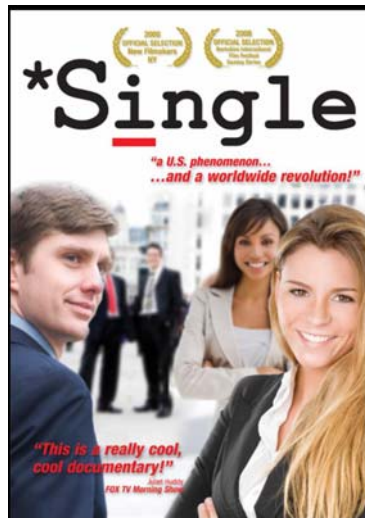


# DISCUSSION GUIDE

# Single

a documentary film

[www.singlefilm.com](http://www.singlefilm.com)



Written, Produced and Directed by  
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Distributed by Osiris Entertainment, Inc.

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## \* The Documentary

100 million adults in America are single\* and for the first time ever, the majority of US households are headed by an unmarried person.

The simple explanation is that we marry later, divorce a lot, and live longer. But there's more to it than that.

Life today is more complex, intense, and demanding. As a result, finding and maintaining a lasting relationship has become even more challenging.

Told through a cast of entertaining and thought provoking experts, comics, singers/songwriters, and "real" people, "Single" explores the growth of the unmarried population and shares insights and observations about the complexities of finding and maintaining a relationship in today's crazy world.

*\*Note from the filmmakers:*

*By definition, this documentary uses the term "single" to mean legally "unmarried," although the filmmakers appreciate that there are other terms and domestic arrangements that individuals may identify themselves with.*

## \* How to Use This Guide

The companion guide for *Single – a documentary film* provides discussion activities designed to engage learners in discussion of timely and universal issues covered in the film such as shifting demographics, changing social mores, diverse lifestyle choices, and the complexities of personal relationships between the sexes.

Designed to be as comprehensive and informative as possible, this guide can be used in its entirety as an in-depth unit of study or individual sections can stand alone as learning extensions after watching the film. An alternative to showing the whole film is using clips that correlate with individual issues, broken down by chapters on the dvd. Specific sections can be discussed as groups and shared with other groups.

Allowing each participant to write down what they hope to gain from the discussion can steer the direction of the meeting. In fact, answering questions and writing down ideas about the topic before watching the film, provides great discussion material after the film. Audiences can discuss their preconceptions, and perhaps misconceptions, and compare them to new knowledge they acquire from watching the film.

After viewing the film, or clips from the film, give students the opportunity to share their reactions and questions. Use the movie discussion guide to facilitate critical discussion of the film.

If you have questions or would like additional support, please contact the filmmakers at [info@gopicturesandfilms.com](mailto:info@gopicturesandfilms.com)

## \* Discussion Guide Objectives

- To introduce discussion and analysis of the evolving changes in demographics and social mores in our society
- To engage viewers in discussion of challenges and opportunities that are different from generations past that are impacting our lifestyle and relationship choices

## \* Target Audience

This guide is designed primarily for college and post-graduate students, as well as adult learners. It can be used in social studies classes, family history classes, and some psychology classes or as a stand-alone learning opportunity.

This guide can also be used in community settings, such as film festivals, house party screenings, or group meetings.

## \* Discussion Questions

### General

- What was the film really about?
- Do the filmmakers present information in a way that is interesting and insightful, and if so, how do they achieve this?
- When the filmmakers present a debatable issue, do they give proper consideration to all sides the debate?
- How has the film changed your interest in the subject matter?
- What surprised you?
- What specific themes did the filmmakers successfully bring to light?
- In reviewing the film in its defined “chapters,” which themes do you think are most relevant and represent the most influential for the current generation?
- Which experts did you most relate to and why? Which comments and insights stand out?
- Which “real” singles in the film did you relate with or disagree with most? What comments and insights stand out? To what extent did they remind you of yourself or someone you know?
- Did viewing this film lead to a new understanding or awareness of some aspect of your life you might not have thought about before?
- Have any of your beliefs, values, or understandings of lifestyle and relationship choices changed after watching this film? In what ways?

- What person or people in your life would you want to share this film with and why?

### **Single Stats & Facts**

- According to the Census Bureau, 100 million adults in the US are single and for the first time ever, the majority of US households are headed by an unmarried person. What are the possible implications?
- The US Center for Disease Control reports that nearly 40% of US babies are born out of wedlock (ironically the highest rate is in the US *Virgin Islands* at 70.8%). What are the possible implications?
- The US Census Bureau reports that 44% of the total American workforce is unmarried. What impact, if any, would this have on workplace dynamics, business relationships, and employee benefits?
- According to the US Census Bureau, 86 – 90% of Americans will get married at least once in their lifetimes. Do you think that percentage will rise or fall in the future and why?
- The divorce rate is the lowest it's been since the 1970's. Do you think education and the delay in getting married has influenced this decline? What else may be an influence?

### **The Evolution of Women**

- How has the evolution of women over the last 20-30 years impacted lifestyle choices – for both women and men?
- As women account for the majority of undergraduates and post graduates today, how do you think this will affect the job market, careers, and earning potential of women – and men – in the future?
- As women are delaying marriage, or are not able to find a suitable mate or forgoing marriage and parenthood by choice, what impact will this have on society?
- The only constant that doesn't change is a woman's "biological clock." How does it influence the timing and selection of a suitable long term partner? Is there an optimal time to make a decision?
- What personal and social factors do you think go into choosing single parenthood and how do you feel about it? How do you think society opinions have evolved about it?
- One expert in the film points out that, as recently as the 1980 census, women who were highly educated and/or successful in their careers were far less likely to get married than women with the same achievements today. What has changed?

- One expert in the film points out that parents encourage their daughters to do well in school, pursue their dreams – and in the next breath ask them when they are they getting married. Why do you think parents ask this question and how might it influence an individual's decision making?
- One expert jokes that because women have become more self-sufficient, "men are becoming perilously close to becoming pets." What do you think he meant by that remark?

### **Stigmas & Stereotypes**

- Do you think people are able to fully live a lifestyle the way they choose or are there societal pressures that influence behavior?
- Can you name some traditional stigmas and stereotypes of people who are unmarried / uncoupled? Why do you think they existed in previous generations and to what extent do they still exist today? Are there now new stigmas? What damage is caused by stigma and stereotyping?
- What stigmas and stereotypes are likely to persist?
- What did you think about the way the "real" singles in the film describe the stigma and stereotyping they experience? Are they representative?
- Is there still an expectation or pressure to bring a date to certain social event like a wedding? What kind of social dynamics are in play at the "the singles table?" How might feelings differ for people seated at the "singles table" in their 20's, 30's, 40's and older?
- To what extent is current day "political correctness" masking what individuals really think or say about those who are single after a certain age – or about any other minority demographic group?

### **Who Said It Was Easy?**

- Is it possible to be single and live a full satisfying life? Would your answer differ by gender or age? What are the advantages / disadvantages of being single?
- One of the experts in the film notes that marriage was primarily created as an economic and legal institution – and "once you make the reason for marriage about love instead of around the interests of property and family, then people will choose to leave a marriage or not marry at all unless they find true love." What are your thoughts on this?
- What obstacles (whether real or perceived) do you think exist in finding and maintaining a long term relationship and how well do you think the filmmakers explore this in the film?
- Media and Hollywood tend to elevate beauty, perfection, and narcissism in relationships. How do their messages influence us in our partner selection and in how we conduct our relationships? What really counts in a relationship?

- One of the social experts in the film thinks that men's interest in internet pornography and women's interest in romantic books, soaps and reality shows are "cries of despair" – each wondering why they can't have that in their real life. What are your thoughts on this?
- In your opinion, what are the pros and cons of online dating and social networking for 1) dating 2) procuring sex and 3) finding a long term relationship? How would your online criteria for social interaction be different in your 20s, in middle age, and in your senior years?
- The filmmakers review the impact of technology and the fast pace of life on personal relationships. How well do they explore these phenomena and what are your personal thoughts on this?
- Experts in the film contend that new technology and the pace of life have reduced our attention spans and diminished our ability to build and maintain personal relationships? What are your thoughts on this?
- As women get older, the pool of eligible men to choose from shrinks – primarily because men tend to date and / or marry younger women. What do you think about this? Why do you think men traditionally prefer to date younger women? Is the ability to breed hard wired into the male psyche?

### **Chemistry & Commitment**

- Do you think people are hesitant to commit to one person for the rest of their lives?
- An expert in the film reviews the "chemistry of a relationship" and explains a biological reason for the "seven year itch." and the influence of the "bonding chemical." What are your thoughts on this research?
- Can people really change who they are over time and learn how to compromise for the benefit of a relationship?
- Why do you think more couples choose to live together either as a pre-cursor to or a substitute to marriage? How is a cohabitation relationship different from a committed marriage? Do you think both parties get what they want out of a cohabiting relationship?
- How important is it to formalize a relationship with a legal marriage contract?

### **\* Additional Discussion Activities**

- Host a screening of "Single" outside of the classroom with one or more people who are from a different generation or relationship status than you (ie, your parents, grandparents, single, married, divorced or widowed friends) and write an essay on what topics resonated most for them, what they learned from the film, and how their opinions and perspectives about the topics differ from yours.

- Pick a particular chapter from the film and write an essay response, create an original video clip (not using content from the film, which is copyrighted) and share with your classmates for discussion.
- Music selections from the film, "Single" are available on the dvd. The music heard in a film is carefully chosen to fit the theme, mood, and/or particular scene of the film. Listen to the songs "Black Boots," "Too Many Men," "Get Up," and "Highway" and discuss how the lyrics tie in with the subject matter of the film. What other popular songs that you know of would fit the theme or topics in the film?
- Review the iChannel television segment on the "Bonus Features" section of the dvd, which includes the filmmakers participating in a panel session discussing topics from "Single." Discuss why you agree or disagree with the insights and opinions of the panel members.

### **\* Feedback to the Filmmakers**

The filmmakers welcome your feedback and comments about this documentary. Please feel free to send us your comments about the film and the results of your discussion session to [info@gopicturesandfilms.com](mailto:info@gopicturesandfilms.com)

## \* About "Single"

Commercially released in Sept 2009, "Single" is an independent feature documentary film which explores the growth of the unmarried population and the complexities of finding and maintaining a lasting relationship in today's crazy world. 100 million adults in the America are single and for the first time ever, the majority of US households are headed by an unmarried person.

Called "brilliantly done" by NY film critic Tiffanie Greene and "a very cool, cool documentary" by Juliet Huddy on Fox TV, "Single" is available on DVD and via digital download at [BarnesandNoble.com](http://BarnesandNoble.com) (a recently selected "Pick of the Week"), [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com), [Netflix.com](http://Netflix.com), [Blockbuster.com](http://Blockbuster.com), [TurnerClassicMovies.com](http://TurnerClassicMovies.com) and other online and offline retailers.

Official selection of the 2008 Berkshire International Film Festival Sunday Series and the 2008 NY New Filmmakers Summer Series.

Written, Directed and Produced by Richard Atkinson and Jane Scandurra/Go Pictures and Films, LLC; Distributed by Osiris Entertainment, Inc.

The academic and expert members of the cast include:

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Professor, Evergreen State College, WA  
Director of Research and Public Education for the Council on Contemporary Families  
Author of "Marriage, a History," "The Way We Never Were," "The Way We Really Are," "The Social Origins of Private Life," and "American Families – A Multi-Cultural Reader"
- Bella DePaulo, Ph.D.  
Social Scientist  
Author of "Singled Out," "Single With Attitude," and "Behind the Door of Deceit"
- Bruce Forester, MD, PC, FACP  
Psychiatrist and Mystery Writer  
Author of "Fatal Betrayal," "In Strict Confidence," "Signs and Omens," and "Fatal Memory"
- Peter Francese  
Demographic Trends Analyst, Ogilvy & Mather  
Co-author (with Lorraine Merrill) of "Communities and Consequences"  
Founder and Publisher of American Demographic Magazine.
- Andrew Hacker  
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