

# Displaying Ethnically Mixed Families in Transylvania\*

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## Displaying Families<sup>1</sup>

**C**ONCERNING THE displaying of mixed couples, Haynes and Dermott (2011) applied the concept within the same project exactly in order to underline the gradual intensity of display in these couples. The example employed by the authors is, interestingly enough, of Romanian-Hungarian couples from Transylvania, using data and conclusions from the study by Brubaker et al. (2006: 302), emphasizing that the display of couples' ethnicity only "happens" in important and/or critical moments. By contrast, during my research on Transylvanian mixed couples I have found three alternative ways of displaying in mixed couples: display of merged identities, display of a double identity, display as a mere façade.

## Methodology

**T**HE FIELDWORK has been carried out in the timeframe January 2013–January 2014 in Transylvania. The interviews were carried out by the research team members. The participants to the interviews were 64 members of ethnically/confessionally mixed families, mostly husband and wife, but in some cases also children. The interviews were taken in the homes of the respondents or, in some cases, of research team members, in a warm and open atmosphere. The interview protocols have been analyzed thematically using the qualitative data analysis software Atlas. The names used are pseudonyms.

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## Displaying Practices Name / Surname

**I**N THE sociology of the family, the role of the choice of names and surnames within a family has been relatively little studied (Finch, 2008), although this practice may become a good instrument in the analysis of how the family becomes integrated into kinship networks and the community. Rosalind Edwards and Chamion Caballero (2008) have conducted one of the few studies that analyses the impact the choice of names and surnames has upon the members of mixed families, trying to emphasize that in the case of these families these choices are more carefully made and they imply more consequences in the short or the long run: the agreement of other relatives with their choice, the impact that the name will have upon the future of the children.

This practice becomes fundamental (Finch, 2007, 2008) for the way families, especially mixed ones (Haynes and Dermott, 2011), display themselves. Hence, the choice made at the moment of the family's very establishment, concerning the family name that wife and husband will use, determines the way the family will be observed from the outside. In Romania, there exist three practices to select a family name: the most usual and somehow most self-evident is adopting the husband's family name; it is fairly common and quite popular since the '70s to adopt both family names of husband and wife and to create a new name<sup>2</sup>, and the third, more recent practice that is popular mostly among young intellectuals, is for both partners to keep their own family names, with the children receiving the name of their father<sup>3</sup>.

The mixed couples in our research have followed these practices, but without the same ease that homogenous majority or minority couples show. The family name is a brand that identifies you more or less unequivocally as a Romanian or a Hungarian.

He considers himself to be a Romanian since his Hungarian father didn't speak to them. Although he never left a fingerprint and he didn't know him, but with the name Marius Molnar, everybody instantly took him to be a Hungarian (Mioara).

The situation becomes more delicate in the case of mixed families when, through the family name, a member changes her social image. In the case of many women from our study, by adopting the husband's name, they become "of another ethnicity" in social representation and it is hard for the community to accept this.

I know that my boss told me at one moment, as I am working in a firm where only Romanians work, and my boss asked me: Wow, girl, will your name be Borboly (...)? (Ecaterina)

The automatic identification through the family name as being of another ethnicity sometimes faces opposition and becomes a subject of discussion, becoming accepted in the end, either because one of the spouses insists,

(...) there was only one issue, somehow... that Victoria wanted to keep her family name (...) Yes. And I told her, Victoria, I cannot change it. I am the man, somehow I want to keep this one. (...) At least this much. Not necessarily, I said, since this is like a present to me. Meaning it is like a recognition that I won you and you are mine and then my name is over you and I have overwhelmed you and you are there with me. Something of the sort. Yes, alright, Victoria didn't quite like it, but alright she had been through changes, maybe it wasn't the time, you know (Gabriel)<sup>4</sup>.

or because it is simpler administratively and socially:

He wouldn't have had anything against it even if I kept my name or if I took both names, as my sister-in-law did<sup>5</sup>, she took both names like that. (...) We didn't want this, not to burden my husband administratively, since he had authorizations: all on his name, and such and such, and the car, and I don't know what and then I burden him to go I don't know where. The self-employed person authorization... a pile of money for what, after all, for me to keep my maiden name, to do what? (...) I didn't want to, honestly I asked, since only there, when you submit the papers and we talked what if I stayed with my name, not to fill in the Hungarian one and you stayed with yours. But then you also think of the future, children come and people think you are divorced or you are...<sup>6</sup> (Ecaterina).

It is easier to associate the family names of both spouses, this often enjoying a full mutual agreement.

Clear. And the name is both Romanian and Hungarian, since we are Nagy and Paști. (...) We have kept both. We said that they go well together and we said let's keep them both (Ana).

The relevance of the family name in determining the ethnic category a person belongs to is reflected especially through the following example. One of our female respondents that took the Romanian family name of the husband had to associate, unofficially, also the Hungarian family name she previously had, in order to become integrated at the workplace. She is a teacher in a Hungarian department and it seemed more natural to colleagues, to seniors and especially to parents that she have a Hungarian family name. Thus, she can be found everywhere under both family names, although officially she only has a Romanian name.

(...) yes, yes. I am only Radu Zsuzsa. In my ID, that is, after marriage, I became Radu Zsuzsa. (...) Now, as a maiden I was Horváth Zsuzsa. At university, already married, I was listed with the name on my baccalaureate diploma. (...) Always Horváth Zsuzsa, but I came with my ID and I said I was Radu. Now, at the inspectorate, I am Radu Horváth Zsuzsanna. Wherever you look for me, Radu Horváth Zsuzsanna (Zsuzsa).

The choice of the children's first names in mixed marriages proves to be a moment of reference, like in other families. However, in their case this practice aims directly at the way the ethnicity of the children is sought to be perceived. In line with the results of the study undertaken by Brubaker, R., Feishchmidt, R., Fox, J. and Grancea, L. (2006) in Transylvania, from our study it also resulted that in most cases parents prefer to choose an ethnically neutral first name, as international as possible, in order not to draw attention to the ethnicity of the child in either of the communities, or in order to counter pressures from within the extended family, demanding that the surname be of one or another ethnicity<sup>7</sup>:

... (..) Dora. This was an issue. We wanted it to be a name after Nora Nicolau<sup>8</sup>, who is my doctor, I thought this, that her name is like this, I liked it. No, no. I wanted to give the child her name at one point, but Zoli didn't like it. And it was a condition that it shouldn't be a Romanian name either, not to upset (...) the Hungarians, and that it shouldn't be Hungarian either, not to upset the Romanians. That she have only one name (...) and we found this international one [she laughs]. If there is another child I really don't know what name I will find again (Ana).

or in order not to create difficulties for the children in a presumed future introduction into the international community:

And when we called her Kristina we had to write it with a K, since it is a Hungarian "k," in order not to be a Romanian "k" [c]. Whoa, and we were super agreed since he the poor thing had also this experience that he went to America being called Zsolt, and they couldn't call him that and they called him Bill. Hey Bill! Come here. You know, it is difficult, Zsolt. And all our friends that, you know, well, on his side Hungarians, that have been to America, they all received names like Bill, Al, and, you know, we said that you know, it would be (better internationally) (Rodica).

The choice for an ethnic surname, especially when it comes from the minority partner in the couple, is not very comfortable and sometimes it causes refusals, since the cultural background on which the resonance of a name is perceived is not shared by the partners:

(...) now I insisted a little that it be ... that he should have a more German name. (...) The names that I liked from the German area didn't please Mihaela since they seemed too imperialistic. (...) Friedrich. Yes, it is a beautiful name, a lot of poets and philosophers had it. But if you think of Friedrich you also think of Friedrich the Great, let's say (...). Or Maximilian, it is a beautiful name, but it also goes for young kids, you call him Maxi and it is very well. But Maximilian again was a great king of Bavaria and it has resonance. Otto again is... so many old German names that I would have liked went out of discussion since for somebody who was not raised in the German culture they have another resonance (Otto).

The decision to choose an ethnic surname is difficult and may sometimes have consequences upon the child during integration into the community. As Satoshi Moriizumi (2011) argues, the choice of a Japanese surname for a mixed American-Japanese child created difficulties to one of her respondents, since at the (American) school they all misremembered or forgot her name. Moreover, through the choice of a surname one virtually pushes rather towards one of the communities, denying equal chances to both. These fears I have also come upon when the couple Antal and Mariana, at the latter's suggestion, decided to name their child Jenő<sup>9</sup>:

Yes, the child, again at Mariana's suggestion. I would have wanted to give him at least an international name, in the sense that he be able to sell himself as a Romanian if he wants to. Errr, of course, this he can do some other time too, I mean I don't want to discriminate completely in the Hungarian direction at the level of names, since, as I already said, this is already an identity, it is a choice, it is defined. Of course you sometimes need to have the courage to make these choices, but I don't know. He has a very Hungarian family name, beautiful, and I don't know, of the lesser nobility, and those who know the Hungarian culture are aware that all noble names end in an "i," well, one that is spelled "y," well, he has two of these, and errr... two very nice traditional surnames, but not traditional Hungarian, but of which the first, the one we use, Jenő, is after Mariana's father, who passed away, his name was Eugen and it is a rarely used name, but not pretentious in Hungarian as well as in Romanian, it is somewhat like in Romanian, a name with resonance and a solid name like that. Well, on the other hand there is a problem with it, with the Hungarians, since they don't use it much anymore and they are... well maybe also impressed positively when they hear it, anyway they don't break their tongue, whereas the Romanians, when they try to pronounce it, they begin to use a diminutive, it is too long and too complicated, and they say Jancsi, that is, the diminutive for János and not for Jenő (...) (Antal).

Another, less frequent, practice is to try somehow to use one surname from both ethnicities; lamentably, in reality these names sound rather majority since in the last moment the spelling is forgotten even though it was meant to be a minority name:

Sofia (...) But Ela is in Hungarian (...) Yes, well, no, I wanted to use to "l"s but she forgot them, even if we were agreed and when she filled it in, in a hurry, she had just given birth, the poor thing... out of breath completely and that was it. (...) Well the boy, Darius and Viktor, with a "k" (...) so we more or less share (Attila).  
 (...) Marc is in both, but it is written in Romanian, not with a "k," for instance (...) but I didn't want it this way, anyway. The same with Victor Gabriel (...) it is after ... I would have wanted it to be Gábriel and she says no, it should be after your father, since my father still is (...) and I said do you want it to be Gabriel, well yes. No problem. And with Roland, Roland Daniel. Daniel after her father. Ok, I don't mind.

(...) There are issues, since I don't pay attention to these issues (...) I don't give them much importance, I don't take them to heart. If there is no apostrophe this doesn't change one's life (Gabriel).

The practice of the choice of names and surnames is one of the most important within the displaying of mixed families, since these decisions are taken for life and socially mark the ethnic position of the person.

## Language and Education

**I**MMEDIATELY AFTER choosing the names and surnames to be employed, the use of language or languages, depending on the case, is what defines mixed families. This is a key element of the manifestation of the ethnic nature that the family possesses. This aspect is all too little studied, although by analyzing the role that using one language or another has in a mixed family one can understand the way mixed family members construct ethnic identities.

As a rule, in mixed families the language of the majority partner is the one predominantly used (Gaspar, 2010) and we have noticed this tendency also with the couples in our research<sup>10</sup>. We have only found one case in which, through the choice of the Romanian language as exclusive means of communication, this became dominant in the family to the degree where it brought complete assimilation, the minority partner giving up his minority identity, producing what Satoshi Moriizumi (2011) has identified as domination through language.

It is hard, yes, yes, yes, and interesting that if you don't speak it, as we haven't with Lăcri for 30 de ani, we never spoke it, you realize. Before, I spoke better, before I got married, I could handle it, but after... (Miklós).

However, through the presence of children and the fact that many couples tend to teach their children the language of the minority partner as well, things become more nuanced. What does predominant use mean? Even if one of the parents doesn't speak the language of the other, but the children speak it among themselves and with the minority parent, is the other language still dominant? What are the implications of the fact that one parent doesn't understand the language that the children speak with the other parent and with other family members? Sometimes frustration builds up among members that don't speak the language when it is used with others, excluding the non-speaker:

So this is the aspect that bothers me a little and there is another one that bothers me, the fact that Andrei speaks Hungarian to his mother on the phone and I again don't understand what is the subject of the phrase, you know sometimes he does it on purpose, too (Victoria).

Sofia Gaspar (2010) has identified three types of life strategy of these families, depending on the selection of language/s used in the family: assimilation (when only one language is used), a bi-national strategy (when both are used) and a peripatetic strategy (meaning the use of more languages in the family).

Closely tied to the language/s used are the choices concerning the children's schooling: in what language and until when they should study. Thus, the choice of institutions in which children from mixed families will study presupposes a more complex calculation than in the case of mono-ethnic children.

One of the identified strategies, when the majority language is spoken at home between the partners, as with many cases identified in our research, is to decide that the children should study, at least until a certain stage, in the minority language, in order to compensate for its lack of use at home.

Children go to the Reformed kindergarten, in the Hungarian language, yes. Ufff... according to the idea to compensate for Gabriel's lack at home. (...) and to consolidate a little the knowledge of Hungarian. You know? (Victoria)

It is not always easy for mixed couples to cope with the institutions in the minority language. This phenomenon has been identified by Bénédicte Brahic (2013) also in the situation when the children tell at home what they have been doing at school in the minority language, and the majority partner is frustrated since he/she is unable to communicate with the child as intimately. Sometimes difficulties in communication occur between the institution and the partner not speaking the minority language. In such situations, the minority partner needs to take over the communication with the institution and become the main interface between the family and the educational environment.

... Yes, because the first time I went, when I was at the first meeting, I didn't even think of the possibility they would not be speaking Romanian. I mean... and I went there and it was in Hungarian. Ok. At one point I went out since I was with Roland and he was moving around and since I didn't understand a word I went out with Roland and Gabriel showed up so I left him in charge (Victoria).

When alternating between languages, a start in the minority language and more advanced studies in the majority language seems to be the preferred strategy.

I told Victoria when we married and at the beginning, when we met, that the first grades 1<sup>st</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> would be in Hungarian and then the high-school (...) mandatorily in Romanian. (...) I remember that it was a little difficult when I went to the 9<sup>th</sup> grade, since I don't know how they do school these days, but then at least I was in a Hungarian class (...) the geography of Romania, the history of Romania, biology, we did them in Hungarian, and I don't find it alright to study the geography of Romania, the history of Romania in Hungarian. You are in Romania, you live in Romania, then do them in Romanian. Well, maybe chemistry, physics,

mathematics, ok, but those are things that pertain to the country, it is nice to do them in Romanian. And it was quite hard in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade when I went over, in mathematics, for example, the words changed a little, but for how long, I should say it was around half a year, that is not a very great effort and then, you are young, you have energy (...) it is still worth it (Gabriel).

But the decision to study in the minority language is questioned by the very minority partner, given the need for good knowledge of Romanian, for a better integration into society:

Of course they must speak Romanian very well since we live in Romania. And if you don't know the language, I know how hard it was for me, going to Hungarian school ... to ... ooh ... the words ... not the words, but phrases from certain fields such as mathematics, again and again, for me it was Chinese and when I first heard that in fact they say adding or multiplying or these technical words I had learned in another language and then it is very difficult to recognize them in Romanian. After that, well, now I know, but there was a moment when someone or another asked me of basic things and I couldn't answer. Not that I didn't know, but in Hungarian, if they asked me, then I knew and I had the impression that, hey, I am so stupid, and others had the impression that, hey, this guy doesn't know how what adding means (Szilard).

Beyond the educational institutions, bilingualism sometimes becomes problematic in educating the children in families where grandparents intervene. Nora Lester Murad (2006) speaks about the frustration that a mother feels in front of her child when the child is educated in another language according to other principles, which the mother doesn't approve of, based on the presupposition that the mother doesn't understand them anyway. We have also come across this educational-linguistic conflict between majority mothers and minority grandparents.

...well you know, this is the only bothersome side. Meaning that there are things that we have settled and we want them to be thus for the child, but sometimes the child does something like this, Mama intervenes in Hungarian on the side of the child and then I feel the need to counter in Romanian and the child is a little at the limit of the linguistic threshold (Victoria).

Another dimension of education that pertains to language are tales, poems, or songs that circulate in mixed families. Laura Barabs-Rhoden (2011) has spoken about the great success enjoyed in the USA by bilingual books (especially English-Spanish), due to the presence of mixed couples and to the general wish of Americans to educate their children bilingually. In Romania, although there exists a market for bilingual books<sup>11</sup>, unfortunately the market of Romanian-Hungarian books is unexploited, and it is one that would prove useful for mixed Romanian-Hungarian couples. Romanian-German mixed couples are more fortunate, having bilingual books due to the fact that while German is con-



sidered by many Romanians a foreign language worth studying, Hungarian is not seen in this light by the majority population.

These forms of literary communication offer mixed couples other methods of preserving their languages:

I wish this very much, although we have a schedule like this, we read the tales in Hungarian, so I try not to tear away him from Hungarian... (Kinga).

These become more important and subtle markers that show how the children of mixed couples have preferences for one or another of the languages. This phenomenon becomes even more interesting in the case of families with more children, who have different affinities in what concerns the preferred language:

(...) each night we have the prayer, each has their own prayers and the prayer of Norbert is “Angel, my little angel,” mine is in Hungarian, and Milan, since he has been in pre-kindergarten, always went to the Hungarian group, they were all together, just a few, and there is a song that has nothing to do with prayer, “the candle is lit, is lit,” and a little song of four verses and he understood it like this, and believes even today that it is a prayer and we have to sing it each night, that little song since that is Milan’s prayer, you understand, so he likes this, he grew up like this at the pre-kindergarten with that little song, he thinks that that is the Hungarian prayer (Kinga).

## Other Practices of Displaying Ethnicity

**B**ESIDE THE names and surnames, the spoken languages and educational institutions chosen for the children, mixed families also utilize other practices to manifest their ethnicity.

One of the most visible is religion, and this becomes important both for the couple through marriage, as well as for the children (Arweck, E., and Nesbitt, E., 2010). When it comes to religion many families make their voices heard, invoking their own religion. Most of the couples in our study preferred to have a double-religion marriage, exactly due to presence of a public made up of family and community, who wanted to feel that that couple belongs to them:

So they don’t go to church, his mother goes sometimes, my parents don’t, but at the moment when the wedding came up, of course, they all became very religious. [laughter] Me Reformed and me Orthodox, you know. Until then there was silence, then everybody, yes, we believe in God and I don’t know what, but finally we had a wedding at the Orthodox church and one at the Reformed church, to pacify them all... and yes, yes, we went to both and then the family calmed down. Well, afterwards the other round started, (...) at the baptism (Kinga).

We have also met situations where they went to a single church<sup>12</sup> or to none, because of discord in the family and not because a spouse is an atheist, as well as one situation where the couple chose to go to a third church that was neutral regarding the families<sup>13</sup>.

If the wedding is simply resolved through the double ceremony, at the baptism of the children things get more complicated. We have met a situation where the baptism of both children was done in both rites of the parents<sup>14</sup>. This is a special case since from the religious point of view this situation cannot exist, baptism being a singular event, to be done in one church only. Few couples chose the minority couple's religion<sup>15</sup>, most of them baptizing their children at the Orthodox church, a sign that for mixed couples it is more important to be accepted into the larger community.

Brubaker et al. (2006) said about the mixed couples from Transylvania that they manifest themselves intermittently, but in key moments that would correspond to the practices of display we have described above. However, for mixed couples ethnicity is not a background phenomenon that appears only from time to time, at decisive moments in life. It is a way of life, which for many couples has entered to their way of being, without constant problematizing, but lived to the fullest.

First of all, as a rule the free time mixed families spend is divided between two worlds: Romanian events and Hungarian events. Family friends belong either to one of the two worlds or are themselves mixed. Moreover, the interiors of homes, dressing styles, cooking ways alternate between the two worlds as well.

The public in front of which this ethnicity is manifested is very important. The major factor, of course, is the extended family that accepts or not the marriage with a person of another ethnicity (Willem Huijnk, Maykel Verkuyten and Marcel Coenders, 2012). We have found similar results in the present research as well, with implications larger than a simple consideration of the opinions of others. The couples that met open resistance to the marriage from the family<sup>16</sup> tend to display a double ethnicity, fighting to be perceived as being both Romanian and Hungarian, equally, all the time. I would call this display one of an assumed double identity. The higher the degree of acceptability, the less important is the display of a double identity, the latter being manifested, as Brubaker et al. (2006) found, only in key moments of family life (choice of name, of religion), without much effort concerning the language spoken by the children, what schools they go to, or other practices. I would call this display a display of principle.

Displaying ethnicity in mixed couples is a defining life strategy for family members in what concerns their ethnic identity. We shall conclude our paper with an illustration of the manner in which the failure to display ethnicity leads to confusion and surprises in what concerns the ethnicity of families.

For instance, a member of our research team interviewed Natalia who, until the end of the research, had been living with the notion that her husband, from a mixed family, considered himself a Romanian. However, at the moment of this research, he declared himself a Hungarian, and Natalia, his own wife, was surprised not to have known this about her own husband.

Another illustrative case of non-displaying ethnicity in the couple and the consequences thereof was provided by one of our respondents:

...as the greatest shock, that in one of the Romanian families that we were very good friends with, I learned a few years back, two or three years ago, that they had a child, well, we paid them a visit to see the baby, and they said that well, the baby must learn Hungarian. And we said, hey, how nice, what people, they live in Transylvania and need to know this. Alright, and how did you figure that...? Well, his grandparents will speak it to him. What do you mean, the grandparents? At this, the explanation: well, Mihai's father, Mihai's parents are Hungarians. What do you mean, the parents? You mean he isn't? So, the Hungarian parents that raised their child a Romanian, meaning they didn't teach him Hungarian since they say it is difficult in Romania to... but for the grandchild they have expectations (...) it was then that I realized that people are very different (Mariana). □

## Notes

1. Displaying is the sum of all the actions that families as units, through their members, undertake in order to show others that this family functions as one. Finch (2007) has defined and argued the importance of “displaying” for the existence of families. She argues that family practices should be recognized as such by others and by the families themselves as well; in order to make sense, *family practices tend to be shared with others as a way of “displaying” the family*. According to Finch (2007, 2008), displaying is essential in a social context where family relationships are becoming more diverse and fluid. The critical factor is that *observers* should recognize an action as conducive to displaying the family in order for this to be validated as such. This is potentially problematic insofar as observers may consider that certain relationships are so different from their preconceived notions about family life that they might refuse to recognize certain acts as constitutive of displaying the family, regardless of its members' intention. Transnational family practices may seem so contrary to preconceived notions about family life that they may also be rejected by observers as legitimate family displaying (Heath et al. 2009, Ducu, 2013). The concept launched by Finch has been since taken over and applied in various research areas. In 2011 Dermott and Seymour endeavored to identify the evolution of the theoretical concept of displaying families and the way it had been applied in research: inviting theorists of the study to think on this topic within a single project. Finch (2011) stated within this project that the practice of “displaying” families is just as important as the practices of “making” families. Also, she pointed to different degrees of intensity in displaying during a family's lifetime: more intense in critical moments, when the integrity of the family is put into question; the audience these practices of displaying are directed to is also highly relevant: whether it is direct family members or people outside the family.
2. The children from these marriages grew and reached the age of marriage, and there are cases where this practice cannot be put into practice since it would come to a situation where the spouses would need to have four family names—in our study it was the situation of Mariana and Antal.
3. This was for instance the case couples like Mihaela and Otto, two young researchers, or Nora and Claudiu, researcher and programmer.
4. Victoria was divorced and in the first marriage she had also had a Hungarian family name.
5. There also a case of mixed marriage with a Romanian wife and a Hungarian husband.

6. Silence that covered the reference to concubinage.
7. This is the case of the couple Zsuzsa and ștefan, who were pressured to choose either a Hungarian name, or a Romanian one for the girls and then they chose two American ones: Jane and Kate.
8. The female gynecologist who supervised the girl's birth, herself from a mixed marriage— she Hungarian, the husband Romanian; a well-known doctor among the Hungarian community.
9. This is the only couple in our research who has chosen a minority name for the child.
10. Excepting a single couple, Zsuzsa and Ștefan—the language used by the family members is the language of the majority, that is, Romanian.
11. Mostly in Romanian and in English, but also Romanian-French and Romanian-German.
12. Mariana and Antal—to the Reformed church, Ana and Lehel—to the Orthodox church and Mihaela and Otto—not at all.
13. Zsuzsa and Ștefan—to the Unitarian church.
14. Victoria and Gabriel baptized their children both at the Orthodox and the Reformed churches—a fairly strange situation since baptism is valid the first time already in any church.
15. Mariana and Antal—Reformed; Carmen and Attila—Catholic.
16. Rodica and Zsolt or Mariana and Antal.

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### Abstract

#### Displaying Ethnically Mixed Families in Transylvania

The article analyses the way mixed couples of Transylvania display their ethnicity, using the conceptual framework of displaying practices (Finch, 2007, 2011). We identify three alternative ways of displaying in the case of mixed couples: display of a merged identities, of a double identity, and of a mixed identity as a mere facade. These emerge depending on the partners' level of acceptance in what concerns the other's ethnicity and on the degree of resistance on behalf of the public (family, friends, community) couples encounter. The name and surname given, the languages spoken and the educational institutions chosen for the children, the rite they choose for wedding and baptism are the most important practices they display their ethnicity through. We also find auxiliary practices: choosing family friends, going to cultural events, furnishing the house, types of food eaten. Ethnicity doesn't only surface in key moments, as stated in the literature (Haynes and Dermott, 2011), but is manifested on an everyday level. The practices of doing family slides between the two communities. Moreover, displaying doesn't only intensify in key moments, as also mistakenly claimed (Brubaker et al., 2006), but also as a reaction to the resistance couples face: the more they are brought into question, the more they develop an awareness of their (mixed) ethnicity.

### Keywords

displaying families, family practices, mixed couples, strategic identities, ethnicity