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## Adjusting to Cultural and Religious Differences in Vojvodinian Ethnic Intermarriages: A Gendered Perspective

This paper explores the dynamics of cultural and religious adjustment in intermarriages among women from national minority and majority groups in Vojvodina, a multicultural northern province of Serbia. Drawing on twenty interviews with women from the Hungarian, Slovak, Romanian minority communities, and the Serbian majority, the study delves into the complex process of navigating intercultural unions. It underscores the influence of patriarchal values on these women as they adapt to their partners' cultural and religious backgrounds. Employing intersectionality as its theoretical framework, the research examines how various facets of a woman's identity—gender, ethnicity, culture—intersect and impact their experiences in intermarriages. Furthermore, the study leverages *acculturation theory* to investigate how individuals from differing cultural backgrounds adjust and adapt upon encountering another culture, offering insights into the adjustment processes of minority and majority women to their partners' ethnic and religious backgrounds. The findings reveal a spectrum of adjustment levels between minority and majority women. Minority women often fully immerse themselves in their partners' culture and religion, adopting new practices and customs and abandoning their own. Conversely, majority women tend to assimilate to a lesser degree, particularly favoring the use of the majority language at home, despite being in culturally mixed marriages. The research also uncovers that these intermarriages are viewed as a means of cultural and community bridging, with women from both minority and majority groups seeing their unions as opportunities to foster understanding and connection between their respective communities. This perspective not only accentuates the personal adjustments they undertake but also underscores the broader social implications of their marriages. By examining the experiences of these women, the paper contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the complexities of cultural and religious adjustments in intermarriages from a gender perspective. It illuminates the role of gender and power dynamics in such relationships and provides insights into the potential of these unions to promote intercultural harmony and assimilation patterns in a diverse society like Vojvodina.

### Curriculum Vitae:

Karolina Lendák-Kabók, PhD holds an Assistant Professorship at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Novi Sad, Serbia. She earned her BA (2010) and MA (2012) degrees at the Faculty of Law and her PhD in Gender Studies (2019) at the Center for Gender Studies, University of Novi Sad, Serbia. She was the coordinator of the University Centre for Interdisciplinary and Multidisciplinary Studies and Research – UCIMSI in the October 2021 to September 2022 period when she stepped down to start her Maria Skłodowska-Curie Postdoctoral Fellowship (2022-2024). The title of the MSCA PF is Intermarriages and Ethnic Identity (IMEI). The focus of her research is the position of ethnic minorities, language barrier,

gender differences in academia and ethnic intermarriages. She published a book titled: *Ethnic Minorities in Serbian Academia – the Role of Gender and Language Barrier*, Palgrave Macmillian (2022). She edited a book of essays of ethnic minority Hungarian women living in Serbia titled: *Üvegplafon?* (Eng. title: *Glass ceiling?*), Forum 2020. Karolina was awarded the ELTE Promising Researcher Award (2023), “Anđelka Milić“ Award for enhancing gender equality at the University of Novi Sad (2022), and the Crystal Ball Award (2017) for an outstanding scientific contribution of a young scholar. In 2014, she received a “National Excellence” scholarship in Hungary and was part of the Hungarian three-year-long “Collegium Talentum” research scholarship program (2013 – 2016) for gifted ethnic Hungarian students living outside the Hungarian border. She was a visiting researcher at the Central European University (Budapest, Hungary) in 2015, at the University of Sydney (Australia) in 2016, at the Université Paris-Est Créteil (Paris, France) in 2018 and the at University of Lausanne (Switzerland) also in 2018, at the Purdue University (USA) in October 2021 and at the University of Victoria (Canada) February-March 2024. She was an invited speaker at the Sociology Department, Graduate School of Letters, Kyoto University, Japan in March, 2019. In 2019 during the winter semester, she was an external researcher at ELTE, Faculty of Social Sciences, Budapest, Hungary with a scholarship awarded by the “Délvidékért Kiss” Fund. She authored or co-authored more than 40 journal and/or conference papers. Karolina is a mother of three underaged children.