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## **SINGLE MEN – TYPOLOGICAL APPROACH FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF SOCIOCULTURAL GENDER**

**Abstract.** The research results presented below are a part of a larger project aimed at describing the situation of single people in Poland. The research was carried out using a qualitative strategy. This article focuses on men living without a partner, either permanently or temporarily. The perspective of socioculturalgender was taken under consideration when designing the research. It was an essential tool of data analysis, its interpretation, and reduction.

In the first part of this article the adopted theoretical concepts and research assumptions are presented. The notions determining the research design were introduced in the following order: the definition of a single person, in the synthetic depiction, and S.L. Bem's concept of a socioculturalgender. A model of a single man popularized by the media is also referred to. The second part contains the characteristics of a methodological research project complying with the above assumptions. The part reporting on the findings includes reconstructed definitions of a single man delivered by the men analyzed, who represented various types of socioculturalgender. The object of the description is also an interpretation of the situation of being single from the perspective of choice and satisfaction with this alternative form of conjugal and family life. The definitions of masculinity and femininity characteristic for the type of socioculturalgender presented by the objects of study as well as preferences concerning one's potential partner are also presented. At the final stage men's topology, formed on the basis of sociocultural gender and complying with successively described categories of analysis, is presented.

**Key words:** single person, definition of a single person, single man, causes for living on one's own, masculinity, women's features preferred by single men.

### **1. A man living on his own – a single man?**

The main problem, still unsolved, stressed in studies about singles is the definition of this alternative form of conjugal and family life. The difficulty in describing and defining singles stem from the fact that this group includes both people who have never been married and those who used to be married as well as

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individuals who have chosen to live alone and also those who do not make this choice voluntarily. This lack of unequivocal definition makes a thorough description of this broad group of persons difficult. Because of the growing popularity of this alternative form of conjugal and family life and as a result the increasing variation of people regarding themselves or regarded as single, a need to define and describe various subcategories of people living on their own has been created, instead of attempts to describe the category in general. The research findings included in this article are an attempt to describe one subcategory of single people, distinguished on the basis of sex. The group that the article focuses on are men who live without a partner, either temporarily or permanently.

Peter Stein was one of the first researchers of the single life phenomenon and in accordance with his view it was assumed that a single person is a man or a woman who is currently unmarried or is not in an exclusive relation, either hetero- or homosexual. A single life means life on one's own, irrespective of marital status (never married, divorced, widowed, separated) or social status (Stein 1981).

With reference to the above the research project was carried out on the basis of the following definition: a single person is a person living without a partner, resigning from starting a family at this particular moment. Being a single person is a stage in life which is characterized by living without a partner and resigning (either temporarily or permanently, voluntarily or non-voluntarily) from being in a steady relationship (either formal or informal) and starting one's own family. According to this definition being single does not assume a lack of earlier experience in relationships (including formal ones), or not having children. The singlehood may be experienced in any moment in one's life, as a one-time or multiple occurrence.

## **2. A single man – a nonstandard man? Gender perspective**

The gender approach determines these study concepts, which adopt the assumption of the fundamental meaning of biological gender stratification and the patriarchal character of culture as basic and essential (Malinowska 2011). With reference to the above the gender perspective was adopted on the level of both research conceptualization and findings' analysis.

In the paper a reference was made to the classical concept of gender schemes and Sandra Lipsitz Bem's theory of sociocultural gender creation (1981, 2000), which assumes that the culture of a given society consists of a set of hidden rules concerning the way in which members of that society should think, feel and act according to their gender. Bem calls them prisms. In her understanding these are hidden assumptions concerning gender and sociocultural gender

which are rooted in social and cultural practices and norms and embedded in an individual's psyche.<sup>1</sup>

This concept refers to the binary gender classification and to those features stereotypically attributed to women and men, therefore it concerns the functioning of individuals in a system of typical gender roles, which is the system still quite visible in Polish society. Reference to this concept seems to be justifiable in the research on single men reported on in this paper, because the role of a man played by them appears to fit the traditional, patriarchal model on one hand, and on the other it does not work in accordance with the masculinity standards so far binding.

If it is assumed that the male role of socioculturalgender includes e.g. focusing on oneself, dominance, career orientation, and conquest of the world (Gromkowska 2002) as well as 'building one's own world' around a status resulting from achievements, power held, and professional career (Strykowska 1999), being a single man is in agreement with the patriarchal concept of masculinity. In this meaning single men seem to be acting in accordance with so-called 'male business', which is not to 'get caught' by marriage because it is usually connected with the responsibility of supporting one's family (Szlendaka 2002). Playing this role may therefore be seen by men as a form of materializing a hidden assumption that by getting married a man loses his freedom in favour of a duty to support his family (Duch-Krzystoszek 1995).

On the other hand, the male gender role in the traditional model is determined by being a head of the family and its breadwinner (Titkow 1993), and masculinity is first of all associated with heterosexuality and the institution of marriage (Connel 1987, Melosik 1999). According to this approach, being single is considered as unmanly.

The ambiguity of this role may be interpreted as an effect of erosion of patriarchy and, as a result, of redefining the place and role of a man in contemporary societies. The appearance of a single man seems to be part of collapse or decomposition of the former patriarchal order.

### **3. A single man – the ambiguous role of a man in the postfamily world**

This ambiguity of the single man's role also seems to be supported by the research results. Among the masculinity models promoted by the Polish media after 1989, other models started to appear, different from those placing a man in the area of professional and family life, e.g. the model of a single man, not a bachelor,

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<sup>1</sup> Bem distinguishes four sociocultural gender patterns, two of which represent particular types of femininity and masculinity (feminine women and male men) and the other two do not form a unified version of femininity and masculinity but are a form of redefined cultural meaning of these categories (androgynous people and people undefined as for sociocultural gender) (Bem 2000).

but a man who does not want to get married. (Arcimowicz 2003). We seem to be dealing with an androcentric interpretation here. There are men who do not want to enter into a relationship with a woman and start a family – maybe because they have something more interesting to do.

However, other studies of the patterns of a single man promoted by the media let us draw different conclusions. As can be seen in Julita Czernecka's work (2008), which analyses the single man's image presented by press, a single man does not look so attractive any longer. Among the characteristics of single men there are those which are very distant from the traditional patterns of masculinity. These are, among others: 'untidy, undereducated, most often living with his parents, a loser.'

And the real single men themselves? In Katarzyna Kuklińska's opinion (2012) one can have the impression that the men researched by her adapted to the situation. Some of them got so involved in their career that they had no more time left for their personal life in the form of their own family, and some of them didn't find the way to handle the 'new' women, and what's more they are not looking for it. Contemporary men living a single life show a particular discomfort at the ambiguity of male and female roles, and they are afraid of 'new' women and are unprepared for sharing lives with them. Because they were brought up in accordance with old patterns they adapt to the new situation slower than women and need much more time to find satisfaction in living in the new conditions.

#### **4. Methodological assumptions of the research**

The purpose of the research reported on in this paper was to recognize how culturally formed gender organizes the behavior, needs and patterns of conjugal and family life of men who, from the traditional masculinity pattern perspective, fulfill untypical social roles and play new roles from the contemporary masculinity model perspective. Trying to achieve this particular aim was caused by the conviction that fulfilling these roles may vary according to the type of sociocultural gender (gender identity). The following questions were asked:

1. What type of sociocultural gender is represented by single men, and what follows, how do they define their masculinity and what cultural patterns do they refer to?

2. What kind of experience has life as a single man been to them in the course of their lives and what meaning does sociocultural gender have in this aspect?

3. What preferences with respect to their potential partners do single men representing various types of sociocultural gender have, and how do they define femininity?

The research was conducted in 2011 and it was of a qualitative type. The biographical method and thematically oriented, autobiographical-narrative interview technique were used while collecting the data. The constructionist approach to the biographical method was referred to. This assumes that a person does not 'have' a biography, but it is only an account or self-account of an individual's life and as such it is always narrative and creation of a character (Bruner 1987).

In order to recognize to what degree the self-concept of those men who were researched is influenced by cultural definitions of masculinity and femininity, the Inventory for estimating psychological gender (IPP) developed by Kuczyńska was used (1992).<sup>2</sup>

The logic of theoretical selection (Helling 1990) was applied in the research. Twelve men fulfilling the characteristics of 'big city singles' were interviewed. The men were selected on the basis of the following features: age 25–40, lack of a steady partner, running a single-person household, university degree, knowledge of foreign languages, income above 3000 PLN a month, representing professional groups such as executives, managers, or specialists holding an independent position, experts, representatives of professionals.<sup>3</sup>

Because of the adopted definition of a single man, the criterion of *choosing* this form of live by those persons studied, which is often applied by other researchers, was rejected. This decision seemed to be justifiable taking into consideration the fact that, as shown by the research on Polish singles, this form of life is much less frequently a question of choice or conscious decision and much more often the result of an incident or coincidence, especially when compared to the Western European countries (Lubelska 2006: 5).

The study cases have been selected according to the maximum variation rule (Flick 2007). Different men in terms of time of living on their own, type of decision about being single, experience with relationships, and having children were selected in order to recognize a variety of experiences among the representatives in this category. To decide on the number of the researched men the criterion of so-called 'theoretical saturation of a trial' was applied (Glaser, Strauss 1967).

The constructionist approach was applied in elaborating on the results and the strategies of analysis were embedded in the concept of symbolic interactionism, according to which the meaning assigned by an individual to their life experience, even if based on its proper interpretative structure, depends on time motivation and narrative situation (Schutz, Luckmann 1974).

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<sup>2</sup> Developed on the basis of assumptions forming a theoretical base of inventory for estimating character traits connected with a sociocultural gender and created by Bem – Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI).

<sup>3</sup> The characteristics were determined on the basis of research called 'A big city singles' conducted by MB SMG/KRC. According to NSP (NSLiM, 2002) there are 9 m single adults in our country. They differ as for status, age and their ways of becoming single. The number of single people fulfilling these requirement amounts from 1,5 to 2 m people nowadays (Lubelska 2006: 4–12).

The data analysis consisted of three simultaneous streams of actions directly related to each other: data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions and verifying (Miles, Huberman 2000). Comparative analysis was used at the stage of data presentation (Bohnsack 2001). It was carried out with reference to the phenomenological analysis procedure (Moustakas 2001).

## 5. The characteristics of the single men studied

The men included in research were mostly inhabitants of Warsaw and Wrocław. During the study procedure they were 25–40 years old. They were evenly divided into three age groups: 25–30; 31–35; 36–40. They had university degrees in social studies (the highest number was in economics) and sciences (e.g. ICT, chemistry). Some of them did extra or postgraduate courses e.g. in managing IT projects, auditing, or Masters of Business Administration (MBA). All of them speak English, some of them on the regular basis at their work, and three of them know two foreign languages and two of them three.

They worked as executives, specialists, and experts mainly in the energy, production, pharmaceutical or entertainment industries, as well as being involved in trade, advertising and counseling. Most of them were employed in corporations and a few were self-employed or professionals. Their gross income fell in the range of 3 500 to 35 000 PLN per month (3500–5000 PLN – 4 men; 5100–10 000 PLN – 4 men; 10 000–20 000 PLN – 2 men; and 30 000–35 000 PLN – 2 men).

All of the men ran a single-person household, eight of them owned their own flats, and four of the them rented them. Among the men researched were four who were divorced, and the rest of them had never been married. Three of the men studied had children to support.

The time of living on their own was counted from the end of the last steady relationship (excluding earlier periods of singlehood). Five of those researched had lived a single life for a relatively short time (from 1.5 to 3 years), two of them had been single from 3 to 6 years, and five of the men had lived without a partner for more than 6 years, including three who had never had a regular partner. Most of the men in question identified themselves as singles by choice, and four said they were looking for a partner.

The researched men represented four types of sociocultural gender as described by Sandra Lipsitz-Bem. They could be evenly divided into two categories of people based on their approach to cultural definitions of femininity and masculinity:

- The individuals defining themselves with reference to cultural patterns of femininity and masculinity – male men and feminine men (six men).

- The individuals redefining cultural patterns of femininity and masculinity – androgynous men, men undefined with respect to sociocultural gender (sexually undefined) (six men).

## 6. The definition of a single person – single men’s perspective

On the basis of the definitions offered by the men researched a few criteria for defining a single person may be established. These are: their attitude towards living on one’s own; the character of the decision to lead a single life; individual predispositions / features; individual approach towards having a regular partner or relationship; the time this situation lasts; material status.

The definition of a single person as interpreted by the researched men is quite broad. It does not specify gender, age, time of living alone, or marital status. According to this definition a single person includes those who have never been married as well as divorced or widowed persons; one who has no children as well as a parent living with their off-spring. The criteria often repeated in the definitions given by the people researched people are: difficulty in finding a suitable partner, lack of a partner and lack of a need to be in a regular relationship, choosing a single life temporarily, and satisfaction with being single.

With reference to these criteria, in the opinion of those researched a single person can be defined by:

- choosing this form of life voluntarily,
- a temporary character of the single living situation,
- satisfaction with living on one’s own,
- lack of a regular partner and lack of the need to be in a steady relationship,
- difficulty in finding a suitable partner,
- having brief, non-committal affairs with women,
- personality traits: the need to be independent and free; egoism,
- high material status.

The analysis of the criteria for defining a single person conducted taking into consideration different types of sociocultural gender showed that men representing dissimilar types pointed to distinct criteria as the most important ones, or assigned various degrees of importance to the same criteria.

The men who referred to the cultural patterns of femininity and masculinity while describing themselves (as male men, feminine men) pointed to such constitutive elements when defining a single person as the lack of the need to be in a steady relationship, difficulty in finding a suitable partner, the need for having brief, non-committal affairs with women, and personality traits such as a need for independence, egoism, and a longing for high material status.

The men who, on the basis of the test, were classified as people redefining cultural patterns of femininity and masculinity (androgynous, undefined with respect to sociocultural gender) mentioned the following as the components of their definition: choosing this form of life voluntarily, the temporary character of the situation, satisfaction with their single life, personality traits such as the need to feel free and unconstrained.

**Table 1.** Definitions of a single person – defining criteria and characteristics according to the men researched

Characteristics defining a single person:  male and feminine men living on their own	<b>Criteria of defining a single person</b>	Characteristics defining a single person:  androgynal, undefined as to sociocultural gender men living on their own
Lack of the need to be in a steady relationship  Difficulty in finding a suitable partner	<b>Character of the decision to lead a single life</b>	Choosing this form of life voluntarily
	<b>Time of living alone</b>	Temporary character of the situation
	<b>Approach to single life</b>	Satisfaction with their single life
The need of having brief, non-committal affairs with women	<b>Attitude to having a regular partner and a relationship</b>	Not feeling the need of having a regular partner
The need to be independent, egoism	<b>Individual predispositions – personality traits</b>	The need to feel free and unconstrained
High material status	<b>Material status</b>	

Source: own research.

The classification of the studied men's interpretations of being a single person was made on the basis of the type of sociocultural gender of the researched criterion, as well as on the grounds of characteristics defining a single person pointed out by the researched men themselves. The following ways of perceiving this experience by the representatives of four different types of sociocultural gender were determined:

- **Being single as a choice and a kind of life experience**

A single person in the opinion of androgynous men is one making a conscious choice of this alternative form of conjugal life from among many contemporarily available possibilities. They defined being single as a form of life experience,



especially important for a man with a strong need to live free and unconstrained, *A single person is one who makes their own choice about being single.* (M 3, a.37, A)<sup>4</sup>; *If somebody is single it means that they have a strong need for independence, to do what they want at a certain moment without considering others.* (M 2, a.34, A).

- **Being single as an effect of reluctance towards a regular commitment**

According to men who are undefined as for sociocultural gender, a single person can be defined on the basis of not having the need to enter into regular relationships and the lack of this need may be experienced temporarily; it could have appeared with various intensity in the past and may occur in the future, *I have an impression that it often happens this way that people keep being single for a certain period of time, so that that they assume that simply I don't know... I'll have fun until I'm thirty and see how it is and then I'll think about it, later I'll find something...*(M 10, a.29, SU).

- **Being single as a stage in life resulting from focusing on oneself**

For male men being single is associated with a self-concept at a certain stage of life. It occurs especially in case of self-centered people having a strong need for independence and, what follows, an aversion to limitations and the commitment that results from being in a regular relationship, *Being single is a stage... You can't define it precisely or attribute to the stage in life.* (M 8,a.29, MM); *I suppose a single person is one who doesn't feel an overwhelming need to be in a relationship.* (M 6, a.29, MM).

- **Being single as a form of dealing with an inability to find a partner**

Single feminine men attribute their singlehood integrally to their inability to find a partner, or to difficulty in building and maintaining a relationship. Being single may also be the result of not wanting to develop a monogamous relationship, to choose only one partner: *A single person is a person who doesn't have a steady life partner and doesn't want to have one at the moment. They need to manage on their own. [...] Sometimes it is just impossible to choose only one woman exclusively.* (M 11, a. 40, FM).

## 7. 'For now I want to live alone' or 'For now I don't want to be in a relationship' – the single men's approach to living on their own

The researched men, irrespective of type of sociocultural gender, assumed a temporary character to their singlehood. However, the older men predicted that being single may become permanent in the future: *Right now I don't want to get*

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<sup>4</sup> I use symbols in the text for example: (M 3 – number of men, a.37 – age, A or FM or MM or SU – symbols of type of sociocultural gender: A – androgynal men; FM – feminine men; MM- male men; SU - undefined as for sociocultural gender men).

*involved, but I assume that it's a temporary situation. (M 5, a.39, A); I don't think it will last forever. (M 7, a.34, MM); I don't think I'll be single forever. (M 10, a.29, SU); The closer I got to my fortieth birthday, the more often the thought appeared that it was going to stay that way. (M 11, a.40, FM).*

Most of those researched interpreted their situation of 'becoming single' as a result of different circumstances e.g. the end of a relationship, involvement in their career, etc. However, the decision about 'being single' and living on their own was, to a greater or lesser degree, a conscious choice of this option for many of the men.

Choosing this alternative way of conjugal and family life for some was connected with the motto 'there is still time for settling down', and for others it was a question of a particular lifestyle and the feeling of satisfaction with living their own lives without dependence and commitment. In case of the rest of them it was the consequence of an aversion to steady, exclusive relationships and/or the effect of disappointment with previous formal and informal relationships with women.

On the basis of conditionings for choosing the single life, the subjects of the research can be divided into two categories: 'For now I want to live alone' or 'For now I don't want to be in a relationship.' Although to an outside observer the reasons offered by the representatives of both groups may seem to be quite similar, their motivations for living a single life differ. It needs to be stressed that the attitude toward singlehood fluctuates during its continuation. The men falling into 'For now I want to live alone' category changed their attitude temporarily into 'now I don't want to live alone', which was connected with entering into longer or shorter relationships. A similar situation concerned the other group.

When analyzing the above mentioned categories taking into consideration the sociocultural gender of those researched, it is readily noticeable that the conditionings of the decision to live single of the 'For now I want to live alone' type were observed mostly for male men and the men undefined as to their sociocultural gender. The other type of motivation for living a life on their own was shown by the other two types of sociocultural gender.

## **8. One's own needs, high demands, fears and difficulties in the relationships with women – causes for the men's decision to live on their own**

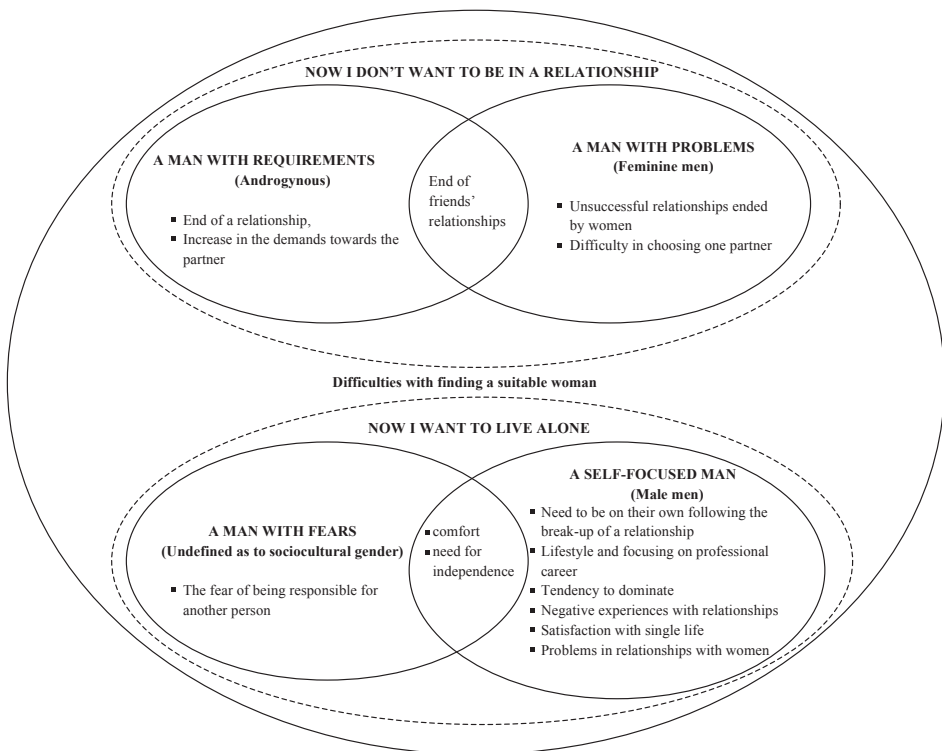
The attitude towards single life in the case of the men researched seems to be closely related to the kind of experience they consider to be the main reason for being single. The men who 'want to live alone' pointed rather at their own personality traits, current needs, and priorities. The male men and the men

undefined as to sociocultural gender belong to this category. The men who are single because they ‘don’t want a relationship’ mentioned their fears for being in an exclusive relationship as important – first of all fears of the limitations and duties which are connected with it, as well as a negative experience from their previous relationships with women. Feminine men and androgynous men fall into this category.

It needs to be stressed that all the men researched, regardless of the type of sociocultural gender, mentioned the difficulty in finding a suitable partner for a regular relationship as a very important reason.

The reasons for living a single life characteristic for the represented types of sociocultural gender of the single men researched are presented in the chart below. The similarities between the types are marked and the attitude of those researched towards single life was taken into account.

**Chart 1.** The reasons for being single given by the men representing different types of sociocultural gender, in comparison with their motivations for leading single life



Source: own research.

## 9. Single men – what kind of men are they? Defining their position in the ‘man’s’ world

In order to answer the question of what kind of men these single men are and to understand their reasons for leading the single life and their attitude towards this situation, an interpretative context in the form of the researched men’s ideas on ‘being a man’ was used. The object of the analysis was to discover the meaning which they assign to masculinity, how they define it, what patterns they refer to, and also how they interpret their own masculinity in the context of these patterns.

All of the men studied underlined that they noticed changes in playing male and female roles and interpreted it in the categories of gender role swapping, or reversal of the previous order. This ‘transformation’ was assessed as problematic by the men researched, both in their personal and professional lives.

The single men who referred to the existing patterns of masculinity when they described themselves – feminine men and male men – interpreted masculinity with reference to the traditionally determined models. The single men of the androgynous and those undefined as to sociocultural gender type did not want to define masculinity. They claimed they had never thought about it and they could not answer that question because they would have to refer to stereotypes. In their opinion, such definitions are impossible to form with reference to contemporary men.

The characteristics of particular types are presented below. They include the conclusions from the analysis and exemplary quotations and utterances capturing the character of the representatives of particular types in the best way.

### A ‘very male’ single man

According to male single men, masculinity means responsibility, firmness, physical strength, taking care of oneself, consistency in actions, determination, nobility and distance. They also mentioned such characteristics as independence, ability to make decisions, strong personality, dominance, and morality. They distinguish three types of contemporary men: 1) subordinate – especially in relationships with women; 2) dominant, so-called alpha males – especially in the area of professional life; 3) outsiders – assessed in a negative way because of their aversion to so-called male rituals. Some of the researched men stressed that contemporary men are too sensitive. Male single men in their relationships with other men expect first of all loyalty, support, help, and the opportunity to pursue common hobbies. Being a man means, for them, having male characteristics such as those listed above. They are convinced that their masculinity fits the defined pattern: *if I were to say if I’m masculine and how I fit the pattern of how a man should act and behave, I think I am and I do to a considerable degree!*(M7, a.37, MM).

**‘Not so male’ single man**

Feminine single men defined masculinity as a set of the following components: responsibility for supporting one’s family, taking care of a partner and pursuing one’s own interests. They particularly appreciated disinterestedness in friendship and the opportunity to spend free time in an interesting way with reference to other men e.g. acquaintances and friends. When judging themselves in the context of masculinity they stressed problems with showing so called male features first of all pugnacity and firmness: *A male man is able to support his woman and he has some passions, his hobbies, he is competitive and it looks rather poor in my case.* (M 11,a. 40, FM) – this statement is an essence of all the feminine single men’s opinions on masculinity.

**A ‘sometimes male’ single man**

Androgynous single men stressed the diversity of male behaviours in their environment. They interpreted their behavior as depending on the circumstances and people who are around. They emphasized that they prefer to think of themselves as of ‘a relatively good person’, ‘honest with others and themselves’ rather than ‘manly/unmanly.’ They show a similar style of thinking when judging other men from their closest surroundings pointing at such important characteristics of men they know or are friends with as honesty, loyalty, similar experience, sincerity. Some of the researched men experienced negative attitude towards their ‘unmanly features’ especially on the ground of relationships with women but they remain indifferent towards such criticism: *I think I have a lot of feminine elements but I can’t say I feel unhappy about it. If other people don’t like it, it’s their problem, not mine.* (M 1, a.40, A).

**The ‘not always male’ single man**

Single men of the type undefined as to sociocultural gender behave in a ‘male’ way and talk about ‘male’ topics in the presence of the same sex. In relationships with other men they appreciate characteristics not typical for their gender, such as a friendly attitude, similarity of opinions, and intellectual independence. They also value a ‘feminine’ sensitivity and friendship with women especially because of this dissimilarity. They interpret those features socially assigned to masculinity, such as supporting one’s own family, independence, firmness, and determination as useful or even necessary, but only if you are in a relationship. In their opinion, because they are single they are not obliged to show such characteristics: *There are some male characteristics which I would like to have in some situations and if I were in a relationship I guess I would have to show them, but now when I’m my own master I don’t feel the need.* (M 10, 1.29, SU).

## 10. Intelligent, independent and attractive – the most desired characteristics of a possible partner preferred by single men

All of the researched men pointed at their difficulty in finding a woman suitable for being their regular partner as one of the main reasons for being single. The terms ‘difficulty’ and ‘finding’ seem to be key words, therefore the object of the research was to verify if the men in question do in fact look for partners, and what women’s features are interesting to them. In this section, the activities undertaken in order to find a partner were described. This concerned single men of various types of sociocultural gender. An attempt was also made to list the characteristics which make a woman attractive to the men researched, and which would encourage them to establish a steady relationship with a woman.

Most of the single men studied, except for the feminine men type, were not actively looking for a partner. The androgynous men do not look for a woman and do not feel such need at the moment. The men undefined as to sociocultural gender do not look for a partner, but they notice an increased activity in this area from time to time. Generally, however, they are rather interested in less demanding relationships. The male men do not look for a partner, but they do not exclude the possibility of regular commitment if they find a ‘suitable’ woman.

**Table 2.** Matrix: Activities in looking for a partner shown by single men of various types of sociocultural gender

Activity in looking for a partner	Type of sociocultural gender	The utterances of the men researched concerning their attitude towards looking for a partner
Does not look for a partner in an active way,	Androgynous	<i>I don't feel the pressure and I don't look for anybody. At this moment in my life I don't want a relationship, I don't feel the need. ( M 4, a.30, A).</i>
	Undefined as for sociocultural gender	<i>There is nothing that would make me stop being single. Sometimes I get this strange feeling and I start looking around, sometimes even in a bit more intensive way, but I'm not looking for a commitment. (M 10, a.29,SU).</i>
	Male man	<i>Right now I just know that professional development, my job, is my priority. And if anything changes in my life, if somebody appears or if I fall in love head over heels it will be okay; I will not fight it. ( M 6, a.29, MM)</i>
Looks for a partner in an active way	Feminine man	<i>I'm not particularly satisfied with my single life and I'm still looking. ' ( M 11,a. 40, FM).</i>

Source: own research..

All of the men, regardless of the activity they showed in looking for a partner, had very specific expectations towards women – partners in a relationship. Their requirements are characteristic for various types of sociocultural gender. Preferences for the following types of women were recognized: 1) ‘Challenging, physically attractive, tender and ethereal’; 2) ‘A good-natured life partner’; 3) ‘An independent, pretty, ambitious peer with high IQ, moderately caring’; 4) ‘An interesting partner, not necessarily pretty.’

### **‘Challenging, physically attractive, tender and ethereal’**

Women whose characteristics are a specific mixture of features traditionally and contemporarily assigned to femininity are interesting for the single men of the male man type. Physical attractiveness, intelligence, independent thinking, combined at the same time with tenderness and sensitivity are highly valued by the researched men of this type because they guarantee creating a fascinating and inspirational relationship: *Sensitive, attractive, intelligent, independent, holding clear opinions which will make the relationship interesting.*’ (M 8, a.29, MM); *‘I have a soft spot for women who are relatively highly independent. It obviously causes... tension and makes life harder but on the other hand, much more interesting (M7, a.37, MM); I like women with, how to call it... a claw. I like some kind of independence. [...] It is good if she’s got something to say. This makes her an interesting person. On one hand she is an equal conversation partner... an interesting person simply. (M6, a.29, MM).*

The so-called feminine features, such as tenderness and sensitivity, are especially attractive for these single men because in their opinion they are more and more seldom found in representatives of ‘softer sex’.

The appearance of a partner has a vital meaning as well. All men of this type appreciate physical attractiveness. Slim, tiny women with an attractive look and a feminine way of dressing are the most interesting for them: *Okay, I must admit that the looks is the first stimulus and it works. I have always been attracted to tiny, delicate women. Not skinny but of a small type with delicate facial features, a bit girlish. [...] I like the kind of moderate but feminine style, a bit ethereal but sport shoes are out of the question, worn out trousers and so on. (M6, a.29, MM); With an original look, generally pretty and shapely. First of all, with an interesting type of beauty. This is important to me. I would prefer a slim [...] but not a skinny type. I would like her to take care of herself, but I can’t give you a particular weight. I’m not interested in an obsession about being slim. (M 8, a.29, MM).*

They expect from women a partner, and a friendly attitude and emotional maturity. They prefer to form relationships with women of a similar age. Younger men of this type of sociocultural gender are also interested in a bit older women. For men from the older age group, younger women seem to be attractive as well as their peers. They would prefer to date single women who have never been married, but divorced women also fall within their ambit of interest. Children from

previous relationships are a disqualifying feature in making a decision about entering into a steady relationship with a woman.

#### **‘A good-natured life partner’**

An optimistic attitude to life and sense of humour, as well as focus on professional career, are among features most desired by single feminine men: *Joy of life or the will to look for it. [...] I’m interested in a person who’s got a sense of humor and simply likes talking. [...] It would be good if her job was fascinating and satisfying for her. I really like women crazy about what they do professionally.* (M 11, a. 40, FM).

Good-natured and gentle are characteristics highly valued by these men. They are discouraged by a difficult character, and inclinations for plotting and gossip were mentioned as turn-offs by the men of this type.

The woman’s appearance – beauty and silhouette – are not of particular importance but being neat is a necessary condition. A provocative look disqualifies a woman from being a potential partner.

The woman’s age is a vital criterion for selecting a potential partner. Single feminine men are interested in younger women. Those who are older than thirty five stop being interesting for them: *I mostly go out with girls up to thirty something years of age. The older ones seem terribly old to me.* (M 11, a. 40, FM).

Women’s experience in previous relationships is not important for the men of this type, and having children is not a criterion of selection. However, they require a settled marital and legal status.

#### **‘An independent, pretty, ambitious peer with high IQ, moderately caring’**

The androgynous men look for intelligent, independent women with a good sense of humour. They highly value reflexivity and tolerance. Tenderness and protectiveness should be displayed rather moderately by their potential partners: *Smart, independent, aware of her own limitations and virtues. But intellect is the best aphrodisiac for me.* (M 5, a.39, A); *Sense of humour for sure. But what more? I like independent, get-ahead and ambitious women. This is what turns me on! [...] Gentle and caring, but to a certain degree.* (M 4, a.30, A). *Reflexivity of a partner, meaning she can listen no matter what. She doesn’t only listen but also hears what is said. [...] I like patience, tolerance and some kind of, let’s call it, an inner craziness. This means I don’t like simple schematic people.* (M 3, a.37, A).

Androgynous men appreciate strong, open women who think in an unconventional way, who have their opinions and are able to defend them. Women’s beauty, slim figure and taking care of oneself are also very important features for this type of man.

They prefer their peers. They definitely exclude a much younger partner because of difficulties in communication originating from the difference in experience and stage of life. They would accept children from previous relationships.



### **‘An interesting partner not necessarily pretty’**

The characteristics particularly desired by men undefined as to sociocultural gender are independent thinking and intelligence, sense of humour, tenderness and gentleness: *Independent opinions, fascinating opposition or some similarities, definitely a sense of humour. I would like the woman to be delicate and tender somehow. [...] Intelligent first of all, but this is also about her having her own opinions. She can't be afraid to use her own brain and express her own views, she doesn't let anybody oppress her.* (M 10, a.29, SU).

Similar interests, views and perception of the world, except for intelligence and independence, seem to be necessary and sufficient conditions for entering into a relationship. Physical appearance does not seem to be an essential criterion for selecting a partner for this type of man. Beauty is appreciated, but it is not a necessary condition for establishing a closer relationship.

Age is not of a vital importance, although women of similar age are preferred. The most desired types for establishing a regular relationship are single, childless women and childless divorcees.

The above listed characteristics of women show the diversity of expectations of single men towards women. At the same time they challenge the common belief that women's intelligence and independence raises fears and aversion in men. It was quite the opposite in the case of the men researched. In their opinion it is difficult to find such women. It is certain, however, that they had some contact with exemplifications of these features and that this let the men form such specific requirements. It appears that the best interpretation of 'difficulties in finding' a suitable partner for the single men is their statement claiming that they are after all not interested in finding one, at least not at that moment. Most of them do not look for a partner in an active way. Nevertheless, the range of desired womanly characteristics is quite wide.

## **Conclusions**

The role of a single man, one of many available men's roles in contemporary societies, may be played in a few different ways and appears to be one of the most interesting ways of being a man. Living on one's own may be a stage in one's biography, a temporary experience, or a conscious choice of one of the alternatives available and as such, in case of men, does not seem to bear negative social consequences in the postfamily world. Not being constrained by age, time of accomplishment, choice, experience with relationships, or assignment to a particular stage in life, the role of a single man becomes not only attractive but also diverse in the form of its execution. Undoubtedly one of the factors influencing the form of execution is the type of sociocultural gender.

As a summary, a topology of various forms of executing the role of single man role will be presented. The topology was formed on the basis of comparison of various types of men isolated at different stages of the analysis. It was based on the following criteria: sociocultural gender identity, approach to being single, defining a single man, the reasons for leading a single life, activity in looking for a partner, preferred womanly features.

Single men – topology:

**1. A self-focused single man, ‘very masculine’** who wants to be temporarily on his own but who is open to a challenging, physically attractive and tender partner. Being single is a stage in his life resulting from concentrating on himself. Type of gender identity: a male man.

**2. A single man with fears, ‘not always manly’** who wants to be single temporarily although he is looking for an attractive partner from time to time. Being single in his case is a consequence of fears and aversion towards regular commitment, which is a part of being in a relationship. Type of sociocultural gender: undefined as to sociocultural gender.

**3. A single man with requirements, ‘sometimes manly’** who does not want to be in a relationship at the moment, so he does not look for a partner, but in the future is willing to meet an independent, pretty, ambitious peer with a high IQ. He treats being single as a choice and a kind of life experience. Type of sociocultural gender: an androgynous man

**4. A single man with problems, ‘not quite manly’** who does not want to be in a relationship at the moment. He is unsuccessful in looking for a partner, therefore he considers his singlehood to be a form of coping with the situation of being unable to find a partner. Type of sociocultural gender: a feminine man.

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## Emilia Paprzycka

### MĘŻCZYŹNI SINGLE – UJĘCIE TYPOLOGICZNE W PERSPEKTYWIE PŁCI SPOŁECZNO-KULTUROWEJ

**Summary.** Zaprezentowane wyniki badań, zrealizowane strategią jakościową, są częścią większego projektu mającego na celu opis sytuacji osób żyjących w pojedynkę w Polsce. Przedmiotem zainteresowania w niniejszym artykule uczyniono mężczyzn czasowo lub stale żyjących bez partnerki. Teoretyczną podstawą badań, zarówno w zakresie konstrukcji narzędzia, analizy danych, jak i ich interpretacji była koncepcja płci społeczno-kulturowej.

**Słowa kluczowe:** singiel, definicja singla, mężczyzna żyjący w pojedynkę, przyczyny życia w pojedynkę mężczyzn, męskość, preferowane przez single cechy kobiet.