Notice of the Final Oral Examination
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

of

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MSc (University of Victoria, 2015)
BSc (University of Victoria, 2014)

“All the Lonely People? A Belongingness Perspective on the
Stigmatization and Well-Being of Single People”

Department of Psychology

Tuesday, June 30, 2020
10:00 A.M.
Conducted Remotely

Supervisory Committee:
Dr. Danu Stinson, Department of Psychology, University of Victoria (Co-Supervisor)
Dr. John Sakaluk, Department of Psychology, UVic (Co-Supervisor)
Dr. Elisabeth Gugl, Department of Economics, UVic (Outside Member)

External Examiner:
Dr. Yuthika Girme, Department of Psychology, Simon Fraser University

Chair of Oral Examination:
Dr. Karen Kobayashi, Department of Sociology, UVic

Dr. David Capson, Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies
Abstract

Due to the cultural preoccupation with romantic love and marriage, little is known about single people (i.e., singles) except that they tend to be stigmatized and to exhibit worse well-being relative to married people. However, these conclusions are largely based on research which has centered the experiences of married people, not singles. Consequently, it remains unclear to what extent singles are actually suffering—that is, to what extent they feel like members of a stigmatized group, as well as to what extent the absence of a romantic bond is responsible for singles’ relatively poorer well-being. Thus, the purpose of this dissertation is twofold: 1) to determine the extent to which singles feel as though they belong to a stigmatized group, and 2) to determine the extent to which singles’ interpersonal relationships may buffer their sense of belonging and well-being. Given the negative cultural attitudes towards singles, I expect that most singles will have a relatively low level of group belonging. Yet, at the same time, I expect that some singles will still be able to meet their belongingness needs through their close interpersonal relationships (i.e., friendships), and that these bonds may support their well-being during singlehood. Consequently, I propose that, on average, singles may exhibit poorer wellbeing compared to married people, not necessarily because they lack a sense of interpersonal belonging but because they lack a sense of group belonging. Obtaining a more accurate account of singles’ experiences of stigmatization and well-being is essential for identifying the factors that lead to both vulnerability and resiliency in this population. By centering singles’ experiences and applying a belongingness perspective, my research will illuminate multiple pathways to well-being.