GROUP IDENTITY AND ITS IMPORTANCE IN CREATING MIXED MARRIAGES

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Abstract: The aim of the presented study is to determine the importance of group identity in creating mixed marriages. We will examine what is the attitude to belonging to a group when choosing a spouse, which categories people consider important when grouping partners and themselves into particular groups and which groups they consider recommended or unacceptable in their marital preferences and why. We will try to answer these questions on the basis of a questionnaire survey realized among the inhabitants of Slovak town Prievidza. The research results demonstrated the importance of group identity when choosing a partner, showing the preference of a partner from the same or a similar group, also suggesting the existence of specific groups which the respondents strongly oppose to in partner preferences.

Keywords: binary oppositions, identity, group, social category, mixed marriage, choice of a partner.

1 Introduction

In the Anglo-Saxon, Francophone, and also in the domestic Slovak scholarly literature, several terms are used to denote a mixed marriage: "international", "intercultural", "bi-cultural", "transcultural" marriage, or "marriage with a foreigner". A mixed marriage is a marriage where partners come from different ethnic, religious, racial, linguistic, social, cultural, geographic or political/economic settings. A common identifying feature of all of these cases is crossing of boundaries between different groups. Mixed marriage is therefore to be seen not only as a term of a commonly used language or legal terminology, but above all as a social category reflecting normative and moral aspects of individual's life within the group as well as mutual relations between two or more groups.

The aim of the study is to identify the importance of group identity (sense of belonging to a particular group or groups, conformity with its values) when creating mixed marriages or when thinking about them. In the empirical part, we will try to find out what is the attitude to belonging to groups when choosing a spouse, which categories (e.g. ethnicity, religiosity, nationality) people consider important when grouping partners and themselves into particular groups and which groups they consider appropriate and recommended and, on the contrary, unacceptable in their marital preferences and why. We will try to answer these questions on the basis of qualitative and quantitative questionnaire survey among the inhabitants of Prievidza – a town situated in the west part of Slovakia.

2 Theoretical background

2.1 Research of mixed marriages

Mixed marriages are most often studied as a consequence of a contact and spatial proximity to another group and its members. They occur in cases of immediate proximity to different groups, with the greatest intensity of their occurrence being usually recorded in mixed environments or at the borders of groups – in, so called, contact areas (e.g. near the state border). Migration processes are another factors enhancing contacts and crossing borders between groups of different types. On the American continent, the concept of mixed marriages has traditionally been based on the racial difference of partners. "The Interracial Marriage: Expectations and Realities" published by I. R. Stuart and L. E. Abta (1973) or "Black/white interracial marriage trends, 1820-2000" by A. Gullickson (2006) are examples of this type of works. Interest in this phenomenon in the USA was also focused on its connection to European immigration, i.e. marriages between Americans and foreigners. On the European continent, the cultural aspect is considered to be the main barrier to mixed marriages. Interest in this issue was therefore

significant in countries with an ethnically and religiously heterogeneous native population and states with a rich immigration history, such as the United Kingdom, France, Germany and the Netherlands. Mixed marriages were perceived in this context as an assimilation index, an identifier of migrant integration and social distance between groups. These topics are discussed in the works of M. Song (2009) and co-authors D. Furtado and T. Song (2015). The context of immigration and mixed marriages in the post war period is addressed by L. Lucassen and CH. Laarman (2009). The analysis of mixed marriages with foreigners in European countries in the perspective of current statistical data is found in the work of G. Lanzieri (2012: 1-4). The question of mixed marriages of the domestic population and migrant partners on the European continent is examined in the publication "Sociology of Mixedness. From amorous mixedness to social and cultural mixedness" by G. Varro (2003). The study by N. Milewski and H. Kulu (2014) and the authors T. Niedomysl, J. Osth and M. Van Ham (2010) or S. Carol (2016) deal with this phenomenon in the countries of Western Europe, particularly in France, Germany or Sweden.

In Slovakia, which can be perceived as a traditionally emigrant country with a low number of immigrants in its territory, the interest in mixed marriages has traditionally been related to local endogamy but also to ethnically and confessionally mixed marriages in culturally diverse regions. It was mainly about examining the relationship of majority to traditional national and religious minorities, but also between minorities. Among these works we can mention, for example, studies by L. Fónadová and T. Katrňák (2016), J. Majo (2011), Ľ. Kráľová (1995), Z. Beňušková (1997), A. Mann (1990), Letavajová (2015) and P. Šoltés (2009).

2.2 Endogamous preferences when selecting a partner

It is obvious that marriage is more than a relationship between two people, it is a relationship between two or more groups and it is related to their mutual status and position. When choosing a spouse the desired pattern of behaviour is introduced through group identification. Relationship between groups is influenced by natural fixation on its own group, its highlighting and preference, and vice versa, the distance and rejection of a different group. Each group ensures that its members create only such relationships that do not harm it, in particular its internal coherence and homogeneity. It is therefore logical that the traditional and dominant model in marital preferences is to select a partner from the same group, referred to as endogamy (or homogamy). The term endogamy and its opposite exogamy (preference for a partner outside his group) were introduced into social sciences by Scottish ethnologist J. F. McLennan. In his work "The Primitive marriage" (1865) he used these terms in relation to kinship groups. Later on, this perception was extended to belonging to other types of groups. An in-depth study of mate selection was carried out by A. Girard (1964), M. Bozon and F. Héran (2006), who pointed out that most people do not choose their partner accidentally, but according to principles based on similarity. By choosing a partner with the same patterns of behaviour, worldview, values, habits or knowledge, individuals develop not only the cultural capital of the group, but they also maintain and improve their economic resources (Gabura 2012, Kalmijn 1998).

Crossing of the boundaries of the group by creating a mixed marriage was rare in the past. The most common reason why mixed marriages were not preferred in most communities was not only cultural differences but also different statuses between groups. D. Bensimon and F. Lautman (1974: 17-40) perceive mixed marriages in this context as an expression of group hostility to the environment and as betrayal of individuals towards their own group. Choosing a suitable partner that is in line with group preferences is realized by the community

through various forms of influence or pressure on the individual. This is accomplished in two ways:

1. prohibiting, discriminating against inappropriate and unacceptable partners,
2. preference, prescribing of suitable partners.

The pressure on the individual most often appears as a positive example, advice, pattern and recommendation. However, if an individual is not in line with a group identity and diverts from the expected patterns when choosing a partner, the sanctions will apply. Their form and intensity vary from defamation, intimidation, discrimination, economic sanctions (fine, extortion) to exclusion from the group (excommunication from the church) or death.

Influencing a desired marital behaviour occurs at different stages of an individual's life cycle - before choosing a partner (recommendations, patterns), during his / her choice (prohibitions, recommending of a suitable partner, granting or not granting parental consent) and after creating the marriage (disadvantage of the people of such a marriage including offsprings who have been born in the relationship). The control of compliance with social standards is primarily realized by the family and the wider kindred. The state and the church are the key institutions with the power to decide on the rules of marriage forming. They control the marriage institution through legislation, religious codes, the influence of priests, or local communities. Other members of the groups from which the partners come from - local authorities, neighbours, young men and girls groups, peers and others - also carry out an informal control.

2.3 "A mixed marriage – an unmixed marriage" as a binary opposition

The theoretical and empirical study of mixed marriages is in most cases aimed at perceiving the spatial and cultural-social distance between the groups, from which the partners come from, confronting them with matrimonial forms that are not mixed. The importance of mixed marriages in both traditional and modern communities, the reasons for their rejection or acceptance, can therefore be explained by interpreting the binary opposition itself, "mixed-unmixed". The problem of binary contrasts was elaborated by the French structuralist C. Lévi-Strauss (2007), who believed that people's thinking and behaviours are universal in all societies, as the world is perceived through binary oppositions. The most basic binary oppositions are the opposites "nature - culture", " me and the other person", "sense - rationality", "my society - other societies", "sacrum - profanum" and others. The logic of binary opposites, based on this contradiction, reveals the functioning of a particular group and its relationships with other groups. With this perspective, "unmixed" and "mixed" marriages can be perceived as the following counterparts:

marriage with a partner from the same group "unmixed marriage"	marriage with a partner from a different group "mixed marriage"
accepted/permitted	not accepted/forbidden
normal/ordinary	abnormal/special
customary/traditional/old	unusual/unconventional/new
common/frequent/typical	extraordinary/rare/unusual
conventional/conforming	non-conventional/non-conforming
dominant/connected with majority	connected with minority
unconflicting/without problems	conflicting/problematic
advantageous	disadvantageous
our/we	foreign/different/they
favoured/preferred/supported	unrecognised/stigmatized/despised
at home/inside	elsewhere/abroad/in a foreign country/outside

equal/the same/similar	different/unequal
closed	open
tradition	modernity/innovation

The outlined binary oppositions highlight in particular the disadvantaged position of the mixed marriage, they underline the existence of barriers between groups and the defence against their crossing and overcoming. Such model assumes or even expects a possible conflict within the couple (between partners) or between the couple and the groups from which the partners come from, it generally evokes negative connotations in relation to such marriages. The term "mixphobia" is an expression of a negative view of "mixing" in partner relationships (Varro 2012: 28).

Mixed marriage can be perceived in this sense as a deviation from the "normal state". Such partnerships are outside the group or groups from which the partners come from. They are not mixed because they are bi-cultural, but because their choice differs from the standards of marriage partner selection and group relations prevailing in the society. Mixed partnerships are a question of diversity and a question of conformity in relation to social standards. D. Bensimon and F. Lautman call a mixed marriage one that provokes a reaction in its social environment. In this sense, mixed marriages are an expression of a particular deviation in partner selection. They emerge as a specific type of a marriage, they describe the nature of the deviation, separating mixed marriages from unmixed ones. Individual communities, however, are very variable in the assessment, acceptance and rejection of these "mixed marriages". (Bensimon - Lautman 1974: 30, Collet 2012: 70-71)

The opposite view is represented by the perception of a mixed partnership as something new, modern, open, and connecting, and it is ultimately a positive phenomenon. The presence of mixed marriages and their perception in individual groups or cultures can be understood in this respect as a state of balance. It reflects the group's ability to maintain its own values and standards, to ensure stability and at the same time to tolerate, innovate and accept something different. This measure is a sign of a certain balance between openness and closure in relation to one's own group and other groups and thus a sign of the group's viability. In accordance with the concept of binary contrasts, the following oppositions can then be ascribed to a traditional and closed marriage with a partner from their own group:

marriage with a partner from the same group "unmixed marriage"	marriage with a partner from a different group "mixed marriage"
traditional/closed/unable to communicate	modern/open/innovative/capable to communicate
group separation/highlighting differences	bonding/integration/inclusion

Discourse on the principles of binary oppositions in mixed marriages is also being developed by the following authors. The perception of mixed marriages as "white - black" is considered archetypal. In this context C. Phillipe uses the term "a domino couple". He explains his view by the effort to grasp and define cultural differences between the partners as a visible colour difference (Philippe 1983). The works of N. Karkabi (2011: 79-97) or M. Oppermann (1999: 251-266), which examine the cultural conditionality of this phenomenon as a consequence of tourism development, are also inspiring when studying the patterns of the creation and functioning of mixed marriages. The question of relationships or marriages created between partners (tourists) coming from West European countries and the so-called Eastern cultures (e.g. Egypt) can then be perceived as the opposition "West" – "East".

The existence of mixed marriages can therefore be seen as a sign of shifts in the intensity of adherence to the social boundaries and, at the same time, as a measure of socio-cultural distance

between groups, mutual acceptance and openness of groups, or vice versa, rejection and closure. Marital preferences simply tell us which groups they communicate with and with whom they do not communicate.

3 Methods of empirical research

The research of the marital preferences was carried out among the inhabitants of Prievidza – the town in the west part of Slovakia. We chose this city for our research for several reasons. In terms of the number of foreigners Prievidza ranks among typical Slovak towns and it is a town with a wide range of foreigners in terms of the reason of their arrival as well as their country of origin. The share of foreigners in the total composition of the population (1.73%) is comparable to the average of Slovak population. Almost 97% of the total population (47 thousand) are accounted for by Slovak nationality, 62% of the population has Roman Catholic confession (another 29% of the population is without confession, 2% are Lutherans). In 2014 the research of local integration of foreigners was carried out in the town (Hlinčíková - Chudžíková et al., 2014).

We carried out a questionnaire survey during 2016 and in the first half of 2017. To obtain the data we used a questionnaire (with more than 50 questions), which was filled out by respondents themselves or we filled it out after an interview with them. Through the questionnaire, we tried to find out how respondents define and evaluate a mixed marriage in general, within which groups (defined for example on the basis of ethnicity, religiosity, race, nationality, cultural specifics, spatial distance) and specific subgroups they are willing or unwilling to tolerate the crossing of inter-group boundaries by mixed marriage and why. The importance of ethnic, religious, linguistic, racial, national, state or continental identity in marriage preferences of respondents has already been indicated by a survey conducted on a sample of 5 respondents that we realized prior to the start of the research itself. The necessary information was found in relation to the respondents themselves, as well as the respondents' recommendations when choosing their children's partners. We therefore considered the use of open questions as important. This method gives respondents the opportunity to think freely, to create their own categories and to justify their views. The obtained material was then subjected to a qualitative and quantitative analysis, following the contents of the testimonies themselves, their structure and the frequency of occurrence of individual statements.

Several opinion polls in Slovakia (e.g. Vašečka 2009, Letavajová 2001) confirm that the perception and acceptance of something different is dependent on the social characteristics of the respondents. For this reason, we also observed the influence of gender, age, and respondents' education, which we perceive in this research as variables. When selecting respondents, we applied the so called quota principle, thus we have reached approximately the same percentage of respondents in the following categories: gender (male - female), age (up to 30 years, 30 to 50, and over 50) and highest level of education (primary, secondary without a graduation, secondary with a graduation and university education). We received information from a total of 221 respondents, out of which 109 were men and 112 women. Respondents are of Slovak nationality (with the exception of 7 respondents), 71% of respondents are Christians, 22% of respondents declared they are without confession. The direct answers of respondents are given in the text in italics.

4 Results

In the beginning, we found out what connotations associated with the subject of our research - the term "mixed marriage"- respondents have. Respondents expressed their opinions after being asked open-ended questions and in most cases gave a number of explanations. This term was explained by most of them as a combination of racially different people (37% of respondents). Another most frequent connotation was ethnic (national) (35%) and religious difference (27%), the difference

of partners in terms of citizenship (partnership with a foreigner) and finally, the difference defined by respondents as cultural. Statistically insignificant, but interesting from the perspective of content were ideas associated with homosexual couples, or vice versa with the relationship between individuals of different sexes, or a difference from the point of view of socio-economic characteristics of individuals. 4 of the respondents defined a mixed marriage directly as a "*problem*" or as "*everything that goes beyond the traditional Slovak marriage*". Relation of the statements to age, gender or education was not confirmed in this case.

4.1 Preference of a partner from a similar group

Realizing an affiliation to a certain group and at the same time a sense of difference from the other groups is evident from several respondents' formulations. It mainly refers to testimonies containing plural: "*we are Christians*", "*we are different*" or possessive pronoun "*our*": "*our race*", "*only our religion*", "*close to our culture*". More than a half (56%) of respondents believe that people should find a partner similar to them and the group to which they belong. This opinion was expressed in approximately equal ratio by both men and women, respondents over 50 years old inclined to this more often and also people with secondary education with graduation. 34% of the respondents opposed to this claim. The local endogamy, namely the preference of a partner from close surrounding, was examined in the following question. Here we noticed the opposite trend. Agreement with the claim, that people should find a partner mainly in their immediate vicinity, was expressed by 30% of respondents and the disagreement was given by 56% of respondents. Female respondents and university-educated people were more inclined to disagree. It is obvious that the choice of a partner within their own group is still essential for the respondents, but it is not exclusively related to spatial proximity.

By using general questions we examined whether the respondents perceive some of the particular types of a mixed marriage as specific and whether they have a special attitude towards one of them. In these responses we observed considerable variability and a wide range of opinions. Many respondents stated that none of the mixed marriages were perceived by them as specific, they generally perceive them as a negative aspect and especially marriages with Muslims or Arabs are perceived as unacceptable. As an example, we can mention the following answers: "*A partnership with a person outside "a civilized world" with a partner from a civilized world, since in most cases it is a formality for the purpose of gaining citizenship in a civilized country.*", "*Rather negative, I think that various races should not mix.*", "*I have a positive attitude towards mixed marriages - as long as it does not concern my family.*", "*Based on several published cases I would be a little afraid of a marriage with a Muslim.*", "*With the Negros because their wooing looks like they would hit a woman on her head and pull her into a cave.*", "*Rather an insane mind. A person, who does not find a partner in his or her own background, has a personality disorder.*", "*Christian and Muslim, no, because it is mostly the Christian who has to convert.*", "*When two people understand each other there is nothing to deal with.*", "*If it's not my marriage, let everyone do what they find as appropriate. I do not really approve of it.*", "*They are all people and I do not condemn anybody because of their religion, race or nationality.*"

4.2 Preferences of partner according to citizenship

Another block of questions was to find out how the respondents rate the marriages with a partner from a group, whose difference we defined by one of the specific categories: nationality, religion, language, race, citizenship and continent. In this part of the research we examined from which particular groups the respondents are willing/unwilling to accept their partners and why. Only 66% of the respondents, who answered this question, would accept the partner explicitly from European countries or the EU countries. The partner from African continent was

identified as the most unacceptable (by 73% of the respondents). From the point of view of citizenship, the respondents consider the citizens from the Slovak and Czech Republic as most acceptable. In their statements these two categories are represented almost equally, among both men and women of all ages and educational categories. The partners, whose origin was in their answers collectively referred to as "*European*" or from "*nearby countries*", as well as citizens of particular countries, notably Germany, Poland, England and Austria are considered suitable. Their reasons are based mainly on their spatial and cultural proximity: "*Because it's close enough to be in touch with my family.*", "*Mentality similar to ours.*", "*Czechs, because they are the closest to us from all the foreigners.*" Particularly the citizens of "*Islamic and Arab states*" are considered unacceptable (by 43% of respondents). Mostly women consider partners from Iraq, Iran, Syria, Tunisia, India and Africa to be unacceptable. Men in this question mention especially the female partners from Africa and Hungary. They explain the rejection of these partners by cultural difference and their inability to leave their own traditions and culture. Negative connotations to Muslim or Arabic countries are mostly connected with different religion, as well as bad relationship of Islam to women.

4.3 Preferences of a partner according to ethnicity and religiosity

Almost every third respondent, men and women equally, prefers a partner of Slovak nationality. The second most acceptable nationality are Czechs and partners who were labeled by respondents as "*Europeans*", "*Europe*", "*the EU*" or "*Slavs*". In this context, respondents also mentioned the English, Americans or Germans quite frequently. On the contrary, the highest rate of social distance is recorded in contact with the Roma ethnic group (more than 30% of the respondents of all categories). Other most frequently rejected people are partners, known as "*Muslims*", "*Arabs*", and "*Africans*". Respondents from all the groups expressed their negative opinion on these categories, with secondary school students having the most expressive opinions. The rejection of Roma partners is expressed by the respondents in statements like these: "*Everything except for Roma.*", "*a Roma man – sponging, maladjustment, nomadic life.*", "*Definitely not, I hate them.*", "*A Roma woman - physically they do not attract me because they are who they are: a problematic social group, different thinking, unreliability, lying.*"

As far as the religious difference of the partner is concerned, more than one third of the respondents would accept exclusively a partner of Christian faith. Half of them referred to some or more Christian denominations, especially to Catholics, Evangelicals and Orthodox, or they used a general term a Christian. 22% of the respondents of all age and educational categories would be willing to accept exclusively members of the Catholic church, the respondents from the mentioned group claim to be Christians with the exception of 2 people. The spouse of any religion would be accepted by 12 people. Nearly 60% of Christian faith respondents would prefer a partner of "*the same faith*". Majority of respondents (70%) without religious confession would also prefer a Christian partner. The relationship between higher age, the Christian religion of the respondents and their preference for the Christian partner, which we postulated, was not confirmed. Christian partner would be preferred by approximately half of the respondents in all of the three age groups, with a slightly higher proportion in a group of secondary school students. A positive attitude toward a partner of the same religion was expressed by the respondents as follows: "*I would marry a Christian, because I am a Christian*", "*I would prefer a Catholic*", "*I think the religion should be the same*", "*Christian, because we would have the same values, which is important for a functional marriage.*", "*I am a Catholic, and I would not convert to another faith.*" About two thirds of the respondents would not accept a partner from another religious group, different from "*ours*", "*the same*" or "*Christian*". Half of the respondents rejected namely Muslims.

4.4 Preferences of a partner by race

72% of the respondents have a clear preference for the Caucasian race. A slightly higher percentage is recorded in the group of respondents older than 50 years. We find relatively more expressive responses to the question formulated in the reverse order. 91% of the respondents were unwilling to accept a partner of the Black and Asian race or at least one of these groups. We noticed a more pronounced bias towards the members of the Black race, which would not be accepted by almost 40% of the respondents. This attitude was expressed mainly by men in the age category up to 30 years. Tolerance and impartiality to race in marital preferences were expressed by respondents as follows: "*Acceptance of a person does not depend on colour.*", "*It does not matter - he must be a Christian.*" The rejection of racially mixed marriage is pronounced in statements like these: "*Because the race is a very visible sign, people look different.*", "*Multiracial children are not accepted by either side; The White race must be preserved so that we do not die out.*", "*It is not good to mix blood.*"

4.5 Partner preference according to language difference

A relatively high degree of tolerance is expressed by respondents to the language difference of their potential partner. The most acceptable were partners speaking Czech (30%), German or English (15%) and Russian (8%). A partner from any language group would be accepted by 10% of the respondents. 16% of the respondents would accept exclusively a Slovak-speaking partner. This view can be observed especially among those with elementary or secondary education, it was very rare among the respondents with a university degree. They responded in a negative way to a partner of the Arabic and Hungarian languages. Arabic language would not be tolerated particularly by an older generation with elementary or secondary education. Other negative statements were directed to partners with the Roma and Chinese languages, less often the Turkish language or the languages of the "*Islamic states*". It can be observed that the respondents associate the issue of linguistic difference with the ethnic or religious background of the partner. Approximately 10% of the respondents would reject all partners whose language "*they would not understand*", about 5% of the respondents would be tolerant of all language groups.

The findings point to the fact that respondents under the age of 30 are more willing to accept a partner no matter what language group they belong to, and they would also accept an English-speaking partner. Respondents over 50 years of age are inclined to choose Slovak and Czech partners. Respondents with university education have not particular preference for Slovak and Czech language and are open to the linguistic difference of the partner. In general, respondents prefer a partner whose language they can speak or which is similar to the Slovak language or a language they would like to learn. Many respondents refer in this case to the possibility of linguistic enrichment or improvement of their language ability. "*English and German - it is good for me, for example, for children who can learn two languages*", "*Czech language – it is similar to Slovak, I can speak the language and there is minimal difference.*", "*In any foreign language that you do not speak perfectly, conflicts arise from different naming of the problems, or inability to clearly express feelings and opinions.*"

4.6 Personal experience with a mixed partnership

We assumed that accepting or rejecting a mixed marriage is to a certain extent dependent on one's own personal experience with such a relationship. However, only 23 people, including 14 women and 9 men, confirmed their direct personal experience with a partnership or marriage in a mixed relationship. According to their testimonies, these were relations with partners of different categories, some of them still existing, some of them having ended. However, the answers of the respondents with their personal experience with a mixed relationship do not differ in any way from the respondents who did not report their personal experience.

4.7 Advantages and disadvantages of a mixed marriage

A relatively large variability of responses is recorded in relation to the declared advantages and disadvantages of a mixed marriage. In terms of content and frequency, these statements can be categorized into several categories. The most frequently cited positives are:

1. enriching of partners - culture, habits, traditions, knowledge (it was declared by 43 respondents out of 177 who answered the question),
2. the opportunity of partners to learn or improve in a foreign language, bilingualism in the education of children (23 respondents),
3. improvement or testing of psychological qualities - openness, tolerance, range of knowledge, respondents also refer to them as *"open mind"* (19 respondents).

The claim that mixed marriage has no advantages, was found in 22 answers. Moreover, travelling and the fact that the partners are not bored were frequently declared advantages. The same or similar categories are found in the statements describing the disadvantages of a mixed marriage. 162 respondents who answered the question most often agree with the following points when describing the negatives:

1. differences in culture in general (31 responses)
2. differences in religion (15 responses)
3. language barrier (11 responses)
4. misunderstandings, conflicts (10 responses)
5. the need to conform to a different culture (10 responses)

Respondents also expressed the problem of distance and separation of partners, racial disparities, different mentality, negative attitude of the neighbourhood and disfavour of the partner's family, differences in children's education and office complications (marriage ceremony, divorce) as well as kidnappings.

4.8 Recommendations in relation to the marriage preferences of the descendants

The last studied topic was the attitude towards a partner from a different or the same group, but this time we focused on the attitude towards the partner of the respondents' children. In most cases, respondents' evaluation and recommendations were the same as the ideas about their own partner. From the point of view of the studied topic, it is interesting to observe the formulation of these statements, in which we can study naming of acceptable and unacceptable partners for children, and also the occasional signs of activity / passivity or concrete action in such situation. The most frequent responses in this sense were responses which:

1. simply named the groups that would be acceptable or unacceptable for their children.
2. declared that the selection and evaluation of a child's partner is not their decision, they leave the decision to the children themselves, and accept it even if they disagree with it. *"My acceptance would not be important.", "I accept all son's decisions."*
3. strongly expressed disapproval of certain groups or they clearly (even imperatively) defined the group which the partner of a child would have to come from. *"I would not accept Roma.", "I would not be in favour of anybody Asian or Muslim.", "He must be a Christian.", "I would never agree with that.", "He must be white – that I will accept, nothing else."*

Rare answers were:

1. They indicated the procedures which would direct the child when choosing a partner. *"She tried to convince her to consider it.", "I would dissuade him from it."*
2. They indicated sanction procedures against a child whose decision would not be in line with parents' opinions. *"I*

would not accept it, I would throw her out of the house, and disinherit her."

5 Conclusions and discussion

Perception of the difference between a marriage within a group and a marriage with a partner from a different group is directly related to group identity and cohesion and it is a measure of the permeability of the group's boundaries and the ability of group to communicate or to be closed towards other groups. Endo-exogamous rules act as group norms by which the community expresses its relation to particular groups and their application is ensured through social pressure on the individual.

The existence of such attitudes or patterns of behaviour in relation to marital preferences were confirmed in our empirical research. It is clear that respondents prefer partners from the same or similar groups. In their responses, they express their group identity as *"Slovaks", "Christians", "Slovak nationality", "Causacians", "speaking Slovak", "Europeans"* and *"Slavs"*. Their own groups, as well as their values, are referred to by respondents in some of their statements as *"better"* or *"normal"*. *"We are the best.", "I think we have the best religion and it should be the only one in the world.", "It contrasts with the traditional Slovak marriage."* The choice of partners within these circles is then perceived as optimal and recommended. Partners from nearby or similar groups are considered to be acceptable. "Proximity" is in their statements perceived as a spatial category - neighbouring and nearby states (Czech Republic, European countries) or cultural similarity (Czech, Christian European culture, Slavic).

On the other hand, respondents are unwilling to cross the boundaries by a mixed marriage with a partner from "distant" groups. In this context, they name partners who come from different religious, ethnic and racial groups. They are rather strictly opposed to Muslims, Roma, Arabs, Blacks, and Africans. The language difference between the partners is perceived as the least problematic. Respondents perceive the linguistic difference of a partner as certain enrichment for them and their descendants.

Respondents' testimonies show a strong stereotyping and categorization of others into groups. We note the tendency to ethnize the issue of mixed marriages, i.e. to focus on the ethnic origin of the potential partner, as well as his religious confession. Content analysis of the testimonies points to the fact that the categories of difference specified by us (ethnicity, religiosity, citizenship or linguistic identity, race) are intertwined in the minds of respondents and that respondents create their own subcategories of wanted and unwanted marriage partners. An example of this is the category *"Muslim"* and further subcategories derived from it: *"Muslim states", "Muslim languages"* and *"Muslim religion"* that resonate in all types of responses. Relatively significant binary oppositions that are perceived in the sense "we-they" when choosing a partner are represented by these opposites:

„we"	„they"
Christians/Europe/Caucasian	Muslims/Africa/Black/Roma

Unequivocal conditionality of responses with the social characteristics of the respondents (gender, age, education) was not confirmed. Certain specifics have been demonstrated in partial findings. Respondents with university education are more open to accept a partner of another language and a partner from a distant country; the oldest generation is mainly oriented to a partner speaking Slovak and Czech languages and ethnically and religiously similar partner; the youngest age group is open to the linguistic difference of the partner, more oriented to the Christian partner; a partner of Christian religion is preferred by Christians as well as people without religious confession. It can be deduced from the testimonies that respondents in their mixed marriage assessments rely on their own experience to a minimum extent, but are mostly influenced by mediated images

of the mixed marriage phenomenon presented in the media. The role of parental authority in choosing a partner is weakening at present. In relation to children, respondents formulate and clearly identify acceptable or unacceptable partners. Most often, their attitudes were the same as in the case of their own partner. This is realized by a recommendation, less often an active instruction or a command.

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