In this article we deal with the issue of cohabitation, marriage and legalized coexistence of partners. Providing a comparison with views of selected world religions on the phenomenon of marriage, we offer a contemporary look at newly emergent forms of relationships. We believe, that these new forms of families, such as single, mingle, patchwork or same-sex families, a common result of cohabitation replacing the traditional family, empower irresponsibility in relationships. Reflecting on current challenges and perspectives regarding family in contemporary society, we provide relevant facts, suggestions and recommendations for practice.

**Keywords:** marriage, cohabitation, registered partnerships, religion, adoption, family, parenting.

**Introduction**

We are witnessing situations where family as a fundamental educational environment for a child or an adolescent is becoming atomized. Family, the place where foundations of morals, politeness and etiquette are laid, is often facing the fast pace of time. We see new types of family cohabitation emerge, such as single, mingle, patchwork, same-sex families and others. More and more young heterosexual couples do not enter marriage as they consider it an unnecessary formality, claiming “no need for a piece of paper to represent [their] love”. On the other hand, almost as if in opposition to the aforementioned, young homosexual couples are demanding legalization of their relationships up to the same degree as that of marriage or registered partnership. We can thus conclude that the understanding of family formation in the traditional sense (specifically meaning heterosexual marriage) does already not require a “piece of paper to legalize the relationship”; whereas emerging forms of marital (as well as familial) cohabitation demand such a document. Consequently, we question why certain groups do not appear to have need for this so-called “piece of paper” while others seem to require it? This article reflects on the phenomenon of marriage in detail, putting it in contrast with the newly forming trends in family coexistence. Cohabitation which respects fundamental family life values, such as universality, traditionalism, conservatism, sacrality and protection, dominates in most Slovak families. Alongside classical means of family coexistence, new tendencies (types, models) have been appearing up to a remarkable degree. We focus on critically analyzing these new trends as well as describing views of selected world religions on the phenomenon of marriage.

**1 Cohabitation or Marriage?**

The phenomenon of marriage exists in almost all countries in the world, either in form of a marriage concluded by the Authority of the State or the Church, or in forms which are very
different from our culture and mentality, but also affected by a different religion, as can be seen in primitive African polygamous tribes. The Latin word *matrimonium* translates as marriage. This term is composed of two words: “*mater*” (mother) and “*munia*” or “*munus*” (duty, mission). Marriage embodies the following aspects:

- **Legal aspect**: it is a covenant of man and woman
- **Natural aspect**: creating a communion, the married couple is primarily focused on the good of the marriage itself - the well-being of the spouses, bearing and raising of their children
- **Social aspect**: the communion is based on human nature
- **Cultural, religious aspect**: traditional marriage is considered a partnership of one man and one woman (equality: Roman and Greek Catholic Church, Orthodox Church and Protestant Church and Jewish Religion; inequality or caste system: Buddhism, Shintoism, Hinduism and Confucianism)

**Marriage** in Slovak Family Law is defined as a permanent communion of man and woman, and its main purpose is to found a family and raise children. This communion as a legal act is based on the Principle of FREE WILL and EQUALITY. In Slovak legislation there are two ways of concluding a marriage:

1) **Religious** or  
2) **Civil Form** (also known as Civil Marriage).

**Marriage** is a union of one man and one woman, which was concluded by the procedure determined or recognized by the Slovak Republic. No other union can be concluded by this procedure. The special protection which is granted to marriage by law cannot be granted to any other union except marriage. Marriage is mentioned also in the Code of Hammurabi which contains 282 Laws:

- **Law 144** states: “If a man marries a woman and she gives him her servant and this servant bears him children, but he wants to marry another woman, he cannot. He cannot have another wife.“
- **Law 145** states: “If a man marries a woman, but she does not bear him children, he can marry another woman and bring her to his house, but this second wife will not be equal to his first wife.“

Marriage is often defined as an institution which fulfills certain roles or functions in society. Marriage in this sense regulates the relationship between two persons, namely in terms of property and Law. Regarding the rights of property, it should be noted that the current trend of promoting legalized partnerships deals with the rights of property, but not the issue of bearing and raising of children (which can be perceived as a possibility of making such partnerships

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2 The procedure before concluding a marriage is regulated by Act No. 154/1994 Coll. on Registry Offices, Part II, Articles 27-30.  
3 Hammurabi was a king in the Ancient Babylonian Empire in 1782-1750 BC. The Codex of Laws dates back to about 1760 BC. The Pillar with the Laws was discovered in 1901 in Susa (today’s Iran) and is currently installed in the Louvre of Paris. The upper part of the Pillar portrays King Hammurabi standing before the god Shamash and receiving Laws from him. This Code is not the only one or the first one. There is a more ancient Code of Ur-Namni, the King of the town Ur (2050 BC) or the Code of the Sumerian town Eshunna (1930 BC).  
4 When concluding marriage, the spouses also conclude joint or undivided ownership. Undivided ownership of spouses is regulated by Articles 143-151 of Act No. 40/1964 (Civil Code).
equal to the classical family). In other words, there is a tendency to focus on property rather than on family. Concluding marriage before a civil authority is possible for unmarried engaged couples, widowed persons, divorced persons (this is unacceptable when concluding marriage before a Church authority), as well as for minors (between 16-18 years of age) after submitting a permission to conclude marriage issued by a court.\(^5\)

**Cohabitation, Concubinage or (in some countries) Legalized Partnership** is not a modern hit of the 21\(^{st}\) Century. Legalized partnerships have been openly discussed since the end of the 19\(^{th}\) century, while the phenomenon of homosexuality was boldly presented already between the end of the 17\(^{th}\) and the beginning of the 18\(^{th}\) Centuries. Legalized partnership is a legal way to form a union of two persons of the same sex, serving as an alternative to marriage. In those countries where partnerships of the same sex are not legalized (since legalized partnership can also exist between man and woman), people can only conclude marriage before civil or church authority. In such countries marriage is also anchored and defined in Legislation. However, this is not the case with legalized partnerships. Legislation lays down rights and obligations which spouses have towards each other, their children and the State. In countries which do not recognize legalized partnerships there is no legal framework for this phenomenon. If it is present, it is fragmented and such partnerships are not bound by any obligations, e.g. if a couple breaks up, there are no legal sanctions.\(^6\) The issue of legalizing same-sex partnerships (to the degree of being equal to the classical form of marriage) is a sensitive topic. Albeit traditional heterosexual relationships refuse to enter into marriage proclaiming “no need for a piece of paper to represent [their] love”; homosexual couples demand this “piece of paper”. This paradox leads us to contemplate what is so precious and at the same time so rejectable about this specific “piece of paper”. Considering long established conventions and family models in Slovakia and throughout the European region, this new kind of “basic unit of society” is non-traditional not only in terms of biology and reproduction but also in terms of the common paradigm.\(^7\)

Concerning legalized partnerships (cohabitation, concubinage), we perceive 4 aspects:

- **Legal aspect**: non-existent or largely fragmented legal framework in countries which do not recognize legalized partnerships; no obligations accrued, meaning the dissolution of a couple results in no legal sanctions.
- **Social aspect**: man/woman relationships (cohabitation), man/man or woman/woman relationships (same-sex partnerships) are less durable according to statistical evidence.
- **Natural aspect**: not present.

\(^5\) The engaged couple have to submit: birth certificate, identity card, (and possibly also death certificate, military record, valid divorce decision issued by a court, proof of eligibility to conclude marriage, residence document, proof of marital status – specifying if they are unmarried, divorced, widowed persons or foreign citizens – in such a case it is necessary to submit also certified and translated copies of the mentioned documents, as well as the proof of payment of the administrative fee in the Slovak Republic).

\(^6\) According to Act No. 461/2003 on Social Insurance as amended, the husband, wife and dependent child of a person who died due to a work-related accident or an occupational disease are entitled to a lump-sum compensation. A life partner is not entitled to widow’s or widower’s pension, or to care allowance, which is paid to an insured person who is taking care of their ill husband, ill wife, ill parent or an ill parent of their spouse. The Slovak legislation does not recognize life partner’s mutual maintenance responsibility. The institution of joint ownership only applies to married couples. It is not possible to make tax deductions of non-taxable part of a base, as is possible in the case of spouses. There are only a few examples of life situations which are not regulated by current legislation. Persons of the same sex who share the same household are in this sense disadvantaged as compared with spouses, although they pay the same contributions and taxes.

\(^7\) We believe that an adolescent who is at the age when “their sexual identity is not yet stabilized” becomes a person with blocked sexual development, especially if they live only with people of the same sex.
• **Cultural, religious aspect**: an alternative to the traditional concept of marriage. Marriage, from the Latin word *matrimonium* translates as “mother” (*mater*) and “duty” or “mission” (*unus* or *munus*). For this reason, homosexual relationships can only be denoted as partnerships from the etymological point of view. Countries (Netherlands, Belgium, Denmark, …) in which legislation uses the term “same-sex marriage” are currently dealing with applications to their respective Constitutional Courts on the grounds of an “etymological paradox”. No religion officially acknowledges homosexual relationships. Nevertheless, tolerance towards these relationships is expressed to a variable degree.

The traditional concept of marriage as a legalized union of man and woman with the goal of bearing and raising of children is gradually being replaced by a more liberal approach in Europe.\(^8\) Law on registered partnerships has already been passed in eighteen European Countries, enabling partners of the same sex to conclude a union similar to marriage. The Law regulates creation and termination of a homosexual union. Concluded at a Registry Office, the union grants partners the right to be informed about each other's health condition and the right of inheritance. It also regulates the partners' mutual maintenance obligation and allows them to take care of children but not to adopt them.\(^9\) Traditional marriage is protected in various ways in Constitutions of e.g. Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Ireland and a number of States in the United States of America (Alaska, Hawaii, Nebraska, Nevada and Texas have passed their own Amendments to the Constitution, protecting the definition of marriage; Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota, Pennsylvania, Texas, Virginia and others have passed protection of marriage by law or referendum; an exception is the State of Massachusetts where same-sex marriage is legalized, similarly as in Canada and South Africa).

**Table 1: Legislation on traditional marriage in some countries of the world**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form of protection</th>
<th>Countries or states</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Countries where marriage is protected by the constitution of that Republic or State</td>
<td>e.g. Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Ireland and some states in the USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Countries which have passed their own amendments to the constitution to protect the definition of marriage</td>
<td>e.g. states in the USA: Alaska, Hawaii, Nebraska, Nevada, Texas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Countries which have passed protection of marriage by law or referendum</td>
<td>eg. Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota, Pennsylvania, Texas, Virginia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. countries with no protection of marriage</td>
<td>e.g. Slovakia</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: TOMÁNEK, P. 2012a. Manželstvo, rodina a legalizované partnerstvá v EU.

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8 Cf.: http://www.euractiv.sk/rovnost-sanci/clanok/registrovane-partnerstvo-uz-aj-v-cechach

9 Ibid.

10 An exception is the state of Massachusetts, where homosexual marriage is legalized.

In Slovakia, as well as in other EU Countries, marriages are concluded before civil or Church authority (depending on the denominations which are recognized in that country, e.g. Roman Catholic, Greek Catholic, Orthodox, Islamic and others). When it comes to legalized partnerships, there is significant variation across the Member States (in legal terms).

There are three forms of legislation on homosexual partnerships in the EU and beyond:

1. **Factual Cohabitation** - mutual rights and obligations of the partners arise on expiry of the fixed period of cohabitation, usually regardless of the sex of the partners,

2. **Registered Partnerships** - a special legal institution which represents a nationally recognized cohabitation of partners of the same sex or regardless of their sex, providing similar or equal rights as in the case of marriage,

3. **Marriages** - marriages of homosexual couples are equal to the marriages of heterosexual partners, including the possibility of raising children.

The first country which legalized same-sex marriages was the Netherlands (2001), followed by Belgium (2003) and Spain (2005). The last country to recognize them up to this day was France (2013). The United Kingdom passed a law on same-sex marriages (2005) but in comparison with the aforementioned countries they are not officially recognized. The issue of legalization of homosexual marriages is often linked to the possibility of adopting children by these couples. Belgium, the Netherlands, Spain and also the United Kingdom have authorized this possibility. In Denmark, Norway, Germany and France (and others) a homosexual spouse can adopt the child of their life partner.

**Table 2: Same-sex partnerships or marriages in Europe**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Possibilities of same-sex partnerships or marriages in the EU and beyond</th>
<th>Countries where these possibilities are available</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Countries where homosexuality is not subject to penalties, but registered partnerships are not possible and there is no anti-discrimination legislation</td>
<td>Cyprus, Estonia, Greece, Ireland, Latvia, Malta, Poland &amp; Austria, Turkey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Countries where it is not possible to conclude registered partnerships, but law bans discrimination of homosexuals in their access to services or in the process of job recruitment</td>
<td>Lithuania, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Italy, Bulgaria &amp; Romania, Switzerland</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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11 Factual cohabitation of two persons of the same sex was recognized in the Netherlands already in 1979.

12 The draft law was passed by the government of the former Prime Minister Wim Kok, chairman of the left-wing Labour Party. Christian Democrats were the only party which opposed the draft law.

13 The law was passed only due to the fact that Christian Democrats were not represented in the government, as was the case in Spain.

14 Among non-European countries, homosexual marriage is legalized e.g. in Canada, South Africa and even in some states of the USA, such as in Massachusetts.
3. Countries where homosexuals can conclude registered partnership

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Czech Republic</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland, France, Luxembourg, Hungary, Germany, Portugal &amp; Sweden, Croatia, Norway</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. Countries where homosexuals can conclude marriage, which gives them more rights, except the possibility to adopt children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. Countries which not only allow homosexuals to conclude marriage, but also to adopt children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>the Netherlands, Spain, the United Kingdom</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. Countries where homosexual couples can adopt children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Denmark, Sweden</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: TOMÁNEK, P. 2012a. Manželstvo, rodina a legalizované partnerstvá v EU.


A survey conducted by the Center for Opinion Polls in October 2005 and the data collected by survey agencies GEORG and Focus show that the Slovaks are less tolerant to homosexuals (including same-sex partnerships and marriages) than people from the Czech Republic. The survey covered 1,075 respondents. The results show that only 24% of Slovaks agree that homosexual couples should have the right to conclude marriage. The survey also found that a positive answer to this question was given (in terms of percentage) by 21% of Poles, 25% of Hungarians and as many as 42% of Czechs.

**Table 4: Tolerance towards same-sex partnerships and marriages in the Visegrád countries**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovak Republic</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Czech Republic</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


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15 Czech homosexuals can already conclude registered partnerships. In 2006 the Parliament overrode the veto of the Czech President Václav Klaus and it readopted the Law on Registered Partnership. The Czech law, however, does not allow e.g. the joint assessment to tax, i.e. to pay lower income tax if one of the spouses is unemployed. If one of the partners is a foreign citizen, they do not have the chance to acquire permanent residence or citizenship in a shorter period, as it is possible in the case of marriage. On the other hand, the Law grants partners the right to inheritance in the first line of succession, as well as the right to refuse to give testimony at court if it might harm their partner, and the right to act on their partner’s behalf before authorities and offices.

16 Cf.: http://www.euractiv.sk/rovnost-sanci/clanok/registrovane-partnerstvo-uz-aj-v-cechach
Marriage and family have a special social status and an increased protection by society, not in order to fulfill individual goals of the spouses but mainly because they bring unique benefit to the society as a whole. We therefore believe that the state should prefer a union which is in its “vital interest”, i.e. marriage, which provides potential for creating a family, since childless marriages are not in the vital interest of our society. The main purpose of marriage is to found a family and raise children. The natural status and function of family and marriage are rooted in the basic needs of human beings. The appointed special protection results from the general benefits that family and marriage contribute to society. Consequently, everyone who enters into marriage also realizes the aspect of parenthood which is closely linked to marriage.

Registered partnerships (heterosexual and homosexual) and their propagation directly endanger the Institution of Marriage and the Institution of Family. Coexistence of heterosexual partners, denoted also as concubinage or cohabitation, fulfills the function of mutual enrichment of the partners, while other basic functions (reproduction or parenting) often remain neglected. This is due to the fact that many contemporary heterosexual partnerships are so exhausted by work-related and social obligations that they are not willing to further increase their burden by reproducing and raising children. Coexistence of same-sex partners does not even fulfill the basic function of procreation. Homosexual partners can become “parents” only by means of:

- **Adoption** (in man-man or woman-woman relationships) or
- **Direct Lineage** (when a man or woman brings his/her own child, for which he/she has full custody from a previous heterosexual relationship into a homosexual relationship).

Child adoption by homosexual partners is not automatically permitted in all countries where it is legal to enter same-sex partnerships.

**Table 3: Child adoption in some countries with legalized same-sex partnerships**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>The year when legislation regarding child adoption was enacted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The United Kingdom</td>
<td>2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>1989, direct descendants only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Island</td>
<td>1996</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>2001, direct descendants only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>1993, amended in 2009</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Homosexuality thus becomes a frequent transitional stage for the formation of same-sex registered partnerships. The Institution of Marriage becomes diminished by these processes, in spite of the fact that marriage has always been considered a conditional status of the “basic cell of society” - the family. By “basic”, we mean that it is capable of dividing or in other words consigning life; “cell” symbolizing the life it embodies and “society” denoting the fact, that without future population cultures will cease to exist. Family is the first environment where a child socializes and acquires its initial behavioral models. Moreover, it is the place where its character is formed for the first time. Finally, the personality of a child is always primarily influenced by its mother and its father.

2 The Phenomenon of Marriage in Some Religions

The phenomenon of marriage, as well as the primacy of family, its protection and promotion, form an integral part of all major religious and human systems and cultures. The protection of authority, dignity and social status of marriage and family is one of the fundamental values of the constitutional arrangements of the Slovak Republic but also one of the values of civilization and humanity. This chapter provides a brief overview of how some world religions understand marriage (in terms of Institution). It should be noted, however, that the phenomenon of marriage is in almost all religions demonstrated in the same way, i.e. marriage is perceived as a union between a man and a woman; it is always concluded with a ceremony or rite; with the aim of mutual love; bearing and raising of children; and last but not least, creating and preserving a social status (both in a broad and strict sense, e.g. family).

- Roman Catholic Church, Greek Catholic Church, and Orthodox Church:
  According to CIC\(^{18}\) the matrimonial covenant has been raised by Christ the Lord to the dignity of a sacrament between the baptized. It lasts until the end - death of one of the spouses. The spouses administer the sacrament to themselves, and they have equal rights and obligations towards each other; which means that the wife is not her husband’s slave or property, and vice versa, the husband is not just his wife’s “property”. By concluding marriage, the engaged couple promise to each other not only their lifelong love,\(^{19}\) care, support and staying together for better - for worse, but also to bear children (which is a fulfillment of the biological and later also educational function of marriage).\(^{20}\) Church marriage is concluded before a representative of the Church\(^{21}\) and two witnesses. Church marriage can be concluded only by mentally mature persons. It is administered in church, or possibly in another place (if it is permitted by the bishop, on request of the couple and on request of the local priest). Divorce is not allowed. However, if necessary conditions are met, it is possible to apply for annulment, i.e. declaration of invalidity of marriage from its beginning. In case of a crisis (or various socio-pathological events) in a Catholic marriage, the spouses are allowed to ask their bishop for a separation “from bed and board”, meaning they shall not share a common household for a certain time. The spouses cannot acquire new partners during this period as they are still married. In Greek Catholic Church we notice similar elements of concluding marriage. The only difference can be found in the liturgy (in choral songs). Merging elements of Roman Catholic

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18 Cf.: CIC, Cann. 1055, Article 1.
19 Cf.: CIC, Cann. 1134.
20 Cf.: CIC, Cann. 1055, Article 1.
21 Cf.: CIC, Cann. 1108, Article 1.
Church and Greek Catholic Church can be found in the Orthodox Church regarding the procedures for administering of the sacrament of marriage.

- **Protestant Church** (specifically the Evangelical Church of the Ausburg Confession): Marriage in the Protestant Church has only a few elements similar to the Catholic procedure, and a lot more differences. Protestant churches do not consider marriage as a sacrament\(^\text{22}\) because it does not bear the signs of a sacrament, which are Christ’s command and promise of spiritual saving grace. Another reason why marriage is not considered a sacrament is the fact that also non-Christians enter into marriage. It belongs to the Creator’s order and not the Savior’s order.\(^\text{23}\) Marriage concluded between a Catholic and a baptized non-Catholic is not allowed in principle. It can only be concluded with the consent of a bishop. Without a bishop’s consent such a marriage (concluded in a Protestant church) is valid, but not legitimate, thus it can be divorced. Mixed marriages must be concluded in accordance with Canon Law (i.e. in a Catholic Church), otherwise they are not legitimate. From the Church’s point of view divorce is possible if the marriage was concluded in a Protestant church or just at a registry office.

- **Jewish Religion:** Marriage is considered to be a sacred union between man and woman which fulfills one of the main commandments of the Torah: “Be fruitful and multiply.” Jewish marriage is based on mutual trust and agreement. For millennia this idea has been expressed in the nuptial covenant called in Aramaic “ketubah” which governs the rights and obligations of the spouses. The nuptial covenant is often written in ornamental letters and the married couple have it framed and keep it as a picture in their household. By signing the nuptial covenant the husband commits to treat his wife with respect and not to let her become destitute. Ketubah also provides for material security of a wife in case of death of her husband or divorce. Marriage need not take place in a synagogue. The condition is to use a wedding canopy known as “Chuppah”, which is stretched on four poles and symbolizes the future home of the newlyweds. Weddings do not take place on feast days or mourning days of Israel. In Roman Catholic countries there is an unwritten rule to conclude marriages on Saturday. In Judaism it is usually on Tuesday, which was proclaimed by God to be a “good day”. An important element is the so-called Rabbi’s blessing. After receiving Rabbi’s blessing, the bride and bridegroom drink wine from the same cup, the bridegroom puts a ring on the bride’s right index finger and utters the formula according to the Talmud: “You are consecrated to me, through this ring, according to the religion of Moses and Israel.” The second part of the wedding ceremony consists in reading out loud of the nuptial covenant, which has been signed by the bridegroom (like in a Roman Catholic ceremony).\(^\text{24}\) After a week during which the engaged couple did not meet, the bridegroom together with his father and his fiancée’s father pays a visit to her in her house – this phase is called “Bedekin”. The future bride
is sitting in an armchair, surrounded by her family and friends, waiting for her bridegroom to unveil her face and publicly recognize her as his future wife.  

- **Islam**: Islamic marriage is not a “sacrament” but a simple legal contract, where each party has the freedom to define their conditions. Marriage from the Islamic point of view is an agreement of two persons of opposite sex to live together; respect each other; show love and affection to each other; possibly have children together. For these reasons, Islam is trying to take away any barriers which could destabilize this relationship in the future. It regulates e.g. financial circumstances between the spouses, which are often a crucial factor in case of misunderstanding or argument. It acknowledges the parents’ right to express their opinion on the bridegroom or bride, because parents can sometimes be the reason for the breakup of a marriage. When concluding marriage, the bridegroom gives his bride the arranged dower in expression of his affection. The wife keeps her own surname and does not take her husband’s surname. Divorce is not frequent with Muslims, even though Islam allows it as the last alternative after everything else has failed. According to Islamic law nobody has the right to force an unmarried Muslim girl to marry against her own will.  

- **Hinduism**: Hinduism also perceives marriage as a union of man and woman (through a ceremony). Adherents of this religion are divided into so-called castes. The caste system limits social mobility and regroups people according to their social rank. There is an unspoken rule among Hindus that nobody can marry a person from a different caste, they cannot even eat together at one table. Hindus do not deem this as The public part of the wedding ceremony takes place under the canopy known as “Chuppah”, which is meant to symbolize the home that the couple will build together in their marriage. Chuppah is usually brought by the wedding guests. First the bridegroom with his father come under the Chuppah and wait for the bride. Then the bride with her parents comes under the canopy, accompanied by singing the Solomon’s song. The bride goes seven times around the bridegroom (sometimes she is followed by the mothers of the couple) in order to protect him against evil spirits and also to symbolically stick to her husband, and start a new life circle. Then the rabbi holding a cup of wine in his hand utters a thanksgiving formula and blesses the couple. Upon this the couple drink from the cup, they exchange rings and the bridegroom utters a formula in Hebrew: “Harei at mekudeshet li b’tabaat zu k’dat Moshe v’Yisrael”, which means: “Behold you are consecrated unto me with this ring in accordance with the Law of Moses and the People of Israel.” After that, the signed nuptial covenant is read out loud by a person chosen by the couple. Then there are seven blessings uttered over another cup of wine. The blessings are pronounced by the rabbi or by the people whom the bride and bridegroom have chosen. The seven blessings are meant to express thanks for the creation of vine, earth, man and the first married couple; for the miracle of a new life; for the fact that the bride and bridegroom have found each other; and for their common happiness. After the last blessing the couple receive the cup of wine wrapped in a cloth, they drink it together and then the bridegroom tramples it on the floor and the present guests cry: “Mazel tov!” (May the stars be good to you.) In the end, the couple goes into a private room where they stay alone for a while and take some rest, or they can refresh themselves and come back to the wedding reception which had started in the meantime.

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26 Cf.: http://www.svadba.sk/article-zidovsky-svadobny-obrad.html
27 Cf.: http://biankahasan.blog.sme.sk/c/125136/LISI-SA-ISLAMSKE-MANZELSTVO-OD-KRESTANSKEHO.html
28 Cf.: http://www.koran.sk/Koran%208k%20stranky/Koran%20vase%20otazky/Koran%20vase%20otazky%20od1.htm
29 The Indian constitution of 1950 grants equal rights to all citizens. In 1956 they adopted a law to remove discrimination based on castes. However, it is not respected by all.  

This ancient caste system, which keeps everyone in their place in the society, is actually also a racial system and comprises different racial types, from Aryan (people with pale skin) to pre-Dravid tribes (with darker skin). Varna, or caste, means “color”. First three castes were Aryans, the palest people, and the fourth caste, including aboriginal inhabitants with darker skin, was non-Aryan. Although the caste system has been for many years considered illegal by the government, it lasts until today.
discrimination; they perceive it as their fate. They do not practice any pre-marital sessions, as is the custom in Catholic religions. In most cases, they invite a Hindu monk to the wedding ceremony. It is forbidden to conclude marriage within blood kinship or to have relationships which would lead to incest. All major ceremonies, including marriage, usually take place at home in a domestic atmosphere rather than in public. Therefore, in most households there is a room or a corner with a domestic shrine. In this shrine, a statue or a symbol of a god is kept in front of which they meditate, burn incense and also conclude marriage. Newlyweds usually live in gigantic families where they share everything.

**Confucianism:** Marriage is concluded between one man and one woman from different families, while the engaged do not need to belong to the same social class. Similarly to Hinduism, marriage is concluded in the family circle, at a place dedicated to honoring ancestors. The government respects this custom. Its uniqueness lies in the fact that the wife only becomes bride at a special ceremony - in the presence of her husband’s parents - when she brings a sacrifice to the ancestors of her husband’s family. By this ritual the marriage is deemed concluded. The status of women in a Confucian family is little respected, or unequal. The wife has to obey her husband. When the husband dies, his property is inherited by his sons. The wife usually has to carry out all domestic chores and she seldom goes in public. Divorce as the termination of marriage is only possible from the husband’s will or because of the wife’s guilt. Reasons for divorce include: disobedience towards the husband’s parents; infertility; incurable disease; theft; backchat; jealousy; etc.

3 Are New Forms of Family the Solution?

The term “family” (Tománek, 2012) mainly denotes a social group consisting of two or more people who are related by marriage, blood or adoption and who live together in one household. It is a primary, informal and intimate social group and the basic unit of society (Tamášová, 2007, p. 32) which is often considered to be the cradle of mankind and child-rearing.

Family also can be described (Prevendárová, 1998, p. 11) as a small social group created by two adult members of the opposite sex and their descendants. It is the initial social environment and the educational institution of primary importance to an individual. Family is a socially accepted form of partnership between two equal people who love each other and are bound by strong kinship. Its main features include intimate cohabitation in one household; commitment; cooperation and assistance among its members. The atmosphere of family environment is given by the correlation between parents and other family members. A child is formed accordingly to the family relationships and environment in which it grows up. It imitates what it sees in the

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31 The position of bride is better than that of wife. Unless the wife gains the status of bride, she cannot be buried with the rest of the family after her death. If there is a conflict between the wife and the head of the family, the wife is punished to death if she has caused her husband’s death; if she has injured him, she gets a year’s sentence. Physical violence from the husband is punished less severely: death sentence if he has killed his wife - except death by misadventure; otherwise the husband is deemed innocent. A peculiar case is that of a concubine, whose status makes her devoid of almost all rights. If a man during his marriage concluded a union with another woman, this act would be deemed invalid and would be punished: the woman (concubine) would not be accepted into the family; she would not be able to gain the status of a bride; she would not be considered a relative; and her only family relationship would be with her children. She would not be able to participate in honoring the ancestors, she would not be buried among them after her death and she would have to obey the official wife. Her only advantage or certainty would be the fact that her children had been financially and existentially secured.

family (Kostrub, 2007, p. 15). Moreover, adults, especially parents, are role models for any kind of behavior. Family is the natural social group and basic cell of society. It groups people into an intimate unity based on kinship. Every man and woman living together under one roof and raising children can be labeled a family. Consequently, the offspring creates its own identity and typical culture (Mátel, 2010), presented by specific traditions, values and conventions within the family. Kinship, economic interests and parenting alone do not express the essence of family sufficiently. This is due to the fact that family as such cannot stand isolated from society, or in other words, it is always a part of a larger social unit by whose norms, culture, tradition and notions it is affected. Family is the first preliminary environment (Tamášová, 2007, p. 37).

Some of the basic features of family (Tamášová, 2007, p. 10) are:

- **Universality** - family still fulfills its function as a basic social institution. It is known as mankind itself. A family has its own rules and boundaries. Individuals in a family have their own habits and express themselves originally to the outside world.
- **Traditionalism** - family is the traditional basic unit of society. Society has yet to offer anything better than the Institution of Family.
- **Conservatism** – family is characteristic by its values, culture and traditions. It has a regular structure which, in the most narrow sense, is comprised of parents and children.
- **Sacrality** - family bonds are sacred for its members. Family members cooperate, support and help each other.
- **Protection** - each and every family creates an own household, an own domestic community. Family members understand and respect each other's moods and opinions and know whom to turn to if they need something.

However, we observe that in present times, the traditional features of family seem as if being reduced, ridiculed or even atomized. Universality and Traditionalism are two basic characteristics that presumably persist up to this day. Conservatism is frequently pushed back by legalized heterosexual (i.e. concubinage) or even homosexual unions. Family sacrality is often atomized by forms of cohabitation, which the current society calls by the terms single family or mingle family. Protection is the “Cinderella” feature of relationships which are supposed to be normal, balanced and meaningful. It is the typical feature of the so-called patchwork family. We will describe these contemporary family types in the following sections.

Development of the emotional aspect results in the development of the social aspect of the personality. Moreover, the interconnection of the cognitive, affective and psycho-motor areas projects itself into the axiological sphere; in other words, into the value system. In this Chapter, we will focus on specific types of family formation in the present. Our aim is not only to provide a descriptive characteristic of these family forms, but also to point out their negative impact on society, family and the individual.

**Single family**

In recent years, there is a growing trend of single mothers having children without a partner, or rather, not relying on the man whom they have the child with to assume the role of the father. Due to the fact that the divorce rate is rising, the number of people who have children but do not have a partner is also increasing. The logical outcome of this situation is the so-called single family, more and more frequently formed and often identified with the motto “I want a child - I don’t want a man.” (Tománek, 2012, p. 84). It might seem reasonable to believe this form to
be caused as a result of the lobbyist and hedonistic motives of women. On the contrary, women often choose this lifestyle because they haven't found anyone with whom they would be willing to share their life. Furthermore, they prefer this choice in order to evade potential problems basing their decision on the experiences of a large number of abused or divorced females. Finally, women want to emerge as pregnant victors from experimental relationships, which they entered out of pragmatic reasons. As a matter of fact, many women sign a “certain form of contract” (Patchworkfamilie, 2012) with men, agreeing not to demand their official acknowledgment of paternity nor require them to pay child support.

Based on acquired data, we conclude the advantages and disadvantages of single families:

Reasons for staying in single families:

- Young people nowadays reach psychological maturity much later, owing to the fact that they spend a longer time preparing for their future career; take more time to become independent; try to experience as many things as possible. It is difficult for young adults to imagine a first love or longterm relationship as the terminal station of their love life.
- Single people do not particularly attach themselves to a specific place. They desire to travel and get to know new cultures and people; learn new things; lead an active life. It is possible to accomplish all of this together with a partner as well, but not without having to submit to their interests and needs as well. Such compromises require the ability to adjust one’s own priorities.
- People who settle down and have a family early on in their life may feel to have missed out on something or feel not to have enjoyed life enough. Such feelings can end up in clashes or even breakdowns of a family.

Disadvantages of single families:

- People, who have been without a partner for a longer period of time have a tendency of becoming depressed (their state becoming more severe with every approaching fall); having headaches; being tired more often; being more prone to contracting illness.
- Some people have an irresponsible attitude towards life and are not able to “take matters into their own hands” regarding freedom as an excuse to enter short-term relationships.
- People can also be less self-confident and as a result, refuse any intimate interaction. Alternatively, people exceedingly focused on building their career sometimes forget that they need to socialize or relate with others.

Mingle family

The term mingle was created by combining two mutually contradictory words married and single (derived from the phrase “married but single”). The mingle trend arrived to Europe at the beginning of the third millennium, emerging from North America, where it has already become a widely established family type. It can be simply described as living together in marriage but at the same time having freedom and not being committed. E. Beck-Gernsheim (2000, p. 33) adds that “It is not completely ruled out, that the husband [in these families] goes to a different woman (his mistress) with whom he has a child. The husband acknowledges his paternity of the child, pays child support but does not want to get a divorce. He often even forces his own wife to respect the situation and think of it as normal. Naturally, the wife suffers because of this and takes legal action. The husband comes home, sleeps, does his laundry, eats and then goes again to his mistress's, who is expecting him. Essentially, the responsibility in both relationships formed by the husband is a pretense.”
The phrase *mingle family* includes traditionally used terms which are contradictory. Hence, in families we can come across the denominations “married single woman [mother]” or “married single father” (from the German “verheiratet, ledig Vater”, and “verheiratet, Single-Frau”).

The function of the family becomes considerably complicated. The parents are, and yet are not together. They form, and yet do not form something together. The spouses live in a long-term relationship but each of them maintains their own household. Partners in the so-called *mingle* relationship meet when they have got the time and desire for one another. They organize moments shared together and inform each other about the time they have spent individually. In this sense they are just like other traditional couples. However, the difference is that when they are together, everything else is put aside.

Mingle families are very arduous with regard to trust and tolerance. They do not offer a feeling of safety and security for smaller children, who are in need of a stable family background. Mingle families can conceal extramarital affairs and are therefore rather a type of an open marriage. They are ideal for people working in different cities or caring for sick parents. The spouses forming these types of families are often called “sometime”, “monthlies” or “weeklies” (Beck-Gernsheim, 2000, p. 11, 15–18), according to the frequency of “entering” their own family.

Based on the acquired data, we conclude the following advantages and disadvantages of *mingle families*:

**Reasons for staying in mingle families:**
- Retaining a certain degree of independence and irresponsibility
- Having time for one's career, friends and hobbies
- Relationship does not become stereotypical
- Coping with breakup is easier

**Disadvantages of mingle families:**
- Irresponsibility in relationships
- Indulgence in bringing up children
- Partners regard each other as a commodity rather than as a person
- Rapid fall in birth-rate (demographic fluctuations)
- Encouragement of hedonistic and egotistic behavior
- Gradual disappearance of mutual trust between the partners/spouses
- Lack of a cohabitation-related habits
- Confusion among younger children, who do not know how to address the new partners in the family

**Patchwork family**

Patchwork family is another specific type of family. The term *patchwork* itself usually describes a cover joined and fastened from several different pieces of fabrics. In spite of appearing to originate from English speaking countries, at first sight the term has actually spread in the EU from Germany, where the word designating bed sheets patched from multiple bits of cloth transferred onto the phenomenon of a certain emerging type of family. A patchwork family is a form of family that is “patched” from various family members, bound
by blood or non-blood relationships. In most cases, members coming from previous families enter a new family, in which they are as if “patched” to a different piece of “fabric” - to a different family, either a functional or an atomized one. It is a “second try” family, since the first try did not turn out well for some reasons. Patchwork is a blanket happily sewn together. Nevertheless, as far as cohabitation and family is concerned, there is always a piece of explosive matter sewn into the blanket as well (usually in the form of complicated social relationships). The divorce rate is constantly increasing, and the number of people looking for their next partner to enter the “marital second hand” is growing correspondingly. The number of children raised out of wedlock has grown sevenfold over the last fifty years, and this trend is still on the rise (Arlt, 1996, p. 34). Similarly, the Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic states that the number of divorces as well as the number of remarried people tripled in the past twenty years (Štatistický úrad SR, Demografia, rozvody, 2010).%

What is it all about then? Let us provide a case study: “Katka is forty years old. She married right after graduating from high school. She gave birth to two daughters. After ten years, Katka divorced her husband and found a new partner, Peter. Peter is also divorced and has two small children from his previous marriage. Katka and Peter move in together and live in a small town near Prague. They have a two-year old boy together. Ordinarily, Katka and Peter live in their house along with their son and with Katka’s younger daughter from her first marriage. However, they take care of two small children from Peter’s first marriage, as they share custody with Peter’s first wife, Alena. Furthermore, Katka’s older daughter, who attends school in Prague during weekdays and therefore lives with Katka’s first husband, joins the family on weekends. Katka’s former husband as well as Peter’s ex-wife also have new life partners. The whole situation is very complicated regarding the issue of parenting, because all parents are strict to their own children but lenient towards the “other” children with whom they form the so-called patchwork family.”

Similar cases have existed in Slovakia for a few years now. The divorce rate in Slovakia is currently 52%. Out of these 52%, approximately 9-10% of divorced people remarry and form a new family - mostly of the patchwork type. Additionally, up to 4% reenters marriage a third time and creates the so-called patchwork family again. By comparison, 12.5% of the population formed patchwork families in Germany (Patchworkfamilie, 2012), whereas in the Czech Republic it was as much as 14% in 2011. The Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic monitors the divorce rate only it does not observe whether there are more divorces coming from civil marriages, Catholic marriages or marriages formed under various Church or religious communities which have signed a contract with Slovakia (and are therefore acknowledged by the State). Since the divorce issue is a legal matter rather than a statistical one, the Statistical Office can acquire limited information about the divorce rate of civil and Catholic marriages only additionally and only at a district or regional level. Such inquiry represents not only a tedious and arduous process, data gained retrospectively would no longer be actual. Marriage dissolution is no longer considered a fatal failure; on the contrary, we are witnessing the so-called “normalization of divorce”. People make allowance for the possibility of divorce, adjusting their life strategies accordingly. For example, women only seldom dedicate themselves to their family to the extent that it stands as their sole mission in life. Paradoxically, coping strategies, which prepare a person for the eventuality of divorce, make divorces easier,

thus supporting their growth. Furthermore, with the simplification of marital divorce or relationship dissolution, it is also easier to find a new partner, who is single. This leads to new attempts at having a family and new breakups, eventually resulting in more and more complicated patchwork families. Social (Artl, 1996, p. 36), existential, but also religious and cultural factors in patchwork cohabitation lead to severe complications. In Slovakia, patchwork families are often called “renewed” or “reconstructed” (Sisáková, 2011).

Based on the acquired data, we conclude the following advantages and disadvantages of patchwork families:

**Reasons for staying in patchwork families:**

- Mutual communication, especially elements of negotiation, problem-solving and finding compromises
- Only children gain a bigger family and siblings
- Economic function of the family is reestablished, patchwork families are economically more stable than single families
- Improved ability for social adaptation

**Disadvantages of patchwork families:**

- Extremely strict upbringing of own children
- Excessively lenient parenting of stepchildren
- Good parent/bad parent situations (step-father, step-mother, …)
- Boundless tolerance (The “new” parents want to appeal to each other in the first place. However, they accomplish this through their own children and through the stepchildren. They influence the children’s behavior by their own attitudes, demeanor and actions, in order to get closer to the new party (spouse, children from previous marriages, etc.)
- Cohabitation of siblings and step-siblings. In the example case mentioned above, common issues related to cohabitation arise.

E.g., “Katka and Peter have got their previous relationships sorted out. Nevertheless, they constantly come across various problems. Katka’s daughter from the first marriage was taught to turn on the TV only after having finished all of her duties. In comparison, children from Peter's first marriage are used to being allowed to turn the television on anytime, even if it’s during lunch. From Katka's viewpoint, it seems correct to adhere to the rule of allowing her daughter to watch TV after attending to all of her duties. However, it is very difficult to do so as the television is constantly turned on. Peter, on the other hand, thinks that the upbringing of his own children should be stable – if the kids are allowed to watch the TV anytime they want when they’re with his ex-wife, things should not be different at Katka and Peter’s place.

- Rivalry with the ex-family: children who get in touch with their former parents often have the tendency to form a very competitive atmosphere in their new families. Distinction between who is a good and who is a bad parent is often made based on criteria such as “which of the parents had given me more” (in a materialistic way), “who had been the more lenient parent”, etc.

E.g., “Our family is one happy household. Flowers are painted on the front gate, many clothes are hanging on the washing lines, a white dog is running around the garden. A big family with four children lives in this household. Everything seems to be ideal until you take notice of the doorbell. There are four surnames on it. As a matter of fact, these four children have two
mothers and three fathers. Moreover, they have got one sister who lives with them only on the weekends, and they have two other step-sibling, who do not live with them at all as they are with their first parents - with their first father or mother. Things appear strange inside the household as well. Nothing seems out of the ordinary at first sight. All the boys, two aged seven, one aged two and one aged four, are playing in the kitchen while grandmother is sitting next to the stove. She has just finished preparing bread with spread for their morning snack and the boys are happily munching away. It doesn't seem to matter, that only two of the boys are her own grandsons."

- The sole essential purpose of parenthood is disappearing: i.e. being a full-time mother or a father. The role of mother and father is frequently divided between the other “parents” in these families. Responsibility also becomes fragmented.
- Firm boundaries of family traditions, belief and values are absent.
- Manipulation of parents by the children or vice versa.
- Jealousy among the children.
- Sexual harassment: people of the opposite sex live in close vicinity but are not protected by the bastion of the incest taboo. Man does not have to take on the active role, an adolescent daughter may try to seduce her stepfather or stepbrother (Beck-Gernsheim, 2000).

According to Swiss Psychologists and Sociologists, a minimum of two years is necessary for all individuals entering a patchwork family to gradually adapt (see more in Patchwork-familie. Ch, 2005). In other words, two years are a trial period for these families. If such a family acquires well, the upbringing of children and adolescents does not fall behind regular parenting in a traditional family setting. However, if the ideal state is not achieved within two years, the cohabitation usually dissolves and the desire to form a new relationship re-emerges. In contemporary society, this phenomenon is called family tourism, from the German “Turismus Familien” (Beck-Gernsheim, 2000, p. 35). Parents visited by children in joint custody are usually addressed as “weekend parents”. The author E. Beck-Gernsheim (2000, p.35) adds that the usage of terms such as “ex-husband” and “ex-wife” in the newly-formed patchwork families is fading in society (she mainly means the German-speaking and French-speaking countries). These old terms are being replaced by the words “Vorman” and “Vorfrau”, i.e. “pre-husband” and “pre-wife (as identification of the ex-souses).

4 The situation in Slovakia and in the EU

A family is a specific type of social environment (Tománek, 2012, p. 81), a cultural unit where upbringing and values (either material or spiritual) are passed on. Nevertheless, family and marriage have lately been exposed to a large number of changes, especially those of the demographic sort (Sekera, 2010). We believe that some of the most frequent of these changes are the following:

- Increasing age of women entering marriage;
- Noticeable decline in birth rate;
- Family structure reduction (a maximum of two children);
- Incomplete families;
- Divorce rate;
- Registered homosexual and heterosexual partnerships;
- Fear of having children;
- Lack of money;
- Accommodation space;
- Impotence;
- Deprivation (needs unmet for a long period of time);
- Atomization of family (dissolution of the traditional family);
- Entropy - disintegration of family, etc.;
- Workaholism;
- Prostitution and pornography;
- Addictions (internet, drugs, alcohol) and gambling (Fešková, 2007);
- Various deviations (Kuruc, 2006);
- Liberalism;
- Intergeneration issues;
- Rise of individualism;
- Contraception availability;
- Declining influence of churches and traditional religions on families;
- Induced abortion rate;
- Change in the position of women;
- Increased mobility;
- Dissolution of traditional unions (Tamášová, 2007, p. 38).

One of the main trends in today's society are the so-called prenups, or prenuptial contracts. The term itself is widely known to the public owing to its large popularity and presentation in the media. It is basically a contract between two people (the engaged couple, i.e. future spouses), which binds both parties to its contents. Apart from other matters, it deals with the amount and size of property of each of the partners entering the marriage. What this in reality means is that usually, when the engaged couple gets married, they “bring” their property into the marriage by means of the prenuptial agreement. In case of divorce, the prenup guarantees that they will not lose the property with which they entered the marital bond. Even if the prenuptial contract may not be unconstitutional, it is fundamentally unethical.

Living in heterosexual partnerships (so-called concubinage) is still probably the most promoted trend in contemporary society. Many young people do not want to confine themselves to a permanent relationship by means of marriage. They rather choose the option of “simply” living, buying things and acquiring property together. Moreover, they do not plan on having children. Were the relationship to break up, they divide the property accordingly with their contribution or by judicial settlement. This behavior is usually rationalized by the following statements:

- We will not marry, so we eventually do not have to get a divorce;
- We will not have children, because to have children in today's society is a luxury which we cannot afford (having a child is expensive);
- We have to enjoy ourselves before entering marriage;
- We need to know, whether things will work out between us or not;
- We want to build our careers and marriage would be an unnecessary burden (spouse, children, food, etc.)

5 Actual facts regarding the issue in question - challenges, prospects and recommendations for real life

In this Chapter we will not only contemplate certain phenomena brought forward by the opposition to marriage and partnership, but also provide and discuss relevant facts.

- Countries which have yet to legalize heterosexual/homosexual partnerships often face ridicule for being backwater, somewhat traditionalist and conservative. We, however, object: “Not all that is modern is also good and ethical.”
According to Swiss and German studies (2010-2011), which had 20,000 homosexual participants, more than 68% of homosexual people are actually bisexual. Yet, R. Uzel, a Czech sexologist, states that bisexuality does not exist—that which is called bisexuality is only a strange type of behavior. This leads us to the following questions: What is homosexuality in reality? What attitude should we assume towards it?

Not family, but marriage is facing a crisis. Young people do not marry; they do not enter or form marital communion; which frequently results in single, mingle, patchwork or homosexual families (Tománek, 2012b, p. 44-63).

The need to view the full picture: countries with legalized homosexual partnerships (e.g. Netherlands for more than 12 years) are currently dealing with the issue of children brought up by homosexual partners. As many as 57% of the children from homosexual families have mental and social problems. Why? Do children from heterosexual families not have similar problems as well? The answer is ‘Yes’, but there is a big difference in their number. As Pastor mentions in his study (2012, p. 268), it is 74% of children from homosexual families and only 26% of children from heterosexual families who face these issues. Why is it so? While in heterosexual relationships a major crisis leading to breakups occurs between the period of 5-7 years after living in a marriage, homosexual relationships face this crisis between 1.5-3.5 years after living together (Pastor, 2012, p. 262-268). This means that a change in partners takes place 2 to 3 times earlier than it does in heterosexual relationships. Not to mention the topic of the actual upbringing of children (biological or adoptive), who lose the stability of any relationship due to their “parents” frequent breakups34 (in Netherlands, Australia or Great Britain for example).  

Every minority group which “enters the market” (e.g. a new religion, sect, alternative to marriage, …?) has to offer some benefit to society. What do heterosexual or homosexual partnerships bring?

Issue of concubinage (cohabitation): concubine means a companion or prostitute. It is an older term for cohabitation of heterosexual partners. The word concubinage is derived from this term. Pastor (2012, p. 265-268), citing German studies from 2008, states that marriages formed after previous cohabitation of the spouses get divorced during the first 10 years.

Contemporary family is threatened by multiple external and internal factors, which are (Kovačič, 2002, p. 48):

- Social influence, trends, attitudes and intentions,
- Entrepreneur and market environment,
- Insufficient countermeasures on society's behalf,
- Modernization and liberalization of society,
- Decrease in positive influence of religion and piety,
- Degradation of culture,
- Destruction of family bonds,

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33 Protect the children: www.lds.org/general-conference/2012/10/protect-the-children (cit. 4.6.2013)


- Instability of marriages,
- Unpreparedness to form a family,
- Consumer lifestyle,
- etc.

We often come across the opinion that contemporary family and parenthood are undergoing a crisis. The world provides us with information about the degradation of society's moral norms; about dissolution of marriages; families; about violence; brutality and so forth. Society is gradually losing control of its emotions; it is falling into solitude; emotional numbness; and disregard for not only familial but often also workplace relationships. Family is becoming a primary concern of the market. Moreover, family is opposed by virtual reality, a world represented by a fearless, “aggressive, emotionally unstable and labile” (Gálik, 2003, p. 16) virtual hero.

The basic grounds for potential family issues (school issues consequently related) chiefly consist of:

- Propagation of liberal relationships formed without a correctly concluded and legitimate marriage (partnerships of persons of opposite or same sex, trend of wanting to have a child but not wanting to have a husband, etc.),
- Degradation of human sexuality through billboard display (e.g. advertisements for building materials, eyeglasses, musical instruments, clothes or shoes with a partially or completely naked female or male in the background),
- Tolerating pets as family members (preference of animals to people, excessive attention to pet food, respect, care, clothing, walks in parks),
- Scandal-oriented news,
- Social Networking (Facebook, Skype, Icq, Pokec, etc.),
- Basic misunderstanding regarding the meaning of the terms “sex equality” and “gender equality”,
- etc.

Reasons behind these problems often lie in:

- Insufficient love between spouses and instability of families. Children have more and more difficulties perceiving and receiving love from their parents. This is due to the fact that children do not see or feel love between their parents,
- Parents not having enough time (Ferrero, 2007, p. 64) to constantly pay worthwhile attention to their children and to reason with them in a patient and rational manner. Adults lack the time to instill values and other important things in their children. Additionally, they are unable to explain to their offspring certain procedures of how to do things, or the reasons behind and causality between specific processes - how things work and why,
- Indifferent attitude toward religion, practical atheism or even religious pluralism.

Recommendations for real life

Based on the previous chapters, we suggest the following preventive measures for families and family education in order to tackle the aforementioned issues:

- Provide more space for family and media education in school curricula. This will allow students to learn how to behave towards their parents and other people. Additionally, they will become better at accessing and using media as well as improve in identifying...
and evaluating relevant information.

- Encourage better cooperation between parents and teachers,
- Emphasize meaningful leisure-time use: limiting time spent on the computer to school-duty related activity, practicing sports more, playing a musical instrument, drawing, and pursuing visual or dramatic arts,
- Intensify pre-marital preparation: education for marriage and parenthood (lectures, presentations, discussions) along with education for responsible sexuality. Sexuality likewise plays an important part in media education. Attitude toward sexuality cannot be ignored, disregarded, neglected nor abolished as it is an inseparable element of human personality.
- Stress the importance of family, marriage, giving birth to, and raising children in the framework of subject curricula of religious, ethical and civic education in schools,
- Support preventive activities at schools (inviting guests competent to address the issue),
- File complaints to the local media regulation authority against inappropriate programs or advertisements: e.g. to the Arbitration Committee of the Slovak Advertising Standards Council (website: http://www.rpr.sk/en)
- Promote positive role models (not celebrities, etc.)

Conclusion

In spite of all the presented information, the topic of our article remains an open and unresolved issue. We would like to emphasize that although our aim was to objectively contemplate the phenomenon of marriage and registered partnership, new data regarding significant promotion of multiculturalism and multi-religionism in our environment still needs to be addressed. We have outlined current findings and facts relevant to marriage and registered partnerships in order to provide a framework for better reflection of these forms of cohabitation. Homosexual or heterosexual partnerships, regardless of their legitimacy, cannot be regarded as equivalent to matrimony. There is no adequate replica or alternative to the marital union, as marriage has always been defined as an equal communion between a man and a woman throughout all history of mankind.

It is said that “He who wants to build high towers must dwell with the fundament for a long time.” We must establish firm foundations to be able to build upon them. Family, society or an individual cannot simply build high-quality relationships on shallow ground. After all, the maturity of an adult person is measured by the quality of their relationships, and not by the quantity. If we start putting off “faulty” families or relationships, will then forgiveness, convergence, reverence and respect towards others not disappear from society? What is more, are these not the fundamental features of a stable and balanced personality, one that is beneficial to society?

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