

Health via consumption: the idealized representation of housewives, mothers, and wives in household economics manuals and magazine advertisements in *O Cruzeiro* and *Manchete*, 1940-1960*

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Abstract

The relationship between the representation of the idealized woman in the household economics manuals and the female figures of the advertisements published in *O Cruzeiro* and *Manchete* magazines between the 1940s and 1960s is analyzed. With different editorial proposals, manuals and magazines were predominantly directed at women who performed the duties of wife, housewife, mother and maid. Despite this clear definition of roles, there existed some tension around the female figure who was no longer tied to the home and already occupied jobs in the public sphere. Consumption became the common denominator among these different women. The new products guaranteed health, comfort and practicality to all concerned.

Keywords: consumption; health;
publicity; press; household economics
manuals.



“It’s the time to ‘relax’... when a ‘housewife’ can forget her routine, the weariness of her daily chores ... when she can distract herself by reading the ‘O Cruzeiro’, her favorite magazine ... this is when a ‘housewife’ is at her most receptive and your advertisement attains all of its objectives” (O Cruzeiro, 12 jan. 1963, p.98; highlighted in the original text). Based on this excerpt taken from a targeted advertisement published in the *O Cruzeiro* magazine, we may identify three points that, in general terms, characterize, urban Brazil throughout the decades between 1940 and 1960: the consolidation of a consumer goods market and a national industrial park; the modernization and professionalization of the press (publicity and journalism) and women as being the key-element for receiving and adopting these consumer goods.

The advertisements analyzed here were all published in two weekly magazines with the largest circulation in the country, namely the *O Cruzeiro* and *Manchete* magazines. Both publications were targeted at a varied audience: men and women from different age groups. These magazines addressed issues that ranged from politics, science and technology to health, fashion, and cookery, amongst others. With a weekly print run of nearly 600,000 copies, the advertisers vied with one another for up to one year before the publication date to obtain space on the back cover of *O Cruzeiro* (Accioly Neto, 1998). Until the end of the 1950s, the *O Cruzeiro* magazine was the print medium with the highest number of advertisements in Brazil (Ribeiro, 2007). *Manchete* magazine, launched in 1952, was based on the *O Cruzeiro* format. However, once the initial launch phase was over, the former soon surpassed the latter, using a new print format to make a magazine: articles consisted of two or three “lively” pages rather than extensive reports of 24 pages; large photographic images and high-quality texts (Bloch, 2008, p.175-176). Whatever was published in a magazine, be it in the format that was used to discuss different topics, in articles or publicity advertisements, was designed to present an ideal style or standard of life. According to the advertisements, good health could be acquired by means of new products derived from an industrial park that was seeking to consolidate itself.

During this period, women were offered a whole range of products, resulting from a process to establish a consumer market that had first begun to be constructed at the end of the nineteenth century. In her multiple, though well-defined roles, such as that of a housewife, mother and wife, a woman was also given the responsibility of looking after family hygiene. These new household “wonders” were offered to this specific sector of the population through a modernized media, by increasing the print run of newspapers and magazines and improving the quality of print.

Successfully published since the beginning of the twentieth century, household economics manuals continued to circulate throughout this period and, now modernized and in keeping with social changes, they set out to teach women how to administer a home in a rational and scientific way. The message was clear: these new appliances, produced by the electronic, chemical and pharmaceutical industry, helped women to carry out their domestic duties, making these less laborious, more practical, hygienic and sanitized (Kobayashi, Hochman, 2016).

Hygiene products and educational guidance about how to administer a home had already been available since the end of the nineteenth century, when housewives were seen as the central focus of attention for the endorsement marketing of hygiene-based

products, for both the home and the body. During this same period and, especially, in the United States, women, who were seen as “household scientists,” sought to modernize and rationalize domestic work, by incorporating new products as well as by rapidly appropriating information and discussions present in the field of medicine and science (Tomes, 1998). A culture of hygiene was therefore established over time, which valued cleanliness and home organization in a rationalized way. This culture became increasingly linked to the view that it was possible to have access to a healthy and modern world via consumption. Cleanliness and health could be bought.

This process accelerated at the time of Second World War. The image of a woman as the manager of domestic life equipped with the latest chemical, electrical and electronic appliances that could produce health and comfort, gained centrality both in the press and in advertising. In the minds of the urban middle class, science and rationality represented the new requirements needed to administer the ideal home. Thus, new attributes were demanded of women, which moreover required a higher level of education. Nevertheless, these positive new traits continued to confine women to their place as a wife/mother/housewife. These tensions related to traditional feminine roles, were apparent in the pages of magazines and household economics manuals.

Based on these considerations, the aim of this article is to analyze the relationship between the way an ideal woman is represented¹ in household economics manuals and the feminine image as seen in advertisements of the time. The former were predominately targeted at married women or those who were about to be married, to serve as an educational guide to the performance of domestic tasks and in the administration of a marital relationship. Advertisements shown in the illustrated magazines, *O Cruzeiro* and *Manchete*, were aimed at a range of different types of women, with emphasis on housewives, wives and mothers. The sources used are in printed form, namely advertisements and articles published in the weekly magazines, *O Cruzeiro* and *Manchete*, which addressed issues of feminine health and care in relation to the home and family, as well as based on household economics manuals.

In sequence, I highlight issues addressed in these manuals, especially with respect to behavioral aspects related to the husband and family and the valorization of household appliances as aids to carry out tasks, as well as to maintain family health. The kitchen receives special attention in this work. Between the decades of the 1940s and 1960s, this was the area where gender issues were clearly delimited. Furthermore, model American kitchens were seen as symbols of the power and influence of the United States in the middle of the Cold War. I then present the (idealized) types of women that appear in these advertising campaigns, with special emphasis on advertisements for sanitary pads, as promoted at the time, as well as the health-related arguments used when offering such products and the attempt made to conciliate the tension that existed in relation to the feminine image, which were increasingly gaining public space.

Rationalization in the household: lessons in home economics

Between 1940 and 1960, women were taught how to perform domestic tasks in a scientific manner. To guide them, the household economists adopted the principles of scientific

administration as proposed by Frederick Taylor. This theory, now known as Taylorism, was originally applied to industrial activities, with a view to controlling and rationalizing the movements of workers in a systematic and rationalized way to eliminate time wasting (Moraes Neto, 1986, p.32). The definition given in the household economics manual, published in *Problemas do lar* (Problems of the home), stated that this discipline was a: "Set of rules for the rationalization of the domestic division of labor" (Prestes, 1945, p.25).

This same publication encapsulated the questions that should be included in household economics: "Guidelines for choosing a home; guidelines for setting up a home; guidelines for maintaining a home; guidelines for maintaining good health; guidelines for a good social education; and guidelines for moral education" (Prestes, 1945, p.25). These manuals described themselves as "household encyclopedias," as guidelines for "steps to be taken by a young housewife from the day of her wedding" (Lar..., 1947, p.5).

Irrespective of whether or not these were directed towards housewives or school course students, the content of these manuals revolved around similar issues: home economics; food and nutrition; the culinary arts; the home; fashion or clothing; childcare or how to look after children; hygiene and nursing; the latest equipment (household appliances); domestic expenses; buying goods via installment buying; behavioral guidance, amongst others (Serrano, 1945; Prestes, 1945; Lar..., 1947; Albuquerque, 1951).

Childcare and looking after children had already begun to be taught at the beginning of the twentieth century, following precepts indicated by medicine, that is to say, by science. Like domestic work, maternity was also regarded as a scientific activity. Women's magazines in the 1920s were one of the means used to publicize this new form of maternity, through articles, teaching routine tasks to mothers, such as how to give a child a bath following principles taught by doctors (Freire, 2014). These lessons also represented the legitimacy of doctors themselves as councilors to the mothers, who, when adhering to the scientific practices dictated by medicine, abandoned the "old ideas," now seen as 'backward,' and tradition," and adopted "the new scientific techniques, which represented modernity and progress" (p.983). At the same time, the application of scientific maternity made it possible for women to practice domestic science, as doctors' assistants, "and still project themselves into the public arena as professionals, especially in the field of nutrition, which contributed towards ... improving the feminine condition as a whole" (p.989).

The aim of establishing domestic economy courses and disciplines was to prepare women to fulfill their domestic functions as the mainstay of the family unit, which was seen as the central institution of an industrial society. Home economy emerged as a reaction to young women leaving home to go straight into the workplace, unprepared to perform domestic tasks. Furthermore, at the beginning of the twentieth century, these tasks were more complex, involving new machinery and new technologies, which demanded greater knowledge in comparison to women of the previous generation. Being a mother also became a "different duty, inasmuch as a woman worked outside the home" (Louro, Meyer, 1996, p.139).

These manuals, used here as a source of information, offered evidence, not only of how homes should be organized, but also about the different types of relationships that should

be established between married partners and the clear division of roles that exist between a couple. A woman, in her private life, looked after her family and husband. A man, given the role of provider, was responsible for supporting the family. In the 1945 edition of the manual called *Minha casa* (My home), written by Isabel Serrano, the first section was dedicated to the family, discussing how important both this and the home were for a woman and, in particular, portraying the husband as the leader of the household and of the wife herself. Only he was capable of advising her, educating her and perfecting her both morally and intellectually. According to this manual, the happiness of a home depended on a woman's capacity to resign and submit herself. The author, who published other similar manuals, gave the following advice "a wife should know to keep quiet when her husband is angry, to give up small habits, give in to a whim, to keep someone at a distance, to arrive home before her husband returns from work" (Serrano, 1945, p.17). Serrano further states that these "sacrifices" in no way change a feminine personality nor do they diminish her value as a woman" (p.18). According to this manual, providing material comfort was a man's responsibility, while paid work carried out by a woman could only be tolerated when it became a necessity. In the explanation provided by the manual itself, paid female work was only acceptable if required to meet a couple's financial needs, or on such occasions when a man could not fulfill his role as provider. Serrano criticized women who worked outside the home because of their personal whims, or for "the pleasure of going out every day and having the financial means to obtain condemnable/deplorable luxuries and non-essential fripperies" (p.44).

This critique shows that women were no longer simply performing the tasks of a housewife, mother and wife. The substance itself of different editions of this same manual also pointed in the same direction. An example of this can be found in the second edition of the *Minha casa* manual, printed in 1949. In this, family-related topics include: "Courtesy between spouses;" "A husband's social position;" "A true lady (congeniality, sincerity, simplicity and serenity);" "Jealousy" and "Luxury" (Serrano, 1949, p.58-60). These items reinforce the argument that it was necessary to keep women concentrated – exclusively – on domestic services, maintaining a posture of submission and resignation.

Despite defending the traditional roles of men as providers and leaders, and of women as being solely devoted to their home and their husbands, this attempt at indoctrination reminds us of the opposite: the insurrection, albeit discreet, of women. This insurrection was nothing new. At the end of the nineteenth century, women of the elite fought for the right to vote and to hold elected office. An example of this was the suffragette movement, led by Bertha Lutz. Classified as "well-behaved feminism," these women claimed the right to participate in political life without, however, defying male dominance. Another heterogeneous group formed by intellectualized, anarchist and working-class women, had a more radical position "when faced with what they identified as being male domination." They also discussed such delicate issues as sexuality and divorce (Pinto, 2003). In the home economics manuals, what one sees is better-behaved forms of insurrection in the insertion of chapters dealing with jealousy, which taught couples how they could maintain a courteous relationship, or the examples that women should follow. Although the marriage models described in the household economics manuals are similar to the formal unions of colonial

times, where the power of decision lay with the husband, seen as the “protector” and “provider” of the home and the woman as administrator of the home and of the “family’s moral health” (Samara, 2002, p.32), young and single women began to occupy paid work spaces “on a massive scale” outside the home in the manufacturing industry. Meanwhile, by combining the functions of a mother and housewife, married women also began to contribute towards the family budget by performing domestic services, without having to leave their homes (p.35). In other words, despite the fact that a man was still – formally – the holder of privileges related to the family in the legal sense, in practice, women were also agents in the domestic area and in the household budget.

New sociability habits also seemed to threaten the education of children. Serrano (1945, p.25) lamented the fact that modern education and the “terrible examples” of behavior derived from “despicable” films and reading material, as well as the social interaction in “major centers, the corrupt and loathsome atmosphere of the casinos, the sad spectacle of bathing beaches.” All this was transforming the relationship between parents and their children into “simple companionship,” without the respect and affection that “should, invariably, reign” among them (p.25).

This mixture of the modern and traditional was also present in lessons related to home management skills. While teaching household formulas to maintain a clean home, at the same time, new household appliances were being promoted as being necessary utensils to ensure that domestic tasks were properly administered. This co-existence between homemade solutions and modern appliances may be observed in the manual *Tesouro doméstico: moderna enciclopédia do lar* (A domestic treasure: the modern household encyclopedia) (Niodossi, 1954). Published in 1954, this manual was written by Renato Niodossi and taught homemade formulas to combat “bad odors” in the home, caused by moldy or “musty” conditions. He claimed that a homemade mixture effectively reverted “this state of things.” The formula consisted of mixing together the following ingredients: “powdered charcoal – 50.0; incense – 40.0; balsamic resin – 30.0; myrrh – 5.0; ambergris tincture – 3.0” (p.168).

The author was opposed to products manufactured by industries and, especially, did not trust the promises made in related propaganda material. According to Niodossi, the search for solutions – be they to clean the home or beautify women – should never be based on advertisements. When discussing feminine beauty care for the face, he categorically stated that beauty creams had absolutely no effect: “The so-called creams used against spots, skin blemishes and blackheads, are indeed very good ... for those who manufacture them” (Niodossi, 1954, p.94). His defiance can be seen as a form of response to the massive number of industrialized products. If Niodossi taught us how to make a mixture to combat “bad odors,” then the market also offered a product that was said to eliminate “225 of the different odors of modern life,” or any other bad smell that threatened the home (Manchete, 26 abr. 1952, p.40) (Figure 1).

DDT was one of the products that was highly valued in household economics manuals. It was recommended as a product to get rid of insects, especially flies. Even Niodossi, adverse as he was to industrialized products, actually recommended that people buy Detefon and SuperFlyt insecticides, brand names that were constantly appearing in publicity advertising,

...eu não podia mais aguentar este cheiro de lixo...



Eu não queria acreditar quando me falaram em **air-wick**; pois sempre pensei que estes maus cheiros que invadem a casa fossem inevitáveis. Comprei **air-wick** e tão simples... É só abrir o vidro, puxar a mecha e...

adeus, mau cheiro!

air-wick na cozinha destrói cheiros de fritadas, de cebolas etc...

air-wick perto da lata do lixo destrói o cheiro fétido de podridão.

air-wick na privada, no banheiro, destrói o cheiro indesejável.

air-wick no quarto do doente e da criança purifica o ar.

air-wick num armário destrói o cheiro de tinta, de mófo, de baratas etc.

air-wick destrói o cheiro de inseticida, de cigarros apagados e mais 225 odores diferentes da vida moderna...

air-wick é econômico pois dura mais de dois meses, usando-o várias horas por dia.

BRABO!

air-wick
(diga: ér-uk)
DENTRO DE CASA DESTRÓI QUALQUER MAU CHEIRO

à base de clostolita



Figure 1: Air-wick advertisement (Manchete, 26 abr. 1952, p.40)

for this purpose. Lifebuoy and Salol bath soaps were thought to be effective in exterminating fleas in household pets, when used with a spray containing a “mixture of DDT and pyrethrum in equal parts” (Niodossi, 1954, p.171). DDT was almost a universal choice in these manuals for the extermination of insects, irrespective of opposing attitudes, either for or against industrialized products or those who featured in advertisements.

As regards items related to cleaning the house and washing clothes, it was recommended that some household appliances should be adopted. These included a floor polisher, a vacuum cleaner and washing machine. In some cases, a refrigerator was mentioned when discussing food preservation. However, no one was taught how to use these new appliances. The need to protect homes against the health-risk of household dust, for example, was used as one of the arguments. These manuals claimed that a broom was not efficient at cleaning, since the dust, formerly on the ground, became airborne and covered all the furniture, thereby requiring extra work to remove the dust from the furniture. It was far better to use a “good electric vacuum cleaner,” which cleaned efficiently, without causing any damage “even to the most delicate carpet” (Lar..., 1947, p.210).

The manual called *Lar feliz, o livro dos bons conselhos* (A happy home, the book of good advice) (1947) stated that it was in favor of the use of these “modern machines.” In addition to the vacuum cleaner, the *Lar feliz* manual also claimed that no “modern home” should be without an electric floor polisher. This enabled

a housewife to save time and manual labor while guaranteeing a clean and gleaming floor: “In just a few minutes, this equipment does all the work that used to take hours, and even far more efficiently” (Lar..., 1947, p.292).

Based on the same argument for its practicality, hygiene and the elimination of manual work, the washing machine was presented to the Brazilian housewife in these manuals as “true mechanical marvels” (Lar..., 1947, p.294). According to these manuals, the arrival of the washing machine represented the practicality of being able to put all your clothes

into a machine, with a little soap powder and nothing else. The machine did the rest of the work (p.294): “The electric washing machines ... are excellent for washing clothes, because they also heat the water, thereby saving a housewife time and effort” (Grechi, Penna, 1954, p.50).

Washing machines, together with other household equipment such as refrigerators, vacuum cleaners, coffee-machines, and others, were the ideal model of a home that the modern consumer household recovering from Second World War should adopt (Grazia, 2005, p.418). Washing machines and the launch in 1952 of Omo soap powder by Unilever and the door-to-door sales campaign of the Ariel brand by Procter & Gamble in Europe in 1968, formed what Victoria de Grazia called the “laundry revolution.” According to Grazia (2005, p.419), this “revolution” conferred a new status on domestic work, showing that manual labor could be replaced by machines. Thus, domestic activities began to be valued in other ways. When replacing unhealthy, manual and tiring work for machine-washed clothes, women theoretically had more time to dedicate to other activities, both domestic and outside the home in the labor market.

In Brazil, washing machines were also seen as being essential to maintain a family’s good health. Sending clothes out to washerwomen began to be seen as a “rather unsanitary” approach, since they mixed together laundry from different people. The manual *Lar feliz* commemorated the arrival of these “mechanical marvels,” extolling the fact that they were easy to operate and made it possible to sterilize laundry at home, without the danger of diseases (Lar..., 1947, p.294).

The manual *Rainha do lar* (Queen of the home) (Serrano, 1953) emphasized that it was indispensable that a laundry woman and her whole family enjoyed good health, so as not to contaminate their clients. Disparaging attitudes were shown towards a laundry woman’s behavior and cleanliness and largely based on the assumption that she was a person who lacked personal hygiene or care:

It is essential to know that a professional laundry woman enjoys perfect health or, at least, does not suffer from any contagious diseases. There is a real danger when sending domestic laundry to be washed outside the home if you ignore the state of health of the person doing the laundry or that of her family. Likewise, it should be ascertained that the laundry woman is clean and scrupulous in her work and does not take in laundry from people infected with contagious diseases, since, although she may be healthy herself, she might mix up the laundry with that of others who are sick, which will make contamination easier. When a laundry woman is not careful about her personal hygiene or the place where she lives there is also the danger of parasites (Serrano, 1953, p.188-189).

Deliberations about the question of the (in)salubrity of handing laundry to the care of a laundry woman were only made in one direction. No concerns were expressed about the reverse situation: was it not possible for a laundry woman to be contaminated by contact with dirty linen? In addition, what about having to do hard manual labor in unhealthy and, often, toxic conditions? Furthermore, the task of washing clothes was considered the most tedious, the unhealthiest task that demanded the most time (Grazia, 2005, p.419). According to Maluf and Mott (1999, p.410):

Contamination appears to be a one-way concern, since the diseases that could be transmitted to the laundry women via dirty clothing are not even mentioned. Nor is there any mention of the burns, lung diseases, rheumatism and abortions to which they were subjected, because of the enormous muscular energy they had to expend, the alternation between hot and cold, contact with contaminated laundry and the frequent changes in temperatures.

The advent of household appliances seemed to provide a solution for another issue that the household economics manuals considered a problem from the mid-twentieth century onwards: domestic servants. The manual *Minha casa* (Serrano, 1945, p.143) stated that this was a delicate issue both in Brazil and abroad. This publication highlighted the fact that in the United States household appliances replaced the work of a domestic servant. The publication *Rainha do lar* (Serrano, 1953, p.71) claimed that “good domestic servants” were becoming increasingly scarce in the labor market. Furthermore, much like their concern about laundry women, they advised that an attitude of distrust should be maintained at all times in relation to the health of a domestic servant: “The state of health of a domestic servant is a question of supreme importance and requires strict vigilance on the part of the employer” (p.126).

Replacing servants with household appliances was also linked to the mobilization of the former to demand their labor rights. In 1946, the Association of Domestic Workers was created with the aim to fight to regulate their category. At the time, that Association released a document in which they denounced the total lack of social and workers’ rights and the exhausting 14 to 15-hour working day to which they were being subjected (Ceva, 2006, p.52-53).

The promise that household appliances reduced a housewife’s work meant they had to do many more daily chores, since, by replacing domestic servants with machinery, the number of functions they had to perform increased. Another point highlighted in these household economics manuals was the new type of habitation: apartments. These spaces only had enough room for appliances and the housewives themselves, who reigned supreme. According to the manual *Noções de economia doméstica* (Notions of household economics) (Serrano, 1954, p.76), the washing machine made it possible to wash clothes, even in an apartment.

All these novelties (household appliances and housing) represented a cost that was inaccessible to a portion of the population. The household economics manuals recognized these economic difficulties and the efforts that housewives without the benefit of these appliances had to make. The lack of equipment in no way compromised the cleanliness and organization of their homes. Despite this, the manual *Rainha do lar* (Serrano, 1953, p.71) declared “it was necessary to economize or reduce superfluous expenses,” so as “to acquire a good mechanical appliance, or part of one, for domestic work.” One of the solutions presented, under the items related to “domestic expenses,” dealt with buying goods in installments as one of the ways to acquire these modern gadgets: “The development of the manufacturing industry and different branches of commerce have notably extended a system of purchase called ‘installment buying’” (Albuquerque, 1951, p.232). An installment plan provided broader market access precisely for articles meant for the home, including “household appliances, clothes or books” (Ramos, 1985, p.58).

The kitchen: a valued innovation space

In the years after Second World War, the kitchen became the new center of operations in a home (Grazia, 2005), ranked highly both in advertisements as well as in household economics manuals, as the area where new materials and new mechanical gadgetry had the greatest impact in changing daily habits. If, beforehand, the kitchen was located at the back of the house, an area that was generally dirty and disorganized, the gadgets produced by the household appliance industry ended up transforming this into an area of technological revolution. This analysis by Grazia refers to the European context and the impact that such products had in North America. This was also applicable to Brazil during the 1950s and 1960s. For instance, with regards to refrigerators, at first Brazil used to import this equipment, which made it expensive and accessible to only a few families. However, in the 1950s several factories started assembling and producing parts here. Some were subsidiaries of American parent companies, but some also originated in Brazil. This meant that access to these consumer goods became much easier.

According to Maria Cecília Barreto Amorim Pilla, during the first decades of the twentieth century, a well-organized and managed home was a reflection of a good housewife and exemplary wife. A disorganized or dirty home represented not only the incompetence of a woman but was also prejudicial to her husband's social life (Pilla, 2008, p.334). Pilla highlights the fact that, in the 1950s "new resources and accessories" in the kitchen (meaning new hygiene/cleaning products and household appliances) provided "greater hygiene and comfort, practicality and efficiency than those used 'in the old days'" (p.337).

The kitchen also became the subject of political discussions. According to Grazia (2005, p.453), during the 1960s, in the middle of the Cold War, a kitchen had a political connotation with cultural influences. During this period, "the kitchen became an icon of the Western way of life, whose greatest defender was the United States." This author also highlights the fact that the *Pax Americana* offered a way of making life more comfortable for women with their utensils. Cultural and economic expansion was of interest both to the North American government and to great American corporations who were eager to enter the emerging European consumer market.

According to the then Vice-President of the United States, Richard Nixon, the kitchen became the best example of North American abundance, innovation, freedom of choice, the quality of life and also of capitalism itself. For Nixon, promoting the North American model kitchen had more impact than launching a satellite, as the Soviets had done. This issue was crucial. This type of exposure was sponsored by the American State Department and by companies such as General Electric and the Museum of Modern Art in New York (Kinchin, O'Connor, 2011, p.55). This transition exemplifies the importance of the home in the period after Second World War. While attempting to dominate outer space, it was through their everyday habits that the "American way of life" spread and took root.

According to Martini (2011, p.141), during the 1950s "an idea was being developed that utensils and domestic appliances were essential to a modern way of life." This author highlights that, during this period, "the consumer market for these products was being established and that an infinity of brand names was being offered to the consumer." Martini

further states that household appliances, one of the examples of “comfort equipment,” were sold and consumed as “symbols of modernity and a way to free up time taken to perform domestic tasks” (p.34).

Magazine advertisements: featuring different types of women

The predominant female body type that featured in these advertisements was Caucasian and middle class. The images of mothers and wives predominated in these advertisements, since many of them offered products for the home and for the care of children and husbands. In addition to these women, other profiles were also featured: professional workers earning salaries, young women seeking their independence, or those who had dynamic attitudes, unattached women, and others.

Even though women performed different roles, these advertisements usually used images of a mother and housewife. There was some tension at the time, since women also performed other roles, such as working outside the home. The conquest of the public arena was not only limited to outings and shopping sprees, but also referred to the conquest of a place in the job market. Advertisers offered these women products that made their progress and the activities they performed much easier.

This valorization of the domestic world, emphasizing a woman in her activities as a mother, wife and housewife, parallels the retraction of the feminist movement in the decades between the 1930s and up to the end of the 1960s. This does not mean that there were no demonstrations led by women during this period. On the contrary, “there were important moments of female participation, such as the movement at the beginning of the 1950s against the high cost of living” (Pinto, 2003, p.11). However, these actions are not considered to be feminist in relation to “the transformation of the condition of women in society” (p.10-11). Irrespective of their brand name, advertisements for sanitary pads were amongst those that regularly represented women in other roles besides maternity and marriage. Replacing linen cloths for sanitary pads promoted comfort, practicality and greater hygiene, since, once used, the product was discarded. In addition to this functional aspect of the products, there is one other that is symbolic. The fact that this was a disposable item – and claimed to be more hygienic – enabled women to perform their tasks even during menstruation.

One of these is quite symbolic. A woman, seen from the back, commemorates the freedom offered by the product. At her side, an iron ball attached to a broken chain symbolizes her freedom: “Enjoy the freedom you never thought you could have. Enjoy the advantages offered by Modess, the sanitary protection for the modern woman ... Nothing to wash – it is used only once. And... it costs so little!” (O Cruzeiro, 11 dez. 1954, p.72). These images were regularly shown in advertisements for Modess sanitary pads: women cutting through barbed wire fences, freeing themselves from railings. In another, hands freeing themselves from handcuffs: “Start living,” urged an advertisement for Modess (Manchete, 29 jan. 1955) (Figure 2). These advertisements suggested that women had other activities beyond the domestic realm. On the other hand, they also showed mothers urging their daughters to clarify any doubts they may have about menstruation: “You daughter may be

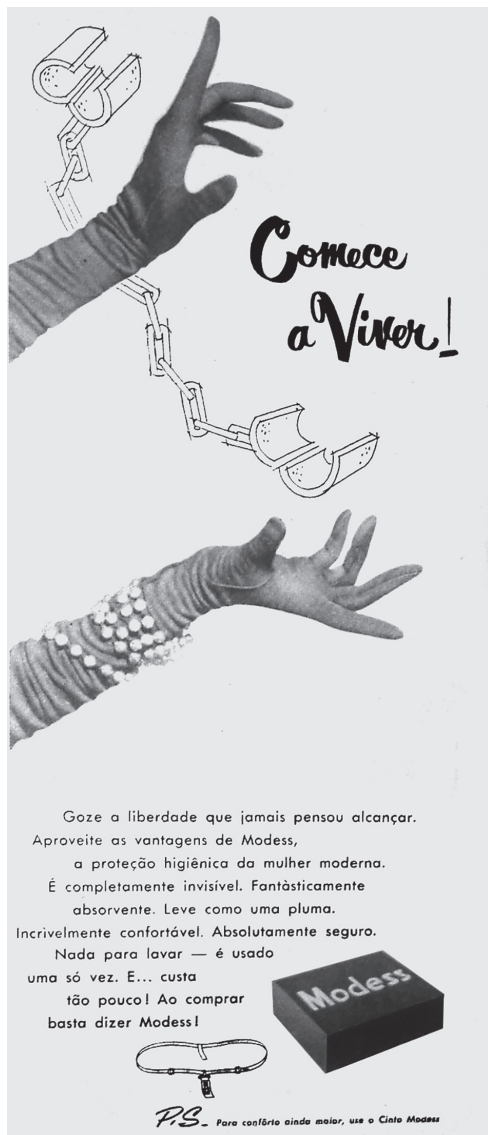


Figure 2: Advertisement for Modess sanitary pads (Manchete, 29 jan. 1955)

afraid to ask ... But she needs to know ‘certain facts’ related to a woman’s life. Your daughter will thank you ... if you start preparing her as from now to accept certain transformations that occur in the life of every woman as being quite normal” (O Cruzeiro, 4 set. 1954, p.24). The advertisement for Modess offered a book written in “simple” and “easily understood” language with explanations about the female body.

Although not mentioning or using the word “menstruation,” these advertisements provided an opportunity to explain a woman’s body and, even more, its functions. According to Michelle Perrot (2003, p.13), the female body has two dimensions: one public and the other private. The first should only be shown in an appropriate way and is loaded with meanings. Yet the private body should remain hidden. Thus, these advertisements brought the intimate side of a woman’s body to the public attention, offering a product directly related to the female reproductive system, although in a somewhat muted way, since they do not explicitly deal with menstruation, but rather with “certain facts related to female life” (O Cruzeiro, 4 set. 1954, p.24). Whatever the case, this involved a step forward in issues related to the female body. According to Marlene de Fáveri and Anamaria Marcon Venson (2007), the transformation of the female body during adolescence are permeated “by the murmurings of a mother

to her daughter and which are lost in her feelings of modesty, and the first menstruation is a surprise that is almost always experienced with a sense of fear and of shame” (p.68).

There are a series of illustrations in the advertisement for Miss sanitary pads showing women performing different activities: playing tennis, volleyball, sitting on a fence dressed as a cowgirl or performing domestic activities. This advertisement represents the different roles performed by women of the 1950s. This focused on a “vibrant Brazilian woman:” “The enthusiasm with which Miss was received proves that all the demands of the modern Brazilian woman have finally been fulfilled with a sanitary pad that is far more hygienic and much more comfortable for your personal protection!” (Manchete, 16 out. 1954) (Figure 3).

ENTUSIASMADA A MULHER BRASILEIRA COM

Miss

O entusiasmo com que Miss foi recebido prova que tôdas as exigências da mulher moderna brasileira foram finalmente satisfeitas com um absorvente muito mais higiênico e muito mais confortável para a sua proteção pessoal! Em Miss — 1.º absorvente lançado no Brasil, produzido e embrulhado unitariamente sem nenhum contato manual — a mulher brasileira, de tôdas as idades, encontra:

mais rápida e maior absorção
 mais suavidade, leveza e maciez
 melhor ajustamento ao corpo
 mais confiança em todos os momentos

PROVA DE QUALIDADE
 Miss, na comparação, é mais branco! Esse alveamento é o resultado da superioridade da matéria prima rigorosamente selecionada e empregada!

use e confie nos produtos **York**

INDÚSTRIAS YORK S. A. — Produtos Cirúrgicos
 Rua Felício Fagundes, 437 — C. Postal 8093 — Fone: 701317 — S. Paulo.

Figure 3: Advertisement for Miss sanitary pads (Manchete, 16 out. 1954)

Guaranteeing the mobility of women was presented as being something that was imperative. A secretary, for instance, could already go to work without having to worry about the discomfort of “those days of the month.”

I am the manager’s secretary (I always need to be in good shape!). An enviable position for someone who has a wonderful (albeit demanding!) boss. One always needs to be attentive and well disposed. For this reason, I rely on Modess to guarantee my comfort ‘on those days of the month.’ Modess is super-absorbent and adapts so well to the body! A modern concept – Modess is hygienically made to be used only once before being discarded (O Cruzeiro, 20 dez. 1952, p.94).

This advertisement implicitly speaks of the need to do a full day’s work, without missing a single day. It was necessary to “be in good shape at all times.” Although this advertisement speaks of a person being disposed to work, the phrase to “be in good shape at all times” is also related to her appearance. When selling a great variety of different types of utensils, the women shown in the advertisements were always well dressed and used the proper make-up.

We could say that these types were divided into three groups: women who worked outside the home, mothers, housewives and wives, and those who worked a double shift (as both an employee and a housewife). The latter appears more timidly through products that promised to facilitate domestic work and offer greater practicality and more free time.

In spite of this climate of modernity, urbanization and the growing industrialization,² in matters related to questions of gender, the tone was set by the tension between two female figures: one devoted to domestic life and the other to the job market or the public sphere. The products offered to these different types of women, was a characteristic of the publications of the time, which sought to become part of a context that was permeated by contradictions: "On the one hand, being home-loving was fundamental for consumption, on the other hand, to be modern and aware of issues proposed and imposed by and for women, was as well" (Cardoso, 2009, p.106). For Joan Scott (s.d.), this contradiction between feminine images is an element involved in gender relationships, which evoke multiple and, usually, contradictory representations. Scott exemplifies this: "Eve and Mary, as a symbol of womanhood ... myths of light and darkness, of purification and pollution, of innocence and corruption" (p.21). This contradiction in relation to the roles performed by the women portrayed in those magazines. is repeated in other publications today, in the twenty-first century. When analyzing four women's magazines, Tânia Navarro Swain (2001, p.71) points out that a professional woman is viewed in a "rather patronizing way," "whose professional activity in addition to her normal tasks, was never a change in the 'natural' division of labor."

According to Margaret Rago (1997, p.603), during the first decades of the twentieth century, women undertook both outside paid work – in the textile industries, in schools, offices, shops, hospitals, old people's homes or as travelling street vendors – as well as in other people's homes, working as domestic servants, washerwomen, cooks, governesses, and so on. Young women from the middle and upper classes could become teachers, engineers, doctors, lawyers, pianists, journalists, writers and directors of cultural institutions.

Even while following the "international tendencies of modernization and female emancipation – boosted by the participation of women in the war effort and reinforced by economic development," at the end of the World War Two, campaigns began to encourage women to return to their homes and to the traditional values of society (Bassanezi, 1997, p.608). When analyzing feminine labor and sexuality, Rago (1997, p.582) pointed out that in the industrial world, there was a decrease in the number of female workers in factories. This author estimates that, in 1872, women represented "76% of the factory labor force." However, in 1950, they represented only 23%.

According to Martini (2011), the stereotypes of a woman as being exclusively involved in the home, and of a man as the provider, was more noticeable among the ruling classes. Women administered the home and looked after the children, while a man was responsible for home finances (p.28). According to Rosa Maria Barboza de Araújo (1993), a good professional career also enhanced a man's prestige in his private life. The opposite – vagrancy, a temporary job or a poorly defined occupation – ended up destabilizing established gender relationships. In these, men had the role of the provider, as a player in the public sphere, while a woman looked after domestic life and the private sphere. Among

the lower classes, there was no noticeable gender division of labor. All concerned – men, women and children – had to work.

The pressure on women to perform solely domestic functions could also originate within their own homes. Many parents encouraged their daughters to find “a good partner” who was able to guarantee her future. This, according to Rago (1997, p.582) clashed with a young women’s desire to work outside the home and to achieve success in their profession.” Women from different social classes experienced this dilemma between choosing a professional career and being exclusively dedicated to the home. In a letter sent to the “Woman to woman” section of the *O Cruzeiro* magazine, a reader asked if she should abandon her studies (she said she was in the third year of medicine, where she had met her fiancé), to please her beloved. According to this letter, he was also a medical student and came from a wealthy family and could certainly ensure a good life for his future spouse. The magazine columnist, Maria Teresa, claimed that this was a very private decision. Although she stressed the fact that the egotistical attitude shown by her fiancé might well lead to even greater demands and asked if “the future bride was prepared to face these,” Maria Teresa proposed an alternative that placed the bride in a subservient position in relation to her future husband. According to the columnist, professional fulfillment could be attained through the success of one’s partner (*O Cruzeiro*, 4 abr. 1953, p.95). It is not possible to affirm if the advice offered by the columnist, known as Maria Teresa, was actually written by a man or a woman. “Maria Teresa” was a pseudonym, used by some of the journalists at the magazine to express their opinions (Cunha et al., s.d.). The then director of the magazine, Antonio Accioly Neto, had originally adopted this pseudonym as a way to launch the column (Klanovicz, maio-ago. 2009).

Intelligent and sophisticated women, such as those cited in the letter to Maria Teresa’s section, were cautioned against outshining their future husbands with their own achievements, making them feel that they were more intelligent than the wives were. Furthermore, the magazine columnist declared, a husband should never be made to feel humiliated or to be upset in any way (Bassanezi, 1997, p.630). This quashing of a woman’s own aspirations was reinforced through advertising. In the advertisement for Scott’s Emulsion, a woman says: “I’m happy seeing my husband is happy. Moreover, nothing reflects happiness more than good health! He never misses work, never refuses to take part in our amusements and never misses the chance to take part in the boys’ merrymaking” (*O Cruzeiro*, 5 dez. 1953, p.24). Although only covering a quarter of the page, this advertisement may be summarized by the phrase: “I’m happy because my husband is happy,” which was considered to be the appropriate line of thought for women in the 1950s. Even though this was a ruling that some women no longer followed.

According to an Ibope opinion poll carried out in 1950, 31.7% of all those living in Rio de Janeiro “believed that Brazilian girls should first think about getting married and becoming housewives; if they had to undertake some sort of paid job, then they could choose the career of a teacher – 25.2%, government employee – 6.3%, doctor or dressmaker – 4.7% (Martini, 2011, p.209).

When writing for the *O Cruzeiro* magazine, Karl Weissmann posed the question: “Why does a woman work?” in the heading of one of his articles. According to Weissmann, it

was impossible for a woman to feel happy performing activities other than those related to the home. This columnist showed his astonishment at the growing number of women who combined their domestic lives with a professional career:

Although the immense majority of women still judge themselves as happy just by being a mother and a wife, every day there is a growing number of women who, in the name of need or social progress, seek to balance the duties of a married woman with the possibilities of life and fun outside the home. Apparently, nothing is easier. Those who manage to find a wife who is solely dedicated to the home are considered to be 'lucky men' (Weissmann, 18 set. 1948, p.82).

In the midst of conservative discussions about maintaining gender relationships in advertising spots, in the household economics manuals, in and journalistic articles and material, there began to appear some indications of the dissatisfaction felt with the notion that domestic work was the only feminine alternative for professional and personal fulfillment.

Final considerations

The feminine images featured in household economics manuals and in advertisements in the *O Cruzeiro* and *Manchete* magazines showed idealized concepts of different types of women that often bore little resemblance to reality. Women dedicated themselves to their domestic chores, but not all of them were exclusively involved in these tasks. Many worked in secretarial and teaching jobs, as well as in the textile industry. Others held posts in paid domestic service: as servants, maids/cleaners, cooks, washerwomen, amongst others. Some of these professions were featured both in the advertisements as well as in the household economics manuals, which indicates that women had increasingly begun to occupy the public space and employment market.

Despite the predominance of a domestically-oriented feminine role, changes had been occurring in the relationships between women and society since the beginning of the twentieth century. Writers such as Pinto (2003) highlighted the fact that, in the decades between the 1940s and 1960s, no feminist movement occurred that was similar to the struggle for the right to vote, as undertaken by Bertha Lutz at the beginning of the century. This does not mean that the women's movement was silenced. Pinto (2003) underlines the fact that feminine demands at this period were centered on domestic issues, such as the outcry against the increase in the cost of living.

Among other issues, this increase in the cost of living could well be closely linked to the new demands made by this rationalized domestic universe that was full of electronic appliances that promised a more practical and healthier way of life. Installment buying was one of the possible methods offered by the market to facilitate the acquisition of new consumer goods, such as refrigerators, washing machines, vacuum cleaners and so on offered as being capable of making domestic work less tiring and less of a physical chore. In addition to these advantages, it was also claimed that these products made homes healthier and more hygienic.

The domestic space was considered as the epicenter of the changes in consumer habits. The kitchen was the area where these changes became more evident. Once condemned

to the back of houses, seen as unsanitary areas, kitchens after World War Two followed American standards of organization and equipment. These were transformed into spacious and more colorful areas that were centered on family life, offering comfort and practicality. In addition: kitchens also occupied areas in political discussions during the Cold War, being considered more influential and important in the expansion of the dominance of the United States than the space race promoted by the former Soviet Union (Kinchin, O'Connor, 2011, p.55).

Adopting new consumer habits for domestic products did not occur in a uniform manner, even though there was a massive output of advertisements for household appliances and other products used to sanitize and keep the home clean. The household economics manuals only mention a few products, such as DDT and refrigerators. We should bear in mind that there was a different target-audience for each one of these publications. Advertisements were published in weekly-illustrated magazines and were intended for an assorted audience, composed of men and women. Meanwhile, the household economics manuals were directed towards women who were – in the first instance – devoted to their domestic chores.

NOTES

* This article has been developed from the doctoral thesis research *Hygiene e consumo: novas sensibilidades para um Brasil modern (décadas de 1940 a 1960)* (Hygiene and consumerism: a new awareness for a modern Brazil during the decades from 1940 to 1960). Defended in 2012, at the Post-Graduate Program in the History of Science and Health – Casa de Oswaldo Cruz (PPGHCS/COC/Fiocruz), under the guidance of Gilberto Hochman.

¹ The term “representation” is employed here in the sense that Roger Chartier (1988, p.17) refers to about representations of the social world as constructions that “although they aspire to the universality of a diagnosis based on reason, are always determined by group interests that forge them.” In other words, the representations of women here are forged in the style of the authors of the home economics manuals and the advertisers. The former in a discourse with a pedagogical intention to administrate homes. The latter, with the discourse of offering women, especially mothers and housewives, products that promise comfort and health to the family. It is a relationship of power, where “a group imposes, or attempts to impose, its conception of the social world, the values it represents, and its domain (p.17).

² In general terms, the process of urbanization and industrialization was pushed forward under the Vargas and Juscelino Kubitschek governments due to a variety of internal and international factors. In the case of the first Vargas government, the 1929 financial crisis ended up reinforcing the formation and integration of a domestic market, which needed to be strengthened due to the effects of the worldwide crisis. The economy moved from an agro-export model to one based on industrialization. During his second government, Vargas continued with his development proposals, with the principal aim of expanding industrialization (Cano, 2005). Vargas’ ideas of development won the approval of the United States, which supported several South-American countries, including Brazil. Juscelino Kubitschek supported Vargas’ proposals in relation to the economy and was himself elected in 1956, using the Target Plan as his platform, together with an economic plan that was based – explicitly – on development. Although both governments defended nationalism, both opened the doors to foreign capital (Souza, 2012). With regards to consumerism, the advertisements published in the *O Cruzeiro* magazine summarized the interest and efforts made by countries that exported manufactured goods to strengthen their commercial ties, to reach new consumer markets (Souza, 2012).

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