

CHOOSING UNMARRIED COHABITATION AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO MARRIAGE

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Abstract

The trends of current demographic development also include a so-called increase in extramarital fertility, which is related to the spread of unmarried cohabitation, because in approximately half of these cases this concerns children born into such families. Why do partners choose unmarried cohabitation instead of marriage and what is their attitude to marriage and unmarried cohabitation? Qualitative research in the form of multiple case studies was chosen to enable deeper understanding of this social phenomenon, which can be considered a dangerous social phenomenon in relation to family, and understanding of the reasons that lead parents to cohabit without marriage. The realised dialogues indicate that even though marriage is linked to “formality” and is deemed unnecessary for family life, the choice to enter into unmarried cohabitation is primarily an unplanned decision, a situation that arises from the relationship itself. Apart from “formality” another frequently stated reason is the “influence of the surroundings” and also “fear of change” and “situational obstacles to holding a wedding”. For all communication partners, even those who currently refuse to wed, the issue of marriage is open in the future. On the basis of the realised dialogues, if such cohabitation relationships do not fall apart, it is possible in all cases (even long-term relationships) to consider cohabitation between unmarried partners a “preliminary level to marriage”. It is not possible to determine how these relationships will end up in advance.

Key words: *unmarried cohabitation – marriage – extramarital fertility – attitudes – reasons – motivation*

INTRODUCTION

Development of family has been undergoing a marked transformation since the middle of the last century (this occurred a little later in the Czech Republic – after 1989). As stated by Možný (2008), these transformations include, for example, the legitimacy of premarital sex, the appearance of contraception as a barrier between sex and conception, the rising number of children born out of wedlock and the waning influence of

the birth family. The Christian concept of marriage (irrevocable) is being replaced with the concept of marriage as a civil contract (which can be terminated by either of the parties). This is related to the rising number of divorces and repeat marriages. Simultaneously the wedding rate is falling and weddings are being delayed to take place when the parties are older (for more see Možný 2008). Some people perceive these changes to be natural development (for instance Hamplová and Pikálková 2002, Hašková

and Rabušic 2008), others are pessimistic and speak of these changes as a crisis concerning family (for instance Sullerotová 1998, de Singly 1999, Bauman 2002, Beck 2004). These changes are related to the spread of other forms of cohabitation, which chiefly includes unmarried cohabitation, which is not a new phenomenon, but is undergoing changes with regard to its quality and its distribution. Unmarried cohabitation is closely related to extramarital fertility. In the Czech Republic the percentage of children born out of wedlock has increased markedly during the last twenty years. According to the data by the Czech Statistical Office in 2010 this percentage achieved the value of 40.1%, whereas in 1989 it was only 7.9% (ČSÚ 2010, 2011). According to Hamplová (2007) approximately half of these children are born into families cohabiting without marriage.

Unmarried cohabitation is the most frequently used expression for two people of different genders, who live together in a longer-term partnership similar to marriage, without being officially married (Rabušic 2001, Hrušáková and Králíčková 2006). The Czech media frequently call this form of cohabitation “na psi knizku” (literally “with dog papers”), “život na hromadce” (literally “living in a pile”). The Czech Statistical Office uses the term “factual marriage”. Other terms used by foreign experts (Rabušic 2001, v. 193) are, for example, “living together”, “consensual union”, “trial marriage” etc. There is no standardised identification. As well as this form of cohabitation not having standardised identification, it also has various typologies (Možný 1987, Rabušic 2001, Hamplová and Pikálková 2002, Mládek and Širočková 2004, Buchler et al. 2009). The problem during any sort of categorisation is the fact that it is impossible to know which unmarried cohabitation relationships will transform into actual marriage, which of these will fall apart and in which cases this will concern lifelong unmarried cohabitation. In spite of this, unmarried cohabitation is primarily considered a temporary phase before marrying (Hamplová and Pikálková 2002) and consequently is not considered a replacement for traditional marriage.

Sarantakos (1994), de Singly (1999), and even Rabušic (2001) or Možný (2002) mention that this concerns individualised cohabitation

orientated towards the self-realisation of each of the partners, cohabitation enabling a sense of individual freedom and distinctive personal identity. Bologne (1997) links the spread of unmarried cohabitation chiefly to the deep transformation of human views, the rhythm of living and life philosophy. Similarly Keller (2005) and Kuchařová (2003) also mention the connection between the spread of unmarried cohabitation and increased flexibility of work, when, in an environment of fairly dramatic social and economic changes, people are evidently seeking adequate forms of family life, living in the present and hesitating to make plans for the future. Similar findings are also stated by Lois (2008) for the German population. Jäckelová (1997) and Kiernan (2004) put the spread of unmarried cohabitation into context with divorces. Divorcees are seeking out new, alternative forms of cohabitation for themselves (both the younger and the older generation). The reason for choosing unmarried cohabitation (Edin 2000, Walter 2001) may also be economic assurance by the man, when women make marriage conditional to the man's stable employment and his sufficient income. Hamplová (2000) gives the option of easily breaking the relationship up as a reason for choosing unmarried cohabitation. Kiernan (2004) finds unmarried cohabitation to mean avoidance of the concept of dependence, which is usually implicit when entering into marriage. Women may be nervous that marriage will change the balance of power within the partnership. Consequently various authors perceive various reasons for the spread of this type of cohabitation. According to Vágnerová (2000) unmarried couples are also usually less conventional, individuals who do not place such a high value on marriage.

Can unmarried cohabitation be considered an alternative to marriage? Bologne (1997), Plaňava (1998), and even Vágnerová (2000) mention the absence of an important ritual, such as a wedding, in unmarried cohabitation. According to these authors a new partnership is established on the day of a wedding and the couple is simultaneously aware of the transformation from adolescence to adulthood. Even according to Cherlin (2004) unmarried cohabitation is an incomplete institution, during which time the roles of people living in such a manner are less defined and are not

bound by clear social standards. With regard to stability, some authors perceive unmarried cohabitation to be less stable (Hamplová 2001, 2007, Osborne et al. 2007, Wu and Musick 2008). Vaculík and Jedrzejczykóvá (2009) state that they found a higher level of obligation and also greater satisfaction in unmarried cohabitation in those couples that were considering the possibility of marrying. Rabušic (2001) mentions the differences in ending a relationship, because divorce of marriage is legally determined, while there are no rules in place in the event that a relationship based on unmarried cohabitation falls apart. On the other hand Höhne (2008) found no important differences, for example, with regard to organisation of the household. The summary of the analysis by Chaloupková (2006) indicates that with regard to economic management, childless couples and couples in which at least one of the partners has experience with a relationship breaking down are most likely to manage their finances separately. Married couples with two and more children are most likely to manage their finances jointly.

With regard to the fact that unmarried cohabitation is related to the increasing numbers of children born out of wedlock and with regard to the fact that this form of cohabitation is still considered fairly problematic I focused my research on establishing the reasons that lead to unmarried cohabitation relationships in which children are born. This text provides findings related to unmarried couples' attitudes to marriage and unmarried cohabitation (which I consider important when making a decision concerning the form of cohabitation) and the interpreted reasons that lead unmarried couples to refrain from marrying.

METHODS AND MATERIAL

In relation to the increasing number of unmarried cohabiters and particularly

with regard to the increasing percentage of children being born out of wedlock, I focused my research on analysis of this social phenomenon, and on why these couples did not decide to marry before their child was born. I was inspired in this by the SEPM 2006¹ quantitative survey. This survey established responses by women who had a child out of wedlock (approximately half of these cases concerned children born into a relationship between unmarried cohabiters) to the question of "why they did not marry". The goal of my research was chiefly to understand the reasons that lead to unmarried cohabitation relationships in which children were born and the opportunity of comparing the responses to closed-ended questions offered in the SEPM survey to data established by means of dialogues. For this reason I chose a qualitative survey. Furthermore the SEPM 2006 survey only focused on responses by women, and so, within the terms of my qualitative research, I also established responses by men. The objects of my research were unmarried couples, who were bringing up at least one child, of which they were simultaneously the biological parents, i.e. where this can be considered an alternative to marriage. A total of 38 in-depth dialogues took place during the period from 2008 to 2011 – 21 responses by women and 17 responses by men were recorded, in total this concerned data on 21 unmarried couples (four men refused to take part in the dialogue). The reasons for parenthood while in an unmarried cohabitation relationship, the circumstances related to parenthood outside marriage and plans for the future were all established. Other monitored areas were, for example, attitudes concerning unmarried cohabitation, marriage and childbirth out of wedlock and also perception of the standing of unmarried cohabitation in society. This concerned semi-structured dialogues, which took from one to three hours, and were realised in an environment determined by the conversational partners, separately with both partners (in one case this concerned a group interview). The

¹ The first specialised representative survey of the Social and Economic Conditions of Motherhood (SEPM 2006) focusing on the issue of extramarital fertility. This established the social, economic and familial situation of unmarried women in comparison to married mothers in the Czech Republic after 1989. This research focused on women, the children of which were born from the middle of the nineteen nineties until the beginning of 2006. In total 1,160 women were questioned.

purpose of separate dialogues was their use for comparison of interpretation of reasons given by women and men and also their concepts of the form of the relationship. In the case of the group interview, this provided the opportunity for mutual interaction between partners, because this concerned sisters who had different reasons for parenthood outside marriage, and simultaneously between partners with different concepts of the form of the relationship. Apart from the dialogue, respondents also completed a questionnaire, which contained several questions identical to the SEPM 2006 survey for the purpose of establishing the difference between responses to the closed-ended questions in the questionnaire and their subsequent interpretation (the interview followed completion of the questionnaire). I chose to perform research designed as a multiple case study, which provides the opportunity for in-depth understanding of social phenomena (see Hendl 2005, Švaříček and Šedová 2007, Reichel 2009). Codification (Straus and Corbinová 1999) and the ATLAS.ti program was used were used within the scope of analysis of the dialogues.

Communication partners were not restricted by age, education, marital status or duration of cohabitation, so that it was possible to analyse the widest possible range of unmarried cohabiters bringing up a child/children. The only condition was that both partners simultaneously had to be the biological parents of at least one child.

People between the ages of 30 and 39 years were predominant in the questioned group. This included skilled workmen and individuals with secondary education with a school leaving certificate, as well as individuals with a university education and elementary education. In six cases this concerned couples living in Prague, seven cases represented couples living in a city, five couples lived in a town and three couples in a village. With regard to the fact that this concerned "mixed couples" in several cases, when one partner was single and the other partner was divorced, there were also children from previous relationships in the family. The duration of unmarried cohabitation ranged from two to thirty years. The text gives quotes under pseudonyms to preserve anonymity (the age, duration of cohabitation, age of child/children

born to the current relationship and marital status in cases when this concerns a quote by a divorced person, are also given).

This text presents the results concerning attitudes to unmarried cohabitation and marriage. The key subject is the interpreted reasons leading to unmarried cohabitation between couples with children.

RESULTS

Attitudes to unmarried cohabitation and marriage

With respect to attitudes concerning unmarried cohabitation and marriage, we established no differences between the responses in relation to age, gender or duration of the relationship. Consequently, the occurrence of responses cannot be differentiated because the attitudes mentioned below appeared in all the dialogues in various forms. Unmarried cohabitation is perceived to be a trend. It is considered an alternative to marriage, a wholly functional family, which does not have to be confirmed by marriage. Participants also mention the attitude of their surroundings, with no stigma being perceived and participants rating it liberal. The greatest problem is that couples are unable to find an adequate expression to call their partners in communication situations with the presence of third parties. They are aware that marriage is a tradition and do not completely reject it, they are also aware of its specific advantages and its importance for the function of society. Quotes characteristic to individual categories are given below.

Unmarried cohabitation

- 1) "An alternative form of family, identical to marriage": "*... for me this is an alternative path, which is entitled to its existence if it suits people... It is a good idea to respect the fact that there are many types of cohabitation*" (Bedřich, 40 years, UC – 19 years, children 1 and 4 years old). It was clear from the dialogues that unmarried couples do not find the status of marriage essential for definition of a family, children are decisive.
- 2) "Trend": "*In my opinion unmarried cohabitation is a trend, but I don't think*

it's a good trend" (Milena, 35 years, UC – 3 years, child 3 years, divorced). The influence of the media was clear during the dialogues, not only on the spread of unmarried cohabitation, but also on its acceptance by society and on the attitude of the unmarried couples themselves.

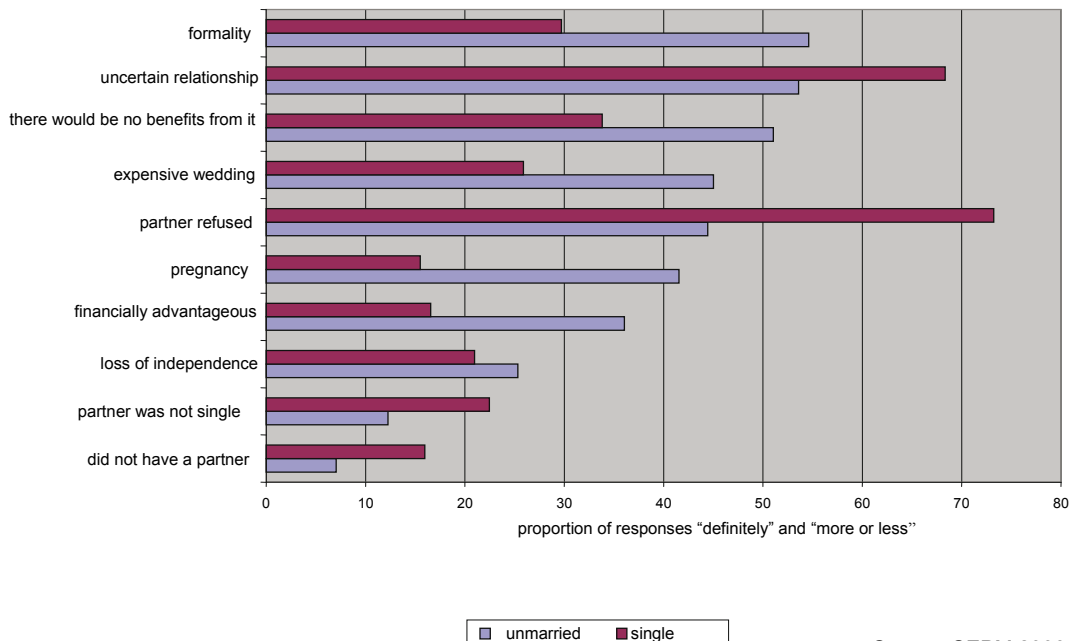
- 3) The attitude of a man with elementary education, who is not accepting of unmarried cohabitation as an alternative to marriage, was interesting. He considers unmarried cohabitation "insufficient, unsatisfactory, incorrect": *"Yes, I would like to marry... I planned a better life..."* (Igor, 28 years, UC – 10 years, children 10 and 11 years). This attitude towards unmarried cohabitation was presented in only one case.
- 4) A "liberal acceptance by the surroundings", which simultaneously affects the spread of this form of cohabitation, is also mentioned: *"I don't feel any trace of stigmatism because of how we live in our environment... on the contrary I feel that it is more audacious... a more free decision... it's like the decision to donate blood, not have a television... it isn't anything that should have to be explained"* (Tomáš, 31 years, UC – 8 years, children 1 and 6 years).

Marriage

- 1) "Non-rejection of marriage": *"... I wouldn't dare say that it is right for people not to marry, or that I think that certain people should marry... I believe that everyone has to find a model that suits him, them... I am not strictly against marriage, nor would I say that I do not want a wedding, that there is no point, I also do not think that marriage is outdated..."* (Šárka, 48 years, UC – 24 years, child 19 years). Even though couples live together without being married, their relationship is not considered a protest against marriage or its rejection.
- 2) I am aware of the "significance, importance of marriage for society": *"... and I am actually that disrupting element... If this were true then this society is actually not holding together... the family is sort of holding it together... we are a sort of large family... one that is made up of small families... I understand this, but at the same time this does not mean that I am disrupting it, because I have a family... it's just that I have no paper to confirm it... and I believe that that I have something much better and of better quality than couples who have a paper confirming their relationship... I simply believe that this is how it should be, that people should marry... and those people who are like me and risk by living like this, then that's their problem"* (Radim, 64 years, UC – 24 years, child 19 years, twice divorced).
- 3) The above-mentioned point is related to the attitude that "marriage = tradition": *"... tradition plays a huge role in this... we are brought up like this, we even have it slightly genetically coded and people are basically unable to imagine it... for girls – for young girls – it's like they wish to prove something to themselves, like I am adult, mature... I am mature enough for marriage... a signal that I wish to establish something..."* (Šárka, 48 years, UC – 24 years, child 19 years).
- 4) On the contrary, others mention "formality" in relation to marriage: *"Marriage is a formality... If I had to define marriage then... if I leave out the religious connotations, when this is an instruction by someone else, a higher power, that this is the way it should be done... then marriage is an act between you and the state"* (Bedřich, 40 years, UC – 19 years, children 1 and 4 years). However, this cannot be considered strict assignation of the noun "formality", unmarried couples are aware of the justification of the institute of marriage. But they are not happy with a third party interfering in their relationship.
- 5) Respondents also mention the "preference of marriage" in relation to statutory provisions: *"I feel that marriage is practical from the aspect of statutory provisions... that from the aspect of these practical things it is better if the two are married..."* (Kamila, 35 years, UC – 4 years, child 2 years). At the same time they query why the state supports marriage and not families as such.

Interpretation of the reasons that lead to unmarried cohabitation between couples with children

The SEPM 2006 survey offered the reasons presented in graph 1, which simultaneously states the ratio of individual reasons.



Source: SEPM 2006

Graph 1. “SEPM 2006” – Unmarried mothers: the reasons why they did not marry

The “motivation for unmarried cohabitation” code originated during the qualitative survey, on the basis of codification of dialogues. This was subsequently codified into smaller units, which are given in the form of individual categories of reasons below (see table 1). With respect to the mentioned reasons, this concerns rationalisation of the situation to a certain degree. In most cases this does not even have to be a conscious decision, but a situation that arises from the relationship itself, chiefly from the opportunity of cohabitation without the need to marry. The influence of the liberal attitude of society to this form of family is clear. Individual traits, the values of individuals and society, as well as religiousness, the social system and also the time we live in, including the circumstances that result in postponing a wedding, are all projected into the life choice of unmarried cohabitation.

Parenthood is preferred over marriage. The dialogues clearly indicate that the reasons are frequently not discussed and this subject, the reason why unmarried couples cohabit in such a relationship, are formed on the basis of dialogues with the researcher. With respect to the fact that this concerns cohabitation of two people, conflicts are also frequent, with regard to the manner of cohabitation and so partners are more likely to avoid this subject. Sometimes they do not have to be aware of any reason, this could concern a decision by one of the partners and adaptation by the other partner who has no problem and states that they are not “worried” about the situation.

Table 1 gives the reasons established within the terms of the qualitative survey. The comparison between the possibilities presented in graph 1 and the reasons established by means of dialogues (Table 1) indicates that conversational partners give

a much more varied range of reasons during dialogues than those offered within the terms of the SEPM 2006 survey. It is also apparent

from the dialogues that, in most cases, there are multiple reasons affecting origin of an unmarried cohabitation relationship.

Table 1. Reasons established by means of dialogues with unmarried couples

REASONS			
External		Internal	
Circumstances	Influence of the environment, social surroundings	Reasons concerning the relationship itself	Personality
pregnancy	defiance against society	fear of change	values
situational obstacles to holding a wedding (expensive weddings)	financially advantageous (expedient UC) – influence of soc. system	relationship uncertain	own experience
other (illness in the family, medical problems)	role of the birth family	testing the relationship	attitude (formality, defiance)
	would not be advantageous	habit	individual traits
	influence of surroundings	partner rejected marriage (disagreement between partners)	feelings
	objection towards interference by authorities in private life		unmarried cohabitation as part of lifestyle
	media influence		personal situation (age, economic conditions, profession)

External reasons

Circumstances

- 1) “Pregnancy”: *“We considered marrying, but we did not marry because my partner did not wish to marry while pregnant, she wants to enjoy her wedding”* (Štěpán, 33 years, UC – 7 years, twins 2 years). These reasons can be linked to circumstances, because two types of pregnancy can be differentiated in this case: pregnancy as an obstacle to holding a wedding – this concerns pregnancy that was planned but not perfectly timed. In the second case this concerns a planned pregnancy, when the intention was to become pregnant and, in the event of pregnancy, to marry after giving birth. Some of those who intended to marry after giving birth changed their opinion and no longer consider marriage important or have other reasons to withdraw from this

intention. Others are already planning the details of their wedding. Subsequent care of the child following birth is also given as a reason to postpone a wedding. Pregnancy was the reason for five couples.

- 2) “Situational obstacles to holding a wedding (expensive wedding, weddings as an extensive investment)”: *“... I simply want a wedding... I don’t want any hoity-toity wedding?... but I want to enjoy my wedding... I simply want everyone to eat well, drink well, a proper wedding... I don’t need to go somewhere and say yes, I just want to enjoy my wedding...”* (Ingrid, 40 years, UC – 10 years, child 7 years, divorced).

In twelve dialogues (this concerned eight couples) “a wedding as a large investment” was given as a reason. If the alternative of a small wedding was mentioned, the possibility of holding a private ceremony,

the dialogues indicated that if it was not possible to realise their ideas the partners would rather not have any wedding at all. When they are able to realise the wedding according to their concept, when they have sufficient funds, they do not see any problem in holding a wedding.

- 3) "Other: medical problems, grave illness in the family, etc. These circumstances include situations when, for example, the woman wanted to marry, but had medical difficulties, then her relative fell seriously ill and she did not see the need for a wedding at this time and then she simply stopped worrying about the situation. Other circumstances could also include "insufficient time" – the following expressions frequently appeared "we didn't have enough time", "there was no time", ... However, circumstances may also lead to a wedding, for example because the sister of one of the respondents married, this led to the unmarried respondent also considering the date of her wedding.

Influence of the environment, social surroundings

- 1) "Defiance against the surroundings": *"I think that we are currently not marrying out of spite because everyone thinks we should marry ..."* (Helena, 39 years, UC – 19 years, children 1 and 4 years).
In their testimonies four respondents mentioned their defiance against their surroundings. This defiance is not directed against the institute of marriage, but actually concerns opposition against the expectations of their surroundings. This is a specific method of "deviation", expression of individuality. This concerned young people, including two who were clearly influenced by their own personalities, difference in thought processes and behaviour compared to others.
- 2) "Financially advantageous (expedient unmarried cohabitation) – influence of the social system": *"We aren't even considered a family. Robert is in the birth certificate and we have arranged payment of maintenance money, I have to do that because otherwise I wouldn't receive anything. Robert officially pays me, a*

trial took place... If there is no money and I want to live with Robert, this is simply more advantageous" (Ingrid, 40 years, UC – 10 years, child 7 years, divorced).

There was only one couple who gave this reason. The woman is divorced and unemployed. With regard to the fact that her child was born before 2008, she had the option of drawing specific advantages arising from pretending to be a self-providing mother. Even now it is considered something more and something that "is advantageous". This couple has arranged maintenance obligations, the partners' permanent address is not the same.

- 3) "Role of the birth family": Divorced parents: *"... one of the issues is that I am from a divorced family... Consequently I don't think that there is the reason I cohabit without marriage, but subconsciously it is possible"* (Helena, 39 years, UC – 19 years, children 1 and 4 years); the same as harmonic cohabitation by parents: *"... my own mother lived with my father for x years... and when my step-brother married they also married – before retiring. So that occurred to me in relation to this..."* (Květa, 55 years, UC – 30 years, divorced, child 23 years).

Even though 15 of the individuals I interviewed have parents who divorced and two have parents who are not married, the birth family was given as a reason for unmarried cohabitation in only seven cases. However, this concerned a reason that respondents believe is kept somewhere in their subconscious, not something they are consciously aware of.

- 4) "There would be no benefits from it": *"Marriage did not look like it would provide us with anything we do not have now..."* (Bedřich, 40 years, UC – 19 years, children 1 and 4 years).
In three cases respondents mentioned that marriage does not provide any advantages and therefore there is no reason to marry.
- 5) "Surroundings": *"... my colleague... who is older, ... I really liked her... told me at work that she and her partner married after x years, when they began dating in their twenties and they married in their fifties, because they were forced to*

for some official reasons... my colleague stated that their relationship changed because of this... reputedly changed a little for the worse" (Helena, 39 years, UC – 19 years, children 1 and 4 years); "... I don't know of any relationship in my immediate surroundings that works normally..." (Renata, 38 years, UC – 12 years, child 8 years).

Example, cases and also the attitudes and opinions of people around them and of people not so close to them, may influence a decision by unmarried couples to either cohabit or marry. The same as friends' negative experience, for example with divorce, positive experiences with unmarried cohabitation may also influence an individual's decision making. The influence of their surroundings was mentioned in 11 dialogues.

- 6) "Opposition against interference by authorities in the person's private life": "We don't like the sense of being bound and it seems as if it is only because of the authorities and society..." (Helena, 39 years, UC – 19 years, children 1 and 4 years).

Only two female respondents stated a negative attitude towards the authorities interfering in their private lives. In one case this concerned a couple who simultaneously declared their defiance against their surroundings and it is typical that this concerns partners who are concerned with minority activities in comparison to others (a specific music band, study of South American cultures, etc.).

- 7) "Influence of the media": "In my opinion unmarried cohabitation is a trend..." (Milena, 35 years, UC – 3 years, divorced, child 3 years).

The influence of the media was clear in only four dialogues. However, we can assume that the media has great influence on the spread of unmarried cohabitation, even though this reason is not mentioned. For example, this concerns presentation of divorce rate statistics, the fall in wedding rates, the trend in unmarried cohabitation, etc.

Internal reasons

Reasons concerning the relationship itself

- 1) "Fear of changes": "... and then it didn't happen, because we said to ourselves, we've been together for four years and so we say: we live together normally and we live happily so why disrupt our lives with a wedding, because, for example I am afraid that if we married he would have greater demands on me or I on him, that our relationship would be different" (Ela, 27 years, UC – 9 years, children 3 and 9 years).

Partly on the basis of their own bad experience and also on the basis of experiences by their surroundings, or simply on the basis of their own conviction, misgivings that the relationship would change to the worse after marriage were mentioned in nine dialogues. This is a feeling that the unmarried couple feel that they care much more for their relationship as it is and that some uncertainty can have a positive influence on the quality of their relationship.

- 2) "Uncertainty about the relationship": "... I didn't want to marry because I did not feel that certain that a marriage would work out, ... I was actually uncertain about the relationship" (Renata, 38 years, UC – 12 years, child 8 years).

In six cases uncertainty about the relationship was mentioned. In two cases this reason transformed during the years and the motivation to cohabit without marriage is now different. In one case this concerned unmarried cohabitation that came about as a result of the fact that the women placed an advert. She met her partner, the father of her child, on the basis of this advert. This relationship has endured for 12 years now and they now don't see any reason to worry about the situation. In the other case this concerned a woman who has cohabited without marriage for 24 years now, however in the beginning she was not absolutely sure about her partner, because he was twice divorced. She is now also in a situation where she does not see the need to worry about marriage. On the contrary, in other

cases there were other reasons that led the partners to cohabit without marriage and they now feel the aforementioned uncertainty about the relationship, which arises from a current situation when problems have occurred between the partners.

- 3) “Testing the relationship”: *“We said that that it was not the right time yet, that we were still young... there is always time for marrying and it is a good idea to consider the issue properly and live with your partner... I wanted to wait, come to know myself and not end up marrying another man after only a year’s relationship...”* (Linda, 31 years, UC – 7, child 2 years).

Testing the relationship was mentioned in only two cases. This could also be considered uncertainty, but there was no trace of uncertainty indicated by the dialogue, this concerns a sort of test of how cohabitation would function.

- 4) “Habit”: *“We simply became accustomed to living like this and we don’t need a wedding...”* (Irena, 31 years, UC – 4 years, child 1 year).

Several years of satisfied unmarried cohabitation can also influence the unmarried couple to remain in this form of cohabitation. Habit was mentioned in seven interviews.

- 5) “My partner refused to marry – disagreement between partners”: Kamil: *“A wedding as such? Well... that could have taken place long ago.”* Moderator: *“And why didn’t it take place?”* Kamil: *“You have to ask Stela about that.”* Stela: *“Because I didn’t want a wedding. But it’s not about me not wanting him and it isn’t about him personally”* (group interview – Kamil, 37 years and Stela – 36 years, UC – 11 years, children 6 and 9 years).

In two cases, when I did not have the opportunity to speak to the men, this situation was also mentioned: *“He actually asked me to marry him once... so I told him he was mad and he hasn’t mentioned it since”* (Věra, 38 years, UC – 4 years, divorced).

“He sometimes makes a crabby remark: ‘You don’t want to marry me anyway.’ He

isn’t against the idea.” (Renata, 38 years, UC – 12 years).

In four cases this concerned women who refused their partner (Věra – divorced, Renata – was uncertain of the relationship, Stela – unmarried cohabitation as part of her lifestyle, Ema – to young – 14 years). This only concerned a man in one case (Robert).

Personality

- 1) “Values”: *“I don’t consider it important. For me these values are elsewhere, not in some wedding, I think that it is more important for a family to function, for children to grow up in a good environment...”* (Oldřich, 31 years, UC – 4 years, child 2 years).

Unmarried couples place particular emphasis on a happy family, on children, not on the form of the relationship. Two men specifically gave values as a reason, where they stressed a good quality relationship and marriage does not have such a value for them.

- 2) “Experience = disappointment in a previous relationship”: *“... I’ve been married twice and I’m a little careful now, I don’t want to rush into anything...”* (Luboš, 45 years, UC – 3 years, 3 years, twice divorced).

Only five respondents out of ten divorcees mentioned disappointment in a previous relationship as a reason. This concerns an experience that can be related to the apprehension that a relationship will change for the worse. Consequently this concerns choosing unmarried cohabitation as a result of a certain degree of caution. However, it cannot be applied to all divorcees, because some divorcees are willing to marry repeatedly.

- 3) “Attitudes = formality, defiance”: *“The reason to marry would mean fulfilment of something, some convention, tradition, something that your family or society expects of you. I don’t feel this”* (Bedřich, 40 years, UC – 19 years, children 1 and 4 years).

Unmarried couples mention tradition, the expectations of their surroundings in relation to marriage as a formality. Even though they behave untraditionally in

this area, there is a clear discrepancy in their attitude to traditions, because, in practically all the cases, they give their child the father's surname. In response to why they did not give the child the mother's surname, which could seem more practical, they respond with the words "tradition", "habit". In spite of the fact that they perceive marriage as unnecessary, a formality, this statement applies to the present because in the future they accept this formality in their lives.

- 4) "Individual traits": *"Maybe its an insistent attempt to do things my way, and this means differently to others"* (Bedřich, 40 years, UC – 19 years, children 1 and 4 years).

Seven dialogues clearly showed the influence of personality, an individual view of life, of the world. In three cases this concerned entrepreneurs, who mentioned that they have a "freelance profession" and unmarried cohabitation is an expression of their free decision and their free status to them. They are in this relationship by their decision, without foreign intervention. At the same time they consider it an obligation, not something they can freely walk away from. However, the obligation is not something enforced "from the outside" but again their own free decision.

- 5) "Feelings": *"The younger I was the more the idea of a wedding terrified me... that I would have to organise it, that I would have to say something and also what if I didn't want to, what If I got up in the morning and don't feel like saying anything that day..."* (Naďa, 29 years, UC – 8 years, children 1 and 6 years); *"... I don't feel like it..."* (Renata, 38 years, UC – 12 years, child 8 years).

Three women and one man linked their choice of unmarried cohabitation to feelings. At the same time it is possible that feelings can have a great influence on the subsequent choice to marry. This concerns a momentary state, which is not unchanging.

- 6) "Unmarried cohabitation as part of a lifestyle": *"... I simply have a personality like that... if you look at this tree for example (it is April and there is Christmas*

tree in the room, bare of any pine needles and there are corks hanging from it instead of decorations) ... well simply... I like being different..." (Stela, 36 years, UC – 11 years, children 6 and 9 years).

Lifestyle is clear as an influence from four dialogues, a lifestyle that is different to others in specific areas and unconventional.

- 7) "Personal situation = age, economic conditions, profession": *"... but after working at a court, where you see that it isn't worth the problems, if we happen to break up... dragging it through the courts..."* (Renata, 38 years, UC – 12 years, child 8 years).

Economic situation can also include unemployment, which simultaneously affects the choice of unmarried cohabitation from the aspect of expedience (one couple), but in one case the influence of employment was also clear. The respondent worked at the custodial department at a court of law and this influenced not only her choice to cohabit without marriage as opposed to marrying, but also her choice of surname for her child, which was given its mother's surname (experience in cases when parents disputed the child's surname, and in the event that her relationship breaks up she does not wish to undergo this). In one case age was also given, in relation to testing the relationship.

DISCUSSION

Unmarried cohabitation has many forms, from something that has replaced "dating" and is only of short duration, to long-term unmarried cohabitation. This research was only realised with unmarried couples, where it can be considered an alternative to marriage, with children present and the future of these relationships is open. For two couples this was cohabitation that they considered in advance, that they planned and in the future they plan on continuing unmarried cohabitation. In three cases this concerned unmarried cohabitation with the participants planning on marrying after the birth of their child (in these cases the wedding was only postponed). Six couples did not plan unmarried cohabitation, this

situation arose from the relationship itself and the issue of a wedding is open in the future (however not within a specific time period). For six couples this was a situation that is mentioned by Šmolka (2004), when partners have a different concept of their relationship and of its future, when they have agreed on a specific compromise, but they have different concepts of the form of the relationship and of planning the future. In these cases this concerned a planned pregnancy, only in four cases did this concern unplanned parenthood during unmarried cohabitation. These couples also do not preclude the possibility of a wedding in the future. In spite of the fact that the questioned couples cohabit without marriage and bring up their children in this relationship, it is clear from the dialogues that this really concerns a situation that arose from the relationship itself, which is what Giddens (1999) writes about, and if the conclusions of the research are generalised, unmarried cohabitation could be considered a temporary phase before marriage, as stated by Hamplová and Pikálková (2002).

The reasons for choosing unmarried cohabitation in a relationship are various depending on age and education. In most cases it is not possible to determine for which group of people a specific reason is characteristic. Only the reason of "influence of the birth family" can be expected by those whose parents are divorced or live as an unmarried couple, while previous experience is a characteristic reason for those who have already been married. Consequently, there are only two reasons that can be linked to a specific group of people, however, not even in this case is this the rule, because this reason was not given by all those it concerned. On the basis of the dialogues there is no apparent difference between attitudes and reasons given by women and attitudes and reasons given by men. However, an interesting finding was that in this research sample it was the women who determined the form of the relationship. The man's dominance over the woman apparent in only in one case, in this case the woman would have chosen to marry, but the man chose unmarried cohabitation. It was clear from nearly all dialogues that men would marry their partners, if it was important to them, if they asked to marry: *"If it was important for Helena, if she wished to marry..."*, *"... that my*

partner did not wish to marry...", *"... she is not pressuring me in this direction..."* Women state that their partner would marry them but they either do not consider it necessary, or they do not wish to marry: *"... he would marry me of course, but I don't feel like marrying..."*, *"I stated in the beginning that I certainly do not wish to marry..."* It may also be that there is an expectation that the man will propose marriage in some cases. However, it is possible that this is a specific manner of misunderstanding between men and women.

With regard to attitude concerning unmarried cohabitation, unmarried couples perceive it chiefly as an alternative to marriage, with the only difference being in that a wedding has not taken place and that the legal consequences arising from marriage do not affect them. In spite of the fact that parents consider it a problem for children born into a relationship in which an unmarried couple cohabits, something that must be explained to the child, they do not deem it so important that they need to marry. They perceive the non-standard and inaccurate naming of their position, roles, for their surroundings to be a serious problem. Spouse/partner is not satisfactory, archaic and unusual, the most frequently used identification is husband and wife, even though unmarried couples feel a specific inadequacy in this term compared to the position they adopt. They do not feel pressure from society in relation to their method of cohabitation and simultaneously perceive this form of relationship to be a certain trend. They consider marriage a formality, in spite of the fact that they are aware of its significance and are aware of it as a tradition. In spite of the fact that they behave untraditionally with regard to the form of their relationship, when choosing their child's surname their choice is traditional (they give the father's surname). In response to the question "why did you give your child its father's surname?" they respond it is habit, tradition. They query why the state supports marriage and not the family as such, when their families work better than some marriages. They do not perceive marriage a brake in the event of that their relationship potentially breaks up, this role is chiefly fulfilled by their child, which would be affected by their decision.

Graph 1 gives the reasons why women did not marry on the basis of the SEPM 2006 survey. In this case this concerned closed-ended questions, which offered this range of responses. Table 1 gives the reasons that arose from the realised dialogues. A wider range of reasons appeared in the dialogues than was offered by the SEPM 2006 survey. With regard to representation of the individual categories, the most frequently mentioned internal reason, in relation to the choosing unmarried cohabitation, was “formality”, “influence by my surroundings” was the most frequently mentioned exterior reason. The most infrequent reasons were “uncertainty about the relationship” and “testing the relationship”. The “situational obstacles to holding a wedding (expensive wedding)” category provided the most interesting interpretation, whereas when the alternative of a wedding with only two witnesses was mentioned, the respondents argued that they have their own concept and if they are unable to realise this due to financial difficulties, they will postpone their wedding until they are able to realise it in the form they imagine. Only one couple cohabitated without marriage for reasons of expedience, giving a reason in the “financially advantageous” category. However, this concerned a family where the child was born before 2008 and consequently it was possible for the mother to pretend to be a self-providing mother and draw various benefits. The “influence of the birth family” reason was considered on a subconscious level, when respondents were not consciously aware of this reason, but accept a certain degree of influence. Interior reasons are related to attitudes, values and experience and also with personal situation. The influence of employment at the custodial department of a court of law on both the choice of unmarried cohabitation and also the choice of the child’s surname was interesting.

CONCLUSION

The submitted text provides partial conclusions from qualitative research, which focused on analysis of a social phenomenon, which is related to social risks. It follows onto quantitative research related to unmarried cohabitation and extramarital fertility, par-

ticularly the selective Social and Economic Conditions of Motherhood (SEPM 2006) survey. This concerns research designed as multiple case study of unmarried women and men, who bring up a child together, with both of them being the child’s biological parents. The material obtained by means of the qualitative research provides a sufficient quantity of information, which indicates the conclusion that unmarried cohabitation for those who live like this is chiefly something that “simply happened”, usually unintentionally and as a result of the option of cohabitation without the need to marry. Unmarried cohabitation of couples with children as a form of relationship spreads on the basis of various circumstances, as a result of the benevolence of society, when parenthood is no longer conditional to marriage. Unmarried people do not worry about the issue of their choice of the form of their cohabitation. Initially the reasons why they chose this form of cohabitation were not communicated in most cases. The established reasons are rationalisation of their current situation. Only a small number choose unmarried cohabitation with children born to the relationship for specific or pragmatic reasons. This is frequently simply a chain of random events. The SEPM 2006 survey indicates that unmarried mothers live in such relationships because they consider marriage simply a formality. On the basis of my realised qualitative research I do not consider this connection to be wholly relevant, because the people I realised dialogues with considered marriage a formal matter, where this would concern an act between the partners and the state, but simultaneously all parties considered marriage in the future. In response to the question of how they imagine an ideal life with their partner they responded: “first of all live together and then marry.” Reasons that could lead to marriage and which were given by the unmarried couples were practical, legal and equally romantic ideas. They consider their manner of life an alternative to marriage, which is entitled to its existence. It is clear from all the dialogues that there is not only one reason for unmarried cohabitation, with children being brought up in this relationship, (apart from the reason of “pregnancy”, when the wedding was simply postponed – however it is not certain that the wedding will actually take place).

It can be assumed that couples cohabiting without marriage will become more usual, widespread and long-term, that as a result of influence of specific circumstances people will seek our alternatives to married cohabitation for themselves. With regard to the configuration of social and legal terms

and conditions for marriage and unmarried cohabitation, marriage will probably not be replaced by unmarried cohabitation. Unmarried couples state that it is these conditions that lead them to consider a wedding in the future.

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