OVERCOMING STEREOTYPES AGAINST SINGLES

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by

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

I certify that I have read *Overcoming Stereotypes Against Singles* by Rachel A. Buddeberg, and that in my opinion this work meets the criteria for approving a thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree: Master of Arts in Philosophy at San Francisco State University.

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In this thesis, I argue that stereotypes against singles can be understood as belief

packages, which combine mental states that influence our behavior in powerful ways.

Much of this influence remains nonconscious reflecting the neurological imprinting from

being exposed to stereotypical messages. Because stereotypes have internalized and

external components, any approach for overcoming them needs to address both aspects. I

suggest that we can overcome internalized stereotypes by recognizing them as shame.

Through an ethics of care we can transform shame by offering empathy. To prepare for a

democracy grounded in an ethics of care, we need to learn how to make it a way of life.

We cannot do that in the institution that currently prepares us, the nuclear family, since it

is marred by stereotypes against singles that it reinforces. Instead we need to design

intentional families that help us overcome the external aspects of these stereotypes.

I certify that the Abstract is a correct representation of the content of this thesis.

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Chair, Thesis Committee                                      Date

# ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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**Road Map and Overview**

In this thesis, i[1] challenge the idea that we are not good enough if we are not in a coupled relationship. This view seems to be deeply embedded in our culture and our psyche. It is preventing us from living in a world where everyone's needs matter, a world that is deeply democratic and grounded in an ethics of care. I argue that stereotypes are the primary mechanisms for upholding this view. They manifest internally as shame and externally as discrimination. To move toward deep democracy, we need to transform these stereotypes. This can happen if we heal shame through an ethics of care approach and learn to participate in democratic life in intentional families. To make my argument, i combine seemingly disparate areas of philosophy: Philosophy of mind, social and political philosophy, and ethics. This introduction provides a roadmap on how these parts fit together, outlines what stereotypes have to do with these fields within philosophy, and motivates the combination.

The most basic definition of stereotypes describes them as traits, characteristics, or qualities that are attributed to a group or members of that group based on group membership (Schneider 2004, 24). Stereotypes claim that certain people have certain characteristics. They can influence how we feel toward people–our affective reaction or prejudices–and how we act–our discriminatory behavior (29). Discrimination is not

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[1] To emphasize the equality between you and me, i prefer using a lowercase "i."

possible without prejudices, which rely on stereotypes. Originally, stereotypes and prejudices were conceived as entirely negative (Allport, 1954/1979). More recent research suggests that stereotypes and prejudices can also seem positive (e.g. Glick & Fiske, 2001). In this thesis, i focus on one particular set of stereotypes: Those directed against singles. To look at these stereotypes more closely, it is helpful to have common terminology. Social psychologist Bella DePaulo (2010) introduced the word "singlism" to capture the stereotyping and discrimination of singles. Singlism is the stereotyping of singles as immature and selfish, at bottom not good enough (DePaulo & Morris, 2005). "Couplemania" is its flipside, which overvalues the couple, leading to preferential treatment of couples as well as reduced importance of friendships. If the couple referenced is a married couple, we talk about "matrimania" (DePaulo, 2006).

**My Focus on Marriage and Singles**

There are two major themes in political philosophy regarding the roles of marriage and the family in society: One views marriage and the family positively as an essential part of society; the other views it as the key to problematic developments within society. The most prominent theme harkens back to Aristotle: The family is seen as the central building block of society (Aristotle, 330 BCE/2005, 1252b, 1253b). That assumption is also the entry point to the other major theme: a critical analysis of the family. Philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari argue that fascism in society originates in the patriarchal nuclear family–the oedipal family model (1972/2004).

Michel Foucault (1977) emphasizes that this family model creates in us a desire for oppression, in part explaining the development of false consciousness, a concept introduced by Marx and Engels (1846/1970) to describe the phenomenon that oppressed groups hold beliefs that contribute to their own oppression (Jost & Banaji, 1994; Bartky 1990/2008). This critique is built on and expanded by feminist philosophers who declare that marriage–as the center of the family–is an evil institution because the state cannot prevent the domestic violence and oppression of women that occur within it (Card, 1996 & 2007). Nevertheless, contemporary philosophers also advance arguments in favor of marriage and the family. Martha Nussbaum (2009) argues that marriage is a fundamental right that should be available to any citizen independent of sexual orientation. Clearly, marriage and the nuclear family are important topics in philosophy. Furthermore, despite these divergent approaches, each of these arguments explicitly or implicitly assumes the centrality of marriage and the nuclear family as an institution of society.

It is time to call this assumption into question. Even if we do not agree with Card's assessment of marriage as evil, there is strong evidence that marriage discriminates both legally and socially between those who are married and those who are not (U.S. General Accounting Office, 2004; DePaulo & Morris, 2005; DePaulo, 2006; Greitemeyer, 2009; Hertel, Schütz, DePaulo, Morris, & Stucke, 2007; Morris, Sinclair, & DePaulo, 2007; Morris, DePaulo, Hertel, & Taylor, 2008). Such discrimination is the result of stereotypes–stereotypes that undervalue singles and overvalue couples. The

most ubiquitous stereotype against singles is the assumption that they are not full adults. It stems from the presumption, widespread even in academic literature (DePaulo & Morris, 2005, 65-71; Grist, 2010), that reaching adulthood follows a set path, which includes marriage (Card, 1996, 9; Rubin, 1975/2008, 23). Morris, Sinclair, and DePaulo (2007) summarize empirical research that indicates that married people are viewed in a more positive light than single people. They are characterized as happy, loving, kind, and secure. Single people are seen as lonely, insecure, and unhappy. Being single is not viewed as a state to choose permanently (Gordon 2003): Singles are always looking for a partner and are stereotyped as incomplete without one. These stereotypes have concrete consequences. For example, as the research of Morris et al. (2007) shows, singles tend to face discrimination when leasing a home.

Such discrimination is hardly socially desirable, as the prohibition of discrimination in an increasing number of social categories reflects. Further, the stereotypes underpinning discrimination are morally intolerable. Sandra Lee Bartky (1990/2008) argues that stereotyping women is "morally reprehensible" (52) for at least two reasons. Stereotypes prevent the holder from being able to apprehend a stereotyped person's needs, making a society where everyone's needs matter impossible. Morally more problematic is the impact of stereotypes on the stereotyped person: They impede the development of an authentic self with autonomy and moral agency, which most moral philosophers hold in very high regard (52-53). Barkty makes these arguments within the

context of sexism: Because of sexist stereotypes, women develop an "alternate self," that reflects the cultural messages that they are less than men.  Similarly, singles are stereotyped as inferior adults *qua* their singleness (Pignotti & Abell, 2009).  Thus, unless a person is coupled, they cannot develop into full humans.  Through the institution of marriage, these stereotypical beliefs are mystified as natural making marriage an institution central to the perpetuation of these stereotypes (Bartky, 1990/2008, 52).  This mystification is strengthened by assuming that universal institutions must reflect a social benefit (Wasserstrom, 1977/2006, 561).  Marriage is an almost universal institution.  In the US, for example, 90% of the population has been married at some time in their lives (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009).  As Richard Wasserstrom (1977/2006) points out, though, the claim that universal institutions must be socially beneficial in a significant way does not hold under moral scrutiny.  Although slavery was fairly universal, we now question its social benefit–together with its moral legitimacy.  Similarly, war, although widespread, is socially more detrimental than beneficial (561).

Yet, marriage is not being questioned.  Its discrimination, as well as the stereotypes that drive it, is not only tolerated but also not acknowledged.  Unlike other stereotypes, such as racism, singlism is still very much normatively accepted (Crandall & Warner, 2005).  Most of us hold beliefs that suggest that singlism and couplemania are not stereotypes but rather reflect the way things are (Pignotti & Abell, 2009).  If we believe that marriage and coupling are natural, research results that seem to show that

married people are happier and healthier make sense to us. We do not challenge them. Neither do we question beliefs like we should be coupled–only weirdoes remain single. As we will see, these beliefs combine into a deeply ingrained belief package together with belief-like mental states that capture cultural messages. This, combined with evidence from neurobiology, shows just how deeply engrained stereotypes are. We incorporate them into our brain structure (Ambady & Bharucha, 2009). I start my thesis with a look at these belief packages and the mechanism that underlie their integration. Understanding stereotypes as a whole package helps us accept why the fundamental changes i call for in the remainder of this thesis are necessary to overcome them.

Drawing on models from philosophy of mind supported with research from neurobiology and social psychology, i develop the argument that stereotypes are very deep seated belief packages that cannot be addressed with surface changes, such as changing words in legislation. Instead, more fundamental cultural changes are called for. Stereotypes manifest as cultural messages that underlie prejudices and discrimination that then become internalized beliefs that are stored in our minds. Overcoming stereotypes requires us to dig deep: We need to avoid the brain imprinting and/or rewire the brain (when the imprinting already happened). A two-pronged approach can accomplish that. First, we need to directly address the damage stereotypes create by healing the shame from their internalization. Healing shame can occur within a context of an ethics of care that emphasizes compassion and empathy. Second, because humans are social, often

recreating the very systems that undermine our long-term goals, we need cultural changes (Young, 2006). We can accomplish that by developing family forms that nurture connection and democracy, moving us beyond the restrictive nuclear family. Each prong draws on a different area within philosophy.

The first prong builds on arguments from within virtue ethics to address the internalized manifestation of stereotypes, beliefs such as "i am not good enough" or "there is something wrong with me" that indicate shame. Shame is a topic well known to ethicists. It is a tool used within many virtue ethics, often described as useful moral emotion. This seems to fly in the face of evidence from psychology, which suggests that shame is a rather destructive emotion, implicated in violence directed against self and others. By overlaying an ethics of care as well as pragmatists' notion of a deeper democracy, i argue that shame, at least when it is a result of internalized stereotypes, functions to uphold the status quo. Therefore, i suggest, if we want to design a more fully democratic society, we need to overcome internalized stereotypes and heal shame. I outline ways of doing this.

The second prong draws on social philosophy, especially that of feminist pragmatists, to suggest ways for overcoming the cultural manifestation of stereotypes. It builds on the pragmatist call to strengthen democracy. If we want to live in a more democratic society, a society in which everybody's needs matter, we need to carefully look at the obstacles, including what prevents us from fully participating in the

democratic process as a way of life (Green, 2008). A major obstacle is that we do not know *how* to participate–other than by voting about once a year. Education in and practice of participatory democracy are thus important. I analyze the place of our first education–the family–and find it lacking this basic training, in part because the nuclear family model reinforces singlism. These stereotypes, both in the family and in culture at large, are obstacles to democracy. They reinforce isolation by promoting an inward focus on the family. They contribute to scarcity thinking by imposing hierarchical distributions; i.e., some people deserve more than others. To help move us toward the vision of democracy presented by pragmatists, i propose an intentional family to build a society that values all its participants no matter their relationship status.

**Democracy and Ethics of Care**

Obviously, i am assuming that democracy, at least the deep democracy advocated by pragmatists, and ethics of care are worthwhile goals. Although i do not argue for this assumption, i want to motivate it here, in addition to describing both concepts further. Many philosophers, especially feminists and pragmatists, advocate a society that values and celebrates diversity by ensuring that everybody's voices are heard in a participatory process that ensures justice. Iris Marion Young (1989/2006, 1990, 2006), for example, suggests that there are four interrelated elements that can help us establish social justice: Just distribution; recognition, including overcoming stereotypes and valuing difference; representation; participation or deliberate democracy. Deep democracy might be one of

the most effective vehicles of bringing us to Young's ideal of social justice because it is designed to ensure representation and participation.

Judith Green (2008) introduces deep, two-strand democracy as a way to conceptualize the deliberative democracy John Dewey envisioned. We are most familiar with the representative strand that enters our lives about once a year when we vote in an election. Yet, Dewey argues that to fully develop democracy–to radicalize democracy–it needs to become a "way of life" (233). This requires the second strand: Participatory democracy. Only by living this second strand can we become a truly democratic society, ensuring that all people's needs matter and most needs are met through a process of active participation. This Jeffersonian strand includes local active participatory democracy, incorporated into civic society and "practices of daily living" (159). Direct citizen participation functions in addition to the representative strand as a counterbalance and complement. By being active participants in our lives, both on a personal and a social level, Green argues that our lives become more meaningful. Thus, a deeper democracy will benefit both individuals and societies at large.

Erin McKenna (2001) provides more details on what such a radical democracy could look like. It requires that we take responsibility for our lives on a personal and a social level (85). This means that we critically examine our past and present to evaluate what needs changing in order for us to move closer to an end-in-view. Because humans are interdependent and able to adapt to our physical and social environments end-states

are impossible, thus Dewey introduced the idea of ends-in-view (86). Ends-in-view are flexible goals that we might adjust when more information becomes available, which we gather by critical examination of the impact of moving toward the end-in-view. They capture the idea that means and ends are interrelated: Once reached, an end-in-view can become the means for a new end-in-view. This interrelatedness requires that the means and the ends are consistent (86). For example, if we want a democratic society, having an undemocratic institution at its center is inconsistent (95). Furthermore, it is important that we ground the ends-in-view in current reality: They propose to overcome social conditions that emerge from a critical examination of our present (Kitcher, 2011, 253).

An important end-in-view of this two-strand democracy is open and free communication that also functions as a means (McKenna, 2001, 112). Participation of all citizens in a democracy requires that these citizens feel comfortable expressing their views. One way to ensure this comfort-level is to encourage empathic connections. Empathy leads us to try to understand what another person is feeling in order to connect with them from their perspective, which we communicate to the person (Batson, 2009). Empathy, thus, involves four skills: Our ability to see the world from another's perspective; to remain nonjudgmental; to understand what another is feeling; and to communicate this understanding (Brown, 2006, 47). This way of communicating establishes an empathic connection that highlights our interrelationships, preventing stereotyping.

Nel Noddings (1984) introduced ethics of care as an ethical approach that is based on women's experience as caregivers. Our actions, in order to be ethical, need to reflect "an attitude/motive of caring toward others" (Slote, 2007, 10). Like empathic connections, this focuses on the centrality of our interrelationships with others as equal contributors to the caring relationship. Instead of claiming that we are more powerful and therefore should only be cared for, we are expected to return the care. An ethics of care, through its focus on empathy, interrelationship, and caring, seems especially conducive to radical democracy. Because of this, an ethics of care is an important end-in-view for a two-strand democracy.

## Stereotypes Are a Package Deal

The acceptance of marriage is based on beliefs like: "It's only natural for people to get married" or "people who do not marry are incomplete" (Pignotti & Abell, 2009, 645). They suggest that it is an institution desirable for individuals and society. They are part of a powerful package that upholds marriage as an institution. To change this (nearly) universal yet undesirable institution,[2] we need to understand how these packages form and how they influence our behavior in such a way that perpetuates the institution.

Stereotypes build on attitudes about traits, characteristics, or qualities that are attributed to a group or members of that group based on group membership (Schneider, 2004, 24). Thus, they are a particular kind of belief. Yet, their content is more complex as implied by the standard philosophical definition of a belief as a propositional attitude. A propositional attitude is attributed to an individual with a specific attitude about a proposition, for example, what is believed about marriage[3] (Bermúdez, 1995/2003, 193-194). Stereotypes combine a multitude of attitudes and other mental states into a belief package. They also contain behavioral motivations, such as a tendency toward avoidance (being single is a state to be avoided) or attraction (being coupled is a state to be sought out). This behavioral direction is shaped by the content of the stereotype (Jost &

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[2] I present further arguments for its undesirability in the next two chapters. For now, recall my argument on the moral reprehensibility of singlism in analogy to Barkty's argument about sexism (1990/2008).

[3] This is formalized as S A that P. For example, Peter [the subject S] believes [the attitude A] that marriage makes a person happy [the proposition P].

Hamilton 2005). So, despite the complexity of belief packages, all the parts of the package contain something: They have content. José Luis Bermúdez (1995/2003) suggests that a mental state has content if it represents the world, that is, it describes how the world is. He therefore argues that the notion of content requires that we explain what a representational state is (195). Bermúdez sets forth four criteria for representational states to generalize the notion of content (200). Representational states function as intermediaries between experiential input and behavioral output (criterion 1). They are cognitively integrated (criterion 2). They are compositionally structured so that their elements can be recomposed into other representational states (criterion 3). And they can misrepresent (criterion 4). I apply these criteria to test if all the parts of the belief package have content.

**Stereotype Parts**

Stereotypes, and beliefs in general, contain multiple parts. At minimum, they consist of an interpretation of a perception–the categorization–and an associated meaning of that categorization. I provide more details in the following sections, however, it is helpful to keep the idea of a scaffold in mind (Bargh, 2006). The bottom rung of the scaffold is categorization: We divide people (and things) into categories (Williams, Huang, & Bargh, 2009). According to psychologist Gordon Allport, the categorization process is a natural, inevitable process of perception (Allport, 1954/1979, 20). It can

happen at different levels of our awareness via conscious or nonconscious[4] processes. We remain at the bottom rung of the scaffold with a completely nonconscious process, which i will describe as subdoxastic states. For example, we perceive our environment in its richness largely automatically without having to consciously make the effort to see every single thing. A fully conscious process requires more effort and tends to be slower. It requires us to involve our conceptual capacities, cognitive faculties that use concepts such as "bride," to bestow meaning thus moving up the scaffold. We use this process when we describe the woman dressed in white as a bride about to get married. We are fully aware of this process and can let it influence our actions or help make specific choices (Bargh & Chartrand, 1999, 463). After we have intentionally learned a concept, the process of applying it becomes automatic, something captured in a mental state called "alief" later in this chapter. For example, after we learned that a wedding band means someone belongs to the category "married," we automatically divide people into married (wedding band present) and unmarried (no wedding band).

Mental scaffolding becomes particularly important in the study of stereotypes because basic concepts can carry more than simply a way of differentiating. Findings from implicit association tests support this contention. Despite years of socially counteracting racial stereotypes, we still make implicit associations between African-

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[4] I prefer using the term "nonconscious," used by researchers such as Bargh and Jost, rather than "unconscious," a term more associated with psychoanalysis, which supposedly can be made conscious with enough hard work. Nonconscious processes cannot always be made conscious.

Americans and negative images (Gendler, 2008b, 577). This suggests the presence of other mental states, which reflect the legacy of social norms, learned through formal and informal teaching, that still influence behavior and shape our brains (Ambady & Bharucha, 2009; Frith & Frith, 2010). A technique used in social psychological research called "priming" taps into these neural networks, activating mental states temporarily using cues often without our awareness (Williams, Huang, & Bargh, 2009, 1260). The primes can be used as a prompt for experiments in social psychology, such as particular words or images. Or they can occur in everyday life as an environmental trigger, something we observe, such as a wedding band. In sum, although our tendency to categorize might be natural, how we categorize is influenced by culture suggesting that mere categorization does not lead to stereotypes. Belief packages do. So, let us look more closely at what is in those packages.

**Perceptual Process**

The key to understanding stereotypes is to analyze their content, which is captured during our perceptual process. According to Fred Dretske (1981/2003) perception is similar to a funnel: There is a vast amount of information that is coming into our system through perceptual experiences–experiences involving our senses–which is then reduced through our cognitive processes. Dretske calls the information coming in analog (26). This analog information is similar to a picture that conveys a gestalt

impression of a scene rather than specific information about a detail. It is data captured nonconsciously, not yet consciously processed.

To illustrate this model, imagine a little girl, maybe four years old, playing the card game "Old Maid" with her parents and some friends. She is having a lot of fun beating her friends by ensuring that she is not the loser with the Old Maid card. Nobody realizes that the card game is not just fun. It also creates a loose association: Old maids and losers. This association enters the girl's mind as a gestalt message of the whole game. She gets this message even if she does not yet know what old maids are. The information still comes in, as Dretske suggests. Similarly, when a young boy attends a wedding, the whole wedding will be captured in analog information, maybe as an iconic representation (Fodor, 2007), including the boy's emotions–associating weddings with fun thus making them more attractive. The more frequently exposed, the more likely these associations form and the stronger the tendency to act on them (Bargh & Chartrand, 1999, 469). Frequent exposure to similar messages and situations creates nonconscious motivations to use certain strategies, form specific beliefs, or make particular judgments, creating neural networks that link specific information within the brain (LeDoux, 1994). As in the case of the boy, we might evaluate attending a wedding as an enjoyable experience, so our mental representations of the wedding are stored with a positive evaluation. This positive association can later influence how we judge marriage.

To add meaning to our perception, we apply concepts, which forces the perceptual information through the funnel of Dretske's model. We are converting the analog signal into digital information by synthesizing, generalizing, and abstracting the analog data (Dretske, 1981/2003, 30). Although this abstraction is not necessary for perception itself, it is necessary for using the information as the basis for knowledge or beliefs.[5]

To better understand this process, it is helpful to differentiate beliefs–mental states that are at least potentially conscious–from states that remain nonconscious. These states might involve a vague notion, such as warmth or nurturance, which an infant might develop through her experience of breast-feeding. They expand on Dretske's framework, which is not rigorously defining "content." To apply Bermúdez' content criteria, we need to understand more about these conscious and nonconscious mental states.

**Nonconscious Belief-Like States**

It is unlikely that an infant applies an adult concept of "male" and "female" to the faces she sees. But as research shows, she can differentiate them (Mackie, Hamilton, Susskind, & Rosselli, 1996, 46). Thus, there must be mental states that are pre-conceptual that might feed into conceptual states either later in a child's development or during belief formation in an adult. According to Stephen Stich (1978), there is a psychological mechanism that gathers perceptual information into subdoxastic states that

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[5] This process also reduces an individual to a member of a group, a process that Marilyn Frye (1983, 8) links to oppression.

are then used in the formation of beliefs about our environment (503). Two basic belief properties are not present in subdoxastic states: Beliefs are accessible and inferentially integrated. When asked, belief holders can report the content of their beliefs once made conscious (504). There is no clear mechanism to make subdoxastic states conscious like there is for unconsciously held beliefs (506). Most beliefs are formed inferentially, that is, we infer beliefs from other beliefs. As a very simple example, if i believe that a dress is white, i have made inferences from my beliefs of what constitutes the color white and what a dress is. Subdoxastic states can play a role in inference but, in contrast to beliefs, this role is very limited to a "narrow range of beliefs" (507).

Using Bermúdez' criteria for mental states, we can characterize subdoxastic states as representational states, states with content. Despite limitations, Stich notes that subdoxastic states are integrated, a contention supported and expanded by Bermúdez[6] (211-212; criterion 2). Since they serve as input to belief formation, they must be structured such that they can be recomposed (criterion 3). And our intuition about grammar, for example, can be wrong: Subdoxastic states can misrepresent (criterion 4). Although Stich sees subdoxastic states as parts of the causal chain to belief formation (501), from his examples it is clear that they could be used to explain behavior directly. He postulates that we can sort sentences without being able to explicitly state a rule into

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[6] Bermúdez refers to subdoxastic states as "subpersonal computational states."

grammatical and ungrammatical. Thus, subdoxastic states function as explanatory intermediaries between input and output (criterion 1). They likely drive our tendency to categorize without the meaning overlay that impacts behavior more strongly. The mental state introduced by Tamar Szabó Gendler (2008a & 2008b) captures this impact.

**Belief-Like States' Impact on Behavior**

Gendler proposes a new category of mental states, aliefs, which differentiates and summarizes existing categories providing us with a more powerful explanatory tool. Aliefs–innate or habitual propensities to respond to a stimulus in a particular way (2008b, 557)–are more primitive than beliefs and form earlier in the development of a child (575), like the facial recognition in infants mentioned previously, which might be based on an alief like "Female. Food! Approach!" Aliefs are often tied to our evolved self-protection mechanisms at the foundation of our mental scaffold and therefore can have a strong influence on behavioral dispositions. They are likely stored in the part of our brain often referred to as our limbic system,[7] which is evaluating our experience to approach or avoid (Siegel, 2011). Unlike Stich's subdoxastic states, they do not need to be inputs to beliefs to influence behavior. Most of the time, they work in tandem with our beliefs but sometimes they can pull us into a different direction. That can happen when what we explicitly intend competes with other input that tells us to do the exact opposite (Gendler,

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[7] The limbic system is a not quite scientifically accurate short-hand for a part of the brain that contains the amygdala and the hippocampus (Campbell, 2009).

2008a, 640). As Dretske points out, we take in a lot more information than we consciously process. A more basic representational state, the alief, then contradicts the conscious belief. The resulting behavior is driven by the alief, which was primed by the environment at the same time as the overt belief. Research from neurobiology can explain why the alief overrides the belief. Aliefs combine with an affective response that can be strong enough for the limbic system to receive most of the mental energy in our brain (Schiller, Monfils, Raio, Johnson, LeDoux, & Phelps, 2010). When that happens, the analytical part of our brain, the prefrontal cortex, cannot intervene. We act out of aliefs. They might even contain messages no longer relevant to our current life. They have not been updated or integrated with our more recent beliefs (Schore, 2009). Aliefs expand the content of the mental state Stich addresses by adding this action-generating and affect-laden dimension to the representational content. A person alieves when she is in a mental state with representational content that is also affective with a behavioral predisposition[8] (2008b, 559). For example, a singlist alief might take the form of "Old maid. Loser. Avoid!"–also demonstrating the danger of an "innocent" game. Thus, Gendler's work allows us to claim that there are belief-like states–aliefs–that have explanatory power for behavior in their own right, not just in a causal chain of belief formation. Such aliefs would then drive someone to avoid being single, pursuing an

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[8] This is formalized as: A person alieves r, a, b–they are in a "mental state whose content is representational, affective and behavioral." For example, Peter (from the example in footnote 3) might alief "Married people are happy. Happiness is good! Pursue!"

intimate relationship no matter at what cost.  The affective dimension of aliefs reflects the nonconsciously triggered evaluation that automatically creates approach tendencies toward what is perceived as good and avoidance of what is bad (Bargh & Morsella, 2009, 13).  What is considered good and bad, though, is culturally determined.

**The Meaning Layer: Cultural Influence**

The cognitive processes related to mental states do not exist in a vacuum.  They interact with the social context of the actor, which provides more inputs to the belief package in the form of a meaning layer (Tuana, 2001).  We have seen that playing a card game can create the alief "Old maid. Loser. Avoid!"  The avoidance tendency alief could not develop unless the culture at large devalues singles.  We learn those aliefs repeatedly, reinforcing the neural connections between content about singles and associating them with avoidance tendencies in the belief package reflecting the cultural imprint in our brain (Ambady & Bharucha, 2009).  The more we are exposed to these messages, which, despite their variations, point to the same aliefs, the stronger the neural connections become: The neurons that fire together, wire together (Siegel, 2011, 40).  Because of this strong connection, aliefs based on cultural messages are more influential than associating marriage with negative experiences, such as a wedding that was not much fun or a divorce.  We are biased toward confirming pro-coupling aliefs (Carroll, 2011).

Culture does not just magically influence our behavior.  Culture lumps together values, practices, and beliefs of people who share at least some parts of an identity, like

living in the same nation (Halloran, 2007). Cultural influences stem from the messages we learn through imitation (Frith & Frith, 2010). They become part of our social identity, especially when our reputation is at stake taping into our survival aliefs (740-741), as might be the case when we face stereotypes.

Additionally, culture determines what strategies we use to meet our basic needs. If we assume that every action we take is an attempt to meet a need by using a specific strategy (Rosenberg, 2003), the strategies we use matter because we might limit ourselves to culturally sanctioned ones. If the cultural messages influence our chosen strategies unfiltered, most of us will have a strong inclination to find a partner. Thus, we use the strategy of coupling to meet our needs for belonging, connection, and to matter. However, these needs could be met with other strategies, including developing a strong friendship network or even getting a pet. By following the cultural strategy, we restrict ourselves and, as i elaborate in the next two chapters, expose society and ourselves to dire consequences. Thus, the cultural messages reduce what is primed to culturally acceptable strategies captured in mental states like the alief "Married. Happy. Pursue!" They pick out certain aspects of the belief package, which stores these strategies together with other mental states, to influence behavior.

**Acting on Mental States**

Maybe someone believes that people should get married when they are under 30. John Perry (1979) demonstrates that this has no impact on his behavior, though, unless it

is individuated as "I am 29. I should get married now." A belief causes specific action only if it is concretized by indexicals–for an individual at a point in time at a specific place (18). The action is most suitable for pursuing a personal goal, which can reflect strategies from cultural neural imprinting. Similarly, action can happen through a strong individuated alief such as "My birthday. 29! Marry now!" Thus, indexicals situate beliefs and aliefs in the here and now of a specific individual.

In addition to the concreteness of indexicals, belief packages can only have an impact on our behavior if all the mental states somehow connect. Richmond Thomason suggests that this connection happens because related mental states are integrated in storage. Thomason (2009) draws on computer science and artificial intelligence to provide a model of state storage and integration. He suggests that beliefs are compiled for an occasion, rather than stored as ready-access beliefs. Instead of having a certain belief stored, we store belief-like attitudes–elements that can be formed into beliefs when an occasion arises that requires a specific combination (5). When we are in one mental state, we can access others that have been stored or are co-occurrent, integrating several mental states with representational content into a belief package. This on-the-fly construction of packages can be habitual–combining Gendler's aliefs–or they might be the result of thorough reasoning. The research summarized by Bargh (2006) supports that we store related information in modules–otherwise primes would not produce a wide range of effects, rather, the same prime would consistently produce the same effect if no

associated aliefs or beliefs would tag along (148). As Bargh notes: "Priming effects […] come in packages" (152). Beliefs and aliefs about marriage and singlehood are likely stored together. A conscious decision to marry might be driven by the belief that marriage makes people happy and by the alief "Single! Lonely! Avoid!" This alief strengthens the behavioral tendency of the belief, congruent with cultural norms.

Thomason's model is also consistent with findings in neurobiology. Every experience–either new learning or a reminder of the past–is integrated into our existing knowledge structure through a process of consolidation or reconsolidation (Eichenbaum 2006, 352). During consolidation memories are solidified during an extended period of time most likely during sleep (McKenzie & Eichenbaum, 2011, 224; Eichenbaum, 2006, 350). New information is integrated with existing memories, possibly into schemas–or what Thomason calls modules–that combine memories based on common elements (McKenzie & Eichenbaum, 2011, 224). This process first happens in the hippocampus, the short-term memory-processing center, and then in the cerebral cortex fixing the memory at the cellular level in the "permanent repository of memory," the neocortex (Squire & Alvarez, 1995, 172). During reconsolidation, activated whenever a stored previously consolidated memory is retrieved, an old memory is adaptively updated with new information, suggesting that a memory can be changed (Schiller et al., 2010, 49).

**How Belief Packages turn into Stereotypes**

We can now paint a picture of a belief package. A belief package loosely groups beliefs, aliefs, and subdoxastic states into thematic modules. Subdoxastic states capture the bottom rung of the scaffold: The categorization. Aliefs reflect mental states that tend to direct our behavior without our conscious awareness, combining categorization with the meaning overlay. We react to environmental stimuli without cortical processing. Beliefs are the most conscious mental state, though as we will see in the case of shame, they also warrant investigation. What is in a package is likely determined by the experiential situation in which the information was first gathered, which was consolidated and then reconsolidated with new information, including cultural messages. Since these cultural messages tend to carry singlist or couplemanic beliefs, the reconsolidation reinforces those messages strengthening our behavioral tendency to avoid the single state and seek out coupling. For example, a person's mental states regarding marriage might be grouped together based on an experience at a wedding. New information is added to this module based on similarity of content. Watching a movie that portrays the happily-ever-after couple will add an approach tendency. Whenever a module is activated, all of its contents are activated and thus might influence our behavior. The threat of being stereotyped alone can influence our performance (Derks, Inzlicht, & Kang, 2008, 165). For example, being primed into couplemania through viewing romantic pictures or overhearing a conversation on dating, women become less inclined to pursue careers in

science or mathematics. These primes even influence their mathematical performance (Park, Young, Troisi, &Pinkus, 2011).

To understand how stereotypes can have this impact on our behavior, it helps to look at two specific mechanisms that turn a belief package into a stereotype: Cognitive dissonance and systems justification. Cognitive dissonance occurs when our beliefs and behavior do not match (Stone & Fernandez, 2008, 316). Resolving cognitive dissonance can take two forms: Changing our behavior or blaming (DeGruy, 2005, 54). If i hold a belief like "it's only natural for people to get married" and yet i am unmarried, i might resolve the dissonance by getting married–adding the alief "Marriage. Natural! Pursue!" to my belief package. Or i might blame myself by incorporating the shaming message "there must be something wrong with me" into my belief package. I can then generalize this message to "there is something wrong with someone who doesn't want to get married," one of the attitudes toward singles reflected in external singlism reducing cognitive dissonance through systems justification (Pignotti & Abell, 2009, 645).

Systems justification, the "process by which existing social arrangements are legitimized, even at the expense of personal and group interest" (Jost & Banaji, 1994, p. 2), serves as a means by which cognitive dissonance is reduced by including justifications for the suffering of the lower status group in the package (Jost, Banaji, & Nosek, 2004, 909). Instead of questioning the system, such as the institution of marriage, singles are blamed for their discrimination. Because they are immature, selfish, and irresponsible, it

is permissible for the government not to treat them as full adults, by, for example, using marital status for allocating rights and benefits to married people in over 1,138 federal laws (U.S. General Accounting Office, 2004). These benefits range from tax advantages to hospital visitation rights excluding unmarried people simply by virtue of their marital status. Stereotypes are the mechanism for justifying this system of inequality (Jost & Banaji, 1994, 11), especially when they include claims to the naturalness of an institution (such as "It's only natural for people to get married").

This chapter established that stereotypes like singlism are complex mental states combined into a belief package. These packages are deeply ingrained–both in our mind and in our culture. When we want to overcome stereotypes against singles we need to break the associations of the avoidance and attraction tendencies captured in the packages. Aliefs like "Married. Happy. Pursue!" or "Single. Lonely. Avoid!" that reflect certain strategies could be replaced by new messages such as "Friends. Happy! Pursue!" Because these aliefs are so deeply seated, literally wired into our brains, we need to counteract them with equally deep-reaching methods. This is what i suggest in the next two chapters. To overcome internalized singlism, we need to heal the shame that manifests as beliefs like "i am not good enough." And to overcome external singlism, we need to change culture to move away from the overvaluation of the couple that manifests in the current focus on the nuclear family. We need both to successfully eliminate singlism and couplemania by rewiring our brains.

## Overcoming Internalized Stereotypes: Healing Shame

Building on Heidi Maibom's evolutionary account and drawing on the psychological mechanisms to resolve cognitive dissonance and to internalize stereotypes, i paint a picture of shame that explains why there are social status differentials in the ability to shame (Maibom, 2010, 572). Most philosophical accounts miss the power dimension of shame. This dimension becomes obvious when we look at its descent. Shame evolved from submission signals. Ultimately, i present an ethics of care approach that allows us to overcome stereotypes by healing shame when it occurs. Although not all shame stems from stereotypes, stereotype-induced shame allows us to see the power dimension most clearly.[9] Together with stereotypes, the evolutionary account of shame suggests that shame plays an important role in upholding social hierarchies. Thus, shame is not useful within an ethics of care, which dissolves hierarchies and stresses connections between humans (Green, 2008).

### Defining Shame

It is imperative to define shame before any exploration of its possible role in overcoming internalized stereotypes. Shame emerges when we fail to measure up "to certain standards, norms, or ideals" from a real or internalized audience (Maibom, 2010, 566). It is a painful emotion that impacts the global self. Guilt, in contrast, is tied to a

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[9] Shame is induced by a judgment: We judge that we do not live up to a standard/norm/ideal. Stereotypes are forms of judgments: Someone judges us that we do not live up to a standard/norm/ideal.

specific action (Tangney, Stuewig, & Mashek, 2007, 349).  Shame reflects "significant character flaws," which may become obvious when we act a certain way, though the action is not the object of shame, the character flaws are (Van Norden, 2007, 260).

We can clarify this definition by looking at a woman named Susan who had an extramarital affair (Van Norden, 2007, 260-261).  Although the affair is an action, Susan feels ashamed to be the kind of person who would have an affair.  She would like to honor her marital commitment, a standard she has failed to live up to.  Even if only the two people involved know about it, Susan feels shame because she has internalized the audience that evaluates whether she lives up to the standard that a virtuous person honors her commitments.  Her shame might manifest in an alief like "Broke commitment! Bad! Bad person!"–transforming the action into an evaluation of the global self.

**Shame in Psychology and Philosophy**

Research in social psychology suggests that feeling shame turns us inward, preventing concern for the harmed person (Tangney et al., 2007, 351).  Rather than leading people to move toward reconciliation, shame motivates us into escape behavior (352).  It "has a negative impact on interpersonal behavior" (Tangney & Dearing, 2002, 3) interfering with our "ability to form empathic connections with others" (Tangney et al., 2007, 350).  Feelings of shame motivate violence (Gilligan, 1996, 111) through the externalization of blame (Stuewig, Tangney, Heigel, Harty, & McCloskey 2010, 99).  Thus, shame is associated with internal and external violence.  Yet philosophers claim

that it is a useful moral emotion (e.g., Van Norden, 2007 & 2008). We might be able to understand this claim if we look at the power dimension that is at play when shaming occurs. As Maibom (2010) demonstrates not everyone has the power to shame (575). While many of us might want to shame the executives of financial service corporations who brought the world economy to its knees, for instance, they are very unlikely to listen to us. After all, we do not have that kind of power even if we believe that their actions have revealed some serious character flaws (see also Locke, 2007). If there are those who can shame us but we cannot shame them, the question of whose standards, norms, or ideals shame is trying to uphold becomes important. The people who have the power to shame also have the power to enforce their standards, norms, and ideals. Thus, shame might be useful within hierarchy-based societies (Noddings, 2010, 139). Within the context of an ethics of care that encourages a more egalitarian way of living, this usefulness might be doubtful.

Jennifer Manion (2003) investigates the power dimension within the context of the male-female hierarchy. She argues that most philosophical examinations of shame have ignored how its usefulness as a moral emotion might be negatively impacted by gender (22). She closely examines Gabriele Taylor's differentiation of genuine and false shame. According to Taylor, genuine shame is morally useful since it is informed by not living up to our *own* standards, norms, or ideals. False shame arises when they are imposed from the outside onto the moral agent but not adopted by her as her own (34).

Manion contends that this fails to take into account that we might internalize standards that we do not agree with. Similarly, Maibom (2010) investigates shame felt by people who are prosecuted, such as Jews or Tutsi (572). Jill Locke (2007) calls this kind of shame "traumatic shame" (150). Traumatic shame arises from normative power, which can be internalized as stereotypes through aliefs like "Single. Bad! Bad Person!"

**Social Norms, Stereotypes, and Shame**

Maibom (2010) presents an evolutionary account of shame that ties it to displays of submission and appeasement in nonhuman animals. Importantly, such displays are "overwhelmingly associated with a hierarchical structure" where "the subordinate animal submits to the dominant one" (578). Submission is used for conflict resolution amongst hierarchically organized animals: The dominant animal forces the subordinate to give up resources in case of a conflict (579). In contrast to nonhuman animals, we humans internalize this "shaming audience" (585). We also do not simply submit to a dominant other, we submit "to a way of life, with its strictures, prohibitions, and demands" (587). Maibom sees this as an important feature for living together in a society (568). Her account of the descent of shame suggests that it is more useful in hierarchical societies since it descended from a display used in hierarchical living arrangements.

If we feel shame, though, because we believe that we have serious character flaws, that is, we do not measure up to our *own* norms and standards and feel genuine shame, the type of society we live in ought to be irrelevant. It is not. As the articles by

Manion (2003) and Locke (2007) suggest, we need to take Maibom's contention seriously that we internalize a shaming audience. This audience can inflict shame via stereotypes that we internalized. Shame can manifest itself in a belief that we are not good enough (Brown, 2006, 45). Singlism suggests, at bottom, there must be something wrong with someone if they are not married[10] (DePaulo & Morris, 2005). When we hold such a belief and apply it to ourselves–i am not good enough because i am not married– we reveal internalized stereotypes (Ferguson, Eyre, & Ashbaker, 2000, 136).

There is empirical evidence that ties internalized stereotypes to shame (Allen & Oleson, 1999). Shame develops in response to the dissonance between our self-ideal and the reality of the self (34). For example, my self-ideal contains the belief that i should get married. Yet, i am single. This creates cognitive dissonance: My belief and behavior do not match (Stone & Fernandez, 2008, 316). The cognitive dissonance can be resolved by internalizing the stereotype: I am not good enough to be married; my character is too flawed to be married. I feel ashamed of being single. Thus, rather than questioning the belief, which is unlikely in a culture that reinforces it constantly, we blame ourselves.

Notice that the stereotype that labels a single person as not good enough sets up a normative standard: The married adult captured in an alief such as "Married. Good! Good person!" That is the norm a single person fails to live up to. There are implicit norms in

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[10] This can also become a vicious cycle because this stereotype works both ways: Because there is something wrong with me, i am not married. Because i am not married, there is something wrong with me.

all stereotypes. Sexism assumes men as the norm; racism Whites; classism the upper class etc. If shame, as a moral emotion, upholds these norms, it upholds the underlying hierarchy through our general shame-averse alief "Shame. Painful! Avoid!" Such a moral emotion does not seem to fit into a democracy that emphasizes equality between people, such as the pragmatist two-strand democracy grounded in an ethics of care described in the introduction (see also Bartky, 1990/2008).

**Healing Shame**

There might be a use for shame even within an ethics of care: It might serve as a reminder that we are in need of some empathic connections to help us understand the source of our shame (Manion, 2003). As is clear from the definition of shame, it is a powerful and painful emotion that reflects a "negative global self-assessment" (Locke, 2007, 149). Since not all shame is felt equally intensely,[11] the self-care options will depend on its intensity.

Shame arises when we notice that we are not living up to certain norms or standards. We evaluate this act as reflecting "significant character flaws" (Van Norden, 2007, 260). This is an indication, as Manion (2003) points out, that some deliberation is in order. We need to figure out if those norms or standards are our own or if they reflect the normative pressures of the society around us. This deliberation is likely difficult

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[11] I am grateful to Bryan Van Norden for drawing my attention to the importance of the intensity when evaluating an emotion (personal correspondence).

unless we give ourselves empathy first. Empathy is a shame-antidote (Brown, 2006, 49) and helps us develop our "capacity to care," which is crucial in a society based on an ethics of care (Noddings, 2010, 57). Empathy creates the distance needed to evaluate our action objectively, decide what action(s) we want to take to make amends, and how we might be able to avoid acting similarly in the future. In other words, we move from beating ourselves up as not good enough to being open to dialog and reconciliation. It also allows us to take a look at the influence of stereotypes on our actions. Maybe we verbally lashed out at our partner because we are in a relationship thinking we should be but would really prefer to be single. Maybe Susan had an affair because she aliefs "Married. Happy! Pursue!" and, thus, she cannot admit that she is not happy. Depending on the intensity of the felt shame, reaching out to others for empathy might be important.

As the previous chapter indicated, our experiences wire our brain in certain ways by strengthening the connections in the schemas that we reactivate most frequently (Siegel, 2011). Being regularly exposed to stereotypes reinforces certain schemas creating large information highways that influence our behavior via aliefs mostly without our conscious awareness. We can build new highways, though, by experiencing empathy to counteract shame and thus refocusing our attention. Rather than buying into the culturally dominant celebration of the couple and feeling ashamed for being single, for example, we can strengthen our friendships. Through that shifted attention we rewire our brains, changing the contents of the belief package (41). This transformation is possible

because of the reconsolidation process. We can use this process to alter a memory, including reprogramming that memory, which can enable us to overcome associations between, say, our self-worth and our coupled-relationship status[12] (Schiller et al., 2010). A consolidated memory becomes changeable when we receive a reminder cue by focusing our attention on a certain belief or alief (McKenzie & Eichenbaum, 2011, 228). Reconsolidation can be blocked, which changes the memory or deactivates it, when the reactivated memory trace is combined with new learning during a window of opportunity. Healing can occur when a memory is reactivated and there is related new learning (228-229). In particular, we could reactivate a memory–such as thinking "I am not good enough because i am single"–and then actively counteract that memory with new information such as creating a subdoxastic state through empathy that reflects our sense of self-worth as independent of our coupling status (Schiller et al., 2010).

One possible tool for such a healing approach to shame is *Nonviolent Communication* (*NVC*)[13] (Rosenberg, 2003). *NVC* suggests that our feelings arise from met or unmet needs. As Noddings stresses, needs are "a fundamental concern of care ethics" (2010, 8). Self-empathy in *NVC* involves obtaining clarity about our feelings and

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[12] The meaning of the word "relationship" has shrunk. It is now mostly used to describe coupled people. Originally, it simply referred to people who relate to each other. I use this broader meaning. Thus when i reference the narrower meaning, i use "coupled-relationship."

[13] *NVC* is not the only tool useful in healing shame nor in promoting empathy, the shame antidote (Brown, 2006, 49). Brené Brown (2006) suggests other tools. I am presenting it here because i am most familiar with this approach. Whether it is the best approach remains an empirical question.

needs. To return to the unhappily partnered person, maybe he feels frustrated and stifled because he longs for having many authentic relationships rather than channeling his time and energy into one. Once he understands this, he can look at why he is in a relationship: He thinks he should be! The "should" is a tip-off that this belief is an internalized stereotype, in this case the internalized singlism that suggests that to prove our lovability, we need a partner, not friends. Instead of feeling shame for not living up to this singlist standard, he could now talk to his partner to find out if they can work out a way of living their relationship that meets both of their needs. Susan, looking at her feelings and needs, might discover that she is longing for acceptance of her unhappiness and wants reassurance that she is not a bad person for not being happy in her marriage. Thus, rather than feeling ashamed for her affair, she can use it as an impetus for change. As mentioned before, if we are stuck in shame, we might need help to establish the empathic connection that allows us to move forward. Someone else can give us empathy by stating what they observed us do, guessing the feelings and needs that contributed to the action, and checking with us to see if the guess feels right.

Once we have moved out of shame through empathy, we can investigate the shame further and reconsolidate our belief package. We can enter into a "self-concerned reflection" from an "intersubjective and impersonal perspective" (Manion, 2003, 31) uncovering the beliefs and aliefs that influenced our behavior. This self-concern involves weighing our reasons from the perspective of someone who cares for us. It requires that

we challenge ourselves to "justify our preferences" (33).  Our actions might have reflected that we did not weigh our reasons correctly and the supposed character flaws were really internalized stereotypes.  Wanting to live with integrity and self-respect, which according to Taylor are necessary and sufficient for living with moral authenticity (32), we reject the internalized stereotypes.  We can only do that, though, after reestablishing an empathic connection with ourselves, which was lost because of shame, and self-concerned reflection that allowed us to understand internalized stereotypes as the source of the shame.

Aside from indicating that we are in need of some self-empathy and deliberation, shame has no role to play within an ethics of care nor in a deep democracy.  We need to refocus ourselves from evaluating our global self toward understanding our reasons for acting a certain way.  This, then, opens us up to consider the harmed other(s) in a caring way by enabling restitution and consideration of alternative ways of acting in the future.  By refocusing our attention in this way, we strengthen the newly reconsolidated memory, building the foundation for overcoming internalized singlism.

## Overcoming External Stereotypes: Intentional Families

Stereotypes are not only deeply embedded in our minds, they are also part of culture.[14] Social interactions are an important input to the development of our brains, especially during childhood (Wexler, 2006). The cultural messages that shape these interactions are stored as belief packages. In particular, couplemania is reinforced culturally through the predominant family form: The nuclear family. Following Dewey's suggestion to evaluate "inherited institutions" (McKenna, 2001, 86), i examine the nuclear family's implication for democratic living, with a particular emphasis on the impact of stereotypes on two-strand democracy, which expands our current representative democracy with a participatory way of life. There are several ways in which the nuclear family prevents deepening democracy: It reinforces hierarchy and biological bonds, prevents exposure to difference, and enables an attitude of devaluing friendship. Most importantly, it does not teach children how to seek out difference and make democracy a way of life. Iris Marion Young's analysis of justice lets us express the underlying problem: There are social structures that govern our interactions, which perpetuate a system of oppression and domination via belief packages (Young, 1990). Amending those social structures–by making family law gender-neutral, for example–does not change the underlying belief packages. These band-aid approaches might lessen the

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[14] Since i am most familiar with U.S. culture, my assessment is mostly informed by it. Research on singlism has also documented it in European countries (Hertel et al., 2007; Greitemeyer, 2009).

effects of injustice but they do not overcome it.  For that, a paradigm shift is needed to a culture that embraces difference, uses and values diversity, and is truly democratic–and reinforces the associated belief packages.  The challenge is how to get from our unjust reality to a just future.  Because our interactions are shaped by social structures, which are embedded in our belief packages reinforced by our daily lives, we need to change those structures to store new messages in the packages.  This can happen by designing different ways of living, new communal lives that move us beyond the nuclear family.

Following Dewey's (1920, 192) call to develop experiments that can replace existing institutions with ones that are more in alignment with our ultimate vision, i present a potential experiment of an intentional family designed to be training ground for deep democracy for children and adults while overcoming stereotypes against singles. To safeguard diversity, I incorporate my experience at Hayes Valley Farm, an urban farm in San Francisco CA,[15] into ideas from Iris Marion Young and Erin McKenna.  This addresses some of the dangers Young and McKenna seem to assume away, particularly our human tendency to move from diversity toward homogenized groups.

**Democracy As A Way of Life**

As mentioned in the introduction, there is a loud and clear call for deliberative democracy within the writing of many pragmatists, including feminist pragmatists.

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[15] Hayes Valley Farm is currently located on city property between two major thoroughfares, close to an Interstate access.  It is an urban farm designed with permaculture principles.  For more information, please see www.hayesvalleyfarm.com.

Judith Green (2008) wants to deepen democracy. Erin McKenna (2001) puts forth the task of developing goals that can lead us to more democratic living. Both build on John Dewey's writing that proposes to make democracy a way of life. Although they outline various ways of getting closer to such democratic living, i argue that we need to question the centrality of the nuclear family if we want to live their visions.

Dewey envisions a society he calls a Great Community, which is based on "associated living" (99). Associated living values pluralism–the plurality of views, opinions, perspectives, and even cultural traditions–as necessary for growth. Without exposure to diverse perspectives, we cannot become reflective thinkers; we cannot grow into unified individuals, people who recognize our interdependence and act with critical intelligence from that recognition. Social arrangements become problematic if they "narrow our perspectives and constrain our critical powers" (99) or restrict the potential content of our belief packages, especially the related strategies. Associated living, thus, pushes us toward lived experience, the conscious process of evaluating our past and current experiences to guide our future in such a way that it provides us with greater opportunities for fulfillment (84). It forces us to critically examine our habits and the belief packages that influence them through dialogue with others (100). Dewey sees this happening within small communities enabling face-to-face interactions.

The primary feminist critique of Dewey's Great Community model is this reliance on small communities (131). The worry is that face-to-face communities perpetuate,

rather than help us overcome, existing inequalities and require us to conform to social norms that ignore diversity. To counteract this worry, McKenna introduces Young's work to "strengthen Dewey's pragmatism" (132). Young's ideal city life offers to balance the anonymity of the city with exposure to diversity (133). City life brings people together across differences to address common problems, such as street repair. Yet it does not impose social norms that require people to live a certain way, as might be the case in a face-to-face community that has not yet achieved Dewey's ideal because the underlying belief packages not yet reinforce lived democracy. Participatory democracy in Young's ideal city is lived in transitory communities that emerge to address specific issues or pursue particular goals. Citizens of the city will be involved in multiple communities, which underscore the interdependence and interconnectedness of all. It is not clear how Young's city life would prevent establishment of social norms within these transitory communities, especially when they remain in place for a considerable amount of time since some problems cannot be resolved quickly.

From both Green and McKenna, building on Dewey, two themes emerge. First, democracy requires active citizen participation–not merely representation–and that requires citizens empowered to participate. That is, we need to train people's critical intelligence so that they can be "critical, flexible, and open-minded" (McKenna, 2001, 135). Second, recognizing and valuing diversity is crucial. Feminists worry that in Dewey's approach diversity will be ignored or, worse, suppressed for "the good of the

community." Young proposes city life as a means to counteract this worry. As McKenna acknowledges, though, her ideal might not be enough (134). I return to this worry when i suggest a specific experiment. Before we get into experiments, though, we need to evaluate a social institution: The nuclear family.

**Evaluating the Nuclear Family**

McKenna stresses the importance of education in advancing Dewey's process model "to create socially responsible citizens embedded in the method of intelligence and experimentation" (101). Yet, she is strangely silent about the institution that provides, for better or worse, the first education and the early input to our belief packages: The family. As far back as Aristotle, the family has been seen as the central building block of society (Aristotle, 330 BCE/2005, 1252b, 1253b). Today, it still trains future citizens for at least the first five years of a child's life. As Dewey points out, the family is one of the institutions that can help people "grow and find their specific capacities and functions" (1920, 188). He also calls for an intelligent examination of "inherited institutions and customs," which includes figuring out the problems they were designed to address and then evaluating whether they successfully do so (1929, 273). If the family is to help children develop into unified individuals, people who recognize their interconnectedness and know how to flex their critical intelligence, does it lay an adequate foundation? We could also frame this question as "What sort of belief packages are implanted?"

The model of the nuclear family is based on a hierarchical structure with the father as the head of the household ruling over his wife and children.  Although this model has changed, allowing heads of households of either gender, children still remain unequal members of the family because they are viewed as too immature to make important decisions.[16]  Children thus learn that there are hierarchies and that there are those who lead and others who follow–a belief hardly conducive to participatory democracy or an ethics of care, as argued in the chapter on shame.  Nuclear families also tend to teach inward focus: Biological ties are viewed as more important than friendships (Gerstel & Sarkisian, 2006).  Spending time with family members is expected as a social norm.  This reduces the time available for reaching out across difference and developing diverse ties to as many people as possible, a crucial aspect of responsibility as defined on pragmatist grounds, as outlined below (Heldke, 2001).  Dewey was equally concerned with the impact of small social groups, which promote "fixed habits" and thereby "restrict the formation of critical powers" (cited by McKenna, 2001, 99).  He did not include the nuclear family in his list of groups, though his concern applies since its narrow focus makes it a similarly "problematic […] social arrangement" (99).

Nuclear families also enjoy preferential treatment.  The more traditional a family, the greater are its financial benefits.  For example, the US federal tax benefit is largest for

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[16] A view all too often reinforced by family courts who claim that children cannot decide what parent they might want to live with in the case of divorce.  The fear is that they have been influenced by a parent–a fear that is not warranted based on empirical evidence. (See, for example, Hoult 2006)

married couples where one partner earns significantly more than the other.[17]  Families with children are supported–assuming they meet certain standards.  This governmental support ties into the most pernicious way the current nuclear family model undermines democracy: Through the development of a set of stereotypes–singlism and couplemania.  Stereotypes are deeply shaming mechanisms that teach us that we are not worthy of love and belonging (Brown, 2006).  Shame prevents empathy, therefore impacting our interactions with others negatively (Tangney & Dearing, 2002).  In order for us to communicate across difference, we need to develop empathy since that allows us to connect with others, a crucial skill for participatory democracy.  For all these reasons, i suggest that the nuclear family is not a desirable building block for a democratic society.  It does not train us for critical intelligence, limits exposure to diverse people, and sows the seeds of stereotypes, undermining ways of connecting across difference.

**Philosophical Experiments**

The role of philosophy, according to Dewey, is to assist in resolving social and moral problems (Dewey, 1920, 26).  To accomplish this, he not only calls for an evaluation of existing institutions but also for the development of experiments designed to test replacement of these institutions.  He bases his idea on a view of science that allows us to develop experiments to figure out how we can move closer to our ends-in-

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[17] For more information, including sources to data analyses, please see http://www.unmarried.org/federal-income-taxes.html

view (McKenna, 2001, 87). Philip Kitcher (2011) reiterates Dewey's call almost a century later by asking for the "exploration of alternatives that are better suited to the problem-background of our own times" (257).

Experiments without evaluation criteria are risky, if not useless. Thus if we want to advance an experiment for an institution to replace the nuclear family, we need guidelines. McKenna (2001) distills five criteria for the critical evaluation of an end-in-view from Dewey. First, the end-in-view needs to include ways of preparing people for "deep democracy" through education and socialization, especially by active participation, which becomes both a means and an end-in-view (97). The promotion of participation helps all members of society develop their critical intelligence (108). Second, we need to take into account present circumstances, as well as past developments, and thus ground the end-in-view in what "is already going on," making the end-in-view as realistic as possible (98). Third, the end-in-view must be flexible. We remain open to adjusting both the experimental process and the end-in-view itself. Fourth, the end-in-view is completely integrated with the means to reach it. The means can enable us to move closer to the end-in-view by teaching us skills necessary to attain it and can also be useful in achieving other ends-in-view (99). Finally, the end-in-view helps us be open to new possibilities and thus promotes plurality as we learn that exposure to a larger variety of experiences allows us to grow more. It helps us realize our interdependence, which

further opens us to possibilities (99). Good ends-in-view, McKenna summarizes, support our growth as individuals and as society (100).

The nuclear family is an end-in-view: an institution that is supposed to prepare children for life in a democracy.[18] Therefore, using the McKenna/Dewey criteria for an end-in-view, we can sharpen my critique further. The nuclear family does not prepare for participatory democracy (criterion 1) and it discourages plurality because of its inward focus (criterion 5). The second criterion calls for a critique from a historical context. As Stephanie Coontz (2005) has pointed out, the nuclear family has shrunk since World War II. It was not until the 1950s that the male breadwinner model became economically feasible. Prior to that, a family was expanded through the presence of boarders who would contribute rent income and also provide diverse viewpoints. Finally, the nuclear family also falls short of the fourth criterion: It does not teach the belief packages and skills necessary to thrive in a two-strand democracy. Before i advance my experiment, i outline the skills, reinforced by belief packages, that we need to learn in order to make deep democracy a reality.

**Democratic Skills**

McKenna (2001) recounts an essay written by Dewey that allows us to glean what elements are important in the education of children (101). The essay is geared toward a

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[18] I realize that this was not the original goal of nuclear families but within the context of the democratic societies we live in now, it makes sense to assume this as at least one of the goals, possibly the most important.

vision of schools and is applicable to any childhood education. The primary purpose of education and socialization is to rear "socially responsible citizens embedded in the method of intelligence and experimentation," which requires that we learn to observe, reflect, judge flexibly, and be able to envision ends-in-view (101). This is crucial for participatory democracy but, as Green points out, also to living a fulfilling, meaningful life (248). Dewey's utopia shows adults and children interacting to allow them to develop critical intelligence in an environment that supports experimentation by eliminating fear of embarrassment–preventing shame. Children learn to be open-minded and ready to envision solutions to existing problems.

The growth and development of children is best encouraged by using the "plurality and complexity of modern society" to promote it (McKenna 2001, 100). This requires that children (and adults) have "critical and flexible habits of mind." These minds emerge when we grow through social interactions (99). According to pragmatists, we have the moral obligation to socially interact with as many and as diverse people as possible. This is necessary to reach objectivity in inquiry toward what constitutes a social good. Jane Addams stresses that a social good, in order to be morally acceptable, requires everyone's input (Whipps, 2004). It cannot simply reflect the views of an elite or of a small group of people. Although Addams seems to have adults in mind, Polish child advocate Janusz Korczak (1921) urges us adults to respect children as human

beings: "Children don't become human beings–they already are!"[19] Thus, children's input is important for a good to be fully social.

Additionally, as Lisa Heldke (2001) points out, a pragmatist view of objectivity in inquiry to questions like "how are we to act" ties it to the moral responsibility to seek out diverse viewpoints. In order to fulfill our moral obligation in inquiry, participants need to acknowledge, fulfill, and expand responsibility. Acknowledging responsibility means to note that there are other participants in inquiry–other adults and children–and that they bring their experience and needs to the table. Fulfilling responsibility requires listening to others' experience, to understand their situation, and to recognize one's contribution to that experience (86). Expanding responsibility calls for including related concerns that might influence the situation (86). After this expansion, we need to assess if inquiry participants can fulfill the new responsibilities (87). If they cannot, they need to account "for a decision not to meet them" (86). An inquiry process can thus be made more objective by working with the question "how can this inquiry be made more responsible?" (87). We cannot fulfill this responsibility if we hold stereotypes because they impede listening to others empathically. This, then, provides another argument for the objectionable morality of stereotypes: They prevent us from upholding our moral responsibility.

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[19] My translation

To enable participatory democracy, then, children need to be exposed to many viewpoints and learn to listen to others critically, yet respectfully, to move closer to responsibility and pragmatist objectivity. This trains them to be the unified adults Dewey envisions who are embedded in the method of intelligence. In addition to learning critical thinking through doing, children learn to value diversity as something positive that adds crucial information to our points of view through an alief like "Difference. More objective! Approach!" One of the most crucial skills enabling these developments is the ability to communicate by establishing empathic connections: Communicating across difference by understanding the other's experience from their point of view. This is also an important requirement of participatory democracy (McKenna, 2001, 112), so learning it through practice as early as possible is vital. Communication helps us "learn to be human" and incorporate democracy into our lives (Dewey cited in McKenna, 116).

**Intentional Families**

As i have argued, the nuclear family does not provide this exposure to others, which is fundamental to the pragmatist end-in-view, nor does it teach us empathic communication, allowing us to overcome internalized, as outlined in the previous chapter, and external stereotypes. Instead i suggest we experiment with intentional families–social groups that are brought together with the goal of helping everybody involved grow, especially the children. Because these intentional families are designed to teach participatory democracy, they cannot maintain the adult-child hierarchy. With

Korczak, they challenge us to view and respect all persons involved as equal human beings, no matter what their age. The preferential treatment of biological ties will be lessened because children have many adults to interact with, not limited to their biological parents.[20] This is also providing a healthier environment for children. Sarah Bluffer Hrdy (1999) has shown that infant mortality goes down with the increased number of alloparents, adults who are not biologically related to the child and nevertheless provide care. Intentional families incorporate democracy as a way of life while making children more resilient.

To be feasible training grounds for a democratic way of life, intentional families need to bring together a diverse set of people–diversity across ages, genders, sexualities, classes, races and ethnicities, at minimum. As Young (1990) suggests, the city provides much of that diversity. To utilize a city's diversity something like Addams' settlement house could function as an intentional family, also allowing for a more realistic way of moving from the nuclear family model to intentional families (1892a/2001). Addams' Hull House offered various activities that were designed to empower people while reaching across differences (1892b/2001). Drawing on a city's diversity, a settlement house can utilize Young's city life by encouraging people to consciously work, play, and

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[20] This story that recounts one child's experience with a larger pool of adults to draw from is similar to what i envision: http://www.lafayettemorehouse.com/choose_family.html#communities-ben (Please note that i find a lot about the Morehouses problematic, still, this story illustrates some aspects of what an intentional family might offer).

learn together across differences moving toward common ends-in-view. As a settlement house, the intentional family would bring together people who live in their various homes, eventually transitioning to living with the intentional family.

To fully incorporate preparation for participatory democracy, intentional families would draw on governing styles from intentional communities. Decisions would be made by modified consensus, which allows people to "step aside" from a decision if they do not agree with it and feel they can live with its adoption. Everybody who can verbalize an opinion is encouraged to provide their input. Sometimes children have ideas that can move an adult group beyond an impasse.[21] Adults learn to listen to children and help them articulate their concerns and ideas. This encourages free and open communication. The decisions made can include larger issues, such as where to go on vacation or whether to move, or they might be delegated to sub-groups within the family who handle, for example, what to grow in the garden. These project groups allow for more involvement with the communication processes because they are smaller and they avoid paralysis by drawing input only from those directly involved with a project.

To address the feminist worry that small communities–such as intentional families–might perpetuate rather than overcome oppression, i suggest testing several safeguards. First, like Young's affinity groups in city life, the intentional family is

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[21] For example, Mark Lakeman from City Repair Portland recounts how a child helped adults see all the resources available in a community by simply drawing a map of a block and then listing skills people can offer.

embedded in a larger community. The interactions with that larger community offer more opportunities for exposure to diversity, which in itself might already counter any normative pressures within the intentional family. However, a more pro-active safeguard would be the formation of two project groups: A conflict resolution group and diversity monitors. Members of the intentional family would populate these groups–again ensuring that children are involved. The conflict resolution group brings together people who are especially skilled–or interested in developing those skills–to resolve conflicts using communication tools. It would be imperative that this group is called upon even to mediate small conflicts because even seemingly small disagreements could simmer and undermine the family. Plus, smaller conflicts provide practice to handle larger conflicts. Such groups are usually part of intentional communities, such as Hayes Valley Farm. However, at Hayes Valley Farm, diversity remains an issue, preventing the involvement of people from backgrounds other than the white upper-middle class neighbors. Strong leaders also influence decision-making by unintentionally silencing people who are less outspoken. In a family, such tendencies might be even more prevalent because adults are often more verbally skilled than children. Thus, i suggest that a group is designated as diversity monitors. Diversity monitors would safeguard inclusion by ensuring that people feel heard and are encouraged to become involved by addressing any concerns that might prevent involvement. They would be charged with actively monitoring whether as many people as possible are included in the intentional family itself and during decision making

within the family. They can also function as ombudspersons who listen to concerns from those who might not feel comfortable bringing the concerns to the larger family. To avoid that the monitors become desensitized to the normative pressures within the intentional family, the members of this monitoring group rotate across family members. Additionally, monitors interact frequently with monitors from other families or groups to ensure that their consciousness can be raised about any lack of diversity they might have overlooked using the "self-concerned reflection" (Manion, 2003, 31) described in the previous chapter.

**Proposal Evaluation**

We can evaluate the experiment in intentional families along the McKenna/Dewey criteria for an acceptable end-in-view outlined above. Since intentional families are designed to prepare children for participatory democracy, they meet the first criterion. The suggestion to start with settlement house-like intentional families that do not require people to move out of their nuclear families but provide opportunities to grow within a virtual intentional family is meant to address criterion 2. Flexibility is of outmost importance as children and adults learn to live with each other and make decisions together collaboratively, ensuring that the third criterion is incorporated. Additionally, each project could have build-in feedback loops that allow for regular assessment of projects with particular emphasis on inclusion. Since the intentional family requires active participation in decision making via consensus, people learn those

skills and use them for ends-in-view other than participation in the larger democracy. This fulfills the fourth criterion. The fifth criterion is, again, part of the design of intentional families. The diversity monitors also promote plurality by ringing an alarm when pressures to conform might arise. These monitors help to address the feminist worry about small communities: They are tasked with actively preventing normative forces. Their incorporation in the experiment goes beyond McKenna's suggestion to grow deep democracy within city life, which passively ensures diversity.

Suggesting intentional families seems like a radical departure from the way we currently live, despite a transition phase that meets the second criterion. It might be easier, we could argue, to make nuclear families more democratic. In fact, they have already become more democratic by replacing the male head-of-household with a more egalitarian set of partners. However, the worry that nuclear families are too insulated to enable learning participatory democracy remains. Although a household of parents with children could practice consensus, the hierarchical dynamics between adults and children are likely to remain strong. They emerge simply by adults' greater life experience, which is not diluted by the presence of other children. A nuclear family might not be large enough to offer enough diversity, something that could be ensured when designing an actual intentional family. Finally, because intentional families draw together people across differences, they do not treat couples preferentially, thus counteracting the stereotyping of singles and the overvaluing of nuclear families, which is prevalent in

current ways of living. In short, nuclear families cannot populate belief packages with aliefs that reinforce democracy.

In this chapter, i proposed an experiment for living together as intentional families, which would allow us to learn belief packages and use the skills necessary for participatory democracy, especially empathic communication across difference. This active, embedded, daily learning better prepares children for citizenship than nuclear families, thus ensuring, that both strands of democracy–representative and participatory–are lived. The emphasis on interdependence counteracts cultural messages that create separation helping us overcome stereotypes, especially singlism. Based on pragmatist and feminist critiques of current models of democracy, i outlined specific ways of ensuring that intentional families do not perpetuate oppression but rather teach and practice valuing diversity. An experiment on paper, though, is not sufficient. The final test of my proposal will have to be through its implementation.

## Conclusion

Stereotypes are embedded in belief packages. Healing the shame associated with internalized stereotypes can rewire these packages. We can fill these packages with new mental states by living in intentional families. These two approaches reinforce each other because the intentional families, especially at first, will face actions driven by stereotypes, making healing shame an important family task. The intentional family can provide the supportive community that enables healing shame by providing connections grounded in empathy using processes like *Nonviolent Communication*.

How do these two things specifically address singlism, the stereotype of interest in this thesis? Because of the strength of couplemania in our society, the shaming messages associated with singlism are very prevalent. We learn and internalize the beliefs that we are half of a couple in high school, probably much earlier. Thus, when we are not in a couple, something is missing, we are not good enough. Using empathy, we can reconsolidate this belief package by replacing the alief "Coupled. Whole. Worthy!" with an alief like "Human. Whole. Worthy!" Aside from providing a supportive community filled with family members eager to provide empathy, intentional families also model ways of living that do not depend on the centrality of the couple or the nuclear family. This then directly counters the cultural messages of couplemania, preventing singlism altogether by reinforcing that all people are whole and complete.

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