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The Rise of Solitary Living Among Young Adults: A Sociological Exploration of Autonomy and Isolation

Course: SOC 302 – Contemporary Sociological Issues

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I. Introduction

In many global cities, a growing number of young adults are choosing to live alone. While solitary living was historically associated with older or divorced populations, it has increasingly become a lifestyle of choice for individuals in their 20s and 30s. This sociological shift raises important questions about how independence, identity, and social connection are being renegotiated in contemporary society. This proposal outlines a study to examine the motivations and implications of this trend.

II. Literature Review

Previous research on solitary living has primarily focused on aging populations or structural factors like housing availability. Klinenberg (2012) argues that living alone does not necessarily lead to loneliness; instead, it can offer freedom and self-actualization. Recent studies (Jamieson,



2020; Li & Chan, 2022) suggest that among younger adults, solitary living can be both a choice and a consequence of delayed marriage, economic independence, and shifting cultural norms. However, limited research has investigated how this lifestyle affects mental well-being, identity formation, and social ties in a digital era.

This study builds on these works by exploring solitary living as both a reflection of broader social change and a reshaping of personal life trajectories.

III. Methodology

This qualitative study will employ:

- Semi-Structured Interviews: 15 participants aged 25–35 who have lived alone for at least 12 months in urban areas (e.g., Toronto, Amsterdam, Seoul).
- Purposive Sampling: Targeting individuals across diverse socioeconomic backgrounds and genders.
- Thematic Analysis: Using grounded theory to identify recurring themes related to independence, loneliness, productivity, and identity.
- Ethical Considerations: Participants will sign informed consent forms, and all data will be anonymized and securely stored.

IV. Expected Results

The study anticipates finding that solitary living among young adults is not simply a reaction to economic or logistical factors, but a conscious lifestyle preference associated with autonomy,



digital connectivity, and flexible identity. However, it may also uncover contradictions—such as hidden feelings of disconnection or anxiety masked by narratives of freedom and independence.

Key themes expected include:

- Redefinition of “community” through virtual networks
- Tension between independence and emotional support
- Shifting expectations of adulthood and success

V. Budget

Note: Budget planning is not required for this undergraduate-level research. Costs will be minimal and limited to internet use, transcription tools (if needed), and optional coffee vouchers for participants.

VI. Conclusion

This study addresses a growing yet understudied phenomenon in urban sociology. By focusing on young adults who live alone, it aims to capture how autonomy, identity, and community are being redefined in a post-pandemic, hyper-digital world. The findings may also inform future sociological studies, mental health research, and urban housing policy.

VII. References

- Jamieson, L. (2020). *Intimacy and Everyday Life*. Palgrave Macmillan.
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- Putnam, R. D. (2000). *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. Simon & Schuster.

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