portrayed them in supportive, rather than leading financial roles within their marriages. Widowed and unmarried women also frequently pointed to family relations motivating their work. Maria do Carmo T. Nunes, an older saleswoman from Rio de Janeiro, used her sales income to meet some of her basic needs so that she would not have to rely solely on the help of her daughters.³⁶⁷ The frequent mention of family responsibilities in these accounts indicated that women's participation in Avon supported their traditional roles as wives and mothers.

Despite *Panorama's* deference to family obligations, many saleswomen appreciated greater economic independence. A desire for independence can be located in saleswomen's expressed pride in their autonomy as business owners. In addition to prestige, the prospect of running one's own business could bring financial independence from a spouse or employer. Widows became less reliant on their children, and married women could use their income to make purchases for themselves or exercise greater

³⁶⁵ "Lista de Honra: Vendas Até a Campanha 13, 1966," Campaign Mailings 1-11, 1967, AVON.

³⁶⁶ Ibid.

³⁶⁷ Ibid.

influence over their husband's expenditures. Female employees at Avon's headquarters and plant in São Paulo also gained greater economic independence through their earnings. Income from cosmetics sales could be particularly attractive to working-class women.

Saleswoman initiative and adaptation to Brazil

Although Avon's advertisements idealized the lifestyles of middle-class white women and the Brazilian branch's original marketing strategy targeted elite and middle-class consumers in major urban markets, branch management quickly realized that the company could not rely solely on fair-skinned middle-class saleswomen. As management shifted company policy to recruit increasing numbers of working-class saleswomen, these women expanded sales of Avon products beyond the company's original target markets to working-class, darker-skinned, and rural consumers. These bottom-up adaptations of Avon's marketing strategy facilitated the company's rapid expansion and market penetration.

Avon's marketing plan for Brazil initially targeted middle-class consumers and saleswomen in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. The company's intention to expand to other urban markets where middle-class consumers were fewer in number, its branding as 'the best possible line of products at an attractive price,'³⁶⁸ and the consistency of Avon product prices relative to incomes from 1960 to 1970 indicate that managers intended to eventually expand sales to a broad cross-section of consumers. However, with higher incomes and greater apparent interest in consuming American and European brands, middle- and upper-class consumers represented a ready market for Avon products.

³⁶⁸ Jones, *Beauty Imagined*, 228.

Further, adoption of Avon cosmetics by affluent consumers could later help the company portray Avon as an aspirational yet affordable brand to working-class consumers.

In order to market Avon products to both middle-class and wealthy consumers, managers initially focused on recruiting affluent saleswomen. João Maggioli recalled that Avon initially recruited promoters in São Paulo from the upper classes under the assumption that Avon represented a product that elites would want to buy. Avon's limited resources for recruitment also favored this decision. In the 1960s, the company only hired promoters who had their own cars so they would be able to have meetings with saleswomen over a large territory and bring catalogues and product samples with them.³⁶⁹ However, Maggioli observed that elite women proved resistant to working in the streets, making recruitment of effective elite promoters difficult. As a result, Avon began to recruit less affluent promoters.³⁷⁰ As managers worked around affluent women's reservations about working in the streets, recruiting further down the class ladder facilitated working-class women's entry into Avon's salesforce and sales to working-class consumers earlier than managers had originally intended.

Although Avon continued to recruit middle-class women, many of Avon's top representatives were far from affluent. The most successful representatives featured in *Panorama* profiles often relied on income from Avon to support themselves, pay for their children's education, or acquire an apartment--things that a woman married to a well-off husband would presumably not need to pay for.³⁷¹ Combined with consumer goods prizes, income from Avon sales represented a way to realize a middle-class domestic

³⁶⁹ Ibid.

³⁷⁰ Ibid.

³⁷¹ "Lista de Honra: Vendas Até a Campanha 13, 1966," Campaign Mailings 1-11, 1967, AVON.

ideal, as did the use of Avon cosmetics. By selling to working-class women in addition to middle-class consumers, Avon representatives expanded access to symbolic markers for glamor and class status. Less affluent women who might not risk purchasing cosmetics they were unsure of could try them out in the privacy of their own homes. If they were unfamiliar with a new line of cosmetics, an Avon saleswoman was there to show these women what cosmetics middle-class clients were buying and how to properly apply them. These advantages to purchasing cosmetics at home were emphasized in Avon's advertising.

One of Avon's first Brazilian advertisements from 1959 introduced the advantages of Avon's direct-to-home distribution.³⁷² The headline reads “Marvelous innovation! The elegant Brazilian woman chooses AVON cosmetics in her own home!” The advertisement attempted to overcome Brazilian consumers' unfamiliarity with door-to-door sales by emphasizing that they should “Welcome the Avon representative when she comes to your home!” The copy explains the advantages of purchasing through Avon: “At home, undisturbed, you can choose the most appropriate lipstick...the fragrance that you most desire!” Other venues did not offer consumers the same privacy. Unlike its competitors, Avon could save women from public embarrassment if they did not know how to use a product and gave consumers more opportunities to try products before buying them. This was especially valuable for women who had limited budgets, women with limited experience with cosmetics use, or women who might be subjected to class or racial prejudices. Avon also provided less-affluent consumers with the convenience of purchasing makeup and fragrances from home instead of at department stores or

³⁷² Brazil – Magazine Advertisement, Int_Ads_00013.jpg, AVON.

boutiques located in commercial districts that were often far from working-class neighborhoods.

In most of Avon's Brazilian advertisements and marketing materials dating between 1959 and 1969, the models were white. Although catalogues and advertisements increasingly featured Brazilian settings as the branch gradually took over production of marketing materials, non-whites did not appear until 1970. In that year, Avon materials began to feature Afro-Brazilians, both in scenes with white women, and in advertisements that specifically targeted Afro-Brazilian couples.³⁷³ It is worth noting that these materials came four years after Avon started advertising to African-American consumers in the US.³⁷⁴

The Brazilian branch's comparative lag in targeting darker-skinned consumers was likely due to limitations in local production capacity and perceptions of consumer purchasing power. The appearance of dark-skinned Brazilians in catalogues coincided with the 1970 opening of Avon's Interlagos plant, which had several more assembly lines, facilitating diversification into product lines for Afro-Brazilian consumers. Avon management may also have perceived the increased purchasing power of Afro-Brazilian consumers as urban employment expanded during the so-called "Brazilian economic miracle" between 1968 and 1973. From 1968 to the end of 1972, non-agricultural employment in the states of Guanabara, Rio de Janeiro, and São Paulo increased 17.7% compared to a 7.3% increase of total employment nationally.³⁷⁵

Although the branch's marketing strategy did not actively pursue dark-skinned

³⁷³ Campaign Mailings 1-10 and 11-19, 1970. Avon Products Inc., Records, Hagley Museum and Library.

³⁷⁴ US Black Ads, 1966-80. Avon Products Inc., Records, Hagley Museum and Library.

³⁷⁵ Own elaboration of data from IBGE, *Anuário estatístico do Brasil*, vols. 30 & 34 (1969 and 1973).

Brazilians prior to 1970, Avon did not exclude them from the salesforce or fail to sell to Afro-Brazilian consumers. Avon's approach to race in Brazil in the 1960s echoed the company's policy in the United States in the 1940s and 1950s to portray Avon ladies as white suburban women while allowing black women to sell Avon products.³⁷⁶ Profiles of brown- and black-skinned women appear alongside those of whites in 1967 honor rolls, although in smaller numbers.³⁷⁷ These women sold to their friends and neighbors and distributed Avon products across racial lines. As with other less-affluent consumers, Avon's in-home sales may have been attractive to Afro-Brazilian women who were uncomfortable sampling cosmetics in retail locations that catered to fair-skinned middle-class consumers. Many women also benefitted from Afro-Brazilian saleswomen's expertise in identifying and applying cosmetics suitable to darker skin.

The inclusion of working-class and dark-skinned women in Avon's Brazilian salesforce and the resulting expansion of sales beyond the branch's initial target markets added to the effectiveness of the company's direct sales distribution and family brand strategy. Avon saleswomen successfully sold a wide variety of branded products to a large number of consumers across social classes. According to IBOPE surveys from 1961, within two years of sales in Rio de Janeiro, Avon was owned by more consumers than any other brand in four out of the nineteen product categories that the company marketed, and second most widely owned in another nine categories. By 1965, the brand led in consumer ownership in eleven categories and placed second in an additional nine out of the twenty-seven product categories that Avon sold in Rio, with 50% or more of women's

³⁷⁶ Manko, "Ding Dong! Avon Calling!," 220, 265.

³⁷⁷ "Lista de Honra: Vendas Até a Campanha 13, 1966," Campaign Mailings 1-11, 1967, AVON.

cologne, perfume, cleansing cream, base cream, hair-removal lotion, hair lotion, and hand cream consumers owning an Avon-branded product.³⁷⁸

Figure 4.1 below reveals the expansion of Avon product ownership in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo from 1961 to 1971 among consumers of five product categories that were both purchased by a large number of consumers and represent the range of products that Avon sold in substantial quantities: perfume, lipstick, nail polish, compact powder, and body deodorant.³⁷⁹

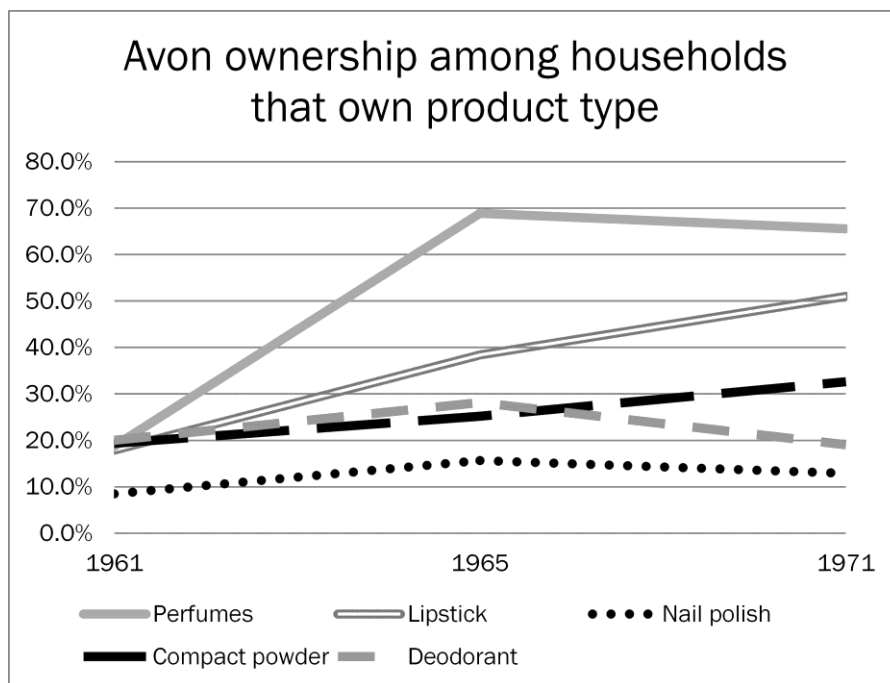


Figure 4.1. Ownership of Avon among cosmetics consumers, Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, 1961-1971. Source: Instituto Brasileiro de Opinião Pública e Estatística, "Serviço de pesquisa entre consumidores," Group: Pesquisas de Opinião Pública, held at the Arquivo Edgard Leuenroth, Universidade Estadual de Campinas, SP, Brazil. Own elaboration.

³⁷⁸ Ownership statistics from "Serviço de pesquisa entre consumidores," Rio de Janeiro, and São Paulo Jan-Feb. 1961, Jan-Feb. 1965, and Jan-Feb. 1971, IBOPE. Avon was also widely owned in several categories in São Paulo, where IBOPE tracked a smaller number of product categories.

³⁷⁹ Ibid. By 1965, IBOPE measured ownership in the greater Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo metropolitan areas. To make direct comparisons with data collected for 1961, data for 1965 and 1971 are on ownership in the State of Guanabara, which comprised the city of Rio de Janeiro, and the city of São Paulo. Figures 4.1 and 4.2 represent an unweighted average of data between the two cities as IBOPE did not provide an estimate of the number of households in each city for 1965 and 1971.

Figure 4.2 illustrates changes in the proportion of consumers who owned a given type of product, regardless of brand.³⁸⁰

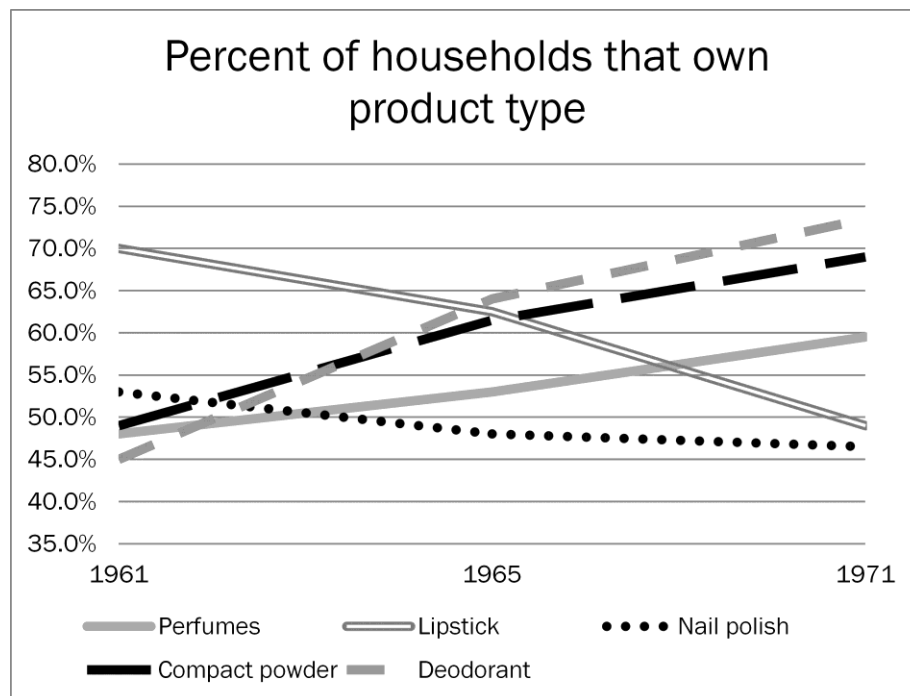


Figure 4.2. Ownership of all cosmetics brands, Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, 1961-1971. Source: Instituto Brasileiro de Opinião Pública e Estatística, "Serviço de pesquisa entre consumidores," Group: Pesquisas de Opinião Pública, held at the Arquivo Edgard Leuenroth, Universidade Estadual de Campinas, SP, Brazil. Own elaboration.

In both Rio and São Paulo, the Avon brand was strong in makeup and fragrances. Among other multinationals in this period, single-product brands like Brylcreem and Aqua Velva were popular in a few categories of toiletries, Unilever and Colgate-Palmolive were widely owned in a narrow range of personal hygiene products, and both Coty and Helena Rubenstein marketed a slightly broader but less popular range of cosmetics and toiletries. Brazilian brands were popular in fragrances and soaps, dominant in lotions, and the Brazilian brand Bozzano gradually established a widely-owned line-up of men's toiletries. However, no other brand was as widely-owned in so many cosmetics and

³⁸⁰ Ibid.

toiletries categories as Avon between 1961 and 1971.³⁸¹

Rapid population growth in urban Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo amplified Avon's expansion in relative brand ownership across categories and offset declining relative ownership in all brands of some product categories. In the period 1960 to 1970, the combined urban population of Guanabara (the city of Rio de Janeiro) and Rio de Janeiro State grew from 5.3 million to 7.9 million, while the urban population of São Paulo State increased from 8 million to 14.3 million.³⁸² Rapid urbanization throughout Brazil contributed to the expansion of the size of the national cosmetics and toiletries market from \$38 million in 1959 to \$372 million in 1976.³⁸³

Avon's inclusion of less affluent women in its recruitment increased Avon product ownership among less-affluent consumers from 1961 to 1971, and did not impede growth in ownership among middle-class consumers. Average ownership of Avon products in Rio and São Paulo across the five product categories in Figure 4.1 was 12.7% among Class A, 11.6% among Class B, 9.1% among Class C, and 4.4% among Class D consumers in 1961. By 1971, the relative gap in Avon ownership between classes in Greater Rio and Greater São Paulo had narrowed, with average ownership across the same five product categories at 25.7% among Class A and B, 24.5% among Class C, and 15.9% among Class D consumers.³⁸⁴

Male managers were not solely responsible for the shift to target new consumers

³⁸¹ Ibid.

³⁸² IBGE, *Anuário estatístico do Brasil*, vol. 38 (1978): 74.

³⁸³ Jones, "Blond and blue-eyed?," 131. Unilever estimates.

³⁸⁴ "Serviço de pesquisa entre consumidores," Rio de Janeiro, and São Paulo Jan-Feb. 1961 and Jan-Feb. 1971, IBOPE. By 1971, IBOPE reports generally lumped Class A and B ownership statistics together.

and saleswomen. Avon's gendered division of labor and management practices excluded women from management, but also made managers reliant on women for their sales expertise. This reliance became more pronounced when American-born managers recruited Brazilian sales managers from positions in accounting and operations to open regional sales offices as Avon expanded beyond Rio and São Paulo. To compensate for their limited experience in sales, new sales managers leaned on promoters and saleswomen for advice. Ademar dos Santos Seródio recalled that when he was promoted to open Avon's branch in Bahia, he had to learn from the women he worked with:

And I didn't know how to work in the first year, I didn't know anything, back then, to be a sales manager, you had to be thirty-five, married, with children, and I was brand new, so the women adopted me, I fell in their laps and never forgot the first meeting in which I apologized because I did not know the work, I would learn with them. 'Leave it to us' [they said].³⁸⁵

This reliance on female promoters likely made managers more receptive to saleswomen's innovations, such as their disregard for rigid sales territories.

Saleswomen demonstrated substantial agency in their ability to reshape Avon practices on the ground by seeking out new markets in smaller cities and rural areas on their own initiative. Following established practices in the United States, Avon's Brazilian managers initially designated official territories for sales representatives. However, Albertina de Araújo Dias recalled from her experiences in the home office and in sales that saleswomen frequently ignored these territories and sold products through extensions of their personal networks regardless of geographical territory. The frequency of such sales eventually led the Brazilian branch's managers to abandon dividing markets into

³⁸⁵ Ademar dos Santos Seródio Interview, "Avon – Memória."

sales territories for individual representatives.³⁸⁶

Saleswomen also took advantage of the absence of prohibitions on splitting commissions with women who wanted to resell Avon products. For ten years, Antonia Gasparine da Silva resold Avon products for a split commission because she did not want to travel to the distant sales meetings that official representatives attended to pick up their inventory.³⁸⁷ Through indirect and secondary sales, Avon's product distribution expanded much more rapidly than the company's official territorial expansion, reaching consumers that other companies could not. João Bosco Maggioli observed that when he officially presided over Avon's expansion into Brazil's North-east in 1972, indirect sales were already quite substantial there, despite underdeveloped transportation infrastructure in the region.³⁸⁸

Avon's direct sales system ensured that any consumer in Brazil with an Avon catalogue and some connection to an Avon saleswoman could purchase any of the company's products, whether they lived in São Paulo or on the Amazon. In many rural areas, Avon was the most easily accessible distributor of cosmetics and toiletries. Recalling her Avon sales experience in the 1960s, Antonia Natalina Gasparine da Silva explained that in the rural area of the state of São Paulo where she lived, the absence of shopping centers left Avon saleswomen as the only local suppliers of cosmetics and toiletries.³⁸⁹ The company had not envisioned informal sales networks extending beyond official sales territories. Avon's rapid expansion outpaced both national infrastructural

³⁸⁶ Albertina de Araújo Dias Interview, "Avon – Memória."

³⁸⁷ Antonia Natalina Gasparine da Silva Interview, "Avon – Memória."

³⁸⁸ João Bosco Maggioli Interview, "Avon – Memória."

³⁸⁹ Antonia Natalina Gasparine da Silva Interview, "Avon – Memória."

improvements intended to facilitate national market integration and Avon's own marketing strategy. This unplanned, informal expansion was an adaptation to Brazilian circumstances facilitated by managers' reliance on innovative saleswomen.

Conclusion

By 1975, a number of indicators pointed to a new direction for Avon's relationship with the Brazilian market and Brazilian women. Increased local managerial control facilitated Avon's rapid expansion in Brazil in the 1960s, but did not result in high profit margins. Avon's gross margins in Brazil stood at only 8.7% in 1971 compared with an average of 20% in Latin America and 63% in the United States.³⁹⁰ Low margins may have been one of the reasons behind Avon's decision to begin centralizing marketing for Latin America in New York in 1972.³⁹¹ The 1973 oil crisis contributed to a slower rate of economic growth and rising inflation in Brazil, presenting the company with a new set of challenges and opportunities.³⁹² The emergence of a more radical feminist movement in the wake of a 1975 United Nations symposium to commemorate International Women's Year also highlighted changing perceptions about women's place in Brazilian society as the number of women in the workforce continued to grow.³⁹³ Emphasizing traditional feminine domesticity became less important to Avon's success and the company began to promote women into upper management in both the US and Brazil in the 1980s.

Some of the female promoters who had been excluded from management in

³⁹⁰ Jones, *Beauty Imagined*, 231.

³⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 230.

³⁹² Jones argues that direct sellers like Avon and Natura benefitted when their competitors' distribution channels suffered during the economic stagnation of the 1980s. Jones, *Beauty Imagined*, 355.

³⁹³ Pinto, *Uma história do feminismo*, 56-66. The military regime's restrictions on speech and assembly also began to ease in 1975, facilitating the emergence of new feminist organizations.

Brazil had acquired substantial experience and were well positioned to climb the corporate ladder in the 1980s and 1990s. Albertina de Araújo Dias worked as a translator and then secretary for more than a dozen years before becoming a promoter in the late 1970s and receiving a promotion to regional sales manager in the 1980s. Unlike *Panorama's* idealized image of the saleswoman devoted to her husband and family, Dias recounted in an interview that she never married so that she could pursue her career at Avon.³⁹⁴

The later promotion of women into management positions may make Avon's earlier gendered organizational structure seem quite conservative by comparison, but it is important to remember the even more conservative social environment in which Avon's Brazilian branch was established. From Avon's entry into the Brazilian market to the early 1970s, branch managers had maintained the core organizational structure, brand strategy, and system of direct distribution that Avon developed in the United States, but found it necessary to adapt marketing and recruitment practices to accommodate conservative Brazilian gender norms and take advantage of unanticipated demand for cosmetics among less-affluent Brazilians. Avon's investment in a large cosmetics plant and the company's system of direct-to-home distribution enabled the company to market a large family of cosmetics and toiletries products. For direct distribution to work, however, managers found they had to extend recruitment to working-class saleswomen and emphasize in marketing and recruitment materials that selling Avon was a respectable feminine activity compatible with women's traditional roles as mothers and wives.

Avon's expansion in Brazil benefited from developmentalist economic policies

³⁹⁴ Albertina de Araújo Dias Interview, "Avon – Memória."

and in many ways were representative of broader trends in multinational investment in Brazil. Like other consumer goods companies, Avon's success was tied to women's household consumption on behalf of their families. However, despite the company's efforts to position sales as compatible with traditional feminine roles, the company effectively presented an alternative role for women in development. The company maintained that Avon women could simultaneously be active entrepreneurs engaged in their communities and effective mothers and wives. The company thus promoted a transitional understanding of feminine gender roles that bridged the idealization of feminine domesticity with women's active participation in the economy. In this way the company's rhetoric paralleled that of contemporary feminists who portrayed women's expanded participation in the workforce as compatible with motherhood and marriage.³⁹⁵ By associating women's sales activity with Western modernity, the company also contributed to shifting popular conceptions of modern feminine gender roles.³⁹⁶

In the context of 1960s Brazil, where even narrow efforts by feminists to expand women's career opportunities found limited popular support, Avon effectively exerted a liberalizing influence on Brazilian gender norms. Despite deference to conservative ideas about women's gender roles in Avon materials, direct selling increased the economic agency of active saleswomen. Given the relative purchasing power that women could derive from Avon sales commissions in Brazil's low-wage economy, successful Brazilian Avon representatives could expect to increase their economic independence more substantially than their North American counterparts. These women also had greater

³⁹⁵ Chapter 6 will examine this aspect of feminist discourse in the 1960s and early 1970s.

³⁹⁶ This trend will be examined more thoroughly in Chapters 5 and 6.

control over their time, choice of clients, and sales practices than the women who sold competing brands of cosmetics in department stores.

Avon saleswomen's independence and entrepreneurial initiative also benefitted many consumers. Avon representatives expanded access to cosmetics and knowledge of their application to working-class, rural, and Afro-Brazilian women, providing them with some of the same options for symbolic self-representation as Avon's fair-skinned, middle-class clients. There are clear parallels between Avon's unadvertised sales to African-Americans and those to Afro-Brazilians, but Avon more dramatically expanded access to cosmetics for poor and rural consumers in Brazil, where retail markets were far less developed and more geographically concentrated than those in the US in the 1960s.

Although Avon's Brazilian branch maintained a patriarchal division of labor between male managers and female saleswomen, this division made male managers reliant on female promoters and representatives for their sales expertise and contact with consumers, giving saleswomen the ability to shape company practices and substantial control over their own sales. Avon profited from this agency when women expanded both formal and informal distribution of Avon products beyond official sales territories, an effective, if unforeseen strategy to adapt to Brazil's limited infrastructural development and enhance the capabilities of Avon's limited number of regional sales offices. Manager flexibility in adapting to Brazilian gender norms and receptivity to saleswomen initiatives, including expansion beyond the company's original target markets, helped Avon rapidly become the most widely-owned cosmetics brand in Brazil. Even after Avon centralized Latin American marketing operations in the mid-1970s, Brazilian women only grew more important to management decisions as saleswomen and female

promoters entered management in the 1980s and sales growth in Brazil outpaced growth in the company's other markets.

Chapter 5 – Feminine Gender Roles in Authoritarian Developmentalism

On March 19, 1964, five hundred thousand people took to the streets of downtown São Paulo in a march organized by the União Cívica Feminina de São Paulo (Feminine Civic Union, UCF). The UCF organized the *Marcha da Família com Deus Pela Liberdade* (March of the Family with God for Liberty), as a conservative response to the *Comício da Central do Brasil*, a rally next to the Central do Brasil train station in Rio de Janeiro (also known as the Comício das Reformas or Rally of Reforms) where President João Goulart called for constitutional and agrarian reforms, urban rent controls, and the nationalization of oil refineries.³⁹⁷ Participants in the paulista march, held six days after the rally in downtown Rio, denounced Goulart's apparent intentions to disregard the constitution, a step in what they feared was a plan to install a communist regime.³⁹⁸

In Rio de Janeiro, the Campanha da Mulher Pela Democracia (Women's Campaign for Democracy, CAMDE), a conservative women's organization whose membership, political orientation, and tactics were very similar to those of the UCF, planned a parallel *Marcha da Família com Deus Pela Liberdade* (March of the Family with God for Liberty) for April 2. However, three days before the march was scheduled, generals and senior officers launched a military coup against Goulart's government and by April 2, Goulart had fled Brasília and was on his way to exile in Uruguay. Elated by the turn of events, CAMDE's members went forward with the march, now nicknamed the

³⁹⁷ "Discurso do Jango na Central do Brasil em 1964," Empresa Brasil de Comunicação/ Agência Brasil, <http://www.ebc.com.br/cidadania/2014/03/discurso-de-jango-na-central-do-brasil-em-1964>, Accessed November 5, 2014.

³⁹⁸ Janaina Martins Cordeiro, " 'A Nação que se salvou a si mesma': Entre Memória e História, a Campanha da Mulher pela Democracia, 1962-1974," Masters Thesis, Universidade Federal Fluminense, 2008, 47-48.

“Marcha da Vitória” (Victory March) on April 2. Roughly one million people attended the event, which featured speeches by prominent public figures, including coup participant General Mourão Filho, and CAMDE president Amélia Molina Bastos. Former president Eurico Gaspar Dutra, who as a general had led the 1945 coup to depose then-dictator Getúlio Vargas, walked with CAMDE’s members at the head of the march,³⁹⁹ celebrating a coup that would bring an end to the postwar electoral democracy he had helped to create.

CAMDE, the UCF, and other conservative women’s organizations clearly played an important role in mobilizing political opposition to Goulart from 1962 to 1964, and in organizing popular support among middle-class Brazilians for the coup, helping to legitimize the subsequent military regime. For these reasons, CAMDE, the UCF, and the marches that they organized are frequently mentioned by historians who study the coup. However, relatively few scholars have examined these organizations in depth. Until recently, academics, who as a group have understandably been antipathetic to conservative supporters of the military regime, have tended to portray these conservative women as unenlightened, gullible housewives. In her influential study of these women,⁴⁰⁰ Solange de Deus Simões maintained that their political activity was steered by their husbands, who had ties to the military and the Instituto de Pesquisas e Estudos Sociais (Institute of Social Studies and Research), an organization funded by the United States Government and domestic and multinational businesses that opposed Goulart and supported the subsequent coup. Simões portrays these women’s political activity as an

³⁹⁹ Ibid., 49-50.

⁴⁰⁰ Solange de Deus Simões, *Deus, Pátria, e Família: As Mulheres no golpe de 1964* (Petrópolis: Vozes, 1985).

aberration from their previous political aloofness and performance of traditional gender roles, but one largely shaped by and in support of conservative men.

More recent scholarship has characterized these conservative women not as passive agents for their husbands' political aims, but as politically-aware actors capable of advancing their own agenda. Margaret Power has argued that the women of CAMDE were not solely influenced by anti-communist conservative ideology originating in the United States, but were able to formulate and disseminate their own anti-communist ideas and organizational tactics across national borders to women's organizations in Chile and the US.⁴⁰¹ Janaina Martins Cordeiro is critical of a historiography that has treated Brazilian women on the left as having agency while denying this agency to conservative women. She maintains that, contrary to Simões' arguments, conservative women's expressed acceptance of patriarchal hierarchy did not mean that they were simply manipulated or failed to act as citizens. Rather, their decision to enter the public sphere as mothers and wives was a conscious action reflecting specific political choices. Cordeiro argues that conservative ideology prompted these women to engage in public activism to advocate for their traditional prerogatives within the private sphere. She observes that CAMDE women portrayed their actions as a non-partisan defense of democracy and the family. Distrusting the ability of conservative politicians to combat communism, these women supported a regime lead by generals, who they viewed to be non-partisan saviors of the nation, even as the military regime became increasingly authoritarian after 1968.⁴⁰²

Cordeiro effectively counters earlier narratives that the conservative women of

⁴⁰¹ Margaret Power, "Who But a Woman? The Transnational Diffusion of Anti-Communism among Conservative Women in Brazil, Chile, and the United States during the Cold War," *Journal of Latin American Studies*, Vol. 47, No.1 (February, 2015): 93-119.

⁴⁰² Cordeiro, "A Nação que se salvou," 88, 93-94.

CAMDE and the UCF were naïve tools of the reactionary right, but she does not challenge a long-standing narrative that these women's political activity and rhetoric was an exceptional conservative response to the polarized political climate of the 1960s. Simões' argument that middle-class housewives had been absent from postwar political discourse prior to 1962⁴⁰³ remains unquestioned and Cordeiro interprets CAMDE women's invocation of moral authority from their traditional feminine gender roles in public to be a conservative discourse that distinguished them from women who worked.⁴⁰⁴ However, these conservative women's rhetorical use of traditional gender norms shared much in common with the political activity of both middle-class and working-class women's earlier participation in protests against *carestia*. Indeed, this chapter will demonstrate that the precedent set by earlier women's organizations shaped CAMDE's activities and its identification with a non-partisan feminine agenda following the coup.

This chapter examines the ongoing importance of the household economy to national politics and development policies in the 1960s and explores the effects of military regime policies on gender and class inequalities in the mid to late 1960s. The chapter opens with a discussion of the role of inflation in Brazil's unstable politics from 1960 to 1964 and reviews CAMDE's rhetorical strategies in its opposition to Goulart and support for the coup. The chapter then turns to an examination of how the military regime's labor and economic policies reflected an authoritarian turn in developmentalism that largely abandoned populist attempts to provide a middle-class standard of living to

⁴⁰³ Simões, *Deus, Pátria, e Família*, 10.

⁴⁰⁴ Cordeiro, "A Nação que se salvou," 93, 98.

urban workers but remained highly reliant on expanding middle-class consumption. The chapter then considers how CAMDE's public activity following the coup reflected both middle-class women's ongoing political importance to the regime and continuity with earlier women's political advocacy for the domestic economy. The chapter also considers how CAMDE's discourse favoring middle-class and elite women's civic participation was echoed by narratives that portrayed elite women and celebrities as new protagonists in development in magazines like *Manchete*. The chapter concludes by examining the effects of regime policies on class and gender inequalities among urban households in the 1960s.

In Defense of the Family: The Demise of Postwar Populism

Inflation continued to afflict the Brazilian economy in the early 1960s and contributed to political instability. The government faced increased pressure to both control inflation and raise salaries to compensate for inflation. These two competing priorities limited the government's ability to pursue economic development policies. As discussed in Chapter 2, Juscelino Kubitschek's development policies, including the construction of Brasília, had resulted in substantial increases to the budget deficit and inflation. Although Jânio Quadros (president, January 31 - August 25, 1961) had promised in his electoral campaign to control inflation and as president pursued orthodox economic policies aimed at improving Brazil's trade and budget deficits, his pursuit of renewed relations with Cuba and the Soviet bloc alienated Congress, leading to his sudden resignation after only seven months in office.⁴⁰⁵

⁴⁰⁵ Christiane Jalles de Paula, "O segundo mandato na vice-presidência e a crise sucessória," CPDOC, accessed Nov. 17, 2014. http://cpdoc.fgv.br/producao/dossies/Jango/artigos/VicePresidenteJanio/O_segundo_mandato_e_a_crise_sucessoria

Vice president João Goulart assumed the presidency in a parliamentary system that limited his presidential powers. This arrangement was imposed by elements of the military who feared he would install a socialist regime and had threatened to prevent him from taking office. At the beginning of Goulart's term, inflation remained above 30%. During the brief parliamentary regime that lasted until Goulart assumed full presidential powers in January 1963, fiscal policy was considerably looser than it had been under Quadros. Inflation was propelled by government spending and wage increases, including the legal requirement in 1962 that employers pay workers a thirteenth month's salary at the end of each year.⁴⁰⁶ Economic policy remained torn between the competing demands of increasing wages, incentivizing economic growth, and containing inflation after Goulart assumed full presidential powers. Government policy fluctuated between restricting credit and spending to expanding spending and wages. This resulted in economic stagnation as foreign investors avoided Brazil for fear of nationalist economic policies, and inflation as the government raised the minimum salary and government wages more than 50% in 1963. By the end of that year, annualized inflation was projected to climb to 80%.⁴⁰⁷

As in the 1950s, inflation in food prices was compounded by inefficiencies and bottlenecks in agriculture and food distribution. Advocates of agricultural land reform believed that redistribution of land to agricultural workers would spur agricultural

⁴⁰⁶ Carlos Eduardo Sarmento, "O cenário econômico no período parlamentarista," CPDOC, accessed Nov. 17, 2014.
http://cpdoc.fgv.br/producao/dossies/Jango/artigos/NaPresidenciaRepublica/O_cenario_economico_no_periodo_parlamentarista

⁴⁰⁷ Carlos Eduardo Sarmento, "O Plano Trienal e a política econômica no presidencialismo," CPDOC, accessed Nov. 17, 2014.
http://cpdoc.fgv.br/producao/dossies/Jango/artigos/NaPresidenciaRepublica/O_plano_trienal_e_a_politica_economica

production and boost rural demand for mass-produced goods, helping to drive industrialization. However, cash payments for appropriations required by the constitution made large-scale reform impossible in the context of Brazil's constrained national finances. Goulart proposed a constitutional amendment that would allow the government to compensate landowners with bonds, but the amendment went nowhere due to the strong representation of agricultural elites in Congress.⁴⁰⁸ In 1962, Goulart issued Lei Delegada nº 4, creating the Superintendência Nacional do Abastecimento (National Supply Superintendency, SUNAB), which replaced COFAP. Although SUNAB had somewhat greater authority than COFAP to intervene in the economy to control the supply and prices of food and other basic goods, the problems afflicting agricultural production and distribution remained largely unaddressed and food price inflation and shortages persisted.

Food price inflation and shortages continued to receive prominent attention in the press. For example, a 1962 article by Aluisio Flôres in *Manchete* described how previously well-provisioned regions of Brazil, like Rio de Janeiro, were beginning to see indications of malnutrition due to food scarcity. Flôres argued that short supplies of beans, rice, and sugar in Rio were due to COFAP's inadequate legal authority, inadequate credit for agricultural producers, intermediaries' exploitation of producers, an excessive number of intermediaries collecting sales taxes and profits, and hoarding by merchants. Flôres noted that the Conferência dos Governadores had recently met in Minas Gerais and proposed administrative, tax, and agricultural reform to address shortages and

⁴⁰⁸ Mario Grynszpan, "A questão agrária no governo Jango," CPDOC, accessed Nov. 17, 2014. http://cpdoc.fgv.br/producao/dossies/Jango/artigos/NaPresidenciaRepublica/A_questao_agraria_no_governo_Jango

inflation.⁴⁰⁹ Flôres' observations and arguments echoed those of the Conselho Coordenador do Abastecimento in 1958, revealing how little had changed in four years. This article also drew parallels to food shortage and price increases in the Soviet bloc and observed that wealthier Brazilians had deposited more than twenty billion cruzeiros abroad due to fears of the establishment of a Marxist regime in Brazil, further limiting the capital available for development.⁴¹⁰ Although Flôres did not directly critique the Goulart government as a threat to capitalism or democracy, the article nonetheless reflected widespread conservative fears that Goulart sought to install a socialist dictatorship with dire consequences for Brazilian consumers.

The UCF and CAMDE both began to actively denounce the perceived threat of communism in Brazil in 1962. CAMDE began as a group of elite and middle-class Catholic housewives in the affluent Zona Sul neighborhood of Ipanema, and recruited new members primarily through their personal networks. CAMDE approached the newspaper *O Globo* for help organizing its first meetings, which the newspaper readily gave. *O Globo* continued to actively support CAMDE's activities with favorable coverage and announcements. Much like IPES, *O Globo* was a vocal opponent of Goulart and lent its support to the coup. CAMDE primarily mobilized middle-class conservative women, but also launched efforts to politicize residents of favelas near Zona Sul by showing films on democracy and supporting television literacy campaigns. The organization portrayed communism as a direct threat to the family, claiming that in a communist regime, children would betray their parents to the government.⁴¹¹ In 1962,

⁴⁰⁹ Aluisio Flôres, "Por Que Aumenta o Custo de Vida," *Manchete*, 11 August 1962, 70-71, 73.

⁴¹⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹¹ Cordeiro, "A Nação que se salvou," 39.

CAMDE collaborated with the UCF to launch a letter-writing campaign asking that the Congress not delegate increased powers to the prime minister out of fear that the prime minister might abuse this power.⁴¹² In this campaign, the two organizations collected over thirty thousand letters against the potential delegation of power, demonstrating their ability to mobilize women with appeals against the threat of communism. CAMDE also supported candidates for Congress that it believed would promote democracy and combat communism in the 1962 elections and in the same year lobbied Congress against granting Goulart full presidential powers.⁴¹³ In her study of CAMDE's activities, Janaina Martins Cordeiro observes that although CAMDE was critical of government policies and implicitly criticized the Goulart government in its anti-communist rhetoric, the organization did not begin its direct opposition to Goulart until 1964.⁴¹⁴

While Goulart's announced decree of limited land seizures to be administered by SUPRA and the nationalization of oil refineries at the Comício da Central do Brasil on March 13, 1964 could be generously interpreted as an effort to bypass an obstinate Congress using the administrative powers of the presidency, Goulart's decrees were interpreted by many to be an illegal step toward the installation of a socialist dictatorship. The Comício prompted a new burst of activity from UCF and CAMDE as each organized its own *Marcha da Família com Deus Pela Liberdade*. According to Cordeiro, the two women's organizations interpreted elements of Goulart's speech at the Comício to be

⁴¹² "Histórico da Campanha da Mulher Brasileira em Defesa da Democracia," April, 1967, Fundo Campanha da Mulher Pela Democracia, Arquivo Nacional, (hereafter cited as CAMDE), P.E. 0.0.78/86, p. 2-4.

⁴¹³ Cordeiro, "A Nação que se salvou," 39, 42. Most of these candidates were members of the center-right União Democrática Nacional.

⁴¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 44.

direct insults to their vocal opposition to the gathering, giving them further motive to organize opposition to Goulart.⁴¹⁵

As indicated by the name they gave the marches, the two women's organizations invoked their feminine roles within the family as moral authority to lead the public demonstrations against Goulart. The UCF organized the São Paulo march for March 19, the feast day of Saint Joseph, patron saint of the family.⁴¹⁶ CAMDE argued that the threat to the nation and family required women's participation in politics as an extraordinary measure. By linking their self-representation to traditional feminine roles as mothers and housewives, these conservative women simultaneously claimed a duty to defend their families and placed themselves above the quotidian politics that they disdained as failing to stop the rise of communism. CAMDE's rhetoric also indicated that once communism had been defeated, they intended to return their attention to traditional feminine concerns. As Amelia Bastos, president of CAMDE said in advance of the planned march in Rio: "It is necessary to put democracy, the Homeland, the regime, above political passions until there is no further danger. Afterwards, we will straighten the house."⁴¹⁷

The military coup, launched before CAMDE's planned march, appears to have only increased the march's appeal. It is doubtful that all of the participants in the "Victory March" in Rio closely shared CAMDE's conservative political orientation. Some may have opposed Goulart's presidency out of dissatisfaction with a stagnant economy and high inflation. Many likely shared the perception that Goulart was abusing his

⁴¹⁵ Ibid., 46-48.

⁴¹⁶ Ibid., 47.

⁴¹⁷ "A Mulher Carioca Prepara a 'Marcha da Família': No Dia 2, da Candelária à Esplanada," *O Globo* 24 March 1964, unpaginated press clipping, CAMDE, PE.0.0.41/20.

presidential powers and acting unconstitutionally. Although the march was led by critics of Goulart and supporters of the coup, many participants may not have found much objectionable in a march that nominally voiced support for the family, God, and liberty. The marchers represented a broad cross-section of politicians, civic leaders, and everyday denizens of Rio de Janeiro. Even representatives of the Federação Brasileira pelo Progresso Feminino, the organization founded decades earlier by feminist and suffragette Bertha Lutz, participated in the march.⁴¹⁸ It is unlikely that most of the march's participants were aware that the coup would come to represent anything other than a temporary intervention that would hand power to a new group of civilian leaders, as a previous coup had in 1945.

Authoritarian Developmentalism and Gender

The coup's leaders chose a different path, installing a military regime that would govern Brazil for the next twenty-one years. Although this regime adopted several measures to curb inflation in the years immediately following the coup, developmentalism continued to shape national economic and social policies. However, compared with their populist predecessors, Brazil's new leaders were far less interested in adopting rhetorical appeals to egalitarianism or policies aimed at improving pay and labor conditions for working-class Brazilians. Expanding consumption remained central to the regime's development plans, but economic policymakers divested themselves of responsibility for supporting the growth of single-earner, male-headed nuclear families. Despite the regime's nominal support for traditional family values, economic and social policy effectively incentivized more women to enter the workforce.

⁴¹⁸ Ibid.

Following the coup, General Humberto de Alencar Castelo Branco assumed the presidency and appointed Roberto Campos, who had previously served on the Development Council and as president of the Banco Nacional de Desenvolvimento Econômico (National Economic Development Bank, BNDE) during the administration of Juscelino Kubitschek and briefly as Ambassador to the United States under João Goulart, to be the new Extraordinary Minister of State for Economic Planning and Coordination. Campos was tasked with coordinating the government's efforts to contain inflation and renew economic growth. The economic stabilization policies that the government adopted focused on deficit reduction through budget cuts and improved tax collection, restriction of credit, and restriction of wages.⁴¹⁹ Prominent among these measures was the government's new minimum salary policy.

The Campos ministry's working documents used to establish a new minimum salary reveal that the ministry based its calculations not on the 1946 constitution, but on the Consolidação das Leis de Trabalho (Consolidated Labor Laws, CLT), dating to 1943. Unlike the constitution, the CLT made no mention of the minimum salary providing for the needs of a family. Instead, the ministry observed that the CLT, as amended by a 1963 law extending a minimum salary to rural workers, conceived the minimum salary to be the minimum amount paid to "every worker, including the rural worker, without regard to sex [...] capable of satisfying, in a given period and region of the country, their normal need for food, habitation, clothing, and transportation."⁴²⁰ The ministry further maintained that the CLT defined the minimum salary as equaling the sum total of the

⁴¹⁹ Baer, *The Brazilian Economy*, 75.

⁴²⁰ Ministro de Estado Extraordinário para o Planejamento e Coordenação Econômica, "Documento de Trabalho no 12: Bases para a fixação do novo salário mínimo," April, 1964, RC 64.04.23 IV.6, CPDOC, 1.

costs to meet these needs.

If this formula was followed as the basis for setting the minimum salary, it would be a radical departure from the wage policies of previous administrations that had repeatedly raised the minimum wage to both keep pace with inflation and increase workers' living standards. The working paper argued that this approach was inflationary and led to the "destruction of social hierarchy, with the absurd transformation of the minimum salary into the modal salary."⁴²¹ Social hierarchy was important to the military regime. On the one hand, regime economic planners believed that minimum salaries should not be so high as to discourage workers from working harder or developing their skills. On the other, the coup had aimed to halt the growing political and economic influence of unions and working-class Brazilians who regularly advocated for higher minimum salaries to address inflation.

Instead, the paper proposed that the minimum salary correspond to "the minimum of subsistence" with an amount reflecting "participation in the results of economic development" added to this minimum only when "the country has reached a level of productivity sufficient to guarantee to all workers something more than the vital minimum."⁴²² If, however, the minimum salary was raised beyond this level, the resulting increase in demand would exceed the nation's productive capacity, resulting in a "new inflationary wave to dissolve the buying power of this exaggerated minimum salary."⁴²³

The new proposed minimum wage was based on an itemized annual budget for a single male worker that set strict limits on personal consumption, including an itemized

⁴²¹ Ibid., 1-2.

⁴²² Ibid., 2.

⁴²³ Ibid., 3.

caloric diet, clothing, and personal hygiene goods. The more generous of two itemized budgets proposed that a man's annual clothing needs would be met with three shirts, one pair of pants, three pairs of underwear, one suit, one pair of shoes, one pair of socks, one face towel, one bath towel, one table towel, one bed sheet, three handkerchiefs, one tie, one belt, twelve cleanings for the suit, one blanket, and one pair of sandals.⁴²⁴ The uniform budget for hygiene goods provided for two toothbrushes, 48 razor blades, one comb, twelve tubes of toothpaste, 24 bars of soap, three units of hair pomade, twelve haircuts, two cans of talcum powder, and twelve visits to the bootblack.⁴²⁵ The document also noted that the provisions should be sufficient to provide rent for a "space in a room" in the State of Guanabara.⁴²⁶

This reductionist approach to establishing a minimum salary revealed both a technocratic impulse to quantify and control working-class consumption and unfamiliarity with the everyday lives of working-class Brazilians. The restrictive budget reflected a degree of fantasy; there is little reason to believe that workers would consume in the standardized fashion prescribed in the compiled tables and it seems improbable that a worker who could only afford one pair of socks would pay to have his shoes shined and his suit cleaned once per month. Although the document clearly indicated that the minimum salary should be provided to women workers, the basis for establishing the minimum was a single man's consumption, revealing that women workers were an afterthought, even though the minimum salary would not be enough to provide for a spouse, let alone children as the 1946 Constitution had envisioned. The document's male

⁴²⁴ Ibid., Tabela II.

⁴²⁵ Ibid., Tabela III.

⁴²⁶ Ibid., 9.

consumer habits may have been imaginary, but the effort to restrict urban working-class consumption was real, and an integral part of the military regime's effort to control inflation.

Restricting overall demand in the face of stagnant production, especially stagnant agricultural production, was an important element of the economic stabilization plan, leading Campos and his colleagues to fret over urban consumer habits and consumer politics. Although women were largely forgotten when setting the new minimum salary, Campos remembered them as consumers. As inflation resulted from the elimination of government subsidies and price controls, Campos felt compelled to defend the government's actions to Brazilian housewives. In 1966 comments he prepared for television, Campos stressed that the government sympathized with housewives but acted in the best interests of the nation:

It is necessary to understand that these decisions are not easy. These decisions are not frustrating only for the consumer, for the housewife. They are frustrating for the Government, but the Government had to make these decisions if it wanted to preserve the future of Brazil. It is a bad policy for us to have a favorable cost of living that creates problems for the future, because the future of the generations that are still to come should not be sacrificed to a narrow preoccupation with comfort in the present.⁴²⁷

Communicating the government's sympathy for housewives was an important consideration in 1966. Housewives had led the *Marchas da Família com Deus Pela Liberdade*, which the military regime pointed to as legitimizing its coup and subsequent rule. Although the regime, like the women of CAMDE, may have portrayed the combat against inflation as something best left to non-partisan leaders, it nonetheless had to explain its actions to core supporters in the middle class to maintain the regime's

⁴²⁷ "Entrevista concedida Pelo Ministro do Planejamento, Sr. Roberto Campos, a uma emissora de televisão, em 13.3.66," RC 66.03.13 1^a-3, CPDOC, 8.

legitimacy. Middle-class support was particularly important to the regime prior to the military's issuance of Ato Institucional 5 (Institutional Act 5 or AI-5) in December 1968, which initiated the most repressive phase of the dictatorship, giving then-president Artur da Costa e Silva the authority to shutter national and state legislatures, suspend habeus corpus, revoke citizens' political rights, issue laws and constitutional amendments by decree, censor the press, and prohibit public assembly, among other measures. Prior to the issuance of AI-5, military leaders had to negotiate with civilian politicians in the federal legislature and in state governments.

Consumption continued to preoccupy economic policymakers into the late 1960s, but once inflation became more tolerable, planners shifted their emphasis to boosting consumer demand to spur economic growth. Increasing internal demand became even more important than it had in previous decades because import substitution was no longer a major source of industrial growth. Edmundo Soares, the Minister of Industry and Commerce, argued in 1967 that it was time for government economic plans to shift gears: "The development of Brazilian industry cannot continue to rely on the process of import substitution to be a sufficiently strong impulse, and thus, this development is basically dependent on the real growth of the internal market and the possibilities to compete on the external market."⁴²⁸ Economic growth would rely on increased productivity through the use of advanced industrial technologies and "the integration into the market of a considerable portion of the Brazilian population currently with standards of living close to those of subsistence. Producing more and at accessible costs to growing segments of the Brazilian population, it will also be possible to improve capacity for competition in

⁴²⁸ Ministério da Indústria e do Comércio: Centro dos Estudos Economicos "Boletins N° 14 e 15" Ano 2, June/July 1967, 13. EMS f publ 1964.04.29, (Microfilm roll 8, F900-935) CPDOC.

the international market.”⁴²⁹ In Soares’ view, the best prospects for increasing economic growth would come from expanding the acquisitive power of Brazil’s poor, especially the rural poor.

This marked another contrast with populist developmentalist policies that preceded 1964. The military regime’s economic team, not particularly sympathetic or beholden to urban organized labor, and led by many of the same officials who had observed the underdevelopment of Brazilian agriculture in previous administrations, saw the greatest potential for overcoming supply bottlenecks and expanding consumption in Brazil’s interior. However, it is important to note that although Soares observed it was time to expand wages for the poorest Brazilians, he found it equally important to increase productivity to lower the cost of goods to make them accessible to less-affluent consumers.

As they had under President Kubitschek, multinational corporations would play a prominent role in increasing industrial production under the military regime. In 1968, Soares observed of foreign businesses operating in Brazil that “the companies with the greatest relative growth are those dedicated to advanced industrial activities, like the automotive industry and heavy machinery in general, being that in the commercial sector and primary products industries, companies established some decades earlier prevail.”⁴³⁰ The consumer durable and industrial goods sectors required the more advanced technology and specialized knowledge that multinationals could provide, but Soares wanted to emphasize that multinationals would not dominate entire sectors. Rather, “To

⁴²⁹ Ibid.

⁴³⁰ Edmundo Soares, “Desenvolvimento, Capital estrangeiro e desnacionalização,” EMS pi Soares, E 1968.05.14, CPDOC, 2.

the extent that the Nation develops and augments its capacity to internally supply consumer goods and equipment, foreign capital should tend towards a role with greater *qualitative* than *quantitative* importance, through the supply of more advanced technology and related experience and organization”(emphasis in the original).⁴³¹

The military regime’s economic policies clearly opened Brazil to greater foreign trade and imports of capital goods.⁴³² Economic stabilization and reformed tariffs incentivized a large increase in foreign capital investment and private-sector lending in Brazil, but tariffs remained in place to maintain a degree of protection for Brazilian consumer goods industries.⁴³³ Economic policymakers recognized that Brazilian industry was not yet competitive on the international market and continued to view domestic consumption as central to economic development.

In comments prepared for an article in *Correio da Manhã* in 1968, Soares observed that economic policies aimed at containing inflation had reduced government spending and inflation and limited worker salaries. However, Soares argued that it was no longer justified that

[T]he continuation of the fight against inflation implies the adoption of measures excessively containing demand. To the contrary, economic recuperation should be pursued through the increase of consumer power, capable of revitalizing businesses, promoting more orders, more efficient production, relatively lower costs, possibilities for profits, and, consequently, reactivation of the business community.⁴³⁴

In the same document, Soares again tied expanded productivity to expanded consumption

⁴³¹ Ibid.

⁴³² Baer, *The Brazilian Economy*, 78.

⁴³³ Ibid., 181-182.

⁴³⁴ Edmundo Soares, “Mercado Interno – Base do Desenvolvimento,” EMS pi Soares, E. 1968.03.19, CPDOC, 2.

by the poor, echoing his arguments from the 1967 bulletin:

[T]he integration into the market of a considerable portion of the Brazilian population, currently with standards of living close to those of subsistence, is one of the ways to increase consumption, and thus, activate the industrial economy. Producing more, at costs accessible to growing segments of the population, it will be possible, also, to obtain better capacity to compete on the international market.⁴³⁵

Here he clarified that expanding industrial capacity would lower the cost of goods, creating a virtuous cycle where more consumers could buy the goods and spur further expansion of industrial capacity which would eventually allow for Brazilian goods to be competitive on the global market.

Consistent with the formula for setting a minimum salary in Campos' working papers, Soares also noted that the government recognized the need to increase salaries "in proportion with the increase of productivity" and spoke of the need to "recompose the acquisitive power of consumers,"⁴³⁶ recognizing that this had been impaired by the government's wage policies, hindering economic growth. In hindsight, Soares was largely correct that greater consumer demand was needed for economic growth. Although government reforms favored increased foreign capital investment, little additional industrial capital was needed as Brazilian industry maintained substantial excess productive capacity throughout the 1960s.⁴³⁷

The military regime's economic stabilization and development program was largely successful in containing inflation and supporting economic growth. As a series of institutional acts progressively limited and eventually ended congressional oversight of

⁴³⁵ Ibid., 2-3.

⁴³⁶ Ibid., 3.

⁴³⁷ Baer, *The Brazilian Economy*, 77.

economic policy, inflation decreased from 89.9% in 1964 to 26.5% in 1967 and remained below 23% from 1969 to 1974.⁴³⁸ While the economy had stagnated from 1962 to 1967, the years of the “economic miracle” from 1968 to 1973 witnessed average annual GDP growth of 11.3%.⁴³⁹ Growth was led by the industrial sector, which had constituted a stable 32-33% of GDP from 1958 to 1967, but began to increase its share of GDP from 34.77% in 1968 to 40.49% in 1974.⁴⁴⁰ Amid this growth, regime policies favored middle-class and elite Brazilians who were crucial for both the regime’s political legitimacy and the growth of demand for consumer goods that would fuel ongoing industrialization.

CAMDE after the Coup

Economic policymakers within the government believed that restricting workers’ wages was politically viable in the context of a military-led regime, but they also clearly recognized that housewives remained important as both consumers capable of sustaining demand for mass-produced goods and as a group whose consent was important to legitimate austere economic policies. In the first few years after the coup, the military government reached out to CAMDE and the UCF as representatives of civil society that actively supported the regime. These women’s organizations presented themselves to the public as non-partisan feminine advocates for the family and for the protection of Brazilian society from communism. In addition to their ongoing public campaigns against perceived communist threats, these conservative women’s organizations modeled roles for middle-class women’s participation in development as educators, activists, and volunteers devoted to combatting poverty through community service. Following the

⁴³⁸ Ibid., 410.

⁴³⁹ Ibid., 77.

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid., 405.

coup, CAMDE renewed efforts to educate, feed, and clothe poor families living in Rio's favelas. Like earlier women's organizations, CAMDE and the UCF also embraced a public role in efforts to control the cost of living.

Most scholars who have studied these organizations have observed CAMDE and the UCF's continued anti-communist rhetoric and support for the military regime, but few have examined other aspects of their civil engagement following the coup. Janaina Martins Cordeiro has observed that CAMDE not only supported the military coup, but also advocated Castelo Branco's assumption of the presidency in 1964, bypassing presidential elections in 1966 to extend Branco's term to 1967, and the issuance of Institutional Act 5 in 1968. Cordeiro maintains that CAMDE portrayed itself as essentially a non-partisan anti-communist organization which in turn supported the heads of the military regime as non-partisan leaders willing to use any means to suppress communism.⁴⁴¹ Cordeiro argues that CAMDE's civic activities after the coup, including instructing conservative civic education classes for the poor, providing favela residents with food and clothing, and combatting food price inflation, were ways that the organization sought to support the regime and prevent the spread of communism.⁴⁴² CAMDE and the UCF most certainly saw their efforts as effective means to combat communism. However, it is important to observe that their involvement in helping the urban poor and combatting inflation, alongside their self-representation as feminine advocates for the Brazilian family, echoed the actions and rhetoric of both centrist and leftist women's organizations in the 1940s and 1950s.

⁴⁴¹ Cordeiro, "A Nação que se salvou," 53-57.

⁴⁴² *Ibid.*, 54.

Seeing inadequate education and poverty as facilitating the spread of communist ideology, CAMDE was quick to reach out to the new government to collaborate in efforts to improve living conditions in Rio de Janeiro's favelas. In July 1964, Mavy d'Aché Assumpção Harmon, director of Social Work for CAMDE argued that: "A miracle occurred in this country, but, so that we do not return to square one, we need to awake the moral conscience of our women and change the panorama of misery that we still encounter in parts of the State [of Guanabara]."⁴⁴³ Three months after the coup, CAMDE had already begun to coordinate with government agencies to distribute food and offer classes in knitting, personal health, and hygiene in poor neighborhoods of Rio de Janeiro.

CAMDE offered vocational classes that reinforced traditional gender norms in favelas, instructing girls in knitting and boys in carpentry.⁴⁴⁴ The organization gradually extended its course offerings, teaching knitting to mothers as well as girls, and used the vocational classes to raise funds for CAMDE's social service activities by selling student work. For example, CAMDE sought donations of used glass bottles that students could transform into cups for sale, and also sold clothing made by children.⁴⁴⁵ The organization enjoyed government support for its activities to educate, feed, and clothe favela residents and distributed anti-communist literature as part of its programs. In 1966, CAMDE began distributing donated shoes for a nominal fee to favela residents, along with anti-

⁴⁴³ "A CAMDE Precisa de Vigilantes para Gigantesca Obra Social," *O Globo*, 21 July 1964, unpaginated press clipping, PE.0.0.8/14, CAMDE.

⁴⁴⁴ "Uma Filha do General Patton Atua com a CAMDE na Rocinha," *O Globo*, 29 September 1964, unpaginated press clipping, PE.0.0.8/33, CAMDE.

⁴⁴⁵ "As Garrafas Vazias São para Fazer Copos, Diz a CAMDE," *O Globo*, 28 October 1964, unpaginated press clipping, PE.0.0.8/37, CAMDE; "CAMDE conquista favela e instala núcleo de ensino," *Tribuna da Imprensa*, 17-18 July, 1965, unpaginated press clipping, PE.0.0.8/49, CAMDE.

communist leaflets.⁴⁴⁶ In 1967, the military provided trucks to help CAMDE distribute donations of food from the US Navy to favela residents.⁴⁴⁷

These social service activities were consistent with CAMDE's ideological orientation and with the military regime's rhetoric. In addition to forestalling communism, CAMDE could uphold community service and philanthropy as viable alternatives to union activism or socialism as ways to improve standards of living for the poorest of Rio de Janeiro's inhabitants. CAMDE's efforts to offer vocational and civic education to favela residents, along with its programs to improve favela residents' standards of consumption echoed the military regime's rhetoric that the integration of Brazil's poorest consumers into the economy would drive future economic development.

Although these efforts were driven by post-Cuban Revolution anti-communist ideology, CAMDE's outreach to favela residents echoed that of the leftist women's organizations of the late 1940s. In their civic activism and social work, CAMDE and the UCF embraced social roles and gendered rhetoric that earlier women's organizations had adopted. This was also true of CAMDE and UCF's involvement in the decades-long campaign against carestia.

Earlier efforts of women's organizations, especially the Associação das Donas de Casa (ADC), to engage the government, businesses, and the general population in campaigns against food price inflation created a precedent for women's leadership in the politics of the domestic economy that would shape the UCF and CAMDE's own involvement in this issue. Interestingly, it appears that the government, not UCF or

⁴⁴⁶ "CAMDE dá sapato e folheto anticomunista por Cr\$200 às crianças do Pavãozinho," *Jornal do Brasil*, 7 September 1966, unpaginated press clipping, PE.0.0.8/70, CAMDE.

⁴⁴⁷ "CAMDE dá comida americana," *Jornal do Brasil*, 1 June 1967, unpaginated press clipping, PE.0.0.8/85, CAMDE.

CAMDE, took the initiative to involve these two organizations in a campaign against carestia.

According to CAMDE's records, on 10 March 1965, Guilherme Borghoff, superintendent of SUNAB, asked for CAMDE's collaboration in a Campanha de Economia Popular (Popular Economy Campaign). CAMDE organized housewives to support the campaign, asking them to report back violations of price controls which CAMDE in turn reported to SUNAB. CAMDE facilitated the cooperation of food merchants and supermarkets with the campaign, giving those who enrolled in the campaign a placard to notify customers of their participation. 23 firms, representing 230 establishments agreed to participate.⁴⁴⁸ The UCF organized the campaign in São Paulo.

In this campaign, conservative women linked inflation to corruption under the previous civilian regime and called on housewives to do their part to support economic development by combatting inflation through their choices as consumers. The president of CAMDE, Amelia Bastos, was quoted in the *New York Times* describing the campaign against inflation as an extension of the campaign that had removed Goulart from power: "The first great battle of the Revolution was removing the communists from the Government. Now, we are engaged in a second great battle, which is the fight against inflation."⁴⁴⁹ A flyer from the UCF's campaign portrayed combatting inflation as the joint duty of housewives and merchants, and linked consumer decisions with the health of the economy:

IF YOU WANT TO STABILIZE THE COST OF LIVING, Give your support to the Campaign and reward the good merchants! DON'T BUY EXPENSIVE, BUY

⁴⁴⁸ "Histórico da Campanha da Mulher Brasileira em Defesa da Democracia," April, 1967, P.E. 0.0.78/86, CAMDE, 13-14.

⁴⁴⁹ Unidentified press clipping from the *New York Times*, ca. 1965, P.E.0.0.92/7, CAMDE.

WELL, stretch your family budget! Don't stop buying, because this creates unemployment, but buy smart, buy at the fair price; help to save the people from the punishment of inflation that previous bad governments created to benefit the corrupt. DON'T BUY EXPENSIVE—BUY WELL, and you will return to Brazil the dignity of a nation marching toward PROGRESS.⁴⁵⁰ (Emphasis in the original)

The UCF flyer placed blame for inflation primarily on previous civilian governments and linked national economic progress to consumer discipline.

CAMDE's campaign expanded beyond ensuring that merchants provided food at prices consistent with SUNAB's tables and attracted considerable consumer and media attention. Some stores agreed to reduce prices on consumer goods such as furniture, appliances, and clothing.⁴⁵¹ Shortly after the campaign was underway, newspapers reported a large turnout of shoppers at stores participating in the campaign, with long lines forming early in the morning and requiring that police supervise the resulting crowds in some cases.⁴⁵² Although CAMDE and the UCF portrayed the campaign as a collective effort to restore economic stability and support national progress, the campaign relied on consumer opportunism. Cartoons in support of the CAMDE campaign in *O Globo* emphasized the personal gains experienced by an apparently self-interested female consumer.⁴⁵³ Both cartoons pictured an apparently middle-class woman with a purse and high-heels celebrating her savings under the CAMDE campaign. Such apparent consumer glee was short-lived. The initial success of the CAMDE campaign proved to create its

⁴⁵⁰ UCF, "A Campanha em Defesa da Economia Popular," undated, ca. 1965, P.E. 0.0.92/1, CAMDE, 2.

⁴⁵¹ "Lançada pela CAMDE a Campanha de Defesa da Economia Popular," *O Globo*, 6 April, 1965, unpaginated press clipping, P.E.0.0.92/20, CAMDE.

⁴⁵² "Multidão Invade as Lojas Que Apóiam a Campanha da SUNAB e da CAMDE Por Preços Reduzidos," *O Globo*, 6 Abril 1965, unidentified press clipping, P.E.0.0.92/22.

⁴⁵³ Cartoon, *O Globo*, 8 April 1965, P.E.0.0.92/29, CAMDE; Cartoon, *O Globo*, undated, ca. 1965, P.E.0.0.92/6, CAMDE.

own problems as long lines appeared at stores and shortages began to occur as consumers emptied participating stores.

Much as it had been critical of COFAP's ability to regulate prices, the ADC began to criticize SUNAB's price control campaign shortly after it began. Yayá Silveira, still president of the ADC, complained: "The prices of foodstuffs continue to rise because of this lousy cost of living stabilization scheme planned by the revolutionary government, which does not stop the robbery to which the public is victim."⁴⁵⁴ As in the 1950s, the ADC was particularly concerned with the price and availability of milk. In May 1965, Silveira complained that SUNAB's regulations to control the price of milk did nothing to ensure sufficient milk supplies. She pointed to the existence of long lines for milk to disprove SUNAB's claims that the supply of milk was adequate.⁴⁵⁵

CAMDE was aware that milk was in short supply and sought to negotiate between milk producers and the government to address the shortage. However, these efforts resulted in a price increase on milk, prompting fierce criticism of CAMDE by the ADC. In June 1965, Silveira argued that CAMDE was responsible for the recent increase in the price of milk from Cr\$150 to Cr\$220. She maintained that the increase would mean "the death of the Women's Campaign for Democracy, because it was CAMDE itself that suggested the Working Group that determined these [price] levels." Silveira observed the apparent personal financial interests of some CAMDE members in dairy farms and declared that the ADC was organizing housewives to telephone CAMDE to complain

⁴⁵⁴ "Donas-de-Casa: Governo Não Sabe Pôr Fim ao Roubo," unidentified press clipping, P.E.0.0.92/45, CAMDE.

⁴⁵⁵ "Dona Iaiá faz apêlo para liquidar a fila do leite," *Jornal do Brasil*, 1 May 1965, unpaginated press clipping, P.E.0.0.92/48, CAMDE.

about their involvement in the price increase.⁴⁵⁶ This public criticism from the ADC appears to have led CAMDE to withdraw its efforts from the campaign, as it ceased its involvement in June.⁴⁵⁷ Although CAMDE had succeeded at establishing a public image as an organization that represented the interests of middle-class housewives opposed to communism, the organization's ties with political and economic elites prevented it from displacing the ADC as the authoritative representative of the economic interests of housewives in Rio. In April 1966, CAMDE organized a meeting between representatives of the government and commerce to address the problem of inflation,⁴⁵⁸ but it did not again venture into the contentious politics of price controls.

Although the ADC was ultimately critical of CAMDE's engagement in the politics of the domestic economy, CAMDE and the UCF adopted gendered political roles and rhetoric similar to those of the ADC and leftist women's organizations like the AFDF and the FMB. By portraying women's engagement in conservative political and social activism as consistent with traditional feminine gender norms and women's issues, CAMDE and the UCF contributed to broader public acceptance of women's expanded participation in politics and the economy. Although other scholars, including Cordeiro, have interpreted CAMDE's invocation of motherhood as being an indirect criticism of women's entry into the workforce, when compared with similar rhetoric from other women's organizations like the CNMB (to be further explored in Chapter 6), it becomes clear that CAMDE was contributing to a broader discourse that linked motherhood with

⁴⁵⁶ "Dona de Casa Acusa CAMDE de Aumentar Leite Para Cr\$220," *Correio da Manhã*, 5 June 1965, unpaginated press clipping, P.E.0.0.94/72, CAMDE.

⁴⁵⁷ "Histórico da Campanha da Mulher Brasileira," 13.

⁴⁵⁸ Amelia Molina Bastos, "Nota Oficial da CAMDE," 22 April 1966, PE.0.0.8/6, CAMDE.

professional and civic engagement. Amélia Molina Bastos, in an interview for the book *Livro da cabaceira da mulher*, maintained that:

A woman's first duty is in relationship to her family. But it should not be restricted only to this. I think that she should be, even if she works, it should be organized in such a way that she exercises her profession, her duty as a mother and also have duties to the community. (...) If a woman has within her an extraordinary vocation, as a scientist or artist, she has to pursue it. But in any case, a woman cannot forget that she is a mother.⁴⁵⁹

Here Bastos maintains that motherhood is compatible with professional and civic engagement, an argument that is consistent with the activism of CAMDE's membership. However, her allowance for women's professional and civic engagement departs from the assumption that women have a choice between staying at home or pursuing a career. She did not consider a situation where mothers must work in order to provide for themselves and their families. CAMDE's model of feminine civic participation was essentially for middle-class or elite women, not working-class women. This promotion of unequal roles for middle-class and working class women in civil society and development was reinforced by media portrayals of middle-class and elite women as leading protagonists in social and economic development.

Women and Development in 1960s *Manchete*

Much as CAMDE and the UCF promoted middle-class and elite women's participation in politics and civil society, but militated against working-class mobilization, the widely-circulated national news and general interest magazine *Manchete* portrayed expanding roles for middle-class and elite women in Brazil's national development, but simultaneously elided the participation of working-class

⁴⁵⁹ As quoted in Cordeiro, "A Nação que se salvou," 100. It should be noted here that Cordeiro uses this quote as evidence that CAMDE was critical of women working outside of traditional roles. However, this quote does not appear to support her argument.

women in industry from 1964 to 1970. Since its inception in 1952, *Manchete* had covered elite society, celebrity, and fashion. However, parallel to CAMDE and the UCF's activism, the magazine's coverage of elite women began to shift from discussions of high society events to elite women's involvement in philanthropy and the economy. This coverage modeled professional careers and community service as compatible with women's traditional roles as mothers and wives and contributing to national progress, but also naturalized elitist narratives about class and development.

Consistent with authoritarian developmentalist discourse, *Manchete*'s coverage of women's involvement in national progress fit into a broader narrative from 1964 to 1970 that promoted Brazil's military, technocratic, business, and industrial elites as the primary agents of national progress. Women's involvement in the economy appeared most frequently in relation to professions and industries associated with feminine gender roles, such as the textile and fashion industries, but generally overlooked the large number of working-class women involved in these industries. One week before *Manchete*'s coverage of the 1964 coup, the magazine ran an article titled "Carioca Miracle," about the industrialization of Rio de Janeiro. The first page of the article noted the prominent role that textiles played in Rio's industrial production. To represent the industry, the magazine chose an image of three models wearing different dresses, standing in front of spindles of thread. Workers were absent from the picture. Instead of portraying workers as contributing to industrial progress, the textile industry was described as providing for Rio's workers, observing that the seventy textile factories in the city "are pioneers of the construction of worker housing, much earlier than governments have dealt with the problem." Further, through exports, the textile industry contributed to development, as

“Beautiful textiles, like these from Bangu, earn foreign currency for Brazil.”⁴⁶⁰

A similar article from June 1964 emphasized that industry in southern Brazil contributed to national progress and featured coverage of the footwear industry in Rio Grande do Sul. The article featured a picture of three models standing above rows of working women, holding shoes.⁴⁶¹ Although the photograph pictured two rows of working women, nowhere in the text of the article were women workers mentioned. Instead, the finished product and its end-consumer were represented as driving progress. This was reflected in the symbolic hierarchy of three women models standing over working women, holding up shoes destined for Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. The article observed that talks were underway to export these shoes to the Netherlands, Canada, and the United States, which reinforced the article’s underlying message that Brazil was capable of producing quality consumer goods that could compete on the international market.

A later article in *Manchete* by Thérèse Quiè highlighted the prominent role that upper-middle class and elite women played in the textile industry. Among the women the article profiled were a dressmaker born in Romania, a woman who oversaw design in a sock and towel factory founded by her husband, an Italian-born manager of a textiles factory, and a woman who managed a pants factory. All of these women were participants in the 1965 Feira Nacional de Indústria Têxtil (National Textile Industry Fair) in São Paulo.⁴⁶² Some of these women appear to have independently achieved professional success, while others more clearly owed their success to marriage. This distinction did

⁴⁶⁰ Ney Bianchi, “O Milagre Carioca,” *Manchete*, 11 April 1964, 35.

⁴⁶¹ “O Sul Cresce para todos,” *Manchete*, 13 June 1964, 95.

⁴⁶² Thérèse Quiè, “Elas Comandam a Elegância,” *Manchete*, 14 August 1965, 77-80.

not appear to be important to Quiè, who emphasized these women's current status in the Brazilian textile industry. Elite status was itself a virtue to be sought after.

Manchete's coverage of elite women shifted somewhat in the years after the coup. The magazine had in previous years run a list of the "Ten Best" women in Brazil, which often included women involved in the arts or literature but was usually dominated by lists of socialites married to politicians, businessmen, and diplomats and who were best known for their social events or philanthropy. However, in 1964's list, only three of the featured women appeared to be socialites and the profile of one of these emphasized her philanthropy over her social engagements. The rest of the list included an artist, an author (Clarice Lispector), two actresses (including Odete Lara), a former Miss Brazil, a young swimmer, and Sandra Cavalcanti, the Social Secretary for the State of Guanabara responsible for favela removal under Governor Carlos Lacerda.⁴⁶³ These profiles emphasized the women's professional achievement and civic engagement but continued to naturalize elite leadership. The choice of Cavalcanti also revealed the magazine's implicit support for a policy that disrupted the lives of poor residents in Rio's favelas in the name of progress and modernity.

A trend toward emphasizing professional development and civic engagement continued in *Manchete* writer José Rodolpho Camara's coverage of elite women. An article from December 1964 on the "12 Best of Tomorrow" highlighted twelve elite young women seeking high school and university degrees. The article promoted their elite status but emphasized that these young women wanted to do more to contribute to society: "It is a new generation with a clear philosophy of life: they would like to be, in

⁴⁶³ Ibrahim Sued, "As 10 Melhores," *Manchete*, 6 June 1964, 34, 36-39.

the future, the most elegant women of the country—as is natural—but are also disposed to act in a useful and constructive manner in the society in which they live.”⁴⁶⁴ A similar Camara article from 1969 on elite women pursuing a university education emphasized that a previous generation’s reliance on a high-school education was no longer adequate for women in high society. “Today, even the woman dedicated to social life knows that memories from high school are very little in a world that demands total participation.” The article emphasized that an earlier generation’s commitment to remaining at home would be perceived as “household slavery” in 1969.⁴⁶⁵

This article fit into Camara’s larger narrative that elite women were adapting their behavior to more modern feminine roles that included pursuing professional careers and contributing more broadly to society. A 1968 article focused on elite women who devoted 12 hours or more each day to careers or philanthropy. Camara noted that “In Brazilian high society, there are far more dynamic ladies than is imagined.”⁴⁶⁶ The list of women covered in the article included the wife of a banker and federal deputy, who devoted her time to giving sewing lessons to poor girls; a member of an established family who made tapestries; another banker’s wife who devoted her time to philanthropy; the wife of an oncologist, who was vice-president of a charity against cancer; a woman who directed the style department at her husband’s clothing company; and a woman who administered a family business that included a paper factory, a forestry business, a rice plantation, and a bank.⁴⁶⁷

⁴⁶⁴ José Rodolpho Camara, “As 12 Mais de Amanhã,” *Manchete*, 12 December 1964, 56.

⁴⁶⁵ José Rodolpho Camara, “As Elegantes Também Estudam,” *Manchete*, 7 June 1969, 165.

⁴⁶⁶ José Rodolpho Camara, “Elas Trabalham das 8 às 8,” *Manchete*, 11 May 1968, 85.

⁴⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 84-89.

Although most of the women in this article attained their social and professional status through marriage or inheritance, Camara maintained that their devotion to public and professional engagement reflected women's shifting social roles: "Feminine emancipation, every day more consolidated in the modern world, has special characteristics in high society. These days, working confers as much prestige as frequenting elegant salons."⁴⁶⁸ Women's activity outside the home was becoming fashionable among the upper classes. However, Camara indicated that these women's professional and social commitments were still compatible with the traditional obligations of mothers and wives: "They always find time to work, between the obligations of the home and numerous social commitments."⁴⁶⁹ Camara may have wished to portray these elite women as hard workers, but it should be noted that their domestic and social obligations were most likely made easier by their wealth and domestic servants.

In the 1960s, *Manchete* may have treated elite women as celebrities capable of contributing to the modernization of Brazil, but the magazine also treated celebrity itself as a way for women of more modest backgrounds to participate in national progress. The magazine had often covered the professional careers and social lives of actresses and artists, especially film and television stars, since its inception. After the 1964 coup, these women were increasingly portrayed as contributing to national development, either through their celebrity on the international stage, or as voices of the Brazilian people in interactions with political elites. Beginning in 1965, *Manchete* began to stage these

⁴⁶⁸ Ibid., 86.

⁴⁶⁹ Ibid., 88.

interactions in a series called “Impossible Dialogs” where women celebrities had extended conversations with male government officials. The seeming “impossibility” of their interactions reflected the increasing social distance between technocratic officials and Brazilians who were not among the political or business elites.

In response to a criticism by actress Fernanda Montenegro of Roberto Campos’ policies that received substantial media attention, *Manchete* arranged a discussion between her and Campos in 1965. The article portrayed the two in gendered terms that emphasized feminine passion and masculine rationality. In a two hour debate, “to every allusion by Fernanda to the practical difficulties of daily life, the Minister responded with his already famous and cold rationality. While she spoke with the heart, he spoke only what came from his brain.” Montenegro invoked her womanhood to complain about the increasing cost of living that resulted from the government’s new economic policies: “I say to you, sir, that for a housewife, a woman, it is difficult to plan her daily survival, I say this to you, sir, openly and frankly. [...] Have you seen the price of green beans? Have you seen the price of eggs? Look how difficult things are, Minister.”⁴⁷⁰ Campos defended recent price inflation as lower than that under the previous government, corrective, and episodic due to recent weather. In response to Montenegro recalling living better before the coup, Campos emphasized that this had come at the cost of rural Brazilians: “Every time that the urban consumer refuses to pay an adequate price for food, he is benefitting himself at the cost of the large rural population.” Campos’ attempt to indirectly accuse Montenegro of being insensitive to the plight of the rural poor was ineffective.

Montenegro replied by denouncing predatory intermediaries in the agricultural market

⁴⁷⁰ André Kallas, “Diálogos Impossíveis: Roberto Campos, Fernanda Montenegro,” *Manchete*, 23 April 1966, 30.

and related that she and her husband had bought a small farm but that all the income from selling their crop of carrots went to the cost of renting a truck to transport them, leading the couple to abandon farming.⁴⁷¹ While certainly not impoverished, Montenegro's celebrity and life experiences allowed her to speak on behalf of the Brazilian middle-classes, *Manchete's* primary audience.

Manchete's coverage of celebrities and elite women reveals broadening support in mass media for women pursuing careers and civic engagement following the 1964 coup. However, this coverage also reflected and naturalized class hierarchies that granted agency to elite women and a lucky few non-elite women who became celebrities through their skill or good looks. These hierarchies persisted under an authoritarian regime that promoted economic development that benefitted the wealthy and middle classes but suppressed the wages and political voice of working-class Brazilians.

Persistence and Change in Household Inequalities during the 1960s

The military regime's policies produced economic benefits for sectors of the urban middle-class and workers in some industries, but restricted wage growth for many working-class Brazilians and exacerbated existing regional, class, and gender inequalities. Regime policies sustained social inequalities between poor and middle-class women, but also disrupted long-standing work arrangements within middle-class households. With ongoing rural to urban migration and limited job opportunities, a large share of poor women continued to find employment as domestic workers in middle-class and elite homes. However, with inflation eating away at middle-class household budgets and more households owning labor-saving consumer appliances, increasing numbers of

⁴⁷¹ Ibid., 31.

middle-class families in the 1960s chose to pay for daily or weekly visits by domestic workers rather than employ a full-time live-in maid.

Despite Soares' claims that by 1968, the time had come to expand wages and consumer demand, and despite Campos' claims that the minimum salary should be increased with increased productivity, the military government continued to restrict the growth of the minimum salary. Having peaked in 1960 and declined more than 20% from the most recent increase under the Goulart administration in 1964 to 1966, the minimum salary's real value—as measured in Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Salvador, and Fortaleza—remained largely flat from 1966 to 1976, with only periodic increases to adjust for inflation that did not result in lasting gains.⁴⁷² Income growth did occur during the “economic miracle” that began in the late 1960s, but not for minimum salary earners. This suppression of the minimum salary contributed to increasing economic inequality as the bottom 80% of income earners' share of national income declined from 45.5% in 1960 to 36.8% in 1970, while over the same period the share of national income going to the top 5% of income earners increased from 27.4% to 36.3%.⁴⁷³ The proportion of workers earning the minimum salary or less remained high in 1970, at 60.6% nationally, with 45.9% of urban workers and 83.1% of rural workers earning the minimum monthly salary or less. As the economy continued to grow and the minimum salary stagnated, these percentages decreased; in 1976, 37.4% of Brazilian earners made the minimum

⁴⁷² Gustavo Gonzago and Danielle Carusi Machado, “Rendimentos e preços” in *Estatísticas do século XX* (Rio de Janeiro: Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística, 2006), Gráfico 4, unpaginated. Beginning in 1976, the real value of the minimum salary in Rio de Janeiro began to decline while it rose in other regions as the government sought to gradually standardize the salary across the nation.

⁴⁷³ Baer, *The Brazilian Economy*, 78.

salary or less, among them 29.2% of urban workers and 56.2% of rural workers.⁴⁷⁴

Although Soares emphasized the need to expand consumption among the rural poor, disparities between the minimum salary rates and percentage of workers making more than the minimum salary in rural and urban states would continue to attract rural Brazilians to urban centers in Brazil's south and southeast.

Income inequality was even more pronounced between men and women and between urban women and rural women. In 1977, the first year for which data on gender and income is available, 60.8% of Brazilian women earning an income made the minimum salary or less compared with 33.6% of men. 54% of urban women with an income made the minimum salary or less compared with 23.6% of male urban earners, and no less than 93.4% of rural women earners made the minimum salary or less compared with 54.6% of male rural earners.⁴⁷⁵ The difference between wages of rural women and urban women, even more substantial than the difference among their male counterparts, made urban migration particularly attractive to rural women, contributing to a persistently high number of poorly-educated women domestic workers making less than the minimum salary in urban centers.

As Chapter 2 observed, postwar economic policies had resulted in substantial regional inequalities, leading many rural Brazilians to migrate to large urban centers like Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, contributing to a large number of unskilled women working as domestics for middle-class and elite families. Due to continued migration to urban centers and limited employment opportunities for uneducated women, the

⁴⁷⁴ IBGE, *Anuário estatístico do Brasil*, vol. 40 (1979): 120.

⁴⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 110-114.

percentage of working women engaged in domestic labor actually increased in the first years of the “miracle” and only modestly decreased in the 1970s. Figure 5.1, below, charts the percentage of economically-active women engaged in “rendering services,” a term used by the IBGE that distinguished this sector from employment in commerce or government. IBGE census data reveal that about 85% of the women employed in this sector were engaged in some kind of domestic service.⁴⁷⁶



Figure 5.1. Women Engaged in “Rendering Services.” Source: IBGE, *Anuário estatístico do Brasil*, vol. 40 (1979). Own elaboration.

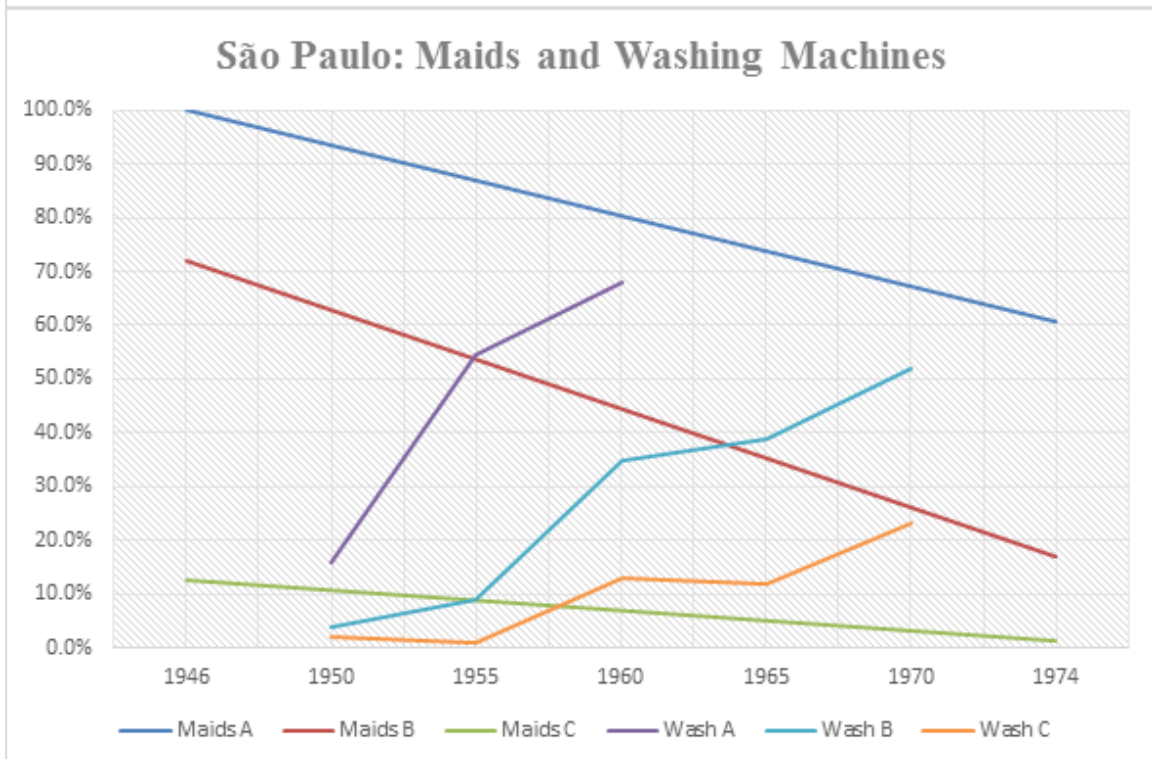
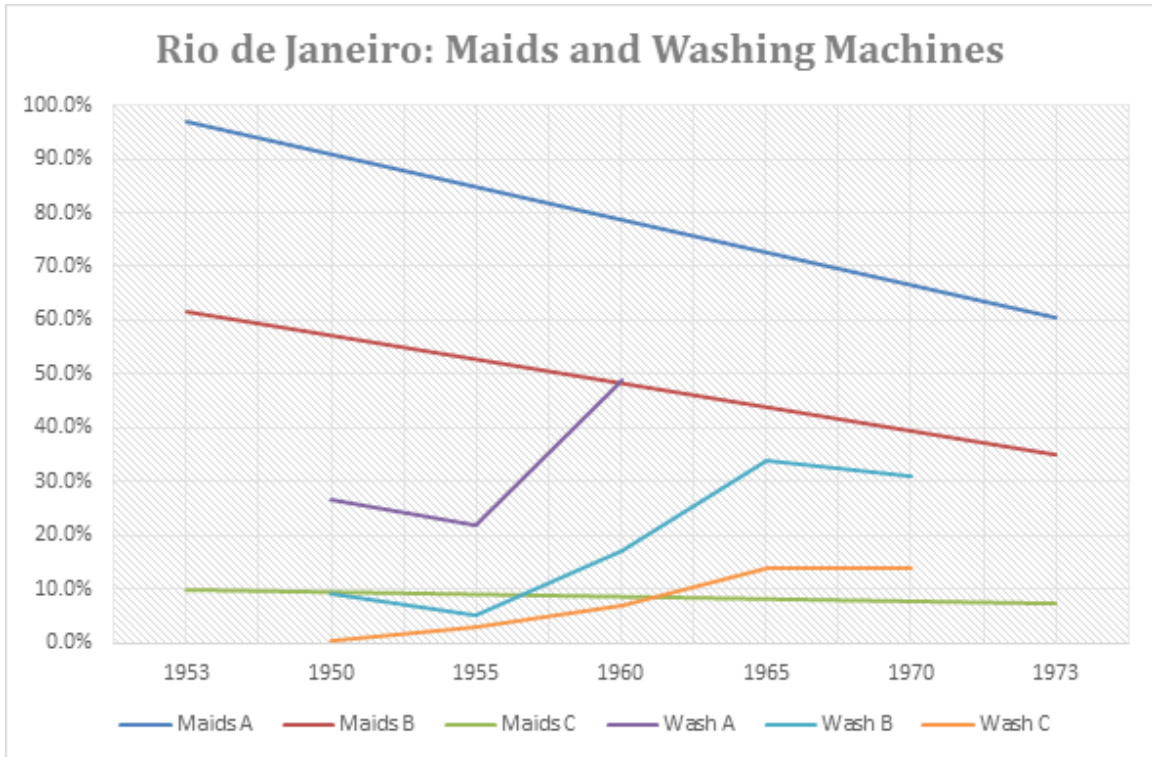
As Figure 5.1 reveals, the percentage of economically active women engaged in this sector increased from 1960 to 1970, reaching 38.8% before declining to 29.8% in 1973.

⁴⁷⁶ The 1973 *Anuário estatístico do Brasil* indicated that of the roughly two million women engaged in this sector, 1.7 million were employed in paid domestic occupations or food service (personal cooks), while another 290,944 were engaged in personal hygiene services. Presumably, some percentage of this second group were employed as hair stylists or manicurists, but the definition is sufficiently vague to allow that many women in this subcategory may have been housecleaners. The remaining 18 women employed as professional athletes represented a negligible percentage of the total.

IBOPE surveys indicate that from the 1940s to the 1970s, middle-class employment of live-in maids in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo shifted from being the norm to being far less common, while most (if relatively fewer) affluent consumers continued to employ maids. This may be best explained by an increased cost of living for middle-class consumers on the one hand, and increased adoption of household appliances on the other. As more consumer dollars went to consumer durables, food, and the cost of housing, finding room in middle-class family budgets for a live-in maid would become increasingly difficult to justify, especially given the labor-saving properties of the appliances that middle-class consumers increasingly owned.

One appliance in particular stands out for its ability to cut back dramatically on time spent on domestic chores: the washing machine. Although, as Chapter 1 observes, the washing machine was not owned by most consumers in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo in the 1960s, by 1970, more than half of middle-class consumers in São Paulo owned washing machines and more than 30% of middle-class consumers in Rio owned them. Figures 5.2 and 5.3, below,⁴⁷⁷ compare employment of maids with ownership of washing machines in Rio and São Paulo across classes.

⁴⁷⁷ Sources: Serviço X and Serviço de Pesquisa entre Consumidores, 1950-1970, IBOPE; Pesquisas Especiais 04 (1946) and 12 (1953), IBOPE; Levantamento Socioeconomico 006 (1973/1974), IBOPE.



Figures 5.2 and 5.3. Comparison of consumer employment of live-in maids vs. ownership of washing machine by class in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. Sources: Serviço X and Serviço de Pesquisa entre Consumidores, 1950-1970, IBOPE; Pesquisas Especiais 04 (1946) and 12 (1953), IBOPE; Levantamento Socioeconomico 006 (1973/1974), IBOPE. Own elaboration.

As the figures illustrate, although rates of live-in maid employment by affluent consumers in both cities declined from close to 100% in 1946/1953 to 60% by 1973/1974, the decline in employment of maids among middle-class consumers in São Paulo was much sharper than in Rio, and middle-class consumers in São Paulo adopted washing machines to a much greater extent than their counterparts in Rio.

As Chapter 1 observes, advertisers had long portrayed consumer appliances as labor-saving devices, but they often left it up to the reader to decide if the appliance was for a maid or for a housewife. Beginning in the early 1960s, perhaps to capitalize on increases in the cost of living that urban consumers had experienced, some advertisers began to more aggressively market consumer appliances as substitutes for maids. This trend was apparent in advertisements for washing machines.

In 1962, Bendix launched a series of advertisements in *Manchete* that upheld the company's washing machine as the ideal substitute for a maid. Two of these advertisements are pictured above. The first of these featured two women with one telling the other about the qualities of a Bendix washing machine as though it were a maid. "You can rest at ease. I have known her for many years. She is honest, economical, and knows how to wash any garment."⁴⁷⁸ The two women were clearly middle-class or affluent as demonstrated by their discussion of maids and their representation as idle consumers shopping for presents. The small text at the top of the ad further clarifies its intended audience; Bendix was preferred "by hundreds of thousands of Brazilian housewives." The second advertisement featured a similar situation with two women sharing tea as one told the other that "You can count on her. She is an excellent helper. Faithful, quiet, and

⁴⁷⁸ Bendix advertisement, *Manchete*, 23 June 1962, 56.

she does not question her work.”⁴⁷⁹ As in the first advertisement, idle consumption, modern fashion and hair, and discussion of employment signaled that these women were middle-class or affluent.

The implied messages in these advertisements did not merely position the washing machines as adequate substitutes for a maid. References to the machine’s honesty hinted at the risk that maids could steal from their employers. The machines were more economical than maids, more faithful, and more accepting of the women’s authority. These attributes, unlike a maid, allowed a housewife to rest in peace without having to constantly supervise an employee. The advertisements portrayed the machines as saving more time, money, and effort than a maid, allowing women time and money to shop or enjoy a cup of tea with a friend. The advertisements were a direct attack on the established prestige that came with retaining the services of a maid; a maid was no longer a privilege, but a pain and had been displaced by a washing machine as a symbol of class status.

Whether because of shifting consumer preferences for consumer appliances or because of economic necessity, by the early 1970s, a substantially smaller percentage of middle-class consumers in Rio and São Paulo chose to employ live-in maids. By the early 1970s, a substantial decline in the percentage of affluent households employing maids indicated that many affluent Brazilians no longer saw employing maids as necessary to maintaining their class status. This is not to say that elite and middle-class women who did not have a live-in maid completely dispensed with domestic labor. By 1972, 21.3% of women working in the personal services sector in the state of São Paulo and 24.7% of

⁴⁷⁹ Bendix advertisement, *Manchete*, 13 October 1962, 23.

their counterparts in the states of Rio de Janeiro and Guanabara were self-employed.⁴⁸⁰ Although many of these women provided personal hygiene services as beauticians, it is probable that a substantial portion of them worked as housecleaners, nannies, and cooks who provided their services to multiple clients on a daily or weekly basis. The persistence of a relatively stable percentage of working women engaged in domestic services in the face of declining relative middle-class demand for live-in maids is also explained by continued expansion of the urban middle-class and the increasing affluence of elite Brazilians who were more likely to employ multiple domestics in their households.

In the 1960s and 1970s, domestic workers would continue to appear in many urban middle-class households, but increasingly as an outside party paid to periodically perform specific domestic chores. This change allowed for increasing breadth of the market for domestic services by allowing middle-class families who might not be able to afford a live-in maid to substitute for some of the chores that a housewife would otherwise be expected to perform. As Chapter 6 reveals, the availability of these services became yet another reason for feminists to question why women should remain at home instead of pursuing a career.

Conclusion

The polarized politics that preceded the 1964 coup shaped the priorities of the new military regime. Urban labor, which had been a central constituency of pre-1964 governments, was suppressed politically and economically as the regime pursued economic stabilization in part by restricting urban wages. With real wages for working-class Brazilians stagnant until the 1970s, increasing economic inequality, and the

⁴⁸⁰ IBGE, *Anuário estatístico do Brasil*, vol. 34 (1973): 605-606.

abandonment of the 1946 Constitution's commitment to providing for a minimum wage capable of providing for an entire family, the military regime effectively abandoned the populist commitment to transforming working class families into male-headed nuclear families capable of enjoying a middle-class standard of living. This shift would eventually favor the more substantial entry of women into the workforce following the end of the 1968-73 economic boom. Despite the regime's abandonment of this goal, it remained committed to industrialization, expanding domestic consumption, and delivering economic growth and stability to middle-class Brazilians. Conservative middle-class and elite women had played important roles in mobilizing opposition to the Goulart government and support for the coup, and they continued to support the military government into the early 1970s. In the first few years after the coup, these women remained important constituencies and allies for the regime, which supported their social service and civic activism.

Although the regime demonstrated little sympathy for the urban working class, economic policymakers were aware of the political importance of explaining government policy to the middle-class and taking measures to contain food price inflation to satisfy middle-class housewives. Looking to earlier participation of middle-class housewives in campaigns against carestia, the government reached out to CAMDE and the UCF to assume leadership in a new campaign to control food prices. This effort met with only temporary success as the measures that SUNAB, CAMDE, and the UCF took were deemed too conciliatory to producers and merchants by members of the ADC, who did not appreciate being displaced in their roles as consumer advocates by CAMDE and the UCF.

The prominent role that elite and middle-class women played in civil society under the regime was also reflected in the media, which highlighted elite women's participation in economic development and philanthropy. This coverage naturalized class hierarchies in Brazilian society while presenting elite leadership and philanthropy as the path to Brazilian economic and social progress. Writers for *Manchete* applauded national elites while promoting the illusion of class mobility among women by highlighting the careers of a handful of affluent women and celebrities. Nonetheless, in the context of an authoritarian regime that censored the press and quashed open political opposition, *Manchete* offered opportunities for women to present mild critiques of regime policies and press leaders to address middle-class desires for economic stability and order.

Representations of feminine gender roles that were largely in line with the military regime's authoritarian developmentalist political project were not the only discourses present in Brazilian media. Middle-class feminists also sought to define expanded roles for women in development, and often more directly challenged conservative gender ideologies, as will be explored in Chapter 6.

Chapter 6 – A New Role for Women in Development

In a 1969 letter of congratulations written to General Emílio Garrastazú Médici on his assumption of the presidency, Conselho Nacional de Mulheres Brasileiras president Romy Medeiros da Fonseca lamented that the newly-installed chief executive had not “made any reference to the participation of women in the Government” in his various speeches to the nation. Fonseca urged Médici to consider the importance of women to national development. “We live in a free and democratic world, in which day to day, women’s cooperation becomes more efficient and necessary to its development. Conscious of her duties and rights, the Brazilian woman trusts in Your Excellency’s Government, with the certainty that feminine cooperation will be recognized and valued as an element indispensable to the socioeconomic development of the Nation.”⁴⁸¹

Two years later, Fonseca addressed another letter to Médici on behalf of the CNMB, advocating the creation of a Serviço Cívico Feminino (Women’s Civil Service). In contrast to earlier conservative proposals to require that young women receive training in housewifery,⁴⁸² this service would obligate young women to contribute their time and labor to literacy campaigns, the provision of first aid, and the creation and maintenance of public childcare centers. Fonseca explained that childcare centers would support women’s economic participation, allowing for “the liberation of this enormous, as yet unutilized potential labor that our country cannot have the luxury of losing, if it hopes to accelerate its rate of development.” She further explained that the service would be a way

⁴⁸¹ Romy Medeiros da Fonseca, Letter to President Emílio Garrastazu Medici, 30 October 1969, RMF Box 16, Folder 4.

⁴⁸² For example, women’s advice columnist Elsie Lessa had called for such a requirement in “Aprendendo a ser mulher de verdade...” *Manchete*, 18 August 1956, 59.

for women to contribute to development that was consistent with their feminine gender, as these services were “adapted to women’s biological and psychological being.”⁴⁸³

These two letters are representative of the shifting rhetoric regarding women’s social and civic roles employed by prominent Brazilian feminists in the context of censorship by the military regime from the mid-1960s to early 1970s. Although Fonseca’s appeal to Médici—who oversaw a deepening of authoritarian and repressive measures during the depths of the military regime’s “leaden years”—to advance women’s inclusion in the economy and government may at first seem quixotic, it is important to recognize that other nominally non-partisan women’s organizations such as CAMDE had recently played prominent public roles in Brazilian politics and received praise and support from the regime. Fonseca’s argument for women’s participation in civic service echoed similar rhetoric from CAMDE and was consistent with a longer tradition of women’s organizations that publically invoked the performance of feminine roles to advance political and social causes.

Unlike second-wave feminists, Fonseca did not directly challenge the idea that women should preform gendered roles within society, but sought to expand the definition of these roles to allow for women’s greater participation in the economy and workforce in the name of social and economic development. Similar rhetoric was adopted by the psychologist and columnist Carmen da Silva in the mid- to late 1960s as she sought to reshape middle-class women’s opinions in support of women’s paid labor and professional development. Fonseca and Silva’s ability to advocate a more radical feminist agenda was constrained by the threat of regime censorship and conservative public

⁴⁸³ Romy Medeiros da Fonseca, Letter to President Emílio Garrastazu Médici, 12 May 1971, RMF Box 16, Folder 4.

opinion, but both women were able to capitalize on a growing preoccupation in the Brazilian media and middle-class urban society with youth culture, the sexual revolution, international feminism, and a perceived crisis of the traditional nuclear family.

In the mid-1960s to early 1970s, feminists such as Fonseca and Silva primarily targeted elite and middle-class Brazilians with arguments that women's professional careers, political organization, and social engagement would contribute to national development while strengthening the Brazilian family. These arguments generally assumed that their audience could outsource domestic labor to maids or paid cleaning services, but by the early 1970s, feminists highlighted professional cleaning services and public childcare facilities as solutions that could both avoid exploitation of poorly-educated domestics and allow middle-class women to leave the home. The early 1970s also saw a shift in media discourse that more openly favored women's labor and increasing independence as a sign of social progress and feminists began to more directly challenge traditional feminine gender roles. The United Nations General Assembly's declaration of 1975 as International Women's Year provided fresh institutional support for a new generation of feminists, even as debates about a proposed new civil code underscored the ongoing relevance of the CNMB's earlier activism and substantial continuity in feminist goals.

As Chapter 3 observed, many scholars have categorized most women's organizations between 1945 and 1975 as feminine, but not feminist and few have seriously examined the activities of self-defined feminists in this period.⁴⁸⁴ Most

⁴⁸⁴ Carmen da Silva's writings have received more substantial attention than those of most other feminists in this period. Scholars usually focus on her influence on media discourse and the next generation of Brazilian feminists. For a recent and detailed examination of Silva's influence on Brazilian feminism, see

narratives on contemporary Brazilian feminism trace its origins to student radicalism and the feminist reflection groups that produced a new generation of feminist leaders after 1975, and emphasize that this new generation's challenge to traditional feminine gender roles marked it as distinct from earlier feminists who had primarily focused their efforts on establishing women's legal equality with men, principally at the ballot box and in the civil code. Although the distinction is largely accurate, this narrative overlooks substantial continuities in feminist rhetoric and objectives across generations from the 1960s to late 1970s. In her brief survey on feminism in Brazil, Céli Regina Jardim Pinto has more usefully described Fonseca as belonging to a generation of feminists that served as a transition from the "well-behaved" feminism of Bertha Lutz and the more confrontational feminism that emerged after 1975.⁴⁸⁵ Historians that adopt a narrative of generational rupture also tend to portray changing discourses around women's sexuality and economic roles in the 1960s as organic responses to structural changes,⁴⁸⁶ downplaying the role of feminist activists and writers in shaping this discourse. As this chapter will demonstrate, feminists were important in promoting the argument that economic development would necessitate women's broader participation in society, and they made this argument before dramatic increases in women's employment.

This chapter will begin by examining the feminist columnist Carmen da Silva's

Ana Rita Fonteles Duarte, *Carmen da Silva: o feminismo na imprensa brasileira* (Fortaleza: Expressão Gráfica e Editora, 2005).

⁴⁸⁵ Céli Regina Jardim Pinto, *Uma história do feminismo no Brasil* (Editora Fundação Perseu Abramo, 2003), 46.

⁴⁸⁶ For a recent example of a narrative that links structural changes to changing social views in the 1960s without identifying the feminists who sought to change these views, see Carla Bassanezi Pinsky, "A Era dos Modelos Flexíveis" in *Nova História das Mulheres*, 513-543.

advocacy of participation in the paid workforce as essential to the performance of traditional feminine gender roles and will then examine evolving representations of marriage, sex, and women's labor in popular magazines in the mid to late 1960s and early 1970s. The chapter will then review Romy Medeiros da Fonseca and the CNMB's arguments for expanding women's participation in development and the corresponding opposition to these efforts by the military regime, followed by the appearance of feminist ideas in the Brazilian press in the early 1970s and increasing elite support for women adopting new roles in the economy. The chapter will conclude by examining the priorities a new generation of feminists that emerged in the mid-1970s brought to campaigns for gender equality.

The Art of Being (a Modern) Woman

In 1963, Carmen da Silva began writing a regular column for the women's magazine *Claudia* titled "A Arte de Ser Mulher" (The Art of Being Woman). Silva's writing was informed by her life experience as a woman who had lived independently and pursued a professional career in business and writing. Born to a middle-class family in Rio Grande do Sul, Silva left Brazil for Montevideo in 1944 where she worked for various businesses and organizations as a clerk and translator. She moved again to Buenos Aires in 1949 and worked in business and for the Argentine Psychoanalytic Association, where she read widely about psychology and took a course in psychoanalysis. While in Argentina, Silva authored articles for various newspapers and magazines, and her first novel, *Setiembre*,⁴⁸⁷ based on her life experiences during the presidency of Juan Perón. Feeling marginalized by her status as a foreigner in Argentina

⁴⁸⁷ Carmen da Silva, *Setiembre* (Buenos Aires: Goyanarte, 1957).

and desiring to participate in Brazilian civil society following the resignation of Jânio Quadros, Silva moved to Rio de Janeiro in 1962.⁴⁸⁸ The women's magazine *Claudia* offered Silva the opportunity to gradually introduce women across Brazil to feminist ideas circulating in Europe and North America.

Launched in 1961, *Claudia* was a monthly magazine published by Editora Abril aimed at middle-class married women with content focused on fashion, advice columns, interior design, and topics related to home economics.⁴⁸⁹ Its exclusive devotion to a middle-class feminine audience distinguished it from contemporary news magazines like *Manchete* and allowed *Claudia* to attract substantial advertising revenue. Although most of the content in *Claudia* reproduced normative ideas about feminine gender roles, the magazine's editors encouraged columnists to express a range of distinct perspectives, allowing readers to come to their own conclusions. This openness to a range of opinions created a space in which Silva could promote more feminist ideas. *Claudia*'s editors welcomed Silva's contribution as a way of raising readers' awareness of women's changing social roles, even if she later complained to colleagues that the editors often rewrote her columns to soften her more radical arguments.⁴⁹⁰

Unlike most other feminine advice columnists, Silva grounded her advice for relationships and life on psychology and a feminist perspective. She was aware of generally conservative views among the Brazilian public and in the first years of writing

⁴⁸⁸ Biographical details about Silva can be found in Duarte, *Carmen da Silva*, Chapter 2.

⁴⁸⁹ The magazine generally avoided discussion of partisan politics and did not cover the 1964 coup. Discussion of policy was generally limited to issues perceived as affecting women, such as the 1962 Estatuto da Mulher Casada and later policy changes regarding labor laws and social benefits for domestic workers.

⁴⁹⁰ Duarte, *Carmen da Silva*, 36, 37, 47.

for *Claudia* she crafted most of her arguments to convince middle-class women of the importance of work and social engagement outside the home, generally avoiding broader critiques of traditional feminine roles within families. Silva's views sometimes clashed with traditional representations of women's gender roles in other sections of *Claudia* but only rarely presented a challenge to the magazine's efforts to market goods and services to housewives. Instead of criticizing a sexual division of labor in parenting and domestic labor, Silva's earlier columns focused on ways that work outside of the home made women better mothers and wives.

In August 1964, Silva wrote one of her earliest columns advocating married women's participation in the workforce. In describing the differences between modern young women and their grandmothers, she pointed to the rising cost of living as a reason for middle-class women considering marriage to plan on working. Otherwise, they would have to do without modern conveniences or a maid, who, if well-trained, could handle domestic chores "with more efficiency than she herself, requiring only a minimum of vigilance and training."⁴⁹¹ Further, Silva argued that even those women whose husbands' incomes were sufficient to allow them to stay at home should still work to give their lives greater meaning. Work represented "a way of being open to the world, to participate in it as a presence and not as a dead weight."⁴⁹² Silva's portrayal of middle-class housewives as a burden on society echoed the arguments of Nice Figueiredo in *O Momento Feminino* in the late 1940s,⁴⁹³ but her rhetoric placed a greater emphasis on the importance of work to women's personal realization and psychological well-being.

⁴⁹¹ Carmen da Silva, "A Arte de Ser Mulher: Trabalhar para não ser bibelô," *Claudia*, August 1964, 120.

⁴⁹² *Ibid.*, 119.

⁴⁹³ Nice Figueiredo, "A sociedade precisa de seu trabalho," *O Momento Feminino*, 11 June, 1948, 5.

Silva's columns on the need for women to work outside the home generated many reader letters to *Claudia*, up to three to four hundred each month,⁴⁹⁴ some in support, but most critical of her arguments. For example, in December 1964, a woman named Malena from the inland state of Goiás wrote: "How they fool themselves, those women who think they are better companions when they work outside the home..." A mother "even if there are monetary restrictions, should dedicate herself entirely to the home."⁴⁹⁵ Silva responded to Malena by arguing that motherhood was only a portion of a woman's life and should not lead her to abandon what she had already accomplished: "A mother, despite her condition, is a being who already existed before having children. A being who dedicated herself to certain things that helped her integrate herself into the world. Will it be simple to forget and abandon a whole series of things for which she prepared herself throughout her whole life?"⁴⁹⁶ Malena was not the only letter writer that month who disagreed with Silva's argument that married women should work—a young male engineer also opposed the idea—but a young woman also wrote in support of Silva. After arguing with her husband, she had been able to convince him of the value of her work and restricted her display of domestic skills to cooking.

Reader letters and Silva's responses represented an ongoing dialog between Silva and *Claudia*'s readership that helped the author frame arguments around reader responses. For example, in her column for August 1964, Silva speculated that the many letters she received from women upset with her column were written out of fear that she might be right: "More passionate than solid, their arguments have all the characteristics

⁴⁹⁴ Duarte, *Carmen da Silva*, 41.

⁴⁹⁵ "Claudia Responde," *Claudia*, December 1964, 4.

⁴⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 6.

of a discussion with themselves, as though they fought against the incipient and painful recognition that things are *not* well as they are.”⁴⁹⁷

These exchanges continued in later years. In April 1965, Ana Maria Oliveira, a woman from São Paulo argued that housewifery could be fulfilling in itself and did not require that women engage in paid labor: “A woman does not need to have a profession to know how to listen, understand and counsel her husband, and achieve true realization in marriage. And for the woman who feels genuinely realized, there is no room for emptiness or dryness in her life.” Silva disagreed, maintaining that “It is important not to confuse complete existence with fragments of existence.”⁴⁹⁸ 23-year-old Jacqueline Françoise Mourier in São Paulo agreed, arguing that “A modern woman does not want to be treated as a doll, nor as a child, nor as a maid. She wants to be treated as an evolved, educated and versatile individual. She wants, ultimately, to be treated simply as a woman, insofar as femininity is an attribute that she has not lost.”⁴⁹⁹ Mourier’s argument that a woman’s independence did not make her less of a woman was a response to conservative fears that labor outside of the home would diminish women’s femininity.

Silva’s exchanges with *Claudia*’s readership reveal an ongoing debate about how women should define their responsibility to society and their families. In September 1965, *Claudia* printed long sections of a letter from a woman going by the moniker “Unhappy Blond” who was upset by one of Silva’s columns on the unhappy state of married women who stayed at home. “Unhappy Blond” argued that responsibility demanded that married women, especially mothers, stay at home. “Someone has to stay

⁴⁹⁷ Carmen da Silva, “A Arte de Ser Mulher: As Razões de independência,” *Claudia*, August 1964, 129.

⁴⁹⁸ “Claudia Responde,” *Claudia*, April 1965, 4.

⁴⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 6.

in the house, at home. Often, not by choice, but simply because there are certain things that cannot be left undone... I stay out of obligation, and principally out of love.”⁵⁰⁰ Silva used this letter as a foil to craft her column for that month, in which she observed that “Every time that this section addresses the theme ‘feminine independence,’ ‘participation of women in society,’ ‘work,’ I already know that I can expect an avalanche of letters.” Silva noted that although some women appreciated her columns, and some men wrote to express their preference that their wives stay “at home, submissive, obedient,” most letters came from women offended by her writing.⁵⁰¹

Contrary to the sentiments of many of these letters, Silva argued that the idea that work was incompatible with women’s domestic roles was a myth; she knew many women who “care for their home, attend their husbands and children, maintain an ample and interesting circle of relations—and are not exhausted nor feel martyred.”⁵⁰² Further, she observed that although middle-class women were often quick to argue that they must stay at home to care for children, working-class women generally worked despite often having substantially larger families. “They work because they have no other remedy, they cannot give themselves the luxury of crafting excuses.” Inverting psychologists’ concern about emotionally dependent children, Silva feared that middle-class housewives were increasingly becoming emotionally fixated on their children, establishing “a relationship of affective and material dependency, using them as pretense to avoid any responsibilities outside of the maternal function.”⁵⁰³

⁵⁰⁰ “Caixa Postal Intimidade,” *Claudia*, September 1965, 11.

⁵⁰¹ Carmen da Silva, “A Arte de Ser Mulher: Resposto a um Mito,” *Claudia*, September 1965, 140.

⁵⁰² *Ibid.*, 179.

⁵⁰³ *Ibid.*, 181.

In March 1966, she again tackled the issue of women's responsibility, observing that many women portrayed housework and motherhood as the only meaningful responsibility for women, and that paid work represented "a flight from the home, conjugal, maternal, and domestic duties." To the contrary, Silva argued that women could only give their children a proper moral education if they regularly ventured outside of the home because "moral values are the result of a choice that can only be made on the basis of a global vision of the world" which could only be obtained through women's broader participation in society. Women had a responsibility to society at large, not just their families, but the execution of this responsibility made them better mothers and wives: "to the extent that I know how to fulfill my social responsibility, I will provide a social dimension to my work as housewife, wife, and mother."⁵⁰⁴

Much as she had earlier observed that poorer women often worked despite having large families, Silva labeled middle-class women's refusal to work as economically and socially irresponsible. She criticized women who opposed working except in cases of "economic necessity" for defending class privilege: "What they defend, with at times lofty-sounding arguments about sublime dedication to the home and maternal function, is just that: a privilege."⁵⁰⁵ Silva maintained that if every "economically unproductive person" decided to work, they would contribute to economic growth that would benefit everyone. This argument foreshadowed arguments that feminists would make a few years later linking women's paid labor to economic development.

⁵⁰⁴ Carmen da Silva, "A Arte de Ser Mulher: Mais trabalho e menos conversa," *Claudia*, March 1966, 46-47.

⁵⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

Magazines, the Sexual Revolution, and Women's Views on Paid Labor

Silva's arguments fit well with a broader preoccupation in the national media with evolving popular views on sex and women's social roles. From the mid-1960s to early 1970s, articles in Brazilian news and feminine magazines like *Manchete*, *Claudia*, and *Realidade* covered broad debates about the sexual revolution, youth culture, and shifting gender norms. This coverage often reflected government censorship but nonetheless promoted more open discussion of women's roles in Brazilian society. Magazines like *Manchete* and research organizations such as IBOPE also sought to measure public opinion regarding these social issues, revealing shifting popular attitudes toward masculine and feminine gender roles.

Changing youth attitudes and behavior served as a backdrop for much of the media coverage on the sexual revolution and shifting gender roles, but censorship appears to have prevented mainstream publications like *Manchete* from covering youth rebellion beyond broad generalizations about changing behavior. Shortly after the 1964 coup, for example, an article on youth rebellion reflected conservative fears that male youth insubordination, drug use, and violence posed a threat to society.⁵⁰⁶ By contrast, censorship prevented meaningful coverage in *Manchete* of the student protests against the military regime or their brutal suppression in 1968, although brief and vague references to youth violence and government repression appeared sporadically in the publication.⁵⁰⁷ Articles centered on Brazilian youth, such as one from October 1966, more commonly

⁵⁰⁶ Lêdo Ivo, "A Revolta dos Jovens," *Manchete*, 25 July 1964, 82-84.

⁵⁰⁷ For example, in a 1970 article on the Brazilian family, Luis Arrôbas Martins, Treasury Secretary in the state of São Paulo, indirectly referenced government repression of students, arguing that conservative regimes around the world had treated youth movements as subversive and suppressed them violently, leading to violent youth behavior. Celso Kinjô, "Como vai a família brasileira," *Manchete*, 6 June 1970, 65.

focused on innocuous changes in fashion among middle-class and elite urban youths.⁵⁰⁸

Instead of in-depth examinations of Brazilian youth rebellion, *Manchete* and other news magazines more often examined younger Brazilians in the context of intergenerational dialogues on issues related to sex and gender roles, highlighting ways that youth were an example of broader changes in Brazilian families and shifting sexual norms. Although media coverage of these topics generally avoided direct challenges to the military regime, they were nonetheless subject to state censorship. In January 1967, the news magazine *Realidade* ran an issue focused on Brazilian women that addressed the controversial topics of abortion, single motherhood, and prostitution. Copies of the magazine in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo were confiscated by order of the court for minors on the grounds that they were “obscene” and “offensive to the dignity of women.”⁵⁰⁹ This censorship, however, appears to have only contributed to the magazine’s notoriety and did not stop other magazines like *Manchete* from writing about sex or changing gender norms.

One of *Manchete*’s preferred methods of covering these topics was by commissioning and commenting on surveys conducted by IBOPE. The magazine featured articles centered on no less than twelve IBOPE surveys of public opinion in Rio de Janeiro and/or São Paulo on topics such as sex, divorce, birth control, feminine fashion, changing family relationships, and women’s labor between August 1966 and January 1971. In addition to surveys commissioned by *Manchete*, IBOPE itself conducted surveys on women’s behavior and views on labor. This apparent interest in

⁵⁰⁸ “A Babel dos Moderninhos,” *Manchete*, 22 October 1966, 112-114.

⁵⁰⁹ “A apreensão de Realidade,” *Realidade*, N° 11 (February, 1967): 3-4.

changing gender norms reflected the desire of advertising and marketing professionals to understand shifting popular beliefs, especially among increasingly independent women and young consumers.

Much as Carmen da Silva observed generally conservative attitudes toward women's labor outside the home among middle-class Brazilians, IBOPE surveys demonstrate that most respondents in Rio and São Paulo in the late 1960s maintained conservative views toward married women's paid labor. In a 1967 IBOPE survey of 600 women in the states of Guanabara and São Paulo, only 21% of respondents believed that women should work after marriage compared with 21% who opposed women working after marriage and 52% who believed that married women should work "only if necessary."⁵¹⁰ A 1969 IBOPE survey of men and women in Guanabara asked respondents if they believed that married women should only work when family conditions became very difficult or if instead they believed that women should not work in any instance because their "work at home is much more important." Given these two options, 68% of men and 86% of women answered that women should only work when conditions were difficult and 31% of men and 11% of women were uniformly opposed to married women working.⁵¹¹ If given a choice, presumably a group of respondents would have voiced support for married women working regardless of family economic conditions, but the 1967 survey indicates that this would likely have been a minority view.

Despite a degree of popular conservatism regarding gender roles as reflected in public opposition in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo to middle-class married women

⁵¹⁰ "Pesquisa sobre o comportamento e a situação global da mulher no meio em que vive," PE-71, January 1967, IBOPE, 63.

⁵¹¹ "Pesquisa de opinião pública a respeito da mulher que trabalha," March 1969, PE-89, IBOPE, 16.

pursuing a career, issues related to sex, marriage, and women's evolving social roles attracted substantial media attention, reflecting broader interest in these topics among middle-class readers of magazines like *Manchete*. This broad interest in issues related to feminine gender roles helped raise Carmen da Silva's profile, giving her opportunities to express her views beyond the pages of *Claudia*. She contributed frequently to *Realidade* and was often invited to participate in discussions on women's place in society in other venues.

For example, in 1968, *Manchete* invited Silva to participate in a discussion about women's emancipation with an actress, a novelist, a gynecologist, and a clothing boutique manager. Silva framed the problem of women's gender inequality as one that primarily affected middle-class women because poorer women were more affected by economic inequality and wealthy women were able to transgress traditional gender roles with fewer social consequences. She also complained that young Brazilian women were overly focused on the issue of sexual liberation and failed to pay sufficient attention to other areas of gender inequality. Nonetheless, along with the other participants, she praised the arrival of the birth control pill for its contribution to women's independence.⁵¹²

Marriage, Separation, Women's Employment, and the Crisis of the Family

Media interest in evolving family relationships paralleled popular interest in discussions about the sexual revolution and women's labor. Popular magazines reflected elite and popular concern about the effects of changing sexual behavior and the increasing occurrence of legal separation of married couples—termed *desquite*—on

⁵¹² Ruy Castro, "Manchete debate: A mulher em questão," *Manchete*, 2 March, 1968, 116.

urban nuclear families. *Claudia* sought to directly address readers' concerns by fielding their questions in letters to the editor and in a legal column tailored to issues affecting women.

These letters indicate the ongoing and growing importance of the civil code for married women seeking to protect their interests against their husbands' actions. For example, in June 1964, a woman in São Paulo wrote to the legal column asking for advice on how to respond to her husband having bought and sold apartments without her authorization and his moving into a new apartment with his mistress. The columnist responded that the husband's transactions could be voided and recommended that she contact the police to address her husband's apparent adultery.⁵¹³ In these and similar responses, the legal column sought to inform women about their rights within marriage, including changes that had occurred with the passage of the Statute of the Married Woman in 1962. For example, responding to a reader question about liability for debts her husband had contracted in 1962, the column explained how the new statute protected married women's assets from debts contracted by their husbands.⁵¹⁴ The legal column effectively provided information about the law that would otherwise have been restricted to women able to afford an attorney.

The legal columns also reflect a broad interest in information about how women could pursue legal separation within marriage (*desquite*). In the absence of legal divorce, *desquite* was a frequent topic of inquiry for women looking to separate themselves from abusive, unfaithful, or irresponsible husbands. However, as the columnist often pointed

⁵¹³ "Mulher, Lei & Direito," *Claudia*, June 1964, 20.

⁵¹⁴ Unfortunately for the reader, the law took effect after her husband had contracted his debts and she remained liable. "Mulher, Lei & Direito," *Claudia*, September 1964, 33.

out, unless the husband agreed to an amicable separation, a wife had to prove adultery, attempted murder, grave injury, or abandonment of the home for a judge to rule in favor of desquite.⁵¹⁵ In addition to fielding questions on whether and how to pursue desquite, the column also frequently responded to questions arising from legally separated spouses pursuing new relationships. These letters reveal that many considered desquite to be the effective end to a marriage, allowing for informal “marriages” to legally separated spouses, as in the case of a woman who claimed to have married a desquitado man and wanted to know whether he would be able to take their child in case of a separation. The columnist advised her that she would maintain custody over her child in such a separation and that the child could be recognized by the father and enjoy the same legal rights as a child born within a traditional marriage.⁵¹⁶

The legal column was not the only section of *Claudia* that addressed the issue of desquite. Carmen da Silva also occasionally counseled women seeking personal advice regarding desquite. In November 1964, a young desquitada woman in rural Minas Gerais wrote to *Claudia* asking that the magazine run a report on desquite and asking for advice on how to address feeling suffocated by living with her parents while caring for three children. The responding column (unsigned, but likely by Carmen da Silva) advised that the woman rent or buy an apartment in São Paulo to pursue an independent life and visit her parents twice a year.⁵¹⁷ In response to interest from readers, *Claudia* focused its July 1965 edition on the issue of desquite, featuring an article detailing arguments made by

⁵¹⁵ “Mulher, Lei & Direito,” *Claudia*, May 1964, 17.

⁵¹⁶ Dr. Claudio, “Mulher, Lei & Direito,” *Claudia*, November 1964, 31.

⁵¹⁷ “Claudia Responde,” *Claudia*, November 1964, 6.

both proponents and opponents of legalized divorce.⁵¹⁸

Claudia's coverage of desquite reflected a broader narrative in the media that the traditional patriarchal family was in a state of crisis, both in Brazil and internationally. Changing international norms of marriage and divorce were partially revealed in coverage of celebrities. Where in the 1950s, *Manchete* had pointed to Brigitte Bardot's housewifery,⁵¹⁹ in the 1960s and 1970s, the magazine covered her extramarital affairs, divorces, and remarriages. Brazilian magazines also often covered international celebrities' critiques of traditional marriage, such as when *Claudia* noted Jane Fonda's belief in the obsolescence of marriage in 1964.⁵²⁰ Higher rates of divorce in the United States and Western Europe and higher rates of desquite in Brazil in the 1960s prompted several articles about the effects of socioeconomic development on family relationships.

Articles in *Manchete* in the early 1970s reveal an emerging media and elite consensus that traditional patriarchal families were incompatible with modern urban and industrial society, and that development was leading to changed relationships between male heads of households and their wives and children. In a 1970 article on the Brazilian family, the treasury secretary for the State of São Paulo, Luis Arrôbas Martins, argued that old social structures such as patriarchy had begun to falter as a result of structural change, something already witnessed in other Western countries: "In more advanced countries, where the patriarchal family disappeared years ago, this phenomenon was received with less surprise. Here, as we cling to old standards, the patriarchal family, of the *pater familias* with a series of powers and rights over his children, we feel a greater

⁵¹⁸ "Divórcio: Sim ou Não," *Claudia*, July 1965, 34-37.

⁵¹⁹ "A dona-de-casa também pode ter 'sex-appeal'," *Manchete* 21 December 1958, 77.

⁵²⁰ Odille Licetti, "A Alta Voltagem de Jane Fonda," *Claudia*, October 1964, 73-75.

repercussion.” He maintained that social disruption and intergenerational conflict was a result of Brazil entering a new stage of structural development faster than its culture could adapt: “when the transformation occurs in an excessively short space and time, every man is injured.”⁵²¹

Writing for *Manchete*, journalist Regina Gabbey came to a similar conclusion about the state of the family in 1971: “Industrialization, urbanization and other factors divided the group, isolated the individuals in the mass, made the couple a solitary cell, which resulted in a difficulty living, and a new anguish.”⁵²² Gabbey emphasized that development required changes in relationships between children and parents, and between husbands and wives. Observing that a woman was no longer just a “guardian of the home,” but had begun to “enter in professional competition with men,” Gabbey asked: “How could this new situation not upend the traditional equilibrium of the couple that rested until then on functions clearly defined by sex?”⁵²³ Gabbey’s contention that women were increasingly competing with men may have reflected broader public perceptions that women were more visibly entering the workforce. However, these perceptions were likely based more on public discussions of women’s labor than actual increases in women’s participation in the workforce.

Data on women’s participation in the economy gathered by the Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística reveals greater government interest in women’s paid labor, but only a marginal increase in women’s workforce participation in the 1960s and early 1970s. Prior to the late 1960s, the IBGE had gathered data on the ratio of women who

⁵²¹ Celso Kinjô, “Como vai a família brasileira,” *Manchete*, 6 June 1970, 64.

⁵²² Regina Gabbey, “O Casal: Plenitude ou Asfixia a Dois?” *Manchete*, 30 January 1971, 121.

⁵²³ *Ibid.*, 122.

participated in the economy as workers, professionals, and business owners in decennial censuses. This data collection continued with future decennial censuses, but in 1968, the IBGE began to supplement the census with a biannual household survey (the Pesquisa Nacional por Amostra de Domicílio or PNAD) in most states. The PNAD household surveys, using more modern sampling methods than the census, purported to offer a more up-to-date and accurate picture of Brazil's changing workforce and level of development. In 1968, the first PNAD survey to measure women's economic participation revealed a national participation rate of 34.4%, more than double that recorded in the 1960 census (16.7%).⁵²⁴ Although this might seem to indicate an increase in women's workforce participation rates, the 1970 PNAD and 1970 census revealed an ongoing discrepancy between the two data sets on women's workforce participation.

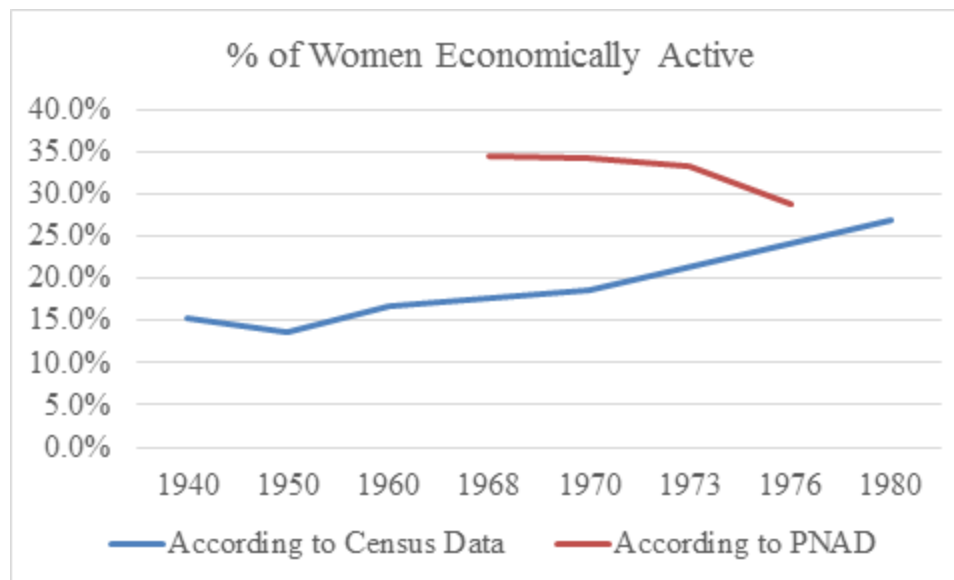


Figure 6.1. Percentage of women who are economically active: PNAD vs. decennial census data, 1940-1980. Own elaboration of data from IBGE, *Anuário Estatístico do Brasil*, vols. 30, 34, and 40.

⁵²⁴ Own elaboration of data from IBGE, *Anuário Estatístico do Brasil*, vol. 30 (1969): 480-483. Census data from *Anuário Estatístico do Brasil*, vol. 40, 1979, 108.

Since both the PNAD and census measured the same types of data (including women's unpaid and agricultural labor), the discrepancy can only be explained by the different methods of collection. If the PNAD was more accurate than the census, it is likely that the census had been consistently underreporting women's participation in the workforce. Regardless of which of the two methods of collection was more accurate, when comparing like data, neither the PNAD nor the census reported dramatic increases for women's labor in the 1960s or early 1970s. The 1970 census recorded an increase in women's economic participation since the 1960 census by only 1.8% (to 18.5%).⁵²⁵ The PNAD data from 1968 to 1972 for the states of São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, and Guanabara, covering most of the years of the "economic miracle," reveal only a minor increase in women's workforce participation in Rio de Janeiro/Guanabara of 2.4% and a modest decline of 0.2% in São Paulo.⁵²⁶

⁵²⁵ IBGE, *Annuário Estatístico do Brasil*, vol. 40, 1979, 108.

⁵²⁶ Own elaboration of data from IBGE, *Annuário Estatístico do Brasil*, vol. 30 (1969): 480-483; vol. 31 (1970): 521-522; vol. 34 (1973): 578-579.

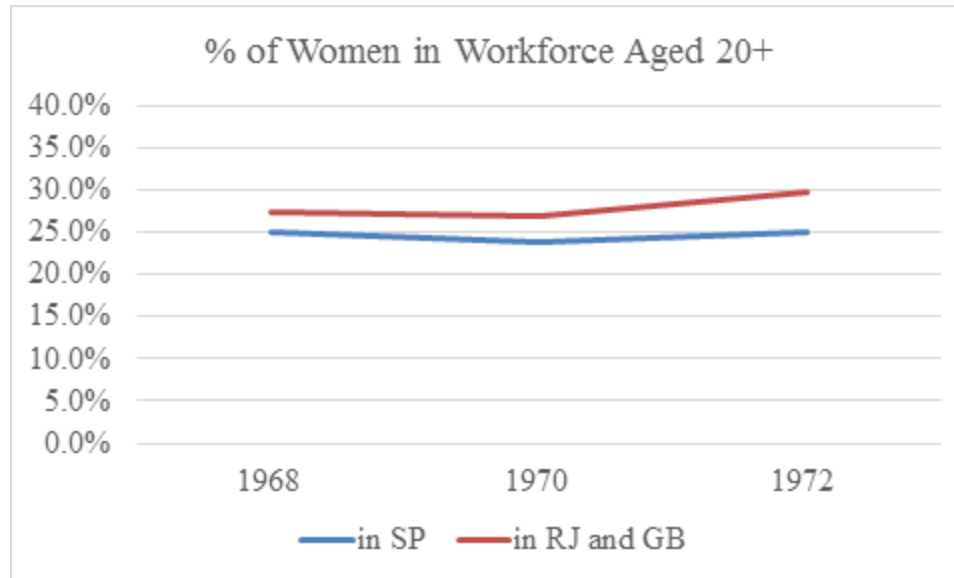


Figure 6.2. Percentage of women in the workforce, ages twenty and up in the states of Rio de Janeiro and Guanabara, and São Paulo. Own elaboration of data from IBGE, *Annuário Estatístico do Brasil*, vols. 30, 31, and 34.

IBGE data from 1973 and 1976 (shown in Figure 6.1) also indicate a decline in women's workforce participation across Brazil from the high recorded in 1968.⁵²⁷ Taken together, these data suggest that although women's economic participation had increased from 1960 to 1970, it was at a rate consistent with a gradual increase dating from 1950. Further, the 1968-1973 economic miracle did not produce a dramatic increase in women's employment, although women's employment did expand more substantially by 1980.⁵²⁸

Contemporary feminists and their allies were well aware of Brazilian women's stagnant workforce participation and linked low rates of participation to familial conflict. In a 1971 *Manchete* article on the crisis of the family, Marcos de Castro denied that women's economic dependence on men had declined substantially in recent years, citing

⁵²⁷ Data from IBGE, *Annuário Estatístico do Brasil*, vol. 40, 1979, 108. It is unclear exactly where the data for 1973 and 1976 come from as no PNAD data on women's workforce participation for those years exists in the *Annuário Estatístico* other than that provided in 1979. However, the data was almost certainly gathered using PNAD methods since no census was conducted in 1973 or 1976.

⁵²⁸ IBGE, *Annuário Estatístico do Brasil*, vol. 42, 1982, 118.

feminist author Heloneida Studart's study of data from IBGE and SESI that the percentage of women who worked had only grown by one percent from 1950 to 1968 to twenty-one percent. De Castro blamed the inability for young couples to adapt to more modern and open relationships for rising rates of desquite and argued that women's reaction to their objectification within marriage led to marital and familial conflict.⁵²⁹ Linking patriarchy to rural society, de Castro maintained that it was incompatible with modern urban society: "What sociologists most familiar with the problem have concluded almost without disagreement, is that the family cannot continue to maintain, from here on, the patriarchal structure," in the face of ongoing urbanization.⁵³⁰ De Castro argued that the solution to contemporary familial strife was greater gender and intergenerational equality within families. "In the open family—neither patriarchal, nor matriarchal (which also has existed)—the rights of all should be equal... From there on, all the problems will be solved."⁵³¹

As noted earlier, IBOPE public opinion surveys revealed continued opposition to women's paid labor except when their families' budgets required it. However, a 1970 IBOPE survey of 300 women in Guanabara revealed that urban women were otherwise open to change in romantic and familial relationships. In this survey, when asked to evaluate the statement that marriage and dating should be modified "in accordance with the new conditions of modern life and their traditional forms should change completely," 40% of respondents believed the statement to be correct "up to a certain point," and

⁵²⁹ Marcos de Castro, "A Grande Crise da Família," *Manchete*, 6 February 1971, 72-74.

⁵³⁰ *Ibid.*, 74.

⁵³¹ *Ibid.*, 75.

another 36% held the statement to be “very correct.”⁵³²

Carmen da Silva used the media and public attention focused on desquite and changing family relationships to argue for women’s greater social and economic independence. In a 1972 column, she argued that patriarchal family structures encouraged exchanges of aggression between spouses. “Little wonder, then, that the end of marriage and the disintegration of the family is feared.”⁵³³ In this and other columns, she regularly maintained that families and marriages could be preserved and improved by women seeking greater equality within their personal relationships and greater economic independence and world experience through paid labor outside the home. Silva’s arguments favoring women’s participation in the workforce paralleled other feminists’ efforts to increase public and regime support for women’s participation in the economy and government.

The CNMB’s Call for a New Role for Women in Development

As Fonseca’s correspondence to president Médici indicates, Fonseca and the CNMB continued their goal of advancing legislative and administrative reforms that would create new opportunities for women to participate in the economy and government following the 1964 coup. Fonseca and the CNMB continued to employ a strategy that focused on influencing politicians and government officials through personal networks, media campaigns, and initiatives with partnering international organizations and domestic professional associations. This strategy was very similar to the one that Fonseca and the CNMB had employed in the 50s and early 60s. Although Fonseca and the CNMB

⁵³² “Atitude da Mulher Perante o Mundo de Hoje,” *Pesquisas Especiais*, PE-105, October, 1970, IBOPE, 58.

⁵³³ Carmen da Silva, “A Arte de Ser Mulher: Não Feche os Olhos à Realidade,” *Claudia*, July 1972, 54.

maintained contacts with civilian politicians and government officials within the regime, the CNMB continued to represent itself as a non-partisan organization and maintained working relationships with feminists in the political left. Unlike the 50s and early 60s, the CNMB found its efforts in the late 60s and early 70s hampered by government opposition and censorship, but the organization's connections to government officials, diplomats, and leaders of civil society shielded the CNMB from the more severe repressive measures experienced by student and leftist organizations.

Following the coup, the CNMB and Fonseca continued to serve on official diplomatic delegations representing Brazilian women and maintained regular contact and friendly relations with politicians and government officials, including those occupying important positions in the military regime. For example, in 1968, José Magalhães Pinto, then foreign minister, attended the CNMB's annual recognition of ten women for their contributions to society, which was held that year in a conference room at the foreign ministry.⁵³⁴ Active members of the CNMB included lawyers, doctors, journalists, politicians, and academics, linking the organization to a variety of professional, philanthropic, and civil organizations.

The CNMB's frequent participation in cultural and diplomatic exchanges increased the organization's institutional prestige and provided it with leverage to advance initiatives related to international women's movements. In a 1969 interview with *Diário de Notícias*, Fonseca outlined her and the CNMB's recent activities in international diplomacy related to women, including participating in the OAS's Inter-American Commission of Women, receiving an economic delegation from India, and

⁵³⁴ Adelina Capper, "Scene and Heard," *Times of Brazil*, 29 December 1968, unpaginated press clipping, RMF Box 1, Folder 9.

interactions with the US Embassy, the Rockefeller Mission, and women in Richard Nixon's administration.

Reflecting the CNMB's initiative to press the government to create a feminine civil service, Fonseca portrayed these activities as demonstrating Brazilian women's active participation in international exchanges aimed at encouraging national development.

“Considering that countries' processes of integral development demand the presence and collaboration of all their human capital and that an absence of feminine production exists that causes visible imbalances in national development in all sectors of activity, governments, and ours could not be an exception, are being obligated to promote woman's enablement, doing everything to incorporate her in the process of national integration. We participate in a global movement in service of feminine emancipation. We want to, side by side with men, contribute to the socioeconomic development of our country.”⁵³⁵

Fonseca thus used the CNMB's participation in international exchanges to both underscore the legitimacy of demands for greater women's participation in the economy and government and to argue that national development required women's participation in the labor market.

Although Fonseca pointed to a growing international economic and political consensus favoring women's labor, her letters to Médici reveal that she was sensitive to popular resistance to women's labor outside the home and regime conservatism. Instead of echoing contemporary arguments from US and European feminists that challenged gendered divisions of labor both inside and outside the home, Fonseca's description of the proposed feminine civil service emphasized its compatibility with traditional conceptions of femininity and categorized differences of gender as biologically

⁵³⁵ Maria Cláudia, “Em Têrmos ‘Mundiais’ – Onde Está a Mulher Brasileira?” *Diário de Notícias*, 4 July 1969, unpaginated press clipping, RMF Box 1, Folder 2.

determined, rather than socially constructed. Nonetheless, Fonseca and the CNMB clearly sought to expand opportunities available to women in government and the economy by redefining respectable feminine gender roles to include women's equal—if gendered—participation in the economy and government.

In the early 1970s, the CNMB planned to organize the *Primeiro Conselho Nacional de Mulheres* (First National Council of Women or ICNM) as the centerpiece of a campaign to create a feminine civil service and advocate a number of additional reforms. This campaign revealed the breadth of the CNMB's agenda, its ties to civil and business elites, and the limitations that it faced under the military regime.

The central theme of the ICNM, scheduled to be held in 1972, was to expand women's participation in national development. A 1971 document prepared for a meeting to plan the ICNM, most likely drafted by Fonseca, argued that international economic competition required that Brazilian women be integrated into the national economy. "In the current race for maximum production, undertaken with more or less success by all the evolved countries, a recognition of the partial underutilization of feminine potential is beginning to be felt." The document also reflected broader concerns that modern standards of living and inflation had made full-time housewifery an unsustainable and antiquated lifestyle: "[F]eminine voices are raised to demand not protective laws for women, but instruction, posts, responsibilities. This malaise is a proof of the devaluation of the 'domestic woman,' very easily explained by her difficult economic situation in the modern world."⁵³⁶ Modern economic circumstances demanded women's labor and prevented them from living satisfied lives at home.

⁵³⁶ Conselho Nacional de Mulheres do Brasil, "1ª Reunião Preparatória do I Conselho Nacional de Mulheres," 23 November, 1971, RMF, Box 16, Folder 1, p. 1.

The CNMB leaned on its elite connections and reached out to the regime to seek support for the conference. An internal CNMB document reveals that the sponsorship commission for the conference included Sarah Kubitschek, wife of former president Juscelino Kubitschek; Lucy Bloch, wife of media magnate and *Manchete* publisher Adolpho Bloch; Maria do Carmo Mellão de Abreu Sodré, first lady of São Paulo state; and Lady Hunt, wife to the British ambassador to Brazil. The CNMB named President Médici's wife to be honorary president of the conference and named the wives of the vice president, ministers of state, president of the Supreme Federal Tribunal, president of the senate, president of the chamber of deputies and governors of the states and territories to be honorary members of the conference.⁵³⁷

Despite the participation of elite women in preparation for the conference and the CNMB's gestures to the wives of political leaders, the conference faced opposition from the regime's leadership and national security apparatus. This opposition made it difficult for the CNMB to arrange financial support for the conference, and police harassed Fonseca. In a 1978 interview, Fonseca recalled "[W]e had great difficulty realizing that congress, because the doors of commerce shut against us. It was DOPS (Departamento de Ordem Política e Social), [which] was completely against it, because they did not want, could not imagine a women's reunion, they do not like it. The authorities are very afraid of women's reunions."⁵³⁸ The DOPS appears to have feared that the conference would help to organize leftist feminists opposed to the government.

Despite this difficulty in locating sponsors for the convention, the CNMB was

⁵³⁷ "Comissão Executiva do CNMB," ca 1971, RMF Box 16, Folder 3, p. 2.

⁵³⁸ Vera Regina Ferreira, "Entrevista de História Oral com Dra. Romy Medeiros da Fonseca," Brasília, 1 May 1978, RMF Box 7, Folder 4, p. 5.

able to line up support from a variety of domestic and multinational enterprises, including Coca-Cola, IBM, Standard Elétrica (appliances), Irmãos Klabin (a food, consumer goods, chemical, glass, and electrical parts company), Aroldo Araujo Propaganda (advertising), and *O Cruzeiro*.⁵³⁹ Given the participants and content of the conference, many of these companies may have sponsored the conference as an opportunity to attract future job candidates as well as for the conference's public relations value.⁵⁴⁰

After being rescheduled, the ICNM was finally held in October 1972. The official themes of the conference were women and work, women and legislation, women and their role in development, feminine values, and women and education.⁵⁴¹ The conference included sessions on a wide range of ideas and issues related to women, among them broad discussions of gender inequality, women and legislation, topics related to the civil code such as the recognition of children from adulterous relationships and the defense of women's property from their husbands' debts, the treatment of domestic workers in employment law, women and labor, and the integration of women into government.⁵⁴²

Despite the broad range of speakers and topics, Fonseca related each subject to the broader theme of women's contribution to development. In her speech before the conference, she maintained that women's increasing participation in university education

⁵³⁹ Scholars have highlighted the support of multinational corporations and the appearance of catholic clergy at the conference to imply that the CNMB held a conservative feminist orientation. See Pinto, *Uma história do feminismo no Brasil*, 47. However, the participation of leftist feminists such as Rose Murie Muraro at the conference indicates that the CNMB sought to attract a broad range of participants.

⁵⁴⁰ Conselho Nacional de Mulheres do Brasil, brochure for the I Conselho Nacional de Mulheres, 23 October 1972, RMF Box 14, Folder 4.

⁵⁴¹ Conselho Nacional de Mulheres do Brasil, organizational document for the I Conselho Nacional de Mulheres, ca 1972, RMF Box 14, Folder 4.

⁵⁴² Conselho Nacional de Mulheres do Brasil, brochure for the I Conselho Nacional de Mulheres, 23 October 1972, RMF Box 14, Folder 4.

and the workforce in the 1970s could accelerate women's "process of awareness and their participation in the development of the country, which could transform [women] into the most powerful force in favor of improving the life of the Brazilian nation. In this way, man will understand woman better, not considering her only as a romantic distraction, but as a political and economic force of the country."⁵⁴³

Although the ICNM enjoyed the participation of prominent feminists, such as Rose Marie Muraro, Helieth Saffioti, and Carmen da Silva, the organizers appear to have felt the need to keep tight control over conference proceedings to avoid the possibility that outbursts from radical feminists or leftists could lead the DOPS to intervene. Rules for the conference reflected concern that attendees might attempt to hijack proceedings to advance their own agenda. Questions had to be written, signed, and sent to the plenary receptionists and oral participation required the approval of the session's president and had to be limited to three minutes per person. These measures were designed to avoid "parallel conferences."⁵⁴⁴

Government opposition and self-censorship seriously compromised the success of the conference and contributed to unfavorable press coverage. An article in *Folha de São Paulo* observed that attendance at the conference was sparse, that the conference lacked political and financial support, and highlighted complaints that participants used abstract language and lacked common sense.⁵⁴⁵ *Veja* criticized the conference (erroneously) for

⁵⁴³ Romy Medeiros da Fonseca, opening speech before the I Conselho Nacional de Mulheres, 23 October, 1972, RMF Box 7, Folder 4, p. 5.

⁵⁴⁴ Conselho Nacional de Mulheres do Brasil, organizational document for the I Conselho Nacional de Mulheres, ca 1972, RMF Box 14, Folder 4.

⁵⁴⁵ "Perde-se no vazio a voz das mulheres?" *Folha de São Paulo*, 26 October 1971, unpaginated newspaper clipping, RMF, Box 1, Folder 6.

failing to allow critics of the military regime and more radical feminists such as Rose Marie Muraro or actress Odete Lara to voice their opinions. The magazine also mocked a proposal to create social security for maids as an example of its frivolity, or “conversa cri-cri,” meaning conversation about children (*crianças*) and maids (*criadas*).⁵⁴⁶

Veja's attempt to minimize the importance of the conference's discussion of benefits for domestic workers overlooked the topic's relevance in contemporary politics. Earlier in October, Médici had introduced a bill that would extend social assistance and retirement benefits to domestic workers.⁵⁴⁷ One week before the conference, Fonseca applauded the bill in *Diário de Notícias*, argued for the need to extend the minimum salary to domestic workers, and indicated that the topic would be discussed at the ICNM.⁵⁴⁸ In addition to having a session devoted to the issues raised by the bill at the ICNM, Fonseca later highlighted the need for better training for domestic workers as yet another reason to have a feminine civil service. In a subsequent speech on increasing women's participation in development, Fonseca argued that training provided to maids by the service would improve the lives of both domestic workers and their employers:

“One of the most important factors of this government project goal is to assure better training of feminine labor for populations from the North and Northeast of the country, the entirely unprepared who arrive in the large centers like Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo to exercise only one viable profession: that of domestics. And because of their unpreparedness, are exploited.”⁵⁴⁹

⁵⁴⁶ Given the range of topics discussed, this characterization of the conference as limited in scope is an exaggeration. It appears that the *Veja* journalist did not attend the entire conference, as Rose Marie Muraro gave a presentation on its second day. “Feminismo: Conselho cri-cri,” *Veja*, 1 November, 1972, unpaginated press clipping, RMF Box 1, Folder 13.

⁵⁴⁷ The bill passed and was signed into law in December as Lei 5.859/1972.

⁵⁴⁸ “Lei para domésticas tem apoio também das patroas,” *Diário de Notícias*, 15 October 1972, unpaginated press clipping, RMF Box 2, Folder 3.

⁵⁴⁹ Romy Medeiros da Fonseca, “Participação da Mulher no Desenvolvimento Brasileiro,” undated conference presentation, ca 1972, RMF Box 13, Folder 10.

Fonseca's advocacy for domestic workers in the early 1970s was part of a broader shift in Brazilian feminist attitudes toward maids.

Although she supported extending social security, minimum salary, and labor protections to domestic workers, Fonseca continued to view the employment of domestic workers as a way for middle-class women to pursue careers without leaving domestic chores unattended, much like Carmen da Silva had in the 1960s. In 1975, she endorsed a book on how to be a good housewife that focused primarily on the location and supervision of domestic workers. In a preface to the book, Fonseca explained:

“Women who work outside the home are those that can best evaluate the value of this Manual, and reap its precious teachings. Everyone knows that Social Laws do not have the power to transform people into competent professionals... Transforming a domestic worker into a responsible auxiliary and friend of the housewife is the measure to achieve domestic peace.”⁵⁵⁰

While Fonseca viewed maids as workers deserving equal access to employment laws and social security, she saw no contradiction in middle-class women employing them at home in order to pursue their own careers. Like her appeal to women's biological predisposition to feminine forms of labor in her call for a feminine civil service, Fonseca's views on maids represented a generation of middle-class feminists that had not yet fully embraced the ideas of second-wave feminism from the United States and Europe.

Despite moderation of their rhetoric, and despite government attempts to obstruct their agenda, Fonseca and the CNMB in the late 1960s and early 1970s were able to attract substantial media attention for their arguments supporting women's greater participation in national development. This contributed to a broader trend toward

⁵⁵⁰ Preface endorsement to Tania Kaufmann, *A Aventura de Ser Dona-de-Casa (Dona-de-Casa x Empregada)* (Rio de Janeiro: Editora Artenova, 1975).

coverage in magazines like *Claudia* and *Manchete* that favored women's paid labor.

Feminism, the Press, and Elite Acceptance of Women's Labor

In the early to mid-1970s, second-wave feminism from the United States and Western Europe had few defenders in the Brazilian media, but the idea that economic and cultural modernity required women's participation in the paid workforce nonetheless reshaped mainstream media narratives. Among the few advocates of feminism in the mainstream media, Carmen da Silva began to more openly discuss ideas from second-wave feminists in the United States and Europe. In the early to mid-70s, Silva's rhetoric shifted from arguing that paid labor outside the home would support women's traditional gender roles to more direct challenges to patriarchal gendered divisions of labor.

Framing discussions of more radical challenges to traditional gender norms as coming from US and European feminists simultaneously allowed Silva to attach cultural authority to their ideas without having to directly endorse all of them. For example, in the July 1971 issue of *Claudia*, Silva discussed the ideas of US feminists, focusing in particular on the work of Betty Friedan and her critique of western consumerism, a critique that Silva herself understandably did not directly advocate given *Claudia's* advertising and extensive coverage of fashion, cosmetics, and various other consumer goods.⁵⁵¹

Although she did not voice support for all of the arguments made by Friedan and others, Silva was clearly supportive of developments in the US and European feminism. In the subsequent issue, she argued that the demands of the US feminist movement for equal access to work, equal salaries, legalized abortion, and a national network of daycare

⁵⁵¹ Carmen da Silva, "A Arte de Ser Mulher: O Que é uma Mulher Livre," *Claudia*, July 1971, 107-111.

centers were also relevant for Brazil, although a more immediate emphasis on expanding access to education and increasing the number of women pursuing professional careers was needed before Brazilian women would be able to secure the same jobs as men.⁵⁵² Silva labeled the decision of some women who received a college education to stay at home instead of working “almost criminal.”⁵⁵³

In her October 1971 column in *Claudia*, Silva echoed others’ critiques of women’s gendered and sexual subordination, arguing that women who attempted to achieve personal realization by staying at home or satisfying their husbands were objectifying themselves like prostitutes: “A sex object is the youth whose greatest value consists in modesty and chastity, is the woman who has a price per hour, the spouse who only ‘is realized’ through her husband, the family mother who does not participate nor opine because her ‘world’ is limited to the house and children.”⁵⁵⁴ These arguments indicated a new critique of middle-class gender norms by Silva. Although she had previously argued that middle-class women’s exclusive devotion to domesticity was parasitic and contributed to various neuroses, linking exclusive domesticity to sexual self-objectification more clearly revealed Silva’s application of second-wave feminist thought to her column.

Silva’s endorsement of second-wave feminist thought became more explicit in the context of the UN declaration of 1975 to be International Women’s Year. In November 1975, Silva interpreted her observations of the proceedings of a UN-sponsored seminar

⁵⁵² Carmen da Silva, “A Arte de Ser Mulher: Por Que é Preciso Ser Livre,” *Claudia*, August 1971, 131-133.

⁵⁵³ *Ibid.*, 133.

⁵⁵⁴ Carmen da Silva, “A Arte de Ser Mulher: Vamos Quebrar uma Velha Imagem,” *Claudia*, October 1971, 48.

on women⁵⁵⁵ to argue that women were subject to unfair wage discrimination and that expectations that women would continue to perform all domestic chores even when working impaired their careers and union participation.⁵⁵⁶ Silva also argued that the experience of more industrialized countries indicated that industrialization would create new opportunities for poor and uneducated women, leading to the gradual disappearance of domestic workers. Reversing her arguments in the mid-1960s that middle-class women should employ domestic workers so that they could seek careers, Silva now argued against the practice. “From the social point of view, the solution is profoundly unjust because it only benefits a minority class; and, furthermore, because it makes the liberation of one group depend on the servitude of another.”⁵⁵⁷ This argument indicated that by 1975, Silva had more closely and definitively associated herself with second-wave feminism than Romy Medeiros da Fonseca and an earlier generation of Brazilian feminists.

Unlike Silva, *Manchete* articles on women and economic development in the early 1970s reflect an aversion to international feminism, but endorsement of women’s paid labor as an important component of economic and social development.⁵⁵⁸ For example, a 1971 article rejected the women’s liberation movement while arguing that women around the world were taking a more active role in society and the economy.

⁵⁵⁵ The seminar that Silva described was related to the International Women’s Year, and most likely part of the week of debates in July about women’s roles and behavior in Brazil that led to the creation of the Centro da Mulher Brasileira, to be discussed later in this chapter.

⁵⁵⁶ Carmen da Silva, “A Arte de Ser Mulher: Mulher Profissão,” *Claudia*, November 1975, 216-217.

⁵⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 218.

⁵⁵⁸ It should be remembered here that the wife of Adolpho Bloch, owner of *Manchete*, was an active member of the CNMB in the early 1970s and this may have made the magazine more receptive to arguments favoring women’s paid labor.

“In a world that progresses uncontrollably, a New Woman is being born—a product of technology and the pill... She is unfamiliar with campaigns, like *Women’s Lib*. In general, she does not even need rallies to impose herself, nor does she fight against men who intend to transform her into an *object*, as she knows that she has already won the war.”⁵⁵⁹

The article linked women’s evolving social roles to technological modernity (symbolized by birth control) and observed that sociologists argued that women should take on new responsibilities alongside men. Although nominally rejecting second-wave feminists, the article reproduced feminist concepts like sexual objectification. The article’s implication that Brazilian women were participating in a global evolution in women’s gender roles was reinforced by images and descriptions of women in a wide range of countries, from Austria to South Vietnam.

When examining women’s employment, *Manchete* articles from the early 1970s regularly indicated that experts—whether sociologists, psychologists, or economists—supported women’s paid labor as important for economic or social development. In 1972, *Manchete* revealed some of the topics in a book on the “Brazilian Miracle” by journalist Murilo Melo Filho. The article observed that half of the adult population “represented by 25 million people of the feminine sex, are constituted by women who in their majority are still (and unfortunately) engaged only in domestic chores.” The article did not make any arguments about the social benefits or consequences of women’s paid labor, but identified women as belonging to one of a number of categories of people who were not fully integrated into the economy, inhibiting further economic development. “If we are already producing an *authentic miracle* with a minute portion [of the population] truly productive, imagine then what a wonder this nation will be on the day that the greater

⁵⁵⁹ Marina Francis, “Nós, as Mulheres do Mundo,” *Manchete*, 20 November, 1971, 126.

part of its inhabitants are personally engaged and participating directly in its process of development.”⁵⁶⁰ Finance minister Delfim Netto had endorsed the book, indicating that this technocratic view of women’s employment most likely reflected those of government economic planners, regardless of the regime’s conservative rhetoric.⁵⁶¹

Manchete’s use of opinion surveys also indicates that the magazine sought to promote public acceptance of women’s paid labor outside the home. In 1972, the magazine had feminist journalist Heloneida Studart cover an IBOPE survey that queried women in Rio and São Paulo on their views on labor. Studart asked if women should remain “as simply guardians of the home and stove drivers.” The answer was no: “Among the interviewees, 39.2% want to work without any restriction. As for the others, 23.1% would work until marriage, 15.8% would remain at work until the birth of children, and 14.5% would return to work after they were grown. The point of view that women should offer services only at home obtained 7.4%.” Studart also noted that “68.2% judge themselves equally capable as men to exercise any profession” and another “23.5% find themselves to be more prepared than men.” Further, Studart observed that “women no longer desire working only to improve the household budget. The majority (55.1%) responded that they wanted to acquire independence.”⁵⁶²

These results seemed to indicate a radical departure from previous IBOPE surveys that had revealed that the public generally supported women’s paid labor only when it was economically necessary and Studart played up women’s newly liberal views.

⁵⁶⁰ “O Milagre Brasileiro,” *Manchete*, 15 April 1972, 17.

⁵⁶¹ The clear interest in measuring the rate of women’s participation in the economy revealed in the PNAD surveys by IBGE also supports this interpretation.

⁵⁶² Heloneida Studart, “A Brasileira Já Não é Mais Aquela,” *Manchete*, 19 August 1972, 52.

However, although Studart claimed that IBOPE had surveyed women of different ages, an examination of the original data produced by IBOPE reveals that the survey had only measured the views of women ages 18-25,⁵⁶³ a younger and more progressive group whose views were not representative of all women. Studart and *Manchete's* misrepresentation of this data reveals their desire to sensationalize and promote more liberal views on women's labor. Regardless of whether most Brazilians shared these views, and despite only minor increases in women's participation in the workforce during the miracle years, media increasingly reported an intellectual and economic elite consensus favoring women's participation in the paid workforce.

Likely swayed by shifting media coverage and favorability toward women's paid labor, some advertisers and the businesses they represented sought to cater to women consumers with advertisements that imitated feminist rhetoric in the early 1970s. Although most advertisements for domestic consumer goods continued to target housewives and mothers in their traditional feminine roles, advertisers for goods that had previously targeted male consumers began to market these goods to women with feminist-sounding appeals. For example, Souza Cruz, one of Brazil's largest tobacco brands, began marketing a cigarette, named Charm, specifically tailored to women in 1971. The company targeted *Claudia's* readership with a three page advertisement. The first page featured an image of male smokers dressed in garb associated with stereotypically masculine professions, including a cave man, a priest, and a pilot. The copy read "Until today, every new cigarette was launched only for men. But this discrimination has ended!" The following two pages displayed a group of smoking

⁵⁶³ "A Mulher 1972," PE-118, IBOPE.

women and observed that “Souza Cruz is launching Charm!” The women appeared diverse in racial background, and were dressed in a variety of feminine outfits, although none of these evoked a particular profession.⁵⁶⁴ Nonetheless, the reference to discrimination indicates that Souza Cruz sought to cater to the same audience that sought out Carmen da Silva’s advice in *Claudia*.

Advertisers and journalists in major magazines were not the only elements of the economic and intellectual elite demonstrating greater openness to women taking on new economic and social roles. Likely in response to increasing demand for labor associated with the 1968-1973 boom, by the early 1970s, industrialists had become more welcoming of women’s full-time labor. *SESI-Higiene*, which had continued to advocate housewifery and motherhood as women’s exclusive roles well into the 1960s, had begun adapting its materials to accommodate working women by the early 1970s. Where the publication had emphasized time-intensive use of basic cleaning supplies in household chores to save money in the 1950s and 1960s, by the 1970s, *SESI-Higiene* recommended time-saving tips and advocated cleaning in short bursts each day and on weekends.

A 1970 *SESI-Higiene* article titled “When the Woman Works Outside the Home” underscored this shift. The article acknowledged that for married women, working outside the home had once been taboo and that married women had once faced substantial discrimination from employers, but that views on women’s labor were changing “whether from real change of mentality, or from the need to collaborate in the household budget.” The article recommended that working women spread their chores across the week to avoid being overburdened on weekends. Reversing *SESI-Higiene*’s

⁵⁶⁴ Souza Cruz advertisement, *Claudia*, November 1971, 47-50.

earlier emphasis on substituting labor for consumer goods, the article recommended that women make “an effort to acquire most of the electric appliances, great auxiliaries, especially for she who works outside [the home].”⁵⁶⁵ The article further recommended that women employ a weekly housecleaner and that they leave their children with an employer daycare service where available or at government parks for children.⁵⁶⁶

By the early 1970s, industrial, business, and media elites were clearly receptive to the idea that women would work outside of the home, years before women’s participation in the paid workforce had dramatically expanded. In this respect, the efforts of a generation of feminists who had focused on creating greater acceptance and opportunities for women’s paid labor appeared to finally gain substantial traction. On the other hand, the early to mid-1970s witnessed a changing of the guard in the leadership of the Brazilian feminist movement, producing new feminist leaders and setting new priorities that would guide the feminist movement following 1975.

1975: A Turning Point for Modern Brazilian Feminism

As business and political elites became increasingly supportive of a new role for women in development as workers and professionals, 1975 witnessed a series of developments that marked a new era in the Brazilian feminist movement. In 1974, Ernesto Geisel assumed the presidency of Brazil and began easing regime censorship, creating an opening for sectors of civil society that had been actively repressed under Médici. Events associated with the United Nations’ International Women’s Year marked an additional important catalyst for the formation of new Brazilian feminist organizations

⁵⁶⁵ “Quando a Mulher Trabalha Fora,” *SESI-Higiene*, March-April 1970, 12.

⁵⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 13.

by providing institutional cover for their activities.

Like Romy Madeiros da Fonseca, the United Nations maintained that equal rights for women was an issue not only of human rights, but also of economic development. One of the UN's stated goals in its declaration of 1975 as International Women's Year was "To ensure the full integration of women in the total development effort, especially by emphasizing women's responsibility and important role in economic, social and cultural development at the national, regional and international levels."⁵⁶⁷ The World Conference of the International Women's Year in Mexico City, held in July 1975, produced the Declaration of Mexico on the Equality of Women and Their Contribution to Development and Peace, which established a series of principles on equality between men and women and maintained that legal equality between the sexes was essential to processes of national development.⁵⁶⁸ These UN actions established equality of women's rights as an internationally recognized and non-partisan objective that was consistent with the Brazilian government's stated development goals. As Brazil was a participant in and signatory to these and other related UN initiatives, Brazilian feminists could point to Brazil's international commitments to legitimize their own activities and demand domestic reforms.

In addition to confirming women's equality as a core principle of human rights, the UN provided direct institutional support for Brazilian feminists. In July 1975, the United Nations Information Center sponsored a weeklong event titled "O papel e o comportamento da mulher na realidade brasileira" ("Women's role and behavior in

⁵⁶⁷ United Nations General Assembly Resolution 3010 (XXVII), 18 December 1972.

⁵⁶⁸ The Declaration of Mexico on the Equality of Women and Their Contribution to Development and Peace 66/34, 2 July 1975.

Brazilian reality') in Rio. The event was primarily organized by women who had been meeting in a private reflection group in Rio for the previous few years to discuss feminist ideas from Europe and the United States.⁵⁶⁹ Where international organizations such as the UN and the OAS had previously provided platforms for established and well-known Brazilian feminists with substantial ties to other sectors of civil society such as Romy Medeiros da Fonseca, the UN now provided institutional support for a new generation of relatively-unknown feminists that until then had met in private to avoid government censorship. Better-known women who supported second-wave feminism provided additional organizational support for the event; Rose Marie Muraro raised funds to cover the costs of the venue⁵⁷⁰ and Carmen da Silva attended.⁵⁷¹ The event led to the creation of the Centro de Mulheres Brasileiras (Center of Brazilian Women, or CMB), a feminist organization active into the late 1970s that would foster discussions between radical feminists primarily concerned with issues of gender equality and leftist feminists focused on opposition to the military regime.

Feminist opponents of the military regime also used International Women's Year as a launching pad to organize a feminine pro-amnesty movement. The Movimento Feminino pela Anistia in São Paulo received credentials at the International Women's Year Meeting in Mexico to propose an international feminine pro-amnesty movement, providing the organization with diplomatic cover for its activities and creating lasting ties

⁵⁶⁹ Joana Maria Pedro, "O Feminismo de 'Segunda Onda': Corpo, Prazer e Trabalho," in *Nova História das Mulheres*, 246-247.

⁵⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 247.

⁵⁷¹ Pinto, *Uma história do feminismo*, 59.

to the broader feminist movement in Brazil.⁵⁷² Although tensions would arise between radical and leftist feminists, these two factions would often work together in the pro-democracy movement in the late 1970s and 1980s.

1975 also witnessed the creation of new national feminist institutions beyond those whose formation was directly connected to International Women's Year. That year, feminist scholars began to meet on an annual basis at the Sociedade Brasileira para o Progresso da Ciência (Brazilian Society for the Progress of Science, SBPC) in Belo Horizonte, creating a forum for public exchanges on academic feminism and the scientific study of women. Much as the UN had provided institutional cover for the CMB and the amnesty movement, the SBPC succeeded in avoiding government censorship due to its academic character.⁵⁷³ Providing a regular publication for the feminist left, women associated with the banned Partido Comunista do Brasil and the radical left launched *Brasil Mulher* in October 1975.⁵⁷⁴ The publication was followed in 1976 by *Nós Mulheres*, a nominally non-partisan feminist publication in which Carmen da Silva participated.

Beginning in 1975, the Brazilian feminist movement, although fragmented between radical and leftist feminists, would more openly challenge conventional gender norms and regime repression than earlier feminists. Nonetheless, arguments previously advanced by feminists like Romy Medeiros da Fonseca, including her efforts to reform the civil code and expand women's participation in economic development, remained highly relevant to the new generation and many feminists who had been active in the

⁵⁷² Ibid., 63.

⁵⁷³ Ibid., 62.

⁵⁷⁴ Pedro, "O Feminismo de 'Segunda Onda,'" 248.

1960s continued their activism in the coming decades.

The ongoing relevance of the civil code and women's participation in development to the Brazilian feminist movement was revealed in debates about a proposal to replace the civil code. A bill to replace and modernize the civil code was drafted by a commission appointed by the Ministry of Justice and subsequently submitted to the congress in June 1975. The Chamber of Deputies appointed a special commission to consider the bill and the commission invited testimony from a wide range of legal experts and civil organizations. In September 1975, the recently-formed CMB presented arguments to the commission for a series of amendments to the proposed bill that would eliminate a number of legal inequalities in the code between married men and women. The three women representing the CMB included Ana Brito da Rocha Acker, a labor court judge who had attended the International Women's Year event in Rio in July, and Branca Maria Alves Vianna, a professor of the sociology of development at Faculdade Cândido Mendes in Rio.

At the commission, the three women presented a document drafted by the CMB that leaned heavily on women's increasing participation in national development to argue for reforms granting women complete legal equality with men. The document quoted lawyer and drafting commission member Miguel Reale's argument that the current civil code was no longer "adequate to a society that has already surpassed the phase of prevailing agrarian structure to assume the forms and processes proper to scientific and industrial development."⁵⁷⁵ The CMB argued that women's increased participation in the workforce and subsequently changing social roles were part of this structural change,

⁵⁷⁵ Miguel Reale, in *Diario do Congresso Nacional*, 13 June 1975, mensagem no 160/75 do Projeto de Lei no 634, p.108.

observing an increase in the rate of women's participation in the workforce from 12.4% to 33.4% between 1950 and 1969⁵⁷⁶ to argue that women were playing an increasingly important role in society:

“The very needs of Brazilian society call her to a greater participation in the productive structure. Added to her duties as mother have come responsibilities, until then almost solely masculine, that of supplying the family's subsistence. And she carries on the new duties with efficiency, sharing with man the tasks of development.”⁵⁷⁷

The CMB highlighted the 1967 UN Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, observing that the resolution had called for equality of rights between male and female spouses. The document also observed that the UN had declared 1975 to be International Women's Year with the objectives of promoting equality between men and women, and women's integration in development. Further, the CMB argued that since the civil code maintained husbands' superiority of authority within marriage, it privileged the status of single women, to the detriment of family formation.⁵⁷⁸

The CMB proposed a series of amendments to the draft bill to remove distinctions in rights between husbands and wives that had essentially been copied from the existing civil code. Some of these amendments echoed proposals first made by Romy Medeiros da Fonseca and Ormind Bastos in 1952, while others focused on removing any distinction between spouses and replacing references to husband or wife with “spouse” to address

⁵⁷⁶ It should be noted here that the CMB presented data from dissimilar data collection methods, and consequently overstated the increase in women's workforce participation. The discrepancy between data collected by the IBGE is examined earlier in this chapter.

⁵⁷⁷ “15a Reunião: Conferências das Professoras Dras. Comba Marques Porto e Branca Maria Alves Vianna; e da Juíza Dra. Ana Brito da Rocha Acker,” in José Theodoro Mascarenhas Menck, org., *Código Civil Brasileiro no Debate Parlamentar: Elementos históricos da elaboração da Lei no 10.406, de 2002*, Vol. 1, Tomos 1 a 4, <http://bd.camara.gov.br/bd/handle/bdcamara/9668>, accessed 26 November 2013, p. 620-621.

⁵⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 621-622.

the many instances in the bill in which limitations were only placed on wives' rights. The main objective of these amendments was to remove the presumed superiority of the husband/father's legal authority over the wife/mother's in marital and parental decisions, a distinction that had remained in the civil code after the 1962 Statute of the Married Woman.⁵⁷⁹ Congressman Lysâneas Maciel⁵⁸⁰ sponsored the CMB's proposed amendments, submitting them in his name.

The CMB's proposals met strong opposition in the Chamber of Deputies, but this was only the beginning of a long legislative process that would outlast the military regime. Future feminists would continue to shape the reform of the civil code. When the process finally concluded with the passage of a new civil code in 2002, the code reflected many of the changes proposed by the CMB and later feminist organizations.

Conclusion

In the mid-1960s to early 1970s, feminists such as Romy Medeiros da Fonseca and Carmen da Silva continued to argue that women's greater social and economic equality would allow them to better perform traditional feminine roles, and introduced new arguments that greater equality was also necessary for national development. Although feminists began to discuss ideas from the US and Europe that more directly challenged traditional gender norms and these ideas began to appear in the Brazilian press, government censorship prior to 1975 constrained the ability of feminists to openly advocate more radical ideas. The difficulties that Fonseca and the CNMB faced in

⁵⁷⁹ Ibid., 623-628.

⁵⁸⁰ Deputy Lysâneas Maciel was a deputy representing Rio de Janeiro. A member of the Movimento Democrático Brasileiro and opponent of the military regime, he had his political mandate revoked by the regime in 1976.

organizing the ICNM revealed that the tactics of lobbying, media appearances, and personal appeals within elite circles that the CNMB had relied on in the 1950s and early 1960s were not sufficient to overcome regime opposition to reform.

However, many of the arguments that Fonseca, the CNMB, and Silva made in this period remained relevant to a new generation of feminists that emerged as regime repression eased in 1975. The argument that women's increased participation in the workforce was required for further national development had also found many adherents beyond the feminist movement by the early 1970s. A shift in rhetoric from intellectual, industrial, and business elites favoring women's paid labor outside the home in the early 1970s indicated a transition to a new elite consensus that abandoned the idea that exclusive devotion to children and the home was the best way for women to participate in national development.

As women's participation in the labor forces of the economically developed nations of the world expanded, as the United Nations identified equal rights for women as necessary for development, and as consumer goods increasingly substituted for domestic labor, housewifery no longer seemed to be a modern way for women to participate in development. Brazilian feminists recognized this and increasingly challenged traditional gendered divisions of labor rather than trying to expand feminine roles. The early to mid-1970s thus marked the end of a developmentalist discourse around the idea of modernizing traditional gender roles. Feminine organizations would continue to invoke their roles as mothers and housewives to decry inflation in the late 1970s and 1980s, but feminists would face decreasing elite and popular resistance to their appeals to promote women's equal access to employment and educational opportunities and no longer

needed to make their arguments appear compatible with conservative gender norms to receive media attention or avoid government censorship.

Conclusion

In the thirty years following the Second World War, a national preoccupation with economic development and social modernization shaped public discourse about women's gendered roles in Brazilian society. Both competing and complementary narratives about development outlined by politicians, economic planners, business leaders, and women activists frequently linked the performance of feminine roles within the family and household economy to the development of the nation. Definitions of modern feminine gender roles were subject to negotiation as structural and cultural standards of modernity evolved. As Brazil experienced substantial political, economic, and social change, women activists embraced developmentalist rhetoric linking the household economy to national progress to advocate broader roles for women in politics and the economy.

Postwar developmentalism sought to modernize urban families to boost domestic consumption and worker productivity in support of industrialization. Businesses and the national government targeted their promises to modernize Brazilian standards of living at married women as custodians of their families' household economies. In the first fifteen years following the Second World War, print media and advertisements indicated that women's traditional gender roles as mothers and wives could be modernized through the use of mass-produced consumer goods and the adoption of modern housekeeping and parenting practices, contributing to the modernization of the Brazilian nation in the process. Populist politicians maintained that expanding industry and consumption would raise working and middle-class standards of living in male-headed nuclear families.

Although this dominant narrative about women's role in development reflected conservative gender ideals, it also created new openings for women to enter the public

sphere by connecting their familial roles to modernity and national development. From the late 1940s to early 1960s, women's organizations and housewife associations in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo decried housewives' difficulty locating affordable food for their families to press populist governments to do more to combat inflation. In the same period, feminists argued that unequal rights for married women debased marriage, interfered with women's ability to be effective mothers and wives, and were inconsistent with international treaties and modern social norms.

Although motivated by a conservative ideology, anti-communist women in Rio and São Paulo also argued that the fulfillment of their duties to their families required that they enter the public sphere, but to oppose the government of João Goulart, support the subsequent military regime, and assist in a government campaign against carestia. The new military government was less interested in improving working-class standards of living than previous governments, but the regime continued to seek support from middle-class women. Women remained important constituents in the elaboration of national economic policies and the regime courted conservative women's support to maintain the appearance that it represented the legitimate interests of the Brazilian people. In the new authoritarian brand of developmentalism, Middle-class women would continue to exercise many of the same symbolic roles they had during the populist era.

A developmentalist narrative that maintained that gendered divisions of labor could be preserved but modernized lent itself to changing definitions of what constituted modern feminine roles. Avon's entry into the Brazilian market presents a clear example of this; to address conservative middle-class norms that frowned on women working in the street, individual saleswomen and the company at large portrayed door-to-door sales as a

modern way for women to support their traditional roles within the family. As women rapidly expanded their participation in academia and the workforces of Western Europe and North America, Brazilian feminists in the 1960s and early 1970s argued that staying at home was no longer a modern way for women to participate in society. Although they rarely challenged gendered divisions of labor within the home, these feminists argued that child education and national development required that middle-class women pursue careers outside the home. Print media, which until the mid-1960s had generally portrayed housewifery as a modern pursuit, also contributed to shifting popular conceptions of modern gender norms in the late 1960s and early 1970s through coverage of the sexual revolution and by providing a space for Brazilian feminists to share their ideas with the public.

Invoking women's idealized roles within the family was a common thread that united the discourse of otherwise diverse groups of women activists throughout this period. Given that women activists most often invoked the performance of feminine gender roles to address concerns that particularly affected them as women, their adoption of gendered rhetoric should not be misconstrued as evidence that they were uninterested in expanding women's agency. Ideologically leftist, centrist, and conservative women alike argued that the defense of the family required that women take leading roles in various public campaigns. Recognizing the public's social conservatism, even feminists linked expanding women's rights and participation in the economy to the fulfillment of familial duties. Whether ideologically committed leftists or anti-communists, when activists claimed they acted on behalf of mothers and housewives, they presented their causes as morally superior to baser political agendas. Appealing to the defense of

women's familial roles repeatedly proved to be a potent strategy for activists to shape public opinion, indicating that this form of feminine politics could be an effective alternative to working through established political parties.

A number of trends in the 1970s would lead to the emergence of a new dynamic in both developmentalist and feminist discourses regarding gender. As gender norms in Europe and North America reflected women's increased participation in the labor force, and as women increased their participation in academics and liberal professions, Brazilian elites in government, business, academia, and the press came to favor women's expanded participation in the workforce as a driver of future economic growth. The 1970s also witnessed a substantial uptick in women's participation in the Brazilian economy. Where the percentage of women that IBGE classified as "economically active" had only increased from 15.4% in 1940 to 18.5% by 1970,⁵⁸¹ this figure rose to 26.9% in 1980.⁵⁸² The relaxation of censorship under President Ernesto Geisel in the mid-1970s allowed feminists to more openly discuss second-wave feminist ideas that directly challenged conservative norms about women's sexuality and gendered divisions of labor both inside and outside the home. With increasing elite and middle-class support for women's paid labor, feminists could more effectively employ rhetoric that focused on women's labor and political agency outside the home. The passage of an amnesty law in 1979 allowed many leftist activists who had sought amnesty abroad to return to Brazil. Many returning women activists had participated in feminist reflection groups and feminist organizations in Europe and North America and contributed to the rising

⁵⁸¹ IBGE, *Annuário Estatístico do Brasil*, vol. 40, 1979, 108.

⁵⁸² IBGE, *Annuário Estatístico do Brasil*, vol. 42, 1982, 118.

influence of second wave feminism in Brazil. They also brought with them a commitment to opposing the military regime. Other feminists joined broader opposition to the military regime as economic stagnation and inflation contributed to an erosion of middle-class support for authoritarian developmentalism in the late 1970s and 1980s.

Although the power of developmentalist discourse waned in the late 1970s and feminists increasingly challenged traditional gender norms, postwar women activists' goals and strategies remained relevant to women's organizations after 1975. Feminists returned to many of the same arguments that Romy Medeiros da Fonseca and the CNMB had employed in campaigns against gender discrimination in the workplace, for women's legal equality in a new civil code, and for the legalization of divorce.⁵⁸³ Feminine and housewife organizations grew in number and used similar arguments to their predecessors in new campaigns against carestia and for childcare centers in the late 1970s and 1980s. Although critiques of conservative ideas about women's domestic labor and subordination to their husbands became part of these women's discourse, both feminine and feminist organizations would continue to highlight the importance of issues affecting mothers and married women.

Forty years after International Women's Year and thirty years after the restoration of civilian rule in Brazil, recent events point to the ongoing relevance of ideas about the household economy and gender that date from the developmentalist era. A recent economic boom expanded the Brazilian economy and the ranks of the middle-class. The successive governments of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (2003-2011) and Dilma Rousseff (2011 to present) harnessed part of this growth to provide for new programs to combat

⁵⁸³ Fonseca remained active in these campaigns, and played a central role in drafting the language of the divorce law that went into effect in 1977.

poverty. Most prominent among these is the Bolsa Família program, which gives direct cash assistance to mothers to provide for their children on the condition that these children attend school. Although this program differs from mid-twentieth century gender norms in that women are assumed to make more responsible economic decisions than men, women have again been called upon to contribute to national development through their management of the household economy and education of their children.

The program reflects a reality that women-headed households are increasingly common among poor Brazilians. In recent decades, less-affluent women have increased their participation in the informal sector by engaging in direct sales or operating small businesses like shops, luncheonettes, and beauty salons in rural areas and favelas. Recent legislation has addressed longstanding gendered inequalities in Brazilian wage and social security policies by granting domestic workers equal access to the minimum salary and social insurance, and expanded labor protections. However, feminists point to the persistence of gender inequality in Brazilian society and the need for further reforms to address ongoing wage inequalities and women's unequal participation in politics and the labor market. Further, the recent and severe economic recession in Brazil has threatened to remove Dilma Rousseff from office and many legislators now call for Bolsa Família and other social spending to be dramatically scaled back to address large budget deficits. Nonetheless, although social conservatism and near-term economic instability may present obstacles to further efforts to combat gender inequality in the near term, it is reasonable to expect that women activists will continue to press for more equal roles in economic and social development.

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