

Civil Defense in Holy Matrimony: Complications and Implications of Gender Roles in Ladies Home Journal, 1954-1960

by Amanda Roberts

In 1958, a letter from a male *Ladies Home Journal* reader revealed an atypical family in the 1950s. The wife, Joanne, had developed inflammation in her shoulders from her daily struggles with lifting and moving small children. The couple had to reverse roles: Joanne returned to the work force while the unnamed husband remained home with the children. He detailed how the children became more self-reliant through his “masculine approach” and that the household was running more efficiently due to the strength and endurance “God gave to male bodies.” At the end, he pondered whether or not gender roles in marriage should be swapped and if their family had been better off with him home and Joanne working. It was during this experience that he “began to realize what women seem to have always known: the family is our reason for being.”¹ His letter represents one aspect of the multitude of thoughts regarding relationship dynamics in marriage in the 1950s as well as the anxieties and questions many had about proper gender roles in post World War II America.

The nuclear family has become the most remembered feature of the 1950s and is part of what scholar Stephanie Coontz labels a “nostalgia trap” for modern families.² This study argues that in the latter half of the 1950s, concepts of civil defense and the changing roles of women complicated the spheres of life typically characterized as feminine. Marriage counselors provided women with a conflicted lens through which they could view their roles in marriage and the home that reflected the concern for national

¹ R. T. Milan, “A Father’s Place... Is in the Home?” *Ladies Home Journal* (May 1958): 4.

² For more in depth analysis of the nostalgic view of families of the past, read Stephanie Coontz, *The Way We Never Were: American Families and the Nostalgia Trap* (New York: Basic Books, 1992).

security present during the early years of the Cold War. The issues of *Ladies Home Journal* from the years 1954, 1956, 1958, and 1960 have been selected for this study. Specifically, it will focus on a recurring help column entitled "Making Marriage Work" by marriage counselor Dr. Clifford Adams.³ He offered a range of advice to married women, or those who wished to be married, often accompanied by letters from troubled women. These articles provide further insight into how marriage was viewed in the early years of the Cold War, what was at stake for women, and the family unit as the essential unit for civil defense. A woman's role and behavior in marriage was crucial to the survival of the family and reflects the tenuous atmosphere of the decade. A limitation of this study is that women's magazines, such as the *Ladies Home Journal* (hereafter referred to as the *Journal*), were targeted toward white, middle-class women. The bias was towards them as they were often the editors and contributors of many women's magazines of the period.⁴ They represented the social ideal and the women who consulted and wrote in to Dr. Adams and the *Journal* fit into this limited demographic.

Sarah Burke Odland argues that after World War II, domesticity and motherhood became separate spheres. Motherhood encompassed everything concerning the rearing of children whereas domesticity encompassed the physical home where a woman would complete household duties. Odland states that this allowed women's magazines in the immediate postwar years, such as *Ladies Home Journal*, to not require domesticity of all women, only of mothers.⁵ Gender anxieties emerged after the Second World War and the shift in gender roles initiated by the war would not be easily undone.⁶ The 1950s began to complicate the image Odland presents of the years immediately following World War II. The decade does not fit the nostalgic view that it has been attributed, as many scholars are now revealing.

The complexity of the era reaches farther than Betty Freidan's *The Feminine Mystique*. Historian Laura McEnaney has pointed out the overt

³ The starting year (1954) was chosen due to source limitation. Texas Woman's University library houses bound issues of the magazine starting in 1954. I chose to go through the articles in this series for four years within this time period to get a sense of what women were concerned about in marriage and what Dr. Adams was advocating. In addition, all citations to "Making Marriage Work" will not be shortened to avoid confusion since Dr. Adams did not give individual names to his general feature article. Every other year was selected to cover more the remainder of the 1950s.

⁴ Laura Curran, "Social Work's Revised Maternalism: Mothers, Workers, and Welfare in Early Cold War America, 1946-1963," *Journal of Woman's History* 17 (2005): 123.

⁵ Sarah Burke Odland, "Unassailable Motherhood, Ambivalent Domesticity: The Construction of Maternal Identity in Ladies' Home Journal in 1946," *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 34 (2009): 78.

⁶ Ruth Feldstein, *Motherhood in Black and White: Race and Sex in American Liberalism, 1930-1965* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000), 84-5.

signs of military ideals seeping into civilian lifestyles in the 1950s. Civilian-run organizations, such as the Federal Civil Defense Administration, perpetuated the militarization of the public by seeking cost-effective ways to involve citizens in nuclear defense.⁷ The definition McEnaney used for militarization is “the contradictory and tense social process in which civil society organizes itself for the production of violence.”⁸ Historian Elaine Tyler May argued that the American family in the 1950s served as a refuge and fortress of domestication against outside evils.⁹ Magazines of the period did not directly challenge these notions of domesticity and marriage, but told a fuller story of the era where women were encouraged to use their femininity in politics and communities in ways that took them outside of the home.¹⁰ This, however, did not make them immune to accusations of harboring communist interests. Women in politics faced loyalty charges disproportional to their numbers in politics and mothers that attempted to have a professional career were scrutinized if they were not married or their children were still in the home.¹¹ Marriage and the home were a woman’s refuge from accusations of communism.

Families increasingly turned toward experts to advise them in this time of uncertainty. Sociological texts of the period showed a shift in thinking of marriage roles as “equal” while simultaneously ignoring the constraints faced by many women.¹² The purpose of marital advice columns was to prepare individuals to adapt to the emotional norms expected of them. Specifically, this advice focused on women, the keepers of family relationships. This emphasis on women was evidence of the importance of marriage and the connection of hard work to a satisfying marital life.¹³ Such articles, featured heavily in women’s magazines of the 1950s, were meant to help women achieve the ideal marriage.

⁷ For more see Laura McEnaney, *Civil Defense Begins at Home: Militarization Meets Everyday Life in the Fifties* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

⁸ McEnaney borrowed this definition from Michael Geyer in “The Militarization of Europe, 1914-1945,” in Gillis, *Militarization of the Western World*, 79.

⁹ For more see Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1988).

¹⁰ Joanne Meyerowitz, “Beyond the Feminine Mystique: A Reassessment of Postwar Mass Culture, 1946-1958,” *The Journal of American History* 79 (1993): 1467-8, 1480.

¹¹ Landen R. Y. Storrs, “Attacking the Washington ‘Femocracy’: Antifeminism in the Cold War Campaign against ‘Communists in Government,’” *Feminist Studies* 33 (2007): 121, 124-5, 142.

¹² Wini Breines, *Young, White, and Miserable: Growing Up Female in the Fifties* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992), 27.

¹³ Francesca M. Cancian and Steven L. Gordon, “Changing Emotion Norms in Marriage: Love and Anger in U.S. Women’s Magazines since 1900,” *Gender and Society* 2 (1988): 311, 313.

Ladies Home Journal led the way for many women's magazines in the 1950s. The magazine had hit a slump in the 1930s until married couple Bruce and Beatrice Blackmar Gould took the helm as editors in 1937, remaining with the *Journal* for 27 years. The couple believed that a woman's life expanded beyond the kitchen. The *Journal* was considered a "middle-class service" magazine and its main demographic was white, middle class women.¹⁴ The magazine's goal was to build rapport with its readers rather than focusing on higher circulation numbers. It wanted to be known for "substance, depth, and reliability in its coverage of home management."¹⁵ Between the 1940s and 1950s, the *Journal* had a change in attitude toward women. In 1946, right after World War II, the magazine made it clear that it did not support women working in a full-time career while they had children to raise.¹⁶ An emphasis was placed on only part-time work, a mindset that would expand to include more options for women in the 1950s. The *Journal's* circulation was 4.5 million in 1954 and by the end of 1960 it had reached almost 6 million.¹⁷ In 1957, the *Journal* led other women's magazines in circulation, though its spot was contested by *McCall's* in 1960.¹⁸ The numbers made it clear that the magazine was highly regarded and read by many women, thus its readers were a prime audience for espousing the advice of marriage counselors.

Dr. Clifford R. Adams was one such expert. The *Journal* was not the first women's magazine to show Dr. Adams' marriage advice. He had previously written for *Woman's Home Companion* in the 1940s.¹⁹ His articles in the *Journal* noted his PhD credentials from the department of psychology at Pennsylvania State University and in the years chosen for this study, most issues of the *Journal* featured an article of his "Making Marriage Work" series. His articles dealt with topics ranging from how a woman could obtain and keep a husband to how the "wise wife" should deal with an unfaithful husband.²⁰ One prominent theme in his writing was the idea that if a woman was not ready for marriage, motherhood, or domesticity, then she was characterized as immature. Another theme was that the wife was responsible

¹⁴ Theodore Peterson, *Magazines in the Twentieth Century* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1964), 189, 197, 301.

¹⁵ Cynthia L. White, *Women's Magazines 1693-1968* (London: Michael Joseph LTD, 1970), 250.

¹⁶ Odland, "Unassailable Motherhood, Ambivalent Domesticity: The Construction of Maternal Identity in *Ladies' Home Journal* in 1946," 75.

¹⁷ White, *Women's Magazines 1693-1968*, appendix VII.

¹⁸ Peterson, *Magazines in the Twentieth Century*, 190.

¹⁹ Beth Bailey L., *From Front Porch to Back Seat: Courtship in Twentieth-Century America* (London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1988), 106.

²⁰ Clifford R. Adams, "Making Marriage Work," *Ladies Home Journal* (September 1958): 40.

for ensuring that the family stayed together.²¹ She was the one that was meant to facilitate time for the father to bond with children, since it came “naturally” to her, and she was responsible not only for the care of her husband (though without being overbearing, Dr. Adams warns in a later article), but to maintain good relations with the in-laws.²² If the in-laws became too unreasonable, then it would be up to the husband to trust her judgment in order to save the marriage.²³ The nuclear family of wife, husband, and children stood alone in the postwar age and it was up to the wife to maintain their unity. This was a requirement of the reliance the family must have on itself in order to facilitate the “self-help” doctrine civil defense required.²⁴

The Federal Civil Defense Administration, founded in 1951, was charged with tracking and molding public opinion in a time when civilians were being considered combatants in their own homes.²⁵ Their interests became intertwined with the roles of civilian women, estimated to be that the majority of the volunteers serving in a time of emergency. “Atomic motherhood/housewifery” was an idea that became prevalent in this era and made domestic duties an essential element of civil defense. Historian Laura McEnaney describes this as a time when “nuclear weapons... blurr[ed] the line between soldier and civilian, protector and protected.”²⁶

The recent threat of World War II had assisted in ingraining patriotic ideals on this generation.²⁷ Coupled with the fear of nuclear weapons, new forms of patriotism took the place of war bonds. The public had, for the most part, rejected the idea of private bomb shelters, but supported arms build-up and public efforts for safety in the event of a nuclear strike. In private, they were pacifists and in public, they supported militaristic, anticommunist ventures.²⁸ The threat of nuclear war brought the family closer together and encouraged the growth of a secure home for the

²¹ The theme of immaturity was mentioned in several of his articles. It is prominently addressed in the articles featured in the July 1958 and December 1960 issues of *Ladies Home Journal*.

²² Clifford R. Adams, “Making Marriage Work,” *Ladies Home Journal* (October 1954): 36.

²³ Clifford R. Adams, “Making Marriage Work,” *Ladies Home Journal* (March 1956): 43.

²⁴ McEnaney, *Civil Defense Begins at Home: Militarization Meets Everyday Life in the Fifties*, 23-28.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 3, 31, 70. McEnaney proves this assertion within her book by examining what actions of the Federal Civil Defense Administration the public supported and the reception they received.

²⁶ Laura McEnaney, “Atomic Age Motherhood: Maternalism and Militarism in the 1950s,” *Women’s America: Refocusing the Past*, ed. Linda K. Kerber and Jane Sherron De Hart (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 449, 451-2.

²⁷ Susan Householder Van Horn, *Women, Work, and Fertility, 1900-1986* (New York: New York University Press, 1988), 117-9.

²⁸ McEnaney, *Civil Defense Begins at Home: Militarization Meets Everyday Life in the Fifties*, 154.

next generation to be raised.²⁹ For the middle-class family that had access to the means and resources to fit into the postwar ideal, the foundation of their postwar home was marriage. This new age brought with it a new concept of marriage that resulted in uncertainty for many American couples as they returned to a normal life after the Second World War. This uncertainty combined with women birthing children closer together than before (usually two years or less between births), created a different portrait of American families. By reaching their preferred family size sooner rather than later, women were left with more years where their children were fully grown.³⁰

The rhetoric Dr. Clifford Adams used in his marriage advice can be best situated within the changing role of the physician. Doctors were increasingly acting as marriage experts, dispensing birth control and sexual advice to married couples. The shift began in the 1920s when physicians were given the sole control over distributing birth control and some believed that by doing so, they were promoting marital happiness. This had the effect of limiting birth control access to the middle-class, typically married white women with access to a physician since doctors would use their own discretion on which of their patients should be allowed contraceptives.³¹ The new marriage that marked the 1950s emphasized the idea of the wife as a companion. She typically lacked her own identity and was often seen through the lens of others, as someone's wife or mother.³² The new marriage that experts spoke of defined a "mature" woman as one that was domestic and submissive whereas unrestrained emotion could lead her straight to divorce or desertion.³³ Marriage would lead couples into a good life that had escaped them during the Depression of the 1930s and the World War of the 1940s. If a marriage ended in divorce, it was seen as a failure of the individuals to make it work and couples, more often the women, would consult experts to guide them through the new mine field of a 1950s marriage.³⁴

Readers of the *Journal* were no exception in their interest in marriage advice. The Goulds, married editors of the magazine, were adamant to give

²⁹ Van Horn, *Women, Work, and Fertility*, 120.

³⁰ *Ibid*, 85.

³¹ Sheila Rothman, *Woman's Proper Place: A History of Changing Ideals and Practices, 1870 to the Present* (New York: Basic Book, 1978), 201, 207, 209.

³² *Ibid*, 225, 227.

³³ Cancian and Gordon, "Changing Emotion Norms in Marriage: Love and Anger in U.S. Women's Magazines since 1900," 318, 332.

³⁴ Stephanie Coontz, *Marriage, a History: From Obedience to Intimacy or How Love Conquered Marriage* (New York: Penguin Group, 2005), 235.

their readers the best they could, and Dr. Adams had made the cut.³⁵ One reader was pleased when she found her young daughter reading a marriage advice article in the *Journal* and wrote, "Well, if this present generation cannot make a success of marriage it isn't that they have been without help!"³⁶ Another woman wrote to tell of her own experiences with marriage counseling and how it had saved her marriage. In her story, she was the only one to attend counseling and her husband refused to work on the difficulties in their marriage. Despite this, the woman reported that she was happier with her marriage and children than she had ever been. The title given to the letter by the editors says it all: "woman power" was the key to saving and maintaining a "happy" marriage in the 1950s.³⁷ Expert advice was paramount in helping women obtain the idealistic happy marriage they were promised in the 1950s. This was the culture that Dr. Adams was writing his advice in, one that saw individuals, but more importantly women, as the ones responsible for the success or failure of marriage.

This important distinction of women being responsible for divorce, even indirectly, can be evidenced in Dr. Adams' recommendations to couples. In one article of "Making Marriage Work," a woman wrote Dr. Adams in distress about the state of her marriage. The couple lived separately due to the wife's reluctance to move until her husband was settled in with his new job in another town. The husband wanted a divorce and she was unsure whether or not she loved him anymore. Dr. Adams replied that it was the wife who tended to think about divorce and her behavior was what led the husband to react and finally suggest divorce. He concluded his advice with: "Divorce is not a cure; it is an emergency operation, and it always leaves scars. Every divorced woman must adjust to her new status: if she had made the same effort to adjust to marriage, there would be far less unhappiness—and fewer divorces."³⁸ In a similar article, Dr. Adams warned women not to fall prey to the temptations of infidelity. Women had to be alert so they were not caught by the "powerful appeal of youth" and temptations were likely to stem from dissatisfactions with themselves, not their husbands.³⁹ At the focal point of Dr. Adams' advice was that a woman's determination to adapt to her marriage was essential to its survival. This adaptation to a new form of the relationship between man and woman would form the basis for American families' survival through

³⁵ Laurie Holden and Alfred C. Holden, "Woman to Women: Social Marketing an Idea to the New World," *Psychology and Marketing* 15 (1998): 182.

³⁶ L. D. Peck, "Can This Marriage... 1965?" *Ladies Home Journal* (June 1954): 4.

³⁷ Anonymous, "Woman Power Saved This Marriage," *Ladies Home Journal* (March 1954): 4.

³⁸ Clifford R. Adams, "Making Marriage Work," *Ladies Home Journal* (April 1956): 44.

³⁹ Clifford R. Adams, "Making Marriage Work," *Ladies Home Journal* (November 1960): 46.

the dangers of the Cold War. Beyond the experts that were consulted, women were to “keep quiet” about their personal affairs, further making the family an isolated island during the Cold War.⁴⁰ “Woman power,” as the editors of the *Journal* put it, combined with consultation with an expert could save any marriage, even one where the husband was unfaithful.

Divorce in the 1950s has been shown to be considered a failure of individuals and Dr. Adams would further emphasize this point in a tale of two wives that were faced with unfaithful husbands. One he admonished because when he spoke to the husband, Dr. Adams was convinced that if the wife had done her share in the marriage earlier, her husband would not be set on leaving her for another woman and obtaining a divorce. He juxtaposed this tale with another that featured the “wise wife” handling a case of infidelity. Discretion was of the utmost importance and the wife was advised to “win her husband back to her” and that “though it is the wife who has been wronged, it is she who must take initiative in setting matters right.”⁴¹ These extra burdens drew on women’s attentions in the early years of the Cold War. Her role was stepping outside of home; government organizations encouraged women to join the work force to improve industrial growth. At the same time, politicians accepted that married women did work outside of their homes.⁴² Women were taking on more responsibility inside and outside the home; burdens that were essential to maintaining strong family units that would be able to fend for themselves in the event of a nuclear threat. If divorces were widely encouraged then what was a fortress, as the home was meant to represent, if it was broken apart?

The fortress of the home had to be maintained and that required a “mature” person that was up to the task. A “superwoman” of the time, as defined by historian Elaine Tyler May, was one who could fulfill many roles within the home such as “early childhood educator, counselor, cook, nurse, housekeeper, manager, and chauffeur.”⁴³ A woman would be unable to fulfill any of these roles without marriage and no desire to pursue marriage or accept its “responsibilities” was seen as a flaw in character. The majority of people Dr. Adams’ wrote about in his article were women, so it is difficult to

⁴⁰ Clifford R. Adams, “Making Marriage Work,” *Ladies Home Journal* (October 1956): 52.

⁴¹ Clifford R. Adams, “Making Marriage Work,” *Ladies Home Journal* (September 1958): 40.

⁴² For more information about the efforts taken towards women’s employment in post WWII America, see Susan M. Hartman, “Women’s Employment and the Domestic Ideal in the Early Cold War Years,” in *Not June Cleaver: Women and Gender in Postwar America, 1945-1960*, ed. Joanne Meyerowitz (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994), 84-100.

⁴³ May, 185; Another scholar, Joanne Meyerowitz, defines a 1950s “superwoman” as one that can successfully combine career and motherhood in “Beyond the Feminine Mystique: A Reassessment of Postwar Mass Culture, 1946-1958,” 1459.

discern whether he would have seen the same level of immaturity in men that were not ready for marriage as he did in women. However, men who wished to not be married were not immune to social criticism; they were met with the same insults of being “sick” and “immature.”⁴⁴ Lack of marriage or children could be seen as subversive behavior linked to communism if a woman were successful and would be used as a weapon against her. This encouraged men and women to maintain traditional gender roles and not draw attention to themselves.⁴⁵ Marriage was not considered optional in the 1950s and those who were not married by certain ages had social faults that others needed to be wary of.⁴⁶ Dr. Adams noted that women who were widowed or divorced and remarried in their thirties showed that they were “both qualified and available” to be wives. He recommended that to get remarried or married, women might have to even move to another community and should take part in community or church activities to widen their dating pool.⁴⁷

The 1950s has been characterized as conservative in ways, but it was a transitional period for marriage after the Second World War. Modern themes of marriage did begin to appear, such as psychologists emphasizing sex within marital relationships.⁴⁸ A wife that was one of Dr. Adams’ clients expressed disinterest in a sexual relationship with her husband and called sex “animal mating” not a representation of love.⁴⁹ This, among other faults, led Dr. Adams to declare that the woman had been unready for marriage. While she may have had other shortcomings that made her an unsuitable marriage partner for her husband, the emphasis of the article was on her hatred of sex and the quote “I hate being pregnant and I hate sex” was featured prominently at the top of the article.⁵⁰

The emphasis on having these women appear immature in their unsatisfactory approach to marriage was a common theme in Dr. Adams’ articles. Another article had the words “I’m still immature” featured in large font at the top and detailed the story of a discontent woman carrying what even Dr. Adams’ called “too heavy a load”. Women who expected too much from their relationships in marriage and family were categorized on the

⁴⁴ Coontz, *The Way We Never Were: American Families and the Nostalgia Trap*, 33.

⁴⁵ Meyerowitz, 1467-8, 1460.

⁴⁶ Coontz, *The Way We Never Were: American Families and the Nostalgia Trap*, 33.

⁴⁷ Clifford R. Adams, “Making Marriage Work,” *Ladies Home Journal* (December 1958): 39.

⁴⁸ Cancian and Gordon, “Changing Emotion Norms in Marriage: Love and Anger in U.S. Women’s Magazines since 1900,” 332.

⁴⁹ Clifford R. Adams, “Making Marriage Work,” *Ladies Home Journal* (July 1958): 28.

⁵⁰ Clifford R. Adams, “Making Marriage Work,” *Ladies Home Journal* (July 1958): 28.

same level as those who did not put in enough effort.⁵¹ Mature women were able to find and maintain the balance within their homes and domestic duties, and by successfully performing this balancing act, they were performing their civic duty to the nation. To do this, women had to walk a tightrope as they were expected to be domestic and dependent on men, but at the same time, take care of them.⁵²

The load for that wife may have been too heavy, but as the caregiver of the family, the wife had many duties to her husband if she wanted to remain married. According to Dr. Adams' article in November of 1954, women were responsible for watching their husband's weight, supervising their diet, ensuring they had time to rest, and encouraging them to relax.⁵³ This gave the wife responsibility for her husband's well-being and leisure; by being wed she was to be entirely responsible for the health of another, grown individual. These women had to be careful not to take it too far, however. A couple of years from then in 1956, Dr. Adams warned women that "making marriage work means effort. It does *not* mean becoming servant, scapegoat, caretaker or nurse to your husband and children."⁵⁴ In the same article, he acknowledged that women were required to take on civic responsibilities in the community while being an excellent housekeeper and cook. Those women that felt insecure about their roles were the ones that over-exerted themselves in their duties.⁵⁵ In this second case, the husband felt henpecked by his wife, while in the first couple, the wife expressed concern over her husband. To fit properly into their roles of civic duty, women had to tend to their husbands, but not to the point where the husband felt smothered or his masculinity was at stake. The lines between the gender roles were a difficult area to traverse in the 1950s and marriage counselors attempted to define guidelines to ensure that men and women did not step outside their roles.

The difficulties of this presented itself in the way the 1950s had more equal treatment between the genders, encouraged women to pursue certain interests outside of the home (community and government), and some modern themes of marriage began to emerge, such as the expression of anger between couples, and emphasis on sex.⁵⁶ There was still an emphasis

⁵¹ Clifford R. Adams, "Making Marriage Work," *Ladies Home Journal* (December 1960): 32.

⁵² Breines, 33-4.

⁵³ Clifford R. Adams, "Making Marriage Work," *Ladies Home Journal* (November 1954): 34.

⁵⁴ Clifford R. Adams, "Making Marriage Work," *Ladies Home Journal* (January 1956): 26.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ Breines, *Young, White, and Miserable: Growing Up Female in the Fifties*, 36; Cancian and Gordon, "Changing Emotion Norms in Marriage: Love and Anger in U.S. Women's Magazines since 1900," 326.

on traditional values, but the 1950s represented a transitional point in the institution of marriage that was included in the new focus on the nuclear family. There were emerging trends of married women working outside the home that marriage counselors had to address. Dr. Adams ranked discussing whether a wife would continue to work after marriage as a priority before the ceremony and warned wives that they should not use employment as an excuse to avoid household and marital responsibilities. In addition to this, the money earned by an employed wife was not to be used to raise the “day-to-day standard of living,” lest it become a necessary luxury the family did not want to give up, or be used for “her own pleasure.”⁵⁷ Roles were changing and women’s opportunities were expanding beyond the home, but there were still guidelines she had to follow. The 1950s was a time of increased luxury spending for the middle-class: 60% of the population achieved middle-class income level by the mid-1950s and many had doubled the surplus money in their budgets.⁵⁸

The emphasis was placed on spending the money wisely; it could not be spent frivolously and better yet, it should be invested wisely if misfortune were to ever strike. A restrained form of consumerism was required within marriage and motherhood or the wife would place negative pressure on her husband.⁵⁹ Marriage had to be carefully controlled to contain femininity and masculinity. Uncontrolled femininity in both men and women could lead to a weakened nation that was supposed to be raising the next generation of Cold War warriors.⁶⁰ The importance of marriage counselors becomes even clearer within this framework.

Marriage counselors, such as Dr. Adams, experienced the demand for their expertise at a time when the United States was trying to reaffirm its standing and stance against communism. They were useful in quelling the fear of gender anxieties that had appeared post-World War II and kept men and women in what was viewed as their proper roles in their relationship to one another.⁶¹ Civilians were stepping into the forefront of the battlefield since the threat of nuclear war could strike anywhere and all had to be prepared. The rise of civil defense in the home, as articulated by historian Laura McEnaney, provides a careful framework in which to examine the values and rhetoric espoused by Dr. Adams.⁶² His articles provide insight into the daily lives of married women in the 1950s when they were seeking

⁵⁷ Clifford R. Adams, “Making Marriage Work,” *Ladies Home Journal* (May 1960): 40.

⁵⁸ Coontz, *The Way We Never Were: American Families and the Nostalgia Trap*, 24.

⁵⁹ Feldstein, 115, 120

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 72.

⁶¹ Feldstein, *Motherhood in Black and White: Race and Sex in American Liberalism*, 84-5, 115.

⁶² McEnaney, *Civil Defense Begins at Home: Militarization Meets Everyday Life in the Fifties*.

the help of experts. The uncertainty of the era spilled over into marriage and the mobilization efforts of the civilian population took on new focus in the decade. This study examined another facet of the complexity within the early Cold War years. The family was the refuge from the communist threat and marriage was the starting point for this stage of life. Women were key players in this period, not only with their increasing roles in the work force, but their roles within the home played a vital importance in planning civil defense. One reader of the *Journal* described herself and other homemakers and wives of the decade: "We are not put-upon, neglected, pathetically isolated individuals, unless we wish it so."⁶³ This was only one part of a complex issue involving the rise of suburbia and the nuclear family.⁶⁴

Civil defense was becoming intertwined with everyday life in the 1950s and was heavily reflected in the marriage advice given by experts of the decade. To have a healthy, mature marriage, as was expected of adults of the period, would be to have a strong foundation of defense within a nation that was focused abroad in its interests. Dr. Adams represented one of many marriage counselors that reflected the period in which they advised couples and singles toward wedded bliss. The ultimate goal would be to have a stable family unit where the wife was the glue that held them together and ideally, she would be able to perform many roles that would assist them in their survival should disaster ever strike. A firm understanding of this transitional period within marriage can help to further the perception of how roles within marriage have been changing within the 20th century United States and are being redefined in modern times.

⁶³ Frances L. Blackman, "Motherhood Not a Prison," *Ladies Home Journal* (September 1958): 6.

⁶⁴ The other side being the frustrated, isolated housewife that is present in Betty Freidan's *The Feminine Mystique*; Joanne Meyerowitz's article "Beyond the Feminine Mystique: A Reassessment of Postwar Mass Culture, 1946-1958" provides a direct analysis of Freidan's work and the complexity of the era.