Women and the Welfare State: Deconstructing Women’s Relationship to the State in Ecuador from 1925-1935
From the Perspective of Carol Pateman’s “The Wollstonecraft Dilemma”

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¹ Note: Most of the primary sources used in this thesis were originally written in Spanish. All translations are my own. However, certain words that I felt would lose their significance have been kept in the original Spanish.
Introduction: Women’s Changing Relationship to the State

During the first half of the twentieth century, the Ecuadorian state underwent a serious transformation, seeking to modernize with liberal social projects and new welfare initiatives that made women and children, among others, objects of formal state policy. Women of this period, typically of the middling sectors of society, gained new forms of agency through governmental support for female education, employment and the expansion of programs targeting maternal and child healthcare. Yet the new social policy operated on maternalist assumptions that made women’s position as mothers the basis of welfare provisions. This had the effect of at least partially solidifying traditional gender norms and attitudes in Ecuador’s patriarchal society. At the same time, while the state put a premium on traditional gender roles, maintaining the image of *criolla* (American-born white) women as domestic figures relegated to the private sphere—or as the Germans famously articulated the traditional female role as “*die Küche, die Kirche, die Kinder,*” women’s duty “to the kitchen, the church and the children”—the same liberal, secular ideology that guided state welfare reforms also created a space for women to organize and to challenge the very policies that oppressed them. Consequently, liberal ideas underlying social legislation provided certain sectors of women the opportunity to act on and shape the state’s agenda.

And yet, the story of Ecuadorian women’s struggle to advance their rights and women’s changing relationship to the state proves more complicated in several respects given both the diversity of Ecuadorian women and their ideas. First, although forty percent of Ecuador’s

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2 While the idea of “maternalism” has undergone various transformations corresponding to distinct moments in history, it is generally understood as an ideology that glorifies women’s maternal role. Writing in the context of the 20th century, Marcela Nari defined it as a form of feminism that exalts motherhood as a means to liberation and emancipation for the female sex. Mary Nash further argued it used maternal characteristics to define women’s role in a social context. Marcela M. A. Nari. *Políticas de Maternidad y Maternalismo Político: Buenos Aires, 1890-1940*. (Buenos Aires, Argentina: Editorial Biblos, 2004). Print.; Mary Nash. "Identidades de Género, Mecanismos de Subaltermidad y Procesos de Emancipación Femenina." *Revista CIDOB d'Afers Internacionals* 73/74 (May/June 2006): 39-57.
population at the turn of the twentieth century was indigenous and another ten percent Black or mulatto,\(^3\) new state directives targeting women’s education and health were aimed strictly at white women. This followed as scientific discourse, particularly that of eugenics, defined Caucasian, elite women as the pillars of societal progress. Consequently, as policy coming out of Ecuador’s modernization project drew on views of gender and ethnicity that referred only to white women, indigenous women were excluded from the state policies.\(^4\) Second, the diversity of Ecuadorian women’s ideas further complicates the history of women’s relationship to the state, as competing strains of feminism characterized Ecuadorian female activism and women’s writing. On this spectrum of feminisms, some women drew on arguments regarding women’s differentiated role as caretakers while others drew on women’s fundamental equality with men to argue for the expansion of women’s rights. Since women employed different discourses to argue for their rights, Ecuadorian feminism was shaped by the fact that there was no universal platform.

The heterogeneous character of Ecuadorian feminism had enduring implications for the struggle to achieve women’s rights in Ecuador, with a notably paradoxical effect on female suffrage in Ecuador. Women in Ecuador were the first to receive the vote in Latin America, as it was granted in the Constitution of 1929. Although disparate women wrote about the importance of the vote, women’s suffrage was achieved without a united suffrage movement and arguably without feminist action. Instead, scholars generally concur that the Conservative party, which had reemerged onto the political stage after the Liberals fell from power with the *Juliana Revolución* (July Revolution) of 1925, was primarily responsible for the passage of women’s

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suffrage, using it as a tool to broaden the party’s political base. In this way, women’s activism in Ecuador differed from the unified and more activist suffrage fronts characteristic of the Southern Cone.⁵

Given the presence of what scholar Ana María Goetschel termed multiple “feminisms” in Ecuador, Carol Pateman’s concept of the “Wollstonecraft Dilemma,” is a particularly useful framework of analysis for understanding the evolution of social policy and its underlying ties with women’s political and social rights.⁶ In her writing on strategies used to expand women’s political rights, Pateman argues that women have demanded two incompatible forms of citizenship, one of which is “gender neutral,” while the other is “differentiated” based on women’s unique role as caretakers.⁷ As I explore the historical role of the Ecuadorean state in providing social welfare to women and children based on the underlying frameworks of motherhood, gender, national identity and state formation, this concept of difference versus equality will illuminate the variety and evolution of arguments employed both by female activists and the state that led to the particular form that the struggle for women’s rights took in Ecuador.

While state discourse set the stage for a paradigm of women’s difference as the basis of social policy, the writing of women themselves highlights the heterogeneity of women’s activism and their strategies for improving women’s position in society. For instance, the writings of Zoila Rendón de Mosquera, one of the prominent feminists of her era, illuminate one way in which women argued for the expansion of women’s rights based upon women’s difference from men.

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as exemplified by their role in the home. On the other hand, women such as Victoria Vásconez Cuvi, demonstrated how arguments for women’s equal rights in society, particularly in their role as workers, operated to improve women’s condition in society. By looking at these and many other female authors in the context of the discourse generated by the state I will show that while the institutionalization of social welfare policy codified women’s “difference” or their role as mothers as their defining contribution to the modernization of the state, individual women argued for the improvement of their status in society both along the lines of women’s difference from and women’s equality with men. In this way, the interaction of women’s writing with that of the Ecuadorian government reflects the range of feminist discourse employed in Ecuadorean society. Such dialogues also show the potential of these competing arguments not only to shape women’s legal rights and official social policy but also to inform Ecuador’s national project by promoting and contesting the idealized maternalist policies of the period.

**Analytical Concepts**

In her study of women’s citizenship in *The Sexual Contract* (1988) and *The Disorder of Women: Democracy, Feminism and Political Theory* (1989), feminist theorist, Carole Pateman coined the term, “the Wollstonecraft’s Dilemma.” By this she means that women have demanded two incompatible forms of citizenship that are simultaneously “gender neutral” but also “differentiated” based on women’s unique role as caretakers.\(^8\) Pateman argues that these two visions are incompatible because they offer only two options for women: either become like men in order to achieve full citizenship or continue in women’s work, which is not valued for citizenship. Furthermore, Pateman argues that within the “patriarchal welfare state” neither of

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these demands can be met and the concepts of citizen, work and welfare need to be reconstructed in order to allow for women’s full citizenship. Thus, Pateman’s conceptualization of the Wollstonecraft Dilemma defines a major theme in the study of women and their political rights: the difference versus equality debate.

This debate further manifests through different conceptions of feminism—namely maternalist feminism and equal rights feminism. Though the definition of maternalism has changed in different historical contexts, in general terms maternalism is an ideology that exalts women’s role as mothers. According to Mary Nash, one of the preeminent scholars of women’s history in the twentieth century, maternalism takes “the platform of maternity as the axis of the feminine identity and evokes the values that are attributed to the maternal role, self-sacrifice and care of the family, but in a social application.” In this way, Nash explains how maternalism, which has appeared in various political and social contexts, comes into direct opposition with an equal rights vision of feminism, or advocacy for women’s improved conditions on the basis that men and women are fundamentally equal. This tension is apparent throughout this work as the Ecuadorian state used maternalism and ideas of political motherhood, which were common philosophies of the era, to construct its modernization project while women themselves employed a range of tactics, referring to both women’s difference and women’s equality, to try and improve their condition. I will draw on this construct of difference versus equality in order to analyze these strategies, as they were utilized in works generated by the Ecuadorian state and by Ecuadorian women. My analysis will focus specifically on how these groups responded to questions of women’s rights, universal suffrage, women’s changing position in society and the deeply gendered construction of social welfare policy.

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Historiography and Sources

A. Social Welfare and Feminism

The history of social welfare policy in Latin America is often situated within the study of the welfare state as it originated in Western Europe or as it emerged in comparison with other welfare systems in the post-World War II arena, like East Asia and Eastern Europe. In their analysis of how governments choose to redistribute incomes, Stephan Haggard and Robert Kaufman, pioneers of the comparative study of social policy in developing countries, concentrate on two aspects of social policy. These areas include social insurance, such as pensions and health insurance and the provision of basic social services, like education and health services. By analyzing economic interests and distributive coalitions, economic organizations and state regime type, Haggard and Kaufman argue that in the Post World War II era, relatively generous provisions for the urban middle class and for some blue-collar workers, alongside the exclusion of informal workers characterized social welfare regimes in Latin America. While I do not take a comparative perspective in this essay, Haggard and Kaufman’s works have informed my understanding of social welfare in an international context, particularly as certain aspects of social policy evolved in distinct ways in Latin America.

Historiography highlights the ways in which the evolution of social welfare policy in Latin America has been simultaneously influenced by European and North American welfare models and the continent’s Catholic faith. Social welfare in Latin America has existed in Latin America since the colonial period, though social welfare was originally conceived of as purely philanthropic and under the guise of the Catholic Church. In the late 19th century, these forms

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of social protection began to evolve as education, health care and state pension programs were extended, though largely for the privileged laborers and the armed forces. In her work, *Latin America and the Search for Social Justice*, Francesca Miller suggests that Latin American countries often followed similar trajectories in the creation of social programs. She argues that reforms in social policy were often modeled on the modernization projects of Europe and North America. The influence of the North American and European models are particularly evident in the political projects of Latin American liberal elites in this period, who expanded the state’s role in social protection on the basis of positivist notions about improving the human race. Nancy Stepan develops this idea in her book, *The Hour of Eugenics: Race, Gender and Nation in Latin America*, asserting that in the 1920s and 1930s eugenics movements, stemming from the United States and Europe played a central role in social policy in Latin America.

Within scholarship on the development of social welfare policy in Latin America, numerous academics have taken up the evolution of social welfare in relation to women since many social policies reveal implicit or explicit constructs of gender. Maxine Molyneux, a prominent sociologist on women’s movements, asserts that since its origins, social policy has had a “gendered character.” Molyneux has taken this position in spite of the fact that contemporary studies suggest that the gendered nature of social programs is a more recent phenomenon related to the proliferation of international women’s rights organizations. Naila Kabeer for instance, argued in “Editorial: Tactics and trade-offs: Revisiting the links between gender and poverty,” that social policy was gender blind prior to gender-based analysis of the poor. She asserted this idea when she wrote, “Poverty has not always been analysed from a

gender perspective. Prior to the feminist contributions to poverty analysis, the poor were seen as composed entirely of men or else women’s needs and interests were assumed to be identical to, and hence subsumable under, those of male household heads.” Molyneux argues that this is only partially true in Latin America, where social policy worked around “deeply gendered conceptions of social needs,” which drew heavily on the idea of granting special entitlements to women as mothers to further national goals. Molyneux advances this thesis in Women’s Movements in International Perspective: Latin America and Beyond, where she claims that welfare provisions for women were based on “maternalist assumptions,” which operated on the belief that women’s primary contribution to society was motherhood.

Similarly, Nancy Stepan argues that motherhood increasingly became an object of state regulation in part through women’s movements and demands for the modernization of childrearing. In the 1930’s, motherhood as the basis of social policy was further codified as numerous acts were written into law that protected reproductive functions and advocated certain childrearing methods. Stepan coined the term “maternal eugenics” to describe this wave of laws, which regulated childrearing according to scientific theories of motherhood. These gendered assumptions carried through the end of liberal states and the rise of Latin American populist corporatist states in the 1930’s, when the states’ focus on workers’ rights reaffirmed women’s place in the home. In corporatist states, citizenship took on a “client-citizen” dimension and both men and women experienced an expansion of their social rights; however, Molyneux suggests

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19 Nancy Stepan. The Hour of Eugenics: Race, Gender, and Nation in Latin America. 121.
20 Nancy Stepan. The Hour of Eugenics: Race, Gender, and Nation in Latin America. 121.
that these rights still remained paternalistic because male breadwinners were the models around which all redistributive policies were based.\(^{21}\)

While Ecuador is typically not mentioned in these regional studies of the gendered history of social policy, these works have been essential for my investigation not only in understanding the roots of maternalism in Latin American social welfare policy, but also in recognizing how the trajectory of women’s rights and Ecuadorian social policy is both similar and distinct from that of neighboring countries. To understand regional developments in these areas, Miller’s work provides a comprehensive overview of the history of Latin American women’s movements, which she describes as a “search for social justice.” In her chapter on feminism, Miller puts the idea of maternalism in perspective arguing that the notion of a woman’s “different mission,” underlies feminism in Latin America, whereas women’s equality was by and large the aim for feminists in North America and England.\(^{22}\) She notes, “rather than reject their socially defined role as mothers, as wives, Latin American feminists may be understood as women acting to protest laws and conditions which threaten their ability to fulfill that role.”\(^{23}\) In other words, for Miller, Latin American feminism was characterized by its maternalist nature, which shaped the beliefs and strategies employed by women in the region.

Case studies in Ecuador likewise draw on the importance of maternalism in feminist discourse, but new revisionist scholarship refutes the assertion that all early forms of feminism were maternal in nature. Discussing the case of Ecuador specifically, Handelsman and Herrera support Miller’s claim because they argue that maternalism was used to legitimize the expansion

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\(^{21}\) Maxine Molyneux, "Change and Continuity in Social Protection in LA.” 4.


of political citizenship to women. However, Goetschel’s revisionist study suggests a more nuanced picture of feminism in Ecuador, by highlighting the diversity of ideas expressed under the so-called banner of feminism. Goetschel points to women of distinct backgrounds and different political orientations, from socialism to radical conservatism, who espoused a range of feminist ideals. The diversity of feminist reviews written in the early twentieth century, from *La Aurora*, which fought for female workers’ rights to the Catholic endorsed *El Hogar Cristiano* (The Christian Home), further supports Goetschel’s analysis that women’s distinct backgrounds informed how they conceived of women’s place in society in different ways. Goetschel’s interpretation of Ecuadorian feminism as a spectrum serves as the basis of my study. I argue that women employed a variety of strategies to improve their position in society even as the state privileged maternal feminism as instrumental to the nation’s modernization project.

In contextualizing women’s history in Ecuador within that of Latin America more broadly, scholars generally emphasize the path to female suffrage as one of the primary ways in which Ecuador’s trajectory differed from that of other Latin American countries. Miller’s discussion of women’s suffrage across the region illustrates this distinction. She examines the political organization and feminist discourse that preceded, or in the case of Ecuador, noticeably did not precede the passage of the vote for women. Rather, in the absence of a united feminist movement, Ecuadorian historiography generally concurs that the conservative party granted women the right to vote based on the belief that they would endorse conservative candidates and

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issues.\textsuperscript{26} Amparo Menéndez-Carrión also argued that giving women the vote was a move by the Right designed to garner support from elite women of a certain sector of society.

However, historians such as Raquel Rodas and Amy Lind suggest a more nuanced view of the history of suffrage in Ecuador because organizing there occurred in less formalized channels there than did the movements of the Southern Cone.\textsuperscript{27} For instance, Rodas points to the writings of \textit{La Mujer} editor, Zoila Ugarte de Landívar in support of suffrage, when it was first discussed in Congress in 1910 and later in petitions in 1924 to suggest that women played a stronger role in the passage of this law, even if they did not exercise their influence from a cohesive movement. Likewise, Lind argues that feminist ideas emerged in Ecuadorian society at “levels that might be considered nonpolitical” from education to social work to women’s role in art and popular culture, suggesting that women’s citizenship rights must be explored beyond strict terms of political participation.\textsuperscript{28} I will draw on this larger non-political domain of feminist activism, particularly feminist writing in popular sources to explore the different strategies employed by women to improve their condition in society. Lind and Rodas’ broader vision of feminism is therefore essential to my study.

While women were engaged in movements fighting for citizenship, the changing nature of the state and the creation of social welfare institutions transformed the relationship between the state and different sectors of society and in particular between the state and women. In her article, \textit{Género, Raza y Nación: La Protección a la Infancia en el Ecuador}, Kim Clark examines the shifting relationship of the state to women, arguing that the state constructed gender around highly traditional terms, with social policy that targeted mothers as a key aspect of Ecuador’s

\textsuperscript{26} Amy Lind. \textit{Gendered Paradoxes}, 20-25.
\textsuperscript{27} Francesca Miller. \textit{Latin American Women and the Search for Social Justice}. 95-100.
\textsuperscript{28} Amy Lind. \textit{Gendered Paradoxes}, 29.
modernization project.\textsuperscript{29} Clark looks at policies of the 1930’s and 1940’s particularly concerning child welfare in her article. I will further explore this argument by taking up how and why the state targeted mothers from the first policies formally institutionalized by the state. Moreover, my work seeks to investigate questions introduced in Clark’s most recent book, \textit{Gender, State, and Medicine in Highland Ecuador}. In this work, Clark looks specifically at health policies and services in an effort to explore how state projects “attempted to modernize both women’s behavior and the opportunities available to them,” at the same time that some of the women involved in these projects “became modernizers themselves.”\textsuperscript{30} This idea of “modernizing women,” is useful for my investigation into how women utilized a range of arguments about women’s difference and equality to improve their position in society at a time when the state privileged women’s differentiated role in the domestic sphere. Thus, while Clark sought to uncover how women exercised their agency by focusing on female employees of social services, I will draw on the discourse of female activists as they reflected larger trends within women’s activism and women’s relationship to a modern Ecuadorian state.

While Clark focuses on human agency and women’s everyday activities in order to illuminate the conditions that allowed certain sectors of women greater opportunities in society, Valeria Coronel takes a macroscopic view of social change and state formation in her work, \textit{A Revolution in Stages: Subaltern Politics, Nation-State Formation, and the Origins of Social Rights in Ecuador, 1834-1943}. By focusing on the broader political context and policy changes within periods of Ecuadorian history, Coronel illustrates the importance of prior social struggles in the negotiations for social rights in order to demonstrate how internal government negotiations


and pressure from social groups played a fundamental role in state formation.\textsuperscript{31} However, scholarship concerning women in this regard is significantly lacking especially in contrast with that of peasants and workers. This point is made by Clark and Marc Becker’s *Highland Indians and the State in Modern Ecuador*. Coronel’s comprehensive overview of the politics of the period together with Clark and Becker’s work on peasant and labor struggles within class or ethnicity based social movements provides a framework to investigate women’s role in state formation, particularly as women’s relationship to the state was changing with the institutionalization of social welfare policy.

\textit{B. Women and the State}

My study will analyze discourse generated both by the Ecuadorean women and by the state. It is therefore important to further define these terms as well as how theoretical conceptions of gender and the state have informed my research. The ethnic diversity of Ecuador’s population is not only one of the defining features of the nation’s history but it also explains why trying to classify women as a unified category is impossible. Given my subject matter of social policy and female activism, I have chosen to focus on white women, particularly of the middling sectors of society, because these women were the main objects of welfare policy. The exclusion of indigenous women from the first formal social welfare policies can be attributed to two causes: the internal structures of indigenous society, which precluded indigenous women from the purview of the state and the European inspired aims of social policy.

Traditional indigenous social structures served as one of the primary reasons why indigenous women were excluded from the state domain. Erin O’Connor addresses this idea and

the exclusion of indigenous women in her work, *Gender, Indian, Nation: The Contradictions of Making Modern Ecuador*. O’Connor explores how indigenous women were simultaneously “central to and marginalized within…Indigenous activism” from the period of independence through the July Revolution.\(^{32}\) She argues that the cultural identities and relationships of the nineteenth century led to the exclusion of indigenous women given that policy coming out of Ecuador’s modernization project constructed views of gender and ethnicity that referred only to white women and indigenous men. In other words, the internal social order in which indigenous men completely controlled their community concealed indigenous women from the public domain.

While O’Connor’s analysis is compelling when considering the directives of the Ecuadorian federal government, it is important to acknowledge that there are exceptions to her analysis. These exceptions are embodied in the activism of Dolores Cacuango and Tránsito Amagüana, two women who played leading roles in the indigenous movement in the first half of the twentieth century.\(^{33}\) The work of these women further supports my argument concerning the diversity of Ecuadorian feminism and the ability of women to influence the state’s modernization project, particularly as these women played active roles not only in Ecuador’s indigenous movement but also in the Communist Party. I will not address their writing, however, because it falls outside of the scope and extends beyond the time period covered in this thesis.

At the same time that traditional social structures precluded indigenous women from becoming objects of new social policy, with the notable exceptions of Cacuango and Amagüana, ideas concerning eugenics and the betterment of the race served to further reinforce indigenous women’s exclusion from social policies and programs. In defining the central goals of social

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\(^{33}\) Ana María Goetschel. "Estudio Introductorio." 15.
policy, improving the race stood at the forefront of reformers’ agendas. European visions of motherhood were thus intimately connected to this goal, as Ana María Goetschel suggests when she writes that women’s domestic roles were seen as a “civilizing” force in Ecuador. Norman Whitten also elaborates on this idea, arguing that “Eurocentric ideologies of womanhood,” alongside those of modernity, progress and “whiteness” played a crucial role in the formation of Ecuadorian state policy and the construction of Ecuador’s national identity. With this vision, it follows that indigenous women did not fit in the mold of social policy as a means to improve the race.

On the one hand, Eurocentric, liberalized understandings of women’s role in public life served to exclude indigenous women from the purview of public policy; yet, these beliefs simultaneously opened up spaces for upper and middle class women to organize against policies and laws that they found oppressive. In other words, Lind contends that elite women benefited to a degree from Ecuadorian political endeavors or the Eurocentric-based attitudes, which supported the “so-called modernization of gender,” as they allowed women to be active in the public sphere. My study further supports this perspective as the feminist discourse from this period reflects the degree to which liberal secular ideology provided for the modernization of gender norms for certain sectors of women. Consequently, I will only focus on Caucasian women who were directly addressed via Ecuador’s formal social welfare policy. Although I recognize the importance of the “indigenous question” and the role that the indigenous played in the construction of the Ecuadorian nation, the views of indigenous women necessarily lie beyond the purview of this study.

Underscoring the difficulties in deconstructing the category of “women” that I will address in this essay begs the question of how I am conceptualizing the state and how it is defined in Latin American history. Elizabeth Dore argues that to analyze the state, one must understand not only “what is the state” but also why it exists and how it rules.37 Dore approaches the state in terms of the traditional nexus between the state and class interests, arguing that on the whole Latin American states, “Ruled in the class interests of an elite, but with an ideology that rule was in the wider interests of a broader portion of society.”38 She further defines the function of the state as facilitating the expropriation of labor and resources of the working class by the ruling elite. In this way, though states of the twentieth century projected a public vision of ruling in the common interest, the exercise of state power emerged largely out of the interests of the ruling elites.39

Other scholars have taken up the nature of the state in terms of its relationship to society. Popular representations of the state in history and anthropology typically conceive of the “separateness and neutrality of the state,” as an actor “above and apart” from society.40 However, in these discussions of the spatial representation of the state, other scholars, particularly in newer ethnographic studies, have suggested the boundaries between the state and society are more porous and that the state emerges from its interconnected relationship with society.

In my analysis of the Ecuadorian state in this period of political transition, I do not intend to refine this rich theoretical debate on the nature of the state, but rather to acknowledge this wide range of scholarship as it has informed my own views. With this in mind, I see “the state”

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not as a monolithic actor, but rather as representative of the interests of the ruling class with an understanding that discourse generated by the state did in fact come from a set of sometimes overlapping and competing interests. These interests were particularly complicated given the political instability of this period, in which provisional governments alternated with jefes supremos (supreme chiefs) and encargados del poder (temporary rulers). Nevertheless, in Ecuador, the ideological divide between the Conservative and Liberal Parties best captured these competing interests—though the interests of subaltern sectors became more pronounced with indigenous activism, the rise of the socialist party and the July Revolution.

When referring to “the state” my analysis draws on documentation produced in an official capacity, which in the case of Ecuador in the early and mid-twentieth century converged around a perspective largely in line with maternalist thought. I will nevertheless acknowledge the diverse perspectives of state actors when referring to individual officials and competing schools of thought as they manifested in the debates surrounding new legislation and policies directed at women.

C. Sources and Thesis Structure

My primary sources are largely divided between documents from the Ecuadorian state from 1925-1935, alongside popular writings concerning social policy and feminist writings of the era. Using these documents together with Pateman’s concept to explore how different discourses on women’s condition were developed and employed in policy, this essay will

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Chapter I will provide the political, economic and social history preceding the July Revolution, situating the Ecuadorean state in the history of the formation of social welfare policy in Latin America. My study begins with the July Revolution of 1925 because this change of leadership, which led to the reorganization of Ecuador’s national government, initiated a period of major economic and social reforms that fundamentally changed the relationship of women to the state through the institutionalization of social welfare policy. From the reorganization of state finances with the creation of the Banco Central (Central Bank) to the creation of the Ministerio de Previsión Social y Trabajo (Ministry of Social Welfare), centralization of the state bureaucracy and the expansion of social programs across Ecuador characterized this period. While this era was simultaneously shaped by incredible political instability, given the failure of the provisional government to successfully consolidate power, reforms implemented at this time, especially the institutionalization of social welfare policies, irrevocably altered the relationship of the Ecuadorian state to women. This first chapter sets the stage for my subsequent examination of the historical role of the state in providing social welfare and the underlying frameworks of motherhood, gender and national identity that informed the construction of this policy.

In Chapter II, I will look at the development of social legislation between 1925-1935, from the reorganization of the Servicio Sanitario (Sanitary Service) to the creation of the Ley de Asistencia Pública (Law of Public Assistance) and the influence of maternalist thought in the construction of state policies. I will look at the history of scientific motherhood, as well as scientific discourse on the improvement of the human race, analyzing how ideas shaped the
development of social welfare policy and the state’s role in providing public welfare. Scientific discourse on the improvement of the race put a premium on women’s role as mothers, and as a consequence this period of history witnessed unprecedented efforts to protect women’s traditional role in society through social legislation. The move towards legislating women’s position in society and thus reaffirming traditional gender roles manifested in policies concerning maternal and child health, women’s education, and women’s rights in the workplace, particularly as they related to women’s primary role as mothers. Whether advocating for protective labor legislation framed around women’s reproductive capabilities or basing women’s right to education on their duty to raise productive citizens, the Ecuadorian state sought to shape society by capitalizing on women’s role as mothers to civilize the nation. As I contextualize the development of Ecuador’s social welfare policies through the lens of the Wollstonecraft Dilemma, this section will illuminate how state officials responsible for the construction of social policy employed arguments about women’s difference to maintain women’s traditional place in society. In discussing discourse generated by the state, I will further show how different beliefs concerning economic, social and moral remedies related to the improvement of society informed the conception of social welfare policy that was developed in Ecuador.

In Chapter III, I will expand upon women’s writing and activism in the period following the July Revolution, when social policy was codified and literate women gained the vote in 1929. I will draw on women’s writing from this period to capture the different strains of Ecuadorean feminism and the evolving arguments for women’s political rights and participation in society. As women’s relationship to the state changed with the advent of formal social policy and the increased activism of different sectors of women in society, this thesis will analyze how feminists employed a range of arguments to shape their role in Ecuador’s modernization project
and to improve their position in society. My analysis will thus show how women in women in Ecuador played a distinct role in Ecuador’s national project, as new social policy converged around the importance of women’s role as mothers at the same time as women activists across the country argued for and against the state’s premium on traditional gender roles.
Chapter I - Background: The July Revolution and Changing Nature of the Ecuadorean State

1.1 Causes of the Revolution: An Overview of Ecuadorean History c. 1895-1925

On July 9, 1925, a small group of military officers disillusioned by the failure of Ecuador’s Liberal government to respond to the economic slowdown of the 1920s joined with middle-class professionals and incited a bloodless coup d’état. The members of the League of Young Officers claimed that “the Liberals had not been liberal enough” and in the face of trying economic times and growing labor unrest, the new body was quick to pursue an agenda of major state reform.

While the reformist officers and their successors ultimately failed to successfully consolidate political power leading to a period of extreme political instability in the 1930’s, the provisional government that came to power did succeed in carrying out numerous state reforms.

These reforms were characterized by a technocratic modernization of Ecuador’s national economy and a re-imagination of Ecuador’s national project, as the officers who led the coup sought to create a stronger, more centralized government, with the capacity to carry out public works projects and economic policies that were truly national in scope. Reorganizing Ecuador’s fiscal and monetary structures, in particular, paved the way for the construction of new state agencies and social welfare programs that benefited sectors across the middle and lower classes of society.

While the Conservative Party hoped that the July Revolution would favor them given the revolutionaries’ discontent with the oligarchic Liberal Rule, the revolution’s leaders pursued a modernization agenda that was even more progressive than the

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one implemented by the Liberal party that had preceded them—though their agenda largely reflected frustrations of the growing middle class, as opposed to demands of subaltern sectors of society. As these reforms were carried out, the future of Ecuadorian nation-state formation was thus tied to an increasing emphasis on the state’s role as “the benefactor of society, including in its management of social welfare and its lead role in directing the socioeconomic development of the nation.”

Prior to the July coup, the Liberal Party had been in power in Ecuador since the Liberal Revolution of 1895. Based in Ecuador’s coastal metropolis Guayaquil, the party was comprised of commercial elites involved in agro-exports, primarily of cacao, and banking; meanwhile the Conservatives, who wanted to maintain the government’s close ties with the Catholic Church, were concentrated in Ecuador’s capital city Quito. Eloy Alfaro, who would serve as President from 1895 to 1901 and again from 1906 to 1911, spearheaded the Liberal Revolution, as Liberals capitalized on the growing strength of Ecuador’s exports sector to overthrow Conservative rule. Economic interests of the Liberals and Ecuador’s U.S. and European trading partners thus worked together to weaken the Conservatives, who had essentially controlled the government since Ecuadorian politician and twice president, Gabriel García Moreno, came to power in 1860. Following in the political tradition of liberalism, which reflected the enduring European influence over the continent and constituted the major force opposing the conservatism of the region’s post-independence governments, Ecuador’s Liberal Party shared in the values of

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“progress over tradition, reason over faith, universal over local values and free market over government control,” while advocating “equal citizenship over entrenched privilege.”

However, liberalism in Latin American politics, and including those in Ecuador, was often only egalitarian in theory, with policies that directly excluded women, ethnic, and racial groups. With an incredibly diverse ethnic population, composed of an estimated ten different indigenous groups at the time of colonial rule in addition to a sizeable population of Afro-Ecuatorianos, Ecuador boasted a form of liberalism that was characteristic of this notion of qualified equality. Ecuador’s exclusionary politics were clearly demonstrated by the state’s historical treatment of the country’s indigenous population. Although the Liberal government abolished the “ethnic administration” of the early post-independence government, which classified the Indians as a “miserable people” unfit to exercise or defend their rights, legislation passed by the Liberal Party, which largely focused on worker’s rights, did nothing to extend universal citizenship or to challenge the racism rampant in Ecuador’s society. Moreover, with voting rights reflective of Ecuador’s historically stringent citizenship requirements, which were limited by literacy tests, property rights, industry and profession along with implicit biases that excluded indigenous groups, political participation in Ecuador was notably low, making for a political scene that was “profoundly elitist.” In his study of “The Politics of Exclusion” in Ecuador, Marc Becker estimated that from the turn of the twentieth century until the May Revolution of 1944, only three percent of Ecuador’s population voted in National Elections.

52 Kim Clark and Marc Becker. Highland Indians and the State in Modern Ecuador. 7-9.
53 Kim Clark and Marc Becker. Highland Indians and the State in Modern Ecuador. 9.
This history of exclusionary citizenship and exceptionally limited electoral politics proves particularly important in the study of Ecuadorian women’s relationship to the state because discourse generated from the national government regarding women’s position in society notably reflected the views of a small population of male ruling elites, whether Conservative or Liberal in their political orientation.

As the Ecuadorian state’s fraught relationship with the nation’s indigenous population has shaped its political history, so too has Ecuador’s geographic diversity. Ecuador’s territorial landscape is composed of four distinct regions: the sierra highlands, the Amazon basin, also known as the Oriente, the tropical coastal lowlands and the Galapagos. Composed of distinct political and cultural differences, as well as varied climates and terrain, these provinces and the history of their tenuous relations gave rise to intense regionalism. With political conservatives concentrated in the sierra and liberals on the coast, these mutually reinforcing political, cultural and geographic differences have shaped the country’s historically fragmented and weak central government. Consequently, the disparate nature of the Ecuadorian state, which scholar Amy Lind argues was reinforced by the strong Catholic orthodoxy and exclusive citizen practices stemming from the colonial era, has played a definitive role in Ecuadorian politics throughout the twentieth century. These forces thus set the stage for the July Revolution and the changing relationship of the state to its people that came in its aftermath, as the Ecuadorian state pursued a more active role in society in an effort to construct a more cohesive national identity, while also directing Ecuador’s socioeconomic development.

1.2 The Case for Reform: The Reorganization of the State and the Institutionalization of Social Welfare

After the July Revolution, the League of Young Officers organized the “Junta Provisional de Gobierno” (Provisional Government Assembly) with an all-encompassing vision of political, economic and social reform. Politically, they sought to transform Ecuador’s governing body from a system dominated by caudillismo and entrenched in the liberal-conservative stalemate of the past century, to one that ascribed to democratic principles. Historically, caudillismo, or the authoritarian rule of political-military figures, together with patronage played a huge role in postcolonial Latin American politics. The League of Young Officers wanted to overcome this system of personal leadership because they believed it facilitated the oligarchic nature of Ecuador’s party politics. The officers thus initially named major opponents of the Liberal plutocracy to the provisional government and began their crusade of reforms.

Given the grave economic crisis that precipitated the Revolution and Ecuador’s corrupt mechanism for appropriating state funds, El Banco Comercial y Agrícola (the Commercial and Agriculture Bank) of Guayaquil, the League of Young Officer’s prioritized economic reforms as key to their goal of remaking the nation. These reforms included establishing a Central Bank and completely overhauling the state’s national financial system in order to remake Ecuador’s mono-export economy, strengthen the country’s financial institutions and address the growing economic crisis.

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61 During the second half of the liberal period, 1912 to 1925, the Commercial and Agriculture Bank of Guayaquil served as a real source of power and influence for the Liberal Party. This bank accentuated the power of the Liberal plutocracy, who were popularly known as la argolla (the ring), as it lent huge amounts to the Government and to private individuals who essentially controlled the cacao trade. The bank was so powerful that historian Oscar Efrén Reyes observed that candidates for public office essentially needed the bank’s approval in order to run.
budget deficit. In order to accomplish these aims, the new government invited Edwin W. Kemmerer, an American economist from Princeton University, better known as the “Money Doctor,” to undertake an advisory mission from 1926 to 1927. While Kemmerer’s recommended policies initially brought a “revenue windfall” to the Ecuadorian government that enabled the establishment of countless social programs, the country’s continued reliance on exports led to even greater economic crisis when the Great Depression caused the world demand for Ecuadorian products, especially cacao, to plummet.

In addition to political and economic reforms, one of the central goals of the July Revolutionaries included addressing Ecuador’s social problems by applying a “new political standard” to social issues. The officers were motivated by the need “not to overlook the social issues because no government, no party, can ignore the movement that is sweeping the world and aspires to raise the economic level of all men to constitute the true base of true liberty.” The League of Young Officers, who identified as “socialists,” conceived of their ambitious agenda of reforms as taking up the cause of the worker in particular. On the one hand, the progressive legislation they passed in favor of workers, from child labor laws to accident prevention measures, responded to many of central concerns of labor activists of the era. And yet, Marc Becker suggests that this group was only “socialist” in name, with policies that tended more towards the appeasement of the middle class. Indeed, to a certain degree the provisional

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64 Oscar Efrén Reyes. Breve Historia General del Ecuador. 267.
government operated according to politics as usual, as they sought to compromise between the still powerful conservative and liberal interest groups.

The officers demonstrated their willingness to compromise their ideals when they selected Isidro Ayora as provisional President in 1926. Ayora, who was trained as a doctor and worked as rector of the Central University and director of the Civil Hospital of Quito, was a dedicated reformer. He had been an early leader of the Ministry of Social Welfare after the Revolution. Nonetheless, his appointment indicated the beginning of concessions to the group’s liberal opponents, as Ayora’s wife came from a family of coastal elites. As Ayora swiftly assumed dictatorial powers, the package of reforms he passed included policies that were progressive but that did not threaten the position of the ruling upper class. Ayora’s invitation to Kemmerer to modernize Ecuador’s economy and financial institutions represented just one of many of Ayora’s conciliatory reforms that were less beneficial for subaltern sectors of society. Though the officers’ lofty vision was undoubtedly complicated by numerous factors concerning both domestic and international economics and politics, the League of Young Officers managed to jumpstart numerous social reforms under the self-proclaimed banner of “progress and socio-economic evolution.”

The League of Young Officers demonstrated their creed of reform immediately upon successfully executing the coup. Only four days after seizing the government, on July 13, 1925, they formed the *Ministerio de Previsión Social y Trabajo* (Ministry of Social Welfare) by *Decreto Supreme* (Supreme Decree). Initially, the Ministry covered a broad domain of social

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69 Marc Becker. *Indians and Leftists in the Making of Ecuador’s Modern Indigenous Movements*. 18-19
issues, and the law forming this ministry extended its jurisdiction to areas of work, public assistance, health and hygiene, recreation, agriculture, migration settlement, and statistics.\textsuperscript{71}

While the establishment of the Ministry of Social Welfare marked the formalization of state social policy, it was only the first in a series of social reforms passed by the provisional government. In keeping with its shift towards protective social policy, one month after the Revolution, the provisional government reorganized the \textit{Servicio Sanitario} (Sanitary Service). In legislation passed in August of 1925, the Assembly decreed that all national and municipal services related to public health and hygiene would operate under and thus be funded by this national bureau.\textsuperscript{72} The establishment of this service, which took over the jurisdiction of what had previously been privately directed sanitary services, echoed the new sense of national control and direction over issues related to public health and public assistance. Continuing in this campaign of social welfare reforms, the provisional government then passed the \textit{Ley de Asistencia Publica} (Law of Public Assistance) on February 12, 1926. By bringing all public assistance services under the domain of the national government, this law revolutionized the provision of social welfare services by making it an obligation of the state to provide assistance for “the mentally and physically ill, the elderly, disabled, beggars, the pregnant, women who have just given birth, defenseless children and infants in general.”\textsuperscript{73}

The Ministry of Social Welfare and the passage of these laws marked the institutionalization of social welfare policy in Ecuador and the changing relationship of the state to its population. The formalization of welfare programs in Latin America in the mid-twentieth

\textsuperscript{72} No. 33, August 19, 1925 in Ecuador Registro Oficial, February 2 1925 thru December 31, 1925. Quito: Talleres Gráficos Nacionales. Microfilm, Library of Congress, Reel 70.
century set the stage for the conception of social assistance not as an act of charity, but rather as an obligation of the state.\textsuperscript{74} Until this time period, the Ecuadorian state relied on religious institutions, namely the Catholic Church, and private philanthropy to provide special assistance to those in need.\textsuperscript{75} The early Ecuadorian state conceived of social problems as beyond the national domain, thereby allowing Catholic Social Services to fill the space relegated to “charity.” Consequently, given both the Conservative base of the early Ecuadorian government and the role of the Church in social matters, Ecuador’s early civil codes, which legislated family life and sexual practices, drew largely on Catholic principles.\textsuperscript{76} While the Liberal Party’s rise to power in Ecuador marked the secularization of some aspects of society, from marriage and divorce laws to education, the provision of social services remained under Church control. The 1908 \textit{Ley de Beneficencia} (Law of Charity), which expropriated the property of foreign religious orders in order to fund social welfare projects through the newly formed \textit{Juntas de Beneficencia} (Boards of Charity) in Quito, Cuenca, and Guayaquil, marked the beginning of the State’s involvement in addressing social problems in society.\textsuperscript{77} This change culminated with the July Revolution when the state made social protection a modernizing goal of the state.\textsuperscript{78} Kim Clark highlights this conceptual shift when she notes that the name change of the \textit{Junta de Beneficencia} (Boards of Charity) to the \textit{Junta de Asistencia Pública} (Board of Public Assistance) following the July Revolution demonstrated the shift “from its roots in notions of charity to a new sense of public entitlements to state services encompassed by the notion of public assistance.”\textsuperscript{79}

\textsuperscript{75} Amy Lind. \textit{Gendered Paradoxes}, 35.  
\textsuperscript{76} Amy Lind. \textit{Gendered Paradoxes}, 35.  
\textsuperscript{77} Kim Clark. \textit{Gender, State, and Medicine in Highland Ecuador}, 34.  
\textsuperscript{79} Kim Clark. \textit{Gender, State, and Medicine in Highland Ecuador}, 36.
1.3 Implications of Reform for Women’s Relationship to the State

As the state took on a protectionist role in social policy and a more interventionist role in society, one way that the government sought to modernize the country was by making the family a pillar of national development strategies. In this period, political and scientific discourses of motherhood, alongside positivist notions about the “perfectibility of society” brought new insights into the role that mothers could play in shaping their families and thus the nation. Women were seen symbolically as “mothers of Ecuador’s future,” and thus were targeted as essential for the state’s modernization project. These notions were further embodied in what Francesca Miller termed “social motherhood,” as the state determined that their role as mothers represented women’s most important contribution to society, not only in terms of their ability to have children but also in terms of their duty to raise productive and capable citizens. In this way, the institutionalization of social policy marked an increasing focus on mothers as objects of formal policy. This idea was further revealed in the photo on above [Figure One], which appeared in a manual on scientific motherhood that was endorsed by the Ministry of Public Education in 1928. The caption below the photo perfectly embodies this notion of social motherhood as it states: “When there are strong men, weak nations do not exist. The mothers that lovingly take care of their children ennoble the sublime mission of motherhood and work for the exaltation of the fatherland.” In other words, for women, nothing could be more patriotic than motherhood.

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80 Amy Lind. *Gendered Paradoxes*, 35.
81 Nancy Stepan. *The Hour of Eugenics*, 121.
While the identification of women as mothers has been emphasized throughout history in terms of defining women’s position in society, it was not until the aftermath of World War I that this association of women as mothers reached national political importance in Ecuador, Latin America and many other areas of the world. The steep death tolls following the First World War raised critical issues concerning human capital and its connection to national development. This emphasis in turn brought a renewed focus on birth rates and the role female fecundity could play in promoting national development. This idea manifested throughout social science writing of the period, both in academic and official government studies. In the case of Latin America, this trend in public policy is perhaps best embodied in the writing of Ernesto Nelson, an Argentine expert on children’s healthcare. In his seminal work, *La Salud del Niño—Su Protección Social* (The Health of Children—Their Social Protection), Nelson captured the postwar sentiments concerning population and national development when he wrote, “Nations bled by the recent war have demonstrated a growing interest in developing methods…destined to cover up certain cracks through which, until now, the vitality of the species has been escaping.”84 This change in perceptions of population loss perfectly coincided with scientific and political discourses concerning motherhood that conceived of maternal instinct not as natural, but rather as something that could be taught, developed and manipulated to achieve a desired outcome—which in the case of Ecuador and many states during this period meant modernizing and forging a unified identity for the global era.85

As a result, the institutionalization of social welfare and its emphasis on women as objects of public policy played a crucial role in transforming women’s relationship to the state in Ecuador—although the nature of this relationship undoubtedly varied across class, race and

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geographic lines. As the state’s relationship to its citizens changed with its self-proclaimed obligation of social protection, Ecuadorian politicians of this period defined women, particularly those of European heritage, as a class in need of special protection. In this way, the development of social welfare policy informed the construction of a paternalist, protective relationship between the state and Ecuadorian women of European descent—Indigenous women and those of Afro-Ecuatoriano heritage still remained outside of the purview of state policy. While the traditional gender norms underlying this legislation were rooted in Ecuador’s long history of Conservative social values, the institutionalization of social welfare policy codified these values in a way that had previously only appeared in Ecuador’s Civil Codes. Moreover, women’s relationship to the national government was further characterized by the maternalist ideology underlying social welfare policy. From the state’s crusade to protect maternal and infant health to the passage of protective legislation for female workers, social policy in Ecuador operated on terms of “social motherhood,” in which women’s position as mothers characterized their most important contribution to national development. Consequently, the construction of social welfare policy in Ecuador reinforced traditional gender roles because it equated a woman’s patriotic duty with motherhood and produced legislation to the same effect.

While Ecuador’s modernization project and reformist social policy reinscribed traditional gender norms, the progressive ideology that guided such reforms nonetheless created a new space for certain sectors of women to organize and respond to the traditional laws, policies and attitudes that had previously limited their position in society. As such, the construction of the state’s protective stance towards women reflected aspects of both conservative and liberal discourses on gender. Drawing on their strong alliance with the Catholic Church, the Conservative Party defined women’s most important contribution to society as revolving around

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their role as mothers and wives, or as ‘angels of the home.’ In other words, women’s confinement to the private sphere was characterized as a moral and religious issue. On the other hand, anti-clerical liberals advocated women’s increased role in public life. Liberal President Eloy Alfaro, expressed his belief concerning the importance of increasing women’s role in public life when he said, ‘It is the duty of government to improve the condition of the woman, providing her with honorable and decorous work.’ With these lines, President Alfaro introduced a decree that would earmark positions in public projects for women. Though appropriate forms of work for women were limited and often imbued with a moral tone, the redemptive power of work, even for poor women, remained a central theme in liberal discourse as the liberals perceived of labor issues in conjunction with their aim of modernization and increasing human capital and thus economic production.

Consequently, in the period leading up to the July Revolution, the liberal government altered “the terrain of gender relations in Ecuador,” through legislation that opened up upper-class women’s access to work, education and legal rights in society. However, Conservatism still remained a powerful force in Ecuadorean society and Catholic institutions played a central role in the provision of early social services, reflecting the reality that both conservative and liberal forces continued to shape women’s position in society. While conservatives and liberals remained divided in their conception of women’s proper place in society, they united over the belief that women’s rights should remain confined to white women only and thus be entirely separate from the so-called indigenous question. This reflected the fact that Ecuador’s

90 Kim Clark. *Gender, State, and Medicine in Highland Ecuador*, 16.
modernization project propelled views of gender and ethnicity that referred only to white women and indigenous men, thereby excluding indigenous women.91

These competing visions of women’s position in society continued to influence women’s social condition following the July Revolution as the provisional government drew on tenets of both political ideologies to build their vision of a modernized Ecuador. On the one hand, Ecuador’s national project was based on highly traditional views of gender, particularly as the institutionalization of social policy put a premium on women’s domestic role. However, at the same time, the government’s vision of low birth rates and infant mortality as an issue of human capital with economic and political ramifications and the emphasis on secularizing social services highlighted the influence of liberal tenets in their national project. As a result, while the state privileged traditional gender roles in its official reform policy, other forces at play opened up space for women to respond in new ways to the attitudes and policies that had defined their position in society. Though the state continued to relegate women to the private sphere, Ecuadorian women were able to use the reformist platform both to express their diverse positions on women’s social condition and to shape the state’s agenda on their own terms.

Chapter II - Women and the Historical Construction of Social Welfare in Ecuador

2.1 Women as Mothers: Becoming an Object of Social Policy

The construction of Ecuador’s social welfare policy along maternalist lines was shaped and motivated by numerous factors. These influences included an effort to direct Ecuador’s demographic development, larger trends in the international arena of social welfare policy and the values of Ecuador’s traditional Catholic society, among others. At the beginning of the twentieth century, a huge wave of urbanization in Quito and Guayaquil gave rise to a public health crisis that had ramifications for all sectors of Ecuadorian society. Alarming rates of infant mortality, outbreaks of infectious disease and extremely low standards of public hygiene characterized this health emergency. As infant mortality rose to heights that were higher than birthrates, Ecuadorian officials deemed population growth a “pressing necessity” and thus made it a national priority. Following liberal perceptions of the population as a vital source of human capital, social policy was grounded in the belief that ‘infant mortality and morbidity continue to be in Ecuador, the fundamental obstacle to progress,’ especially as they reduced the nation’s potential labor force.

Together these issues played a definitive role in motivating policy directed at mothers, as educating and providing health services to women was seen as a way to bolster the population by reducing infant mortality and by combating the spread of disease through the provision of vaccines and basic health care. The rationale behind the national attention placed on demographic development in this period was epitomized by the words of twentieth-century...

94 Kim Clark. Gender, State, and Medicine in Highland Ecuador, 51.
British politician, David Lloyd George: “It is impossible to have a first-class country with a population from the third class and that one cannot have a first-class population, with homes, factories and social conditions of the third class.” The duty of ensuring and fostering a so-called “first-class” population thus fell to mothers, who were endowed with the patriotic project of protecting and raising children, or the “future potential of the nation.”

Dr. Sanchez, a doctor and professor at Ecuador’s Universidad Central expressed this sentiment in his decisive work on scientific motherhood, when he wrote: “The day in which the mother knows how to conserve the life of her child is the day in which Ecuador increases her population and becomes a rich and prosperous nation.”

In the years leading up to the July Revolution, private charitable institutions, typically religious, took the lead in providing services to protect infant health. Between 1917 and 1922, infant mortality rates were estimated to be an astounding thirty-four to forty deaths per one hundred births, which placed Ecuador among the third highest infant mortality rates in the world at that time. Numerous institutions dedicated to childcare, such as the semiprivate La Sociedad Protectora de la Infancia (The Society of Infant Protection), formed in 1914, and the private society La Gota de Leche (The Drop of Milk) established in 1920 to distribute sterilized breast milk and to promote breastfeeding, opened in response to this immense social problem. These institutions not only provided health services for newborns but also offered assistance to mothers so that they could better care for their children. For instance, the Casa Cuna (House of the Crib)

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96 Kim Clark. Gender, State, and Medicine in Highland Ecuador, 52.
97 Carlos R. Sanchez. Breves Nociones de Puericultura. (Quito, Ecuador: Imprenta de la Universidad Central, 1928). Print. XIV.
99 Kim Clark. Gender, State, and Medicine in Highland Ecuador, 56.
While Ecuador’s infant mortality rate was indisputably high, not all countries were considered when Ecuador was granted the third highest level.
founded in 1921, as a subsidiary of *La Sociedad Protectora de la Infancia* together with the *Cruz Roja Ecuatoriana* (Red Cross), provided workingwomen childcare in addition to its function as an orphanage.\(^1\) While Ecuador’s traditional society largely expected that women remained at home, institutions like *Casa Cuna* acknowledged the fact that poor women who were compelled to work ought to be provided assistance. An abundance of data gathered from domestic and international sources, indicating that infant mortality was much greater amongst the poor provided additional evidence for the necessity of these programs.\(^2\)

With the intensification of the crisis of infant mortality in Ecuador in the 1920’s, these private institutions set the stage for the maternalist priorities of national social policy, as they were constructed after the July Revolution. A study of mortality published in the *Registro Oficial* of 1923 indicated that not only were there huge incidences of death among children in their first years of life, but also that many babies died of preventable diseases, particularly digestive illnesses related to poor nutrition.\(^3\) Dr. Luis de la Torre, a medical director of the *Casa Cuna* explained, “infant mortality is largely due to gastroenteritis and other digestive disturbances caused by being deprived of the maternal breast, premature weaning, and the lack of hygienic feeding methods: the fatal triad of infant mortality.”\(^4\) With these reports, which were supplemented by further investigations conducted by the Ministry of Social Welfare’s Statistics Department, alongside the revolutionaries’ national vision of social reforms, the League of Young Officers proceeded to create policies that both subsumed and expanded upon early private maternal health organizations.

\(^1\) Kim Clark. *Género, Raza y Nación: La Protección a la Infancia en el Ecuador.* 186.

\(^2\) At this time, infant mortality was not just an issue in Ecuador, but across Latin America and in many other parts of the world. Because of this fact, along with the high death tolls of WWI, many groups particularly the Pan American Health Organization reported on infant mortality rates and successful strategies for reduction. Interestingly, the Rockefeller Foundation played a particularly prominent role both in researching and providing funding for child healthcare and the eradication of infectious diseases in Ecuador and Latin America.

\(^3\) Kim Clark. *Gender, State, and Medicine in Highland Ecuador,* 63.

\(^4\) Kim Clark. *Gender, State, and Medicine in Highland Ecuador,* 66.
The concern about protecting mothers as a class essential for national development led the Ecuadorian government to begin to address infant and maternal health issues even before it established national institutions that formalized social policies directed at women more generally. In a report in the 1925 Registro Oficial on tax reforms for private charities, for instance, the state expressed the significance of maternal and child health when it stated that infant protection was one of the primary duties of the government and that “lack of assistance, before and after the birth of children” was the primary cause of extremely high rates of infant mortality. By examining children’s health in terms of the mother’s care and access to healthcare, the state thus conceived of intervention on behalf of mothers as the principal way to solve Ecuador’s health crisis and thus to promote the modernization of the nation. The report further echoed this sentiment when it “declared the public utility of the Casa de la Madre (House of the Mother)” and called for the establishment of sister institutions across Ecuador’s major cities. While the Casa de la Madre was technically a private institution when this report was written, the call for these organizations to submit statutes to the Minister of Social Welfare for approval and regulations in Article four of this same report highlights the way in which the new provisional government began institutionalizing women’s role as mothers in official state policy.

The maternalist roots of Ecuador’s social policy fully materialized when the provisional government reorganized the Servicio Sanitario in August of 1925. As this agency took over the jurisdiction of societies such as La Gota de Leche, either directly or by appointing public health

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officials to oversee the work of private organizations, intervention in motherhood prevailed as the policy of choice to control Ecuador’s health crisis.\(^\text{107}\) While much of the work of the Servicio Sanitario built upon the programs and networks established by previously private associations, the broad scope of this agency reflected the new nationwide reach of social policy and its importance in the reformers’ conceptualization of the nation. The provisional government formalized the reach of this institution when they passed the Ley de Servicio Sanitario (Law of the Sanitary Service) on March 2, 1926, which further detailed the administrative jurisdiction of national and municipal health organizations. As the reformers brought maternalist policy to the fore, the Servicio Sanitario defined “Infant protection,” as one of its key areas of interest.\(^\text{108}\) In a later revision of the decree, the program also specified Madres Nodrizas (Nursing women) as a class in need of special protection.\(^\text{109}\)

The specification of women who were nursing reflected another component of Ecuador’s maternalist social policy: the immense emphasis placed on breastfeeding and sterilized milk to support infant health. At this time, it was commonly held, amongst doctors, social scientists and women themselves, especially of the upper classes that the ultimate act of motherhood was to breastfeed one’s child.\(^\text{110}\) Dr. Emiliano Crespo illuminated the universal nature of this conviction when he went so far as to argue that not breastfeeding one’s child was a crime. Crespo summed up his position when he wrote, “The mother that does not nourish her progeny with her breast milk commits a theft so much greater than a crime but against a law of Human Nature, who wisely and prudently has placed these sources of life in the human body of the mother.”\(^\text{111}\)

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\(^{107}\) Kim Clark. *Gender, State, and Medicine in Highland Ecuador*, 60.


Crespo’s statement not only showcased the tremendous emphasis placed on breastfeeding, but also the prevailing conceptions of gender as women’s biology defined their role in society. And yet, the need for the state to control and direct this aspect of women’s biological functions represented a new level of intervention in women’s place in the home and likewise in society. On this platform, the provisional government thus took a much more pronounced step in legislating motherhood as it served to remedy Ecuador’s population predicament and to shape the future of the nation.

The Ecuadorian government further elaborated on its interventionist platform concerning women as mothers when it passed the Law of Public Assistance in February of 1926. In its sweeping overhaul of the state’s obligation to provide social assistance, this law identified six groups of society, from the elderly to the mentally ill, who merited the right to protection and federal support.\footnote{Maruja de Uzcátegui. Apuntes Para una Historia de la Protección y de los Servicios Sociales en el Ecuador. 15.} Among the six sectors indicated were “pregnant women and women who have just given birth,” “defenseless children” and “infants in general.”\footnote{No 182, March 2, 1926. Ecuador Registro Oficial, January 1, 1926 thru September 30, 1926. Quito: Talleres Gráficos Nacionales. Microfilm, Library of Congress, Reel 71.} Thus, with nearly half of this law directed at women and children, the provisional government established with this policy what Maxine Molynuex described as “deeply gendered conceptions of social needs, that were familiar, patriarchal and paternalistic.”\footnote{Maxine Molyneux. "Change and Continuity in Social Protection in LA - Mothers at the Service of the State?" 4.} In other words, by identifying women and mothers as the predominant recipients of social welfare, the Ecuadorian state constructed a vision of social welfare that was not only highly gendered but also that privileged traditional roles for males and females. Thus, adding the component of financial support further reinforced the paternalistic relationship between women and the state, as women were classified as a group in need of special protection.
The impact of the Law of Public Assistance on the state’s construction of gender was intensified by the law’s national character. From the first decree, which placed the implementation of this law under the purview of the Ministry of Social Welfare, the jurisdiction of the Asistencia Pública extended to all provinces, districts and cities. Article seven further elaborated on the hierarchy of agencies responsible for the implementation of this law. It provided that the Juntas de Asistencia Pública of Quito, Cuenca and Guayaquil would serve as regional centers, administering to the smaller districts within their region.\textsuperscript{115} Regional administration included annual visits to the local juntas so that institutional and administrative needs could be assessed directly. Moreover, article thirty-six specified that the three central Juntas were to control the annual budgets for their individual districts, which in essence gave them control over the provision of all national welfare services.\textsuperscript{116} Upon its formation, the provisional government allotted 655,600 sucrés to the Asistencia Pública—roughly forty percent of the Ministry of Social Welfare’s annual budget.\textsuperscript{117} The agency’s budget, which only continued to multiply, highlighted the increasing importance that the state placed on fulfilling its obligation of social assistance. Moreover, the influence of the Asistencia Pública reflected the breadth of activities that the agency administered to, from hospital administration to medical research to childcare. The expansive financial and programmatic scope of these agencies set the stage for the Asistencia Pública and the Servicio Sanitario to serve as the primary platform for the projection of traditional roles for women, as they were institutionalized in social policy. As these institutions took on a national character women’s relationship to the state was thus much more

clearly defined along paternalistic lines in which women’s biological capacity defined both their condition in society and their need for protection by the state.

While the Ministry of Social Welfare and the programs it funded represented the formalization of social welfare policy in Ecuador, the actual implementation of social programs proved far more complicated as this body attempted to centralize a complex web of organizations addressing maternal and infant healthcare. The 1929-1930 Annual Report from the Ministry of Social Welfare highlighted these difficulties in streamlining social policy as they related to “the first of the state’s obligations in caring for life: the protection of infants.”

Minister of Social Welfare, Francisco Boloña articulated these issues when he wrote “The State subsidizes the lacuna of these institutions, but the lack of unity and the lack of coordination in their efforts, makes much of their energies a waste. Gotas de Leche, Casas-Cunas, Orfelinatos, Sociedades Protectores de la Infancia and others with names less symbolic work in isolation and without coordination.” He went on to paint a grim picture of the fate of children born into poverty, whose mothers were forced to work until the instance they gave birth and whose lack of financial resources condemned most of these children, except those privileged by the “law of natural selection” to death via lack of nutrition or abandonment. And yet, while he criticized the lack of coordination of maternal health services in Ecuador, he simultaneously argued that the key to Ecuador’s future lay in the expansion of services for mothers. Building upon institutions in existence at this time, Boloña asserted that mothers should not only be provided a place to rest for a month after they gave birth, but also that infants should be placed under professional control during that time period, so that they would receive sterilized milk and the nutrients

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118 Francisco Boloña. *Informe del Ministro de Agricultura, Previsión, etc., a la Nación. 1929-1930*. Quito, Ecuador: Talleres Topográficos Nacionales, 1930. 46.
119 Francisco Boloña. *Informe del Ministro de Agricultura, Previsión, etc., a la Nación*. 46.
120 Francisco Boloña. *Informe del Ministro de Agricultura, Previsión, etc., a la Nación*. 46.
essential to their development.  

Boloña’s suggestions reflect the perception that assisting and educating mothers to care for their children was ‘perhaps the most patriotic project that the State could…undertake in benefit of the protection of children and the enrichment of the country.’

As the construction of social policy evolved in this fashion, the maternalist nature of national social welfare services was thus rooted both in early social institutions and increasingly informed by an emerging discourse on social and scientific motherhood. While this discourse converged around a maternalist view of society that privileged women’s “differentiated” position in the home, different advocates of social policy drew on distinct arguments about the best way to legislate women’s place in society and to address infant and maternal health.

The positions of Dr. Enrique Garcés, who worked as a professor and doctor at the Universidad Central and regional director of the Servicio Sanidad, and Dr. Carlos Andrade Marín, who served both as Mayor of Quito and Minister of Social Welfare at different points in his career, exemplify two of the dominant opposing arguments regarding the nature of and justification for maternal social policy. For Dr. Garcés, the discussion began and ended with the fact that biology predestined women for motherhood. Garcés asserted that gender roles were clearly dictated in this way when he wrote, “I will never tire myself in repeating this: the woman is formed for the purpose of motherhood and the man for the purpose of work. The sexes are not equal, but distinct. To different creations correspond different activities.” With this fundamental premise, he argued that women should be educated to fulfill their duty as mothers and caretakers and that men should earn a family wage so that women were not forced to work. Garcés thus advocated education as the most important component of social policy for mothers

121 Francisco Boloña. Informe del Ministro de Agricultura, Previsión, etc., a la Nación, 46.
122 Kim Clark. Gender, State, and Medicine in Highland Ecuador, 52.
124 Enrique Garces. Por, Para y Del Nino, 48-49.
in Ecuador, as he believed it would empower women to raise healthy and productive citizens. In his writing, Garcés acknowledged the difficulties of poor women, particularly the large population who had illegitimate children. While he was sympathetic towards these women and recognized their need to work to support their families, he ultimately advocated greater responsibility among men and women in procreation, namely refraining from premarital sex, alongside the success of social services that supported poor mothers. Furthermore, he argued that when forced to work, pregnant women or mothers should choose a job that allowed them to exert the least amount of effort possible, in order to protect their health and their child’s health. Drawing on this rationale, he consistently argued that a family salary consistently was the cure-all solution to the issue of women working.

Conversely, Dr. Marín’s emphasis on women as mothers served as a platform to argue for the expansion of women’s legal rights in society. Marín argued that Garcés solution of a family wage to keep women in the home ignored the reality that many women were forced to provide for their families. Marín therefore argued that women needed economic and legal protection so that when necessary they could support their families. Marín consequently conceived of women’s economic empowerment as the best way to assist mothers in protecting their families. While he acknowledged that women’s rightful place was in the home, he asserted that when forced to work women ought to be assured in their occupation. Marín was revolutionary for his time in this regard, as he fought to protect women’s jobs when they went on maternity leave and to provide for a safe space in which they could breastfeed their children. While Marín took a more progressive stance in his strategy to legislate for the protection of

women than did Garcés, both of these doctors embodied the maternalist rhetoric of the Ecuadorian state, which centered on the differentiation of women’s role as mothers as imperative for national development. These doctors thus highlight the ways in which women’s differentiated role as mothers underscored greater policy debates as the state institutionalized social welfare. Ultimately, Marín’s views would prevail as the principal strategy of the state, as the provisional government moved towards an agenda of protective labor legislation.

2.2 Scientific Discourse on Social Legislation: Using Scientific Motherhood to Improve the Race

In the 1920’s and 1930’s discourse on eugenics originating from the United States and Europe played a central role in the construction of social policy in Latin America. As a social philosophy, the theory of eugenics posited that knowledge of genetics could be applied to advance the human race. Doctrines of eugenics, however, took on different meanings in various political, social and cultural contexts. In the United States, Great Britain and Germany for instance, theories of “negative” eugenics were employed in policies that were intended to control the reproduction of “undesirable” groups. These theories drew on Darwinian or Mendelian interpretations of heredity, as they justified policies such as forced sterilization on the basis of a strict view of the inheritance of unfavorable traits. Conversely, the French model championed a softer view of inheritance, which asserted that genetic inheritance was subject to environmental influences. This model emerged out of a Lamarckian philosophy of genetics, in which a larger weight was placed on the relationship between genes and the environment.

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advocating in favor of the nurture component of the “nature versus nurture” debate, this vision supported the emergence of social welfare reform, as improving one’s environment served as a means to better the human race.

For a number of reasons, including their common Catholic heritage, the French vision of eugenics gained greater credence in Latin America. Discourse concerning social policy and race in Ecuador appropriated concepts from Lamarckian eugenics, particularly as it legitimized the revolutionaries’ platform of sweeping social reform. María Esther Castelo de Rodriguez, Sub-director of a municipal high school and professor of scientific motherhood, described this breed of eugenics as “cultural eugenics” as it “referred to the hygiene, physical and moral, of adults, necessary to direct human development for the formation of a strong and healthy race.” This model supported the intervention of the state in the home, as it was understood that mothers stood at the nexus between the state and the environment in which children, or the future population, were raised. The future President Isidro Ayora reiterated this connection between eugenics and maternal social policy when he wrote, “The child is in all educated nations a favorite being, to whom the most exquisite care is dedicated because they represent the future of the family, the fatherland and the race.”

The idea that society could be perfected manifested throughout social policy in Ecuador, as exemplified in Francisco Boloña’s introduction to the 1929 annual report on the Ministry of Social Welfare:

“The tendency of modernity is that it is more convenient to avoid than to correct, and in this sense all nations of the world have instituted agencies that have been entrusted with the duty of guarding valuable interests: health, order, justice, the betterment of the race, tranquility of old age, growth of the population, peace among our allies and moral perfection, etc.”

132 Carlos R Sanchez. Breves Nociones de Puercicultura. IX.
133 Francisco Boloña. Informe del Ministro de Agricultura, Previsión, etc., a la Nación. 1929-1930. 45.
By referring specifically to “the betterment of the race” and “moral perfection,” Boloña illustrated how positivist thinking about the perfectibility of society directly informed Ecuador’s national mandate of social assistance. Language concerning eugenics was not unique to the domain of social policy in Ecuador, but it took on a particularly powerful meaning in this realm as the institutionalization of social policy marked the first time that the Ecuadorian national government possessed the power to direct the nation’s identity by influencing demographic development.

The understanding of eugenics adopted by Ecuadorian reformers reflected a distinct conception of race, as it related to social welfare policy. While race took on many different meanings as it concerned indigenous and Blacks in Ecuador, when related to social policy, race was defined in terms of specific behaviors that were beneficial for the future of the nation. Kim Clark argues that references to race in discussions of child and maternal wellbeing were interchangeable with the idea of the nation, as it was conceived around the improvement of the Ecuadorian race through the remaking of “unwanted” behaviors. This idea of race was informed by a distinct understanding of genetic heredity. Dr. Emiliano Crespo explained it as such: “The child of today will be a man tomorrow, and due to the fatal law of heredity, he will transmit to his descendents his advantageous and disadvantageous attributes, as they have been acquired in the course of his growth and development.” In other words, Crespo suggested that certain behaviors represented genetic and racial dangers and that these behaviors were not only inheritable but also influenced by one’s environment. On these grounds, social reformers of the

134 Nancy Stepan. *The Hour of Eugenics: Race, Gender, and Nation in Latin America*. 56.
time acted under the assumptions that reforming “dangerous” behaviors proved the most important way to influence the population.

From this discourse on the betterment of the race emerged the growing importance of “scientific motherhood” as another key motivator behind legislating motherhood. The idea of scientific motherhood, which suggested that women needed medical guidance in order to raise their children properly, dated back to the nineteenth century in Europe. However, its importance culminated in Ecuador with the social reforms of the twentieth century, as the reformers’ agendas privileged public policies directed at mothers and intervention in childcare. The term *puericultura* (the professional care of mothers) embodied the idea of scientific motherhood as the act of rearing children was analogized to the cultivation of plants.\(^{138}\) The word’s Latin roots demonstrated this, as “pueri” meant of the child and “cultura” the act of cultivation.\(^{139}\) This metaphor took on a literal sense in Ecuadorian discourse as references were made to children as “the little human plant” or the “seeds of the future.”\(^{140}\)

The manual, *Breves Nociones de Puericultura* (Brief Notions of Puericulture) written in 1928 by Doctor Carlos Sanchez and heavily endorsed by Ecuador’s Ministry of Public Education, illuminates the level of scientific detail applied to motherhood in this era. Though infant mortality played the largest role in this movement, this book advocated the careful and calculated care of one’s children not just during infancy, but from before pregnancy until after puberty. Accordingly, scientific motherhood conceived of the actions of the mother as they dictated the fate of the child. From avoiding physical exercise to “living a life of absolute moral repose,” while pregnant, motherhood was described as “a parasitic living,” in which the mother


\(^{139}\) Carlos R Sanchez. *Breves Nociones de Puericultura*. 3.

\(^{140}\) Astudillo Espinosa, Celín *Prof. Dr. Isidro Ayora: Médico Innovador y Presidente de la República*. 194-195.
lived for the expense of the child.\textsuperscript{141} Even as this concept applied more literally during pregnancy, Sanchez suggested this theme throughout his work, insinuating a woman’s patriotic duty and in a sense sacrifice, as she dedicated herself to raising her family. Once the child was born, scientific motherhood provided for a highly calculated experience of child rearing, as specific instructions were directed for everything from proper respiratory functions to the baby’s first bath. To some degree, these topics seemed to fit within the realm of any childcare manual; and yet the scientific terminology and specificity of instructions illustrated a new level of precision to be applied to the position of motherhood. This highly technical language reinforced the evolving idea that a “maternal instinct” was not innate, but rather that women needed to be taught the proper skill set to raise their children.\textsuperscript{142}

With specific instructions concerning all aspects of childcare, a scientific understanding of motherhood informed all levels of maternal policy, from the support for further education for mothers to government funding for professional childcare for the poor. The attention placed on breastfeeding and sterilized milk for infants both in discourse on social welfare and in provisions of the \textit{Asistencia Pública} highlights one of the centrals ways in which scientific motherhood influenced social policy. According to the aforementioned manual on puericulture, breastfeeding one’s child was both an act of extreme nutritional importance and an act that supported the maternal bond between a woman and her child. This manual cited the “specific substances” and exact amount of calories (695, to be exact) strictly found in the milk of a mother, as opposed to that of a wet nurse or a cow.\textsuperscript{143} In addition to these nutritional qualities, the manual further illuminated the social importance of breastfeeding as it asserted, “the mother that does not breastfeed her child does not have for it neither the affection, nor the tenderness that ennoble

\textsuperscript{141} Carlos R Sanchez. \textit{Breves Nociones de Puericultura}. 13.
\textsuperscript{142} Kim Clark. “Género, Raza y Nación: La Protección a la Infancia en el Ecuador.” 194.
\textsuperscript{143} Carlos R Sanchez. \textit{Breves Nociones de Puericultura}. 54–56.
motherhood and constitute the happiness of the home.” The manual went on to describe the nutritional value of breastfeeding, as it enumerated an appropriate feeding schedule, the precise caloric requirements of an infant among other aspects of proper nutrition.

A scientific conception of motherhood, especially of breastfeeding, manifested throughout the establishment of social policy. For instance, labor legislation concerning working regulations for women and minors, which was passed in 1928, provided that: “Every mother must be able to breastfeed her child, during the nine months after birth in an interval of fifteen minutes, every three hours; except in the case that a medical certificate establishes a smaller interval.” The inclusion of breastfeeding in labor legislation alone showcased the way in which scientific motherhood was institutionalized in social policy. Moreover, this law and its insertion of a strict feeding schedule, which was to be followed unless approval was provided by a doctor, illuminates the power endowed in medical professionals, acting on the behest of the state to direct the act of child rearing. The state further wove the doctrine of scientific motherhood into social welfare, as it expanded funding for La Gota de Leche and specified the provision of sterilized milk as an obligation of the Asistencia Pública, among funds provided to other maternal organizations. While scientific studies argued that the breast milk of the mother was far superior to sterilized milk, these studies showed that sterilization of artificial milk improved nutritional deficiencies and mitigated the risk of digestive illnesses so common for Ecuadorian infants. The photo above [Figure 2], taken from the

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144 Carlos R. Sanchez. *Breves Nociones de Puericultura*. 54.
aforementioned manual on Puericulture demonstrates the way in which this health policy was promoted, as photos like this one, of a healthy baby of eight months “nursed by his own mother” served to advertise the benefits of breastfeeding.

In addition to informing Ecuador’s social welfare policy, scientific motherhood illustrated the way in which both conservative and liberal conceptions of gender informed the state’s construction of social policy. On the one hand, scientific motherhood embodied the heart of liberal philosophy as it promoted the use of education for demographic development, and thus the view of the population as a vital source of human capital. Furthermore, by treating motherhood as a scientific occupation this idea reinforced the redemptive power of work espoused by the liberals. On the other hand, to the degree that this philosophy supported women’s role in the home and her importance in raising children, scientific motherhood also drew on conservative values. And yet, a scientific understanding of motherhood simultaneously challenged conservative conceptions of gender, which assumed women’s position as caretakers and homemakers. Rather, this concept suggested that women were not endowed with a maternal instinct, but that they needed to be specifically trained to fulfill these duties. In other words, scientific motherhood wholly endorsed women’s differentiated role in society, but on the government’s terms as puericulture defined the appropriate behaviors of a mother.

2.3 A State in Transition: The Expansion of Protective Legislation

In addition to the Ecuadorian State’s interest in demographic development, global trends in international social welfare and Ecuador’s traditional Catholic values informed the construction of Ecuador’s social policy along maternalist lines. One such trend that manifested

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146 Kim Clark. *Gender, State, and Medicine in Highland Ecuador*, 12.
throughout Europe, the United States and Latin America was Protective Labor Legislation
(PLL). Essentially, PLL imposed restrictions on the number of hours women could work and
under what conditions with the purpose of keeping women out of harm.\textsuperscript{148} The physical
differences between men and women and the possible implications on a woman’s health,
particularly her reproductive capabilities, served as the primary justification for these forms of
legislation.\textsuperscript{149} PLL was thus fundamentally based on arguments about women’s difference. As a
result, feminists who sought to improve women’s position on the basis of women’s equality with
men vehemently opposed PLL. These opponents recognized that while PLL was enacted with the
intention of improving working conditions for women, in most cases it disadvantaged female
workers because employers were more inclined to hire men, who had lesser or no restrictions on
the amount of hours they could work. Passed by President Isidro Ayora in 1928, PLL represented
a new development in Ecuador’s maternalist social policy, as it fundamentally drew on women’s
differentiated capabilities while simultaneously recognizing the reality that more women were
entering the workforce.

As major labor unrest and a volatile economy were two of the defining causes of the July
Revolution, reforming labor laws proved a central goal of the socialist minded revolutionaries.
However, enacting labor reform was more difficult than other aspects of social policy given the
reformers’ diverse scope of interests, the complex nature of labor issues and tough international
economic conditions. As described in a later report by the Ministry of Social Welfare, combating
the “intensification of industry, collective exploitation, factory work...mechanization” while
maintaining competitive in the world market remained the central challenge to the passage of

labor legislation. Given these issues, the provisional government started by passing regulations on the Inspección general del trabajo (general work inspection) in 1926, until they could put forth a more comprehensive body of labor legislation. The Comisión de Legislación Obrera (Commission on Labor Legislation), which was presented to the National Assembly in October of 1928, captured the provisional president’s holistic package of labor legislation. Passed in response to a broad study of labor issues in Ecuador with the aim of “[uniting] the world of protective legislation” this body of legislation included laws about individual contract, maximum hours, weekly rest, child labor and the protection of pregnant employees, among other issues. The Ley de mujeres y menores y protección a la maternidad (the Law of women and minors and the protection of maternity) established the foundation of protective legislation for women as mothers in Ecuador.

In many ways, the language of the Ley de mujeres y menores y protección a la maternidad echoed the protective language of health policy concerning women as mothers as it was expressed in the Servicio Sanitario and the Asistencia Pública. For instance, article twelve of this law stipulated: “It remains prohibited for women to occupy a position, in establishments, industrial or commercial, urban or rural, public or otherwise, during the period three weeks before and three weeks after birth.” With this law, the state asserted its ability to intervene in commerce and in women’s position in public life, as the government supported women’s right to work so long as it did not interfere with their primary duty of bearing children. In this way, this

150 M. A. Albornoz. Informe de Ministerio de Gobierno y Previsión Social. Quito, Ecuador: Imprenta Nacional, 1931. 20. Interestingly, in this report from the year 1930-1931, the Minister of Social Welfare advocated a more radical solution to the crisis of laborers, namely “social reorganization.” While his goals were reflected by the flux of labor protestors in this period, his dramatic solution was not realized by the Ecuadorian government in this period.
151 M. A. Albornoz. Informe de Ministerio de Gobierno y Previsión Social. 62.
152 M. A. Albornoz. Informe de Ministerio de Gobierno y Previsión Social. 62.
legislation served to reinforce the protective and paternalistic nature of women’s relationship to the state, as women’s differentiated capabilities formed the basis for this new form of protection. Moreover, this law demonstrated the way in which the construction of the nation depended on the protection of mothers and the family as the foundation of the state. Nonetheless, this law also reflected a more liberal vision of women’s place in society as it acknowledged women’s growing participation in the workforce and the economic realities that made such participation essential, particularly for single women.

Women’s expansion into the workforce in this period built upon the foundation of education and employment reforms passed by the Liberal government in the years preceding the July Revolution. Providing free and universal secular education was one of the defining features of liberalism and Ecuador was no exception as the liberal party was quick to mandate primary education as obligatory and free of charge. In conjunction with the expansion of education, the government took an active role ensuring that women had opportunities to work and support themselves. For instance, in a report from the Minister of Public Education to Congress, José Peralta explained, “The poor woman needs to create an independent situation for herself through her own work…she needs an honorable wage which will become the best defense of her virtue and sentinel of her dignity.” Peralta’s testimony not only showcased the liberal emphasis placed on work as a highly positive force in women’s lives but also the moral undertones of what work was deemed appropriate for women. In keeping with this vision of so-called suitable work, the federal government served as one of the largest employers for women, with large contingents of women in the Ministry of Public Education and Ministry of Public Works. While discourse on

155 Kim Clark. Gender, State, and Medicine in Highland Ecuador, 17.
156 Kim Clark. Gender, State, and Medicine in Highland Ecuador, 14.
women’s work was undoubtedly imbued with a moral dimension, the Liberal Party’s support of women’s participation in certain dimensions of public life had lasting effects on the formation of a feminist consciousness and the expansion of women’s opportunities in society. Ana María Goetschel supported this assertion in her work on the history of women’s education in Ecuador, when she argued that feminist reviews and debate about women’s position in society emerged from the expansion of educational opportunities, especially conversation that came out of the classroom.\textsuperscript{157}

In recognizing the reality of women’s participation in the formal labor force, the 1928 law for workingwomen and minors provided women with newfound assurances against potential sex-based discrimination in the workplace. Article thirteen of this law exemplified this form of protection as it required that “No woman could be dismissed because she is pregnant and that the position should be conserved for the corresponding period of six weeks in which the woman is absent, during which the woman has the right to receive fifty percent of her salary.”\textsuperscript{158} This law highlighted the competing conservative and liberal visions of gender, which continued to shape women’s role in society, as economic demands facilitated women’s increased participation in the workforce while cultural attitudes simultaneously sought to preserve traditional gender norms.

However, in many ways these tensions operated on an abstract level as many legislators commented that a lack of funding and regulatory bodies made labor regulations particularly difficult to enforce. In the 1929 annual report from the Ministry of Social Welfare, Minister Francisco Boloña captured this sentiment when he wrote, “Many of these laws need reforms and maybe fundamental reforms, and there also exists many vacancies to fill, but is not due to the


inaction of the Ministry or the lack of knowledge of needs” but because of parsimony. The
Minister Boloña explained that with only three regulatory institutions in Ecuador’s largest cities,
it was nearly impossible to provide an adequate number of work inspectors. Consequently,
Ecuador’s labor legislation faced problems of implementation similar to those of Ecuador’s
Servicio Sanitario and Asistencia Pública. Nevertheless, in spite of the criticisms of the
weakness of labor legislation, the language used by the state regarding these laws demonstrated
the protective nature of social policies for women as objects of policy in this era.

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159 Francisco Boloña. Informe del Ministro de Agricultura, Previsión, etc., a la Nación. 1929-1930. 59.
Chapter III: Female Activism in Ecuador: Competing “Feminisms”

To a certain extent the Ecuadorian state was effectively “acting on” women when it institutionalized social welfare and redefined its relationship to the female sex as a group in need of explicit protection. Still, women simultaneously gained new forms of agency through these reforms and others, notably the expansion of female education. Consequently, new social policies alongside shifts in cultural attitudes about gender roles allowed women to shape their own relationship to a modern Ecuador. One way in which women accomplished this was through feminist writing and activism, particularly in the form of magazines and journal articles,160 which allowed women to express and circulate their views to a broader public. Likewise, organizations such as the Centro Feminista La Aurora (Feminist Center The Aurora) of Guayaquil, which was linked to the Confederación de Obreros del Guayas (Confederation of Workers of Guayas), among others, gave women opportunities to argue for the expansion of their rights in the workplace and in public life.161 Discourse from these feminist outlets and others illustrate that while the Ecuadorian state drew on women’s differentiated role in society as the basis of maternal social policy, Ecuadorian women simultaneously incorporated arguments of women’s difference and women’s fundamental equality with men to argue for their expanded role in society. To this end, a range of “feminisms” operated in Ecuadorian society, with distinct effects on Ecuador’s modernization project.

The diversity of feminist thought is particularly apparent in the period following the July Revolution within dialogues on the passage of female suffrage and the construction of social

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160 Beginning under the Liberal Government, women began expressing their views through literary reviews. Published across the country from Quito to Guayaquil to Ambato, from a range of feminist perspectives, some of the most well read reviews included: La Mujer (1905), El Hogar Cristiano (1906-1919), La Ondina del Guayas (1907-1910), La Mujer Ecuatoriana (1918-1923), Flora (1917-1920), Brisas del Carchi (1919-1921), Arlequín (1928), Nuevos Horizontes (1933-1937), Iniciación (1934-1935), Alas (1934).

welfare policy. However, it is important to note that since feminist ideas first emerged in Ecuador at the turn of the twentieth century, Ecuadorian feminism has been characterized by its heterogeneous nature. Drawing on different backgrounds, political orientations and values, even the earliest feminist authors contributed to the multiplicity of feminist ideas, employing both sides of the “equality versus difference debate.” For instance, Zoila Ugarte de Landívar, teacher and founder of one the earliest feminist journals in Ecuador, *La Mujer* (1905) drew on notions of women’s equality and women’s difference when she advocated for women’s education. Ugarte de Landívar demonstrated her support for women’s equal access to education when she wrote, “Ignorance is no guarantee of happiness, and even if they say it, we will never be convinced that the educated woman is incapable of domestic virtues.”162 Yet, this quote also reveals how she did not reject the importance of women’s role in the home, thereby affirming components of arguments for women’s equality and women’s difference in society.

Meanwhile, other authors of this time, such as the feminist writer Anabelly, focused more on equal rights in her articulation of feminist aims. Anabelly espoused this perspective when she wrote, feminism “consists in [the woman] fully possessing her rights, it is the support of her properties and person, it is the equality that should exist in social relations of man and woman.”163 Though Anabelly affirmed some aspects of women’s difference when she clarified that feminism did not include “dressing in male garments,” her call for equal rights shows that from the earliest feminist discourses some authors employed arguments of equality, while others drew on women’s differentiated role as the basis for expanding women’s role in society.

Consequently, although dialogue concerning women’s difference versus women’s equality was

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not unique to the period after the July Revolution, the tension between opposing sides of the equality and difference debate heightened as questions about social welfare policy and women’s suffrage emerged and contradictions inherent in arguments for women’s rights in Ecuador became increasingly difficult to ignore.

3.1 The Paradox of Female Suffrage and Women’s Activism in Ecuador

The proliferation of protective legislation for women occurred during a period of political transition in Ecuador, while the provisional government sought to formalize their regime and their reforms with the passage of a new constitution. The provisional president, Isidro Ayora, initiated these political reforms by convening the Asamblea Nacional Constituyente (National Constituent Assembly) in 1928, which provided for debates concerning a new constitution. In this constitution, among other changes to the structure of Ecuador’s government, suffrage was a major topic of discussion. Defining suffrage was essential because this document provided that the Executive would be elected democratically. Women entered into this conversation when the Conservative party favored the expansion of female suffrage under the assumption that women would help the party expand their political base. And so, bolstered by Conservative support, the Constitution of 1929 passed female suffrage in Ecuador—for literate women, that is—making Ecuador one of the first countries in Latin America to grant women the vote.

Interestingly, though, the first woman to vote in Ecuador, and likely in Latin America, actually voted five years before Ecuador officially decreed female suffrage: Matilde Hidalgo de Procel. In 1921, Matilde Hidalgo became the first Ecuadorian woman to graduate as a Physician and three years later, she became the first woman to vote in elections for Congress and Senate.

She was able to vote after she asked her husband, who reviewed the 1906 constitution and agreed with her that there was no explicit provision preventing women from voting. The couple took the case to the Minister of the Interior, who concurred that the constitution did not qualify “citizens” as males. He thus allowed Matilde to vote in the May 1924 elections. Following this incident, the Council of State determined that any women who met the requirements of citizenship, literacy and otherwise, could vote and be elected—a judgment that was formalized in the 1929 constitution.

As Matilde Hidalgo made history in Ecuador and Latin America, a range of feminist writers discussed the significance of the vote, assigning it various degrees of importance. In analyzing the spectrum of feminist discourses on Ecuadorian suffrage, employing the Wollstonecraft Dilemma is particularly useful because it demonstrates how women argued for a form of citizenship, which was inherently contradictory. According to Pateman, in demanding citizenship that is both “gender neutral” and “differentiated” based on women’s domestic duties, women fought for a conception of citizenship that was incompatible with the gendered reality in which they lived.

The writing of Zoila Rendón de Mosquera highlights one component of the often-contradictory debate regarding the expansion of women’s rights in society, as many conservative women actually did not support suffrage. Taking instead a narrower vision of women’s political participation, Mosquera argued that women ought to preserve their “feminine virtues” and only participate in politics to the degree that they could do it from the “sanctuary” of the home. Thus, Rendón’s idea of appropriate political participation notably did not include suffrage.

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166 Kim Clark. *Gender, State, and Medicine in Highland Ecuador*, 5.
Rather, Rendón asserted, “It is enough to influence the choice of your husband, your brothers and children, in order to win a vote.” Yet, although Rendón did not support the vote, she affirmed that “indifference” in politics signified a “lack of patriotism,” and that civic engagement was crucial to the functioning of the nation. Rendón went on to argue, “to say patriotism was to say mother,” expressing the commonly held view of conservative feminists and politicians that motherhood was the most patriotic act women could undertake. Though Rendón conceived of patriotism in a way that did not include suffrage, Conservative politicians would employ similar language concerning women and patriotism as it contributed to their arguments in favor of suffrage. “Political motherhood,” took on new dimensions in this form as women were conceived of as a moral force that would purify politics, or as the Conservatives hoped, would support a Conservative political agenda.

Victoria Vásconez Cuvi, a teacher and feminist writer, reveals another way in which feminists advocated for Pateman’s dual form of citizenship, as she simultaneously employed arguments of women’s equality and women’s difference. For instance, in an article written in 1925 “Actividades Dórmesticas y Sociales de la Mujer” (Domestic and Social Activities of Women), she showcased an equal rights approach to suffrage when she wrote,

“The woman needs the vote… strictly for justice, because she obeys the law and suffers disproportionately the laws’ insufficiencies, because she has equal legal responsibilities as man, because pays the same contributions; in a word because she has resigned all of her duties and is missing all of her rights.”

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In this passage, Vásconez’s call for female suffrage emphasized men and women’s equality, especially given that liberal reforms of the early twentieth century put men and women of the upper class on much more equal footing in terms of divorce and inheritance legislation.

Yet, while Vásconez expressed an egalitarian vision of citizen rights in the above passage, just a year before Vásconez made this declaration for equal citizen rights, she wrote the article “Por la Mujer” (For the Woman) entirely on the basis of women’s role as mothers. In this work, she favored a form of maternalist feminism, in which she sought to expand women’s rights on the premise that “el hogar” or “the household” should be defined more broadly.175 She argued that it ought to include all aspects of life from the university to politics, so that women’s involvement in the public sphere could originate from their primary role in the home. In other words, this work directly contradicted her position that women have the same legal rights and obligations because she defined women’s rights within the parameters of their domestic responsibilities. Drawing on Pateman’s definition of the Dilemma, in a patriarchal vision of citizenship, women’s work in the home is not valued, and thus women are effectively precluded from citizenship as it is defined on male terms. Vásconez encapsulated the Wollstonecraft Dilemma, as her writing seemed to try and reconcile an idealized egalitarian vision of society with the realities of existing gender roles in Ecuador. Goetschel described this feature of Vásconez’s writing in another way, when she argued, “The thinking of this author is a demonstration that there are no univocal positions, but rather approaches that are many times contradictory, that respond to distinct ideological and moral postures, like they do to conditions of class.”176 In other words, to a certain degree, the realization of the Wollstonecraft Dilemma

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was a product of the strong influence that conservative family values continued to have over feminist aims, even as the doctrines of “progress” and positivism prevailed amongst liberal thinkers.

As Vásconez illustrated one perspective on female suffrage in Ecuador, other writers further illuminated the often-contradictory views of female citizenship and its implications for Ecuador’s largely traditional society. For instance, feminist journalist Hipatia Cárdenas de Bustamente criticized liberal opposition to female suffrage by arguing that the problems raised with female citizenship could describe issues with male citizenship and the nature of democracy as well. For instance, she wrote, “I see that you return to the mat because as long as elections approach, so too does the issue of removing the vote for women. Unhappy men do not succeed in resolving the political problem of Ecuador as in any democratic country with an electoral base that puts its resources towards placing women to one side to see if they are not on the ball.” In other words, for Cárdenas, upholding female suffrage was critical to the preservation of liberal political precepts and the maintenance of democracy in Ecuador—an issue that resonated deeply with the political instability in which she wrote. To this end, Cárdenas illuminated the fact that Ecuador’s narrow conception of suffrage and qualified view of liberalism, which was often only egalitarian in theory, was unsustainable. The ramifications of the Liberal’s highly oligarchic rule became particularly apparent as populist political leaders who sought to incorporate previously disfranchised sectors of society rose to the political stage in Latin America.

Following in Cárdenas’ vision, many liberal feminist writers sought to challenge the liberal opposition to female suffrage, as it demonstrated the weaknesses of the liberal political ideology and the failures of liberalism to adapt to the changing political composition of the state following the July Revolution. For instance, María Esther Martínez Macías, expressed one

liberal perspective on suffrage when she argued that the right to equality and the right to reason countered any claims against women’s right to suffrage. Martínez articulated this perspective when she wrote, “The justice of granting the right of suffrage to women since, as an intelligent being, she has the right to enjoy, in a comprehensive way, all the rights that correspond to such beings.” As Martínez employed the importance of equal rights in her writing, referring to legal reforms, women’s labor unions, equal salaries, among other ideas that would uplift women in society, she thus conceived of a form of citizenship that privileged women’s equality as opposed to women’s differentiated role. Martínez also hinted at the issues embedded in contradictory arguments for female suffrage, as she noted that the Constitution of 1929 gave women the right to vote, even though this right was fundamentally at odds with existing codes and laws, which limited women’s civil and social rights.

Similar to Martínez’s liberal interpretation of female suffrage, another political faction emphasized the importance of equal rights in debating women’s right to vote: Socialists and Anarchists. Given their ideologies of social equality, socialists saw women’s political participation as instrumental to their political project, which was based on the inclusion of subaltern sectors, from women to indigenous. For instance, María Angélica Idrobo, a professor and socialist, advocated the importance of female suffrage in a speech she gave in Guayaquil in 1928, titled “Cultura y Renovación” (Culture and Renovation). In this speech she not only defended her belief that “women have the right to this function, the greatest of citizenship, the

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freedom to vote,” but she also criticized ideas of “feminismo mal entendido” or “feminism badly understood,” as many women did not exercise their newly acquired voting rights due to the fear of seeming “unfeminine.” First, it is important to note that female suffrage was extended with a literacy qualification. This requirement not only reinforced the image that suffrage was strictly a tool used by the Conservative party to control women’s vote, but it also drastically limited the pool of women eligible to vote. Second, the idea of seeming “unfeminine” was a concept that manifested both among feminists and their critics, and it reflects the spectrum upon which feminists acted, as conservative values still remained a powerful source in society. Nonetheless, in raising questions about expanding women’s rights and place in society, suffrage served to engage new issues both within discourse from women and from the State regarding gender roles in Ecuadorian society.

The analysis of various feminist perspectives concerning women’s right to vote highlights the fact that women did in fact take a stance on the vote, even as Ecuadorian female suffrage is still often characterized in history as a manipulation of the Assembly by the Conservative party; this is especially true when Ecuadorian suffrage is compared with Latin American female suffrage elsewhere, as Ecuador lacked unified feminist activism. The Ecuadorian literary figure, Piedad Larrea Borja captured this irony when she wrote, “The golden dream of the English feminists was realized by Ecuadorian women through a spontaneous recognition of all of her political rights. And all this occurred easily, naturally, as in the unfolding of a biological cycle.” On the one hand, Larrea Borja’s analysis completely ignores the writing of women who had petitioned for suffrage or who addressed the topic in feminist journals. However, she was accurate in that Matilde voted simply after the reinterpretation of

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existing legislation and that women did not play a direct role in debates regarding women’s suffrage in the Constitution of 1929. In this regard, women’s participation in the passage of suffrage was somewhat spontaneous, even as it holds that this political transformation profoundly changed the political context in which feminist ideas were conceived and debated.

Though questions remain about the degree of activism behind female suffrage in Ecuador, there is no doubt that the debates about female suffrage opened up new spaces for larger discussions about political inclusion and women’s role in the public sphere. As Goetschel and Prieto argued, discourse surrounding suffrage “put into question the hegemonic views of masculinity and femininity and made it possible to consider new roles for men and women.”184 Feminist writing from this era empowered women to reconsider their position and role in society, even as the government conceived of women as a class in need of special protection. Likewise, in spite of the fact that feminist arguments may have been ultimately incompatible as the nation sought to redefine citizenship, these debates were instrumental in raising questions about gender roles and women’s rights in Ecuadorian society.

3.3. From Social Motherhood to “La Mujer Moderna:” the Influence of Ecuadorian “Feminisms” on Ecuador’s Modernization Project

At the same time that the suffrage question intensified the equality versus difference debate among feminist authors, the formalization of social welfare policy along maternalist lines similarly engaged such questions. While the state institutionalized the importance of women’s role as mothers through social policy and new legislation, women responded to the changing political, social, and economic circumstances of the time by invoking a range of feminist perspectives. To the degree that these women managed to project their views, either through

widely circulated journals or publishing books at the behest of government ministries, such as the Ministry of Education, various feminists influenced Ecuador’s national project and the way in which women were conceived within it.

Writing from a highly traditional perspective, Zoila Rendón de Mosquera not only represents a female advocate of “social motherhood,” but she also shows how conservative feminist voices were able to shape the construction of Ecuador’s national project. With the expansion of government ministries following the July Revolution, the Ecuadorian government used the Imprenta Nacional (National Press) as a platform to publish works that corresponded with their vision of a modern Ecuador. While the first edition of Rendón’s seminal work, La Mujer en el Hogar y en La Sociedad (The Woman in the Home and in Society), was published in 1922, three years before the July Revolution, the reprints of this book, first in 1933 and again in 1961 highlight its importance as a text endorsed by the national government. For instance, the Ecuadorian author and critic, Nicolás Jiménez, demonstrated the significance of this work and its message when he wrote in the “critical opinion” introduction to the second edition, “It is therefore this [its multiple editions] the first and most palpable proof that the book of Ms. Zoila has pleased many, has been useful for all kinds of people and has come to appear as a favorite an enjoyable text to read in schools, colleges and in many homes in our society.” As Jiménez went on to elaborate why this work was so applicable to “mothers of the families of Ecuador,” he suggested the appeal of Rendón’s message was its gradualism, as it addressed the changing social fabric of society, but in a way that did not suggest an overhaul of gender roles.

As she wrote in support of traditional social values and as she criticized “la mujer moderna” (the modern woman), whose ideas of progress threatened the nation’s morality, Rendón’s voice served to support the maternalist vision of society privileged by the state. In her chapter on the “Social Mission of the Woman,” Rendón encapsulated the idea of “social motherhood,” an idea central to her feminism and the construction of social welfare policy. For Rendón, social motherhood stemmed from the belief that “The society is the family, and the family, the mother.”187 Or, in other words, she asserted that women could utilize their formative role in the home to shape the development of society. Contrary to Rendón’s idealized mother was the figure of “la mujer moderna,” who, active in the public sphere did not fulfill her familial responsibilities and thus posed an extreme threat to the character of Ecuadorian society and the progress of the Nation. In writing against this movement of women, she went so far as to suggest, “There should be a formal campaign, in which they open centers to combat the modern woman, and her role in the destruction of the home and the family.”188 The review, Mundo Espanol (Spanish World) of Chile, summarized Rendón’s criticism of modern women, “It is to say: the woman of today is prepared for life, but not to morally or scientifically direct the upbringing of the family.”189 As an antidote to the proliferation of immoral, modern women, Rendón argued that proper education held the key reestablishing order in society. Rendón was thus one of the chief advocates of women’s education, in a broad sense, as she stressed that women needed to be instructed in all fields so that they could raise their children as capable leaders and strong workers, with good morals. As Rendón wrote on the importance of female education and women’s responsibility as mothers, she echoed national legislation on health care

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188 Zoila Redón de Mosquera. La Mujer en el Hogar y en la Sociedad. 82.
189 Zoila Redón de Mosquera. La Mujer en el Hogar y en la Sociedad. 17.
and public assistance, which made similar arguments concerning women’s importance in raising Ecuador’s future citizens.

Though on the one hand Rendón’s writing seemed to simply reinforce the maternalist vision of society projected by the state, she also directly influenced the state’s conception of women’s position. She achieved this through her policy prescriptions and recommendations, which focused on providing a holistic education for women and supported ideas of puericulture. As the state was engaging with these issues and many others as they institutionalized social welfare policy, Rendón’s influence was palpable, not only in her eventual role as director of one the Hogares de Protección Infantil (Homes of Infant Protection) but also in her writing. The “Official Note of the Minister of Public Education,” in the third edition of her famed book, La Mujer en el Hogar y en la Sociedad, highlights the depth of Rendón’s influence as the Minister referenced a National report, which concluded that this work was “a valuable contribution to the Ecuadorian Bibliography.” Moreover, the Minister established Rendón’s importance as a national figure when he wrote, “With the reforms that the author has introduced with a clear and modern vision of female problems, I believe that said work will reach persistence with a third edition.” Beyond her platform for education, Rendón further exercised her influence as she called for protective labor legislation in her writing. From prenatal care, to dining halls for working mothers, Rendón undoubtedly shaped labor legislation, as it legislated appropriate conduct for mothers, reinforcing the protective relationship that the state had begun to formalize with the passage of welfare provisions.

While Rendón’s influence on the construction of gender roles is clearly apparent given the harmony of her views with those of the state, other feminist authors, writing from distinct

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190 Zoila Redón de Mosquera. La Mujer en el Hogar y en la Sociedad. 24.
191 Ana María Goetschel, “Estudio Introductorio.” 47.
perspectives also served to influence women’s condition and women’s relationship to the state. Victoria Vásconez Cuvi, feminist author who also served as president of the Centro Feminista “Luz del Pichincha,” (Light of Pichincha) exemplified one such author who shaped ideas about women’s position in society. Though Vásconez drew on maternalist feminism in some of her writing, especially as she incorporated ideas about honor and morality in her conception of gender roles, on various issues she challenged the premium that the state put on women as mothers. She did this particularly when she advocated for greater acceptance of women’s participation in the public sphere.

Vásconez’s conception of “La Mujer Moderna” highlights one way in which her feminism differed from that of Rendón, as Vásconez glorified new developments such as the emergence of feminist organizations and women’s growing role in the formal economy. For instance, Vásconez challenged the fact that women made lower wages because it disadvantaged them in the market—even though she qualified this discussion of women’s rights as workers with the assertion that women should put their work in the home first if possible.192 Vásconez, nonetheless, espoused a progressive view of gender norms when she wrote, “The work, duly paid is the capital interest of the woman, because dignity, liberty and the largest land she cannot obtain without economic independence.”193 Recognizing the desperate conditions of many poor women who were forced to work, Vásconez argued that providing these women proper compensation was essential to uplifting women out of poverty. She also noted the importance of fitting salaries as the destitute situations of poor women often led to them pursuing so-called immoral trades, such as prostitution. She thus proposed the creation of Professional Schools for

Women, on the basis that women were as capable in fields from law to medicine to business.\textsuperscript{194} In her writing on equal wages, she evoked the opinion of Dr. Marín, as he argued that economic empowerment was the best way to uplift women. Though the first wave of legislation for female workers took a decidedly protectionist standpoint, Vásconez’s demand for women’s economic independence opened up an important debate on the fixed nature of men and women’s roles in society. Though the radical changes Vásconez articulated were not realized, smaller victories such as the 1910 \textit{Ley de Emancipación Económica} and other laws of a similar nature, helped women begin establishing independence by achieving recognition as individuals outside of marriage.\textsuperscript{195} Acknowledging the divergence of some of her views with those of the state, she wrote, “The worthy emancipation of women is, not as much in the support of society around it, or in the laws that favor it, but rather in the faculties of the woman herself, in the efficiency of her ideas and the strength of her convictions.”\textsuperscript{196} In other words, Vásconez suggested that the changes regarding women’s place in society needed to begin at a grassroots levels.

As Vásconez described the importance of gathering support among women in her writing, she also expressed the importance of female organizing to amplify women’s voices in society. In her 1922 speech to the \textit{Centro Feminista} (Feminist Center), she discussed the potential of these groups to open opportunities for women: “It is immense, unimaginably immense, the force of thought and of collective action, and if this force defends reason and justice, it has to be invincible.”\textsuperscript{197} When she went on to explain why the emancipation of women was both necessary and just, Vásconez further demonstrated how changes under the Liberal

\textsuperscript{195} Enrique Avellan Ferres. "Comentarios a la Ley de Emancipación Economica de la Mujer Casada." PhD diss., Universidad Central, 1940.
\textsuperscript{197} Victoria Vásconez Cuvi. “Honor al Feminismo.” 86.
government and the July Revolutionaries’ government altered the terrain upon which women were able to organize and circulate their views. In other words, the organization of women’s groups shows that while women’s relationship to the state was highly paternalistic in the new forms of protection provided to women, the liberal ideas underlying their reforms, simultaneously allowed certain sectors of women to organize and to fight the attitudes that demanded their subordinate role in society.

The liberal author, María Esther Martínez Macías represents another liberal feminist of the era who employed “equal rights” as opposed to maternalist arguments to influence state policy. In a piece titled, “El Problema Feminista en el Ecuador” (The Feminist Problem in Ecuador), Martínez illuminated the contradictory nature of feminism in Ecuador when she explained how women had received suffrage without any changes to their limited civil rights. Martínez explained, “They had created a situation in which the woman was not permitted to make use of the rights she had been conceded,” given the realities of the existing Código Civil (Civil Code).\(^{198}\) Taking Vásconez’s support for female workers’ rights a step further, she argued for legislation to prevent the exploitation of women as workers and the creation of unions, which would give women bargaining power. Discussing the terms of women’s employment beyond a paternalist framework of protection, Martínez referred to women as agents, who ought to be empowered to take control of their relationship with their employers. She went so far as to argue for “A FUNCTIONAL SENATOR FOR FEMINISM” (Capitals from the author) who could lobby for laws “in line with the new social and political situation.”\(^{199}\) In this way, Martínez’s directly opposed the maternalist perspective projected by the state.


\(^{199}\) María Esther Martínez Macías. "El Problema Feminista en el Ecuador." 120.
Though Martínez’s policy prescriptions seemed directly at odds with legislation coming out of the Ecuadorian government, Martínez leveraged her influence through another channel: inter-American feminist conferences and agendas. Among other Ecuadorian feminists who engaged in international dialogues on women’s rights, Martínez was a prominent figure in international feminist conferences. For instance, Martínez’s feminist review, *Nuevos Horizontes* (New Horizons), which she co-directed with Rosa Borja de Icaza, was directly connected to the *Unión de Mujeres Americanas* (Union of American Women) created in New York in 1935. She also played a founding role in the *Legión Feminina Internacional de Educación Popular* (The International Feminine League of Popular Education) in 1929. Martínez demonstrated the importance of these international platforms in influencing the achievement of feminist aims when she wrote, “It is from every point of view essential, the reunion of the International Feminist Congress in order to unify the action and as a means to solidify the aspirations so that [we] fight with a vision of the reasons and considerations that assist women in achieving their propositions.” In other words, Martínez argued for a more unified feminist platform in both Ecuador and Latin America because it would allow feminists to better strategize if they shared in a broad agenda. Given her long-term outlook, Martínez’s influence on women’s relationship with the state was less direct than that of Rendón or even Vásconez. Yet, as questions of workers rights, for women and all subaltern sectors in Ecuadorian society continued to dominate the

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200 Though Ecuador never played a leading role in Panamerican feminist conferences, particularly given the unique form that feminism took in Ecuador when compared to the rest of the Continent, Latin American feminist thought undoubtedly influenced the progression of feminist ideas in Ecuador. Although not much is known about the participation of Ecuadorian women in early conferences, reports indicate that Vásconez Cuvi sent her work to the Second Conference of Panamerican Women in Lima in 1925 and that Rendón de Mosquera presented her work at the International Feminist Congress in Chile in 1925. This information suggests that international feminist dialogues influenced Ecuadorian feminist thought, even if different writers were exposed to international currents to varying degrees.


202 Maria Esther Martínez Macfías. "El Problema Feminista en el Ecuador." 120.
political scene in the 1930’s, Martínez’s ideas continued to shape policy debates long past the first wave of reforms of the maternalist-inclined reformist government. In this way, the international character of Martínez’s writing reflected the equal rights feminism she espoused and her progressive vision of gender relations in Ecuador, even if the whole of Ecuadorian society was not yet ready for such a radical reconception of society.

Contrasting the writing of Rendón, Vásconez and Martínez, three feminist writers of completely different orientations, shows how women were able to employ different feminist arguments in order to influence the way in which women were conceived in Ecuador’s national project. Even as these writers and other feminist authors often invoked what Pateman would deem inconsistent notions of citizenship, these women began an important process of opening up dialogue about women’s role in the home and the presumption that women must remain confined to the private sphere. In this way, these writers show that elements of both side of the “difference versus equality debate” were necessary in the process of liberalizing attitudes concerning women’s position in society.
Conclusion

From the emergence of feminism to the passage of female suffrage, the first half of the twentieth century in Ecuador was era of profound, yet often contradictory changes for women. Following the July Revolution of 1925, the national government institutionalized ideas of “social motherhood,” following in the footsteps of many Latin American countries in the process of establishing national social welfare policy. From the 1926 Law of Public Assistance to the extensive resources dedicated towards scientifically training mothers, Ecuador’s social policy took on a decisively maternalist character that glorified women’s role in the home and women’s capability to raise productive, patriotic citizens. These policies drew heavily on the theories of positivism and eugenics, which played a definitive role in the evolution of social welfare policy across Europe and the Americas. In this way, the reformist government following the July Revolution endorsed conservative gender roles in society in their formal public policy. However, the liberal ideas that supported the expanded role of the state simultaneously opened up new spaces for women to organize and to protest the very attitudes that demanded their continued confinement to the private sphere. To this end, though the state endorsed social policy that depended on women’s differentiated role in society, female activists and writers argued both along the lines of women’s difference and women’s equality with men for the improvement of women’s condition in society.

Carol Pateman’s articulation of the Wollstonecraft Dilemma, or the difference versus equality dilemma captures the scope and often-contradictory nature of these feminist perspectives as women of different backgrounds and political beliefs employed a variety of arguments in favor of their expanded role in society. For instance, on the conservative end of the spectrum, women like Zoila Rendón de Mosquera suggested that women could play a larger role


in public life, but strictly through their domestic role raising children and caring for their spouses. On the other hand, women such as María Esther Martínez Macías argued that a comprehensive set of political and social rights out to be extended to women to provide for their greater participation in society, thus affirming their equality with men. Meanwhile, numerous authors drew on both of these perspectives, suggesting more progressive solutions for women who were forced to work, while affirming the belief that women’s rightful place was in the home.

The heterogeneous nature of Ecuadorian “feminisms” continued to evolve as the Conservative party led the crusade to grant female women the vote with the Constitution of 1929. Though historiography shows that feminists in Ecuador did not play a fundamental role influencing the inclusion of female suffrage in the 1929 Constitution, the suffrage debate opened up new spaces for feminists to call into question traditional gender roles in Ecuador. In feminist reviews and in meetings at newly inaugurated feminist groups, women in Ecuador took varying views on the necessity of the vote to improve women’s condition in society. Some argued that female suffrage was critical to greater public participation; meanwhile others highlighted the fact that without reforms to advance women’s other civil rights, the vote did essentially nothing to empower women. This range of perspectives further embodied Pateman’s classification of the Wollstonecraft Dilemma.

As writing from Ecuadorian feminists shows, women argued for two incompatible forms of citizenship, which defined it as both “gender neutral” and “differentiated” based on women’s role in the home.203 Although feminist authors employed contradictory rationales in favor of expanding women’s rights as citizens and as active members of Ecuadorian society, these

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debates were essential in opening up spaces to call traditional gender roles into question. From challenging the maternalist nature of Ecuador’s social policy to contemplating the larger implications of women’s suffrage, feminist writers in Ecuador showed that both sides of the Wollstonecraft Dilemma played a key role in initiating the process of expanding women’s role in Ecuadorian society.
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Photographs:

Figure 1:

Figure 2: