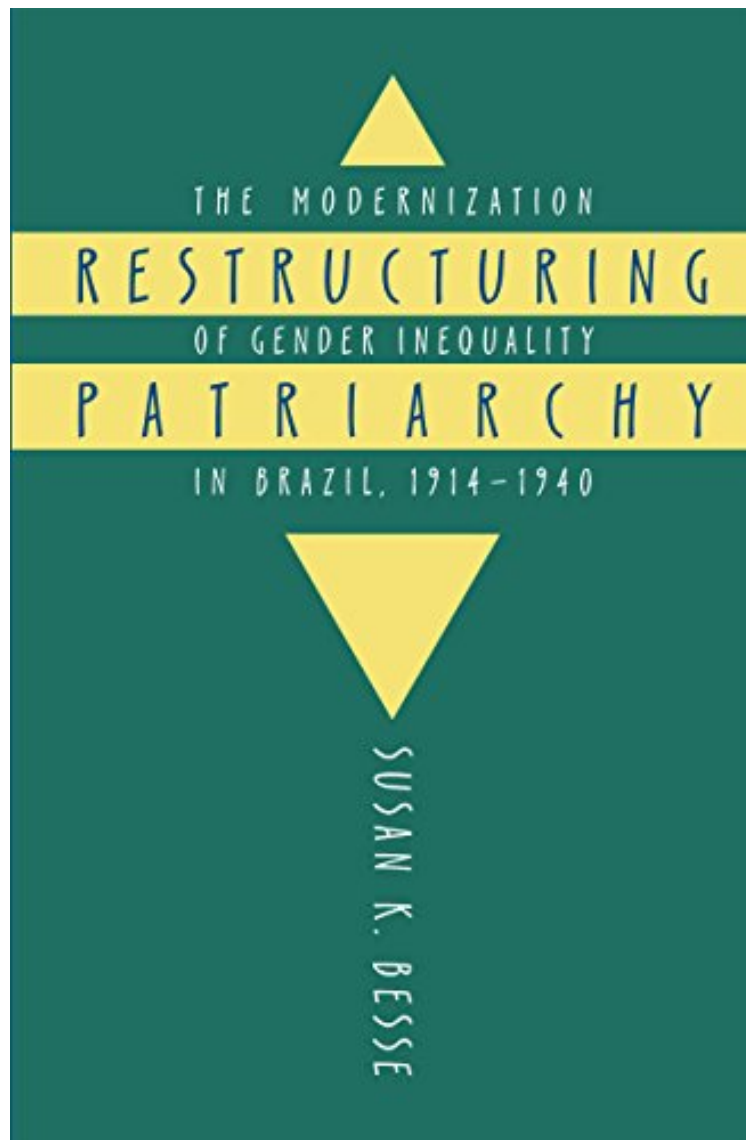


(Free download) Restructuring Patriarchy: The Modernization of Gender Inequality in Brazil, 1914-1940

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Susan K. Besse

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before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Restructuring Patriarchy: The Modernization of Gender Inequality in Brazil, 1914-1940:

4 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Marriage in Brazil 1914-1940 By Magally A Henderson In this review I would like to concentrate in the Besse's contribution to the study of marriage patrons in Brazil between post

World War I period and 1940s offered by Susan Besse in her book *Restructuring Patriarchy: The Modernization of Gender Inequality in Brazil, 1914-1940*. Susan Besse shows how changing economic necessities and social norms brought new opportunities for urban middle and upper class women for higher education and paid employment in Brazil's post World War I era. This process was seen by the conservative elites as a menace to the "traditional Brazilian family", generating a public concern and a state ideology of wifedom and motherhood that succeeded in incorporating these changes to the maintenance of patriarchal dominance. Based on an ideological and discursive analysis that underlay the consolidation of the new authoritarian bourgeois order of the late 1930s, part of Besse's study is dedicated to the institution of marriage which seems to be in a "crisis" after the World War I period even when the rate of marriage was more widespread than before. This "crisis" is confronted by the elite in a discursive effort to solve "the low rate of nuptiality among the poor and the instability of poor families" (Besse, 39), through a national discussion about the topic in the media, scientific circles, the law, and government policies. The effort to promote different values among the lower classes is part of national concern to "civilize" the country and the creation of a national identity based on the ideal of racial and class democracy. Although marriage in Brazil was always a middle and upper class institution, the dysfunctionality of the free unions in buttressing order and stability in Brazil's new urban-industrial society (Besse, 39) made this behavior a social problem that "had" to be confronted by the state for the social wealth. Public debates about new responsibilities for wives and husbands, the abandonment of the custom of arranged marriages and overall preoccupation of the state to "civilize" the lower classes through the promotion of the institution of marriage are generated by the upper class anxiety for the challenge that the new social spaces that women had acquired represents for the society. The eruption of the middle and upper class women in white collar jobs, their access to higher levels of education, the new social spaces of department stores and cafes did not necessarily imply a rejection of the marriage and motherhood as the most "natural" role for them, even when Besse highlights some dissident life experiences. Other alternatives were neither attractive nor viable since for many "respectable" women concubinage and free love were regarded to be little different from prostitution (Besse, 48). Even if they achieved a professional career that allowed them economic independence, social pressure is done upon them in the form of constant surveillance, judgments on their personal lives or portraying them under the deprecatory name of "spinsters". On the other hand, for most of these women marriage secured them greater independence from their parents, adult status and economic support" (Besse, 49). One important change that has to be taken into account in attention to the marriage performance is the relative few number of arranged marriages and a discourse that allowed the bride more freedom in the partner election. New spaces of interaction and courtship -as the Sociedade Harmonia-different from the old elite experience were created to secure advantageous marriages for both, daughters and sons - most of them young professionals- of the urban elites, and most important of all to preserve themselves from the arrival of nouveaux riches (Besse, 51). In that sense, these new spaces for personal choice of the marriage partner and new opportunities for courtship represent a perfect example of how new forms of relationship allow the continuity of the patriarchal rule. A rare case of arranged marriages but it does not necessarily mean complete freedom at the moment of choice. Their parents exercised their "right or duty" to guide the actions and decisions of their daughters through the subtle advice of frequent society to the more radical actions through coerced marriages. Probably one of the few criticisms that could be doing to this challenging study would be the inclusion of race as a tool of analysis of the genderization of the national discourse about national identity. Susan Besse base her analysis on the fair assumption that race boundaries was not violated for social mobility in this period among upper and middle class. Nonetheless, problematize race would give us not different conclusions but a deep insight about the expectations and possibilities of social mobility of women and men and also in the criticism that Besse does about the lack of compromise of the elite's women rights movement with other class women. In the specific case of her analysis of the marriage costumes, more attention to race could give us an interest inside about social mobility expectations and opportunities among upper classes. This analysis could be a complementary perspective to the importance of fashion, good manners and appropriate access to socialization places in the effort to gain social mobility through an appropriate marriage.

Susan K. Besse broadens our understanding of the political by establishing the relevance of gender for the construction of state hegemony in Brazil after World War I. *Restructuring Patriarchy* demonstrates that the consolidation and legitimization of power by President Getulio Vargas's Estado Novo depended to a large extent on the reorganization of social relations in the private sphere. New expectations and patterns of behavior for women emerged in postwar Brazil from heated debates between men and women, housewives and career women, feminists and antifeminists, reformist professionals and conservative clerics, and industrialists and bureaucrats. But as urban middle- and upper-class women challenged patriarchal authority at home and assumed new roles in public, prominent intellectuals, professionals, and politicians defined and imposed new 'hygienic,' rational, and scientific gender norms. Thus, modernization of the gender system within Brazil's rising urban-industrial society accommodated new necessities and opportunities for women without fundamentally changing the gender inequality that underlay the larger structure of social inequality in Brazil.

[An] engaging contribution to the literature."Luso-Brazilian "Besse raises important questions that will spur further research."Journal of Social History"A valuable contribution to the historiography on gender in Latin America."American Historical "A detailed and insightful analysis of the impact of modernization and political change on Brazilian women during the interwar years."Choice"[An] extremely valuable book that will change forever the political analysis of both twentieth-century Brazilian history and modern patriarchal relations."Historian"An engaging contribution to the literature."Luso-Brazilian "An extremely valuable book that will change forever the political analysis of both twentieth-century Brazilian history and modern patriarchal relations."Historian" Besse's book is a valuable contribution to the historiography on gender in Latin America. Its careful analysis of the constestation of gender ideologies in a key period in Brazilian history provides important insights for our understanding of middle-class and elite women in the urban environment.--American Historical [An] extremely valuable book that will change forever the political analysis of both twentieth-century Brazilian history and modern patriarchal relations.--HistorianThis excellent, provocative, and well-written book elucidates and explains the far-reaching cultural, socio-political, and economic changes in gender relations during the Estado Novo in Brazil. . . . Besse tells a compelling story and tells it well: this book will interest social historians and all Brazilianists and will be exciting fare for graduate courses and advanced undergraduates. I recommend it strongly.--Elizabeth Kuznesof, University of KansasBesse offers a detailed and insightful analysis of the impact of modernization and political change on Brazilian women during the interwar years.--Choice[An] engaging contribution to the literature.--Luso-Brazilian From the Back Cover'Restructuring Patriarchy' demonstrates that the consolidation and legitimization of power by President Getulio Vargas's Estado Novo depended to a large extent on the reorganization of social relations in the private sphere.