



The Sociology of Interamrriages

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Defining intermarriages

- Marriage:
 - **a long-term relationship** with a person who shares similar values, norms, lifestyles, leisure activities, and tastes;
 - uses socioeconomic resources to ensure the well-being of the family.
- Marriages can be culturally homogamous or exogamous
 - **Homogamous** - less cultural tension;
 - **Exogamous** - manifold cultural challenges.
- Exogamous marriages (or intermarriages) involve partners of different nationalities, religious affiliations, ethnic and/or racial origins.
- Historically, intermarriage was banned in some societies, and in many others, it remains controversial even now.
- An active space that **disrupts and challenges social norms** (Rodriguez-Garcia 2015).
- **Divorce rates higher** for mixed couples due to:
 - socioeconomic differences (Goldstein and Harknett 2006),
 - cultural differences (Kalmijn, De Graaf, & Janssen 2005)
 - disagreements within the family, i.e. non-acceptance of the spouse's family (Milewski and Kulu 2014).



Two strands of intermarriages in Europe

Minority groups in Europe

- **Migrants** - (a group formed by the decisions of individuals and families to leave their original homelands and emigrate to another society [Kymlicka 2001, 31]).
- **National minorities** - (a group that formed complete and functioning societies in their historic homeland prior to being incorporated into a larger state [Kymlicka 2001, 23])
- Bringing together these two strands presents challenges as the sociocultural backgrounds of the latter groups are profoundly different.
- (1) In the case of national minorities and majorities, there exists a dominant nation and national minorities who have historically lived together and may share a common heritage through intermarriage (this is the most common situation in Central and Eastern Europe).
- (2) In the case of intermarriage involving migrants, there is a nation and community (host society) into which migrants (as newcomers) would like to enter, and intermarriage is one of the ‘entry cards’ (this is the case mainly, but not exclusively in Western Europe).



Intermarriages in Europe

- Analysis of the literature on intermarriage in Europe, both between migrants and members of the host society and national minorities and majorities, can largely be classified around three themes:
- (a) the effect intermarriage has in society;
- (b) the tensions it causes for society and families; and,
- (c) gender differences in intermarriage



Migration and intermarriage



Intermarriage and society

• *Integrationist view*

- Migrant (minority) populations can integrate into structures and institutions or build social networks through marriages with members of the majority population (Song 2009)
- There is an “inverse” or “bidirectional” integration outcome for intermarried couples, where the majority partner becomes oriented toward the sociocultural world of the immigrant spouse, or where the native member of the couple benefits from the cultural and structural integration of their immigrant partner (e.g., in the area of language acquisition, social networks, or labour incorporation).



Tensions in the society

- "Cultural badges" such as race, ethnicity, education, and occupation are highlighted by potential spouses as their qualities in marriage (Kalmijn 1998).
- Mixed marriages can also become a **scene of conflict between spouses** (Rodríguez-García, Solana-Solana and Lubbers 2016)
- A recent study on intermarriage in three European counties with different religious backgrounds (immigrant Muslim and European Christian) **highlights the continuing presence of social barriers.**
- The family of the host society's partner **may fear a decline in 'social prestige'** if a Muslim spouse joins the family, revealing the complex, intertwined social categories of class and ethnic background (Cerchiaro 2022).



Gender differences

- Research on intermarriage in Finland: **intermarried immigrant women** from the former Soviet Union **are more successful in accessing Finnish mainstream society** than immigrant women who are not intermarried or are single (Jääskeläinen 2003, 48).
- Klein (2001) argues that the frequency of intermarriage in Germany is relatively low and that **German males do not marry into non-majority groups of society** living in Germany as much as German females do (mostly with Turkish immigrants).
- Cerhchiaro (2022) argues in his study of intermarriage in Belgium, France, and Italy that gender differences are relevant - **gender represents a significant transversal variable** since members of the majority group in all three countries particularly oppose partnerships when the Muslim partner is the man rather than the woman (Cerchiaro 2022, 342).



National minorities and intermarriages in CEE region



Intermarriage and society

- *Minority community erosion*
- The CEE region differs from migrant-receiving countries in many ways.
- The creation and break up of empires (such as the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Soviet Union, and the Yugoslav Federation) created national minorities and majorities across the region, potentially generating tension between partners of different ethnicities (Dumănescu 2017).
- Kiss (2016) argues that in Transylvania, **members of ethnically mixed couples are constantly forced to choose between two ethnically marked identities**
- Due to the social power asymmetry between majorities and minorities, the choice often gravitates towards the majority identity, which results in ethnic minority group erosion and endangers ethnocultural reproduction (ibid)



Social and family tensions

- A 1967 study conducted in Yugoslavia **showed how respondents quickly rejected members of other ethnic groups as possible spouses** (Burić 2020).
- Hărăguș (2017), in her study of mixed marriages in Transylvania (Romania): tensions inevitably occur between the families of potential spouses.
- Brubaker et al. (2018) observed similar tensions in Cluj-Napoca (Romania), where heated arguments arise between couples when they discuss political issues concerning the spouses' respective nations.
- Acculturation and assimilation of the minority spouse (Ladancsik 2020).
- Questions like:
 - choosing a name, religion and the language of the child's education.



Gender differences

- In the former Yugoslavia, a sociological survey of interethnic **marriages revealed more exogamy among men than women within conservative, traditional ethnic communities**, such as Serbian, Turkish, Macedonian, Montenegrin, Romanian, and Albanian ones, with the exception of the Italian sub-group (Petrović 1985, 80).
- Sokolovska (2008) concludes that ethnically heterogeneous marriages were concluded on the territory of Vojvodina by all ethnic groups in the period from 1956 to 2004, mainly involving Serb women, which might be interpreted as a sign of the social integration of the minority population.
- Regarding patriarchal patterns, Vučković (2004) argues that in a **traditional environment in the Balkans, when women enter intermarriage they are more likely than men to abandon their native language** - thus, they accommodate their husband's traditional values.
- However, **some ethnic group boundaries seem to be more rigid**; an ethnological survey of interethnic marriages in Bulgaria demonstrated that women from minority groups hardly ever marry outside their ethnic group (Ilić, according to Pašova 2010).



Identity building patterns of „mixedness“

- People of mixed origin often encounter different prejudices (Törngren, Irastorza and Rodríguez-García 2019), which puts them in a disadvantageous position.
- Children born in intermarriages are often not identified as belonging to one ethnic group, while cultural specificity is diminished (Harris and Sim 2002) – they tend not to be accepted in the minority community (Öllös, 2012)
- Supranational identities (like the Yugoslav one) was to ‚hide‘ mixed origin - free of ethnic and class labels (Tóth 2019).



Intermarriages in the lights of statistics: case study of Vojvodina (Serbia)



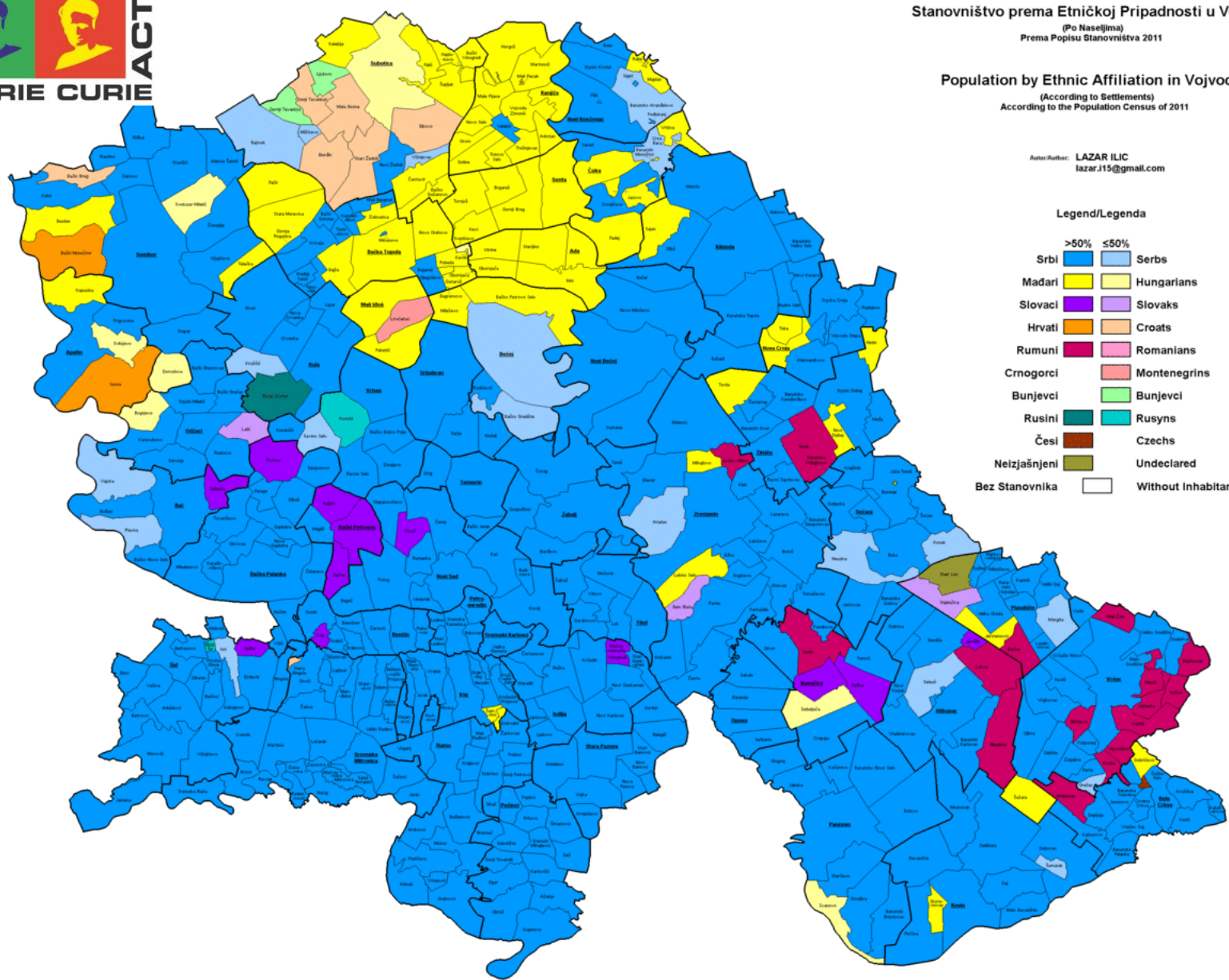
Stanovništvo prema Etničkoj Pripadnosti u Vojvodini
(Po Naseeljima)
Prema Popisu Stanovništva 2011

Population by Ethnic Affiliation in Vojvodina
(According to Settlements)
According to the Population Census of 2011

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Legend/Legenda

>50%	≤50%
Srbi	Serbs
Mađari	Hungarians
Slovaci	Slovaks
Hrvati	Croats
Rumuni	Romanians
Crnogorci	Montenegrins
Bunjevci	Bunjevci
Rusini	Rusyns
Česi	Czechs
Neizjašnjeni	Undeclared
Bez Stanovnika	Without Inhabitants



Vojvodina's population 1953-2022

	1953		1961		1971		1981		1991		2002		2011		2022	
Total	1698 640	100 %	1854 971	100 %	1952 533	100 %	2034 772	100 %	2012 517	100 %	2031 992	100 %	1931 809	100 %	1740 230	100 %
Serb	8655 38	51,0 %	1017 713	54,9 %	1089 132	55,8 %	1107 375	54,4 %	1151 353	57,2 %	1321 807	65,0 %	1289 635	66,8 %	1190 785	68,4 %
Hungarian	4351 79	25,6 %	4425 60	23,9 %	4238 66	21,7 %	3853 56	18,9 %	3409 46	16,9 %	2902 07	14,3 %	2511 36	13,0 %	1823 21	10,5 %
Slovak	7115 3	4,2 %	7283 0	3,9 %	7279 5	3,7 %	6954 9	3,4 %	6394 1	3,2 %	5663 7	2,8 %	5032 1	2,6 %	3980 7	2,3 %
Romanian	5721 8	3,4 %	5725 9	3,1 %	5298 7	2,7 %	4728 9	2,3 %	3883 2	1,9 %	3041 9	1,5 %	2541 0	1,3 %	1959 5	1,1 %
Yugoslav	1053 7	0,6 %	3174	0,2 %	4692 8	2,4 %	1722 19	8,5 %	1688 59	8,4 %	4988 1	2,5 %	1217 6	0,6 %	1243 8	0,7 %



Quantitative

- Three national minority groups in focus: Hungarians, Slovaks and Romanians
- We will examine the factors that influence exogamy based on statistical data over a twenty-year time frame, from 2002 to 2021, by presenting statistical indicators of mixed marriages for the territory of Vojvodina.
- We will also present the data analysis for six municipalities of particular interest for our abovementioned ethnic groups as they are autochthonous minorities with a considerable size in the municipalities of our focus.
- Namely: Novi Sad (capital of Vojvodina), Albinuar - Vršac (Romanians), Petrovac – Stara Pazova (Slovaks), Senta – Zrenjanin (Hungarians)



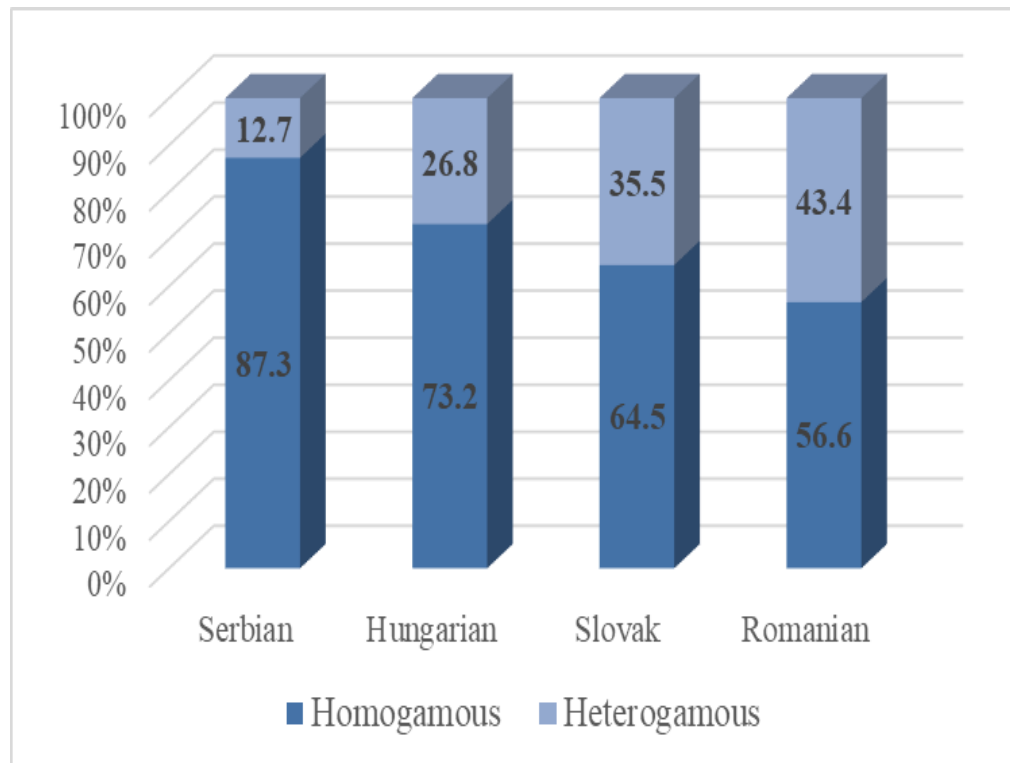
Marriage statistics in Vojvodina

- Over the last twenty years, between 2002 and 2021, the number of people marrying and, within that, the number of people marrying a spouse of a different nationality, has evolved as follows:
 - 272 676 people of Serb nationality married, of whom 33 892, or **12.4%**, chose a spouse of another nationality;
 - 47,967 ethnic Hungarians got married, of whom 14,397, or **30 %** chose a partner of another nationality;
 - 8387 marriages where a spouse was a Slovak, of whom 3467, or **41.3 %** chose a different nationality;
 - 4 842 marriages of Romanians, of whom 2 232, or **46.1%**, chose a spouse of another nationality.

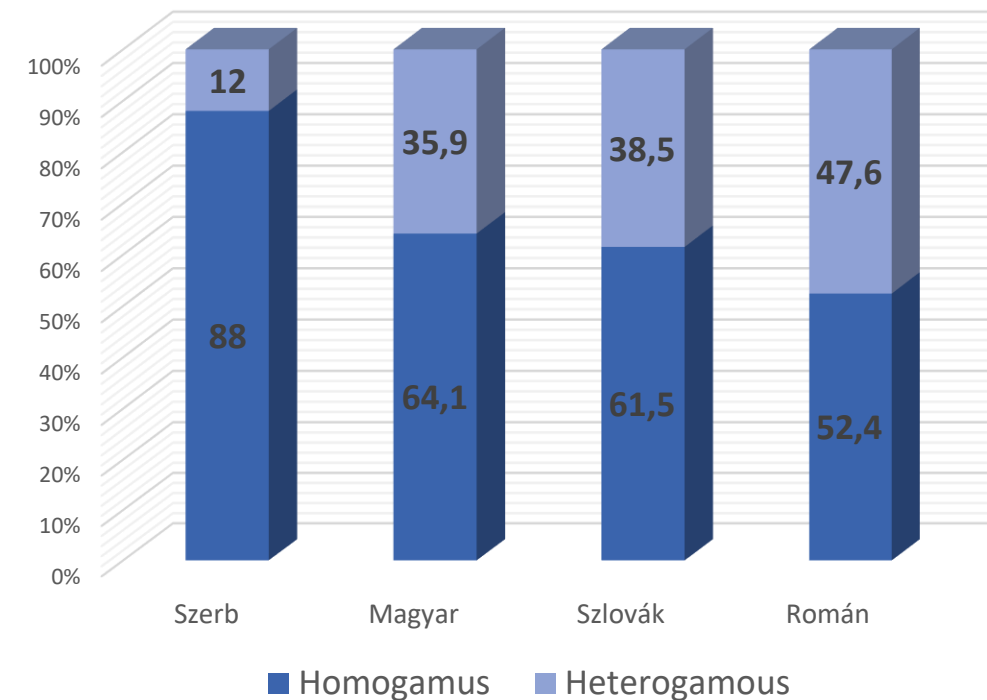


Gender perspective of mixed marriages

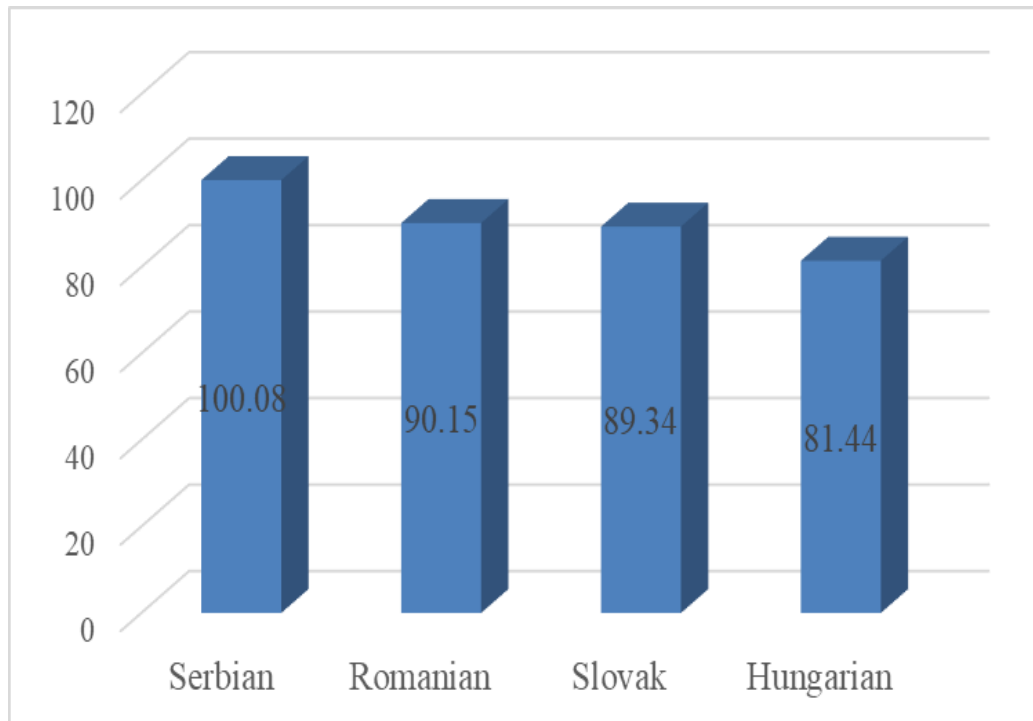
Homogamous and heterogamous choice of a partner for men by nationality: 2002-2021



Homogamous and heterogamous choice for a partner for women by nationality: 2002-2021



Ethnocultural reproduction



In the case of Serbs, a value above 100 means that there will be more children of Serb nationality than the number of children born to Serb mothers, according to the statistics. This is possible due to the assimilation of other nationalities into the majority population through mixed marriages.

The ethnocultural reproductive loss is roughly the same for Romanians and Slovaks, while it is much lower for Hungarians. This is due to the relatively high proportion of women in mixed marriages and their ethnocultural reproduction rate, at only 7.7%.

This means that women who enter mixed marriages can pass on their national identity to their children at such a rate.



Qualitative (1)

- In total, **60 interviews** were conducted with mixed couples and persons in mixed marriages in 6 municipalities in Vojvodina, namely:
 - Hungarian mixed marriages: Senta (4 couples) and Zrenjanin (4 couples) - 16 interviewees (8 couples)
 - Slovak mixed marriages: Bački Petrovac (3 couples) and Stara Pazova (3 couples) - 12 interviewees (6 couples)
 - Romanian mixed marriages: Alibunar (3 couples) and Vršac (3 couples) - 12 interviewees (6 couples)
- ***Mandatory criteria within selection:***
 - only mixed Hungarian/Slovakian/Romanian -majority couples
 - the family has at least one child aged



Qualitative (2)

- **Focus groups**
 - Participants: aged 18+, both girls and boys, finishing secondary school in Serbian or Hungarian, from a mixed Hungarian-Serbian marriage
 - Locations:
 - Novi Sad (6 participants - 3 boys, 3 girls)
 - Senta (5 participants – 3 girls, 2 boys)



Interviews

- Respecting both cultures within the marital union
- Respecting both religion – Catholics/Protestants and Orthodox
- Feeling alienated by the minority community
- Minority identity is hard to maintain within their children
- Theory of language ideology – monolingual nationalism vs polyglot nationalism
- Gender differences - the majority partner cannot help the children, if they would attend school in the minority language
- Some political arguments – pro-Russian majority partners – while the minority partners are not



Focus groups (1)

- Novi Sad focus group - 4/6 parents were divorced
- **Friendships:**
 - They can't make friends with Serbs because they don't understand the minority world, and Serbs never initiate friendship with them.
 - However, once they do make friends, they can count on their Serbian friends much more than the Hungarians (who shy away from problems).
- **Language:**
 - What they also said is that they are bothered when they are "explained" on the street or lectured to speak Serbian.
- **Religion:**
 - They have a great respect for the orthodox religion, celebrating all religious holidays with their extended family.
 - But on those occasions they have to be careful to speak Serbian with their brothers and sisters, because that is the expectation. Serb parents are very insistent that they attend religious celebrations - but sometimes it is difficult for them because they feel obliged to do so.



Focus groups (2)

- **Anthem:**

- None of the six know the Hungarian national anthem, but they know and love Serbian.
- They say it is the influence of the school, because they start every school celebration with the Serbian anthem and recently they have started the school year with the anthem.

- **Kin-state:**

- They don't feel any connection to the Hungarian nation – when they visit Hungary. Some of them know Hungarian history, others don't - but they feel nothing when they visit Hungary and encounter historical symbols.
- They are alienated from their Hungarian counterparts, they cannot identify with them, they do not think they understand their world or why they speak with an accent. It is their lack of acceptance that causes this aversion.



Concluding remarks (1)

Vojvodina has traditionally had a high rate of mixed marriages, even in the former Yugoslavia, and this rate has not decreased significantly during the nationalist conflicts and events of the 1990s.

Thus, inter-country conflicts have not significantly changed the factors influencing mixed marriages at the micro level of society.

One aspect of this is that minorities often intermarry, not only with members of the majority nation.

The prevalence of mixed marriages is higher for ethnic groups in a dispersed situation, which can be explained by the characteristics of the marriage market and their constraining effect.

Other factors influencing this are the size of the community and the proportion of the community in the total population.



Concluding remarks (2)

We can say that women are more likely to intermarry than men.

This may be due to the higher social prestige of majority nationality husbands, but our research cannot prove this.

Cultural reproduction is symmetric if the husband belongs to a national minority, whereas if the wife belongs to a national minority, ethnocultural reproduction becomes asymmetric towards the majority nation.



Concluding remarks – What is missing?

- The literature addresses:
 - interracial marriages or marriages between immigrants and natives
 - the United States or Western European countries.
 - groups with low socioeconomic status – changes in social status – cultural adaptability
- Intermarriages between majority and national minority population are prominent, mainly in the CEE region, but scattered and less researched.
- There is a need:
 - Comprehensive focus on intermarriages in CEE
 - Depicting the conflicts within intermarriages;
 - Explaining acculturation or even assimilation patterns from a gender perspective;
 - Mothers' role in intermarriages – cultural transmission;
 - Presenting the identity patterns of generations from mixed marriages;
 - Policy recommendations – how to approach the question of education in intermarried families.



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Thank you for your kind
attention! Questions? 😊

