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"More than a Contract": The Emergence of a State-Supported Marriage Welfare Service and the Politics of Emotional Life in Post-1945 Britain

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Abstract This article examines the seminal contributions of Britain's marriage counseling and therapy services toward cultivating a new emotional purpose for marriage in the decades following World War II. It presents two related narrative threads. First, it argues that psychologically oriented relationship services attracted government support because they supported the postwar ideal of a classless democratic society. Pioneering practitioners promoted a universalized view of citizens' emotional relationships—rather than their socio-economic circumstances—as the determining fact of their lives. Second, it argues that these services provided a compelling language and set of concepts for articulating transforming understandings and expectations of marriage in the decades after 1945. To this end, the article reveals how the language and concepts of marriage therapists were mobilized by divorce reformers in the 1960s, and helped replace the offense model for divorce petitions with a less punitive psychological model of relationship "breakdown" in 1969. Britain's postwar marriage welfare services endowed stable harmonious families with crucial social and political importance as the bedrock for postwar social reconstruction and the most fitting environment for children and adults alike to develop into fully mature and self-realized democratic citizens.

> No marriage is entirely materialistic; emotional qualities enter into it so very deeply that I think it would be wrong to try to make marriage no more than a contract.[1]

At the International Congress on Mental Health held in London in August 1948, Dr. Edward Griffith, a popular sex-education author and founding member of the National Marriage Guidance Council, lamented the widespread decline in the value that British men and women accorded to marriage and family life. He noted that one in four British brides became pregnant before marriage, and that abortions, illegitimacy, and venereal diseases were all "on the

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[1] The National Archives (hereafter TNA), Eustace Chesser, "Written Evidence Presented to the Royal Commission on Marriage and Divorce, 1952," LCO 2/6113.

increase."[2] Most distressing, he argued, was the sharp rise in the divorce rate: "In this country in 1900 there were 500 divorce and separation cases; this year there will be at least 50,000."[3] Griffith linked the resolution of Britain's alarming "divorce epidemic" to the broader challenge of promoting mental illness prevention within the context of the state-directed reorganization of the country's health services. He urged that the nationwide expansion of Britain's new therapeutic marriage counseling services offered the most promising means for stabilizing British marriages.[4]

In the years immediately following the Second World War, government-commissioned inquiries echoed Griffith's assessment and declared an urgent need for state intervention. However, panic surrounding marriage breakdown was not tied to anxieties about Britain's dwindling population, which had been a prominent source of worry during the interwar decades. The British birth rate had finally surpassed replacement level in 1947, and concern was now focused on the psychological health of the growing population reared outside of the nuclear family. In the popular press, divorce was connected to a host of distressing social problems: youth crime had steadily risen since the war's end; a prominent study of Britain's mental health services warned that a "great army" of men and women suffered from neurotic illness;[5] and an alarming increase in sexual crimes alongside the growing visibility of homosexuality in urban centers was repeatedly linked to the spread of family breakdown. State-appointed committees underscored the need for a nationwide marriage welfare service by mobilizing psychiatric evidence that pointed to the pathological impact of family breakdown on children's healthy development.

Postwar British marriage welfare initiatives almost always relied upon depth psychology to both understand and "cure" dysfunctional marriages.[6] Government committee researchers and legislators reported being impressed with recent insights into the psychodynamic underpinnings of intimate interpersonal relationships, and by 1949 British government funding was aimed at incorporating depth psychology into marriage reconciliation workers' training. Within a decade, the vast majority of British marriage counselors understood their work as fundamentally targeting the unconscious dynamics of intimate relationships, regardless of whether they had received their primary training as a social worker, a general physician, a psychiatrist, or a volunteer counselor at a local marriage guidance center. The appeal of specialized psychological techniques for marriage reconciliation only intensified in the decades that followed. Services grew in number, government grants and private donations increased, and public demand rose each year. The scale of this expansion was significant—while the number of couples who underwent marriage counseling in 1946 was in the hundreds, in 1968 the National Marriage Guidance Council saw

[2] Edward Fyfe Griffith, in *International Congress on Mental Health, London 1948*, vol. 4, *Proceedings on the International Conference on Mental Hygiene, 16th–21st August*, ed. John Carl Flugel (London, 1948), 172.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid., 173.

[5] Feversham Committee, *The Voluntary Mental Health Services: The Report of the Feversham Committee* (London, 1939), 53–54.

[6] The term "depth psychology" refers to all forms of psychological therapy and research that posit the existence of an unconscious mind. Freud's contemporary, the Swiss psychiatrist Eugen Bleuler, coined the term in 1914 to bring coherence to the wide range of competing psychological understandings of unconscious life.

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more than thirty thousand clients, and the Family Welfare Association had been approached about more than one hundred thousand marital problems.[7]

These postwar developments raise several questions: Why did the government actively integrate marriage counseling and therapy services into Britain's new welfare state? How were these psychosocial services seen as contributing to the larger welfare-state project of eliminating "want, disease, ignorance, squalor, and idleness" (in conformity with William Beveridge's plan)? How did they help to make Britain into a "classless" democratic society (following the reasoning of welfare-state theorist T. H. Marshall)?[8] Moreover, given their growing popularity, how did these services' treatment of marriage as primarily an emotional relationship contribute to changing public expectations of marriage during decades when the ideal of personal satisfaction in love relationships became increasingly valued across the social classes?[9]

This article explores how citizens' emotional lives emerged as a central object of political concern in Britain after the war, how intimate relationships became the subject of legal reform, and how new public expectations of emotional fulfillment developed in the decades that followed. To this end, it presents two related narrative threads. First, I argue that state support for a network of marriage welfare services was integral to the wider welfare-state project of eliminating class divisions. Britain's new marriage welfare service affirmed the universal importance of emotional relationships as the central determining fact of citizens' lives at a moment when the government claimed to have largely solved the acute interwar problem of socioeconomic inequality. Second, I argue that marriage counselors' and therapists' treatment of marriage as a fundamentally emotional relationship helped shape an epochal shift in popular attitudes toward marriage. There was a widespread appropriation of psychological language and concepts in the movement to liberalize the divorce law in the 1960s; divorce reformers also promoted therapeutic marriage services as a humane and scientifically grounded alternative to a restrictive divorce law. The psychological "discovery" of the wide-ranging importance of emotional relationships for healthy human development crucially framed the new emotionally oriented political landscape—focused on the private world of the family—that emerged in Britain during the decades following the Second World War.

In examining how citizens' intimate relationships were politicized as they became increasingly visible as objects of psychopathological knowledge and therapeutic intervention, this essay builds on scholarship illuminating the close relationship between the human sciences and the politics of democratic citizenship.[10] This literature has

[7] See National Marriage Guidance Council, *Counsellor Basic Training Prospectus* (London, 1985).

[8] William Beveridge, *Social Insurance and Allied Services* (London, 1942), 8; T. H. Marshall, *Citizenship and Social Class* (Cambridge, 1950).

[9] See Claire Langhamer, *The English in Love: The Intimate Story of an Emotional Revolution* (Oxford, 2013); Anthony Giddens, *The Transformation of Intimacy: Sexuality, Love, and Eroticism in Modern Societies* (Stanford, 1992).

[10] Jonathan Toms, "Political Dimensions of 'the Psychosocial': The 1948 International Congress on Mental Health and the Mental Hygiene Movement," *History of the Human Sciences* 25, no. 5 (December 2012): 91–106; Rhodri Hayward, "The Invention of the Psychosocial: An Introduction," *History of the Human Sciences* 25, no. 5 (December 2012): 3–12; Michael E. Staub, *Madness is Civilization: When the Diagnosis was Social, 1948–1980* (Chicago, 2011); Suzanne Stewart-Steinberg, *Impious Fidelity: Anna Freud, Psychoanalysis, Politics* (Ithaca, 2011); Michal Shapira, *The War Inside: Psychoanalysis, Total War, and the Making of the Democratic Self in Postwar Britain* (Cambridge, 2013); Denise Riley, *War in the*

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shed new light on how a diverse range of modern psychological and psychiatric agendas have aspired to also function as political theory, and have even shaped public health, family, education, and labor policies. I similarly explore how Britain's marriage services were embedded within key discussions about Britain's future, in exchanges between pioneering marriage therapists as well as in debates within the halls of Parliament. In doing so, I highlight the centrality of personal relationships to conceptions of—as well as new connections drawn between—healthy human development and responsible citizenship in Britain in the middle decades of the twentieth century.

In exploring the psychological politics of emotional life in Britain, this article problematizes claims advanced in many recent histories of British sex, marriage, and love that the rising value attributed to the emotional aspects of romantic relationships during the postwar decades was underwritten by an unshackling of agentive individual desire from the bonds of public duty.[11] In contrast, by focusing on the development of marriage services in Britain after the war, it examines what postwar Britons came to believe constituted desirable emotional relationships and how they judged the difference between viable and failed marriages. British marriage services provided a compelling and clarifying language for making sense of the often challenging difficulties of monogamous, heterosexual married life, as well as for apprehending and valuing its broader social importance. As a laboratory for making democratic, emotionally fulfilled selves, marriage had not lost its public political value by the late 1960s, despite growing support for the liberalization of Britain's divorce law. Divorce reformers believed that prioritizing access to a richer and more personally fulfilling emotional life would ultimately stabilize families. Far from liberating emotional life, they presented a new set of constraints. Emotional satisfaction, not merely permanent marriage, was made an imperative—a state of being that several scholars have since noted was, and remains, elusive to most and connected to a very limited conception of freedom.[12]

Britain's marriage welfare service played a crucial role in cultivating a fundamentally emotional purpose for marriage—making it "more than a contract"—and promoting a new understanding of the wide-ranging consequences of emotional fulfillment in the immediate postwar decades. Far from simply keeping couples out of the divorce court, marriage experts helped to alter perceptions of what marriage meant and what it should ultimately involve: much more than a biological

Nursery: Theories of the Child and Mother (London, 1983); Mathew Thomson, *Psychological Subjects: Identity, Culture, and Health in Twentieth-Century Britain* (Oxford, 2006); Camille Robcis, *The Law of Kinship: Anthropology, Psychoanalysis, and the Family in France* (Ithaca, 2013). For consideration of the history of the Labour Party's preoccupation with the reform of mind and character, see Jeremy Nuttall, *Psychological Socialism: The Labour Party and the Qualities of Mind and Character, 1931 to the Present* (Manchester, 2006).

[11] Langhamer, *The English in Love*; Hera Cook, *The Long Sexual Revolution: English Women, Sex and Contraception, 1800–1975* (Oxford, 2004); Janet Finch, "The State and the Family," in *Families and the State: Changing Relationships*, ed. Sarah Cunningham-Burley and Lynn Jamieson (Basingstoke, 2003); Jane Lewis, *The End of Marriage? Individualism and Intimate Relations* (Cheltenham, 2001); Giddens, *The Transformation of Intimacy*, 184–204.

[12] See, for example, Eva Illouz, *Saving the Modern Soul: Therapy, Emotions, and the Culture of Self-Help* (Berkeley, 2008); Laura Kipnis, *Against Love: A Polemic* (New York, 2003); Wendy Langford, *Revolutions of the Heart: Gender, Power, and the Delusions of Love* (London, 2002); Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner, "Sex in Public," *Critical Inquiry* 24, no. 2 (Winter 1998): 547–66.

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and social unit for procreation, stable marriage was reconceived as a necessary psychological experience toward the production of psychologically mature and emotionally satisfied selves. While only a few hundred thousand men and women ever came into direct contact with marriage counselors and therapists in the decades following the war, their work was nonetheless profoundly important in providing a compelling language and set of concepts that elevated the stable lifelong marriage to a position of social and emotional cure-all in the public imagination.

RATIONALIZING INTIMACY: SEX ADVICE AND THE INTERWAR ROOTS OF MARRIAGE THERAPY

The British public was first introduced to practical strategies for marriage improvement during the interwar decades, partly in response to anxieties surrounding Britain's falling birth rate. Unlike postwar marriage reconciliation services, which focused on emotional conflicts, interwar marriage improvement initiatives primarily targeted problems in married couples' sexual lives. Concerned physicians, sexologists, and birth control advocates—including Marie Carmichael Stopes, Helena Wright, and Edward Fyfe Griffith—identified widespread ignorance about the precise mechanics of sexual pleasure as the leading cause of marital unhappiness (and ensuing population decline), and published extensively on sexual matters. These new self-styled marriage experts all insisted that mutual sexual enjoyment was the result of instruction rather than improvisation.[13] Stopes's own first marriage, as she confessed in the preface to her controversial 1918 bestseller *Married Love*, was never consummated, and she claimed that sexual ignorance had caused her to pay the "terrible price" of a failed marriage.[14]

Sex manuals' frank descriptions of the sexual act explained the largely misunderstood differences between male and female sexuality, and focused especially on educating readers on how women experienced sexual enjoyment. For sex education authors, husbands' and wives' shared experience of sexual pleasure was not merely a physical benefit, but the foundation for profound emotional connection between spouses. Stopes maintained that mutual orgasm was "extremely important" for enhancing spouses' emotional relationship, and occurred regularly between the "perfectly adjusted" husband and wife.[15] Griffith also stressed mutual orgasm as having not merely procreative value, but as also serving to "revivify" each spouse's "whole personality," and bring partners together in an ego-transcending union.[16] Griffith further described mutual sexual fulfillment as training for good citizenship: the ability to form a deep emotional bond with another person prepared the individual to participate fully in community-oriented pursuits.[17]

[13] See, for example, Helena Wright, *The Sex Factor in Marriage: A Book for Those Who Are or Are About to Be Married* (London, 1932); Marie Carmichael Stopes, *Married Love: A New Contribution to the Solution of Sex Difficulties* (London, 1918); eadem, *Marriage in My Time* (London, 1935).

[14] Marie Carmichael Stopes, *Married Love: A New Contribution to the Solution of Sex Difficulties*, 18th ed. (London, 1926), xvii.

[15] Marie Carmichael Stopes, *Married Love* (London, 1919), 68–70.

[16] Edward Fyfe Griffith, *A Sex Guide to Happy Marriage* (1935; repr., New York, 1952), 46.

[17] Edward Fyfe Griffith, *Sex and Citizenship* (London, 1941), 202–3.

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Despite its controversial content, British sex advice literature attracted a large readership. Stopes's *Married Love* sold more than half a million copies by 1925;[18] Griffith's *Modern Marriage and Birth Control* went through nineteen editions between 1935 and 1946, and quickly established him as a preeminent medical expert in the treatment of sexual problems;[19] Helena Wright's *The Sex Factor in Marriage* sold over one million copies, and immediately became a bestseller when it was published in 1930.[20] As there was clearly public demand for knowledge about sex and marriage, several physicians (including Griffith and Wright), psychiatrists, and clergymen took advantage of this moment of opportunity: they introduced sex education lectures to youth organizations and secondary schools,[21] launched birth control clinics, created a centralized National Birth Control Council in 1930, and formed a subcommittee specializing in preparation for marriage through the British Social Hygiene Council in 1931.[22]

For sex educators, birth-control advocates, and pioneers of marriage preparation courses, an emotionally harmonious marriage was viewed as having important consequences for the health of adult men and women and their future children alike. Stopes argued that unhappy marriages were responsible for a range of nervous illnesses. Griffith pointed to their negative impact on women's fertility.[23] Dr. Jessie Margaret Murray, in her preface to *Married Love*, argued that marriage problems had a profoundly damaging effect on the personality formation of young children.[24] Like child psychologist and marriage guidance pioneer Ethel Dukes, Murray saw matrimonial harmony as an important factor in preventing "maladjustment" in children—a form of progressive mental disorder that was argued to often lead to juvenile delinquency. The cultivation of stable, loving marriages thus became an important focus of an expansive and updated eugenics in the 1930s that targeted not only Britons' reproductive practices for their impact on population health but also the environments in which children were reared.[25] Sex educators and marriage reformers' eugenic convictions merged a commitment to educating the public on the emotional virtues of marriage with the goal of expanding popular—as well as expert—understandings of the meaning and implications of health to include intertwined

[18] Alexander C. T. Geppert, "Divine Sex, Happy Marriage, Regenerated Nation: Marie Stopes' Marital Manual Married Love and the Making of a Best-Seller, 1918–1955," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 8, no. 3 (January 1998): 389–433, at 396.

[19] Edward Fyfe Griffith, *Modern Marriage*, 19th ed. (London, 1946).

[20] Barbara Evans, *Freedom to Choose: The Life and Work of Dr. Helena Wright, Pioneer of Contraception* (London, 1984), 154.

[21] Edward Fyfe Griffith, *The Pioneer Spirit* (Upton Grey, 1981), 75–77.

[22] The National Birth Control Council was formed by merging five independent birth-control societies in 1930. The Sub-Committee on Preparation for Marriage was initially launched by the British Social Hygiene Council in 1931 to produce a collaborative marriage preparation manual, written by a team of experts, including anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski, psychiatrist H. Crichton Miller, gynecologist Lilias Jeffries, and Canon T. Y. Pym.

[23] Edward Fyfe Griffith, *Modern Marriage and Birth Control* (London, 1935); idem, *Voluntary Parenthood* (London, 1937).

[24] Stopes, *Married Love* (1919), vii.

[25] Wendy Kline describes similar developments in the United States in the 1930s, noting that Paul Popenoe incorporated marriage counseling as part of a new positive eugenic program focused on cultivating family stability. See Wendy Kline, *Building a Better Race: Gender, Sexuality, and Eugenics from the Turn of the Century to the Baby Boom* (Berkeley, 2001).

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physical, environmental, and moral aspects. To introduce the radical changes in marital life that sex and marriage reformers believed were necessary for making measurable improvements to national health, they coupled the print dissemination of sex and marriage advice with the provision of public lectures and new specialized advisory services.

It was in this spirit that the Marriage Guidance Council was launched in 1938 with a small grant of two hundred pounds from the Eugenics Society. The council, which was largely composed of self-consciously progressive physicians and clergymen, promoted a comprehensive medico-moral view of marriage that brought attention to the impact of matrimonial harmony on population health.[26] Approaching this goal pedagogically, marriage guidance pioneers initially focused their efforts on circulating educational material and providing public lectures on healthy marriage. They focused especially on explaining the benefits of premarital medical examinations (to determine compatibility and eugenic "fitness"), promoting the use of birth control in spacing children, and emphasizing the *dual* purpose of sex in not only producing healthy children but also establishing a lasting spiritual and emotional connection between spouses.[27] During the first course of lectures held in London in the autumn of 1938, attendance ranged between 150 and 250, "mainly young office workers, shop assistants, etc., with a sprinkling of students."[28] The Marriage Guidance Council's first report optimistically noted that "the group as a whole was obviously keenly interested in marriage and sex problems and was considering them in a thoughtful and serious manner," so much so that many stayed after the meetings had concluded to ask additional follow-up questions.[29]

This commitment to the socially transformative power of education was challenged by a surging divorce rate during the war, and many reformers felt their efforts to improve British marriages had failed. The Marriage Guidance Council was thus updated in 1942 to confront the more immediate problems that married men and women faced—not only those caused by the forced separations and insecurities introduced by the war, but also the range of everyday problems that couples encountered in peacetime. Perhaps fittingly, against the backdrop of international conflict, members transformed the Marriage Guidance Council to focus more directly on resolving marital conflict—whether sparked by poor sexual relations, cramped housing, financial worries, or troubles with in-laws. The individual most directly responsible for introducing this new emphasis, the council's secretary (and former Methodist minister) David Mace, was adamant that couples' direct access to medical, psychological, and spiritual consultants was necessary to overturn Britain's escalating "marriage crisis." With donations received from their expanding

[26] Memorandum on the work of the Marriage Guidance Council, E. F. Griffith papers, PP/EFG/A.10, Wellcome Library, London (hereafter WL).

[27] Marriage Guidance Council, "To Those About to Marry," 1938, E. F. Griffith papers, PP/EFG/A.12, WL.

[28] Marriage Guidance Council, "1938 Annual Report," 4, E. F. Griffith papers, PP/EFG/A.8, WL. The report further noted that lectures in the provinces—in Bristol, Godalming, and Sheffield—drew in even larger audiences of three hundred or more.

[29] Ibid., 4.

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membership, the Marriage Guidance Council launched its first marriage advisory center in a small rented space in London in March 1943. Mace advertised widely and by November the advisory center had dealt with 250 cases.[30]

Despite its humble beginnings, the marriage guidance movement expanded rapidly. By April 1946, local marriage guidance councils had been established in more than one hundred towns and cities in Britain.[31] While concern for marital dissatisfaction had preoccupied a growing number of sex and marriage experts before the war, perceptions of a British marriage crisis escalated after the war in response to the combination of a sharp rise in the divorce rate and widespread panic that the children of broken homes suffered lasting emotional damage. The rapid growth of the nationwide network of local marriage guidance councils, along with the launching of marriage therapy services at the Family Discussion Bureau in 1948 and the Tavistock Clinic's Marital Unit in 1949, reflected and cultivated demand for specialized services purporting to improve British marriages. Unlike interwar marriage-improvement efforts, most of these postwar initiatives explicitly cast doubt on the efficacy of educational approaches to marriage improvement, claiming that relationship problems were rooted in unconscious emotional conflicts that had their origins in spouses' early childhood experiences. Their resolution was argued to lie beyond the scope of cool-headed rationality.

Why, during this moment of postwar reconstruction and recuperation, did psychological therapies aimed at emotional relationships come to dominate Britain's marriage services? The answer is certainly connected to postwar optimism surrounding the extensive reach of scientific progress, and support for the pursuit of scientific solutions to a variety of social problems. A science of marriage appeared to be possible especially after the Second World War, as psychiatrists had demonstrated during the war that depth psychology had an impressively broad range of practical uses. More importantly, Britain's psychologically oriented national marriage welfare service was consistent with the democratic values of the transformed political landscape; not only did men and women increasingly seek out expert-directed marriage services that were primarily aimed at resolving conflicts, but the British government regarded the provision of such services as appropriately noncoercive and geared toward cultivating clients' capacity to make responsible decisions autonomously. Although emotions had featured positively in experts' discussions of sexual and marital reform before the Second World War, it was only during the decades after the war that a couple's shared emotional life, as opposed to their sexual relationship, became a central basis for conceiving of the wide-ranging political implications and consequences of marriage.

[30] Marriage Guidance Council, "1943 Annual Report," 4, E. F. Griffith papers, PP/EFG/A.12, WL.

[31] In an effort to establish nationwide coherence, in June 1946 a meeting of Council representatives was held in London. In 1947, the expanding network of local Councils was formally centralized under the National Marriage Guidance Council, with a head office in Rugby. J. H. Wallis and H. S. Booker, *Marriage Counselling: A Description and Analysis of the Remedial Work of the National Marriage Guidance Council* (London, 1958), 6.

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TARGETING UNCONSCIOUS EMOTIONAL LIFE THROUGH A STATE-SPONSORED MARRIAGE WELFARE SERVICE

Immediately following the Second World War there was a massive rise in the divorce rate. Fueling anxiety surrounding the postwar "divorce epidemic" were reports that the incidence of illegitimate births had more than doubled over the course of the war, while the married birth rate had dropped significantly.[32] The wartime rise in extramarital sexual relationships, along with the fact that the birth rate remained below replacement level, contributed to panic that Britain was in a state of precipitous decline. To many observers, moral standards appeared to be eroding, and it seemed that wartime conditions were not straightforwardly to blame since a comparable increase in illegitimate births and divorces had not occurred during or after the First World War.

State-appointed committees charged with investigating the rise in the number of divorce petitions treated the problem as an unfortunate outcome of the unique conditions of mid-twentieth-century urban industrial modernity. They concluded that the state needed to play a more active role in protecting families from further disintegration. This was seen as especially urgent in the wake of the church's perceived failure to "make the most of its opportunity to give marriage guidance" before the war.[33] Following six months of investigation, the 1947 Committee on Procedure in Matrimonial Causes, led by high court judge Lord Alfred Thompson Denning, urged the government to provide substantial support for a nationwide "marriage welfare service" that focused on matrimonial reconciliation; they stressed that "the reconciliation of estranged parties to marriages is of the utmost importance to the state as well as to the parties and their children. It is indeed so important that the state itself should do all it can to assist reconciliation."[34] Although the "Denning report" repeatedly emphasized that marriage services should be state funded, it was also adamant that they needed to avoid any appearance of coercion in providing couples with marriage advice: the decision to stay married needed to come from clients themselves.[35] The prospect of the state intervening in people's private lives seemed dangerously close to the practices of the undemocratic authoritarian regimes that the new welfare government consciously avoided emulating. As a result, following the report's suggestions, Parliament decided to provide funding for already existing marriage services—including the National Marriage Guidance Council (NMGC), the recently launched Catholic Marriage Advisory Council, and the Family Welfare Association—rather than create a centralized government service, effectively providing a "marriage welfare service *sponsored* by the State, though *not* a State institution."[36]

[32] In 1940, 25,633 extramarital births were registered as compared to 55,173 illegitimate births in 1944. While 39,350 infants were born within the first seven months of marriage in 1940, four years later this number had fallen to 27,966. See Kathleen Kiernan, Hilary Land, and Jane Lewis, *Lone Motherhood in Twentieth-Century Britain* (Oxford, 1998), 27–28.

[33] "Preserving the Marriage Tie: A Welfare Service Proposed," *Guardian*, 6 February 1947, 5.

[34] Alfred Thompson Denning, *Final Report of the Committee on Procedure in Matrimonial Causes* (London, 1947), 12.

[35] Ibid., 13.

[36] Ibid. (emphasis added).

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Government researchers' support for a nationwide marriage welfare service was fueled by recent psychiatric discoveries concerning the negative impact of family disruption on children's fragile emotional development. Familial instability was seen as causing a troubling array of problems, including juvenile delinquency, neurosis, illegitimacy, and divorce. Studies of children who had been either evacuated or placed in residential nurseries while their parents contributed to the war effort concluded that a stable family life and loving parents were crucial to a child's healthy emotional and social development.[37] Government committees integrated these findings into their arguments in favor of Britain's pressing need for a marriage welfare service. The Denning Committee members were "much impressed by the evidence of experienced workers in this field that the basic causes of marriage failure are to be found in false ideas and unsound emotional attitudes developed before marriage, in youth and even in childhood."[38] Similarly, the 1948 Committee on Grants for the Development of Marriage Guidance, chaired by child welfare advocate Sidney Harris, included discussion of the psychological impact of marriage relationships on children in their report. It noted that since "it is widely accepted that successful marriage relationships can generally only be achieved by persons of sound and balanced character … the impression [a marriage] left on the minds of the children may influence their attitude to the community and to their own future marriages."[39]

Government researchers' preoccupation with the psychological impact of the social environment was also informed by wartime developments in British psychiatry. In response to reportedly successful experiments with group therapy in rehabilitating neurotic soldiers, psychological methods in officer selection, and studies of German prisoners of war that isolated the roots of Nazi ideology in authoritarian family dynamics, several of Britain's most prominent psychiatrists began to criticize biological understandings of mental life as crudely reductive. They focused instead on the psychologically transformative effects of the social environment as the foundation for healthy mental and emotional development. The emergence of the democratic "therapeutic community" approach to mental treatment was perhaps the most emblematic symbol of the psychosocial turn within postwar British psychiatry.[40] However, an even more pervasive marker was the growing focus among psychiatrists, psychologists, teachers, and social workers alike on mental illness prevention that targeted the elimination of authoritarian and "affectionless" relational influences within families, schools, hospitals, and workplaces. This postwar psychosocial turn had explicit political dimensions, which endowed its associated preventive and therapeutic practices with promising applications for social improvement and also provided its adherents with a compelling basis for making requests for government support. Its key architects included child psychiatrist John Bowlby, social psychiatrist

[37] See Anna Freud and Dorothy Burlingham, *Infants without Families: The Case for and Against Residential Nurseries* (London, 1943); Susan Isaacs, ed., *The Cambridge Evacuation Survey* (London, 1941); Richard Padley and Margaret Cole, eds., *Evacuation Survey: A Report to the Fabian Society* (London, 1940); Katherine Wolf, "Evacuation of Children in Wartime," *Psychoanalytic Study of the Child* 1 (1945): 389–404.

[38] Denning, *Final Report of the Committee*, 5.

[39] Sidney Harris, *Report of the Departmental Committee on Grants for the Development of Marriage Guidance* (London, 1948), 5.

[40] Robert N. Rapoport, *Community as Doctor: New Perspectives on a Therapeutic Community* (London, 1960).

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Thomas Main, and marriage therapy pioneer Henry Dicks. They all focused particularly on establishing crucial links between the quality of the emotional relationships that parents forged with their children and their future capacity to take on the enormous social responsibilities of democratic citizenship.[41]

In 1949—in the wake of the psychosocial "revolution" in British psychiatry—the Home Office alerted the NMGC and the probation service that all marriage counselors needed to undergo psychological training, and that the government would assume responsibility for funding such programs.[42] The Harris Committee recommended that all marriage reconciliation work adhere to expert-informed methods, since "[a]ll the good qualities that a counsellor should possess … may not carry him very far without special instruction in the nature of the problems he will have to face."[43] Although the Harris Committee had not specified the precise content of marriage welfare workers' training, the professional rigor of two recently launched psychodynamic marriage therapy initiatives impressed government officials, particularly with their theoretically sophisticated and seemingly objective approach to treating the underlying causes of all types of marital conflict. In 1948, the Family Welfare Association had created the Family Discussion Bureau (FDB), a social work initiative specializing in marital problems. Several months later, the Tavistock Clinic—one of Britain's leading centers for psychoanalytic therapy, research, and training—created a marriage therapy unit under Dicks's leadership. Unlike the NMGC's deliberately empirical and case-specific style of counseling, these explicitly psychotherapeutic initiatives were committed to developing specialized clinical techniques that would universalize the treatment of problem marriages by approaching intimate relationships as new kinds of therapeutic objects. As Dicks crisply put it, instead of treating afflicted individuals, "the marriage became the patient."[44]

The postwar turn toward treating relationships, rather than individuals, as the object of therapy had grown out of wartime experiences. Dicks saw the creation of the Tavistock Marital Unit as an opportunity to put into practice his wartime research on the origins of Nazi ideology in childhood family dynamics: "The War of 1939–45 sharpened our awareness … that the quality of marital life was a crucial factor in moulding the personalities of children, and thus the psycho-social climate of the future."[45] Drawing from a very different set of experiences, the FDB's first secretary, caseworker Enid Eichholtz (later Balint), credited the origins of the psychodynamic orientation of the bureau to her wartime work with the Citizens' Advice Bureau. At the FDB, she had discovered that the dislocated families she helped find housing

[41] See TNA, Henry V. Dicks, *The Psychological Foundations of the Wehrmacht* (London, 1944), WO 241/1:1; E. F. M. Durbin and John Bowlby, "Personal Aggressiveness and War," in *War and Democracy: Essays on the Causes and Prevention of War*, ed. John Bowlby et al. (London, 1938); John Bowlby, "Psychology and Democracy," *Political Quarterly* 17, no. 1 (January 1946): 61–75.

[42] A Marriage Guidance Training Board was also formed in 1949 following a recommendation made by the Harris Committee. An individual appointed by the Home Office chaired the committee. See Harris, *Report of the Departmental Committee on Grants*, 11.

[43] Ibid., 10.

[44] Henry V. Dicks, "The Mental Hygiene of Married Life" (1950), Henry Dicks Papers, PP/HVD/D/1/2, WL. See also Henry V. Dicks, "Clinical Studies in Marriage and the Family: A Symposium on Methods," *British Journal of Medical Psychology* 26, no. 3 (September 1953): 181–96.

[45] Henry V. Dicks, *Marital Tensions: Clinical Studies towards a Psychological Theory of Interaction* (New York, 1967), 45.

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were most interested in talking to her about "their personal experiences and relationships."[46] She became "convinced that behind many practical problems were relationship problems—more specifically marital problems—and that these were surprisingly difficult to resolve."[47] In setting up the FDB, Eichholtz identified her primary task as bringing the most up-to-date psychological knowledge and techniques to bear on marriage problems. She had a deep appreciation for Freud's understanding of unconscious life, and had recently begun training in psychoanalysis under John Rickman at the British Psychoanalytical Society. In formulating the content of social workers' education at the FDB, Eichholtz established a close relationship with the psychiatric staff at the Tavistock Clinic, several of whom, including Bowlby, Dicks, and her future husband Michael Balint, were very sympathetic to her objectives.[48]

The early innovators of marriage therapy were inspired by object relations psychoanalysis, a theoretical approach that Austrian émigrés Melanie Klein and Anna Freud as well as Scottish psychiatrists Ronald Fairbairn and Ian Suttie developed in Britain in the 1920s and 1930s. Basing many of their conclusions on clinical observations of infants and young children, object relations theorists deviated from orthodox Freudians in identifying human drives as motivated not by sexual desire but by a desire to develop relationships with other human beings. They argued that normal psychological development proceeded through interpersonal relationships, first with the individual's mother, later his or her father, siblings, friends, teachers, workplace associates, and, finally, his or her spouse.

Focusing on the marriage relationship rather than on either individual partner, marriage counselors and therapists at both the FDB and the Tavistock guided *both* spouses to understand themselves as inherently relational, and therefore mutual participants in the creation of marital conflict (following a relationship pattern established earlier in childhood).[49] For example, at the FDB a "tomboyish" young woman who complained of her husband's sexual rejection was described as unconsciously reliving her adolescent experience of having a mother who frequently criticized her lack of interest in dresses and makeup. At the Tavistock, the wife of a repeatedly adulterous husband was discovered to have had a mother who had openly preferred her sister to her and was described as reliving this earlier rejection through her marriage.[50]

As spouses became aware of their mutual contributions toward creating problems in their relationship, their attitudes and behavior changed. For example, at the FDB in the early 1950s the flirtatious Mrs. Greenwood and "weak and childlike" Mr. Greenwood were brought to understand their relationship as having "reactivated in both clients their early anxieties about intense rivalry with siblings and their unresolved conflicts about sexual identification." Over the course of their nine months of therapy, Mrs. Greenwood delighted in her husband becoming "more manly and

[46] Christopher Clulow, "Enid Balint obituary," uncatalogued, Tavistock Centre for Couple Relationships Archives, London (hereafter TCCR).

[47] Ibid.

[48] Enid Balint, "The Nature of an Effective Marriage Counselling Service," 25 January 1955, uncatalogued, TCCR.

[49] Kathleen Bannister et al., *Social Casework in Marital Problems: The Development of a Psychodynamic Approach* (London, 1955), 83–93.

[50] Dicks, *Marital Tensions*, 91–96.

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independent," relieved that "he no longer seemed like a child." She increasingly found herself "able to respond to him more cooperatively, both in a mutually satisfying sexual relationship and over the new budget plans." Counselors and therapists stressed the reciprocal nature of marital improvement, emphasizing that the resolution of "vicious *circles* of intolerance and resentment" gave way to "a beneficent *spiral* in which more positive behavior on both sides evoked a warmer response."[51] Ideally, therapy would be initiated soon after conflict had surfaced, as a way of preventing the intractable problems that resulted in petitions for divorce. If it were left too long, then even the most expert therapist might not be able to help couples to undo the psychological damage incurred by the neurotic relationship itself.

Published case studies were intended to teach the methods of marriage therapy to prospective practitioners through the use of concrete examples. They reveal clients' common complaints and hesitations in therapy, as well as the obstacles that marriage workers frequently encountered. However they also strikingly offer insight into the many complicated assumptions underlying the narrative of marital improvement that therapy was ideally meant to elicit. Published case studies all demonstrated that the central goal of postwar marriage counseling and therapy services was for individual spouses to become emotionally mature together; in practice, this meant that both husband and wife became capable of unselfishly and cooperatively working together to build a family. With marriage problems identified as stemming from relationships in childhood and adolescence, case studies describing couples' successes in therapy detailed their (usually arduous) journey toward emotional maturity; this was always narrated as a progressive movement from an inappropriately youthful state of arrested development toward healthy adulthood. As therapy progressed, emotional maturity was exhibited differently in men and women, with husbands' outward display of healthy adulthood gauged in terms of their competence as breadwinners and wives' maturity measured in terms of their enthusiastic embrace of homemaking and child-rearing. Clients' desired "personal development" was thus gauged according to the degree to which they enthusiastically accepted and performed expected marital roles and duties. For example, Mr. Robinson, who first made contact with the FDB in the late 1950s, was initially noted to have the demeanor of a "shamefaced boy," but through regular meetings with his caseworker he steadily came to accept his "role as an adult man." Mr. and Mrs. Cooper experienced a similar transformation over the course of eighteen months of therapy at the FDB. By the end, Mr. Cooper appeared "surer of himself, a man of some standing," and Mrs. Cooper "look[ed] very much a mother now, someone to be respected and reckoned with." With past traumas uncovered, spouses could begin to more adequately fulfill the requirements of a male-breadwinning, child-producing marriage. Spouses' heightened "self-realization"—language used in the FDB's and Tavistock's pamphlets and reports—was, in practice, assessed through their confident expression of the normative markers of adult masculinity and femininity. Therapeutic progress was measured in terms of spouses' joyful discovery of their appropriate masculine or feminine spousal role and readiness "to move forward into full adulthood and parenthood."[52]

[51] Bannister et al., *Social Casework in Marital Problems*, 93, 89, 91, 78 (emphasis added).

[52] Lily Pincus, ed., *Marriage: Studies in Emotional Conflict and Growth* (London, 1960), the quotations at 94, 137, 98.

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Prompted by the Home Office's 1949 decision that all services purporting to offer marriage counseling adopt a consistent, professional approach, the FDB and the Tavistock expanded their training programs; within a decade, probation officers, family planning physicians, psychiatric nurses, and lay counselors were receiving training in their joint psychotherapeutic techniques. Since marriage counseling services were provided to users free of charge, the client body was diverse—from working-class divorce petitioners who approached the probation service directly to upper-middle-class couples who were referred by a family physician. Dicks explained that while a depth psychological approach was appropriate for all social classes and backgrounds, in practice working-class clients required more openly didactic techniques than educated middle-class couples:

> We have to modify not our conceptual framework or interpretation of the phenomena but the techniques we employ to help insight and co-operation of different populations. We have to accept cruder transference-manifestations; use simpler words and be prepared to play more overt parental roles. I have discovered no essential class-difference in the dynamics of marital interaction.[53]

Probation officer Joan King similarly stressed that a psychotherapeutic approach to marital conflict was effective irrespective of a couple's socioeconomic background, although working-class couples often expected to receive authoritative guidance. King was adamant that "modern psychological knowledge and methods" enabled clients to "look below the surface" of their marriage and "recognize the underlying feelings and needs of both parties."[54]

In presenting the underlying causes for both marriage breakdown and its cure as essentially the same across social classes, all marriage problems—from persistent "henpecking" to spousal violence—were positioned on a spectrum of difficulties stemming from troubled relationships in childhood. In treating marriage as a fundamentally emotional relationship that flourished between psychologically mature men and women, therapists shifted significance away from a couple's material circumstances, except insofar as these exacerbated preexisting emotional problems. This was echoed in clients' own complaints about their marriages. The NMGC's records for the years 1952 to 1954 showed that clients most often complained of one or more undesirable personality traits or repeated behaviors in their spouse. These touched on "a range of different factors such as emotional immaturity, selfishness, financial incompetence and being unduly interested in persons of the opposite sex." Not only did clients seldom focus their complaints on material factors, but descriptions of spouses' "defects" also far surpassed the frequency of mentions of "difficulties in intercourse and anxieties about contraception." The NMGC's training officer, John Wallis, noted that personality problems were far more difficult to definitively resolve than sexual problems.[55] For this reason, by 1955, marriage guidance counselors throughout Britain were taught to understand their work as targeting the emotional conflicts that lay beneath (and ultimately fueled) all of their clients' expressed complaints.

[53] Dicks, *Marital Tensions*, 68.
[54] Joan King, *The Probation Service* (London, 1958), 122–27.
[55] Wallis and Booker, *Marriage Counselling*, 138.

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By the mid-1950s, the emotional orientation of marriage counselors and therapists had expanded far beyond earlier interwar preoccupations with sexual problems to encompass a much broader, and more nebulous, range of interpersonal issues. Emotional conflict had replaced sexual ignorance as the most pervasive and insidious threat to family stability, and became the focus of marriage improvement work. While sexual dissatisfaction remained a major concern for marriage counselors, it came to be treated as merely part of a constellation of symptoms of a dysfunctional emotional relationship. Mace explained the reason for the NMGC's reorientation: "The exercise of the sexual function is essentially a matter of the mind and emotions."[56] Although treatment environments and service user agendas differed, the strategies developed to attend to tensions and conflicts in marriage shared a commitment to untangling the complexity of emotional life (and making it intelligible). Although they served a diverse clientele, marriage therapists and counselors treated all intimate relationships as emotionally the same. The shared approach of the majority of British marriage services revealed a growing consensus that emotional factors lay at the base of all marital problems and that these required special techniques to resolve.

A psychological understanding of intimate relationships even proved popular with family services that did not explicitly make marriage reconciliation part of its work. By the early 1960s, the Family Planning Association had begun to integrate marriage therapists' insights into their birth control work as part of clinic physicians' updated duties since "marital difficulties" were judged to be "often part and parcel of the desire or request for birth control."[57] A 1963 Family Planning Association report stated that "every clinic doctor should be perceptive to emotional aspects of sexuality which cause unstated anxieties in many clinic users [and] also be able to spot and know what may be done about more serious disturbances deserving the name of 'marital difficulties.'"[58] The selection of clinic physicians was thus increasingly made on the basis of their "interest in psychological medicine, awareness of the emotional aspects of sexuality, [and] appreciation of psychosexual symptoms in neurosis and personality disorder."[59] This was an especially timely set of developments given that the Family Planning Association's client base was increasingly younger—with presumably less relationship experience—and more frequently middle-class, and thus likely familiar with the language and goals of psychotherapy.

Although the rationale for the state's provision of financial support for marriage welfare services was largely focused on protecting children's healthy emotional development, marriage therapists and counselors were more attentive to how the resolution of marital conflict made their clients more emotionally literate, more "self-realized," and ultimately more mature men and women. This goal became especially prominent over the course of the 1960s as marriage counselors and therapists

[56] David Mace, *Marriage Counselling: The First Full Account of the Remedial Work of the Marriage Guidance Councils* (London, 1948), 78–79.

[57] Family Planning Association, *Family Planning in the Sixties: Report of the Family Planning Association Working Party* (London, 1963), 24, Sir Allen Daley Papers, PP/AWD/H/7/8, WL.

[58] Ibid., 7.

[59] Ibid., 24.

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came to think of marriage as itself a necessary experience for the completion of individual men's and women's mature emotional development, thus further heightening the stakes of their therapeutic interventions. Cassel Marital Clinic director Tom Main explained that marriage provided a necessary platform for personal development, which by nature proceeded relationally: "within the marital relationship the self-realization of each partner is achieved through the other by the steady reality testing of the partner against the fantasies derived from earlier conflicts."[60] FDB caseworker Lily Pincus maintained that marriage equally performed two main functions: "the self-realization of husband and wife, and the social development of their children."[61] Marriage was likened to the mother-child relationship in counselors' training literature by way of emphasizing its developmental importance, and the aim of counseling was increasingly described as not only keeping marriages stable, but more importantly, helping couples to make "use of the potentialities for growth and self-realization which are inherent in the marital union."[62]

The insights of marriage therapists reverberated beyond the clinic. In the media and Parliament alike, discussions of divorce reform in the 1960s increasingly relied upon depth psychology when explaining the nature of marriage breakdown, and public conversations showed increasing concern for the impact of a failing marriage on spouses' emotional well-being. Supporters of divorce reform argued that incurably dysfunctional relationships needed to be publicly acknowledged as irreversibly "broken down," and spouses rendered free to seek out more suitable love relationships. Reformers maintained that legal recognition was not sufficient to constitute a marriage as real: its true foundation lay in the emotional relationship that spouses either nurtured, or neglected.

Divorce reformers' psychological understanding of marital dysfunction was one important outcome of marriage therapists' engagement with the public through radio programs, marriage advice columns, and popular sex and marriage education literature.[63] However, despite their deliberate attempts to shape public opinion and bring about a deeper valuation of lifelong commitment to marriage, counselors and therapists could not control how their message was received. Marriage therapists' psychological language and concepts permeated British culture, but were absorbed in unexpected ways as British men and women considered what marriage meant to them and reconsidered how many unmet expectations and how much dissatisfaction they were willing to endure.

[60] T. F. Main, "Mutual Projection in a Marriage," *Comprehensive Psychiatry* 7, no. 5 (October 1966): 432–49, at 445.

[61] Lily Pincus, ed., *Marriage: Studies in Emotional Conflict and Growth*, 2nd ed. (London, 1973), 17.

[62] Ibid. For further discussion of marriage therapists' treatment of marriage as a gateway to adult emotional maturity (and thus a crucial developmental experience) by the mid-1960s, see Teri Chettiar, "Treating Marriage as 'the Sick Entity': Gender, Emotional Life, and the Psychology of Marriage Improvement in Postwar Britain," *History of Psychology* 18, no. 3 (August 2015): 270–82, at 277–79.

[63] For example, after the Second World War, David Mace gave numerous lectures on marriage on BBC radio and had written a popular weekly advice column in the *Star* newspaper for four and a half years. In that time, he received "3,850 letters from readers presenting specific counseling situations." See David Mace, "An English Advice Column," *Marriage and Family Living* 12, no. 3 (August 1950): 100–2; idem, *Coming Home: A Series of Five Broadcast Talks* (London, 1946).

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BRINGING THE LAW INTO CONFORMITY WITH LOVE: EMOTION AS A SOCIAL VALUE IN 1960S BRITAIN

Marriage therapists' observations about the emotional nature and purpose of love relationships were not entirely novel after the war. Arguments urging the importance of emotional satisfaction in marriage had found a sympathetic audience within the growing movement for divorce reform in the 1930s, and even successfully provoked changes to the Matrimonial Causes Act in 1937. Alan Herbert's 1934 novel *Holy Deadlock* was instrumental in gaining public support for the view that marriage was essentially an emotional, rather than an economic or legal, relationship. Having left his career as a lawyer, Herbert wrote *Holy Deadlock* as a meditation on the moral conundrum that Britain's offense-based divorce law introduced. It told the moving story of a childless couple that had grown apart—through no fault of either spouse—after many years of marriage. While neither husband nor wife wished to pursue an extramarital relationship, both desperately wanted to divorce in order that they might seek out a more satisfying marriage.[64] However, the only way that an unhappily married couple could obtain a divorce was if one spouse committed adultery—or at least persuaded a judge to believe that this had happened. Herbert spotlighted a grave injustice that many contemporaries agreed could only be resolved through the liberalization of outdated divorce laws, and *Holy Deadlock* elicited enough public outrage to push the Matrimonial Causes Bill through the House of Commons in 1937. Although Herbert made a persuasive case against the offense model, the 1937 Act merely eased the conditions and waiting period for divorces pursued on certain limited grounds (such as women seeking to divorce adulterous husbands and divorce petitions proceeding from desertion). The basic framework of the offense model was kept intact, and divorce continued to only be granted if one party could prove that he or she was the innocent victim of an unjust injury by their spouse. It was not until the end of the 1960s that the offense-based model for divorce would be abolished. Marriage therapy, which had become increasingly popular, provided a persuasive and scientifically grounded framework for articulating the potentially damaging emotional stakes of a bad marriage, providing the movement for divorce reform with more compelling rhetorical ammunition.

The massive disorder that the Second World War brought to British family life fueled the perceived need to replace the offense model with divorce by mutual consent. Arguments in favor of liberalizing the divorce law now broadened to focus not only on the misery of unhappy couples but also that of children, such as the social stigma on and emotional damage in children born of relationships between married men and their mistresses. An article published in the *Guardian* in 1950 highlighted the many debilitating injuries facing the children of the "upwards of 300,000 couples more or less permanently separated and unable to re-marry."[65] Underscoring the inexorability of the breakdown of an ever-increasing number of families, the British news media was awash with arguments that once previous marriages had ceased to exist in anything but name, the law needed to stop

[64] A. P. Herbert, *Holy Deadlock* (Garden City, 1934).
[65] "Divorce," *Guardian*, 24 November 1950, 8.

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preventing new, legitimate unions from being formed and their children from being legally recognized.

By the early 1960s, arguments in favor of liberalizing divorce increasingly reflected concern for spouses' psychological well-being. Commentators on marriage and divorce in national newspapers emphasized the unending despair—even resulting in neurosis—caused by unhappy marriage. Many correspondents noted that as men spent more hours at work, rarely helping with childcare, women experienced profound resentment, loneliness, and, in some cases, severe depression. A 1961 *Observer* exposé titled "Miserable Married Women" reported sympathetically that many working- and middle-class suburban housewives fantasized about leaving their husbands and children. The mental harm caused by a life at home alone with one's children was often remarked upon, subverting the promises made in women's magazines and in modern parenting literature: one contributor noted that "the stress and strain of managing without proper facilities during children's younger years does infinite harm to the mental health of mothers *and* their families."[66]

Over the course of the 1960s, the essence of marriage was increasingly defined in terms of intimacy and mutual emotional fulfillment, rather than its legal or spiritual meanings: "its sanctity," marriage counselor Peter Fletcher maintained in a 1964 address to the NMGC, "derives from love" and it was therefore no use trying to preserve a marriage based only on its merits as a social institution.[67] The legal aspects of marriage were also frequently described as merely a formal recognition of a preexisting emotional relationship that itself constituted a family as legitimate. Novelist and social critic Gillian Tindall noted that British men and women increasingly expected more from marriage as the central relationship of their adult lives. In a plea to liberalize the divorce law, she argued that a readiness to resort to divorce was reflective of higher emotional standards and raised expectations. A higher divorce rate signified that "we expect more from [marriage] in terms of personal companionship and individual fulfillment." Some marriages, she argued, were simply "not worth maintaining" as they were "based on a situation so neurotic that it can never be rendered more stable."[68] Tindall thus strongly opposed the agenda of any public service—especially singling out the NMGC—that set out to prevent divorce. She called for a radical change in both public opinion and in the work performed by Britain's marriage welfare services. In her view, emphasis needed to shift "from disapproval of divorce undertaken 'too readily and too lightly,' to disapproval of marriage undertaken too lightly."[69] Tindall was not alone in seeing divorce as an appropriate solution for many dissatisfied couples. In a 1968 *Guardian* survey of British attitudes to marriage, 71 percent responded that divorce was the "best way out" of an "empty" marriage.[70]

Admiring the relationship insights of Britain's psychotherapeutic marriage services, the Labor MP Leo Abse mobilized a similar style of argument in Parliament.[71] As

[66] Elaine Grand, "Miserable Married Women," *Observer*, 7 May 1961, 34 (emphasis in original).
[67] "What Makes Marriage Sacred," *Guardian*, 2 May 1964, 3.
[68] Gillian Tindall, "A Shoulder to Cry On," *Guardian*, 1 August 1968, 7.
[69] Ibid.
[70] Ann Shearer, "Analysing the Answers," *Guardian*, 7 February 1968, 7.
[71] Abse went on to write psycho-biographies of Margaret Thatcher and of Tony Blair following his retirement from politics. See Leo Abse, *Margaret, Daughter of Beatrice* (London, 1989); idem, *Tony Blair:*

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the primary author of the radically transformative 1968 Divorce Reform Bill, Abse sought to replace the offense model for divorce with mutual consent following recognition of the marriage relationship's irretrievable "breakdown." He argued that adultery and desertion were merely telling "symptoms," and the not the cause, of a failing marriage.[72] Like the Tavistock marriage therapist and the FDB marriage counselor, Abse pronounced the collapse of a marriage to be a mutual affair: neither spouse was ever wholly innocent or entirely guilty. Moreover, linking harmonious marriage with Britain's democratic political culture, he argued that his proposed reforms to the divorce law would nurture the democratic family, whose "basis is not legal constraint but personal affection."[73] Abse argued that the offense model for divorce proceedings needed to be abolished not only because it misunderstood the true basis of intimate human relationships, but also because it stood as an obstacle to the cultivation of a truly democratic society—one that was rooted in emotional freedom. He therefore proposed that Britain's antiquated approach to divorce be replaced with a marriage "breakdown" model that was informed by a modern psychological view of intimate relationships. According to Abse, the law needed to support citizens' emotional needs, and "nurture not strangle" the possibility for all British marriages to be anchored in natural feelings of affection.[74] This was of crucial political importance since, "[t]he making of the modern family" he proclaimed, "has been part of the making of the new society."[75]

After several years of heated debate, the Divorce Reform Bill was introduced in Parliament in February 1968. Abse had presented an earlier Matrimonial Causes and Reconciliation Bill in 1963; in it one clause—proposing that married couples be allowed to divorce following seven years of separation without any attribution of offense to either spouse—caused immediate controversy. The bill encountered resistance from every Christian organization in England. The *Times* underscored this "remarkable display of solidarity" as a landmark event in British ecclesiastical history since it was the first time that all of the churches of England and Wales had united on a matter of doctrine.[76] Abse dropped the controversial "seven-year clause" after deciding it would prevent the bill's central proposals from being passed, including legal changes that would allow couples to make use of marriage reconciliation services without either being seen as guilty of collusion or of having forgiven a grievous marital offense if a divorce petition followed.[77] As he saw it in 1963, it was far more important to enable couples to reconcile than to make it possible to divorce through mutual consent. In his view, "magistrates and solicitors [could] deal

The Man behind the Smile (London, 1996). His 1973 memoir was similarly steeped in psychoanalytic explanations for choices that he had made throughout his political career. See Leo Abse, *Private Member* (London, 1973).

[72] "Mr. Abse Bows to Divorce Storm: 7 Year Clause Goes," *Guardian*, 4 May 1963, 2.

[73] Abse, *Private Member*, 161–62 (emphasis added).

[74] Ibid., 162.

[75] Ibid.

[76] "The Churches and Divorce," *Times*, 3 April 1963.

[77] The 1963 Matrimonial Causes and Reconciliation Bill became popularly known as the "kiss and make up" Bill. *Hansard Parliamentary Debates*, Lords, vol. 250, 22 May 1963, 389.

only with explicit surface problems" in a marriage.[78] To attain any real success in resolving marriage problems was, he argued, "a psychiatric task."[79]

Although church opposition had managed to stymie Abse's inclusion of the seven-year separation clause, the following year the archbishop of Canterbury appointed a group of church leaders to investigate contemporary divorce procedures and arrive at an informed decision about the matrimonial offense model. To the astonishment of many, the group's 1966 report concluded that "empty, legal marriage bonds are contrary to the public interest and … breakdown of marriage should be substituted for the notion of matrimonial 'guilt' and 'innocence.'"[80] Explaining the meaning of breakdown, the group maintained that "frequently, if not always, the failures in adjustment that lead to the divorce court come of failure to deal successfully with the legacy of infantile experience."[81] Embracing the contemporary psychological interpretation of marriage as compatible with their own spiritual view, the group recommended that the government concentrate on preventing breakdown, and further expand existing matrimonial reconciliation services so that they reach a greater number of couples in need. The archbishop's group described Britain's marriage services as enabling spouses to, "learn how to accept in the other, as well as in himself (or herself), some of the deepest elements of early infantile relationships. If both succeed in doing this, a new and more creative relationship may emerge."[82]

The archbishop's report was integrated into the 1968 Divorce Reform Bill, the purpose of which was to "recast [Britain's] divorce law by making the breakdown of marriage the sole basis of a divorce petition."[83] Entirely rejecting the offense-based model for divorce proceedings, it emphasized spouses' mutual participation in causing a marriage to fall apart. As with Abse's 1963 bill, this new bill suggested expanding and encouraging the use of marriage counseling services. William Wilson, the Labor MP and lawyer who piloted the bill through Parliament, recorded being "satisfied from talks that I have had with organisations that are skilled in reconciliation work that there is considerable scope for improvement and expansion of the work they do."[84] When the Divorce Reform Bill was passed in October 1969, the *Guardian* described the press around it as following "a psychological approach to divorce in place of the present system of divorce by marital offence."[85]

Although the theological objections to British divorce law reform had been settled by 1966 for many of Britain's most eminent churchmen, an additional set of protests remained unsatisfied. These misgivings focused not on reservations about the "marriage breakdown" model, but instead on the financial impact divorce had on housewives and mothers. The most vocal opponent of the Divorce Reform Bill was Dr. Edith Summerskill, a respected physician, Privy Council member, and married mother who had the support of the Married Women's Association. Claiming to

[78] *Hansard Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, vol. 620, 23 March 1960, 525.
[79] Ibid.
[80] O. R. McGregor, "Towards Divorce Law Reform," *British Journal of Sociology* 18 (1967): 91–99.
[81] Archbishop of Canterbury's Group on the Divorce Law, *Putting Asunder: A Divorce Law for Contemporary Society* (London, 1966), 142.
[82] Ibid.
[83] William Wilson, "Divorce Reform Bill," *Hansard Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, vol. 758, 9 February 1968, 810.
[84] *Hansard Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, vol. 758, 9 February 1968, 812.
[85] "First Divorce Law Change in 30 Years?," *Guardian*, 5 April 1969, 3.

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speak on behalf of all married mothers, Summerskill attacked the bill as a "Casanova's Charter." She condemned it both in the press and in Parliament as "a husband's bill, drafted by a man who doubtless meant well but who failed to recognize that marriage has different values for a man and a woman."[86] According to Summerskill, since "the preservation of the home with children was more important to the wife than the husband," the dissolution of a marriage was far more devastating to a wife than it was to her husband.[87] For Summerskill and her many supporters, it was taken to be an indisputable fact that all married men eventually developed an irrepressible appetite for new lovers, leaving their more family-oriented wives saddled with the burden of keeping their desires in check. It was therefore the duty of the law in a civilized society to exercise compulsion and force men to remain faithful to their marital vows. Summerskill warned that allowing greater freedom in this area would only result in the destitution of vast numbers of innocent wives and children. The bleak prospect of poverty, rather than the vague promise of emotional fulfillment, was her overwhelming concern. In the face of a significant rise in unemployed and unsupported mothers, Summerskill viewed appeals to "irreversible breakdown" and emotional dissatisfaction as inconsequential as she noted that "we have not yet reached the stage of social affluence where many [husbands] can afford two wives."[88]

Advocates of divorce reform disagreed with Summerskill's grim assessment, and appealed instead to the abject misery that they argued tens of thousands of men *and* women were currently experiencing in their marriages. Alex Lyon, Labor MP for York, maintained that he "did not believe life would be much altered for a woman who was divorced against her will if the marriage had already collapsed."[89] Lady Gaitskell similarly argued that "nothing is deader than dead love," and she "refused to accept the social myth that men tire of women more easily than women tire of men."[90] In a memoir published shortly after the Divorce Act had come into effect, Abse's reply to Summerskill and other opponents of the Divorce Bill was far more cutting. He dismissed Summerskill's opposition as a pathological symptom of a midlife crisis, maintaining that it stemmed from "the floating suspended anxiety of women suffering a crisis of identity" provoked by the changes in family life that accompanied middle age.[91] He further diagnosed *all* of Summerskill's major campaigns—including her efforts to make boxing illegal and to prevent the birth control pill from becoming readily available to unmarried women—as stemming from a "resentment, if not envy, of male aggressiveness and sexuality."[92] Exploiting psychoanalytic diagnosis as a retrospective tool against his opponents, Abse framed all of his campaigns for social reform—in favor of liberalizing divorce, decriminalizing homosexuality, and seemingly paradoxically, in opposition to the legalization of abortion—as working toward the wider psycho-political end of "liberating Eros" and protecting citizens' sexual and emotional freedom.

When the Divorce Reform Bill was finally accepted on 17 October 1969, its implementation was postponed by more than a year to allow sufficient time to make

[86] *Hansard Parliamentary Debates*, Lords, vol. 250, 22 May 1963, 397.
[87] "Reply to Church Critics," *Guardian*, 23 May 1963, 2.
[88] "Bishops Split over Divorce Bill," *Guardian*, 1 July 1969, 1.
[89] "Protecting First Wives' Pensions," *Guardian*, 17 January 1969, 20.
[90] "Bishops Split over Divorce Bill," 1.
[91] Abse, *Private Member*, 178–79.
[92] Ibid., 180.

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changes to the laws pertaining to the division of marital property and finances. By 1969, it had turned out to be impossible to stem the tide of shifting public opinion when it implicated popular beliefs about the nature and purpose of intimate relationships: emotional concerns took precedence over material misgivings. Summerskill's campaign had, however, not been in vain. Before divorces could be made easier to obtain, new laws were drafted to ensure that divorced men's ex-wives and legitimate children would not be forced to suffer financial ruin.

While "irretrievable breakdown" became the new legal framework for understanding marriage relationships and their vicissitudes, the old offenses—adultery, cruelty, and desertion—were retained in divorce proceedings as indications of breakdown rather than being entirely dismissed from legal decisions as irrelevant. Although the archbishop's group had recommended an inquiry into the presence of "irretrievable breakdown" for every divorce petition brought before the court, it was decided that if either spouse claimed that their marriage had irreversibly broken down, this would be treated as sufficient evidence for the case to proceed. Contrary to Summerskill's prediction, in the years following the passage of the Divorce Act, the majority of divorce proceedings were initiated by wives rather than husbands, and only 10 percent of divorces involved couples over the age of fifty.[93] The Divorce Reform Bill proved to be less a "Casanova's Charter" that left middle-aged women destitute than a means for people under the age of forty to pursue the dream of an emotionally fulfilling relationship.

Studies of English attitudes toward marriage at the height of Britain's "sexual revolution" revealed widespread expectations of emotional satisfaction in marriage. Geoffrey Gorer's 1969 anthropological inquiry into English attitudes toward marriage demonstrated a shifting set of commitments across the social classes since the end of the war when it came to defining and seeking out marital happiness. Gorer identified a move away from a focus on material factors toward a new preoccupation with emotional concerns; he noted that the most common response to the question, "What do you think goes to wreck a marriage?" did not touch on material issues like cramped housing and insufficient finances as it had twenty years earlier, but instead most often focused on relational issues like "bad communication," "selfishness," and "conflicting personalities."[94] Gorer's study revealed pervasive expectations of emotional intimacy in love relationships among both men and women under forty-five, and it also showed that the younger generations continued to value monogamous marriage just as strongly as their parents and grandparents did, however differently they saw its meaning:

> In England the press, and other media of mass communication … insisted that there was a major change in the sexual morals of the young; the 'permissive society,' 'swinging London' and all the other clichés implied that the young … had an ever-diminishing regard for the importance of marriage as an institution. Such casual observations as I had been able to make made me doubt the validity of these observations; I thought the censorious commentators were confusing changes in word-style with changes in life-style.[95]

[93] Mary Stott, "Looking Back on 10 years of Liberal Divorce Laws," *Guardian*, 26 September 1979, 10.
[94] Geoffrey Gorer, *Sex and Marriage in England Today: A Study of the Views and Experience of the Under-45s* (London, 1971), 84–85.
[95] Ibid., 2.

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Offering a closer examination of this change in "word-style," Gorer noted his respondents' preference for emotional language when explaining the enduring value of monogamy. For example, when asked whether fidelity remained important even though effective methods of birth control had become available, 92 percent of respondents gave answers that stressed the "emotional importance of fidelity" despite the growing use of the birth control pill and diminishing concerns about extramarital pregnancies.[96]

The findings of a 1971 study of British attitudes toward marriage conducted by the Institute of Marital Studies (as the FDB was renamed in 1968) similarly revealed that marriage continued to be deeply valued across age groups and social classes. Institute researchers interpreted this recurring discovery as evidence that monogamy was the most natural form of human coupling. To prove this point, the study included recent population statistics demonstrating that the numbers of couples choosing to marry was on the rise despite growing cultural tolerance for premarital sex. However, challenged by second-wave feminism, countercultural activism, and New Left Marxism, the perceived emotional benefits of monogamous marriage continued to hold significant weight. Declining support for the virtues of spouses' self-sacrificial "adjustment" to marriage may, on the surface of things, appear to have set the stage for the wholesale rejection of monogamous marriage by British young people. However, in 1971, the growing number of married couples and rising proportion of married men and women who were under the age of twenty-five demonstrated that this was far from the way things stood.[97]

By the end of the 1960s, widespread support for the importance of emotional satisfaction in intimate relationships appeared to many to dismantle, rather than bolster, marital stability. As evidence for such claims, more than four hundred thousand couples divorced in the first two years following the passage of Britain's Divorce Act.[98] Divorce reformers had drawn on the conceptual vocabulary of marriage therapists and even prioritized the further expansion of reconciliation services in order to bring British laws surrounding marriage and divorce in line with new scientific discoveries about the fragile and eminently relational nature of human emotional development. Reformers' savvy appropriation of expert knowledge about intimate relationships—however unintended by early marriage therapy pioneers at the end of the Second World War—ended up proving to be more effective at ending unhappy marriages than therapists had been at using this knowledge to "save" them. Despite the surge in the numbers of divorce petitions after the Divorce Act came into effect on 1 January 1971, supporters of the wide-ranging benefits of stable marriage retained a strong sense of optimism that the most recent (and most severe) "divorce epidemic" might actually be a good thing for Britain: as people bravely chose to end their dysfunctional marriages, they were free to enter into more emotionally fulfilling relationships and become more fully developed, "self-realized," and socially responsible citizens and parents. Appeals to the invisible logic of evolutionary progress were common as supporters of monogamous marriage

[96] Ibid., 149.

[97] See Pat Thane, "The 'Scandal' of Women's Pensions in Britain: How Did It Come About?," http://www.historyandpolicy.org/papers/policy-paper-42.html.

[98] "Woman's Guardian," *Guardian*, 16 July 1973, 9.

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continued to promote this highly specific form of human relationship as the necessary path toward the elusive goal of emotional satisfaction.

CONCLUSION

Britain's state-supported marriage welfare services both propelled and gave coherent shape to changing public understandings of the purpose of marriage and its function in people's lives. Not only did marriage services play an instrumental role in popularizing a new language of interpersonal psychological development and emotional fulfillment, but they also provided the basis for the post-war emergence of a new kind of emotional subject who expected to be made "mature" and "self-realized" through marriage. By 1971—despite the relaxation of divorce laws, the state-funded accessibility of birth control to unmarried women, and the decriminalization of homosexuality—marriage counselors and therapists continued to make a widely appealing case for the continued relevance of monogamous heterosexual marriage in producing mature men and women. The Institute of Marital Studies, which was "particularly concerned with the use people make of marriage as a vehicle for developing maturity," reported its longest waiting list yet that year.[99]

For decades, scholars have noted that a transformation occurred in legal discourse and public opinion in the second half of the twentieth century: a movement from thinking about marriage as an institution to thinking about it as a relationship.[100] Social historians Jane Lewis, Kathleen Kiernan, and Hilary Land add that the view that marriage primarily serves "public purposes" has been abandoned in favor of seeing it "as a private arrangement that maximizes individual satisfactions."[101] This reading, while not incorrect, obscures the ways in which healthy emotional development was framed in the post–World War II decades as deeply connected to public life—as a basic guarantee of responsible citizenship and as a basis for resolving a host of intractable social problems and securing a stable democratic polity. As this article has shown, the emotionally oriented postwar subject was brought into existence, in part, through the British government's involvement in attempting to ensure the production of autonomous and socially responsible citizens. Moreover, Britain's first generation of marriage therapists promoted their services as fulfilling a necessary social function: harmonious families were meant to reinvigorate public life by setting empathic social responsibility on a solid foundation, the healthy and fully developed personality. Unlike the individualizing projects that Michel Foucault's work on modern penal and psychiatric institutions explores, Britain's marriage welfare services were anchored in experts' "discovery" that the self was fundamentally relational: interdependent rather than independent, intersubjective rather than self-sufficient.[102] Marriage therapists presented a naturalized community-centered alternative to the socially fragmented and endlessly competitive Darwinian vision of urban industrial modernity.

[99] Institute of Marital Studies, "Marriage Study" (1971), uncatalogued, TCCR.

[100] This particular phrasing is first attributed to Ernest W. Burgess and Harvey V. Locke, *The Family, from Institution to Companionship* (New York, 1945).

[101] Kiernan, Land, and Lewis, *Lone Motherhood in Twentieth-Century Britain*, 63.

[102] See Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (London, 1975); idem, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* (London, 1961).

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The sociologist Anthony Giddens has described the greater valuation of emotional life in the latter half of the twentieth century as integral to the democratization of private life.[103] In Giddens's view, love relationships have been elevated to a place of utmost importance in defining and communicating individual identities and aspirations—this model of love is more self-expressive than self-sacrificing. This view has since been echoed in historians' explanations for a series of reforms connected to the late 1960s sexual revolution, which associate choices rooted in emotion with democratic freedom.[104] Giddens helps to account for the steady popularity of couples' counseling and marriage improvement literature. But he fails to consider the extent to which emotional intimacy and satisfaction became values associated with a form of lifelong monogamy that many felt compelled to accept and incorporate into their lives. Giddens takes for granted that emotions are pure, in the sense of being expressive of an unmediated agentive self. However, it is important to note that the conventions surrounding emotional intimacy in the decades following the Second World War were centered on the production of nuclear families with male breadwinners, and they served very specific purposes. Marriage counseling services both reflected and nurtured these conventions. While it seems that many genuinely supported and found comfort in the increasing regard for emotional life, and also saw tremendous potential for freedom contained within this emerging set of values, there were also many others who were excluded from this model of mature adulthood: homosexuals, childless couples, and those who, for a variety of reasons, never married. The freedom that was increasingly associated with love relationships did not straightforwardly extend to include non-childbearing individuals and couples.

By the late 1960s, emotional intimacy was seen as relying upon an immense amount of privacy. The privacy of the marriage relationship was ideally manifested through a couple's spatial separation from the world and their commitment to monogamous exclusivity. At the same time, their unique emotional dynamic, and its impact on each spouse's personal development, involved the two of them and no one else. These various aspects of intimacy were seen as intertwined: it was no accident of word choice that Institute of Marital Studies marriage therapist Stanley Ruszczynski explained that it was "within the privacy of our own home" that we had "the opportunity to regress or grow, to become childlike again or adults … Marriage asks us to be the fullness of our potential as human beings."[105] Privacy was essential for marital harmony; however, marriage therapists also emphasized the important consequences of emotionally satisfying marriages for public life, since they enabled spouses and children to become the most highly developed and most socially attuned selves that they could be. Integrating Britain's marriage counseling and therapy services into the welfare state gave legitimacy to their psychological reading of married life; it also provided optimal conditions for its permeation of British society at every socioeconomic level, so that it might give coherent shape to the needs and expectations of a large proportion of the adult population.

Because marriage welfare services were included within Britain's publicly funded social and health services, emotions were politicized in Britain in a way that they

[103] Giddens, *The Transformation of Intimacy*, 58.

[104] See Cook, *The Long Sexual Revolution*; Langhamer, *The English in Love*; Jeffrey Weeks, *The World We Have Won: The Remaking of Erotic and Intimate Life* (London, 2007).

[105] "Marriage à la Mode," *Guardian*, 20 August 1987, 8.

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were not in the United States, where marriage counseling services were also launched during the same mid-twentieth century decades as a service to private fee-paying clients, as well as through the sponsorship of Protestant churches.[106] In postwar Britain, like the United States, the democratic dream of responsible citizenship was strongly linked to an imagined ideal of emotional and psychological maturity; however, the idea that the state shared responsibility for ensuring that children and adults alike experienced healthy emotional development was peculiar to Britain. Marriage therapy services were often provided by government employees and made available as a condition of national belonging and workforce participation, which had the effect of legitimating the desire for a fuller and deeper private emotional life as a basic guarantee of citizenship. T. H. Marshall influentially argued in 1949 that Britain's social services ensured that every citizen had access to a common social heritage, and in this way served to eliminate class disparities and guarantee social equality. Britain's marriage welfare services contributed to this postwar ideal. Not only did they actively help couples develop the necessary emotional literacy to stay married, but they also promoted a cross-class awareness that permanent monogamous marriages could function as a platform for psychological growth, which would enable individuals to achieve their fullest social potential. This was a promise that was steeped in a quintessentially middle-class cultural ideal of family life; however, its foundation in emotional life rendered it a natural universal aspiration.

Ultimately, Britain's marriage welfare service made new modes of emotionally oriented existence possible and helped to create new possibilities for being a complete and fully integrated social self. These methods garnered the support of the British government and the public alike, and helped a new set of values flourish—ones rooted in emotional health and personal development. While this may have provided new freedoms for some, such as divorce seekers, it also presented a host of new barriers for others, such as homosexuals, thus creating not only a new emotionally oriented political culture with new possibilities for making political demands, but also a series of new obstacles and exclusions. As only certain family arrangements and sexual choices would be aligned with healthy emotional maturity, all others became troubling—although curable—signs of a suspended state of arrested development.

[106] Rebecca Davis, *More Perfect Unions: The American Search for Marital Bliss* (Cambridge, MA, 2010).

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