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Modern Marriage and the Culture of Sexuality: Experts between the State and the Church in Poland, 1956–1970

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Through an analysis of archival documents and the published writings of experts, this paper explores the relationships between the emerging field of sexology, the state, and the Catholic Church in post-1956 Poland, as these relationships play an important role in the history of sexuality under state socialism. In the period in question, experts in sexuality, mainly medical doctors, focused on how to improve sexual relations within marriage. They developed a notion known as the 'culture of sexuality' based on progressive values such as equality, rationality, and psychological health. Experts drew a connection between an improvement in people's marital sex lives and the health and welfare of both society and the nation. The Party-State supported these developments and also used them to their advantage in their political struggle with the Catholic Church. However, the experts' proposal to restrict access to abortion (in 1961) was met with decisive resistance on the part of the Party-State.

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