



Provided by the author(s) and University of Galway in accordance with publisher policies. Please cite the published version when available.

Title	Caught in the Cultural Lag: The Stigma of Singlehood
Author(s)	Carr, Deborah; Byrne, Anne
Publication Date	2005
Publication Information	Byrne, Anne, and Deborah Carr. 2005. Caught in the Cultural Lag: The Stigma of Singlehood. Psychological Inquiry 16 (2):84 - 141.
Publisher	Psychology Press
Link to publisher's version	http://www.informaworld.com
Item record	http://hdl.handle.net/10379/142

Downloaded 2024-04-26T12:24:09Z

Some rights reserved. For more information, please see the item record link above.



Published as Byrne A. and Carr, D. 2005. 'Caught in the Cultural Lag: The Stigma of Singlehood'. *Psychological Inquiry: An International Journal for the Advancement of Psychological Theory*, Vol. 16 (2,3): 84-91.

Caught in the Cultural Lag: The Stigma of Singlehood

Anne Byrne and Deborah Carr¹

Word count: 5924 (including text, notes, references, and appendix)

¹ Authorship is alphabetical; both authors contributed equally to this manuscript. The authors were fellows at the Rutgers Center for Historical Analysis (RCHA) during the 2003-04 seminar on "Gendered Passages in Historical Perspective: Single Women." Please address all correspondence to Deborah Carr, Department of Sociology and Institute for Health, Health Care Policy and Aging Research, Rutgers University, 30 College Ave., New Brunswick, NJ 08904; email to carrds@rci.rutgers.edu or Anne Byrne, Department of Political Science and Sociology, National University of Ireland, Galway, Ireland; email to AnneByrne@nuigalway.ie.

Caught in the Cultural Lag: The Stigma of Singlehood

The United States is unquestionably a pro-marriage society. The observation that marriage is a more desirable status than singlehood has been trumpeted in recent popular books including *The Case for Marriage* (Waite & Gallagher, 2000), *Creating a Life* (Hewlett, 2002), and *What Our Mothers Didn't Tell Us* (Crittenden, 2000) and has guided the implementation of pro-marriage social policies including “covenant marriage,” and economic and tax policies that favor married couples (e.g. Nock, Wright, & Sanchez, 2002). Popular “reality” television shows, situation comedies, and films owe a posthumous screenwriter’s credit to Jane Austen, as their final scenes often fade to a dreamily enamored heterosexual couple at (or on their way to) the altar (Wetzstein, 2001).

Few observers would question that cultural images, public policies, and personal attitudes elevate the status and value of heterosexual marriage relative to single life in the United States today. DePaulo and Morris take this observation one important leap further. They argue that pervasive and largely uncontested support for the Ideology of Marriage and Family has quietly generated a more pernicious yet barely acknowledged phenomenon called “singlism,” or prejudice and discrimination targeted against the unmarried. The persistence of singlism, they argue, is evident in multiple studies documenting negative attitudes towards unmarried persons (e.g., Morris, DePaulo, Hertel, & Ritter, 2004). Of even greater concern to DePaulo and Morris is that uncontested beliefs about the supremacy of marriage as a cultural ideal are perpetuated (unintentionally) by the social scientific community. Social science research often begins with the unacknowledged and uncontested assumption that a comparison between “married” versus “unmarried” persons is a meaningful and important contrast. Similarities between the two groups

are often ignored, and differences (particularly those differences where the single fare worse than the married) are attributed to the less desirable aspects of singlehood or, worse yet, to personal deficiencies of the single persons themselves.

DePaulo and Morris provide a timely, compelling, and exciting springboard for further investigating the ways that civil (marital) status shapes human experience. Rather than critiquing their argument, we hope to push it in new directions by evaluating more rigorously the claim that single persons are the target of stigmatization. To do so, we will first revisit classic and contemporary conceptualizations of stigma, and will evaluate the extent to which singles both meet and depart from the criteria set forth by Goffman (1963) and others. Second, we will challenge the notion that prejudicial beliefs toward single persons are sufficient evidence that single persons are stigmatized. Rather, we propose that single persons themselves must perceive that they are the targets of mistreatment (regardless of their attribution for it) to demonstrate stigmatization. Third, we conduct empirical analyses, based on the Midlife in the United States (MIDUS) study, to evaluate whether unmarried persons differ from married persons in their perceptions that they have been the target of interpersonal and institutional discrimination. Fourth, we explore possible explanations for our empirical finding that single people report interpersonal mistreatment but not institutional discrimination. We propose that singles are caught in a “cultural lag” (Ogburn, 1922) between macrosocial changes that encourage and sustain singlehood as a desirable option, and slow-to-change cultural ideals that still elevate marriage as the ideal state. Pro-marriage ideology (and consequently, single stigma) will persist until scholars and laypersons (a) recognize and question the privileges afforded to married persons, (b) acknowledge that problematic aspects of marriage and family life are indicative of “public issues” rather than “private troubles” (Mills, 1959), and (c) investigate more fully the

adaptive and creative ways that unmarried persons construct their own unique sets of “family” relationships. Finally, we propose that the development of “singleness studies” as a field of academic inquiry may be an important step in chipping away at singlism both in science and society.

Is Singlehood a Stigmatized Identity?

Are singles stigmatized in the United States today? If early conceptualizations of stigma are used as the criteria, then the answer is a resounding “yes.” Goffman (1963:3) defined stigma as any personal attribute that is “discrediting” to its possessors and that reduces such a person “from a whole and usual person to a tainted and discounted one.” Crocker and colleagues (1998) elaborate that stigma refers to “a social identity that is devalued in a particular context.” As DePaulo and Morris argue persuasively, research conducted over the past 20 years shows that unmarried persons are viewed as less likeable (Krueger, Heckhausen, & Hundermark, 1995) and more physically unattractive, lonely, and shy than their married peers (Morris et al., 2004). Single people are particularly likely to be denigrated if they are deemed “responsible” for their solitary civil status. Unmarried persons often are viewed as responsible for their single status due to some characterological flaw or “blemish,” such as promiscuity, immaturity, self-centeredness, or a lack of personal discipline (e.g, Davis & Strong, 1977; Morris et al. 2004). The extent to which singlehood is stigmatized is closely tied to context (Crocker, Major, & Steele, 1998); young unmarried college students are considered perfectly acceptable, whereas 40-something unmarried persons are viewed as pitiful, past their prime, and hopeless in their quest for a lasting love (Kruger, et al., 1995; Morris et al. 2004).

Whereas Goffman defined stigma in terms of social desirability and acceptance, more recent definitions characterize stigma as the violation of widely accepted norms. For instance,

Stafford and Scott (1986: 80) describe stigma as “a characteristic ...that is contrary to a norm of a social unit,” where “norm” refers to a “shared belief that a person ought to behave in a certain way at a certain time.” According to this definition, too, singles are clearly stigmatized. Both behavioral and attitudinal data underscore that marriage is “normative”: more than 90 percent of all Americans will marry at some point in their lives (Connidis, 1991), and survey data consistently show that most Americans believe that it is better to be married than to go through life single (e.g., Thornton & Young-DeMarco, 2001).

However, one innovative reconceptualization of the stigma process suggests that single people may *not* necessarily constitute a “stigmatized” group. Link and Phelan (2001) argue that evidence of anti-single attitudes alone does not necessarily support the claim that single persons are a stigmatized group. Rather, Link and Phelan (2001) argue that stigma exists when four interrelated components converge: labeling, stereotyping, separation, and status loss/discrimination. Specifically, they propose that the first step of the stigmatization process is the creation and labeling of oversimplified groups that are believed to be different from one another, and where some groups are viewed as superior to the others. Although there may be tremendous variability within such groupings, this variability is often ignored. Single persons fit into the first steps of the stigmatization process. Both in public rhetoric and scholarly work, as DePaulo and Morris observe, “singles” are often viewed as a monolithic group. Although unmarried persons are a highly diverse population, comprising the always single, the formerly married, singles who hope to be married someday, gay singles who are not allowed to marry, and so on, they are typically treated as a very broad analytic category in social scientific research. Married persons, too, are typically treated analytically as a monolithic category; only on rare

occasions do scholars stratify the broad “married” category according to the duration, order (i.e., 1st, 2nd, etc.), or quality of one’s marriage.

Link and Phelan (2001) further propose that a core component of the stigma process is that the labeled person experiences discrimination and status loss, which in turn may have harmful consequences for their life chances, including their psychological, economic, and physical well-being. According to this criteria, it is unclear whether singles are stigmatized. We know of no studies that have evaluated directly whether unmarried persons are more likely than married persons to experience discrimination, either in their interactions with major social institutions (such as employers or realtors) or on a daily, interpersonal basis. Rather, most studies document prejudicial attitudes towards fictitious or abstract “single people” using quasi-experimental designs, and presume that these attitudes will necessarily lead to discriminatory treatment (e.g., Conley & Collins, 2002; Morris et al., 2004).²

The assumption that anti-single attitudes will be translated into discriminatory behaviors is questionable, however, given the powerful evidence that attitudes are only weakly related to actual behavior (see Eagly & Chaiken, 1993 for review). Moreover, few studies directly evaluate whether members of purportedly stigmatized groups suffer from disadvantaged life chances due explicitly to discrimination. Rather, “discrimination” is invoked as a post-hoc explanation when members of a socially devalued group show a disadvantage in an important life domain, such as economic or emotional well-being. For example, numerous studies document that unmarried persons (especially men) have lower earnings and occupational status than married persons. This

² Prejudice refers to negative attitudes and beliefs about members of a particular group, while discrimination refers to overt negative and unequal treatment of members of a given social group solely because of their membership in that group (Allport, 1954).

disadvantage typically is attributed post-hoc to “bias” or “discrimination” even when no direct measures of such experiences are obtained (e.g., Antonovics & Town, 2004; Bellas, 1992; Toutkoushian, 1998).

We believe that it is important to explore individuals’ *own perceptions* that they have been treated in a discriminatory manner, *regardless of their attribution for that treatment*. We agree with DePaulo and Morris’ assertion that singlism is so subtle and uncontested that even single persons themselves may not perceive that they are treated in an inappropriate or unkind way due to their civil status. However, we do believe that documenting whether single persons’ perceptions of experiencing interpersonal or institutional mistreatment (regardless of their attribution) is an important line of inquiry that may reveal the specific ways that singlism is manifested and experienced.

The Subtle Stigma of Singlehood: Empirical Evidence

In order to investigate whether single persons differ from married persons in their reports of experiencing interpersonal and institutional discrimination, we examined data from the Midlife Development in the United States (MIDUS) survey, a random sample survey of more than 3,000 men and women ages 25 to 74 in 1995. The MIDUS is the only nationally representative survey we know of that asks Americans whether they have ever been the target of a wide array of interpersonal and institutional discrimination experiences. We conducted logistic regression analysis to evaluate the likelihood that a never married person, currently cohabiting person, and formerly married person (that is, separated, divorced, or widowed) reports having experienced each of nine forms of interpersonal discrimination, and eleven types of major institutional discrimination; currently married persons are the reference group. Specifically, respondents are asked the following two questions: “How many times in your life have you been

discriminated against in each of the following ways because of such things as your race, ethnicity, gender, age, religion, physical appearance, sexual orientation, or other characteristics?” and “How often on a day-to-day basis do you experience each of the following types of discrimination?” The response to each question is coded “yes” if a respondent indicates any such experiences. The complete list of discriminatory experiences is displayed in Appendix A.

We evaluated gross effects models, which reveal the unadjusted likelihood that a single person reports discrimination. We also evaluated net effect models, so that we can control for possible confounding factors. Past studies have revealed that never married persons tend to be less well-educated and younger than their married peers. African Americans, overweight persons, persons with poor physical health, and persons with depressive symptoms are also less likely than whites, thinner persons, and persons with high levels of positive physical and mental health to be married (e.g., Mastekaasa, 1992; Waite & Gallagher, 2000). Because personal characteristics, such as race, sexual orientation, or health status, may also affect one’s experiences of interpersonal and institutional discrimination, we control for such characteristics in our analysis. In doing so, we can better pinpoint the effect of marital status on perceptions of discriminatory treatment. We estimated models for men and women separately, given that singlehood is experienced very differently by men and women (Bernard, 1972; DePaulo & Morris, 2004). The results of our analysis are presented in Appendix A; we present results for never married persons only.

We found that never married persons are much more likely than their married peers to report discriminatory treatment, yet this treatment occurred largely in informal, interpersonal exchanges (net of possible social selection and confounding factors). Single men are more likely than married men to say that they have been treated rudely, as if they are not smart, as if others

are afraid, as if they are dishonest, and that they have been threatened or harassed. However, single men were no more likely to report having experienced *any* of the 11 possible forms of institutional discrimination, and were less likely than married men to report having been denied a bank loan. Generally similar patterns are documented for women. Compared to married women, never married women are more likely to report that they've been treated with less respect than others, received poorer service at restaurants, were called names, or were threatened or harassed. Single women were not significantly different from married women in their reports of having experienced 10 of the 11 forms of institutional discrimination, although they were more likely to say that they had ever been hassled by the police.

We also explored whether cohabiting unmarried persons and formerly married (i.e., divorced, separated, or widowed) persons were more likely to report experiences of discrimination, compared to married persons (Complete results are available from second author). Cohabiting men are no more likely than married men to report any form of interpersonal or institutional discrimination, although cohabiting women did report elevated levels of mistreatment by the police, and of being made to feel uncomfortable in their own neighborhood. Our analysis demonstrates that the stigma of singlism persists, but in a very specific way, and for never married unpartnered persons moreso than for formerly married persons, or for unmarried cohabitants. Importantly, singles are more likely than married persons to report experiences of interpersonal mistreatment, but not institutional discrimination.

We believe that these findings underscore an important observation of Link and Phelan (2001): "stigma is a matter of degree....some groups are more stigmatized than others." Cohabiting and formerly married singles may be less subject to stigmatization than never married unpartnered singles, who, in turn may not be as highly stigmatized as other frequently

“discredited” subgroups, such as mentally ill persons, substance abusers, and members of ethnic and racial minorities. Still, the fact that single people *do* report interpersonal mistreatment calls for an investigation of the question “Why?” Why are single persons more likely than marrieds to experience mistreatment at the hands of friends, acquaintances, and wait staff at restaurants yet are *not* more likely to report obstacles in getting or keeping a job, renting or buying the home of their dreams, and securing the bank loan to buy that dream home? We believe that singles are caught in a normative and cultural lag; although demographic patterns and other major social changes are creating an historical and social context where singles may lead lives that are as rich and fulfilling as married persons, cultural values and attitudes still blithely endorse and perpetuate the Ideology of Marriage and Family.

Why Does Interpersonal Discrimination Persist? Cultural Lag

Rapid social change may produce a cultural lag, where one element of a culture or society changes more quickly than another (Ogburn, 1922). Singles may be caught in such a “lag” or the delay between the point in time when social conditions change, and the time that cultural adjustments are made. DePaulo and Morris marshal extensive empirical evidence to document that social conditions have indeed changed over the past three decades. Demographic data reveal not only that fewer Americans are marrying and staying married today, but also that the proportion of adults remaining single until their 30s, 40s and even 50s is higher than ever before (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2003). Reproductive technologies enable unpartnered women (and gay partners) to have a biological child outside of the traditional heterosexual relationship. Practices such as surrogate mothering, in vitro fertilization, and new biotechnologies such as gene splicing, cloning, and genetic engineering mean that reproduction is no longer linked inextricably to biological (and married) parents (Rifkin, 1998).

The functional bases for traditional marriage also have started to erode over the past four decades. A gradual blurring of gender-typed social roles in the home and workplace today means that men and women no longer need to find a partner to fulfill the expressive and instrumental marital roles (respectively) that traditionally were performed by a member of the opposite sex (Becker, 1981). Women's educational and occupational opportunities have expanded drastically over the past four decades, thus women's economic need to find a spouse have declined considerably (Carr, 2002). Likewise, as each consecutive cohort of men becomes increasingly willing to engage in homemaking and childcare tasks, men's need to find a homemaker, child care provider, and helpmate have diminished (Coltrane, 1996).

If the functional bases for traditional marriage are eroding then why do pro-marriage (or anti-single) cultural beliefs remain so intransigent? Why is marriage still held up as the most cherished of all relationships, and as *the* most important relationship for fulfilling an individual's needs for intimacy, love, and nurturance (e.g., Barrett & McIntosh, 1982; Bourdieu, 1996; Jamieson, 1999)? Accordingly, why are all other emotional relationships – with siblings, friends, coworkers, and uncommitted romantic partners – viewed as “second-class” arrangements, or as relationships that will be placed promptly on the backburner when one marries? Most importantly, why are unmarried persons – even persons who maintain healthy non-marital relationships – still viewed as less desirable, moral, respected, and happy than their married peers?

We propose three reasons why the Ideology of Marriage and Family is so slow to change. First, marriage (and the nuclear family, more generally) is so taken for granted as the “norm” that few actively recognize or contest the fact that *marriage is an institution of privilege*. Conformity to the Ideology of Marriage and Family is rewarded with “economic, cultural, and symbolic

privilege” (Bourdieu, 1996). The state confers social, financial, and legal benefits on married persons, while withholding such benefits from unmarried persons (Wise & Stanley 2004). We argue further that marriage is an institution *for the privileged*. Persons who can and do marry often have more rights and resources than those who do not. For example, most gay Americans face legal obstacles and cannot marry, even if they are positively disposed to the idea.

Economically disadvantaged persons and persons who are not yet financially stable may sidestep marriage for cohabitation (or may be encouraged to postpone such a union all together) until they achieve a position of financial stability (Smock, 2004). Others, still, may face more subtle obstacles to marrying, if the partner of their choice is deemed unacceptable or inappropriate by family members.

Systems of privilege, whether based upon civil (marital) status, gender, race, social class, or sexual orientation are resistant to change because prevailing ideologies “present existing social relations as natural and inevitable, [while] interests [of the privileged group] ...come to appear as universal and neutral” (Purvis & Hunt, 1993: 478). We believe that the privilege afforded to married persons is the most pervasive and least contested of all privileges because nearly all persons have first-hand experience with the nuclear family. Not only are pro-family attitudes internalized by children and young adults, but these beliefs are reified on a daily basis, through language and practice. As Bourdieu (1996) observes, the dichotomies of married versus not married and family versus individual underlie “the common principle of vision and division that we all have in our heads.”

Second, pro-marriage cultural beliefs persist because most Americans (both laypersons and scholars) ignore, discount, or reinterpret “data” that reveals problematic aspects of the traditional marital relationship. In doing so, the belief is perpetuated that the public institution of

marriage is unproblematic. Rather, those persons who have troubled marriages, who divorce, or who choose ultimately to avoid marriage, are viewed as pathological or “flawed” individuals (Goffman, 1963). Any critique of the institution of marriage – in either word or deed (e.g., the decision either to avoid or dissolve a marriage) – is viewed as indicative of a “personal problem” of the unmarried or unhappily married, rather than as an indication of a larger “public issue” (Mills, 1959). This tendency to view “public issues” as “personal problems” has a very important consequence: the institution of marriage is allowed to persist as is, and problems such as marital strain, abuse, divorce, and the like are attributed to personal failings of specific individuals rather than to a flawed institution (Feldberg & Kohen, 1976; 158).

Some scholars counter that personal efforts to tackle individual-level problems can lead to institutional change. For instance, Giddens (1992) proposes that the transformation of intimacy at the level of personal relationships may have consequences for wider social transformation. However, other scholars maintain that structural inequalities cannot be eliminated by personal efforts at transformation. Indeed, such an emphasis on the personal deflects attention away from the political. For example, many married women recognize inequality in their intimate relations and invest much of their time and energy into “relationship-saving strategies” to sustain marital intimacy. Such efforts deflect personal (and societal) attention and efforts away from transforming gender-based inequalities that are deeply embedded in the institution of marriage (Jamieson, 1999).

Third, because marriage is viewed as the ideal and most highly desired form of human relationships, most unmarried persons are viewed as victims who have defaulted to singlehood, rather than as powerful agents who have established and maintained personal relationships that fulfill their own preferences and desires. We urge members of the scientific community to

conduct in-depth qualitative studies of unmarried persons themselves, in an effort to uncover the distinctive ways that unmarried persons defy social norms promoting marriage, and instead forge relationships that best meet their personal needs and preferences. Analyses focusing on agency *and* structural contexts may reveal the specific ways that pervasive ideologies perpetuate the single stigma.

We know, for example, that single individuals engage in a variety of practices to mitigate and deflect the harmful effects of negative evaluations by and interactions with non-singles (Byrne, 2000). However these strategies are relatively ineffective in the face of a persistent pro-family ideology that casts single persons as “anti-family.” Studies that reveal the ways that unmarried persons creatively maintain familial and interpersonal relationships may help to refute the faulty assumption that unmarried persons are “anti-family.” For instance, recent research confirms that single women are often responsible for providing emotional and practical help to others; what distinguishes single women from their married peers is their ability to negotiate and choose whom to care for and under what conditions (Byrne, 1999; Byrne, 2003). However, single women are still constrained by the Ideology of Marriage and Family; single women are more likely than their married peers to be “expected” to provide care to aging parents, because they do not have husbands and children who also require care (Allen, 1989; Byrne, 2000).

Implications and Future Directions

Taken together, our analysis and the writings of DePaulo and Morris provide powerful evidence demonstrating the subtle ways that the Ideology of Marriage and Family and singlism conspire to compromise the quality of life experienced by single persons in the United States. A first step toward combating singlism involves the recognition on the part of social scientists and policy makers that they may be contributing unintentionally to the perpetuation of singlism. For

example, social scientists often attribute single persons' disadvantages such as higher levels of depressed affect to personal traits, while federal programs prescribe marriage as the panacea for all of the social, economic, and psychological ills experienced by unmarried persons.

Our analysis suggests that attention must also be paid to the practices of "those who do the discriminating" (Link & Phelan, 2001: 366). Interpersonal discrimination, in part, may account for the lower levels of self-esteem and higher levels of depressed affect evidenced by unmarried persons in multiple studies (e.g., Simon, 2002; Waite & Gallagher, 2000). The self-concept develops through interactions with others, and it reflects one's perceptions of significant others' appraisals (Cooley, 1956). Members of stigmatized groups, such as single persons who experience interpersonal mistreatment, are likely to perceive that they are regarded negatively and may incorporate those negative attitudes into their self-evaluations (Cooley, 1956). The perceptions of significant others are neither idiosyncratic nor based solely on observable traits of single persons, however. Rather, such appraisals reflect "the patterning of [pro-family] ideology rather than the supposed dysfunction of single" individuals (Reynolds & Wetherall, 2003).

Improving the quality of life for unmarried persons requires attacking the "fundamental cause" of single stigma. Practices and policies should be developed that "produce fundamental changes in attitudes and beliefs, or [that] change the power relations that underlie the ability of dominant groups to act on their attitudes and beliefs" (Link & Phelan, 2001: 381). We acknowledge that changes in attitudes and power relations often occur at a glacial pace. Racism, sexism, and homophobia still persist in the United States today, despite the tremendous inroads made by the Women's and Civil Rights movements of the 1960s. Yet the social scientific community has also made an important contribution to helping to chip away at such "isms." The establishment of academic subfields such as women's studies, race and ethnic studies, and gay

studies has been instrumental in training a new generation of scholars to look beyond the dichotomous divide of male/female, black/white, and gay/straight and instead to search for important sources of within-category differences and between-category similarities. Such efforts have been instrumental in promoting a more theoretically sophisticated and nuanced understanding of the lived experience of stigmatized individuals.

As a first step, scholars in singleness studies should call for a move away from the simple contrast of married versus unmarried in social sciences research. More fine-grained categories of marital status are needed to characterize the diverse experiences of unmarried adults. Unmarried unpartnered persons, unmarried persons cohabiting with a romantic partner, widowed persons, and divorced persons each comprise a distinctive group of “unmarried” persons. The experiences of formerly married persons are molded not only by the absence of a legally-sanctioned romantic union, but also may reflect the stressors associated with the transition between the states of “married” and “formerly married”. Further, there are multiple pathways to the “unpartnered never married status”. Some are single by choice, others would like to be married someday but have not yet had the opportunity, others may face psychological or physical challenges that create obstacles to their ability to form a lasting romantic union. Only when scholars move away from taken-for-granted yet often meaningless demarcations such as “unmarried” versus “married” can they truly uncover the distinctive challenges and benefits experienced by the highly heterogeneous category of “unmarried” Americans (Link & Phelan, 2001).

We are optimistic that singlism “in society” also may erode in the coming years, as greater numbers of individuals achieve “wise person” status (Goffman, 1963). Goffman (1983: 28) has observed that some stigmatized individuals find support and encouragement from “wise persons” who are “privy to the secret life of the stigmatized individual and sympathetic with it.”

As more adults postpone marriage, dissolve marriages, or choose not to marry all together, then they and their closest friends and supporters will achieve “wise person” status. As more Americans are “privy” to the distinctive experiences of the unmarried they may start to scrutinize and challenge the Ideology of Marriage and Family, and in the process transform singlehood from a second-class status to one that is recognized as just as desirable and valuable as traditional marriage.

References

- Allen, K. R (1989) *Single women/family ties: Life histories of older women*. London: Sage.
- Allport, G. W. (1954). *The nature of prejudice*. Cambridge, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Antonovics, K., & Town, R. (2004). Are all the good men married? Uncovering the sources of the marital wage premium. *American Economic Review*, 94, 317-321.
- Barrett, M. & McIntosh, M. (1982). *The anti-social family*. Verso: UK.
- Becker, G. S. (1981). *A treatise on the family*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Bellas, M. (1992). The effects of marital status and wives' employment on the salaries of faculty men: The (house) wife bonus. *Gender & Society*, 6, 609-622.
- Bernard, J. (1972). *The future of marriage*. New York: Bantam.
- Bourdieu, P. (1996). On the family as a realized category. *Theory, Culture and Society*, 13, 19-26.
- Byrne, A. (1999). Familist ideologies and difficult identities. In M. Cohen & N. Curtin (Eds.) *Reclaiming gender, transgressive identities in modern Ireland* (pp. 69-90). New York: St Martins Press/Macmillan.
- Byrne, A. (2000). Singular identities: Managing stigma, resisting voices. *Women's Studies Review*, 7, 13-24.
- Byrne, A. (2003). Developing a sociological model for researching women's self and social identities. *The European Journal of Women's Studies* (Special Issue on Identities), 10, 443-464.
- Carr, D. (2002). The psychological consequences of work-family tradeoffs for three cohorts of women and men. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 65, 103-124.

- Coltrane, S. (1996). *Family man: Fatherhood, housework, and gender equity*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Cooley, C. H. (1956). *Human nature and the social order*. New York: Free Press.
- Conley, T. D., & Collins, B. E. (2002). Gender, relationship status, and stereotyping about sexual risk. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 28, 1483-1494.
- Connidis, I. A. (2001). *Family ties and aging*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Crittenden, D. (2000). *What our mothers didn't tell us: Why happiness eludes modern women*. New York: Touchstone.
- Crocker, J., Major, B., & Steele, C. (1998). Social stigma. In D. T. Gilbert & S. T. Fiske (Eds.) *The handbook of social psychology* (pp. 504-53). Boston: McGraw-Hill.
- Davis, A. G., & Strong, P. M. (1977). Working without a net: The bachelor as a social problem. *The Sociological Review*, 25, 109-129.
- DePaulo, B. & Morris, W. (Forthcoming). Singles in society and in science. *Psychological Inquiry*.
- Eagly, A., & Chaiken, S. (1993). The impact of attitudes on behavior. In A. Eagly, S. Chaiken, & D. Youngblood (Eds.) *The psychology of attitudes* (pp. 155-281). New York: Harcourt.
- Feldberg, R., & Kohen, J. (1976). Family life in an anti-family setting: A critique of marriage and divorce. *The Family Coordinator*, April, 151-159.
- Giddens, A. (1992). *The transformation of intimacy: Sexuality, love and eroticism in modern societies*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Goffman, E. (1963). *Stigma: notes on the management of spoiled identity*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

- Hewlett, S. A. (2002). *Creating a life: Professional women and the quest for children*. New York: Miramax.
- Jamieson, L. (1999). Intimacy transformed? A critical look at the 'pure relationship'. *Sociology*, 33, 477-494.
- Krueger, J., Heckhausen, J., & Hundertmark, J. (1995). Perceiving middle-aged adults: Effects of stereotype-congruent and incongruent information. *Journal of Gerontology: Psychological Sciences*, 50B, 82-93.
- Link, B. G., & Phelan, J. C. (2001). Conceptualizing stigma. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 27, 363-85.
- Mastekaasa, A. (1992). Marriage and psychological well-being: Some evidence on selection into marriage. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 54, 901-11.
- Mills, C. W. 1959. *The Sociological Imagination*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Nock, S. L., Wright, J.D., & Sanchez, L. (2002). Is covenant marriage a solution to America's divorce problem. In M. Coleman & L. Ganong (Eds.) *Points & counterpoints: Controversial relationship and family issues in the 21st Century*, Los Angeles, CA: Roxbury.
- Morris, W. L., DePaulo, B. M., Hertel, J., & Ritter, L. C. (2004). Perceptions of people who are single: A developmental life tasks model. Manuscript in preparation.
- Ogburn, W. F. (1922). *Social change with respect to cultural and original nature*. New York: B. W. Huebsch, Inc.
- Purvis, T. & Hunt, A. (1993). Discourse, ideology, discourse, ideology, discourse, ideology.... *British Journal of Sociology*, 44, 473-499.

- Reynolds, J. & Wetherell, M. (2003). The discursive climate of singleness: The consequences for women's negotiation of a single identity. *Feminism & Psychology*, 13, 489-510.
- Rifkin, J. (1998). The biotech century: Human life as intellectual property. *The Nation*, 266 (April 13): 11-19.
- Simon, R. W. (2002). Revisiting the relationships among gender, marital status, and mental health. *American Journal of Sociology*, 107, 1065-96.
- Smock, P. J. (2004). The wax and wane of marriage: Prospects for marriage in the 21st century. *Journal of Marriage and Family* 66, 4, 966-73.
- Stafford, M.C., & Scott, R. R. (1986). Stigma deviance and social control: Some conceptual issues. In S.C. Ainlay, G., Becker, & L. M. Coleman (Eds.) *The dilemma of difference* (pp. 77-91). New York: Plenum.
- Thornton, A., & Young-DeMarco, L. (2001). Four decades of trends in attitudes toward family issues in the United States: The 1960s through the 1990s. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 63, 1009-1037.
- Toutkoushian, R. K. (1998). Racial and marital status differences in faculty pay. *Journal of Higher Education*, 69, 513-529.
- U.S. Bureau of the Census. (2003). *Statistical abstract of the United States: 2003* (123rd ed.). Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- Waite, L. J., & Gallagher, M. (2000). *The case for marriage: Why married people are happier, healthier, and better off financially*. New York: Doubleday.
- Wetzstein, C. (2001). Reality check for marriage. *The Washington Times* (May 29, 2001).
- Wise, S., & Stanley, L. (2004). Beyond marriage: The less said about love and life-long continuance together the better. *Feminism and Psychology*, 14, 332-343

Appendix A. Summary of Logistic Regression Models Predicting the Effect of Singlehood Status (versus Currently Married Status) on the Likelihood that One Reports Having Ever Experienced Interpersonal and Institutional Discrimination

	Men		Women	
	Gross Effects	Net Effect	Gross Effect	Net Effect
<i>Interpersonal discrimination</i>				
Treated with less courtesy than others.	1.89 ***	1.43 *	2.10 ***	1.38
Treated with less respect than others.	1.78 **	1.29	2.42 ***	1.58 *
Receive poorer service than other people in restaurants.	1.65 **	1.30	2.51 ***	1.63 **
People act as if they think you are not smart.	1.91 ***	1.65 ***	2.15 ***	1.37
People act as if they are afraid of you.	1.98 ***	1.53 *	2.05 ***	1.37
People act as if they think you are dishonest.	2.03 ***	1.58 **	1.98 ***	1.18
People act as if they think you are not as good as they are.	1.85 ***	1.37	1.96 ***	1.18
You are called names or insulted.	1.69 **	1.19	2.75 **	1.88 *
You are threatened or harassed.	2.04 ***	1.47 *	2.27 ***	1.56 *
<i>Institutional discrimination</i>				
Discouraged by a teacher from seeking higher education.	1.65	1.27	1.75 *	.98
Denied a scholarship.	1.93	.88	1.06	.44
Not hired for a job.	1.36	.94	1.72 **	1.06
Not given a job promotion.	1.16	.92	1.95 **	1.23
Were fired.	1.84 *	1.17	1.59	1.12

Appendix A (Continued)

	Men		Women	
	Gross Effects	Net Effects	Gross Effects	Net Effects
Prevented from renting or buying a home in the neighborhood you wanted.	1.94	1.21	1.14	.59
Were prevented from remaining in the neighborhood because neighbors made life so uncomfortable.	2.97 *	2.14	1.91	2.05
Were hassled by the police.	2.67 ***	1.29	4.90 ***	2.67 **
Were denied a bank loan.	.55	.42 *	1.65	1.08
Were denied or provided inferior medical care.	2.11	.99	.91	.67
Were denied or provided inferior service by a plumber, car mechanic, or other service provider.	1.27	.88	2.07 **	1.41

Note: Gross effect models reveal whether “never married” persons are significantly different from “currently married” persons in their reports of having ever experienced discrimination, before any other characteristics are controlled. Net effect models reveal whether “never married” persons are significantly different from “currently married” persons in their reports of perceived discrimination, after age, race, cohabiting status, formerly married status, education, income, sexual orientation, body mass index (BMI), self-rated physical health, and depressive symptoms are controlled.

Exponentiated betas or (odds ratios) are presented.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$