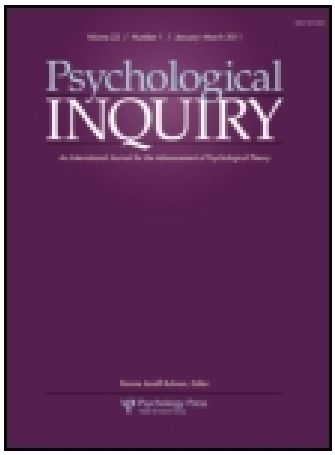
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AUTHORS' RESPONSE: Should Singles and the Scholars Who Study Them Make Their Mark or Stay in Their Place?

Bella M. DePaulo & Wendy L. Morris
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AUTHORS' RESPONSE

Should Singles and the Scholars Who Study Them Make Their Mark or Stay in Their Place?

Bella M. DePaulo
Department of Psychology
University of California, Santa Barbara

Wendy L. Morris
Department of Psychology
University of Virginia

In many important ways, the collection of commentaries on our target article, "Singles in Society and in Science," is a dream come true. We said at the outset of our article that we hoped, in the long run, to see a science that is broader, deeper, more imaginative, and more rigorous. We had not imagined that the long run could be so short.

We are both social psychologists. The time we have spent studying singles can be measured in years, not decades. The topic of singles has broad interdisciplinary potential. Our own expertise is quite limited. So we had our hopes. We hoped that someone with far-ranging knowledge would take a big-picture view of the topic, approaching it from perspectives in sociology, social history, demography, and culture. Koropeckyj-Cox (this issue) and Byrne and Carr (this issue) stepped forward and did just that. Because we wanted to convince intellectuals who might just be skeptical of our entire enterprise to take singles more seriously, we hoped to hear from thinkers who had trod such turf before. Areas such as women's studies and women in history, for example, were not embraced uniformly and wholeheartedly when they were first proposed. We wished for someone to speak from a place of experience in those fields. Byrne and Carr went there for us.

Even on our home turf of psychology, we had our insecurities, and none more so than our take on evolutionary psychology. We needed someone steeped in that tradition to tell us what we should have said, and we are grateful to Pillsworth and Haselton (this issue) for so doing. (Listen to them, not us.) Neither of us are health psychologists, so when we reviewed outcomes linked to civil status, we drew mostly from research on happiness and life satisfaction. When we discuss that literature with colleagues and friends, a question arises so often that it has become predictable: But what about physical health? We are most grateful to Rook and Zettel (this issue) for looking at so many different sides of that question. We also admit to being more than a little bit pleased that their conclusions dovetail so nicely with our own.

In our research and thinking on singles, we have focused primarily on early and middle adulthood. It's a start. In old age, though, single status becomes even more salient demographically. Whether it is also more significant emotionally, interpersonally, or physically is a very important question. We thank Koropeckyj-Cox (this issue) and Rook and Zettel (this issue) for giving those kinds of issues the serious attention they deserve.

As some of you noticed, we are deeply invested in our work on singles. We pondered and researched and revised our target article for years (and not even because the editors were nagging us; we just wanted it to be as good as we could possibly make it). At the same time, we recognized that for people asked simply to read an article and write a brief commentary, the task might be construed as just an interesting way to spend a day or two. So we were bowled over by the intensity of the efforts represented in the commentaries. The review of physical health outcomes that Rook and Zettel (this issue) provided was no mean feat. And Dion, Lucas and Dyrenforth (this issue) and Byrne and Carr (this issue) went to large-scale publicly available datasets and produced new and important analyses just for their commentaries. We do not mean to single out only these contributions. One commentary after another reflected great effort and deep thinking.

We like to think that in drawing attention to a powerful, but mostly overlooked ideology, we are affecting nontrivial changes in the ways that people think about

issues relevant to singles. Lucas and Dyrenforth (this issue) met our Ideology of Marriage and Family, and raised us one. Their suggestion that there is an even more sweeping ideology at work—one that values all manner of relationships and devalues other attributes less suffused with moral goodness, such as income—is profound. It has already changed our own thinking in fundamental ways.

There are abstract questions from the sociology of science that we have been wondering about for years. For example, how do particular social categories such as race and gender get problematized in intellectual circles? Why do some become topics of intense interest while others go unnoticed? How and why do some societal prejudices make their way into the scientific and cultural spotlight, only to fade from view? Why do others never seem to get there? We did not expect anyone to take on such daunting questions, but Crandall and Warner (this issue) did, and Byrne and Carr (this issue) did, too.

We know how corny this is going to sound but we are going to say it anyway. Our last wish was for a better world. We hoped this wonderful set of scholars would think hard about the ways in which singlism might be reduced. They did. In some commentaries (Kaiser and Kashy; Byrne & Carr), the ideas are spelled out, and in others, they jump out from between the lines.

Have We Made Any Progress?

Having had so many wishes come true, maybe we should have been satisfied. We were not. We wanted more. We wanted to deliver a crushing blow to the uncontested reign of the Ideology of Marriage and Family. We also wanted to encourage an affirmative and nonstigmatizing approach to the study of singles. In Byrne and Carr's commentary, we found an articulation of three criteria against which we could measure our success in achieving those goals. In their words:

> Promarriage 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.

When we read the commentaries in light of these criteria, we had to acknowledge that our success in meeting our goals was decidedly mixed. In the following sections, we will review the criteria one by one.

Did Our Readers Recognize and Question the Privileges Afforded to Married Persons?

To some of our commentators, the need to recognize and question the privileges afforded to married persons was evident long before they read our article. Koropeckyj-Cox (this issue) and Byrne and Carr (this issue) have clearly been thinking deeply about these issues. Rook and Zettel (this issue) and Crandall and Warner (this issue) readily acknowledged singlism and moved the discussion forward by many paces. Pillsworth and Haselton also recognized institutional biases against single people.

On the other side are the scholars who, rather than recognizing and questioning the privileges afforded to married persons, are skeptical about the prejudice, stereotyping, and discrimination experienced by single people. They are not so sure that singles are in fact a stigmatized group who deserve to be studied as such. We will first summarize various versions of this argument presented in the commentaries. Then we will respond to the overall attitude of skepticism as much as to the specific doubts that were raised.

Dion (this issue) suggests that perceptions of single people are not really negative because ratings of single targets typically hug the midpoint. Moreover, he adds, there are dimensions along which singles are rated positively. He also questions our data on rental discrimination, as they are based on vignettes and convenience samples. All told, he concludes, we "have made a weak case that single marital status is actually stigmatized and perceived negatively." As for the Ideology of Marriage and Family, he describes it as something we have "alleged" as permeating science and society.

Other scholars offered the argument that any stigma experienced by singles is qualified and limited, and therefore perhaps not really in the same category as the more widely recognized stigmas that are associated with groups such as African Americans and women. Williams and Nida (this issue), for example, carve out a group of singles they call "seriously single," that is, "committed to a single lifestyle by choice." They assume that the seriously single "are probably not victims of economic discrimination any more than nonmarried individuals are." Therefore, they limit their analysis to "the social psychological consequences of being seriously single in a culture of couples."

Kaiser and Kashy (this issue) are most precise in spelling out their notions of which singles should count as stigmatized, and then shrouding even that subgroup of singles in qualifications. The authors estimate that 95% of all people who will marry will have done so by age 36.2. Therefore, they call singles who are younger than that "normative" singles and those who are older "non-normative" singles. They explain:

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> We do not mean to imply that normative singles never experience unfair treatment because of their single status. Rather, we believe that discrimination against normative singles is likely to be particularly circumscribed and likely to have few implications for their place in society (e.g., the stigmatization faced by European Americans who find themselves in the unusual situation of a diversity seminar).

Even among non-normative singles, Kaiser and Kashy (this issue) continue, the importance of single status will be limited. For example, in some situations, other aspects of their social identity will be more salient. Moreover there are individual differences in identity salience, and when single status is not central to a single person's self-worth, then that single person is not likely to perceive singlism, especially when the situation is ambiguous.

Kaiser and Kashy sum up by noting that they were initially "somewhat uncomfortable with placing singlism alongside racism, sexism, and other stigmas that individuals oftentimes chronically struggle with in our culture." They addressed their own discomfort to some extent by narrowing their analysis to contexts in which singlism is especially likely to occur. Still, though, they do not really like the idea of studying singles from a stigma perspective:

> Even with the more focused analysis placed on what we have called non-normative singles, research from a stigma perspective may not be the most fruitful avenue to pursue. Instead, we encourage researchers to probe this phenomenon from the close relationships angle.

The example given here is by studying adult friendships.

What is striking to us about the arguments for discounting singlehood as a stigmatized status is that almost every one of them is applicable to the groups widely regarded as stigmatized, such as African Americans and gay men and lesbians. Ratings of stigmatized groups often hug the midpoint, and most groups are perceived positively along at least some dimensions. There are individual differences and contextual variations in the salience of any aspect of social identity. Yet, we can think of no instances in which criteria such as these have been invoked to dismiss any potentially stigmatized group as a suitable topic of study by scholars of discrimination and stigma. As Crandall and Warner (this issue) note, early work on antifat attitudes was trivialized as merely applied (rather than theoretical) in its significance. But so far as we know, scholars were not lining up reasons for excluding the topic of fat people (or any other proposed group) from the scientific study of stigma. Nor were they proposing to each other that it would be more fruitful to study fat people's friendships than their experiences of stereotyping and discrimination.

We think there are several dynamics at work in this resistance to the study of singles as a stigmatized group. We empathize and agree with one source of resistance. As we noted in our original article, we think there are important differences in the severity of the implications of, say, racist and homophobic attitudes on the one hand, and singlist attitudes on the other. As for a second source of resistance, we will take a big share of the blame for it. We were not clear or compelling enough in spelling out the ways in which singles–including even normative singles—are targets of prejudice, stereotyping, and discrimination.

We think that when scholars and laypersons raise the objection that singles are not stigmatized in the same way that African Americans or gay men and lesbians or people with severe physical deformities are, they are thinking of such considerations as the following. No one in contemporary American society has been dragged to their death at the end of a pickup truck just because they were single. No one has been beaten to a bloody pulp just because they were single. And perhaps no one walks into a room of strangers and worries that their mere appearance will elicit feelings of fear or disgust or repulsion just because they are single. The list could go on. We agree.

Now we would like to outline some differences between the experiences of singles and of other groups whose stigmatized status is more widely recognized and acknowledged. We will begin with institutionalized discrimination. In most instances, claiming an injustice such as unfair compensation based on sexual or racial discrimination is a tough case to make. It will rarely happen in any workplace that every woman is paid less than every man, or every African American worker is paid less than every European American worker, when relevant factors such as seniority and accomplishments can be controlled. So the data are likely to be ambiguous and open to other interpretations. However, if a compelling case can be made, the complainants have legal recourse. If they can show likely discrimination on the basis of race, color, sex, national origin, religion, age, or disability, they are protected by federal law. The Equal Opportunity Employment Act looks out for them. If a single worker could develop an equally compelling case, that person's standing under federal law would be less clear.

We have been discussing pay as an example. We already noted in our original article that single men have been shown to be paid substantially less than married men, even in the most rigorously controlled studies. Let's switch now to the total package of compensation, which includes benefits. Here the differences between single workers and other workers are starker. In the many workplaces that allow employees to add a spouse to their health care plan at a discounted rate, the worker who accepts this option receives total compensation that can far exceed that of the single worker. There is

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absolutely no ambiguity here. Married workers in such workplaces always have such an option. Single workers have no such option to add an adult to their plan. Plus, it is all perfectly legal.

The objection to this analysis that can, and has, been raised is that the single employee does not lose anything when a married employee's spouse gets access to more affordable health care. The single employee has that access and so does the married employee. That objection falls short on several levels. First, discounted rates for spouses are paid for in some way. They are not without cost to the company. Singles subsidize those discounts when they have no access to anything comparable. The objection that they have no spouse so of course they should have no such access to benefits simply demeans the important adult relationships that single people do have. Moreover, the mere concept that access to something so fundamental as affordable health care might be linked to an attribute such as whether a person is married should offend any citizen's sense of social justice. It offends ours.

It is important to note, we think, that workers do not need to be 36.2 years old or older to be subject to this form of institutional discrimination. This form of routine societal discrimination cares nothing about whether you are a normative or a non-normative single. Either way, you lose. The same is true for all of the discounts offered to couples to travel together, dine together, or sign up for club memberships together. They are all subsidized by the singles who pay full price. We have never run across a discount plan that penalizes only those singles who, in society's eyes, are of such an age that they "should" be married.

We have shown in the studies we reviewed in our original article that young singles are subject to negative perceptions, even when they are just 25 years old. True, the negativity intensifies as the singles get older, but it is still there even during early adulthood. Adults who are so young, or in such circumstances (e.g., attending college) that being married would actually be counternormative, are still subject to relatively harsh perceptions if they do not have a history of having been in at least one romantic relationship (Morris, DePaulo, Hertel, & Ritter, 2004).

We have already objected to Dion's (this issue) point that ratings of singles are closer to the midpoint than to the negative end of the scale by saying that the same is true for ratings of other groups. In fact, the reluctance among many people, including most college students, to admit negative attitudes toward known stigmatized groups has led to the increased use of implicit measurement. We, too, have documented negativity toward singles using implicit measures (Ritter, Morris, & Sinclair, 2003). But we do not need to use such measures. Our participants routinely express the glory of couples and the sadness of singles in their explicit ratings, their open-ended responses, and just about any other way we can think of to ask them.

The unabashed expressions of demeaning and insulting attitudes toward singles, both in scientific research and in the culture at large is, we think, one of the most dramatic differences in the experiences of singles, compared to many (though certainly not all) other stigmatized groups. Here, for example, are some excerpts from an essay by Neil Steinberg (2004), who addressed the question of why married people should pressure single people to get married.

> Because they don't know what they are missing. Being married is better … Married people are more plugged into life, their shoulders are to the struggle of moving civilization. Single people keep the cosmetic surgery industry alive and that's about it.
>
> We are trying to help our single friends salvage what's left of their lives before the years pass, irretrievable. Single people are cowards and it pains us to see them strut around in their narrow boxes, declaring them the whole world … the years clock by, and the married people reap the rewards, while the single people buy cats and tell themselves that they haven't missed anything. But they have.

This was not published on someone's obscure personal blog, but in the *Chicago Sun-Times*, a newspaper with a circulation of nearly a half million. It was not meant as a humor piece; it was deadly serious. And it did not appear in 1954, but 2004. If we could find no other examples like this, we would have ignored it. But our file folders are brimming with them.

Here is another way to approach the question, "To what level must the negative experiences of singles sink before singles are taken seriously by scholars of stigma?" It is a reversal-of-fortune thought experiment. How long would married people put up with their experiences, and how long would it take social scientists to include them as members of a stigmatized group, if their lives included the following:

- Every time you get married, you have to give expensive presents to single people.
- When you travel with your spouse, you have to pay more than when you travel alone.
- When you tell people you are married, they tilt their heads and say things like, "aaaawwww" or "don't worry honey, your turn to divorce will come."
- You get paid less than single people for the same work.
- Single people can add another adult to their health care plan; you can't.
- When you go looking for a house, you get directed instead to apartments or condos.
- When you browse the bookstores, you see shelves bursting with titles such as "If I'm So Wonderful, Why Am I Still Married," and "How

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to Ditch Your Husband After Age 35 Using What I Learned at Harvard Business School."
- Moreover, no one thinks there is anything wrong with any of this.

We could go on and on, but you probably get the point. Our critics are right. None of this adds up to getting dragged to your death at the back of a pickup truck. However, we bet our annual salaries that married citizens would scream bloody murder if these kinds of things routinely happened to them.

Herein lies the power of an uncontested dominant ideology: Single people, by and large, are not screaming bloody murder. Maybe they know better. Maybe they suspect that their complaints would be dismissed as mere whining and selfishness, and not as fair-minded critiques of unfair practices.

Here is another thought experiment, of a more somber sort. It addresses the question, "How badly does a practice have to hurt, to what extent does it have to be experienced as personally painful, before it is considered to be stigmatizing and unacceptable?" Imagine—and we do not know whether this actually happened—that before the civil rights movement, many African Americans made their way to their separate drinking fountains unselfconsciously, without any feelings of insult or injury. Imagine that to them, going to a separate fountain was just the way it was. If the targets of an unfair practice are not experiencing it as hurtful or unfair, then is it just fine to go ahead with the practice?

So far as we know, there are no separate drinking fountains for single people and married people. But there are separate political, cultural, and even scientific discourses. The discourse of marriage is often respectful, celebratory, even reverent; the discourse of singlehood is rarely any of those things.

Have We Convinced Our Readers That Problematic Aspects of Marriage and Family Life Are Indicative of "Public Issues" Rather Than "Private Troubles"?

Koropecki-Cox (this issue) and of course Byrne and Carr (this issue) take it as a given that difficulties within marriage or family life cannot be located solely or even primarily within the individual marriage or family. Marriage and family are institutions that need to be analyzed at the level of history, society, culture, and social structure. Pillsworth and Haselton (this issue) remind us that marriage and family also need to be understood from an evolutionary perspective, a point of view that values insights from comparative, physiological, and anthropological research. A big-picture perspective is also evident in Rook and Zettel's (this issue) article on the implications of civil status for physical health. At its core, their analysis is a consideration of civil status in the context of contemporary society.

For psychologists, the distinction between public issues and private troubles maps onto a more familiar juxtaposition of the person versus the situation. We expected to find the most sparkling appreciation of the power of the context from our colleagues in social psychology. After all, that's what often distinguishes us from personality psychologists or clinicians. We always give the situation its due. When someone attributes blame to a person that rightly belongs to a situation, we are so appalled by the error that we call it "fundamental."

There is something else that social psychologists are fond of doing: producing a powerful effect in the most minimal of circumstances. Williams and his colleagues have offered the field a stunning program of research showing just how little it takes to make a person feel pained by exclusion. As Williams and Nida (this issue) note:

> The imputed reasons for the ostracism and being cognizant of who is doing the ostracism and why they are doing it is of little consequence … [It hurts] even when people know that the others are not intentionally ostracizing them, but instead are simply unable to include them. It is distressing even when the individual is ostracized by outgroup members or even by those they despise … It even hurts when a computer does it!

Williams and Nida (this issue) note that ostracism research has identified two patterns of reactions by those who are excluded. In one pattern, the ostracized people try to improve their standing with such tactics as working harder and becoming more socially sensitive. In the other, they respond with anxiety and even aggression. These are patterns that have been established across carloads of studies from multiple labs and even multiple nations. They are not the responses of particular individuals, or categories of individuals. They are predictable responses to the situational condition of being ostracized.

Much to our surprise and chagrin, Williams and Nida (this issue) turned these characteristic responses into pathologies and pinned them on single people. Because single people may feel ostracized by a society that fawns over couples, there may be two categories of singles; they suggested "the sycophantic single" and "the spiteful single." Here is their description of the latter: "The other path is for singles to strike back and to become an anti-social, perhaps even aggressive group that forces friends, employers, and the government to recognize and reckon with their existence."

So what did we expect Williams and Nida (this issue) to say as they extended their work on ostracism to the study of single people in a coupled society? How about this: Wanting one's existence recognized is not

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something that should have to be "forced" onto friends or employers. It comes with the human package. It is a matter of basic dignity. Working for social justice is not spiteful or aggressive; it is instead one of the most honorable traditions in history.

About those "sycophantic singles": Well, yes, we suppose you could call the pattern (though not the singles in particular) sycophantic. But you could also say that people who try to work harder and become more socially sensitive are acting responsibly, graciously, and adaptively. Especially when you consider that they have just been ostracized.

Here's another implication of the work of Williams and Nida (this issue) that we thought they might propose: "Hey you married people, don't just ditch your single friends. That would be painful enough if you didn't even like each other, but you used to be *friends*, remember? Oh, and by the way, same for you, single people. Just because your friends now have spouses does not mean that they no longer have a life or want one. Include them. They would be hurt even if a computer excluded them so they probably do not want to be ostracized by you."

Have We Convinced Scholars of the Value of Exploring "More Fully the Adaptive and Creative Ways That Unmarried Persons Construct Their Own Unique Sets of 'Family' Relationships"?

Clark and Graham (this issue) were among those who offered in their commentary creative thinking about the place of personal relationships in the lives of people who are single. Byrne and Carr (this issue) specifically encouraged singles-centered thinking with regard to relationships, but we think their intended point was much broader. We believe they want us to think outside of the box on every issue relevant to singles—or maybe to blow the box to bits. The "poor, sad singles" box was torched by Koropeckyj-Cox (this issue) when she reminded us of the valued roles of singles at other times and places throughout history. Rook and Zettel (this issue) gave the box a swift kick when they said that single people construct a life path that not only matches that of married people in terms of the level of health and well-being that it fosters, but sometimes even exceeds it. They rattled our box a bit when they showed that despite all the evidence indicating that divorced people sometimes have worse outcomes than people who have always been single, divorce can also be associated with health benefits, as, for example, when the marriage it ended was particularly noxious.

Crandall and Warner (this issue) try to save their colleagues from getting trapped in a tiny little myopic box. Do not treat singlism as a specialized, marginalized, and narrowly applied topic, they warn; it is not. Pillsworth and Haselton (this issue) provide similarly cautionary points (which we must say, are well-taken) when they issue their list of fallacies to be avoided, including

> the fact that humans have adaptations for coupling does not imply the moral superiority of coupled individuals … The evolutionary perspective on coupling also does not suggest that coupling will result in a healthier or more satisfying life for any particular individual … nor does it mean that the desire to form a couple will always trump other evolved motivations.

Two More Issues to Consider as We Move Forward

What Shall Single People Be Called and How Should the Category Be Subdivided (If at All)?

A number of scholars expressed misgivings about the proper label for the group we call singles. Koropeckyj-Cox (this issue), for example, observes that "single" seems to carry the implication that the person is searching for a partner. People who are engaged in no such search often find the term jarring. People who are seriously coupled but not officially married also find it strange to refer to themselves as single. Solot and Marshall (2002), who wrote the book on such couples, describe them as "unmarried to each other."

Perhaps the most important problem with the term single is the one expressed by Clark and Graham (this issue). "Single" seems to suggest that the person so named is without any close relationship partners, and that is rarely the case. Or as the heroine of *Girls' Guide to Hunting and Fishing* quips when she is invited to a singles event, "'Singles?' I say. I think of individually wrapped American cheese slices" (Bank, 2000).

We empathize with all of these concerns, and have not yet found a term that is wholly satisfying. "Single," unlike bachelor and spinster, at least has the virtue of treating men and women equally. We try to steer clear of "marriage" terms (such as unmarried, never married, and marital status) as they seem to give the Ideology its way by making marriage the standard by which everyone is judged and even named. But we are not rigid about that.

What we find more significant and more vexing than the precise term that is chosen is the promiscuous use of the civil status category as grounds for sorting, naming, valuing, rewarding, including, or excluding people. Once my doctors know whom to contact in case of emergencies, why do they also need to know whether I am married, divorced, widowed, have always been single, or have green hair with purple stripes?

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A related concern is with the theoretical integrity of the category of singles. In our original article, we described many subcategories of singles and their potential significance. The data we reviewed on well-being underscored the particular importance of distinguishing between singles who have always been single and those who were once married. Rook and Zettel (this issue) seconded that distinction in their review of the links between civil status and physical health. Koropeckyj-Cox (this issue) pointed to the profound significance of whether a single person does or does not have children. Others also described important distinctions that should be pursued, within the categories of single people and of married people. Clark and Graham (this issue) argued that subgroups of singles should be categorized and labeled according to the particular research question at hand, and no uniform divisions should be assumed. They even went so far as to suggest that the global term "single" is not a scientifically useful one.

We agree that the range of experiences of people who are "single" is vast, and that as scientists we should respect and study that multihued palette. Still, we think it is equally important to think hard about what all singles, in all of their diversity, have in common. We return, as we so often do, to the Ideology of Marriage and Family. As long as that ideology remains dominant and uncontested, all singles have something in common: Compared to married people, they are second rate. The term "single," used to unite all adults who are outsiders to the ideological yellow brick road, has both theoretical and political potency.

Does the Study of Singles Deserve Its Own Special Place?

Clark and Graham (this issue) want to discourage more than just the use of the term "single." They also urge us to perish the thought of pursuing singles as a new and distinct area of research for relationship researchers, or for stereotyping researchers, or presumably for scholars of any other stripe. "When people begin to think of research on 'singles' as a field," they argue, "what often happens is that researchers within the area begin to communicate primarily with each other. Simultaneously, researchers outside of the field do not feel compelled to read materials falling within the field." Instead, they suggest that scholars "address questions of particular relevance to singles within the context of broader psychological theories of intrapersonal and interpersonal functioning."

There is a certain intuitive appeal to the Clark and Graham (this issue) arguments. We would be sorely disappointed if our clarion call for the serious study of singles resulted ultimately in a small clique of scholars writing only for each other, and divorced (so to speak) from the rest of the academy. Further, as basic researchers, we value the scientific study of fundamental processes that are not specific to any one subgroup of humans.

Still, the history and sociology of science gives us pause. Once upon a time, the study of heart disease was overwhelmingly the study of heart disease in men. We imagine that some of the scientists of that time argued that many basic physiological processes are much the same in women as in men. Sure, it might be a good idea for the sake of generalizability to study women as well as men, but research on men was not irrelevant to outcomes in women. Today, those arguments seem lame, and if medical scientists want large-scale federal funding to study only men, they had better be studying prostate cancer.

The history of departments or even concentrations in areas such as Women's Studies or African American Studies is also mottled. Why, it was surely asked (and sometimes still is today), do we need to study women's history when we can study women within the context of plain old history? Plain old history is more basic, more noble, it was said. The problem, of course, is that his-story never really did become equally her-story, too.

It seems to us that with regard to the study of singles, we are at about the same place that scholars were in the study of gender when it was common practice to refer to all humans as "he." Flip through the titles of articles in relationships journals. Many have the word "relationships" or "close relationships" in them. But skip to the methods section and you will often find that the article is not really about "relationships;" instead, it is about just one particular kind of relationship—the relationship of coupled people. We optimistically agree with Crandall and Warner's (this issue) prediction that "prejudice based on marital status will follow this same path out of marginalization and into full attention by social researchers."

Here is our fear about following Clark and Graham's (this issue) suggestions. If we all just try to remember, now and then, to include issues of special relevance to singles in our list of possible studies, what we know about singles decades hence may be little more than we know right now. Or, just as importantly, our fundamental thinking about issues of single status may remain locked in place.

Singles and the scholars who study them should not stay in their place. They should make their mark.

Notes

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Bella M. DePaulo, P. O. Box 487, Summerland, CA 93067. E-mail: depaulo@psych.ucsb.edu

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