

SINGLEHOOD FROM INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIAL PERSPECTIVES

EDITED BY **KATARZYNA ADAMCZYK**



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Preface

In Poland there is a proverb which could be translated as “every monster will find its devotee”. Despite the optimism expressed in the saying, in Europe and the United States the number of single persons has risen substantially in the past decades, and this trend will likely continue in these regions (Poortman & Liefbroer, 2010). This trend is also clearly evident in Poland (Such-Pyrgiel, 2014). Naturally, neither the phenomenon of the single life nor the interest it arouses among researchers and journalists is anything new (Żurek, 2008). For instance in 1937 a biweekly entitled *The Lone Observer* (*Samotny Obserwator*) aimed at single people started being published in Poland. The magazine’s intention was not to promote single life, nor to counteract it by means of “matrimonial propaganda” as the editors believed such issues to be too private, in most cases independent of the individual’s own will, and for many – a necessary evil (Gajda, 1987). Instead, in their articles the editors encouraged the readers to share their observations and reflection concerning single people’s life, including the advantages and disadvantages of singlehood (Gajda, 1987).

The magazine does not exist anymore but the role of single life observers has been assumed by researchers representing various scientific disciplines. Those researchers, who are experts in the field of single life research, were invited to contribute texts devoted to different aspects of single life. And so, in Chapter 1 *From families to individuals, from spinsters to singles, from parents to childfree. Demographic and economic perspectives on changes in family formation patterns* Krzysztof Tymicki focuses on the presentation of the demographic and economic perspective on changes in family formation patterns. These changes are presented as a consequence of technological and social advancements resulting in a transformation of a society based on families, to a society based on individuals engaged in the labour market. The chapter addresses the issue of changes in family formation patterns by exploring such areas as: process of partner selection, union formation and childbearing. The conclusion contains discussion of future trends in family formation patterns and long-term social and economic consequences of the presented changes.

Chapter 2 *Being single as a result of failures in building a relationship?* by Julita Czernecka explains why young Polish people decide to be single. This

chapter is a part of qualitative research about social circumstances of singlehood in Poland. The main goal in those research was to identify the reasons for being alone, which the respondents were aware of. This article focuses on aspect of being single as a result of failures in building a nest. The author presents different problems: difficulties in relationships with the opposite sex, unequal involvement in building a relationship, high expectations of potential partners and infidelity and abandonment as a reasons to being single. Furthermore it describes other aspects of singlehood associated with unfulfilled love, not ready to set up home and a rest after living together as a couple. The article presents also a typology of singles based on those research.

In chapter 3 *Polish singles – between family life and independence* Aldona Żurek indicates that systematic studies dedicated to learning more about Polish singles have a short history. Therefore, among social scientists, there is no consensus on how to define this social category. There is a general agreement that the single is an unmarried person. But among other factors, such as age, household type, local environment, self-awareness of being single or voluntariness of being single aroused many disputes and polemics. In so far conducted empirical studies, a picture emerges in which the single is a person who value a personal freedom, independence, privacy and living alone. Polish singles are neither spoiled nor form tribal structures. They maintain, however, a wide variety of social ties, which have various strength and content. The most important social environments for them are friends and family circles. Each of these fields performs a different function to singles. Relatives fulfill the need for social security. Friends – emotional needs and the quality of spending free time. Life strategies of Polish singles combine two trends. Protection of the independence and the privacy, with desire to gain assistance from informal social structures.

In chapter 4 *Partnership market and partner's finding strategies. Matrimonial and procreational plans of singles in the light of economic theory of human behavior* by Gary Stanley Becker Małgorzata Such-Pyrgiel shows single lifestyle in the aspect of the theory of this famous noblest. The Becker's marriage conception, family and procreation treats about the possibility of usage the logic structures of modern economical theory to explain people's behavior and actions in marriage and family as the social institutions. In this chapter economical theory of partner choice was presented, in light of matrimonial market connected with matrimonial decisions of rational items considering economical conditions of modern singles. Theoretical consideration was proved also by the results of her own research. They concerning mainly creating decisions

of singles in matter of marriage and motherhood and other conditions such as the age, the sex, education, type of their place of living, accommodation status, income, political opinions. The source of this consideration was the book of mentioned previously nobelist entitled “Economics theory of human behavior” from 1990, translated by Helena and Krzysztof Hegemejer.

The purpose of the chapter 5 *Socio-cultural gender of single men and women as conditioning factor of attitude towards single life* Emilia Paprzycka was to have a closer look at Polish single men and women and characterising this group with the assumption of similarities and/or differences of experience among men and women living on their own. The results of qualitative and quantitative research in which the concept of socio-cultural gender constituted both specific research tool and analytical perspective have been referred to. The text preparation has been based on the thesis that changing patterns of femininity and masculinity favour making decisions about playing gender roles which differ from the traditional ones and creating one’s own biography dependent on current individual needs. The idea that diversity and variety of available femininity patterns encourages differentiation of biographical experience within groups determined by biological gender has also accompanied writing this text. It has been assumed that people whose socio-cultural gender is formed with reference to traditional models of femininity and masculinity are not so much interested in an alternative form of family life such as single life and are going to be satisfied with it more rarely than people with less traditional gender identity. Theoretical and methodological assumptions of research which the analyses come from have been presented in the first three subchapters. The contents of the following subchapters have been organised on the basis of dependence between the type of socio-cultural gender and the attitude towards single life. They show characteristics of single men and women through statistical data as well as individual biographical experience in the typological view.

In chapter 6 *Do you take this marriage? Perceived choice over marital status affects the stereotypes of single and married people*, Wendy L. Morris and Brittany K. Osburn indicate that although remaining single is more common than it once was, singles continue to be perceived more negatively than their married peers (DePaulo & Morris, 2006). It has been argued that the negative stereotypes of singles are a result of a widely accepted ideology of marriage and family which depicts marriage as the key to a meaningful and fulfilling life (DePaulo & Morris, 2005; Morris, DePaulo, Hertel, & Taylor, 2008). This chapter presents the results of an experiment which tested whether singles are

perceived more positively if they embrace that ideology than if they reject it. Seventy-one participants (35 men and 36 women) rated descriptions of three different people – a married person, a single person who wanted to marry, and a single person who chose to remain single. As predicted, singles who chose to remain single were perceived as less well-adjusted and more self-centered than singles who wanted to marry or people who were already married. Although singles who supported the ideology of marriage and family by wanting to marry were perceived more positively than singles who did not, they were still not perceived quite as positively as married people. Singles who want to marry are perceived somewhat positively for sharing the highly valued goal of marriage but also somewhat negatively because they have not achieved that goal. People may assume that those who have failed to marry have personality flaws which make them less desirable to potential partners. However, making the choice to remain single brings with it even more negative impressions due to the rejection of the highly valued institution of marriage.

Chapter 7 *Do Polish never-married singles feel stigmatized?* by Dominika Ochnik and Eugenia Mandal underlines the meaning of stigmatization from psychological perspective. Singlehood is a very important social phenomenon. However the dissemination of single lifestyle is clearly noticeable, it is still related to stigmatization. Stigmatization can be described in two basic dimensions: external (public and structural stigma) and internal (self-stigma). There are given examples of public stigmatization (negative stereotypization) and strategic stigmatization (legitimization) of single people. In the chapter authors are analyzing the individual's perspective on stigmatization. The authors are proposing a new method "The Feeling of Stigmatization of Singles Questionnaire", that turn out to be highly reliably tool. The results show that Polish never-married singles feel stigmatized. The feeling of stigmatization is related to certain stigma conditions. Polish never-married singles after 30 years old who have had one or none previous long-term relationships, have been single for more than 2 years, have primary education, have lower self-esteem and do not perceive their singlehood as their own choice are exposed to the feeling of stigmatization the most.

Chapter 8 *Leisure activities of LGBT singles: tourist behavior in the context of individual attributes* by Adrian P. Lubowiecki-Vikuk presents leisure time behaviours of single people among whom tourism and active recreation play a vital role. It has previously been proven that the socio-demographic, spatial and economic factors essentially shape, and at the same time differentiate the level of participation in physical culture and tourism of people living alone

(Lubowiecki-Vikuk, 2011). The patterns of their sport behaviours generally do not differ from the overall Polish population, unlike in case of tourist behaviours. Male singles appreciate a lonely lifestyle even when undertaking tourist leisure activity. They travel alone and spend their free time in solitude more frequently than women who travel to learn about other cultures, customs, regions, so that when it comes to choosing a holiday destination, they take into account the wealth of attractions and tourist values that occur in a given spot. Aged singles travel alone mainly for health and work reasons, which is combined with active relaxation and making new friends. Meanwhile, younger singles spend their leisure time sailing, canoeing, horseback riding, windsurfing, paragliding, mountain climbing, scuba diving, skiing; they visit disco clubs and amusement parks. They organise their tourist trips independently, and their destinations are determined by the prevailing fad and the access to good for sports/recreational and tourist infrastructure. Frequent and long (domestic and foreign) tourist trips of better educated singles do not tend to be of solitary character. With a group of friends and acquaintances they actively spend their leisure time, and at the same time participate in various courses include learning foreign languages. In their free time, urban professionally active singles set on journeys abroad during which they practise water sports, horseback riding, paragliding, mountaineering, winter – skiing and in the summer – enjoy sunbathing. People living alone in smaller cities travel mainly to visit their families or do the shopping, whereas single individuals from the countryside travel on business. Of course, with the increase in their income, the rate of tourist activity increases. Considering singles with their attributes such as gender, age, education, socio-occupational group, place of residence, level of monthly net income allows us to gain better knowledge of Polish prosumer of free time services, which is far from the stereotypical image of a single. Sexual orientation is another factor which has been taken into account.

Many researchers (e.g., Boyd & Bee, 2008) indicate that contemporary research should include new phenomena in the area of affectionate bonds, including singlehood. Therefore, the present book constitutes a response to the pressing need for studies of the single life. The need for further research into and discussion of singlehood follows among others from the fact that most people want to find a life partner and most of them succeed. Thus, the question still stands why—to paraphrase the proverb quoted earlier—not every monster finds its devotee and what the consequences can be of the lack of such devotees in our lives. Answers to these and other questions can

be found in the book that you are now holding in your hands. Single life is conditioned by various factors and we can get to know only some of them, but I believe that a scientific exploration of the phenomenon of singlehood is extremely important and that it also has a practical aspect to it.

At this point I would like to express special appreciation to our reviewers – Prof. dr hab. Anna Kwak, Professor Salvatore D’Amore, and Dr. Stéphanie Haxhe for their reviews. Their constructive comments and suggestions have helped improve the quality of the texts. I would also like to thank the reviewers for their kindness and support they provided during the preparation of the manuscript.

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Katarzyna Adamczyk

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CHAPTER 2

Being Single as a Result of Failures in Building a Relationship

Introduction

In postmodern concepts of love and relationships, “the here and now” seems most attractive for young people. It is not associated with any responsibility of being in a formalized relationship. A “here and now” relationship ends when it does not meet expectations – and popular guides teach not only how to lower the risk of failure, but also how to end a relationship with no harm or side-effects. The result of this superficial “skill acquisition” of love and new experiences in relationships is by no means a higher awareness of living together but “un-learning love” (Bauman, 2003). Such an interpretation can also be referred to singles that are trained in their inability to love.

Paradoxically, in a postmodern society the quality of marriage, relationships and family life have become one of the most important indicators of the quality of life. Since the 1960s, as sexual freedom grew, the level of satisfaction from the quality of relationships has decreased. It has resulted in higher expectations towards the partner and the relationship, which are supposed to provide, among other things, sexual satisfaction and a sense of a close emotional bond. These high expectations refer to the fact that people most often look for someone who would be an ideal soul-mate, i.e. someone who is emotionally close, gives a sense of unity, and someone who we could share our love, happiness and sadness with. At least on an ideological level, finding the “other half” has replaced all the previous reasons for getting married or being in long-term relationships (Trimberger, 2008). American studies

show that 94% of respondents aged 20–29 are searching for their soul-mate and 84% deeply believe that one day they will find them. The ideal of a soul-mate somehow legitimates single life, as searching for “the one” disqualifies the belief that you cannot live a satisfying life without a partner and that it is better to live with someone even if they are not ideal (Trimberger, 2008; DePaulo & Morris 2005). On the one hand, living without a partner means a lack of certain emotions, and is to some extent a symptom of failure in building a stable life (understood as marriage and family) and the inability to cope with the fear of loneliness. On the other hand, excessive concentration on oneself and your own needs, caring for your own satisfaction and safety, makes it impossible to compromise, something which is crucial for building stable intimate relationships (Bauman, 2003). Being active in building and keeping relationships has become a basic “skill” which we expect from our partners (Giddens, 2007). Behavior patterns and mental processes linked with sexual behaviors and emotional relationships have become volatile, and it has become difficult to identify what love actually is and is not. Men and women, to make a decision, must know in what relationships they want to participate, and which relationships will answer their emotional needs. When they subjectively stop feeling satisfied in a relationship (which is usually defined as degradation of quality of life), many people decide to leave their partner and to look for amusement in other, reconstructed relationship or on their own.

Living with someone means compromise and sacrifice and at least partially “surrendering yourself”. Therefore, whenever a new relationship begins, you must be absolutely positive that the relationship is worthwhile. In other words, people must make a conscientious analysis of the pros and cons. When such an investment in somebody is made, we mostly expect predictability, safety, support and other gains in return. If the value of a relationship begins to “decrease”, we end it, bearing in mind that contemporary promises of emotional involvement are of no meaning in the long-term. As long as people see an investment which is beneficial for them, and makes them feel safe and satisfied, they are willing to take the risk (Bauman, 2003). If not, they become singles.

Method

This article is a part of my research, which I’ve prepared for PhD dissertation. The first goal in my research it was to identify the reasons for being alone,

which the respondents were aware of. I was interested in which reasons they would state themselves.

Due to the ambiguous concept of “singlehood” I decided to define singles for this book as people who live in cities (of 500,000 citizens and more), who are not in stable relationships, do not have children and do not live alone due to an unexpected event (e.g. death of a spouse, disability). The selection of participants for the study was purposive. They were heterosexual people aged 25–40, because this is the age when people usually decide whether or not to set up home. This is also when they decide to pursue personal development, education and a professional career. The youngest respondents were 27 years old, the oldest was 41. There were 60 participants – 30 women and 30 men. The average age of those studied was close to 33. At the time of the interviews the respondents had not been in a relationship for at least two years (a stable relationship defined as being considered “serious” and “exclusive” by those involved), had never been married and had no children (but were not too old to potentially have them). The respondents were university or college graduates and were financially independent.

The participants of the study live in Poland, in cities of 500,000 people or more. The reason for choosing residents from big cities was that currently cities are the scene of many social and cultural changes, and because it was in big cities in the West that the biggest growth in the number of singles was noted. Studies conducted by van Hoorn show that the percentage of people who live alone is highest among people in metropolises, where they are generally well educated, with high incomes, and considered “achievers” (Hoorn, 2000).

The respondents were chosen based on the snowball method. This is a technique which is applied in studies on specific social categories, and singles can be counted as such. “The term snowball refers to the process of accumulation because every found person names the following ones” (Babbie, 2009). The analyzed material comes from 60 free-form interviews. Each interview lasted 40–90 minutes. The studies were finished in 2008.

In this article the quotations from respondents are signed with their name and age (e.g. Ewa, 30 – which means the respondent is 30 years old). I use also other symbols denote the experience the respondents have had in relationships: S – serious relationships, C – casual relationships, SC – serious and casual relationships, N – no experience in relationships.

Results

Unequal Involvement in Building a Relationship

When we spoke about reasons for living alone, singles often mentioned their unsuccessful attempts to find a partner, or negative experiences of living as a couple. Being in unsuccessful relationships, where the partners did not accept or understand each other's point of view, made some of the singles think that it was better to be alone than to be stuck in a relationship without a future. The participants of the study talked about their partners not being as involved in the relationship as they were. They admitted that their previous relationships had fallen apart because they had been the only ones to invest their time and emotions, and their partners at the time had been focused on their own needs. The respondents were convinced that they had often done everything they could to make their partners happy in the relationship but their partners were not satisfied with them wanting to build strong relationships.

The unequal involvement of the two parties in building their life together was, according to some of the singles, a result of different personalities and temperament. One of the men admitted that he had moved to a little town in a distant part of Poland for his fiancée at the time, and therefore he had had to give up a very good job which was a passion of his. He took a worse paid, uninteresting job just to make a living. Unfortunately his partner did not appreciate it; neither did she support him when times were hard. She had very high financial expectations of him: "She was an only-child, spoiled from the very beginning. When it was OK, it was fine, but when it got less OK, she didn't want to help me, she didn't want to go to work for lousy money (...). She was egocentric, maybe not egotistic, but she had to have it all and it had to be the best, and if she didn't get it, she felt bad. She didn't want to go to work for 1000 zlotys either, but for 3000, and she spent 1000 at the hair dresser's etc. I'm telling you, love is blind, and you only begin to notice such things after a while and you get annoyed with it. Partnership means doing something together. We have our plans and we make an effort. I was practically in a relationship with her parents, not her. I only shared my bed with her, and that's it" (Philip, 33, S).

Different personalities in a relationship with both people making an equal effort may also be a reason for not living in harmony. This was the case of one of the respondents. He claimed that his partner was too emotional, too hot-tempered, and too jealous of him. She could not trust him, even though he never gave her any reasons not to: "She always smelled a rat... and this is

not who I am (...). If I am constantly accused of things I haven't done, then there is no trust here. If two people love each other, they trust each other, unless something happens to destroy the trust. Trust and tolerance come above everything" (Mick, 41, SC). He also added that his girlfriend lived on his problems, and that is why his friends called her a "koala", because they believed she clung onto him instead of living her own life. The respondent could not tie the knot with her as she was too different from what he expected of a partner, and he knew that she would not change.

Unequal involvement in a relationship can also be the result of a big age difference, and therefore there are different needs or points of view: "I was in one serious relationship. She was my student. It hit me hard the last time and it ended (...). This was a matter of different needs, actually an age difference of eight years. (...) She once clearly told me that she needed to enjoy life, and enjoying life for her meant going away with her friends instead of going away with me. She needed them more than me. It was growing up time for her. One needs to grow mature, too" (Casper, 34, S). The young age of partners, according to those studied, often caused changes in their life plans, mood swings, searching for new life experiences and wanting to experiment sexually with other people. This immaturity of partners made the respondents who had had such experiences fear about the future of their relationships. Some of them thought that the age difference and different life priorities made it impossible for the relationships to last: "You expect something different, mature (...). She was not mature enough for such a relationship, as she told me a few times. It was true. You know, nobody is perfect. I'm sure that if I met her today (when she was older – J.C.), this would look completely different. That's obvious. When you are 18, you don't think of spending your life with someone" (Matthew, 30, S).

Big differences in age, personalities or opinions were also listed by the respondents as reasons for not being able to build more lasting relationships with people whom you have just met. This was also the case of the singles who had had no previous experience of being with someone. Two single women admitted that when they went on dates and they did not speak the same language with the other person, they did not pursue the friendship further: "It didn't click during the meeting. We were worlds apart" (Iris, 32, N); "We were from completely different planets. We talked about two different things all the time" (Agatha, 35, N). Even if the atmosphere was nice and friendly, big differences between the two people make the single not want to go out with the same person ever again.

The participants of the study were afraid that a difference that was too big – in age, personality, life priorities – could, sooner or later, result in an unsuccessful relationship. This is why the majority of them did not want to take the risk and preferred to remain single until they meet the right person.

Infidelity and Abandonment

One in four of the singles who participated in the study did not want to build a stable relationship in the future for two reasons. One group does not want to be hurt again when they are left or someone cheats on them, while the other does not want to hurt their partners this way. For the studied singles, the most traumatic experiences of adultery were those of long-term partners. One of the men admitted that after three years of a relationship he and his partner cheated on each other. He said it was “an accidental one-night stand”. They decided to talk it through to save their relationship. During the conversation his girlfriend admitted that she had already had one longer affair: “We had this serious conversation, to clear everything up and to be together forever, but it didn’t work (...). When she was living with me, she told me how much she loved me. She was sleeping with me and at the same time she had been sleeping with somebody else for six months. I couldn’t forgive her for that – permanent, planned, premeditated adultery” (Adam, 33, SC). One of the respondents came to the very same conclusion when she learned her partner had cheated on her with other women. He even went out with more than one woman at the same time. She said that she still felt humiliated and thought that being with someone made no sense, as men always, sooner or later, cheat on their partners (Sylvie, 32, SC). Another woman had been in a relationship with a man she thought she would marry. They had planned their future together and talked about building a house and having children. She really tried to show him how much she cared for him. She cleaned his house, ironed his clothes, and cooked him dinners – that is how she expressed her love. “From top manager to housewife” – she commented on her makeover (Joanna, 38, SC). Unfortunately, this relationship did not last, as her partner cheated on her with a random shopping assistant. He tried to explain it as something unimportant for their relationship, but the respondent felt deeply hurt. This experience was so strong that even after so many years she still has no intention of getting involved with another man.

Singles are not only cheated on, they are also the ones who cheat. One of the respondents admitted: “The end of this relationship was entirely my

fault, unfortunately. I drank too much at a party and how can I put it... I cheated on her. She didn't want to know me anymore. This was a sad story. I don't know how much an influence it had on me, but I decided not to get involved with women seriously anymore and enjoy life as long as I can. Of course, I've made some more attempts, but those relationships never lasted more than a few weeks" (Martin, 33, C). Another respondent said that he was fascinated with each of his partners at the very beginning. Later, every relationship became monotonous, the conversations were boring and none of the girls was as exciting as at the beginning: "I was in relationships but 90% of them were casual. There were maybe five or six more serious ones, which in my case means three to nine months. They were women who were very interesting, who fascinated me. But then these relationships fell apart and it was my fault" (Barry, 35, C). He admitted that he had cheated on his partners and told them about it, because he wanted to be honest. This obviously contributed to the breakdown of the relationship. Another participant said that he was very liberal and he knew that each of his relationships would end up in adultery. He admitted he admired his friends who never cheated on their partners: "When my peer tells me that he has been with one woman for over ten years I am polite enough to congratulate him and admire that. But on the other hand, I think that he is missing out on opportunities with other girls and women by being faithful to his love" (Paul, 30, C). He stated that he would like to be in a serious and lasting relationship, but at the same time he wouldn't feel free in it and could not discover new women then.

The experience of being left by "the other half" is yet another reason behind singlehood. Breaking up with a long-term partner hurts the most. The participants of the study often referred to them as their "one true love", and found it difficult to believe that this relationship did not exist anymore. In the cases of three women, their partners decided to leave them when they were about to get engaged or married. These singles admitted that they were very disappointed with serious relationships and that is why they preferred to be alone: "I was a fiancée once, with an engagement ring and I was dumped (...) I think I only loved one man in my life and I cannot be with him now (...). I would really like to find someone to share my joys and sorrows with. But it didn't happen. And I'm not making an effort to find one. I don't want to be with someone who will ruin the next few years of my life. I don't think I will live a happy life with a man so I am looking for the bright side of being single (...). I would like to be with a mature man, so I will always be single because they don't exist" (Ella, 30, SC). The other respondent who spoke

about it said that after 14 years she had been left by her partner because of children – she wanted to have them, he didn't. That is when the problems started. He convinced her that he wanted to have children with her, but at the same time he was already looking for his own flat. The woman said that they would probably still be together if they had formalized their relationship earlier. She wanted to get married and he postponed the decision and, she believes, it made it much easier for him to make the final decision (Isabelle, 41, S). One of the studied men said that he never initiated the end of his relationships, it was always his partners. He admitted that, even though he was also to blame, he was not sure whether he knew the real reasons for his partners leaving him, as he described it (Patrick, 28,C).

One of the single women, even though she had never experienced infidelity herself, is convinced that almost all men cheat on their wives, and those who do not are exceptions. Her opinion is based on her previous experience of having affairs with married men. She admitted that she would like to have a family in the future, but she is afraid that her husband or partner may at some stage not want her anymore and would start to lie and cheat on her. This fear stops her from looking for a stable relationship and from getting fully involved with a man (Hanna, 37, C).

In the case of some singles, the pain of adultery or abandonment by a partner was so strong that they do not want to be in another relationship. Living alone is a lifestyle which allows them to rebuild their sense of security and to feel certain that no one will ever hurt them again. Others live the single life because they are afraid they would cheat on their partners. In their case being single allows them to maintain many casual relationships and not hurt anyone.

High Expectations of Potential Partners

The female respondents required their previous partners to show initiative, be ambitious at work and earn a lot, as they have always had high aspirations when it comes to work and personal life themselves. They treat relationships as an opportunity to improve their living standards. And as their partners did not demonstrate any initiative to change their life, the respondents decided to leave them as they had no future anyway: "I think I'm quite demanding. I was always ambitious and realized I didn't want to drag a man behind me. I'm talking about economic and professional aspirations, but also personal ones. The man I was with stuttered and it turned out that there was no chance of

him losing the stutter, even if he worked hard and invested money to get rid of it, which he had done. (...) If you bear in mind that he was supposed to be the one to provide for the family too, you wouldn't like this prospect. But I am not narrow-minded. (...) I think it wouldn't have worked out anyway" (Maya, 30, SC). Another single woman admitted that her former partner, although he was a good man – caring, understanding and very much in love with her – was completely helpless. She thought he was a mummy's boy as he lived with his mother who did everything for him. She was afraid that she would have to nurse him, motivate him to act, and do most of the housework without his help. She did not feel like "pushing him and spurring him on" all the time, because she wanted to have a partner who would be responsible for his own life and could realize his own goals (Agnes, 34, SC). Another woman also admitted that her boyfriend, who she used to live with, was "a great guy" but "an unrealistic artist" who could not make a living from his work. She had to pay all the bills. Then she got involved with a married man who spoiled her with gifts and got her used to "a very comfortable lifestyle." This is why she no longer dates "losers" who, in her opinion, are simply a waste of time (Emily, 32, SC). The studied women stated that they had preferred to end these relationships instead of compromising and continuing to live with the wrong man.

Single women also expect their partners to understand their emotional needs. They believe that a man they could be in a relationship with should be responsible, caring, and know how to show feelings. As they had not found these traits with their partners, they ended the relationships. One of them is still afraid that she will never meet such a man, as her expectations are too high: "I was always the one to blame, because I think I expect too much from men, more than they can give and that causes trouble. Once, during a fight (...), I heard from one of my boyfriends (...) that I would like him to be my father, lover, brother, friend and God knows who else, a Prince Charming on a beautiful horse at the same time" (Ella, 30, SC). Another respondent noticed that she was never in a serious and happy relationship because the men who she went out with did not understand her emotional needs. Some of them were machos, and although she felt sexy and attractive with them, they did not know how to show that they loved her. Others, romantic poet-types, were, on the other hand, overprotective and effusive (Ewa, 30, PL).

Men who discussed the topic said that it was important for them that the woman was physically attractive, with high intellectual potential and eager to get involved. One of the men admitted that he had tried to build a relationship

with one woman for a year – he loved talking to her but she did not attract him physically. He finished the relationship because she did not react to his suggestions on her hair-do or clothes etc. (Adam, 33, SC).

The participants of the study – both men and women – noticed that it had been easier for them to be in a relationship when they were younger, because their expectations were lower. The respondents think that it is harder to accept the faults of others as we grow older. They also noted changes in their behavior – they are more authoritative and do not like compromise: “Once you’re on some level, you don’t want to go down and you won’t be satisfied with someone who is worse at something or can’t do it at all. This is so sad, because it’s a sort of emotional and intellectual deficiency (...) the more we want something, the more difficult it is to get it from life” (Luke, 33, SC).

Their previous relationships are not the only victims of the unrealistic expectations of the singles. They admit they are aware that an impression which someone makes on them during the first meeting or a date, even if not always positive, does not have to be true either. They often do not give a second chance to someone who could turn out to be a worthwhile and fascinating person. Many of the single people confirm that due to their very high expectations of their potential partners they immediately reject those who do not meet their requirements at first glance.

Not Ready to Set Up Home

Sometimes the singles are not looking for a stable partner because they do not feel ready to set up home, or to be a mother or a father. They say that they are emotionally immature and that it is too soon for them to make such an important decision. In some cases this was also the reason for breaking up previous relationships.

Some of the single women admitted they could not picture themselves as mothers, and did not feel a maternal instinct. They believe that if they feel the need to have a child at some point, they will think of looking for a steady partner: “Everyone was made to have children anyway, because the maternal instinct is well developed with women. I think that at some stage every woman feels that a child is exactly what she needs to be happy. I’m not saying definitely no to children, but not now, so I am not looking for a guy” (Anna, 29, C); “I want to have children and a family one day. I don’t know when, yet. If there is such an opportunity, I will use it for sure, because like every woman I want to have children – every woman feels a maternal instinct.

This is not a result of my financial situation, as I am a businesswoman, I am educated and have some money and I could provide for a child, but not now” (Blanca, 27, S).

The men also talked about not being ready to become fathers: “I don’t have such plans, no pressure to have a child. To have a child you need to be responsible and really want to have it. It makes no sense otherwise. And you have to grow into it and there is no sense of, ‘Oh I’m thirty so I have to have a child’. No. You need to reach this point in your life when you really want to have a child and to take this responsibility, and if I ever feel that with somebody then I will certainly have a child” (Ken, 29, SC).

Some of the participants of the study admitted that their previous relationships had ended because their partners at the time wanted to have families and children and they were against it or could not make up their minds yet. This was the case of a single woman who split up with her boyfriend after a few years also because of that. Her partner came from a traditional family and insisted on them getting married once they graduated. He also wanted her to get pregnant soon afterwards. The respondent had other life plans and she ended the relationship (Maya, 29, SC). Another participant of the study also admitted that one of the reasons which made him split up with his girlfriend at the time was that she wanted to have a child and he did not feel ready for it (Barney, 38, SC).

Some of the singles admitted that they did not want to have a family or children at all. One of the single women had the opportunity to observe her sister and her little son every day. She also took care of him. Yet she does not want a child of her own: “I’m almost 40. I look young, but I don’t feel the need to have a child. I look at my godson and I like what I see, but I don’t want to have children” (Joanna, 38, SC). The respondent is aware that it may be the last moment to decide to have a child, but she prefers to devote her energy to developing her career or having casual relationships rather than looking for a lifetime partner and getting pregnant. Moreover, she believes that having a child would not allow her to spend her time the way she is used to – travelling a lot, going out etc. Another participant admitted that he could not picture himself as a father and that he has always been skeptical towards having children: “I don’t know why but I’m not a fan of kids. People who watch me with dogs think that I would be a good father or guardian, but I don’t feel the instinct” (Mick, 41, SC). Only one of the respondents was 100% sure that he would never have children, because: “I know from my own experience that having children is just a necessary evil” (Robert, 38, C).

Some of the singles do not feel mature enough to set up home. They could not imagine how their friends who already have children can manage to raise them, combining a professional and family life, and having hobbies. It is a sort of admiration, because some of the respondents believe that this life activity – having a family – is beyond their imagination.

A Rest after Living Together As a Couple

Some of the singles admitted that they had got used to living without a partner, and they treat their lives as sort of a break after being in a relationship. One of the men explained that during the six years of his relationship he had focused on his partner's needs and lost himself. After the break-up he rediscovered his passions, preparing meals or listening to his favorite music (Arthur, 41, S). A single woman shared his opinion. She spent 12 years in a common-law marriage and now she felt free and independent. She added that she would never give up living alone to be part of a couple, as her relationship had become "too exhausting" for her (Joanna, 33, S). Another respondent was bored with his girlfriend wanting to spend all their free time together. She did not allow him to go out with his friends; he also did not have time for his passions. The last two out of the six years of their relationship were, in his opinion, unbearable because they did not love each other anymore, they were just used to being together. He feels alive now that he is single: he meets his friends, goes out, spends time on his hobbies and has no intention of getting involved with someone. Another man said: "I feel like relaxing after all those long relationships. I changed my strategy. I'm not being totally serious right now... I simply decided to rest for a while after two long relationships, which took over five years of my life" (Peter, 28, SC). One more respondent was also tired of "love adventures". As he had failed to build a stable relationship so many times, he decided he would always be single. Here is his story: "I have had really bad experiences with relationships. My first serious relationship was with a Japanese girl, M., in Canada. It lasted almost a year, and then she went back to Japan. This was a fatal attraction. I was 19 then. Another one was also in Canada and lasted three months. I had to find someone after M. Then there were flings more than relationships. But when I was in my third year of college, I met R. She was my friend's sister. We were together for over two years. Then I met J. She was Polish. We left for Amsterdam together. Our relationship lasted six months. Then lot of flings. The longest was with a Venezuelan girl, generally stable, we lived together. Then other

flings. Then I spent a year and a half with an Italian, very charming. She was a choreographer and worked in a theatre with me. Then nothing for a long time. In Hamburg, casual relationships. A relationship with B. in Warsaw. It lasted for over a year. During that relationship I was already with another woman in Lodz, and that was the last one. The relationship with B. ended because she wanted to be a mother and wanted me to do something about it. The relationship with R., my friend's sister, was one of the best but it ended because of him. He was my best friend and didn't know about it. We had a fight, I packed my bags and came back to Poland. I acted like an asshole. The relationship with J. didn't last because we were too fascinated with the possibilities Amsterdam gave us. She found herself a Dutch guy and I found the Venezuelan. The relationship with the Venezuelan was more of an erotic experience than feelings. It fluctuated" (Robert, 38, C). Currently, the man says that due to numerous failures which he had experienced, his relationships with woman are and always will be of a sexual nature only.

Some singles got used to being alone. They treat it as something natural and do not want to change or spoil it with attempts to build a relationship. One of the women admitted that some time ago she had had an affair for a few days which turned her world upside-down and she could not get back to normal for quite a while. She said she would never risk the comfort of living on her own again (Camille, 32, N). Another single woman said that she sometimes had "short relationships with men", which means that she goes out for a coffee or to the cinema with someone. She believes that there is no point interrupting an organized life for a relationship which, in her opinion, is bound to fail. Two other respondents also cannot imagine someone entering their perfectly organized lives and upsetting their stability: "I have never been in a stable relationship and I cannot imagine it right now. It would destroy my fantastic apartment, its harmony, which I have been building somehow" (Ashley, 30, C); "On the one hand, I would like to have someone, but on the other I cannot imagine a stranger in my house" (Iris, 32, N).

The above statements prove that some of the studied singles, despite their different previous life experience, are now happy about living on their own. They all have one thing in common – they think it is better to live alone than in an unhappy relationship with the wrong person.

Unfulfilled Love

An unhappy love, because it is unfulfilled, is another reason for which some of the singles had never lived in a stable relationship. Unrequited feeling discouraged them from deeper, more intimate relationships with other people for many years. One of the men said he had been unhappily in love with his friend for a few years. He always offered his help, just to be close to her. She told him about her problems and cried on his shoulder when her love life went wrong. When he decided to tell her about his feelings, she did not want to continue the relationship. He later tried to date other women but none of them seemed interesting enough to continue the friendship. He said he had never experienced the true and reciprocated love of a woman, just the love of his family (Karl, 33, N).

Some singles think that they are simply unlucky in love. They admit they sometimes feel like they're in a vicious circle: when they fall in love, the people do not love them back, and they are loved by people who they are not interested in. One of the single women admitted that she had only experienced casual relationships. She usually met men who did not treat her as a potential partner but as a person who they could spend a nice time with: "Sometimes men, I reckon, fill their time with me. Like my last boyfriend. He was waiting for a girl who was supposed to split up with another guy (...). Maybe it is me who chooses such relationships which are simply not good for me, because it later proves that this person is already involved with someone. And that's the way it goes... They want me when I don't want it and don't want me when I want it – it's so self-destructive of me" (Hanna, 37, C). Other female respondents believe that the men they fell in love with always treated them as friends, not potential partners, and that is why they never could have had a stable relationship: "I treated him (partner – J.C.) seriously, but unfortunately it wasn't reciprocated. I was very involved. Actually, I wouldn't even call it a relationship. I don't even know what it was." (Magdalene, 38, C); "I had such one-sided, unhappy loves, which is very upsetting. I had one little affair which in the end caused much more trouble than pleasure, as I needed a lot of time to move on" (Camille, 32, N). Another single woman said that she was alone because she only met men who liked her, but she did not want to date them, while those she likes do not want to go out with her: "After a date they usually do not want to go out with me again. They say they will call, but they never do. I don't know if there's an explanation for it" (Dorothy, 37, N).

“Getting back on their feet” and “healing the wounds” after an unfulfilled love was, in many cases, harmful. The singles are discouraged by love failures and want to avoid negative emotions. That is why they try not to get involved at all. They do not want to fall in love again, because they think that since they hadn’t managed to build a happy relationship with the right person so far, then it is very unlikely that they ever would.

Difficulties in Relationships with The Opposite Sex

Problems with starting up a conversation with the opposite sex is another reason for being single. Being tense and not spontaneous is, in their opinion, the first reason for their failures in male-female relationships. One of the studied women said that she could not get on with any man because, when she really likes someone, she becomes artificial and pretends to be someone who she really is not: “Actually, I can see a potential husband in any man. I know it’s silly but that’s the way it is. Sometimes I think that I’m acting so unnatural and fake that I can’t be with someone for longer, because I don’t feel like myself. I pretend to be someone I’m not. I don’t know, there may be something wrong with me, because it is sometimes so hard for me to tell the truth, as if I was going to scare the boy off. You know – I am not as cool as it seems” (Eva, 30, C). The respondent said that falling in love is “not her style” and that is why it may be hard for her to build relationships with men. The same person said that once, a boy who had been in love with her for some time said that she was “emotionally repulsive”. She commented on that: “I began to realize that I simply repulsed these guys with some attitude of mine. Many of them said that they were really in love, but then either I acted weird, because I knew this wouldn’t work, or I didn’t want to get involved, take a risk. There was always something I didn’t like (...). Sometimes I get this feeling that I was very egotistic and that I only entertained myself with them, so that life wouldn’t be boring, and deep down I didn’t want to be with any of them (...). Other than that, I really feel single, and I always have done” (Ewa, 30, C).

Sometimes singles expect the people they meet to be their partners for life. This makes them present themselves in the best possible light. One of the single women said that her relationships lasted up to a few months because she treats her partners as if they were to become her husbands. She believes that it would be better if she allowed the relationships to develop slowly: “Maybe I should take it slowly, relax... it just crossed my mind.

Why should I bother? Was anyone bothered when they left me or played tricks on me? I can have fun, too. Maybe men are hunters and they need to hunt. And they are afraid when a girl cares for them, and this does not necessarily mean that they want to drag him to the altar. They want freedom. Maybe I need to relax and be less serious, because I'm generally too serious. Maybe that's why I'm single" (Hanna, 37, C). A similar opinion was given by a man who said that if he really liked a girl on their first date, he told her straight away that he was looking for a wife at the moment. He talked about the qualities which she had to have, about building a house and having children. He admitted that they may not treat him seriously because of that and do not want to go out with him again, as they are afraid of early declarations (Conrad, 33, N).

Being shy and not able to communicate is another reason listed by the interviewees which makes it difficult for them to talk to the opposite sex. One of the women was convinced that men thought of her as if she was "a cold and distant princess", and she acted like that just when they were around. She admitted that she was afraid to get hurt or to be in a relationship and that is why she pretended she was not interested in men (Agatha, 35, N). Another woman said that she could not read the signals which men who are attracted to her sent her: "I have never been in a relationship which I thought was serious (...). I am shy and I would never pick up anybody. Someone could fall on my head and I wouldn't notice him, because I'm such a lost case. I go to so many places; I even go to Warsaw by the stupid train and a normal woman would have met like 50 guys already. There are women who can, but I can't. Men usually say that I give the impression that I'm unapproachable or involved. These are the signals I get from men. Maybe I make strange faces. There must be something. There must be a reason for my pose. I keep on thinking about it. I don't know how to change it (...) maybe I'm destined to be lonely. There are such people" (Iris, 32, N). Another respondent was very stressed by dates – he tries to cover this stress during meetings with women by talking all the time. He admitted he does not allow his partners to speak, by telling them stories which are not always suitable in the given circumstances. The man thinks that stress causes this high self-criticism and his unique sense of humor, sarcasm and rudeness. This is why he was usually negatively judged by women and as a result could not find a partner (Jacob, 34, S).

Problems in relating to the opposite sex are typical for singles who have no experience in serious relationships. Some of them observed some reservations or anxieties related to male-female relationships and therefore they could not

build true and deep relationships. These singles admit that the older they are, the more difficult it is to overcome these barriers and that is why they've lost faith in not being alone all their life.

Conclusions

An analysis of the reasons for singlehood opens a list of many negative experiences with attempts to build stable relationships. Some said they had failed to build relationships in the past because their partners had not been as involved, or because of different and contradictory personalities and different expectations from life as a couple. Others have painful memories of adultery or abandonment, or had been in love with somebody who did not love them back. There is also a group of people whose expectations were very high and those who did not feel mature enough to be in a stable relationship or to set up home. Some chose to live alone because they wanted to rest after a relationship.

The answers of all participants of the study made it possible to create a typology of singles based on the main (but not all mentioned) reasons for not having a partner.

The first type are the all-or-nothing singles who believe that "it is better to be alone than with just anybody". This category covers this singles who used to be before in unhappy relationships. This group has also very high expectations of their potential partners. Members of the group admit that currently they prefer to be alone than with a random person. The second type are the accustomed singles who say: "I'm used to being single". They have been alone for a while and treat it as their natural state – they do not want to destroy the harmony of their life, or give up their rituals and everyday pleasures for a partner. Being unattached is something "normal" for them, and being in a relationship is something "abnormal". The next group is the romantic type, those who wait for their great love: "I'm single because I'm waiting for my ideal". They are deeply convinced that their "soul mate" is out there somewhere. This group is composed mostly of people over thirty. Some of them are the so-called eternal singles, who have never been in a serious relationship. Others broke off their previous relationships because the partners did not meet their expectations. These people are strongly convinced that it is worth waiting for Prince or Princess Charming. Other type are the hurt singles – they follow this rule in their life: "I prefer to be alone than to

be hurt again”. Despite numerous attempts they have not managed to build a lasting relationship and they only got involved in unhappy relationships. The participants of the study do not think about intimate relationships, because they find it difficult to trust another person, as they are convinced that the events from the past could be repeated. They usually choose to be single to protect themselves from further love failures. The last type are the happy ones who fully accept their lifestyle: “I’m happy that I am not in a stable relationship”. They do not feel the need to be in a relationship and they prefer casual relationships. These singles treat being solo as a sort of a break or rest after serious relationships, and also as a possibility to develop their professional career and passions.

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