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Effects of Single-Group Membership Valence and Social Identity Threat on Intragroup Singlism

By

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the Graduate Faculty of the University of Kansas in partial fulfillment
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Effects of Single-Group Membership Valence

and Social Identity Threat on Intragroup Singlism

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Abstract

The social identity perspective guided this investigation of the impact of single-group membership valence and social identity threat on the expression of intragroup singlism. Social identity, in an intergroup context, was made salient by asking participants to self-categorize as single or married. The psychological experience of single-group membership was varied (positive or negative) along with social identity threat (social identity threat absent or present) in a between-subjects factorial design (N = 191); participant gender was included as an exploratory variable. A significant interaction between participant gender and single-group membership valence revealed that men in the positive valence condition felt more pride in single-group membership than men in the negative valence condition. Women's pride in single-group membership was intermediate compared to men, and was not affected by the single-group membership valence manipulation. Participants in the social identity threat absent condition, where single-group members were said to be advantaged compared to married-group members, felt more pride in single-group membership than participants in the social identity threat present condition where single-group members were said to be disadvantaged compared to married-group members. Although pride in single-group membership was negatively correlated with the three components of the intragroup singlism measure, the predicted interaction between single-group membership valence and social identity threat on intragroup singlism was not obtained. Providing support for the idea that intragroup singlism is widespread, the current research confirmed that young single adults felt more positive toward married people than toward single people, even though the latter was currently their own ingroup.

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Effects of Single-Group Membership Valence and Social Identity Threat on Intragroup Singlism

Singlism is group-based prejudice that is reflected in the negative stereotyping and discriminatory treatment of people who are not married or seriously coupled (DePaulo, 2006). Given that people in the Western world now spend a greater proportion of their lives living alone than ever before (Klinenberg, 2012; Pignotti & Abell, 2009), singlism has the potential to negatively affect the experiences and life outcomes of many people. At present, almost half of the U.S. states do not have laws in place to protect single people from discrimination. Indeed, on average, single men earn less money than married men even controlling for age and job experience (DePaulo & Morris, 2006), and "never married" women earn less than "married" women (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012). Although traditional family households are no longer a majority in the U.S. (Pignotti & Abell, 2009), the pervasive, highly valued *marriage norm* continues to permit the devaluation of single people and the elevation of married people.

Unequal financial burdens incurred by single people, in combination with their devalued social status, make the under-acknowledgment of singlism an important topic for social psychology to address. Research on other well-known forms of prejudice and discrimination (e.g., racism and sexism) provides supporting evidence that devaluation and perceived discrimination based on group membership can result in negative consequences for psychological well-being (e.g., Branscombe, Schmitt, & Harvey, 1999) and physical health (e.g., Pascoe & Richman, 2009). Singlism is a group-based prejudice that continues to fly under the social inequality radar and thus remains under-represented in experimental social psychology literature. The goal of this research is to examine whether focusing on positively or negatively valenced aspects of single-group membership combined with social identity threat differentially

influences the expression of prejudice by single people toward their own ingroup (i.e., intragroup singlism).

Intragroup prejudice, a relatively rare phenomenon among low-status groups, is typically observed in groups that fall within normative boundaries of "acceptable" targets for intolerance and devaluation (e.g., fat people; Baron & Hebl, 2010; Crandall, 1994; Crandall, Eshleman, & O'Brien, 2002). Despite the few experimental studies published thus far, an unusual aspect of singlism is the willingness of single people to derogate and discriminate against other single ingroup members. For example, Morris, Sinclair, and DePaulo (2007) found that single participants were just as likely as married or seriously coupled participants to consistently choose married or socially coupled people over single people when making decisions about rental applicants.

Three key factors might play a critical role in motivating and maintaining intragroup singlism. First, when there is little psychological importance concerning a specific social-group category membership intragroup prejudice might occur (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Second, and relatedly, low identification with a group membership, which typically varies with psychological importance (e.g., Ellemers, Spears & Doosje, 1997; Tajfel & Turner, 1979), is known to inhibit favorable treatment toward one's own ingroup members (i.e., ingroup favoritism). Third, whether expected or deemed inevitable, perceived social mobility on the part of ingroup members from a lower-status group to a higher-status group, undermines group identification and ingroup favoritism (Garstka, Schmitt, Branscombe, & Hummert, 2004; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). How each of these factors is likely to specifically affect intragroup singlism is considered below.

Psychological Importance, Identification, and Perceived Social Mobility

A person who perceives or experiences their ingroup membership negatively may distance themselves from the ingroup, and even derogate other ingroup members because that specific group membership is deemed not important to the person's self-concept (Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 1997). When used as an identity management strategy, distancing by derogation allows a person to draw a psychological boundary between the self and other ingroup members thereby creating perceived "intragroup differences" between the self and other group members (Ellemers & Van Rijswijk, 1997). To the extent that such intragroup differentiation occurs, a person who focuses on the negative aspects of their lower-status single-group membership should be especially likely to psychologically distance themselves from the ingroup by endorsing negative stereotypic ingroup traits (e.g., intragroup singlism). On the other hand, a person who focuses on the positive aspects of single-group membership should be less inclined to differentiate themselves from the ingroup and should be more likely to protect and maintain their positive social identity by resisting the endorsement of negative stereotypic ingroup traits.

In general, people belong to and identify with many social groups; however, a specific social group membership typically becomes salient to the perceiver when a relative outgroup comparison is psychologically available (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). In other words, although degree of psychological importance and group identification are closely associated and often vary in the same direction, group membership identification is highly dependent on specific ingroup saliency (Hogg & Turner, 1987).When the psychological importance of ingroup membership is high, an intergroup context often times causes a person to self-categorize based on that specific ingroup, and in turn to more strongly identify with that ingroup (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987). The degree of identification a person feels toward their ingroup typically guides the person's attitudes and behavior (Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 1997).

Thus, when a person self-categorizes in terms of a group membership, self-concept and behavior are likely to reflect the perceiver's social identity rather than personal identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Turner et al., 1987). Accordingly, attitudes and behaviors will be based on accepted group norms and standards which resemble the attitudes and behaviors of other highly identified group members (Hogg, 2004). On the other hand, if identification with the ingroup is weak due to low psychological importance of ingroup membership, the person is more likely to express attitudes and exhibit behaviors consistent with their idiosyncratic individual characteristics (i.e., act on the basis of their personal identity) which vary widely from person to person (Tajfel & Turner, 1986).

When a person becomes aware of belonging to a devalued group, identity management in concert with the motivation to maintain positive self-esteem can play a substantial role in directing a person's attitudes and behaviors toward their ingroup (Ellemers & Van Rijswijk, 1997; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). If a person considers their particular ingroup membership to be of low psychological importance and consequently their identification with that group is weak, it may be partly due to a belief that moving to the higher-status group is feasible or even perceived as inevitable (Ellemers, van Knippenberg, & Wilke, 1990). In fact, perceived social mobility is a critical factor related to psychological importance and identification with an ingroup, especially in the case of a lower-status, devalued group category membership (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; 1986). One of several possible ways of managing a devalued group identity is to attempt to escape that group membership by literally or psychologically aligning the self with the higher-status outgroup (Ellemers, Van Knippenberg, DeVries, & Wilke, 1988). Ellemers (1993) found that "permeable group boundaries" combined with assigned low social status perceived as "legitimate" differentially affected ingroup identification and the decision to change groups

depending on whether a person felt “proud” of their ingroup membership. When social mobility from a minority group to the majority group was possible, members of a minority group with perceived low status felt less identified with their ingroup than members of a minority group with perceived high status, and consequently these low-status minority group members reported a stronger attraction for joining the majority outgroup than did the high-status minority group members.

Permeability of group boundaries combined with social status can also differentially affect identification with an ingroup and psychological well-being. Garstka, Schmitt, Branscombe, and Hummert (2004) found that although both young (18-25 years) and older adults (65 and over) perceived their group as having lower social status compared to middle-aged adults (35-50 years), responses to perceived discrimination differed between the young and older adult groups. Perceived age discrimination was positively associated with ingroup identification and negatively associated with psychological well-being in the older adult sample; however, ingroup identification and psychological well-being were not related to perceived discrimination in the young adult sample. Garstka and colleagues posited that young adults' *awareness* of their inevitable movement to the valued middle-aged group may render perceived age discrimination psychologically unimportant to this age group. Following this line of reasoning, perceptions of an almost certain social mobility from the lower-status single-group to the higher-status married group is likely to result in weak ingroup identification among young single people.

Because married-group membership boundaries are highly permeable and the majority of people who want to marry eventually do (Cohn, 2013), the identity management strategy likely to be employed by single people may differ from those used by other devalued groups, and may critically depend on whether ingroup members feel positively or negatively about their current

experience of single-group membership (Ellemers, 1993; Glasford, Dovidio, & Pratto, 2009; Tajfel, 1981). As evidenced by Doosje, Ellemers, and Spears (1995), one possible response to a *negatively valenced* social identity is to psychologically disassociate from the lower-status ingroup which may result in the expression of intragroup prejudice, and in this specific case, intragroup singlism.

Prejudice against singles (singlism)

In a study conducted by DePaulo and Morris (2006) nearly 1,000 undergraduates not only indicated their awareness of but also their agreement with culturally tolerated stereotypes of single people when asked to generate characteristics of both single and married people. Participants generated more negative characteristics when describing single people (e.g., "immature, insecure, self-centered, unhappy, lonely, and ugly") and more positive characteristics when describing married people (e.g., "mature, stable, honest, happy, kind, and loving"). In a series of studies, Morris, Sinclair, and DePaulo (2007) found that both, actual rental agents and undergraduates role playing as rental agents, consistently chose married couples over single people when deciding among target rental applicants. When asked why they made the choice they did in an open-ended question, participants stated that the marital status of the rental applicant was the main reason for their choice. Indeed, in a related experiment, when participants were asked to rate the "legitimacy" of a landlord's decision to rent to a particular type of tenant, participants felt that it was more acceptable to discriminate against an unmarried rental applicant compared to rental applicants belonging to more commonly stigmatized disadvantaged groups (e.g., African Americans and gay people; Morris, Sinclair, & DePaulo, 2007). Greitemeyer (2009) also found that single people were negatively stereotyped more than married people or people who were seriously coupled. It is important to note that the participants in Greitemeyer's

studies were middle-aged adults, which lends support to the notion that such differential treatment based on marital status is widespread. Furthermore, and most critically for the present research, the participants' own marital status did not moderate the effects of single versus married status on the expression of singlism. Single people were just as likely to negatively stereotype single people as were those who were married or seriously coupled.

Taken together, these studies offer support for the notion that intragroup singlism is pervasive and often unacknowledged given that single and married people seemingly believe that married people are apparently superior to single people. More importantly, prejudice and discrimination against single people seems to be largely uncontested by devalued single-group members (Greitemeyer, 2009). Cronin, Branscombe, and Henslee (2011) proposed that system justification theory (SJT; Jost, Banaji, & Nosek, 2004) would explain singlism by reasoning that in order to protect one's belief that the world is a fair and just place people may derogate those who threaten existing worldviews. Single people may be seen as a threat to just world beliefs in that they violate normative marriage-goal expectations (also see Lerner, 1980).

Critical to SJT is the idea that prejudicial treatment is perceived as legitimate by both those who gain advantages and by those who are disadvantaged by the overarching social system in order to maintain the belief that the system controlling their lives is correct and fair. Cronin et al. (2011) found that low-status group members (i.e., single people) expressed more prejudice toward other single ingroup members (i.e., intragroup singlism) when they were told that the institution of marriage was strong and that married people had more meaningful lives than single people compared to when they were told that the institution of marriage was suffering and was not at all important to a meaningful life. The favoring of higher- status married-group members at the expense of fellow single-group members can be interpreted as support for SJT in that

consensus about the valued institution of marriage resulted in greater support for members of that group (i.e., outgroup favoritism). Support for the dominant majority can be interpreted as motivated by a need to justify institutional systems that provide people with a sense of predictability and stability (Jost, Banaji, & Nosek, 2004).

Given that experimental research is sparse and has mostly viewed intragroup singlism through an SJT explanatory lens (see Cronin et al., 2011), the current research project was designed to extend existing work by further investigating intragroup singlism from a social identity perspective.

A Social Identity Approach

Personal identity reflects a comparison between the self and others and can be expressed in terms of a differentiation of attitudes, behaviors, and emotions (Hogg & Turner, 1985; Worchel & Coutant, 2004). Social identity, however, involves a shift in focus of attention away from differentiation from other individuals toward commonality with other ingroup members and perceived differences between one's ingroup and a relevant comparison outgroup (Hornsey, 2008; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Self-categorization theory (SCT) (Hogg, 2004; Hogg & Turner, 1987; Turner et al., 1987) further elaborated social identity theory (SIT)—now commonly referred to as the social identity perspective—by developing and clarifying SIT's cognitive aspects. By specifying self-construal at differing levels of inclusiveness as the mechanism through which interpersonal versus intergroup behavior occurs, SCT suggests that there are generally three levels of self-categorization that are psychologically discernible, and that each level differs in terms of the degree of inclusiveness of others in the self-category (Turner et al., 1987). The most subordinate level of self-categorization (i.e., personal identity) shifts to group category membership (i.e., social identity) when ingroup

membership is made salient by the psychological presence of a comparison outgroup. At the maximally inclusive end is human identity which is the highest, superordinate level of self-categorization where the self and all others are included in a single category to which human beings belong (Turner et al., 1987). As the level of self-categorization shifts along the continuum from a personal to a social identity perspective, so do the attitudes and behaviors expressed. More specifically, as the psychological group becomes salient in the mind of the perceiver, the "us-versus-them" intergroup distinction motivates behavior that is more in line with group advantage rather than individual needs.

A widely researched topic that influenced the early formulation of social identity theory (SIT) is ingroup favoritism (e.g., Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Turner, 1981; Brewer, 2007). During the 1970s, Tajfel and colleagues conducted a series of studies showing that participants' categorization into two groups led to ingroup favoritism even when the category memberships were minimal and randomly assigned (Tajfel, Billig, Bundy, & Flament, 1971). The studies provided evidence of the distinction between interpersonal and intergroup context. Participants favored their assigned ingroup members over outgroup members even when the outgroup members were—"similar others"—individuals who were much like the participants allocating the rewards (Tajfel, 1981; p. 237). Tajfel and colleagues showed that an intergroup context may be all that is necessary for one group to express prejudice and exhibit discriminatory treatment toward another group.

Prior to and not unlike SJT, Tajfel acknowledged that even when differential group status is an existing social reality, as long as both of the groups involved perceive the situation to be "legitimate and stable," social identity is said to be "secure" (as cited in Caddick, 1982; p. 139). In other words, all is perceived to be right in a stable intergroup relationship so devalued group

members fail to contest their position and instead accept it. Tajfel thought this situation to be a relatively rare occurrence given that the most common case is when differential group status is seen by the lower-status group as unfair (e.g., racial segregation). When social identity is threatened, and moving from the low-status group to the high-status group is not possible, the instability of the intergroup relationship may give rise to intergroup conflict with the low-status group generally relying on one of two main social identity management strategies: social creativity or social competition (Doosje, Ellemers, & Spears, 1995; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Social creativity is a group-level strategy that allows a lower-status group to maintain perceived "positive distinctiveness" (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) by claiming superiority in a new "comparative situation" with the higher-status group. Often times the new comparison is perceived as unimportant to the high-status group and consequently is uncontested by that group. Social creativity undermines social change by attenuating contentious intergroup relations which then allows for the maintenance of the hierarchical status quo. Social competition, however, seeks to directly challenge the current hierarchical structure between the lower-status and higher-status groups. This group-level strategy is most often employed when the lower-status group recognizes the illegitimacy of the current social structure (Ellemers et al., 1990). At the extreme, social competition can result in violent intergroup conflict (Tajfel &Turner, 1979).

Social Identity Threat

Awareness of devalued ingroup membership is closely tied to the concept of social identity threat. According to Tajfel and Turner (1986), when a person's social identity is devalued or threatened, ingroup members respond by employing various individual or group-level identity management strategies in order to achieve or maintain a positive social identity. Whether ingroup members employ individual versus group-level identity management strategies

hinges on the perception of legitimacy—and quite possibly *awareness* in the case of single-group membership—of social-group membership differential status (e.g., Ellemers & Van Rijswijk, 1997; Garstka, Schmitt, Branscombe, & Hummert, 2004).

Most applicable to intragroup singlism is the *threat to value* which occurs when high-status group members (i.e., married people) are perceived by relevant others to be more socially valued than the low-status group members. According to Branscombe, Ellemers, Spears, and Doosje (1999), one possible response on the part of low ingroup identifiers—those not psychologically invested in their ingroup membership—is increased disassociation and distancing (also see Ellemers, 1993). Following similar lines of reasoning, distancing by derogating other ingroup members (Ellemers & Van Rijswijk, 1997) should be highest when participants focus on the negative aspects of their single-group membership and they find out that a relevant third party (e.g., future employer) threatens their social identity by favoring married people over single people (single-group members are disadvantaged). In contrast, when participants focus on the positive aspects of their single-group membership and they find out that single people are more socially valued than married people for future employment (single-group members are advantaged), intragroup singlism should be attenuated.

Theoretical Problem Addressed in the Current Research

Although SIT and SCT more commonly address the circumstances that motivate intergroup prejudice (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), I argue that the SIT perspective can offer a more useful alternative explanatory framework than SJT for the underlying psychological processes involved in intragroup singlism, which conceptually is a reversal of ingroup favoritism (i.e., outgroup favoritism).

This study was designed to answer three general questions: What role will making salient positive versus negative aspects of single social-group membership play in group identification and intragroup singlism? What circumstances of social identity threat (threat absent or threat present) affect identification with the single-group membership, and what impact will this have on the expression of intragroup singlism? And, to what extent might participant gender modify these effects?

Employing a social identity perspective (SIT and SCT; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; 1986; Turner, Brown, &Tajfel, 1979) as an explanatory framework, participants' endorsement of negative stereotypes of other single people (i.e., intragroup singlism) and inducement of negative affective state (NAS) should depend on whether the participant focuses on the positive or negative aspects of being single (i.e., single-group membership valence). Participants in the positive single-group membership valence condition should identify with and value their ingroup membership more strongly than those in the negative single-group membership valence condition (Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 1997). Thus when single-group membership is positively valenced and single people are favored over married people in future employment (i.e., social identity threat absent condition) *resistance* to endorsing negative stereotypes of other single ingroup members should be particularly strong and the degree of NAS should be low. On the other hand, when single-group membership is negatively valenced and married people are favored over single people in future employment, participants should attempt to psychologically distance themselves from single-group membership by endorsing negative stereotypes of other single people (i.e., intragroup singlism) and the degree of NAS should be high. Feelings of anxiety about future employment should only be affected by whether social identity threat is present or absent (Branscombe et al., 1999) whereas single-group membership experience

(positive or negative) is not relative to anticipation of a negative future outcome (Lewthwaite, 1990).

Although the gap between men and women's age of first marriage is narrowing, it is still more common for men to be older than women at the time of first marriage (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Given that it is not normative for both college age men and women to be married, but societal pressure to be married is still stronger for women than it is for men (Reynolds, 2008), responses to intragroup singlism may differ as a function of participant gender.

Hypothesis 1—Single-group identification:

In a context of high social mobility opportunity (Ellemers, 1993), participants in the positively valenced single-group membership condition should more strongly identify with their ingroup than participants in the negatively valenced single-group membership condition. Although a main effect of social identity threat is also possible, it was expected that a two-way interaction between the valence of single-group membership and social identity threat will emerge. The lowest group identification overall should occur when the participants focus on the negative aspects of their single-group membership and social identity threat is present (i.e., married people are more likely to receive job offers than are single people), and the highest group identification overall should occur when the participants focus on the positive aspects of their single-group membership and social identity threat is absent (i.e., single people are more likely to receive job offers than are married people). When the psychological experience of a socially devalued group membership is negative, and social mobility to a higher-status outgroup is perceived as almost certain, the salient ingroup membership should be deemed psychologically unimportant by the perceiver which should result in weak identification with that ingroup (Ellemers et al., 1988; Ellemers, van Knippenberg, & Wilke, 1990).

Hypothesis 2—Intragroup Singlism expression:

Intragroup singlism will be lower when participants focus on the positive aspects of single-group membership than when participants focus on the negative aspects of single-group membership. Likewise, intragroup singlism will be lower when social identity threat is absent (i.e., single people are said to be more likely to receive job offers than married people) than when social identity threat is present (i.e., married people are more likely to receive job offers than single people). A two-way interaction was expected to qualify these two main effects. Intragroup singlism was expected to be higher in the negatively valenced single-group membership condition and when social identity threat is present compared to the positively valenced single-group membership condition and when social identity threat is absent. If participants' psychological experience of their ingroup membership is negative and their social identity is threatened by an outgroup (Branscombe et al., 1999), participants should respond by endorsing negative stereotypic ingroup traits in order to psychologically distance themselves from the ingroup (Ellemers, 1993). If participants' psychological experience of their ingroup membership is positive, their identification with the ingroup should be strong thus participants should protect their social identity by resisting the endorsement of negative stereotypic ingroup traits. On the other hand, when the psychological experience of a socially devalued group membership is negative, and social mobility to a higher-status outgroup is perceived as almost certain, the salient ingroup membership should be deemed psychologically unimportant by the perceiver which should motivate psychological distancing by derogation of other ingroup members (Ellemers et al., 1988; Ellemers, van Knippenberg, & Wilke, 1990).

Hypothesis 3—Participant Anxiety:

Given that anxiety can result from worry about negative outcomes concerning an important goal (i.e., future employment opportunities; Lewthwaite, 1990), a main effect for single-group membership valence is not expected. Whether a person focuses on the positive or negative aspects of *current* ingroup membership should not differentially affect feelings of anxiousness about future outcomes. Participant anxiety should be, however, significantly lower when social identity threat is absent (i.e., single people are more likely than married people to receive job offers) compared to when social identity threat is present (i.e., married people are more likely than single people to receive job offers). In addition, a two-way interaction between single-group membership valence and social identity threat is possible. Anxiety may be higher when participants focus on the positive aspects of single-group membership and they are told that single-group membership is a disadvantage for future employment opportunities (i.e., social identity threat present condition) compared to when participants focus on the negative aspects of single-group membership and they are told that single-group membership is a disadvantage for future employment opportunities. If positive valence strengthens identification with single-group membership and in turn increases the psychological importance of ingroup membership (Ellemers, 1993), a "threat to value" (Branscombe et al., 1999) should cause participants to report higher levels of anxiety; however, in the negative valence condition where identification and psychological importance are expected to be low, social identity threat may be inconsequential, especially in the case where changing from the lower-status single group to the higher-status married group is perceived as highly probable.

Hypothesis 4— Negative Affective State:

NAS will be lower when participants focus on the positive aspects of single-group membership than when participants focus on the negative aspects of single-group membership.

Likewise, NAS will be lower when social identity threat is absent (i.e., single people are said to be more likely to receive job offers than married people) than when social identity threat is present (i.e., married people are more likely to receive job offers than single people). In addition, a two-way interaction between single-group membership valence and social identity threat is possible. NAS may be higher when participants focus on the positive aspects of single group membership and they are told that single-group membership is a disadvantage for future employment opportunities (i.e., social identity threat condition) compared to when participants focus on the negative aspects of single-group membership and they are told that single-group membership is a disadvantage for future employment opportunities. If psychological importance of single-group membership increases as a result of focusing on the positive aspects of being single, participants will report more negative affect when they are told that marital status, an irrelevant dimension concerning employment qualifications, is used to value married job applicants over single job applicants (Branscombe et al., 1999).

Hypothesis 5—Thermometer scales:

Participants in the positively valenced single-group membership condition will report more positive feelings toward single people than married people. On the other hand, participants in the negatively valenced single-group membership condition will report more positive feelings toward married people than single people. When the psychological experience of a socially devalued group membership is negative, and social mobility to a higher-status outgroup is perceived as almost certain, the salient ingroup membership should be deemed psychologically unimportant, and the perceiver should favor the group that they will be changing to (i.e., married; Ellemers et al., 1988; Ellemers, van Knippenberg, & Wilke, 1990). Likewise, more positive feelings toward single people compared to married people should be reported when social

identity threat is absent (i.e., single people are said to be more likely to receive job offers than married people), and more positive feelings toward married people compared to single people should be reported when social identity threat is present (i.e., married people are more likely to receive job offers than single people). A three-way interaction was expected to qualify these two main effects. Positive feelings toward married people compared to single people was expected to be higher in the negatively valenced single-group membership condition and when social identity threat was present compared to the positively valenced single-group membership condition and when social identity threat was present. If participants' psychological experience of their ingroup membership is negative and their social identity is threatened by an outgroup (Branscombe et al., 1999), participants should respond by reporting more positive feelings toward the outgroup (i.e., married people; Ellemers, 1993). If participants' psychological experience of their ingroup membership is positive, their identification with the ingroup should be strong thus participants should protect their social identity by reporting more positive feelings toward other ingroup members compared to outgroup members. On the other hand, when the psychological experience of a socially devalued group membership is negative, and social mobility to a higher-status outgroup is perceived as almost certain, the salient ingroup membership should be deemed psychologically unimportant by the perceiver which could motivate overall outgroup favoritism (Ellemers et al., 1988; Ellemers, van Knippenberg, & Wilke, 1990).

Hypothesis 6—Perceptions of social mobility:

All participants, regardless of condition, will indicate that getting married is a matter of choice whether they are responding to perceived social mobility pertaining to the "average person" or "themselves", and will strongly endorse the pervasive normative belief that most people want to marry and eventually will. No significant main effects or interactions were

expected for this measure. In other words, participants' expectations of the ease of social mobility to the higher-status married group will not be affected by either of the experimental manipulations.

Method

Participants and Design

Participants (N = 229) were recruited through the university subject pool (111 Males, 115 Females, 3 unknown). Participants received credit toward their introductory psychology course in exchange for their participation. The majority of participants were European American 75.5%), ranged in age from 18-20 (M_{age} = 18.9, SD_{age} = 1.5), and were not legally married. No data was collected from one participant who was married.

Male and female participants were randomly assigned to one of four conditions. Accordingly, the design of the study was a 2 (Single-group membership valence: positive or negative) x 2 (Social identity threat: absent or present) between-subjects factorial. Approximately equal numbers of men and women were assigned to each condition.

Materials and Procedure

This study was conducted online using Qualtrics Survey Software. Participants were first asked to read and electronically sign the informed consent before proceeding to the study materials. All participants read an introduction describing ostensible research findings related to the hiring of recent college graduates based on marital status. Participants were then asked to self-categorize in terms of their marital status by indicating their membership in one of the following three categories: "single," "single, but in a committed relationship for longer than six months," or "married." The one married participant was sent to a thank you message that explained that this study concerned responses from non-married participants.

Participants were asked to write five things they "liked" about being single (positive valence condition) or five things they "did not like" about being single (negative valence condition). Participants were then told that our prior research findings showed that "single college graduates were 35% more likely to be hired over married college graduates" (social identity threat absent) or "married college graduates were 35% more likely to be hired over single college graduates" (social identity threat present).

After both manipulations were delivered, participants were asked two memory manipulation check questions. The first question was a dichotomous choice asking whether they had written about things they liked or did not like about being single. The second question asked whether they read that single people or married people were hired more often. Once both manipulation check questions were completed, participants responded to six dependent measures in the following order: identification with their single group, anxiety, singlism, negative affective state (NAS), feeling thermometers concerning single and married people, and perceived social mobility for the average person and the self. When they were finished with the dependent measures, participants completed a demographic sheet. Finally, all participants (including any who self-categorized as married) were asked to read a debriefing sheet[1] followed by a short message thanking them for their participation.

Experimental Manipulations

Participants' single-group membership was made salient by asking them to self-categorize by checking either "single" (71%) or "single, however I have been in a committed, long-term relationship for six months or longer" (29%). If a participant self-categorized as married, they were not advanced further in the study.

[1] A second *purpose of study* statement was emailed to all participants as was required by the Human Subjects Committee, Lawrence.

The single-group membership valence manipulation then asked participants to consider either positive or negative aspects of their single-group membership by having them respond to the following writing task: "Because you indicated that you are single, we would like you to quickly jot down five positive things about your single status. In other words, what five things do you like about being in this social category?" or "Because you indicated that you are single, we would like you to quickly jot down five negative things about your single status. In other words, what five things don't you like about being in this social category?" This manipulation was adapted from that used by Glasford, Dovidio, and Pratto (2009) and Miron, Branscombe, and Biernat (2010).

The second manipulation, social identity threat absent or present, was created specifically for this study and was constructed to suggest that there are real-world advantages or disadvantages to being a single-group member. Participants were told that previous and current research obtained evidence that "*single people were hired over married college graduates* (social identity threat absent) or *married people were hired over single college graduates* (social identity threat present). The vignettes used are presented in Appendix A.

Manipulation Check Questions

After participants completed the writing task and read the materials reflecting their assigned condition, they were first asked to remember whether they wrote about five things they *liked* or *did not like* about being single and whether *single college graduates were 35% more likely to be hired over married college graduates* or *married college graduates were 35% more likely to be hired over single college graduates*.

Dependent Measures

Participants completed a16-item identification with single-group membership measure

(adapted from Cameron, 2004) which assessed the extent to which participants felt identified with their single social category (1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*). This measure was used to provide supporting evidence that the valence manipulation affected identification levels with their ingroup (i.e., singles). Responses were combined into composite scales following a principle components analysis using Varimax rotation and then were averaged to create a summary score for each factor. Three components emerged with eigenvalues greater than one, and a scree plot likewise indicated a three-component solution.[2] The first component, *pride in single group membership,* accounted for 36.44% of the variance. Seven items were included in this index ("In general, I am happy about being a single-group member," "Being single makes me feel good about myself," "I enjoy being a single-group member," "Being single increases my self-esteem," "I think that single-group members have a lot to be proud of," "Being a single-group member gives me a good feeling," and "I feel more self-confident because I am single;" α = .90). The second component, *single-group membership saliency,* accounted for 17.54% of the variance. Three items were included in this index ("I often think about the fact that I am a single-group member," "The fact that I am a single-group member is an important part of my identity," and "In general, being a single-group member is an important part of my self-image;" α = .78). The third component, *similarity to other singles,* accounted for 9.29% of the variance. Two items were included in this index ("I am similar to the average single person" and "I have a lot in common with the average single person;" α = .78).

Next, participants responded to a seven-item anxiety scale (adapted from Cronin et al., 2011) which assessed the extent to which participants experience worry about how being single might affect their future employment after graduating from college. Examples of the statements

[2] Four items were eliminated due to dual or triple loadings (see Appendix B for eliminated items).

used are "I worry that being single will make it more difficult to get hired after I graduate" and "I worry that employers value married people more than single people" (1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*). Responses to the individual items were averaged to create a single anxiety summary score (α = .96). See Appendix B for the complete measure as presented to participants.

Participants then completed an 18-item singlism measure (adapted from Cronin et al., 2011) which assessed prejudice toward single people. Responses to the individual items were combined into composite scales following a principle components analysis using Varimax rotation and then were averaged to create a summary score for each factor. The eigenvalues and scree plot indicated a three-component solution.[3] The first component, *negative characteristics*, accounted for 44.68% of the variance (α = .90). Six items were included in this index. Examples of the items are "Single people tend to be irresponsible" and "Single people tend to be immature." The second component, *flawed personality*, accounted for 9.70% of the variance (α = .82). Five items were included in this index. Examples of the items are "Single people tend to be desperate to find a mate" and "Deep down, single people are lonelier than married people." The third component, *disadvantaged*, accounted for 5.62% of the variance (α = .45). Two items were included in this index ("In general, it is more difficult for older singles (e.g., 35+ yrs.) to get married" and "Single people are more economically disadvantaged compared to married people). Participants responded to each item using a seven-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*). See Appendix B for the items used for each index and the five items that were eliminated.

Next, participants completed a 12-item negative affective state scale (NAS) which assessed the extent to which participants felt angry at the present moment. Responses to the

[3] Five items were eliminated due to dual or triple loadings.

individual items were reverse-scored where appropriate and then averaged to create a summary score for negative affect (α = .90). Participants responded to each item using a seven-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*). Examples of the terms used are "bitter," "furious," "outraged," "cheerful," "happy," and "pleased" (see Appendix C for a complete list).

Participants were then presented with eight feeling thermometer scales (0 – 100) and asked to indicate their affective responses when thinking about single people and when thinking about married people. Responses to the individual feeling thermometers were averaged to create a summary score for the single-people feeling thermometers (e.g., "When I think about single people I feel" 0 = *negative* to 100 = *positive*; α = .82) and a summary score for the married-people feeling thermometers (e.g., "When I think about married people I feel" 0 = *negative* to 100 = *positive*; α = .82). See Appendix C for the individual items as presented to participants.

Next, participants completed a five-item social mobility scale (adapted from Cronin et al., 2011) assessing perceptions of an *average person's* ease of movement from their lower-status single group to the higher-status married group. Responses were first combined into composite scales following a principle components analysis using Varimax rotation and then averaged to create a summary score for each component. Eigenvalues greater than one and the scree plot indicated that a two-component solution was optimal. The first component, *average person's desire to be married*, accounted for 48.08% of the variance (α = .85). Three items were included in this index ("With few exceptions most people would rather be married," "Most people will eventually get married" and "Most people want to get married"). The second component, *average person's choice to marry*, accounted for 28.09% of the variance (α = .63). Two items were included in this index ("Most people consider getting married is a matter of personal choice" and "In general, most people view marriage as optional").

Participants also completed a ten-item social mobility scale (adapted from Cronin et al., 2011) assessing their perceptions of how easy it would be for them personally to move from their lower-status single group to the higher-status married group (1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*). Responses were first combined into composite scales following a principle components analysis using Varimax rotation and then averaged to create a summary score for each component. Eigenvalues greater than one and the scree plot indicated that a two-component solution was optimal. The first component, *personal pressure to marry*, accounted for 38.88% of the variance ($\alpha = .78$). Six items were included in this index. Examples of the items used are "The longer I wait to get married, the more difficult it will be to find the right person" and "It is important that I marry before age 35." The second component, *personal aspiration to marry*, accounted for 16.44% of the variance ($\alpha = .82$).[4] Two items were included in this index ("I have always thought that I would eventually get married" and "I believe I will eventually get married"). Participants responded to each item on both of the mobility measures (i.e., average person and personal self) using a seven-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*). See Appendix C for the individual items used for both mobility measures, and the items that were eliminated.

Results

Thirty-six participants (16%) failed to respond correctly to one or both memory manipulation check questions (final $N = 192$).[5]Analyses are reported excluding the participants who did not pass one or both memory manipulation check questions; however, analyses were

[4] One item was eliminated due to dual loading.
[5] One male participant and one female participant did not correctly recall the valence of their writing task (positive or negative); twenty-two males and 12 females did not correctly recall whether they read that single people were more likely to be hired than married people or vice versa (social identity threat manipulation).

also conducted with all participants included, and any differences that emerged from the analyses reported here are presented in footnotes.

Correlational Analyses

Zero-order correlations were computed for all dependent variables collapsing across conditions. Several dependent variables were significantly correlated which was expected; however, most of the correlations were small to moderate in size (less than .40; see Table 1 for all dependent measure correlations).

Most notable were the significant correlations between pride in single-group membership, a component of the identification with single-group measure, and intragroup singlism as indexed by negative characteristics $r(191) = -.19$, flawed personality $r(191) = -.30$, and disadvantaged, $r(191) = -.14$; all $ps < .05$. The more pride single-group members felt the less they were willing to engage in intragroup singlism. Pride in single-group membership was also significantly correlated with NAS $r(191) = -.24$, $p < .001$, and participants' feelings of pressure to be married $r(191) = -.26$, $p < .001$. As pride in single-group membership increased, negative affect and pressure to marry felt by participants decreased. Consistent with prior social identification literature, pride in single-group membership was positively correlated with similarity to other singles, $r(191) = .36$, $p < .001$, indicating that identification with an ingroup and psychological investment in that ingroup are positively associated (Ellemers, 1993; Leach et al., 2008;Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Pride in single-group membership was also significantly correlated with positive feelings toward single people, $r(190) = .44$, $p < .001$ indicating that identification with an ingroup is closely related to positive feelings toward other ingroup members (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Further evidence of the close relationship between identification with an ingroup and feelings toward other ingroup members was indicated by the

negative correlations between positive feelings toward single people and intragroup singlism as indexed by *negative characteristics*, $r(191) = -.37$, $p < .001$), *flawed personality*, $r(191) = -.26$, $p < .001$), and *disadvantaged*, $r(191) = -.19$, $p < .001$.

Surprisingly and in direct contrast to the negative associations between pride in single-group membership and intragroup singlism, *single-group membership saliency*, was positively correlated with all three components of the singlism measure ($rs > .23$, $ps < .001$) indicating that the more people became *aware* of their single-group category membership, the greater the expression of intragroup singlism. The data suggest that feelings of pride may be competing with single people's awareness of membership in a devalued social-group which in turn may result in conflicted responses to other ingroup members.

As expected, the three components of the singlism measure were significantly correlated ($rs > .44$, $ps < .001$). Describing singles as possessing negative characteristics, flawed personalities, and as being disadvantaged is consistent with previously documented negative stereotypes of singles (i.e., singlism; see Cronin et al., 2011).

Finally, participants' feelings of pressure to be married and intragroup singlism were significantly correlated. The more participants felt pressure to be married, the greater their expression of intragroup singlism as indexed by *negative characteristics*, $r(191) = .27$, $p < .001$, *flawed personality*, $r(191) = .48$, $p < .001$, and *disadvantaged*, $r(191) = .40$, $p < .001$.

Analysis of Variance-Dependent Measures

A 2 (Single-group membership valence: positive or negative) x 2 (Social identity threat: absent or present) x 2(Participant gender: male or female) between-subjects analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted on each of the dependent variables (see Table 4 for all *F*-values and *p*-values) with one exception. A mixed between-within ANOVA was conducted to assess the

difference in participants' positive feelings toward *single people* and *married people* as represented by averaged scores toward each group on the feeling thermometer measures.

Identification with single-group scale. A 2 (Single-group membership valence: positive or negative) x 2 (Social identity threat: absent or present) x 2 (Participant gender: male or female) between-subjects ANOVA was conducted on each of the three components of the identification with single-group measure (i.e., pride in single group membership, single-group membership saliency, and similarity to other singles). Significant main effects for single-group membership valence, $F(1, 182) = 10.02$, $p = .002$, partial $\eta^2 = .05$ and social identity threat, $F(1, 182) = 7.46$, $p = ..007$, partial $\eta^2 = .04$ were obtained for *pride in single-group membership*; however, the main effect of single-group membership valence was qualified by a significant interaction between single-group membership valence and participant gender, $F(1, 182) = 6.10$, $p = .014$, partial $\eta^2 = .03$. Simple effect tests revealed that male participants felt significantly more pride in their single-group membership when they wrote five things that they liked about being single ($M = 4.45$, $SD = .92$) compared to when they wrote five things that they did not like about being single ($M = 3.61$, $SD = 1.10$), $F(1, 186) = 15.44$, $p < .001$. Women, on the other hand, did not feel significantly more pride in their single-group membership when they wrote five things that they liked about being single ($M = 4.20$, $SD = .98$) compared to when they wrote five things that they did not like about being single ($M = 4.00$, $SD = 1.17$), $F(1, 186) = 1.02$, $p = .314$. The main effect for participant gender, the other two-way interactions, and the three-way interactions were all nonsignificant, Fs < .28, ps > .57. No significant main or interaction effects were obtained for *single-group membership saliency*, Fs < 3.57, ps > .06.[6] No significant main or

[6] A significant main effect of gender and a significant three-way interaction between single-group membership valence, social identity threat, and participant gender were obtained when all participants were included in the analysis.

interaction effects were obtained *for similarity to other single people*, *F*s < 3.13, *p*s > .08 (see Table 2 for individual means and standard deviations).

Participant anxiety. A significant main effect for social identity threat was obtained, $F(1, 182) = 15.43$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .08$. Participants who read that married people were 35% more likely to be hired than single people ($M = 2.96$, $SD = .143$) reported stronger feelings of anxiety about being single when looking for employment after college than participants who read that single people were 35% more likely to be hired than married people ($M = 2.23$, $SD = .13$). The main effects for single-group membership valence and participant gender, and all two-way and the three-way interactions were nonsignificant, *F*s < 1.93, *p*s > .17 (see Table 2 for individual means and standard deviations).

Negative characteristics (intragroup singlism). A significant main effect of participant gender was obtained, $F(1, 182) = 6.80$, $p = .01$, partial $\eta^2 = .04$. Male participants ascribed more negative characteristics to single people ($M = 2.72$, $SD = .12$) than did female participants ($M = 2.29$, $SD = .11$). The main effects for single-group membership valence and social identity threat, and all two-way and the three-way interactions were nonsignificant, *F*s < 1.18, *p*s > .26 (see Table 2 for individual means and standard deviations).

Flawed personality (intragroup singlism). The main effects for single-group membership valence, social identity threat, and participant gender, and the two-way and three-way interactions were all nonsignificant, *F*s < 2.12, *p*s > .15 (see Table 2 for individual means and standard deviations).

Singles are disadvantaged (intragroup singlism). The main effects for single-group membership valence, social identity threat, and participant gender, and the two-way and three-

way interactions were all nonsignificant, *F*s < 1.20, *p*s > .28 (see Table 2 for individual means and standard deviations).

Negative affective state (NAS). The main effects for single-group membership valence, social identity threat, and participant gender, and the two-way and three-way interactions were all nonsignificant, *F*s < .79, *p*s > .13 (see Table 3 for individual means and standard deviations).

Desire to be married (average person's mobility). A significant main effect for participant gender was obtained, $F(1, 182) = 6.78$, $p = .01$, partial $\eta^2 = .04$. Female participants reported stronger perceptions of the average person's desire to marry ($M = 5.89$, $SD = .86$) than did male participants ($M = 5.58$, $SD = .92$). The main effects for single-group membership valence and social identity threat, and the two-way and three-way interactions were all nonsignificant, *F*s < 2.30, *p*s > .13 (see Table 3 for individual means and standard deviations).

Choice to be married (average person's mobility). A significant main effect of participant gender, $F(1, 182) = 5.82$, $p = .02$, partial $\eta^2 = .03$, indicated that female participants reported greater perceptions of the average person's choice to marry ($M = 5.37$, $SD = 1.13$) than did male participants ($M = 4.98$, $SD = 1.19$) The main effects for single-group membership valence and social identity threat, and the two-way and three-way interactions were all nonsignificant, *F*s < 1.13, *p*s > .29 (see Table 3 for individual means and standard deviations).

Pressure to be married (participants' mobility). A significant main effect of participant gender, $F(1, 182) = 4.55$, $p = .03$, partial $\eta^2 = .02$, indicated that female participants reported feeling more pressure to marry ($M = 5.27$, $SD = 1.15$) than did male participants ($M = 4.93$, $SD = 1.12$). The main effects for single-group membership valence and social identity threat, and the two-way and three-way interactions were all nonsignificant, *F*s < 3.73, *p*s > .06 (see Table 3 for individual means and standard deviations).

Aspiration to marry (participants' mobility). A significant main effect of participant gender, $F(1, 182) = 4.51$, $p = .04$, partial $\eta^2 = .02$, indicated that female participants reported greater aspirations to marry ($M = 6.39$, $SD = 1.03$) than did male participants ($M = 6.04$, $SD = 1.16$). The main effects for single-group membership valence and social identity threat, and the two-way and three-way interactions were all nonsignificant, Fs < 3.52, ps > .06 (see Table 3 for individual means and standard deviations).[7]

Positive feelings toward single vs. married people. A 2 (Single-group membership valence: positive or negative) x 2 (Social identity threat: absent or present) x 2 (Participant gender: male or female) mixed between-within subjects ANOVA was conducted to assess the difference in participants' feelings when thinking about *single people* compared to when thinking about *married people* as represented by averaged scores for the four feeling thermometers for single people and the four feeling thermometers for married people, with *feeling thermometer* as the within-subjects variable. The main effect of feeling thermometer was significant, F (1, 182 = 48.13, $p < .0005$; Wilks' $\Lambda = 0.791$, partial $\eta^2 = .21$. Participants felt more positive affect toward married people ($M = 70.19$, $SD = 16.86$) than they did toward single people ($M = 58.89$, $SD = 17.54$). There were no other significant effects which include all of the two and three-way interactions, and the four-way interaction, Fs < 1.18, ps > .279.

In sum, pride in single-group membership was negatively correlated with intragroup singlism as indexed by negative characteristics, flawed personality, and disadvantaged, and was positively correlated with similarity to other singles and positive feelings toward single people. Single-group membership saliency was positively correlated with the three indices of intragroup singlism, NAS, and participants' feelings of pressure to be married. Similarity to other singles

[7] A significant main effect of social identity threat was obtained when all participants were included in the analysis.

was positively correlated with positive feelings toward single people. Participant's anxiety about how their single-group membership may be a disadvantage for future employment opportunities was positively correlated with three indices of the singlism measure and participants' personal feelings of pressure to be married. NAS was positively correlated with the negative characteristics index of the singlism measure and negatively correlated with positive feelings toward single people.

Significant main effects for single-group membership valence and social identity threat were obtained for pride in single-group membership, however, an interaction between single-group membership valence and participant gender qualified this main effect. Men who focused on the positive aspects of being single felt more pride in single-group membership than men who focused on the negative aspects of being single. Women were not affected by the single-group membership valence manipulation. Participants who were told that single people were more likely than married people to be hired (i.e., social identity threat absent) felt more pride in single-group membership than participants who were told that married people were more likely than single people to be hired (social identity threat present). A significant main effect for social identity threat was obtained for participants' anxiety about how their single-group membership may be a disadvantage for future employment opportunities. Participants felt significantly more anxiety when they were told that married people were more likely than single people to be hired (i.e., social identity threat present) compared to when they were told that single people were more likely than married people to be hired (i.e., social identity threat absent).

The three indices of the singlism measure were not affected by the single-group membership valence or social identity threat manipulations, consequently my central hypotheses concerning intragroup singlism were not supported by the data. As predicted, the experimental

treatments had no effect on participants' perceptions of the average person's desire to be married or feelings that marriage is a choice (i.e., others' mobility) or participants' personal feelings of pressure to be married or aspirations to marry. Last, women felt more strongly than men about others' desire and choice to marry. Women also felt more personal pressure to marry than did men and had stronger aspirations to marry than men (i.e., participants' mobility).

Discussion

The purpose of this research was to investigate the relatively rare phenomenon of intragroup prejudice. Specifically, I set out to examine the impact of single-group membership valence and social identity threat on the expression of intragroup singlism, and the extent to which participant gender might modify these effects. A social identity intergroup context was made salient by asking participants to self-categorize as single or married. The psychological experience of single-group identification was varied by reminding participants of the positive or negative aspects of being single. Participants wrote about the things they liked about being single (positive valence condition) or did not like about being single (negative valence condition). Glasford, Dovidio, and Pratto (2009) found that ingroup identification was strengthened when participants expressed important aspects of being a group member (see also Miron, Branscombe, & Biernat, 2010). Social identity threat (or no threat) was operationalized by varying future employment opportunities. Participants were told that single-group membership was either an advantage (i.e., social identity threat absent) or a disadvantage (i.e., social identity threat present) in terms of the future employment for young college graduates.

In agreement with previous research addressing the psychological importance of group membership for the self-concept (Ellemers et al., 1997) and in line with my predictions for single-group identification, significant main effects for single-group membership valence and

social identity threat were obtained for pride in single-group membership. In addition, a two-way interaction between participant gender and single-group membership valence revealed that men in the positive valence condition felt more pride in single-group membership than men in the negative valence condition, whereas women were not affected by the single-group membership valence manipulation. The data suggest that the difference between the two valence conditions for men is driven more by men's responses when thinking about the negative aspects of single-group membership. A close examination of the reasons for not liking being single revealed that participants noted perceived "loneliness" as a major factor. Although loneliness was given as a reason for not liking being single by a majority of both men (54%) and women (57%) in the negatively valenced single-group membership condition, college age men may have more difficulty dealing with feelings of loneliness than college age women (Schmitt & Kurdek, 1985). According to Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Finkenauer, and Vohs (2001), thinking about negative events demands more attention than thinking about positive events. Given that college age men may be less able to cope with loneliness than women, men may have given more attention to and thus placed more weight on the loneliness that results from being single than did women. Although speculative, this might explain why the single-group valence manipulation affected men's pride in single-group membership and not women's. In addition, the main effects of gender on the four components of the social mobility measures may also shed light on why the single-group membership valence manipulation did not affect women's pride in single-group membership. The consistent main effect of participant gender obtained on the measures of perceived social mobility showed that women felt more strongly than men about the average person's desire to marry and the average person's feelings about marriage being a choice, as well as their own personal feelings of pressure and aspirations to marry. These results are consistent

with the qualitative body of work conducted by Reynolds and colleagues (Reynolds, 2008; Reynolds & Taylor, 2005; Reynolds & Wetherell, 2003; Reynolds, Wetherell, & Taylor, 2007), indicating that women, more than men, still feel stronger societal pressures concerning marriage.

In addition, participants who were told that singles are an advantaged group concerning future employment opportunities (i.e., social identity threat absent) felt more pride in single-group membership than participants who were told that singles are a disadvantaged group concerning future employment opportunities (i.e., social identity threat present). The current data show that when members of the lower-status single group were said to be more valued than the higher-status married group by a relevant third party (no social identity threat), identification with the ingroup strengthened in terms of pride. Indeed, Ellemers (1993) found that ingroup identification with low-status groups depended on whether people were able to derive a sense of positive social identity from their ingroup membership, especially in the case where group boundaries were permeable.

Given that all participants, regardless of condition, were expected to perceive high social mobility opportunities from the lower-status single group to the higher-status married group for others and the self, I predicted that participants in the negative valence condition who were told that being a single-group member is a disadvantage concerning future employment opportunities would express a greater amount of intragroup singlism compared to participants in the positive valence condition who were told that being a single-group member is a disadvantage concerning future employment opportunities. In other words, the expression of intragroup singlism should be highly dependent on whether people are "satisfied" and consequently more strongly identified with the salient ingroup (Ellemers, 1993) especially when social identity is being threatened by implied superior attributes of a relevant outgroup (Branscombe et al., 1999). Although

correlational analyses showed that pride in single-group membership was negatively correlated with the three components of the intragroup singlism measure, thus indicating that lower levels of pride in single-group membership were associated with increased endorsement of negative stereotypic ingroup traits, the data did not support my main interactional hypothesis for intragroup singlism. The null result was surprising considering that significant main effects for single-group membership valence, although for men only, and social identity threat were obtained for the pride in single-group membership component of the single-group identification measure. These main effects suggest that participants were at least aware of the valence of single-group membership (positive or negative) and whether singles were the advantaged or disadvantaged group.

People seek social identities that are important to their self-concept and that provide a valued group identity that can be distinguished from other groups (e.g., Ellemers et al., 1988; Ellemers & Van Rijswijk, 1997; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). When people are not satisfied with their current ingroup membership and changing groups is possible, psychological distancing from an ingroup by derogating other ingroup members (e.g., intragroup singlism) which is conceptually the opposite of ingroup favoritism is one of the identity enhancing strategies that may be employed (Ellemers, 1997). Aligning the self with a *future* ingroup, hence outgroup favoritism, is another possible strategy that low-status group members may employ, especially in the case where group boundaries are highly permeable (Ellemers, 1993). The current data suggest that this particular sample of young single people was not willing to derogate other single ingroup members on the singlism measure, but they were willing to praise outgroup members (i.e., married people) as was indicated by the significant main effect of target group obtained for the feeling thermometers.

An unexpected, yet interesting result from the correlational analyses may also offer a partial explanation for the null experimental results for intragroup singlism. As previously stated, pride in single-group membership, the first component of the identification with single-group measure, was negatively correlated with intragroup singlism as indexed by negative characteristics, flawed personality, and single people are disadvantaged. These results are consistent with the social identity literature in that people who feel more pride in their group membership should feel more highly identified with that ingroup, and people who are highly identified with their ingroup should generally resist endorsing negative stereotypic ingroup traits (Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 1997; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). However, single-group membership saliency, the second component of the identification with single-group measure was expected to be moderately correlated with pride in single-group membership (Leach et al., 2008), but it was not. In direct opposition to pride in single-group membership, single-group membership saliency was positively correlated with intragroup singlism; the more people were *aware* of their single-group category membership, the greater the expression of negative stereotypic ingroup traits. The correlational data suggest that feelings of pride may have been competing with single people's awareness of membership in a devalued social-group which resulted in conflicted responses to other ingroup members. It is possible that young single people are confused about how they should feel about being single. In other words, a person might feel good about being single when they consider the positive aspects of being single or when they find out that future employers value their single-group status, but at the same time, most people are aware of the widely accepted and pervasive normative belief about marriage and married people—that is, overall, married status is more socially valued than single status. Awareness of and the degree of

personal endorsement of this pervasive belief might make it difficult for single people to consistently achieve a positive single-group social identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

Consistent with my hypothesis concerning participant anxiety, a significant main effect for social identity threat was obtained showing that participants who were told that single-group status was a disadvantage for future employment opportunities reported more anxiety than participants who were told that single-group status was an advantage for future employment opportunities. Contrary to expectations, my hypothesis concerning an interaction between single-group membership valence and social identity threat on participant anxiety was not supported. The most plausible explanation for the absence of an interaction effect is that single-group membership valence was related to current state and social identity threat was related to a future outcome. In the context of high social mobility opportunities on the part of low-status single-group members, whether participants liked or did not like their single group, it is a group that they perceive themselves as leaving in the future (Garstka et al., 2004). For this reason, current single status may have been deemed by participants as psychologically irrelevant to their future employment opportunities. If this was the case, then the single-group membership valence manipulation would not cause differential responding on the participant anxiety measure.

The data did not support my predictions for NAS. On one hand, the absence of a significant main effect for social identity threat is surprising. At the very minimum, when a relevant outgroup (i.e., married people) is deemed more competent than the ingroup (i.e., single people) based on marital status alone, as was the case when married people were favored over single people in hiring decisions, the illegitimacy of the devalued status assigned to single people should have caused participants to report higher levels of negative affect (e.g., Ellemers, 1993). However, the alternative perspective given for the participant anxiety measure (above) is also

plausible. As was the case for the young adult sample in Garstka et al. (2004), discriminatory treatment based on group membership may have been perceived by the young single sample in the current research, but a negative response was deemed unnecessary and therefore was absent due to the fact that single-group membership may have been perceived as temporary.

Consistent with my prediction that regardless of condition, participants would not differ in their responses to the ease of moving from single-group membership to married-group membership, no main or interaction effects were obtained for either participants' perceptions of the average person's social mobility opportunities or their own personal social mobility opportunities. Participants almost uniformly believed that upward social mobility from the single group to the married group is easy to accomplish.

Limitations

A major limitation of this research was that the participant sample consisted of young college age adults and thus did not allow for age as a potential modifier. The average age for first marriage has increased for both men and women and is greater than the average college age adult (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). The fact that it is normative for this young adult sample to not be married at this stage of their lives may have weakened the influence of the *single-group membership valence* and *social identity threat* manipulations. In addition, it is possible that older adults may not perceive the ease of movement from single to married status in the same way that young adults do (see Garstka et al., 2004). Although there are no age barriers to marrying, older adults may view changing from single to married status as possible but less probable whereas younger adults are more likely to view changing from single to married status as highly probable if not inevitable as was indicated by the social mobility measures in the current study. The degree to which older adults believe that they will marry in the future may be an important

mediator of intragroup singlism. In other words, when older single people recognize that they may not be changing groups, intragroup singlism should be attenuated (see Garstka et al., 2004).

Along with an increased variation in age of participants, measuring psychological well-being and the perception of legitimacy of discriminatory treatment based on single-group membership may shed light on how younger and older adults respond to the same instance of group-based prejudice (Ellemers, 1993; Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

Future Research

The current data suggest that single participants are willing to praise married people and hold them in higher esteem compared to their fellow single ingroup members. The mean positive feeling toward single people was close to neutral (59%) whereas the mean positive feeling toward married people was clearly positive (70%). Following up on this finding, a measure of outgroup praise such as positive outgroup evaluation may be more informative concerning the uncontested ascribed lower social status of single people. Precisely because single people expect to change group memberships, the interests of both single and married social groups are highly compatible. That is, most single people want to get married, and married people also want single people to get married (Coontz, 2005; DePaulo & Morris, 2005). Therefore, the interests of both groups might well be served by according higher status to the "married" social group.

Closing Comments

The aim of this line of research is to make visible powerful normative forces that serve to legitimize the negative stereotyping and discriminatory treatment of single people even among single people themselves. Existing research has yet to determine to what extent a lack of awareness of this social issue plays in maintaining the differential social status of single and married people. Indeed, when participants were asked to list the groups that they think

experience prejudice and discrimination, only 4% of respondents listed the single-group social category (Morris, Sinclair, & DePaulo, 2007). The current research confirmed that people do feel more positively toward married people than toward single people, even though the latter is currently their own group membership.

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Appendix A

Current Research Study Results

While researching hiring trends for 2010, our data suggested that ***single*** college graduates were being **hired more frequently** than ***married*** college graduates.

When we researched hiring trends for 2011, we found *more evidence* consistent with our 2010 data. A more detailed examination showed that ***single*** college graduates were approximately **35% more likely to be hired over *married* college graduates.**

We realize our current findings *suggest* a possible relationship and are not conclusive at this point; however, it is important to our continuing research program to understand college students' responses to the information that ***single*** **people are being hired, on average, MORE OFTEN than *married* people.**

Before proceeding to the questionnaires, we will *test* your memory regarding what you just wrote and read about. (Once you click "Next" you will not be able to return to this page.)

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Appendix B

Identification with Single-Group Scale (*eliminated items*)

I often regret that I am a single-group member.
Overall, being single has very little to do with how I feel about myself.
Being single is unimportant for my sense of what kind of person I am.
I feel a bond with other single-group members.

Anxiety Scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*)

I worry that being single will make it more difficult to get hired after I graduate.
I worry that employers think married people make better employees than single people.
I worry that employers value married people more than single people.
I worry that if two people have the same qualifications, the married person will be hired over the single person.
I worry that if I am single when I graduate from college I will have a harder time finding a job than if I was married.
I worry that if I am single when I graduate from college I will be held to a higher standard during the interview process as compared to a job applicant that is married.
I worry that I may be liked less by interviewers if I am single as compared to being married, when I apply for jobs.

Singlism Scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*)

negative characteristics

Single people are unstable.
Single people are obsessed with their careers.
Single people tend to be irresponsible.
Single people tend to be immature.
In general, single people live isolated lives outside of their work.
Basically, single people live selfish lives.

flawed personality

People who don't marry are never truly happy.
Normal people eventually get married.
Single people tend to be desperate to find a mate.
I feel sorry for people who are single all of their lives.
Deep down, single people are lonelier than married people.

disadvantaged

In general, it is more difficult for older singles (e.g., 35+ yrs.) to get married.
Single people are more economically disadvantaged compared to married people.

Eliminated items

Single people are lacking in close relationship skills.
Long-term singles are basically afraid of commitment.
In general, no one would remain single if they could avoid it.
Being single is an obstacle to be overcome.
People who never marry live shallow lives that lack meaning.

Appendix C

Negative State Scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*)
Cheerful, Bitter, Happy, Furious, Angry, Light-hearted, Irritated, Pleased, Outraged, Upbeat, Resentful, and Glad.

Feeling Thermometers
"When I think about single people I feel" (0 = *negative* to 100 = *positive*)
"When I think about married people I feel" (0 = *negative* to 100 = *positive*)

"When I think about single people I feel" (0 = *unfavorable* to 100 = *favorable*)
"When I think about married people I feel" (0 = *unfavorable* to 100 = *favorable*

"When I think about single people I feel" (0 = *devalued* to 100 = *valued*)
"When I think about married people I feel" (0 = *devalued* to 100 = *valued*)

"When I think about single people I feel" (0 = *disrespected* to 100 = *respected*)
"When I think about married people I feel" (0 = *disrespected* to 100 = *respected*)

Social mobility scale (average person's ease of movement) (1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*)
Desire to be married
Most people want to get married.
With few exceptions, most people would rather be married.
Most people will eventually get married.
Choice to be married
Most people consider getting married is a matter of personal choice.
In general, most people view marriage as optional.

Social mobility scale (participant's ease of movement) (1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*)
Pressure to marry
I think I will feel out of place if all my friends are married and I am not.
It is important that I marry before age 35.
The longer I wait to get married, the more difficult it will be to find the right person.
Finding someone to marry gets much harder after age 35.
I feel a lot of pressure to get married before I turn 35.
Getting married after age 35 makes it harder to start a family.
Aspiration to marry
I believe I will eventually get married.
I have always thought that I would eventually get married.
Eliminated item
I feel, in a general sense, that I am expected to get married eventually.

Table 1

Zero-Order Correlations Between Dependent Measures

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1. Pride in Single Group	1.0	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
2. Single-Group Saliency	.04	1.0	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
3. Similarity to Other Singles	.36**	.09	1.0	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
4. Anxiety	-.05	.12	-.03	1.0	---	---	----	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
5. Negative Characteristics	-.19**	.34**	-.16*	.29**	1.0	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
6. Flawed Personality	-.30**	.27**	-.04	.20**	.54**	1.0	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
7. Disadvantaged	-.14*	.23**	-.05	.23**	.44**	.47**	1.0	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
8. Negative Affective State	-.24**	.19**	-.16*	.06	.29**	.13	.12	1.0	---	---	---	---	---	---
9. Feeling About Singles	.44**	-0-	.25**	-.18*	-.37**	-.26**	-.19**	-.24**	1.0	---	---	---	---	---
10. Feeling About Marrieds	-.05	-.05	.09	-.12	-.09	.09	-.03	-.13	.18*	1.0	---	---	---	---
11. Desire to be Married	.02	-.06	.11	-.02	-.10	.22**	.11	-.06	.06	.22**	1.0	---	---	---
12. Choice to be Married	-.03	-.18*	.18*	-.10	-.29**	-.10*	-.07	-.21**	.09	.24**	.13	1.0	---	---
13. Pressure to be Married	-.26**	.19*	.07	.15*	.27**	.48**	.40**	.15*	-.18*	.15*	.31**	.09	1.0	---
14. Aspiration to Marry	-.07	-.05	.09	-.11	-.11	.21**	.10	-.22**	.02	.25**	.22**	.35**	.30**	1.0

NOTE: *$p < .05$, **$p < .001$

Table 2

Cell Means across single-group membership valence and social identity threat for pride in single-group, single-group saliency, similarity to other singles, anxiety, negative characteristics, flawed personality, and economic disadvantage (with standard deviations in parentheses)

	Single-Group Membership Valence			
	Positive		Negative	
Social Identity Threat	Singles Advantaged	Singles Disadvantaged	Singles Advantaged	Singles Disadvantaged
Pride in Single-Group Membership	4.43 (1.02)	4.17 (.85)	4.06 (1.14)	3.58 (1.12)
Single-Group Saliency	3.69 (1.32)	3.49 (1.19)	3.56 (1.26)	3.43 (1.33)
Similarity to Other Singles	4.69 (1.12)	4.20 (1.18)	4.50 (1.34)	4.51 (1.37)
Participant Anxiety	2.35 (1.22)	2.96 (1.44)	2.11 (1.10)	2.90 (1.28)
Negative Characteristics (Singlism)	2.58 (1.08)	2.56 (1.06)	2.29 (1.00)	2.49 (1.30)
Flawed Personality (Singlism)	3.74 (1.24)	3.67 (1.31)	3.63 (1.17)	4.05 (1.38)
Disadvantaged (Singlism)	3.73 (1.21)	3.91 (.96)	3.76 (1.31)	4.00 (1.26)

Table 3

Cell Means across single-group membership valence and social identity threat for negative affective state, feeling about singles, feeling about marrieds, average desire to be married, average choice to be married, personal choice to be married, and personal aspiration to marry (with standard deviations in parentheses)

	Single-Group Membership Valence			
	Positive		Negative	
Social Identity Threat	Singles Advantaged	Singles Disadvantaged	Singles Advantaged	Singles Disadvantaged
Negative Affective State	2.89 (.94)	3.21 (.96)	2.84 (1.12)	2.99 (1.09)
Feeling About Singles (0-100)	60.30 (18.00)	58.46 (16.63)	60.71 (17.23)	55.74 (18.15)
Feeling About Marrieds (0-100)	71.90 (16.65)	68.11 (17.60)	70.98 (17.73)	69.16 (15.82)
Average Desire to be Married	5.73 (.91)	5.75 (.85)	5.74 (.81)	5.76 (1.06)
Average Choice to be Married	5.06 (1.20)	5.11 (1.18)	5.33 (1.07)	5.28 (1.24)
Personal Pressure to Marry	5.02 (1.18)	5.16 (1.28)	4.93 (1.11)	5.36 (1.01)
Personal Aspiration to Marry	6.23 (1.00)	5.95 (1.21)	6.55 (.81)	6.14 (1.30)

Table 4

Main effects of single-group membership valence and social identity threat on dependent variables

Variable	Single-Group Membership Valence			Social Identity Threat		
	F-value	*p*-value	η_p^2	*F*-value	*p*-value	η_p^2
Pride in Single Group	**10.16**	**.002**	**.052**	**7.46**	**.007**	**.039**[8]
Single-Group Saliency	.03	.863	--	1.04	.310	.006
Similarity to Other Singles	.34	.562	.002	1.14	.287	.006
Participant Anxiety	.64	.424	.004	**15.43**	**.001**	**.078**
Negative Characteristics (Singlism)	1.26	.264	.007	.12	.730	.001[9]
Flawed Personality (Singlism)	.592	.443	.003	.832	.363	.005
Economically Disadvantaged (Singlism)	.10	.753	.001	1.20	.275	.007
Negative Affective State	.50	.482	.003	2.35	.127	.013
Average Desire to Marry	.11	.76	.001	.02	.89	--[10]
Average Choice to Marry	1.13	.29	.006	.03	.872	--[11]
Personal Pressure to Marry	.03	.864	--	3.73	.055	.020[12]
Personal Aspiration to Marry	2.71	.101	.015	3.52	.062	.019[13]

NOTE: **Bold** means significant *F*-values

[8] Single-group membership valence x participant gender was significant, $F(1, 182) = 6.10$, $p = .014$, $\eta_p^2 = .032$. Men in the positive valence condition ($M = 4.45$, $SD = .92$) had more pride in single-group membership than men in the negative valence condition ($M = 3.61$, $SD = 1.10$), $F(1, 186) = 15.44$, $p < .001$. Women's pride was not significantly affected by the positive ($M = 4.20$, $SD = .98$) vs. negative valence ($M = 3.99$, $SD = 1.17$) conditions, $F(1, 186) = 1.02$, $p = .314$.

[9] Participant gender was significant, $F(1, 182) = 6.80$, $p = .010$. Men ascribed more negative characteristics to single people ($M = 2.70$, $SD = 1.10$) than did women ($M = 2.30$, $SD = 1.10$).

[10] Participant gender was significant, $F(1, 182) = 5.41$, $p = .010$. Women reported stronger perceptions of the average person's desire to be married ($M = 5.89$, $SD = .86$) than did men ($M = 5.58$, $SD = .92$).

[11] Participant gender was significant, $F(1, 182) = 5.82$, $p = .017$. Women reported stronger perceptions of the average person's choice to marry ($M = 5.37$, $SD = 1.13$) than did men ($M = 4.98$, $SD = 1.19$).

[12] Participant gender was significant, $F(1, 182) = 4.55$, $p = .034$. Women reported stronger perceptions of personal pressure to marry ($M = 5.27$, $SD = 1.15$) than did men ($M = 4.93$, $SD = 1.12$).

[13] Participant gender was significant, $F(1, 182) = 4.51$, $p = .035$. Women reported stronger personal aspirations to marry ($M = 6.39$, $SD = 1.03$) than did men ($M = 6.04$, $SD = 1.16$).