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SINGLE WOMEN'S VIEWS TOWARD THE INSTITUTION OF MARRIAGE

Natalie M. Yorba-Perez

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SINGLE WOMEN'S VIEWS TOWARD THE INSTITUTION OF
MARRIAGE

A Project
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Social Work

by
Natalie Marie Yorba-Perez

June 2014

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Approved by:

Dr. Janet Chang, Faculty Supervisor

Rosemary McCaslin Ph. D. Research Coordinator

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore single women's views towards the institution of marriage. This study utilized a qualitative design. In-depth face-to-face interviews with ten unmarried women living in San Bernardino County were conducted to collect the data. Participants were asked in a structured interview to provide their views towards premarital sex, cohabitation, non-marital childbearing, divorce, and same sex marriage. This study found that women's liberal and conservative views towards premarital sex, cohabitation, non-marital childbearing, divorce, and same sex marriage did not affect a women's desire to enter the institution of marriage. Furthermore, the study indicated that women exhibited both liberal and conservative views, regardless of religiosity. Last, this study found that women commonly exhibited the traditional view of marrying prior to starting a family, regardless of women accepting premarital sex and cohabitation. The findings of the study suggest that social workers need to have a better understanding of the diverse views and behaviors of unmarried women. The study also recommends that social workers need to increase their awareness of unmarried women's preferred lifestyles and to diminish the stigma associated with unmarried women. Furthermore, social workers should enhance their knowledge of micro and macro services available to unmarried women including resources in family planning and women's health.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	
Problem Statement	1
Purpose of the Study	3
Significance of the Project for Social Work	4
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW	
Introduction	5
Premarital Sex, Cohabitation, Unmarried Childbearing	5
Divorce	8
Same-Sex Marriage	10
Religion	12
Theory Guiding Conceptualization	13
Summary	13
CHAPTER THREE: METHODS	
Introduction	15
Study Design	15
Sampling	16
Data Collection and Instrument	16
Procedures	17
Protection of Human Subjects	18

Data Analysis	18
Summary	18
CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS	
Introduction	20
Presentation of the Findings	20
Summary	27
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION	
Introduction	28
Discussion	28
Limitations.....	30
Recommendations for Social Work Practice, Policy, and Research	31
Conclusions	32
APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW GUIDE	34
APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT	36
APPENDIX C: DEBRIEFING STATEMENT	38
APPENDIX D: DEMOGRAPHIC FORM	40
APPENDIX E: RECRUITMENT FLYER	42
REFERENCES	44

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This chapter will discuss how the current trend of postponing marriage as well as not marrying contributes to the steady decline of marriage in the United States amongst women. The purpose of exploring single women's views towards the institution of marriage will be addressed in this chapter. Last, this chapter will discuss how understanding unmarried women's views towards marriage will be beneficial to social worker's.

Problem Statement

The percentage of first marriages in America's 21st century has declined as a result of women delaying as well as refusing to enter into the institution of marriage. Modern women of today's generation are either marrying for the first time at later ages as well as not marrying. Women currently in the life-cycle stage of young adulthood are even not considering marriage as a primary goal to achieve (Lesser & Pope, 2011). As a result of this trend, there continues to be a steady decline of marriages in America.

It is evident that many American women are delaying marriage as well as not marrying. For instance, from 1960 to 1996 the percentage of unmarried women between the ages of 20 and 24 rose approximately 40% (Lesser & Pope, 2011). Furthermore, over the past several decades, woman currently in their first

marriage has decreased from 44% in 1982 to 36% in 2006-2010 (Copen, Daniels, Vespa, & Mosher, 2012).

In regards to women marrying at later ages, Copen, Daniels, Vespa, & Mosher (2012) reported that in 2006-2010, 25.8 was the median age at first marriage for women. The the likelihood of first marriage by this age of 25 was 44% for women as compared to 59% in 1995; this was a decrease of 25%(Copen, Daniels, Vespa, & Mosher, 2012). Furthermore, the probability of first marriage by age 35 in 1995 was 84% as compared to 78% in 2006-2010; this was a decrease of 7%” (Copen, Daniels, Vespa, & Mosher, 2012,).

According to Lesser and Pope (2011), there has been an increase in the number of women engaging in serial monogamy; this is the act of forming monogamous relationships without a commitment to a shared future and/or marriage (Lesser & Pope, 2011). As a result, the percentage of never-married women has risen. According to Copen, Daniels, Vespa, & Mosher (2012), black women had the highest percentage never married (55%), followed by U.S. born Hispanic (40%), Asian (39%), and white women (34%). Furthermore, never-married women aged 15-44, increased from 34% in 1982 to 38% in 2006-2010 (Copen, Daniels, Vespa, & Mosher, 2012).

It is apparent that women are delaying as well as refusing to wed. This current trend of America’s 21st century is puzzling and has not been adequately explained. It is of importance to discover how interpersonal factors, other than

environmental factors, have contributed to the steady decline of American women postponing marriage, not marrying, or not re-marrying.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore single women's views toward the institution of marriage. The study investigated unmarried women's views toward premarital sex, cohabitation, unmarried childbearing, divorce, and same-sex marriage. Exploring single women's views towards marriage was important in understanding how such views can contribute to the decline of marriage in America. Prior studies have only focused on environmental factors such as the recession, education, employment, and the shortage of marriageable men, in explaining why women are not getting married. Therefore, this study focused on the examination of interpersonal factors such as a perception as another variable to this trend of marrying or delaying as well as refusing to marry. In order to obtain the views toward the institution of marriage, this study investigated the perceptions of ten single women. Therefore, a qualitative research was valuable for this study in gaining a deep and rich understanding of unmarried women's views toward the institution of marriage.

In-depth face to face interviews with ten single women were conducted to collect data. The snowball sample of this study answered questions concerning premarital sex and co-habitation, unmarried childbearing, divorce, and same-sex marriage. Each interview was audio taped, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed.

Significance of the Project for Social Work

The significance of this study for Social work is to produce more research to enrich social workers knowledge about their women cliental who are single and hold numerous views toward marriage. This specific population may be prolonging marriage, may not be considering marriage, or may not want to re-marry. Therefore, it is necessary for social workers to be aware of how an interpersonal factor, such as views, can be a variable in a woman's decision making process of whether or not to marry.

Social workers should also be aware and competent of cultural differences when working with unmarried women. Since stereotypes of single women still exist in today's society, this study should assist social workers in overlooking these stereotypes and recognizing how women themselves are delaying as well as refusing to be married. Therefore, it is imperative for social workers to be aware of women's preferred lifestyle amongst women as well as respect unmarried women's behaviors. This study will enhance social workers knowledge of how an interpersonal factor, such a view, can influence a woman's decision to delay as well as refuse to marry. Therefore, the research question this study will attempt to answer is: "What are the views single women have toward the institution of marriage?"

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter presents brief summaries of research studies that investigated women's views toward premarital sex and cohabitation, unmarried childbearing, divorce, and same sex marriage. This chapter will be divided into 5 main areas. The first two sections of the literature review will be composed of studies examining women's views and behaviors in regards to premarital sex and cohabitation, unmarried childbearing, and divorce. The third section consists of studies that explore women's views toward same-sex marriage. Religions influence on women and marriage will be discussed in the fourth section. The fifth section of this chapter will focus on the theory that will guide the conceptualization of the social issue being studied.

Premarital Sex, Cohabitation, and Unmarried Childbearing

Copen, Daniels, Vespa, & Mosher (2012) conducted The National Health Statistics Report that explored the current marital status of first marriages in the United States of women aged 15-44; data is based on the 2006-2010 National Survey of Family and Growth. This report identified a rise in women currently cohabitating and a decline in women currently married for the first time. In regards to cohabitation, this trend increased steadily from 3.0% in 1982 to 38% in 2006-2010 (Copen, Daniels, Vespa, & Mosher, 2012). Thus, "foreign-born

Hispanic women showed the highest percentage cohabiting (16%) compared with 11% white women and 9.3% black women” (Copen, Daniels, Vespa, & Mosher, 2012, p. 5). Kennedy & Bumpass (2008) reported that among women, 68% of unions began as cohabitation rather than in matrimony in 1997-2001” (Copen, Daniels, Vespa, & Mosher, 2012).

Edin, Kefalas, & Reed (2006) explored the meanings of childbearing, cohabitation, and marriage amongst low-income residents of large cities in the United States. The researchers found that the trend of not marrying, cohabitation, and unmarried childbearing is most common amongst low income individuals. “In fact, among Americas least advantaged citizens, non-marital childbearing has become the rule (Ventura & Bachrach, 2000), and marriage just might eventually become the exception (Lichter & Graefe, 2001)” (Edin, Kefalas, & Reed, 2006, p. 1008). This fact has led some to blame that low-income individuals have abandoned the institution of marriage altogether (Edin, Kefalas, & Reed, 2006). Furthermore, low-income parents who are not married believe cohabiting is a significant stage in their relationship. “Taken together, roughly 6 in 10 unmarried couples in the Fragile Families survey either live together already at the time of their child’s birth, or move in together by the child’s first birthday” Edin, Kefalas, & Reed, 2006, p. 1010).

Cherlin, Cross-Barnet, Burton, and Garrett-Peters (2008) used data on low-income mothers in Boston, Chicago, and San Antonio to test three propositions regarding mother’s attitudes toward childbearing, marriage, and

divorce. This study found unmarried childbearing carries very little stigma amongst low-income individuals. Thus, a vast majority of mothers in this study agreed that a woman should have children if she wants to, regardless of her marital status (Cherlin, Cross-Barnet, Burton, & Garrett-Peters, 2008).

Musick (2002) examined the social, demographic, and economic correlations of planned and unplanned childbearing among women who are not married using data from the 1995 National Survey of Family Growth. According to Abma, Chandra, Mosher, Peterson, and Piccinino (1997) about half of recent births are a result of planned pregnancies amongst unmarried women (Musick, 2002). As a result, one in three births occur outside the institution of marriage. Musick (2002) found that Blacks and Hispanics had the highest rates of planned and unplanned pregnancies than their White counterparts. Venture et al, (2001) reported that 22% of Whites, 42% of Hispanics, and 69% of Black births were to unmarried mothers (Musick, 2002). The results of this study indicate that cohabitation increases planned pregnancies than unplanned pregnancies. Cohabiting increased the chances of having a planned birth amongst Blacks and Hispanics, while cohabiting increased planned and unplanned births equally amongst Whites (Musick, 2002).

Thornton and Young-DeMarco (2001) examined trends in family outlooks and values across the last four decades of the 20th century. Thornton and Young-DeMarco (2001) found that Americans, both young and old, still value and hold a commitment to marriage and children. "Only a small fraction of young Americans

believe that a good marriage and family life are not important, prefer not to have a mate, believe that they will not marry, or believe that it is unlikely that they will stay married to their spouse for a lifetime” (Thornton & Young-DeMarco, 2001, p. 1030). Furthermore, this study revealed that marriage has become not only more voluntary but also less powerful as an institution legitimizing and controlling the behavior of women engaging in premarital sex, cohabitation, and unmarried childbearing (Thornton & Young-DeMarco, 2001). In this study, a majority of young adults accepted cohabitation and actively supported cohabiting before marriage as a good idea to see if the relationship will work (Thornton & Young-DeMarco, 2001). In regards to unmarried childbearing, only a minority of American women viewed it as wrong, while a majority viewed it as an alternative lifestyle. In regards to premarital sex, this study found that only a small fraction of American’s viewed premarital sex as wrong (Thornton & Young-DeMarco, 2001).

Divorce

Copen, Daniels, Vespa, & Mosher (2012) conducted The National Health Statistics Report that explored the current marital status of first marriages in the United States amongst women aged 15-44; data is based on the 2006-2010 National Survey of Family and Growth. In 2006-2020, the probability of women’s first marriage lasting at least 10 years was 68% for women, while the probability of it lasting 20 years was 52% (Copen, Daniels, Vespa, & Mosher, 2012). Asian women (69%) had the highest probability of first marriages last 20 years, whereas Black women (37%) had the lowest chances of first marriages lasting 20

years, significantly lower than for white women (54%). Foreign born Hispanic women (56%) had higher probabilities of their marriage lasting 20 years compared with U.S.-born Hispanic women (47%) (Copen, Daniels, Vespa, & Mosher, 2012).

Cherlin, Cross-Barnet, Burton, and Garrett-Peters (2008) used data on low-income mothers in Boston, Chicago, and San Antonio to test three propositions regarding mother's attitudes toward childbearing, marriage, and divorce. In regards to divorce, this study found that the fear of divorce is not a variable in women postponing marriage. For instance, "only one fourth of the mothers agreed that getting a divorce is embarrassing or that one should avoid marriage because it usually does not work" (Cherlin, Cross-Barnet, Burton, & Garrett-Peters, 2008, p. 931). Furthermore, only a few unmarried mothers avoid matrimony because they are worried that it may end in an embarrassing divorce (Cherlin, Cross-Barnet, Burton, & Garrett-Peters, 2008).

Martin & Parashar (2006) studied trends in divorce attitudes amongst young adult women in America by educational attainment from 1974 to 2002. The findings of this study identified that highly educated women's permissive attitude toward divorce has changed over the years to restrictive attitudes toward divorce, while women who are not high school graduates hold permissive attitudes toward divorce. Furthermore, "this top educational stratum can have a disproportionate ability to promote family change by shaping laws or influencing the social acceptability of divorce, compared to those in the middle educational

levels who are more ambivalent about the availability of divorce or disadvantaged groups at the lowest education levels who clearly want divorce to remain accessible” (Martin & Parashar, 2006, p.38). Last, this study found that work and family structure are the variables strongly associated to the educational crossover in divorce attitudes (Martin and Parashar, 2006).

Helweg-Larsen, Harding, & Klein (2011) investigated whether non-married college men and women in the United States display differences in the magnitude of comparative optimism/personal chance of having a happy marriage getting divorced in the future and discovered possible variables associated with this link. Findings revealed that men as compared to women, were more optimistic for having and happy marriage, while men and women had no differences in comparative optimism for divorce (Helweg-Larsen, Harding, & Klein, 2011).

In regards to the estimated personal chances of happy marriage or divorce, men as compared to women, were more optimistic about both a happy marriage and divorce optimistically (Helweg-Larsen, Harding, & Klein, 2011). Parental divorce moderated this pattern so divorced parents of college students, especially women, rated their personal chances of both events less optimistically (Helweg-Larsen, Harding, & Klein, 2011).

Same-Sex Marriage

Baunach (2011) utilized the analysis of data from the General Social Survey to investigate the trend in attitudes toward gay marriage. The findings

suggest that attitudes toward same-sex marriage have liberalized over the past years. For instance, 71% opposed same-sex marriage in 1988 and by 2006 this opposition dropped to 52% (Baunach, 2011). It is evident that America's young adults, as well as evangelical Protestants', have shifted their attitudes from disapproving same-sex marriage in 1988 to approving of it in 2006 (Baunach, 2011). The American's who changed their attitudes of approving same-sex marriage in 2006, included young adults, individuals of other races/ethnicities, any individual living outside of the southern region of the United States, the more educated, non-evangelicals, and Democrats (Baunach, 2011).

Brumbaugh, Sanchez, Nock, & Wright (2008) used data from a three-state survey conducted in 1998-2000 and designed to explore attitudes toward same-sex marriage. The researchers found that women, Whites, and young adults are more accepting of same-sex marriage than men (Brumbaugh, Sanchez, Nock, & Wright, 2008). Additionally, the researchers found that the nonparents cohabiting experience are most approving of same-sex marriage, while parents with no cohabiting experience are least approving (Brumbaugh, Sanchez, Nock, & Wright, 2008). Last, religiosity and political conservatism are predictors of the preservation attitudes of heterosexual marriage in America (Brumbaugh, Sanchez, Nock, & Wright, 2008).

Avery et al. (2007) studied America's public opinion polls conducted from 1977 to 2004 about gay men and lesbians and marriages or civil unions for same same-gender couples. A steady increase of American's favoring some form of

legal recognition for same-sex couples is supported by the findings of this study (Avery et al., 2007). Individuals in favor of same sex marriage increased 7 percent between 2000 and 2004; 49 percent of Americans were in favor of civil unions in May 2004 (Avery et al., 2007). However, even though a majority of Americans endorse civil unions, Avery et al. (2007) found that almost two-thirds of Americans (61%) resist the extension of full marriage rights to same-sex couples, while only one-third (33%) of Americans endorse same-sex marriage. Last, researchers found that that the belief that same-gender relationships should be legal rose from 43% in 1977 to 53% in 2002 (Avery et al., 2007).

Religion

Sigalow, Bergey, & Shain (2012) used data from the first wave of the Portraits of American Life Study from 2006 and provided a glimpse into variation among men and women who place an importance on religion. The study found an individual's choice of occupation, decision about whether or whom to marry, decision about where to live, and decision about how many children to bear, was due to the perceived influence of religious factors on one's decision making process (Sigalow, Bergey, & Shain, 2012). Furthermore, this study found that women do not draw on religion in their decision making more than men (Sigalow, Bergey, & Shain, 2012). Moreover, researchers found that many women speak generally about religion's importance in their lives than actually report utilizing it into their decision making processes, demonstrating a paradox of perception around decision making (Sigalow, Bergey, & Shain, 2012).

Theory Guiding Conceptualization

There is a shortage of studies that examine how interpersonal variables such as views, can contribute to the decline of marriage in the United States. The limited amounts of studies that have explored women's views towards marriage have implemented Systems Theory to guide the conceptualization of their study. However, Systems Theory will not be guiding this particular study because this study is not discussing how this trend of choosing to be single affects members of the family. Therefore, the theory that will guide the conceptualization of this study is Theory of Reasoned Action.

This theory is appropriate for this study because it emphasizes how an individual's interpersonal factors such as attitudes, beliefs, as well as social norms, influences one's decision to engage in a certain behavior (Gillmore et. al, 2002). This theory will be essential in investigating unmarried women's views toward premarital-sex, cohabitation, unmarried childbearing, divorce, and same-sex marriage. Furthermore, this theory will assist in how attitudes and beliefs may differ from women with a formal religious affiliation and women with no formal religious affiliation. This is imperative because it will identify how those three variables shape the views woman will have towards marriage.

Summary

This chapter presented brief summaries of research studies that investigated women's views toward premarital sex, cohabitation, unmarried childbearing, divorce, and same-sex marriage. Furthermore, articles exploring

women's views toward same-sex marriage was presented. How religion can influence a woman's decision making process in regards to marriage and childbearing was discussed. Last, the Theory of Reasoned Action was discussed as the theory that will guide the conceptualization of the social issue of women wanting to be single rather than being married.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODS

Introduction

This chapter will identify the methodology of this study examining single women's views toward the institution of marriage. The design of the study, sampling, the collection of data and instrument will be discussed in detail. Additionally, the procedures, the protection of human rights, and data analysis will comprehensively be covered.

Study Design

The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate single women's views toward the institution of marriage. The following components of the institution of marriage were explored: pre-marital sex, cohabitation, unmarried childbearing, divorce, and same-sex marriage. In depth face to face Interviews were conducted to gain a deep and rich understating of women's perceptions towards pre-marital sex, cohabitation, unmarried childbearing, divorce, and same-sex marriage. However, this study did have a limitation; this was not including the views of divorcees and widowers. The research question this study attempted to answer was: "What are the views single women have toward the institution of marriage?"

Sampling

A non-probability snowball sampling was employed to secure participants for this study. Ten unmarried women residing in San Bernardino County were conducted to collect the data. Snowball sampling was implemented due to time limitations of this study. All participants in this study were at least 18 years of age. The snowball sample in this study was taken from this researcher using acquaintances that met the criteria as participants for this study and securing referrals from each respondent. Recruitment flyers (see Appendix E) were given to respondents to distribute to friends who qualified as participants for this study.

Data Collection and Instrument

This researcher began snowball sampling with acquaintances that were eligible as participants for this study and locking referrals from those respondents. The ten women in this study participated in an in depth face to face interview. The interview guide of this study was created by this researcher.

This researcher used an eight-item interview guide (see Appendix A) that provided a deep and rich understanding of the views single women have toward marriage. Specific components of the institution of marriage, such as, pre-marital sex, cohabitation, unmarried childbearing, divorce, and same-sex marriage, created the interview guide. In addition to the eight-item questionnaire, a demographic form (see Appendix D) was administered after the interview. Demographics attained from each participant included age, sex, ethnicity, religion affiliation, and marital status.

Procedures

The data for this study was collected through in depth face to face interviews. Participants for this study were solicited by this researcher contacting acquaintances that qualified as participants for this study and securing referrals from each respondent. Each respondent was given a recruitment flyer in order to distribute the flyer to a friend who qualified as a participant for this study.

When a potential participant for this study contacted this researcher, each participant was explained in detail about the purpose of this study as well as the interview process. A mutual decision between this researcher and each participant were made in regards to date, time, and location for interview. Duration of each interview was about 30 minutes; 20 minutes for interview itself and 10 minutes for the process of informed consent (see Appendix B), debriefing statement (see Appendix C), demographic form, and distribution of incentive.

For each interview, this researcher had an audio tape, consent form, demographic form, debriefing statement, interview guide, and incentive. Each participant was given an informed consent. Once the participant consented, the interview began. After the interview, the participant was given a demographic form to complete. Once the form was completed, the participant received a debriefing statement as well as a copy of the informed consent. The participant was then given a \$5 gift card to Starbucks.

Protection of Human Subjects

The confidentiality and the anonymity of the participants of this study were protected by not requiring the participants to sign the consent form as well as not requiring participants to place their name on the demographic form.

Confidentiality of participants was ensured by placing informed consents, audio recordings, and transcripts in a locked file cabinet. All data artifacts were destroyed upon completion of this study.

Data Analysis

Each interview of this study was audio taped and transcribed verbatim by this researcher. Upon completion of transcripts, this researcher analyzed the data and identified themes. The demographic profile of participants (i.e., age, sex, ethnicity, religion, and marital status) was also examined in discovering trends of the results.

Summary

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore single women's views toward the institution of marriage. The following components of the institution of marriage were explored: pre-marital sex, cohabitation, unmarried childbearing, divorce, and same-sex marriage. Ten single women were selected for this study through snowball sampling. This researcher contacted acquaintances that met the criteria as participants for this study and secured referrals from those respondents. Recruitment flyers were given to respondents to distribute to friends

who qualified as participants for this study. An in depth fact to face interview was conducted to collect data for this study. The confidentiality and the anonymity of the participants were protected by not requiring the participants to sign the consent form as well as not requiring the participants to place their name on the demographic form. Each interview was audio taped and transcribed verbatim. This researcher analyzed the transcripts for themes.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

Introduction

This chapter is a presentation of the results of this study. The basic demographics of the sample of this study will briefly be described. For obtaining results, the audio recordings of the interviews were transcribed verbatim. Transcripts of the interviews were used by the researcher to analyze data across the cases in regards to each question on the interview guide. This chapter will conclude with a summary.

Presentation of the Findings

The sample of this study consisted of ten female participants. The youngest participant was 18 years of age and the oldest participant was 40 years of age. Of the ten participants, eight identified as Mexican American and two identified as Caucasian. Nine out of the ten participants identified with a religion; seven identified as Christian and two identified as Catholic. Of the nine participants who identified with a religion, only three identified as a committed practicing follower of their religion. All participants identified as not being married; five identified as not being in a relationship, four identified as being in a relationship, and one identified as being in a relationship and cohabitating.

When participants were asked if you need to be married to have sex, five of the ten participants agreed and five disagreed. The five participants who

agreed commonly stated that sex should wait till marriage, sex is something special, and sex should only be between a husband and wife. For example, one participant stated,

I feel that sexual intercourse is something that should be shared with one person who you are married to. I believe that premarital sex is something that isn't right and causes issues. As a Christian I was taught that you need to wait until marriage and that it is something special you need to share with your spouse and nobody else (Participant #2, personal communication, March 2014).

However, another five participants who disagreed commonly stated that sex is a natural desire, sex can be done outside of marriage, and sex can be shared with a person who is not your spouse. For example, one participant reported,

In my opinion I don't think you have to be married to have sex because I feel that marriage would be the next step. Although sex is sacred and is something that is meaningful that you share with another person; I feel if you've been dating the person for awhile and you feel like the time is right, then it's okay to have sex. I guess I was brought up that I didn't have to wait to get married to have sex, it was okay to do it before (Participant #5, personal communication, March 2014).

When participants were asked about engaging in co-habitation prior to marriage, five of the ten participants were not in favor of co-habitation, four were

in favor of it, and one was neither not in favor of it nor in favor of it. The five participants who were not in favor of co-habitation commonly stated that you should not live with someone before marriage, you won't get married if you move in with your boyfriend, and you should make a commitment to get married first before moving in together. For example, one participant stated,

I don't think a couple should live together before they are married. I feel that if they do, they won't ever get married. It might lead to disappointment. Plus moving in should be part of marriage. It's also a special thing (Participant #1, personal communication, March 2014).

However, the four participants who were in favor of co-habitation commonly stated that co-habitation is a good thing and that co-habitation allows you to get to know your partner better before getting marriage. For example, one participant reported,

I am perfectly fine with co-habitation; in fact I would suggest co-habitation before getting married. It's important to make sure that you can handle the bad things about your significant other, and these characteristics often come out when living with another individual (Participant #7, personal communication, March 2014).

When participants were asked if you need to be married to have a family, nine of the ten participants agreed and one participant disagreed. The nine participants who agreed commonly stated that this is traditional, demonstrates

commitment and stability, and is the proper way. For example, one participant stated,

Now and days in society, people make it seem like its okay to have a family without being married. Although I feel that it is okay to have sex before getting married, I do think you should be married before having a family. I feel if you know you are going to spend the rest of your life with that person then mine as well get married. I guess I feel like it's a tradition to get married, buy a house then have a family (Participant #5, personal communication, March 2014).

The one participant who disagreed stated,

Absolutely not! I think we live in progressive times and it is not necessary to be married to have a family. Nowadays single women can go to the sperm bank and have their own child or adopt a baby on their own. I think that's proof enough one doesn't have to be married to have child who becomes a productive member of society (Participant #7, personal communication, March 2014).

When participants were asked if divorce should be an option in a marriage, eight of the ten participants agreed divorce should be an option and two disagreed. The eight participants who agreed commonly stated that divorce can be an option if you are being abused, if there is infidelity, and if you are unhappy. For example, one participant stated,

A divorce should only be an option if there is infidelity and/or physical or verbal abuse. First of all, the Bible says infidelity is the only sin that should/could cause a divorce if the spouse does not feel he/she can forgive and move on. Any form of abuse is damaging to a person's mind and spirit and for those reasons, it should not be tolerated under any circumstance (Participant #9, personal communication, March 2014).

However, the two participants who disagreed commonly stated that divorce should not be an option because you made a commitment and must work through the problems. For example, one participant reported,

I personally don't believe in divorce. I think if you got married to the person you made a commitment. I think if you are married you need to work together and keep the promise you made. I think marriage should be a onetime thing to one person (Participant #2, personal communication, March 2014).

When participants were asked about same sex marriage, four of the ten participants did not agree of same sex marriage, five participants agreed, and one participant neither disagreed nor agreed. The four participants who did not agree of same sex marriage commonly stated that it is wrong and the bible states marriage is between a man and woman. For example, one participant stated,

I do not believe in same sex marriage. That was not God's intention when he created man and woman. Marriage is intended to be

between a man and a woman. The Bible calls it a sin against the body and it is not to be condoned (Participant #10, personal communication, March 2014).

However, the five participants who did agree commonly stated that it is an individual's choice, that they should get married if it makes them happy, and that they don't have anything against it. For example, one participant reported,

I think that same sex marriage is an individual's choice, just like abortion is, so who are we to deny anyone of that choice. People should live the way they want, to an extent, and I do not think they should be denied true love (Participant #8, personal communication, March 2014).

When participants were asked if a relationship between religion and marriage exists, all ten participants said yes. The ten participants in agreement commonly stated that religion is important in a marriage, God makes a marriage stronger, you get married in a church, bible teaches us about marriage, and that marriage is a religious tradition. For example, one participant stated,

Yes the Bible says in Ecclesiastes 4:12, "Though one may be overpowered by another, two can withstand him. And a threefold cord is not quickly broken." If you put God at the center of your marriage you will be strong and the trials that come against you, you will withstand because not only do you have your spouse on

your side but more importantly, God is in the middle (Participant #10, personal communication, March 2014).

Another participant reported,

I think religion is very important in a marriage. As a Christian, I think that I should marry a Christian. A religious person being with a non-religious person can make the other fall short and lose their relationship with the Lord. I think a couple should help each other grow in their walk with the lord. I think religion can help make a marriage stronger (Participant #2, personal communication, March 2014).

When participants were asked if they would like to be married some day, nine of the ten participants said yes. The nine participants in agreement commonly stated that they want someone special to spend the rest of their life with, want someone to share their life with, want to have a family, and want to have a commitment with someone. For example, one participant reported,

I do want to be married to someone one day. I want the wedding, the commitment to another individual, and the responsibilities of being married. I want to be the first one called when something happens, I want to share the simple things like a bank account, a last name, a bed. Some of these things that cannot be with just co-habitation. I want to find that love that lasts a life time (Participant #8, personal communication, March 2014).

Another participant stated,

I would want to be married some day. I would like to have that person to share life with, to be my best friend, to talk, to pray, to travel. Someone that will be a person who balances me out, who is strong where I am weak and where I can be strong where he is weak. I want to be married to have someone special to spend rest of life with, want to share my life with someone, want to have a family, and want to have a commitment with someone (Participant #9, personal communication, March 2014).

Summary

Chapter four presented the results of this study. Basic demographics of the sample of this study were briefly described. Responses of each question on the interview guide were extracted from the interviews and presented in the analyzed data of each question.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

Introduction

This study explored single women's views towards the institution of marriage. This chapter presents the key findings of this qualitative study. The limitations of this study and recommendations for social work practice, policy, and future research are discussed. Last, this chapter concludes with a summary.

Discussion

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore single women's views towards the institution of marriage. This qualitative study found that women's liberal and conservative views towards premarital sex, cohabitation, non-marital childbearing, divorce, and same sex marriage, did not affect a women's desire to enter the institution of marriage. Furthermore, this study found that women exhibited both liberal and conservative views, regardless of religiosity. Last, this study found that women commonly exhibited the traditional view of marrying prior to starting a family, regardless if women accepted engaging in behaviors such as premarital sex and cohabitation.

The finding that women desire to marry is consistent with previous research demonstrating that women still value and hold a commitment to marriage (Thornton & Young-DeMarco, 2001) and inconsistent with previous research demonstrating that some women have abandoned the institution of

marriage altogether (Edin, Kefalas, & Red, 2006). The finding of religion not influencing women's views is consistent with previous research demonstrating that many women do not draw on religion to make decisions and only discuss religion as an importance to their life but do not put it into practice in their decision making process(Sigalow, Bergey, & Shain, 2012)

The finding that women accept divorce is consistent with previous research demonstrating the probability of a first marriage reaching its 20th anniversary being 52% for women in 2006-2010 (Copen, Daniels, Vespa, & Mosher, 2012) and women believing they will unlikely stayed married to their spouse for a lifetime (Thornton & Young-DeMarco, 2001). The finding that women accept same-sex marriage is consistent with previous research demonstrating that women are more accepting of same-sex marriage (Brumbaugh, Sanchez, Nock, & Wright, 2008) and that women's attitudes have been liberalized over the past years from disapproving same-sex marriage in 1988 to approving of it in 2006 (Baunach, 2011).

The finding that women do not agree with out-of-wedlock childbearing is not consistent with previous research demonstrating that women believe they should have children regardless of their marital status (Cherlin, Cross-Barnet, Burton, & Garret-Peters, 2008) and women viewing out-of-wedlock childbearing as an alternative lifestyle (Thornton & Young-DeMarco, 2001).

The finding that women accept premarital sex is consistent with previous research demonstrating the rise of women having sexual relationships from 3.0%

in 1982 to 11% in 2006-2010 (Copen, Daniels, Vespa, & Mosher, 2012) and some women not viewing premarital sex as wrong (Thornton & Young-DeMarco, 2001). The finding that women do not accept cohabitation is consistent with previous research demonstrating that cohabitation has increasingly become the co-residential union (Copen, Daniels, Vespa, & Mosher, 2012) and that women actively support cohabitation to test the relationship (Thornton & Young-DeMarco, 2001).

The traditional views exhibited in this study could have been due to the participant's ethnicity. Majority of participants of this study identified as Mexican American. The Mexican American culture holds traditional views such as marrying prior to having children and living with your significant other. The traditional views exhibited were due to four of the participants being practicing committed followers of their religion. The values learned in church played an influence on a minority of participant's who had conservative views towards premarital sex, cohabitation, unmarried childbearing, divorce, and same sex marriage.

Limitations

This study was intended to obtain an in-depth understanding of single women's views towards the institution of marriage. However, this study had several limitations, such as, having a tiny sample size of ten women. Interviewing participants for this study who only resided in San Bernardino County was also a limitation. Another limitation of this study were the participants age; majority of

participants were 25 years of age and younger, whereas only a few participants were over 25 years of age. Last, the wording of certain questions on the interview guide served as limitation for this study.

Recommendations for Social Work Practice, Policy and Research

The significance of this study for social work is for social workers to have a better understanding of the diverse views and behaviors of unmarried women. The findings of this study will enhance social workers awareness of women's preferred lifestyles and assist social workers in diminishing the stigma associated. Since stereotypes of single women still exist in today's society, this study should assist social workers in overlooking these stereotypes and recognizing how women themselves are delaying as well as refusing to be married.

Social workers should also be aware and competent of cultural differences when working with unmarried women. Therefore, it is imperative for social workers to be aware of women's preferred lifestyle amongst women as well as respect unmarried women's behaviors. Furthermore, social workers will be aware of micro services to provide to unmarried women; this includes providing resources in family planning and women's health, such as annual women exams, birth control, pregnancy testing, HIV/AIDS testing, and STD screening. It is recommended for future research to be conducted as to why single women have the desire to marry.

Conclusions

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore single women's towards the institution of marriage. The following components of the institution of marriage were explored: pre-marital sex, cohabitation, unmarried childbearing, divorce, and same-sex marriage. The snowball sample of this study consisted of ten single women from San Bernardino County. Each interview was audio taped; interviews were transcribed verbatim and analyzed by this researcher.

This study found that women's liberal and conservative views towards premarital sex, cohabitation, non-marital childbearing, divorce, and same sex marriage, did not affect women's desire to enter the institution of marriage. Furthermore, this study found that women exhibited both liberal and conservative views, regardless of religiosity. Last, this study found that woman commonly exhibited the traditional view of marrying prior to starting a family, regardless if women accepted engaging in behaviors such as premarital sex and cohabitation.

The significance of this study for social work is for social workers to have a better understanding of the diverse views and behaviors of unmarried women. The findings of this study will enhance social workers awareness of women's preferred lifestyles and assist social workers in diminishing the stigma associated. Since stereotypes of single women still exist in today's society, this study should assist social workers in overlooking these stereotypes and recognizing how women themselves are delaying as well as refusing to be married.

The findings of this study suggest social worker's need to enhance awareness of women's preferred lifestyles and assist social workers in diminishing the stigma associated with unmarried women. Furthermore, social workers need to be aware of micro services to provide to unmarried women; this includes providing resources in family planning and women's health such as annual women exams, birth control, pregnancy testing, HIV/AIDS testing, and STD screening. It is recommended for future research to be conducted as to why single women have the desire to marry.

APPENDIX A
INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. In regards to your upbringing, what were you taught about marriage?
2. Do you think you need to be married to have sex? Can you tell me your reasons as to why or why not?
3. Can you tell me what you think about engaging in co-habitation prior to marriage?
4. Do you think you need to be married to have a family? Can you tell me your reasons as to why or why not?
5. Do you think Divorce should be an option in a marriage? Can you tell me your reasons as to why or why not?
6. Can you tell me what you think about same-sex marriage?
7. Do you think there is a relationship between religion and marriage? If you think this relationship exists or not, can you please explain why?
8. Would you want to be married some day? Can you tell me your reasons as to why or why not?

Developed by Natalie Yorba-Perez

APPENDIX B
INFORMED CONSENT

Informed Consent

This study will examine the views single women have toward the institution of marriage. This study is being conducted by Natalie Yorba-Perez, a social work graduate student, of California State University, San Bernardino under the supervision of Dr. Janet Chang, professor at California State University, San Bernardino. This study has been approved by the School of Social Work Sub-Committee of the Institutional Review-Board, California State University, San Bernardino.

In this study you will be asked to respond to several questions in regards to the institution of marriage. The interview should take approximately 20-30 minutes to complete.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may decline to answer any question in this study as well as withdraw from this study at any time without penalty. The interview you are about to partake in will be recorded using an audio recording device. The recorded interview will only be analyzed by this researcher for the sole purpose of this study. Please be assured your responses will be anonymous. No identifying information will be recorded with your responses.

Upon completion of the interview, you will be given a debriefing statement describing the study in great detail. Please know that there will be no long term or short term risks associated with participation in this study. You will be compensated with a \$5 gift card to Starbucks for your participation.

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please feel free to contact Dr. Janet Chang, Ph.D., through telephone at (909) 537-5184 and/or via-email at jchang@csusb.edu. You may access the results of this study after December 1, 2014, at the Pfau Library located at California State University, San Bernardino.

By placing a check in the box below and dating this form, I acknowledge that I have been informed of, and understand, the nature and purpose of this study, and freely consent to participate voluntarily. By consenting, I also acknowledge that I am at least 18 years of age.

I have read, understood, and consent to participate in this study.
Today's Date: _____

I consent to have my interview audio recorded.
Today's Date: _____

APPENDIX C
DEBRIEFING STATEMENT

Debriefing Statement

The study you have just complete was designed to investigate the views toward the institution of marriage amongst single women. The interview questions were designed to gain a deeper and rich understanding about the subject. This researcher is particularly interested in studying what are the views single women have toward the institution of marriage.

If any aspect of this study has caused you any emotional distress, please contact Dr. Janet Chang, professor at California State University, San Bernardino, by telephone at (909) 537-5184 and/or via-email at jchang@csusb.edu. The results of this study will be available after December 1, 2014, at John M. Pfau Library located at California State University, San Bernardino. Thank you for your time and participation in this study and for not discussing the nature of this study with other participants.

APPENDIX D
DEMOGRAPHIC FORM

Demographic Form

To record your answer, please fill in the blank when prompted to do so or circle the appropriate answer that reflects your response.

1. Please state your age: _____
2. Please state your sex: _____
3. Please state your ethnicity: _____
4. Do you identify with a religion?
 - A.) Yes
 - B.) No

If you have answered No, please skip to question # 7.
5. What religion do you identify with? _____
6. Are you currently a practicing committed follower of your religion?

7. Marital Status:
 - A.) Not married, not in a relationship
 - B.) Not married, in a relationship
 - C.) Not married, in a relationship and cohabitating

APPENDIX E
RECRUITMENT FLYER

Are you a female?

Are you at least 18 years of age?

Are you currently not married?

If you have answered yes to the above questions, please participate in a study that is exploring Single Women's Views Toward the Institution of Marriage.

You will be compensated for your time and participation in this study

If interested, please contact Natalie Yorba-Perez, researcher of this study through telephone at:

(909) 525-5425

and/or via e-mail at:

yorbapen@coyote.csusb.edu

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