



# InCoSin

**International Conference of Singlehood**

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Abstract Book



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KOMISJA NAUK PSYCHOLOGICZNYCH  
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# Keynotes

## Single and Stigmatized: Understanding The Roots and Consequences of Singlehood Stigma

Yuthika U. Girme  
Simon Fraser University

Singlehood is becoming increasingly common worldwide. Despite this, research on singlehood has not received remotely equivalent research attention as romantic relationships. Wellbeing research that has explicitly included singles has focused on whether coupled versus single people are more satisfied with their lives. Yet, these between-group comparisons have not attended to within-group variability among singles that can point to when and for whom singlehood is associated with thriving. In this talk, I will review factors that are associated with the well-being of single individuals from a within-group perspective, including (a) intrapersonal factors (characteristics of the individual), (b) interpersonal experiences (qualities of one's social relationships and experiences), and (c) societal influences (features related to one's broader social or cultural context). Next, by bridging interpersonal and intergroup theories, I illustrate the roots and consequences of one particularly challenging experience that single people must contend with – singlehood stigma/discrimination. I provide empirical evidence that, compared to coupled people, single people on average report lower wellbeing because single people report lower social support and greater social stigma. The roots and consequences of singlehood discrimination are exacerbated when single peoples' social networks are saturated by coupled people or when single people endorse societal norms that place relationships on a pedestal. Taken together, the social context that single people are embedded in plays an important role in determining whether single people thrive or find singlehood challenging.

# Ambiguous Loss in Adults Experiencing Undesired Prolonged Singlehood

Jeffrey B. Jackson  
Virginia Tech University

Long-term partnering is the societal norm in most parts of the world, however, research suggests that increasing rates of singlehood are occurring in many countries throughout the world. Although many adults experiencing prolonged singlehood do not experience distress about being single, many do, particularly those who desire being in a committed long-term romantic relationship. This presentation will address how ambiguous loss theory provides a framework for conceptualizing distress caused by prolonged singlehood among adults who are single and desire to be partnered. Adults who are single may experience ambiguous loss due to the lack of clear information as to if or when their single status will change through the materialization of an indefinitely missing anticipated partner. According to ambiguous loss theory, an indefinitely missing anticipated partner is simultaneously physically absent and psychologically present. The primary reaction to ambiguous loss is ambivalence, and the most common cause of ambivalence is not knowing whether to hold on or move on. Accepting the permanent loss of the indefinitely missing anticipated partner and resigning oneself to permanent singlehood allows for some closure, grieving, and healing; conversely, hoping that the indefinitely missing anticipated partner will eventually materialize prevents true grieving from taking place. Attachment needs may make complete acceptance of permanent singlehood difficult, perpetuating the ambiguous loss. Ambivalence may be increased by the lack of rituals for demarcating the invisible loss of being single, which can result in disenfranchised grief. The degree of ambivalence experienced from singlehood ambiguous loss typically varies according to the developmental timing of singlehood, decisions between settling and prolonged singlehood, and unviable potential partners. Strategies for managing singlehood ambiguous loss will be briefly addressed.



## Theorizing Singlehood as an Identity

Elyakim Kislev

Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Very little attention has been paid in the literature to the essence of singlehood. Existing research can be divided into the reasons for singlehood on one side and the implications of being single on the other side, while mostly leaving singlehood itself a ‘black box,’ but singlehood is now going through a conceptual revolution resembling past revolutions regarding race, gender, and sexual orientation. In this talk, I will first survey the two existing scholastic streams. Second, I will lay out a growing stream of research where singlehood is found to be a social category and identity in itself. Third, through using social identity theories, I will offer a scale that moves from counter-normative identity to extended identity to core identity. Fourth, I will discuss some of the implications of this identity scale for empirical research and topics such as social discrimination, civil rights, and social movements.

## **Towards an Affective Reading of Singlehood: Some Suggestions for a New Research Agenda**

Kinneret Lahad  
Tel Aviv University

This article explores singlehood as an ongoing affective and sensorial process. Taking my cue from affect and post-human theory, I propose a new theoretical framework which entails critical reappraisal of some of the prevailing ontological and epistemological considerations of singlehood studies. Whereas sociocultural researchers employ mostly a constructionist and discursive mode of inquiry, which privileges narratives, discourses, and social meaning making, here singlehood is conceptualized as an assemblage of forces and capacities which affect and are affected by different kinds of human and non-human bodies. Moreover, turning away from an overreliance on a unified and bounded individual subject, this line of inquiry provides new conceptual opportunities in which the connectivities and potentialities along the indeterminate and amorphous path of singlehood can be explored. To exemplify this approach, I revisit my earlier studies on singlehood, and consider how these conceptual pathways allow us to address the more-than-human and more-than-representational dimensions of solo living.

## Putting Sex and Dating in Context in Single People's Lives

Geoffrey MacDonald

University of Toronto

Arguably, many people assume that single people's top priority is to find opportunities for sex and relationships. In this talk, I will explore the extent to which sex and dating are priorities in single people's lives. First, I will discuss research suggesting that sexual satisfaction is an important predictor of well-being for singles. Second, I will discuss research suggesting that relatively high sexual satisfaction can arise either from desiring sex and having it, or from low desire for sex. Third, I will discuss research asking single people to set priorities in building an ideal single life which suggests sex and dating are low priorities for the average single person. Finally, I will discuss research examining different "types" of singles which suggests that singles with the lowest desire for sex and dating have the highest satisfaction with singlehood (but lower life satisfaction). I will discuss the notion that this pattern of results can be explained by considering that satisfying singlehood may well involve deprioritizing sex and dating, but also that individuals who are disinterested in sexual/romantic relationships may also, on average, have lower interest in relationships of any kind.

## Trends in Singleness Across Cohorts

Dimitri Mortelmans

University of Antwerp

Many authors have documented a global rise in singlehood during the past decades (Perelli-Harris & Lyons-Amos, 2015; Yeung & Cheung, 2015), expanding beyond Western or industrialised countries (Esteve et al., 2020). Simultaneously, the number of single households is increasing, not only due to the aging of the population, but also because young adults are increasingly living solo (Bellani et al., 2018). While singlehood and solo living do not necessarily coincide, existing studies tend to overlook this distinction, and thus disregard potentially diverse causes and consequences. Furthermore, current literature employs a large diversity in definitions of the term “single”, with a subsequent large variety in measurements and results in empirical studies. In this paper, we provide conceptual clarity as to what types of singles can be distinguished, through a framework that builds on two dimensions: living solo and being partnered. Next, we apply this singlehood framework to empirical data. In doing so, we firstly identify how the conceptual approaches towards singlehood are currently adopted in large, international studies. Second, we use these datasets to comparatively document how singlehood has changed over time across birth cohorts. To do so, we use data from both internationally comparative retrospective studies (FFS, GGP, Sharelife) and prospective panel studies (Pairfam, GSOEP, SHP). The results of the analyses show substantial differences in the possibilities to operationalize singleness. Also, the analyses on 532937 individuals show that trends in singleness differ across birth cohorts and also across countries.

# Young Singlehood: a Life-course Perspective

Lonneke van den Berg

Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute

Nowadays, the majority of European young adults live in singlehood in their first living situation outside of the parental home. However, the focus in the sociological and demographic literature has typically been on entering cohabitation or marriage rather than singlehood. For example, the transition to adulthood literature views entering a partnership as a step toward adulthood. The potential developmental advantages or choice for singlehood in this life phase are often overlooked. This talk approaches young singlehood from a life course perspective. I do so by discussing four questions. First, I reflect on the question how young singlehood fits within the transition to adulthood. Here, I describe what young singlehood exactly entails and what sets it apart from later phases of singlehood. Second, I reflect on the question who are the young singles. I describe differences in the likelihood to be single, among others, across cohorts and social background. Moreover, I set out the most important explanations for these differences. Third, I answer the question what the implications are for young singlehood over the life-course. I illustrate this by my research on how individuals who were single in young adulthood cope with divorce later in life compared to individuals who were immediately partnered. Finally, I discuss the implications of the spread of young singlehood for life-course research and singlehood research. I reflect here on possibilities and challenges for future research on young singlehood.

# Symposium: The lives of single people: Discriminated or thriving?

What are the lives of single people like? Research identifies heterogeneity in singlehood and suggests the need to examine within-group differences. Across four talks using diverse methods—experiments, and longitudinal and qualitative studies—we examine both external factors (discrimination, stereotypes) and internal factors (internalized beliefs about relationships, fear of singlehood, sense of autonomy) that shape experiences to investigate within-group differences. Talk 1 finds that frequently experiencing singlehood-based discrimination was associated with greater concerns about being a victim of singlehood stigma, which predicted increased fear of being single, but decreased capacity for control regarding changing their relationship status. Talk 2 finds that levels of singlehood-based discrimination do not differ by gender, but that the content of stereotypes is gendered. Talk 3 finds that single people themselves may endorse beliefs that put relationships on a pedestal, which are associated with higher fears of being single as well as lower life satisfaction (daily and weekly). Talk 4 finds that although some single people perceive decreases in satisfaction following negative experiences related to their relationship status, many single people are also thriving; they perceive increases in satisfaction following experiences that highlight their sense of autonomy, for example. In sum, single people may face singlism from society and their internalized beliefs, but these experiences are nuanced (e.g., gender differences and intertwined with positive singlehood experiences). Thus, this symposium will feature the diversity and complexity in the lives of single people.

# **Ironic Effects of Singlehood Sigma**

Kenneth Tan

University of College London

Singlehood is on the rise in many developed countries and understanding discrimination regarding singlehood has become a pivotal goal in recent research. The current research explores this issue from a social identity threat perspective, trying to understand whether stigmatizing singlehood results in greater tendency to form romantic relationships. We hypothesized that exposure to singlehood stigma simultaneously increases motivation to avoid being single, but decreases the capacity or control to do so. In 2 correlational studies and 2 experimental studies comprising of participants from both USA and Singapore, results showed that single participants (i.e., not currently in romantic relationships) frequently experiencing singlehood-based discrimination was associated with greater concerns about being a victim of singlehood stigma, which predicted increased fear of being single, but decreased capacity for control regarding changing their relationship status. Moreover, experiencing discrimination also led to increased motivation to avoid stigma as well as increased negative affect. Findings suggest that discrimination against singlehood to combat against being single may have paradoxical and undesired effects.

# **”Conceited Cat-ladies and Selfish Man-slobs”: Gendered Differences in the Stereotypes of Single Women and Men**

Hannah Dupuis<sup>1</sup> and Yuthika U. Girme<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Simon Fraser University

Do single women and single men differ in their experiences of “singlism”? This research examines whether single women and men report differences in discrimination and the content of singlehood-based stereotypes, (e.g., “lonely”, “defective”). Study 1 (N=140) evaluated the level of discrimination single male and female participants reported against single women, single men, and themselves for being single. Additionally, participants were asked to provide positive, negative and/or neutral stereotypic trait words for singles of their own gender. I hypothesized that there would be no difference in the level of discrimination single women and men reported, but that the content of stereotypes would be reflective of gender stereotypes. Hypotheses were correct; single male and female participants did not differ in their reported discrimination levels, but they reported gendered stereotypes for single women (e.g., “frigid”, “controlling”) vs. single men (e.g., “immature”, “poor”). Study 2 replicated the results of Study 1 and extended them by having single male and female participants (N=146) report 10 stereotypes for both single women and single men. Participants rated the valence of those stereotypes to determine if there are differences in the ratings of singlehood-based stereotypes. I hypothesized that the valence of stereotypes would be rated more negatively for single women than single men. Contrary to hypotheses, single men were rated more harshly on the valence of stereotype words than single women. Thus, while reported discrimination levels between single women and men are similar, the stereotypes of single women and men are gendered, and single men may be stereotyped more negatively than single women. This research fills a gap in the extant singlehood literature by quantitatively examining the level of discrimination single women and men report and qualitatively examining the stereotype content of single women and single men.



# **“Do I Need to be in a Relationship?”: Single Peoples’ Endorsement of Relationship Beliefs Exacerbates Fears of Being Single and Undermines Wellbeing**

Brittany E. Dennett<sup>1</sup> and Yuthika U. Girme<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Simon Fraser University

In this research, we are interested in studying both the societal beliefs and personal beliefs of singlehood and how these beliefs then impact individual single people’s well-being. In this research, we will be focusing on the societal belief of relationship pedestal belief (i.e., the beliefs that one needs to be in a relationship to be truly happy) and how the endorsement of relationship pedestal belief by single people impacts their own views of singlehood, and subsequently their own personal well-being. To assess this, we examine if greater endorsement of relationship pedestal belief undermines single people’s well-being via fear of being single. Across three studies, we invited single participants (total N = 760 individuals, 5332 observations) to fill out a baseline questionnaire and a short follow-up questionnaire daily (Study 1 and 3) and weekly (Study 2) about their life satisfaction. We conducted multi-level modeling (days or weeks within participant) and found that single participants who endorse greater relationship pedestal belief was associated with higher fears of being single and that was associated with lower daily (Study 1 and 3) and weekly (Study 2) reported life satisfaction. Taken together, this work suggests it is important for the area of singlehood to continue considering what societal beliefs people receive about singlehood, and single people’s internalization of those societal beliefs within themselves. This work may also help in theorizing possible ways to bolster single people’s well-being, such as reducing negative beliefs about singlehood at the societal level, or an intervention at the personal level that targets the internalization of these beliefs. Furthermore, this research suggests that relationship pedestal belief could be a possible antecedent variable for fear of being single. Thus, researchers with future questions or lines of research about the variable fear of being single may find this research of particular interest.

# Perceived Satisfaction in Singlehood: A Mixed Method Study of Singlehood Experiences

Jeewon Oh

Syracuse University

Research suggests that satisfaction in singlehood changes over time. What might underlie this change? In a mixed-method study, I investigated what events single people perceive to be influential for changing their satisfaction with singlehood, what those events are like, and whether those characteristics predict current well-being. Participants were 445 single participants (63.82% women; Mage = 52.91 years) and had been single for 20.43 years on average. Across a total of 912 written responses describing events that single people perceived to change their singlehood satisfaction, 30 themes were identified across four broad categories—whose experience it was, the kind of experience, the timing of experience and valence. Most experiences were events that the individuals experienced themselves (72.15%), but some were events of others (18.86%; e.g., a friend’s engagement) ranging from close family members and friends to ex-partners and strangers. Among the type of events, the most frequent event was about negative experiences in previous relationships (e.g., memories of a previous abusive relationship, seeing couples have conflicts; 18.82%) These events were characterized by lower positive valence, which was a significant predictor of lower life satisfaction and singlehood satisfaction ( $B \beta .26$ ). Other people also wrote about times they were glad to miss negative experiences in a relationship (9.54%) and 65% of these individuals reported an increase in their singlehood satisfaction. The second most frequent type of event were moments that highlighted freedom and independence afforded by singlehood (16.78%). Participants mentioned experiencing freedom to live life as they wish—pursuing career opportunities, hobbies, and travel as well as meeting up with people they want to when they want to. These events were characterized by greater positive valence, again a significant predictor of higher life satisfaction and singlehood satisfaction. In addition, these responses were consistent with a perspective that many single people happy and thriving (DePaulo & Morris, 2005) and often have satisfying non-romantic close relationships (Sarkisian & Gerstel, 2016). Indeed, some single people described feeling a sense of connection to non-romantic relationships and 71% of the participants who wrote about this type of event reported feeling more satisfied with their singlehood afterwards. However, spending time with close others was not a uniformly positive experience (e.g., “I was tailgating with friends and was the only single one there. Even though I was having fun I felt lonely” [participant response]). These results are consistent with research showing single people might experience discrimination from the very people who also give support (Girme et al., 2022). All in all, this study highlights the diversity and the nuance in the single life that range from singlism to thriving.

# Individual Paper Presentations

## Seeing the Worst in Each Other: Opinion Formation on Social Media in the Context of Unsuccessful (Online) Dating

Johanna Lisa Degen  
Europa-Universität Flensburg

Mobile online dating celebrates its 10-year anniversary and is today statistically the most common place to meet a spouse. It also brings new principles and norms into the dating culture, such as parallel dating, acceleration, and ghosting as a form to break up. However, the established manners, are reproduced by the masses but at the same time often perceived as hurtful. Besides negative effects on well-being, it also shows, that some of the practices like acceleration and parallel dating, inhibit falling in love, and establishing relationships. As one consequence, a group of frustrated online daters grows. They describe online dating fatigue, experiencing a continuous lack of success and acknowledgment. Being disappointed and hurt by the everyday dating practices (being ghosted, lacking matches, having unsuccessful communication), one strategy to stabilize self-esteem and self-worth is to degrade the generalized other. This shows in the data on online dating, with exhausted online daters concluding that men are either players or desperate, and women are under suspicion to be promiscuous. At the same time, subjects turn millionfold to social media with their needs and for opinion formation. In this sphere, parasociality rules, and as such, influencers are followed by a mass of subjects, usually building a somewhat congruent opinion and grounding similar values. Followers turn to these parasocial relationships seeking advice, validation, comfort, and belonging and as a consequence, they are somewhat easily influenced in terms of opinion; by the content, but also by the validation of the mass of others agreeing. This study analyzes the discourse and mechanisms on Instagram, one prominent social media platform, around influencers and their communities containing content on dating and relationships. Under a reconstructive approach, this study demonstrates how subjects expect the worst of the generalized other as one consequence of the online dating logic and how this is firstly negotiated, framed, and multiplied by influencers (the content shared) and secondly, met by their communities (the reaction by the followers). The findings show how online communities, with up to 5 million followers, rant against the opposite gender and their behavior when dating (mostly online). On the female side, men are demonized as lazy, dirty, rude, not able to reflect, and unsuccessful while at the same time entitled and overall treating women badly. On the male side, females are depicted as promiscuous, moody, and arrogant, having absurdly high standards, making dating and mating impossible, and by that being detrimental to reproduction and humankind. Concluding, it is discussed how such dynamics explain a programmatic hindrance of romantic approximation and intimacy and the meaning for gender relations and relationship dynamics.

## Structural Singlism? An Examination of Economic Security Among Never-Married Older Adults

Deborah Carr  
Boston University

Marriage is a near-universal experience for current cohorts of older adults. Just five percent of U.S. adults ages 65 and older have been single for life, with this share inching upward in each successive cohort. In 2019, the proportions who had never married were just 3.1 and 3.8 percent for men and women ages 85+ respectively, with rates roughly twice that among those ages 65 to 74 (7.2 and 6.4 percent, respectively). Although the proportion of U.S. adults who never marry has increased steadily across cohorts in the late 20th and early 21st centuries, relatively little is known about the economic well-being of lifelong singles and gender differences therein. Never-married women typically had continuous work careers throughout their lives, especially among current cohorts of older adults who seldom had children outside of marriage. By contrast, among older men, for whom marriage was seen as an indicator of one's maturity and stability, married men's earnings and career advancement outpaced their never-married counterparts. These life course influences on labor supply and earnings may spill over into economic security in old age. Older adults' income security is based on four main sources: the "three-legged stool" of Social Security income, private pensions, and interest income, as well as wages/salary for those working for pay. Each of these income sources is plausibly affected by lifelong singlehood.

# The Relationship Between Attitudes Toward Singlehood, Marital Relationship Beliefs and Loneliness

Gülzade AVCI ÇAYIR Şükriye<sup>1</sup> and Melek DEMİR Ondokuz<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Işık Preschool, <sup>2</sup>Mayıs University

It is observed that there is an increase in young adults' tendencies to prefer to remain single as the average age of marriage for both men and women is on the increase for the last 20 years in Turkey, as in many countries. It is considered significant in terms of this study to investigate the consequences of these kinds of demographic changes in society and analyze the factors that may be associated with individuals' attitudes toward singlehood. In this study, singlehood is defined as the state of individuals over 18 years of age who have never been married regardless of being in any kind of romantic relationship at the present time or at any previous period of time with reference to the legal definition. The aim of this study was to investigate the relationship between attitudes toward singlehood, marital relationship beliefs, and loneliness in single individuals. The study was conducted with a total of 1,215 single individuals over 18 years of age. All data of the study were collected through an online questionnaire between the years 2020-2021. The Attitudes Toward Singlehood Scale, Marital Relationship Beliefs Scale, UCLA Loneliness Scale were used in the study. Exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses were used in data analysis in order to determine the construct validity of the Attitudes Toward Singlehood Scale, while Pearson correlation coefficient, Multiple Regression analysis, and ANOVA were used in order to determine the relationships between variables. It was concluded at the end of the study that there was a positive relationship between marriage relationship beliefs and loneliness and a negative one between attitudes toward singlehood and marriage relationship beliefs, while 11% of the change in the variable of attitudes toward singlehood was explained with the variables included in the model created regarding the prediction of the attitudes toward singlehood by the root family dependency and I-we balance. Scores on the emotion management, which is the subscale of the marital relationship beliefs scale, were found to be significantly higher in women compared to men, while the irrational belief scores on I-we balance were significantly higher in men compared to women. Those who had an ongoing romantic relationship had higher scores in emotions toward singlehood than those who did not have a romantic relationship. The loneliness levels differed according to the existence of a romantic relationship, and the loneliness levels of individuals who had never had a romantic relationship were higher compared to those who had an ongoing romantic relationship and did not have an ongoing romantic relationship. Those who had an ongoing romantic relationship had lower marital relationship beliefs compared to those who had never had a romantic relationship and did not have an ongoing romantic relationship. Those living in villages-towns had lower mean scores in the dimension of emotions toward singlehood compared to those living in districts and metropolitan cities. It may be beneficial within the scope of the research that practitioners prepare awareness-raising seminars and programs within the context of attitudes toward singlehood for young adults.

## The Singles' Plot in Chloe Zhao's "Nomadland"

Elizabeth R. Foulke

The Pennsylvania State University

For centuries, it has been rare to encounter fictional narratives with single women protagonists that do not follow the courtship or marriage plot. As Mary-Catherine Harrison reminds us in her 2014 article, "Reading the Marriage Plot," "the marriage plot" which is " 'canonical. . . ' and "integral to folktales, fiction, and film. . . watched in movie theaters and television screens across the world. . . is a story of heterosexual love and courtship culminating in marriage. . ." But as people of all genders are postponing or forgoing romantic partnerships, the stories that we tell are evolving to reflect new narrative forms. My paper looks at one such story, Chloe Zhao's "Nomadland," which won the Academy Award for Best Picture in 2021. While many view the film as a meditation on grief—and this is certainly a valid interpretation of the film—it is also possible to employ a Single's Studies lens to "read" "Nomadland." Doing so enables us to identify narrative forms that may mirror and/or pave the way for how we understand the "plot" of a person's life. Rather than following the traditional narrative arc of birth, education, career, falling in love, getting married, and having children, Zhao's protagonist Fern is among a growing number of fictional women who invite us to participate in a nuanced discourse on the different shapes a life can take. To chart the course of single characters' lives, I developed the concept "the singles' plot," which I've adapted from literary scholar Benjamin Kahan's conceit the "the celibate plot," introduced in his 2013 book "Celibacies: American Modernism & Sexual Life." Kahan is interested in tracing the ways that celibate characters configure novels and other literary genres. Building on Kahan's work, I look to literature and film with single women protagonists, focusing on the ways that singleness affects a story's structure. To this, I add ideas of narrative structure that Jane Alison introduces in her 2019 text on the craft of fiction writing, "Meander, Spiral Explode: Design and Pattern in Narrative." Alison's text serves as a guide for using patterns found in the natural world as a construct for mapping plot. When mapping Fern's journey, the shape of a spiraling fractal emerges (see image below). Several repeating patterns in the movie occur at various scales. The idea of repetition at various scales is one way to conceptualize the singles' plot. It provides an alternative viewing of a fictional character's, or person's life so that we need not try to squeeze them into the more established shape of Freytag's pyramid that many were taught. In creating the fictional character Fern, Chloé Zhao gives the single woman a more unbounded and indeterminate plot line. I see this as one of the common features of the singles' plot, and I think one of the ways that Singles Studies can help us to reconceptualize our lives is by helping us (independent of our gender, sexuality, or relationship status) to be less fearful, and perhaps even to welcome, the indeterminate qualities of a life.

## Heteronormative Pressure to Partner Engenders Greater Relationship Desire and Loneliness Among Singles

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Singles are notoriously stereotyped as lonely and lacking (e.g., Greitemeyer, 2009). And while there may be some truth to this stereotype (e.g., Adamczyk, 2016), relatively little research has considered how broader societal norms—specifically heteronormative pressures to be in a relationship—may fuel singles’ sense of loneliness. In the current research, we collected a representative, cross-sectional sample of American singles (N = 4,835; 57.5% female, 42.5% male, 0% nonbinary; 83.83% Straight, 7.05% Bisexual, 3.91% Gay, 1.57% Lesbian, 0.7% Queer) to examine their experiences of pressure to partner, desire to partner, and loneliness. We hypothesize that perceiving pressure to partner from friends, family, and society more generally will be associated with a greater desire to partner among singles, which in turn will engender a greater sense of loneliness. Critically, we also hypothesize that the pathway between pressure to partner and loneliness via desire will be distinctly heteronormative such that it will be especially pronounced for women (vs. men) and straight (vs. LGBTQ+) individuals. We will test these hypotheses using structural equation modeling. Together, this research will shed light on how heteronormative pressures to be in a relationship, as communicated by friends, family, and society, may serve to perpetuate the deficit narrative of singlehood.

## Correlates of ‘Incel’ Identification in Single Adults

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The ‘incel’ subculture refers to online groups consisting of single men who adopt a nihilistic, anti-feminist worldview stemming from their inability to attain a romantic partner (Hoffman et al., 2020). Incels have received significant attention in recent years as a result of several high-profile attacks and mass killings committed by self-identified incels, with some governmental organizations labelling the incel movement as an emerging terrorist threat. The scant research to date on the incel phenomenon highlights the importance of examining the psychological characteristics of individuals who subscribe to this misogynistic ideology. Although definitions of the term ‘incel’ vary, current perspectives suggest that self-identification with the label is a key element in establishing membership (Williams et al., 2021). Here, we investigate psychological predictors of individuals’ identification with the term ‘incel’ among a sample of 894 single adults recruited from Reddit. Participants completed an online survey consisting of several measures of theoretically relevant variables related to incel ideology and involuntary celibacy (e.g., sexist and gender-role attitudes, social dominance orientation, mate value, social belongingness needs, sexual motivations, psychological well-being) and personal assessment (Eastwick Finkel, 2008; Peterson et al., 1982). Central to the current investigation, participants also reported the degree to which they self-identified with the label ‘incel’. Exploratory analyses revealed that hostile sexism, social dominance orientation, gender linked social roles, and components of sexual narcissism (i.e., sexual exploitation and sexual entitlement) were the strongest correlates of identification with the ‘incel’ label. Subsequent regression analyses showed that hostile sexism, sexual exploitation, and (lack of) sexual skill were the strongest unique predictors of incel identification. The current research reveals important insights into understanding key distinguishing characteristics and predictors of individuals adopting incel-specific attitudes and misogynistic belief systems. These findings have implications for identifying targets for education, intervention, and prevention of misogynistic attitudes and violence connected to the incel movement.



## Determinants and Consequences of Involuntary Celibate Among Polish Single Men in Early Adulthood

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A shooting in Isla Vista in 2014, caused by Elliot Rodger, where 6 persons were found dead, has drawn attention of society toward men describing themselves as “incels” (an acronym from “involuntary celibate”) who have strong negative beliefs about women and simultaneously suffer from not having a female partner. In our project we intend to check the determinants and consequences of incelhood among Polish single men in early adulthood (18-35 years old). We are going to perform a longitudinal, three-wave study where we will check the link between incelhood and gender essentialism as well as between incelhood and various aspects of distress - depression symptoms, low self-esteem and gender role conflict. We are going to operationalize incelhood in three ways - as identification with the category of “incels”, as frequency of consuming the “manosphere” content on the Internet and as unwanted celibacy, measured with the Polish version of the scale of unwanted celibacy by Grunau et al. (2022) which consists of items like e.g. “I want to date, but nobody wants to date me.”

# The Mating Psychology of Incels (Involuntary Celibates): Misfortunes, Misperceptions, and Misrepresentations

William Costello

University of Texas

Finding and retaining a mate are recurring and fundamental adaptive problems for humans. Yet there is a growing community of men who form a sense of identity around their perceived inability to solve these problems. The incel (involuntary celibates) community have forged a sense of identity around their perceived inability to form sexual or romantic relationships. Despite significant mainstream media speculation about the potential sexual/mating psychology of incels, this has yet to be formally investigated in the scientific literature, partly due to the “hard-to-reach” nature of this group. In the first formal investigation of incel mating psychology, we compared a sample ( $n = 151$ ) of self-identified male incels with non-incel males who were single ( $n = 367$ ) across a range of measures. Compared to non-incels, incel men have a lower sense of self-perceived mate-value and a greater external locus of control regarding their singlehood. Contrary to mainstream media narratives, incels also reported lower minimum standards for mate-preferences than non-incels. Compared to non-incel men, incels did not significantly overestimate the importance of physical-attractiveness or financial prospects to women, but in line with prior predictions, they did underestimate the importance of intelligence, kindness and understanding, humor, loyalty, and dependability. Furthermore, incels underestimated women’s overall minimum standards more generally. Further exploratory analyses showed that incels are significantly shorter in height than non-incels, and incels who use forums believe that participating in the forums made their opinion of women worse. Taken together, these factors could have a deleterious effect on their mating prospects. These findings suggest that incels represent a newly identified group to target for evolutionary-psychology-informed interventions, which could help challenge cognitive distortions around female mate preferences and improve their mating intelligence. Other implications and directions for future research, such as investigating the prevalence of body-dysmorphia in incel populations, are discussed.

## The Social Networking of Incels (Involuntary Celibates)

William Costello  
University of Texas

The recurring problem of finding and retaining a mate represent fundamental adaptive problems for humans, yet there is a growing community of men who strongly identify with their perceived inability to solve these problems. Involuntary celibates (incels) forge their sense of identity around a perceived inability to form sexual or romantic relationships. A significant minority of incels ( 10%) engage in misogynistic online hostility, and rare individual-cases have seen incels lash out in violent rage. In 2021, the UK government’s Commission for Countering Extremism noted that the movement meets their definition of ‘hateful extremism’. Given this security policy interest, a thorough understanding of incels, and their motivators is a contemporary issue of (inter)national importance. Formal examination of incel ideology and psychology is still in its infancy, yet research to date, much of which comes from the field of evolutionary psychology, has provided a good understanding of their general outlook. Incels purport that genetic factors, evolved mate preferences, and inequitable social structures restrict their access to sexual relationships with women. They believe that most women are attracted to a small number of men, who monopolize sexual encounters. The incel community operates almost exclusively online, yet there is no research which seeks to understand the intricacies of incel social networks, and despite the term “incel ideology” being used quite heavily in the mainstream media, there is a lack of empirical investigation into whether incels view their social movement as ideological. This is the gap we wish to fill with the Swansea Incel Social Network (SISNET) project. We aim for this research to be the largest study of incels to date and seek to empirically quantify the extent to which incels see their community as ideological. We also aim to investigate other measures of interest, such as prevalence of rape myth acceptance, dark triad traits, mating effort, hostile sexism, rejection sensitivity, and overall potentiality to harm themselves or others. Research from the field of evolutionary psychology has found that socioeconomic and cultural factors contribute to incel activity, including high income-inequality, male-biased sex ratios, and low gender pay-gaps, and the incel community itself shows broad awareness of how these factors impact their mating prospects. According to the sexual frustration theory of aggression, violence, and crime, these factors are also associated with increased harm to society. While the implication of these lines of research is that incels might be more prone to instrumental violence, no research to date has directly investigated this. Thus, understanding how incels network and communicate could give insight not only into how any ideology is perpetuated and intensified, but also whether such networks act as a buffer for the ability of incels to cope with their feelings of frustration and hopelessness, which in turn might reduce the likelihood of their developing extreme beliefs or support for violence.

# The Sex and Dating Lives of Single Individuals

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The current project aims to broaden the definition of single status by considering the various forms of romantic and sexual connections that a single individual can maintain. Moreover, we aim to evaluate how the types of relationships individuals maintain while single relate to their well-being. A prior exploratory study we conducted indicated that single individuals with Casual Sexual Relationships (CSRs) significantly differed from singles without any such sexual connection along various measures, including sexual satisfaction, attachment avoidance and anxiety, extraversion, neuroticism, mate value, and fear of being single, generally suggesting higher levels of well-being among singles with CSRs. However, there is significant variability within the broad class of CSRs; one-night stands, hook-ups, booty calls, fuck buddies, and friends with benefits vary along dimensions such as emotional closeness, frequency of sexual contact, and the extent to which the relationship is exclusively sexual. This variability was not captured by our initial exploratory study. Moreover, broad and inconsistent definitions of the various CSRs have previously limited understanding of how CSRs relate to well-being outcomes. To reliably differentiate distinct aspects of CSRs along a continuum and more clearly identify how these features are related to experiences during singlehood we conducted a follow-up study focusing on the dimensions of the relationships themselves. To better understand the dimensions that shape CSRs, we developed a follow-up survey that allows for measurement of the relational context (how single individuals met their casual partners, how familiar they are with the partner), the type and frequency of contact shared between partners (how frequently they meet to engage in sexual and social activity), the primary goal of the relationship, and the code of conduct that defines relationship behaviors and expectations. The survey also allowed for the identification of single individuals with various romantic connections that do not involve in-person sexual activity, which includes sexting, flirting, casual dating, and experiencing romantic feelings. We included various validated personality scales and well-being measures in the survey as well. We have three aims once the data is collected in March: 1. Compare single individuals with no connections to those with various forms of sexual or romantic connections along well-being and personality measures to examine the replicability of our exploratory findings. 2. Understand the structure and characteristics of the casual sexual relationships that single individuals maintain. 3. Evaluate how the specific dimensions of the sexual and romantic connections single individuals maintain relate to well-being and personality measures. This research can identify one significant source of within-group variability within the broad class of singles, specifically whether particular types of sexual and romantic connections are uniquely related to well-being. The language surrounding single status lends itself to methodological issues and lacks the nuance necessary to capture the diverse experiences associated with single life. While coupled status allows for numerous definitions of an individual's relationship, research on singlehood typically assesses one category: single. Understanding unique contributors to singles' well-being can broaden the field's understanding of this large population, with the goal of applying this work to improve singles' well-being.

# Perceptions of Relationship With God Among Christian Singles

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The focus of previous research on the phenomenon of singlehood has primarily been on the causes of singlehood and its consequences in the area of mental health (Adamczyk, 2021). In the last seven years, we can observe a new trend in research on singlehood, according to which researchers seek answers not to the question "What are the negative consequences of living alone?" but to the question "What factors make living alone not associated with negative consequences?" (Adamczyk, 2021). These studies have revealed, for example, that such a factor is satisfaction with work and social relationships (Pepping, MacDonald, 2019), or the level of social support available and low levels of discrimination based on marital status (Girme et al., 2021). It appears that religion may also be such a factor, despite the fact that a review of research on single life indicates that it has received little research attention to date. The topic under consideration seems to be socially relevant, as the number of people living alone in society has been increasing in recent years. Besides, this group is very diverse within itself (DePaulo, Morris, 2005). Furthermore, in Polish society, affiliation to any religious system is declared by more than 90%. The current study seeks to answer the question of how the relationship with God is perceived in people living alone. The importance of religion (understood as a belief in the existence of a Supernatural Being or belief system) in the lives of believers and those living alone. Previous research indicates, for example, that religion can serve a compensatory function in the absence of an attachment figure (Granqvist, Hagekull., 2000). The study is conducted using an in-depth interview technique. Thirty participants, who are followers of monotheistic religions and do not have a life partner/life partner, will take part. The data obtained will be processed using a thematic analysis approach.

# Do Singles and Individuals in Relationships Differ in Their Personality?

Elaine Hoan<sup>1</sup> and Geoffrey MacDonald<sup>1</sup>

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Over the past few decades, the number of people living alone and reporting not being in a committed relationship has risen worldwide (OECD, 2020). This trend suggests a rising prevalence of single individuals and has sparked an increasing interest, both academically and publicly, in understanding well-being in singlehood (Adamczyk, 2021). One fundamental determinant of well-being is personality (Strickhouser et al., 2017). Personality has been demonstrated to hold profound impacts on both physical and mental well-being, including longitudinally (Fetvadjiev He, 2019). This is especially true of neuroticism and extraversion which are arguably the strongest personality predictors of well-being (Costa McCrae, 1980; Vittersø Nilsen, 2002). Despite the strong link between personality and well-being, existing research examining this link in the context of singlehood is severely limited. Extant literature has indirectly shown that singlehood may be characterized by lower extraversion and higher neuroticism while higher extraversion and lower neuroticism may be a facilitator of romantic relationships. For example, extraversion has been positively linked to relationship initiation (Chopik et al., 2023), but negatively linked to involuntary singlehood (Apostolou Tsangari, 2022). Compared to individuals in relationships, singles have also been shown to be perceived as more neurotic (Schutter et al., 2020) and lonely (Hertel et al., 2007). One study demonstrated that despite there being differences in how singles and individuals in relationships are perceived, no true differences exist in self-ratings of personality (Greitemeyer, 2009). While some existing work speculates personality differences between singles and individuals in relationships, no work to date has directly examined these differences, especially in the context of well-being. Thus, our study sought to answer the following questions: Do singles and individuals in relationships differ in their personality traits? And if so, do these differences contribute to satisfaction with their relationship or singlehood status? To address these questions, exploratory analyses were conducted on two cross-sectional datasets collected from Prolific. In both Study 1 (N = 760) and Study 2 (N = 992), t-tests demonstrated that the biggest personality difference emerged with extraversion such that individuals in relationships were significantly more extraverted than singles. Individuals in relationships were also significantly more conscientious and less neurotic than singles in both studies, while no differences emerged for agreeableness and openness. Linear regressions with interactions also demonstrated that neuroticism did not predict relationship satisfaction for individuals in relationships, greater neuroticism significantly predicted lower relationship satisfaction for singles. Overall, these results demonstrate that individuals in relationships tend to be higher in extraversion compared to singles. Moreover, given the negative emotionality that characterizes the trait of neuroticism, one might expect that higher neuroticism consistently predicts lower relationship satisfaction regardless of relationship status. However, our results demonstrate that only for singles does neuroticism negatively predict relationship satisfaction. These findings help to illuminate direct personality differences between singles and individuals in relationships. Further research could examine what types of extraverted or neurotic behaviours might differentially contribute to differences in relationship satisfaction to ultimately understand what individual differences contribute to a happy single life.

## Being Single in a Mobile Academia

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Monogamous (heterosexual) coupledness remains the expected civil status of adult individuals. Marriage, having children and buying a home has long been culturally framed as ‘settling down’, that is, the ‘appropriate’ follow-on to youthful years of generally little responsibility. However, growing numbers of adults do not ‘settle down’ in the traditional sense. More people choose an unattached and childfree life, manifested in the increase of one-person households (Snell, 2017). Nevertheless, single, childfree people face ‘singleism’ (DePaulo, 2006), cultural prejudices (Cobb, 2020) and their life situations become ‘queer’ when confronted with ‘the tenacity of the couple-norm’ (Roseneil et al., 2020). In this article, we focus specifically on single and childfree women academics in the context of institutional demands for international mobility to achieve tenure. Research shows that single, childfree women academics are more likely than their partnered, mothering counterparts to seek academic opportunities abroad (Uhly, Visser Zippel, 2017). While often perceived an unquestioned career advantage by ensuring international experience and networks, mobility also poses both professional and personal challenges, for example, due to expectations of constant work availability (Gao Sing, 2020; Utoft, 2020). Thus, the experiences of single, childfree mobile women scholars are silenced in both the academic literature and in universities’ internationalization practices. Using in-depth interviews with 10 women academics who are single and childfree, we examine how they unsettle traditional notions of ‘settling down’ through their experiences of singlehood and international mobility. We employ a spatial-temporal perspective (Lahad, 2017; Rafnsdóttir Heijstra, 2013; Ramdas, 2012) to understand how the research participants unsettle ‘settling down’ by often accepting (short) fixed-term employment which poses very specific limitations to the extent to which internationals can then practically and socially ‘settle in’ into their new environments. As ‘foreigners’, international scholars may struggle for cultural or language-related reasons to feel part of the work environment (Johansson Sliwa, 2014; Strau Boncori, 2020) which may increase their feelings of work-related stress and precariousness. In their private lives, single women academics, especially those who seek opportunities abroad, may unsettle traditional notions of ‘settling down’ by pursuing temporary sexual and/or romantic relationships or abstain from dating all together, or rely more heavily on (temporary) friendships for social support. All of these factors affect how mobile women academics are perceived by their professional peers, and by their families and friends since long-term, committed relationships, stable jobs, and home ownerships are often taken as a proxy for maturity and adulthood, which is linked to the persistent stigma attached to adult singlehood (Cobb, 2020). In sum, to challenge the institutionalization of normative (hetero-)coupledom, we explore women’s singlehood in a mobile academic context. We delve into the complex entanglement of opportunities and obstacles across the artificial professional-private divide that being single and internationally mobile affords. Our findings contribute to in-depth understandings of singlehood, which in the studies of inequality regimes within higher education institutions appears to be a hitherto largely overlooked identity and social category.

## **“I Have Made Humanity my Family”: Socially Celebrated Ways of Being Single in India**

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Singlehood is a stigmatized category across the world and Singles Studies as well as the Singlehood Movement aims at undoing this bias. Yet, unlike the West, there are two distinct ways of being legitimately single in India: one of being in public service (politicians) and the other of religious life. For both politics and religion/spirituality, the common trope for singlehood is sacrifice, sacredness, moral uprightness, and giving up of individual and familial gain for a greater good, be it God or the nation. The legitimacy of singlehood is predicated on sacrifice and self-abnegation, and a giving up of conjugal pleasures and comforts. While the state of sacrifice is exalted, pleasure and comfort that are attributed to conjugal life are viewed differently in single life which is one of asceticism and denial of conjugal pleasure. One best lives one's single life largely because of a 'greater calling' which commands respect and power. Thus, joy in singlehood, is viewed differently in the case of politicians and saints. This is contrary to the individualism and assertions of the self in the way singlehood has been fashioned in the West, and in assertions by single women (single by choice) in contemporary India. The question of choice for a celebrated single person in India does not arise as much, as being chosen by the nation or god and by surrendering oneself to this larger goal, which supersedes the small self of the individual and her/his family. Even though this provides many public and private spaces for people to be legitimately single, it is still a fairly narrow definition of singlehood. The paper aims to develop a new way to theorize singlehood in the Global South. It will examine the two examples of being single: that of single politicians, and that of unmarried religious/ascetic figures. The first section of the paper will look at the public and party perceptions, media coverage, and statements of various single female and male politicians in India to understand what makes their singlehood so celebrated. The second part of the paper will examine the life of various saints (through biographies, their own views and opinions of others) in India who have either been single in search of a higher truth and devotion to God and/or those who have been married yet have invested immense time and energy to a religious/spiritual life, in effect living as a 'single' person.



# On The Trails Of Romanian Never-Married Singlehood... Following Linguistic Crumbs

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One way to understand a society and culture is to look into its language, and one way to understand the present is to look into the past. The Romanian language has several words and phrases that designate the never-married individuals, and they can all be traced back to more than one century ago. To better understand the Romanian never-married singlehood, this study looks at how those terms were used over time. Twelve “key terms” referring to never-married individuals were used as keywords for searching in a Romanian digital library to build a corpus of data that was subjected to content analysis. The texts in which a term appeared at least once were quantified separately according to four historical periods. The latter corresponds to different political, administrative and demographic regimes. The content of each text was further analyzed and included in one of several context categories. A total of 1816 texts published between 1860 and 2020 were analyzed. Although the proportions of never-married men and women were low and relatively stable until the 1990s, the study shows significant differences in the number of appearances of the “key terms” among the four periods. The never-married individuals were mentioned the most frequently between 1919 and 1945 and the least between 1946 and 1990. The first interval reflects a time when the proportion of Romanian ethnics was at its lowest level, tensions between the Catholic and Orthodox churches (celibate and married priesthood) were high, and the nationalist, xenophobic and eugenic discourses were at their peak. The second period corresponds to the communist regime when marital status was less relevant in relation to employment status and parenthood. The study shows the differences regarding the (negative) social visibility of never-married individuals according to historical and socio-political contexts.

## **”I Can See How It Would Affect Single People a Lot More”: Singles and Amatonormative Perceptions of Singlehood During the COVID-19 Pandemic**

Moira Armstrong  
University of London

COVID-19 has had varying impacts on various marginalized groups in society. However, these impacts are not always negative, and are not always perceived accurately by those outside of the group in question. This presentation will explore one example: single people during COVID-19. This presentation will draw on oral histories from Queer Pandemic, a project that has been collecting the stories of queer people in the United Kingdom during the COVID-19 pandemic since fall 2020; I am a research assistant and oral historian working on the project. Of the 50 narrators who have participated thus far, 14 were single at the time of their interview. (This number may change as more interviews will be completed before the conference and if accepted, I may incorporate this new material into my presentation.) I will analyze their experiences, as well as the assumptions made by coupled narrators about singlehood during the pandemic, using Peter J. Stein’s typology of singlehood as a framework. The oral histories demonstrate that the majority of single narrators describe that they are voluntarily single, either permanently or temporarily, and illustrate having robust networks of friends, colleagues, and other important people in their lives who provided significant companionship and other support throughout the pandemic. However, coupled narrators express the assumption that all single narrators are involuntarily single, forced into singlehood due to the pandemic, and assert negative amatonormative stereotypes about what their experiences with the pandemic have been like, particularly during periods when stay-at-home orders were in effect. I will argue that these results demonstrate the pervasiveness of amatonormativity. Even amongst queer people who have come to understand other elements of relationships and personal identity as social constructs and challenge other normativities related to gender and sexuality, amatonormativity remains largely unquestioned. I will conclude that this is connected to homonormativity in modern queer culture and assert that amatonormativity must be addressed by the queer community. The implications of leaving amatonormativity unchecked are significant, as it is one iteration of aphobia, which is linked to larger anti-queer trends in the UK, including transphobia. Solidarity against this divisive force is an essential part of the fight for queer rights.

# Changes in Mental Health due to Relationship Status during the COVID-19 Pandemic in Young Adults across Four Countries

Dominika Ochnik  
Academy of Silesia

The objective of this prospective study was to reveal changes and differences in mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic among nationally representative samples of young adult never-married singles ( $n = 481$ ), never-married coupled ( $n = 542$ ), and married individuals ( $n = 658$ ) from Poland ( $n = 433$ ), Slovenia ( $n = 427$ ), Israel ( $n = 416$ ), and Germany ( $n = 405$ ) in a three-month period. The total of 1681 young adults (20-40 years old, 53% women) responded to an online survey in February 2021 and May–June 2021. The used measurements were: Fear of COVID-19, Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-10), Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9), and Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD-7). A repeated-measures two-way mixed-factor ANOVA was performed to examine changes over time, relationship status, gender, and across countries for mental health indicators. The covariates were: educational and professional status, and having children. The study showed a greater decline in fear of COVID-19 and stress in an improved COVID-19 pandemic situation among never-married single women than never-married coupled and married individuals, while depression and anxiety levels were stable. Singles, particularly women, had higher depression and anxiety than coupled and married individuals, regardless of the pandemic situation. Slovenian singles had lower depression and anxiety, while German singles had lower stress than other singles. Despite lower mental health indices in singles, single young adults, particularly women, were more adaptable to improved external circumstances. Furthermore, a cross-cultural context should always be considered when analyzing relationship status.

# The Importance of Gender Culture and Work-family Balance Policies for Singlehood

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Although rising singlehood is a worldwide phenomenon, there is still substantial cross-national variation as well as differences according to gender in levels of singlehood. In this paper, we argue that both gender norms and social policies should be taken into account for explaining cross-national differences in singlehood. We approach this from a life-course perspective by studying these relations at different points of the life-course. Both gender norms and social policies have been associated with other demographic phenomena such as fertility delay, but research focusing on singlehood remains scant. First, we examine the role of gender norms for cross-national variation in singlehood. Gender culture puts stress on gender-non-conforming couples as it creates social pressure to reinforce the dominant gender norms. We argue that an individual might choose to be single because their expectations towards a partner differ from what is expected from the gender culture, especially for women. Second, we look at the opportunities that are created for men and women through social policies. There is evidence that social policies influence demographic trends. When social policies facilitate an egalitarian context through work-family balance policies, they promote union formation because women's opportunity costs decline. However, a distinction is necessary for policies aimed at single parents. The more generous these policies are, the more singlehood among single parents is encouraged, especially among the lower educated. Further, we argue that a mismatch between policy context and gender culture could encourage singlehood. Policies supporting a dual-earner/dual-caregiver model are associated with more gender egalitarian attitudes. However, countries which show high levels of egalitarian attitudes could still fail to provide policies which encourage gender equality. We pool worldwide cross-sectional data from different datasets to examine the role of macro contextual factors for the chance of being single and gender differences in singlehood over the life course. We use the Comparative Panel File, the ESS, the OECD database and the World Values Study. We analyse these data using multilevel multinomial logistics modelling. The outcome variable is categorical, distinguishing between partnered individuals and different types of singles. At the macro-level we use predictors covering gender culture, social policies targeting work-family life and single parents. At the micro-level the most important predictors are gender and age. We expect that a more gender egalitarian context will be associated with less singlehood, especially among women. Further, we expect that social policies targeting the work-family balance reduce singlehood while policies targeting singles will encourage singlehood, especially among women. Additionally, we expect these associations to be interlinked with a correlation between a smaller chance of singlehood and a more gender egalitarian context in combination with a broad offer of work-family balance policies. This article makes three contributions. First, it provides insight in how cross-national variation in singlehood can be explained. Previous research on this topic has a mostly descriptive character. We make a next step by considering how gender norms and policies can explain these differences. Second, we provide insights in how the context affects different groups of individuals by focusing on gender differences over the life course. This adds to research on gender differences that focused on other demographic events. Third, by pooling different datasets, our study provides insight for a large number of countries,

including countries often not included in comparative research (e.g., South-Korea).

# Who is Happy and Single? Queering Approaches to Singlehood

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Pop articles link rising rates of singlehood across the west to living in a ‘technosexual’ dating world. However, recent work has shown that being single can be a satisfying choice for some. Could this rise suggest that some people are happier while solo? Could shifting demographics change the way single people view their lives? The pool of singles is highly diverse, as in recent years, 47% of Americans who identify as LGB are single as compared to 29% of straight Americans. To discover for whom being single is a healthy choice, research would benefit from taking a queer intersectional approach. Testing models of minority stress theory has shown that LGBTQ+ people report lower subjective well-being than heterosexual and cisgender people. Yet, studies that cluster sexual minorities in their samples have yielded dissimilar findings from studies that analyze lesbian, gay, and bisexual samples separately. Moreover, researchers must make arbitrary decisions in data analysis and model choice, from selecting control variables to including gender as a covariate. These various analytical choices can impact whether we find support for minority stress theory across non-heterosexual samples. Investigating the effect of these analytical choices on our statistical output provides an unexplored avenue to understand the experiences of being single for different sexual minorities. To examine the robustness of well-being disparities found while comparing sexual orientations and genders, the current work proposes a multiverse analysis approach. We will examine differences in life satisfaction, sexual satisfaction, satisfaction with single status, and loneliness across single LGBQQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, questioning, and “other”) and heterosexual populations, and across three gender categories—women, men, and “other”. A multiverse analysis will allow us to examine the variability of statistical outcomes due to grouping sexual minorities together or separately, including gender as a moderator, including control variables, and using data from longitudinal versus cross-sectional samples. The findings that will be discussed may be the first to document how single status functions alongside sexual orientation and gender, and if results supporting or rejecting minority stress theory in singlehood could be sensitive to data processing and analysis choices. By applying metascience and intersectional theories to the well-being of single LGBTQ+ people, we emphasize the importance of studying how different sexual and gender minority groups experience the state of being single.

## Have Singles Become More Satisfied Over Historical Time? A Cohort-Sequential Study

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People share the strong belief that romantic relationships are the most meaningful social relationships in life and that those who are single are at risk of reduced well-being. However, singlehood in Western societies underwent significant changes over time. Compared to previous cohorts, people nowadays spend more time with being single and consider prolonged singlehood as more acceptable. These changes could have positively affected singles' satisfaction, meaning that today's singles would be more satisfied with their singlehood and life in general, compared to singles of previous generations. In addition, singles' satisfaction may further depend on intrapersonal factors such as demographic characteristics (age and sex) and personality traits (extraversion and neuroticism), which may be more or less relevant at a given historical time. In this preregistered study, we used data from a representative cohort-sequential longitudinal study from Germany, including  $N = 3,161$  participants (age at T1:  $M = 21.79$ ,  $SD = 7.89$ ). Data were collected annually between 2008 to 2021, and participants from four birth cohorts (born between 1971-2003) provided information on their singlehood satisfaction and life satisfaction at three consecutive assessments. This design allowed us to compare satisfaction of earlier-born and later-born singles within three age groups: adolescence, emerging adulthood, and established adulthood. Multilevel growth curve models were calculated to estimate intraindividual change, age-, cohort-, gender- and personality-related differences in singlehood satisfaction and life satisfaction. Results indicated that changes over historical time only emerged for adolescents: Adolescent singles were more often single and more satisfied with being single nowadays than their earlier-born counterparts. No cohort-related differences emerged among singles in emerging and established adulthood. In addition, moderator analyses suggested that regardless of historical time, younger age, higher extraversion, and lower neuroticism predicted higher levels of satisfaction. Together, the results suggest that the experience of singles have changed among adolescents and highlight the relevance of considering sociocultural context and intrapersonal factors in synergy to arrive at a more nuanced understanding of singles' satisfaction.

## Factors Associated with Happiness of European Single Individuals

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In recent decades, the number of single individuals has been recognized to be on the rise. These rising shares of single adults are accompanied by the researchers' exploration of factors related to positive outcomes of singlehood. Following this recent line in research, we aimed to investigate the factors related to the happiness of single individuals in Europe. Therefore, we analyzed the data collected in 33 countries in the scope of the European Social Survey (ESS) in the years 2002-2018. In a series of regressions, we have examined the associations between sociodemographics, social relationships, health, basic human values, religion and single individuals' happiness. The multilevel analyses showed that the strongest predictors of single people's happiness were as follows: subjective general health ( $\beta = -.29$ ), frequency of social meetings with friends, relatives or colleagues ( $\beta = .13$ ), frequency of participation in social activities in comparison to that of others of the same age ( $\beta = .10$ ), and being religious ( $\beta = .10$ ). Future studies will benefit from a deeper exploration of these factors and investigate in detail the mechanisms explaining the links between the subjective general health, social life and religion and happiness of single individuals.



## Age Moderates the Link Between Relationship Desire and Life Satisfaction Among Singles

Laetitia Hill Roy

Higher desire for a romantic partner has been shown to be associated with lower life satisfaction for singles, but research has not considered whether the strength of this association might vary across age groups. We collected data from single participants ( $N = 3,057$ ) across a broad age range (18 to 75 years of age,  $M = 36.12$ ,  $SD = 12.34$ ) to examine age as a moderator of the relationship between desire for a partner and singles' life satisfaction. Our results suggest that having greater desire for a partner is associated with lower life satisfaction for older (1 standard deviation [SD] above the mean) vs. younger individuals (1 standard deviation [SD] below the mean). We also found some evidence that this age-dependent association was stronger for women than men. Further, this interaction effect remained largely unchanged controlling for participants' attachment anxiety or avoidance. This study highlights the importance of considering how singlehood may play out differently for individuals at different life stages.

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