

# Emerging Adulthood, Solo Living and Changes in Gender Subjectivity<sup>1</sup>

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**Emerging Adulthood, Solo Living and Changes in Gender Subjectivity.** The households of young adults can be viewed as a natural environment where gender role transformation models can be found. After experiencing gender specific socialisation in childhood and adolescence, men and women enter a stage in which this structure more or less reverts to universalising practical requirements. These include financial security, focus on careers, securing a home and providing for household duties. The context outlined above is addressed in the paper via selected theoretical arguments and the review of relevant theoretical and empirical literature. The objective is to theoretically justify the mechanisms or principles resulting from specific elements present in the lives of solo-livers that can logically impact specific elements of gender subjectivity.

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## Introduction

Almost two decades ago sociologists noticed that the transitions between childhood and adult life are becoming blurred. The concepts such as emerging adulthood, early adulthood, young adulthood or post-adolescence have been developed and there have been discussions as to what extent this stage is distinctive in terms of lifestyle and the subjective sense of self. (Arnett 2000; Blatterer 2010; Hendry – Kloep 2010; Buchmann – Kriesi 2011) However, we believe that the origin of “emerging adulthood” or, more technically speaking, the differentiation of a new structural whole within the framework of life stages, presents other sociologically relevant themes. None of these have yet received sufficient attention in literature.

This text will focus on a theoretical model based upon the following sequence of arguments: (1) There is a new, distinctive life stage that can be potentially fulfilled by solo living. (2) The proportion of the population of young adults living alone has significantly increased compared to the past when the shift towards adulthood usually consisted of a cluster of directly subsequent transitions. (3) Solo living is characterised by universal requirements for the behaviour of both men and women. This impacts the

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unification of gender repertoires to a much greater extent than the preceding biographical period of socialisation in the orientation family or the (traditionally) following period of partnership, marriage and parenthood. Thus, our question is: Can such changes in life stages be reflected in the change in gender subjectivity? Can we observe and conceptualise mechanisms — that are typical for people living alone — mechanisms, that permanently or in the long-term impact the results of gender socialisation?

Our text focuses on all of these three assumptions because we do not consider them to be self-evident. The third argument, in particular, is analytically the most interesting because it provides a platform to discuss the presumed mechanisms behind the impact on gender subjectivity. For this reason, the focus is on the elements of gender socialisation although the text will also focus on the detailed characteristics of young people living alone. From a methodological point of view, we have designed the text as a literature review from which we have derived the original theoretical arguments and models.

The text is divided into six sections. The first section examines the concept of emerging adulthood and the phenomenon of solo living as a life stage. This is followed by the basic conceptualisations of gender which are necessary when inquiring into the connection between the emerging adulthood everydayness and gender role changes. The next three chapters cover three characteristics of solo living — partnerships that have the potential for gender subjectivity change within the sphere of intimacy; specific employment situations representing changes through public sphere; and the particularities of everydayness that represent a potential change in gender performativity. These three chapters form the essence of our argument. Here we attempt to answer the question of which mechanisms can change gender subjectivity in the solo living experience. We also argue that these situations form a gap between gender socialisation in the original family and establish gender roles in (potential) procreational families. In the final chapter, we present our conclusion, which sums up the principal arguments for the benefit of changes in gender subjectivity in connection with the solo living experience. We also summarise the counter-arguments and doubts phrased in four hypotheses that establish a possible future direction of empirical research. The aim of this text is not an empirical test for these, but rather to establish a theme and logical derivation of a mechanism, which, in principal, may be the reason for changes in gender subjectivity.

### **Emerging adulthood as a new life stage**

Current sociological research points to the newly formed structures within biographies. (Kohli 2007; Huinink – Feldhaus 2009) The idea of structural

differentiation within life stages is not a new one. Parsons (1960) made use of the concept of structural differentiation<sup>4</sup> to draw attention to a situation in which a new structural unit emerges while the social behaviour is still to be institutionalised. For example, life expectancy and quality of life have been rising although patterns of elderly people's behaviour, the role schemes and institutions connected with later life are still to be clarified. This notion of structural differentiation connected with uncompleted/inadequate institutionalization is very inspiring and a similar situation can also be observed in the case of emerging adulthood. The term "emerging adulthood" was introduced by Arnett (2000, 2006) to draw attention to the fact that the biographical episode between childhood and adulthood can no longer be defined as a transition but rather as a new life stage. We find this conceptualisation useful because of its emphasis on adulthood "emerging" out of the processes of change, exploration and role experiments. The structural differentiation of the new period is noticeable<sup>5</sup> but using Parsons' parallel, the institutionalisation of its patterns of behaviour creates a number of ambiguities. In particular, an issue revolves around whether the new period represents a model of an individualised form of a life stage, i.e., a situation discussed by Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002) in the sense of the dissolution of social institutions which normatively determine our lives. Alternatively, it may be a temporary stage, in which we are witnessing a transformation of the social institutions in their current structure and in which newer institutions are gradually being established – without us being able to reliably recognise them. Generally speaking, there are two opposite interpretations – a process of definitive crumbling and the dissolution of social institutions as a sign of a transition to new forms, which regulate individualised biographies,<sup>6</sup> or the gradual creation of new social institutions.

Regardless of the previous theoretical dilemma, we can observe that the period of emerging adulthood is filled with extremely varied lifestyles. Many of these are, as newly emerging social phenomena, subject to sociological research (being single, cohabitation, living apart together, extended stay at the parents' household). Solo living in the emerging adulthood stage represents a

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<sup>4</sup> In the context of the life stage, paradigm attention must be drawn to the double meaning present in the concept of differentiation. Some authors (e.g. Beer 2007) use differentiation in the sense of a diverse timing of transitions. Here, differentiation serves as an indicator of individual choices and, statistically speaking, stands for the dispersion of particular life events (e.g., variety in the timing of marriage within a particular population). Parsons, following the Durkheimian tradition, perceives differentiation as an emergence of new structural wholes and ties the differentiation process to modernisation. In this context of the life stage, differentiation may be considered not only in the sense of the isolated process of a social change but rather in the principled sense of modernisation – i.e., as a gradual differentiation and crystallisation of ever more complex structures (here life stages).

<sup>5</sup> This is why that fact that it is sandwiched between the existing stages of life is very interesting – in contrast to changes in old age caused by an extended life span.

<sup>6</sup> Currently, these new forms are unclear and impossible to describe. However, a certain form of regulation must exist if society is to exist. Therefore, we do not refer to absolute freedom in behaviour as a counterpoint.

pattern of behaviour that provokes discussion on whether any traces of initial institutionalisation of youth lifestyles are present. Research from developed countries documents high levels of premarital residential independence (both expected and achieved), showing that young adults are increasingly fashioning a stage in which traditional family roles and perceived obligations are not part of their lifestyle. (Goldscheider – Goldscheider 1992; Klinenberg 2012; Jamieson – Simpson 2013)<sup>7</sup>

The second point raised in the introduction of this text concerns the scope of the solo living phenomenon. Growth in the number of single-person households is typical for most developed countries, and it is no different in the Czech Republic. The one-person households made up almost 30 % from all Czech households in year 2011. In comparison with other household types (such as complete or incomplete family households), the number of single-person households rose the most of any other in recent decades - in the 15 years from 1995 to 2010 by as much as 83%. Although the most strongly represented age groups in single-person households today are seniors over the age of 60 years, the most dynamically growing is the proportion of "young adults". A report by the Czech Statistics Office (CZSO) based on analysis of data from the 2011 census states: "Thanks to the shifting of strong generations to a higher age, the highest relative increase, by 40% compared with 2001, was scored by the 30-39 age category"<sup>8</sup>.

Solo living has become one of the key elements in the transition to adulthood and has become characteristic for the newly emerging life stage (post-adolescence, second adolescence, emerging adulthood, etc.). Klinenberg (2012) notes that in the 20th century, the status of young people living solo has changed significantly. While in the past, living in a single-member household has been perceived as a social failure, today, it is more "a ritual" accompanying a transition from childhood to adulthood. The experience of solo living in a young age is perceived by them as a means for looking for one's identity and expressing oneself. It enables to focus on oneself, one's needs and priorities without the limiting influence of parents, a partner or flatmates. (Klinenberg 2012) This need of solo living experience doesn't mean necessarily refusing of future partnership, cohabitation with partner or parenthood but can be

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<sup>7</sup> Something similar was also implied by the data from Czech surveys. For example, the data from the Couples and Families survey showed that a significant portion of respondents aged 15-17 presupposed an approximate two-year period in which they would no longer live with their parents or with a partner in their next life stage. (Katrňák et al. 2010)

<sup>8</sup> According to analysis of data from 2011 Czech republic census the single-person households of young adults have their own statistical specifics: in the comparison with the whole population, they are more frequently people reaching a higher level of education, are economically active, live in cities and in forms of housing that often suggest transience (or at least the possibility of quick change). The men in single-person households outweigh women (every ninth man and every thirteenth woman live this way of life in 2011). In this age category (30-39 years old), the increased divorce rate and subsequently the increasing number of households of individual men plays an important role (CSO 2014).

understand also as preparing (mostly material) for these “traditional” life transitions. (Vacková et al. 2014)

### **Gender conceptualisation – elements of change manifestations**

From the point of view of gender studies, solo living represents a topic concerning the fundamentals of gender role definition and performance. We can hypothesize, the more men and women become independent, or the larger the group of men and women who build autonomous single-member households becomes, the more important is the issue of transformation or reproduction of gender role schemes. The households of individuals can be understood as environment where gender role transformation models can be found. After experience with a gender specific socialisation in childhood and adolescence (Jarkovská 2009; Slepíčková – Kvapilová Bartošová 2013) young people enter a stage in which socialization translates in more or less universalised role requirements, focusing on achieving financial security, building home and exercising household duties. The universalised requirements of solo living come in the life stage between childhood and adulthood — a stage which Erikson characterises as a stage of searching for one’s roles and identity (Erikson 1950). Gender role establishment is part of this process. The combination of external factors, which we generally refer to as “universalising requirements” and the internal factors influenced by a culture which represents the lack of stability and the fragility of role and identity choices, create a strong potential to modify the gender subjectivity acquired in the original family<sup>9</sup>.

From the theoretical point of view, gender has been conceptualised based on three different dimensions: individual, structural and interactional. These approaches to gender and explanatory frameworks of gender inequality can be seen as complementary and mutually interrelated (Connell 1987, 1995; Risman 2004).

The approach emphasising the individual dimension of gender is based upon socialisation theories, according to which, socialisation in childhood and its psychological influences lead to the development and internalisation of various personality traits and choices. From this perspective, a significant part of the

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<sup>9</sup> Leaving their parents may mean greater autonomy for young people but it also limits the frequency of contact with them, means greater or lesser geographical distance from them and, in contrast, more time spent with other people – mostly friends or partners (Fuligni – Masten 2010). Parents lose the opportunity to directly influence their children on an everyday basis. From the point of view of socialisation theories, leaving one’s parents and gradually becoming independent from them may lead to discrepancies between the attitudes expressed by parents and children (Goldscheider – Goldscheider 1992; Bucx – Raaijmakers – Wel 2010; Tsai et al. 2013). Transitions in the life stage produce a different socialisation context and so, in contrast, the attitudes of parents and children and the closeness in relationships between parents and children may converge in another stage of life, e.g., during the children’s transition to parenthood when they acquire experience identical to that of their parents (Bucx – Raaijmakers – Wel 2010) and through grandchildren who provide closer and more frequent contact (Bucx et al. 2008). However, empirical studies do not agree on whether entry into early adulthood actually creates a discrepancy between the attitudes of the parents and children.

gender differences between adult men and women are due to different socialisation and a different approach to raising the sexes (Parsons 1964, Chodorow 1978).

In contrast, the structural approaches to gender emphasise the influence of external, macrostructural factors upon individuals. These influences are created and reproduced within social structures – social institutions, normative systems and culture. Gender distinctions result from the manner in which social institutions in a particular society have been organised. These include the concentration of power, type of legal system and the setup of organisational barriers. Based upon macrostructural factors, women and men are awarded different resources that create a cultural conviction of gender and define the individual agency of men and women (Hartmann 1976, Shelton – Agger 1993).

The latter approach to gender emphasises the significance of everyday behaviour and interaction between social actors. The gender as a specific set of culturally shared meanings is considered as being performed. People act based upon their conviction of the natural differences between men and women (Goffman 1977). The performances based upon these expectations create gender as an intersection between the interpretation of the performances by the actors and their social environment (West – Zimmerman 1987, Butler, 1990). These performances produce and reproduce the gender order of society, which is perceived by the social actors as a given and external factor. The failure to fulfil expectations related to a specific gender is sanctioned by society and the existence of the sanctions forces social actors to continue behaving in such a manner so as to reproduce gender as a distinguishable category.

Considering all three gender conceptualisations (individual, structural and interactional), the levels concerning construction and hierarchisation must also be differentiated. This is necessary since gender is not characterised solely by attributing meanings (as inspired by the phenomenological tradition) but also by the obvious classification of these meanings into hierarchies whose nature is not only restrictively but also productively interconnected with the phenomenon of power (as noted in the Foucault-inspired theories).

For the purpose of this text, we use an umbrella term for prior gender conceptualisation – gender subjectivity. This is a concept used in post-structuralist gender theories to emphasise that in addition to self-awareness and identity, gender is also characterised by its socially produced processual nature (srov. Zábrodská 2009). This allows us to free the subsequent sections from a constant lengthy repetition of the fact that we are describing the individual, structural and interactional dimension of gender.. We are aware that simplification has taken place at this point because the subjectivity is not identical to the dimensions described but, in a certain sense, represents their product. Changes in gender subjectivity are then perceived as a general result

of gender socialisation, the influence of the institutional gender structure impacting the actors, and the discursive framework for gender performativity. These are the dimensions in which potential changes related to solo living will be examined.

### **Solo living conceptualisation – elements of change factors**

In our conceptualisation, solo living can be characterised by three groups of conditions which function as elements possessing the potential for gender changes — the specific situation in a partner relationship, economic activity, and specific daily routines. These three dimensions do not represent all of the specifics of solo-living situations (almost every aspect life style is influenced by the composition of household), but we selected three dimensions which represent the key sources for potential changes and their combination makes solo living intrinsically different from other stages in life.

### **Partner relationship in the solo living stage**

Singlehood or the “new” forms of partner relationship arrangements experienced during solo-living (“living apart together”, open relationships, long-distance relationships, “friends with benefits”) provide the necessary degree of independence and non-commitment. Empirical studies found that being single or separated is associated with more egalitarian views about division of household labor, women’s employment and caregiving (Vespa 2009, Goldscheider – Goldscheider 1992). The support for egalitarian roles for women and men in families is positively linked to independent living, but negatively associated with the subsequent timing of entry into marriage and marital parenthood (Cunningham et al. 2005). Remaining in single living or cohabitation implies the development of the emancipatory attitudes (Moors 2003). The independence creates a biography that is governed by the requirements imposed by the job market into accord with the need for a “significant other”. These forms of partner relationships are more acceptable to individuals because their character corresponds to the need for mobility, independence and flexibility, which are typical for the lifestyle related to emerging adulthood (Rhodes 2002; Roseneil – Budgeon 2004; Levin 2004). This newly formed stage also creates new norms and values concerning partnership and parenthood — parenting at a young age is perceived to be irresponsible because people are not considered to be ready (Hašková – Zamykalová 2006; Bartošová – Slepíčková 2009). In contrast, the lack of a partner or sexual experience can be perceived as a stigma (Reynolds – Wetherell 2003; Budgeon 2008). This is also reinforced by the probability that in the stage of emerging adulthood, young people tend to be involved in

alternative forms of relationships that do not necessarily lead to parenting and are not practised in a shared household. Entirely different expectations may be applied to these relationships than those explicitly related to parenting (Bartošová 2012).

In spite of this, living alone is often perceived by young people as "an unfortunate coincidence" or "coincidence" than as part of a particular lifestyle choice, and is associated with a temporary or an age-limited life stage (Lewis 2006; Macvarish 2006). According to many researchers, a family and cohabitation with a partner are part of the future plans of young singles or people living alone (e.g. Simpson 2006; Tomášek 2006; Ettlerová 2007). However, their lifestyle and preferences indicate a gradual weakening of their ability to live together with a partner and they value the advantages of living alone, which can compete with the benefits of living in a pair (Molgat – Vézina 2008; Jamieson et al. 2009; Tomášek 2006; Bartošová 2009). Qualitative research conducted by Molgat and Vézina (2008) shows that the solo living may well become an increasingly permanent part of individual life stages, particularly in highly urbanised settings. The chances of continuing to live alone rise significantly with age (Chandler 1991). According to Australian research, using longitudinal data, mostly the increasing age of women reduces the probability of creating a shared household with their partner more than in the case of men (Qu Lixia – de Vaus 2011)<sup>10</sup>. Based upon their research, Jamieson, Simpson and Wasoff (2009) state that it is independently living women who, over time, learn to appreciate their status and start to perceive it as a solid part of their identity.

In terms of gender subjectivity, the (dis)continuity of both roles and socialisation factors related to intimacy must be considered. Solo living, in our opinion, fills the gap between two phases of intimacy where gender roles within the intimacy sphere are established – experience from the parental relationship and from partnerships. This stage is also filled with relationships or actions taken in the intimacy sphere whose institutional form has not been firmly anchored. From the structural point of view, actors choose types of actions whose gender differentiation is not as established as that in the institutionalised forms. Actions outside the institutionalised forms penalise individuals in the form of ambiguous roles, the need for negotiation and frequent disharmony. On a structural level, they reinforce the status of social patterns whose existence makes the traditional forms of partnerships relative and whose structure is gendered in a different way. Negotiations concerning roles and new positions held by men and women create a specific framework

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<sup>10</sup> Women in the older age category (35-64 years of age) cease independent living less frequently by starting up a partner cohabitation than men (44.9% of women compared to 60.1% of men). In contrast, after their solo living experience, women frequently than men return to their parents or their children return to them (Qu Lixia – de Vaus 2011).



for gender performativity. From the point of view of the interaction gender concept, this has the potential for changes in the discourse. This is a conceptual framework for three points of contact concerning gender changes and the partnership situation during solo living and is proposed for further empirical research.

### **Public sphere – careers and employment**

Emerging adulthood is typical by the disconnecting of various types of transitions into the adulthood. Whereas during the former periods, the entry into the adulthood was characterized by clusters or “packages” of transitions (typically: entry into the job market, separation from parental household, entry into the marriage, beginning of the parenthood), recent transitions are more sparsely spread over relatively lengthy period of life. Nonetheless we can still identify patterns structuring the timing of various types of transitions. There can be two clusters of transitions distinguished: the first one represents the obligations within the public sphere (completing education, entering employment), and the other one represents the private sphere (leaving parents, living with a partner, marriage, parenthood). During the foregone period when these transitions were interconnected over time, they were also gender specific – immediately after completing education men were expected to focus on their careers and women should have children and look after the household. Now two clusters of transitions are temporally separated and first type of transition – entering the public sphere – is universal for both sexes. Since the “public sphere transitions” occur before the “family transitions”, they are directly subsequent to the previous gender socialization in the family and poses the most significant potentiality to change the gender-specific socialisation results.

Employment is for young men and women not often limited by parenthood or partnership in this time. The gender pay gap, which exists in the majority of European countries to varying degrees, is usually lesser during young adulthood where it is usual to postpone marriage and parenting transitions (Anxo et al. 2011). Generally, employment and full-time work are a strong indicator of egalitarian gender attitudes rather than any previous work experience or part-time work (Bolzendahl – Myers 2004, Wilkie 1993). Working women profess a more equal gender ideology than women who do not work (Bolzendahl – Myers 2004) due to their experience of gender discrimination at work (Coverdill – Kraft – Manley 1996). In contrast, the gender pay gap increases in connection with the transition towards marriage, and, in particular, to parenting<sup>11</sup>. A combination of paid work and parenting is

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<sup>11</sup> Generally, parenting is associated with traditional gender ideology, in particular, in the case of large families and families with young children (Sanchez – Thomson 1997, Fan – Marini 2000, Bolzendahl – Myers 2004).

hard to attain for both mothers and fathers. The strategies applied by men and women are complementary: men typically devote more time to paid work while women reduce their obligations in the public sphere or give up their job permanently. Thus, parenting directly endangers work opportunities for women, their further career and financial growth while forcing them into a long-term disadvantaged position compared to men. (Anxo et al. 2011)<sup>12</sup>

On the other hand, given the persisting gender gap in the labour market, the careers of young men and women can become polarised and unequal in the stage of emerging adulthood. Depending upon this experience, young people may organise their partner relationships and foresee their future arrangements in various ways (Pearson 2006). On an individual basis, identical behaviour by men and women may also be legitimised based on gender stereotypes and, ultimately, they will prepare and foresee the future gender arrangement. While men can relate their experience gained in paid employment to their role as a breadwinner (Cohen 1987), women can explain the same experience as a form of preparation for future motherhood and a means of subsistence should they drop-out of employment during maternity leave (Bartošová 2012). Talking about work in terms of their career may be more difficult for women than for men because career building, as an appropriate activity, is from the view of societal stereotypes and bias primarily expected from men. In contrast, women are confronted with social expectations that reach outside the work sphere. The building of professional career is complicated for them because a large section of society is convinced that women cannot build careers unless at the expense of their families, households and children. For example according to survey conducted within the research project "Family, employment and education", more than a half of respondents accepted the statement, that man have to earn the money and woman have to look after the household (Höhne et al. 2010). This is connected to the tendency of both men and women to adapt to the models accepted by society and regardless of actual opportunities for women to combine work and family. (Křížková – Václavíková-Helšusová 2002)

Regardless of young people's perception of work, research shows that work represents a key factor for fulfilment in the stage of emerging adulthood. Work often takes over other the spheres of the respondents' lives and interferes with their private space. According to Ettlrová's (2007) quantitative research, one-third of interviewed unmarried individuals in the age bracket of 25-29 could not prevent work from invading their privacy Every thirteenth respondent thought their work so important that they consciously subordinated their private

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<sup>12</sup> Despite of this fact there are significant differences between European countries in the level of labour market integration of mothers, mostly in relation to national policy regime (see for example Anxo et al. 2007). Czech Republic belongs between European countries where is negative impact of motherhood to employment activity of women with small children in the long term almost the highest (Křížková – Formánková 2014). It is mostly the consequence of relative long-term paternal leave, the lack of child care institutions and the lack of part-time jobs (Kuchařová et al. 2006).

life to their job. Similarly, other researchers (Dudová 2008; Vacková et al. 2014) showed that childless people often complained of their leisure time being colonized by the work and of their inability to separate both spheres.

We find it essential that independently living, single and childless people turn their attention to the social field with a specific gender structure (work) to a much greater extent. Thus, the results obtained from the previous section of this paper may also be interpreted as a theorising on the impact of their professional orientation on their intimate lives. The consequences reflected in the public sphere will be described from another point of view. In terms of gender subjectivity, the fact that a growing portion of the society (in particular people living alone) uses work as a resource for the roles of adult men and adult women they learn after their childhood period is essential. From the structural aspect, this is behaviour which legitimises, promotes and deepens gender neutrality or the blindness in the labour market via compatibility and requirements for flexibility, mobility and independence. Paid work represents a specific framework for gender performativity (career elements) characterised by the public sphere rules (performance and rationality), which have been developed sooner, and to a broader extent compared to the types of gender performativity, in the sphere of intimacy. In our opinion, these three mechanisms create contact points that can be used for further empirical research into the gender context of professional orientation during solo living.

### **Everydayness and setting up an independent household**

The need for independence and expressing oneself via an independent household becomes culturally imperative once people feel too old to live with their parents or flatmates. The need for an independent home is related to feelings of control over one's own space, time, resources and decisions and demonstrates independent adulthood. This independence consists of accepting responsibility for obligations and expenditures connected with an independent home, albeit the rent or mortgage payments, and control over everyday household management (Jamieson – Simpson 2013).

While in other areas, we witnessed the direct relationship between gender universalising behaviour (a shift away from partner relationships, dominance of careers) and solo living, then on the level of everydayness and practical requirements related to one's home, the situation is more complicated. On the one hand, the everydayness of solo living is characterised by very similar requirements for social action of men and women. They all have their own home they must look after, they all must eat, clean, get dressed and they do not have people around them who could take on these activities on an everyday basis. On the other hand, research shows a very strong tendency to act on a gender structured basis in these situations or attribute gender-structured

meanings to them (Fulgini – Masten 2010, Vacková et al. 2014). This contradiction is not surprising. It is clear that solo living does not mean that gender socialisation will be erased and men and women will begin to behave in an identical manner. However, we believe that this contradiction makes the level of tension present between the everyday requirements and gender roles more visible, thus enabling it to become a subject of discussion. Compared to other ways of living during emerging adulthood (living with parents, cohabiting), it is solo living that tends to create a strong tension which, on the level of everydayness, usually goes against the fulfilment of socialised gender stereotypical roles. While the everydayness of living with parents or a partner means increased costs when deviating from stereotyped gender roles, the universalising potential of solo living lies in the fact that the increased costs are related to the fulfilment of such roles. In turn, this puts pressure on those involved to abandon them. In solo living, gender specific socialised roles appear in the context in which they are often dysfunctional. Simultaneously, the institutionalised frameworks in the housing market, as well as rentals and services related to housing, represent gender non-structured requirements which both men and women alike must face. Combined with the acquired elements of gender performativity, the meaning and impact of stereotypical behaviour repertoires become ambiguous.

Generally speaking, the process of individualisation is connected to the deinstitutionalisation of traditional gender role repertoires where we can observe and hypothesise many particular aspects of these processes on the micro-level of everyday solo living.

An example is securitisation through home ownership. This need is mentioned by both men and women, resulting in very similar strategies (Jamieson – Simpson 2013: 112). The practical aspects of the real estate market, mortgage and conveyancing paperwork, pushes the actors into the universalised roles regardless of the sex of the customer. Nowadays, this type of rationale that is typical for the traditional male role (with the anticipated responsibility for the family) is part of the lives of the growing number of young solo living women.

Once the home is bought (or rented), the use of time and space is characterised by the strong emphasis on individual decisions. Traditionally gendered women's roles tied to dependence and subordination fade away with the opportunity to create individually structured lifestyles and crafted homes without the restrictive need for compromises. How facilities are used, housekeeping provided, meals prepared and consumed and specific DIY approaches applied are all everyday practices that slightly affect the performativity to move outside traditional gender boundaries. This shift is characterised by the practical aspects of the activities and the aspect of

individual decisions in this regard. We especially perceive the latter as an important source of self-consciousness and empowerment for the social roles that overcome the traditional gender repertoires.

### **Summary, discussion and conclusion**

The preceding sections of the paper describe the three aspects of solo living in detail. In the following matrix, we summarise the theoretically formulated final portions of the previous sections that draw attention to the gender-universalising effects of (1) partner situations for solo-livers, (2) specific forms of participation in the labour market and (3) the specific context of everydayness related to living and household. These connecting lines in the discussion of solo living and gender have been drawn inductively. They offer nine conceptual frameworks within which specific mechanisms may be found that identify changes in the (1) socialisation results (individual gender level), (2) gender structuralisation of institutions (structural gender level) and (3) gender performativity repertoires (interactive level of gender). Regarding all nine gender and solo living intersections, we explain the mechanisms possessing a presumed universalising effect in the sense of gender construction of social action and in the sense of gender hierarchisation. In other words, in our opinion it is meaningful to propose that these relationships are the key “suspects” which may now, and also in the future, limit the processes connecting masculinity and femininity with specific behaviour and processes that assign (consistently unequal) values to these. However, other mechanisms that have not been mentioned could be present within the frameworks, nevertheless the presented mechanisms we consider to be the most significant, based upon cited theoretical and empirical resources.

Causal reasoning must also be commented on. In most cases, it is not possible to accurately state if solo living is a cause or a consequence of typical arrangements that are assumed to be the potential for changes in gender subjectivity. Within relationships, work and everydayness it is probable that a specific orientation (e.g. being voluntary single, LAT or work orientated) leads to independent living and also vice versa, where independent living starts, strengthens or broadens these orientations. Nevertheless, it is not essential to the argument whether it is caused by the former or the latter. From our point of view, solo living is typical of the connection and feedback looping this specific combination of factors. We assume that for people living independently it is possible to identify mechanisms that naturally appear in different contexts as well (gender roles have been changing). These are pointed out and interconnected.

	INDIVIDUAL socialisation	STRUCTURAL institutionalisation	INTERACTIONAL performativity
Partner situation (intimacy sphere)	Discontinuity of roles, disintegration, fragmentation and reversibility of transitions related to intimacy.	Lower gender structuralisation of forms of intimacy outside of institutionalised partnership patterns.	Missing/limited/transformed sphere of intimacy as a changed space of gender performativity.
Career and employment (public sphere)	Paid work as a dominant aspect of the transition to adulthood.	Compatibility with the requirements of flexibility, mobility and independence reinforces legitimacy.	Specific field of power relationships within the public sphere as space defining gender performativity.
Everydayness of solo living (housing and household)	Non-functional gender structured roles within the context of everyday solo living.	Gender non-structured conditions on the market with housing, loans and rentals.	Ambiguity of ways to deal with the need to perform "the other" gender role.

Usually, the limits of the selected approach or weaknesses in methodology are stated in the conclusion of the text. In our case, we will discuss theoretical arguments, which limit or interfere with the validity of our conclusions. These arguments are phrased using four hypotheses. These can be regarded as a summary of doubts as well as the grounded hypotheses enhanced by suggestions for more extensive empirical tests. These test areas are defined concerning the following: (1) permanence of change in gender socialisation, institutions and performativity frameworks - temporal hypothesis, (2) nature of the differences distinguishing the solo living stage from previous life phases - distinction hypothesis (3) opportunities to identify a consistent cluster of factors affecting gender in solo living – consistency hypothesis and, especially, (4) modification of the solo living and gender relationship for both genders (asymmetry hypothesis).

### ***Temporal hypothesis***

Temporal dynamics of the changes under consideration may vary greatly (Buckx et al. 2010; Tsai et al. 2013). However, the key question is to what extent solo living experience permanently changes gender behaviour repertoires or those that are only temporarily related to this life stage? Our reflections on the impact of solo living are based on the presumption that the socialised gender roles from the previous life stage have been permanently modified. Our arguments are mainly based on the fact that the solo living stage is a stage in which adult life roles are formed (after leaving the parent household), the independent identity of individuals is established and lifestyle preferences formalised.

On the other hand, it should be noted that every change in life has the potential to change gender behaviour repertoires and ideologies and, in this

regard, partnership, marriage and parenthood surely represent major turning points. We do not presume, of course, that people who have experienced solo living will live in partnerships in a manner identical to when they were living alone. However, gender role distribution may be expected to differ depending upon this experience. This is contrasted by the assumption of a return to the gender role concept closer to the socialisation phase prior to solo living.

### ***Distinction hypothesis***

This hypothesis consists of reflections on the differences characterising solo living and the prior/subsequent periods (Arnett 2000; Hendry – Kloep 2010). It is clear that the external attributes of these situations vary. Independent living, economic independence, entry to the labour market compared to prior experience and life without a partner compared to the subsequent experience are the observable definition characteristics we worked with. However, can it really be presumed that these varying life arrangements result in a significant discontinuity in factors that impact gender socialisation? Does it hold true (and will it continue to do so in the future?) that solo living creates stronger universalising requirements than socialisation in orientation families? Our arguments lean toward this theory. Nevertheless, the situation in families and the characteristics of the emerging adulthood stage may not be as clear cut in terms of reproducing traditional gender roles as expected. In that case, does solo living really create a distinctive stage in terms of gender socialisation? This is the framework for a number of questions that can be summarised by testing the hypothesis concerning distinction and gender-socialising factor discontinuity.

### ***Consistency hypothesis***

Put simply, the previous two hypotheses concern the contours outlining the solo living stage. The discontinuity of various elements as such does not necessarily mean a strong potential for changes in gender socialisation. This is why we ask whether there are any elements, characteristic for the solo living stage, that create a consistent unity of “universalising requirements” with a synergistic impact upon the disruption of traditional gender role models. We believe that such consistency can be observed in solo living as a result of a combination of three key elements: employment, practical requirements for running a household/home and a specific partner situation (absence of partnership or partnership forms without co-habitation).

### ***Asymmetry hypothesis***

The last hypothesis summarising the opposite poles of the starting points focuses on gender asymmetry. The entire text has discussed the gender universalising impact by solo living without regard to it being conditioned by

the gender of social actors. This paper is aimed at defining a set of mechanisms by which solo living impacts the gender order in society. All the mechanisms discussed will probably be strongly differentiated for men and women so the impact can be significantly modified. On one hand, the universalising trends may be limited by their unavailability to men or women (e.g., if the disadvantaged position of women in the labour market led to withdrawal into the family, the gender consequences of a career would be much less universalising for women). On the other hand, the impact may differ for men rather than women due to the difference in the meaning assigned to particular types of behaviour by the individual genders. However, we do not believe that the form of these modifications is clearly estimable and predictable (e.g. the emancipation impact by paid work is stronger for women).

The phenomenon of solo living and the concept of emerging adulthood represent new social trends that arise from a long-term process, which has become known as individualisation, detraditionalisation, and deinstitutionalisation. These vast social changes are often perceived with uncertainty and worries. Despite this, we wanted to point out the ambiguousness and potential positive consequences of these changes. We have chosen a mere detail – solo living is not and most probably will not be the prevailing lifestyle. We have shown, however, that the change in the way some young people start their adult life (even if it occurs later and in a more complicated way compared to previous generations), may lead to reducing gender distinctions and inequalities.

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