

Emily Priscott

Singleness in Britain, 1960-1990

Identity, Gender and Social Change

SERIES IN CONTEMPORARY HISTORY

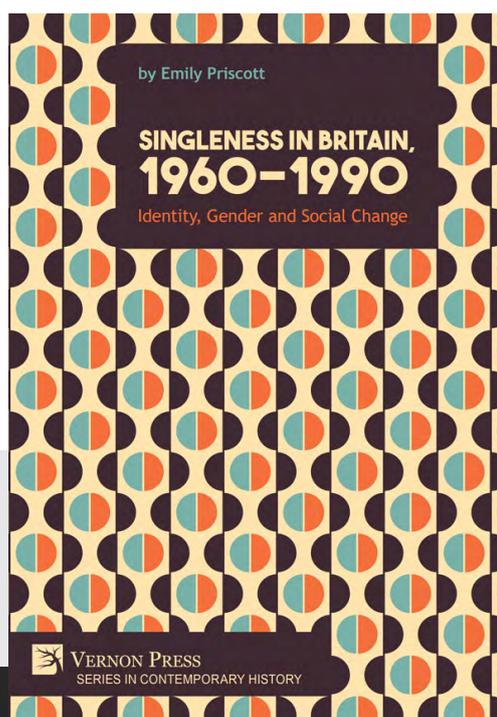
About the author

Emily Priscott is a writer and social historian, and recently completed her doctorate in contemporary history at the University of Sussex. Her interests include gender, popular culture, and 20th-century British history, particularly what attitudes and ideas reveal about an era's social climate. Her research frequently uses gender as a method of measuring social progress and highlighting the tension between lived experience and social expectation.

Summary

This book contributes to an emerging field of research, looking at the significance of marital status to debates about identity and gender. It examines representations and experiences of single men and women between 1960 and 1990, using a wide variety of sources, including digitized British newspapers, social research, films, and lifestyle literature.

Whilst much-existing work focuses on the early-to-mid 20th centuries (such as Katherine Holden's ground-breaking work, *The Shadow of Marriage: Singleness in England, 1914-1960*), this book alternatively examines the impact of the 1960s and the aftermath of changing attitudes to singleness. While Holden and others, such as Virginia Nicholson in *Singled Out*, focus largely on social status and lived experience (often through oral testimony), the author is just as interested in finding new ways of looking at gender and sexuality. This work starts from the premise that a distinct double standard existed in attitudes towards single men and women, which continued even after the wave of legislation to improve women's status during the 1960s. Examining these often vastly different expectations reveals a complex web of progress, continuity, and contradictions, highlighting the uneven pace of social change and its frequent compromises and limitations. Using theoretical approaches such as feminism and queer theory, this work explores the impact of changing gender norms on issues including single fatherhood, old maid stereotypes, and experiences of homelessness. It can be used as a study aid for 20th-century British history and gender studies courses, and might also interest both established academics and intellectually curious non-academic readers. The author has made efforts, where possible, to clearly explain her theoretical approaches and interventions for those who might be unfamiliar with them.



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