RETHINKING THE MODERN MAN: A GENERATIONAL ANALYSIS OF MASCULINE
SOCIAL PRESSURES RELATED TO LIFELONG UNIONS

By

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Abstract

Individuals who choose not to couple live a unique experience. This study examines the evolution of the social pressures and expectations, directed toward men, in regards to choosing a partner and forming a lifelong union. The study gathered the attitudes, opinions, and experiences of adult Canadian males regarding this topic. The participants include men who have avoided lifelong unions, such as marriage and cohabitation, in the 1960s, and men who have avoided lifelong unions from 2005 to the present.

The data for this study was created through conducting semi-structured interviews. I interviewed ten men who rejected lifelong unions in the 1960s, and ten men who have done so since 2005. I focused on the male experience because the majority of the existing sociological research pertaining to lifelong unions is centered on the couple, and focuses on the shared experience of marriage. I am interested in questioning marriage as a norm, and the research suggests socially accepted alternatives to coupling and lifelong unions.

The study provides insight on how the experiences of single men have changed over the past fifty years. The results from the study suggest that marriage is still the norm, and that it is still difficult to question this norm. When the participants did not conform to the norm, they expressed being subject to stereotyping or discrimination. The study also suggests that the participants who are currently single experience less pressure to form a lifelong union than the participants who were single in the 1960s. However, the pressure to couple remains strong, and the participants who are currently single experience intense age-related pressure that increases the longer they remain single.
Preface

The Behavioural Research Ethics Board at the University of British Columbia Okanagan approved this study on December 22, 2011 (UBC BREB Number H11-02699).
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Chapter 1 Introduction

My older brother was nineteen when his girlfriend was unexpectedly pregnant with their child. Eight months later, they got married. As I grew older, I watched him struggle with the gender roles that were expected of him as a husband and father. When I reached my twenties, I had a period of close to six years where I remained single. During this period, I experienced many unique situations that were directly related to my relationship status. When in social situations, whenever the conversation was directed at me, it would always lead to questions about why I was single. My close friends, co-workers, and family, would constantly ask me the same questions over and over. “So, are you seeing anyone? Why not? Is there anyone that you’re interested in? Why are you still single? Don’t you get lonely? When was the last time you had sex? Don’t you want to meet someone? Are you gay? Do you want me to set you up with my friend?” If I would ever mention to a family member or friend that I had met someone, I would be asked a new set of questions. “Who is she? Do you like her? Is she the one?” And then, “Do you love her? When are you going to move in together?” And if the relationship continued to progress they would ask, “When are you getting married?” And if I were to get married, I am sure I would be asked, “When are you going to having kids?” Along with the constant questioning of my relationship status, I experienced other unique experiences related to being single. The majority of my close friends are coupled, so when I would socialize with them and their partners, they would ask me the same questions, and I could feel them pity me. Sometimes, I would not get invites to certain “coupled” events. I felt this pity from strangers in public as well. Numerous times, I have gone to a restaurant by myself and had the staff point out, and emphasize the fact that I was alone. In these situations, I also experienced awkward glances from the other coupled patrons looking at a man who is dining alone. I was unaware at the time,
but I was experiencing negative stereotyping and discrimination based solely on my relationship status.

### 1.1 Research focus

The institution of marriage is constantly evolving. There is now more diversity among partners, same-sex marriage has been legalized, there has been an increase of cohabitation, individuals are delaying marriage, and divorce is much more socially acceptable. However, the traditional concept of marriage remains resilient. As Mandell and Duffy (2005) explain in their book *Canadian Families: Diversity, Conflict and Change*, “Despite what some insist, marriage remains popular and intimate relationships with partners, children, and parents remain important for Canadians” (p. 14). Canadians are receiving mixed messages when it comes to relationship status. Single individuals are being told that it is okay to wait before entering marriage, while also being told not to wait too long. There is now more emphasis placed on the importance of obtaining a post-secondary education and starting a career before entering a lifelong union. The amount of time that Canadians delay their first marriage has been on the rise since 1960 (Clark, 2014). Factors that contributed to the increase of delaying marriage are, ‘no fault’ divorce, the birth control pill, and the increase of women engaging in post-secondary education and the workforce (Clark, 2014). In comparison with previous periods, in the early 1970s in North American society, the amount of babies being born decreased and divorce increased, and then in the early 1980s, more individuals delayed marriage and childbirth (Benokraitis, 2008). Recent changes include: an increase of single-parent families, more racially diverse families, and the inclusion of same-sex marriage (Benokraitis, 2008). According to the 2011 Canadian Census, married couples account for 67% of Canadian families, this number
has gone down due the increase in common-law couples, who now account for 13.9% of Canadian families (Milan & Bohnert, 2014). Even though the number of Canadian married couples has decreased, the increase in common-law couples suggests that coupling remains popular in Canada.

Young Canadian adults are increasingly taking longer to finish school, leave their parent’s house, find a permanent job, and get married (Clark, 2014). In 2001, 34% of men and 49% of women were married by the time they reached 25, whereas in 1971, 65% of men and 80% of women were married by 25 (Clark, 2014). It is evident that Canadians are delaying marriage, but it is also clear that they will eventually choose marriage because in Canada, “Society strongly supports marriage, and 9 out of 10 people marry at some point” (Macionis & Gerber, 2009, p. 477). This suggests that there are few socially acceptable options for long-term relationships outside of marriage. I examined the amount of social pressure directed at Canadian men in relation to choosing a long-term relationship.

1.2 Research Questions

This study will address the gap in current research on coupling, by focusing on the social expectations and pressures related to lifelong unions specifically pertaining to the male experience. Although marriage remains one of the main stages of the life course and Canadian society strongly advocates marriage, over the past fifty years same-sex marriage, the increase of cohabitation, delaying marriage, and increased divorce rates have become more socially accepted. Has the social pressure for men to choose a lifelong union evolved with these changes, or does the pressure remain? How much have social pressures toward lifelong unions changed over the past fifty years? Does society continue to pressure men to cohabit, marry, and have families? And how
strong are the social pressures toward lifelong unions now, compared to fifty years ago? The study will provide insight on how single male attitudes related to coupling have changed from the 1960s to the present. I conducted semi-structured interviews with participants who rejected lifelong unions in the 1960s, and compared their attitudes and opinions related to coupling, to participants who have done so within the past five years.

This study argues that there are not a sufficient amount of socially accepted life course options outside of coupling, co-habitation, and marriage. Individuals deserve the choice to pick alternative and socially accepted life course options outside of marriage, cohabitation, and coupling, because men who do not choose marriage or cohabitation are subject to stigmatization. Single individuals are stigmatized by coupled society through negative stereotyping and by the government through unequal access to the benefits that married couples have (DePaulo, 2006). The concept of masculinity is central to the stigmatization and discrimination of single men. Challenging traditional concepts of masculinity can help to eliminate the stigma attached to men who do not marry, cohabit, have families, or who do not choose lifelong unions.

I am interested in demonstrating that the social pressures and expectations remain strong for men to choose lifelong unions, such as marriage and cohabitation. This research is important because alternative options for the life course outside of marriage, cohabitation, and coupling must first be suggested before they can become socially accepted. For example, individuals should be able to make a choice to live independently, and not be pressured or expected to enter a lifelong union. It should be socially acceptable to have periods of monogamy and co-habitation, followed by long periods of independence, or even the option to live independently without a partner for the entire length of the life course. In an inclusive society, individuals should be free to
choose to live their adult life without feeling any social pressure to engage in a lifelong union.
Chapter 2 Literature Review

2.1 General overview

This chapter outlines the literature and theoretical perspectives that influence my analysis. I have divided the chapter into three sections: singlism, masculinity, and marriage and family. In the first section of this chapter, I examine DePaulo’s (2006) concept of singlism. It is a relatively new concept that recognizes discrimination directed toward single individuals. I have used the literature related to singlism to develop an understanding of the role that society has in influencing individuals to choose a lifelong union. Understanding singlism is important to my research because it has helped me to conceptualize the stigmas associated with living a single life. There are negative stereotypes, and many myths attached to single individuals. Singlism is an unacknowledged type of discrimination. Most people are not aware of the discrimination directed toward singles. Single individuals are subject to an invisible type of ostracism, where the majority of them are unaware that the discrimination they are subject to is a result of their marital status (Williams and Nida, 2005). Research related to singlism is essential to my theoretical framework because it recognizes and gives a name to the type of discrimination directed toward individuals who choose not to couple. Singlism has a unique gendered experience, and I focus specifically on the effects of singlism experienced by men.

In the second section of this chapter, I explore concepts of masculinity. I look atConnell’s (2005) theory of hegemonic masculinity. Applying her concepts has enabled me to strengthen my conceptualization of the gender specific expectations related to coupling. Connell’s (2005) concept of many different “masculinities” adds to the foundation of my critical approach toward normative definitions of masculinity.
In the third section of the chapter, I examine the ideology of marriage and family. I focus on how the concept of marriage has evolved into its current ideology. I pay attention to the changes that occurred in the 1960s. The changes to traditional concepts of marriage and sexuality transformed marriage into the current ideology of marriage and family. I explore how these changes particularly affected the lives of men.

2.2 Singlism

Research related to the discrimination of single individuals is limited. Recent research about single-life suggests that negative stereotypes are attached to individuals who reject lifelong unions. In her book, Singled Out: How Singles are Stereotyped, Stigmatized, and Ignored, and Still Live Happily Ever After, DePaulo explains what it means to be single today. She coined the term “singlism”, and claims that it is, “the twenty-first-Century problem that has no name” (DePaulo, 2006, p. 25). She states that people who are not married or do not have what she calls “a serious coupled relationship,” are stigmatized, stereotyped, and treated dismissively (DePaulo, 2006). She explains that society views single people as interested in one thing, “getting coupled,” that being single is not considered a permanent situation, and that single individuals are assumed not to be happy. She defines “coupled” as being in a serious relationship, and “single” as not having a partner (DePaulo, 2006). She elaborates on the difference between stereotypes on singlehood related to women and men. Stereotypical stigmas attached to single men remain strong, and imply that they are, “Horny, slovenly, and irresponsible, and … are the scary criminals, or, … are sexy, fastidious, frivolous, and gay” (DePaulo, 2006, p. 46). DePaulo (2006) addresses the stigmas attached to singles and suggests that it is a form of discrimination that remains unchallenged.
DePaulo (2006) outlines the standard myths attached to the single lifestyle. One of the myths regarding single individuals is that their main focus is to find a lifelong partner (DePaulo, 2006). Coupled society assumes that being single is not a choice, and that if given the chance single individuals would choose to be coupled (DePaulo, 2006). When a single man socializes with coupled men the conversation at some point will most likely turn to the relationship status of the single man (DePaulo, 2006). The single man will be bombarded with questions regarding his relationship status, and a plan will be put into action to find him a potential partner (DePaulo, 2006). The coupled men are often more interested in finding the single man a partner, than the single man is himself.

Coupled society assumes that single individuals are leading an unsatisfying life. DePaulo (2006) calls this the “dark aura of singlehood,” or the myth that single individuals live miserable, lonely, and tragic lives. DePaulo (2006) has devised an acronym, BLAME, and suggests that coupled society views single individuals as BLAME-worthy: bitter, loveless, alone, miserable, and envious of couples. These stereotypes have stuck to single individuals because the stereotypes are rarely questioned. This is problematic because the stereotypes attached to singles, in most cases, do not fit. The stereotypes fail to recognize the increasing number of successful, satisfied, and happy single individuals (DePaulo, 2006).

The stereotypes attached to singles differ between men and woman. DePaulo differentiates between the stereotyping of single men and single women. Single men are often labeled as bachelors, and this label carries many negative connotations. The bachelor is often stereotyped as unhealthy, irresponsible, slovenly, and immature (DePaulo, 2006). These stereotypes are perpetuated in the media as well as in academia. DePaulo (2006) critiques sociological research that asserts that married
men are happier and healthier than single men. Linda Waite and Maggie Gallagher claim that married men are subject to certain health benefits that single men are not. Waite and Gallagher (2000) suggest that married men are happier and healthier because wives discourage negative habits, such as drinking, smoking, and speeding, while encouraging positive habits, such as a low-cholesterol diet and exercise. Waite and Gallagher (2000) claim that every study on marital status and happiness concludes that married individuals are happier than single individuals. They point to one study in particular, *Marital Status and Happiness: A 17 Nation Study*, conducted by Steven Stack and Ross Eshleman (1998). The study looks at the correlation between an individual’s marital status and their own perceived level of happiness. Stack and Eshleman included participants from 17 Western nations. DePaulo (2006) questions Waite and Gallagher’s interpretation of Stack and Eshleman’s research. She proposes that Waite and Gallagher misrepresented the results of a study. DePaulo (2006) notes that their claims are inaccurate because the study was not a long-term study, it was a one time study and it only reported the participants’ happiness at one given point in time. DePaulo (2006) also points out that Waite and Gallagher failed to mention that the participants who had been always single, were happier than the participants who did get married, but then later were separated, divorced, or widowed. She also recognizes that the participants who did marry would all have had different levels of happiness before they married (DePaulo, 2006).

DePaulo (2006) also disagrees with Waite and Gallagher’s claim that single men are alcohol abusers, and drink twice as much as married men. DePaulo (2006) argues that Waite and Gallagher base their claims on research conducted by Robin Simon (2002) that looked at the percentage of participants with drinking problems based on their marital status and gender. The results of the study were very low. 2.3% of married
men had drinking problems compared to 3.7% of always-single men (DePaulo, 2006). DePaulo (2006) argues that by claiming single men drink twice as much, Waite and Gallagher are distorting the results of the research. The numbers are not quite doubled and, in fact, the numbers are very low and could be read differently (DePaulo, 2006).

For example, more than 95% of single men do not have a drinking problem (DePaulo, 2006). Looking at Simon’s research, DePaulo (2006) also argues that Waite and Gallagher do not point out that the group with the highest number of drinking problems was the group of men who were divorced.

DePaulo (2006) proposes that the negative stereotypes attached to single men are in part perpetuated though a misrepresentation of research results. She points to a long term large-scale research study from the Centers for Disease and Control Prevention that shows that men who are currently married, or who have always been single, have very similar levels of health and happiness, and that both groups are healthier and happier than men who are cohabiting, divorced, or widowed (DePaulo, 2006). The research by the Centers for Disease and Control Prevention focuses on 5 groups of participants: Currently married, always single, cohabiting, divorced or separated, and widowed. The study looks at eight different aspects of health, including obesity, physiological distress, and alcohol consumption. DePaulo (2006) asserts that the results of this study have also been misrepresented, because the Centers for Disease and Control Prevention summarized the study by stating that married adults were the healthiest. DePaulo (2006) suggests an alternative plausible interpretation, that both married adults, and adults who have always been single are the healthiest.

Yet, the results of the study show that the married group has the most first place finishes in all the eight different health categories (DePaulo, 2006). DePaulo (2006) suggests that this is the only valid reason that the Centers for Disease and Control
Prevention can claim that married adults are the healthiest. DePaulo (2006) also emphasizes two other points: that even with the most first place finishes, the married group also has a last place finish in the obesity category, and that the always single group has the second most first place finishes and zero last place finishes. DePaulo (2006) points out that the summary given by the Centers for Disease and Control Prevention is misleading and makes it appear as if adults who are always single are in the same group as adults who are cohabiting, divorced or separated, and widowed, and that they are all less healthy than adults who are currently married.

DePaulo (2006) compares the treatment of singles to the treatment of women in the early 1960s. The concept of sexism was not yet widespread, but new points of view were expressed and awareness was raised. The dominant discourse in society still implies that single individuals are missing out on the most important relationship. Most individuals view lifelong unions as a relationship that can make people happy, and give meaning to their life (DePaulo, 2006). Individuals who do not have this relationship are viewed by society as lonely, miserable, and living incomplete lives (DePaulo, 2006). Individuals in a lifelong union are viewed as better people and more worthy of success (DePaulo, 2006). DePaulo (2006) states that one of the biggest problems related to the negative stereotyping of singles is that it is largely unnoticed. Even single individuals themselves can experience difficulty recognizing when they are receiving negative stereotyping as a result of their marital status.

Single individuals are subject to many different types of discrimination. DePaulo and Morris (2006) outline the distinctions of discrimination directed at singles. There is legal and bureaucratic discrimination, which includes government benefits that are only available to married individuals (DePaulo & Morris, 2006). Singles are also subject to social discrimination (DePaulo & Morris, 2006). For example, western society views
single-life as lonely, less meaningful, less happy, and less valuable compared to coupled-life (DePaulo & Morris, 2006). Single men have lower salaries, are less likely to be considered for a promotion, and they are not entitled to the same employment benefits as married men (DePaulo & Morris, 2006).

DePaulo and Morris (2006) allege that the discrimination and stigmatization of singles is rooted in the ideology of marriage and family, which suggests that individuals in Western society assume that everyone wants to get married and have children, and that adults who do are better people who are happier and more mature. They argue that the assumption that marriage is the only path for lifelong relationships remains strong because 90% of all American adults get married at one point in their life (DePaulo & Morris, 2006). The ideology of marriage and family maintains that adults in lifelong unions hold more value to society than adults who remain single (DePaulo & Morris, 2006). DePaulo and Morris (2006) call to attention that the ideology of marriage and family is widely accepted and rarely questioned, and that it needs to be questioned because the negative stereotyping and stigmatization of singles continues to go unrecognized. The stigmatization of singlehood is unique due to the fact there are age norms attached to marital status (DePaulo & Morris, 2006). Single individuals receive more discrimination the further they pass the socially acceptable age norms attached to coupling (DePaulo & Morris, 2006). Becoming coupled before passing the perceived age norm is so important that society views a middle-aged divorced man as more socially successful than a middle-aged man who has always been single (DePaulo & Morris, 2006). DePaulo and Morris (2006) stress that the reason for this is because society views marriage as an achievement that is attainable and necessary for every individual to attain.
DePaulo and Morris (2006) provide substantive evidence regarding the negative stereotyping of single individuals. In their study of 1000 college students they found that the participants described married people as happy, secure, reliable, and kind (DePaulo & Morris, 2006). When asked to describe single individuals, the participants said singles were lonely, shy, unhappy, self-centered, and insecure (DePaulo & Morris, 2006). The study also found that individuals in a relationship were more highly regarded than single individuals. Participants described coupled individuals as better adjusted, happier, and more socially mature than single people (DePaulo & Morris, 2006). The negative description of singles increased with the increase in age of the single person that the participants were asked to describe (DePaulo & Morris, 2006). DePaulo and Morris (2006) also found that divorced people were described as more attractive and sociable than people who have always been single. DePaulo and Morris (2006) also conducted a study were they made applications to numerous housing rental landlords. They submitted applications from married men and single men. The applications were created to be very similar, both applicants had a similar job, a similar wage, and both had a positive reference from their current landlord. The only difference in the application was that the single man offered to pay more than the suggested rent. Even with the offer to pay more rent, the majority of landlords chose the married man over the single man (2006). DePaulo and Morris (2006) then showed the results of the rental study to a group of participants, as well as a different rental study that showed landlords choosing white applicants over black applicants. The participants described the racial study to be prejudice, unfair discrimination, and wrong (DePaulo & Morris, 2006). However, the participants justified the landlords’ decision in DePaulo and Morris’ (2006) study, by reinforcing the negative stereotypes of singles, saying that the single applicant is less reliable, and unstable.
An assumption inherent in the ideology of marriage and family is that single individuals are miserable. Singles should be lonely because the majority of society believes that they are, they are discriminated against due to their marital status, and are surrounded by coupled people. DePaulo and Morris (2006) have found that this is not the case and that single individuals are just as satisfied with their lives as married individuals. DePaulo and Morris (2006) believe that single and married people have similar levels of well-being because single people do have long lasting positive relationships. They explain that single adults are more likely than married adults to have a strong relationship with their siblings, and their sibling’s children (DePaulo & Morris, 2006). Single adults are more likely to maintain close friendships and establish new friendships (DePaulo & Morris, 2006). Single adults also make more friends outside of their close circle, because they are more likely than married adults to join clubs and attend social events (DePaulo & Morris, 2006).

Despite having similar levels of well-being singlism persists due largely to the fact that the ideology of Marriage and Family remains dominant and uncontested (DePaulo & Morris, 2006). Singles continue to be discriminated against because of the deep-rooted power in the “cult of the couple” (DePaulo & Morris, 2006). DePaulo and Morris (2006) describe the “cult of the couple” as the standard for all relationships. Indoctrination into the cult starts at a very young age, even children in elementary schools practice having relationships (DePaulo & Morris, 2006). Establishing a romantic relationship with a person of a different sex, or even the same sex, is a sign of adulthood in Western culture (DePaulo & Morris, 2006). Singles will continue to be treated negatively as long as couples are so highly valued.

Some of the research related to single life suggests that the discrimination of singles is rooted in evolution. Pillsworth and Haselton (2005) disagree with DePaulo
and her ideas related to the discrimination of singles. They claim that the evidence of romantic love can be found in over 100 cultures from every region in the world (Pillsworth & Haselton, 2005). They state that the Western model of marriage is not universal, as 83% percent of the world’s cultures practice polygyny (Pillsworth & Haselton, 2005). However, they do assert that the desire to find a partner and form a unique emotional bond is universal (Pillsworth & Haselton, 2005). Pillsworth and Haselton (2005) subscribe to an evolutionary approach in regards to coupling. They believe that the main purpose of coupling is reproduction (Pillsworth & Haselton, 2005). They dismiss DePaulo’s concerns that the discrimination of singles is socially constructed (Pillsworth & Haselton, 2005). They suggest that the discrimination of singles is evolutionary, stating that couples choose not to socialize with singles because single individuals pose a threat to the couple’s relationship (Pillsworth & Haselton, 2005). Pillsworth and Haselton (2005) claim that single individuals pose a sexual threat, as they could potentially lure one partner away from the other. They proclaim that the exclusion of singles in couple dominated social life, is a case of mutual self-selection, and that, “[s]ingles of both sexes pose a double threat because they are more likely to be pursuing mating opportunities and because they are not under the watchful eye of their own partner” (Pillsworth & Haselton, 2005, p. 102). They further claim that the threat of singles to the coupled relationship is greater in the Western cultures due to the social acceptance of mixed-sex socializing (Pillsworth & Haselton, 2005). They don’t disagree with all of DePaulo’s research; they do agree that Western culture combines several roles into the idea of what a partner should be (Pillsworth & Haselton, 2005). They state that in the majority of cultures across the world, the spouse does not hold the role of best friend, and in most cases one’s spouse is not their primary social partner (Pillsworth & Haselton, 2005).
It is clear in the research related to single-life that individuals who do not choose a lifelong union are subject to discrimination. In Canada, married and common-law couples are privy to many income-tax benefits that single individuals are not entitled to. Williams and Nida (2005) agree with DePaulo’s idea of singlism, and explain that single individuals are subject to ‘oblivious ostracism.’ They express that there is a definite ostracism of singles, that singles are ignored and excluded by their coupled counterparts, but that it is not deliberate (Williams & Nida, 2005). Williams and Nida (2005) assert that singles are subject to institutional discrimination, and suggest that the discrimination does not come from a hatred of singles. The oblivious ostracism can cause emotional pain and distress to single individuals (Williams & Nida, 2005). They explain that individuals react two different ways to oblivious ostracism (Williams & Nida, 2005). The ostracized individual will either try to conform to socially accepted ideologies, or they will experience anxiety in their social relationships (Williams & Nida, 2005). Williams and Nida (2005) report that after the initial pain of being ignored and excluded, single individuals will become either sycophantic or spiteful. The sycophantic single will try to conform and become socially accepted by others, while the spiteful single will strike back, become antisocial, and may even become aggressive towards groups that do not accept their existence (Williams & Nida, 2005).

Lévi-Strauss (1969) suggests that the majority of societies highly regard individuals who choose marriage, and that there is a repulsion attached to men who do not choose marriage. He explains that in the “primitive tribes” bachelors are nonexistent because they could not survive, due to the fact that labor in “primitive tribes” is shared between men and woman. Bachelors are not permitted to receive the benefits of women’s work, including certain food and hygiene benefits (Lévi-Strauss, 1969). Lévi-
Strauss (1969) explains that bachelors and couples without children can never reach full status within the group.

It has only been recently that scholars have begun to create acts of resistance against the discrimination of single individuals. A. and Campbell (2011) deconstruct the current stereotypes attached to single individuals. They believe that the language attached to singles needs to be reinvented. They have come up with a word with the intention to reject the negative connotations associated with being alone. The word is ‘onely.’ A. and Campbell (2011) explain that the word ‘alone’ holds negative connotations, that it means lonely, and when it is attached to single individuals, it implies that they are searching for a coupled relationship. They established a website with the intention of promoting pro-single rhetoric and questioning the heteronormative bias represented in the media’s portrayal of single individuals (A. & Campbell, 2011).

2.3 Masculinity

Research on the subject of masculinity is essential to my research. It is my view that there are specific gender related societal expectations attached to coupling; men experience a unique set of social pressures related to choosing a lifelong union (DePaulo, 2006). All cultures have general expectations related to gender, but not all of them share the concept of masculinity (Connell, 2005). Connell (2005) claims that the concept of masculinity comes from the colonial and capitalist roots embedded in European history. She explains that being a man or a woman involves adhering to a socially accepted set of gender specific expectations (Connell, 2005). Connell (2005) explains that the concept of masculinity can only exist as a binary to the concept of femininity, and that gender is constructed through social practices. She asserts that normative definitions of masculinity suggest how men should behave; that men are
rational, aggressive, stoic, and hard, but that the majority of men do not live up to these normative definitions of masculinity, and that, in fact, there are many different masculinities (Connell, 2005).

Connell (2005) conceptualizes gender as a structure that includes three different relations: power relations, production relations, and cathexitis. She explains that the main axis of power in Western culture’s concept of gender is the subordination of women through patriarchy (Connell, 2005). In regards to production, Connell (2005) suggests that the social construction of the gendered division of labour allows men to continue to control the capital. In regards to cathexitis, Connell (2005) perceives passion and emotional desire as a gendered characteristic, and explains that this illustrates the connection between heterosexuality and patriarchy.

Connell (2005) explains that the practices of hegemony, subordination, complicity, and marginalization structure modern masculinity. She takes the concept of hegemony from Antonio Gramsci and defines hegemonic masculinity as a gender practice that continues to ensure the dominance of men and the subordination of women (Connell, 2005). Connell (2005) further argues that in contemporary Western culture there is subordination between groups of men. Homosexual masculinity, for example, is subordinated to heterosexual masculinity; their subordination includes political discrimination, cultural abuse, physical violence, and even legal violence through the enforcement of sodomy laws (Connell, 2005). Subordination puts homosexual men at the bottom of the masculine hierarchy (Connell, 2005). However, heterosexual men who do not meet normative definitions of masculinity are also subject to subordination (Connell, 2005). And although most men do not practice hegemonic masculinity, the majority of men do benefit from it, most men receive cultural advantages because of hegemonic masculinity’s subordination of women (Connell,
These men practice complicity in relation to hegemonic masculinity, and take part in sustaining it without ever completely belonging to it (Connell, 2005). Connell (2005) suggests that marginalization occurs when one type of masculinity is either oppressed, or empowered by hegemonic masculinity. She uses the example of how black superstar athletes are turned into the model of hegemonic masculinity, but that the black community in general does not receive any additional benefits because of it (Connell, 2005). Connell (2005) believes that the relationships between hegemony, subordination, complicity, and marginalization can provide a framework to analyze different types of masculinities. Connell (2005) believes that gender is present in all aspects of society and that all social practices are constructed through gender.

There are numerous stereotypes attached to men and manliness. The stereotypes related to men are always characteristics that are opposite to the stereotypical characteristics related to women. The stereotypes include the ideas that men are rational while woman are emotional, men are promiscuous in sex while women are faithful, and men are assertive while women are sensitive (Mansfield, 2006). Mansfield (2006) explains that gender stereotypes are prejudice and that they were socially constructed in patriarchal tradition. He suggests that the only purpose of gender stereotypes is to continue the tradition of women being subordinate to men (Mansfield, 2006). Mansfield (2006) envisions a gender-neutral society where the stereotypical distinctions of gender are obsolete. He suggests two ideas that can aide in the transcendence of gender and sex. The first is an idea contributed by feminism, which is based not on sex or gender, but humanity (Mansfield, 2006). He suggests that in a feminist society there are no social roles, and that roles are replaced by individual identities (Mansfield, 2006). The second idea is the liberal idea, which is also based on humanity, but with an abstraction from sex and gender rather than repression.
(Mansfield, 2006). Mansfield (2006) believes that transcending sex and gender will create a gender-neutral society where one’s sex will not determine one’s rights, duties, and roles. A gender-neutral society recognizes sex and gender as debilitating because it positions woman as subordinate to men (Mansfield, 2006).

Bell hooks asserts that patriarchy is the greatest life-threatening social disease in Western culture (2004). Hooks explains that:

Patriarchy is a political system that insists that males are inherently dominating, superior to everyone and anything deemed weak, especially females, and endowed with the right to dominate and rule over the weak and to maintain dominance through various forms of psychological terrorism and violence. (2004, p.18)

She states that the majority of men never even think about patriarchy or about how it is created and sustained, and that individuals are indoctrinated into patriarchy at a very young age. Hooks illustrates how the media supports outdated patriarchal stereotypes related to masculinity. Children learn from the media that men are always dominant in sexual relationships, and that women are always submissive, and that strong men always dominate weaker men. Boys are conditioned to become compulsively sexual. In order to reverse this, hooks explains that men must be able to exist as sexual beings in a society that does not promote patriarchal sexuality. She promotes a new feminist masculinity, and critiques the old men's movement because it was critical of women and feminism, and never challenged or questioned patriarchy. Hooks explains that feminist masculinity promotes the idea that “strength” is the capacity to be responsible of one’s self and others, and not having power over others. She suggests that male sex roles need to be redefined in ways that do not promote domination over a sexual partner. At the core, feminist masculinity would be about a commitment to gender equality.
The unique gendered experiences throughout an individual’s life course impact behavior toward lifelong unions. Carpenter examines gendered sexuality throughout the life course, and suggests that, “[s]exual beliefs and behaviors result from individuals’ lifelong accumulation of advantageous and disadvantageous experiences, and their adoption and rejection of sexual scripts, within specific socio-historical contexts” (Carpenter, 2010, p. 157). She states that an individual’s sexual behavior is shaped by gendered experiences, and looks at how these experiences can mold an individual’s behavior and beliefs toward marriage and coupling (Carpenter, 2010). As an example, she looks at the difference between heterosexual and homosexual relationship trajectories in men. She explains that most men are raised under the assumption that they are heterosexual and will one day get married and have children, and that adolescent dating experiences socialize them to anticipate monogamous lifelong unions (Carpenter, 2010). She notes the difference in socially acceptable sexual scripts between homosexual and heterosexual men. For example, before the emergence of same-sex marriage, it was socially acceptable in the homosexual community for men to have non-monogamous relationships. By contrast, this type of relationship was not socially acceptable in heterosexual relationships (Carpenter, 2010). She also suggests that men who resist monogamous relationships still find it extremely difficult to imagine a future that does not include a lifelong union (Carpenter, 2010).

2.4 Marriage and Family

Near the end of the 1800s, the current concept of heterosexual marriage started to take shape. In the nineteenth century, as the North American middle-class began to expand, the cult of domesticity emerged. Wives were expected to take care of the household duties, remain chaste, and take care of the children (Abbott, 2010). Most
women were not to go out into the work force and earn money. At the end of the nineteenth century, women began to challenge the cult of domesticity. Abbott (2010) argues that social activists like Charlotte Perkins Gilman began to question women's roles in marriage, suggesting that marriage should not include the concept that women must be economically dependent on a man. She further explains that the 1960s were a time of great change in views toward marriage and sexuality (Abbott, 2010). Attitudes toward premarital sex began to change. The majority of individuals no longer believed that it was wrong for a man and a woman to have sexual relations before marriage (Abbott, 2010). Birth control methods also allowed women to pursue education and careers, thus delaying marriage. This also led to an increase in unmarried cohabitation because childbearing could be avoided among individuals who believed that they should be married before having children (Abbott, 2010). By the 1970s, birth rates began to decline and divorce rates started to rise, and by the 1980s, many more individuals over 25 delayed marriage, and those who did marry delayed childbirth (Abbott, 2010). Recent decades have also seen more racial diversity in marriage, an increase in single-parent households, an increase in median age of first marriage, and even more recently, the gradual acceptance of same sex marriage (Abbott, 2010).

According to the 2011 Canadian Census, the number of same-sex married couples tripled from 2006, and same-sex common-law couples rose 15% (Milan & Bohnert, 2014). In 2011, 12.8% of Canadian Census families were female lone-parent, compared to 3.5% male lone-parent (Milan & Bohnert, 2014).

The changes to marriage in the 1960s had a unique effect on men. Nock’s (1998) research on lifelong unions illustrates the importance of lifelong unions in relation to men’s lives. Nock outlines how the changes to normative marriage in the 1960s directly impacted the lives of men. Nock (1998) defines normative marriage as:
1. Marriage is a free and personal choice based on love.

2. Maturity is a presumed requirement for marriage.

3. Marriage is a heterosexual relationship.

4. The husband is the head, and principal earner, in a marriage.

5. Sexual fidelity and monogamy are expectations for marriage.

6. Marriage typically involves children. (p. 6)

Nock (1998) explains that up until the 1960s, marriage was the defining feature of men’s lives. Being a provider was the most important role for a man to achieve. Men who did not achieve the provider role were seen by society as less masculine than men who could successfully provide (Nock, 1998). Men who could not financially provide to their wives were not only seen as failure, but they were not even considered to be men (Nock, 1998). Nock (1998) indicates that these men were considered "pseudo-homosexuals," because at the time being married and being a provider was essential to meeting the socially accepted standards of masculinity. Male rebellion against the concept of normative marriage started in the mid-1950s (Nock, 1998). The way that men were represented in Playboy magazine was counter to the socially accepted idea that marriage was essential to masculinity (Nock, 1998). In particular, Playboy challenged the provider role as being essential to masculinity (Nock, 1998). The magazine included articles that critiqued the normative definition of marriage (Nock, 1998). The articles challenging marriage, mixed with the photographs of nude women, reassured men that not choosing normative marriage was still inside the boundaries of heterosexuality (Nock, 1998).

Also, in the 1960s men also began to challenge traditional sexual norms. The idea of premarital sex became more socially acceptable. This gave individuals an alternative for a sexual relationship outside of marriage. As a direct result, the
acceptance of premarital sex lead to an increase in childbirth outside of marriage (Nock, 1998). Nock (1998) speculates that in a traditional sociological definition, marriage was the socially regulated method of distributing the roles and responsibilities of the partners related to parenthood. Before the introduction of contraceptives, parenthood was integral to marriage because in most cases childbirth was an unavoidable result of sexual activity (Nock, 1998). Contraception allowed individuals to choose when or if they wanted to have children. Even with these changes having children within a marriage is still the most socially accepted way to have a family (Nock, 1998).

Marriage is a prerequisite for men if they want to be socially accepted as masculine. Nock (1998) outlines how marriage is North American culture is a rite of passage into manhood. A man’s life changes in many ways after he transitions from a single man to a married man. The married man is a different individual, both socially and legally. The married man receives different treatment from family, friends, colleague, and strangers (Nock, 1998). The married man is treated with respect, and is expected to be responsible, mature, and dependable (Nock, 1998). Maintaining masculinity is an ongoing process, and marriage is only the first step of becoming a socially accepted adult male (Nock, 1998). Men must marry, become fathers, and adhere to the roles of provider and protector of their partners and children. Nock (1998) suggests that even with the growing diversity of living arrangements, real men are husbands, and traditional marriage will continue to be the way in which individuals raise children. Married men’s lives will continue to be changed. Married men will achieve more and continue to be more active in community organizations, and society will continue to regard married men as being better men than single men (Nock, 1998). Nock (1998) recognizes the role that feminists had in changing the concept of normative
marriage. Feminists also critiqued the role of men as the provider. Part of the feminist critique was that the exclusive role of homemaker/mother was oppressive.

Mandell and Duffy define familialism as the, “Glorification of an idealized nuclear family – a family construed as consisting of a socially and legally recognized heterosexual couple” (Mandell and Duffy, 2005, p. 375). Familialism is an ideology that celebrates traditional concepts of marriage and family and does not include ideas related to alternative forms of coupling. Western culture strongly promotes familialism, and individuals who do not conform to its ideologies are generally viewed as outsiders. We are in a period of change regarding attitudes related to marriage and having children. Young adults are starting to view marriage and having children, as two separate endeavors (Post Maritalism, 2013). Marriage is no longer a prerequisite to having children, and for the first time in history, the average age of American women having children is less than the average age that American women are getting married (Post Maritalism, 2013). This suggests a shift in the socially accepted traditional ideologies attached to familialism. It illustrates how much the social stigmas related to having children outside of marriage have evolved and become more socially acceptable. Some even believe that the values of traditional Western familialism are depreciating.

Hymowitz (2007) is concerned with the growing trend of couples having children before they get married. She believes that this trend is a serious threat to ideals related to familialism (Hymowitz, 2007). She feels that when couples have children before marriage, it creates a type of family instability, and that it negatively impacts the wellbeing of the children, and could eventually have consequences on society as a whole (Hymowitz, 2007). Hymowitz (2007) believes that Western familialism is deteriorating because of the increase of divorce, and the increase of individuals having
children outside of marriage. She explains that these trends are creating a nation of unequal families (Hymowitz, 2007). She feels that the breakdown of familialism is directly contributing to poverty and inequality (Hymowitz, 2007). Hymowitz (2007) highlights that:

Children of single mothers are less successful on just about every measure than children growing up with their married parents regardless of their income, race, or education levels: they are more prone to drug and alcohol abuse, to crime, and to school failure; they are less likely to graduate college; they are more likely to have children at a young age, and more likely to do so when they are not married. (p. 4)

Hymowitz (2007) recognizes the cultural differences in marriage around the world, and focuses particularly on the Western institution of marriage. She acknowledges how the sexual revolution and the feminist movement in the 1960s initiated the change in trajectory of familialism (Hymowitz, 2007). Hymowitz (2007) claims that traditional American values such as freedom, individuality, and self-government contributed to the change in views related to having children outside of marriage. She believes that two parents are crucial for the economic security and success of the children (Hymowitz, 2007). Hymowitz (2007) believes that the most damaging consequence of having children outside of marriage is the loss of a “life script.” She outlines the similar stages to those found in life course theory:

The script has a number of acts: childhood, adolescence and schooling – or apprenticeship or some other preparation for work that would lead to self-sufficiency – then marriage, and only then children. Middle-class children growing up in today’s information economy know the preparation act of this script will last well into their twenties and possibly even thirties; that is why the average
age of marriage has climbed in recent decades. But low-income children of single mothers are actors in a different, far more chaotic, drama. Without a culturally endorsed script, there is no planning for the future, no deliberate decision-making, no ambitions, and few dreams. (Hymowitz, 2007, p. 10)

Hymowitz (2007) believes that by first becoming self-sufficient, then finding a partner, then marrying, and then having children, a couple conserves and passes on the familial values that contribute to maintaining a successful society. Familialism in Canadian society does not appear to be threatened. According to the 2011 Canadian Census, 87.4% of the couples with children included two parents and their adopted or biological children, compared to only 12.6% that were stepfamilies (Milan & Bohnert, 2014).

2.5 Summary

The previous sections show that the literature related to single individuals is very limited. While there is some discussion of gender in DePaulo’s research related to single individuals, most of the other research on single life does not focus on the unique gendered experience. The research does include some data related to gender, but it lacks the actual attitudes, opinions, and experience of single men. The current research focuses on how people view single individuals, and does not include the voice of the single individuals themselves. This study will fill a gap in the current research by focusing on the voice of single men. Including the attitudes, opinions, and experiences of single men is important to the research related to single individuals because recognizing their concerns and their unique experience will help legitimize and make visible the invisible type ostracism that they are subject to.
Chapter 3 Theory

3.1 General overview

In the first part of this chapter I explore the idea that heterosexual lifelong unions, coupling, and marriage are an unquestioned metanarrative that continues to be followed by the majority of society. I examine ideas that naturalize heterosexual marriage and lifelong unions and declare heterosexual monogamy to be a human universal. I look at how the ideas that support the marriage metanarrative contribute to the discrimination of single individuals. Then I discuss the evolution of marriage from the advent of agriculture, to the modern romance based version of marriage. I focus on how individuals who do not fit into the marriage metanarrative are ostracized and subject to singlism. In the next part of the chapter, I suggest that the marriage metanarrative must be questioned, critiqued, and deconstructed. I explore Lyotard’s ideas related to totalizing metanarratives and utilize them to examine the marriage metanarrative. I look at the knowledge created around marriage and its relationship to authority. I question the totalizing nature of the marriage metanarrative and the binary it creates between heterosexual coupled and single individuals. I suggest that it is necessary to deconstruct the marriage metanarrative in order for single individuals to receive equal treatment. I examine Derrida’s ideas related to deconstruction, in particular his proposition to deconstruct texts related to authoritative structures, and texts where binaries can create meaning and value in a society. I look at the authoritarian nature of the marriage metanarrative and propose conceptualizing a new hierarchical structure related to the marriage metanarrative. Finally, I outline my research methods and explain how taking a postmodern/post-structural approach to my research assists in deconstructing the dominant ideologies related to coupling, lifelong unions, and marriage.
3.2 The marriage metanarrative

“Simplifying to the extreme, I define postmodern as incredulity toward metanarratives” (Lyotard et al., 1984, p. xxiv).

Theorists informed by poststructuralist ideas recognize the problematic nature of dominant ideologies, and critique the forces that normalize these ideologies. The idea of coupling and forming a lifelong union is a dominant ideology in many societies, and the social pressure directed toward single individuals to form lifelong unions normalizes coupling, lifelong unions, and marriage. DePaulo (2006) defines coupling as, “twosomes who look to each other for companionship, intimacy, caring, friendship, advice, the sharing of the tasks and finances of household and family, and just about everything else” (p. 4). She explains that marriage is the final goal of all coupled relationships, and that is necessary to be fully socially accepted as a couple (DePaulo, 2006). Individuals who couple, choose lifelong unions, and marriage, are following a grand narrative. Lyotard (1984) describes grand narratives, or metanarratives, as large-scale, global theories and philosophies regarding history and knowledge. Coupling that leads to a lifelong union, or marriage is an expectation in Western society; monogamy is assumed to be natural, and heterosexual marriage is heralded as universal (Ryan & Jetha, 2010). Individuals who stray from this narrative are stigmatized and negatively stereotyped (DePaulo, 2011).

Ryan and Jetha (2010) examine how marriage has become the only socially accepted narrative related to human romantic relationships. They explain that scholars have perpetuated the metanarrative of marriage. They cite anthropologist Owen Lovejoy, who states that “[t]he nuclear family and human sexual behavior may have their ultimate origin long before the dawn of the Pleistocene [1.8 million years ago]” (as cited in Ryan & Jetha, 2010, p. 34.), and anthropologist Helen Fisher, who agrees with
Lovejoy, claims that monogamy is natural, and that, “Among human beings monogamy is the rule” (as cited in Ryan & Jetha, 2010, p. 34). Coupling, lifelong unions, and marriage are a hegemonic metanarrative because they constitute a totalizing system of universal normativity (Yancy, 2002). The hegemonic metanarrative of coupling, lifelong unions, and marriage has been socially constructed, and continues to be perpetuated.

The list of scholars who declare that monogamous marriage is universal continues. For example, sociobiologist Desmond Morris declares that, “The pair bond is the fundamental condition of the human species” (as cited in Ryan & Jetha, 2010, p. 150). Similarly, biological Anthropologist, Michael Ghiglieri states that:

Marriage…is the ultimate human condition. Men and women in all societies marry in nearly the same way. Marriage is normally a ‘permanent’ mating between a man and a woman…with the woman nurturing the infants, while the man supports and defends. The institution of marriage…is older than states, churches, and laws. (as cited in Ryan & Jetha, 2010, p. 150)

These types of statements by scholars turn the concept of lifelong unions into scientific knowledge, and this contributes to the totalizing nature of heterosexual coupling as a hegemonic metanarrative. Coupling, marriage, and lifelong unions are accepted as universal human models. Malinowski argues that the universality of marriage is, “unquestioningly correct” (as cited in Ryan & Jetha, 2010, p, 115). Ryan and Jetha recognize that the all-encompassing nature of marriage is not only perpetuated through academia, but by world leaders as well. Benjamin Franklin proclaimed that, “Marriage is the most natural state of man, and therefore the state in which you are most likely to find solid happiness” (as cited in Ryan & Jetha, 2010, p. 112). With academics and world leaders proclaiming lifelong unions as a human universal, the discrimination of single individuals is inevitable. The totalizing nature of coupling, lifelong unions, and
Ryan and Jetha (2010) argue against the idea of marriage as a metanarrative. They believe that the idea of marriage and coupling is based on a universally accepted myth. They assert that:

the generally accepted myth of the origins and nature of human sexuality is not merely factually flawed, but destructive, sustaining a false sense of what it means to be a human being. This false narrative distorts our sense of our capacities and needs. (Ryan & Jetha, 2010, p. 33)

Ryan and Jetha (2010) disagree with the notion that coupling is natural. They believe that the metanarrative of marriage began to take shape at the advent of agriculture. They explain agriculture created change in all aspects of life, especially in the areas of family structure and the ideas that were attached to sexuality. Ryan and Jetha (2010) state that the shift to agriculture was:

The most important pivot point in the story of our species… With agriculture virtually everything changed: the nature of status and power, social and family structures, how humans interacted with the natural world, the gods they worshipped, the likelihood and nature of warfare between groups, quality of life, longevity, and certainly, the rules governing sexuality. (p. 14)

In hunter-gatherer societies sexual relationships looked much different. Lifelong coupling was not a part of the standard narrative, and paternity became more of a concern with the emergence of agriculture, private property, and the notion that land could be owned and passed down (Ryan & Jetha, 2010). This affected sexual relationships because private property was passed down in a patrilineal line, so it was
imperative to know whom your sons were. At the dawn of agriculture, the only way for men to know for sure who their sons were was by controlling woman’s sexuality (Ryan & Jetha, 2010). Before the advent of agriculture, hunter-gatherer societies were much more egalitarian and the relationships between men and women looked much different.

Morgan (1877) explains that even though it is commonly accepted that monogamous relationships have always existed, in pre-agricultural society four different types of marriage preceded monogamian marriage. Morgan (1877) lists the five successive types of marriage and family units:

I.  *The Consansanguine Family.*

It was founded upon the intermarriage of brothers and sisters, own and collateral, in a group.

II.  *The Plunaluan Family.*

It was founded upon the intermarriage of several sisters, own and collateral, with each other’s husbands, in a group; the joint husbands not necessarily kinsmen of each other. Also, on the intermarriage of several brothers, own and collateral, with each other’s wives, in a group; these wives not being necessarily of kin to each other, although often the case in both instances. In each case the group of men were conjointly married to the group of women.

III.  *The Syndyasmian Family.*

It was founded upon marriage between single pairs, but without an exclusive cohabitation. The marriage continued during the pleasure of the parties.

IV.  *The Patriarchal Family.*

It was founded upon the marriage of one man with several wives; followed, in general, by the seclusion of the wives.

V.  *The Monogamian Family.*
It was founded upon marriage between single pairs, with an exclusive cohabitation. (p. 394)

Morgan was interested in contradicting the metanarrative of marriage, and suggested that the foundation of coupled relationships, pre-agriculture, was not based in monogamy. Morgan argued against Darwinian theory, which asserted, “promiscuous intercourse in a state of nature [to be] extremely improbable” (as cited in Ryan & Jetha, 2010, p. 42).

Morgan (1877) outlined the evolution of the institution of marriage and family from savagery (60,000 years) to civilization (5,000 years), and claims that the first stage of human sexual relationships was based in promiscuous intercourse. He claims that the Greeks and Romans knew of tribes in North Africa and Ireland who lived in promiscuity (Morgan, 1877). During the era of promiscuous intercourse humans lived in hordes in very primitive habitats. Once they began to learn how to fish for food consanguineous groups began to form. Intermarriage as well as sibling marriage was common because, “It would be in the nature of a compact on the part of several males for the joint subsistence of the group, and for the defense of their common wives against the violence of society” (Morgan, 1877, p. 508). When humankind advanced into barbarism (35,000 years), humans began to pair up, however these were not monogamous pairings, and both husband and wife would seek other mates (Morgan, 1877). Then, among Semitic tribes, family units began to form with a patriarchal head, and many servants and wives underneath him to take care of the flocks and herds. Exclusive cohabitation was a new feature in this evolution of marriage and family (Morgan, 1877). Morgan (1877) explains that the rise of the monogamian family did not begin until civilization (5,000 years) and the concept of private property. He stresses that, “[w]ith the establishment of the inheritance of property in the children of its owner,
came the first possibility of a strict monogamian family” (Morgan, 1877, p. 512). The shift to the monogamian family was gradual at first, but as civilization evolved it became much more common (Morgan, 1877).

The book of *Genesis* contains the origins of traditional Western marriage. The first instance in *Genesis* that promotes monogamist marriage is the creation of humans. In Genesis 1, “God created the human in his image, in the image of God He created him, male and female He created them” (Alter, 1996). In the sentence directly following the creation of humans, God says, “Be fruitful and multiply” (Alter, 1996). The God character repeats this many times throughout *Genesis*. Newman (2001) suggests that the foundations of Western marriage are largely based on a literal reading of *Genesis*. Newman (2001) proposes that the verses in *Genesis* outline the fundamental purposes of marriage (Cohabitation and child rearing), as well as condemn sexual intimacy outside of marriage, birth control, and same-sex relationships. A literal reading of the book of *Genesis* has greatly influenced the concept of Western marriage.

Abbott outlines the history of Western marriage. She explains that there were three different models of marriage found in European History: Western, Eastern and Mediterranean (Abbott, 2010). The Western model was distinct, because the men and women got married at older ages, and were also closer in age, compared to what was found in the Eastern and Mediterranean models (Abbott, 2010). The Western model also established what is now known as the nuclear family. Eastern and Mediterranean models of marriage often included multigenerational households, where the married couple would generally move into the household of the groom’s parents (Abbott, 2010). In the Western model newly married couples would tend to establish their own household (Abbott, 2010). Abbott (2010) explains that for the most of European history, the Western model of marriage was not a personal matter between husband and wife,
but instead it was the business of the two families that brought them together. The parents of the husband and wife would arrange marriage contracts that would often include a dowry (Abbott, 2010). Most marriages were arranged and women seldom had a choice regarding the situation. Men would marry because it was the only way to obtain social, financial, and political adulthood (Abbott, 2010). Abbott (2010) explains that the modern version of Western marriage started to take shape in the seventeenth century, when Europeans began to immigrate to North America and the social construction of romantic love started to become an essential feature of marriage. Prior to European immigration marriage was primarily an economic arrangement and there was little room for romantic love, and even simple affection was not considered essential. Women began to protest the notion of marrying men whom they did not love, and by the eighteenth century the concept of marrying for love began to become more socially acceptable (2010). The concept of a successful marriage transformed from one based on financials and family ties, to one that included the emotional relationship between the married individuals (2010). The modern love based ideal version of marriage and family became what Ryan and Jetha call, “the standard narrative of human sexual evolution” (2010, p. 7).

Individuals who do not adhere to the standard metanarrative can experience a form of terror (Lyotard et al., 1984). The totalizing nature of coupling forms clear distinctions between those who participate in the narrative and those who do not. Those who do not choose to participate are subject to negative stereotyping, stigmatization, and dismissive treatment. Single individuals experience the totalizing voice of the marriage metanarrative as a form of terror through the social pressure, unequal rights to government benefits, negative stereotyping, stigmatization, and invisible ostracism. The
discrimination towards singles is also largely unacknowledged, as the majority of people are unaware of the discrimination directed toward single individuals (DePaulo, 2006).

In order for change to occur around the discrimination of single individuals, the metanarrative of marriage and coupling must be questioned, critiqued, and deconstructed. Lyotard (1984) explains that socially accepted totalizing metanarratives do not include the naturally existing randomness, or the outliers of individual experience. He argues that the human experience is random, irregular, and chaotic, and suggests resistance against any force that attempts to regulate any sort of totalizing universality (Lyotard et al., 1984). Lyotard (1984) advocates to “wage a war on totality; let us be witnesses to the unpresentable; let us activate the differences and save to honor of the name” (p. 82). Yancy (2002) explains that Lyotard uses language like ‘war’ because he conceptualizes the totalizing nature of metanarratives as violent, in that the voice of the metanarrative aims to terminate the voices of any other narratives. The metanarrative categorizes voices into binary oppositions, where the invalidly of one voice is defined by the validity of the totalizing voice (Yancy, 2002). Thus, coupling, lifelong unions, and marriage are accepted as a normative universality, and remaining single is viewed as a logically inferior option, and individuals who do not prescribe to the metanarrative can experience a sense of normalized terror. DePaulo (2011) explains that, “[s]inglism stalks you until you become seriously coupled (or forever if you don’t), but even if you do join another in committed conjugality, you are still not home free. Eventually the cousin steps in” (p. 272). The cousin that DePaulo (2011) is referring to is the social pressure to become a parent and have children. Having children after marriage is a fundamental aspect of the marriage metanarrative. In my research I focused only on the pressures and discrimination directed towards individuals to participate in coupling, lifelong unions, and marriage. I did not focus on the pressures
and discrimination directed toward coupled individuals regarding children. The totalizing nature of the marriage metanarrative continues to pressure even after single individuals choose marriage.

Lyotard (1984) is skeptical of the idea of pure objective knowledge. He describes knowledge as being an amalgamation of the forces of power, authority, and government, and asserts that these forces legitimize knowledge (Lyotard et al., 1984). He compares the producers of knowledge to those who pass laws in government (Lyotard et al., 1984). He says, “Legitimation is the process by which a legislator is authorized to promulgate such a law as a norm” (Lyotard et al., 1984, p. 8). The same process occurs in the creation of knowledge. Both processes require an authority figure for legitimation to determine whether or not a statement can be considered to enter the discourse. The knowledge around marriage and coupling is clearly based in the authority of many societal institutions, including government, religion, and education. Lyotard (1984) proclaims that:

knowledge and power are simply two sides of same question: who decides what knowledge is, and who decides that it needs to be decided? In the computer age, the question of knowledge is now more than ever a question of government. (p. 9)

Government is a prominent authority that legitimizes the marriage metanarrative through laws. Western governments allow married couples to access many more benefits than single individuals (DePaulo, 2011). Indeed “[t]he longer the government naturalizes marriage through cultural and legal ‘advocacy,’ the longer singles will be forced to wait for true equality” (A. & Campbell, 2011, p. 982). The inequalities between single and coupled individuals are a representation of the urgent demand to critique and question the authorities that facilitate the legitimation of the marriage metanarrative.
The marriage metanarrative remains powerful in society, but is not a narrative that is suitable for all individuals. Lyotard (1984) exclaims that the idea of a grand narrative is a fallacy, and that in fact there are many individual local narratives. He recognizes that there is no universal solution to society’s problems (Lyotard et al., 1984). He emphasizes that all knowledge is subjective, that there are multiple truths instead of one, and many individual narratives instead of one totalizing metanarrative (Lyotard et al., 1984). It is fundamental to look at coupling, lifelong unions, and marriage subjectively, and to appreciate and recognize the need for individual narratives instead of one totalizing metanarrative. Before there can be many individual narratives related to coupling, lifelong unions, and marriage the metanarrative must be deconstructed.

Marriage is an institution and an ideology with deep historical roots. Many researchers claim to have confirmed basic patterns that support coupling in the standard narrative of human sexual evolution (Ryan & Jetha, 2010). Ryan and Jetha (2010) argue that these patterns are not a part of human nature, but more of an adaptation to social conditions. Jacques Derrida suggests that ideologies constructed through history and implemented in institutions might not be natural. Derrida calls for the deconstruction of all texts where binary oppositions have the ability to construct meaning and value (Newman, 2001). Deconstruction is a:

series of moves, which include the dismantling of conceptual oppositions and hierarchical systems of thought… Deconstruction is a way of reading texts…with the intention of making these texts question themselves, forcing them to take account of their own contradictions, and exposing the antagonisms they have ignored or repressed. (Newman, 2001, p. 2)

The metanarrative of coupling, lifelong unions, and marriage must be deconstructed because the narrative is built on a binary opposition; coupled versus single. This binary
is the fundamental attribute that naturalizes the discrimination directed toward single individuals. Singles are defined by what they are not. The binary opposition facilitates singlism, and reinforces the metanarrative of coupling, lifelong unions, and marriage. DePaulo (2011) explains that most coupled individuals, assume that what single individuals want more that anything else is to become coupled, or “unsingle.” Being single is not viewed as a choice, coupled individuals assume many different things about the single individual’s situation (they question their sexually, they assume they are flawed, they believe they are desperate), but generally they do not assume that they are single because of a personal choice (DePaulo, 2011).

Derrida advocates the application of the principles of deconstruction to authoritative structures. These principles can be applied to the authoritarian nature of the coupling, lifelong unions, and the marriage metanarrative. A critique of authoritative structures reveals, “the fact that power itself cannot be contained in stable identities – such as the state, for instance. Rather, power is an identity that is always unstable, contingent and diffuse” (Newman, 2001, p. 4). The authoritarian nature of the coupling, lifelong unions, and the marriage metanarrative has remained relatively stable since the 1960s. The authoritarian identity of the marriage metanarrative in Western society is universal. Newman (2001) asserts that:

Derrida continues this critique of essential identity by showing that not only its unity and purity are questionable, but also that it constitutes an authoritarian identity. It establishes a series of hierarchical binary relationships in which one term is subordinated to another. Derrida sees these as ‘violent hierarchies.’ (p. 4)

This violent hierarchy upholds the subordination of single individuals. Newman (2001) explains that Derrida does not suggest flipping the binary and allowing the subordinate to become the authoritative because this would only reinvent the binary. This was a
critique that Derrida had of Marx, that the proletariat class could not just simply replace the bourgeois because it would result in a reinvention of the binary (Newman, 2001). He also did not believe that the proletariats could dismantle the bourgeoisie and restructure it because this could lead to a reformulation of hierarchical authority. Derrida explains:

What must occur then is not merely a suspension of all hierarchy, for anarchy only consolidates just as surely as the established order of a metaphysical hierarchy; nor is it a simple change or reversal in the terms of any given hierarchy. Rather…a transformation of the hierarchical structure itself. (as cited in Newman, 2001, p.5)

In order to demolish the concept of binaries an eclipse of oppositional thinking must occur. Rethinking a brand new and totally original hierarchical structure related to the coupling, lifelong union, and marriage metanarrative will be the most advantageous technique to eliminate the coupled versus single binary, and singlism altogether.

3.3 Summary

Ideas related to postmodernism/post-structuralism are beneficial to the theoretical approach for my research because I am concerned with challenging a dominant ideology, which is a main concern of these paradigms. I am interested in challenging the metanarrative of marriage and the social expectation of lifelong unions. Marriage remains one of the main stages of the life course and Canadian society continues to strongly advocate marriage, as 9 out of 10 Canadians choose marriage at least once throughout their life course (Macionis & Gerber, 2009). Challenging marriage as a metanarrative is essential in order to abolish the stigma attached to individuals who do not marry, cohabit, or chose a lifelong union. There are not a sufficient amount of
socially accepted life course options outside of coupling, co-habitation, and marriage. Individuals deserve a choice to pick alternative and socially accepted life course options outside of marriage, cohabitation, and coupling, because individuals who do not choose marriage or cohabitation are subject to stigmatization and discrimination. It is imperative to have many socially accepted local narratives related to coupling, instead of one totalizing marriage metanarrative.
Chapter 4  Methodology

4.1 General overview

In this chapter, I outline methods that I utilized to conduct my research. I illustrate my adoption of a constructivist grounded theory approach to my research. I emphasize the value I placed on recognizing the participant’s voice in the research, and how I focused on mutually creating the data with the participants. I acknowledge that a constructivist grounded theory approach was essential to my research, because in order to understand singlism, it is essential to place a high value on the voice of the participants.

4.2 Sampling and recruitment

I examined the evolution of the social pressures and expectations toward men to choose lifelong unions. I investigated the evolution of these pressures and expectations through a generational analysis. I focused on participants who self-identified as single in the 1960s, and compared their attitudes and experiences regarding lifelong unions to participants who currently self-identify as single. I chose to focus on participants from the 1960s because this was the beginning of major changes in ideology, as well as in attitudes toward sex and marriage in Western societies. During the 1960s attitudes toward premarital sex began to change. The majority of people no longer believed that it was wrong for a man and a woman to have sexual relations before marriage (Thornton, Axinn, & Xie, 2007). Birth control methods also allowed women to pursue education and careers and thus, delay marriage. This also led to an increase in unmarried cohabitation, because childbearing could be avoided among individuals who believed that they should be married before having children (Mitchell, 2009). Regarding the men who are currently single, I focused on participants between the ages of 25 and 45. I
focused on these ages because 31 is the average at which Canadian men marry for their first time (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2014).

The participants included 10 men who were single in the early 60s, and 10 men who currently self-identify as single. The 20 interviews were conducted between January and April of 2012. I found all of the participants through snowballing, and did not have to relate to other types of participant recruitment. The word-of-mouth method was invaluable. The majority of individuals with whom I spoke regarding my research were interested in and willing to participate. The most difficult part of participant recruitment was finding men who were single for a period of time during the 1960s. A large number of these potential participants could not self-identify as being single in the 1960s, because they either married their high school sweetheart, or were always in a serious coupled relationship. I found my first participant through word-of-mouth, and after that interview he suggested a friend, and after every subsequent interview each participant always suggested, and provided contact information for potential participants. The majority of the participants were residents of either Vernon or Kelowna. The fact that most of the participants lived in Vernon and Kelowna limit the results of the study, in that the attitudes and opinions will be specific to single men from smaller towns in British Columbia. The participants came from diverse socio-economic backgrounds. I tried to find participants who came from different backgrounds. I was able to recruit Canadian men of Japanese, Chinese, South Asian, and European backgrounds. I was also fortunate enough to be able to include one gay man in the group of men who currently self-identified as single.

4.3 Data collection
Before every interview, I sent the participant a letter of initial contact and a consent form. For the large majority of the interviews I went to the participant’s home. This seemed to be the most comfortable and convenient method for most of the participants. If meeting at their home was not an option, I met them at a coffee shop that was located close to their home. If I met a participant at a coffee shop, I would purchase the participant a cup of coffee. An optimal interview location was imperative to my research because, as Herzog (2012) explains, the interview location “should be examined within the social context of the study being conducted and analyzed as an integral part of the interpretation of the findings” (p. 207). I was especially concerned with location because of the sensitivity of my questions. I did not want to offend the single men. I did not want my questions to be misunderstood as discriminating, I was very cautious to not create an atmosphere that might contribute to the negative stereotyping or stigmatization of single individuals. When conducting interviews about potentially sensitive subject matter, it is advantageous to hold the interview in the participant’s home, because it offers a sense of friendliness (Herzog, 2012). In regards to the few interviews that were conducted in coffee shops, I took into consideration the location in the interpretation of the data results. I understand and note in the analysis of the data that the impact of the noise and lack of privacy can change or distort the answers of the participant.

Before each interview began, I went over the consent form with the participant and answered any questions. In the consent form I explained that the purpose of the interview was to gain generational perspectives from men, regarding marriage, cohabitation, and singlehood. I outlined that the study would include 15 open-ended questions related to marriage, cohabitation, and singlehood. The consent form explained that the interview would be audio recorded, and would be approximately 45
minutes. I told the participants that the interview would be low risk, and that there would not be anything in this study that could harm them. The consent form detailed that some of the questions asked might upset them, and that if this did happen to please let me know if they had any concerns. The consent form also stated that if at any time during the interview process they felt uncomfortable with any question, they were free to not answer that question or withdraw from the interview altogether. I also assured the participants that all of the data would be confidential, that the computer data will be password protected, and the audio data, field notes, and any other related paperwork would be secured and locked. Under University policy, the data will be kept for 5 years and destroyed. I explained to them that the research is for a public document, that the data was going to be used in a thesis for a graduate degree, and that they would not be identified by name in any reports of the completed study. I told them that their participation in the interview would contribute towards the sociological knowledge of marriage and family, and that they would be provided with a link that would direct them to an electronic copy of the final thesis paper. I was very detailed about the specifics of the consent form because, as Marzano (2012) explains, “The risks and benefits deriving from participation in the study…must be honestly described. And guarantees must be given to absolute confidentiality and the respondent’s right to withdraw his or her consent at anytime” (p. 443). Informed consent was a major concern for my research, making sure that the participants were aware of all details, and research methods was crucial. I wanted to ensure the participants that their identity would be completely confidential because I wanted to receive the most honest answers. I also wanted the participants to legitimately feel like they were contributing to the discourse on marriage and family. This research project was based on the University of British Columbia
Okanagan code of ethics. I obtained informed consent and maintained confidentiality with all of my participants.

After the participants signed the consent form, the interview began. Each interview was audio recorded with a digital recorder to an mp3 audio file. The length of the interview ranged from 15 to 30 minutes. I asked each participant 15 questions related to marriage, lifelong unions, cohabitation, and single life. I conducted semi-structured interviews (see Appendix D), because it enabled me to maintain some of the control of structured interviews, without the need to use close-ended questions or force the participant into the role of a respondent, rather than someone who volunteers personal information (Fife, 2005). This method enabled me to gauge the amount of social pressure that my participants have received. The semi-structured interview method allowed the participants to answer freely, while also giving me the opportunity to ask follow up questions from the participants’ responses. This was beneficial to me because some participants clearly did not want to admit to feeling social pressure, so by asking follow up questions I was able to receive important additional information regarding the question. I asked very open-ended questions, and this made the interview flow more like a conversation, and the participant was also able to help control were the conversation went (Fife, 2005). This was extremely important because I was be able to gain a level of trust, and I believe that this resulted in receiving more honest and thoughtful data.

Every participant was asked the same 15 questions, and some of the participants were asked follow-up questions. One of the most difficult aspects of the interview process was getting the participant to engage. Some of the participants were very willing to provide information, but some were quite guarded with their answers at first. Warren (2012) highlights the techniques aimed at engaging participants and explains
that when dealing with a participant who is not providing in-depth answers, to not be afraid of the silences. This was a beneficial tactic by not rushing to the next question during moments of silence because it offered the participant time to think about their answer. More often than not the participant would offer more information after a period of silence. If they did not offer more information, I found that this was the best opportunity to ask a follow-up question, rather than quickly proceeding to the next question. I was also very focused on being an active listener. Lillrank (2012) outlines that:

A good listener creates a mental space for the other. It means that the listener is able to leave his or her own perspective and concentrate on what the narrator has to say. It also means to take care, interpret, and respond to a story and to avoid taking for granted one’s own hypothetical framework of the subject matter. In addition, a good listener recognizes shifts, contradictions, or gaps in a story. (p. 283).

Being an active listener was a crucial aspect in creating reliable data. Before my first interview, the participant eluded to the notion that I was anti-marriage. I had to ensure the participant that this was definitely not the case. In the subsequent interviews I made sure not to let my own hypothetical framework interfere with the way I conducted the interview. I did not want my biases to influence the answers of the participants.

4.4 Data analysis

When I finished all 20 of my interviews I began to analyze my data utilizing methods informed by grounded theory. Methods informed by grounded theory fit with my research because:
The method is designed to encourage researchers' persistent interaction with their data, while remaining constantly involved with their emerging analysis. Data collection and analysis proceed simultaneously and each informs and streamlines the other. The GTM builds empirical checks into the analytic process and leads researchers to examine all possible theoretical explanations for their empirical findings. (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007, p. 1)

By following this method and being constantly engaged in data analysis, even while conducting the interviews, I was able to successfully focus and craft my overall analysis. Grounded theory is utilized to create theories related to important issues related to everyday life. The goal of a researcher who adopts grounded theory is not to prove or disprove any of their particular viewpoints, instead the researcher should form their viewpoints based on the information presented by the participants. The researcher will then code the participants' data and form theories by comparing and contrasting the codes.

More specifically, I adopted a constructivist grounded theory approach. Charmaz (2009) defines constructivist grounded theory as a method that, “Sees knowledge as socially produced, acknowledges multiple standpoints of both the research participants and the grounded theorist, and takes a reflexive stance towards our actions, situations, and participants in the field setting” (p. 129). Constructivist grounded theory emphasizes the importance of the participants' voice. My qualitative methodology consisted of interviewing 20 participants, and I incorporated ideas from grounded theory to respect the voice of the participants. During the time before my interview and throughout the interview, I focused on developing a partnership with the participants. Through building trust and creating a partnership we were able to mutually construct the data.
Constructivist grounded theory implies that knowledge is socially constructed, and that the researcher constructs knowledge with the participant. The construction of knowledge is influenced by the researcher’s pre-existing ideas regarding the subject matter (Charmaz, 2009). During the interviews, I made a conscious effort not to let my own ideas and opinions regarding lifelong unions influence the way I asked the questions, or the way I reacted and responded to the participants answers. For example, I especially focused on not letting my biases known. I worked on keeping neutral facial expressions and maintaining a calm body language. I focused on maintaining an unbiased standpoint on the topic because I was aware that data is greatly affected by the process of production (Hildebrand, 2007). Adopting constructivist grounded theory ensured that I recognized that the participants and I were mutually creating the data.

Constructivist grounded theory differs from classic grounded theory in that it considers the participants’ influence on the data as much as the researchers (Charmaz, 2009). Constructivist grounded theorists must take into consideration the participants’ actions and interpretations related to the research, and locate their participation into the situation. I made an effort to understand from the participant’s perspective, their beliefs, and their reactions to the research. This was crucial because in some instances the participant would react in a way that contradicted the verbal answer that they provided. For example, when I asked some of the participants if they have ever felt any pressure to foster a lifelong union, they would quickly answer with a harsh “No!” In these cases they would not even take the time to consider any circumstances were they might have felt social pressure. However, in a following question they would answer the question in a way that did indicate that they had felt social pressure. In the data analysis I kept these types of reactions and inconsistencies in consideration, and would look to see if
their reaction to this type of question was contradicted in any of their other answers. Adopting this method was essential to the results of my research because as DePaulo (2011) emphasizes, single individuals are often unaware of the social pressures, and discrimination directed towards them. This was very evident in my interviews. The participants were often very reluctant to admit to any type of social pressure regarding coupling.

Constructivist grounded theorists aim to place the participants’ data and reactions into a larger perspective that includes social structures and discourses that the participant might not be aware of. Charmaz (2009) explains that “[p]articipants’ meanings may reflect ideologies; their actions may reproduce social conventions or power relationships. We look for the assumptions on which participants construct their meanings and actions” (p. 131). Charmaz (2009) uses an example related to health to illustrate this point. She points out that most people make assumptions about their own and other’s illness, and assume some individual responsibility (Charmaz, 2009). She claims that this leads to blame, and in turn, the possible social causes might not be taken into consideration (Charmaz, 2009).

During each individual interview, I was conscious of analyzing the data as I was collecting it. I kept a notebook with me and wrote down my initial thoughts after each interview. I wrote a memo summarizing the interview and noted my general impression of the participant’s stance regarding the interview questions. After all participant interviews were completed, I began to analyze the data. I transcribed all of the data recorded in each interview session. After I transcribed all of the interviews, I became familiar with the data by carefully reading it over several times. I then wrote a memo of my impression of each interview transcript and compared it to the first memo that I wrote after I conducted the interview. Through out my data analysis I focused heavily on
the method of writing memos. Lempert (2007) acknowledges that memo writing is the “distillation process, through which the researcher transforms data into theory… It is the methodological practice of memo writing that roots the researcher in the analysis of the data while simultaneously increasing the level of abstraction of his/her analytical ideas” (p. 245). Writing memos allowed me to develop and conceptualize new ideas and theory related to my data. Charmaz argues, “Memos are the analytical locations where researchers are most fully present” (as cited in Lempert, 2007, p. 247). Memos helped me to find my voice and positionality in the research. After reading over the transcripts and writing the second memos, I sorted the memos into different categories according to the participants’ beliefs and opinions related to the research questions. As the memos were being sorted, I could see the beginning of my theory starting to emerge in the physical appearance of the different groups.

After I sorted all of the memos, I highlighted the recurring themes and particular participant opinions that stood out. I began coding the data by highlighting key concepts and patterns, and applying code names to each concept and pattern. Charmaz suggests that, “theoretical codes specify possible relationships between categories you have developed in your focused [substantive] coding” (as cited in Stern 2007, p. 120). After I assigned code names to the different beliefs and opinions in the data, I put them into different categories, and began to compare and contrast the relationships between the categories. It was at this stage that I really started to conceptualize the emergent theory. I kept in mind a list of questions as suggested by Mruck and Mey (2007):

What is happening in the data? What does the action in the data represent? Is the conceptual label or code, part of the participant’s vocabulary? In what context is the code/action used? Is the code related to another code? Is the code encompassed by a broader code? … Are there codes that reflect similar
patterns?" (p. 526)

These questions served as a guide to hone the codes and tighten up the generated theory.

4.5 Summary

Utilizing semi-structured interviews and open-ended questions allowed the interviews to flow much more like a natural conversation. The open-ended nature of the questions gave me the opportunity to ask follow up questions and receive additional data that I may have not received otherwise. This type of questioning also gave the participants the ability to participate in the direction of the interview. Adopting methods informed by grounded theory, and more specifically, constructivist grounded theory was crucial to my methodology because of the importance placed on considering the participants’ voice in the construction of the data. I placed substantial emphasis on the voice of the participants. As a result, the participants and I were able to mutually construct the data.
Chapter 5 Results

5.1 General overview

This chapter juxtaposes the attitudes and opinions of men who self-identified as single in the 1960s, to men who currently self-identify as single, regarding marriage and single life. In the first part of this chapter, I discuss the participants’ attitudes and opinions related to singlism. In particular, I examine their attitudes and opinions in regards to the social pressures and expectations related to being single. I suggest that these attitudes and opinions reinforce the totalizing nature of the marriage metanarrative. I outline how the social pressures and expectations change with age and are perpetuated through family and other social relationships. Through the participant data, I highlight how singlism remains an invisible type of ostracism. In the next part of the chapter, I review the participant data related to marriage. I investigate the marriage metanarrative and focus on the how it has evolved over the past fifty years. I also focus on how the marriage metanarrative is related to childrearing. In the last part of the chapter, I review the participants’ attitudes and opinions related to gender expectations and masculinity. I focus on the evolution of these gender expectations and focus on participant opinions regarding what it means to be “a real man.”

5.2 Single life

The older generation of participants have attitudes and opinions toward single life that are congruent with the societal attitudes that support the stigmatization of single individuals. When asked about the difference between a married man and a single man, Mark, a participant from the older generation said:

I would like to think a married man as much more conservative in his thought process and keeping it simple. I think a single person is looking for fun, and wild
and crazy. At least that’s my concept. A married person is more looking at meaningful things to do on the weekend or during the week, but not something that you have to go out of your way to manufacture. A homebody, I guess. Having a home, a central location… Not worry about having to go out. I think that would be the major differences. The person is much more thinking about, “How do I look? Where should we go?” I could be wrong.

Mark expressed a very stereotypical view regarding single individuals that reinforces the standard definition of normative marriage. The older generation of participants defined single men in binary opposition to married men. These types of opinions are debilitating to the progression of the social acceptance of single individuals because, “[a] standard of adult development that emphasizes marriage and traditional family only reinforces marriage as a gate to adulthood and does little to inform us about what makes a good life for single people” (Schwartzberg & Berliner, 1995, p. 5). Men of the older generation did not express any progressive opinions related to how they feel a married man is different from a single man. Bill, a participant from the older generation said:

Married man has more responsibilities in sharing things that they do with their spouse. If you're single you can pretty much do whatever the hell you want. You're not responsible to anybody but your self. When you're married every time you make a decision you have to think of the consequences how it impacts your partner. Not getting permission, but out of courtesy, informing the person that with that you’re going out tonight, won’t be home. If you’re single you don’t have to do any of that stuff.

This opinion about single men is exactly what DePaulo (2006) is talking about when she writes about singlism. Bill listed common stereotypes attached to single and married men, and the older generation of participants attached negative stereotypes to single
individuals. They believed that single men are less responsible and less stable than married men. They also unanimously agreed in another stereotypes listed by DePaulo, that single men are lonely. Jim, a participant from the older generation, had a very simple answer when asked what he felt is the difference between a married man and a single man, he said, “Single man is lonely.” His cohort Harry agreed, and added, “Subconsciously, I think the single guy wants to be married.” The attitudes and opinions of the older generation of participants reinforce the totalizing nature of the marriage metanarrative. They assumed that all single men are lonely and would prefer to be in a relationship. The younger generation of participants did not express the same feeling about the level of loneliness assumed by the older generation. It was difficult to get reliable answers related to loneliness, because most of the younger generation of participants did not admit to being lonely. Cargan (2007) outlines that participants are hesitant to admit that they are lonely, and that this makes dealing with the topic of loneliness very difficult. Cargan (2007) suggests that the social pressures to be in a relationship contribute more to an individual feeling lonely than actually being alone does, because:

being alone in a couple’s world signifies failure – the failure to have people around. It appears difficult to believe that one could be content with one's own company, so it seems incomprehensible that one might actually choose to be alone – if you are alone, it means that you must be lonely. (p. 163)

The majority of the younger participants did not mention loneliness in their answers related to the differences between a married man and single man. Only one participant from the younger generation alluded to loneliness. Dan shared:
It can be lonely, but also have a lot of fun at the same time, have a lot of freedom. But, a man who has a wife just feels comforted a lot, and gets that alpha-male feeling, which probably feels pretty good, so. But, I don’t have that.

Dan briefly mentioned that being single can be lonely, and then instantly mentioned something that every single participant from the younger generation mentioned, that there is freedom attached to being single. When asked what they felt the biggest differences between a married man and single man were, every participant from the younger generation mentioned the idea of freedom. For example, John believed that:

I think is mostly just the freedom that single people have. In terms of being able to go out and do things, sometimes, I guess married men, they just have a little less opportunity as to what they can do. They’re always tied down a little bit more. In terms of their personality, I find that some single men are a little bit more easy going and worry a little less about what they are doing. They have one less responsibility. They can take a bit more adventures, they can put their bodies out there, go skiing and stuff, where dudes that are married have to make sure that they come home every night.

Similarly, John’s cohort James explained:

There are pros and cons to both. The single man has freedom, but the married man has that partner, and that person there for them all the time, 24/7. I don’t know whether a single man would be happier than a married man, or the other way around. But, I guess that’s pretty subjective too. If you ask a married man, he’s going to say that he’s happier than he was when he was single. Depends if you’re recently single, you know recently divorced, then maybe you’re happier than you were when you were married. Or if it’s the other way around, if you’ve
never been married and you’re single, then maybe you haven’t found that happiness.

The younger generation of single participants did not admit to feeling lonely, rather they all emphasized having more freedom than married men. The older generation felt that single men are lonely and that they wish to become married men. Cargan (2007) concludes that these stereotypes are not true. In a study of the well-being of married and single men, Cargan (2007) found that the men in his study held the same stereotypes. The married man believed that the single men were lonely, and the single men believed that they had more fun than the married men. Cargan’s (2007) study found that the stereotypes were not true, and that the well-being of single men was similar to married men, and both were in better positions of well-being than divorced men. James, from the younger generation of participants, pointed out that he does not know if a married or a single man would be happier and that he feels it’s subjective. It shows that the younger generation is more open-minded to being single. It is also interesting to note that the majority of the younger generation of participants did not attach feelings of loneliness in relation to being single. This is evidence of an evolution in the attitudes and opinions of men related to marriage and lifelong unions. The younger generation of men are able to remain single and not express feelings of loneliness. The younger generation expressed that they feel being single is important, this was an opinion that was not shared by the older generation of participants. Joe, a participant from the younger generation explained:

As it stands right now, being single, you know, it’s important. I definitely think it’s important. Because you have to be content with yourself before you can really be content with anybody else. So, yeah, just being single is a good thing because especially in your developing years, I mean I don’t want to say figuring yourself
out, but it’s important to be independent, especially before you become dependent with a spouse.

Joe’s cohort Kevin expanded:

Being single is a little bit more of a blurry line. Being single is living your life for yourself mostly, and not committing yourself to put others on the same level of respect that you have for yourself. Being single is about taking care of yourself first, and when you make a leap into marriage or a really committed relationship it’s about agreeing to put that person on the same level of concern that you put yourself.

The older generation of participants did not share these attitudes and opinions. The younger generation of participants stressed the importance of being single, while the older generation did not attach any value to singlehood. It is interesting to note that even though the younger generation attached value to the single experience, they still do not see it as a permanent stage. Not one of the participants from either generation expressed that they would like to be single forever. Every participant from the younger generation claimed that they would like to get married one day. They still view single life as a transitional stage into married life. Steve, a participant from the younger generation elaborated:

Being single to me. I tell you, I’ve been in a relationship and I’ve been single. Then I’ve been in a very deep relationship, then I’ve been single. So, being single to me, based on experience, and what you learn, I think that it’s not really that fun. Because sure I can go and do whatever, but that’s when your risks go up, potentially getting a virus, and potentially having a kid… but at the end of the day for me I’d rather have someone that I can rely on a little bit.
Steve’s cohort Dave explained that being single is “Just still looking for that special person, and finding what you want and what the other people out there can offer.”

The younger generation of participants are conflicted. They see the benefits of being single, they recognize the importance of being single in regards to personal development, yet they do not want remain single. This is directly related to the social pressure that is directed toward single individuals in regards to coupling. All of the participants from the younger generation expressed that they feel pressure related to finding a partner. For example, James shared:

Oh, yeah. For sure. I get it from my family mostly. ‘Cause they don’t understand what it’s like to be single in a small town, they don’t get it too much. Any time I say, 'I'm hanging out with this girl, or that girl.' They just jump on it right away, and they want to know if she’s the one, and things like that. It’s just a lot of pressure. And even just in social circumstances with friends and co-workers and stuff you definitely get it from all angles. For sure.

James’ cohort Kevin expanded:

Yeah. Yeah, there is pressure from family and society. You can only be single for so long, before people start questioning what it is that you are doing, or what it is that you’re into. Right? So, yeah, there’s pressure there and yeah there’s external pressures too from government, they make it easier sometimes, to put you in different tax brackets, to create a single relationship out of two people, sometimes they try to force you into that box to make it easier for their system. The issue of common law marriages are a good example of that, people that haven’t gotten married, said vows to one another, but in the governments eyes are considered and labeled “married.” So, I mean there seems like there’s some pressure coming from that end. As well as family and society in general.
James stated that you can only be single for so long. The younger generation of participants placed a huge emphasis on age and its relation to social pressure related to coupling. Steve claimed, “If you ask me last week, then no, but in the last week, ’cause I turn 28 tomorrow, then yes.”

Steve’s cohort Joe offered some reasons that he believes the pressure expands with age:

I mean right now, no. But, I can see as you get older and older, it’s something that happens. Your friends start getting married, or getting in serious relationships for that matter, and it’s almost an expected thing. But, as it stands right now, no I don’t feel pressure. But I can see, just how things are, and how people that I know, my brother for example, he’s been in a relationship for years and years and years, and everyone’s asking him, “When are you going to get married?” So, once you start dating someone for a long time, yeah it’s an expected thing. So, from that standpoint, yeah there is a bit of pressure. Also, I guess your parents too, they’re always in the back of their minds, they want to be grandparents, they want to see successful, normal children as they develop and grow up. It’s an expected thing to end up getting married.

Joe’s opinion clearly illustrates the social pressures and expectations that are directed toward single individuals. Life Course Framework is an approach to the study of aging. It suggests that as individuals age, they move through different social roles (Quadagno, 2005). Throughout the life course an individual will take on different roles such as student, husband or wife, worker, and parent. Age is also attached to these roles. These are called Age norms, or the appropriate age for making these life course transitions (Quadagno, 2005). Age norms form a social clock that influences when people get married, have children, and retire. For example, the average age leaving
home is 21 for both males and females, average age of marriage is 25 for females and 
27 for males, and average age of retirement is 59 for females and 61 for males 
(Quadagno, 2005). Steve and Joe communicated an acute awareness of a social clock 
attached to marriage. Their answers clearly demonstrated how the pressure to marry 
increases with age.

The older generation of participants did not express the same level of pressure 
when asked if they felt pressure to find a partner, but the majority of them did admit to 
experiencing pressure to get married. Rob revealed that:

Her parents wanted us to get married, but mine didn’t. But, then I felt this 
enormous responsibility that I couldn’t leave her, so we got married. I put 
pressure on my self. I felt enormous pressure to be responsible, that I did this, so 
I better deal with it.

Bill also described how he experienced parental pressure:

I knew that my parents wanted it, as well as the parents of my ex-wife to get 
made before getting together. So, it wasn’t really a pressure, but it was 
definitely what they wanted, and no exemption on that.

Parental pressure to marry is very common type of pressure placed on single 
individuals. The older generation of participants were particularity susceptible to 
experiencing parental pressure due to the fact that they were children in the generation 
of the traditional nuclear family. For example, Tim (from the older cohort) described a 
different type of pressure related to choosing marriage:

If there was pressure, it was the pressure I put on myself. Yeah, in fairness, 
when I reached a point, I felt that I had to bite the bullet. And that's probably why 
my first marriage never lasted. Probably should have waited a little bit longer.
Tim described a similar type of age-related pressure that is described by the younger generation of participants. Tim explained that he felt rushed into marriage, and that he did it because it was something that he felt he had to do. Cargan asserts that this common, that people sometimes get married because they feel that it is the next stage of a relationship (Cargan, 2007). This type of pressure remains strong and continues to be placed on single individuals. Dave, a participant from the younger generation described a similar type of pressure to what Tim experienced, “I’d say so because it is that social norm and what people do. It’s like kind of that step in life, and that stone, I guess.” Trevor, a participant from the younger generation stated, “Everyone kind of hints at it. Like, you’re 30, you’re not married, you don’t have a family. What are you doing with your life?” The younger generation of participants clearly felt social pressures to get married, and there was an obvious correlation between the amount of pressure that a participant feels and their age. The older generation of participants expressed that they began to feel the social pressure to get married when they were in their twenties, but the younger generation of participants revealed that they began to experience the pressure in their late twenties, and then experience increasing amounts of pressure the closer they get to thirty. The younger generation of participants also expressed that they felt marriage would probably be more important for their potential partner, and that they would be willing to get married to please them. For example, Kevin explained:

Mostly my pressure would come from I would want to do it for my partner. I would want to give her a big fancy day and a party, buy her the ring, and everything that comes with that. I think most women look forward to that moment. As a male I don’t feel as excited or look as forward to it, but I think a lot of the time women do. So, I feel if I never did take that step for her that she might be perceived as
missing out on something, or she might feel that she’s missing out on something.

I don't feel pressure, I guess my family might make a comment, it doesn’t really register to me as pressure, like I could give a shit what their opinion of it is. But the pressure I feel is mostly internal I think, but it comes from external sources.

This type of opinion was not offered by the older generation of participants. The social pressure for women to marry is also very strong. This obviously had an effect on the younger generation of participants, because as Kevin explained, he considers his potential partner’s value of marriage very much in his own decision. Some of the younger generation claimed that they did not feel pressure, but revealed that they do, without saying it. When I asked Ken if he felt pressure to get married he stated:

No. Um, sorry. Perhaps, my parents but it doesn’t affect me. So, I don’t feel that I need to make them happy by getting married. But, I sometimes feel that, maybe from my mom that would want to have a family.

Ken’s cohort John claimed, “Not pressure, no. Other than parents maybe, would be a little bit of a pressure, but other than that, no.” Ken and John started out by stating that they do not feel pressure to get married, but then alluded to feeling pressure from their parents. These types of responses are similar to what Cargan (2007) detailed about single individuals not wanting to admit to being lonely. Admitting to feeling social pressure to marry could be considered a sign of weakness. I call this phantom pressure. It is pressure that is distinctly evident, but not identified by the individual who is experiencing it. Kevin did not admit feeling pressure from his friends and family:

I don’t think so. No. Like there’s a little bit of external pressure there. They’ll make comments and stuff. I don’t really take any of that to heart. It’s difficult because I want to see myself in a relationship regardless. If I had the perspective that I didn’t want to be in a relationship, I don’t think that I would let their
comments persuade me one way or the other, I think that I have a vision for the way I see my life, that includes a partner, that includes someone there at the end of my days. I don’t think that it stems from my family or friends I think that just stems from what I want. That may have been formed from pressure from friends and family in the past, I don’t know how that was formed, I just think how I see things now and what I want, it includes a partner, and whether that was formed by them, or just who I am, I don’t know, but I do. Maybe that is formed by, we see that, or we’re told that that is happiness. That a good partnership is happiness. I don’t know if my ideals or my idea of happiness comes from that, or if that’s honestly what I believe, that’s tough to say. I think I do see, or from my experience in partnerships, when they’re good healthy partnerships they’re extremely fulfilling. Being taken care of and your needs being taken care of and you’re not sacrificing more than you’re giving, and there is balance to it, I think that there’s huge rewards from that. So, whether it was formed from my experience in good relationships or it was formed from years of watching TV with happy couples on it I don’t know. But, I still see a vision of a happy future as having a partner there. I’m a bit of a codependent person, I like having people around me. I don’t love being by myself, and maybe it stems from that. But, I definitely see a good solid partner as part of my future and something I want.

This is a very interesting comment because Kevin clearly wants to be in a committed relationship and he believes that it is what he wants because that’s how he naturally feels. Kevin realizes the social constructs that contribute to the marriage metanarrative, yet he struggles to believe that they are true.

The majority of the younger generation expressed that their friends and family have had an influence on their decision to find a life long partner. John described:
Overall, yes. I think that, definitely actually. Well lifelong partner for sure, but even girlfriend and what not, I always take them home and make sure my friends approve and my family, probably less so than my friends, but they definitely both have a pretty important role in seeing if someone kind of works for me. I’d say, yeah.

James, a participant from the younger generation agreed and explained:

Yeah, they do, for sure. Because I’ve neglected to listen to them in the past, and I’ve been severely wrong about it. And I missed all the warning signs from family and friends. Like you go back to one of the previous questions about having pressure from them, but at the same time, they just have your best interests in mind. And when they’re putting those pressures on, they just want you to find the best person. They want you to be happy. Ultimately it’s your friends and family that know you, sometimes better than you know yourself.

The younger generation of participants placed great value regarding their family’s approval of their partner. Dave explained:

Yeah, with my last partner, I feel like my parents liked her a lot more than I did, and maybe the relationship lasted longer than it should have because of how they felt for her and I tried to make it work when probably it was a lost cause at the time. Yeah.

Me: What about your friends?
Yeah, I’d say so, but less so than my parents.

Family approval was so important to Dave that he admittedly stayed with his partner for longer than he would have preferred to, just because his family really liked his partner.

The older generation of participants claimed that their family and friends did not
influence their decision to find a partner, but again, their answers revealed the contrary.

Mark revealed:

Friends, no, for sure not, they could care less, you could find who ever you want. And the parents, in their heart of hearts, they would always want me to be married, and have grand children, and in the Japanese culture, a boy to carry on the name. And I know in my dad’s mind he would have loved to have a Japanese person. But, that was never in the cards, as far as going out of my way for a Japanese person. If it happened, hey, so be it. It never did, and there was never any pressure it was just more discussions prior to. But, no there was no pressure to get married.

Mark stated that there was no pressure to get married, but he also claimed that his father would have appreciated if he would have found a Japanese partner. Mark believed that since he did not marry a Japanese person, that he didn’t experience any pressure. He does not make the connection between his father’s known desires and the social pressures related to coupling. The majority of the participants from the older generation of participants did not feel like they received any pressure from their family and friends in relation to finding a partner. Coupled with phantom pressure, I believe that a notable reason for this is because the majority of the older participants got married when they were in their early twenties. Tim is an outlier; he got married in his early thirties and explained that:

I think when you’re in your thirties, people would always say, “Come on, when are you going to bite the bullet? Or how come you’re so lucky you’re so luck, you’re still single?” Stuff like that. But I think it’s just off the cuff comments. I never felt the comments biting, that I was going to rush out. I was more important to find someone that when you go into the relationship, it was going to be a
lifetime thing. I think everybody goes in with that expectation, it just doesn’t always work out.

Tim reveals that the pressure is directly attached to age. This kind of age-related pressure has been shown by DePaulo and Morris (2006) in a study that asked a group of undergraduates their opinions regarding single individuals. The group was asked to give their opinions on single men and women from the ages of twenty-five to forty. The group believed that all singles were less socially mature, less well adjusted, and more self-centered compared to married individuals (DePaulo & Morris, 2006). They rated these attributes higher as a single individual got closer to the age of forty. Tim is the only participant from the older generation that married in his early thirties. The rest the participants form the older generation got married before they turned twenty-five. When I asked Hank (a participant from the older generation) if he experienced any social pressure from his family and friends related to finding a partner, he stated, “No. Because I married quite young.” The amount of social pressure from family and friends experienced by a single individual is directly related to age. The older a single individual becomes, the more likely they are to receive social pressure to find a partner. Dan, one of the youngest participants from the younger generation alludes to the age-related social pressure. He claimed:

Yeah, they want to like, they, deep down they do want me to get married one day for sure. They want me to live like how everyone else lives in a way. Not very many people want to be single for their whole life, especially once you get later in life. You just settle down and fall in love, I guess.

Dan is in his early twenties and he already recognized the expectation to couple from his family. In comparison to the younger generation of participants, those in the older
generation of participants also expressed less of a difference in treatment from their single friends compared to their coupled friends. Tom, from the older generation stated:

Not the people I hung out with. No. I mean there was the odd wise crack about being single and doing whatever you want, and that sort of thing. There were always wisecracks from different people, but you got that from single people as well. Nope.

Tom’s cohort Phil claimed, “No. I’m sure there’s a lot of that that goes on now. But then, never. No.” Hank, a participant from the older generation revealed, “Yeah, I think it is a couple’s world. As you get older, especially nowadays, cause people marry so much later. Yeah, in my older years it is a couples world.” The older generation didn’t experience as much of a difference in treatment from their coupled friends versus their single friends because as a majority, they were not single for a long enough time. Most of them were only ever single for around one year. They did however, express that they believe that it is a couple’s world now, and they could imagine that single individuals get treated differently by their coupled friends compared to their single friends. Kevin, a participant from the younger generation elaborated:

Yeah, definitely. By nature I think of relationships, long term relationships, the lifestyle is different. It slows down and your interests go with that. A lot of my heavily coupled friends, or friends with long term relationships. The things that they’re into, is sharing meals, family meals with kids and family around. If that’s not your idea of a good time, they’re going to stop calling you for that. And when you’re single the last thing you want to do is sit down with a bunch of coupled people and eat dinner, right? So, sometimes you might not be into doing it, but sometimes at time same time, when they stop calling and no one is calling you
because you’re single, then it sucks, because you don’t want to be left out. But yeah, there’s definitely different standards.

Ken (a participant from the younger generation) agreed:

Yes. I think it relates more to activities. Being invited to certain venues or parties, or anything like that, I feel that when you’re single you’re going to get left out. At our age, like around 29, I feel like couples like to have their couple time. The girls talk to the girls, the guys talk to the guys, it’s kind of an escape for the couples.

Me: So, you feel that single people get left out?

Yes, for sure.

The younger generation felt left out of situations and gatherings that involve coupled individuals. They also expressed that when they are included in situations that involve coupled individuals, they felt like they were intruding. John and Trevor share a similar attitude related to the treatment that they receive from their coupled friends. John stated:

I find that people who are in couples, or married, always try to set you up, not treat you like a third wheel, but kind of wish you had someone around. Where as your single friends usually don’t care. If anything they’re usually a little more relaxed about the whole situation.

Trevor agreed:

Oh, for sure. They think it’s weird probably, well I’m assuming. Like, they don’t really ask me to do stuff with them, ‘cause what’s the point, it’s just kind of like a third wheel.

The type of treatment described by the younger generation from coupled individuals constitutes the unacknowledged discrimination that contributes to singlism. DePaulo (2006) explains that singlism often times is unacknowledged even by single individuals.
The attitudes and opinions of the younger generation of participants emphasized how singlism is a type of unrecognized discrimination. Some of the younger generation of participants did not acknowledge experiencing a great deal of discrimination as a result of being single, however their answers showed that they are in fact experiencing singlism. Jon, a participant from the younger generation stated:

Not really. You know actually the weirdest time, if any time, is when you go out to a restaurant, going by yourself as a single guy, you just don’t do it, because you think you would be, it’s one time I never want to be single, or by myself, but that kind of goes hand in hand. Going to a restaurant by yourself, that’s pretty much it, or to a movie, or in public places like that, kind of doing activities by yourself, when you should have possibly a girlfriend and or a wife with you, would be one time when you get kind of looked at, maybe just a bit different.

John started his answer by saying “not really,” and then went on to describe a classic case of singlism. Jon did not recognize that the feelings he experienced when going out to certain public places, are a result of singlism. Most people, including singles themselves, do not recognize discrimination directed at single individuals. A study by DePaulo and Morris (2011) that asked participants to list groups that they felt received discrimination revealed that only 4% of the participants included single people in their list. Jon’s cohort Steve claimed that:

On a scale from 1 – 100, like 95% no.

Me: So, in that 5% what would say the discriminations would be?

It’s just in the setting where somebody feels bad (for you), and they mention, “don’t worry, this seat is for you.” You know, even if I would of sat somewhere else and maybe their girlfriend wanted to sit beside him, then I would notice, or this is how I think, that I’ve noticed that I don’t want to sit beside them. So they
feel the need to bring it up, and maybe that’s a level of making it known that there is somebody in here who is single.

Steve did recognize that he experienced some form singlism, but he felt that it is a very small amount. The type of discrimination that he described is a standard form of singlism. Single individuals commonly experience this type of condescending treatment and pity from coupled individuals in everyday life (DePaulo, 2011). Kevin, a participant from the younger generation described a different type of discrimination:

Maybe in regards to, I know from a federal tax perspective, I think it’s sometimes more manageable and easier to declare yourself in a partnership, in a relationship, the federal government makes it easier, there’s more breaks, it’s easier on your paper work, it’s less headaches. If you try and remain single while living with someone for longer than then the two year period then they deem you common law, there’s a lot of hoops to jump through, they make it pretty difficult to remain single, when they’d rather just view you as couple, turn you into one corporate entity, and treat you as such. I don’t know if it’s better or worse, one way or the other, but I feel that they make it difficult to try and remain single once you cross whatever line or boundary that they’ve drawn as far as that makes you a couple or a married or common law partner. That might be the only discrimination that I feel.

A. and Campbell (2011) highlight the different types of government discrimination against single individuals. They explain that the tax benefits for married couples are the most common type of governmental discrimination of single individuals (A. and Campbell, 2011). This type of discrimination is one of many factors that contribute to the social pressure that influences singles, and unmarried couples to get married. Kevin claimed that government discrimination is the only type of singlism that he has
experienced, this could be related to the fact that he might not want to admit to feeling discrimination, or that he does not acknowledge the other types of discrimination directed toward single individuals. Most of the participants from the younger generation did acknowledge that they felt subject to singlism. Trevor explained:

Oh, yeah. For sure. Everyday. From friends, even friends that, couples that I hang out with. I’m definitely discriminated by them. I mean, in most people’s eyes, you’re thirty, you should have a life, and I don’t. And my parents for sure, ‘cause they don’t really know what I’m doing. All my other brothers and sisters are married. My sister’s even younger than me, and she’s married, and it’s kind of like, “get your stuff together, let’s kick it into gear.” Just, and anyone that kind of knows me, like my boss, he thinks it’s weird, pretty much everyone that I encounter on a daily basis, would think it’s weird, I think. I’m not to stoked on it.

Trevor’s cohort Dan agreed, “Yes. Because, people just look at you differently. They don’t look at you as if you are a successful person in a way. Like you’ve failed in that section of life. Yeah.” Trevor described an extreme type discrimination that is obviously having a huge impact on his self-esteem and well-being. Trevor felt that people think he is weird, and Dan felt like a failure. The discrimination that Trevor and Dan described contributes to the social pressures and expectations related to choosing a partner and creating a lifelong union. The older generation of participants did not acknowledge being subject to any type of discrimination when they were single. Tom and Phil explained that they have witnessed others being discriminated against as a result of being single. Tom stated:

Maybe some. Not really. I would say in some cases, work cases, maybe if you’re single sometimes single guys are looked at as a little less reliable. There was a bit of that, I saw, not a lot. Single guys were thought of as to be partyers. Yeah, a
little less reliable for work. Other than work, well, financially yeah. If you went into a store to buy a big piece of furniture, or a big purchase, vehicle, or financing a loan, yeah the banks would ask you if you’re single or married, and there would be a little bit of [uncertainty] on their part if they knew you weren’t married. Marriage to them sometimes means a financial commitment, and financial responsibility, whereas a single guy, or a single woman would apply as well and would have that stability, maybe bad credit in their eyes.

Tom described many of the most common stereotypes attached to single individuals. That singles are less reliable, less responsible, and less stable, but he doesn’t say that he was subject to the discrimination. Nether does his cohort Phil who claimed:

No. But I do know guys that are. One in particular who is totally discriminated, and it’s a shame because he’s a hard working guy, but he’s 46 an never been with a woman and never had a girlfriend. He is discriminated verbally. I would think he’s got to be gay, but doesn’t want to be. I feel sorry for him.

Phil is reinforcing the stereotypes that contribute to singlism. He stated that he never felt any discrimination himself, but claimed that he knows someone who has, and even though he recognized the singlism, he still questioned the single individual’s sexuality, by assuming that he must be gay. Most of the older generation of participants did not experience singlism first hand because they were not single for a long enough period of time. Dave agreed, “No, mainly because I was never single long enough to have to worry about it.” Not one of the participants from either generation stated that they would want to be single for the rest of their life. Tom, a participant from the older generation claimed:

No, I wouldn’t want to be, no. I was single for quite a while when I was younger...

It was a bit tough at times, you’re always, If you’re not seriously dating
somebody, these days as soon as you seriously start dating somebody, you almost move in, and it’s basically a marriage, you do everything together anyway. But, up to the point where you’re just casually dating, it’s pretty tough, if you’re just doing stuff on your own. It’s tough emotionally, I think you have to be pretty together, and you have to have a social network, if you want to be own your own, living on your own, if you want to stay on your own. I think it’s pretty tough and you have to have a real strong character to do it. I wouldn’t want to, I could, but I don’t think, maybe for a short period, it’s pretty tough to do it the rest of your life, you have to be pretty together.

Tom summarized the attitude and opinion of the older generation related to being single for life. The younger generation held a similar opinion. Kevin expanded:

It’s not where I’d like to see myself. I would like to see myself in a total lifelong partnership. It doesn’t always work out that way, even with the best intentions or the best effort, sometimes it doesn’t work out like that. You’ve got to be open to the fact that people change always, we’re always growing and changing and a good match one day might not be a good match 5–10 years down the road. I could see myself being single, I don’t want to see myself being single. I’d like to think that I could make a relationship work, but it’s not a given for sure.

The attitudes and opinions of the older and the younger generation of participants regarding being single for life, suggest that the social pressures and expectations related to coupling, lifelong unions, and marriage remain strong. Even though some of the participants verbally expressed that they may not feel pressure to find a partner, their collective agreement regarding not wanting to remain single, suggests that the ideals and values related to familialism are still important to these Canadian men. Many of the older participants vocalized that they feel marriage has changed a lot over the
past fifty years. They noted the increase in divorce rates, having children outside of marriage, and the emergence of same-sex marriage among these changes. One aspect that did not change, and the majority of both generations of participants agreed that men still want to find a partner and form a lifelong union.

5.3 Marriage

The younger and the older generation had similar opinions regarding what they believed the definition of marriage is. Generally, both generations of men that I interviewed held a traditional definition of marriage. They believed in the standard marriage metanarrative, in that marriage is a monogamous lifelong partnership (Benokraitis, 2011). In regards to the definition of marriage, there was only one participant with an outlying opinion. Kevin, a 28 year old, who has been single for 3 years believed that,

Marriage to me, I would like to, in my life any way, I would like to see it more of celebration of a job well done and years well served with one another. I see a lot of marriages happen really fast, and end really fast. And I think if I could use it to period in a successful relationship, you know, 10 – 15 years down the road, kids are raised, you’ve been through the hard times, the good times, and you’re still committed to each other, I think that’s a great excuse for a wedding, a big celebration, and a party. I don’t necessarily see a couple years together with a person, to say at that point that you’re going to be together for the rest of your life, is a bit premature. I think once you’ve been through some real trials and tribulations with a person, then maybe it’s more of an appropriate time to get married, and say “We’ve gone this far, we’ve been through a lot, I don’t foresee it getting worse. I can say now with confidence that I’ll be with you forever.” That’s
when I want to have my wedding. To celebrate the fact that you have made it through really tough times. And that your relationship is strengthened not deteriorated. As a real celebration that you did it that you had a working relationship. That to me seems like a good reason to have a wedding.

Kevin was the only participant who expressed a nontraditional definition of marriage. It is interesting to note that even though Kevin imagined and alternative version of marriage, he still envisions a future that includes a lifelong union in the form of marriage that prescribes to the standard narrative. Despite having a unique and nontraditional definition of how a relationship could progress to marriage, he held traditional views regarding the dynamics of a partnership. He stated,

Me in my ideal relationship, it would just be me working, and I could afford to take care of my family, and take care of my wife. But, that's not always a reality, it's tough to make it, but that's just something that's in my head as an ideal. I still see things in the traditional sense with the man as a provider and the woman as a caregiver and educator of children.

These two different opinions of Kevin’s are interesting to note because he has a progressive idea about getting married, but then he holds traditional views related to how his future marriage would potentially look. This is interesting because he was one of the only participants from the younger generation who offered a unique definition of what a relationship could look like before marriage. His second statement suggests that even though he is somewhat progressive, he still conforms to a standard definition of what Nock (1998) calls normative marriage, one where the husband and wife maintain predictable and stereotypical gender roles.

There were notable differences between the older and younger generation regarding what the definition of marriage should be, but the majority of participants had
an opinion similar to Ken, a single 30 year old who believed that marriage is, “Two people that want to have a life together, committed to only each other, probably looking to have a family.” Every participant believed that marriage was a lifelong monogamous union, and the majority of participants believed that child-rearing should be included in the definition of marriage. I did not see a lot of difference in opinion on how the two generations of participants defined what marriage meant to them, but one of the most interesting generational differences regarding the definition of marriage was that the younger generation was more aware and ready to articulate how they felt about marriage as a social expectation. James, a 31 year old who has been single for over 5 years stated:

Marriage is the ultimate commitment. Marriage is something that I feel like a lot of people kind of just see as their next logical step in their relationship and they do it whether it’s right or not. They just do it because it’s something that they think they should do. And I think it’s one of those things that you shouldn’t do, unless you know for sure that you want to spend the rest of your life with that person. And that’s what that means. Forever. And I’m all for it, but it’s got to be forever. It can’t be under any other circumstances.

James is directly speaking to marriage as a societal expectation and suggested that he felt that sometimes individuals are not ready for marriage but get married anyway due to the expectation. The older generation of participants never questioned this expectation. They were aware of the expectation as single individuals, but did not question it in the same way that James and many of the other younger generation of participants did. The older generation of participants shared an opinion similar to Don, who was single in 1967, and felt that, “The expectation was, you go out there, you get married, you have kids.” Not one participant from the older generation questioned this expectation in the
same way that James did. This outlines a change in the attitudes and opinions of men regarding marriage. It suggests that the societal expectation of marriage is being questioned, as James stated, he felt that people get married because marriage is the next “step” in a relationship. Thorton et al. (2007) describe the stages in adult relationships and define being single as transition stage that eventually leads into marriage, or at the very least, unmarried cohabitation. James questioned the social expectation of marriage. He did not believe that you should get married because it is the next stage of a relationship. The younger generation expressed a more serious attitude toward getting married. They are giving marriage a lot more thought than the older generation. Even though the younger generation questioned the societal expectation, every single participant told me that they plan on getting married one day. They shared this opinion with the older generation, as every participant from the older generation claimed that they had planned on getting married one day. Grimes (1995) explains that marriage is a rite of passage in a man’s life and that it is a defining characteristic of manhood. Marriage is an essential stage in a man’s life, and it is crucial for young men to enter this stage, so that they can avoid the discrimination that is attached to remaining single. Ken, a participant from the older generation explained that he always planned on getting married one day, “I think everybody did. You never really asked yourself if you were going to get married. I was just taken for granted that you would get married someday.” The participants from the older generation agreed with Ken; all ten revealed that they had always planned on getting married one day. Ken’s cohort Phil clarified that:

Oh, yeah. We were raised my era, you meet somebody, you do they courtship, you get married, you have kids. That was it. That was it. I was fairly late getting married at 22. I had buddies getting married at 18, 19. It seemed to be your first
love, you marry them. It’s not like now, how it’s casual. We didn’t have cell phones, a lot homes didn’t have a phone. So, you had your sweethearts at school, and there was a dance once a week and hopefully meet there. It was terrible. I retract that. It wasn’t terrible, it was great, but looking back at that, there was no communication. People used to pass you notes. It’s weird. You had lots of little girlfriends, but you ended up with one. Most of the guys at school married their childhood sweethearts; I’d like to see that percentage.

Phil had a very insightful perspective and summed up one of the main differences in the attitude regarding the definition of marriage between the younger and older generation. He stated that he felt that people from his generation would marry their first love. This notion has greatly changed over the last fifty years. All ten of the participants from the younger generation have been in a long-term relationship, and not one of them married their first love. In regards on planning to get married, Joe, a single participant from the younger generation claimed:

I mean, you can’t really plan marriage per se, until you’re in a serious relationship, but yeah, I would like to at some point. I kind of picture it I’ve always thought about it. Being younger, I was in a serious relationship, and I always thought it would kind of happen. So, just getting back in that mind set, and thinking about how I was when I was in that relationship, just based on what I was like, I think I would get married, yeah, if the opportunity presented itself.

Joe’s attitude toward planning a marriage indicates an evolution on how the different generations of participants perceive marriage. Both generations expressed that they want a life that includes marriage. The older generation didn’t plan marriage because it was inevitable, it happened whether it was planned or not. The younger generation did not necessarily plan marriage either; they viewed marriage as something that will
“happen when it happens.” For both generations marriage is inevitable, but in the younger generation marriage is delayed, and pushed back until they find the “right person.” James, a single participant from the younger generation explained that:

I’d like to. It’d be nice to have that stability, that partnership and what not. I see lots of benefits to it. It’s not something I’m ever going to rush into or try and find, or work super hard to try and find that person. When it happens, it happens.

The majority of participants from the younger generation shared this sentiment. The younger generation of participants expressed more consideration of marriage than the older generation. They are not willing to rush into marriage, as Dale, a participant from the older generation revealed, “If you liked somebody, then you marry them. Right?”

This attitude toward marriage was never expressed by the younger generation of participants. The younger generation is not as eager to marry as the older generation was, but they still definitely want to marry, because all ten of the single participants from the younger generation expressed a desire to marry at some point in their life.

The reasoning behind choosing marriage is extremely similar between the two generations of participants. The main reason that both generations gave was family. Both generations stressed that they want marriage because they want to have children.

Ken, a participant from the younger generation said he plans on getting married:

because I’d like to have a family, and I’d like to think that I could find a girl to be with for the rest of my life, and raise that family.

Ken’s cohort Dave agreed:

Marriage is when two consenting adults form a loving committed relationship to each other and they want to project that to the public in the form of marriage, and just tradition, and family, and that kind of good stuff.
The idea of children and family being one the most important attributes of a marriage was a reoccurring theme that came up throughout my research, and one that both generations of participants agree on. The older generation of participants expressed similar opinions to the younger generation related to the idea of children. Rob, a participant from the older generation believed, “The concept of marriage for me is that it’s a great stable place to form a family, and raise children.” His cohort Phil explained that marriage is, “Like getting a lifelong friend, and obviously having kids, there was no other thing that entered into my head once I met the right person.” The language that Phil used in his answer summarizes the attitude of the older generation in regards to having children. He used the word “obvious,” this suggests that the idea of marriage without children is unquestionable, and that having children is essential to marriage. This opinion was reiterated throughout both generations of participants, as every single participant suggested in someway that children were an essential characteristic to marriage. I believe that the younger generation still feels this way because of what DePaulo (2011) calls, “singlism’s cousin,” or the stereotyping and stigmatization of individuals who do not have children. Married and coupled individuals alike are subject to social pressures that demand obligatory reproduction (DePaulo, 2011). Couples without children are constantly being told that they are missing out and will regret their decision to not procreate (DePaulo, 2011). This social expectation has only just begun to be questioned. This is why the younger generation of participants still identified having children as one of the main characteristics of a marriage. Foster envisions a new way of addressing the traditional picture of marriage, she explains that, “Perhaps it’s time to change the old refrain of ‘when you grow up, get married and have children…’ to ‘when you grow up, IF you get married and IF you have children” (Foster, 2011, p.
The younger generation did not express any questioning of the social expectation of coupled individuals having children.

The differences in the attitudes and opinions between the generations of participants related to what they envision an ideal version of marriage to look like are not as big I thought they were going to be when I first started this research. I assumed that the older generation of participants would hold a much more traditional and normative vision of an ideal marriage. I was wrong. The older generation holds similar opinions to the younger generation of participants regarding what they believe an ideal marriage should look like. When I conducted the interviews, the first few were with participants from the younger generation, and they described a version of ideal marriage that I thought was going to be unique to their generation. They described a version of marriage that emphasized the importance of independence and individuality. Kevin, a participant from the younger generation described his version of an ideal marriage:

Yeah, my idea of an ideal marriage leaves enough time in the equation for both parties’ interests. I think that where a lot of partnerships go wrong, is when the individuals aren’t taking care of themselves, and their needs first. You get locked into a cycle of looking after one another, and forgetting about yourself. Everyone’s got their own things that they like to do, or need to do to stay sane. Hobbies, shit like that. In relationships, I think a lot of those things get thrown to the wayside, and you try to develop things as a couple that are things you like to do [together], but if you’re sacrificing all of the things that you really like to do [independently] then that’s a problem.
This description of an ideal marriage was not unique to the younger generation of participants. The older generation of participants shared this opinion. Hank, a participant from the older generation stated:

An ideal marriage is where both people love each other and everything is equal, but yet you still have separation. You can do what you want to do, she can do what she wants to do.

Both generations expressed this opinion, however the level of independence was much greater for the younger generation. Jon, a participant from the younger generation described a level of independence that was absent from the opinions of the older generation. He said:

I think ideal marriage would pretty much be a best friend. Where you can have your opinions and go off and do your thing, even if it’s a month at a time, for work or whatever. And come home and it’s always the same, you have that person that you can just kind of rely on to be there for both comfort and hanging out as well and doing activities. But, you know there are some things about marriages that are kind of a draw back, the whole idea of losing the freedom. I think that’s what everyone gets scared of, is losing the freedom. I think the ideal marriage, you would still have that, or at least your wife or partner would partake in the activities, so you don’t lose that freedom. A perfect kind of bond, the same interests and characteristics would be pretty important, I think.

Both generations stressed the importance of independence in their version of an ideal marriage but the younger generation suggested a higher level of independence. Jon stated that he would appreciate the ability to leave his potential partner for a month at time. While the older generation did suggest the importance of independence in a marriage, none of them ever suggested that their ideal version of marriage would
include long periods of time where they would be away from their partner. Steve (a participant from the younger generation) held a unique, more modern view of an ideal marriage that was not expressed by the older generation of participants.

So, ideal marriage is also a sense of teaching, and that’s something I believe. I don’t know if many people think of it this way, but you need to always be able to teach each other and learn from each other. I want to learn from her, and she should want to learn from me, and I should then teach her, and I want her to teach me, and how you achieve that, and it starts from the roots, is having cross-cultural marriages. If I marry a girl from Vernon, who has grown up in Vernon, and I grew up in Vernon, I mean all we’re going to do is those all-inclusive getaways. I want to be able to have a partner that’s maybe from a different nation, so that their roots are connected to somewhere else in the world, so as we raise our family, and grow as a married couple, in an ideal way, I go to her nation and learn and be part of that nation, and be cultured and have citizenship and just live. And kids education, whatever it may be, and vice versa.

Steve described an ideal marriage that is unique to the younger generation. Benokraitis (2011) explains that this attitude is becoming more popular and that traditional idea of a family is changing. She explains that the traditional nuclear family is still the standard, but that families are changing. There are more single-parent families, stepfamilies, same-sex parent families and families that are more racially and ethnically diverse (2011). Steve’s opinion of an ideal marriage speaks to the evolution of the family.

5.4 Gender and masculinity

When asked about the roles that a man should bring to a partnership, both generations of participants insisted on the notion that men should hold the role of a
provider. This was an area of the research results that surprised me. I assumed that the younger generation would not have held traditional ideas related to gender. They did, in general, hold less traditional attitudes toward gender than the older generation. However, the notion of men serving as a provider in a relationship came up consistently in both generations of participants. Kevin, from the younger generation elaborated on the idea of being a provider:

   Me and my friends laugh about this sometimes, we talk about blue jobs and pink jobs, man. And whether, I don't think it's unfair to say that there are some jobs in a working household that are better suited to a man, and better suited to a woman. I look at things a bit traditionally too, I like to see, or I like to think of myself as a bit of a provider. Me in my ideal relationship, it would just be me working, and I could afford to take care of my family, and take care of my wife. But, that's not always a reality, it's tough to make it, but that's just something that's in my head as an ideal. I still see things in the traditional sense with the man as a provider and the woman as a caregiver and educator of children.

Kevin is attached to ideas left over from the cult of domesticity, where woman were expected to adhere to traditional values related to the home and family. The cult of domesticity made the duties that women performed around the home a profession (Winter, 2004). According to the cult of domesticity this homemaker profession was something that supposedly came natural to all women (Winter, 2004). Before I conducted the interviews I believed that this viewpoint would no longer be held by the younger generation of participants. I was surprised find out that some of the younger generation of participants still held traditional notions of gender. I should point out that the younger generation's attitude toward traditional gender expectations were not as strong as the older generations, but the idea of the man as the provider in a partnership
was expressed equally by both generations. Kimmel (2008) calls this the “cult of compulsive masculinity,” where males born into Western society, who are raised by their mother tend to, “[b]reak with their mother and their need to establish their individually and masculinity [is] accompanied by violent protest against femininity” (Kimmel, 2008, p. 94). Young boys will reject any feminine association related to their mother and cultivate their own masculine individuality (Kimmel, 2008). John, a participant from the younger generation expanded on the idea of men filling performing the role of a provider:

Well, definitely providing. If you’re having children and what not, you got to provide while the woman has a kid, or whatever. Provide safety as well. Other than that I don’t think roles are, I don’t like the whole defining of roles. I think both people should be involved in pretty much every aspect of a marriage if they’re kind of willing to take that step. I like the idea of a fluid marriage where kind of everyone does everything. Or at least the partnership, where you kind of work together for most aspects.

John and the majority of the participants from both generations held the opinion that the man should be the provider, but John articulated that outside the provider role he felt that the gender roles in a relationship should be less defined. The rest of younger generation held this opinion as well. There is definitely an evolution in the attitude toward male gender roles, because the older generation expressed a much more traditional view. Dale believed that:

Well. Okay, in our generation you had to be the breadwinner, right? Because most women didn’t work, they stayed home then, except later on in life, but when we first got married, in the late 60s that’s how it was. We had to provide and be the provider.
Dale’s cohort Phil expanded on the idea of the male provider role and explained that:

I think the woman looks to the guy to be the strong guy and I would think most women would expect the guy to run most of the financial, I’m not saying women can’t. But when I think of the guys I know, they would probably run the financial side and the woman the house, the kids. The guys the head, the lead, and I’m talking about our era, the guy was the strong guy, he’s the man. Usually, the breadwinner. But, if the woman worked that’s fine, then you would share, do the wash up. But, if the guy went to work and the woman was at home, I’m afraid it was the case that the woman would run the house, get his food. To me it was quite acceptable. But if she worked, then we have a different ball game, she’s a breadwinner as well. In our day, as I said you got engaged, got married, had a kid, very quickly. Very, very, quickly. So the woman stayed at home. There was none of this business, were you could be off work, you would lose your job, and there was no guarantee that you could go back. So, normally when women had the baby, it was usually followed by another one. So, all of the sudden the women’s at home, and the guy’s the breadwinner, that was it. Right up to the 80s and 90s with that attitude.

The majority of the older generation of participants shared an attitude similar to Phil’s. Their attitude toward gender roles is very interesting because they were children in a time when the traditional patriarchal normative family was the socially accepted norm. They were getting married in a time where the traditional roles of husbands and wives were just beginning to be questioned. Kimmel (2008) outlines that 1963 was when Betty Friedan’s, *The Feminine Mystique* started to influence the ideas surrounding the traditional nuclear family. She called the suburban household a “comfortable concentration camp” (as cited in Kimmel, 2008, p. 135). In the 1960s the traditional
single-earner male breadwinner family started to evolve into the dual-earner families that are common today (Kimmel, 2008). The participants from the older generation were raised in a society that promoted the traditional patriarchal family, but when it became their time to have a family, the socially accepted family model was beginning to change. It is interesting because this evolution in the family structure was recognized in the opinions of the participants from the older generation. Rob shared:

It’s totally different now. If you asked me years ago I would have given you a different answer than today. When I first got married in 1968 the role was very clear, the guys went out to earn, and the woman look after the kids. But, now it’s far different, I’m not sure there are defined roles for males in a marriage today.

Rob admitted that he felt that his opinion has changed over the years. His attitude clearly illustrates how the perception of gender roles related to partnership has evolved. The evolution of the attitude regarding male gender roles in a partnership is further represented in the younger generation of participants. While, the majority did still feel that the man should be a provider, this was the only traditional attitude that the younger generation held related to male gender roles. Ken clarified:

I don’t know if there are defined roles. Except when you have a kid or kids, that you’re ensuring their health and safety. And I think that would be the same for your wife. I wouldn’t think that when I get married that I would do X and she will do Y. I think that that will come when you get together and where you’re at in life that could change. Maybe I won’t work and she’ll work. Or maybe we’ll both work, or maybe we won’t work. Just really depends on how that works out.

Ken’s cohort David agrees and explained:
Over time it’s changed. For me, basically just helping out and doing whatever it takes. Not just certain, “the guy’s supposed to go out and work.” Or whatever. It’s not like that. You both work at it, share all the experiences, and duties around the house and stuff like that. It’s all got to be shared.

Outside of the shared notion that men should be the provider in a relationship, the younger generation of participants had more liberal attitudes related to gender. Their attitudes are an example of what Kimmel (2008) describes as a dramatic shift in the twenty-first century family. Kimmel (2008) explains that the biggest shift will be the changing roles of men. He correlates the shift of men’s roles in the family, to the shift of women’s roles in the workplace during the twentieth century. Women are working longer hours, are more career orientated, and are contributed more to the family income, and in relation to this, men are required to do more work in the household.

Kimmel (2008) asserts that:

When men and women fully share housework and the raising of children, gender inequality in the family will gradually decrease, and the gender stereotypes and gender differences that were presumed to be the source of that inequality will also gradually begin to dissolve. (p. 174)

The progressive attitudes and opinions held by the younger generation of participants related to gender are evidence that for the men in this study, the dramatic shift of the twenty-first century family that Kimmel describes has already begun.

The evolution in the attitudes toward gender in a relationship is more visible in the participant’s attitudes related to women. In general, the participants do not expect their partner to fill any particular role. One of the reoccurring themes in the answers of both generations of participants was that they felt the most important role that their
partner should fill, is the role of a supporter. Kevin, a participant from the younger generation explained that:

In an ideal marriage a partner brings support, support for one another. Understanding of what a person goes through. They got to be able to understand what you go through and appreciate what you do, and let you know that they appreciate what you do. And that goes both ways as a man you got to really appreciate the sacrifices, or the hard things that your partner does. Appreciation and acknowledgement go a huge long way in keeping people happy in what they’re doing. If you’re constantly doing things that you don’t want to be doing, and no ones telling you that they appreciate that you are doing that, it’s no good. Everybody likes to have a little pat on the back, and be told, “we value what you do.” A good partner has to value you, and tell you that you’re valued, and you got to have good balance. Their strengths got to pick up where yours leave off.

Balance, that’s a good relationship.

Kevin explained that he wants a balance in his relationship, and most of all support. The younger generation did not express any particular roles that they want their partner to fill. Holmes (2009) suggests this attitude is related to a new type of relationship called “pure relationships” (p. 69). Holmes (2009) asserts that in pure relationships couples are, “more flexible and more equal. Instead of basing their relationships on fairly static roles where men are expected to be the powerful providers and women the compliant nurturers, people now have to negotiate the terms of the relationship” (p. 69). The younger generation of participants are interested in pure relationships. The only role that they articulated that they wanted from their partner was support. Steve stated, “A partner brings that support, the support that you can rely on somebody.” Steve’s cohort confirmed that the only role he expects from his partner is, “Just the support. Allowing
each other to achieve the goals you want to achieve.” The older generation of participants also wanted a partner that would be there to provide support. Mark stated, “I think support, and but also to be strong. If I’m not making sense as far as a decision that she is prepared to call me on it and rationalize to why it isn’t.” The older generations view on gender roles has evolved. I believe that if they had given their opinions regarding gender back in the 1960s when they first married, that they would have been a lot more traditional than the ones they expressed to me. Phil, from the older generation of participants explained:

You do get career women now, but not so much in my day. If you’re talking about my era sure there were a few, but as I said, they left school, and the next minute they’re married, and usually a child followed fairly quick. It was nearly always the given. There was none of this having babies out of wedlock. Wasn’t a common thing, normally they were aborted. Seriously. It was taboo. You didn’t live with your girlfriend either. You got married. It was just the way it was. It sure isn’t now. Phil described a traditional view on gender roles and family, but he also recognized the change that has occurred over the past 50 years. The majority of the participants from the older generation recognized the evolution of the traditional nuclear family, and didn’t express that they wanted their partner to hold any particular role that is directly related to their gender. I suspect that the opinions of the older generation have evolved with the times, and that they may have expected their partners to conform to traditional gender roles when they first got married.

Nock (1998) explains that marriage is a basic prerequisite for adult masculinity. Marriage is a rite of passage into manhood and to be considered a “real man” in society, marriage is essential (Nock, 1998). The younger generation of participants
placed a much greater emphasis on the attachment of marriage to masculinity. Kevin proposed:

It is in a certain way, like I said earlier, if you’re single for too long of a time people start to question if you’re even interested in a relationship with a woman. It kind of happens, maybe it’s in jest, or in humor, but it kind of gets taken seriously sometimes. You go so long without a partner and people start wondering if that’s what you want. And I guess there’s the connotation that’s what every man should want, and that’s what every woman should want. It is tied together… to be a real man sometimes in my mind has something to do with taking care of your family, and stepping up to take care of people, and that could get tied into it. My concept of what a man is has something to do with caring for and taking care of other people.

Kevin clearly attached the concept of masculinity to marriage. Nock (1998) explains that this opinion is held all over the world and that men are expected to fill at least three roles in order to be considered “complete members of adult society” (p. 49). The first role that men must fill in order to be considered a real man, is the role of a father. Men must be able to produce children. Nock (1998) explains that in most of the world’s cultures, blame is put on the man in childless couples and that men “must be sexually ‘successful’ in producing children. And since children are expected (everywhere) to be born to a married woman, this means that men must be fathers” (p. 50). The second role that men must fill is the role of a provider to their family (Nock, 1998). Men are expected to provide for their wives and children, and men who do not are scorned by society (Nock, 1998). To be considered a “real man” a man must work and provide adequate support for his family (Nock, 1998). The third role that a man must fill is the role of a protector to his wife and children (Nock, 1998). A man is expected defend his
family and show courage in situations that put his family in danger. Nock (1998) calls these three essential roles, the trinity of social roles that define masculinity. Before a man can fill the trinity of social roles that define masculinity, he must first choose to marry, or be involved in a life long partnership (Nock, 1998). Nock (1998) explains that when a man first gets married society only then begins to view him as a man, “The young husband is a different social and legal person than he was as a bachelor. He is held to different standards. He is according different treatment by friends, family, associates, and strangers” (p. 52). The newly married man is treated with greater respect, and is assumed to be more mature, responsible, productive, and stable than his single counterparts (Nock, 1998). The newly married man makes a public statement about his sexuality (Nock, 1998). Kevin touched on this in his statement, he says that the longer you remain single, the more people question your sexuality. He also explained how he felt that his masculinity is directly attached to Nock’s (1998) trinity of social roles that define masculinity. The majority of the participants from the older generation claimed that they did not see a connection between marriage and masculinity, but some of their answers revealed that they did. When asked how he felt marriage was attached to masculinity, Mark, a participant from the older generation stated:

I never did. It was more sort of a natural thing for me. It wasn’t that I had to prove that I’m a guy, so I have a woman. I was more of looking for a partner and settling down, and raising kids, and bringing them into the world, and moving my career along and moving around, and sharing that with someone. So, if that’s masculinity I guess sure.

At the beginning of his statement Mark said that he never felt that the concept of masculinity was attached to marriage, but he goes on to describe his own situation in
traditionally masculine terms. This was the biggest difference between the generations of participants related to the concept of masculinity being attached to marriage, that, as Mark declared, “It is just natural.” The older generation of participants did not recognize masculinity being connected to marriage. Tom claimed, “That’s a tough one. I don’t think it is. I don’t feel like it is. I don’t feel it has any bearing on your masculinity. Maybe it did at one time. I never though about it in those terms.” Tom’s cohort Rob agreed, “I don’t think it is. I can’t think how it would be. I think they’re quite separate things.” This attitude has evolved over the past fifty years. For the older generation of participants the idea that masculinity and marriage are connected, was so natural to them, they were unable to recognize it. Some of the younger generation of participants were unable to recognize it as well, but like Mark, after they stated that marriage is not attached to masculinity, they provided evidence of the connection in their proceeding answer. Steve said:

Ultimately, I really don’t think that there’s a correlation. ‘Cause you can be a man and not be married. But in the same way, a man who works hard and earns a great living and is able to provide for his family and who is married, then you know he’s the man.

The younger generation questioned the idea of masculinity being attached to marriage in a way that the older generation did not, because the majority of them pointed out that they feel a man can still be a “real man” and not be married. However, they also claimed that a man who fills all the roles outlined in the trinity of social roles that define masculinity, was considered a “real man.” The older generation of participants did not articulate that they recognized the correlation between marriage and masculinity. The younger generation certainly did, Dave explained that:
Yeah, I'd say that definitely having a wife or a partner is expected of men. Especially in the political scene, and like every president’s had like a beautiful wife and stuff like that. And yeah, it seems odd for like the bachelor scene, because you don’t really see that in the social media, unless it’s like the celebrity playboy kind of thing, but that’s portrayed in a different light Like every respectable gentleman is happily married, or at least that’s how it appears.

Nock (1998) suggests that masculinity is a constantly evolving state in men’s lives. The older generation of participants did not question masculinity and its connection to marriage, in the same way that they did not question marriage as a social expectation. Marriage and its connection to masculinity was natural to the older generation. The younger generation of participants questioned the connection because they are single, and have had their masculinity questioned as a result. They did not feel less masculine, yet they associated married men with masculinity.

5.5 Summary

The results of this research suggest that the attitudes and opinions related to coupling have evolved over the past fifty years, but single Canadian men still feel pressure to couple. The results of this research will fill a gap in the current research related to singlehood. The research related to single Canadians is extremely limited. Baumbusch (2004) gathered the perspectives of aging single women from a mid-sized city in Ontario. The study focused on the benefits and drawbacks of remaining single, but not on the social pressure to couple. Skop (1988) completed a study that looked at the experiences of single Ukrainian Canadians. The research focused on the ethic experience, and looked at the experiences of both Ukrainian men and women. None of
the Canadian research focuses specifically on the attitudes and opinions of Canadian men and the social pressure to couple.
Chapter 6 Conclusion

Masculinity and the roles of husband, father, and son are socially determined. The participants from both generations shared opinions that suggest that society expects men to have particular roles, and to participate in activities related to their gender. In Western society, men are encouraged to be competitive, seek leadership roles, marry, and support their families. Traditionally masculine men are stereotyped as less caring, less nurturing, less sensitive, and less emotional compared to their female counterparts. The attitudes and opinions of men from both generations illustrate that men who stray from these traditional gender concepts are often stigmatized by society.

A traditional definition of masculinity suggests that a lifelong union is a necessity. Men also have to work on maintaining masculinity throughout their lifelong union. They must constantly provide for and protect their partner and family, and men who fail at this are viewed poorly by society. The comments from both generations of participants outline that a lifelong union is essential to masculinity, and any man who strays from this path is stigmatized by society.

It is evident that the attitudes and opinions related to lifelong unions have evolved over the past fifty years. It is clear that strong social pressure persists related to finding a partner and choosing a lifelong union. The older generation of participants did not express that being single could have any value. Jim, from the older generation of participants concluded that, “Single man is lonely.” The older generation of participants described single men in opposition to married men. They believed all single men desire to become coupled. They did not express that being single could have any benefits. The single men from the younger generation of participants expressed that they value their singlehood, but they do not view it as a lifelong situation. This suggests that the social
pressure to couple remains strong. Joe, a participant from the younger generation explained that:

As it stands right now, being single, you know, it’s important. I definitely think it’s important. Because you have to be content with yourself before you can really be content with anybody else. So, yeah, just being single is a good thing because, especially in your developing years, I mean I don’t want to say figuring yourself out, but it’s important to be independent, especially before you become dependent with a spouse.

The younger generation of participants emphasized that it is important to experience singlehood. They acknowledged that being single and independent can be advantageous to self-growth, and even provide benefits to future coupled relationships. However, the social pressure to couple is evident, because Joe, and every other participant from the younger generation stated that they do not want to be single for the rest of their life. Even though they value their singlehood, they do not expect it to be a permanent situation, they view it as a transitional stage that will eventually lead to a coupled relationship.

The older generation of participants did not express that they experienced a lot of pressure to couple and get married. When Hank was asked if he felt pressure to couple and get married, he summarized, “No. Because I married quite young.” Hank, and the majority of his cohorts shared this opinion. For the older generation of participants, marriage was an expectation, and it was expected to happen at an early age. The fact that majority of the participants from the older generation married before they reached their late-twenties, suggests that the social pressure was more intense than it is now. Since they all married at such an early age, they did not experience social pressure to couple over a lengthy period, but the pressure that they did experience was strong
enough to make them choose marriage without considering any alternatives for a lifelong union. Tim, the outlier from the older generation got married in his early thirties and explained that, “people would always say, ‘Come on, when are you going to bite the bullet?’” This illustrates that the social pressure was definitely present, but the majority of the participants from the older generation did not remain single long enough to experience many persuasive comments from their family members and friends. The fact that every participant from the older generation got married before they reached their late-twenties without considering any alternative options, suggests that the social pressure to couple and get married was even stronger for the older generation. They experienced an invisible type of pressure, a phantom pressure, marriage was mandatory, it was something that all men did, and choosing an alternative was not a socially accepted option.

Unlike the older generation, the participants from the younger generation expressed that they do experience pressure to couple. Kevin, from the younger generation of participants explained, “Yeah, there is pressure from family and society. You can only be single for so long, before people start questioning what it is that you are doing, or what it is that you’re into.” The younger generation of participants experience age-related pressure that increases the older they get and the longer they remain single. Their comments also illustrated that they experience singlism. Dan explained that, “people just look at you differently. They don’t look at you as if you are a successful person in a way. Like you’ve failed in that section of life.” This kind of singlism and discrimination reinforces the totalizing nature of marriage as a metanarrative. The comments from the younger generation of participants exemplify the heavy presence of singlism in the lives of individuals who choose not to couple.
Marriage is an accepted ideology, but ideologies can be changed. Individuals adopt certain ideologies because they are born into them. We are born into marriage as an ideology. Many individuals get married because it is the norm, we were born into this norm, and it is out of the ordinary to question this norm. When individuals do question this norm they are often looked down on and labeled negatively. The word single carries extremely negative connotations. The new concept that I want to suggest in this research (a socially accepted alternative to marriage, lifelong unions, and coupling) does not have specific word attached it. There needs to be a word with positive connotations attached to it, for an individual who chooses to not have a lifelong partner, get married, or couple. The word single does not work. There needs to be a word for an individual who chooses to not get married, but still desires to have periods of long or short-term monogamist relationships, as well as periods without a partner. The word bachelor does not work. There needs to be a word for individuals who do not want to engage in any type of romantic relationships. I would like to suggest that this word be independent. So, when an individual who is not in a traditional coupled relationship is asked, “Are you single?” They can respond, “No, I’m an independent.”

Going forward with this research, I would like to investigate what DePaulo (2011) calls; “singlism’s cousin,” the stereotyping and stigmatization of coupled individuals who choose to not have children. I would like to do another generational analysis, and examine the evolution in the attitudes and opinions of Canadian men, related to having children, over the past fifty years.
References


Westview Press.


Bryant, & K. Charmaz (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Grounded Theory* (pp. 539-565). Los Angeles: SAGE Publications.


Newman, J. (2001). Biblical religion and family values a problem in the philosophy of


Appendices

Appendix A: UBC Behavioural Research Ethics Board approval certificate

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL - MINIMAL RISK

<table>
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<th>PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:</th>
<th>INSTITUTION / DEPARTMENT:</th>
<th>UBC BREB NUMBER:</th>
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<tr>
<td>Peter Uremetzer</td>
<td>UBC/UBCO IKE Barber School of Arts &amp; Sc/UBCO Admin Unit 6 Arts &amp; Sci</td>
<td>H11-026899</td>
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INSTITUTION(S) WHERE RESEARCH WILL BE CARRIED OUT:

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CO-INVESTIGATOR(S):

- Tyler Alexander Lyburner

SPONSORING AGENCIES:

N/A

PROJECT TITLE:

Redefining the Modern Man: A Generational Analysis of Masculine Social Pressures Related to Lifelong Unions

CERTIFICATE EXPIRY DATE: December 22, 2012

DOCUMENTS INCLUDED IN THIS APPROVAL:  
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The application for ethical review and the document(s) listed above have been reviewed and the procedures were found to be acceptable on ethical grounds for research involving human subjects.

Approval is issued on behalf of the Behavioural Research Ethics Board Okanagan
Appendix B: Consent form

Consent Form
Redefining the Modern Man: A Generational Analysis of Masculine Social Pressures Related to Lifelong Unions

Principal Investigator: Dr. Peter Urmetzer
Name
Title / Department Associate Professor, Barber Arts & Sciences Unit 6 - UBC Okanagan
Location / Campus 309 Arts Building 1147 Research Rd. Kelowna BC V1V 1V7
Telephone 250-807-8709
Email peter.urmetzer@ubc.ca

Co-Investigator: Tyler Lymburner, BA. Barber Arts & Sciences Unit 6, UBC Okanagan, 250-306-6548.

Purpose:
To gain generational perspectives from men, regarding marriage, cohabitation, and singlehood.

Study Procedures:
The study will include 15 open-ended questions related to marriage, cohabitation, and singlehood. The interview will be audio recorded. The interview will be approximately 45 minutes.

Potential Risks:
We do not think there is anything in this study that could harm you or be bad for you. Some of the questions we ask might upset you. Please let one of the study staff know if you have any concerns. If at any time during the interview process you feel uncomfortable with any question you are free to not answer that question or withdraw from the interview altogether.

Potential Benefits:
Your participation in this interview will contribute towards the sociological knowledge of marriage and family.

Study Results:
You will be provided with a link that will direct you to an electronic copy of the final thesis paper.
Confidentiality:
All data will be confidential. Computer data will be password protected. Audiotapes, field notes, and any other related paperwork will be secured and locked. Under University policy, the data will be kept for 5 years and destroyed. The research is for a public document. Data will be used in a thesis for a graduate degree and may also be published in journal articles and books but you will not be identified by name in any reports of the completed study.

**Payment:**
We will not pay you for the time you take to be in this study.

**Contact for information about the study:**
Please contact Peter Urmetzer or me with any inquiries:
Peter Urmetzer, PhD
(250) 807-8709
peter.urmetzer@ubc.ca

Tyler Lymburner, BA
(250) 306-6548
tylerlymburner@gmail.com

**Contact for Complaints:**
If you have any complaints about your treatment or rights as a research subject, you may contact the Research Subject Information Line in the UBC Office of Research Services at 1-877-822-8598 or the UBC Okanagan Research Services Office at 250-807-8832.

**Consent:**
Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time.

Your signature below indicates that you have received a copy of this consent form for your own records.

I agree to have my interview audio recorded (please circle yes or no): Yes/No

Your signature indicates that you consent to participate in this study.

____________________________________________________  
Subject Signature  Date

____________________________________________________  
Printed Name of the Participant
Appendix C: Letter to participant

Dear Research Participant,

I am a Master’s student in the Interdisciplinary Graduate Studies program at the University of British Columbia Okanagan. I am conducting research about the attitudes and opinions of men regarding marriage, cohabitation, and singlehood. To gather this information I will be conducting semi-structured interviews. The results of these interviews will be presented in my Master’s thesis.

I would like to request that you participate in this research project. Your experience is very valuable to my research. The interview will take approximately 45 minutes, at a location that best suits your availability and comfort level. If you consent to participate, please understand that your answers and identity will be kept confidential. Only my supervisor and I will have access to the collected data.

Thank you for your consideration in participating in this research project. If you have any further questions please contact my supervisor, Dr. Peter Urmetzer, or myself at the following addresses:

Tyler Lymburner, BA
#102 – 567 Yates Rd.
Kelowna, BC, V1V 2V4
(250) 306-6548
tylerlymburner@gmail.com

Peter Urmetzer, PhD
Irving K. Barber School of Arts and Sciences
3333 University Way
Kelowna, BC, V1V 1V7
(250) 807-8709
peter.urmetzer@ubc.ca
Appendix D: Interview Guide

1) How long have you been single?

2) Can you explain to me what marriage means to you?

3) Can you explain to me what being single means to you?

4) Do you plan on getting married one day? Why or why not?

5) Do you feel any pressure to find a partner? If so, from whom?

6) Do you feel any pressure to one day get married? If so, from whom?

7) Do you ever feel like your coupled friends treat you differently than your single friends?

8) How do you feel marriage is attached to masculinity?

9) In your opinion, what is the difference between a married man and a single man?

10) Could you see yourself being single for the rest of your life?

11) Can you please describe your version of an ideal marriage?

12) Do you ever feel discriminated against as a result of being single? If so, from whom?

13) What roles do you feel men have in an ideal marriage?

14) What roles does a partner bring to an ideal marriage?

15) Do your friends and family have any influence on your decision to find a lifelong partner?