

# Gendered Experiences and State Formation in Highland Ecuador

This book explores the experiences of Ecuadorian women as both objects and agents of state formation, examining state practices, women's lives, and gender ideologies in the Ecuadorian highlands in the first half of the twentieth century. The subtitle *Modernizing Women, Modernizing the State* alludes on the one hand to state projects that attempted to modernize both women's behavior and the opportunities available to them, and on the other to the fact that some of the women involved were or became modernizers themselves. They seized on new opportunities and pressed the limits of those state projects in ways that perhaps were not anticipated. Thus they became active participants in the modernization of the Ecuadorian state, and in doing so they put their own imprint on processes that were also occurring elsewhere in a similar time period.

The analysis moves between two broad themes—state formation and patterns of women's experience and agency—bringing together a discussion of four general areas in which women's behavior was of interest to, and intervened by, state institutions. Child welfare and children's value (discussed in chapter 2) and prostitution and venereal disease (in chapter 3) were both arenas where women and girls became objects of state projects. New institutions, permeated by gender ideologies, were developed in these areas that increased the state's ability to act on gendered subjects and enlisted women's own participation in a range of ways. When we turn to examining midwifery and nursing (in chapters 4 and 5), however, we can see more clearly how women themselves became active agents in state projects.

Although child protection projects and control of venereal disease did turn Ecuadorian women into objects of state action, the operation of such programs also offered opportunities for women to exercise agency as they used state services to pursue their own goals. And while women who trained for new professional careers became state agents when they sought government employment, they were also the objects of state action via the provision of both new educational and employment opportunities and in the gendered ways they were objectified and their agency undermined (not always successfully) within state institutions. This book thus examines different permutations of how women were both objects and agents in the provision of social programs and state policy. What differs between chapters 2 and 3, and chapters 4 and 5, however, are some of the sources that allow a deeper reading of women's agency in the latter chapters. In their explorations of the functioning of specific state institutions and state programs, all of the chapters offer insight into processes of state formation, including attention to fissures within the state and specific ways that state and society were entwined, rather than constituting separate spheres of activity.

The period explored here is roughly the first half of the twentieth century, with significant changes initiated after the 1895 Liberal Revolution. The exact starting and end points in each chapter vary depending on the historical rhythms of the themes examined. For child protection policies, an early component of gendered social policy, we begin early in the liberal period and consider the decades up to passage of the 1938 Código de Menores, Ecuador's first Child Code. The history of antivenereal programs and prostitution control policies began later, with early projects from around 1910 but the Venereal Prophylaxis Service was only established in Quito in 1921. The heyday of antivenereal programs wound down after the 1943 discovery that penicillin was an effective treatment for syphilis, although the shift to new models was not immediate.

For midwifery, the first field of university study opened to women, stabilization of training began in the early 1890s, with a significant expansion of enrollments after the 1899 founding of the new *Maternidad* (lying-in hospital or maternity clinic) in Quito. For graduated midwives, state employment opportunities were expanded in 1935 with the establishment of a new maternal-infant health program within the *Servicio de Sanidad* (Public Health Service), so chapter 4 follows midwives up through the 1940s. Professional nursing came later, with the earliest classes begun in 1917, reorganization of nursing training in 1927, and a more profound transformation in models of nursing in 1942 with the founding of the National Nurses School as a collaborative effort of U.S. and Ecuadorian agencies. While chapter 5 begins with a consideration of early nursing projects, it focuses on the first decade of training at the *Escuela Na-*

cional de Enfermeras (1942–52), which allows a consideration of the challenges faced at midcentury by a new group of female professionals training and working in state institutions in highland Ecuador.

### **Ecuadorian History Read through Women's Lives**

Historical sociologist Philip Abrams has argued that “society must be understood as a process constructed historically by individuals who are constructed historically by society.”<sup>1</sup>

In a suggestive discussion of the relation between individual and society, Abrams highlighted the ways that biological generations must be understood in conjunction with sociological generations. He argued that “the problem of generations . . . is a problem of the mutual phasing of two different calendars: the calendar of the life-cycle of the individual and the calendar of historical experiences. . . . New life-histories are constantly being lived in relation to new world-histories.”<sup>2</sup> It was not so much that women gained new educational opportunities in Quito in the early twentieth century but that women of a specific age group did so. Moreover, “society” (including those women’s social circumstances and positioning) made some of them particularly likely to be willing to grasp those new opportunities; their actions in doing so then propelled social change.

While we might think of the interplay of state projects and individual action in this context in terms of structure and agency, it is more useful to consider how state projects changed the terrain on which individuals could act, enabling certain possibilities and constraining others. Those state projects themselves were the contested results of conflict among dominant groups from the Ecuadorian coast and highlands, liberals and conservatives, and certainly church and state at the turn of the twentieth century. In other words, although they seem to form the structure within which women acted, those projects were themselves the result of human agency and struggle.<sup>3</sup> For those projects to then be realized—literally made real in life and not only confined to policy documents or official pronouncements—sometimes required substantial personal sacrifices, courage, and sheer stubbornness. One of my arguments is that social patterns can be discerned that suggest what kinds of women were more likely to display those characteristics, or rather, which social circumstances brought out those traits.

To illustrate these points, let us begin with accounts of some pioneering Ecuadorian women.<sup>4</sup> In 1921 Matilde Hidalgo became the first Ecuadorian woman to graduate as *doctora de medicina* (physician) from the Universidad Central in Quito. She had been born into what had been a middle-class family in the southern highland city of Loja in 1889. Because her mother was widowed

just before Matilde's birth, she grew up in a fatherless household where her mother and older sister took in sewing to support the family and to allow her two brothers to continue their education. During her years as a primary student at a local Catholic school, Matilde had the opportunity to assist the nuns in their work at the small local hospital. She began to imagine pursuing a medical career. This would first require that she attend secondary school, but despite its status as a provincial capital, Loja did not have a secondary school for girls, although state schools open to young women had recently been established in the capital Quito and the main port of Guayaquil by the liberal governments that came to power in and after 1895.

Because there was only a secondary school for young men in Loja, Matilde petitioned in 1907 to be admitted to the Colegio Bernardo Valdivieso. Given that there was no explicit rule prohibiting women from attending, she was permitted to enroll. This created a scandal in Loja: female classmates from primary school were prohibited from speaking to her; she was mocked and insulted on her way to school; her mother was threatened with excommunication from the Catholic Church; and she had to manage difficult relationships with her male classmates. Following her graduation as *bachiller* in 1913 at the age of twenty-four, she applied to the medical program at Quito's Universidad Central. Despite her excellent grades, Matilde's application was rejected with the recommendation that she consider enrolling instead in the midwifery or pharmacy program—the only two areas of university study then open to women. She was more successful with an application to the undergraduate program in medicine at the Universidad de Azuay in the city of Cuenca (where she would be able to live with her brother and sister-in-law). Graduating as a licentiate in medicine in 1919, Matilde was finally accepted that year into the medical program at the Universidad Central to complete advanced studies. Unlike any of her male classmates, however, she was encouraged to enroll simultaneously in the third year of the midwifery program while she undertook her sixth year of medical studies, and the following year pursued the final year of courses in both programs.<sup>5</sup> She did her medical internship at the Maternidad, directed by Loja-born physician Isidro Ayora, where by definition Matilde would treat only female patients. In 1921 at the age of thirty-two she graduated as *doctora de medicina* from the Universidad Central.

Moving to Guayaquil—where her brother had by then settled with his family—Matilde took up positions in the Hospital General and then the Casa Cuna Juan Arzube Cordero (an orphanage). In 1923 she married lawyer Fernando Prócel, who had been her classmate in the *colegio* in Loja. The newlyweds settled in the southern coastal city of Machala, the capital of El Oro province, where Matilde established a medical practice and taught natural history at the

state secondary school while Fernando practiced law and taught history there. In 1924 registration of voters began in preparation for the upcoming elections for Congress and Senate. At Matilde's request, her husband reviewed the 1906 constitution and offered his legal opinion that there was no explicit provision that women were ineligible to vote. On consultation, the minister of the interior agreed that the legislation referred only to "citizens" and did not specify that they must be male.<sup>6</sup> He therefore granted Matilde permission to vote in the May 1924 elections. In June a meeting of the Council of State determined that indeed Ecuadorian women who otherwise satisfied the requirements of citizenship—that is, who were at least twenty-one years of age and literate—were eligible both to vote and to be elected. Five years later, female citizens' right to vote was formally incorporated into Ecuador's 1929 constitution. Matilde Hidalgo de Prócel was thus not only the first Ecuadorian woman to vote in a national election but likely also the first Latin American woman to do so, since Ecuador was the first country in the region to approve female suffrage.<sup>7</sup>

In 1925 the *Revolución Juliana* (July Revolution) overthrew three decades of liberal rule in Ecuador, carrying physician Isidro Ayora to a cabinet post and then to the national presidency. With the reorganization of municipal councils by the revolutionary government, Matilde Hidalgo was appointed a municipal councilor for Machala by the central government. Soon thereafter, Matilde was appointed the provincial director of *Asistencia Pública* for El Oro, which placed under her supervision the province's curative health-care facilities. No other woman served in such a role in any Ecuadorian province during the first half of the twentieth century. Meanwhile, the expansion of women's formal political rights, initiated by Matilde Hidalgo, continued apace. In 1931 some fourteen thousand Ecuadorian women voted for the first time in national elections.<sup>8</sup> In 1936, Matilde herself was elected by popular vote to the Machala municipal council and was named vice president of the council. In 1941 she became the first woman elected to Congress, when she became supplemental representative for El Oro province. Matilde was not actually called on to serve in Congress in this capacity, but her election paved the way for the 1945 election to Congress of communist political activist Nela Martínez.

One of the women who joined Matilde Hidalgo in 1921 to celebrate her landmark graduation as a physician was teacher María Luisa Gómez de la Torre. Luisa had been born in Quito in 1887, the illegitimate daughter of Francisca Páez and Quito aristocrat Joaquín Gómez de la Torre. Although she attended the San Carlos Catholic primary school as a day student, Luisa was unable to register in any of Quito's three Catholic secondary schools for young women because of her illegitimate birth. However, in Quito in the first decade of the twentieth century there were two new secular educational options available to

young women: matriculation in the Instituto Nacional Mejía, the state secondary school established as a coeducational institution in 1897, or registration in the Colegio Normal Manuela Cañizares, a women's teacher-training facility founded in 1901 to staff the expanding network of state secular schools. In 1908, Luisa enrolled in the Colegio Normal. The requirements for admission were talent and dedication, rather than wealth and legitimate birth, and instead of learning embroidery and piano along with rudimentary lessons in arithmetic, grammar, and natural history, she would be able to prepare herself for a career there that would allow her to support herself financially.

Luisa began her studies at the Normal just three years after the first five *profesoras normalistas* graduated in Quito; she completed her studies in 1916. Thus her student era coincided with the presence at the Colegio Normal of the first of two German pedagogical missions.<sup>9</sup> The mission was contracted by the liberal government to reorganize the country's education system to base it on scientific, positivist thinking, moving from rote memorization to approaches that aimed to awaken students' interest and their analytical capacities through experiential and experimental study. Given the emphasis on developing a healthy body as well as an inquiring mind, physical education was promoted: students learned gymnastics and choreographed dance and went for hikes in the mountains surrounding Quito. This model of the active, healthy, modern woman could not have been more different from the socially conservative norms promoted in the Catholic schools and within elite highland society.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, simply to enroll in the Colegio Normal was an inherently transgressive act, not least because the first teachers at the new secular state schools were Protestants.<sup>11</sup>

While an 1862 concordat between the Ecuadorian government and the Vatican required all Ecuadorian education from primary school to university to be in accordance with Catholic doctrine, this agreement lapsed following the Liberal Revolution. Luisa was not only publicly insulted on her way to classes but both she and her mother were excommunicated by the Catholic Church. Luisa spent much of her career teaching at Quito's Instituto Mejía; as physical education teacher there, she organized the first girls' basketball team in Quito. Later, when the Instituto Mejía became an exclusively men's school in 1935 and its remaining female students were sent to the Colegio 24 de Mayo—a women's secondary school that had been established in 1922 to provide a secular single-sex alternative in Quito to Catholic education—Luisa was the only female instructor who remained at the Mejía.

While both the students and teachers at secular educational institutions challenged conservative social norms in Quito in the early twentieth century,

by the mid-1920s Ecuadorian political life too was becoming more diverse and contested. When the socialist bookseller Leonardo Muñoz imported the first volumes of Marxist writings into the country, he found interested customers precisely among some of the teachers of the Mejía.<sup>12</sup> Similarly, among the participants in the 1926 founding meeting of the Partido Socialista Ecuatoriano in Quito were a number of Mejía staff members. The only woman who participated in that meeting was Luisa Gómez de la Torre. When a group of young conservatives disrupted the meeting, they saved their most damning insults for her, expressed in sexual terms. In her professional life she was also an activist, involved in defending working conditions by establishing such organizations as the Club de Profesores del Instituto Nacional Mejía and later the first Sindicato de Profesores (teachers' union) in 1937. She was also among the women who participated actively in the political events of 1944 in Quito, when a broad social coalition mobilized to bring down the government of Carlos Arroyo del Río and bring back to power for a second term José María Velasco Ibarra (a populist politician who would eventually serve five terms as national president), in what became known as the *Revolución Gloriosa* (Glorious Revolution).<sup>13</sup>

When Velasco Ibarra overthrew his own government's progressive 1945 constitution in a 1946 self-coup, Luisa Gómez de la Torre was among a group of women who publicly called for his resignation. After three decades as a teacher, Luisa was fired from her position at the Instituto Mejía. This led to a new stage in her life, as she turned increasing attention to working with indigenous activists who had founded the *Federación Ecuatoriana de Indios* in 1944. In association with illiterate peasant leader Dolores Cacuango, Luisa helped establish bilingual, bicultural schools for indigenous children within the grounds of state haciendas in the northern highlands.<sup>14</sup> In addition to the long list of her other transgressions, we can add Luisa's unusual cross-class and cross-ethnic friendship with Dolores Cacuango and their collaborative work in an indigenous literacy project. That project can rightly be seen as a precursor of the bilingual education programs that became central to the institutional history of the *Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador* (CONAIE) in the 1980s, facilitating CONAIE's emergence and development into the strongest indigenous rights confederation in Latin America at the end of the twentieth century.<sup>15</sup>

The lives of women like Matilde Hidalgo and María Luisa Gómez de la Torre provide revealing windows onto numerous dimensions of Ecuadorian society in the first half of the twentieth century. These were lives that were framed by important political processes—processes indeed in which these women participated—and that were equally marked both by new opportunities

for education and employment and by admirable personal initiative that gave them the courage to seize such opportunities. Despite the many differences in the stories of these two women, there are also significant parallels. Both had a certain amount of cultural capital—certainly they were not among the illiterate poor—but they were also peripheral enough to elite Ecuadorian society that they were able to, or needed to, imagine a different life for themselves than contracting a good marriage and becoming adornments for and administrators of upper-class homes. They imagined lives in which they would become the subjects of their own histories, projects in which the ability to support themselves financially held a central place. They also faced some similar conflicts with respectable society, including with the Catholic Church. Finally, Matilde Hidalgo and María Luisa Gómez de la Torre were born just two years apart and into families lacking a father who could provide financial stability to the household.

These examples point to some of the ways that the options potentially available to young women in the early twentieth century were different from those available to their mothers and grandmothers. Those opportunities depended crucially on state projects established by the liberal governments that dominated Ecuadorian politics from 1895 to 1925. The existence of secular secondary schools—a cornerstone of liberal social policy—is an obvious example. Moreover, the liberal state tended to define rights in inclusive terms. Thus there was no explicit provision that women could not attend the men's *colegio* in Loja, nor was "citizen" defined in masculine terms. It was only social convention that determined that women were excluded from participation in secular secondary education, or for that matter from voting. Social convention was, however, very strong. This prompts a question: given both conservative social norms of appropriate female behavior, and new opportunities established in principle after the 1895 Liberal Revolution, just what kinds of women were most likely to have the nerve—or the lack of other options—to risk social disapproval by pursuing those new possibilities? The answer suggested by the lives of Matilde and Luisa is women who were neither entirely privileged nor fully marginal.

In 1903, Rosa Stacey was the first woman to begin study at the Instituto Nacional Mejía. Although the liberal state's flagship institution of secular education had been established as a coeducational institution six years earlier, she was the first woman who had dared to enroll. When she did, she was twenty-nine years old and apparently already a confirmed spinster. After completing her *bachillerato* at the Mejía she briefly directed and taught at Quito's Escuela-Taller de Mujeres, a trade school for working-class girls. Following her publication of a geography textbook, Rosa was awarded a scholarship to study at the Sorbonne in Paris, returning to Quito to direct the Colegio Normal Manu-



ela Cañizares for many years. Her last name indicates her descent from Diego (James) Stacey, an Englishman who traveled to the Andes to fight for independence, widely believed in Ecuador to have been the nephew of Lord Byron (although it may be that Stacey was Byron's nephew in figurative rather than literal terms, perhaps via their Masonic relationship). Diego Stacey's son, Manuel Stacey Sanz, had various romantic liaisons, including a long-term relationship that produced four (illegitimate) children, the eldest of whom was Rosa.

Thus Rosa was born into a liberal family in Quito, whose father had a bohemian reputation. Clearly her family did not fulfill traditional Quito's ideals of conservative, Catholic, respectable society, despite the efforts of the women of the household to support themselves decently by taking in sewing, one of the few options available. Rosa herself is remembered as a very strong-willed woman.<sup>16</sup> She would have had to have been to take such a bold step as to enroll in the Instituto Mejía in 1903. Rosa's relatives (the grandchildren of one of Rosa's sisters) recount that her decision to do so came following an altercation with a client over the quality of a sewn item, after which Rosa swore to seek another way to support herself.<sup>17</sup> As the biographer of Rosa's nephew phrased it: "His ancestors were not people who were characterized by passivity and tranquility, but rather by courage, action, and participation in the important events of the time."<sup>18</sup> Rosa could certainly be included in this characterization.

Most of the female figures who populate this book did not have the public prominence of Matilde Hidalgo, María Luisa Gómez de la Torre, and Rosa Stacey, nor is it always possible to flesh out our understandings of their lives. The availability of archival documentation that offers information about the student days and working lives of midwives and nurses allows for a richer interpretation of some of those women in chapters 4 and 5. In contrast, it is rather more difficult to grasp the lives of poor girls and women who interacted with institutions of child protection and of women who used prostitution as one of their livelihood strategies. Although they had points of contact with various state institutions, relatively more dimensions of their lives were obscured from the view of the state.

The account offered here of women's experiences and agency in contexts not entirely, but sometimes in part, of their own making is undoubtedly partial. Nonetheless, I highlight the protagonism of particular kinds of urban women of the emerging middle sectors in building Ecuadorian modernity in the early twentieth century. This has been largely ignored in social histories of the country, with the notable exception of Ana María Goetschel's wonderful history of female education and female teachers (*profesoras normalistas*) in Quito in the same era. Consistent with the lives outlined earlier in this chapter, Goetschel

also hints at the social conditions that might lead women to take advantage of new opportunities in a context of strong social disapproval. Consider, for instance, the following oral history anecdote from María Luisa Salazar (the director of the Colegio Normal Manuela Cañizares in the early 1980s) about how her mother had become one of the first normalistas:

Before Eloy Alfaro became president [that is, during the battles of the Liberal Revolution], General Terán of the liberal army received help from my grandmother, a young widow with two daughters, when his troops stopped at her rural property in Patate. Eloy Alfaro heard of this and sent my grandmother a note to thank her and ask her to come to Quito. When she went, he told her: “A colegio is going to be opened and I want to give you the opportunity to educate your daughters. Women in the future will need to be educated; not just men, but women too.” My grandmother looked frankly at her situation and decided to educate her daughters in the Normal, despite the recriminations of her conservative family: “You are going to lose everything, you are allying yourself with the liberals; if you are going to give your daughters a Godless education, then just say good-bye, we can no longer recognize you.”<sup>19</sup>

This story points to a number of emerging patterns: the rejection by more conservative society of women’s education in secular state institutions; a personalistic approach to recruitment of women for new roles, perhaps necessary given the social barriers at the time; and also the beginnings of what would become a more systematic emphasis on providing state protection to women without other male providers, a theme that runs through this book.

Salazar notes that her mother did not actually work as a teacher despite her training at the Normal, since after her marriage her husband wished her to stay at home. The acquisition of a male protector often led to new constraints as well as to new forms of security. A similar story is told in an oral history interview that María Cuvi Sánchez conducted with Rosario Mena de Barrera who, following her graduation from the Colegio 24 de Mayo with a diploma in commercial accounting, became the second woman hired to work in the new Caja del Seguro (social security office) soon after its 1937 founding. She withdrew with some regret from her professional life once she married lawyer Jaime Barrera.<sup>20</sup> As Mireya Salgado, the daughter of public health physician Eustorgio Salgado, recollected: “In my day we women did not work. There were girls who worked in stores selling fabrics, as vendors, that is all. Today girls become professionals and work in every field. But in my day women who had professional husbands did not work, our work was to stay at home raising our children.”<sup>21</sup>

Salgado dreamed of becoming a physician like her father but did not pursue

postsecondary education. This despite the fact that Salgado came from a family of strong liberal credentials: her father was one of five medical students sponsored by Eloy Alfaro's government to undertake advanced training abroad in the first decade of the twentieth century.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, at the time she was born, her maternal grandfather, Modesto Peñaherrera, was serving as minister of the interior during liberal general Leonidas Plaza's second term as president (1912–16). These anecdotes point toward social patterns that will be explored in later chapters: some of the contradictory experiences for women of having, or not having, male protectors; a changing terrain of opportunities structured by state programs and policies; and overlapping gender models that situated women in a variety of ways, both providing opportunities to maneuver among a range of options and riddling their lives with tensions. Without doubt, the contours of the pressures and limits on women changed, as new opportunities brought with them novel forms of social control.

### **Women's Rights and Women's Opportunities in Political Context**

This book is a study of state formation that conceives of those processes in terms of prosaic, everyday activities that entangle different social groups in a variety of ways. State formation does not start and end with broad political changes. Nonetheless, the larger political framework in Ecuador influenced the processes in important ways. Significant shifts in policy were clearly linked with broader political changes, both because policies toward disadvantaged groups (which were defined to include women in certain political moments) became symbolically important to represent changes in government, and because different political regimes brought new actors into the state, with different perspectives, interests, and lived experiences. Importantly, the historian Valeria Coronel has insisted on the weight of prior social struggles in the negotiations for social rights that occurred in different periods of Ecuadorian history. These were not just benevolent actions on the part of governments—although they were sometimes presented that way by government actors—but rather the result of alliances with and pressures from a variety of social groups.<sup>23</sup> We know more about the struggles of peasants and workers in this regard than of women.<sup>24</sup>

The 1895 Liberal Revolution constituted a fundamental political shift, bringing to power coastal agro-export and commercial elites who generally sought to modernize and open up the economy. They also promoted important social changes associated with the separation of church and state, asserting state control over areas that had previously been managed largely by the Catholic Church (such as education, marriage, civil registry, and social welfare in-

stitutions). While the three decades of liberal political domination (1895–1925) saw a number of internal shifts in political alliances and policy paradigms, another fundamental change came with the 1925 *Revolución Juliana*, when a nationalistic cohort of mid-ranking military officers joined with middle-class professionals to overthrow the liberals in a bloodless coup. The liberal project had wound down, with an economic crisis that led to government indebtedness to private banks in Guayaquil and thus increasing control of this “*bancocracia*” over government policies. A massacre of striking workers in Guayaquil in 1922 powerfully symbolized the displacement of the more radical aspects of the liberal project by repression and corruption. The Juliana governments between 1925 and 1931 engaged in an energetic process of reform, establishing Ecuador’s Central Bank, nationalizing its railway, and passing a number of pieces of social legislation that, for instance, regulated working conditions and institutionalized female suffrage. Their administrative reforms involved coordination and harmonizing of state institutions, including a reorganization of the *Servicio de Sanidad* that moved its main office from Guayaquil to Quito and created provincial delegations to extend public health programs beyond Ecuador’s main cities. Altogether, these reforms produced a more active, interventionist state, one effect of which was the considerable expansion of state employment, especially in Quito.<sup>25</sup> Indeed, by 1936 public employees constituted 16.6 percent of Quito’s economically active population (5,893 people of a total workforce of 34,276 in the city’s overall population of 101,668).<sup>26</sup>

The 1930s saw the advent of a new political environment, with a generalized economic crisis that was matched by an extraordinary degree of political instability: there were fifteen men who passed through the presidential offices in rapid succession in this decade alone. Although this was a “bust” period between Ecuador’s earlier boom of cacao—undermined by the trade disruptions of the First World War and further threatened by crop diseases in the 1920s—and a later boom of banana production that took off in the late 1940s, scholars have proposed a more diverse set of experiences of this period.<sup>27</sup> In a context where global trade was reduced due to the global economic depression, there were efforts to expand industrial production of textiles and other consumer goods. There was also considerable migration to urban areas such as Quito. The decade was marked too by the emergence of populism, based on the social transformations associated with economic change, diversification, and urban growth. In a way, relative political stability emerged at the end of the decade under Carlos Arroyo del Río (1940–44), but the loss of half of Ecuador’s territory to Peru in a 1941 war was one of the catalysts for another political revolution: the *Revolución Gloriosa* of 1944 that brought populist Jose María Velasco Ibarra back to the presidency. In 1948 the election of Galo Plaza Lasso, a mod-

ernizing landowner who was son of liberal president General Leonidas Plaza, initiated an extended phase of political stability, based in part on the consolidation of the banana boom in the 1950s.

While the latter part of the nineteenth century saw a number of shifts in political culture, it has been persuasively argued that in the decades immediately before the 1895 Liberal Revolution, Ecuadorian political discourse conceived of women's roles within the model of Catholic modernity forged by conservative president Gabriel García Moreno, who dominated Ecuadorian political life from 1859 until his assassination in 1875.<sup>28</sup> Unlike other Latin American countries where those decades saw processes of modernization pursued by liberals, García Moreno modernized the state, paradoxically, by tying it more closely to the Catholic Church.<sup>29</sup> In terms of women's contributions to the nation, the reference point of that model was primarily elite women, who were urged to influence the public sphere as "angels of the home," through their private moralizing influence over their sons and husbands.

Following the Liberal Revolution, a very different notion of women's potential contributions was presented by government leaders. President Eloy Alfaro, in an address to Congress on June 13, 1897, set out an ambitious plan to emancipate the female sex: "There is nothing as painful as the condition of the woman in our Patria, where relegated to domestic chores, the sphere of her intellectual activity is extremely limited, and even more narrow is the circle within which she can earn a living independently and honorably. To open new horizons, to include her in work that is compatible with her sex, to call on her to collaborate in the activities of science and art; to broaden, in a word, her field of action, improving her future, is a matter that we should not neglect."<sup>30</sup>

Eloy Alfaro went on to ask:

Why not open to woman the doors of the universities, so she can dedicate herself to the study of scientific professions? Why not provide, similarly, special institutes to train her in trades not incompatible with her sex? Why not give her a role in public employment, again as compatible with her sex? [ . . . ] And do not say, following the selfish pessimism of many, that all of these reforms in the education of the woman will deprive the home of her poetry and tranquility. To the contrary: the educated woman, the woman who knows a trade, the woman who works and acquires experience that gives her a more immediate contact with the real world, far from undermining domestic life, is a great support for the family, and a valuable treasure for the husband because, forging her soul in realism, her ideas about fidelity and honor—her greatest patrimony—become clearer and more perfect, and the moral education that the children of such women receive is therefore more solid.<sup>31</sup>

Eloy Alfaro thus called on the assembly to “perfect the protection that has been initiated by passing laws that emancipate the Ecuadorian woman from the narrow circle in which she lives, and giving her opportunities to raise herself up to a level that will offer her abundant resources for her honorable subsistence.” Convinced of the importance of these issues, he explained that he had already initiated protective measures, hiring women to work in post offices and establishing a training course in telegraphy for señoritas. Indeed, some eighteen months earlier, he had decreed that effective January 1896, women would be hired to serve the public in postal offices in provincial capitals; the postal system would coordinate the sale of stamps, through a position that would be filled by a woman; and classes in telegraphy would be established in Quito and Guayaquil for women, providing them with credentials so that they could then be employed as telegraph operators. As the prologue to the decree explained: “It is the duty of government to improve the condition of the woman, providing her with honorable and decorous work.”<sup>32</sup> This decree came only a few months after the Liberal Revolution and for the first time earmarked positions in the public administration for women.

Now, undoubtedly there is much here that suggests restricted definitions of appropriate forms of work for women. Nonetheless, that should not blind us to two other themes that were very significant in the context of the time. The importance and redemptive potential of *work* in this speech—and particularly the recognition that many women were seeking ways to support themselves honorably—is striking. The central position of women from nonelite sectors in this program of reform is also significant. In 1900 these sentiments were echoed and elaborated on when the minister of public education—key liberal intellectual José Peralta—presented his annual report to Congress. As he explained,

The poor woman needs to create an independent situation for herself through her own work; she needs the workshop to elevate and ennoble herself, and thus to be able to fulfill her responsibilities; she needs an honorable wage which will become the best defense of her virtue and sentinel of her dignity. To redeem the woman by way of work is to moralize society, extirpating vices that are a fatal cancer for the people. To open up to the woman the professions and licit, lucrative industries is to double the nation’s productive forces and to harness a new and enthusiastic factor of national prosperity. And these grand social and economic reforms will not be achieved except through the creation and support of Industrial Schools, through the admission of women to university studies in fields of practical utility, in a word, through the decisive protection of women’s work. Prostitution and pauperism cannot be detained through merely religious fears: women’s virtue will not be preserved simply

through mystical practices. Experience dictates against the pretensions of Theology, and demonstrates the urgent need to place women under the protective shield of work, establishing institutions in which she can learn to earn a living honorably.<sup>33</sup>

The emphasis on work here was consistent with the liberals' emphasis elsewhere on labor issues. In that regard, they established a number of measures to loosen what they saw as traditional, backward, unproductive forms of labor control on highland agricultural estates, partly in an effort to generate flows of labor to coastal agro-export plantations.<sup>34</sup>

These also constituted attacks on the economic and political power of highland landowners, who as a group—although not always individually—were associated with the conservative rule of previous decades, a period that has been glossed by some scholars as characterized by the *estado terrateniente*, the large landowners' state.<sup>35</sup> With their social base in the more outward-oriented coast, the liberals represented their own program of reform as more secular, more modern, more liberating for productive working people of all kinds (implicitly including themselves in this category) and more open to external influence in general and the global economy in particular. Their emphasis in a wide range of areas on the importance of work and effort can be seen as part of the process of forging their own self-representation as economic entrepreneurs whose wealth, unlike traditional highland landowners, was based on effort and ingenuity rather than inheritance (regardless of whether those representations were accurate in individual cases). The liberals' general emphasis on labor issues was also consistent with the reconfiguration of the national population as human capital, which was particularly evident in relation to child health and welfare issues from the 1910s on.

For women the emphasis on the redemptive value of work had a distinctly moral tone, tied directly to preservation of their virtue and honor. In Peralta's comments it is clear how central women were, discursively, to the conflict between the Catholic Church and the liberal state. Key liberal reforms in the separation of church and state included the 1900 Law of Civil Registry in which the state seized control over information about births, marriages, and deaths from the Catholic Church, followed soon thereafter by the Civil Marriage and Divorce Law in 1902.<sup>36</sup> Civil marriage was characterized by the Catholic Church as state-sanctioned concubinage of women. Much worse, consistent with the reconfiguration of marriage as a contract rather than a sacrament, this law made it possible to dissolve the marriage contract. While in general the separation of church and state came later in Ecuador than in many other Latin American countries, Ecuador's divorce law was relatively early compared

with most other countries in the region. The provisions for divorce in the 1902 law followed closely the reasons for which the Catholic Church itself allowed formal separations—infidelity, impotence, or a husband’s attempt to prostitute his wife or children—which no doubt facilitated the law’s passage in Congress. Much more controversial were the proposed 1910 amendments to the divorce law, which provided for divorce by mutual consent; despite heated debates in Congress, the law was ultimately passed.<sup>37</sup>

In 1911 a further law provided a concrete form of economic emancipation to married women: it allowed them to request partial separation of goods, which they could then independently administer. This law referred specifically to wealth brought into the marriage, not wealth gained during the marriage; and it required women to register their intention to separately administer those goods or property with a public notary. Of course, such a law really only applied to women who were in a position to bring some wealth into a marriage. It nonetheless was significant in undermining men’s position as unilateral administrators of household property. Like other aspects of liberal reforms, many of these measures required action from the women involved to make them real and effective, action that surely was often difficult to take. Still, these legislative resources undoubtedly changed the terrain of gender relations in Ecuador. While these various processes were associated with a considerable secularization of social life in the early twentieth century, both the continuing weight of Catholic norms and the continuing participation of Catholic institutions in social policy areas are evident throughout this book.

The chapters explore the social effects of liberal projects and claims to expand women’s opportunities, examining to what extent, and through which means, they became reality, especially in health-related areas. The expansion of state employment for women was based on the expansion of women’s education—as is clear in the comments earlier of Alfaro and Peralta—since it depended on the acquisition of new skills. First it was necessary to establish the legal and institutional conditions for such study, however. In 1895 (just a month after the triumph of the Liberal Revolution) it had taken a presidential decree to recognize the secondary studies that a young Guayaquil woman, Aurelia Palmieri, had completed in 1893, since the Law of Education at the time did not recognize the possibility of women graduating with the high school diploma of *bachiller*.<sup>38</sup> The 1897 Congress formally recognized the right of women to opt for academic diplomas. This led some congressmen to respond to Alfaro’s impassioned 1897 speech rather dismissively, saying they had already remedied the situation.

Indeed, in the 1897 constitution the state generally guaranteed the freedom of education (unlike the arrangements with the Vatican under the 1862 concor-



dat), and made primary education both obligatory and free of charge. The 1897 founding of the Instituto Mejía as a coeducational secondary school was part of this process of establishing state-run secular education for both sexes. The founding of four Normal schools in 1901 (two women's schools in Quito and Guayaquil and two men's schools in Quito and Cuenca), with the purpose ultimately of staffing the expanding public education network, was another important step. For at least some Ecuadorian girls, the rapid growth of that network took education out of the two main venues where women's schooling had been provided until then: within the family and by Catholic religious orders. Secular education was one of the most important achievements of the Liberal Revolution, facilitating both a weakening of the influence of the Catholic Church over society and the dissemination of new skills needed for the modernization of the political and economic systems.<sup>39</sup>

Although this book explores the concrete effects of the expansion of health-care training and careers for women, a quick look at a published source from the era indicates that in other fields, too, liberal claims to favor women's work were not empty words. A review of the information provided in Ecuador's 1909 *Guía comercial, agrícola e industrial* indicates that indeed women were appointed to positions in the postal system, as Eloy Alfaro claimed, particularly in the provinces of Guayas and Pichincha, the sites of Ecuador's two largest cities.<sup>40</sup> In coastal Guayas province, among the personnel of Guayaquil's administrative offices of the postal system, women made up 30 percent of the technical staff who merited being named in the guide, as well as the postal administrator in one of the province's four county post offices. Together these added up to fourteen women, ten of whom were single, two were widows, and only two were married. Although the numbers are small, that does not reduce the social significance of the emergence of these new areas of women's work, in which unattached women held a prominent place. In addition, in Guayaquil's port the entire statistical office of the Customs Service was staffed by "señoritas" (including one widow, who fit uncomfortably in the category of señorita except in the sense that she too lacked a husband), together amounting to another nine named female staff members in the guide.

In Quito, similarly, there were five women in each of the postal offices and mailbag sections of the postal system (in total, eight single women, one widow, and one married woman); another single woman served as one of four county post office administrators. Within the head offices of the institution in Quito, the interpreter in the office of the general director of the postal system was a single woman, and the sole bookkeeper within the accounts department was a married woman. In total, women made up some 45 percent (thirteen of twenty-nine) of the employees of the postal system in Pichincha province who were

mentioned by name in the guide. The general director of the national postal system in 1909, Manuel Stacey, would have been well aware of women's abilities: he was the brother of Rosa Stacey. Unlike in Guayaquil, women had begun to make inroads in the telegraph system in Pichincha province; the telegraph operator in one of the local telegraph offices outside Quito was a single woman.

The guide indicates that women were also appointed in Quito to positions of responsibility within the National Library: they comprised the entire relatively small technical staff of the library, led by the library's director, Señora Zoila Ugarte de Landívar (perhaps best known as editor of Ecuador's first women's magazine, *La mujer*, and for her activities as a writer and a teacher). No doubt it was less controversial to appoint women to positions in institutions like the postal system and library, since these were relatively new forms of work in a process of expansion. They neither took positions away from men, nor had such work already been marked as masculine. Also noteworthy was the establishment of female workplaces, with women grouped together in specific offices within these institutions. In this and subsequent decades, there continued to be concern about women working alongside men, so it was more acceptable to have an entire office made up of women than to have a mixed workplace.

Despite the recollections of Mireya Salgado, there were increasing opportunities for white-collar employment for women, although as Rosa Mena de Barrera suggested obliquely, when women pursued careers they frequently remained single. While teaching was an area of rapid expansion of women's professional work for state institutions, in official references to the kinds of work and study appropriate for women, it is clear that health-care work also seemed particularly well matched to what were considered women's natural abilities. Women were thought to have special skills in areas that involved a combination of caring and technical work. It is striking that the Faculty of Medicine was the only faculty at the Universidad Central that admitted any female students at all until 1936, when a woman enrolled in the first-year program in the Faculty of Law.<sup>41</sup> Within the Faculty of Medicine, women were permitted first to study midwifery (beginning relatively early in the nineteenth century but significantly expanded and regularized in the liberal period), then were accepted into lower-level courses in pharmacy (beginning in 1904), and then began to study nursing (in 1917). Following Matilde Hidalgo's pioneering 1921 graduation as a physician, Lusitania Vivero became the first female doctor of dentistry in 1927.

What was it about medical, and especially paramedical, professions that seemed especially appropriate for women? In 1905, Luis A. Martínez, secretary of public education, phrased it like this in his annual report to Congress: "In the past year on an experimental basis we established a basic course [*curso in-*

*ferior*] in Pharmacy for señoritas. The initial results have surpassed all of the government's expectations, supporting yet again our conviction that the Ecuadorian woman has undeniable aptitudes for applied scientific study. . . . I think it is also necessary to establish in the universities of Quito and Guayaquil a special course for nurses, capable of forming adequate personnel for the service of hospitals and attention to patients, since the lack of knowledge for the appropriate application of the treatments prescribed by physicians can cause lamentable results.<sup>42</sup> While the first nursing classes were not established until 1917, what is evident from an earlier date is that women were considered well adapted to the careful application of knowledge created by others: that is, by men.

Some two decades later, Dr. Enrique Gallegos Anda, professor of clinical medicine at the Universidad Central, clarified some of these notions. In 1925 he was experiencing difficulties in running the Clinical Laboratory in Quito's Hospital Civil San Juan de Dios due to the inconveniences associated with employing male medical students as laboratory assistants. As he explained to the Junta de Beneficencia (the umbrella state organization that oversaw public health-care facilities), such students were not well suited to the work, because they had to leave the laboratory frequently to attend classes and they only took the position on a temporary basis while they completed their studies.<sup>43</sup> He elaborated:

As a result, for some time I have thought that it would be more convenient to employ a woman who could remain all day in the laboratory and continue in the position for many years, which are undoubtedly advantages. Perhaps one might say that a woman has no scientific knowledge; but while it is true that the scientific basis of the work is more or less complicated, the techniques are easy and require only meticulousness, patience and constancy, qualities that without any doubt women possess to a greater degree than do men. It has not escaped my attention that the promiscuous mixing of employees of both sexes presents its inconveniences; but that can be avoided with a careful selection and with the warning that at the first sign of incorrect behavior they will be inexorably dismissed. Besides, when the current first assistant leaves we have already agreed with the Señor Rector of the Universidad that he will be replaced by a señorita; thus soon the two laboratory assistants and the servant will all be of the female sex.

Gallegos went on to explain that a young woman had been assisting at the laboratory on a voluntary basis for several days; it was a common practice when seeking state employment to provide unpaid services for a period to prove one's aptitude. He observed: "She has shown interest in the work, seriousness, and

sufficient intelligence; she has presented very good references as to her conduct; she is a poor and orphaned señorita; and I believe it would be convenient to offer her the position. However, it would be necessary to authorize her to receive her meals in the Hospital, since otherwise with a monthly salary of only 25 sucres no one could satisfy the current necessities of life. Perhaps I should also remind the Honorable Junta that laboratory analysis involves working with saliva, fecal materials, urine, etc., which most people find repugnant, and that it is a true act of abnegation for someone to dedicate themselves to this kind of work.” Many of the issues touched on by Gallegos echo throughout the pages of this book, including women’s aptitude for applied scientific work, the importance of single-sex workplaces, and again the idea that the state should provide employment particularly to unprotected and unattached women.

These points can be further appreciated by examining two snapshots of female employment in state institutions. The first picture comes from a census of the affiliates of the state pension system, *Caja de Pensiones*, which covered professional employees and office workers (the *Caja del Seguro* established in 1937 extended state benefits to additional groups of public and private employees).<sup>44</sup> It is clear that the most important area of government employment for Ecuadorian women was in the expanding education system. By 1935, according to this census, the Ministry of Public Education was the leading employer of women within the national government: 2,040 women worked for this ministry, constituting almost half of its employees; and 1,357 of them, or precisely two-thirds, were single. Some women did continue to work in this profession after marrying: there were 588 married women (29 percent of the female employees) working for this ministry but also 87 widows and 8 divorced women. The Ministry of Public Works, Agriculture, and Development (where postal employees and telegraph and telephone operators worked) was the second largest employer of women within the federal government, with 283 female employees, again about two-thirds of whom were single.

The number of women working for the Ministry of Government and Social Welfare—where women in the allied medical professions would have worked either in medical institutions or in the public health service—paled in comparison: in early 1935 only 111 of the ministry’s 4,723 employees, or 2.4 percent, were female. Of those 111 female employees, 99 or 89.2 percent were single. That is not to say that the remaining 12 were married: while 6 of them were married, 5 were widowed, and 1 was divorced. In other words, 95 percent of female employees in the Ministry of Government and Social Welfare did not have husbands. Although the absolute numbers working in this area were not high, this ministry was the third largest employer of women within the federal government; and these numbers would increase with the establishment just two months later of

a new program of maternal-infant health care, which employed midwives and nurses. In addition to the predominance of women without husbands among government employees, among both federal and municipal employees nationwide, about 11 percent of *single* female employees were supporting dependent children. Not only did government employment provide support for women without male providers; it also allowed them to support other dependents.

A second snapshot of female employment provides additional insight; it comes from a listing of the employees of Quito's Hospital Civil San Juan de Dios in October 1949.<sup>45</sup> Among the seventy-seven employees of the hospital, forty-three were women (56 percent). There were no professional nurses employed by the hospital: the *Hermanas de la Caridad* (Sisters of Charity) who administered the hospital were not considered employees and were not included in this list. Of the forty-three women on the hospital's payroll, only four earned more than 150 sucres per month (which was the recently established minimum government salary), leaving the other thirty-nine with this wage regardless of whether they were laundrywomen, cooks, assistant cooks, nursing aides (*asistentes de sala*), pharmacy assistants, switchboard operators, or the sole female medical intern. Five of the female employees were married, one was a widow, and the other thirty-seven were single. Of those who were supporting their own minor children, four married women and the widow had legitimate children, the other married woman had two legitimate children and an illegitimate daughter, and four single women had illegitimate children. Interestingly, the latter included the female medical intern: at the time she would have been about thirty-four years old, having persisted in her medical studies despite interruptions—perhaps related precisely to her pregnancy outside of marriage—which did not stop her from becoming one of Ecuador's first twenty female physicians.<sup>46</sup>

Some female employees were also supporting two elderly parents (in two cases), or just their mothers (three women, one of whom also supported two nieces). Some maintained other family members, such as the woman who supported three minor siblings, another who supported four cousins, one who supported her six-year-old sister, and another who supported a twenty-five-year-old unmarried sister. These situations suggest that women employed in state institutions were able to take on support of otherwise unprotected dependents (some of whom may have been orphaned). Dependents might include minor male or female children, unmarried female relatives of any age, and elderly parents. The legislation did not seem to contemplate the possibility that a woman might define a husband as a dependent. Still, it is striking that this legislation was not simply used to enforce the boundaries of legitimately constituted nuclear families. Rather, it formally recognized a wider family network,

including practices such as economic support for cousins and nieces as well as for illegitimate children. The names of these dependents were included in this document precisely because as recognized dependents of employees, the latter had the right to claim certain state benefits for them.

This discussion of political and social rights suggests that in Ecuador there was a strange mix of early achievements for women in some areas and quite late achievements in others. The vote came to women early in Ecuador, yet in the absence of a female suffrage movement. Divorce, too, came early, although again without significant female participation in the debate. In contrast, professional education came late. Matilde Hidalgo was not only the first female physician but the first university graduate in any field who completed the same curriculum as men did.<sup>47</sup> Twenty years earlier in Argentina a female physician had written a 1901 doctoral dissertation about feminism, following an undergraduate thesis in the early 1890s on women's health.<sup>48</sup> Female university graduation came much earlier in the southern cone, and these are early dates unparalleled in Ecuador for discussions of both feminism and women's health. Brazil's first female physicians and lawyers completed their training as early as the 1880s, although the historian Susan Besse has pointed out that few actually practiced their professions given the social obstacles to doing so. It was only in 1899, for instance, that a female lawyer was first permitted to defend a client in a Brazilian court.<sup>49</sup>

Some of the profound processes of social change that affected some other Latin American countries in the early twentieth century—with important implications for women's roles—were less evident in Ecuador. These included the industrialization of the southern cone countries that drew large numbers of women into factory work (directly prompting questions about their economic rights), large-scale European immigration to Argentina and Uruguay, and political changes such as the Mexican Revolution. In those countries feminist movements emerged to press for specific kinds of women's rights. Explicit discussion of feminism was strikingly absent in Ecuador. There was little in the way of organized feminist movements and no female political parties as there were in countries like Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay. Indeed, while there was some tentative participation in public discourse by female writers and teachers, there was little such participation by female medical and paramedical professionals, with the exception of Matilde Hidalgo. This should not lead us to think, however, that such women did not participate in Ecuadorian political processes. Rather, a review of primary archival sources shows the importance of their participation in the modernization of key services offered by the Ecuadorian state.

This strange combination of achievements that came early to Ecuadorian

women with achievements that came late poses a puzzle: was it simply that leading state actors granted Ecuadorian women rights without any kind of action on their part? Ecuadorian historiography has emphasized, for instance, that female suffrage may have been promoted by conservatives working under the assumption that women tended to be more conservative than men and therefore that this would shore up conservative power.<sup>50</sup> The historian Raquel Rodas has contested this interpretation, pointing out that Zoila Ugarte wrote publicly in support of women's suffrage when it was under discussion by the 1910 Congress, and in 1924 Congress received three petitions signed by women urging a consideration of female suffrage.<sup>51</sup> Still, these efforts did not add up to a collective movement. Eloy Alfaro, too, seems to have provided opportunities to women in the absence of a sustained movement that demanded them. Situations of this kind may have been what Ecuadorian literary figure Piedad Larrea Borja had in mind when she wrote in 1943 that:

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. This liberated the woman both from the degrading attitude of the slave, and from the anti-aesthetic combative attitude. Ecuadorian feminism never suffered the horrible extreme: the masculine haircut, sunglasses and gym shoes. . . . Women of yesterday's generation . . . arrived naturally, elegantly, in the field of intelligence in all of its manifestations. And it was thanks to the serene grace of this attitude that prejudices were erased that had been deeply rooted in our medium. Softly, without the fatigue of dubious, repetitious speeches . . . , they demonstrated that the glory of contemplation, of knowledge and of work need not destroy the charms of personalities formed in the attributes of true femininity.<sup>52</sup>

Some of the struggles engaged in by the women considered here suggest against the ease of access to public space portrayed by Piedad Larrea. The quotation does, however, capture nicely the conundrum they faced of how to pursue new opportunities without contravening gendered codes of behavior. The full history of women's struggles for social rights is yet to be written in Ecuador. This book nonetheless aims to offer insight into questions such as: What was the lived experience of the women who took advantage of new opportunities? And how did their actions transform those projects?

Certainly Ecuador—especially in the highlands—has been seen as a deeply traditional and conservative society, and in Quito in the early twentieth century it was still the case for women from elite families that attending mass was the most acceptable reason to leave the confines of the home. Women who

began to publish their thoughts in venues such as the woman's magazine *La mujer* (founded in 1905) focused on how women might contribute to the nation in ways consistent with their special qualities as members of the fair sex.<sup>53</sup> The covers of the magazine are striking in their depictions of women holding books, richly evoking their intellectual inclinations but also portraying the serenity and grace that Piedad Larrea highlighted.<sup>54</sup> Some of the women involved in that literary and journalistic work were also active in women's education. As teachers, they participated in a female public sphere where women worked together to plan curriculum, write textbooks, and participate in female workplaces. This book looks beyond the small group of women who were publishing their ideas, to examine, through archival documents of institutions that intervened in women's lives or in which women studied or worked, groups of women who did not write publicly but nonetheless participated in political processes and projects. In so doing, they stretched their limits. While the research results offered here are partial given that gender history is still relatively undeveloped in Ecuador, the use of institutional archives does reveal dimensions of women's actions and experiences that are not currently well known.

### **Frameworks, Perspectives, and Sources**

The areas examined include different kinds of intimate activity: child rearing, sexuality, birthing, and nursing, which involved care and treatment of other people's bodies. The Foucauldian concepts of biopolitics and governmentality illuminate these processes, drawing our attention to the highly political and power-laden ways that administrative practices and policies were forged in these areas of bodily activity. In a relatively early formulation, Foucault characterized biopolitics as focusing on "the species body, the body imbued with the mechanics of life and serving as the basis of the biological processes: propagation, births and mortality, the level of health, life expectancy and longevity, with all the conditions that can cause these to vary. Their supervision was effected through an entire series of interventions and regulatory controls: a biopolitics of the population."<sup>55</sup>

Foucault contrasted this biopolitics of regulation that operated at the level of population with anatomo-politics, the disciplining of individual bodies again with attention to what he called the processes of life. One might expect that child welfare and health, in which children were seen as human capital, would involve biopolitics, while policies around sexuality might constitute anatomo-politics. However, the specific ways that venereal disease control programs operated articulated notions of danger to the nation rather more than intimate regulation of sexual life with an individual focus. In any case, for Foucault an important shift in forms of governing came with the move from sover-



eign power where the sovereign exercised the right over death, the right to kill, to biopolitics where power operated diffusely via the administration of bodies and the calculated management of life. Increasingly these ideas came together in his concept of governmentality, where power is deployed via the “conduct of conduct.”<sup>56</sup>

A key insight of Foucault and his followers is that state formation involves not only repressive mechanisms of policing and disciplining but also the more productive processes of management of the population. One significant dimension of how this is accomplished is when people internalize norms in such a way that they become self-regulating subjects.<sup>57</sup> As the historian Paulo Drinot has recently argued for neighboring Peru, the management of the population is more successful at sites where the interests and aspirations of the population come to be aligned with those of state agencies (although this may also generate discontent where programs fail to deliver).<sup>58</sup> This is especially clear when new opportunities were offered to women who already had a yearning for intellectual and professional challenges. But even Quito’s antivenereal programs entangled women in quite specific ways, offering them new means to identify themselves as responsible members of society even though they were in the vulnerable position of having to prostitute themselves to survive economically. It was the partial alignment between state projects and individual aspirations that enabled novel forms of behavior in the context of a range of new choices, although those alignments were both unstable and had unintended consequences.

The concept of reproductive governance also offers useful ways to ground these issues, as it points to constellations or assemblages of specific institutions and actors who intervened in these areas. The anthropologists Lynn Morgan and Elizabeth Roberts have defined reproductive governance as “the mechanisms through which different historical configurations of actors—such as state institutions, churches, donor agencies and NGOs—use legislative controls, economic inducements, moral injunctions, direct coercion and ethical enticements to produce, monitor and control reproductive behaviors and practices.”<sup>59</sup> An exploration of some of the everyday engagements with and consequences of these projects helps to inject a sense of the contingent, partial, and negotiated nature of such interventions into Foucault’s diffuse notion of power. Moreover, those negotiations were not only between the clients of state programs and those who designed and operated them. Many other negotiations occurred, including both within and between state institutions. For instance, the terrain on which child welfare programs were delivered was an intensely populated and heavily contested one.

While “the state” insinuated itself into people’s lives, it certainly didn’t

succeed in fully determining how they lived or saw the world. In the early-twentieth-century Ecuadorian highlands, even in the urban center of Quito, there was not the intense “statization” of everyday life that scholars have identified for North American and European countries.<sup>60</sup> Ecuadorian state agencies’ success at monitoring and intervening in people’s lives was quite partial. Not only were state agencies underfunded and competing with other forms of social control, but also people often experienced the world in ways that were in tension with dominant representations and could not be contained by them. At the same time, new state programs and agencies did succeed in aligning themselves with the aspirations of some Ecuadorian women, who as a group had not previously been taken into account significantly in political discourse and in and by public administration. Those programs helped to generate new aspirations in those they engaged, but the programs and agencies were also changed via those engagements.

Studies in both the anthropology and historical sociology of the state have emphasized the everyday and mundane character of the activities through which state formation occurs.<sup>61</sup> Moreover, they have challenged dominant representations of the separateness and neutrality of the state, which is often portrayed in spatial terms as standing above and apart and then acting on society.<sup>62</sup> Increasingly, ethnographic studies have explored the specific ways that those images have been socially and politically constructed, as an element in the cultural construction of stateness, turning an analytical eye on how the state comes to seem present and real to people.<sup>63</sup> Other studies have highlighted the often blurred boundaries between state and society.<sup>64</sup> In Ecuador, state and society were intimately intertwined in a range of ways in different program areas. This occurred in arenas like child protection, where a complex constellation of public and semiprivate institutions participated and in which state actors themselves might also take on allied roles as private individuals. In another example, midwives brought their social backgrounds into their work activities for the public health service in ways that changed the delivery of its programs, and physicians with whom they interacted also brought their own gendered and class assumptions to their interpretation of midwives’ activities. In myriad ways “the state” showed itself to be an assemblage of multiple agencies with often conflicting agendas, and even within a single state institution it was not unusual for employees to be pulling programs in different directions. Informed by an eclectic mix of studies of state formation and power relations, the book’s primary goal is to deepen our understanding of Ecuadorian society rather than to refine our understanding of theoretical concepts.

A recurring theme, in common with other studies of gender history, is honor. While this is not a theme that initially guided my research, the evidence

of its importance could not be ignored. There is a large literature on honor, some of which links the importance of this notion in Latin America to Mediterranean cultural heritage. Recent studies have explored the ways that notions of honor are colored by various class experiences.<sup>65</sup> Works that have scrutinized the meaning of honor in specific historical contexts and emphasized change over time have also furthered our understanding considerably.<sup>66</sup> For instance, in a study of the late colonial and independence period in Quito, the historian Chad Black has shown how quickly the social relevance of notions of honor could change.<sup>67</sup>

Following the 1765 Rebellion of the Barrios, when popular groups rose up against Bourbon tax reforms, there was a concerted effort by colonial administrators to exert control over popular neighborhoods by regulating private life. New state agents and legal frameworks were developed that allowed people to denounce moral violations of their neighbors and permitted state entry into private residences to police such behaviors. No doubt this was simply another set of tools that could be used when people came into dispute, but it is striking how often it was used, and the extent to which it was gendered. Black's analysis of arrest statistics and court cases reveals an intensified surveillance of women's bodies and sexual behaviors, activated by accusations against their honor, which were central to the exertion of monarchical state control over popular neighborhoods. In the 1820s, as Ecuador was caught up in the uneven process of gaining its full independence, these frameworks were transformed again. While local officials were charged with monitoring public morals in a range of ways, sexual improprieties were specifically excluded from this list as domestic spaces were reconstructed as private and inviolable. Although women were not arrested nearly as often for moral improprieties in this decade, they also lost the mechanisms for redressing their partners' infidelities and mistreatment, as a new private sphere of gender and sexuality was constructed. Black's work reminds us that notions of honor and morality are far from timeless and are linked to political changes and state practices. Evoking a shared cultural heritage thus does not go very far in explaining the social significance of honor for people of different social groups in particular moments.

In the early twentieth century, Ecuadorian men served as guarantors and protectors of their women's honor, whether of daughters, wives, or sisters, and indeed they had legal responsibility for their women. The prevalence of this value within the elite could be institutionalized in laws and state practices, both concrete ways that dominant groups projected their values over other social groups. While the theme of honor appears repeatedly, it does so in a very specific way. To access particular kinds of government resources—from placements for one's children in institutions of care, to scholarships, to employ-

ment, to being removed from a prostitution registry, and more—women had to prove that they were honorable and therefore deserving of support. What did this mean for the kinds of women who populate this book's social landscape? Most important, how was honor preserved or proven when men were absent from women's family lives? Although the images of proper womanhood emphasized women's role as wives and mothers, there were in fact large numbers of women who were neither and many others who were the latter without being the former.

The apparent prevalence of such unattached women in the archival materials is borne out by the data collected in Ecuador's first national census, taken in 1950. The census showed, for instance, that while women married younger than men, they were less likely to remarry if they were widowed or divorced. Among elderly Ecuadorians, there were many more widowed women than men, both because men more often remarried and because of women's longer life expectancy. Among Ecuadorians age eighty-five and older in 1950, 55.8 percent of men were married but only 18.3 percent of women. Women without partners accumulated in older age groups. However, they also accumulated in urban areas. By the time age eighty-five was reached, almost a quarter of urban women were single—that is, they had never married. Similarly, about a quarter of urban women in the thirty to thirty-four age group were single in 1950, suggesting that the likelihood of ever marrying dropped sharply after age thirty. The census also indicated a disproportion of women of an economically productive age in urban areas, most markedly in Quito. This was due to short-range migration strategies, which led demographer John Saunders to conclude that rural-urban migration was primarily a female phenomenon in Ecuador.<sup>68</sup> There were also two male migration streams clearly evident by 1950: from the highlands to coast and from the highlands to the Amazon, both considered longer-distance migration strategies. The result was that by 1950 there was a surplus of women in urban areas in the highlands in general, and as Saunders noted: "Quito particularly appears to be a mecca for the female population in the productive ages."<sup>69</sup> This information helps to contextualize the large number of women who appear in this book who did not have male partners.

The census also showed that while there was a slightly greater tendency for both men and women to be single in the coastal provinces than in the highlands, much more marked was the large proportion of common-law or consensual unions on the coast compared to the highlands. In coastal provinces 26.2 percent of men and 27.1 percent of women were living in common-law relationships, while in the highlands the percentages for each group were 2.1 and 2.4 (although it is possible that consensual unions were underreported by those enumerated given the relative social stigma of such unions in the highlands).

On the coast the number of persons living in common-law unions was in fact greater than those formally married. This indicates a considerable difference in attitudes toward marriage in these two regions of the country, undoubtedly linked in part to the historical influence of the Catholic Church on highland society compared to the coast. Saunders further noted that subsequent data indicated that across the national territory, 33.1 percent of all Ecuadorians born in 1955 were illegitimate; however, the overall proportion of couples living in common-law marriages was only 11.9 percent, which he identified as a significant discrepancy. On the coast, where slightly more than a quarter of all men and women of marriageable age were living in common-law relationships, the proportion of births registered as illegitimate was twice that, at 56.5 percent. In the highlands, however, while only slightly more than 2 percent of men and women of marriageable age had common-law partners, it was more striking that over 14 percent of all births were illegitimate.<sup>70</sup> The figures suggest that many such children were not born into sustained relationships.

Given the significant numbers of unattached women, then—including many who might have children to support—just how did such women demonstrate that they were honorable? Social capital was crucial in doing so. The sociologist Pierre Bourdieu defined social capital as social obligations, networks, connections that could sometimes be converted into other forms of capital (economic and cultural).<sup>71</sup> In Ecuador, in the first half of the twentieth century, it was a routine part of seeking government services to provide certificates from respectable men vouching for the honor of the female petitioners. In such certificates, hard work and support of children (or other dependents, including elderly parents) were presented as measures of women's honor, notions that appear to have been shared to some extent by the women themselves and their sponsors. For women of the popular sectors (a general social category including all those whose economic situation was not secure, regardless of specific livelihood activities), this required cross-class as well as cross-gender social networks, which were often readily available as Quito had limited spatial social segregation in the early twentieth century. Not only was there considerable residential mixing in Quito's colonial center, but many poor women provided domestic service in elite or middle-class homes.<sup>72</sup>

Large houses in the center of Quito were often inhabited by wealthy families in one wing and included additional patios off of which poor families rented rooms; first-floor rooms facing onto the street might also serve as commercial venues. This began to change with the geographic expansion of Quito as the twentieth century progressed, including the construction of new residential neighborhoods for the wealthy and middle classes to the north of the old city center and the increasing settlement of the poor population to the south.

Certainly notions of honor and morality took on different shadings when they were articulated by and around poor women seeking help for their children, women seeking a change in their status in the prostitution registry, women who became midwives, and young women traveling to Quito to live apart from their families as they trained to become nurses. Still, all of these women in different ways had to prove their honorability, although many of them could not recur to the easiest answer: that a man both supported them economically and was in a position to guarantee their conduct. To provide any answer at all, they needed to draw on wider social networks of male sponsors.

Historians have found the records of courts and notaries to be useful for examining gendered rights and perspectives. Court records can be used to trace not only patterns of infractions and changing definitions of what constituted a crime, but also the ways that women and men used civil courts to defend their reputations. Notaries produce documents around land transfers, divisions of property, and inheritance that reveal gendered economic rights. The documentation that underlies this analysis is different. The detailed, everyday correspondence within and between state institutions reveals a world of contradictions in their operations, intentions that pulled in different directions, and both the processes underlying policy formation and the difficulties encountered in implementing programs. The principal archives drawn on are of the Servicio de Sanidad and the Junta de Beneficencia/Asistencia Pública (Social Welfare Board) and to a lesser extent the documentation of Quito's public Hospital San Juan de Dios. These sources were then enriched with documentation of the Faculty of Medicine at the Universidad Central and administrative documents of the National Nurses School, both important venues where female medical professionals trained.

This project grew in an organic way, as surprises evoked at one archive suggested interesting new routes through other archives to answer emerging questions. Historical anthropology, like anthropology itself, is especially open to seeing what the evidence suggests rather than following predetermined questions. Anthropology characteristically works up from social data rather than down from theoretical debates, following an inductive model. Anthropologists have long distinguished, too, between *etic* and *emic* research strategies, where the *etic* approach seeks to understand patterns in the evidence that may not be apparent to anthropological or historical subjects themselves, while the *emic* approach aims to capture people's own experiences and understandings. I move between both approaches, although it is admittedly more difficult to capture women's own perspectives from this kind of documentation.

The historical anthropologist Ann Stoler has identified a series of ways that one can do ethnography in and of the archives, suggesting especially that "the

ethnographic space of the archive resides in the disjuncture between prescription and practice, between state mandates and the maneuvers people made in response to them, between normative rules and how people actually lived their lives.”<sup>73</sup> There are myriad examples of those kinds of disjuncture. At the same time, the analysis also explores how those state mandates and normative rules emerged, sometimes out of intense discussion and negotiation and often in rather nonlinear ways, full of stops and starts, advances and reversals. In other cases there was no discussion, with state actors simply invoking and institutionalizing what seemed obvious to them and their peers.

One issue that was apparently obvious to leading state actors in highland Ecuador in the first half of the twentieth century was that none of the forms of government monitoring of, intervening in, or enabling intimate life explored in this book were relevant to indigenous women. While in this pre-census era indigenous people were believed to constitute about 40 or 50 percent of the national population, most of them living in the highlands, the absence of indigenous women from the various policy areas considered is striking. As the anthropologist Mercedes Prieto has argued, indigenous people were an important object of observation, analysis, and imagination among Ecuadorian intellectuals and politicians throughout the early part of the twentieth century, although the ways in which they were perceived changed over that period.<sup>74</sup> The historian Marc Becker has noted that within the history of the Ecuadorian left, too, indigenous activists and labor organizers—including illiterate peasant women such as Dolores Cacuangó—held a central role, from at least the 1920s.<sup>75</sup> As the historian Erin O’Connor has pointed out, however, when Ecuadorian liberals wrote, spoke, and developed policy toward two disadvantaged groups—women and indigenous people—often indigenous women specifically were discursively erased from these processes, as liberal forms of paternalism overlapped with indigenous Andean gendered understandings to create dueling patriarchies that marginalized indigenous women.<sup>76</sup>

In the institutions and policies developed to address infant morbidity and mortality, seen as threats to future national prosperity, indigenous populations or individuals were rarely mentioned; as the anthropologist Esben Leifsen has argued, the population on which the nation’s future was thought to rely was an urban and mestizo population, precisely what was considered the “national” population.<sup>77</sup> The Sanidad’s maternal-infant health program established in 1935 also was not extended into rural areas to include indigenous populations, and given that a state midwife could only be in one place at a time, it was mostly limited to women of modest resources who sought their services in provincial cities. However, it is also evident that these services were of less interest to women in smaller population centers, where midwives found it more difficult

to recruit clients for this state program. Neither the midwifery nor nursing programs offered by the Universidad Central had indigenous women among their students during the first half of the twentieth century. Entry to those programs required basic education and rural populations and the poor population—and women in particular in both of these groups—were considerably less likely to be literate.<sup>78</sup>

The disregard for indigenous women in social policy areas likely resulted from their association with rurality, a space primarily of interest to dominant groups in the form of productive resources or male labor. O'Connor notes, too, that the liberal period saw a masculinization of the ways that indigenous communities could communicate and interact with state institutions and agents. At the same time, indigenous communities had their own practices that shielded indigenous women from some forms of interaction with the state, including greater community protection for women experiencing conjugal violence and generally greater ability to withdraw from dysfunctional relationships so that it was less necessary to turn to state institutions for protection. As indigenous men began to embark on labor migrations out of their communities as the twentieth century progressed, indigenous women became even more tied to rural areas as they took on additional subsistence work that would allow their families to cobble together a livelihood that included subsistence agriculture and wage work, often straddling different regions of the country. They increasingly became the gendered guardians of indigenous identity as they maintained indigenous ties to the countryside and to community life in an era of considerable social change affecting these communities.<sup>79</sup>

While Stoler has highlighted for the colonial archive ways that silences were actively produced about some areas of social life, evidence was not found in the Ecuadorian archives of a deliberate erasing of indigenous women from the policy areas considered. They simply were not taken into account as significant social actors in the health-related areas explored here, suggesting an even more profound marginalization of this population in the early twentieth century. State projects oriented specifically toward indigenous women date to a later period, such as the projects of the *Misión Andina* in rural areas in the 1950s.<sup>80</sup> With the move toward agrarian reform from the 1960s, additional state programs began to target rural communities, where indigenous women had become increasingly important actors with the seasonal migrations of community men. If the various processes discussed here made urban mestiza women amenable to state action in a variety of ways, one could also say that in the first half of the twentieth century the lives of indigenous women were simply not as knowable, and as actionable, by the state.