

CHAPTER 7

Exploring Marital Belief Systems of Single and Partnered Polish Young Adults

Katarzyna Adamczyk and Scott S. Hall

INTRODUCTION

Marriage is a basis of family functioning (Bakiera, 2009). It has unique relational properties compared to other romantic relationships such as assumed permanence, and is conducive to unparalleled dynamics and outcomes (Waite & Gallagher, 2000). Marriage is typically assumed to serve common functions of providing personal fulfillment and the expression of love (Wyatt, 1999), as well as the need for companionship (Coontz, 2000). However, marriage has become more diverse and subjective and less narrowly institutionalized (Cherlin, 2004). Despite the heterogeneity of marital and family life observed today (Cherlin, 2004; Slany, 2006), and an increasing acceptance of its alternative forms such as singlehood, living apart together, cohabitation without marriage (Cherlin, 2004; Lehnart, Neyer, & Eccles, 2010; Slany, 2006), searching for a lifetime partner/spouse remains an area of significant interest and importance to young adults (Erikson, 1980; Havighurst, 1981; Willoughby & Dworkin, 2009). In Poland, like in many in other countries, most adolescents and young adults desire to marry and have a successful marital and family life (Bakiera, 2009; Koropeczyk-Cox, 2005; Rostowski, 2009). Though most young adults experience a committed relationship (Carver, Joyner, & Udry, 2003), many of which culminate in marriage (Braithwaite, Delevi, & Fincham, 2010), a sizable number young adults remain single, be it by choice or involuntarily (Palus, 2010; Reynolds, Wetherell, & Taylor, 2007).

To appreciate the diversity within young adulthood, it is important to understand what factors are associated with relationship status (single vs. partnered)

in young adulthood. One of these possible correlates of relationship status and marrying may be attitudes and beliefs about marriage (Bakiera, 2009; Mahay & Lewin, 2007). Marital beliefs and attitudes can also influence satisfaction in dating relationships (Sullivan & Schwebel, 1995) and the nature of one's marriage, primarily regarding levels of distress, satisfaction, and communication negativity (Baucom, Epstein, Rankin, & Burnett, 1996; Bradbury & Fincham, 1993; Foran & Slep, 2007; Hamamci, 2005; Neff & Karney, 2005). Differing beliefs about marriage are manifestations of underlying meanings that marriage holds for individuals, some of which are reflections of larger societal expectations (Hall, 2006). For instance, Polish young adults perceive marriage as a union of an emotional nature, which also includes obligation, responsibility, commitment, dedication and sacrifice (Bakiera, 2009).

Gender is often a contributing factor when considering the role of marital beliefs in the formation of romantic and marital relationships. Traditional developmental tasks for women are defined in regard to bonds with others, among them the most significance being marriage (Mandal, 2004). In general women are found to display a stronger desire of intimacy and higher motivation for it than men, whereas men are often described as focused on instrumentality and achievement (Feldman, Gowen, & Fisher, 1998). These gender differences appear to hold true in Poland. For instance, in a Polish study by Bakiera (2009), women expressed greater approbation of marriage than did men, and men expressed more disapprobation than did women. Societal assumptions and customs likely contribute to such gender differences, in that for women but not for men being single after a certain age often results in being labeled as a spinster (Zubrzycka, 1993). For many centuries in Poland it has been assumed that all women desire to marry and failing to do so fostered assumptions about her having some personal deficits (Duch-Krzystoszek, 1995) or as being unattractive (Tymicki, 2001, p. 78).

One area of inquiry that remains less known is if an association exists between attitudes toward marriage and relationship status (single *versus* partnered) during young adulthood. To the best of our knowledge, prior research in Poland has not thoroughly examined relationship status for unmarried adults in the context of marital beliefs. The vast majority of relevant research in Poland (e.g., Bakiera, 2008; 2009; Braun-Gałkowska, 1992; Duch-Krzystoszek, 1995; Żurek, 2008) has focused on people's beliefs, expectations, standards, or attitudes related to marriage in general but not in regard to relationship status. Understanding if and how single and partnered young adults differ in their marital beliefs can inform scholarship related to the development and implications of marital beliefs.

Though marital beliefs are often studied in isolation or as a narrow set of beliefs, one comprehensive investigation of marital beliefs resulted in a conceptualization of marital meaning along five interrelated dimensions (Hall, 2006). The first dimension was classified as a Special status of marriage *versus* neutral alternative. Marriage can be seen as the highest expression of love and intimacy and the most satisfying type of relationship *versus* being just one of many types of similarly valid couple relationships (or simply a “piece of paper”). The second dimension, Self-fulfillment *versus* obligation, refers to seeing marriage as a key means for meeting one’s needs, such as emotional fulfillment or economic security, *versus* a type of social obligation for individuals that would take some priority over personal fulfillment. The third dimension, Mutuality *versus* individuality, incorporates ideas that marriage requires spouses to give up individuality and merge identities, *versus* marriage being compatible with (or even promoting) maintaining clear individual identities. The fourth dimension, Romanticism *versus* pragmatism, corresponds to viewing marriage as a relationship perfectly fit for soul mates or that a good marriage is inherently full of agreement and spontaneity, *versus* being primarily a practical exchange system that requires effort and compromise to maintain. The final dimension is Role hierarchy *versus* role parallelism, which focuses on concepts of control and power and a hierarchy of roles often associated with gender, *versus* being a horizontal and mutual relationship primarily based on sharing and companionship. Incorporating a multi-faceted approach to studying marital beliefs is likely to represent a more complete mindset or paradigm related to marriage (Willoughby, Hall, & Luczak, 2013).

THE CURRENT STUDY

The current investigation is a part of a larger research project concerning identity, self-construals, romantic beliefs and marital beliefs in single and partnered young adults in Poland. The results regarding identity and self-construals were presented in other paper (Adamczyk & Luyckx, 2013) and the findings regarding romantic beliefs were presented in a paper by Adamczyk and Metts (2013). The current article presents the results of the study which, to the best of our knowledge, is the first study to use a Polish sample aimed at investigating marital beliefs among young adults in regard to relationship status. This study specifically extends previous research by using a foreign instrument to measure marital beliefs and by focusing on the content of marital beliefs and not merely on positivity and negativity of attitudes. This contribution is par-

ticularly important as marital beliefs can influence decisions relevant to marital and family life (Bakiera, 2009). In this study, three main research questions were addressed. First, we investigated how relationship status is related to the five dimensions of marital meaning (i.e., Special status of marriage *vs.* neutral alternative, Self-fulfillment *vs.* obligation, Mutuality *vs.* individuality, Romanticism *vs.* pragmatism, and Role hierarchy *vs.* role parallelism). We hypothesized that partnered individuals will hold greater levels (scores toward the first concept listed on each dimension; e.g., special status, self-fulfillment, etc.) on all of marital beliefs compared to single individuals. Second, we hypothesized that the marital belief systems identified by Hall (2006) would also emerge in the present study through the use of cluster analysis. “Classically idealistic marital belief system” would have high scores on mutuality, romance, and role hierarchy. “Individuated and practical marital belief system” would have high scores on self-fulfillment and lowest on mutuality and role hierarchy. Finally, the “realistic marital belief system” would have high scores on special status and lowest on self-fulfillment and romance. With respect to the link between relationship status and these marital belief system, we hypothesized that both classically idealistic system and realistic belief system would be mainly represented partnered individuals who will hold greater level of marital beliefs. Conversely, we expected that individuated and practical belief system would be mainly represented by single individuals. Third, in regard to gender, we expected that women will report greater level of all of marital beliefs given tendencies identified in the literature of women being more relationship-oriented than men (e.g., Mandal, 2004; Plopa, 2002) .

METHODS

Participants and Procedure

The study was carried out on a sample of university students from different faculties of Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan, Poland. Four hundred questionnaires were originally distributed of which 305 were returned. Thirty-nine participants were excluded from the study due to incomplete data and not meeting the inclusion criteria, yielding a final sample of 291 students – 155 females (53.30%) and 136 males (46.70%). Participants were 20–25 years old ($M = 22.29$, $SD = 2.05$) and resided in large Polish city with a population exceeding 500,000 inhabitants. All the respondents were never married, had no children, and were heterosexual. The minimal duration of being single and partnered was arbitrarily defined as “at least 6 months (see Donnelly, Burgess,

Anderson, Davis, & Dillard, 2001). One hundred and thirty- seven students (47.10%) declared being in a romantic relationship at the time of the assessment while 154 students (52.90%) were not.

The first author distributed the measures to the participants across the different courses. The questionnaire packages were administered in classrooms to groups of 20 to 30 students at a time and participation was voluntary. An explanation as to the purpose of the study was given as was an assurance that the information provided would remain anonymous and confidential. The instructions were read aloud. Participants completed a demographic questionnaire and the Polish-language version (translated for this study) of the Marital Meaning Inventory (Hall, 2006).

Measures

The questionnaire package presented to the study participants was comprised of the following instruments:

Demographic Questionnaire. This questionnaire was designed by the first author to obtain general descriptive information such as age, gender, faculty and current relationship status.

Marital Meaning Inventory (MMI; Hall, 2006). It is a 21-item instrument to examine the meaning that the institution of marriage can hold for young adults, based on their systems (or collections) of beliefs about marriage. The statements include in the MMI were inspired by the five themes of marital meaning identified in the literature and, to the extent possible, were similar to single items used in the studies from prior reviewed literature. Each dimension contains polarized and contrasting conceptualizations of marriage. These dimensions are as follows: (1) Special status of marriage *versus* neutral alternative (e.g., ‘*Marriage is the highest commitment couples can make to each other*’); (2) Self-fulfilment *versus* obligation (e.g., ‘*A person’s marriage should take priority over individual goals*’); (3) Mutuality *versus* individuality (e.g., ‘*Married couples share all the same interests*’); (4) Romanticism *versus* pragmatism (e.g., ‘*Loving each other is enough to keep marriages together*’); (4) Role hierarchy *versus* role parallelism (e.g., ‘*Each spouse should be in charge of different aspects of the family*’). Respondents were given the following prompt: “What do you believe about marriage? How true are the following statements about what you think marriage is like?” Possible responses range from 1 (not true at all) to 5 (very true). The Polish-language version of the MMI indicated relatively good psychometric properties. In the present study, Cronbach’s alphas were as follow: .63 for Special status of marriage *vs.* neutral alternative, .73 for Self-fulfilment *vs.*

obligation, .61 for Mutuality vs. individuality, .60 Romanticism vs. pragmatism, and .61 Role hierarchy vs. role parallelism.

Data Analysis

The analysis was divided into three phases. First, to test whether group differences exist between single and partnered individuals in regard to marital beliefs, and whether gender differences existed among these variables, we performed a one-way multivariate analysis of variance followed up by univariate analyses and discriminant function analysis. Second, we performed an iterative *k*-means clustering procedure on the marital beliefs to retain clusters representing different marital belief systems. Third, we examine the distribution of relationship status in the retained clusters by using chi-square testing. An alpha level of .05 was used for significance tests.

RESULTS

Mean-Level Analyses

First, to examine possible mean differences between single and partnered samples in regard to marital beliefs a one-way multivariate analysis of variance was used resulting in a significant multivariate effect (Wilks's $\Lambda = .95$, $F(5, 283) = 3.12$, $p = .009$, $\eta^2 = .05$ (see Table 1).

Table 1

Means and Standard Deviations on Marital Beliefs by Relationship Status

Variable	Total sample (N = 291)	Single sample (N = 154)	Partnered sample (N = 137)	<i>F</i> ratio	η^2
	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)		
Multivariate test				3.12**	.05
Special status of marriage vs. neutral alternative	15.99 (3.11)	15.59 (3.10)	16.44 (3.06)	5.13*	.02
Self-fulfillment vs. obligation	14.16 (2.62)	14.08 (2.65)	14.26 (2.59)	1.44	.01
Mutuality vs. individuality	8.02 (1.91)	7.73 (1.90)	8.34 (1.87)	6.05*	.02
Romanticism vs. pragmatism	10.68 (2.31)	10.26 (2.39)	11.16 (2.13)	9.44**	.03
Role hierarchy vs. role parallelism	8.50 (1.83)	8.49 (1.78)	8.51 (1.89)	.08	.00

** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$.

Follow-up univariate analyses revealed significant differences between single and partnered individuals in regard to three dimensions of marital beliefs. As shown in Table 1, partnered individuals scored higher on Special status of marriage, Romanticism, and Mutuality than did single individuals. In the area of the Self-fulfillment vs. obligation, and Role hierarchy vs. role parallelism no significant differences emerged.

In regard to gender, multivariate analysis of variance did not result in a significant multivariate effect, Wilks's $\Lambda = .98$, $F(5, 283) = .96$, $p = .443$, $\eta^2 = .02$ (see Table 2).

Table 2

Means and Standard Deviations on Marital Beliefs by Gender

Variable	Total sample (N = 291)	Women (N = 155)	Men (N = 136)	<i>F</i> ratio	η^2
	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)		
Multivariate test				.96	.02
Special status of marriage vs. neutral alternative	15.99 (3.11)	15.87 (3.02)	16.13 (3.20)	.01	.00
Self-fulfillment vs. obligation	14.16 (2.62)	14.39 (2.63)	13.90 (2.59)	3.80	.01
Mutuality vs. individuality	8.02 (1.91)	7.88 (1.88)	8.17 (1.94)	.15	.00
Romanticism vs. pragmatism	10.68 (2.31)	10.51 (2.42)	10.88 (2.17)	.06	.00
Role hierarchy vs. role parallelism	8.50 (1.83)	8.42 (1.79)	8.60 (1.88)	.70	.00

As Table 2 displays, women and men did not differ on five marital beliefs.. Furthermore, the interaction between relationship status and gender was also found to be not significant, Wilks's $\Lambda = .99$, $F(5, 283) = .53$, $p = .754$, $\eta^2 = .01$.

Discriminant Function Analysis

In the second step, as it is recommended in the literature (e.g., Field, 2009) the MANOVA was followed up with discriminant analysis (DFA) to examine how the dependent variables discriminate the single and partnered groups. We employed a two-group, stepwise discriminant analysis with the maximum significance of F to enter of .05, and minimum significance of F to remove of .10. The analysis revealed one significant discriminant function, Wilks's $\Lambda = .96$, $\chi^2(1) = 10.97$, $p < .001$. The eigenvalue of the discriminant function was .04 and the canonical correlation was .19. The variable included into the model was Romanticism vs. pragmatism, $F(1, 289) = 11.20$, $p = .001$. The standardized discriminant function coefficient for

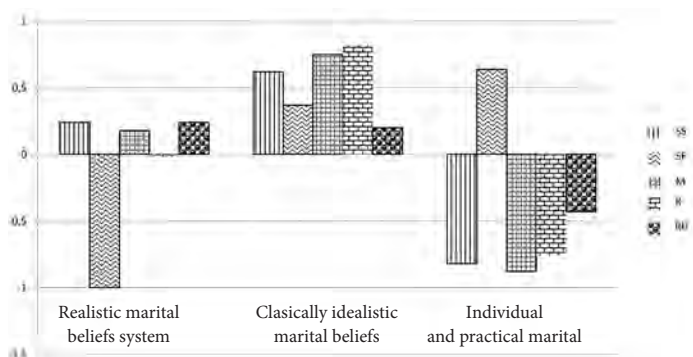
Romanticism vs. pragmatism was 1, and the pooled within-groups correlations between discriminating variables and standardized canonical discriminant function was also 1. These coefficients provided congruent pattern of results, indicating that Romanticism vs. pragmatism is a variable which in the highest degree contributed to the distinguishing between the single and partnered individuals.

The group membership prediction accuracy was measured on the analysis and the holdout sub-samples. The hit ratio for the analysis sample and for the holdout sample was the same and was 60.50%. To assess the appropriateness of these hit ratios and the classification accuracy for groups, the Press's Q statistic was employed. The Press's Q statistic calculated for this study was 12.79, which is greater than the critical value (6.64) from the Chi-square distribution with 1 degree of freedom at the significance level of .01. Thus, the prediction was significantly better than chance and the classification accuracy was satisfactory. With a canonical correlation of .19, it can be concluded that 4% (square of the canonical correlation, $R^2 = .04$) of the variance in the dependent variable was accounted for by this model.

Cluster Analysis

In the next stage of our analyses an iterative *k*-means clustering procedure on the marital beliefs was conducted in the total sample resulting in three clusters retained. Figure 1 presents the final cluster solution with the y-axis representing *z* scores.

Figure 1
Three clusters of the five dimensions



SS – Special status of marriage vs. neutral alternative; SF – Self-fulfilment vs. obligation; M – Mutuality vs. individuality; R – Romanticism vs. pragmatism; RH – Role hierarchy vs. role parallelism.

A one-way ANOVA was employed to examine mean differences between the three clusters. The results of one-way ANOVA indicated that the three clusters significantly differed in the area of five marital beliefs: Special status of marriage vs. neutral alternative, $F(2, 288) = 85.79, p = .000$; Self-fulfillment vs. obligation, $F(2, 288) = 160.38, p = .000$; Mutuality vs. individuality, $F(2, 288) = 121.90, p = .000$; Romanticism vs. pragmatism, $F(2, 288) = 104.12, p = .000$; and Role hierarchy vs. role parallelism, $F(2, 288) = 15.65, p = .000$.

The 1 cluster (98 participants; 33.70% of the sample) scored positively low on Special status, Mutuality, and Role hierarchy, and very low on Romance, and scored negatively and highly on Self-fulfillment. The 2 cluster (94 participants; 32.30% of the sample) scored moderately and high on all marital beliefs with the exception of low scores on Role hierarchy. Finally, the 3 cluster (99 participants; 34% of the sample) was distinguished by negative and high, and moderate scores on all marital beliefs, excepted for positive and high scores on Self-fulfillment.

The final step of the analyses employed the chi square test to examine if the three clusters differ in regard to relationship status (see Table 3).

Table 3
Distribution of Relationship Status in the Three Clusters

	Clusters					
	1		2		3	
	(n = 98)		(n = 94)		(n = 99)	
Relationship status	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Single status	53	54.10	38	40.40%	63	63.60
Partnered status	45	45.90	56	59.60	36	36.40

Note. $N = 291$.

* Percentage within cluster

As shown in Table 3, three clusters differed on the relationship status, $\chi^2(2) = 10.51, p = .005$, Cramer's $V = .19$. It is clear that cluster 2 has a much larger (and a majority) of partnered individuals than the other clusters. Furthermore, cluster 3 had the largest proportion of single individuals.

DISCUSSION

The goal of this study was to provide preliminary insight into the meaning that the institution of marriage can hold for Polish, single and partnered, young adults, based on their relationship status. Specifically, we were interested to investigate whether being single *vs.* partnered and gender differentiate the levels of specific marital beliefs.

The first hypothesis which predicted that relationship status will differentiate all marital beliefs was partially supported. The performed analysis revealed that significant differences between single and partnered individuals exist in the extent of such marital meaning dimensions as Special status of marriage *vs.* neutral alternative, Romanticism *vs.* pragmatism, and Mutuality *vs.* individuality. In regard to the above-mentioned marital beliefs individuals committed in a serious relationship hold greater levels of beliefs concerning marriage to be the ultimate expression of love and intimacy, be the most satisfying type of relationship, be only good when there is complete acceptance and agreement, it should always be happy, spontaneous, and satisfying. In turn, in the scope of Self-fulfillment and Role hierarchy single and partnered respondents were in similar in how they perceived marriage as a means for receiving emotional fulfillment and/or economic security, completing one's sense of self, and as a hierarchy of roles. Moreover, the results of discriminant function analysis revealed an unique contribution of one from five marital beliefs, namely Romanticism *vs.* pragmatism for distinguishing between single and partnered status.

These findings suggest that certain selected beliefs concerned marriage may be associated with being in a serious relationship. These findings, however, are of a correlational nature, so it is uncertain as to the direction of influence between beliefs and relationship status. However, beliefs about marriage being special and romantic may act to motivate young adults to partner (with eventual marriage in mind) given that romantic love has begun to constitute the primary basis of the marriage (Bakiera, 2009; Rostowski, 1987). The overall high scores on these particular marital belief may reflect a contemporary perception among Polish young adults of marriage as being a more emotional than institutional bond (Bakiera, 2009). It seems probable that some degree of romanticism can be useful to initiate and sustain a relationship (Sharp & Ganong, 2000). Romantic ideals promote optimism and positive emotions during initial interactions and serve as a buffer during relationship maintenance by helping individuals not distract themselves from concentrating concentrate on their partner's negative traits (Murray & Holmes, 1997). Holding some romantic ideals may

motivate romantic partners to invest in their relationship and may contribute to working harder and more persistently on relationship problems (Medora, Larson, Hortačsu, & Dave, 2002). Romantic beliefs may function to prolong relationships (and thus avoid the likelihood of being single) because they foster the ability to view imperfect relationships more favorably and thus potentially experiencing more satisfying, stable relationships (Murray & Holmes, 1997).

Our second hypothesis concerned the possibility to retain three clusters distinguished on the basis of five marital meaning dimensions. In this area the current finding partially replicated the original results obtained by Hall (2006). In the present investigation the first cluster resembles the cluster labeled by Hall (2006) as “realistic marital belief system.” Individuals included in this cluster hold a moderate conviction of special status of marriage, the possibility of achievement of one’s fulfillment through marriage and possibility to arrange marital roles in a hierarchical way; at the same time, these individuals among other clusters are extremely skeptical of romantic ideals, and were more prone than the other clusters to believe that marriage is more of a social obligation for individuals, and to be placed ahead of personal fulfillment. The second cluster can be named, as in the Hall’s (2006) study, “classically idealistic marital beliefs system.” The individuals included in this cluster hold a belief that marriage is thought to be a special union with a joint identity of spouses, and romance, simultaneously holding a moderate belief that marriage is a means for receiving emotional fulfillment and/or economic security and for completing one’s sense of self, and a lower endorsement of marriage being a hierarchy of roles. Finally, the third cluster, to some degree, replicated the cluster retained and termed by Hall (2006) as “individuated and practical marital belief system.” The individuals who constituted this cluster believed that marriage can provide spouses with emotional fulfillment and/or economic security. At the same time these individuals believed in high degree that marriage as an institution amounts to a “piece of paper.” Additionally, spouses are regarded as primarily independent with little dependency and/or restriction of autonomy and the spouses engage in a more practical exchange system based little on romantic ideals, with an egalitarian union of sharing and companionship. This cluster also included the highest percentage of participants from the total sample. This pattern may reflect contemporary social changes associated with a prevalent promotion of individualistic values such as autonomy, sense of freedom, self-reliability and privacy (Bakiera, 2009; Żurek, 2008). Individualism appears to coincide with viewing marriage as more of a business agreement or company in which both partners engage in for the sake of personal gratification (Bakiera, 2009).

A key element of our analyses was to also investigate the association between relationship status and three retained clusters. The results of performed analysis revealed that all three clusters differed in the regard to the proportion of single individuals with the highest rate of single respondents being in the third cluster termed “individuated and practical marital belief system” (63.60%). This pattern of results may reflect that domination of individualistic goals over collective goals (Bakiera, 2009) which may discourage young adults from commitment in a serious relationship, especially if they are meeting their individualistic goals as singles. It is important to note that we did not collect information on reasons for remaining single and we cannot conclude that specific configuration of marital beliefs directly determine the state of being single. It is possible that this association is bidirectional and that single individuals adopt certain meanings of marriage as a result of living without a lifetime partner. In regard to partnered individuals whose percentage was nearly the same in three clusters we may assume that any configuration of marital beliefs can be conducive to the possibility of being in a committed relationships. However, it is also possible that being in a serious relationship affects an individual’s beliefs about marriage in the direction of developing more realistic, individualized and pragmatic notions of marriage.

Finally, contrary to our expectations, no gender differences emerged in the present study. The performed analysis revealed that men and women hold similar marital beliefs. This results is, however, a bit surprising taking into account prior research that suggests that women define themselves through the prism of their relationships with others, among them being of most significance is marriage (Mandal, 2004). Additionally, taking into account that for many centuries it has been assumed that every women desires to marry, failing to do so would result in social stigma (Duch-Krzystoszek, 1995), the current findings, may therefore, confirm a more contemporary tendency among women and men to achieve similar meanings of love and marriage, or in general, of intimate relationship (Brannon, 2002). However, the desire to marry was not measured so we cannot draw conclusions about gender differences in that regard.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The present study has some important limitations. First, correlational nature of data precludes any statements regarding the casual direction of effect. Although on theoretical grounds it is tempting to assume that marital beliefs, at least

in regard to notion of romantic aspects of marriage, may dictate relationship status, the possibility that relationship status (single *vs.* partnered) influences marital beliefs cannot be excluded. For instance, relationship outcomes can lead to adopting certain romantic beliefs (Sprecher & Metts, 1999). Longitudinal research is encouraged to provide better insight into the formation of marital beliefs and romantic relationships, both as antecedent and consequence. Second, it would be useful to include a wider range of factors which may determine the level of marital beliefs, and their association with relationship status and gender. Personality factors, family and relational factors, and past history of relationships might be relevant. It is also plausible that individuals with different relationship histories (e.g., never-married, divorced, or widowed) may differ in regard to specific marital beliefs. Moreover, it would be desirable to expend the notion of relationship status from a two-level categorical variable to one that includes greater variation, for instance, single, steady relationship, cohabiting unmarried, engaged, married (see Soons, & Liefbroer, 2008). Third, the demographic distribution of the sample in the present study is another potential limitation. All participants were university students within the age range of young adulthood (20 to 25 years). Thus, results from the present study can be referred only to population of university, heterosexual, never-married, childless students at this developmental stage. Never-married or cohabitating individuals may differ from engaged or married adults (Bumpass, Sweet, & Cherlin, 1991) in regard to marital beliefs, and relationship expectations. A broader, more representative sample needs to be obtained for future research on these issues. Finally, the sample utilized for this research consisted of Polish university students and lack of a cross-cultural comparison to determine differences between Polish and other (e.g., US) samples in another limitation. In the future, it would be informative to perform cross-cultural studies on marital beliefs, relationship status, and gender with the inclusion of Polish samples. Previous studies have demonstrated that there may be cultural differences in romantic beliefs and attitudes toward romantic love (Medora et al., 2002; Simmons, Wehner, & Kay, 2001; Sprecher & Toro-Morn, 2002).

Despite the indicated limitations and the preliminary character of this investigation, they current findings provide an additional step toward the understanding of factors associated with marital belief systems and relationship status. They function to confirm the importance of incorporating contextual factors in peoples' beliefs systems, including their relationship status.

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