

MAGDALENA PARZYSZEK

FIDELITY AS A VALUE  
IN THE OPINION OF FIANCEES IN THE LIGHT  
OF THE PILOT STUDY

INTRODUCTION

Fidelity is one of the most important values for every person. In the literature on the subject one may find positions that are devoted to the issue of maintaining marital fidelity but it is not very often discussed in scientific publications, especially those of a pedagogical nature. The cultural, political and economic transformation which is the basis of progress, has become a source of changes in premarital morality, and people more and more often “treat fidelity and love as a kind of enslavement, as a denial of human freedom” (Nagórny, 2006, p. 127).

The presented article is an attempt to contribute to the reflection on the changes concerning the understanding of fidelity by people planning marriage. The aim is to present the fiancées’ opinion on fidelity as a value. The article is a report from the conducted research, which had a pilot character. The subject of the presented research was fidelity in the opinion of fiancées.

1. TO UNDERSTAND AND FIND MEANING OF FIDELITY

Fidelity has positive connotations. Quite often people talk about loyalty, remaining faithful to a person, an ideal, values, keeping one’s promises, or sticking to one’s principles. According to W. Doroszewski, faithfulness is conformity to reality, to a model, and also to the original. The author believed that a faithful person is someone who keeps the faith, is devoted and attached to

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someone or something. On the other hand, a faithful person is not only someone who does not betray, but also someone who is attached to someone, and also devoted to a given person (Doroszewski, 1969, p. 1312). In Christianity, fidelity is an attitude, even a worldly one, which encompasses the whole of human life; it is an expression of love directed towards God, and also towards man, it is an attribute of every love. Fidelity is connected with love, hope and also fortitude (Nagórny, 2006, p. 150). It gives content to human life and only thanks to it, man experiences, among the changeability of the world and life conditions, that his life is one. In everyday life faithfulness manifests itself in many specific attitudes. On the negative side, there is always the rejection of all hypocrisy and all forms of betrayal, the rejection of fraud and unreliability, as well as the unstable nature of trust. On the positive side, it is a question of loyalty and keeping one's promises honestly, of simply remembering other people, their affairs and problems (Nagórny, p. 145).

Thus, one may notice that the authors quoted treat fidelity as a virtue, not only in marital, but also in social relations. We may risk a statement that fidelity is fundamental in every field of social life, it is also the basis for maintaining the trust of another person, not only the spouse, but also a friend or a parent.

When talking about fidelity, it is important to look at several aspects of it. The first of these is to understand fidelity as exclusivity. Fidelity cannot be reduced solely to emotionality and sexuality, or to not having sexual relations with anyone other than one's spouse, but it is important to have fidelity in mind and to understand it accordingly. The nature of love is not temporary but permanent. Mutual devotion to each other requires fidelity and inseparable unity (Parzyszek, Marzęda, 2014, p. 36). Unity is the union of one man and one woman, who have the inner will to live a life that is long-lasting and faithful. The starting point of marital unity is co-responsibility for the other person which manifests itself in releasing all that is good in him, supporting his growth or taking his affairs as our own (Kłys, 1978, pp. 171–173). True unity is found in the common values that the spouses share and respect, in the common goal that they are working towards and in the communion before God and people that manifests itself in the common search for God in prayer and in the outward display of the bond (Szyran, 2010, pp. 82–83).

Fidelity is often understood as sexual exclusivity. However, it consists not only of this physical sphere of life, but also gives rise to psychological states. A relationship, understood holistically, cannot be shared with more than two people. One should not think that it is not worthwhile to pay attention to the needs of others. However, it should be understood that one should show most interest in

one's spouse, be loyal to him/her in every situation (Braun-Gałkowska, 1987, p. 33), but also keep in mind the double purpose: union in love and openness to fertility. The union of man and woman is an expression of the subjective love that the spouses have for each other, which becomes a mutual gift of a person to a person (Wojtyła, 2001, p. 59–60). The sexual act must therefore fulfil two basic criteria of moral evaluation: a personal act expressing authentic love and openness to fertility. In bodily love both find their masculinity and femininity (Knotz, 2001, p. 210).

When talking about fidelity, it is important to look at several aspects of it. The first is to understand fidelity as exclusivity. Fidelity cannot be reduced solely to emotionality and sexuality or to not engaging in sexual relations with anyone other than one's spouse, but attention must be given to becoming one and understanding it accordingly. The nature of love is not temporary but permanent. Mutual devotion to each other requires fidelity and inseparable unity (Parzyszek, Marzęda, 2014, p. 36). Unity is the union of one man and one woman who have the inner will to live a lifelong and faithful life. The starting point of marital unity is co-responsibility for the other person which manifests itself in releasing all that is good in him, supporting his growth or taking his affairs as one's own (Kłys, 1978, pp. 171–173). True unity is found in the shared values with which the spouses reckon and respect each other, in the common goal towards which they are striving, and in the communion before God and people which manifests itself in the common search for God in prayer and the outward display of the bond (Szyran, 2010, pp. 82–83).

Fidelity is often understood as sexual exclusivity. However, it consists not only of this physical sphere of life, but also gives rise to psychological states. A relationship, understood holistically, cannot be shared with more than two people. One should not think that it is not worthwhile to pay attention to the needs of others. However, it should be understood that most interest should be shown to one's spouse, to be loyal to him/her in every situation (Braun-Gałkowska, 1987, p. 33), but also to keep in mind the double purpose: union in love and openness to fertility. The union of a man and a woman is an expression of the subjective love that the spouses have for each other, who become a mutual gift of person for person (Wojtyła, 2001, p. 59–60). The sexual act must therefore meet two basic criteria for moral evaluation: a personal act expressing authentic love and openness to fertility. In bodily love both find their masculinity and femininity (Knotz, 2001, p. 210).

Another essence of marital fidelity is that fidelity is part of the marriage vow, which is made primarily to the spouse, but also to God and the Church. Invoking

God and the Church as witnesses gives great importance to the situation. For this reason, failure to be faithful is not only an offense against the husband or wife, but also against God, for it is on Him that the meaning of fidelity rests. In the marriage vow, the husband receives the gift of the wife and the wife receives the gift of the husband. It is a joining together of two people. Spouses are not joined together just for a month, a week or a day. It is a relationship that should last in love for the rest of their lives. Spouses do not give each other a piece of themselves, but they give each other their whole selves. They entrust their problems, their dilemmas, their sorrows, their joys, their bodies and their material goods to the person closest to them. This is the unity of the spouses—with the reception of the sacrament of marriage they begin to belong only to each other, both physically and spiritually. Each spouse must be equally committed to this most important relationship. The community of love understood in this way is the foundation for the fidelity of this love between two people (Kaszowski, 1995, p. 121).

Another aspect of fidelity understood as the foundation of love between two people is to treat it as a command. This may result from the sixth commandment of God, which reads “You shall not commit adultery,” from the sacramental character of the nuptials, but also from the oath taken on the wedding day.

It is impossible to disagree that the sacramental nature of marriage is a command to be faithful to the wife or faithful to the husband. Undeniably, the fundamental commandment of marital fidelity is the marriage vow that the couple takes on the day of the reception of the sacrament of marriage or the vow taken at the nuptials in the Registry Office. Indissolubility is a requirement of love understood as a gift of oneself from one person to another.

## 2. FACTORS CONDUCIVE TO FIDELITY

Maintaining fidelity requires vigilance and care. It is worth pointing out here the internal and external factors conducive to the maintenance of fidelity, while noting that probably not all of them will be mentioned; the reader may indicate others, but for the purposes of this paper the following will be indicated: emotional maturity, maturity for marriage, communication, friendship, closeness and tenderness or having children.

It is undeniable that one of the factors that secure fidelity is the emotional maturity of those entering marriage.

K. Imielinski there are six indicators that constitute the degree of emotional maturity of a person, these are: predominance of higher feelings over lower ones, ability to master strong negative and positive emotions, being emotionally independent from the environment, e.g. family, educated sense of reality lack of aggression and low self-esteem, ability to adapt to life in society, formation of altruistic feelings (Imieliński, 1977, pp. 19–20.)

J. Witczak proposes one more factor indicating the emotional maturity. The ability and skill of naming one's own feelings, but also anxieties. Emotional maturity understood in this way may favor the development of love between spouses. It is based not only on the knowledge of oneself and one's partner, but also on the combination with general life maturity (Witczak, 1984, p. 31).

It is also necessary to grow personally in marriage. According to Braun-Gałkowska maturity for marriage requires physical maturity, i.e. readiness of the body to undertake tasks connected with being a wife or a husband, sexual maturity, i.e. the ability to initiate sexual intercourse and conceive children, legal maturity, i.e. reaching the age or consent to enter into marriage and economic maturity, i.e. financial independence. It is worth remembering that different types of maturity are not achieved at the same time (Braun-Gałkowska, 1987, p. 29.)

Another important feature that fosters fidelity is adequate communication, understood as the elaboration of positions on important matters, which is the basis for the development of feelings (Parzyszek, 2020). Thus, there is a need to listen, to “enter” into the inner world of a person, to look at life from the perspective of the other person, to bring "into the world of thoughts, experiences and desires of the other person as if he were bringing us into his apartment (Dziewiecki, 2019, p. 111).

Another factor that is significant in maintaining fidelity is friendship. Loyal friendship in a relationship reduces the chances of infidelity by either party. Friendship makes the marital relationship more genuine. It is not uncommon for professional or emotional difficulties of one spouse to push the other spouse to cheat. This can be prevented by the friendship of the spouse. A partner who is preoccupied with his or her own affairs may quickly feel emotionally abandoned. That is why a friendly relationship in marriage is so important because it helps to distance the feelings experienced by each other (Augustyn, 2015, p. 82)

Closeness and affection between spouses also helps to prevent either spouse from committing infidelity. Both tenderness and closeness should be continually refined in the marital relationship as well as before receiving the sacrament of marriage. Closeness and tenderness are very important elements of faithful love. Mostly women expect tenderness from their partners because of their tender

nature. Men, on the other hand, very often confuse closeness with lust, which is wrong. So a woman should teach her partner tenderness. A tenderness that is not only sexual, but emotional (Staniek, 2005, p. 59).

Another of the important factors for marital fidelity can be the fact of having children. Being a parent may be the very reason why a person refrains from being unfaithful to their spouse. Parenting should be responsible, and the main parental task is to bestow paternal and maternal love on the child, and to care for the child's undisturbed, peaceful development (Dudziak, 2002, p. 41).

### 3. FACTORS NOT CONDUCTIVE TO FIDELITY

For the purpose of this paper, it is also necessary to pay attention to the factors that are not conducive to maintaining fidelity.

J. Witzak lists several character traits that definitely make it difficult for spouses to live together and remain faithful to one another. These include: egoism, self-centeredness, malcontent, petty-mindedness, and gloominess. Egoism involves documenting that one partner is unable to give the other what he or she has committed to through marriage. And pettiness, seemingly innocuous, can lead to feelings of exhaustion, resentment, and feelings of hurt in the spouse, which can lead to seeking peace and happiness from another person. Spouses also tend to forget that every person is different. Everyone has different needs, habits, customs and ways of reacting to different situations. Small habits can lead to arguments and conflict situations. By not being able to accept different behavior or reactions in a partner can also lead to tense situations between spouses (Witzak, 1984, pp. 162–163.)

A serious threat to marital fidelity can also be ignorance of or failure to respect the rules of consensual marital life. The most common of these principles include: responsibility for the family created, acceptance of the advantages and disadvantages of the spouse, striving for unselfish love of the spouses, trust, tolerance forbearance for the loved one, ability to remain calm and give way in conflict situations, avoiding conflict topics, respect for the family of the spouse, ability to empathize (Kaszowski, 1995, pp. 69–70)

Immaturity for marriage is a serious threat to maintaining fidelity among partners. M. Kaszowski notes that “uncontrollable egoism, lack of self-sacrificing, altruistic love, lack of ability to empathize, ignorance or infantile awareness of the aims, nature and qualities of marriage, religious and moral deficiencies both in the sphere of intellect and conduct, that is, personal immaturity of one of the spouses

– these are the most common and at the same time the most serious internal sources of marital conflicts” (Kaszowski, 1995, p. 68).

The main features of immature affection may be: impermanence, egoism, considering only one's own good, not taking into account the partner's needs (Witczak, 1984, p. 79-80).

Premarital impurity is one of the factors that can lead to infidelity in marriage. The prenuptial period, instead of serving the purpose of getting to know each other, discovering respect for each other, has become today a time of taking ill-considered and irresponsible selfish actions, seeking happiness to the maximum degree, that is, seeking pleasure that gives happiness to man without regard for the objective requirements of true good (Jan Paweł II, p. 14).

#### 4. SUBJECT, PROBLEM, AND RESEARCH TOOLS

Fidelity as an object of cognition can be reduced to different research contexts. It can be understood as a value for the studied group of fiancées or as knowledge expressed in the opinions of respondents. In the presented research the subject of cognition was the opinion of the examined fiancées on fidelity as a value. The main problem was contained in the question: What is the opinion of fiancées about fidelity? The scheme of detailed questions concerned the understanding of fidelity, factors that determine fidelity, and the consequences of maintaining and not maintaining fidelity. The opinion of the fiancés was studied using a self-report questionnaire, containing 24 questions, of which the first five constituted a metric—gender, age, education, place of residence, and attitude to faith, while the remaining questions in open and closed form concerned the issues indicated in the research problems.

A total of 136 people took part in the study, including 71 women and 65 men. The respondents were between 19 and 35 years old. The study was conducted in a web-based format using an online application from the Google suite.

#### RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS OF THE STUDY

Due to the large number of results and the limitation of the volume of text in the submitted communication, I present only selected results that signal certain directions of connections. The calculations are only percentages and present the opinion of the surveyed brides of selected aspects of fidelity.

Table 1. Fiancées' understanding of fidelity

Answers	Total		Women		Men	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Not having sexual relations with another person	80	58,82	44	61,97	36	55,38
Honesty	71	52,21	38	53,52	33	50,77
Being loyal	66	48,53	35	49,30	31	50,77
Leaning on the other person	65	47,79	33	46,48	32	47,69
Attachment to the loved one	63	46,32	32	45,07	31	46,15
Keeping secrets	44	32,35	28	39,44	16	24,62

Table 2. Manifestations of fidelity in engagement

Answers	Total		Women		Men	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Not having sexual relations with another person	52	38,23	25	35,21	27	41,54
Trust	41	30,15	27	38,03	14	21,54
Loyalty	23	16,91	9	12,68	14	21,54
Honesty	11	8,09	6	8,45	5	7,96
Leaning on the other person	4	2,94	2	2,82	2	3,08
Attachment to the loved one	3	2,21	1	1,41	2	3,08
Other	2	1,47	1	1,41	1	1,54
Total	136	100,00	71	100,00	65	100,00



The above results indicate that the fiancées understand fidelity more broadly than just sexual contact with a person other than their spouse. This may indicate a deeper understanding of the concept and greater moral sensitivity.

Table 3. Factors conducive to fidelity

Answers	Total		Women		Men	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Emotional closeness	72	52,94	43	60,56	29	44,62
Honesty	54	39,71	29	40,85	25	38,46
A successful sex life	38	27,94	21	33,80	17	26,15
Trust	36	26,47	19	26,76	17	21,54
Similarity of characters	13	9,56	5	7,04	8	15,38
Respecting wedding vows	6	4,41	3	4,23	3	4,62
Having children	5	3,69	3	4,23	2	11,54
Maturity of partners	2	1,47	2	1,41	0	0,00

Table 4. Traits conducive to marital fidelity that respondents value in themselves

Answers	Total		Women		Men	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Trust	69	50,74	37	52,11	32	49,23
Commitment to the relationship	19	13,97	14	21,54	5	7,04
Support in the other person	19	13,97	11	15,49	8	12,31
Tenderness	16	11,76	11	15,49	5	7,69
Loyalty	8	5,88	4	5,64	4	6,15

Honesty	3	2,21	2	2,82	1	1,54
Ability to keep a secret	2	1,47	1	1,41	1	1,54

Among the factors conducive to maintaining marital fidelity, respondents indicated the greatest importance of emotional closeness or honesty in the relationship, but when asked what values they value in themselves, they indicated trust, commitment to the relationship or support in the other person.

The following tables show the effects of staying or not staying faithful in a relationship.

Table 5. Effects of maintaining marital fidelity

Answers	Total		Women		Men	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Deepening of emotional ties	109	80,15	61	85,92	48	73,85
Mutual support	57	37,50	32	45,07	25	38,46
Growing feeling of love	50	36,76	26	35,21	24	29,23
Increasing trust	44	32,35	25	35,21	19	29,23
Having a family	41	30,15	24	33,80	17	26,15
Friendships within the relationship	22	16,18	9	12,68	13	20,00
Keeping your marriage vows	2	1,47	0	0,00	2	3,08
Other	1	0,74	0	0,00	1	1,54

Table 6. Consequences of being unfaithful

Answers	Total		Women		Men	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Family breakdown	49	36,03	30	42,25	19	29,23
Severance of emotional ties	45	33,09	21	29,58	24	36,92
Divorce	10	7,35	7	9,86	3	4,62
Lowered sense of self-worth	7	5,15	3	4,23	4	6,15
Depression	7	5,15	3	4,23	4	6,15
Feeling of failure in life	6	4,41	3	4,23	3	4,46
Stress	6	4,41	4	5,63	2	3,08
Lowered self-esteem in children	5	3,68	2	2,82	3	4,46
Family members turning away	4	2,94	2	2,82	2	3,08
Reduced circle of friends	4	2,94	2	2,82	2	3,08
Feeling like a bad person	4	2,94	2	2,82	2	3,08

The surveyed fiancées recognize the great value of fidelity and the effects of its observance, placing the greatest importance on the deepening of emotional bonds, mutual support, and growth of love. They also recognize the consequences of not being faithful. Divorce (as recognized by many researchers and statistics) and breaking the emotional bond ranked first.

## CONCLUSIONS

On the basis of the presented research results presented in a percentage manner, it is already possible to draw some conclusions and indicate educational postulates. The researched young people who are engaged and preparing for marriage understand fidelity in different ways. Most often it is associated with not having sexual contacts with other persons but they also associate it with loyalty and honesty. The analysis also shows that the majority of the brides believe that emotional closeness and honesty are conducive to marital fidelity. The fiancées indicated various qualities that they value in themselves that are conducive to fidelity. However, the most common response was about trust, commitment to the relationship. According to the fiancés, the effect of maintaining fidelity is a deepening of emotional bonds, as well as mutual support in the person one loves. From the analysis, it can be seen that the main reason that leads to a crisis of fidelity in marriage, according to the fiancées, is not enough commitment to the relationship of one or both of the parties. In such a situation, according to the respondents, the most common effect of infidelity may be the breakup of the family, but also the breaking of emotional ties between spouses. The presented analysis of the research results inspires us to take further actions in the discussed topic. Taking into account the socio-cultural changes and changing premarital customs, the results of the presented research may be important for the development of the pedagogy of the engagement period. They can also be an inspiration for further scientific research and provide a basis for formulating conclusions for application in the field of upbringing, counseling and formation. They can also be valuable for diagnosis, designing and implementation of counselling or therapeutic activities. It is therefore necessary to convey by word and example the truth that marriage is a reality that claims the full commitment of a man and a woman. The decision regarding fidelity, demands freedom open to the future, making a free decision, responsibility. By entering into marriage, the fiancées not only promise fidelity to each other, but also that they will guard and shape it.

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FAITHFULNESS AS A VALUE  
IN THE OPINION OF BRIDES IN THE LIGHT OF PILOT STUDIES

SUMMARY

The purpose of this article is to present the views of brides on fidelity as a value. The article is in the form of a communication from the conducted research, which was of a pilot nature. The subject of studying the presented research was the value of fidelity in the opinion of people preparing for marriage.

**Keywords:** faithfulness; value; fiances.

WIERNOŚĆ JAKO WARTOŚĆ  
W OPINII NARZECZONYCH W ŚWIETLE BADAŃ PILOTAŻOWYCH

STRESZCZENIE

Celem artykułu jest przedstawienie opinii narzeczonych na temat wierności jako wartości. Artykuł ma formę komunikatu z przeprowadzonych badań, które miały charakter pilotażowy. Przedmiotem poznania zaprezentowanych badań była wartość wierności w opinii osób przygotowujących się do małżeństwa.

**Słowa kluczowe:** wierność; wartość; narzeczeni.