societies

MDPI

Article

Positive Self-Perception and Well-Being Across Marital Statuses

Elyakim Kislev * and Aurel H. Diamond

School of Public Policy and Governance, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Jerusalem 9190500, Israel
* Correspondence: elyakim.kislev@mail.huji.ac.il

Abstract

Unmarried individuals experience lower levels of subjective well-being than married individuals. Some argue that this is due to intrinsic benefits often associated with marriage. Others claim that those who are never married, divorced, or widowed face prejudice, stigma, and discrimination that contribute to their lower levels of subjective well-being. The current research investigates these two perspectives by empirically estimating the role of positive self-view in the happiness levels of different groups by marital status (N = 79,695, excluding missing values). Multilevel regression analyses are conducted using two relevant waves of the European Social Survey (2006 and 2012). The results indicate that unmarried adults show lower levels of positive self-view. However, unmarried individuals derive greater happiness from positive self-esteem, optimism, and a sense of accomplishment than married individuals. In other words, self-view may be impactful in determining the well-being of singles.

Keywords: marriage; singles; self-esteem; wellbeing

1. Introduction

The population of singles in contemporary Western societies is rapidly growing [1–5]. In Europe, over half of housing units in big cities such as Munich, Frankfurt, and Paris are single-occupant homes [6]. Many other addresses are comprised of singles living in shared accommodations. In the US, one-quarter of young adults will likely remain single. While 22 percent of American adults were single in 1950, today, this number stands at more than 50 percent [7].

Although the single lifestyle is more common in wealthier countries, this phenomenon is becoming more pronounced globally. South American, Middle Eastern, and African countries quickly followed this trend and have seen a rise in singleness over the last few decades [8]. In fact, data published by countries including India, South Korea, Vietnam, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Malaysia demonstrate this trend in Asian countries: people marry later, get divorced, and choose to live alone more often [9–13].

Many studies argue that being single inherently leads to lower levels of subjective well-being, with two main possible explanations. First, some studies suggest that there are material benefits to marriage shown to actively promote a better quality of life due to health, financial, emotional, and other seemingly *intrinsic* advantages to marriage [14–16]. However, while many studies have tried to control for potential genetic, racial, and other difficult-to-measure environmental factors such as education, culture, and religion, it is difficult to establish causality here. Indeed, there is evidence supporting selection into marriage, where happier people have a higher chance of getting married [17,18]. Furthermore, meta-analyses of longitudinal studies indicate that married individuals do

Check for updates

Academic Editors: Cristóbal Fernández-Muñoz and Joaquim J.F. Soares

Received: 9 January 2026
Revised: 5 April 2026
Accepted: 21 April 2026
Published: 24 April 2026

Copyright: © 2026 by the authors. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license.

not necessarily enjoy more happiness than they did as singles, except in some cases where there are initial increases in happiness that do not last or reduce significantly [19].

Second, reduced levels of well-being among singles can also stem from societal pressure to marry and the fact that those who remain single end up stigmatized [20–22]. Indeed, singles are perceived by others as lonely, unfortunate, unattractive, and even anti-social [23–25]. Moreover, forms of living that are different from marriage are seen to be less optimal, and therefore, society often defines singles by the status they lack (i.e., being unmarried) or what they appear to be missing in life (such as a nuclear family or a partner). In this sense, being single is seen as a deviation from societal norms [26–28]. In turn, discrimination, stigmatization, and stereotyping are sometimes internalized by singles and have negative behavioral and psychological consequences [29–31]. In this sense, the social pressure faced by singles can be understood as a subjective and *external* factor, unrelated to marriage itself, which reduces happiness.

These concurrent explanations behind the happiness gap between the married and unmarried do not necessarily contradict each other, but they paint contrasting pictures. On the one hand, the happiness gap could be explained by intrinsic factors directly related to the claimed emotional, physical, or economic benefits of marriage [32]. On the other hand, the happiness gap could be attributed to the external/subjective negative experience of singles who face social challenges that reduce levels of happiness. In other words, it is not clear whether the extent to which the happiness gap between singles and married individuals can be attributed to marriage itself or to the subjective challenges of being single. One important implication for the latter would be that, over time, as attitudes shift to be more tolerant of different marital statuses, the social climate will become more conducive to happy singlehood. This debate is especially important since, as mentioned previously, studies comparing the married and unmarried do not necessarily indicate that long-term differences between the two groups are a causal consequence of marital status [33].

Moreover, beyond individual-level psychological explanations, the family systems theory suggests that self-perception, optimism, and feelings of accomplishment are formed within networks of interdependence rather than in isolation. Individuals are embedded in family systems shaped by roles, expectations, boundaries, and emotional processes, so marital status is experienced within a wider relational field [34,35]. From a relational-context and life-course perspective, well-being is similarly shaped by "linked lives," in which identities and outcomes are co-constructed through ties to parents, siblings, partners, and kin, as well as through culturally normative expectations surrounding marriage and family formation [36,37]. This framework helps explain why positive self-view may be especially consequential for singles: self-views are not merely internal traits, but socially situated resources that can buffer the effects of singlism, reduced social recognition, and family-based pressures to conform to couple-centered norms [38]. Accordingly, examining self-view among unmarried adults requires attention to the relational environments in which identities are negotiated, supported, or challenged, thereby grounding individual well-being within broader sociological processes.

The current study thus seeks to contribute to this debate by exploring the extent to which positive self-views increase the happiness of singles. Of course, there is a well-established relationship between positive self-views and happiness [39,40], but the question here is whether singles with positive self-views succeed in raising their happiness levels more than couples do. The argument is that positive self-views are more important for singles because their happiness levels are influenced by social pressure and psychological stress that are independent of the existence or lack of a romantic partner. Thus, if a positive self-view is found to be more important for singles, the magnitude of the role of subjective factors in the happiness of singles could be deduced. Recent work also highlights that

singlehood is heterogeneous and that self-evaluative resources may help some singles cope with or thrive under social pressure [41–43].

1.1. Terminology

For the purpose of studying the self-views of singles, defining the terminology used is critical. Indeed, researchers have investigated various aspects of attitudes toward the self in fields ranging from self-perception and self-concept to self-esteem, self-worth, self-efficacy, and others [44–47]. This term relates to other notions that recur in the literature. While the current research does not purport to fully review every possible measure of self-view, studies have confirmed the close relationships and concurrent validity of many of the aforementioned terms [48–50]. The literature review, therefore, includes research on a wide range of measures of self-view, which, although not interchangeable, are understood to be highly correlated.

In this vein, it is also important to define the measures of self-view that are measured in the data analysis here. Specifically, three correlates of self-view are investigated here. The first, self-beliefs, refers to how singles determine their attitudes and preferences through the interpretation of their own behavior [51,52], and therefore is an important component of self-view. The second available measure, optimism, is well established as a predictor of happiness [53], and is closely correlated with other measures of self-view [54]. Similarly, the third measure, the sense of accomplishment, is an important predictor of happiness that correlates closely with other measures of self-view [55].

Finally, while the definition of 'married' is universally recognized, the terms 'unmarried' or 'single' include people who are never-married, divorced, widowed, or cohabiting. Therefore, we separately categorized those groups. Here, the category of cohabiting couples needs to be considered carefully. On the one hand, cohabitation is legally and socially closer to marriage than ever, with some jurisdictions providing common-law marriages similar (though not necessarily identical) rights as those enjoyed by people in formal marriages [56,57]. In addition, recent research indicates that the impact of cohabitation on happiness is similar to that of marriage [58]. At the same time, cohabitating is close to singlehood because it is partly based on the increasing frustration and disillusionment with the institution of marriage [59,60]. Cohabitation can hence be understood as a midpoint category and not strictly part of singlehood, and as such, is not included in this study because they differ legally and characteristically from other categories.

1.2. Singles' Positive Self-View as a Pathway for Increased Wellbeing

It was found that positive self-views are associated with levels of happiness and well-being among the general population [39]. For example, a study of 664 individuals in early adulthood found increased well-being to be associated with positive self-perception [40]. Research has also found that, especially in cultures that value individualism, a positive self-perception is linked to greater happiness [61]. In other cases, studies have found that those who give themselves a positive rating are likely to be happier, even if they have reduced physical health, cognitive function, and social capital [62,63].

Research has yet to establish, however, whether positive self-views play the same role in the happiness and well-being of singles as they do for people in committed relationships. In order to understand how these factors may be moderated differently by views of the self it is instructive to consider components of an individual's self-view that distinguish singles from other demographics and to examine their effects separately. Three possible components of self-view are detailed in the next paragraphs: self-perception, optimism, and feelings of accomplishment.

The first possible component is self-perception, which is instrumental in raising levels of happiness [64]. For singles, there are many external factors and agents that stigmatize and portray singlehood negatively and, as a result, inhibit the self-perception of singles. Indeed, as discussed, singles are subject to high levels of prejudice and discrimination known as 'singlism' [65]. However, if singles can develop resilience to prejudice, stigma, and discrimination through positive self-perception, they may not only benefit from the increased happiness associated with positive self-perception but also from a better social position that makes them more resistant to the effects of singlism [41–43]. As such, positive self-perception is hypothesized to increase singles' well-being more than that of married couples.

The second component that distinguishes singles from married and coupled individuals is optimism. Based on the evidence that optimism moderates between self-perception and subjective well-being [66], it is apparent that more optimistic singles are likely to experience improved happiness. Yet, the question is whether singles need to be more optimistic. To consider this question, it is important to note that optimism relates more strongly to better subjective well-being in times of adversity or difficulty [67]. In this sense, singles are more exposed to adversity and difficulty than most coupled individuals. Indeed, singles are not usually entitled to the same legal and financial benefits as married couples, creating a potential economic disadvantage [68,69]. Moreover, singles face adversity due to singlism, discrimination, and prejudice [21,24]. In other words, while it is reasonable to expect married couples to be more optimistic than singles because they anticipate better social and economic support from their partners and children in the future, singles may be more likely to need to exercise optimism as a result of adversity. It is, therefore, hypothesized that optimism plays a more powerful role in raising the happiness of singles than it does for married and coupled individuals.

The third possible aspect is the extent to which individuals feel valuable and accomplished. This dimension can relate closely to careers and professional life. DePaulo [65] argues that singles often seek work that is interesting, challenging, and fulfilling. Thus, it is hypothesized that feeling valuable and accomplished will be more decisive for singles in raising happiness than for married and coupled individuals.

1.3. Moderating Factors of Positive Self-View Among Singles

For the sake of investigating the role of positive self-views in the happiness of singles, there is a need to consider the social and economic factors that may present confounding and sometimes mixed effects. Indeed, social and economic factors such as income [70], level of education [52], family support [37], and religiosity [71–73] moderate self-perception for people in general, but the question is how these factors may affect singles in particular. One study [74] shows that singles with higher levels of education, increased family support, and who are less religious often enjoy a higher level of self-acceptance. Moreover, the length of time one is single may affect one's self-view. Indeed, and in particular for middle-aged women, studies indicate that long-term singles have higher scores on personality characteristics associated with well-being [75], and that these singles create satisfying and fulfilling lives [42,76].

Other studies have found that negative self-perception increases with age, particularly among socially conservative, traditional, and religious individuals who place more importance on family formation [77]. In addition, contrary to the above evidence [76], self-perception may also decrease the longer an individual has been single [74]. Stigma may be especially strong for elderly singles, who face stereotyping and discrimination both for being single and also for being elderly [78–80]. Finally, given the increasing number

of single-friendly environments for younger individuals, it is expected that older singles experience more negative self-perception.

There is also evidence to suggest gender differences in self-views [42,81]. In some cases, the extra discrimination, prejudice, and societal expectations placed on and against women appear to negatively impact how single women see themselves. This is evident in academic achievement [82], career progression [83], business, and entrepreneurship [84]. Often, women who work in science, technology, and related fields also hold more negative self-views [85]. Yet, in the context of this study, we should note that the evidence suggests single women are better at managing social capital than single men [86–88]. We therefore expect that gender will play a significant role in moderating the relationship between self-view and happiness here.

In examining the self-perception of singles, it is also important to consider how ethnic factors relate to self-perception and moderate its effect on singles [72]. While most of the research on relationship status and subjective well-being has focused solely on comparing singles with coupled or married individuals, it is also possible to consider an ethnic effect. Even after controlling for available psychological resources, minorities are frequently recorded to have lower levels of confidence and general self-perception in comparison to the majority group in a number of fields [89]. Accordingly, these variables will be measured and accounted for in the equations below. We detail these components in the following section.

2. Method

2.1. Participants and Setting

For this study, we analyzed data from the European Social Survey (ESS). Starting in 2002, the ESS measures the beliefs and social attitudes of citizens of 30 nations on a bi-annual basis. Specifically, data from the third and sixth editions of the ESS (2006 and 2012 ESS surveys) are used, since they contain the self-view items that act as variables in the analyses below. The sample (N = 79,695) includes everyone living in their respective countries. Data is gathered regardless of each person's nationality, citizenship, or language. For our purposes, only individuals older than 30 are considered. We chose this age because that is when societal and internal expectations of being married start to increase rapidly. As a result, there is a larger difference in the social contexts of marital status in the thirties and beyond [90]. Still, any age limit can be arbitrary, especially since there are many ways in which people of all ages deal with the "happiness question". For this reason, a sensitivity analysis was conducted. The results were similar and are available upon request. In addition, and since it is more difficult to define cohabiting individuals as strictly single or married, we dropped cohabitators from the current study (3.98 percent of the total sample).

In both rounds, the ESS sampled persons aged 15 years and older living in private households, regardless of nationality, citizenship, language, or legal status. Round 3 covered 25 countries and its integrated data file contains 47,099 cases, whereas Round 6 covered 29 countries and its integrated file contains 54,673 cases. The personal and social well-being module was first introduced in Round 3 and then partially repeated in Round 6, which makes these two waves especially suitable for examining self-view and happiness using comparable item wording across time. Some cases were dropped, but this was only due to missing values in the relevant variables.

Because the present study utilizes publicly available and approved data, no institutional IRB approval was required. The Stata software version 18 was used.

2.2. Measures

Our study defines the primary dependent variable as the level of happiness. This indicator is given by the question: "Taking all things together, how happy would you say you are"? Answers to this item are on a scale ranging from 0 (least happy) to 10 (most happy). Although well-being can be broken up into several components [91], this question correlates significantly with questions on subjective well-being and life satisfaction. We chose this indicator because of its treatment in previous studies such as those of Stack and Eshleman [16] and Mencarini and Sironi [92]. With that said, happiness is notoriously difficult to define, with definitions usually including the use of synonyms, self-evaluated measurements, and the implication of culturally dependent norms. For the purpose of this study, however, we define happiness or subjective well-being as the degree to which people judge their lives favorably or unfavorably [93,94].

The main independent variable we have chosen is marital status. Our study combines the categories of being separated or divorced, since no significant differences have been found between the two and because there are relatively few separated individuals.

We test marital status in interaction with three measures of self-view: feeling positive about oneself, feeling of doing valuable things, and being optimistic about the personal future [48–50]. The three focal self-view indicators were drawn from the ESS personal and social well-being module. Using the official ESS questionnaires for both waves, respondents were asked how strongly they agreed or disagreed with statements corresponding to: (a) positive self-regard ("In general I feel very positive about myself"; variable pstvms), (b) optimism ("I'm always optimistic about my future"; variable optftr), and (c) meaning/value in one's activities ("I generally feel that what I do in my life is valuable and worthwhile"; variable dngval). In the source questionnaire, each item uses a 5-category Likert response format ranging from 1 = agree strongly to 5 = disagree strongly. These measures are congruent to the three categories discussed above (self-perception, feeling valued and accomplished, and optimism), where singles were hypothesized to differ from coupled and married individuals. The three ESS self-view items were reverse-coded prior to analysis, so that higher values consistently indicate a more positive self-view (the original ESS coding ranged from 1 = agree strongly to 5 = disagree strongly).

In this study, positive self-view is defined as a broad evaluative orientation toward the self, rather than as a single narrow trait. More specifically, it refers to a person's tendency to hold favorable self-regard, to view the future with optimism, and to perceive one's actions and life activities as valuable and worthwhile. This definition fits the logic of the ESS well-being module, which was developed to move beyond momentary happiness alone and to capture more durable dimensions of positive functioning and subjective well-being. Positive self-view is therefore theoretically relevant to subjective well-being because self-evaluations, future expectations, and perceived meaning shape how individuals interpret their life circumstances and judge their lives overall.

Several variables related to self-perception and happiness identified in the literature have a moderating effect. Therefore, the analyses below use several demographic and socioeconomic variables to accurately determine individuals' happiness, including gender, age, employment status, subjective views of their income (1–4), and history of cohabitation. As an education variable, 'years of schooling' is being used. We also examine subjective health assessment (1–5), sociability (1–5), degree of religiosity (0–10), and the percentage of respondents who feel discriminated against (as a proxy for an ethnic minority stance) in our study. All of these variables are both prominent in the literature on happiness and proved to be significant in a preliminary step-wise examination. In the multivariable models, gender and the other demographic and socioeconomic variables are treated as control variables, not as mediators, because prior research shows that these factors are systematically associated

with both self-evaluative processes and subjective well-being and may therefore confound the relationship between marital status, positive self-view, and happiness. Accordingly, the present study estimates adjusted associations rather than indirect pathways, and any earlier language implying formal mediation testing has been removed.

2.3. Design and Procedure

This study is a cross-sectional secondary analysis of ESS Rounds 3 and 6 designed to examine whether the association between positive self-view and happiness varies across marital-status groups.

2.4. Statistical Analysis

Multilevel models were estimated with individuals nested within countries, allowing individual characteristics to be assessed relative to others in the same national context. Country-level predictors included mean national happiness and the Human Development Index (HDI), and year of survey was included to account for period differences. All calculations were weighted with the figures provided by the ESS and applied at the fixed-effect (lower) level.

Because the large sample size can yield statistically significant coefficients even when point estimates are small, Cohen's d effect sizes were also estimated to assess practical significance.

3. Results

Table 1 presents descriptive characteristics by marital status. More than 38 percent of the analytic sample is unmarried, including approximately 14.5 percent never-married respondents. Married respondents report the highest average levels of happiness, satisfaction, social activity, subjective income, and the three self-view indicators, whereas widowed respondents report the lowest averages.

Table 1. Characteristics of Marital Status Groups, Age 30 and above.

Variable	Divorced/Separated	Married	Never Married	Widowed
N	9474	49,055	11,559	9607
% total	11.9%	61.6%	14.5%	12%
% men	38.8%	49.4%	53.8%	20.5%
Mean age	52.56	53.19	46.48	71.45
Mean happiness (0–10)	6.55	7.36	6.67	6.19
Mean satisfaction (0–10)	6.16	6.96	6.40	6.04
Mean social activities (1–5)	2.65	2.70	2.66	2.48
Mean subjective health (1–5)	3.60	3.72	3.79	3.07
Mean years of education	12.61	12.24	13.12	9.72
% feels discrimination	9%	5.8%	9.61%	5.19%
Mean degree of religiosity (0–10)	4.33	4.99	4.41	5.92
Mean subjective income (1–4)	2.66	2.98	2.84	2.57
% unemployed	6.16%	3.19%	8.17%	0.9%
Feel positive about myself (1–5)	3.76	3.88	3.78	3.68
Optimistic about my future (1–5)	3.60	3.72	3.60	3.40
What I do is valuable (1–5)	3.87	4.02	3.85	3.73

Source: Own elaboration on the European Social Survey.

Table 2 reports multilevel coefficients for the three self-view indicators. Higher subjective income, better subjective health, more social activity, lower perceived discrimination, and greater religiosity are positively associated with all three indicators. Gender coefficients

differ across outcomes: women report lower positive self-regard and optimism, but higher perceived value in what they do.

Table 2. Coefficients of Multilevel Analyses of Self-View Indicators by Marital Status, Age 30 and above.

Variable	Feel Positive About Myself	Optimistic About My Future	What I Do Is Valuable
Individual Characteristics			
Female	−0.086 *	−0.066 ***	0.018 **
Age	−0.003	−0.006	0.016 ***
Subjective health	0.172 ***	0.222 ***	0.107 ***
Years of schooling	−0.001	0	0.007
Unemployed	−0.037	−0.031	−0.062 **
Subjective income	0.055 ***	0.126 ***	0.066 ***
Never cohabit	0.001	0.013	0.026 ***
Degree of religiosity	0.012 **	0.019 ***	0.019 ***
Not feeling discriminated	0.069 ***	0.128 ***	0.046 *
Social Activities	0.085 ***	0.101 ***	0.063 ***
Marital status [a]			
Divorced/separated	−0.008	−0.044 **	−0.101 ***
Never married	−0.043 *	−0.106 ***	−0.138 ***
Widowed	−0.022 *	−0.073 ***	−0.097 ***
Country Characteristics			
Mean of happiness	−0.015	0.148 **	−0.011
HDI	−0.42	−0.621	0.614
Intercept	3.395 ***	1.822 ***	2.171 ***
Variance Components			
Country variance	1.899 ***	1.873 ***	2.741 ***
Individual variance	0.267 ***	0.102 **	0.303 ***
N	59,026	59,033	58,687

* $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, and *** $p < 0.01$. Source: Own elaboration on the European Social Survey. *Note*: additional covariate included in model but not shown here is Year of Survey. [a] Omitted category: married.

Table 3 presents multilevel models of happiness with interactions between marital status and the three self-view indicators. Positive interaction coefficients indicate a steeper association between a given self-view measure and happiness relative to the married reference group.

Across the three models, better health, employment, higher subjective income, more social activity, never having cohabited, being female, lower perceived discrimination, and greater religiosity are positively associated with happiness (see Appendix A Tables A1–A3 for group-specific models).

The interaction terms show that the coefficients for feeling positive about oneself and optimism are larger among divorced/separated, never-married, and widowed respondents than among married respondents. For valuing what one does, the interaction coefficient is positive and statistically significant only for never-married respondents.

To illustrate the magnitude of these coefficients, an average never-married respondent with a score of 3.78 on feeling positive about the self gains 0.726 points in happiness (0.192×3.78), reducing the gap with married respondents from 1.367 to 0.641. Comparable reductions are observed for widowed (0.681) and divorced/separated (0.590) respondents. Similar calculations for optimism yield gains of 0.752 for never-married, 0.590 for divorced/separated, and 0.547 for widowed respondents.

Table 3. Coefficients of Multilevel Analyses of Happiness and Marital Status in Interaction with Self-View Indicators, Age 30 and above.

Variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Individual Characteristics			
Female	0.119 ***	0.108 ***	0.071 **
Age	−0.049 ***	−0.047 ***	−0.060 ***
Subjective health	0.397 ***	0.370 ***	0.439 ***
Years of schooling	0.004	0.003	−0.001
Unemployed	−0.310 ***	−0.299 ***	−0.291 ***
Subjective income	0.464 ***	0.427 ***	0.463 ***
Never cohabited	0.102 ***	0.098 ***	0.094 ***
Degree of religiosity	0.052 ***	0.048 ***	0.052 ***
Not feeling discriminated	0.373 ***	0.343 ***	0.390 ***
Social activities (1–5)	0.227 ***	0.217 ***	0.247 ***
Marital status [a]			
Divorced/separated	−1.272 ***	−1.245 ***	−0.806 ***
Never married	−1.367 ***	−1.350 ***	−0.853 ***
Widowed	−1.427 ***	−1.275 ***	−0.942 ***
Feel positive about myself	0.437 ***		
Optimistic about my future		0.454 ***	
What I do is valuable			0.389 ***
Marital status * self-belief			
Divorced/separated	0.157 ***	0.164 ***	0.043
Never married	0.192 ***	0.209 ***	0.066 *
Widowed	0.185 ***	0.161 ***	0.061
Country Characteristics			
HDI	−1.043	−0.62	−2.096 **
Mean of happiness	0.621 ***	0.563 ***	0.661 ***
Intercept	−0.781	−0.522	0.072
Variance Components			
Country variance	2.243 ***	2.186 ***	2.149 ***
Individual variance	0.550 ***	0.537 ***	0.555 ***
N	58,692	58,698	58,364

* $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, and *** $p < 0.01$. Source: Own elaboration on the European Social Survey. *Note*: additional covariate included in model but not shown here is Year of Survey. [a] Omitted category: married.

A comparison of the lowest and highest values of the 1–5 self-view items leads to similar estimates. Moving from the lowest to the highest level of positive self-view corresponds to a 0.768-point increase in happiness among never-married respondents, 0.628 among divorced respondents, and 0.740 among widowed respondents; the comparable figures for optimism are 0.836, 0.656, and 0.644, respectively.

Cohen's d estimates indicate medium-to-high effect sizes for the happiness gains associated with average self-view levels among unmarried groups.

4. Discussion

This paper investigates the role of three components of self-view in happiness across marital-status groups. The findings indicate that married individuals report higher average self-view and happiness, but that the association between self-view and happiness is stronger among unmarried groups. It extends the broader literature linking positive self-evaluations to well-being [39,40] by showing that these associations are more pronounced among unmarried respondents.

The results also resonate with recent scholarship on singlism and the diversity of singlehood experiences [20–22] and with work showing that some singles cope with, or even thrive under, social pressure [41–43]. In that sense, positive self-view appears to function as an especially important correlate of well-being for unmarried adults.

These findings have several implications for how the well-being of singles is interpreted. They suggest that the happiness gap between married and unmarried adults may also reflect differences in the psychological and social resources available to unmarried people. Strengthening positive self-view may therefore be one pathway through which some singles narrow that gap.

Second, the stronger association between self-view and happiness may help explain why singlehood is experienced differently across subgroups. Research on singles by choice and singles by circumstance suggests that these groups differ in how they evaluate relationships [95]. Stereotypes also differ across these subgroups [96]. The ESS does not distinguish these categories directly, but the present results indicate that future research should examine whether self-view operates differently across forms of singlehood.

Third, and since the unmarried, particularly those who do not fit the category of 'new' singles, typically have lower levels of happiness, this study shows the importance of singles developing and cultivating positive self-views. One possible approach could be using positive psychology, to improve the self-perception of singles [97]. By focusing on leading lives that are meaningful and fulfilling, singles can further raise their levels of happiness [98]. The results in this paper suggest that positive psychology, and indeed other approaches to improving self-views may therefore be especially beneficial to singles.

Finally, the importance of self-view for singles' happiness has implications for the workplace. The results suggest that perceiving one's activities as valuable is especially strongly associated with happiness among never-married respondents. This pattern is consistent with DePaulo [65], who argues that singles often seek work that is interesting and fulfilling.

5. Limitations

This study should be interpreted in light of several limitations. First, the ESS data are cross-sectional, which precludes causal inference. Although positive self-view is associated with greater happiness across marital-status groups, the direction of this relationship cannot be definitively established. Second, the key self-view indicators were measured with brief self-report items, which, while suitable for large comparative surveys, may not capture the full complexity of constructs such as self-esteem, optimism, and perceived meaning in life. Third, the analysis excluded cohabiting respondents in order to preserve clearer marital-status distinctions, but this may limit the generalizability of the findings to contemporary relationship patterns in which long-term partnerships increasingly occur outside marriage. Finally, although the multilevel models account for country clustering and a broad range of sociodemographic controls, unmeasured cultural, institutional, and relational factors may still shape both self-view and well-being. Future longitudinal research using more comprehensive psychological and relational measures would help clarify the mechanisms linking marital status, self-view, and happiness across different social contexts.

6. Conclusions

Using two ESS waves, this study shows that unmarried adults report lower average levels of positive self-view, but that positive self-regard, optimism, and perceived value in what one does are more strongly associated with their happiness than with the happiness of married adults. Positive self-view is therefore a particularly important correlate of well-being among never-married, divorced/separated, and widowed respondents.

Although the results are correlational, they suggest that the well-being gap between married and unmarried adults is not only a matter of marital status itself but also of the social and psychological resources through which people interpret their lives. For policy and practice, this underscores the value of reducing singlism and supporting fair, inclusive

environments in workplaces and public institutions. Future longitudinal research should examine how changes in self-view and social context shape happiness across different forms of singlehood.

Author Contributions: Conceptualization, E.K.; methodology, E.K.; validation, E.K.; formal analysis, E.K.; investigation, E.K. and A.H.D.; resources, E.K.; writing—original draft, A.H.D.; writing—review and editing, E.K. and A.H.D.; supervision, E.K.; project administration, E.K. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding: This research was partly funded by Israel Science Foundation grant number # 613/24.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable. For this study, we analyzed data from the European Social Survey (ESS). Because the present study utilizes publicly available and approved data, no institutional IRB approval was required.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable. For this study, we analyzed data from the European Social Survey (ESS). Because the present study utilizes publicly available and approved data, no institutional IRB approval was required.

Data Availability Statement: Data were obtained from the European Social Survey (ESS) and are publicly available.

Acknowledgments: The authors have developed the thesis and have written the article. During the preparation of this manuscript/study, the authors used Stata 18 for the purposes of statistics estimates. The authors have reviewed and edited the output and take full responsibility for the content of this publication.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Appendix A

Table A1. Coefficients of Multilevel Analyses of Positive Self-Perception by Marital Status, Age 30 and above.

Variable	Married	Divorced/ Separated	Never Married	Widowed
Individual Characteristics				
Female	−0.114 ***	0.046	−0.058	−0.018
Age	−0.004	−0.007	−0.005	−0.002
Subjective health	0.153 ***	0.210 ***	0.209 ***	0.192 ***
Years of schooling	−0.002	0.01	−0.008	0.004
Unemployed	−0.059	0.008	−0.01	0.061
Subjective income	0.043 **	0.063 **	0.037	0.122 ***
Never cohabit	0.013	−0.042	−0.007	−0.002
Degree of religiosity	0.010 **	0.022 ***	0.014	0.014 ***
Not feeling discriminated	0.082 ***	0.084 **	0.074	−0.04
Social Activities	0.077 ***	0.116 ***	0.120 ***	0.070 ***
Country Characteristics				
Mean of happiness	−0.273	−1.572	−1.688 **	−1.947
HDI	−0.054	0.075	0.07	0.106
Intercept	3.650 ***	3.126 ***	3.637 ***	3.554 ***
Variance Components				
Country variance	1.873 ***	1.750 ***	1.879 ***	1.970 ***
Individual variance	0.291 ***	0.229 ***	0.234 ***	0.211 ***
N	38,465	6378	6446	7700

** $p < 0.05$, and *** $p < 0.01$. Source: Own elaboration on the European Social Survey. *Note*: additional covariate included in model but not shown here is Year of Survey.

Table A2. Coefficients of Multilevel Analyses of Optimism by Marital Status, Age 30 and above.

Variable	Married	Divorced/ Separated	Never Married	Widowed
Individual Characteristics				
Female	−0.088 ***	0.026	−0.064	0.054
Age	−0.005	−0.020 **	−0.016 **	−0.006
Subjective health	0.207 ***	0.251 ***	0.243 ***	0.255 ***
Years of schooling	−0.002	0.007	−0.003	0.015
Unemployed	−0.034	0.057	−0.097	−0.109
Subjective income	0.119 ***	0.139 ***	0.141 ***	0.138 ***
Never cohabit	0.02	0.003	−0.065	0.033
Degree of religiosity	0.018 ***	0.019 ***	0.040 ***	0.012 ***
Not feeling discriminated	0.116 *	0.193 ***	0.098	0.144 ***
Social Activities	0.093 ***	0.141 ***	0.103 ***	0.099 ***
Country Characteristics				
Mean of happiness	−0.847	−3.271 ***	−3.121 ***	−3.302 ***
HDI	0.120 *	0.228 ***	0.182 ***	0.222 ***
Intercept	2.280 ***	3.318 ***	3.693 ***	3.135 ***
Variance Components				
Country variance	1.981 ***	2.149 ***	2.221 ***	2.525 ***
Individual variance	0.126 ***	0.039	0.078 *	0.043
N	38,491	6374	6444	7687

* $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, and *** $p < 0.01$. Source: Own elaboration on the European Social Survey. *Note*: additional covariate included in model but not shown here is Year of Survey.

Table A3. Coefficients of Multilevel Analyses of Feeling Accomplished by Marital Status, Age 30 and above.

Variable	Married	Divorced/ Separated	Never Married	Widowed
Individual Characteristics				
Female	−0.058 ***	0.057	0.080 ***	−0.029
Age	0.004	0.017 **	0.004	0.027 **
Subjective health	0.139 ***	0.147 ***	0.171 ***	0.194 ***
Years of schooling	−0.002	0.006	0.013 **	0.008
Unemployed	−0.211 ***	0.056	−0.141 ***	−0.373 ***
Subjective income	0.072 ***	0.166 ***	0.100 ***	0.154 ***
Never cohabit	0.032 *	0.090 ***	0.068	0.022
Degree of religiosity	0.012 ***	0.008	0.010 *	0.002
Not feeling discriminated	0.107 ***	0.007	0.100 **	0.174 ***
Social Activities	0.075 ***	0.101 ***	0.113 ***	0.095 ***
Country Characteristics				
Mean of happiness	−0.711	−1.318	0.87	−1.606
HDI	−0.105	0.025	−0.054	0.017
Intercept	4.052 **	2.661 **	1.590 ***	2.625 **
Variance Components				
Country variance	1.828 ***	1.793 ***	2.051 ***	2.071 ***
Individual variance	0.259 ***	0.190 ***	0.199 ***	0.136 ***
N	38,433	6369	6432	7645

* $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, and *** $p < 0.01$. Source: Own elaboration on the European Social Survey. *Note*: additional covariate included in model but not shown here is Year of Survey.

References

1. Budgeon, S. Couple culture and the production of singleness. *Sexualities* **2008**, *11*, 301–325. [CrossRef]
2. Dales, L.; Kottmann, N. Japanese Singles and Solo-Life. In *Singular Selves*; Routledge: New Delhi, India, 2023; pp. 119–137.

3. Fry, R. A rising share of young adults live in their parents' home. In *Social Demographic Trends Project, Issue*; Pew Research Center: Washington, DC, USA, 2013.
4. Kislev, E. Being Single in the 21st Century. In *Modern Relationships: Romance, Friendship, and Family in the 21st Century*; Hojjat, M., Moyer, A., Eds.; Oxford University Press: Oxford, UK, 2024.
5. Klinenberg, E. *Going Solo: The Extraordinary Rise and Surprising Appeal of Living Alone*; Penguin: London, UK, 2012.
6. Euromonitor. *Downsizing Globally: The Impact of Changing Household Structure on Global Consumer Markets*; Euromonitor: London, UK, 2013.
7. Wang, W.; Parker, K.C. *Record Share of Americans Have Never Married: As Values, Economics and Gender Patterns Change*; Pew Research Center: Washington, DC, USA, 2014.
8. Lee, G.R.; Payne, K.K. Changing Marriage Patterns Since 1970: What's Going On, and Why? *J. Comp. Fam. Stud.* **2010**, *41*, 537–555. Available online: http://www.jstor.org/stable/41604567 (accessed on 9 January 2026). [CrossRef]
9. Census of India. Houselisting and Housing Census Data. 2011. Available online: https://censusindia.gov.in/census.website/data/HL2011 (accessed on 3 April 2023).
10. Dommaraju, P. One-person households in India. *Demogr. Res.* **2015**, *32*, 45. [CrossRef]
11. Guilmoto, C.; de Loenzien, M. Emerging, transitory or residual? One-person households in Viet Nam. *Demogr. Res.* **2015**, *42*, 1147–1176. [CrossRef]
12. Park, H.; Choi, J. Long-term trends in living alone among Korean adults: Age, gender, and educational differences. *Demogr. Res.* **2015**, *43*, 1177–1208. [CrossRef]
13. Podhisita, C.; Xenos, P. Living alone in South and Southeast Asia: An analysis of census data. *Demogr. Res.* **2015**, *41*, 1113–1146. [CrossRef]
14. Carr, D.; Springer, K.W. Advances in families and health research in the 21st century. *J. Marriage Fam.* **2010**, *72*, 743–761. [CrossRef]
15. Johnson, D.R.; Wu, J. An empirical test of crisis, social selection, and role explanations of the relationship between marital disruption and psychological distress: A pooled time-series analysis of four-wave panel data. *J. Marriage Fam.* **2002**, *64*, 211–224. [CrossRef]
16. Stack, S.; Eshleman, J.R. Marital status and happiness: A 17-nation study. *J. Marriage Fam.* **1998**, *60*, 527–536. [CrossRef]
17. Burt, S.; Donnellan, M.; Humbad, M.N.; Hicks, B.M.; McGue, M.; Iacono, W.G. Does marriage inhibit antisocial behavior? An examination of selection vs causation via a longitudinal twin design. *Arch. Gen. Psychiatry* **2010**, *67*, 1309–1315. [CrossRef]
18. Mastekaasa, A. Marriage and psychological well-being: Some evidence on selection into marriage. *J. Marriage Fam.* **1992**, *54*, 901–911. [CrossRef]
19. DePaulo, B.; Kislev, E. Singles and mental health. In *Encyclopedia of Mental Health*, 3rd ed.; Kristin, J., August, N.M., Cain, M.M., Gillen, J.M., Kelly, L.K., Lu, W., Mindy, M., Riggio, R.E., Eds.; Elsevier: New York, NY, USA, 2023; Volume 3.
20. Adamczyk, K. *Toward a Psychology of Singlehood: What We Already Know and What We Need to Know About Contemporary Singlehood*; V&R Unipress: Göttingen, Germany, 2023.
21. DePaulo, B. *Singlism: What it is, Why it Matters, and How to Stop It*; DoubleDoor Books: New York, NY, USA, 2011.
22. Dupuis, H.E.; Girme, Y.U. "Cat Ladies" and "Mama's Boys": A Mixed-Methods Analysis of the Gendered Discrimination and Stereotypes of Single Women and Single Men. *Personal. Soc. Psychol. Bull.* **2024**, *50*, 314–328. [CrossRef]
23. DePaulo, B.; Morris, W. The unrecognized stereotyping and discrimination against singles. *Curr. Dir. Psychol. Sci.* **2006**, *15*, 251–254. [CrossRef]
24. Greitemeyer, T. Stereotypes of singles: Are singles what we think? *Eur. J. Soc. Psychol.* **2009**, *39*, 368–383. [CrossRef]
25. Morris, W.; Sinclair, S.; DePaulo, B. No shelter for singles: The perceived legitimacy of marital status discrimination. *Group Process. Intergroup Relat.* **2007**, *10*, 457–470. [CrossRef]
26. Hertel, J.; Schütz, A.; DePaulo, B.M.; Morris, W.L.; Stucke, T.S. She's single, so what? How are singles perceived compared with people who are married? *Z. Fam.* **2007**, *19*, 139–158. [CrossRef]
27. Long, B.L. Stigmatized identities: Choice, accessibility, and authenticity. In *New Directions in Identity Theory and Research*; Stets, J.E., Serpe, R.T., Eds.; Oxford University Press: Oxford, UK, 2016; pp. 539–568.
28. Stein, P. Singlehood: An alternative to marriage. *Fam. Coord.* **1975**, *24*, 583033. [CrossRef]
29. Crocker, J.; Major, B. Social stigma and self-esteem: The self-protective properties of stigma. *Psychol. Rev.* **1989**, *96*, 608. [CrossRef]
30. Fink, P.J. *Stigma and Mental Illness*; American Psychiatric Pub: Washington, DC, USA, 1992.
31. Major, B.; O'Brien, L.T. The Social Psychology of Stigma. *Annu. Rev. Psychol.* **2005**, *56*, 393–421. [CrossRef]
32. Gallagher, M.; Waite, L. *The Case for Marriage*; Random House: New York, NY, USA, 2000.
33. Luhmann, M.; Hofmann, W.; Eid, M.; Lucas, R.E. Subjective well-being and adaptation to life events: A meta-analysis. *J. Personal. Soc. Psychol.* **2012**, *102*, 592–615. [CrossRef]
34. Bowen, M. *Family Therapy in Clinical Practice*; Jason Aronson: Lanham, MD, USA, 1978.
35. Cox, M.J.; Paley, B. Families as systems. *Annu. Rev. Psychol.* **1997**, *48*, 243–267. [CrossRef]
36. Elder, G.H., Jr. The life course as developmental theory. *Child Dev.* **1998**, *69*, 1–12. [CrossRef]

37. Tamir, L.M.; Antonucci, T.C. Self-Perception, Motivation, and Social Support through the Family Life Course. *J. Marriage Fam.* **1981**, *43*, 151–160. [CrossRef]
38. Umberson, D.; Montez, J.K. Social relationships and health: A flashpoint for health policy. *J. Health Soc. Behav.* **2010**, *51*, S54–S66. [CrossRef] [PubMed]
39. Baumeister, R.F.; Campbell, J.D.; Krueger, J.I.; Vohs, K.D. Does high self-esteem cause better performance, interpersonal success, happiness, or healthier lifestyles? *Psychol. Sci. Public Interest* **2003**, *4*, 1–44. [CrossRef]
40. Caprara, G.V.; Steca, P.; Gerbino, M.; Paciello, M.; Vecchio, G.M. Looking for adolescents' well-being: Self-efficacy beliefs as determinants of positive thinking and happiness. *Epidemiol. Psichiatr. Sci.* **2006**, *15*, 30–43. [CrossRef]
41. Girme, Y.U.; Park, Y.; MacDonald, G. Coping or Thriving? Reviewing Intrapersonal, Interpersonal, and Societal Factors Associated with Well-Being in Singlehood from a Within-Group Perspective. *Perspect. Psychol. Sci.* **2023**, *18*, 1097–1120. [CrossRef] [PubMed]
42. Luke, N.; Poulin, M. Sex and single women in midlife: Theoretical perspectives, recent findings, and future directions. *J. Fam. Theory Rev.* **2023**, *15*, 578–594. [CrossRef]
43. Wilkinson, K.; Rouse, J. Solo-living and childless professional women: Navigating the 'balanced mother ideal' over the fertile years. *Gend. Work. Organ.* **2023**, *30*, 68–85. [CrossRef]
44. Bandura, A. Self-efficacy. In *The Corsini Encyclopedia of Psychology*; John Wiley & Sons, Inc.: Hoboken, NJ, USA, 1994. [CrossRef]
45. Rosenberg, M. *Conceiving the Self*; RE Krieger: Malabar, FL, USA, 1986.
46. Rosenberg, M. *Society and the Adolescent Self-Image*; Diane Publishing Company: Collingdale, PA, USA, 1999. Available online: https://books.google.co.il/books?id=EYo4PQAACAAJ (accessed on 9 January 2026).
47. Wylie, R.C. *The Self-Concept: Theory and Research on Selected Topics*; University of Nebraska Press: Lincoln, UK, 1974.
48. Bong, M.; Skaalvik, E.M. Academic self-concept and self-efficacy: How different are they really? *Educ. Psychol. Rev.* **2003**, *15*, 1–40. [CrossRef]
49. Hagborg, W.J. The Rosenberg Self-Esteem scale and Harter's Self-Perception profile for adolescents: A concurrent validity study. *Psychol. Sch.* **1993**, *30*, 132–136. [CrossRef]
50. Loveland, K.A. Self-Perception and Self-Conception. *Psychol. Inq.* **1992**, *3*, 125–127. [CrossRef]
51. Bem, D.J. Self-Perception Theory. In *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*; Leonard, B., Ed.; Academic Press: London, UK, 1972; Volume 6, pp. 1–62. [CrossRef]
52. Riding, R.J.; Rayner, S. *Self Perception*; Greenwood Publishing Group: Boston, MA, USA, 2001; Volume 2.
53. Wilson, W.R. Correlates of avowed happiness. *Psychol. Bull.* **1967**, *67*, 294–306. [CrossRef]
54. Caprara, G.V.; Steca, P.; Alessandri, G.; Abela, J.R.; McWhinnie, C.M. Positive orientation: Explorations on what is common to life satisfaction, self-esteem, and optimism. *Epidemiol. Psichiatr. Sci.* **2011**, *19*, 63–71. [CrossRef]
55. Koyasu, M. Three Components of Happiness: Synthesising a Sense of Competence, a Vital Sense of Life, and a Sense of Accomplishment. In *Philosophy, Psychology, and Comparative Education*; Kyoto University: Kyoto, Japan, 2010; pp. 15–22.
56. Heaton, T.B.; Forste, R. Informal unions in Mexico and the United States. *J. Comp. Fam. Stud.* **2007**, *38*, 55–69. [CrossRef]
57. Martin, T.C. Consensual unions in Latin America: Persistence of a dual nuptiality system. *J. Comp. Fam. Stud.* **2002**, *33*, 35–55. [CrossRef]
58. Blekesaune, M. Is Cohabitation as Good as Marriage for People's Subjective Well-Being? Longitudinal Evidence on Happiness and Life Satisfaction in the British Household Panel Survey. *J. Happiness Stud.* **2018**, *19*, 505–520. [CrossRef]
59. Cherlin, A.J. The deinstitutionalization of American marriage. *J. Marriage Fam.* **2004**, *66*, 848–861. [CrossRef]
60. Zimmermann, A.C.; Easterlin, R.A. Happily ever after? Cohabitation, marriage, divorce, and happiness in Germany. *Popul. Dev. Rev.* **2006**, *32*, 511–528. [CrossRef]
61. Schimmack, U.; Diener, E. Predictive validity of explicit and implicit self-esteem for subjective well-being. *J. Res. Personal.* **2003**, *37*, 100–106. [CrossRef]
62. Depp, C.A.; Jeste, D.V. Definitions and Predictors of Successful Aging: A Comprehensive Review of Larger Quantitative Studies. *Am. J. Geriatr. Psychiatry* **2006**, *14*, 6–20. [CrossRef] [PubMed]
63. Strawbridge, W.J.; Wallhagen, M.I.; Cohen, R.D. Successful aging and well-being self-rated compared with Rowe and Kahn. *Gerontologist* **2002**, *42*, 725–726. [CrossRef] [PubMed]
64. Szentagotai, A.; David, D. Self-Acceptance and Happiness. In *The Strength of Self-Acceptance: Theory, Practice and Research*; Bernard, M.E., Ed.; Springer: New York, NY, USA, 2013; pp. 121–137. [CrossRef]
65. DePaulo, B. *Singled Out: How Singles are Stereotyped, Stigmatized, and Ignored, and Still Live Happily Ever After*; Macmillan: New York, NY, USA, 2007.
66. Karademas, E.C. Self-efficacy, social support and well-being: The mediating role of optimism. *Personal. Individ. Differ.* **2006**, *40*, 1281–1290. [CrossRef]
67. Carver, C.S.; Scheier, M.F.; Segerstrom, S.C. Optimism. *Clin. Psychol. Rev.* **2010**, *30*, 879–889. [CrossRef]

68. Cahn, N. Singlehood. Reflections on singlehood. *Wash. Univ. J. Law Policy* **2023**, *72*, 27.
69. Casper, W.J.; DePaulo, B. A new layer to inclusion: Creating singles-friendly work environments. In *Work and Quality of Life: Ethical Practices in Organizations*; Reilly, N.P., Sirgy, M.J., Gorman, C.A., Eds.; Springer: Dordrecht, The Netherlands, 2012; pp. 217–234. [CrossRef]
70. Macintyre, S.; Ellaway, A.; Der, G.; Ford, G.; Hunt, K. Do housing tenure and car access predict health because they are simply markers of income or self esteem? A Scottish study. *J. Epidemiol. Community Health* **1998**, *52*, 657–664. [CrossRef]
71. Ellison, C.G. Religious involvement and self-perception among black Americans. *Soc. Forces* **1993**, *71*, 1027–1055. [CrossRef]
72. Kislev, E.; Marsh, K. Intersectionality in studying and theorizing singlehood. *J. Fam. Theory Rev.* **2023**, *15*, 412–427. [CrossRef]
73. Marsh, K. *The Love Jones Cohort: Single and Living Alone in the Black Middle Class*; Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, UK, 2023.
74. Manasra, N.M. *The Effect of Remaining Unmarried on Self-Perception and Mental Health Status: A study of Palestinian Single Women*; De Montfort University: Leicester, UK, 2003.
75. Marks, N.F. Flying Solo at Midlife: Gender, Marital Status, and Psychological Well-Being. *J. Marriage Fam.* **1996**, *58*, 917–932. [CrossRef]
76. Trimberger, E.K. *The New Single Woman*; Beacon Press: Boston, MA, USA, 2005.
77. Hassouneh-Phillips, D.S. Marriage is Half of Faith and the Rest is Fear Allah" Marriage and Spousal Abuse Among American Muslims. *Violence Against Women* **2001**, *7*, 927–946. [CrossRef]
78. Böger, A.; Huxhold, O. Age-related changes in emotional qualities of the social network from middle adulthood into old age: How do they relate to the experience of loneliness? *Psychol. Aging* **2018**, *33*, 482. [CrossRef]
79. Cuddy, A.J.; Norton, M.I.; Fiske, S.T. This old stereotype: The pervasiveness and persistence of the elderly stereotype. *J. Soc. Issues* **2005**, *61*, 267–285. [CrossRef]
80. Kislev, E. Aging, Marital Status, and Loneliness: Multilevel Analyses of 30 Countries. *Res. Ageing Soc. Policy* **2022**, *10*, 77–103. [CrossRef]
81. Gentile, B.; Grabe, S.; Dolan-Pascoe, B.; Twenge, J.M.; Wells, B.E.; Maitino, A. Gender differences in domain-specific self-esteem: A meta-analysis. *Rev. Gen. Psychol.* **2009**, *13*, 34–45. [CrossRef]
82. Meece, J.L.; Glienke, B.B.; Burg, S. Gender and motivation. *J. Sch. Psychol.* **2006**, *44*, 351–373. [CrossRef]
83. Fischlmayr, I.C. Female self-perception as barrier to international careers? *Int. J. Hum. Resour. Manag.* **2002**, *13*, 773–783. [CrossRef]
84. Wilson, F.; Kickul, J.; Marlino, D. Gender, entrepreneurial self-efficacy, and entrepreneurial career intentions: Implications for entrepreneurship education. *Entrep. Theory Pract.* **2007**, *31*, 387–406. [CrossRef]
85. Zeldin, A.L.; Britner, S.L.; Pajares, F. A comparative study of the self-efficacy beliefs of successful men and women in mathematics, science, and technology careers. *J. Res. Sci. Teach.* **2008**, *45*, 1036–1058. [CrossRef]
86. Kislev, E. 4. Sleeping Alone, Bowling Together. In *Happy Singlehood*; University of California Press: Berkeley, CA, USA, 2019; pp. 103–124. [CrossRef]
87. Kislev, E. Social Capital, Happiness, and the Unmarried: A Multilevel Analysis of 32 European Countries. *Appl. Res. Qual. Life* **2020**, *15*, 1475–1492. [CrossRef]
88. Wenger, G.C.; Dykstra, P.A.; Melkas, T.; Knipscheer, K.C.P.M. Social Embeddedness and Late-Life Parenthood: Community Activity, Close Ties, and Support Networks. *J. Fam. Issues* **2007**, *28*, 1419–1456. [CrossRef]
89. Bénabou, R.; Tirole, J. Self-Confidence and Personal Motivation. In *Psychology, Rationality and Economic Behaviour: Challenging Standard Assumptions*; Agarwal, B., Vercelli, A., Eds.; Palgrave Macmillan: London, UK, 2005; pp. 19–57. [CrossRef]
90. Engelberg, A. Religious Zionist Singles: Caught Between "Family Values" and "Young Adulthood". *J. Sci. Study Relig.* **2016**, *55*, 349–364. [CrossRef]
91. Ryff, C.D.; Keyes, C.L.M. The structure of psychological well-being revisited. *J. Personal. Soc. Psychol.* **1995**, *69*, 719–727. [CrossRef] [PubMed]
92. Mencarini, L.; Sironi, M. Happiness, housework and gender inequality in Europe. *Eur. Sociol. Rev.* **2010**, *28*, jcq059. [CrossRef]
93. Diener, E.; Suh, E.M.; Lucas, R.E.; Smith, H.L. Subjective well-being: Three decades of progress. *Psychol. Bull.* **1999**, *125*, 276–302. [CrossRef]
94. Veenhoven, R. The utility of happiness. *Soc. Indic. Res.* **1988**, *20*, 333–354. [CrossRef]
95. Slonim, G.; Schütz, A. Singles by choice differ from singles by circumstance in their perceptions of the costs and benefits of romantic relationships. In *27th Annual Convention of the Association for Psychological Science, New York*; Opus: Bamberg, Germany, 2015.
96. Slonim, G.; Gur-Yaish, N.; Katz, R. By Choice or by Circumstance? Stereotypes of and Feelings About Single People. *Stud. Psychol.* **2015**, *57*, 35–48. [CrossRef]

97. DePaulo, B. Toward a Positive Psychology of Single Life. In *Positive Psychology: Established and Emerging Issues*; Dunnm, D.S., Ed.; Routledge: Oxfordshire, UK, 2017.
98. DePaulo, B. Single and flourishing: Transcending the deficit narratives of single life. *J. Fam. Theory Rev.* **2023**, *15*, 389–411. [CrossRef]

Disclaimer/Publisher's Note: The statements, opinions and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of MDPI and/or the editor(s). MDPI and/or the editor(s) disclaim responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions or products referred to in the content.