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## *My Slice of Americana*

# **Hungarian-Americans Construct Their Ethno-Cultural Identity in Narratives**

*Egy szelet Amerika*  
Az etnokulturális identitás narratív leképezése amerikai  
magyar kontextusban

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# Introduction

Knowledges exist not as static accumulations of facts, bits or bytes, but as human activities, tangles of verbal and non-verbal practices. (Pratt 29)

Multiple discourses on narratives and identity have become paradigmatic (Abbott; Bruner, *Self-making*; De Fina; László, *Társas*). People have long faced the necessity of having to find out who they were in order to be able to build a fruitful relationship with others or simply to meet their own needs, desires or aspirations. In order to ensure better rates of survival the capacity to live and grow together in communities of similar ethnic background became top priority from very early on. Communal existence in ethno-cultural groups demanded a deep level of self-understanding that made its way into all different forms of everyday social and cultural interaction. The aim of this work is to analyze the role of narratives, personal and canonical, in constructing, negotiating and renegotiating ethno-cultural identities.

The structure of the dissertation is as follows. Two chapters review the relevant literature that deals with the theme. In the first chapter, I summarize constructs of identity as they appear in various academic fields and then, I outline the germane aspects in the background literature on ethno-cultural identity. The selection is by no means complete, partly because of the vastness and diverging as well as far-reaching nature of the field and partly because my academic background is in Applied Linguistics, American Studies, and Cultural Anthropology. Wearing my American Studies hat narrows the focus further; therefore, I deal mostly with research embedded in the North American context.

The theoretical background of identity studies is traced in philosophical, social-psychological and narrative psychological, sociological, Cultural Studies and Applied Linguistics discourses. A short review of the background literature, not aiming to present all angles of research regarding identity in its complexity, helps build the term conceptually along the axis of essentialism and constructionism (Bodó 47-48; Calhoun 12-20). The introduction, however, presents no simple opposition of the two trends; it describes possible approaches to issues of identity via the combination of these ideologies. Cultural Studies as a recent discipline challenges earlier ideas of culture foregrounding items that can be inventoried and explained on an individual basis (Baldwin, Longhurst, McCracken, Ogborn, and Smith 3-42). Culture as context creates and hosts identity that is under construction and its elements are based on some essences. Language plays a key role in the way society moulds

its members into well-distinguishable categories and as part of the process of identity construction people negotiate their presence and membership according to those categories. Reviewing all research conducted in the myriad of disciplines that incorporate identity studies is beyond the scope of this work, instead it focuses on the role of narrative in constructing and maintaining identity through language as a medium of narration.

Theoretically, the relationship between identity and narrative is built on the assumption that identity is life history under permanent and continuous construction. The once articulated history of the self caters for continuity, unity and integrity in the identity of the person (László, *Szerep* 139). However, looking at life histories defies the idea that there is one unique human reality represented in a narrative. Brockmeier and Harré argue that the narrative is not a way of externalizing an internal reality within a linguistic frame but rather a particular mode of constructing and constituting reality and identity(49-50). Thus, identity construction is a process of negotiation, which may be modeled in a chaos/complexity perspective. The core features of a system according to the chaos/complexity theory such as its interactive nature, internal dynamics, nonlinearity and active relationship with the environment host and contextualize narrative identity.

In the second chapter, I describe ways of conceptualizing and researching ethno-cultural identity. Ethnicity has long been a demarcation feature helping to position individuals relative to a group of people. Postmodern discourses (Baldwin et al.; Calhoun 9-29; Hall 1-17) on identity tend to handle the concept with extreme care if not refuse it on grounds that ethnicity builds and explains cultural identity through collectiveness where all members share a set of essential features. The relationship between individual and collective ethnic identity is defined within the framework of assimilation and acculturation (Gleason; Weinstock 4-19), pluralism and post-pluralism (Hollinger). Language has a twofold function in defining ethnic identity as a relevant construct toward understanding the complexity of ethno-cultural identity. First, narratives on negotiating ethno-cultural identities show how language serves as a tool that represents stability and shared knowledge by members of the linguistic community (Bruner, *Life* 693-94; Bamberg, *Positioning*; Hoffman, *Life* 1-8). Second, language is the equipment deeply embedded in cultural context and characterized by utmost flexibility in being able to follow and represent the individual as a cultural entity (Kramsch 8-9). Thus, unfolding the language that mediates the negotiation of ethno-cultural identity disproves the static nature of the construct.

The present dissertation examines ethno-cultural identity in a North-American context, therefore, a large part of the reviewed background literature and studies with similar foci will



be drawn from the North American research canon. Inquiry into ethnic identity focuses on three major issues: (1) ethnicity as choice, (2) the content and maintenance of ethnic identity, and (3) the intergenerational transfer of ethnicity (Waters 1-15). Measuring the ethnic identity of later-generation ethnicity through the 1990s came from large scale sample surveys (Alba and Chamlin; Abramson) that inquired about the “ethnic identification” of the individual (Waters). Such quantitative research has found that participants do maintain an ethnic identity; yet these works do not provide information as to the meaning of identity to the individual. In-depth interview-based qualitative studies among third and fourth generation suburban ethnics already trigger partial life histories and short narratives (Waters; Min and Kim). Though narratives provide deeply and richly contextualized information about the individual’s ethno-cultural identity they are often prefabricated and more often than not rehearsed pieces of discourse (Rubin and Rubin 231-34; Ochberg). Code-switching as a discourse strategy appears to be much less controlled (Gumperz 59-97) and thus opens up a new perspective in looking at the construct from a linguistic point of view. Investigating such aspects of identity construction requires and justifies using ethnographic techniques of research.

The remaining three chapters deal with the background and results of two empirical studies, aiming to show how images of ethno-cultural identity are built through language. The third chapter presents the background and qualitative research design to elicit and interpret narratives on ethno-cultural identity. This study focuses on Hungarian-Americans living in North America, so the chapter outlines a brief history of immigration and settlement as well as their current life and concerns. The method of ethnographic or qualitative interviewing is described in the second part of the chapter. It is applied to elicit life narratives from ten second- and third-generation Hungarian-Americans. Interviews promise to focus more intensely on the experience of people than quantitative research methods such as questionnaires, which tend to limit informants to narrow menus of prefabricated questions and responses (Ochberg 97). Elicited narratives may traditionally be approached according to the ethnographic and narrative-psychological traditions of content analysis and the linguistic traditions of discourse analysis. In the present dissertation I will mostly rely on the technique of content analysis, nevertheless, refer to specific meanings of discourse elements where the linguistic unfolding of narrative discourse reveals such important issues as the role of social ties or the concrete and specific circumstances of expressing ethno-cultural identity (De Fina 92).

The same chapter describes how three main principles—the ethnographic, linguistic and psychological—have been brought together in the analytical coding of the data. I combined the ethnographic tradition of open coding first to find as many themes and concepts as possible and focused the coding to reveal fine-grained ideas regarding the categories that emerged in the wake of open coding (Emerson, Fretz and Shaw 142-47; Rubin and Rubin 241-56). I looked at the concepts that have occurred in narratives from a discourse point of view in an attempt to show the linguistic representation of ethnic experience. Within the techniques of coding and analyzing concepts and themes, I also relied on the narrative psychological method of content analysis (Ehmann 80-93; László, *A narratív* 1367-1374; László, *A történetek* 134-148; McAdams, *Coding Autobiographical*).

The fourth chapter presents the results of the study, explores the integrity of narrative identity, and places life stories in an ethno-cultural context. Altogether twenty-eight interviews have been conducted and fully transcribed, following which the texts were coded according to the rules of content analysis (Ehmann 80-93; Emerson et al. 142-47; László, *A történetek* 134-48; László *A narratív* 1367-74, Rubin and Rubin 241-56). The stories these informants tell are narratives not in the sense of a firm and cognitive entity but as Brockmeier and Harré indicate, that of a set of rules about the “ordering and making sense of experiences” (54) regarding the ethnic world of the larger Hungarian-American community. Emerging themes and concepts include liminality, homeland, the sense of geography and history, language choice and code-switching, uses of canonical literature, stereotypes, traditions, community and uniqueness.

Nine interviewees position themselves as middle-class Americans and ethnic Hungarians via negotiating their identities in perfect English yet often switching to Hungarian. They do not only express but also demonstrate their knowledge of the ancestral language and the study reveals how code-switching proves to be a signifier of liminality in their ethno-cultural identity construction. I will also apply a chaos/complexity perspective to discuss the thematic and linguistic concurrences and how in this system, narratives encapsulate the emerging properties of a system of ethno-cultural identity. The stories bring forth several concepts and notions that appear in the literature review, and the analysis illustrates how they build a meta-narrative system of liminality and bidirectional acculturation through interactions with one another.

Staying in the world of narratives in the fifth chapter, I discuss a second empirical study about ways in which ethno-cultural identity is reflected and created through reading canonical narratives. First and second- or later-generation Hungarian-Americans and native

Hungarians who speak English well were asked to read a Hungarian short story in translation and then answer ten/eleven open questions about the experience. Another group of native Hungarians were asked to read the same short story in its Hungarian original and reflect on their understanding of it. In the second part of the chapter, I analyze and discuss the findings regarding the answers of the altogether five cohorts. Their responses may espouse how language expresses and embodies cultural reality; in what ways translation influences the transmission of cultural content; as well as how an understanding of culture encompasses the common cultural assumptions of the readers. The exploratory study aimed to justify assumptions regarding an understanding of the canonically storied nature of human conduct. Empirical studies and the review of literature on identity and ethnicity aim to follow up the role of language in constructing ethno-cultural identity. Conformity has a very important role in group-dynamics, yet to what extent individual members are aware of it in terms of ethnic maintenance is a question to be answered in the dissertation. In the study I seek answer to two questions: (1) whether reflections on reading canonical narratives may become discursive markers of ethno-cultural communities, and (2) if reading literature may trigger thinking along the ethno-cultural meta-narrative.

The two empirical studies are set in a Hungarian-American context in North America for two main reasons. First, at the Department of English Literatures and Cultures I teach American Studies courses focusing on ethnic and racial questions, so I have a better understanding of the American approach to these issues. Second, the initial phase of both studies was conducted when I had an opportunity to participate in the graduate studies program at the American Studies Department of the University of Iowa on a Fulbright-Soros grant in the academic year 2000/2001. Hereby I acknowledge the support that I received from the Hungarian Fulbright Commission and the Soros Foundation to pursue graduate studies and conduct research in the United States of America, which helped laying the foundations of this dissertation.

# Chapter One

## Theories and genealogy of cultural identity

Let us begin with the Self in its widest acceptance, and follow it up to its most delicate and subtle form, advancing from the study of the empirical, as the Germans call it, to that of the pure, Ego. (James 437)

Identity is a term used in a myriad different ways and there is no consensus regarding its meaning or even definition. Zsuzsanna Vajda claims that most approaches to the concept very likely embrace individual and social aspects that however, do not distinguish identity from other psychological categories related to the self (8). Identity encapsulates one's definition of who the person is. Elaine Baldwin et al. define identity as a tool to describe the consciousness of self found in the modern individual. The modern self is understood to be autonomous and self-critical (224). The concept bears permanent features only partly; it is also a result of the discourse between self and environment.

The roots of both individual and social or collective identity go back to the term personal identity widely accepted and contemplated in philosophical thinking from ancient times (Shoemaker, *Identity* 8-12; Calhoun 9-15; Hall 1). One key thesis that most sources agree about is that everyone has and maintains personal identity and it persists irrespective of our individual traits (Calhoun 9-15; Baldwin et al. 224; Bodó 5-8). Establishing a firm position as to the logically necessary and sufficient conditions for a person identified once and identified the same at another time has long been in the center of philosophical debates (Shoemaker, *Identity* 19-21; Olson 1-2). Philosophical uses and interpretations of personal identity appear in the social sciences (Bauer 19; Bodó 11) and psychological studies (Bodó 13; Gleason 124-129) and gain additional and distinguishing meanings to describe intra- as well as interpersonal relations. Reviewing the entire research canon on identity theory would be too wide a scope for the present dissertation; therefore, mostly those authors and ideas are mentioned in the chapter that bear significance from the perspective of introducing and interpreting ethno-cultural identity.

### 1.1 IDENTITY IN PHILOSOPHICAL DISCOURSES

Theories in philosophy have attempted to define the term personal identity from very early on. A cornerstone of the metaphysical discourse is the axiom that personal identity exists and “it is a fact of conscious life, as common as the word ‘I’” (Stewart 53). Thinkers of the ancient civilizations as well as modern philosophers, however, provide little guidance beyond stating the postulate, thus framing these definitions in the form of a problem.

### 1.1.1 Ontological roots: personal identity

Classic approaches to grasping the meaning of identity rooted in ancient Greek philosophy. *Phaedo* is the first dialogue in which Plato decisively posits the existence of the abstract objects (Kraut 710) and conceptualizes identity as an idea or an abstract object. Aristotle pursued identity in terms of the relationship between essence and appearance or between the true nature of phenomena and epiphenomenal variations (Calhoun 15).

[...] the soul must be a substance in the sense of the form of a natural body having life potentially within it....That is why we can wholly dismiss as unnecessary the question whether the soul and the body are one: it is as meaningless to ask whether the wax and the shape given to it by the stamp are one, or generally the matter of a thing and that of which it is the matter. (Aristotle 16)

In his work Aristotle gives a general account of the nature of the soul’s principal cognitive features (Wedin 48) thus presenting an early approach to personal identity. The timeless nature of the issue is justified when one of my conversational partners in the qualitative-interview-based study, which I analyze in Chapter 4, actually reflects on this longstanding dilemma of the soul and the self.

Linguistically, identity is a derivate of the Latin root *idem*, meaning “the same.” *Merriam Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary (MWCD)* traces its use back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The term stands for “sameness of essential or generic character in different instances or sameness in all that constitutes the objective reality of a thing.” According to *MWDC*, identity also refers to “the distinguishing character or personality of an individual.” Gleason argues that identity bears the technical meaning of sameness in algebra and logic, “and has been associated with the perennial mind-body problem in philosophy” (124). In this context identity functions as the relationship a thing has with itself and informally the identity of two separate items implies their sharing of all their properties (Wagner 415). The term expresses logical simplicity and clearness and remains a basic notion in philosophy.

A new and focused emphasis on identity was the notion that the self is integrally and immediately both being and consciousness, name and voice. Descartes' famous cogito argument "I think therefore I am" is a crucial index of the novel stress on identity. The person becomes a disembodied cognitive subject and knowledge depends on this subject (Calhoun 10). The modern history of the philosophical uses of personal identity follows Descartes' course of thought and is taken up in the discourse of John Locke in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The English philosopher became intensely engaged in the social and cultural issues of his day (Wolterstorff 506). Locke opposes the rationalist belief in innate ideas and launches a famous attack on innate knowledge. He argues that the mind is born tabula rasa upon which all knowledge is inscribed in the form of human experience (14-17).

Locke held that the identity of a person consists neither in the identity of an immaterial substance, nor in the identity of a material substance or animal body, and that it consists instead in same consciousness. In this approach, the persistence of a person through time consists in the fact that certain actions, thoughts, experiences occurring at different times, are somehow united in memory (Shoemaker, *Personal Identity* 661; Olson 2). People have in memory a special access to facts about and events in their own histories and their identities but this kind of access they do not have to the histories and identities of other persons and other things. To approach personal identity Locke defined the person as a thinking, intelligent being "that has reason and reflection, and can consider itself as itself, the same thinking thing, in different times and places" (201). A person is capable of this through his consciousness, which is inseparable from thinking.

For since consciousness always accompanies thinking, and 'tis that, that makes every one to be, what he calls self, and thereby distinguishes himself from all other thinking things, in this alone consists personal Identity, i.e. the sameness of a rational Being: And as far as this consciousness can be extended backwards to any past Action or Thought, so far reaches the Identity of that Person; it is the same self now it was then; and it is by the same self with this present one that now reflects on it, that that action was done. (Locke 202)

Thus, personal identity connects to consciousness and it is through this link that a thinking person can be differentiated from other people.

Later empiricist David Hume also based his system on Locke's theory of knowledge and defined identity as key to understanding personal development and growth.

For my part, when I enter most intimately into what I call myself, I always stumble on some particular perception or other, of heat or cold, light or shade, love or hatred, pain or pleasure. I never catch myself at any time without a perception, and never can observe anything but the perception. [...] I may venture to affirm of the rest of mankind, that they are nothing but a

bundle or collection of different perceptions, which succeed each other with an inconceivable rapidity, and are in perpetual flux and movement. (Hume 145)

In Hume's understanding identity is common to every being whose existence has any duration (15) and defines the identity of the self relative to perceiving others and so the concept gains the dynamics of perpetual flux and movement of human relationships (145). Craig Calhoun writes that at the same time modern selves had to display new sorts of moral weight, yet it was St. Augustine who first assigned this weight to the self in his *Confessions* (10). Augustine became Christian and a proclaimer of an individual God and individual salvation. He combined these ideas with Greek forms of intellectual exploration and ideas of recognition to generate a new sort of morally charged introspection. Modern self-understanding brought along a similar synthesis a millennium later. The discourse of self is uniquely modern and modernity is specifically tied to the discourse of the self, partly because of the cognitive and moral weight attributed to selves and self-identity. Modern ways of thinking about identity also root in ways in which modernity has made identity problematic. The kind of clarity that characterized classic and medieval understandings of the self rooted in cultural and ideological consensus as well as in the reinforcement stemming from the systematically organized networks of social relations (Calhoun 10-11).

### **1.1.2 Identity as self-reflection**

Calhoun argues that in Fichte the simple equation "I am I" is elevated to a philosophical claim to the self-sufficiency of identity (10). Among other representatives of the German idealist tradition this is joined to an emphasis on the fundamental formative power. As the knowing and recognizing self carries this philosophical weight, it is also more commonly seen as fixed, as appearing in simple identity rather than complex relationship. Simple self-sameness is increasingly questioned, yet most theories have retained a focus on identity in a fairly strong sense, on integral individuality. The term had reference to personality or individuality and slowly its use embraced a looser, more informal manner. Hegel saw individualism, the right to criticism and autonomy of action as the three main characteristics of modern subjectivity (Baldwin et al. 224). The self-reflective nature of identity means that modern thinking looks upon identity as a project that is not fixed. These early contemplations regarding the formation and content of personal identity all agree that creating the history of the self is a key process in identity formation. Philip Gleason argues that the philosophical tradition of

usage is very important since it invested identity with great intellectual significance and moral seriousness, yet it was a restricted quasi-technical tradition (125).

Modern theories derived from Locke's take memory continuity to be a special case of something more general psychological continuity (Shoemaker, *Personal Identity* 661). This psychological continuity is a key feature of the Lockean and neo-Lockean discussion of the term. Recent discourses (Grice 85; Olson 4; Parfit 253) approach this concept as person-stage or a momentary time-slice in the history of a person. Person-stages form a psychological continuity if the psychological states such as memories that appear among the various person-stages grow out of earlier stages in certain characteristic ways. In the psychological continuity view of personal identity, person-stages occurring at different times are stages of the same person if they belong to a single psychologically continuous series of person-stages (Shoemaker, *Personal Identity* 661).

Opponents of Locke's approach to identity support their reasoning from dualism and materialism. Personal identity, therefore, is indefinable, and nothing informative can be stated as to its content. Others hold that the identity of a person consists in some physical continuity, perhaps the identity of a living human organism, or the identity of a human brain. However, recent philosophical attention focuses more on the importance of personal identity rather than what it consists in (Shoemaker, *Personal Identity* 661).

In his search for a definition of personal identity Stewart looks at Locke's memory theory to find some constitutive features that are necessary and sufficient conditions to frame the concept (53-76). The first criterion is memory. Locke's statement demands too much if it is taken literally, since it requires that we remember everything that has ever happened to us, forgetting nothing along the way (Stewart 54). Anthony Quinton (53-72) and Paul H. Grice (73-95) assume that it is impossible to remember everything and they have modified Locke's theory to accommodate forgetfulness in it. Sydney Shoemaker accepts that personal identity can be defined in terms of memory because human beings are capable of making memory statements concerning their own pasts (*Personal Identity and Memory* 133-34). Hence long-term and explicit memory seems a necessary condition of personal identity. The second criterion is continuity, "a protean property of material objects, one expressed in several modes by inanimates, plants, animals and human beings" (Stewart 59). The third criterion is subjectivity entailed in awareness; even passive awareness for it is the conscious subject after all, who is aware. The author claims neuroscientific evidence that such ubiquitous correlation exists and "the transition from the unattended condition up to passive awareness marks the emergence of subjectivity" (67).



Wayne Stewart argues that memory, continuity and subjectivity are the necessary conditions of personal identity (53-76). Thinking in terms of narratives Locke's central claim regarding the necessity of having the same consciousness through time or in various stages of life means that the protagonist and the narrator in the story share personal identities. The narrative is about the history of self, which plays a key role in identity formation.

## **1.2 IDENTITY IN SOCIAL SCIENCES AND PSYCHOLOGY**

Theorizing about identity in a psychological and sociological context rooted in nineteenth-century discourses on collective representations such as religion or sciences valid for entire communities. Especially in the beginnings, socially contextualized thinking about identity involved focusing on the person and the self and the functions that individuals fulfill in the social aggregates (Somlai 70-76). Such an interest triggered a louder and more vivid dispute regarding key features of identity. Émile Durkheim holds that "collective tendencies have an existence of their own; they are forces as real as cosmic forces, though of another sort, they likewise affect the individual from without" (*Suicide* 309). Philosophical contemplation about the conditions and characteristic features of self-sameness opens up a discourse of identity in terms of self and society, the individual as part of a group of people. Studies focus on the process how the individual becomes part of the group or society as well as how the members reassure that norms and values of the community are reproduced, maintained and exploited to constitute personal identities.

### **1.2.1 Individual and society**

The nineteenth century was a period of classical liberalism as well as modernization, involving numerous attempts that aimed at winding up remnants of feudalism. Former feudal classes disintegrate and individuals tend to form looser, less traditionally and officially demarcated cultural communities. Benedict Anderson holds that by the mid-nineteenth century a large cluster of new political entities emerged in the Western hemisphere, all of which self-consciously defined themselves as nations (46). The concept refers to "an imagined political community ... both inherently limited and sovereign" (6). National consciousness in these nation-states developed mainly due to three major historical-cultural as well as linguistic phenomena. First, wide and cheap access to the printing press occurred and brought along the revolutionary vernacularizing of medieval Latin with it. Second was the

impact of the Reformation, which owed much of its success to print-capitalism. Third was the slow and geographically uneven spread of some vernaculars. Even though the territorial gain was slow and geographically uneven, these language variations gradually became instruments of administrative centralization by certain well-positioned, would-be absolutist monarchs. Print languages became the basis for national consciousness (Anderson 37-46).

These crystallizing socio-political units required their members to develop a new form of inter-personal bonding as well as identification based on collective national consciousness. The creation of the modern nation state developed the Durkheimian dualism of human nature: being individual and social at the same time (Bauer 29). Durkheim describes society as a compelling collective representation independent of the individual, in which human behavior cannot be explained via understanding natural laws or generalizing individual lifestyles and decisions. Collective forces and states of mind that are stronger and more enduring than anything else form patterns of behavior regarding suicide, education, crime, religion, language use and consumption. Social instincts are therefore inherent in people because they are the products of society (Durkheim, *Suicide* 218). Durkheim's view that society is transcendent and immanent for the individual at the same time (*Az erkölcsi* 186) implies that the individual is a social being. Social existence is the source of knowledge that is the framework of the person's ethno-cultural identity. The content is personal, which carries meaning for the individual as a member of the society. Thus, it is personalized information that derives from collective knowledge and requires conformity from the members of the group.

Discourses on the relationship between individual and society increasingly made use of the term "socialization," which in its first occurrence referred to the "process of social control" (Somlai 15). Socialization means learning the behaviors deemed appropriate by one's culture (Papalia and Olds 256). Péter Somlai explains the term as the process during which the biological being becomes a social being, consequently, social relations, powers and cultural meaning systems unite in the personality of a human being (14-20). The dialectic relationship of individual and society implies that either one or the other assumes superordinate position relative to the other. During socialization a person creates multiple aspects of his identity, including gender, ethnicity, religion, occupation, social role, etc. A group of Hungarian-Americans participates in Hungarian Scouting in Exeter as a form of socializing into the various aspects of ethnic Hungarianness. Four of my informants, Endre Szentkirályi, Eszter Pigniczky, Matyi Tábor, and Ildikó Varga emphasized the significance of scouting in their initial socialization as Hungarian-Americans. Eszter Pigniczky talks about

the role of scouting that “when I was nine, ... [we] moved to New Brunswick, NJ, another huge pocket of Hungarians. And scouting of course, and Hungarian school of course, but there we had Hungarian church which was a big deal because we could learn the Hungarian liturgy” (Appendix C, *Interview 8/1*). Eszti finds that scouting has placed her not only in the Hungarian community but also in church as well as a person having strong skills in leadership. Therefore, identity is a tool that demarcates the major features of socialization and at the same time identity is an end, the ultimate marker of a person that is formed during socialization.

### **1.2.2 Social identity**

Social psychology conceptualizes identity in two major ways (László, *Társas* 94). Erik Homburger Erikson played a key role in attaching meanings to identity that put the word in circulation in sciences other than philosophy. The term in this approach refers to “a process ‘located’ in the core of the individual and yet also in the core of his communal culture, a process which establishes, in fact the identity of those two identities” (Erikson, *Identity* 22). Personal identity develops deep in the unconscious as a durable and persistent sense of sameness of the self which aspect is in accordance with the Lockean concept. Erikson stresses the role of crisis in identifying identity and argues that the non-pathological individual does not normally consider himself or herself to have become someone else no matter how traumatic the experience or dramatic the passage from one phase of life to another (Byron 292). Therefore, a person conceives of the self in his/her historical time and spatial range of experience. This concept of identity is rooted in Freudian psychoanalysis and revolves around the developmental regularities of personal identity (László, *Társas* 94).

Gleason argues that the Eriksonian concept of personal identity involves an interaction between the interior development of the individual personality and the developing sense of selfhood that arises from participating in society, “internalizing its cultural norms, acquiring different statuses, and playing different roles” (127-28). As individuals progress through the eight psychosocial stages of life they are faced with conflicts that must be resolved for healthy development to occur (Dworetzky 345). These experiences are not only linked to biological maturation “but they are also intrinsically linked through social interaction to the milieu in which one finds oneself” (Gleason 128). This milieu is the historical context of the culture that codifies the social world in which the individual and his/her contemporaries live. The interaction between society and its members supports the process of identity formation as

long as individuals may keep the particular element of “deliberate tentativeness of autonomous choice” concerning membership (Erikson, *Reflections* 232). The person must understand that the next step depends on him and that it is the same if he stays or goes away because he may always decide to leave or turn in the opposite direction should he choose to do so (Erikson, *Reflections* 232). Erikson emphasizes the organic nature and continuity of the self, as well as its internal and external balance through choices (László, *Társas* 94). Choice is a factor in constructing and maintaining ethno-cultural identity as some conversational partners have stated the ethnic category they place themselves implies potential marginality (see Chapter 4). Thus, choice in this case is responsible for the continuity of the ethno-cultural feature of the Eriksonian self.

The second concept in social psychology, social identity emphasizes the social element. Even though it is a well-articulated aspect of the Eriksonian approach to identity, it became more explicit in major conceptual theories in psychology and sociology (Allport 293-94; Merton 279-440; Goffman 9-239). The theory of social identity stresses the group identifications of individuals and interprets how the self remains independent, valid and active. The category of identity appears in symbolic interactionist role theory which deals with identity as role (László, *Társas* 94, Pataki 34). Gordon W. Allport linked identity with ethnicity and claimed that identification meant the emotional merging of oneself with others and it may most easily take place in the field of social values and attitudes (294). This approach to identification emphasizes the individual’s social and cultural surroundings and the mechanisms of socialization and acquisition of culture. Erving Goffman’s conceptualization of role (9-239) and Robert K. Merton’s reference group theory (279-440) are closely linked to social identification, which is a “process by which persons come to realize what groups are significant for them, what attitudes concerning them they should form, and what kind of behavior is appropriate” (Gleason 129). Nevertheless, Dan P. McAdams argues that Goffman’s concept of social life does not discern “an integrative sense of self—an identity—behind the many roles we play. For Goffman nothing transcends the particular behavioral performances we enact” (*The Stories* 126).

Calhoun argues that while the sociological approach to roles acknowledged the concurrence of multiple identities, it commonly obscured its full impact and implicitly claimed some sort of ontological independence of the individual from her/his various roles (12-13). Thus, individuals may have to cope with the tensions among their roles. The strong version of role theory looked upon persons as partially constituted by their roles. Its rhetoric focused on how individuals played socially prescribed roles and failed to adequately address

the problem of relating multiple roles to one another. Identity in Eriksonian psychology and the sociological traditions of usage as in symbolic interactionism (Giddens 664-66), role theory and reference group theory differ principally in their relationship to change. According to the former, the concept entails a strong core that remains intact through change, while identity is shaped and altered in the interaction of the individual and the surrounding social and cultural environment.

The sociological analysis of roles and their function toward building identities, on the other hand, tend to view the concept “as an artifact of interaction between the individual and society ... a matter of being designated by a certain name, accepting that designation, internalizing the role requirements ... and behaving according to those prescriptions” (Gleason 131). Peter L. Berger adds that identities “are socially bestowed” and “they must also be socially sustained” (100). This sociological vision of the personality defies earlier philosophical and psychological assumptions of continuity in the self or even identity as a matter of choice. “Looked at sociologically, the self is no longer a solid given entity. ... It is rather a process, continuously created and re-created in each social situation that one enters, held together by the slender thread of memory” (Berger 106). The debate steps beyond arguing that human identity is essential, yet triggers further consideration of the social construction of self (Bodó 48; Calhoun 13).

The theory of social identity explains how different groups relate to one another. This approach is based on the assumption that individuals cherish the basic motive of positive social identity, and they satisfy the demands toward positive self assessment via belonging to a particular group. The individual identifies with the group as a social category and this identification becomes part of the self. Thus, identity is created within the existence of other groups and it is formed through in-group comparison. The formation and maintenance of social identity depends on group membership as exemplified in the informant narratives by Hungarian scouting (Appendix C). Members find shared views extremely important because they develop and keep these constructs of reality in a joint effort (László, *Társas* 96-97; Pataki 24). Such common views and constructs of reality may be analyzed and interpreted both as canonical and personal narratives.

### **1.2.3 Essentialism and constructionism**

Essentialism and constructionism build a theoretical framework in which the concept of conformity relative to identity can be explained. Constructionist views (Calhoun 12-20; Bodó

47-48) challenge the ideas that identity is given naturally or produced by individual will, and question the existence of collective identities based on some core features shared by all members of a particular group of people. Arguments of social constructionism defy essentialist ideas in that a human being may have singular, integral, altogether harmonious and unproblematic identity. Essentialist discourses on identity, however, continue to invoke concepts such as race, nation, gender, class, ethnicity and person as clearly definable terms of reference (Gleason 132; Bodó 47-48; Calhoun 12-20). The two courses of interpretation resonate the problem of the unity of the self associated with the writings of Locke and Hume, whether “ethnic identity is something primordially given or optionally cultivated” (Gleason 132). The roots of essentialism trace back to Locke’s theorem and it cannot be seen as simply a period in history, or else a dead end in early modern philosophical thinking. Essentialism reinforced the development of individualism and the rhetoric of national identity or early nationalism “as for example the notion of human rights was grounded on a presumed essential commonality of human beings” (Calhoun 18).

Post-structuralist approaches (Bodó 51-54) to both collective and personal issues of identity define the concept as incomplete, fragmented, and full of contradictions. Such a challenge to essentialism has become very influential and led to a more multifaceted understanding of identity. Calhoun finds it risky “that simply showing a process of construction, fails to grapple with the real, present-day political and other reasons why essentialist identities continue to be invoked and often deeply felt” (14). Thus, sociologists who challenged essentialist approaches to individuals would likely speak of the “the essence of community” (Hewitt 127). Moreover, widely acclaimed role-theoreticians would frequently approach persons who did not fit normatively sanctioned roles as deviants (Giddens 138-48). Such strong dichotomy between essentialism and constructionism has reinforced the nature—culture division. Reference to biology was often set aside with the accusation of being essentialist (Calhoun 17). An alternative suggestion is that essentialism and constructionism be seen as a field of possible strategies for treating issues of identity.

Social constructionism was an ambiguous ally in the attempt to oppose the devaluing of various identities. Social constructionist approaches could be just as determinist as naturalizing approaches, for example, when they denied or minimized personal and political agency by stressing seemingly omnipresent but diffuse social pressures as the alternative to biology causation. The emphases on early socialization and on the power of social structure also led many social constructionists to treat identities in terms nearly as “essentialist” as those of biological determinists. (Calhoun 16)

Yet much of the pressure due to the authority of sameness and the essentialist approach to identities stems from a tendency to think in terms of categorical identities (White 80). Individuals are placed into abstract categories if they share a particular identity. This given identity is rooted in interactions and social relationships, and once it is articulated it becomes subject to permanent renegotiation. The person is aware of a set of potential and relevant identities and while learning about those and becoming able to navigate among them, he/she creates continuity and balance among the various sorts of identities. “Categorical identities can be invoked and given public definition by individuals or groups even where they are not embodied in concrete networks of direct interpersonal relationships” (Calhoun 26). Thus, a person may claim to be part of a community on the basis of sharing key features yet without physically sharing the space with the group. A conversational partner of mine has expressed that she is a Hungarian-American yet she does not want to become part of Hungarian-American organizations mainly because membership in any of those would require her to speak Hungarian that seems to require too much effort (see Chapter 4). Her father links her to this community, however, having stronger ties such as shared spaces in any form would restrict her too much.

The abstractness of categories promotes framing discourses about membership in them and by means of shared discourses and language the element of essentialism becomes part of the categorical identities. A particular categorical identity may become more important than others and achieve a “trump-card” status. Calhoun argues that in the face of the modern world there are always many possible salient identities and the struggle to achieve the “trump-card” salience may bring about “in-group essentialism” (26). Depending on the group and the identity frame in-group essentialism may be rewarding or repressive at the same time. It enforces conformity to the standard views of the given identity and brings forth dependence on expert authoritative sources as to that identity (Calhoun 27).

In the American context, in-group essentialism means the suppression of some identity; usually the one that fewer people admit to be their salient identity compared to some that belongs to a larger group. In the relationship of individual and group or collective identity this means that collective identity as such is open to both internal subdivision and may be incorporated into some larger category or primary identity.

Tension between identity—putatively singular, unitary and integral—and identities—plural, cross-cutting and divided—is inescapable at both individual and collective levels. As lived, identity is always project, not settled accomplishment; though various external ascriptions or recognitions may be fixed and timeless. (Calhoun 27)

It means that for example being Hungarian in America is always a project of intellectual existence in which there are elements of resistance to mainstream American culture as well as conformity and acceptance to in-group ideologies. The seemingly contradictory elements of identity construction can be resolved within the narrative structure, which by its nature accepts the presence of internal tensions and inconsistencies. Personal and collective identities are inextricably linked mainly because the cultural discourses that locate persons as individuals and as members of a group respond to individual as well as communal appeals to self-realization.

### **1.3 IDENTITY IN CULTURAL STUDIES**

Research regarding the relationship of identity and culture belongs to the area of Cultural Studies as well as psychology, philosophy, sociology, anthropology and Applied Linguistics. Approaches to culture have crossed disciplinary boundaries and claim such key concepts as ethnicity, identity or their linguistic representations to be core issues. Baldwin et al. hold that Cultural Studies are prone to a valorization of differences and a corresponding recognition of the plurality of identities to which persons can lay claim (138). Cultural Studies explain identity within the complexity of culture. Thus, it is important to find and summarize the perspective from among the manifold ways of approaching culture that attempts to contextualize the narrative study of ethno-cultural identity.

#### **1.3.1 Identity in defining culture**

Providing a most comprehensive yet lightweight definition of culture that is geared toward a better understanding of identity is a complex task, since both the content and nature of culture have to be examined. The definition has to include the entirety of customs, ideas, values, norms, art, relationships, structures and functions, history and future perspectives that are produced, shared and maintained by groups of people. It may change over time but only if alterations are based on consensus. Culture also proves to be essential to humanness; it exists only when people enact it, whose behavior varies from one community to the other. Michael Byram approaches culture as an “omnibus term” (80; Kaplan and Manners 3). “Definitions of culture, particularly in anthropology, are notoriously difficult, yet it is as good a label as any for the overall phenomenon or system of meanings within which sub-systems of social



structure, technology, art and so on exist and interconnect” (Byram 80). Looking at the myriad ways of conceptualizing culture within Cultural Studies three approaches may be emphasized on the basis of its content from the perspective of this dissertation: (1) definitions of culture as an inventory of encyclopedic items, (2) culture as context; and (3) culture and language.

Combining these approaches to culture Raymond Williams distinguishes three senses of culture: (1) culture with a big 'C', (2) culture as a way of life, and (3) culture as process and development (90-91). In this taxonomy Williams (90) interprets the first sense, culture with a big 'C' as a list of “works and practices of intellectual and especially artistic activity.” This segment of culture describes “music, literature, painting and sculpture, theatre and film,” all of them “refined pursuits in which the “cultured” person engages (Williams 90). The second sense of culture embraces “the creation and use of symbols, which distinguish a particular way of life, whether of a people, a period or a group, or humanity in general” (Williams 90). The third sense describes “the development of the individual’s capacities” and refers to “cultivation as a general, social and historical process” (Williams 91). The symbolizing capacity as well as the developmental capacity contextualize and make sense of the items on the list of culture with big 'C'. Culture and language belong here.

Inventorying modes of understanding culture claim that a whole list of individual items constitute culture which can be described, interpreted and learned (Kroeber and Kluckhohn qtd. in Kuper 54; Williams 90). In 1871, first in the genealogy of the anthropological idea of culture, Edward B. Tylor provided a comprehensive definition in which he practically included everything a person can think of aside from biology (Kuper 56; Geertz, *Thick Description* 3). “Culture, or Civilization,” Tylor wrote, “taken in its wide ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society” (qtd. in Kuper 56). Culture is understood as a whole, which is perpetuated in the form of essential, communal knowledge.

This definition ruled anthropological thought until the 1950s claiming that culture as a whole is to be understood as a list of traits, inventoried but never analyzed (Kuper 57). Civilization and ethnic studies also built on this approach of clearly definable terms of reference (Hansen 202-212; Mead 216-231; Gleason 3-28) which paved the way to the kind of essentialist thought Calhoun outlined (12-29; Bodó 46-48). Identity in this approach is a product of culture because the individual is shaped by those elements of culture that he/she acquires. Culture is conceived of as the heritage of a group, but it refers to the elements

traditionally referred to as “the spiritual possessions of a group” and these spiritual elements give meaning to the life of the individual (Kuper 65). Conceived in this way, Adam Kuper argues, it is culture that gives a “particular people its distinctive place in the world” (65). Even though the approach has become outdated as a fully conceived method of negotiating and interpreting cultural phenomena, inventorial definitions constitute of elements that constantly recur as referential points in ethnic life narratives (Dublin, Holt).

An anthropological sense of culture has developed and reflected the cultural or holistic level of analysis and “has attempted to provide a methodological account of the study of cultural difference” (Young 33). In an explanation of the culturally other, Clifford Geertz looks at the culture as a context of interpreting human lives and tears off the threads with a view of its content that may be understood through lists and descriptions of individual items (*Thick* 4). Geertzian culture resides in an ensemble of texts constructed by the ethnographer and all social acts can be taken as texts and have the qualities of speeches (Kuper 112).

The concept of culture I espouse, and whose utility the essays below attempt to demonstrate, is essentially a semiotic one. Believing with Max Weber, that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning. (Geertz, *Thick* 4)

Thus, culture is a symbolic system and cultural processes must be read, translated and interpreted because the description of social acts bears the qualities of speech. Informants of the ethnographic field work provide the texts that carry the symbols. The ethnographic narrative about culture consists of the fragmentary and fleeting text of informants as well as the text that the ethnographer fabricates. In this joint narrative culture is the framework in which characters negotiate and position various items, actions, and features.

Clifford reads ethnographic texts of the twentieth century between the lines and argues that they do not carry information on other cultures as their explicit meaning would assume, but they tell about the “predicament of culture” (10). This view rejects the Geertzian notion of cultural integrity and emphasizes the fragmentation of the modern world. Renato Rosaldo, however, does not see the fragmented nature of culture a problem. Anthropology is geared toward expanding one’s sense of human possibilities through the study of other forms of life. “Not unlike learning another language” in such an inquiry “we cannot ... simply use our imaginations to invent other cultural worlds. Human imaginations are as culturally formed as distinctive ways “of behavior, which are specific to certain forms of life” (Rosaldo 25). Rosaldo adds:

Culture lends significance to human experience by selecting from and organizing it. It refers broadly to the forms through which people make sense of their lives, rather than more narrowly to the opera or art museums. It does not inhabit a set-aside domain, as does, for example, that of politics or economics. From the pirouettes of classical ballet to the most brute facts, all human conduct is culturally mediated. Culture encompasses the everyday and the esoteric, the mundane and the elevated, the ridiculous and the sublime. Neither high nor low, culture is all pervasive. (Rosaldo 26)

Culture and identity are inextricably tied, and they are both in flux. They are constituted consciously and the construct is unstable as well as fluid. In the approach to culture as “a form of personal and collective self-fashioning,” its members assume a “state of being in culture while looking at culture” (Clifford 9). The question remains whether the content of culture is negotiable. If culture is not an enduring entity then the ethnographic narrative about identity has two clearly distinguishable functions. On the one hand, it creates cohesion among the voluntary and random selection of the constituents of culture and explains why and how they belong together. On the other hand, it provides data by means of which culture may be described. Thus, narrative is a genre of talking about culture as well as it is a tool that creates cultural representation and integrity. An individual may learn a culture “only reading, listening or being there” (Rosaldo 26).

The third category in this taxonomy of definitions of culture is the relationship between language and culture. “In its most general sense,” Kuper argues “culture is simply a way of talking about collective identities.” One potential medium of talking about collective identities is language (3). In an attempt to espouse the relationship of language and culture, Michael Lessard-Clouston states that by today culture has become widely accepted and exploited as the context for language use (198). Robert Phillipson, in his term of “linguistic imperialism” (1992) creates a subordinating relationship of language and culture by regarding linguistic, media, educational, and scientific imperialism as the subtypes of cultural imperialism. In this process the key mechanisms are exploitation, penetration, fragmentation and marginalization by means of culture as well as language. Adrian Holliday argues that language should not be considered a part of culture because that approach would deprive language of its reality-constructing role (237-60). Instead, one has to apply a discourse-centered approach in which discourse serves as a concrete manifestation of the language-culture relationship. The function of discourse is to create, recreate, focus, modify and transmit culture, as well as language and their interaction.

Language pre-eminently embodies the values and meanings of a culture, describes cultural artifacts and establishes people’s cultural identity and does all this in a reciprocal way

(Byram 41). The idea of representation immediately raises a number of issues such as cultural relativity that have been the subject of much philosophical debate over the centuries (Baldwin et al. 43-90; Wardhaugh 217-57).

Because of its symbolic and transparent nature language can stand alone and represent the rest of a culture's phenomena. [...] The meanings of a particular language point to the culture of a particular social grouping, and the analysis of those meanings—their comprehension by learners and other speakers—involves the analysis and comprehension of that culture. (Byram 41)

Representations, do not simply copy the world, but produce a version of it and “a representation is centrally involved in the construction of the world” (Baldwin et al. 43). However, there seems to be a paradox at the heart of language as a medium of representation. It is effective as a means of communication and representation because its form and its associations are shared, regular, and conventional. Nonetheless, it fulfils its role successfully because it is optional in nature. Language is arbitrary, so speech communities can make of it anything that they choose. This apparent contradiction is the essence of language that it is “constituted through difference” and “is simultaneously both regulated and creative” (Baldwin et al. 76). Baldwin et al. continue that “social life, which is made up of instances of mutual interpretation, is possible because language offers the possibility of the negotiation of meaning” (76). The sphere of negotiation depends on the social situation and the semantic domain. The partial and negotiated nature of language is revealed in the act of communication, as Weiner says, “in that sense, spoken language does not create but rather problematizes culture. To put it in another way, unspoken language is language taken for granted, spoken language is language problematized and therefore culture problematized” (184). Thus, language seeks to encompass culture instead of defining it and attempts to map the social terrain of a speech community but never colonizes it.

### **1.3.2 Codability of culture across languages**

Expression of cultural phenomena and artifacts across languages is a major perspective of the relationship between language and culture. “Behavior [as well as linguistic behavior] must be attended to, and with some exactness, because it is through the flow of behavior—or more precisely, social action—that cultural forms find articulation” (Geertz 10). Moreover, language is the most important set of symbols a human being possesses, which allows him to create culture and perpetuate it from one generation to the next (Vander Zanden 63). The

linguistic relativity—the Sapir-Whorf—hypothesis (Pinker 59-82) has influenced much of the way in which to think about language and culture. It holds that a particular language influences the way its speakers think. Therefore, distinctive patterns of language result in distinctive patterns of thought. The hypothesis defies the idea that language represents the surrounding world perfectly, because it acknowledges that ways of a language affect its speakers. There is a distinction between a strong and weak version of the theory (Hudson 95-105; Pinker 73-82; Wardhaugh 216-22), nevertheless, regarding the strong version Pinker argues that “there is no scientific evidence that languages dramatically shape their speakers’ ways of thinking” (58).

Experiments confirmed the weaker version according to which, the structure of one’s language influences perception and recall (Kramersch 13; Lyons 307). Furthermore, it is widely held that a natural link exists between the language that members of a social group speak and the identity of that group (Kramersch 65). Languages the ancestors spoke that are different from the one the individual uses may as well serve as points of reference in negotiating cultural identities. Thus, language is the most sensitive indicator of the relationship between an individual and a community (Kramersch 77), and a definite factor in the process of negotiating ethno-cultural identities even if the person does not speak the ancestral language any longer. All informants who shared their life histories with me talked about the role of Hungarian in their lives, regardless if they speak it on a native level or have only vague memories of their relatives using archaic Hungarian (Chapter 4).

The nature of the relationship between language and culture brings along the problem of codability across languages, which is more than a matter of the existence of single-word lexemes in them (Lyons 306). Much of the meaning of expressions, including their descriptive as well as their social and expressive meaning, is non-universal and culture-dependent. Due to a greater or lesser degree of cultural overlap, it is possible to make even highly culture-dependent expressions understandable for someone who does not know the language and culture of the original. Cultural diffusion helps reduce and conceal semantic differences between languages (Lyons 323-25). No matter how unique and untranslatable a term is it can be translated on the level of semantic explication in a natural semantic metalanguage (Wierzbicka 135). Translations from one language into another, however, do not always respect normal usage, since they are relative to the purpose for which they are intended and to “the assumed background knowledge of those who will use it” (Lyons 326). The gap created by the linguistic coding of cultural connotations will be addressed in the

study outlined in chapter five, in which five cohorts of respondents read the original and the translated version of a Hungarian short story.

### **1.3.3 Cultural identity**

In Kuper's view, there is general agreement that culture involves a matter of ideas and values and a collective cast of mind. "The ideas, and values, the cosmology, morality, and aesthetics, are expressed in symbols" thus, if the medium is the message—culture is a symbolic system (227). In this system identity is understood to be a project that is not fixed. A kind of autobiographical thinking represents modern identity and this narrative concept creates a coherent sense of past identity, which has to be sustained in the present and reestablished in the future. "The constant remaking of identity reveals that the sense of self is to some extent an illusion, because the making of the self requires a constant interaction with the not-self or non-identity: the external world" (Baldwin et al. 224). Lawrence Grossberg emphasizes a noticeable tendency to equate Cultural Studies with the theory and politics of identity and difference due mainly to the wide influence of postcolonial and critical race theory (87). The veritable discursive explosion in recent years around the concept of identity has left it in a critical state regarding its integral, originary and unified nature (Hall 1). The controversial issue of identity politics is rooted in thinking about identity as power "bound up with a whole series of new social movements, most prominently the women's liberation movements, anti-racist, lesbian and gay liberation, peace and green movements" (Baldwin et al. 223-24). These crusades began to bring issues into the realm of politics that were not considered on the political agenda before and triggered debate from a number of perspectives (Baldwin et al. 225; Hall 1-6).

Stuart Hall finds the concept of identity irreducible in Cultural Studies discourse, an idea that is in a state between "reversal and emergence" (2). Strategic and positional rather than essentialist identity is created by means of identification. The term in this context indicates the recognition and articulation of some common origin or shared features with another person, group, or ideal, and with the natural closure of solidarity and allegiance established on this foundation. This approach to identity challenges the Eriksonian idea of the stable core of the self which remains the same through all the trials and tribulations of history and holds that "identities are never unified and, in late modern times, increasingly fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions" (Hall 4). Identities originate in the past and

are tightly connected to it; nonetheless, they tell more about the process of construction than the current state of being through their links with history, language, and culture. Four core features characterize the process of rearticulating and negotiating identity in its modern sense: (1) it operates across difference, (2) it entails discursive work, (3) it triggers the binding and marking of symbolic boundaries, and (4) the production of frontier effects (Hall 3; Grossberg 89-104).

Even if some wish to maintain distinctiveness as a collective identity, upon closer examination they tend to be constantly changing (Wieviorka 903). Cultural identities are in a continuous state of flux, and Wieviorka argues that postmodern individuals maintain a paradoxical relationship with collective cultural identities (893). They may acknowledge a specific collectivity—a memory, a language, a religion, shared history—without having to be despised for this identification by practices similar to racism. Nevertheless, they refuse to be over-dependent or restricted in personal freedom as the price to be paid for their collective identity.

Cultural identity and the logic of difference are created in reciprocity; thus, identity is always constituted out of difference and difference is constituted out of identity. This concept emphasizes the multiplicity of identities and differences as opposed to a singular identity and the connections or articulations between the fragments or differences. Identities are constructed through, not outside, difference because identity exists only relative to the other, the “constitutive outside” (Hall 4). Discourses, practices and positions express difference at their best.

Identities are therefore constituted within, not outside representation. They relate to the invention of tradition as much as to tradition itself. [...] They arise from the narrativization of the self, but necessarily fictional nature of this process in no way undermines its discursive, material or political effectivity, even if the belongingness ...through which identities arise is, partly, in the imaginary. [...] Precisely because identities are constructed within, not outside, discourse, we need to understand them as produced in specific historical and institutional sites within specific discursive formations and practices, by specific enunciative strategies. (Hall 4)

Thus, identities are always relational yet incomplete. Homi Bhabha’s concept of the ideological construction of otherness is based on fixity as a key term in understanding difference. Fixity connotes rigidity and a lack of change sometimes even disorder and these qualities serve to describe the other and position the self relative to the other. Stereotype is a major discursive strategy and form of knowledge that expresses taken-for-granted cultural information about otherness based on ambivalence and repetition (Bhabha 66-84). The construct is never finite and depends on the difference from and the negation of some other

term. This assumption justifies the presence and significance of boundaries in maintaining identities. In Hall's view, identities function as points of identification and attachment solely because they have the capacity to exclude (5). Nevertheless, as Kuper argues identity is not only a private matter, so it must be experienced in the world, in dialog with other individuals, where identity is actually fabricated (235). Such a dialog may be created in the experience of reading canonical literature as will be shown in Chapter 5. From a subjective viewpoint, identity is explored within the individual and relative to others. "The inner self finds its home in the world by participating in the identity of a collectivity (for example, a nation, ethnic minority, social class, political or religious movement)" (Kuper 235). Thus, identity is constituted while participating in a culture and thus, the concepts of identity-building and of culture have to be interpreted together (Bauman 19).

Every identity has its margin either in space or in time, which is also the beginning of another identity. The boundaries emphasize the construct of identity by separating and excluding it from other unities. Thus, the unities, which identities proclaim are the result of the relationship between power and exclusion. They emerge due to that naturalized and overdetermined process of closure rather than because of natural and inevitable essential or primordial totality (Bhabha 67; Hall 5). Encapsulated in the approach to the boundaries of identity is the recognition of liminality or the frontier effect. Location in a unique spatial condition defines members of a community that is crossing borders constantly, experiencing terms of frontier existence while its members are seeking to position themselves. The concept gains more importance in discussing ethno-cultural identity which experience can be interpreted as symbolic or real borderland. "A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. [...] People who inhabit both realities [...] are forced to live in the interface between the two" (Anzaldúa 308).

The terms of diaspora and transnational social space further refine and interpret the concept of border-crossing from yet another angle (Grossberg 92). Transnationalism here denotes dynamic social processes that aim at sustaining ties of persons, networks and organizations across the borders, across multiple nation-states, ranging from little to highly institutionalized forms (Faist 189). The reality of transnational social spaces implies that migration and return migration may not be "definite, irrevocable and irreversible decisions – transnational lives in themselves may become a strategy of survival and betterment" (Faist 191). James Clifford argues that diaspora means not only transnationality and movement, but also signifies the political struggles to define the local "as a distinctive community, in historical contexts of displacement" (308). In this context, diaspora articulates the spatial



history of identity and positions it in historical movements as well as transnational networks (Grossberg 92). Thus, the pursuit of identity is a desperate existential struggle to put together a life-style that can be sustained for a brief moment (Kuper 239-41). Cultural identity in itself can never provide an adequate guide for living because “we all have multiple identities, and even if I accept that I have a primary cultural identity, I may not want to conform to it” (Kuper 247).

#### **1.3.4 Language and identity**

The use of language to express cultural meaning and to construct identity has widely been acclaimed in Applied Linguistics and sociolinguistics as well as in sociology and cultural anthropology only to name a few large academic fields (Byram; Kramsch; Lemke, *Language*; Wierzbicka). Jay L. Lemke argues that people use a language appropriately in social activities only if it is rooted in some social stance or role that can be identified (*Language* 68). Individuals internalize identities, attitudes, values, and dispositions in order to be able to connect the appropriate schemed meaning with the conventional linguistic form.

Identities can be conceptualized in this context as being constituted by the orientational stances we take, toward others and toward the contents and effects of our own utterances, in enacting roles within specialized subcultures by speaking and writing in the appropriate registers and genres. Language competence in this sense is as much an ensemble of virtual identities as a language itself is an ensemble of its heteroglossic voices. (Lemke, *Language* 68)

The acquisition of the specialized registers of language and the development of appropriate identities for competently using those registers comprise processes in the focus of research regarding the relationship between language and identity (Lemke, *Language* 68). Bonni Norton conceptualizes identity in the context of language learning relative to how an individual “understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future” (5). A person negotiates a sense of self at different sites and times through language (Heller qtd. in Norton 5). Nevertheless, he or she may or may not have access to powerful social networks that serve as resources of contextualized language use. Accordingly, language is not a “neutral medium of communication,” but it is perceived “with reference to its social meaning” (Norton 5). Similarly, in poststructuralist cultural discourses, identity is never a finished product; it is dynamic, changeable, and framed in interactions. These definitions view language as a tool toward an ongoing process of identity construction. Furthermore, they

include important aspects of studying language and identity, namely communicative competence as a construct in which speakers of a language frame their identity, the impact of power on building identity through language and the relationship between identity and semiotic practice.

Norton suggests that the definition of communicative competence be expanded to include the “right to speak” (8). In reference to “the significance of the social context in the study of language,” Hymes coined the term “communicative competence” (270). Communicative competence is the ability to employ appropriate sociocultural features in speech in a given community to conduct and interpret social life (Hymes). It is a complex skill that allows the language user to choose from the available set of grammatically correct expressions the exact form “which appropriately reflects the social norms governing behavior in specific encounters” (Wardhaugh 248). Canale and Swain (1-47) and Canale devised a theoretical framework of communicative competence. This model describes the nature of communication, distinguishes communicative competence from actual communication and identifies its main components as: (1) grammatical competence, (2) sociolinguistic competence, (3) discourse competence, and (4) strategic competence.

Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei and Thurrell define communicative competence with further content specifications (5-35). In their proposed model, the authors use the term “linguistic competence” instead of grammatical competence, “sociocultural competence” instead of sociolinguistic competence, and add actional competence to the original four competencies (11). This approach interprets sociocultural competence as the “speaker’s knowledge of how to express messages appropriately within the overall social and cultural context of communication, in accordance with the pragmatic factors related to variation in language use” (23). A wider context of the approach is the view of language as an integral part of the speaker’s identity as well as the most significant channel of social organization “embedded in the culture of communities where it is used” (Celce-Murcia et al. 23). The *Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR)* on the learning, teaching and assessment of modern languages adopts a similar approach and defines communicative language competence as “that competence which permits a social agent to act using linguistic means” (9). The document also states that,

any form of language use and learning are two of the many actions performed by a social agent who, as an individual, has at his disposal and develops a range of general competences and in particular communicative language competence. (CEFR 9)

This permission to act by means of speaking denotes the concept Norton suggests be included in communicative competence as the “right to speak” (8) and the right to freely frame identity on the basis of socially and culturally contextualized language knowledge and use. In accordance with the poststructuralist understanding of identity the self is dynamic and depends largely on interaction, thus the right to speak and have interaction is key to identity construction.

As far as the relationship between power, language and identity is concerned, Norton posits that identity denotes the desire for recognition, affiliation, security, and safety (8). In order to pursue such needs successfully one needs to have access to at least financial but to some extent also social and political resources. Language hosts “actual and possible forms of social organization and their likely social and political consequences. Yet it is also the place where our sense of ourselves, our subjectivity is constructed” (Weedon qtd. in Norton 8). In this conceptual framework, the possession of power legitimizes the access to and ability of using dominant languages. Dominant here does not mean that speakers of a particular language necessarily outnumber other groups in society, but that they are in charge of political control. However, the heterogeneity of social systems implies the unfairly structured world in which the gender, race, class, and ethnicity of people who speak languages, or even varieties of a language different from legitimate mainstream languages or varieties, may serve to marginalize them.

Recent Applied Linguistics research focuses on issues of identity construction in semiotic practice within the framework of “ecosocial dynamics,” which is a hybrid of social semiotics and ecosystem dynamics (Lemke, *Language* 69; van Lier 144-54). Social semiotics attempts to frame the role of language in society emphasizing “the social function of language or other semiotic resources such as visual representations or ritualized actions” (69). Ecosystem dynamics, according to Lemke, is the set of concepts in biosciences that aims to determine “the ways in which energy and matter flow through ecological systems and maintain relatively stable patterns of organization” (*Language* 69). Ecology, as van Lier views it, is the study of the relationships between distinct organic systems and their physical environment (144). Context is a key to understanding the ecological perspective in which a system and its context are like water to fish. Ecosocial systems are likewise context-dependent; therefore, each level of organization is defined by the next level in scale while it is also an organization of units and interactions one level below.

At the level of communities in which humans most directly participate, ecosocial systems include not only people, but artifacts, architectures, landscapes [...] social processes and semiotic practices, not of organisms. [...] Semiotic practices are conceptualized as ecosocial processes, which are simply the material processes by which organisms in communities interact with one another and with other actants in ways that are adaptive in the context of higher-scale levels than that at which the material interaction itself takes place. (Lemke, *Language* 70)

Individuals in communities as well as communities with one another interact via language. When language is in use, it is always the application of the system of signs in real activity, which is fundamental to making meaning. Speaking is impossible unless speakers imply what they believe in, what they find important and valuable in their lives and how they position themselves in the systems of social classification. Identity is then the verbal as well as nonverbal performance of a “possible constellation of attitudes, beliefs, and values that has a recognizable coherence by the criteria of some community” (Lemke, *Language* 72). A study, in which a short story is read in translation as well as in the original, will be discussed in Chapter 5 to reveal more about the role of language in establishing cultural contexts. Results show how the knowledge of or lack of familiarity with connotations of historical- and society-specific language use create community boundaries as well as identities.

Identity as an ecosocial concept cannot be defined on a single timescale but several levels of behavioral as well as linguistic coherence exist, which then, by means of their mere existence, defy essentialist discourses on identity. However, Lemke finds it particularly important that no normative, consistent, fixed, and stereotypical understanding of identity is taken for granted (*Language* 72). Individuals with their identities build communities through interacting with one another. These communities, however, are framed more by how participants depend on each other and articulate this interdependence than by the features they share. Thus, communities are like ecosystems in which the system is knowable not merely by learning all the characteristics of individual constituents but more importantly through understanding the discourse resulting from various interactions. These discourses build narratives, which in turn construct identities.

#### **1.4 IDENTITY AND NARRATIVE**

The relationship between language, culture, discourse, and identity has triggered increasing interest in social-psychological, sociological, anthropological and sociolinguistic investigations in recent years. Expressions of identity, communal norms and the criteria of value hierarchy are encoded in various discourses. These modes of expression are

characteristic to the community that created them and they serve as a source of cultural reproduction and survival. Highly stratified communities create multiple discourses, which are subject to rethinking and differ largely from one another. Thus discursive fields help maintain collective existence. Discourses that people are not familiar with or simply lack meaning disturb them,; however as discourses represent moral values—communities aim at making their own discourses unquestionable (Schöpflin 43). As Bruner sums up, “we seem to have no other way of describing ‘lived time’ save in the form of narrative” (*Life* 692). The talent of narrative is so overwhelming and universal that Abbott perceives it as a “deep structure, a human capacity genetically hard-wired into our minds in the same way as our capacity (according to some linguists) is something we are born with” (3).

#### **1.4.1 The narrative mode of thinking**

A narrative is a story that offers a culturally and historically founded interpretation of some aspect of the world that human personality formulates. “Simply put, narrative is the representation of an event or a series of events” and has a cumulative effect (Abbott 12). In everyday communication people often create and tell narratives in order to make sense of phenomena or to better understand events, other groups of individuals, places or the surrounding world. Narrativity is intentional communication that characterizes social thinking and as such, it aims at maintaining group cohesion, creating coherence and providing meaning (Pléh 266; László, *Társas* 43). Abbott posits that narrativity is a gray area and “as with many issues in the study of narrative there is no definitive test that can tell us to what degree narrativity is present” (22). Accordingly, a narrative has features of narrativity if we have the sense of someone telling a story or staging a performance (Abbott 22). Jerome Bruner suggests that there are two primary modes of thought: the narrative mode and the paradigmatic mode (*Actual* 13). Paradigmatic thinking is structured, as propositions are linked by categorical operators, and the mind transcends particularities to achieve systematic, categorical cognition. In narrative thinking, the mind engages in sequential, action-oriented, detail-driven thought in the form of stories and “gripping drama.” The primary goal of narrative thinking is not necessarily rendering truth rather than being lifelike (Bruner, *Actual* 13-16).

The approach Bruner takes to narratives is constructivist—“a view that takes as its central premise that ‘world making’ is the principal function of mind, whether in the sciences or in the arts” (*Life* 691). According to this view, stories are products of human thinking and

are constructed in the mind instead of happening in the real world. Thus, sciences, quasi-sciences, literature, fine arts or history are varied forms of “description and depiction” and so take part in “worldmaking” (Goodman 54-61). Bruner postulates that if physics, painting and history are ways of world making, then life narratives “should be viewed as a set of procedures for ‘life making’” (*Life* 691). In the process of creating life Foucault’s concept of subjectification, “our relation to ourselves” or else “a being’s relation to itself” helps understand all kinds of attention that humans have directed towards themselves and others in different places, spaces and times (Rose 129). Subjectification takes place only in the history of the relations, which people have established with themselves, rather than in the historical construction of the self (Rose 130). This happens in narrative thinking, too.

Our relation with ourselves, that is to say, has assumed the form it has because it has been the object of a more or less rationalized schemes, which have sought to shape our ways of understanding and enacting our existence as human beings in the name of certain objectives—manliness, femininity, honour, modesty, propriety, civility, discipline, distinction, efficiency, harmony, fulfillment, virtue, pleasure—the list is as diverse and heterogeneous as it is interminable. (Rose 130)

Human beings learn these schemes in narratives, which define the set of relations that create, maintain and develop the self. An understanding of the process of discursive subjectification helps shift from the unquestioned recognition of cultural phenomena and images as binaries of positive and negative, good or bad to the perception of a wider cultural spectrum. Bruner says that “narrative imitates life, life imitates narrative,” as the narrative is built on action and the interpretation of action (*Life* 692). The narrative paradigm offers a specific cognitive logic to express intentional acts, thoughts and emotions and sets up a framework to deal with the relationship of emotion and representation or time and perspective. Thus, a narrative must have some referentiality and its structure must be embedded in time (László, *Társas* 49-52).

The human sense of time—past, present and future—is closely related to narration. In the formal and functional analysis of oral narratives, William Labov and Joshua Waletzky defined the narrative clause as “the basic unit of narrative in terms of temporal juncture and displacement set” (17). Narrative clauses are fixed, temporal sequences, which have a finalized position in the text and form its backbone, therefore their displacement triggers “a change in the temporal sequence of the original semantic interpretation” (Labov and Waletzky 17; László, *Társas* 61). Paul Ricoeur argues that fiction depends on the reader's understanding of narrative traditions, which necessarily evolve along a temporal dimension, and thus, cannot be reduced to an atemporal structure (qtd. in László, *A történetek* 18). The narrative is always about temporally contextualized events, which break up time and create narrative time

relevant for the individual. The significance of time depends on the interpretation of events. The historical present is the time of actions, the time of the inaugurations of new sequences and arrangements of things. It is also the moment framed by the agent's space of experience and horizon of expectation. To give expression to this complex historical present one must have a kind of discourse that can articulate both strings of actions and events and their human contexts. The kind of discourse to do this is narrative (Dauenhauer 6; Ricoeur, *The narrative* 294; Ricoeur, *Time* 3: 108-09). Historical time becomes human time "to the extent that it is articulated through a narrative mode, and narrative attains its full significance when it becomes a condition of temporal existence" (Ricoeur, *Time* 1: 52).

Such distinction of human and historical time resonates with Henri Bergson's juxtaposition of two views of time: diachronicity, time understood as sequence or clock time and synchronicity or duration, time defined as coexistence (Deleuze 37-50; Gunter 82; Rohrberger 8). Bergson held that the mathematical perception of time does not imply real time, flux, or human consciousness that is perceived by intuition and not by means of the intellect or through external references (Deleuze 37-39; Rohrberger 8). Duration encompasses a sequence of states "one merging into another in continuous flux so smoothly that it is impossible to know when one starts and another ends, though consciousness is enriched as present turns into past and announces future" (Rohrberger 8). Thus, variety and even binary opposites mark duration, as it constitutes of the entire past and present of the individual (Deleuze 43-48). Duration expresses narrative time, through which a multiplicity of episodic substructures supports the "narrative surface" (Rohrberger 8).

Embedded with images forming patterns, metaphoric designs, allusions that resonate, linking small actions or objects in the extensional world with cosmic wholes, [narrative] surfaces occasionally parallel but usually diverge from their substructures, creating tensions, contradictions, ironies, ambiguities, paradox, flux. (Rohrberger 8-9)

As far as referentiality is concerned, a text becomes narrative only if it refers to events that happened regardless of the narrative (László 53). In the case of literature, narrative is about imagined reality. The narrative embraces the sequence of events and the cohesion that connects these events. Members of the community experience the events, which later they forge into a widely accepted and shared canonical narrative. Canonical narratives then create and maintain the community. This reciprocity of the community creating narratives and narratives re-creating and maintaining the community becomes a key element in interpreting narrative negotiations of ethno-cultural identity. In an ethnographic research on women and ministries, Lawless applies the principle of reciprocity from a principle in life building further

into a technique in methodology. Her ten conversational partners tell their stories as well as create interpretations of the community stories and reveal the principles of constructing the canonical narratives. Thus, deciphering narratives is “an ongoing process, a spiral that has simply looped back on itself only to offer the challenge of a new and further arching spiral that will in time offer yet another” (Lawless 285).

Ricoeur holds that in narratives disparate and somehow discordant elements appear in the concordant unity of the story plot that has a temporal span (*Oneself* 142; Dauenhauer 10). All of these elements may differ from one another or even be entirely fictional. Besides actions and events, the story also contains characters or personages and the narrative “constructs the identity of the character, what can be called his or her narrative identity. [...] It is the identity of the story that makes the identity of the character” (Ricoeur, *Oneself* 147-48; Dauenhauer 10). Referentiality of the narrative thus means that individuals make sense of their personal identity in much the same way as they do relative to the identity of characters in the story. Characters in the story are contextualized and made sense of through the set of events in the plot that connects them, their goals and what they actually do.

Similarly I make sense of my own identity by telling myself a story about my own life. In neither case is the identity like that of a fixed structure or substance. These identities are mobile. Narrative identity takes part in the story’s movement, in the dialectic between order and disorder. Until the story is finished, the identity of each character or person remains open to revision. (Dauenhauer 10)

Narrative accounts have two key features. First, people and their intentional states—desires and beliefs—are greatly important and second, how these intentional states trigger particular activities (Bruner, *Self-making* 26-28). Characters in the narrative act upon intentional states and the narrative acts imply intentional states. Narrative causality is an essential feature of these acts. Intentional states, however, do not define the flow of events, and causes cannot be traced one after the other. Each event contains action and the actions assume choice, but intentional states do not cause action directly. The analysis and interpretation of narratives aim to unfold the intentional states – desires and beliefs – behind each action (Bruner *Self-making* 26-29; László, *Társas* 58-59). Thus, narratives have multiple meanings and interpretations may also vary. According to the hermeneutic circle, narrative analysis aims to provide reading that is in harmony with all the elements of the story. Such interpretation positions the reading relative to other alternative readings rather than relative to rules of logic or the outside world (Guerin, Labor, Morgan, Reesman and Willingham 296; László, *A történetek* 104; László, *Társas* 59). The analysis focuses on why the narrator tells a particular



story in a given situation. The stories that occur in qualitative interviews to make the conversational partner's views more well-rounded are open to interpretation from the perspective of their function within the entire narrative.

The narrative sense of time, referentiality and cause together construct the narrative perspective that is always the viewpoint of a participant in the story. The narrative perspective engenders those states of mind that represent the characters in the story. Four major dimensions represent the narrative perspective: the evaluative, phraseological, spatial-temporal, and the psychological. The evaluative-ideological dimension of the narrative perspective refers to the evaluation that the author and the protagonist present, which indeed is very hard to grasp objectively. The spatial-temporal dimension contextualizes the narrative according to the spatial position of the protagonist and informs about the temporal sequence of events. The phraseological dimension opens up by means of analyzing the linguistic aspects of the narrative, whereas the psychological dimension of the narrative perspective implies the introduction of the characters (László, *Társas* 73-77; László, *A történetek* 112-13).

Bruner argues that the “story of one's own life is, of course, a privileged but troubled narrative in the sense that it is reflexive: the narrator and the central figure in the narrative are the same” (*Life* 693). Formally speaking:

If we consider the logical powers of first-person statements and the role played by the first-person pronoun in communication, nothing seems clearer than that in all first-person statements, including “avowals,” the word ‘I’ functions as a singular term or singular referring expression. (Shoemaker, *Identity* 6)

The sameness of the narrator and life story posits reflexive instability within the issue of authorship. Moreover, the reflexivity of self-narratives creates dilemmas, such as the problems of verification or the issue of indeterminacy or that of rationalization. If the protagonist and the narrator are the same, the autobiographical narrator may negotiate his or her intention as far as events are concerned quite differently from how those actually occurred (Bruner, *Life* 693; László *Társas* 112). According to Matti Hyvärinen, narrative and story are not themselves the objects of interpretation they rather serve as metaphorical resources with which to observe identity, moreover “identity is a life story” (31).

### **1.4.2 Narrative and identity**

One of the most challenging aspects of understanding narrative identity is to put together a holistic, dynamic and contextualized approach to the complex relationship of the continuous

and changing sense of self and identity, the role of community beliefs and practices in identity-making and the means of expressing identity (Thorne 364). Theories that approach identity as narrative are constructionist and deny that key features of identity or the surrounding world prove to be essential points of reference (Bruner, *The Narrative* 3-4; László, *Társas* 113; Webster and Mertova 25). The idea concerning the narrative structure of identity is rooted in Erikson's psychosocial theory of the eight psychosocial stages in human life. The social and psychological selves develop together and upon solving the conflicts of each stage, and they get reconstructed on a different level (Dworetzky 345; László, *Szerep* 138). In this Eriksonian concept identity is life history which is re-edited again and again. Bruner posits that autobiographies are constructed, therefore, they are not a record of the events "but rather a continuing interpretation and reinterpretation of our experience" (*Life* 692). Thorne holds that recently there has been a turn toward narrative in psychology and social sciences and the understanding of identity has shifted from "stages to stories" (2). The search for varied epistemological methods in human and social sciences is the background to turning to narratives and stories, which seem to open up more holistic and less objectivistic and particularized forms of knowledge than the previous studies, laws and theories (Hyvärinen 22). The story-based paradigm to identity is similar to Erikson's stage theory as they both construe identity via its relationship with larger social forces. "Storied approaches also preserve Erikson's premise that identity emerges through struggle to make sense of oneself in the complex world" (Thorne 361). Thus, the story of the self plays a key role in creating the unity, continuity and integration in one's personality (László, *Társas* 112). However, as Jens Brockmeier and Rom Harré argue, the narrative is not a way of externalizing an internal reality within a linguistic frame but rather a particular mode of constructing and constituting reality (49-50).

In social sciences as well as psychology, stories are a means of making sense of lived experience. Social identity and the sense of being socialized have their roots in narratives (László, *Társas* 79). Research into life story and narrative assumes a reciprocal relationship between narrative and identity (Bruner, *The Narrative*; Freeman 170; Halverson 247). Individuals construct notions of who they are through telling stories in multifarious social and cultural situations and interactions. "The narrative unity of life" in Ricoeur's view "is made up of the moments of its responsiveness or failure to respond to others" (Dauenhauer 11). As discussed previously in section 1.4.1 in relation to the referentiality of narratives, Ricoeur ascribes the role of construing identity to stories.

Because my personal identity is a narrative identity, I can make sense of myself only in and through my involvement with others. In my dealings with others, I do not simply enact a role or function that has been assigned to me. I can change myself through my own efforts and can reasonably encourage others to change as well. (Ricoeur qtd. in Dauenhauer 11)

Accordingly, Erica Rosenfeld Halverson holds that the way people perceive themselves in these social and cultural situations shape the stories they tell (247). Deborah Keller-Cohen and Judy Dyer posit the significance of this relationship as observing “that speakers use the site of narratives to construct particular identities” [...] and each story offers “the narrator a fresh opportunity to create a particular representation of herself” (150). Elliot G. Mishler defines life stories as “socially situated actions; identity performances; fusions of form and content” (18). According to this approach, narrative and identity are interdependent regardless of the awareness of the narrator. Halverson holds that this inextricable relationship between identity claims and life stories provides for understanding how people negotiate their lives through narratives (247).

There are two major modes of deciphering the power of stories to interpret lived experience; first “to view identity as a socially situated enterprise” and second “to view identity as a long-term autobiographical project” (Thorne 361). Michael G. W. Bamberg defines identity making as a contextualized or “situated project” in which the individual more reflectively puts together those stories that may unfold as narrative episodes of his or her life (*Talk* 367). Thus, identities are construed when individuals position themselves and others relative to culturally accessible “master” or canonical narratives (Bamberg, *Positioning* 338; Thorne 361). Master narratives are not culturally essential stories but rather culturally available scripts, which individuals may exploit to build their own identities as well as those of others. Identities depend on the dominant ideology of collective discourses at any given time, which occurs in master narratives exactly at that time (Bamberg, *Positioning* 335-339; Thorne 361-362). Thus, the individual story counts only as part of the collective narration and is tailored to that framework.

The autobiographical approach, on the other hand, “views identity as a long-term personal project, more situated in the person than the situation, and oriented toward developing a coherent story across the individual’s past, present, and imagined future” (Thorne 361). This conceptualization of narrative identity approximates to the Lockean and Eriksonian definition of personal identity.

Identity is a slowly evolving life story that begins in earnest around age 30. The capacity to construct a coherent life story is said to require the cognitive capacity and inclination to draw meaningful connections across one’s past, present, and anticipated future. The life story

partakes of cultural narratives, myths, and fables, but the basic material of the life story is unique to each person because each individual's lived experience represents a unique configuration. (Thorne 362)

McAdams writes that identity unfolds in verbal accounts that carry the outlines of internalized personal myth and life story develops through self-reflection (*The Stories* 20). "The myth is there all along inside the mind. It is a psychological structure that evolves slowly over time, infusing life with unity and purpose" (McAdams, *The Stories* 20). This theory of identity development assigns some role to the immediate and wider socio-cultural circumstances, yet the social context in which the life narrative is told is not particularly significant (Thorne 362). Moreover, Bamberg notes that the "act of telling [...] intervenes [...] between the actual experience and the story" (*Positioning* 335). The emphasis on the discourse-based interactional management of identities is a key feature of the social construction.

Noticeable convergence exists across situated and personal identities because "narratives emerge partly from individual choices" (Thorne 363). These choices often remain unexplained and there is a lot more to each narrative that remains untold (McAdams, *The Stories* 20). Thus, what the conversational partner chooses to talk about carries along the significance of choice. There is always a myriad of episodes and stories that could be narrated at any particular time and the informant decides as to which story is worth telling and what characters are involved. Avril Thorne suggests that the stories that people tell be examined to learn more about the process by which they select these stories (363). Such focus would help bridge the gap between the two identity approaches.

The most important use of narrative concerns identity, since "social circumstances and the existence of the self within them are to a large extent socially constructed by texts and the narratives they frequently contain" (Cobley 37). Narratives depend on cultural conventions and language usage regardless whether someone tells a life-story, or it is socially situated and part of the cultural and literary canon. Bruner claims that life narratives reflect prevalent ideas about "possible lives" which are part of a person's culture (*Life* 694). Culture creates the narrative models, which in turn serve as a way to describe the course of a life in that culture.

The tool kit of any culture is replete not only with a stock of canonical life narratives, but with combinable formal constituents from which its members can construct their own life narratives: canonical stances and circumstances as it were. [...] Eventually the culturally shaped cognitive and linguistic processes that guide the self-telling of life narratives achieve the power to structure perceptual experience, to organize memory, to segment and purpose-build the very 'events' of a life. In the end we become the autobiographical narratives by which we 'tell about' our lives. And [...] we [...] become variants of the culture's canonical forms. (Bruner, *Life* 694)

Language is an indispensable constituent of narrative and the individual is initiated in the community through language. The act of telling and writing life-stories, own and others', perpetuate language as a means of building communities and establishing the laws and behavioral patterns in it. Uses of stories are almost naively apparent in Native American studies (Silko 83-94; Basso 95-116). "Traditionally everyone, from the youngest child to the oldest person was expected to listen and to be able to recall or tell a portion if only in small detail, from a narrative account or story" (Silko 87). In this approach, recalling and retelling were a communal experience. A whole group of people, the entire community, made a conscious effort to put together the valuable accounts and key pieces of information that might otherwise have been lost with the death of the person. "Communal storytelling was a self-correcting process in which listeners were encouraged to speak up if they noted an important fact or detail omitted" (Silko 87). Likewise Keith Basso quotes Western Apaches who talk about the natural landscape and the importance they attach to named locations (97-98). These people construe their land with the help of elements of language and patterns of speech. Apaches tell stories about events that have happened at particular locales, and "they take steps to constitute it in relation to themselves" (Basso 98). Jan Assmann (qtd. in László, *A történetek* 18, 20) in his study on the development of culture finds that personal and institutionalized memory is crucial in the process of accommodation and forming communities and ethnic groups.

Bruner characterizes life narrative as ancient and universal because people can tell "some intelligible account of their lives. What varies is the cultural and linguistic perspective or narrative form in which it is formulated and expressed" (*Life* 695-96). These "forms of self-telling" may reveal identical formal structures across a wide variety of content for "language constructs what it narrates, not only semantically but also pragmatically and stylistically" (Bruner, *Life* 696). Bruner quotes Russian formalists in distinguishing the three main aspects of a story – theme, discourse, and genre, originally termed as *fabula*, *sjuzet*, and *forma* (696). The timeless theme is the "mythic, transcendent plight that a story is about" and any dilemma that belongs to human universality (696). Discourse incorporates or implements the theme "not only in the form of a plot but also in an unwinding net of language" (396). The third feature of narrative is genre, "which may be viewed as a set of grammars for generating different kinds of story plots" (697). Genre also makes the narrator use language in a certain way, for example, lyric, epic, first person and present tense, third person and past tense. Furthermore, Bruner finds that agents play a key role in understanding self-told life narratives and they control the language in which events unfold.

I believe that the ways of telling and the ways of conceptualizing that go with them become so habitual that they finally become recipes for structuring experience itself, for laying down routes into memory; for not only guiding the life narrative up to the present but directing it into the future. I have argued that a life as led is inseparable from a life as told—or more bluntly, a life is not “how it was” but how it is interpreted and reinterpreted, told and retold: Freud’s psychic reality. (Bruner, *Life* 708)

Narrative language has yet another aspect to deal with, namely the view of transcribed discourse as language. The transcription of a narrative yields a linguistic form of literate products and literary interpretations (Bamberg, *Talk* 366). The question is whether the transcript is able to handle such devices of non-verbal communication as silence or the non-engagement of some conversational partners, certain facial expressions, bodily gestures, postures, intonation contours, eye gaze, laughs, etc. It is theoretically and methodologically important to transform bodily interactions into written texts. The words and syntactic units that participants utter are marked off in writing so that they become visible and readable. The narrowness of the dialogical situation means that, “oral actions and interactions are limited to the immediate situation of the interlocutors” (Bamberg, *Talk* 366). Leather labels the same phenomenon “data reduction,” claiming that, “transcription [...] introduces a particular risk of prejudging outcomes” (51). Thus, the “non-fixity, the fleetingness and negotiability of the interactive situation as a whole” is at stake because of data translation. The shifted focus is a “world of individual intentions as ‘behind’ the individual contributions of individuals’ turns” (Bamberg, *Talk* 366-367). An understanding of narrative identity within chaos/complexity theory may help tackle problem.

### **1.4.3 Narrative identity in chaos/complexity theory**

Like with narratives, so with chaos and complexity theory, the acute epistemological crises in human and social sciences have triggered a major turn of the back on traditional simplistic and objectivistic and often necessarily reductionist forms of knowledge (Hyvärinen 22; Larsen-Freeman 33-38).

Chaos breaks across the lines that separate scientific disciplines. Because it is a science of the global nature of systems, it has brought together thinkers from fields that had been widely separated. Chaos poses problems that defy accepted ways of working in science. It makes strong claims about the universal behavior of complexity. (Gleick 5)

In the past two decades, chaos theory has turned science upside down with the realization that “very simple dynamical rules can give rise to extraordinarily intricate behavior” (Waldrop 12). Chaos theory considers how very plain ideas bring about very complex outcomes that would not be predictable upon investigating the constituting parts alone. Yet chaos in itself does not explain the coherence, the structure and the “self-organizing cohesiveness” of complex systems (Waldrop 12). Complexity theory looks at how complex systems create simple results. A system is complex when a myriad of independent agents are interacting with each other in multifarious ways. “The very richness of these interactions allows the system as a whole to undergo spontaneous *self-organization*”—without anything in charge of that (Waldrop 11). It is impossible to predict what a complex system develops into because it is a network of a large number of intensely interacting units, (MacGill, *Chaos* 1). However, the science of complexity is still so new and its scope is so wide that there are only vague attempts to define it or identify where its boundaries lie. “But then that’s the whole point. If the field seems poorly defined at the moment it’s because complexity research is trying to grapple the questions that defy all the conventional categories” (Waldrop 9).

James Gleick defines the focus of chaos/complexity science as “complex, dynamic, nonlinear systems” and adds that it is the “science of process rather than state, of becoming rather than being” (Gleick qtd, in Larsen-Freeman 38). Scollon adds that looking at social phenomena and language as rule-based conceptual structures, or as on-going lived experience does not help understand how “social actors construct their worlds in real-time social interactions” (132). Compared to traditional approaches in sciences chaos/complexity theory does not study systems in their particular components, it rather looks at systems as entities and emphasizes the interactions of the composing elements. There is no central executive to manage and control the separate constituents. The components “act, react to and interact with their environment,” which consists of other elements, features and their behavior in the system, “without any reference to global goals—they are undertaking purely local transactions. The net result of these local transactions is a pattern that emerges at a global level” (Larsen-Freeman 38). Groups of agents that attempt to reach “mutual accommodation and self-consistency” elevate themselves to higher levels and gain “collective properties such as life, thought and purpose they might never have possessed individually” (Waldrop 11). These complex, self-organizing and self-sustaining systems try to turn anything that happens to them to their advantage. Furthermore, the dynamic nature of complex systems implies spontaneity, disorderliness and livelihood (Waldrop 12).

All the complex systems possess the ability to balance chaos and order somehow. This point of balance—the edge of chaos—is where parts of the system “never quite lock into place and yet never quite dissolve into turbulence” (Waldrop 12). Chaos reaches its edge when “the system performs at its greatest potential and is able to carry out maximally complex processing” (Leather 60). Ali Bulent Cambel (qtd. in Leather 60) identifies three features of a chaotic system:

- (1) The system is neither deterministic nor completely random, and exhibits both characteristics.
- (2) The causes and effects of the events that the system experiences are not proportional.
- (3) The different parts of the (complex) system are linked and interact with one another.

Diane Larsen-Freeman specifies a pentad of key properties from yet another angle (38-39).

- (1) Properties that emerge from interactions within the system in chaos/complexity can themselves interact.
- (2) Due to these interactions they form societies, however, a change at any one level will have implications for every level.
- (3) Complex systems that are open import free energy from the environment to reorganize themselves to increasingly higher orders of complexity. When these dynamic systems are far from equilibrium spontaneous large-scale restructurings may occur. When a system is near equilibrium, it remains stable.
- (4) These complex, dynamic systems are nonlinear, therefore, effects due to a cause will not be proportional to the cause.
- (5) Results stemming from research in chaos/complexity theory are widely applicable regardless of disciplinary boundaries.

These properties describe the potential of chaos/complexity theory to host and contextualize narrative identity. The approach handles the analysis and interpretation of narratives and identity more in holistic terms than reductively. Larsen-Freeman argues that, according to the chaos/complexity theory perspective, “it is meaningless to attempt to understand something by taking it apart, explaining the behavior of the parts, and finally aggregating these partial explanations into an explanation of the whole” (40). Even though the narrative mode of thinking (Bruner, *Actual* 13) focuses on individual actions and details in the story, the goal is to gain a holistic understanding of the self in individual as well as social context. Narratives are systems describable exactly by these terms.



The perception of social systems in the chaos/complexity theory helps avoid easy distinctions, or the dualism between social and individual, “which may well turn out to be false dichotomies” (Larsen-Freeman 40). Narrative accounts negotiate identities rather than place them in artificially established categories or attribute features to them that may not belong there. According to narrative referentiality, the protagonist understands his/her identity in a set of contextualized and interpreted events that make up the story. Relativization of particular features occur while aiming to position the individual as part of a group or if other characters in one’s story assume roles that formulate his/her identity. Thus, the principle of negotiating narrative identity is not based on distinctions or dichotomies.

Complex systems are dynamic and nonlinear as they proceed temporarily and spatially. Most research in the human sciences as well as language acquisition expect “linear progressions based on equilibrium and stability” (Leather 59). Leather claims that the theory of nonlinear dynamic systems attributes a particular meaning to the concept of “variability” and the term “unpredictable” as well as it establishes new techniques for exploring time series (59). Linearity is not a necessary feature of narrative time either, yet the importance of time in narratives is a postulate of the significance of events the story tells. Therefore, the narrative contextualizes and defines time differently from real time. A complex system takes in new elements and energy regardless of the linearity principle and the narrator includes episodes regardless of the real time when they actually took place. What counts is the function that the particular event has from the perspective of the entire story because action and the interpretation of action build the narrative and contextualize events temporarily (Bruner, *Life* 692).

Telling narratives may to this extent be viewed as a chaotic system. The choice of episodes, however, is not simply random. The narrator may provide new details, include new episodes or make certain parts more precise and the outcome is unpredictable but coherent from the perspective of the intention of the storyteller. Larsen-Freeman (38-43) and Jonathan Leather (53-60) posit that within the chaos/complexity-theoretic perspective language use and language acquisition are synchronous. Along this analogy, language use, identity construction and narrative construction are synchronous, moreover, narrative structure equals the structure of life (Hoffman, *Life* 1).

Furthermore, chaos/complexity theory offers a framework to look at groups of people who interact. This aspect allows interpreting not just parts of a system in connection with one another like in the case of language or narrative but also provides an understanding of human relationships that define social identity. “Small-world network” is a term that refers to the

“mathematical pattern of equal proportions between levels” (MacGill, *Small* 2). In mathematics and physics, a small-world network means a class of random graphs where most nodes are not neighbors of one another, but most nodes are within reach from every other by a small number of steps (MacGill, *Small* 2). In the social sciences application of the small-world network model, nodes represent individuals and edges connect people that know each other. Small-world networks are therefore systems in which groups of people interact (MacGill, *Chaos* 3). The small-world concept presents strangers as linked by mutual acquaintance. If there are only few links that connect the participants, the group does not function well. If the number of links is too high, assumingly “everyone spends so much time communicating that they do not get to get on with the group’s tasks” (MacGill, *Chaos* 3). As the number of intra-group connections increases, the effectiveness of the group dramatically improves.

An approach to ethnic identity within the context of the small-world phenomenon and chaos/complexity theory would help explain how ethnic communities maintain their face against mainstream social identity. These communities have their stories and these narratives reach all members even under diasporic conditions (Hoffman, *Life* 1-5; László, *Társas* 47). Narratives as discussed above help construct ethnic identity because members may tell different stories of the same events and within the structure of the shared culture similarly to the small-world phenomenon, they exchange and reinterpret different versions until the final one is constructed. Collective cultural experience is formulated in individual stories, it gets personalized and if the community accepts and legitimizes the story it becomes a communal identity narrative.

In this review of multiple discourses on defining identity and its contextualization in narrative, I have intended to point out the interdependence of the narrative construct of identity and language. This relationship can best be understood in a dynamic, nonlinear frame of the chaos/complexity perspective, which caters for the continuity and integrity of the concept. The approach helps relate the notions of ethnicity and ethnogenesis, which I define in chapter 2, to the construct of narrative identity.

# Chapter Two

## Ethno-cultural identity

Life in the United States is completely a routine. Going to work, coming home [...] going to a movie or drinking beer. I suspect that to stay for the rest of my life would be to live a routine. [...] In my village [...] we have festivals in which everybody practically lives together. [...] We are [not] lazy, but [...] we know how to work—and how to forget work for awhile.

Even if I could learn English, I couldn't integrate myself into American life because of the differences in customs, although in the U.S., customs do not exist so much as a way of life and laws for governing it. (Pérez 232)

The protagonist of the quote, Ramón “Tianguis” Pérez writes his narrative in the form of a diary about his stay in the United States of America as a wetback, an undocumented immigrant, from Mexico. Intelligent, persevering, and hard working, Pérez intends to stay only for a short period, a year or so, and make enough money to buy tools for his carpentry in Oaxaca city, Mexico. Even though he articulates his goal as not to settle permanently, he gets tangled in the dilemmas of revising the constructs of his ethnic identity. He starts thinking about his position relative to Americans, as well as the meanings of his Mexicanness versus being American. Had he decided to stay in the United States, he would have had to face deeper issues of culture shock and acculturation. The narrative form makes the account of Pérez more powerful yet personal.

The short quote from the diary frames and contextualizes most of the theoretical issues I have dealt with in the first chapter of the dissertation such as personal and social identity, culture as the means of constructing identity, and building identity in narratives. The second chapter will focus on theories and processes of ethnicity, the construct of ethno-cultural identity in narratives and ethnogenesis or creating ethnicity, and ethnic identity. The inventory of trends, ideas, concepts and theories I will mostly draw on originate in the American research canon because the empirical studies detailed and interpreted in later chapters of the dissertation have been carried out in that context.

## **2.1 CONCEPTUALIZING ETHNICITY AND IDENTITY**

The role of ethnicity as a distinguishing feature is not new. It occurred in the travel descriptions of the histories of Herodotus, thus making them prescientific ethnography (Weber 54). The phenomenon though labeled in its present form made its appearance in various forms of literature, mainly travelogues or narratives about encountering non-European lands and people especially from the time of geographical explorations (Pratt 23-30). The term ethnicity has become increasingly important in the social sciences from the 1960s onwards. Reasons for the growing interest include the strengthening of decolonization in Africa and Asia, the social reform movements of the 1950s and 1960s in the United States of America, consolidation of European economies and the growing number of immigrant workforce, migration due to totalitarian regimes in Eastern Europe, just to mention a few. Anti-colonial and anti-racist arguments in social sciences mounted a whole generation of new vocabulary in which the term ethnicity acknowledged “the positive feelings of belonging to a cultural group” (Spoonley qtd. in Guibernau and Rex 1). The ambivalence of the term’s denotation before the 1960s mainly rooted in its etymology (Sollors, *Ethnic* 1-12), the creation of nation-states (Anderson), or such marked cultural and social practices as nationalism, primordialism, nativism, and racism within the larger system of differentiation (Frankenberg 1-22).

Due to multiculturalism saturating virtually every aspect of postmodern societies and cultures, there is an increasing interest in their ethno-cultural past among members of the white middle class. Albeit the movement does not even vaguely resemble ethnic revivalist movements of racial minorities in Western history, its presence tends to offer choices for individuals to reposition themselves along the ethnic v. mainstream axis. Tracing major theoretical approaches from the beginning of the last century will help frame the concept of ethnic and ethnicity, understand the construct and prove that distinctive wording covers similar dilemmas.

### **2.1.1 Theories of ethnicity**

Early twentieth century sociology found it necessary to deal with a new and growing emphasis on ethnicity, which did not fit into earlier European and even American forms of understanding nations and nationalism (Guibernau and Rex 2). In rational terms, the modern nation emerged in the wake of the modernizing industrial societies. The principle of

nationhood may have rooted in such emotional bonds as ethnicity, yet it was far from being the only source. Montserrat Guibernau and John Rex in their summary of the intellectual traditions of understanding ethnicity claim that classical sociological tradition hardly dealt with the issue (2). Marxism considered ethnicity as a “form of false consciousness” and with the passing of time, this falsity would yield to the “consciousness of shared and opposed interests” (Guibernau and Rex 2). Max Weber was the first classical social theorist who conceptualized the notion of ethnic relative to class, status, and party. He said:

We shall call ‘ethnic groups’ those human groups that entertain a subjective belief in their common descent because of similarities of physical type or of customs or both, or because of memories of colonization and migration; this belief must be important for the propagation of group formation; conversely it does not matter whether or not an objective blood relationship exists. (Weber 56)

Weber’s definition no doubt proves an attempt to give an overall and concise definition of the term. There are five important corollaries to this definition, which recur later in several prominent voices regarding ethnicity. They are (1) a distinction between race and ethnicity, (2) ethnicity and group formation, (3) history and ethnic groups, (4) the role of migration in ethnic consciousness, and (5) widening the ethnic horizon to social level (Guibernau and Rex 2-3).

First in his study of ethnic groups, Weber distinguished these social formations from race, which he understood in biological terms. Biological difference and shared customs together create ethnic groups, in which members perceive themselves as well as trigger perception from the surrounding environment. The characteristics and subjective perception of these characteristics “both by those who share them and by those who react to them” are equally important (Guibernau and Rex 2).

Second, Weber claimed that ethnicity based on common customs and shared features was not enough for ethnic group formation. Ethnic membership does not build the group; it only supports creating it especially in the political sphere. The political community, no matter how artificial, inspires the belief in common ethnicity. “This belief tends to persist even after the disintegration of the political community, unless drastic differences in the custom, physical type, or above all, language exist among its members” (Weber 56). Weber thus finds language crucial in ethnic group formation both as a feature of internal assimilation and external differentiation (55). Guibernau and Rex argue that Weber found united political action central in the dynamics of ethnicity (3).

Third, the shared memory of past engagement in joint political action is what constitutes ethnic groups. Memories of the shared past become history, which also includes attachment to clearly demarcated territory as the locale of historical events. Fourth, the historical land and past political formations may have become past due to migration. Weber acknowledged the importance and consequences of migration in the history and consciousness of ethnic groups. Fifth, the Weberian definition of ethnicity recognized that the concept of ethnicity constructed in history and migration serves to set the boundaries of “social circles,” which are different from kinship groups (Weber 59). These issues of ethnic identification and its relation to language, history, migration, transnational existence resonate throughout twentieth-century as well as early twenty-first century perspectives on the field. Thus, the Weberian basic social constructionist model has much in common, both shortcomings and possibilities, with models of ethnicity currents in social sciences (Jenkins 3).

“Ethnicity seems to be a new term,” wrote Nathan Glazer and Daniel P. Moynihan, who revealed that the word’s first dictionary appearance is in the *Oxford English Dictionary* in 1972 (1). In Anglophone social anthropology, the term “ethnics” made its debut at the time of World War II, when it came to be used as a “polite term referring to Jews, Italians, Irish and other people considered inferior to the dominant group of largely British descent,” yet superior to races which mostly meant African Americans and Mexicans (Eriksen 33). Theoretical writing in this period mainly applied methods of classical anthropology to describe, compare and contrast immigrants and their second and third generation descendants in the American context giving currency to a handful of such concepts as “Anglo-conformity, cultural pluralism, the third generation interest, behavioral assimilation and structural assimilation” (Nahirny and Fishman 266). This approach digresses sharply from the Weberian theorem regarding the meaning of ethnic and ethnicity. The debate focuses on the generational shift in ethnic identification, namely whether second- and third-generation ethnics lose all ties to the ethnic groups their ancestors were once members of or retain certain elements. One view is that third-generation interest in ethnic background leads to ethnic revivalism and a codification of the laws of history (Hansen 210-15; Nahirny and Fishman 266-67).

Schneider claims that one is ethnic either by birth or through the process of naturalization. Furthermore, he distinguishes two kinds of citizens, those by birth and those by law. A person who is by birth a member of a particular ethnic group was born into it, and the person who has taken the citizenship of another country and assimilates into one or another

ethnic group voluntarily belongs to the second category. David Schneider cites three examples: first, the person who is by birth an American but who has taken the citizenship of another country; second, the person who is American by naturalization but not by birth; and third, the person who by both birth and law is American.

A common feature of approaches to ethnicity in post World War II Anglophone social anthropology is their view of the concept as static and “fixed by categorical ascriptions based in assumed homogeneous national and cultural experience and membership” (Drzewiecka and Nakayama 21). The American Studies movement of postwar years also placed the concept in central position and explained ethnic as prototypically American not so much due to its distinctiveness of cultural heritage, but because being ethnic presented the “character structure produced by the American experience of change, mobility, and loss of contact with the past” (Gleason, 171-72). Such a course of thought exploits certain elements of the Weberian concept of ethnicity yet it is constructed within the context of anthropological description and immigration history rather than in discourse, narrative, and language. This overwhelming image assumed an unproblematic division of ethnic groups by national borders which immigration broke and left rupture and disjunction in its wake. “Acculturation and adaptation studies conceived immigration as uprooting from specific places resulting a rupture of cultural ties and traditions to be replaced by new ones” (Drzewiecka and Nakayama 21). These approaches saw successful adaptation as incompatible with the maintenance of ethnic identities as experienced in ethnically based communities.

Ethnic boundaries help define ethnicity as Fredrik Barth argued that ethnicity is a situational project and that ethnic groups are a kind of social organization generated and maintained by ethnic boundaries (294-95). Boundaries are demarcated through communication of and interaction about fundamental cultural values, which are “realized in overt unity in cultural forms” (Barth 296). Thus, ethnic groups are culture-bearing groups and ethnic identification can be labeled as ethno-cultural identification. Barth denied the existence of simple one-to-one correspondences between ethnic groups and cultural similarities and differences. Boundaries are permeable and transactions across the demarcation lines help build and preserve the ethnic groups. Ethnic identity is problematic and situational because it emerged from interactions and it cannot be fixed, natural and essential in character. Thus, the theory bridged the gap between earlier theoretical interpretations of ethnicity and late-twentieth century approaches. In this model, shared culture is variable, changing and dynamic rather than fixed and it emerges due to boundary maintenance processes (Barth 309-20).

Richard P. Jenkins posits that while Barth was more interested in the creation and maintenance of boundaries “we need to shift attention to what goes on within the boundary” (107) and focus on what constructs ethnic identification. Even though Barth insisted on the transactional nature of ethnic identity, he inadvertently reified the notion of ethnicity and ethnic group (Drzewiecka and Nakayama 22; Jenkins 15). “Language, non-verbals, dress, food, the structure of space” can give more profound insights into constructions of ethno-cultural identity (Jenkins 76). Jenkins accepted the major claims Barth made and argued that ethnicity should be approached as “complex repertoires which people experience, use, learn and ‘do’ in their daily lives, within which they construct an ongoing sense of themselves and an understanding of their fellows” (14).

Postmodern understandings of ethnicity suggest that the concept be understood as an “invention” rather than a fixed notion (Marquez 243). Werner Sollors goes on arguing that individuals invent their ethnicity continuously. “Ethnicity is merely a matter of cultural (let alone biological) survival”; it is constantly recreated as people make new distinctions, establish new boundaries and form new groups (*Nine suggestions* 95-96). Thus, ethnic identity is situational and reciprocal. Identification in terms of ethnicity is situational because it depends on major life events, varies from one situation to the other and changes according to geographical location. Moreover, ethnic identity is reciprocal because the individual’s intention to join an ethnic group also depends on the group’s decision to accept the individual as a member. It “depends on both the individual’s and others’ identification of the individual as a member of an ethnic group” (Stephan and Stephan 230).

José Medina points out that a multifaceted discussion addresses issues of ethnicity and discusses how it intersects with other identity categories as well as how ethnic identities are produced, maintained, disrupted and transformed (93). One key dilemma is whether our identities have become postethnic, a term David Hollinger coined to challenge the political and intellectual legitimacy of the concept of ethnicity (105-128). Along this perception ethnicity has been problematized as the intersectionality of the different aspects of identity. Accordingly, “gender, sexuality, class, race and ethnicity are not dimensions of identity that come neatly packaged and sealed off from each other,” they rather intersect each other in manifold directions resulting in an entangled web of interdependencies (Medina 94). Belonging to an ethnic group is voluntary and ethnic identities become transient (Shimakawa 155), because membership may fluctuate and cannot be strictly based on any kind of common features. Such shared distinct characteristics may reify and essentialize ethnic identity, which



must remain elusive and defy unification so that the individual may develop rather than be pulled back due to ethnic group membership.

Ethnicity in this approach is decentered as well as fractured and it is a concept based on defining otherness (Bhabha 66-67). “It is fabricated from whatever props happen to be at hand, not given but a matter of agonized choice, at best an imaginative act of resistance to power” (Kuper 217). Rosaldo rejects this path and finds ethnicity a fixed point in the fragmented concept of identity. Ethnicity provides the individual with an identity and a community as well as with solid ground for making theoretical and political choices (Rosaldo x-xi). It also creates boundaries and clearly demarcates spheres of existence. Nevertheless, a classic concept of culture positions the individual either as ethnic or as mainstream and “grants little space to the mundane disturbances that so often erupt during border crossings” (Rosaldo 28-29). Borderlands exist not only at the boundaries of legitimate cultural units but also at more casual intersections, which may be gender, age, status or distinctive life experience (Rosaldo 29).

Language is a characteristic marker of these borderlands, especially because more often than not the knowledge and use of two or more languages characterize borderland or liminal existence. Liminality in its original use means the second phase in a rite of passage. Rites of passage are culturally determined activities related to the transition from one stage of life or place to another. Cultural anthropology distinguishes three main stages of rites of passage, which are (1) separation, (2) margin or liminality, and (3) aggregation (Kottak 242). “More generally a rite of passage may mark any change of place, condition, social position and age” (Kottak 242). Therefore, ethnic relocation and language use may also be interpreted in the framework of rites of passage. As will be shown in Chapter 4, second-generation Hungarian-Americans talk about how they sense their ethnicity different from their parents’ generation, and how learning and using Hungarian in this alternative context requires great effort especially in terms of attributing meaning and value to it. Furthermore, liminality will be a key analytical concept in the study outlined in chapter 5 regarding the role of language and ethno-cultural background in understanding the cultural messages in a canonical short story. The persistent dilemmas of negotiating ethno-cultural identities may yield acanonical contents and schemes, which may be interpreted within the conceptual framework of ethnic adaptation processes such as acculturation and assimilation.

### **2.1.2 Acculturation**

The historical and contemporary reality of migration has encouraged many interpretations of ethnic diversity and change as well as of the question regarding the relocation and settlement of groups and individuals who decide to make the move (Gleason 55-66). Conceptualizations of the adaptation process, acculturation and assimilation, seem diverse and even incongruous (Kim, Laroche and Tomiuk 607). The interdisciplinary nature of the constructs underlying the notion of changing ethnicity plays out in the multitude of academic disciplines that traditionally host research related to acculturation and ethnicity. These are anthropology (Kottak), Applied Linguistics (Kramsch; Norton; Schumann) cultural anthropology (Kuper; Rosaldo), cultural studies (Calhoun; Hall), philosophy (Hoffman, *The new*), social and developmental psychology (Berry; Weinstock), and sociology (Giddens). The term in its folk use embraces “the cultural modification of an individual, group or people through prolonged and continuous interaction involving intercultural exchange and borrowing with a different culture” (*MWCD*). Kroeber writes that

There is no difference of principle between the acculturation involved in the Hellenization of the Romans in Italy during the two or three centuries following 270 B.C. and that of the Americanization of Italians in the United States in the century following A.D. 1850. The chief unlikeness is that the ancient Italians were the dominant and majority group, the modern Italians a minority and socially dominated group. Which problem one prefers to investigate is largely a matter of taste and temperament. (Kroeber 427)

The notion has become widespread from the 1960s with the focus on migration and ethnicity in social sciences (Gleason 55-64). Alexander Weinstock suggests that acculturation be distinguished from assimilation (4). The two processes in this view are related but not identical, because the term acculturation refers to the phenomenon, which is a result of groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact with subsequent changes in the original patterns of either or both groups (4). Culture contact, per se, however, does not necessarily lead to acculturation (Weinstock 4). Edward P. Dozier notes in his study of the Hopi and Tewa Indians in Arizona that both of these Pueblo tribes lived side by side in the same village for more than 200 years without any perceivable change in the cultural patterns of either group (259-376). Acculturation, therefore, is highly voluntary, as far as it does not involve the involuntary blending of two cultures. Once it is preceded by migration, the voluntary or forced severance from their homeland, it opens up new perspectives in seeing themselves and others. The cultural aspect of such disruption is acculturation, which has a crucial role in shaping social and cultural identities as well as ethno-cultural identity.

Chankon Kim et al. distinguish two ways of defining acculturation. First, the concept is broad and follows “the single continuum model of ethnic change” (Kim et al. 609), or the unidirectional model of acculturation (Pham and Harris 280). Accordingly, Rodrigo Marino, Geoffrey W. Stuart and Harry I. Minas define acculturation as the process of linear, bipolar changes in the knowledge, attitudes, cultural beliefs, values, and practices due to the individual’s exposure to a different cultural environment (Duan and Vu 225; Marino et al. 21). Thus, “immigrants not only acquire aspects of the host or dominant culture but also lose part of their cultural heritage” (Kim et al. 609). In this context, acculturation refers to the phenomenon labeled as “ethnic change” (Duan and Vu 225; Kim et al. 609). The second frame of conceptualization portrays acculturation in a narrower sense, which Changming Duan and Paul Vu label as functional acculturation (225). In this approach, the notion means strictly the acquisition of target culture traits and ethnic individuals choose to become highly acculturated only at a functional level without disowning their original cultural traditions and ethnic identities (Duan and Vu 225). Thus, individuals do not have to disclaim their cultural values or give up their ethnic identities. Thuy B. Pham and Richard J. Harris label this phenomenon as the “bidirectional model of acculturation” (280). In the North American context the narrow sense of acculturation is akin to the meaning of the terms Americanization and Anglo-conformity (Kim et al. 609-10). Along with this course of thought Teresa D. L. LaFromboise, Hardin L. K. Coleman and Jennifer Gerton assert that ethnic identity change and the process of acculturation happen independently of each other (395-409).

Acculturation may occur along five related dimensions, which are behavioral, attitudinal, linguistic, psychological and socioeconomic (Berry 69-71; Kim et al. 610; Marino et al. 21). Behavioral acculturation is the process of cultural learning in which individuals adopt the most observable external aspects of the dominant culture. These elements include attitudes, values and behaviors in areas such as language familiarity and usage, social skills, ethnic pride, ethnicity, cultural heritage, interethnic distance and the ability to fit in or negotiate the new sociocultural reality (Berry 69-75; Marino et al. 21). Attitudinal components refer to the sense of belonging and pride in the group individuals belong (Kim et al. 610). Linguistic acculturation is a concept that embraces the acquisition of dominant culture traits through language use (Laroche, Chankon, Hui and Tomiuk 418). Psychological acculturation on the other hand, reflects the extent to which the established norms, core values, ideologies, beliefs, attitudes and preferences agree with the preferences of the majority of the group (Marino et al. 21). Recent research has shown that individual differences exist in acculturation even among members of ethnic communities, due to factors such as age,

education, length of residency in the host country, immediate home, school, or work environment (Duan and Vu 227).

Within an Applied Linguistics context, acculturation implies the highly social context of language. In the process of becoming adapted to a new culture, a reorientation of thinking, feeling and communication is necessary (Brown 169).

To be sure, culture is a deeply ingrained part of the very fiber of our being, but language—the means for communication among members of a culture—is the most visible and available expression of that culture. And so a person’s world view, self-identity, and systems of thinking, acting, feeling and communicating can be disrupted by a change from one culture to another. (Brown 170)

The phenomena of culture shock, culture stress, anomie and social distance provide a better understanding of such transitional disruption. Social distance is an affective construct that refers to the cognitive and affective closeness of two cultures in one person due to acculturation (Brown 176; Schumann 380-82). The concept indicates a dissimilarity between two cultures on grounds of dominance, integration, cohesiveness, congruence, attitude, and length of residence “to describe hypothetically good and bad language learning situations” (Brown 176). Social distance is part of Schumann’s acculturation model of second language acquisition (SLA), as a source of explanation for the lack of success.

Schumann developed the model in particular to explain the language acquisition of adult immigrants in a North American context (Norton 114). The theory relies on assumptions that there exist an occasional relationship between acculturation and SLA. Acquisition of the target language is one segment of acculturation and the extent to which the immigrant acculturates to the target culture will control the extent to which the individual acquires the second language (Schumann 380-90). Therefore, Schumann argues that the model supports acculturation against instruction, so if acculturation does not happen, the immigrant will not be able to make extended use of instruction toward learning the second language (380-90). The variable acculturation model has been quite influential (Brown 176-81; Ellis 198-224), yet the major source of its limitation is due to generalizations based on a case study of the SLA of Alberto, a 33-year-old working-class Costa Rican.

Claire Kramsch approaches acculturation as the internalization of the culture (i.e. system of standards) of a discourse community, and relates the notion to socialization, the course by which a person internalizes the conventions of behavior and cultural schemas imposed by a society or social group. Furthermore, acculturation does have a role in defining the relation between the powerful and the powerless and whether “whose values and beliefs

will be deemed worth adopting [...] which historical events are worth commemorating, which future is worth imagining” (Kramsch 9). Thus, acculturation takes place gradually. Concrete objects like tools, utensils and ornaments are generally the first things adapted by the newcomers to any culture (Weinstock 5). The memories of Mary Antin, a Russian Jew immigrating with her family to the USA as a child at the turn of the century express this feature of acculturation especially vividly.

Do you think all your imported spices, all your scientific blending and manipulating could produce so fragrant a morsel as that which I have on my tongue as I write? Glad I am that my mother, in her assiduous imitation of everything American, has forgotten the secrets of Polotzk cookery. At any rate she does not practise it, and I am the richer in memories for her omissions. Polotzk cheese cake, as I know it has in it the flavor of daisies and clover picked on the Vall; the sweetness of the Dvina water, the richness of newly turned earth which I moulded with bare feet and hands; the ripeness of red cherries by the dipperful in the marketplace; the fragrance of my childhood summers. (Antin 91)

The transfer of intangible elements, such as patterns of behavior, on the other hand takes place long after the newcomers’ initial exposure to the target culture largely due to the content of national consciousness. Nationality in Anderson’s view has multiple significations, among them the “cultural artifacts of a particular kind” (43). Due to the heavy reliance of the concept of acculturation on the framework of nationality, culture has a double effect on the individual, both liberating and constraining. Individuals claim membership in a society based on their share in that society’s national history. That historical dimension within a particular group’s identity constitutes its culture. Culture liberates people from oblivion and the randomness of nature, and constrains them by imposing on them a structure and principles of selection on synchronic (social) and diachronic (historical), and metaphorical levels (Kramsch 6-8). Regarding shared history and its role in ethno-cultural identity informants in the interviews in Chapter 4, unanimously expressed its utmost significance in connecting and grounding people in communities (Appendix C). This is how events in the 1956 revolution have become central and foundational to certain segments of the Hungarian-American contingent in the United States of America. As Hungarian-Americans these people choose to share this history and have access not only to their own past but to the past of other persons. As discussed in section 1.1.1 (Shoemaker, *Personal Identity*; Olson 2), the availability of own and communal history are building blocks of personal identity.

Therefore, immigrant individuals in the target society assumingly acculturate at least on two levels. First, acculturation has a strong homogenizing effect within the ethnic group, since ethnics of different experiences lived together. There is an interaction between the

various ethnic subgroups originating in distinctive social classes, professional and cultural background. This creates a somewhat different set of ethnic culture and practices, and recreates a slightly new ethnicity relative to the group they have left behind. This process can be labeled as intra-group acculturation. Second, acculturation takes place between the ethnic group and the larger society that is external acculturation. This latter refers to the cultural adjustments and changes that the acculturation of single ethnic groups brings upon the target culture in the earlier described sense. These two levels constitute dual acculturation, a process originally describing the initial cultural experience of African slaves in the Americas (Franklin and Moss 26). Dual acculturation consisting of intra-cultural homogenization as well as intercultural dialog provides a relevant construct to study ethno-cultural identity narratives. As will be shown in Chapter 4, intra- and extra-group acculturation are processes that some participants in the qualitative-interview-based study describe without necessarily labeling it. Some of these people talk about how participation in the 1956 revolution and having to emigrate as a consequence eradicated otherwise important social and cultural distinctions among '56-ers. Members of the community of displaced persons (DP) and their descendants perceive the group highly distinctive from groups of earlier and later immigrants even though it may be more varied in terms of social stratification.

The study of acculturation embraces the attempt to understand the cultural transmission process, a notion deeply rooted in and related to various approaches to culture. Complex notions like culture, or discourse, should first be deconstructed to avoid inhibiting an analysis of the relationship of the variables they pack together (Kuper 245). Kuper goes on arguing that religious beliefs, rituals, knowledge, moral values, the arts, rhetorical genres, and so on be separated from each other rather than kept together in a single bundle labeled culture, or collective consciousness, or superstructure, or discourse. Once these elements are selected, one is led on to explore the changing configurations in which language, knowledge, techniques, political ideologies, rituals, commodities, and so on are related to each other (245). Thus, acculturation requires taking a step beyond deconstructing and understanding the essential components of culture mainly because of the dynamic nature of the interaction between the mother and target cultures that it involves.

### **2.1.3 Acculturation and Assimilation—Stages of one another or individual choices**

Assimilation may be looked at from a social and individual point of view. From the perspective of society the term refers to “the processes that lead to greater homogeneity in

society” (Abramson 150), whereas the person yields his cultural character to the dominant majority on an individual level. Weinstock understands assimilation as the complete loss of original ethnic identity in an individual or group of individuals leading to absorption into the dominant culture. While assimilation is often one of the results of acculturation, the two phenomena are not the same (Weinstock 4). Milton M. Gordon suggested that acculturation be defined as behavioral or cultural assimilation and is a precondition to social assimilation (68-79). Pyong Gap Min and Rose Kim in their study of the formation of ethnic and racial identities reject Gordon’s conclusion arguing that acculturation, in the sense of replacing ethnic culture with American culture, is not a precondition for social assimilation (755).

John W. Berry posits that the processes of acculturation take place in four major attitudes individuals or groups within pluralist societies may hold towards other groups or individuals. These are (1) assimilation, (2) separation, (3) integration, and (4) marginalization (Berry 75). The assimilation mode is defined when an individual has no wish to maintain his identity in a non-dominant culture, yet seeks daily interaction with it. In contrast when the person finds it most important to hold on to his or her original culture and at the same time avoids interactions with other members of society then the separation alternative is defined. Integration occurs when the individual intends both to maintain his or her original culture and to interact with others daily. Marginalization means that the immigrant reveals little interest or has few opportunities to maintain his or her original culture; often the reason is exclusion or discrimination (Berry 75-77). This model is multilinear and offers a set of alternatives rather than a single dimension ending in assimilation or complete absorption into a unicultural society (Neto 19).

In his theory of symbolic ethnicity, Herbert Gans eradicates the sharp division between the notions of acculturation and assimilation. He considers important only the outcome, which has to do with a phenomenon he refers to as ethnic revival (194-98). Ethnicity, in his approach, has two major components: religious and secular. Such distinction makes the study of acculturation more refined, as it promotes the idea that acculturation makes sense and therefore, can and should be studied in the case of third, fourth or even further generations of descendants of once immigrant ancestors. Gans also claims that today’s ethnics have become more visible due to upward mobility; and that they are adopting the new form of ethnic behavior and affiliation he calls symbolic ethnicity (198). The concept refers to “a nostalgic allegiance to the culture of the immigrant generation, or that of the old country; a love for and a pride in a tradition that can be felt without having to be incorporated into everyday behavior” (Gans 204). Due to the homogenizing impact of American society,

neither secular nor religious forms of ethnicity will be sustainable; they are doomed to disappearance within five or six generations (Gans 214-15).

Regarding ethnicity within theoretical discourses on identity, however, the assumption calls for reconsideration. Within the framework of ethnic symbols, ethnicity as a stable core of self can be challenged; thus, it is not sustainable due to the strategic and positional nature of identity. Individuals will assumingly reject being ethnic because it implies counter-assimilation into the ethnic community rather than become part of the mainstream which is more status enhancing. Symbols are much less threatening in this respect and they have the washback of creating a unique individual by being merely familiar with them and their meaning. Uniqueness turns out to be very distinctive and positive for some of the conversational partners who talked about their ethnicity in the study that I will discuss in Chapter 4 of the dissertation. Yet as Rosaldo indicated, ethnicity serves as a fixed point with concrete features to turn to within the loose and fractured construct of identity. Thus, the experience of ethnicity is always accessible, if some fourth-generation individual renounces it, the fifth-generation can relearn it maybe in a slightly different form, but for unquestioned value. Therefore, as the interviews reveal in Chapter 4, neither acculturation nor assimilation are necessary, fixed, and unidirectional modes of ethnic development. This assumption is a constituent principle of pluralist approaches to ethnicity.

#### **2.1.4 Pluralism, post-pluralism or what is beyond ethnicity?**

Harold J. Abramson holds that existentially a person traces ethnicity from a particular culture and structure in a diverse world. The distinction between symbolic and relational ethnicity helps positioning the individual (Abramson 155). What the person believes and responds to is symbolic ethnicity whereas other individuals with whom he or she relates are labeled as relational ethnicity (Abramson 155). In the North American context, approaches to modes of acculturation also acknowledge cultural diversity and the importance of past histories build toward “a foundation of American citizenship” (Abramson 154). The presence of the past, which is a narratively sensed history, plays out not only in building individual identity but also in constructing collective consciousness (Rosenzweig and Thelen). Horace Kallen and Randolph Bourne in 1924 viewed America as a unique sociological fabric woven of diverse ethnic narratives that create persisting ethnic communities and contributions (Abramson 154; Gleason, 18-19). Kallen coined the term “cultural pluralism” to describe an approach in which the preservation of ethnic distinctiveness constructs a genuine American nationality and



culture (Gleason 19). This original definition emphasized the value and importance of upholding consciously maintained cultural features such as language.

Pluralism has ceased to be a policy of intergroup relations; now it refers to a particular pattern of social interaction (Gleason 39). This “new particularism,” Higham holds, encourages a heightened solidarity within any segment of the population that defines itself as distinct (196-230). Gleason argues for the recent slipperiness of the concept of pluralism especially regarding the question what kind of differences between groups constitute the grounds on which they may be said to be pluralized. Because the features of ethnic culture such as language, press, theater, and ethnic societies have been eroded by assimilation, the grounds of pluralism have become more and more elusive (Gleason 39). Thus, structural pluralism has become a more valid term than cultural pluralism meaning that individuals still claim that they are ethnic for informal socialization, even though they may reject any outward distinction. The meaning of cultural and structural pluralism has also gained foothold as multiculturalism mainly in the Canadian political arena, educational policy in the United States of America and “Eurocentric Cultural Studies” from the late 1970s onwards (Gleason 48).

Hollinger suggests that defenders of cultural diversity take a step beyond multiculturalism and pluralism toward a perspective he labels as “postethnic”:

A postethnic perspective favors voluntary over involuntary affiliations, balances an appreciation for communities of descent with a determination to make room for new communities and promotes solidarities of wide scope that incorporate people with different ethnic and racial background. A postethnic perspective resists the grounding of knowledge and moral values in blood and history, but works within the last generation’s recognition that many of the ideas and values once taken to be universal are specific to certain cultures. (Hollinger 3)

This approach to ethnicity doubts the category as it has been understood so far. Accordingly, asserting that certain cultural products and resources compose the ethnic heritage of an individual or a group is exclusionary because it approves of and legitimates discriminative access to these items based on ethnic affiliation. The postethnic perspective that means cosmopolitan multiculturalism should transcend and supersede ethnic movements and their exclusionary claims (Hollinger 120-32). However, postethnicity is a critical renewal of cosmopolitanism deeply embedded in the context of the present sensitivity to roots and becomes “rooted cosmopolitanism” (Hollinger 5). Thus, it builds extensively on previous theories of ethnicity, yet it rejects the essentializing force attached to it. The most important

feature, however, that ethnicity helps contextualize personal identity socially, is especially well-articulated in the ethnic narratives discussed in Chapter 4.

A narrative perspective of ethnicity focuses on the idea that the ethnicized self is constituted discursively (Hall 16). Discourses among community members build ethnic narratives, which in turn build cohesion among ethnically defined individuals. According to an ecological understanding of narrative ethnicity, ethnic groups constitute of individuals loosely connected in dynamic, heterogeneous communities in which the characterization of being ethnic varies widely and the individuals have freedom and competence in positioning themselves relative to other members of the community. The level of language use also signifies ethnic identification, as it is the channel of negotiating ethno-cultural positions and has a notable impact on constructing ethno-cultural identity.

## **2.2 THE CONSTRUCTION OF ETHNO-CULTURAL IDENTITY IN ETHNOGENESIS**

So far, I have argued that identity may help define and interpret what the self is and where the self is both psychologically and sociologically. On the one hand, it makes the individual create order in his or her personal life. On the other hand, it positions that individual within a group or identify him or her with a particular collectivity (Guibernau and Rex 4). Theories of ethnicity explain how individuals become integrated in groups on the basis of shared cultural and in some cases national features. Ethno-cultural identity refers to the component of the self that includes the knowledge and evaluation of one's membership, common values and attitudes shared with other members, in one or more ethno-cultural groups (Dion and Dion 1; Duan and Vu 226; Tajfel). The majority of sources consulted in the dissertation provide the meanings of the terms ethnic identity and ethno-cultural identity so that they may be interchangeable. I will use the term ethno-cultural identity, because it expresses more profoundly that ethnic identity is embedded in culture and that aspects of culture reflect ethnicities that are part of it reciprocally.

Both the individual and the collective aspect of identity may be reflected in the use of symbols (Guibernau and Rex 4).

Ethnicity has come to be regarded as a mode of action and of representation: it refers to a decision people make to depict themselves or others symbolically as the bearers of a certain cultural identity. [...] The apparently monolithic or generalised character of ethnicity at the collective level [...] does not preempt the continual reconstruction of ethnicity at a personal level. (Cohen 119-120).

Thus, multiple identifications on a collective level and individual identity exist and carry meaning for people concurrently. A particularity of human existence is that people live within, and identify with multiple groups on grounds of the specific event, without becoming disturbed in their individual psyche (Guibernau and Rex 4). Among the multiplicity of groups that individuals occasionally identify with there are old and new ethnicities. Ethnogenesis is a term that refers to the evolution of and acculturation to a new ethnicity rather than to a preexisting culture (Abramson 152). Thomas K. Fitzgerald applies the concept of ethnogenesis as a metaphor of identity construction that implies “the development and public presentation of a self-conscious ethnicity” (83). Assumably, language, temporal and spatial questions and narratives interact in ethnogenesis.

### **2.2.1 Ethnicity and language**

Weber discusses ethnic groups as communities of shared language (57). An ethnic group implies such human groups that believe in their common descent in part because of physical similarities, shared customs or both. Ethnic membership is based on presumed identity unlike kinship group the existence of which implies concrete social action and it does not bring about a group; it only triggers group formation especially in a political sense (Weber 56).

It is primarily the political community [...] that inspires the belief in common ethnicity. This belief tends to persist even after the disintegration of the political community [...] unless drastic differences in the custom, physical type, or, above all, language exist among its members. (Weber 56)

Thus, an ethnic group is also a language group because language is a “specific cultural possession of the masses” and as such, it brings about and enhances mutual understanding (Weber 57). Shared language and the common regulation of life rituals lead to feelings of “ethnic affinity, especially since the intelligibility of the behavior of others is the most fundamental presupposition of group formation” (Weber 58). Moreover, Weber holds that the distinctive language use of various communities demarcates social groups to such an extent that ignoring clear-cut linguistic boundaries would leave only gradual transitions of customs without immutable ethnic frontiers (58). My interviewees hold a similar view (see Chapter 4): all of them have at one point or another expressed their relationship to the Hungarian language. Knowing or not knowing the language of the ethnic cohort is a feature of ethnicity that is subject to disagreement. The question is what constitutes the ethno-cultural identity of

someone who does not speak the ancestral language yet the person claims to a particular ancestry.

Eva Hoffman describes the process of relocating in another culture and having to assimilate and acculturate through the experience of learning another language and then acquiring a second culture (*The New* 43-58).

And it may be that one's first language has, for the child, this aura of sacrality. Because we learn it unconsciously, at the same time while we are learning the world, the words in one's first language seem to be equivalent to the things they name. They seem to express us and the world directly. When we learn a language in adulthood, we know that the words in it "stand for" the things they describe; that the signs on the page are only signs—arbitrary, replaceable by others. It takes time before a new language begins to inhabit us deeply, to enter the fabric of the psyche and express who we are. (Hoffman, *The New* 50)

Thus, language helps create ethno-cultural identity because it is through radical dislocation that the individual understands how much he or she is a creation in culture, how much language and culture construct and shape the person. Language and culture build a matrix, which is a source of ethno-cultural identity and a person falls out of this matrix in times of dislocation. It is understood on a surface level that cultures differ in customs, food, religions, and social arrangements. It takes longer to understand, however, that each culture has subliminal values, predispositions, and beliefs that inform the individual's most intimate assumptions and perceptions. A culture depends on the people who live in it because it is located within them.

It is inscribed in the psyche, and it gives form and focus to our mental and emotional lives. We could hardly acquire a human identity outside it, just as we could hardly think or perceive outside language. In a way, we are nothing more – or less – than an encoded memory of our heritage. (Hoffman, *The New* 50)

Intercultural communication scholars have focused on cultural and ethnic identity and its relationship to communication and language (Drzewiecka and Thomas 21-22; Young 32-56). Until quite recently, fixed categorical ascriptions described ethnicity, which rooted mostly in assumed homogeneous national and cultural experience (Drzewiecka and Thomas 21). The prevalent image was an unproblematic division by national borders and ethnicity a finished product emerging in linear identity development. In accordance with the idea that identity is a dynamic and fluid construct constituted in interactions, ethnicity and identity are also viewed as created in communication. "Ethnic identity is constantly recreated, it is flexible and evolving rather than static and fixed" (Drzewiecka and Thomas 21). Ethnicity in this respect

is a product of opposition, the individual's sense of otherness is a result of participating in relationships in which the person constructs his or her ethnicity (Norton 12).

The process of building one's ethnic image positions the person in a powerful ethnic network relative to other members and a common, shared language defines such networks.

Thus the first principle of ethnic identity formation is participation in ethnic social networks, and therefore in activities controlled by ethnic group members. Language is important here as a means by which access to networks is regulated: if you do not speak the right language, you do not have access to forming relationship with certain people, or to participating in certain activities. (Heller 181 qtd. in Norton 12)

An immigrant context locates ethnicity in a system of social relations that organize individuals relative to wider social processes that take place in society (Norton 12). Language and customs are the most observable criteria in researching the acculturation of immigrants, yet there are subtle details in both categories such as the gendered language experience in patriarchal societies. Ethnic identity is constructed "in specific sets of social, historical and economic relations of power which are reinforced and reproduced in everyday social encounters" (Norton 12). In this context, ethno-cultural identity refers to the relationship between individual members of a group who have access to a common language, shared past and display similar understandings of the world (Norton 19). Individuals, however, are not free agents but subjects of social and cultural discourses and as such, they take positions within larger social and cultural structures. Ethno-cultural identification is a way to frame the positions within which individuals make their choices (Drzewiecka and Nakayama 22). Thus, language and the possibilities of speech play a well-articulated part in the construction of ethno-cultural identity.

### **2.2.2 Spatial and temporal aspects of ethno-cultural identity**

Ethno-cultural identity is a socially, culturally and linguistically defined "cultural contract" (Fejős, *Variants* 363). Individuals with particular ethno-cultural identities create ethnic groups; however, these communities are not homogeneous in the cultural sense. Manifestations of membership in an ethnicity take distinctive forms in both time and space. Zoltán Fejős argues that geographically an ethnic group may be spectacularly fragmented (*Variants* 363) as in the case of Hungarian-Americans who live in diaspora in various countries of the North and South American continent. In this dissertation, however, I will focus on Hungarian-Americans living in the United States of America. One of the informants

(see Chapter 4) talks about how she experienced different contingents of Hungarian-Americans within the United States of America. Her memories and accounts vividly illustrate how the structure and life of the community depend on the historical period in which the diasporic cohort was established and the background of immigrants that settled in the area. Members of ethnic groups may or may not live in close communal ties, which fact also plays out in the spatial aspect of ethno-cultural identity.

Temporal features refer to the historical construction of an ethnic group. Accordingly, Jenkins breaks down the concept of identity into two levels: nominal and virtual identity that are independent but related (167). Nominal identity signifies names and designation and virtual identity refers to what the name means especially for the person or group that bears it (Fejős, *Variants* 368; Jenkins 167-68). The name may remain the same over time and in space, yet its meaning may change. Therefore, Fejős posits that the name of any ethnic group arising from a natural human need does not signify a constant ethnicity (368). “The content behind the name is changeable the name in itself refers to the creation of collective ethnicity” (Fejős, *Variants* 368).

The emergence of ethnic groups is related to both space and place. Drzewiecka and Nakayama distinguish space and place and claim that identity formation is a spatialized process (23). Ethno-cultural identities appear at particular places, which are specifically recognizable geographical locations. A more complex notion ‘space’ refers to the different experiences of places, thus, space is constructed in experiencing multiple places and concrete locations (Drzewiecka and Nakayama 23). Ethno-cultural spaces have boundaries within which ethno-cultural identification takes place, and the experience creates a sense of homeland. The ethnic group acknowledges that a particular area has a special importance for itself and that members feel at home in that area (Sheskin 119). The homeland is more than just the geographical location of people at one particular moment in time; it includes the people, the place, the time and the sense of place. It is a concept rooted in cultural ecology that means “bonding with land” (Association of American Geographers [A.A.G.], *Session Report* 12). Thus, the sense of homeland is a way of identifying with an ethnic community that defines itself through the geographical location.

Ethno-cultural identity is a construct that exists in space as well as in time. An ethnic group means a collectivity and its use explicitly refers to a particular concept of belonging together of individuals identifying with the group. The formula “Hungarian-Americans,” according to Fejős, implies a diasporic collectivity, which has distinctive historical extensions and emerges due to different stages of emigration (*Variants* 369). It includes various groups

of first-generation immigrants that arrived in the United States at different times in history. However, historical inquiry proves that even the immigrants themselves “cannot be regarded as the unchanged distant representatives of those who remained at home,” mainly due to the acculturation they go through (*Variants* 369). The self-definition of the generations born already in the United States of America prove that they are mainly participants of American society (Fejős, *Variants* 369), and their Hungarianness is constructed and negotiated relative to their position in American society. Thus, ethno-cultural identity is also a matter of time as to when the individual, his/her family or ancestors decided to migrate. This conclusion also became clear in the way informants in Chapter 4 interpreted their Hungarianness.

### **2.2.3 Narrative construction of ethno-cultural identity**

Approaches to defining ethno-cultural identity emphasize shared knowledge regarding past and history, language, traditions, and customs. Shared customs may have diverse sources, deriving mostly from “adaptation to natural conditions and the imitation of neighbors” (Weber 61). Community consciousness, on the other hand, is rooted in the memory that once members engaged in joint political action, like a single defense or conquest and then such political memories constituted the group (Weber 61). Assmann argues that alongside the individual memory there is also a collective memory, which is a social phenomenon. It has a social and a cultural basis like consciousness, language, and personality. The act of remembering connects the internal life with the social world because the socialization process enables the individual to remember and the memories help the person to become socialized (Assmann 4). Collective memory aims at the transmission of collective identity, as it shifts the focus of history from texts to participant-interpreters (Rosenzweig and Thelen 199).

Society inscribes itself in this memory with all its norms and values and creates in the individual the authority...that has traditionally been called “conscience.” [...] It is a projection on the part of the collective that wishes to remember and of the individual who remembers in order to belong. Both the collective and the individual turn to the archive of cultural traditions, the arsenal of symbolic forms, the “imaginary” of myths and images, of the “great stories,” sagas and legends, scenes and constellations that live or can be reactivated in the treasure stores of a people. (Assmann 7-8)

Cultural memory has its source in traditions, narratives, and written texts (Assmann 6-8; László, *Történelem* 5). It goes back to the roots of the group, and encodes the most important events and memories into narratives and preserves them in this form. Traditions, Assmann holds, are a special case of communication in which knowledge is exchanged vertically from

one generation to the other, rather than reciprocally and horizontally (8). In this process symbol and memory are in continuous interaction, which plays out on every level. In order to remember things people invent “memory aids” or “memory sites” that concentrate the memory of entire communities be it national, ethnic or religious (Assmann 8). Memory sites may be monuments, customs, rituals, traditions, and feast days. In short, a set of things that “enables the individual who lives in this tradition to belong, that is, to realize his potential as the member of a society in the sense of a community where it is possible to learn, remember and share in a culture” (Assmann 9).

Along with the pervasiveness of the narrative impulse (Hoffman, *Life* 1), these experiences from within the cultural memory appear inscribed in stories that members of the group are familiar with. “Stories: all societies have them, tell them, listen to them. Most societies write them and read them” (Hoffman, *Life* 1). These narratives organize and make sense of lived experience for the individual alone as well as for the individual within the community. The stories are about various groups that distinguish themselves from one another based on mythical, legendary or fictitious characteristics. A particular group becomes good in comparison with another that allegedly has more negative qualities rather than due to its absolute worth. The stories initiate social dialogues and glorify some community heroes relative to other groups whose members easily be depicted as bad or even evil. Thus, historical and cultural narratives carry and perpetuate these features, which justify the picture a group develops about itself (Rorty qtd. in Geertz, *Az értelmezés* 380).

Characters of these stories are real-life people who acculturate to the canonical norms and values of a particular ethnic culture through narratives, while narratives themselves make ethno-cultural norms and values canonical. Each ethno-culturally distinguishable community has its historically crystallized stories, which the individual may look at and interpret from distinct viewpoints. Individuals may create different stories regarding the same event, yet the common culture hosts potential narrative frames. Narrative is a contextualized way of presenting memory sites, which by means of its specific handling of time, space and authorship also contextualizes individuals as members of the community. Cultural memory is shaped and personalized in individual stories, and once the group approves these stories, the narratives carry cultural memory (László, *Társas* 47). Thus, cultural memory and its narratives help frame identity and ethno-cultural identity of the individual and the group.

The concept of collective memory handles the narrative construction of ethno-cultural identity in holistic terms, as it is characteristic to the chaos/complexity theory perspective. “Behaviors arise that cannot be anticipated from examining the parts” (Larsen-Freeman 40),



however, understanding the interaction between the parts carries information as to the development and restructuring of ethnic groups. The first qualitative empirical study in the dissertation (Chapter 4) provides an analysis of narratives elicited from second-generation Hungarian-Americans. Some of my conversational partners describe how the post-1956 Hungarian emigrants created a community of Hungarian-Americans. They emphasize how their parents and their peers legitimized the collective cultural memory on the basis of the 1956 revolution, which further colored the ethno-cultural identification of the members of already existing Hungarian émigré circles in the United States of America. Understanding the community as a small-world network exemplifies how ethno-cultural identity is framed from within collective cultural memory that helps establish the necessary number of links to connect participants.

Narratives that generate ethno-cultural identity do that by means of establishing borderlines between one and the other and affirm difference. Fejós holds that difference from an ethno-cultural point of view is “a historical construction in which the borderlines between ‘we’ and ‘they’ in part (may) continue to exist independently of the activity of the group members and in part may be maintained consciously” (*Variants* 370). Thus, narratives participate in ethnogenesis as they explain and legitimate liminal existence that is building dual bonds with a host ethnicity.

### **2.3 RESEARCH IN ETHNO-CULTURAL IDENTITY**

In the preceding sections I have argued that identity is a key concept in understanding acculturation, the process through which an individual becomes part of the surrounding cultural environment. Identity and culture are in permanent reciprocity, and this dynamic relationship, as Hazel Rose Markus and Shinobu Kitayama maintain, depends on construals of the self, of specific others and the relationship of the two (224-26). These construals appear in the cultural milieu, which they are a product of, and so they govern the individual. According to counter-essentialism, culture and ethno-cultural identity are imaginary and therefore, unstable discursive fabrications, yet narratives provide the context. These concepts stand in the focus of multifaceted research regarding ethno-cultural identity. First, I will draw on some studies that pioneered the field in terms of establishing a widely shared understanding of core issues. Second, I will summarize research work related to ethnicity and narratives to shed light on some practical considerations of theoretical works. Third, I will discuss some research I find relevant from the aspect of the focus of the present dissertation related to the

field of language and ethnicity. Most of the research I will review is related to the American context because both empirical studies in the dissertation share that background.

### **2.3.1 Historical perspectives**

The major focus of past sociological and ethnographic research in American ethnic history was the process of adaptation and assimilation of immigrants and their gradual acceptance into American society (Waters 2-3). Studies in ethnic ghettos (Riis) and social surveys of American attitudes (Mead; Hansen) have reported on the acculturation and assimilation process of European immigrants. There is data available on how groups of European people went to the United States of America, established ethnic neighborhoods and created voluntary ethnic organizations (Waters 3). According to these studies, the majority of European immigrants decided not to pass on the old traditions and identifications of their past lives to their descendants in order to avoid discrimination, residential segregation, strong religious identification and to gain access to resources open to non-ethnic Americans (Waters 3). Therefore, most research on American immigration has focused explicitly or implicitly on some variation of the melting pot theory of assimilation (Bisin and Verdier 955).

Ethnicity and identity gained increasing emphasis around the 1950s. Oscar Handlin's study of immigrants in Boston (Handlin, *Boston's*) and the more comprehensive statement of the overwhelming role of immigration in framing American identity (Handlin, *The Uprooted*) indicated a growing interest in researching the concept of acculturation. The works present an analysis of historical records and describe the influence of the distinctive Bostonian and larger American environment on the immigrants still within the framework of complete assimilation. Handlin's almost archetypical portrayal of the depressing conditions faced by European peasant immigrants concluded that newcomers completely severed their cultural and social bonds with the culture of their origin (Blanck 25). Accordingly, there was very little room left for the "old-world heritage"; instead, the study emphasized the impact of the new urban environment in forming immigrant attitudes and beliefs. These chronicles of the everyday emotional experiences, fears, hopes and expectations of European immigrants inspired a generation of research into the meanings and social and cultural consequences of American immigration.

Also part of the research emphasis on the American influence on immigrants, Weinstock studied acculturation in the wake of immigration from a psychological aspect. Of the large number of psychological studies on acculturation, I chose this one because the

context of the study, Hungarian refugees in the wake of the 1956 revolution, makes it relevant to the present work. Weinstock aimed at finding out whether a positive relationship exists between the level of acculturation and occupational status. One of the main objectives of social systems is to assure cultural continuity and to minimize social conflict, thus, the process of acculturation can be said to be functional within the social framework (Weinstock 105). Results of the study are applicable only to a limited extent in that it focuses on the acculturation of the immigrant generation thus excluding the study of cultural identities from the perspective of multicultural theories. This is closely related to the question whether the process of acculturation refers to only those who relocate or their descendants as well who in some way or another decide to consciously share some, in some cases very limited features of ethnicity. The very same dilemma has much longer been present in the American context.

The high degree of motivation experienced by the generation that left their homes in England to travel to the wilderness of Massachusetts was unlikely to be shared by their offspring, who never themselves experienced religious persecution or the trauma of migration. (Madsen 25)

From the late 1950s dissenting voices started discrediting the stronghold that immigrants naturally and fully assimilated (Bisin and Verdier 956). Newcomers, for instance, failed to assimilate along religious dimensions and posited that the “three great faiths” (Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish) might constitute a “triple melting pot” (Herberg 32-37). Glazer and Moynihan presented the widely acclaimed watershed assumption that assimilation takes place very slowly and rarely completely along ethnic traits. New York’s five major ethnic groups retained distinctive cultural, political and economic patterns even long after the arrival of their ancestors in the United States of America. Gordon also arrived at similar conclusions as far as retaining certain ethnic traits is concerned. In the 1970s Egon Mayer studied Orthodox Jewish communities in New York and found that members were experiencing a cultural revivalism despite earlier prophesied perspectives of complete and irreversible assimilation.

These studies have all agreed on the visible presence of suburban white ethnics. Nevertheless, most of the information regarding later-generation ethnicity derives from research works that rely on “ethnic identification” of individuals of later-generations (Waters 8). These studies included U.S. wide sample surveys such as the *General Social Survey of the National Opinion Research Center* or the *National Survey of American Catholics* and political and election studies that asked for ethnic affiliation such as the *Michigan Election Survey* (Waters 8-9). Due to social and academic pressure from white ethnic circles, the 1980 census asked the population to specify their ancestry, and the form allowed each person to give a

maximum of three responses (U.S. Department 1; Waters 9). “For the first time, then, the ethnic ancestry of every individual was ascertained—not just that of the first and second-generations” (10). According to the U.S. Department of Commerce Bureau of the Census, approximately 83 percent of Americans declared at least one specific ethnic ancestry (1). Single ancestry was claimed by 52 percent and 31 percent reported multiple ancestry (U.S. Department 1). Ever since, the question on ancestry has occurred on census forms providing refined and up-to-date information of the ethnic background of Americans. These data only proved, however, that ethnic identity is hardly measurable because the numbers do not tell how people make their choices and what the content of ethnicity for the individual is. In short, both census data and sample surveys in themselves are too shallow to provide an explanation towards ethno-cultural identifications regarding either their strength or extent.

Although the Hungarian context of ethnic-identity related research differs profoundly from the American, some of the findings carry significance to issues of ethno-cultural identification. Let me mention two survey-based studies related to ethno-cultural identity. Mária Demeter-Zayzon carried out a sociological survey regarding the ethno-cultural identity of ethnic Germans and Slovaks in four villages in Hungary in 1989 and 1991. The starting point was ethnic self-definition and characterization, which according to the hypothesis, served the purposes of the so-called “dual-bonding” to the mainstream as well as to the ethnic group (18-19). The study revealed that rural German and Slovak communities based their ethno-cultural identification on elements such as language, traditions and customs, items of remembrance like old tools etc., and the landscape (Demeter Zayzon 121-23). This latter finding is significant from the aforementioned concept of the ‘sense of homeland’. Individuals build a sense of collective ethno-cultural identification because they share the same geographical location, which in turn construes items of ethnic identification.

György Csepeleli conducted a survey-questionnaire-based social-psychological study of national consciousness. The starting point is a core assumption regarding the empirically measurable national consciousness, which frames the way members of the particular society are aware of a set of national features that are part of collective national consciousness. Thus, the name of a nation is central to self-identification (Csepeleli 110-11). Among the conclusions it is important to mention the role of cultural themes, which are central to Hungarian national consciousness. Thus, language and the culture that language creates are closely and organically linked, according to respondents (Csepeleli 165-66).

### **2.3.2 Ethno-cultural identity in narratives**

As has become clear from these studies, ethnic identity and the quantitative data regarding ancestry are not the same phenomena. Research interest into the relationship of ethnicity and identity has increased since the 1980s (Gans 193-95; Waters 3-5; Szarka 15), and fueled multifaceted independent investigations. Such studies have the capacity to demonstrate “in what situations and under what circumstances, for how long and out of what considerations persons of foreign ancestry choose an ethnic-based, self-defining identity, together with and within their American identity” (Fejős, *Variants* 366). The relationship between the American and the ethnic identities can be characterized by a series of choices, which means that ethnic identity is voluntary and emerges because of consciously choosing between available emotional options (Waters; Fejős, *Variants* 366). In this section, I will summarize the structure and findings of four studies from the North American canon that partially or fully make use of the narrative concept in conceptualizing ethno-cultural identity.

Mary C. Waters aimed at widening the horizons of census information and attempted to explain the end-of-twentieth century interest in ethnicity by combining Gans’ theory of symbolic ethnicity and ethnographic techniques of data collection on ethnic options. Ethnic identity involves less of an ascriptive than a voluntary ethnic role expressed possibly in limitless ways of actions, feelings or a combination of these (Gans 202-03). An individual may want to join formal ethnic organizations and participate in their activities or attempt to find his or her ethnic identity by means of “affiliating with an abstract collectivity” (Gans 203). Based on census data Waters investigated the type of ethnicity that may still exist among highly mobile suburban populations of later-generation white ethnics without any direct contact with the ethnic community their ancestors once belonged to. In order to find out more about these processes of ethnic identification for white Americans Waters conducted in-depth interviews with sixty third- and fourth-generation white ethnics in two suburban communities (11).

A content analysis of the results reveals that respondents were largely uncertain as to whether the traits and characteristics they described as ethnic were indeed such or merely particular to their family and personal background (Waters 82). The ethno-cultural features participants mentioned mainly derived from either books or mass media portrayals of that nationality or came from firsthand knowledge of their own distinctive families. When asked about what made their ethnic group different from others, respondents almost universally ascribed certain values to their ethnic group. They claimed that “their group was different from all the rest because of three important values: (1) family and the high value put on

family, (2) education and the ways in which parents sacrifice for their children, (3) loyalty to God and country” (Waters 85-86). The study concludes that ethnicity at this stage is private and voluntary, yet “when given a choice among European ancestries, the more recent, more ‘ethnic’ of the groups are chosen. In other words, the more ‘ethnic’ the group, the more desirable as an identity choice” (Waters 36). Thus, ethno-cultural identity has true consequences for individuals and groups, yet there is not much consensus as to how it is formulated.

There is an increasingly acclaimed recognition that ethno-cultural identity is not inherent or fixed, rather flexible and under construction and transformation (Waters 164-67). Narrative—the creation and perpetuation of the story of collective cultural experience—provides the structure, which contextualizes the dynamic, on-going, formative and transformative concept of ethno-cultural identity. In line with this trend of thinking, Thomas Dublin’s edited collection of narratives on the ethno-cultural roots and background of undergraduate students maps the diversity of ethnic experience. The stories fall into three groups. The largest cohort consists of third-person accounts of the migration experiences of grandparents or ancestors (Dublin 6). Students wrote their ancestral chronicles based on interviewing their parents or other family members. They often “address the changing significance of ethnicity with the passage of time between their grandparents’ generation and their own” (Dublin 6). Ethno-cultural identity in this approach is understood as the product of a historical process that involved upcoming generations onwards. The second group of narratives lays out the generational conflict embedded in ethnicity and migration. Stories bring together parents’ migration experience and the impact of the parents’ ethnicity on the narrator. The third group of narratives includes first person accounts that explore ethnicity in the lives of students. The focus is on aspects of multiple and often conflicting ethno-cultural identities within a single lifetime often within a relatively short period. Dublin only introduces the narratives and the writers, and provides no further analysis.

In an examination of ethnic and pan-ethnic attachments of young professionals, Min and Kim elicited fifteen autobiographical essays from well-educated Asian-Americans (Min and Kim, *Formation* 736-38; Min and Kim, *Struggle* 8-12). Their research focused on three dimensions of ethnicity: (1) the retention of ethnic culture, (2) participation in ethnic networks, and (3) ethnic and pan-ethnic identities. The authors do not provide sufficient information as to how they worked on the stories or what kind of analysis they used. Narratives have proved that “many essayists were characterized by strong bicultural experiences” in terms of their acculturation into mainstream American culture yet strongly

affiliating to Asian cultures (Min and Kim, *Formation* 754). These patterns have emerged due to the cosmopolitan nature of American colleges as well as the “transnational ties maintained with their parents’ home countries” (Min and Kim, *Formation* 754).

In a study of Mexican immigrant personal experience narratives Anna De Fina reflects on the links between ethno-cultural identity construction and narrative discourse. The study attempts to explore narrative as a locus for the study of identity mainly because narratives render personal experience determined culturally and subjectively. The narrators apply linguistic mechanisms and strategies consistently and these devices define concepts of the self, its role and its position relative to others. Just like Ramón “Tianguis” Pérez, De Fina’s conversational partners chronicle their border crossings into the United States as well as their settlement, which provide the data for analysis. According to the author, discourse and interaction frames identity, thus the local expression and negotiation of identity connects to the wider social and cultural background that contextualizes the experience of migration, settlement, and acculturation. Identities emerge in discourse; thus, language is not only a tool and a medium toward constructing identities but it is also a part of it (De Fina 93-138). Narrative-based studies regarding ethno-cultural identity hone in on the textual, lexical and interactional levels of identity construction and provide further insights into the relationship of language and ethnic identity.

### **2.3.3 Language and ethno-cultural identity**

An interpretation of the concept of identity through narratives implies that language is a fundamental tool in the process of identity construction. Applied linguistic and linguistic research that deals with or at least somehow touches upon the role of language in ethno-cultural identification is extremely multifaceted. My aim at this point is to review and show some trends and themes that help explain some recurring phenomena in the empirical studies in forthcoming chapters of the dissertation. Such issues include the context and level of language knowledge, use of English and Hungarian, code-switching, transfer and its implications, yet the list is far from complete, as the goal was not to analyze the narratives from a purely linguistic point of view. The studies overviewed in this section belong to two loosely framed themes: (1) questions of linguistic acculturation and critical period effects in SLA, and (2) identity construction in bilingualism. Within the first theme, I will summarize the findings and conclusions of two studies, one in linguistic acculturation and the other regarding the critical period hypothesis, which I find important because the research cohort is

Hungarian-American and the findings have important conclusions regarding ethno-cultural identity construction. In the second theme, I will focus on research into bilingualism to the extent that it supports the interpretation of code-switching data that occurred in the qualitative interviews I conducted with second-generation Hungarian-Americans. I will also refer to a study of ethnonyms as part of identity construction.

The study of ethnicity and ethnic change largely revolves around the concept of ethno-cultural identification and acculturation, meaning the acquisition of the social and cultural features of the host society (Weinstock 4-8; Norton 12; Kim et al. 609). Linguistic acculturation is one dimension of acculturation (Berry 69) and it is related nonlinearly to ethnic identity (Laroche et al. 418). Michel Laroche et al. conducted an empirical study among four ethnic groups in Eastern Canada to test this relationship between the two facets of culture change: (1) linguistic acculturation or the acquisition of the dominant culture through language, and (2) ethnic identification or the retention of the culture of origin. The results “lend credence to a body of literature that indicates a relationship between the two constructs” (Laroche et al. 424). Thus, as an individual acculturates linguistically, an increasing marginal loss in his or her original ethnic identification occurs. This model expresses the two opposing needs of the social self, the need for assimilation, which appears through linguistic assimilation, and the need for differentiation, which appears in ethnic identification (Laroche et al. 425). However, the relationship between the acquisition of the host culture and the retention of the culture of origin may not be linear.

Linguistic acculturation is also part of the target language acquisition process, which has a highly influential age factor to it. According to Rod Ellis, there is a widely held lay view that younger second language learners for the most part do better than older learners which belief is supported by the critical period hypothesis (CPH) (484). The critical period in general refers to “a fixed span of years during which language learning can take place naturally and effortlessly, and after which it is not possible to be completely successful” (Ellis 484). From the point of view of ethno-cultural identity construction, the relationship of age and asymptotic achievement in sociocultural competence is important. Morphology and syntax are essential components in all approaches to define communicative competence (Canale and Swain; Canale; Celce-Murcia et al.) labeled as linguistic or grammatical competence, which may develop in parallel with the so-called sociocultural competence. A wider context of the approach is the view of language as an integral part of the speaker’s ethno-cultural identity as well as the most important channel of social organization “embedded in the culture of communities where it is used” (Celce-Murcia et al. 23). In their



attempt to specify cultural knowledge for language pedagogy, Byram et al. reconceptualized the subcompetences of communicative competence under the old-new construct of sociocultural competence. This model proposes a concurrence of linguistic and cultural learning.

One of the most frequently quoted works in support of the CPH is that of Johnson and Newport's study of 46 Koreans and Chinese who had immigrated to the USA between the ages 3 and 39 (Ellis 490; Johnson; DeKeyser). Johnson and Newport administered a grammaticality judgment test with spoken sentences, which covered a wide variety of basic morphosyntactic structures of English. The correlation between age of arrival and judgment scores was  $-.77$  (qtd. in DeKeyser 502). Ellis posits that an effect for "identification with American culture" was also found, though much weaker than for age (490). DeKeyser replicated the study with 57 Hungarian speaking immigrants in the U.S.A. to confirm the strong negative correlation between the age of arrival and performance on a grammaticality judgment test but also assumed some overlap in range between child and adult acquirers. Participants were also measured on aptitude to find out if it actually correlates with the achievement of high-scoring adult acquirers. A significant correlation between achievement, age of arrival and high verbal aptitude was found among those adults who scored along with child acquirers.

DeKeyser concludes that there really is a critical and not just a sensitive or optimal, period for language acquisition, provided, that the CPH is understood narrowly enough, that is applying only to implicit learning of abstract structures (518). Since several authors (Hymes; Canale and Swain; Canale; Celce-Murcia et al.; Byram et al.) approach sociocultural competence as an ability to use language in context, the poor acquisition of abstract linguistic structures may as well be one explanation for weak sociocultural skills. Such skills refer to the ability to apply specialized registers of language and negotiate one's relationship to the world, thus they are segments of acculturation. I argued in the section on language and identity that interactions are a prime means of constructing identity, and having only weak morphosyntactic and sociocultural skills would hinder the unobstructed development of ethno-cultural identity, too.

This relationship also occurs in a research Marianne Nikolov designed to defy the strong version of the CPH in the case of successful adult learners. The results have proved that the strong version of the CPH cannot be maintained (Nikolov 122). Moreover, one of the findings is of particular importance from the aspect of the acquisition of sociocultural skills. The study has revealed that the strategies for identifying native speakers tend to vary

according to age and background, however, most often judges listened for meaning rather than for linguistic features. One of the speakers, for example, talked about “meeting a Hungarian of ’56 (*ötvenhatos magyar*) in a train” and adult judges thought a non-native speaker of Hungarian would not use this expression (Nikolov 120). The use of an ethnonym, that is so intimate for the Hungarians whether in Hungary or in émigré circles signifies the level of sociocultural skills achieved by the learner.

The second theme I will introduce from the wide canon of research related to language and ethno-cultural identity revolves around code-switching that is the alternative use of two or more languages in the same conversation (Milroy and Muysken 7). Conversational code-switching is a category “defined as the juxtaposition within the same speech exchange of passages of speech belonging to different grammatical systems or subsystems” (Gumperz 59). The phenomenon accompanies the linguistic acculturation of migrant communities as well as serves the purposes of ethno-cultural identification in the case of ethnic individuals. The contemporary setting of bilingualism studies has two paramount focal points: (1) migration and its linguistic consequences, and (2) language revival (Milroy and Muysken 1). Migrant communities vary widely in their attitudes to the host language versus mother tongue dilemma. Characteristically, bilingualism in migrant communities spans three generations starting from the monolingual community language-speaker generation to the target language speaking third generation members (Milroy and Muysken 2). However, in the North American context a tendency toward language revival and the prestige recently attributed to being American through being ethnic offers numerous exceptions.

Several of my conversational partners have talked about how they find it important from their own personal perspective to be able to use Hungarian in certain social and cultural contexts and such change of languages did occur during our talks even if the person did not speak Hungarian fluently. This fact coincides with Cummins’ predisposition that bilingual speakers typically use each of their languages in different contexts and not in all (qtd. in Milroy and Muysken 3). A cluster of such social contexts and situations is the domain, which is typically constrained by a common set of behavioral rules to account for patterns of language choice in bilingual communities (Fishman qtd. in Milroy and Muysken 5). Robert B. Le Page and Andrée Tabouret-Keller see particular language choices as responses to other participants in the interaction as well as symbols of the kind of identity which a speaker at any given time wishes to communicate (26-58). Thus, each utterance a speaker makes and the language choice it embodies is an “act of identity” that places the individual in the multilingual and multicultural community (Tabouret-Keller 27). Speakers of two languages

constantly juxtapose distinctive cultural forms and standards. They are aware of the fact that the way they behave is one of a set of behavioral modes and their “style of communication affects the possible interpretations of what a speaker intends to communicate” (Gumperz 65). Thus, bilingual speakers choose one language or the other to express aspects of a social identity under permanent construction “as they move through a multidimensional sociolinguistic space, and the metalinguistic concept of a single language” (Milroy and Muysken 7).

Under the term code-switching (CS) or code-alternation different types of bilingual behavior are subsumed. Intra-sentential switching refers to the use of different languages within the sentence, mostly at syntactic boundaries, whereas inter-sentential switches occur between the sentences. Anna Giacalone Ramat lists yet another level of code-switching, “word-internal CS” between a base and a bound morpheme, however, she notes that “this type of language contact phenomena is not easy to distinguish” (55). In many cases, the terms tag-switching, emblematic switching or extra-sentential switching refer to the language shift between an utterance and the tag or interjection attached to it (Milroy and Muysken 8). Speakers varying their language choice within an agreed framework of social and cultural values and symbols apply a discourse strategy to negotiate additional contents, such as frames of identity. John J. Gumperz argues that code-switching has five major conversational functions: (1) it signifies quotations or reported speech, (2) it acknowledges a change in the addressee, (3) it marks an interjection or a sentence filler, (4) it reiterates the main message part, and 5) it specifies information told in the message (75-84). Lesley Milroy and Li Wei identify repetition, emphasis, clarification, confirmation, word-finding, and self-editing as the major functions of code-switching (151). Thus, code-switching is an element in a socially agreed matrix of contextualization cues and conventions that speakers use to signify the social and situational context of the dialogue to the addressees (Gumperz 132-52).

Louise Dabène and Danièle Moore studied code-switching in institutional and community settings and state that language serves as an “emotional cement” in the recognition of one’s own group and the determination of in- and out-group boundaries (23). Their work is based on data collected in the Grenoble area in France among Iberian and Algerian communities. Speech samples were recorded in residential complexes inhabited by the two ethnic groups. Regarding social networks and in-group communication, the authors conclude that group membership is not a static position, as it can develop and change over time and according to situations (Dabène and Moore 23). Identification with the language of a community plays a key role in strengthening group cohesion and stabilizing the community.

Language becomes once again a “supreme symbol system” that stands for its speakers and distinguishes between them and others (Fishman 217). In order to affirm differentiation one needs to display identity (Dabène and Moore 23). Language is a strong integrative medium and embraces the emblemacy of group membership claims together with religion and race. With its naming and referential capacity, language is invested with symbolic boundary roles. Language choice defines attachment to ascribed group values and divides between those who speak the language and those who do not (Dabène and Moore 24). In this interpretation, language plays a fundamental role in constructing ethno-cultural identity.

Language choice also plays out in creating labels or ethnonyms for the particular group in all available languages. In a project on Hungarian-American bilingualism Miklós Kontra conducted approximately 50 hours of interviews in South Bend, IN, and surveyed the ethnonyms that the community used regarding themselves as well as other ethno-cultural groups. It is assumed that being familiar with distinctive ethnonyms creates strong ties in identification with the ethnic groups. Kontra found five different ethnonyms used to denote the Hungarian-Americans in the South Bend area, which are “őregamerikások—old tiers,” “vadmagyarok—debased Hungarians,” “dipik—displaced persons,” “szabadságharcosok—freedom fighters,” and “összmagyarság—all Hungarians, or the Magyar people” (154-60). These names signify members of the group who are exactly familiar with their position relative to other ethnic groups and Americans.

In this section, I have looked at perspectives of field investigation that illustrate theoretical points relevant to the narrative construction of ethno-cultural identity. The research that I have reviewed relates to the focus of the dissertation in its methodology, sample or else bring up issues that illuminate certain aspects of framing ethno-cultural identity. In the next chapter, I will provide detailed information about the context and method of eliciting narratives from second-generation Hungarian-Americans and outline the methods of working with the data.

# Chapter Three

## Background and qualitative research design on ethnic narratives

The most interesting claims people make are those they make about themselves. (Kluckhohn qtd. in Basso 95)

In the preceding two chapters, I have concluded that ethno-cultural identity is a concept that carries social and cultural information that individuals learn and thus, negotiate relative to other people and by means of using one or several languages depending on the content they want to display. I have also argued that narrative is a widely applicable resource for both the individual to put forth aspects of his or her identity and for the researcher to learn about these issues. In this chapter, first I will describe the background of an ethnographic study on negotiating ethno-cultural identities that I have conducted among second-generation Hungarian-Americans.

The study is based on twenty-eight interviews with ten people; the data collection follows the ethnographic traditions of qualitative interviewing. These interviews reveal the everyday stories of everyday people that together with literary texts are the two “most apparent forms of narrative thinking” (László, *Szerep* 43). First, I will give a social historical outline of Hungarian immigration into the United States of America, which helps contextualize the social and cultural background the interviewees often draw upon. Second, I will introduce the research design in terms of the tradition and technique of qualitative or ethnographic interviewing, the participants, and the circumstances under which I talked to these people and how I coded the interviews to gain information regarding the narrative construction of ethno-cultural identity.

### 3.1 BACKGROUND TO STUDY

Angela Brittingham and G. Patricia de la Cruz claim that establishing the ancestry of an individual is hard because the concept itself is too broad and it means different things to different people (1). Therefore, ancestry can be described as the place where the ancestors are from, where the persons or their parents originated, or simply how they consider themselves

ethnically. The Census Bureau of the United States of America defines ancestry “as a person’s ethnic origin, heritage, descent, or ‘roots’, which may reflect their place of birth, place of birth of parents or ancestors and ethnic identities that have evolved within the United States” (Brittingham and de la Cruz 1). According to the report on the data collected by Census 2000, approximately 80 percent of respondents specified at least one ancestry of which 1,398,702 persons indicated their ancestry as Hungarian (Brittingham and de la Cruz 4). Apart from current census data, in the next two sections I will not present a history of Hungarian emigration in terms of numbers and percentages but use historical and sociological sources to refer to major trends as well as issues and questions that occur also in the narratives that I collected from Hungarian-Americans.

### **3.1.1 A brief history of Hungarian-American immigration and settlement**

Hungarian immigration to the United States has a long history. Although numerically the bulk of Hungarian immigrants to the U.S. arrived between 1871 and 1913, several sources note that Hungarians had traveled to the New World almost since the very moment of its discovery (Benkart 464; Gracza and Gracza 8-12; Weinstock 41). A Hungarian allegedly landed in North America with Leif Ericson, another accompanied Sir Humphrey Gilbert in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and a handful of Hungarians volunteered to fight with the Americans in the Revolution. Most of the volunteers served in the cavalry, and a Hungarian colonel in George Washington’s army was Mihály Kováts de Fabricy who eventually died in the Battle of Charleston in 1779 (Benkart 464; Gracza and Gracza 11-13). In the wake of the American Revolution Hungarian travelers, merchants, naturalists and explorers went to the United States. Agoston Haraszthy was one of these travelers, who eventually introduced the cultivation of Hungarian Tokay grapes in California (Benkart 464; Széplaki 4). Such a well-articulated Hungarian presence in early American history builds toward a strong sense of history in Hungarian-American ethno-cultural identity, which several of my informants emphasized during the interviews.

The first substantial group immigrated and settled in the United States in the wake of Hungary’s abortive 1848-49 revolution and war for independence. Mostly former officers and landowners constituted the so-called Kossuth-emigration. In 1850, László Újházy together with a small contingent of mostly middle- or upper-class Hungarians established a small permanent community under the name of New Buda in the hills of Southern Iowa. Through a land grant by the U.S. Congress they acquired thousands of acres of land (Széplaki 5-6). In

1861 approximately 800 Hungarians joined the Union Army, many of them were veterans of the 1848/49 war (Benkart 465). Most of them also gained lands by the Homestead Act. Large-scale immigration, however, started in 1880 when due to agricultural difficulties an increasing number of farmers started to seek economic betterment in North America. A large proportion of these people arrived for about five years to make enough money that helps prosper back in Hungary (Benkart 466). This first wave of immigration and sojourning, that is return migration, lasted until WW I broke out in 1914.

Hungarian-Americans arrived during the great expansion of bituminous coal mining and the steel industry, so most of them found work in western Pennsylvania, eastern Ohio, West Virginia, Northern Illinois and Indiana. Some cities and towns, such as New York, Cleveland, Pittsburgh, Chicago, Bridgeport CN, New Brunswick, South Bend IN, developed large Hungarian-American colonies (Benkart 466). These people, however, were in constant motion, due to the unsteady nature of work, thus, establishing ethnic enclaves and Hungarian-American community life took place slowly and gradually. Hungarians in America, whether staying temporarily or with the intention to relocate permanently, established self-help societies and associations such as sick-assisting and burial societies, churches and schools to preserve the language, religion and culture (Fejős, *A chicagoi* 85). The most important and most widely appreciated feature of Hungarian-American culture has been music (Benkart 468; Fejős, *A chicagoi* 110-30). Benkart holds, that “in the quest for fortune, Hungarians may have sacrificed their native language, to improve their children’s chances for success, but they did not renounce their musical heritage” (468). Despite the first-generation’s efforts to retain its Hungarianness, the second-generation of this wave, grew up in an era of strong, at times even extreme nativist voices within American society that pressured immigrant colonies to assimilate (Fejős, *A chicagoi* 175-80).

The immigration act of 1924 thoroughly limited the entry of southern and eastern Europeans, among them Hungarians (Benkart 466). The second wave of immigration from Hungary lasted from 1925 to 1948. In this period a large number of middle-class business and professional people as well as post World War II displaced persons (DP) or refugees gained admission (Gracza and Gracza 39-41; Széplaki 8-9). The age of professional immigration meant that the majority of Hungarian immigrants were intellectuals, often of Jewish origin (Gracza and Gracza 43). They established community institutions, insurance associations and gave a boost to the struggling Hungarian-American press (Benkart 467). These associations often turned English speaking by the time children of immigrants joined them.

The third wave of immigrants from Hungary to the United States arrived in the wake of the 1956 revolution. Weinstock claims that the Hungarians admitted to the United States at that time constituted a very different group of immigrants from their predecessors (41). The Hungarian-American community also made efforts to raise funds for the relief of these people, who were often treated as heroes and considered “freedom fighters” (Weinstock 41). They generated wide support and ultimately between 35,000 and 40,000 Hungarians ended up in the U.S.A. (Benkart 466; Weinstock 41). Upon their arrival, all of these people were flown to Camp Kilmer, New Jersey, a former United States Army base, where a reception center and temporary housing facilities had been established for them (Weinstock 42). Many of these people received help from the earlier immigrants and their progeny, so at first they settled down in the industrial towns the sojourners had favored. However, due to their urban professional background or aspirations in most cases, about 3,000 refugees became college students and they soon learned English and exchanged unskilled jobs for better (Benkart 466; Gracza and Gracza 48-50).

These escapees were far younger than the postwar refugees and they did not merge with the previous émigrés, while both sets of refugees stood apart from the older Hungarian-American community (Benkart 471). They avoided joining ethnic communities earlier Hungarian immigrants had established mainly because that would have meant a decline in social status (Weinstock 43). Freedom fighters soon learned English but more often than not their children retained a native command of the “Magyar tongue” which in Benkart’s understanding may have been the source of awkwardness when they met second- and third generation Hungarian-Americans (471). When in 1951, refugees organized the Hungarian Scout Association in Exile, mostly the children of new arrivals joined (Benkart 471). Hungarian Scouting in the United States became one of the most important sources of learning and retaining Hungarian identity (Koncz 4). As relations between the Western powers and the Communist countries improved in the 1970s, political issues began to draw the three groups more closely together but culturally and socially they continued to have little in common, which is a recurring phenomenon in the narratives at several points.

### **3.1.2 Hungarian-Americans: lives and concerns today**

Today Hungarian-Americans live across the United States, with about 80 percent of them residing in nine northeastern states—Ohio, New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, Connecticut, Wisconsin—and in Florida, California, and Texas (Várdy and Szendrey 16). Despite widely held views (Benkart; Gracza and Gracza; Széplaki; Várdy;



Weinstock), Fejős argues that it is hard to interpret census data (Brittingham and de la Cruz 4) in a way that it becomes possible to speak of Hungarian-Americans (amerikai magyarság) as a collectivity, mainly because the term “represents an extension of the old country” (*Variants* 368-69). The self-definition of the descendants of Hungarian immigrants born in the United States differs from this idea. Above all, these generations are participants in American social and cultural life and agents in American history with the possibility that “they may consciously distinguish themselves on occasions from the society as a whole or any of its components” (Fejős, *Variants* 369). Thus, Hungarian-Americans consider themselves a diaspora, rather than an ethnic minority (Koncz 2).

Stephen Béla Várdy and Thomas Szendrey claim that cultural survival and relationship to Hungary are prominent issues for some Hungarian-Americans (6). Nevertheless, the bulk of the third-, fourth-, and fifth-generation descendants of the economic immigrants from the time of the first and second tidal waves of immigration have already assimilated into American society. The majority of them did not retain their ability to speak Hungarian and no longer have an identity of themselves as Hungarians. The majority of these people have “only trivial knowledge of modern Hungary or Hungarian traditions” (Várdy and Szendrey 6).

The collapse of communism, however, triggered some genuine interest in Hungary and a significant number of second- and third-generation, sometimes even fourth-generation descendants have found their way back to the land of their ancestors (Várdy and Szendrey 6). Their entrepreneurial spirit could be put to use much more easily than any time earlier not only because of political changes but also because some major American or Western European corporations established branches in Hungary and provided employment opportunities similar to their home conditions (Várdy and Szendrey 7). This return is sometimes temporary, sometimes permanent; nevertheless, in either form it creates a set of new ties. The experience, however, may have a negative overtone mainly due to the radical transformation Hungarian society went through during the four decades of communist rule (Várdy and Szendrey 7). The perspective and the experience may have a lasting impact on the construction of Hungarian-American ethno-cultural identity.

Despite the claims of the current Hungarian political discourse, a large proportion of Hungarian-Americans do not have the goal of staying or becoming Hungarian in terms of nationality at any time in the history of immigration plainly, because these people did not need official forms of Hungarian nationality (Koncz 3; Várdy and Szendrey 8). Koncz posits that there are two important prerequisites of how to construct Hungarian-American ethno-

cultural identity successfully (8). First, Hungarian-American communities are based on the ability at least to speak Hungarian. There are many Americans, however, who would gladly join these professional and non-professional organizations in case they offered a solution to reconcile the issue and bridge the language gap (Koncz 8). Second, only those mostly individual initiatives may help survive Hungarian-American ethno-cultural identity as a relevant choice in American society that originate from within the Hungarian-American diaspora (Koncz 8). Eliciting narratives from Hungarian-Americans is one possible way of learning about how these people understand such initiatives and frame their ethno-cultural identification based on them.

### **3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN**

This study was designed along the traditions of qualitative ethnographic research (Becker; Rubin and Rubin; Spradley) to elicit life histories within the wider scheme of negotiating cultural identities. I examine the ways how Hungarian-Americans construct their ethno-cultural identities, feel and talk about making their choices, while arguing for or against particular options. Participants describe the cultural needs and responses that social situations generate and they incorporate these into the everyday discourse regarding their ethno-cultural identity. Due to its qualitative nature, the study had no extensive a priori hypothesis regarding such concepts as acculturation or ethno-cultural identification but it had three distinctive goals. First, to explore the content of being Hungarian-American, as well as to find out more about the ways how Hungarian-Americans express and maintain this dual identity or else their potential reasons to refuse it. Second, I aimed to learn more about aspects of the acculturation process through which the individual or the group gained their identities especially via ascribing values to the group and what these values are. Third, I wanted to elicit data on the narrative construction of ethno-cultural identification assuming that the narratives express not only the content of ethno-cultural identity but also its structure.

#### **3.2.1 Qualitative interviewing**

The bulk of current research in the fields of Sociology, Anthropology, Ethnography is qualitative, and the paradigm takes an increasing space also in Psychology, Sociolinguistics and Applied Linguistics (Ehmann 55; Denzin and Lincoln 1-30; Rubin and Rubin 1). Qualitative research uses a multitude of methods, and approaches its subject in an

interpretative and naturalistic way (Ehmann 55). Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln hold that qualitative ethnographic social research entails an “attitude of detachment toward society” that allows the researcher to observe the conduct of self and others in their natural environment (3). It is the collection and studied use of empirical data in the forms of case study, personal experience, introspection, life-history, interview, observational, historical interaction-based and visual texts to describe casual and problematic events and phenomena in the lives of individuals (Ehmann 55-56; Denzin and Lincoln 1-30).

Qualitative interviewing is a technique in ethnographic fieldwork that helps find out the way others feel and think about their worlds (Fontana and Frey 646-47; Rubin and Rubin 1; Spradley 26). Denzin and Lincoln even posit that “we live in an interview society, in a society whose members seem to believe that interviews generate useful information about lived experiences and its meanings” (633). Through this technique, it is possible to open up such experiences and reconstruct events that only the narrator participated in. An interpretation then shows that a narrator steps beyond the mere description of events, he or she is also construing them (Ochberg 100). The stories that people tell about themselves are not merely descriptions but conscious efforts at persuasion that narrators make. Storytellers try to convince others and themselves to take a particular view of their lives to see them as coherent, dedicated, triumphant—or perhaps unfairly constrained. Often these efforts at narrative persuasion matter because of the contrast they draw between a preferred account and a less palatable alternative: a latent subtext, which is never described explicitly but which is always threatening to emerge (Ochberg 97-98).

The narratives then help explain how and why certain aspects of culture evolve and how they are maintained (Rubin and Rubin 2). Qualitative interviews about culture inquire about shared understandings, taken-for-granted rules of behavior, standards of value and mutual expectations. A fundamental goal is to find out what people have learned through experience and how they are able to pass it on to the next generation. Qualitative interviewing is more than a set of skills that help elicit data; it is also a philosophy. One element of this philosophy is that encouraging people to describe their worlds in their own terms results in mutual understanding. Furthermore, there is a live relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee that imposes obligations on both sides (Rubin and Rubin 2; Ochberg 97).

Herbert J. Rubin and Irene S. Rubin identify four major characteristic features of qualitative interviews. First, interviews are conversations, so questions and answers follow each other as people take turns talking. Researchers listen to each answer and determine the next question based on what has been said. It is crucial to hear the meanings, interpretations,

and understandings that give shape to the worlds of the interviewees (Rubin and Rubin 7-8). Second, the genre of qualitative interview implies discovering the world of the interviewee and acquiring the special vocabulary and the taken-for-granted ways of thinking of the concept (Rubin and Rubin 8-10). Third, interviewees are treated as partners rather than as objects of research. Conversational partners may thus even guide among themes they choose because they feel competent about (Rubin and Rubin 10-12). Fourth, in qualitative interviewing the researcher is not distant, neutral or emotionally uninvolved. The researcher's personality, moods, interests, experiences and biases may even affect the interview (Rubin and Rubin 12-14). The researcher and the interviewee build together a relationship that is likely to be involving. Such rapport helps encourage conversational competence and avoid making the interviewee nervous or threatened.

The qualitative interview differs from narrative interview in that the latter invites the telling of a life story only with one single question in which the interviewer asks the informant to tell his or her life. In the narrative interview the researcher does not ask for details, or additional information but lets the person tell the story and the emphasis is on the structure as story rather than a curriculum vitae (László, *A történetek*, 132-33; Ehmann 110). The structure of qualitative interview develops because of taking turns in terms of questions and answers. This frame allows flexibility to change questions while maintaining the overall structure. Furthermore, László reflects on the debate whether the result of qualitative or narrative interview is a narrative or only a "fake narrative" (*A történetek*, 80; *Társas*, 81-82). A real narrative differs from a fake narrative in the role of the narrator. In a real narrative the story-teller creates the story structure, whereas in a fake narrative the researcher guides the conversational partner to weave the story frame according to particular aspects of interest of the study. László quotes and accepts the position of Jovchelovich who defines the interview whether qualitative or narrative as a narrative genre (*A történetek* 80; *Társas* 82).

The patterns of the interview are built on three types of questions. Main questions are open ones that leave the spectrum of answers widely open to elicit distinctive opinions and experiences that the research can develop. Probes focus narrowly on sufficient detail, depth, and clarity to complete or clarify the response and request further examples as well as evidence. Follow-up questions pursue the implications of particular answers to main questions. They are meant to examine central themes or events or ask for elaboration about basic ideas and concepts in order. Follow-up questions help gain the depth that is the hallmark of qualitative interviews (Rubin and Rubin 122-44). The information elicited can appear on six levels of the ethnographic writing. These levels are: (1) universal statements, (2) cross-

cultural descriptive statements, (3) general statements about a society or cultural group, (4) general statements about a specific cultural scene, (5) specific statements about a cultural domain, and (6) specific incident statements (Spradley 206-12).

This system serves as a primary tool for the content analysis and coding of the data in order to learn the rules, norms, values and understandings, in short the culture, that guide the choices that conversational partners make (Rubin and Rubin 168-72). This culture defines who is a member of it and who is not, because it establishes boundaries to divide between those who should and those who should not be taught the rules (Rubin and Rubin 171). “To learn about a particular segment of culture an interviewer does not necessarily need to become an insider but must be allowed to cross the boundary and become accepted as one who can be taught” (Rubin and Rubin 171). Follow-up questions mostly lead into the area of such taken-for-granted aspects of the particular segment of culture. When attending to what informants take for granted, e.g., outcomes or behaviors, “cultural icons” (Rubin and Rubin 236-37) or symbols may emerge that unfold attached beliefs. Thus, iconic statements personalize the story and give the bulk of the narrative in terms of language and specific vocabulary as well as cultural content.

As qualitative interviewing involves both participants and the researcher more deeply than survey studies, the issue of name use is also at stake. It is of utmost importance to avoid any harmful consequences that may occur in the lives of conversational partners due to their participation in the study. Using real names makes the study and the writing more intimate and emphasizes the real-life aspect of the work (Brettel 5). Applying pseudonyms, however, may be important for those who may feel the threat of potential discrimination due to what they identify with or talk about. In the present research I asked each participant to fill out a form of informant consent (Appendix A) in which they indicated if they preferred the use of their real names or pseudonyms.

### **3.2.2 Participants**

In the present study, I interviewed ten adult persons. Eight of them are second-generation Hungarian-Americans according to their self-identification, one person is third generation and one interviewee said he did not know for sure whether his father was born in Hungary or in the United States. Their backgrounds and life circumstances present a very wide spectrum of Hungarian-American existence.

As a graduate student at the University of Iowa on a Fulbright-Soros grant, I selected three conversational partners: Christopher Kovach, Peter Hevesi, and Kathryn Szigetvari from the local phonebook of Iowa City, IA. This way of reaching interviewees, however, does restrict the cohort of potential informants to persons whose link to Hungarian culture is paternal. It excludes people whose ancestors decided to change their names not wanting to be identified with Hungarian culture or those with maternal links to Hungarian culture. Because of the aforementioned reasons, the Hungarian link of these three interviewees is their fathers and Kathryn's maternal grandmother was also Hungarian. At the time of the interview they were all affiliated with the University of Iowa: Kathryn studied nursing, Christopher was a medical student and they both agreed to being referred to by their real names. Peter was a high-ranking professional employed by the university who required that this pseudo-name be used throughout the study.

Christopher is from Topeka, Kansas where his parents live to this day. His father is a retired scientist in biopsychology who was born in Hungary and emigrated in the wake of the 1956 revolution. His mother is a clinical psychologist, a second-generation German immigrant. The family frequently, at least biannually visits their relatives in Hungary and Germany. Christopher has spent a year in Germany and two of his Hungarian cousins stayed with his family for a year.

Kathryn is from Chicago, Illinois. Her father is a lawyer who was born in rural Hungary and her mother is a realtor whose mother was also Hungarian. Kathryn's father arrived in the US as a child with his mother, so the paternal grandmother also lived with the family for a while. The family's only living relative in Hungary, however, is her paternal grandfather who does not speak English.

Born in a small oil-mining town in the state of Michigan, Peter Hevesi now lives in Iowa City, Iowa. He did not know whether his father had been born in Hungary or in the United States of America; however, he underpinned how strongly his father wanted that he and his siblings assimilate. Admittedly, he has no connections with relatives in Hungary, yet has a considerable knowledge regarding the geography and economy of the country. Altogether eight interviews were made with Kathryn, Christopher and Peter in March and April 2001.

The project was continued in 2005. I found Robert Fütő's (Rob) article in a flyer published by the Reformed Church and contacted him with the help of some church members who knew him. He is a Presbyterian minister who came to do missionary work in the Hungarian Reformed Church. His father left Hungary because he fought in the 1956

revolution. Rob's mother was born into an ethnic German family in a Hungarian village in Transylvania. She speaks both German and Hungarian. The family lived in Saint Louis and set up a mostly Hungarian household with English and Hungarian as dominant languages. Rob is married to a Hungarian woman and currently they live in Budapest. I interviewed Rob in June and September 2005.

One of Robert Fűtő's acquaintances, József Temesvári also agreed to talk about his life and experiences as a Hungarian-American. Józsi was born in Fort Knox, KN, and the family later moved to a suburb of Cleveland, Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio where he grew up speaking only Hungarian until the age of six. In 1999, he and his wife moved to Austria as part of a mission organization called Taking Christ to Millions or Teaching Christ to Missionaries (TCM) and in 2002 they came to Hungary. The couple lives in Érdliget and plans to settle down in Hungary. The interviews were completed in November and December 2005.

Five other informants in the study were volunteers, all of them staying in Budapest for some shorter or longer period. I contacted them with the help of Endre Szentkirályi whom I met at the fourth biennial conference of the Hungarian Association of American Studies (HAAS) in Budapest in November 2004. Endre is from Cleveland, Ohio where he works as a high-school teacher of German. Both his father and mother were born in Hungary and had to leave the country after the 1956 revolution. They had a great uncle living in the U.S. who helped the newly wed couple to settle down. Endre spent the 2004/2005 academic year in Budapest, teaching at Pázmány Péter Catholic University and working as the principal of Superkids, American Preschool and Kindergarten in Budapest.

Eszter Pigniczky (Eszti) is Endre's wife who spent the same year with her husband and four children in Budapest. Eszti's father was from Szeged and left Hungary in 1956. He settled down in Philadelphia and never came back to Hungary. Now he is buried in Szeged. Eszti's mother is in California. She was born in Mosonmagyaróvár, daughter of a high-school teacher who lost his job following the revolution in 1956. Before they went to the U.S.A., the family stayed in Switzerland for four years and then moved to Cincinnati, Ohio. Currently, Eszti and Endre live in Cleveland.

Mathias Tabor (Matyi) studied at Balassi Bálint Intézet in Budapest in 2004/2005. He lives in Cleveland, Ohio. His paternal grandparents emigrated from Hungary after World War II, and the grandmother went to the USA from Prussia. Matyi said his maternal grandparents left Hungary "after the abortive revolution in 1956." Upon completion of the year-long

program at Balassi Institute Matyi was trying to figure out what to do next with the kinds of interest he admits in Hungarian folk culture and scouting.

Szentkirályi Levente uses his name in the Hungarian way. He is the first cousin of Endre Szentkirályi, yet he did not grow up in the Cleveland area. In Bowling Green, Ohio they were, as he puts it, a “bit secluded from the very large Hungarian population Cleveland has.” His father was a very talented composer and pianist who died two years ago. His mother held several jobs, currently she works as a cashier in a small photo studio. Levente studies at Bowling Green State University and at the time of the interviews he spent a semester at Central European University in Budapest studying philosophy and environmental sciences. I conducted the interviews with Endre, Eszti, Matyi and Levente in May and June 2005.

Ildikó Varga grew up bilingual in suburban New Brunswick, NJ, in a fully Hungarian household. Both her mother and father emigrated from Hungary in their childhood years with Ildikó’s grandparents following the 1956 revolution. Her mother is a real estate agent and her father is a chemical engineer. Ildikó has been living in Budapest for five years. After she completed a master’s degree in Business Administration, she started working which she intends to continue until she is able to make a living without struggle. We met and talked in December 2005.

### **3.2.3, Data collection: talking to people**

Due to the overall aim of the study to find recurring patterns in the data related to negotiating cultural identities in narratives, the structure of the interviews complies with the ethnographic conventions of qualitative interviewing. I met and talked with Kathryn and Christopher three times in the Main Library of the University of Iowa, and interviewed Peter in his office in the University Services Building of the University of Iowa, however, only on two occasions because of his tight work schedule. I met Endre in a coffee shop first and the two subsequent interviews were conducted at his workplace, Superkids American Preschool and Kindergarten in Budapest. Eszter invited me to their home in Budapest. I met and talked with Matyi, Levente, Ildikó and Józsi at coffee shops in Budapest and Rob invited me to his office at the Nagyváradi tér Református Gyülekezet.

I tape-recorded all interviews and transcribed them word by word in order to keep all data that might be important during the interpretation (Appendix C). Before the actual interviewing started, participants signed a statement of informant consent (Appendix A) to avoid any violation of personal freedom or rights and to clarify the overall goals and



conditions of the data collection procedures. All ten participants expressed interest and curiosity in the project and it was easy to establish rapport with them. Our conversations ranged in length from 50 minutes to 85 minutes, generally the second and third ones lasting longer. The primary language of the interviews was English; however, I told informants that they should choose the language in which they felt more confident.

The first interviews began with an informal chat meant to point in the direction of the topic (Rubin and Rubin 129) including a description of participants' family background, studies and jobs. Although there were no pre-set questions that I intended to ask, several main questions served the purpose of directing the discussions as well as providing unity to the interview. As Rubin and Rubin argue, "the wording of a main question should be open enough to encourage interviewees to express their own opinions and experiences, but narrow enough to keep interviewees from wandering too fast from the subject at hand" (146). Main questions in this study focused on three issues: (1) the interviewee's experiences as a Hungarian-American, (2) relationship with Hungary and Hungarians in the family, and (3) the role of choices in identity formation through ethnicity. Since the interviews were cultural rather than topical, these questions also served as conversational devices to encourage a description of what is important in the cultural arenas of the conversational partners (Rubin and Rubin 146). Two other modes of inquiry, probes and follow-up questions were used to elicit additional or more profound and detailed information; however, the nature and content of these depended on the conversational partner's response to the initial questions. These types of questions also helped return to the data, clarify and expand them, thus also provided the means for initial validation.

Despite all efforts to make qualitative ethnographic data gathering objective and reliable, it often remains resilient, as according to Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, it presents the problem of cultural fragments and textual integration. "When one is an eyewitness to events, there is the option of describing what one has seen and experienced. But when working only with the report of someone else who saw and experienced events, the account has been in a sense preauthored" (127). Bridging the gap between interviewee and author by means of shared authorship may help tackle this problem. If conversational partners are also responsible for the report, they read it, comment on it while the writing is still in progress, and their cooperation builds toward a better contextualization of events and circumstances in the account. Kathryn and Christopher did read and comment on the report in its final draft and their suggestions and clarifications hopefully made the outcome more authentic and less

fragmented as well as helped balance the rhetoric of authorship between the person speaking and the researcher.

Control for the generalizability of the results is yet another way to overcome the problem of cultural fragments and textual integration. Assumptions based on interview data may outline the framework of an experimental research study (Seliger and Shohamy 135-50), which in this case may include a conceptualization of sustainable ethnicity and the discourse features of negotiating cultural identities.

### **3.2.4 Narrative analysis: hearing and coding data**

The twenty-eight interviews yielded 152, 347 words of raw data. Because of the nature of the study, no statistical methods could be used; the interviews were coded according to the traditions of qualitative ethnographic research. Rubin and Rubin define coding as the “process of grouping interviewee’s responses into categories that bring together the similar ideas, concepts, or themes one has discovered, or steps or stages in a process” (238). During the data analysis phase several stages and types of coding occurred. The process started before the end of the interviewing mainly because I conducted more than one interview with each participant. Thus, further interviews could in part be based on the preliminary analyses of the first ones. The technique helped redesign main questions and make them more focused on central themes. The final analysis categorizes all the material that speaks to one theme or concept. At this stage each particular idea or concept mentioned or explained in the interviews were marked off and indicated in a code, which also described the subject of each paragraph. Both folk and analytic terms were used in coding, and the aim was to invite interviewees to supply as many categories as possible. Appendix B contains a few paragraphs that exemplify coding in this study. In the interpretation of the data, I relied mainly on full stories that informants told and only rarely quote chunks of narratives or short evaluative comments.

Following De Fina’s and McAdams (*Coding* 3) typology of narratives, I categorized the stories according to their function and content. As far as their function is concerned narratives can be (1) argumentative narratives, (2) orientation narratives, (3) chronicles, (4) prototypical narratives, and (5) causal narratives. According to their content narratives fall in three major groups, which are (1) personal experience stories, (2) settlement stories, and (3) conflict stories. Narratives are argumentative when narrators tell them to support open generalizations about particular qualities and behaviors and they make a point that persuades rather than entertains. In the case of stories about ethnic, racial or national groups they may

have the function to orient the listener towards a conclusion about the particularities of the groups and “therefore they are presented as support for a claim or claims about that group” (De Fina 151). Orientation narratives make a point to communicate some specific meaning and they invoke and present events, states and conditions in which the narrator is not the protagonist yet the circumstances are important from his or her self-definition. De Fina distinguishes chronicles from stories in that “they usually involve a series of temporally and spatially ordered events” (98). A minimal narrative may be based on just two temporally sequenced events, which is not possible for a chronicle. Stories have a point; chronicles do not need to have one specific point. The goal of stories is to present the “narrator’s evaluation of the meaning of certain actions and events” whereas “chronicles are descriptive in nature since their objective is to give an account of how a certain state of affairs was brought about” (De Fina 98). Prototypical narratives recount past events, “revolve around unexpected episodes, ruptures or disturbances of normal states of affairs or social rules, and convey a specific message and interpretation about those events and/or the characters involved in them” (De Fina 14). Their function is to set the pattern for particular events and explain them through looking at those patterns. Causal narratives display events in an order of causation. The prior occurrence of one event or factor is the reason of the second event or factor. In this construction, the second event would not take place if the first one did not “cause” or trigger it (McAdams 3).

Regarding the content of personal experience narratives, the story structure is made up of at least a sequence of two events and has a set temporal order or an “invariant structural unit” (Labov and Waletzky 4). Any change in this order triggers a change in the original semantic interpretation and the “narrator’s treatment of the action in the text as constituting a specific evaluable event” (De Fina 57). Narratives of settlement focus on some general opposition between two identifiable groups rather than more specific distinctions. Stories with content focus on settlement display a “positive valence associated with group belongingness (defined by community in language and/or in country)” (De Fina 209). Conflict narratives construct the self in contrast or opposition to the characterization of others. Neutral terms are absent and the story worlds tend to polarize individual as well as collective experiences (De Fina 189).

Within the techniques of coding and analyzing major categories, I also relied on the narrative psychological method of content analysis that intends to make sense of interviews in narrative psychology (Ehmann; László, *A narratív* 1366-78; László, *A történetek* 134-48). This method of handling narratives relies on the assumption that in creating meaning the

narrative reflects how the narrator organizes his/her relationship to the world and constructs identity (László, *A narratív* 1366). There are eight categories of analysis: (1) functions and roles of characters, (2) uses of spatial and emotional distances, (3) narrator's perspective, (4) uses of time in narratives, (5) narrative evaluation, (6) narrative coherence, (7) meanings of the self, and (8) negation (Ehmann 80-93; László, *A narratív* 1367-74; László, *A történetek* 134-48).

As the focus of the dissertation is to model how ethno-cultural identities are constructed in the language of narratives, I also looked at particular language phenomena that highlight the major concepts in the thematic coding. The expression of agency, including such features as uses of pronouns and switches in pronominal use, the meanings and features of reported speech and the switch from description to reporting dialogues or words of some characters other than the narrator and forms of negation especially vividly express some notable features of the construct of ethno-cultural identity. I did not, however, intend to work on the narratives according to the conventions of discourse analysis such as lexis and grammar, rhetorical formations, genres, cohesion chains and principles of constructing thematic formations (Lemke, *Analyzing* 10), as that would have given the dissertation an entirely different focus and course of thought.

The roles and functions of characters are important because they define the chain of action as well as the development of the self in the narratives. Spatial and emotional distances position the protagonist and co-actors relative to physical or geographical locations as well as interpersonal relationships within the community. The narrator's perspective is a set of language devices that includes descriptions of the events, circumstances under which particular events emerged, other characters or anything that is important and mentioned in the narrative. Time in the narrative means the relationship between the chronologies of chronicled events and real time. Narrative evaluation refers to a set of devices that build a narrative out of a simple set of events. It positions the narrator relative to the events. Narrative coherence is the rational order of events in the inner and outer world that occur in narratives. Self-reference stands for the linguistic expressions of the self, assuming that in narratives the narrator and the protagonist are the same person. Negation in life narratives signifies the use of negative forms to express relation to particular people, events locations, or concrete objects (Ehmann 80-93; László, *A narratív* 1367-74; László, *A történetek* 134-48).

Coding the interviews has brought about the following nine major themes: (1) ethnic roots, (2) senses of history, (3) senses of geography, (4) language choice and code-switching, (5) literature, (6) uses of stereotypes, (7) traditions and customs, (8) community, (9)

uniqueness as a form of self reference and self-awareness. Particular pieces of interview data may have a place naturally in more than one category, so I tried to place them in the one that I felt was more relevant with remarks that it may also be labeled in a different way. Within the thematic coding, I will attempt to interpret the findings as to how they are expressed in language. Due to the flexibility of qualitative data, the interviews can be approached from different perspectives, emphasizing aspects that I have found less important in this study. In the next chapter of the dissertation I will interpret and discuss these themes with the help of the above described content analysis devices to give a detailed interpretation of each category. I will focus on how these initial concepts build the larger categories of liminality, language roles in building ethno-cultural identity and questions of assimilation. Assumedly, the narrative construction of ethno-cultural identity relies on these conceptual frameworks.

## **Chapter Four**

### ***Struggling to remain Hungarian—***

### **narrative reconciliation of ethnic and American**

I consider myself a Hungarian, Szentkirályi Levente, before I consider myself an American, Levente Szentkirályi. And it's not, I mean there's still a lot of things that I'm, I mean I certainly am an American citizen and that, my pride for my Hungarian culture doesn't negate my pride as an American citizen. But that culture is just as prominent as my American heritage. (Szentkirályi, Levente, Appendix C, *Interview 7/3*)

In this chapter, I will analyze and discuss the results of 28 qualitative interviews with ten second and third generation Hungarian-Americans (see Appendix C for transcribed interviews). In the text I will indicate in parentheses the number of the interviewee and the number of the interview in which the particular narrative that I analyze originally occurred. Transcriptions at this stage contain only the plain text without noting features such as intonation patterns, latched utterances, stress, and other non-linguistic actions, as the study's primary goals did not require that. The personal narratives illustrate how culture in a broad sense and the elements and icons of a particular individual's culture come to create the unique world of an individual as the participant and maker of another culture.

The chapter consists of three parts according to the emerging major themes. The first one deals with liminal spheres of existence that is the knowledge and ability to navigate in two distinctive cultures. I will discuss the ways in which liminality as a life experience is approached in the narratives of my conversational partners. The second part focuses on the linguistic representations of ethnicity. The narratives provide data on code-switching and language choice which help negotiate ethno-cultural identities. Literature and ways of reading literature as well as the uses and linguistic forms of stereotypes will be discussed. The third section is about questions of acculturation and the ethnic perspectives that emerge in stories of the self as a part of culture. Here I will reflect on the ways conversational partners interpret the role and meanings of traditions and customs in building communities. Some traditions become cultural icons and these icons build memory sites and a sense of homeland. Self-reference and self-awareness are tied to participating or not participating in the ethnic community and also calibrate the person within mainstream American society. Ethnic prestige

and pride, choices and individuals positioning themselves as ethnic are encapsulated in their stories regarding ethno-cultural identity. This approach to the narratives, however, is based on the assumption that “every discourse event is unique [...] [and] all analysis is reductive” (Lemke, *Analysing* 1-2).

#### **4.1 LIMINAL SPHERE OF EXISTENCE**

Second- or third-generation ethnic Americans are only one or two generations away from the relocation experience. Migration triggers the necessity of leaving behind a space that is encircled with well-known boundaries in a geographical, linguistic, cultural, psychological, and anthropological sense. The new place of living provides borders only in a physical-geographical sense; the rest has to be constructed anew. As I discussed in section 2.1.1, the term liminality in this context refers to borderland existence at the boundaries and margins of legitimate cultural units, which may also be ethnicity. In this situation, the individual is positioned relative to the non-geographical boundaries of his or her previous existence as well as to the borders of the new locale.

The concept in its original use means the middle stage of the so-called rites of passage. Rites of passage are activities associated with the transition from one place or stage of life to another (Kottak 242). Its three phases are separation, margin or liminality, and aggregation. Konrad Phillip Kottak also notes that passage rites may indeed mark any change of place, condition, social position, and age. Thus, liminality supports the self-reflective nature of identity discussed in chapter 1.1.2 in that it is a project that is not fixed. This experience resonates when my informants talk about the migration memories of their parents or grandparents in the narratives. We talked a great deal about how they incorporate and understand their family’s Hungarianness in their daily lives, how the family thinks about and uses history and geography to negotiate their ethno-cultural identity.

##### **4.1.1 *A bear with a string and some honey*—the world of parents and grandparents**

Newcomers to the United States of America bring their old world experiences with them, which may not live long as theories of acculturation suggest, yet they strongly affect ways of socializing children. I have found three main aspects of liminality as it plays out in the world

of ancestors into the world of their descendants, which are (1) language use, (2) hard work and perseverance, and (3) sensing difference.

Peter Hevesi chose this story when I asked him about his family after the introductory part in the first interview. The narrative, which has two parts, focuses on how his father in his very reserved and unspoken way gave a myriad of signs that his children should strive to be part of the norm he labeled as “mainstream America” as opposed to ethnic, which according to him meant “Old World” (Appendix C, *Interview 2/1, 2/2*). Speaking Hungarian in this context refers to a lack of assimilation and Peter’s father used it only to communicate with his mother and relatives, mainly people who tied him to his “Old World” experience.

- 1     **M:** Could you tell me about your family?  
2     **PH:** My father was the Hungarian part of the family. And when his relatives  
3     would come to visit us from South Bend, Indiana, his mother would only speak  
4     Hungarian. When he would speak with his half brother who lived nearby, they  
5     would speak Hungarian. But he never wanted us to be Hungarian. He wanted us  
6     to be as American as we could. You know the name [Hevesi] was, it was more  
7     appropriate to be perceived as Italian, than it was Hungarian. And so uhm we, we  
8     grew up as, as not taking uhm I don’t know pride, I mean we didn’t, I didn’t feel  
9     shame by my heritage, but it was certainly that my father was certainly pushing  
10    us to be more mainstream, rather than ethnic.  
11    **M:** Can you think of any particular event when this was even more articulated?  
12    **PH:** Mhm. I guess, the question why we didn’t learn the language you know,  
13    when a relative would come up and I hear them speaking the language and I’d ask  
14    my father to help me speak some of that, he’d I don’t know what he said, the  
15    impression I got is that you don’t need that, you don’t want that. So, you know  
16    when I would ask him what’s the Hungarian word for that and you know he just  
17    didn’t play that game. (Appendix C, *Interview 2/1*)

In the first part of the orientation narrative Peter mentions several times that these relatives live in the “Old World”; they are fluent in Hungarian, in fact that is the only language they speak well enough (lines 3-5). The protagonist is Peter’s father and the story revolves around how he interacts with his mother and siblings, the Hungarian part of the family, and with his children who are to become as Americans as possible. The two worlds are entirely fenced off there are no crossing options. Speaking Hungarian (lines 3-5) is a prerequisite to being ethnic Hungarian, thus Peter does not identify with this group. It seems even more proper to be considered as Italian. Later he expressed that he thought, “being perceived to be Italian was better than perceived to be Hungarian” (Appendix C, *Interview 2/2*). In American ethnic history Italians composite a larger group and belonging to that group is considered more status enhancing, “appropriate” as he puts it (line 7), for Peter than to remain part of the Hungarian-American community. The conscious choice of not teaching Peter and his siblings the ancestral language is meant to wash away the boundaries between the ethnic groups and



strengthen their positions as mainstream Americans. If they do not speak Hungarian, they can easily be perceived as Italians who do not speak Italian any longer. In the second interview he even modeled the proper American way to pronounce his name rather than in the traditional Hungarian way to be more accepted.

In lines 7-10 there are signs of hesitation and false starts that may indicate some uncertainty as to the decision to reject fully his Hungarianness. The narrative emphasizes that it was Peter's father (lines 9-10) who made the decision once and for all. The narrative continues when I asked for a concrete example when it played out. Though Peter emphasizes that his father was bilingual and spoke accentless English, he also communicates that Hungarian as a second language in the 1950s United States of America was not perceived as advantageous (line 15). For Peter's father the knowledge of Hungarian language besides English marks off liminal existence and incomplete acculturation. Nevertheless, he felt that such borderland existence is not a desirable distinctive life experience but a source of difficulties and a status of powerlessness. Acculturation is voluntary, as part of the family decided to keep their Hungarianness, whereas Peter's father found that only a complete loss of the original ethnic identity might guarantee success in American society.

In this part of the narrative, the orientation continues as to how Peter's father acted upon not fulfilling their initial interests concerning the Hungarian language. In terms of the language used in the story, it is important to note the shift to reported speech (lines 13-15), as Peter aims at reconstructing some parts of past dialogues instead of recounting events in simple descriptive statements. Such presence of the dialogue in the narrative activates two distinctive story frames, the storytelling world or the "reporting context" in which the narrator lives and tells the story, and the story world or the "reported context" in which the words were originally uttered (De Fina 95-96). Due to the double context, De Fina suggests that instead of reported speech the term "constructed dialogue" be used.

The aim of using constructed dialogue in the narrative may be threefold. First, giving his father voice about his firmness in not using Hungarian with his children, Peter highlights the strength and decisiveness of his father, which are crucial features for immigrants to succeed. Presentation of the decision not to speak Hungarian in the form of constructed dialogue evaluates it through the portrayal of the characters' reaction. Second, a dialogue is more dynamic because it assumes the active role of participants. Immigration is a process in which new decisions are to be made at every single move and its action-packed nature is reflected in the dynamics of the dialogue rather than in a chronicle or description of features and events. Third, telling the story in reported speech serves as a device to distance Peter from

his father's decision and eliminate his responsibility for not being able to speak English. In the dialogic form, the narrator may hold and express different points of view or disagreement to position himself or herself.

To approve of his father's decision Peter tells the story of visiting relatives in South Bend, Indiana. The city has had considerable Hungarian population since 1882, and approximately, when Peter's father spent his childhood there in 1930s, it hosted a flourishing enclave of about 10, 000 Hungarians who cultivated strong ties to Hungarian culture (Kontra 154).

1 My father and I would go there, just the two of us on occasion. But it was like a  
2 transition to a different time and culture, because in South Bend they lived at that  
3 time in a primarily Hungarian neighborhood, went to Our Lady of Hungary  
4 Church, which was around the corner. The grandmother of my father's half  
5 sister and her husband shared a house with her son and her daughter and son-in-  
6 law and their three kids. And the son-in-law was the most Hungarian of any of  
7 the people. He came over after the '56 revolution he was a soldier. Now he to  
8 this day is more Hungarian than anything else. He smokes his meat in the  
9 backyard and throughout the garage and he has a hobby of working on old  
10 motorcycles and ethnic music is playing in the garage and so forth. And he  
11 would sit around, he was different. There would be like blood sausage cooking  
12 in the stove. It's been long hours sitting at the kitchen table, talking and people  
13 coming and going, hollering out at the dogs in Hungarian and what not.  
(Appendix C, *Interview 2/2*)

Peter chronicles this museum-like setting (line 2) as an option for his father that he justifiably rejected for the benefit of his children. As it is so different, it seems a dead end compared to the opportunities in modern America. The kind of life he describes, however, reminds him of the rural versus urban distinction (lines 11-13) rather than a simple ethnic marker. The story is an argumentative narrative that supports open generalizations about the qualities of Hungarians and backs up the claims of the father regarding his decision. The actions carried out by ethnically identified family members are linked to features attributed to the ethnic group in the society that ancestors left behind, and to those of the Hungarian-American ways in the South Bend enclave. Peter narrates (lines 8-13) widely held generalizations about the features of ethnic Hungarian-Americans, and speaking Hungarian to the dogs (line 13) is a crucial argument in it. Thus, the ethnic description (lines 8-13) serves the point of counter-identification; Peter tells who he is through depicting a group of people he does not belong to. In this tableau of Hungarianness, speaking the language, alien to other Americans, is a cornerstone of identification.

The ability to speak Hungarian as a signifier of ethno-cultural identification and liminality has been discussed in other interviews from yet another angle. Endre, Matyi, Rob,

Levente, Eszti and Ildikó often talked about the efforts their families put into educating them in Hungarian. Levente told how his father's rule that remained effective even after English became the predominant language, once he and his siblings started school, "when you cross the threshold into this house, [...] we speak Hungarian in this house" (Appendix C, *Interview 7/1*). Despite all trials and tribulations that his family went through, not only speaking Hungarian but also speaking it eloquently on a native or near-native level (line 2) is an important goal for Levente, which he expressed in this orientation narrative.

1 My mom says time and again that she attributes her grasp of the language, she  
2 speaks very properly, very formally. She attributes to knowing the language as  
3 well as she does to my father's intensity how important it was to him. And I  
4 really appreciate that. I mean I don't know where I'd be now had I not had at  
5 least those number of years when I was growing up with the language. [...] So  
6 it's nice to know that when I come back any sort of extended period of time, that  
7 language will come back. And I don't think I'll ever lose what I have. (Appendix C,  
*Interview 7/1*).

Ancestral language as a marker of borderland existence is status enhancing and it is to be cherished and kept as long as possible unlike in the case of Peter. Levente's father participated in the 1956 revolution and had to leave Hungary afterwards forever, however, he never gave up his mother tongue (line 3) and wanted his children to identify with it. Liminality means that besides their mother tongue, Hungarian, these immigrants had to learn English as well in order to be able to use career and study options. A mastery of English and Hungarian ensures one's place in both language communities. Ancestors, relatives and friends locate Levente and his family as Hungarians even though they "were a little bit secluded" because they "didn't live in the Cleveland area" (Appendix C, *Interview 7/1*). They did not belong to scouts or any other formal organization, however, the knowledge and daily use of Hungarian demarcates a larger, less official yet equally distinctive community of those who speak Hungarian in the United States of America. On the other hand, the studies and jobs place them in multiple American communities in which English is the means of communication. The acquisition of English, however, meant a serious challenge.

My informants talk about how their parents mastered English to succeed in numerous accounts. Levente mentioned not only the family language, which was Hungarian, but also how he appreciated his father's arduousness and attitude toward acquiring English.

1 What's amazing though, I mean if you can picture my father he studied as an  
2 undergraduate at Oberlin, in Ohio. He didn't know any English. When he was  
3 in the army when he emigrated he knew absolutely no English. [...] I can only  
4 imagine his perseverance and his courage [...] to accept studying at an English

5 speaking institution and hardly know the language. [...] He'd sit, read every  
6 paragraph, every word, every sentence of every paragraph with a dictionary in  
7 the other hand. And that's how he taught himself the language. (Appendix C, *Interview*  
7/1)

In this story, Levente describes how his father's extraordinary efforts helped him succeed. He did not experience overt racism or discrimination; there would only be a lack of opportunities had he decided not to learn English. As a talented musician who grew up under the influence of Bartók's music, who actually taught his great-aunt, he had to establish an existence in the field that he could excel. Levente narrates this extraordinary zeal (lines 3-7) as part of being a Hungarian in America and states several times how he feels highly inspired by it. Rob Fütő perceived his father's language learning zeal in a similar way. The narratives close with the observation that Rob's father (line 6) as well as Levente's father learnt English all by themselves, which makes the effort more precious in the eyes of their children.

1 And what he would do living in America is he would read the paper and every  
2 time there was an English word that he didn't know he would circle it, underline  
3 it, or he would develop his own dictionary and write the word in it. And over that  
4 many-many years he would read the papers and his vocabulary in English is  
5 better than my vocabulary in English and he is a phenomenal speaker. And he  
6 really educated himself. (Appendix C, *Interview* 6/2).

Encapsulated here is the recognition of the hardships of immigrant existence and the effort that parents made to reconcile ethnic heritage and American life (lines 1-2). In the narratives, Rob attributes arduousness and hard work to his parents' attempt to succeed as members of the immigrant generation (line 6). His father became a phenomenal speaker of English and was able to support his family and educate his three children. The stories tell how Rob's and Levente's father found it very important to be able to keep the doors open to both language communities, Hungarian and English. How once the father or mother learned English, now their children put similar efforts into speaking Hungarian. Dual bonds or the opportunity to participate in Hungarian and English speaking communities are thus narrated in the stories about parents and language use as conscious steps in acculturation that is highly controlled this way. The fact that Rob and Levente conclude their stories with the same coda reflects their appreciation of the effort their fathers made and this dual world becomes the more precious and worth preserving.

Codas end the narrative and provide a smooth bridge between the verbal perspective and the moment of storytelling. According to its content the coda may be a short comment summarizing what has been told, or it may set forth remarks on how events affect the narrator

or give additional emphasis to the point of the story. The length of codas varies from a single clause to a longer part of evaluating and summary (De Fina 85; Labov and Waletzky 29). Even though their narratives embrace different lives and emerge in distinctive settings, Levente and Rob arrive at the same conclusion and tell about the hard work that their fathers performed to master English. Neither of the codas is neutral, they refer to the very personal experience of the father. They summarize the experience and the emphasis is not only on the person of the father learning English successfully, but the use of the reflexive pronoun “himself” gives the special meaning that it was the father and nobody else who taught him. This fact seems to be a cornerstone of immigrant success and since these people achieved it all by themselves, it becomes the more precious and worth remembering. Because immigrants learnt English to provide for their families the kind of life they thought their children would deserve, their sons pay tribute by working hard to learn Hungarian and be able to use it.

Immigrant experience of the parents created a world that was different from the “Americana” (Appendix C, *Interview 6/3*) not just in terms of language use. Narratives about ethnic experiences often portray how financial hardships and frugality were characteristic to the newcomers. Rob uses the following story about cultural differences in approaching clothing to illustrate that living in Hungary as a Hungarian-American among Hungarians brings about challenges that he already had experience in tackling. In the talk preceding the narrative we discussed how hard it is to try and start communities in which Hungarians are willing to participate on a regular basis mainly due to cultural differences and whether Rob keeps in touch with other Americans.

1 And so if you were a child of parents who because you know had an accent  
2 foreigners would speak so you know they wouldn't speak perfect English then  
3 they would make fun of that. And so as a second-generation you would try to  
4 speak perfect English and you would.  
5 I remember, my mother didn't know how to dress us so we would fit in with the  
6 other American kids. So she would dress us the way they would dress in Europe,  
7 and so I would pull my colored socks all the way up to my knees when  
8 Americans would wear white socks. And so they would see that, you know,  
9 who dressed you, you know, and oh my gosh, that looks so strange, you know,  
10 and, or. In America many of the parents would just buy all kinds of clothes for  
11 their kids and they could dress very nicely. While my parents came from Hungary  
12 and they didn't see why they should spend lots of money on their kids' clothes.  
13 So from sixth grade on I bought all my own clothes. So they wouldn't make fun  
14 of me. You know when it was snowing I would go out there and shovel snow and  
15 make all kinds of money. And I did that from when I was as long as I can  
16 remember. And I would always have money, somehow, cutting grass or  
17 whatever. And I'd go out there and buy clothes.  
18 'Cause I remember one time a girl asked me and I think it was sixth grade, “How  
19 many pairs of brown pants do you have?” And I only had one pair of brown pants

20 that I wore all the time. And so I remember saying, I'm gonna go out and buy my  
21 own clothes, 'cause my parents wouldn't buy me clothes. Because this wasn't a  
22 part of their thinking. And so I went out and started buying clothes and buying  
23 shirts. So that I remember being an oddity. (Appendix C, *Interview 6/3*)

In this argumentative narrative, Rob recalls a series of events that occurred when his peers questioned his conformity in terms of clothing. He argues that value systems of immigrants and their American born children differ to the extent that may lead to excessive stereotyping at points. Nevertheless, experiencing the gap creates challenges that require individual solutions similarly to the ones that his immigrant parents once faced. The story opens with a description of the background (lines 1-4), and the situation is contextualized through the dichotomy how the parents, as immigrants would not speak perfect English and consequently the children would try to speak perfect English. The parents' norm at this point differed sharply from that of mainstream American society (lines 6-8) and the interaction that took place in school signified the beginning of a negotiation process in Rob's acculturation (lines 10-12). Rob's schoolmate challenged parental norms (lines 9 and 18-19); even if he had several pairs of brown pants, it would be less appropriate than having different kinds of pants. Acculturation takes place in negotiation, parents pushed for one set of norms, Rob understood the presence of another, and that he needs to conform to those as well. His role in this situation is to reconcile norms in order to acculturate successfully (lines 13-17) through counter-identification.

As argued in chapter 2.1.2 acculturation is the process of acquiring certain aspects of the host or dominant culture on a functional level and at the same time losing part of the individual's cultural heritage without necessarily disowning original cultural traditions and ethnic identities. Rob's decision to exchange old world traditions of clothing to American and modern emerges due to negotiation with his classmate and the process exemplifies an ongoing construction of a sense of himself as a second-generation Hungarian-American. The complex repertoire of ethnic Hungarians is irrelevant in its original form and the changes that occur are supported through the dynamics of negotiation. However, the result does not harm ethnic boundaries, Rob's decision (lines 13 and 17) shifts attention from where the boundaries are to what happens within the boundary in terms of ethno-cultural identity formation.

The narrative has an introduction about the generally existing gap between immigrant parents and their American born children. In lines 1-3 the subject of the clauses is expressed with the personal pronoun "you" to refer to people in general including the hearer. The conversational use of "you" as an indefinite personal pronoun indicates that the experience is relevant to others, may even be typical of second-generation European Americans (line 3 and

lines 9) whose parents live according to the traditions of their ancestral homeland. Lines 2-3 describe that the consequence of such outmoded behavior is being ridiculed, which is thus distanced with the help of a general subject. The event is not unique, so it does not have to be personalized. At a later stage of the analysis of the narratives, I will refer to how my conversational partners build the concept of uniqueness as a distinctively positive feature in the construction of their ethno-cultural identity. Therefore, distancing negative experience and making it nonunique with the help of making the subject indefinite is a linguistic means of preserving uniqueness as a positive element of identity. Rob emphasizes how he is a member of a group of second-generation Hungarian-Americans with whom such an event may happen any time and it is not their fault.

The narrative continues with the recount of how Rob's mother actually dressed him in a style that was characteristic to her native settlement. Rob emphasizes the role of conformity in the wish to fit in with other American kids (lines 5-8) and at the same time the lack of conformity (line 5). The switch to reporting a fragment of a dialog in lines 8-10 makes the disturbing nature of the difference even more prominent. The lack of cultural similarity explains this oddity of clothing traditions, yet it is hardly tolerated by teenage society especially in the Midwest, "very Americana still" (Appendix C, *Interview 6/3*).

Peter Hevesi describes the strong desire of seeking conformity in the Midwestern area of the United States of America as the "middle American vanilla" (Appendix C, *Interview 2/2*). This part of the narrative has a resolution coda in which Rob tells how he preserved his conformity to the norms of his parents, since he did not demand them buy more clothes, yet yielded to peer pressure in clothing and went out to make money and buy clothes. With this creative solution, Rob did not have to confront either groups of socialization and the attitude he takes resembles that of his immigrant parents. Instead of finishing the story with the conclusion in lines 18-21, Rob recalls yet another incident that even more clearly illustrates his decision. At this time, events are presented in the form of a constructed dialogue. The conversation with the classmate appears in the framework of the decision to go and buy clothes and this turns out to be the starting as well as the end of the story. Reporting the original question emphasizes the difference between the norm of the parents and the more American schoolmate, which second-generation ethnic Americans have to face. The dialogue breaks the linearity of narrative time and leaps back in time to recount events that led to the decision. This structure expresses the importance of the decision and justifies it as well. The more so since in the case of second-generation ethnic Americans there are even more options in terms of norms and value systems.

Christopher Kovach expresses a similar dilemma of the frugality of immigrant parents. His mother and father unlike the majority of upper middle class professionals did not believe that expensive though becoming sneakers were necessary for young children. Looking back at the experience Christopher argues that such events have fueled the kind of nonconformity he has in his adult life.

- 1 Even as a young child it was, [...] I couldn't conform, because I lived in such a
- 2 different world at home. I was always different at school and as I grew older I
- 3 kind of realized that that's probably a good thing. I'm able to see things for what
- 4 they are. [...] I don't want to say I'm right and everybody's wrong, but that's the
- 5 way I feel I guess. (Appendix C, *Interview 3/1*)

Through time, nonconformity becomes a positive experience (lines 4-5), as it offers more choices to live and act in the conformity-bashing world of postmodern cultures. The accessibility of manufactured goods at a low price has created a new demand for sources of individualism as part of this lifestyle. Frugality becomes an ethnically definable label yet they lay a track of distinctiveness for Rob and Christopher by means of which they come to position themselves. Difference and liminality as sources of distinctiveness (lines 1-2) are key concepts in the story. Thus, the episode becomes a narration of difference, which builds a dynamic concept of ethnicity because the narrator identifies himself through qualities and situations that he feels he does not belong to, rather than through asserting features that are similar and characteristic to a group of other people. Ethnicity not only appears as an identity construct, but also as a way of seeing other people create their identities and understanding the rest of the world (lines 3-4).

Kathryn Szigetvari also traces her Hungarianness to her father's ethnic background. In the story, Kathryn explains her understanding and acceptance of cultural differences with the intensive, continuous exposure to representations of another culture. She compares herself to her "more Americanized" friends to calibrate the difference. "I think I'm like this 'cause of my father. Because I've been there [in Hungary] before, because he is worldly, he wasn't born here. So I think that all makes me want to go explore and I'm open to different cultures" (Appendix C, *Interview 1/3*). The short remark is explanatory, and it is meant to bring up and explain two key concepts difference and choice. Difference or being different is described both as a positive and negative experience in her responses. Kathryn grew up with a strict father, which fact she claims has benefited her in manifold ways, nevertheless, she expresses her disapproval in not wanting to be like that. Kathryn experienced her father's extreme strictness, a source of difference, as restrictive and static rather than open and dynamic.



The cult of difference seems to be an undisputed value in the discourse of multiculturalism. Culture, as argued in chapter 1.3, represents the prolonged capacity of groups to distinguish their members from other groups. The kind of Hungarianness Kathryn has been socialized into is status enhancing, since she has acquired such extra information that comes in handy in an achievement-oriented society. While she is explaining her being different or unique, she also attempts to understand the dilemmas behind the decision to emigrate. Such differences are sometimes palpable, more often they are not, so it is hard for both Kathryn and Christopher to describe the experience of distinctiveness in concrete terms.

Parents and grandparents tell their stories, contextualize their experiences, offer choices yet make the decisions for their children. Because they have chosen to become immigrants they leave a culture behind which is the collective ethnic identity of a group of people. Through their choices and voluntary membership in another collective identity, they create their own distinctive individual ethnic identity. It becomes sustainable because it is voluntary and tailored to the individual instead of a direct representation of collective ethnic Hungarianness. Pieces of former collective identities appear in Kathryn's story as antiques. She says they have many antiques in their house and describes her favorites.

- 1 Some of the toys my dad used to play with. We have his bear with a string and
- 2 some honey. And we put this honey over the edge and it walks. [...] They're old.
- 3 They're simple and you respect that. Everything today is so complex and
- 4 expensive. [...] It was his, you know. And he brought it with him when he came
- 5 here. It's worth, it's priceless. When he was ten. When they immigrated. (Appendix C, *Interview 1/2*)

Kathryn's father had toys that carry values (line 3) such as age and simplicity. Kathryn negotiates her ethnicity in terms of knowing these items and the qualities attributed to them. Understanding the principle of simplicity is argued to free from prefabricated classification systems such as ethno-cultural identity. The use of the personal pronoun "you" (lines 2-3) indicate that Kathryn thinks the value of these items is beyond the family because of carrying attributes such as simplicity. The fact that the family owns this makes their experience relevant for the hearer as well. Old and simple in line 3 are opposed to the complexity and expensiveness (lines 3-4) of postmodern American consumer society and the legacy of immigrant status is conceptualized as a set of options. Stories of parental and ancestral lives in the old world underline the dual role of culture. According to Kramsch's definition quoted in section 2.1.2, culture empowers the individual to rise from oblivion yet restrains him or her by imposing a particular frame of reference on them (65). The culture of the ancestral world is constructed and reconstructed narratively mostly in stories that recount

multiple events with multiple characters. Such dynamics of individual narratives build a dynamic meta-narrative framework. Thus, narratives of liminality that characterize bidirectional acculturation follow patterns of systems in the chaos/complexity theory. Emphasis does not lie on the linear rendering of events but more on how these events justify the dynamics of migration and the decision to leave one's homeland.

#### **4.1.2 Hungary 101—meanings and uses of history**

Besides personal history, many immigrants carry, tell and attempt to hand down the wider historical circumstances and events that influenced them in their decision to relocate. Narratives, as argued in chapters 1.4 and 2.2.3, shift the focus of history from texts to interpreters, and historical culture thus becomes a story created by participants rather than something read or viewed by them. Stories about historical events create and maintain communities and thus ethno-cultural identities (Assmann 1-12; Rosenzweig and Thelen 199). Immigrants decide to leave behind a group of people with a widely acclaimed archive of historico-cultural narratives and create a new community based on selected items from that archive. As the particular incidents are reinterpreted and recontextualized in narratives the new group will have its own interpretations of the history. For newcomers in a distinct geographical, political, historical and cultural arena, acculturation opens up a new archive of historical-cultural narratives. Thus, the experience of liminality refers to an access to two distinctive archives of narratives, which help construct the changing ethno-cultural identity. In the interviews, two major events of twentieth century history occurred in a most articulated form. World War II and the 1956 revolution in Hungary seem to be the historical story frame for interviewees to explain the concept of liminality in their ethno-cultural identity.

In the case of narrating history that immigrating parents or grandparents experienced a double narrative structure unfolds. The children or grandchildren recount the story of their parents and ancestors and the two narratives are built on one another. In chapter 1.4.1, I argued that narratives representing life in a culture also describe the particular culture (Bruner, *Life* 694; Hoffman, *Life* 3). Reciprocity exists between the community creating narratives and the narratives maintaining and recreating the community. Thus, the life-stories of immigrants who participate in major historical events carry archetypal patterns as to the involvement of these people, and become meta-narratives of the particular episodes in history. These meta-narratives provide the structure of the stories that second-generation Hungarian-Americans told in relation to the role of their ancestors in Hungarian and world history.

Individual and national histories intertwine in the experiences of second-generation Hungarian-Americans especially in the lives of those who had to leave Hungary due to some political event such as World War II or the abortive revolution of 1956. Józsi Temesvári told a number of stories about his paternal grandparents, “sovány nagymama” and “sovány nagypapa” (Appendix C, *Interview 9/1*) and their life during World War II.

1 Grandfather never talked about it. My dad talked about it. He’s already seen what  
2 his father went through. So he would explain things to us sometimes. Not all the  
3 times. My father wouldn’t even talk about it sometimes. ‘Cause he has seen the  
4 concentration camps as a young child.[...]  
5 There was a few here in Hungary, and he’s also seen the one in Austria, my  
6 father. And my grandfather was also one of those individuals that tried to, was on  
7 the plot that was trying to kill Hitler. The Germans were getting close to him.  
8 You know this was all started to come out and the Russians were coming from  
9 the other direction. So he had a decision to make. My grandfather didn’t believe  
10 in killing innocent lives. You know Jewish people. He was against that from the  
11 first day. He did not understand why they would do that. And he himself said  
12 Hitler was Nazi, before he got really deep the way out in the left field. The  
13 generals were in that. All the generals Germans and Hungarians knew that. It was  
14 just a matter of time. Before the war would end and they were on the losing  
15 side. They knew that. They knew it was gonna be a losing battle ‘cause he was,  
16 Hitler was in charge. It’s something you wouldn’t imagine people could do to  
17 other people. Yeah, even pictures don’t tell. But to actually experience that, to  
18 live through it. That’s something different. (Appendix C, *Interview 9/1*)

The narrative Józsi tells about the role of his grandfather in World War II exemplifies a larger historical trajectory as well as the family’s involvement in it. World War II is one of the biggest thrusts of history in the twentieth century if indeed not the biggest. Józsi’s grandfather not only participated in the war, but served as a key military leader (line 13) and he was familiar with what happened at the front as well as outside the combat area (lines 1-2). He was one of the highest-ranking generals and had an important role in ending the war before it was too late. The coup against Hitler is canonical history (lines 6-7), as well as the Russian occupation of Hungary (lines 8-9). Consequently, the grandparents had no other choice but leave their native Hungary and gained the status of displaced persons (Kontra 155-156). In the United States of America the family kept together and they spoke Hungarian amongst themselves, however, could not do much to continue with their former life.

This story exemplifies the strong historical influence on the family, which set a value system that has not ebbed with the loss of immigrant status. The intimate presence of large-scale history makes it very hard for second- or even third-generation members of the family to become only products of their time; they remain actors and observers in canonical history. Lines 1-3 indicate that the experience was too powerful for the grandfather to be able to give

firsthand account to his grandchildren, but even for the father it was too hard to talk about it frequently. The phrase: “not all the times” (lines 2-3) show that family members, especially children would be more hungry for information about the grandfather’s involvement in the war; however, these facts were too heavy to become over-the-table sagas. Deciphering the meaning of the grandparents’ wartime involvement contextualizes family experiences historically and provides a strong sense of their position in American society as first-generation Hungarian-Americans. Remembering is a strong aspect of liminal existence and forgetting is a strategy to personalize history to individual needs. Józsi finds this part of his heritage so excitingly enigmatic that he continues to try and find out what actually happened back then, so he does not only remember but aims at creating and reinterpreting by putting together the missing parts of the puzzle. The theme of participating in World War II recurs during the interviews and becomes a cultural icon (Rubin and Rubin 176-177) that evokes attitudes relative to core values and norms. Due to the grandparents’ involvement in World War II immigrant status and ethnicity become a source of pride and uniqueness that cannot be stepped over without an attempt to interpret and personalize. Family members circulate and hand down the stories thus maintaining a liminal position that Józsi identifies with in the narrative.

Taking a closer look at the language of the family experience reported speech seems a very important linguistic device that highlights the narrator’s evaluation of the events. The story opens with the description of the terrors of World War II, which are too much even to recount. Józsi shifts to reported speech as the peak of the story approaches (lines 11-12). Reported speech is a strategy of interpreting the particularities of the story world within the storytelling world since narrators are part of the latter within which they invoke the former (De Fina 95-96). The short and matter-of-fact report of how Józsi’s grandfather rejected Hitler and his war (lines 9-12) describes him as a strong and powerful person whose decisions are not questioned. The short sentences in which Józsi evokes the views and attitude of his “sovány nagypapa” (Appendix C, *Interview 9/1 and 9/2*) also reflect his determination. The tension of the situation is best rendered through the dynamics of reporting some words of the grandfather (lines 11-12) instead of simply describing his life and choices. The shift from description to reporting fragments of the dialogue is the linguistic expression of the meta-narrative in Józsi’s story. The device allows the archetypal story frame about World War II come to the surface and brings together the two narrative perspectives.

According to the history of Hungarian immigration in the U.S.A., as quoted in section 3.1.1, the 1956 revolution in Hungary and the consequent Soviet military occupation triggered

the third wave of migration. Participation in the revolution often brought about the must to leave Hungary to avoid imprisonment or vigilantic death penalty. Endre told the story of how his parents, then newly weds, left Hungary in 1956 as “they found no hope in staying” (Appendix C, *Interview 4/1*). Thus, he positions himself as part of the community that fifty-sixers or freedom fighters (Kontra 156) established upon emigration.

- 1 My father’s sister died in the fighting, she was a nurse. My father had spent
- 2 time in prison, thirteen months for organizing a strike in ’54, ’53 thereabouts,
- 3 and they just decided to go and left everything behind. Went across. My father
- 4 had been born in Győr, so he said he was going to visit his mother but, and she
- 5 was in Budapest so that was a lie but that was OK. And they walked across the
- 6 border and then got on a plane. (Appendix C, *Interview 4/1*)

The narrative appeared at the beginning of our first conversation. The 1956 revolution is the cause for relocation and Endre proves the fact that his parents had no other choice no matter how they felt towards their homeland. The opening lines describe the circumstances in which individual lives are taken without much afterthought. Klára Szentkirályi, Endre’s aunt is killed, and his father served more than a year in jail. Under such circumstances, even telling a lie is forgivable (line 5) as retaliation threatened the immediate life of Endre’s father. The story is told very simply, there are no extensive descriptions just mere facts chosen from a number of episodes, how young Ödön Szentkirályi participated actively (line 2) in the events that led to the revolutionary attempt to overthrow the totalitarian rule of the early 1950s Hungary. Such straightforward presentation of the facts shows that the story is a deeply engrained part of family psyche. It is iconic not only because 1956 is a historical-cultural icon for Hungarians but also because the events described construct individual history.

The opening scene is a matter-of-fact report of the death of the aunt (line 1), which justifies the decision to emigrate and save their lives rather than die or languish in jail. Description of the lie (line 5) is a turning point in the narrative, as telling a lie becomes a way of escaping from a corrupt regime yet its chronicling emphasizes the honesty of the protagonist. To describe this moment Endre switched to using reported speech (line 4-5). The device brings the story world into the storytelling world and Endre’s father becomes involved in the narrative. This is the point when his original narrative, with the archetypal patterns of 1956 participation, unfolds. The historical event of the revolution is the event around which participants organize part of their life narrative. Archetypal structures, such as the freedom fighter, death in the family due to participation in the fighting, and having to escape the totalitarian regime construct the meta-narrative of 1956 among Hungarian-Americans.

These meta-narratives become a very powerful device of community building as well, which can be modeled in chaos/complexity theory, as I will do in section 4.3. Reporting the words of the father emphasizes the act that he did not tell the truth but the historical circumstances justify him. The narrator has the opportunity to formulate his opinion and deflect responsibility (De Fina 96) based on a narrative experience. A profound understanding of 1956 absolves the lie and the fact of leaving one's homeland and provides an insight into the wider socio-cultural circumstances in which the episode of the narrative takes place.

Narrating parental participation in 1956 not only locates Endre as a Hungarian-American but it also becomes a source of empowerment (McAdams, *Coding Autobiographical* 7). The participation of Endre's father in the 1956 revolution makes him a figure of authority on 1956 and he is able to guide and assist his children in their development of Hungarian ethno-cultural identity. The story breaks the linear sequence of time and develops a specific temporal arrangement the significance of which is described in chapter 1.4.1 (Bruner, *Life* 691-693; Dauenhauer 10; Ricoeur, *Oneself* 147-148). Nonlinear narrative time starts with the death in 1956 (line 1), continues with the strike and imprisonment in 1953 or 1954 (lines 1-2), and ends with emigration in 1956 (lines 5-6). Death disintegrates the family and emigration is a consequence because the members are stained as participants in the revolution. In order to avoid more deaths in the family emigration seems a necessary choice. Even though the basic narrative units recapitulate experience in an order slightly different from the original events, it does not disturb the narrative construct, since as a device it has an important meaning. Thus, changing real time into narrative time illustrates and justifies the decision to migrate.

Identity construction in narratives happens through negotiating personal and social roles that actors assume in the stories (De Fina 20). The protagonists are Endre's aunt and father and Endre's role as a narrator is to remember and be able to report authentically and keep the memories alive and pass them on. In a later conversation, Endre switches back to the previous story and talks about how his background and experience of 1956 makes him more knowledgeable and well-rounded as a teacher thus, gives justification of fulfilling the role of the narrator. The story involves another person, Endre's grandfather who also faced hardships due to the emigration of his two sons.

- 1 Probably I have a better understanding, I don't have firsthand but second hand
- 2 understanding of Eastern European communism and totalitarianism in terms of I
- 3 can drop a comment you know like: "Yeah, my dad did time for organizing a
- 4 one-day strike." Or my grandfather was forced to go out of the city on every
- 5 national holiday or he did time because his two kids went to America. And his

- 6 daughter was killed in the Revolution. So he did about a year as well as time for that.  
(Appendix C, *Interview 4/2*)

A sense of history requires proper narration and Endre uses the knowledge of family history (line 3) contextualized into larger historical trajectories. A specific order of events sets a distinctive narrative time in this episode as well. Emigration of the boys, Ödön and András is told first, then the death of the daughter Klári. According to the narrative, Endre's grandfather was harassed more because of the leave of his sons than the death of his daughter. Such stories of his parents' escape provide a solid background to a second-generation Hungarian-American and serves as a source of empowerment in the émigré community.

Second-hand understanding of totalitarian regimes (lines 1-2) positions Endre as a survivor in the sense that their generation was born because their parents could escape death. Eszti Pigniczky resumed the feeling and meaning of being the second-generation survivors of 1956.

- 1 És hogy mi tulajdonképpen, ez az '56 égisze alatt nőttünk fel Amerikában.  
2 Akármennyire hangoztatva volt vagy nem volt hangoztatva ez a téma. Mi annak  
3 a gyerekei vagyunk, vagy annak a történelmi pillanatnak a gyerekei vagy  
4 áldozatai. Mi azért születünk ott, ahol születünk, mert volt egy ötvenhat. (Appendix C,  
*Interview 8/2*)

Eszti uses this argumentative narrative to persuade the hearer towards understanding the conclusion that the mere existence of the people born into freedom fighter families maintains a distinctive ethnic community (line 3-4). The prolonged existence of this community depends on ability of the members to narrate and pass on the experience as objectively as possible. Eszti tells her viewpoint in Hungarian to emphasize her belonging to this particular group. Children of 1956 immigrants, Endre, Eszti, Levente, Rob, Christopher and Ildikó talked about the difficult and often adventurous escape of their parents or grandparents, which they unanimously find important to understand and know about. Eszti even told how she and her sister Réka went out to investigate the paternal accounts of the Royal Szálló csoport in October 1956 to make a documentary film. They had the oral history and no concrete facts to support it. Eszti said, "the nicest part of it is realizing that the stories that he told were all real. [...] And then to find the concrete information about that story that he told was amazing" (Appendix C, *Interview 8/2*). With this claim, Eszti assumes the social role of the investigator and narrator at the same time. Before she is able to tell the proper story, she has to go out and find out about the facts. Historical archives provide objective information, which appropriates

her not only as a knowledgeable person in the family but also as an authentic source of concrete historical understanding.

However, bringing the topic into public is often a source of misunderstandings.

- 1 És sokszor fáj is ez a téma, mert Magyarországnak bizonyos rétege nem szereti a
- 2 külföldi magyarokat. És akkor mi mindig megkapjuk, hogy hazajövünk. Akkor ez
- 3 úgy a rokonok között, mint baráti körben néha való, nehéz témává válik, hogy na
- 4 ti elmentetek, mi meg itt maradtunk című. Ez a kettőnk közötti különbség. (Appendix C, *Interview 8/2*)

The position is disputed and frequently attacked by those who chose and could stay in Hungary (lines 2-4). Even relatives feel that it was easier to leave Hungary than to stay and survive physically and morally (lines 3-4), which makes it harder to hear the true voices. Eszti describes the tension (line 3) that she feels palpable between Hungarians living abroad and in Hungary in the second half of the episode. Her attitude of being well-informed and knowledgeable helps bridge this gap as she talked about her relatives accepting their approach.

The narratives I quoted give an account of personal involvement in major historical events in the ancestral homeland and the stories identify characters through positioning them relative to these experiences. The direct involvement of parents and grandparents creates a distinctive archive of historical narratives and their second- and third-generation descendants construct a sense of history through assuming the role of the narrator as well as investigator. Thus, the distinctive status of liminality or borderland existence refers to an active participation in creating and maintaining a strong sense of history regarding the ancestral homeland. Knowing history provides an understanding of the group's existence in time and proves the acceptance of existing meta-narratives, which are built into the personal stories. Such individual interpretations may be slightly different from the canonical portrayal of historical events due to their nature as narratives, yet the primary goal of the narration is to be lifelike (Bruner, *Actual* 13), thus render the real life character of ethnicity.

#### **4.1.3 *America is not all that there is*—meanings and uses of geography**

Ethno-cultural identity formation is not only a construct related to historical time but it is also a spatialized process, in which specifically recognizable geographical locations occur and gain significance through narration. As I have reviewed in chapter 2.2.2, the ethnic group finds a particular area especially important as its members feel at home there (Fejős, *Variants*



363-365; Sheskin 119). Homeland becomes more than just a mere geographical site where people dwell at a given moment in time; it incorporates the inhabitants, their whereabouts, the time and their knowledge and understanding of the place. Thus, a sense of geography reflects an awareness of homeland or else the bonding with land (A.A.G, *Session Report* 12), and ethno-cultural identification partly happens through a self-definition within the geographical location. My conversational partners narrate their sense of homeland and geography in their stories about visiting Hungary as the ancestral homeland, relocating in Hungary and living in the United States of America as Hungarian-Americans. The experience of visiting Hungary implies crossing boundaries in a geographical as well as psychological sense. It becomes a distinctive life experience, which also means learning to live at borderlands. Thus, transition from one place to another in the form of traveling to and visiting ancestral homelands becomes a rite of passage defined in section 2.1.1. In a cultural anthropological perspective rites of passage refer to culturally defined activities that mark changes of place, condition, social position or even age (Kottak 242).

Nine of the ten interviewees talked about having visited Hungary at least once before our conversations took place. Christopher and his family travel to Hungary to visit relatives every two years. The experience of being there seems very positive for him despite the negative features such as underdevelopment and dirt he mentioned that did not disturb him. “I felt at home there. [...] It’s the place, the countryside, and the language has always been kind of important for me, just like how the language sounds. My relatives [...] always treated me very lovingly. It is just that, because that was something different.” (Appendix C, *Interview* 3/3). In the first interview, we talked about the topics they often discuss with relatives when they visit them in Hungary. There are certain issues of disagreement: some of them are cultural and some of them topical. Christopher first told a story in which his father and some relative were arguing creationism vs. evolution in which his cousin had a kind of naïve viewpoint. He then described a walk during which he and his cousin had a disagreement.

- 1     **M:** And they were arguing about these very current things? I mean you think
- 2     the difference in their argument was more like a cultural thing?
- 3     **CK:** Could be. But it’s hard to say how much it is a cultural thing or he was just a
- 4     bit more fashionable, modern and [...] But for that reason it might as well be
- 5     thought out because it’s kind of how everybody relates to each other. But I know
- 6     that reminds me of another story, which. Uhm.
- 7     I was walking with another of my cousins in Budapest and we were walking up
- 8     like it’s the Freedom Statue. The woman holding an olive branch and she was
- 9     telling me that the person who designed this statue originally wanted it to be an
- 10    airplane [laughs]. And then this was because his son was a bomber pilot and died
- 11    in the war. And, and she said, “So this olive branch represents his son” or

12 something like that. I was asking her it really didn't make sense to me, because  
13 usually when you have something representing something it's kind of concrete  
14 representing something abstract. And that was kind of odd that something  
15 abstract represents something concrete. And she was, she was telling me that  
16 Americans just don't understand how symbolism, like we don't understand how  
17 symbolism works because grew up in, in an environment where expression is so  
18 free that you don't, there is none of this kind of necessity to see clear. This is  
19 something else that which existed in the communism, and so.  
20 **M:** Did you accept this accusation that Americans don't understand this kind of  
21 "double psyche"?  
22 **CK:** Oh, yeah. I accept that. I didn't really accept that I didn't really understand  
23 it. I felt I understood it, but I didn't really understand the purpose for it. I guess  
24 and uhm I don't think that American culture is a lot more open and superficial,  
25 and there isn't that kind of in-depth meaning for most of the things. (Appendix C,  
*Interview 3/1*)

In this argumentative narrative, Christopher orients the hearer towards an understanding how stereotypical thinking may result in untrue cultural generalization (lines 16-17). The particularities of a group become visible if there is enough concrete knowledge behind each utterance. He claims he knows a lot about the "Hungarian psyche" as he labels it in an earlier part of the interview (Appendix C, *Interview 3/1*) and at the same time born and raised in the United States of America, he has a subtle knowledge of North American culture to which his cousin does not have access. Telling this story proves that Christopher also has a profound familiarity with Budapest and he is knowledgeable not only about the touristy sights but also about what those places mean to the people living there. He even ventures into a dispute about the symbolism of the Budapest Freedom Statue that among other important sites often represents the capital of Hungary in pictures and publications such as travel guides. Thus, Christopher has an active knowledge of specifically recognizable geographical locations as opposed to a passive knowledge, which would not enable him to argue as he does in the story (lines 12-15). His active knowledge of Hungarian history and cultural geography entitles him to refuse the assumption that he is an ignorant American or the view that freedom of expression leads to lacking the ability to read symbols. The Hungarian cousin is hurt (lines 15-18); as Christopher, a person who did not grow up in Hungary may so easily challenge what she explained and took for granted about a particular site and its meaning.

The narrative aims at reconstructing a dialogue and it reports the utterances of the participants. At the beginning of the story, in lines 8-11 Christopher used either indirect speech or he paraphrased his cousin's words to tell how he learned about the dilemma regarding the theme of the statue. Nevertheless, a linguistically signified turning point occurs in line 11 when he tries to quote the words in the original conversation. De Fina refers to such reporting as "direct reported speech," which may perform main evaluative functions such as

justifying and supporting certain actions and presenting the characters' response to these events (105). In this case, it emphasizes the standpoint, which has triggered a strong reaction on part of the narrator. Its function is evaluative as it serves as basis of an important point, and this is the critical argument Christopher has problems with rather than Hungarian culture itself. Once the hearer becomes familiar with the roots of the dispute Christopher returns to indirect speech. He indicates that his argument is not specific but has general validity by means of using the personal pronoun "you" in line 13, referring to a group of people whose identity is actually not specified.

The conflict point of the narrative is when Christopher's cousin argued how she thought Americans could not understand such culturally embedded symbols (lines 15-19). It is important to note how Christopher switches from the ethnic label "Americans" to using the personal pronoun "we" (line 16) in his recount of the dialogue. This turn signifies the member status in a larger group, which is a defensive strategy at this point. In our conversations, Christopher considered himself a Hungarian-American; however, in this narrative his cousin positioned him as an American, which he accepted. A Hungarian-American suddenly repositioned himself relative to Hungarians and within one dialogic turn, he accepted to be labeled American as opposed to his Hungarian cousin. Ethnic ties ceased to exist at that moment and Christopher acknowledged it with the pronominal switch (line 16). His Hungarianness was questioned in Budapest and he had to defend himself claiming that the knowledge to read symbols is part of Western Judeo-Christian cultures rather than a petty ethnic issue. Thus, knowing the "Hungarian psyche" (Appendix C, *Interview 3/1*) or else the collective consciousness of Hungarians makes Christopher a Hungarian, whereas its criticism makes him an American.

The geographical location, Budapest, plays the role of the trigger because it makes ethno-cultural identity become articulated and re-articulated. The story ends with a general comment referring to communism, a system that Christopher may only know from his father's chronicling. According to the cousin, firsthand experience of it is crucial in understanding such meta-narratives for example, the symbolism of the Freedom Statue. The narrative Christopher chooses to tell encapsulates how he is fully acculturated as a person born and raised in the United States of America yet without the intention of disowning his father's original cultural traditions and ethnic identity. Thus, his acculturation is bidirectional (Pham and Harris 280), as defined in chapter 2.1.2, as the story exemplifies a conscious effort to gain a deeper understanding of Hungarian culture and consciousness. Liminality is maintained in the bidirectional acculturation and for Christopher it provides the opportunity to participate in

both cultures. His cousin, however, refers to Americans (lines 16-18) as if they had a particular categorical identity with a trump-card salience (Calhoun 26 qtd. in chapter 1.2.3) in terms of their ignorance and superficiality in understanding foreign cultures. Christopher accepts that Americans may not be interested (lines 24-25), however rejects that they would not understand foreign cultures and the claim is certainly not valid for himself.

In the larger theoretical framework of conceptualizing ethno-cultural identity, the narrative argues for the repressiveness of in-group essentialism. Visiting Hungary as a passage rite has provided Christopher the opportunity to learn about ways of understanding the Hungarian psyche. As a ritual, it has two goals: first, to acculturate the American born narrator-protagonist into his father's former cultural environment and this additional social-cultural knowledge empowers him to reject critiques of essentialism. Second, it strengthens his position as a worldly, well-informed American capable of nonconformity and decision-making.

Another aspect of ethno-cultural identity related to particular places may be traced in narratives of temporary or permanent relocation. Both patterns are present in the cohort of informants I interviewed; Robert Fütő and Józsi Temesváry are now staying in Hungary with the intention of permanent relocation. At the time of the interviews Endre Szentkirályi, Eszter Pigniczky, Mátyás Tábor, Ildikó Varga and Levente Szentkirályi were living in Hungary for a shorter or longer period. In the following narrative Józsi talked about how his decision rooted in his childhood and recalled his mother's reaction and advice.

- 1 **JT:** Growing up I always heard my grandparents on both sides and my aunts and
- 2 uncles on both sides saying that they would return to Hungary.
- 3 **M:** Did they ever?
- 4 **JT:** No, and I'm the only one that's actually settled down here.
- 5 **M:** And I assume that your aunts and uncles helped you make a decision.
- 6 **JT:** They all know that I'm here.
- 7 **M:** Do they like the idea?
- 8 **JT:** They don't care. My aunts and uncles don't care. At first my mom wasn't too
- 9 sure about it, she told me, "Son," this is her words, that "You're gonna realize
- 10 that the country that you were born in is your motherland." She says, "it's gonna
- 11 be very difficult for you over there in Hungary. Just remember that."
- 12 And I find it difficult sometimes here. You know there is a lot of
- 13 misunderstandings, in speaking and I'm speaking in English 'cause it's much
- 14 more comfortable to speak in this language than Hungarian. But I'm trying. (Appendix  
C, *Interview 9/1*)

The story emerged in our first interview. I asked Józsi whether he spoke Hungarian before coming to Hungary. According to its function, his answer is an argumentative and prototypical narrative; at the same time and contentwise it deals with settlement. As far as

relocation is concerned, the story illustrates immigrant behaviors and experiences as well as relocation as a source of rupture and disturbance of normalcy and everyday social and cultural rules. Józsi spoke about how members of his extended family often discussed returning to Hungary as an option. However, they never did and for some reason it was he who ultimately did make the move.

The common immigrant meta-narrative based on the archetypal images of immigrant hardships frames the story. Józsi's mother used the experience of her parents as well as her own when she warned her son against the extremities of relocation. She summarized her life-experience-based view in a sentence that Józsi decided to quote in the story (lines 9-11). These difficulties epitomize trials of settlement, financial hardships, the culture being different from the one immigrants were originally socialized into and language barrier especially at the beginning. In the narrative Józsi uses direct reported speech to bring his mother into the dialogue who had firsthand experience related to migration and settlement. She accepted his son's decision, did not question or comment on it, and even supported him by not providing enthusiastic but empty remarks. The comment justifies her own life and struggles to try to acculturate her children. She did not want to sound alarming or nostalgic, she referred only to the fact of migration. Her warning is yet the culmination of another narrative that is her own life-story having the patterns of an archetypal settlement narrative. That is the reason why the narrator reports it directly rather than paraphrases it. This other narrative is the meta-narrative framework about immigrant and settlement experience, which is more often than not far from pleasant.

The second part of the story starts with acknowledging that his mother was right (line 12). Józsi switched back to telling about his difficulties instead of reporting dialogues. The most obvious difficulty was language, which thus became a source of repeated misunderstandings (lines 12-13). At the time of the interview, Józsi still found it more comfortable to speak English (lines 13-14) and eliminate a potential source of misunderstandings. Because much of Józsi's socialization was also about the family and him coping with acculturation and liminality, until the age of six he spoke only Hungarian, he had some repository of ways to tackle some problems of relocation. The story coda (line 14) also proves that Józsi tried hard to conform to grandparental and parental roles and cope with difficulties similar to theirs.

A slightly different relocation experience emerges in Ildikó's story. She has lived in Hungary for five years, yet she is not sure how long she wants to stay. At one point, she even says that she is not necessarily here because she is Hungarian. "I wouldn't stay here and if life

became difficult and I felt like I couldn't make a living here and I couldn't support myself then I would be just as happy in America [...]. I'm choosing here because I like being here but you know I wouldn't you know kill myself just because I'm Hungarian" (Appendix C, *Interview 10/3*). She feels she can find her way in America equally well and this fact resonates the sagacious advice of Józsi's mother about one's motherland. Following the remark Ildikó talks about how the decision to come to live in Hungary has been the result of a complex dilemma not only for her but for other Hungarian-Americans she keeps in touch with at the time of the interview.

- 1     **M:** And why do some of you come here for school?  
2     **IV:** People who come for medical school are usually because it's very, very  
3     difficult to get into a medical school in the States. It's usually easier for them to  
4     be accepted into medical school here and it's cheaper also. So that's part of the  
5     reason why they are here. [...] One of them who graduated actually is working  
6     here and he wants to stay. He came at eighteen and he has just finished his second  
7     year residency. And no he doesn't want to go, he likes to be here. [...] He is  
8     choosing to stay [...] definitely long-term. So, but I don't know I guess it's  
9     somewhat the same thing of why anybody goes for a year abroad, I guess kind of  
10    the same thing. Although it's usually they do say that they want to come to their  
11    mother country. I think it's a little simplified answer. I don't know if that's  
12    enough of a reason but they definitely like to be here.  
13    **M:** I think curiosity is also in the decision. That's where my parents were  
14    born, that's where.  
15    **IV:** Yeah, yeah, definitely. And it's, I think partly just Europe in general. And I  
16    think Hungary is in that prospect too just as any European country is so much  
17    different than America. But it's close enough. I think it's different to be  
18    interesting but close enough culturally where it's not you know shocking. Like  
19    it's not like you know going to Africa or you know, it's yeah, so it's still you  
20    know in your comfort level of difference. [laughs] [...] And quite a few people  
21    are studying in Hungarian now. (Appendix C, *Interview 10/3*)

The story is an orientation narrative as it unfolds specific information about the circumstances of making a decision on relocation (lines 8-12) without necessarily involving Ildikó as a character in it. The protagonist is not the narrator; she rather plays the role of the moderator in bringing together the experiences that are relevant to her position. The first part of the narrative (lines 2-12) tells about a friend of hers (lines 5-8) without actually invoking him to speak. It is not necessary because from the narrator's perspective the events that led to the decision are more important than the emphasis on the dynamics of decision-making. Ildikó mentioned that she wanted to stay in Hungary regardless of her parents and ancestors, mainly because she liked it. The former medical student, now a resident doctor (lines 6-7) decided to stay because he had positive feelings about being here, rather than due to ancestral ties. To illustrate her point Ildikó, related the interest in traveling and resettling abroad to a

general quest of adventure (lines 8-9) when young people go abroad for a year to seek experience. She also felt that settling in Hungary because it was once a mother country of parents (line 10) is an irrelevant argument and Ildikó emphasized the role of choice in her and others' decision.

The argument about choices in this part of the narrative builds the meta-narrative concept of transnationalization, a term defined in chapter 1.3.3. People who choose to relocate temporarily or permanently build personal ties and networks wherever they decide to live. Such relationships become the centers of transnational social and cultural spaces. Ildikó and her acquaintances are parts of transnational spaces in the framework of which their decision regarding migration and settlement are not definite, irrevocable or irreversible. Furthermore, for these people transnationalism becomes a source of ethno-cultural survival and betterment with reciprocity as a primary mechanism of integration into both cultures and maintaining ties with them. The second part of the narrative (lines 15-21) offers an interpretation of the concept from yet another angle.

The synecdochic use of Europe to refer to Hungary (line 15) is a device to take the better-known and easily perceivable name of the continent and use it for the country that is much more difficult to identify for the majority of Americans. Traveling in Europe has always been an upper-middle class chic for Americans, so an emphasis on the geographical location of Hungary in Europe is a way to position narrative characters as part of that social group. Ildikó even argues in lines 15-17 that Hungary is European just like any other country on the continent and similarly different from America in this respect. Such synecdoche is not unique to this narrative, it is a strategy that Kathryn (Appendix C, *Interview* 1/2; 1/3) and Levente (Appendix C, *Interview* 7/1; 7/2; 7/3) also extensively employ and they often refer to Europe instead of Hungary in particular calibrating their knowledge and heritage. The use of the whole meaning the part helps define a person by means of mutually empowering associations and it becomes status enhancing. Europe for an American is exotic enough as a traveling target, yet close enough in culture (lines 18-19) to avoid much of the potential cultural disturbance. The use of the synecdoche is a way to stress the European cultural heritage of Hungary, which is an important aspect. The impersonal reference of the coda in the narrative (lines 20-21) supports this emphasis, as Ildikó notes how some people even take the tiresome task of learning Hungarian.

A third aspect of negotiating a sense of geography in narratives involves the ethnic community creating a sense of ancestral homeland. Eszti talked about the Philadelphia and Vicinity Magyar (Hungarian) Sports Club as well as how the place had become part of her

childhood. The story has two parts: in the first part, Eszti recounts how it functioned during its early years and in the second part, the hearer learns how the community went about building the place. The narrative is a chronicle because it presents a series of events that are ordered spatially and temporally.

- 1     **EP:** A Magyar Tanya, a philadelphiai Magyar Tanya. And we grew up there. We  
2     spent our summers there. In fact there were summers when all the kids were  
3     camping out at the Hungarian club. Parents would go home to work and at night  
4     some parent would come out to make sure we haven't killed each other or we  
5     take our underwear, you know we ate. Make sure everybody was OK and then  
6     would go home. So we spent our summers up there.  
7     **M:** What age were you then?  
8     **EP:** We were the youngest, my sister and I, or almost the youngest. This was in,  
9     after my parents split up, so like age 9, 10, 11, 12, 13. Well, my parents were  
10    involved in this Magyar Tanya from the very beginning. They helped, there was  
11    and old farmhouse there, and they put an addition. Well, the first thing they did  
12    was they dug a pond in the shape of Nagy Magyarország. Történelmi  
13    Magyarország. And so when people would go out and help out with the work. So  
14    they volunteered every family with the kids. And men would work you know as  
15    stone masons, carpenters, and they would all do the work themselves. The wives  
16    would cook, bake and the kids would play and go swimming. And so turning to  
17    this huge, huge community thing. Eventually a pool was built because the  
18    American Health Department closed down the pond, because we were not  
19    supposed to swim in it. And a huge pool was built, a ballroom, hotel rooms,  
20    kitchen by the pool a pavilion, so this took four years to go on. And my parents  
21    were involved in this from the very beginning. (Appendix C, *Interview 8/1*)

Neither of the episodes have a specific point because it is descriptive in nature. De Fina distinguishes between stories and chronicles claiming that the former has the main objective of “presenting the narrator’s evaluation of the meaning of certain events or actions and events,” the latter is descriptive and it aims at portraying how a particular state of affairs occurred (98). The clause about Eszti and her sister practically growing up in Magyar Tanya (lines 2-3) calibrates the importance of the place for them. It became a Hungary substitute for many of the people who worked on it. The chronicle constitutes of episodes or a series of stories, which also describe how the community was built (line 17) besides the site. Magyar Tanya is a home for the Hungarian-American community near Philadelphia, since it not only builds community but also maintains it through providing a sense of homeland (Sheskin 119). The particular place has a special importance for the community, its members feel at home there, and the experience of liminality fuels the idea.

As the episodes prove, the narrative constructs of liminality, borderland existence and bidirectional acculturation can be approached through the migration experience of parents and grandparents, their participation in historical events as well as my informants’ relocation and



sense of homeland. The interpretation has shown that linguistic devices such as the shift from direct to indirect speech, pronominal switches and synecdoche reveal meta-narratives and restructure archetypal storylines about ethno-cultural existence. These meta-narratives position narrators individually as Hungarian-Americans. They present their life-stories applying various means of representation such as language choice and code mixing, understanding canonical narratives and using and addressing stereotypes.

## **4.2 REPRESENTATIONS OF ETHNO-CULTURAL IDENTITY**

Narratives of Hungarian-Americans present events, qualities, characters in distinctive modes of representation that encapsulate some kind of language use. The choice of language constitutes one of the major forms that represent ethno-cultural identity. As I have written, the interviews were conducted in English; however, informants often switched to Hungarian to add emphasis to the content, to talk about something exclusively Hungarian, or to refer to highly culture-dependent concepts, events or items. Thus, code-switching as a linguistic device carries the intention of the speaker to express cultural content and informs about how interviewees relate to their Hungarianness. The second form of language-related representation of ethnicity is canonical narratives or literature and the way informants refer to reading and interpreting it. Their choices and understandings strongly reflect the experience of liminality. The third form of representation regards narrative stereotypes as cultural viewpoints and verbalization of cultural artifacts essential to cultural consciousness. Thus, language or semiotic practice, as argued in section 1.3.3, becomes a tool towards a continuous progression of identity construction.

### **4.2.1 *A very cserkész* word—language choice and code-switching**

In this section, I explore ways in which code-switching as defined and discussed in section 2.3.3 is used in the narratives to symbolize and communicate issues of ethnicity such as individual vs. collective identity or boundary roles and liminality. The alternative use of English and Hungarian in the same conversation not only indicates a stage in the linguistic acculturation of these people but also signifies a conscious effort to keep the ancestral language as well as an “overtly marked separation between in- and out-group standards” (Gumperz 65). The knowledge of Hungarian links its speakers to prestigious communities that are only available through language. Even though the ability to understand and speak

their ancestral language differed greatly among my informants, all of them switched occasionally to Hungarian even if only for the sake of one or two words. Single word switching (Gardner-Chloros 73-74) occurs very frequently with items of food, names of events and geographical locations characterizably Hungarian (Appendix C). However, in this section, I will focus on three distinctive modes of code-alternation that occurred in the narratives and I assume that they are significant from the perspective of negotiating ethno-cultural identity. These are 1) inter-sentential code-switching, 2) intra-sentential code-switching, and 3) single-word switching. Regarding the terminology of the field, I will use the term “matrix language” (Myers-Scotton 235) to signify the dominant language of the narrative, the language from which most morphemes are drawn (Myers-Scotton 237-238). Embedded language (Myers-Scotton 235) on the other hand, means the language into which the speaker occasionally switches.

The following narrative cropped up at the beginning of our conversation when Endre was telling me about attending Hungarian school from a very early age on, and the hilarious stories that they had there.

1 Szendrey Dani who was a good friend of mine, we grew up together, he walked  
2 in and said, “Hey, what’s happenin’?” Daróczy Ibi néni was our teacher and she  
3 says, “Nem úgy köszönünk.” And she sent him out and to try it again and so he  
4 walked back in and says: “Hey, what’s happenin’?” And it possibly happened  
5 like five times before he kind of finally walked in and could set the teaching off.  
6 And, or she would say, “Vedd le a szemüvedet!” You know and so she could  
7 give him a “pofon.” Uhm. We were rowdy kids I mean this. We had good times,  
8 you know. (Appendix C, *Interview 4/1*)

The narrative is argumentative about the use of the Hungarian school despite that young kids do not always appreciate the effort. Endre argues that this school experience gave them a lot not only in that it made them able to speak Hungarian fluently and eloquently but also as it provided them with a source of kids’ fun belonging to a peer group of similar background. It is a personal experience story in which at least six events occur in a temporal order. This order is important because it constitutes a specific point about them as kids as well as how the Hungarian school operated and taught not only the language but also the cultural and behavioral norms and attitudes (line 3). The matrix language of the narrative is English and Hungarian is the embedded language. The first and second code-switches occur in lines 1 and 2 and they are both names said in Hungarian. They are intra-sentential switches and as names they specify the information that Endre provided as well as emphasize the Hungarianness of

the characters. It is not only the order of the name, last name coming first, but also both persons are referred to in a Hungarian nickname, Dani (line 1) and Ibi néni (line 2).

The third instance of code-alternation occurs in line three in which Endre quoted an entire clause of the teacher's words in Hungarian. In this sentence, the clause is reported as direct speech and in Hungarian. The story then tells how Endre's friend was sent out five times before the class could resume. It has never turned out from the story what Dani finally said in Hungarian, yet assumingly he conformed to the teacher's requirements. These two devices strengthen the message that Hungarian school was not only about learning the language but also about norms, manners and attitudes. However, it also had to offer ways of entertainment and motivate children towards liking it. All my interviewees who mentioned that they had attended Hungarian school said that though it was a drag having to go to school in their free time it was worth it, for it gave extra knowledge and community that they belonged to. Quoting his friend's verbal misbehavior and the teacher's reaction to it deflects responsibility and it allows Endre to assume the neutral role of the audience. As a member of the class, he also learned proper behavior and the episode even served as reinforcement. Nevertheless, his switching to Hungarian when he mentions the name of his friend and the teacher indicates that he shared the same communal ties with them by a common language. Thus, the conversational devices of code-alternation and reporting dialogic turns express the power and dynamics of language in building and maintaining community. In section 4.3.2, I will deal more profoundly with community building and ethno-cultural identity.

Dani's mischievous behavior continued even after Ibi néni set off teaching. Endre switched to Hungarian once again to indicate and quote her reaction (line 6). The next sentence, however is almost only English except for the word "pofon" (line 7), a single-word switching, which is embedded in a syntactically correct English utterance. However, the term 'slap in the face' would not emphasize and reinforce the information that all this happened in the Hungarian school with second-generation Hungarian-American kids who learned to apply in- and out-group standards. Thus, bidirectional acculturation is a theme that the narrative opens up. Second-generation ethnic Americans go all the way through the primary means of acculturation into American culture that is the American education system. Hungarian school as a source of cheerful and funny experiences created a positive and motivating environment for the instruction of Hungarian as an additional language. According to Schumann's model of the relationship between the level of acculturation and language described in section 2.1.2, acquisition of the classroom atmosphere must have supported acculturation back into an émigré-community-based Hungarian culture, which in turn led to successful instruction.

As described in the acculturating capacity of the Hungarian school and reviewed in chapter 2.1, canonical theories on ethnicity hold that the identity of second-generation ethnic Americans is hardest to describe and generalize. Eszti talked about the pioneer mentality in America, which she started to appreciate after having spent more time in Hungary.

1 Amerikában ott semmi sem lehetetlen. [...] Ez az alapállás, ami az Amerikai  
2 gyerekeknek van az sehol a világon nem lehet.[...] Na most lehet hogy sokan úgy  
3 gondolják hogy a felületes érdeklődés meg kedvesség amit az amerikaiak  
4 nyújtanak, mert mindig mosolyognak meg köszönnek meg mit tudom én, de  
5 valahol nekem az jobban esik mint amikor belépsz a postába és már azzal  
6 fogadnak, hogy már megint miért vagy itt című undor. [...] Szóval ez a két dolog,  
7 tehát hozzáállás és felfogás. Ez az életfelfogás, hogy mindenre képes az ember  
8 csak legyen elég lelkiereje hozzá. De ezt senki nem fogalmazza meg magának  
9 Amerikában. Ez természetes dolog.  
10 Mikor eljössz ide Magyarországra, akkor döbbsz rá, hogy az osztályban a tanár  
11 néni azt mondja, hogy nem mehetünk el az őségi kirándulásra, mert túl drága  
12 volt a busz, a minibusz, amivel elmentünk volna. És akkor én körbenézek, hogy  
13 kérdezett bárki is engem, hogy van-e valami ötletem, hogy, hogy lehetne ezt  
14 megoldani. Nem. Csak már eleve úgy indulunk neki, hogy képtelenek vagyunk  
15 megoldani, mert túl nehéz. És kész. És amikor rákérdez az ember, hogy hát van  
16 három különböző ötletem, amit meg lehetett volna próbálni mielőtt feladjuk a  
17 harcot, és hát. Ez nagyon fárasztó. Nehéz az ilyenekkel szemben, hogy a  
18 gyerekek ne hogy rákapjanak erre a szellemre. [...] Hihetetlen dolgok történnek  
19 itt. És én nem így ismertem a magyar embert. Legalábbis nekünk nem ezt  
20 mondták el Nagy Károlyék. Hogy ilyen a magyar ember. Szóval becsapás volt a  
21 nevelésünk egy kicsit.  
22 [...] Hát minél több külföldi magyar kell jöjjön Magyarországra és minél több  
23 magyarországi fiatal kell kikerüljön nem Európába, Amerikába, mert Európában  
24 is olyan butaságok vannak, hogy az ember. És soha nem gondoltam, hogy én  
25 valami nagy Amerika rajongó vagyok, de kiderül, hogy ezek szerint az vagyok  
26 illetve nagyon értékelem azokat az eszméket, amik ott természetesek. Illetve én  
27 hiszek abban, hogy “positive brainwashing.” Tehát a gyerekeim osztályaiban,  
28 Amerikában “you can do it,” “aim higher,” “you’re capable,” “smile it’ll be  
29 better.” Meg ilyen plakátok vannak kirakva az osztályokban. És annak idején  
30 amikor nem jártam ennyit Magyarországon akkor nem fogtam fel ennek az  
31 értékét és úgy lenéztem, hogy mi ez, miért van erre szükség. De szükség van rá,  
32 hogy pozitív hozzáállást az emberekben hangsúlyozni. Meg az a pionír szellem,  
33 ami még mindig létezik Amerikában az fantasztikus. (Appendix C, *Interview 8/2*)

The narrative is argumentative, in which the point is that the ever present pioneer spirit makes it easier to get by in American society. The matrix language is Hungarian and the embedded language is English. The episodes that Eszti brings up to illustrate her point revolve around a conflict between certain attitudes of Hungarians living in present day Hungary and the American mentality that she has been acculturated into as a second-generation Hungarian-American. Thus, regarding its content, it is a conflict narrative because the self is constructed in contrast to the attitudes and characteristics of others. The arguments that underlie the conflict are mounted in a rhetorical set of binaries. In the first part (lines 1-9), Eszti compares

her experience of services in Hungary with that in the United States of America. Events that are recounted here are de facto; they occur in general, there is no concrete time or place mentioned. Thus, they represent attitudes in a generalized, stereotypical form and position the narrator relative to these attitudes at a respectable distance. The first pair of binaries occurs at this point: Americans always smile and greet each other (line 3), whereas Hungarian postal assistants have an expression of disgust on their face (line 6). The gap is huge, and it signifies a conflict area and culture shock. Mentioning disgust as a form of greeting customers at the post office represents an idea that attitudes and ways of doing things in present day Hungary lack vitality and a future perspective.

The second binary to outline Eszti's argument about the conflict appeared in a story (lines 10-21) that illustrated her point with personal experience. Her children could not tour the Órség region of Hungary due to the teacher's lack of resourcefulness and creativity. Hungarians give up the fight (lines 16-17) to trying to solve a petty problem, whereas Eszti would act on the contrary and pool some ideas (lines 12-14 and 15-16). In this narrative the Hungarian norm of teacher authority also surfaced and Eszti's distinctive cultural experience of teachers and parents working together to find solutions that are best for the children. Therefore, the argument is also about that the Hungarian cultural norm focusing more on authority, whereas the American norm, at least according to Eszti, aims more to solve the problem. The episode ends in a reflection on the knowledge acquired at the Hungarian school (lines 18-21) and that it seems irrelevant.

There is a second narrative that is embedded at this point about Károly Nagy (line 20), one of the prominent leaders of the Hungarian-American ethnic community, and his attempt to acculturate Hungarian-American children into Hungarian culture. In her present stay in Hungary, Eszti compared 21<sup>st</sup> century Hungary to a sense of Hungary constructed in the personal narratives of her parents, friends and teachers and the literary narratives she learned from the Hungarian literature canon. The gap may in part be due to the migration experience of the émigré community that actually shared much of the pioneer mentality. Without seeking solutions to problems, establishing rapport and following natural ideas and thoughts they would not have been able to settle in a different country and culture. Thus, the American pioneer mentality that is rooted in the émigré existence from very early on is very similar to the experience many of these families encountered.

The last part of the story (lines 22-33) is a proposal how Hungarians could acquire the pioneer mentality through first hand cultural contact. Eszti used the third set of binary in this episode as she opposed the foolishness of Europe (lines 23-24) with the poster wisdom of

positive attitudes (lines 28-29) on display in American schools. The role of the slogans is to reinforce the pioneer mentality, which is invisibly part of American socialization. In lines 24-27 Eszti talked about how being socialized into that mentality she went through bidirectional acculturation into American as well as Hungarian culture. By the time of the interview she was able to pick the elements of each culture she felt would make her successful, virtually a Hungarian in America and an American in Hungary. Such duality of her identity is part of second-generation liminality. The embedded English language appeared to quote the posters and refer to the effect of “positive brainwashing” (lines 27-29). The conversational functions of the code-switching are notably to signify and give more emphasis to the American part of the binary, and reinforce the main message of the narrative. Eszti’s American life was manifest at this stage; the posters’ words represented a mental trip to the United States of America to create a cultural hybrid. The coda of the story summed up its initial statement as if to provide a frame without a specific reference to the narrator. Such lack of regard to the speaker makes the experience relevant to others and invites them to participate in it.

Ildikó also invoked the Hungarian-American community in an orientation narrative and talked about how the Hungarian Athletic Club functioned and served or did not serve the needs of particular people. The original question was whether she thought old and new immigrants differed in their attitudes.

1 I mean I don't really know [the difference between old and new immigrants] but I  
2 have heard that there are, you know, certain kind of people who stick together  
3 more in that area. As a Hungarian-American Athletic Club, ott inkább ilyen  
4 idősebb korosztály van, de nem tudok mindent amit ők csinálnak, de például ők  
5 azok akik rendezik az ünnepélyeket is, tudod az ötvenhatos meg a  
6 negyvennyolcas ünnepélyeket is, de náluk szokott lenni mindenféle  
7 színházprogram, hogy megjönnek Magyarországról és akkor így előadnak ott.  
8 Meg ott szoktak ilyen kisebb közösségek is lenni, ahol ilyen tudományosabb  
9 dolgokat is megbeszélnek. Meg, de ott van olyan, hogy például van egy bár lent,  
10 bár most új atléta klub lesz, mert, mindegy ez hosszabb történet, de ott van egy  
11 bár ott lenni, és akkor azt hiszem keddenként oda megy mindenki és ott  
12 iszogatnak, beszélnek, biliárdoznak, tehát az ilyen klubféleség így mondják. De  
13 oda fiatalok nem nagyon járnak, de ők is nagyon összetartanak így magukban.  
14 Szokott is lenni néha így a cserkészek, meg tehát néha a különböző egyesületek  
15 között azért szokott így lenni, hogy mit tudom én egy nap van valami  
16 rendezvény, bár most valami összekötő szervezet figyel, hogy ki mikor mit, hogy  
17 ne legyenek ilyen összekapások, de néha vannak ilyen összekapások, így a  
18 különböző egyesületek között. Megint előjön sajnos. De ja ez így, tényleg  
19 mindenhol van. Mondjuk egy próbálkozás volt, ami mondjuk érdekes volt, szóval  
20 nem tudom, úgy tizenegynéhány évesen szoktak, ahogy mondtam a cserkészethől  
21 úgy kiszállongani. Ja mi magyarul beszélünk. (Appendix C, *Interview 10/3*)

As a major characteristic feature of orientation narratives, the narrator is not the protagonist. The story has a second part to it in the interview (Appendix C, *Interview 10/3*) about an organization in which together with her older brothers, Ildikó also assumed some part though only as an observer. The narrative pointed out the role organizations such as the Hungarian-American Athletic Club (HAAC) played in the life of an ethnic community to keep people together, yet it also created boundaries. Officially, anybody could enter the particular organization; yet in practice, it would not host newcomers (lines 12-13). The story recounted the events that the organization held and some of these were representative of the entire Hungarian-American community and some pastime activities. Due to the highly impenetrable nature of the boundaries, the solution for people who did not like one organization was to establish another (lines 19-20). However, the lack of coordination of the events these groups held could become yet another source of conflict (lines 20-21).

There is no matrix and embedded language in the narrative because it presents a specific case of code-alternation. In line four, there is an intra-sentential code-switching which leads to an entire change of code from English to Hungarian. Ildikó realized her change of code only at the end of the narrative (line 21) that makes it a subconscious mixing of the two languages to create a distinction in style and meaning. The switch occurs after the name of the club, at the beginning of the sentence. The organization has an official name in English because as it is located in the United States of America it has been registered in English. Since the name has no Hungarian equivalent, it would be hard to use the translated form and it does not sound very good either (line 3). However, it is meant to be a place where members would come together to do sports and socialize in Hungarian. Telling the story about the club must have seemed more natural in Hungarian than in English for Ildikó. The narrative describes the organization not only verbally but also symbolically through the change of the code. The device reveals and strengthens identity as well as asserts differentiation. The fact that Ildikó is conscious about mixing the two languages surfaced in the same interview when she said that they mixed words into not just Hungarian but the other way round, too. "If we are talking about scouts then you know we'll be speaking in English but we'll use you know *cserkész*zet, *tábor*, *sátor*, like these words like use *csajka*, a very *cserkész* word you know. So these words I guess that we're used to saying in Hungarian we'll use that" (Appendix C, *Interview 10/3*). The choice of language plays the role of the medium of connecting the two worlds and emblemizes group membership. Being familiar with canonical literary narratives is a hypothetical boundary that also builds toward an emblematic reality of group membership,

whereas code-switching appears to be a prime indicator of liminality and bidirectional acculturation.

#### 4.2.2 *It's not badly nationalistic*—reading literature and readings of literature

Six of the ten informants expressed a profound knowledge of and interest in Hungarian literature. They were not only able to talk about a wide spectrum of canonical literary pieces but some of them also mentioned authors who published in emigration thus, were largely unknown to the Hungarian public. Those conversational partners who turned out to be knowledgeable also displayed a common view that these works should be read in the original if possible. As Endre said he had some relatives “who say that you know Shakespeare is so much better in the Arany János translation, but I don't buy it” (Appendix C, *Interview 4/2*). Narratives on narratives revealed how my interviewees sifted out the cultural assumptions from those literary pieces and compared the information to their life experience to make it relevant. Our first dialogue with Christopher took an unexpected turn.

1     **CK:** So, uhm, sometimes, once when I was living in Germany, I was 13 years old  
2     and he translated on tape this, uhm, this and he started reading this book to me. It  
3     was a little bit of a, it's kind of a silly book, because it's kind of nationalistic and  
4     a little bit embarrassing.

5     **M:** Is it a German book?

6     **CK:** No, no, this is a Hungarian book, and it's “The Stars of Eger.”

7     **M:** Uhu. Mhm.

8     **CK:** Yeah. And he I mean because it was a book that he read when he was a boy  
9     and liked it a lot and he decided to read it to me so he read, he translated it on  
10    tape and sent me the tapes every week, so I got the tapes. [...]

11    **M:** Why did you feel it is nationalistic?

12    **CK:** Uhm. It is not, it is not badly nationalistic but that's kind of, yeah I mean it's  
13    not worse than a lot of other, it's not like Nazi. I mean it's not fascistic at all. It's  
14    just, I kind of portray it is Hungarian is heroic and the Turks kind of dumb and I  
15    don't know. But it yeah. [...] There's some kind of resentment that is probably  
16    very deeply rooted in the Hungarian psyche I think. And that's something my  
17    father has described to me about himself. And there is one story, he was at a  
18    scientific meeting and, and there was a Turkish, Turkish scientist at this meeting  
19    and he asked where he was from and he said he was from Hungary and he said,  
20    “Oh, the Turkish and Hungarian are related, aren't they.” Like the languages and,  
21    and he said kind of like, “well, we are all related” [laughs]. Kind of dismissive,  
22    he didn't like the idea of Turks and Hungarians related to each other. And he tells  
23    this story in his own self-reflective way, and how he relies on these kinds of  
24    things are deeply rooted.

25    **M:** That's very interesting.

26    **CK:** And there is always this attempt to a certain degree of mutual admiration, I  
27    don't know what the right word is sort of, kind of mutual respect sometimes, and  
28    like I know I'm thinking in Budapest, in the Fortress there is a grave of a Turkish  
29    soldier. And it's also, it's been a long time since I read, since I heard the “Stars of



- 30 Eger,” so it’s hard for me to come I guess it’s later on it’s not really hard. I mean  
31 Turks are also portrayed as somewhat heroic. I don’t know. Yeah. (Appendix C,  
*Interview 3/1*)

The argumentative narrative is about how a canonical piece of fiction builds toward collective vs. individual ethno-cultural identity. Christopher told how his father had provided him with the translation of the Hungarian novel “The Stars of Eger” [*Egri csillagok* transl. *Eclipse of the Crescent Moon*] on tape (lines 1-10). He, however, found this boyhood favorite of his father to revolve around nationalism (lines 3-4) that he clearly marks off as embarrassing and silly. The opening part of the narrative argues that the novel carried very little meaning and relevance to Christopher at first hearing translated into English by his father. He only saw its romantic nationalism and binary status of Hungarians and Turks as a prime negative feature. The portrayed effort to gather forces heroically against Turkish invaders aimed to strengthen the collective national identity for Hungarians in the Carpathian Basin. However, it lost significance in its original form for Christopher who grew up in a different cultural setting as he heard the story first on tape in his father’s voice. The novel is a classic historical narrative in the Rortian-Geertzian sense, as argued in section 2.2.3, in which a particular group is depicted as good relative to another that allegedly has more or only negative features.

Upon my question why he thinks of the novel as nationalistic, Christopher alleviates the tension and claims that the story is not badly nationalistic (lines 12-15). He illustrates this point with another narrative episode (lines 17-24) that he relates to his father’s reading experience. The novel, according to Christopher, is nationalistic enough to be embarrassing (line 4), yet in a series of negative forms he calibrates it as tolerable. He uses words with very strong connotation such as “Nazi” and “fascistic”; however, the word fascistic is negated in an emphatic form using “at all” (line 13). The use of such words instead of the more indifferent term nationalistic or ethno-centric makes his argument more powerful, yet distances them from the narrator’s experience. By the time the description of the story as nationalistic ends Christopher decides that he is not sure about it by simply adding “I don’t know” to the argument (lines 14-15). This sign of hesitation may be due to my reaction of asking back for clarification (lines 5 and 11) and the question reflects my position on the novel, which is closer to that of Christopher’s father. It also annihilates the argumentative construct of nationalism because it refers to the entire utterance. This change of opinion is justified in a story that followed (lines 17-24). Christopher tells a story how his father felt outraged when a Turkish scientist suggested that Turks and Hungarians are related ethnicities. Reporting one of his father’s stories Christopher invokes the embedded meta-narrative

concerning the deeper meaning and impact of the novel to create a collective national consciousness and socialize the readers into it. The narrator orients the hearer (lines 22-24) that this part of history has become deeply engraved in the Hungarian psyche, which Christopher claims familiarity with. The form of reporting the most important part of a dialogue between his father and a Turkish stranger invites the friendly foe into the story. Thus, nationalist resentment toward Turks is justified in the father's narrative retold, and the edge of nationalism itself is taken off as well.

Relative to Turks, however, Christopher accepts the position of his father with a cultured understanding of the Hungarian psyche. He also shows an accurate understanding of history and cultural geography of Hungary as well as important sights in Budapest. Such profound mastery of cultural icons, sense of history and geography justify his choice and proves his bidirectional acculturation as a Hungarian-American. Simply knowing the "Stars of Eger" is more important than identifying with it. Such cognizance entitles Christopher to incorporate Hungarianness into his heritage on his father's side, yet he feels no obligation to accept the canonical reception of the novel relevant for the majority of Hungarians living in the Carpathian Basin. In the coda of the narrative (lines 30-31), Christopher turns the dislike of the nationalistic aspect of the novel into a neutral event. He claims that Turks are also somewhat heroically portrayed, and the novel is more balanced in terms of value judgments, thus he converges the view of his father with his own.

Egri Csillagok is a novel that all my informants mentioned who occasionally read Hungarian literature. Along with such widely known literary pieces, some interviewees mentioned authors and pieces that are specific examples of Hungarian literature. Endre talked about Gábor Áron, a writer who mostly published in emigration, so is relatively unknown in Hungary. His assumption that I did not know much about this author was right, so Endre gave a narrative introduction of Gábor Áron's life and literary career referring to the most important titles and facts.

1 I read, I really enjoy Gábor Áron who's totally unknown here. Gábor Áron is an  
2 interesting guy, he was the head of the Hungarian Red Cross in 1945, and before  
3 that in the early forties he was a wartime correspondent. And so he went with the  
4 Hungarian troops as they went on the Soviet offensive and so he wrote a book  
5 called "Túl a Sztálin vonalon," for which they gave him the death sentence. Uhm,  
6 I haven't read it, but I have it. Just because I just figure that if someone's  
7 sentenced to death for something that it's a book that you should have. Uhm. It  
8 must be something. Anyway he came back and in '45 they took him to Siberia  
9 and so he wrote a book about those experiences called "Szögletes szabadság" and  
10 then after 5 years they let him go. And so in Siberia, in a small village he goes to  
11 the police station and says, "I want to go home, and they say, "Where is your

12 passport? And he says, “What do you mean passport? I came here in a “vagon.”  
 13 And so he says, and they say to him, “Még a nagy Szovjet Birodalomban sem  
 14 utazik senki sem útlevél nélkül.” So he spent another 10 years as a free citizen in  
 15 Siberia, and he wrote a really good book called “Évszázados emberek,” which is  
 16 about the Russian people and living among the Russians, which was very  
 17 interesting. And then in 1960 he comes back to Hungary and so this is, if you  
 18 imagine someone who left Hungary in ’45 and then comes back to in 1960, where  
 19 there’s totally, they had gone through Rákosi, they had gone through 1956, and  
 20 then they were well into the Kádár years and he tries to fit in with his old ways,  
 21 and old ways and outlooks, and he tries and doesn’t work. So after one or two  
 22 years he went to Germany, to Munich. So anyway his book is called “Túlélés,”  
 23 which is about how people kind of survived those years. And the moral choice  
 24 and ethical choices they need to live through the heyday of communism. It’s a  
 25 very, I think it’s a good book because it’s very respectful to the people that are  
 26 fighting the system, and the people who are in the system and the people that are  
 27 just trying to make it through. And these little things that are now after ’89 it’s  
 28 easy for people to like you know right now we are talking about the ügynök laws.  
 29 And it’s easy to look at the past and say well you should’ve stuck out your  
 30 principles, whatever [...] and then they ask you to write a report about your  
 31 neighbor or your brother or whatever it is. And he treats that all respectfully. I  
 32 just think it’s a good book. I like the style. So anyway it’s Gábor Áron. (Appendix C,  
*Interview 4/2*)

The narrative functions as a chronicle because apart from the fact that Gábor Áron is one of Endre’s favorite authors (line 1) he talks mostly about the writer’s life and major novels in a rough chronological order. Such chronicling of the events of the writer proves that he is an émigré writer. Endre did not experience the trials and tribulations of his life, yet his parents were under similar pressure (lines 20-21) to leave communist Hungary. As I argued in section 4.1.2, it is necessary to preserve family stories, the narrower and wider participation in historical events that builds the sense of history. A profound knowledge of the works and life of the writer Gábor Áron extends Endre’s parental experiences within a similar context, therefore, the familiarity with the circumstances help construct his self-definition. Unlike Egri Csillagok for Christopher, this author and his novels seem fully relevant to the Hungarian-American community. Thus, his choice of this writer signifies an identification with the émigré status. The characters of the story are Endre who read the works of the writer and the author himself. Gábor Áron appears as if he is not invoked to be the subject but another character in it.

The matrix language of the narrative is English and the embedded language is Hungarian. Gábor Áron wrote most of his works originally in Hungarian, so it seems natural to switch to Hungarian when Endre quotes the titles of his work (lines 5, 9, 15 and 22). These intra-sentential switches are embedded syntactically as well so there is no break in the sentence. The switches emphasize that the experiences depicted in the novels happened to the author because he was Hungarian. There are two further instances of code-alternation in the

narrative (lines 12-14). Endre uses the Hungarian word for box-car to make the story more authentic and at the same time emphasizes the distance between himself and those who for ideological, political reasons were transported in box-cars. The word is part of a dialogue (lines 9-14) Endre quotes. The conversation took place between the Soviet police person and Gábor Áron when upon earning his freedom he wanted to return to his native Hungary. The conversation that Endre most probably takes from the novel “Szögletes szabadság” (line 9) is too powerful in its grotesque nature to be reported indirectly. The utterance in Hungarian adds further emphasis to its ironic and grotesque nature.

Endre’s identification with the émigré community is represented on three levels in this narrative. Formally through occasional code-switching, because Endre has read the novels in Hungarian, and refers to the original title of the books. Moreover, in line 28, Endre uses one word in Hungarian, “ügynök” [agent or emissary]. The historical period-and society-specific connotations of the word in Hungarian explain the use of intra-sentential switching because Endre wants to make sure that no information is lost that way. The issue whether cultural contexts can be constructed and understood with or without the connotation of historical period- and society-specific language use is a pivotal point in the study outlined in chapter five of the dissertation. Endre solves this problem via navigating between the two languages to give additional meaning to the words and quotations. Furthermore, the émigré community is represented structurally, when he shifts from the declarative statements of the chronicle to reporting dialogues and contentwise in choosing Gábor Áron as an émigré author he likes and understands.

Matyi Tábor (MT) calls most of the authors he has read “heavy hitters in literature” (Appendix C; *Interview 5/1*) meaning canonical Hungarian literature. In the second interview, Matyi mentioned that his mother was in charge of scout fundraising as well as organizing the poetry recital competition for the children in the Hungarian school, so he also participated.

- 1 **M:** Can you tell me about that [the poetry recital competition]? You just
- 2 mentioned that you liked it a lot.
- 3 **MT:** No, I liked winning and getting the money. I didn’t like learning the
- 4 poems, that was annoying.
- 5 **M:** You said there was money that could be won?
- 6 **MT:** Yes, there was a monetary, like monetary award for winning the
- 7 competition. It’s a competition on three grade levels. I mean there are three
- 8 places, first, second and third and each of those has certain amount of money that
- 9 you win. So that was nice to win. Uhm.
- 10 **M:** Did you win several times?
- 11 **MT:** Yes, I was usually placed in the top three.
- 12 **M:** Can you tell me what your favorite poems were?
- 13 **MT:** I don’t know. I don’t generally have favorites, there are ones that I like. Az

14    úr érkezése, Ady Endre, Anyám tyúkja, that was always a favorite. Uhm, hogy  
 15    hívják azt “Egész úton hazafelé” Füstbe ment terv. I certainly remember  
 16    learning Nemzeti dal of course. We learned some Arany as well. Arany Lacinak,  
 17    lot of Petőfi. Uhm. Who was that? Reményik, we learned some Reményik I  
 18    believe. Reményik Sándor. Az acélember, do you recognize that? So Áll  
 19    egyenesen egymagán, az acélember a hegy oldalán. I don’t remember any further  
 20    but it’s basically about a telegraph pole standing and watching the world around  
 21    itself and seeing what happens. I like that one. (Appendix C, *Interview 5/2*)

There are two episodes in this personal experience story. In the first story (lines 3-9), Matyi recounted how participation in the poetry recital competition raised ambiguous feelings in him. He liked the financial reward of good work, however, achieving it required hard work and perseverance, which was annoying sometimes (lines 3-4). Learning and citing poetry in Hungarian is not an easy task for even Hungarian children. Matyi said that at the beginning his motivation was mainly his mother who wanted her children to speak very good Hungarian, indistinguishable from native speakers. As time passed, it became his personal goal, not only to speak Hungarian but also to speak it well. Poetry is a source of language that is very complex and often shaded with particular linguistic devices that require the reader’s specific knowledge. According to the episode, Matyi acquired that knowledge and made excellent use of.

In the second part of the narrative (lines 13-21), Matyi talks about the kind of poetry he knows and likes. He refers to four authors and five poems to illustrate that he actually likes more poems rather than picking a few favorites. A mixture of English and Hungarian appears in the second part of the narrative. Matyi lists an author and two titles (lines 13-14) and in lines 14-15 he gives a sign of hesitation regarding the next title and rather quotes the first line of the poem. This whole utterance is in Hungarian because the topic is such that Matyi uses Hungarian when talking about Hungarian poetry. Therefore, it is natural for him in this situation to juxtapose the two languages and signal the importance of the theme by using a different language. Even in the U.S.A., it is natural for him to switch to Hungarian if they talk about Hungarian poetry or literature. Matyi closes the story with a short quotation from a poem by Sándor Sík – he mistakenly thought Sándor Reményik – entitled Acélember [Steel Man] (lines 17-21). He tells the opening lines from the poem in Hungarian (lines 18-19). Code-switching in these cases indicated the occurrence of a specific theme which required a particular language. Matyi aims at communicating the familiarity with poetry and Hungarian literature as well as expressing his pride about it in a personal experience narrative. Such knowledge of literature and poetry means the acquisition of dominant culture traits through language use, which as I cited Laroche et al. (418), is a prerequisite of linguistic acculturation.

This time, nevertheless, linguistic acculturation is targeted at the Hungarian language and culture. The knowledge of literature becomes a referential point of the ethnicity narrative as well as part of the inventorial definition of culture that I have outlined in section 1.3.1.

Literature and familiarity with Hungarian literature appeared as an important theme in the interviews. Most of my interviewees who know and read Hungarian literature read it in the original. Christopher has said that since he has very little knowledge of the language it would be impossible to read in the original, so he has read some works in translation, which he himself feel as different. In section 1.4.3, I argue how narrative identity can be explained from a holistic chaos/complexity perspective. Narratives about the literature reading experience of my Hungarian-American conversational partners tend to converge toward a common framework of potential interpretation. Considering these narratives a system rather than individually, interactions between the story components open up and construct a broader dialogical framework. The meta-narrative dialogue builds on concrete readings of literary pieces, which occur at different times and places, so the system has a prime feature of nonlinearity. The reading experience creates distinctive cultural representations that serve as relational points against which otherness of the reader is measured. Random links that relate the stories to stories construct the meta-narrative in process rather than statically. Membership in a group means that the individual is familiar with canonical ethnic literature and it creates meaning from the perspective of his or her own migration and borderland-existence experience. The source of free energy necessary for an ethnic community and individual as complex systems may be familiarity with the literary piece itself, which may be read and re-read any time. Thus, literature has proved to be a very important source of learning culture, which is valid in the original language. Similar features of canonical narratives to construct and refine ethno-cultural identity will be outlined in Chapter 5, as well.

Christopher's story about his first encounter of *Eclipse of the Crescent Moon*, earlier in this section, already brings forth the issue of stereotypes as an impulsive way of expressing cultural content and meaning. Categorizing the story as nationalistic as it presents mostly "heroic" or "dumb" characters Christopher applies a discursive tool to articulate rigid conventionalized and pre-defined cultural information. Nevertheless, it is not only through relating to this piece of literature that participants in the study applied the technique of stereotyping. Uses of stereotypes in distinctive contexts often aim to build the foundations for comparison, describe conflicts and position themselves relative to value systems.

#### **4.2.3 *A magyar ember becsületes, rendes ember*—uses of stereotypes**

When my interviewees talked about the communities they grew up both in the United States of America and Hungary, they very often used stereotypical remarks and generalizations to illustrate their points regarding American and Hungarian people, traveling or virtually any theme apart from their families. In section 1.3.3, I quoted Bhabha who defines stereotypes as a key to understanding otherness and difference (66). It is a discursive strategy to communicate conventionalized and pre-defined cultural information. Stereotypes lack flexibility; yet they are constructed in ambivalence and repetition (Bhabha 66-84; Kramsch 64). The narratives that my conversational partners told exemplify these qualities. When I asked Eszti how her parents' situation had been difficult as immigrants, she continued her answer with a story on how Americans normally did not understand why she spoke Hungarian to her children. Uses of stereotypes in her narrative serve such functions as setting the standard for comparison, constructing otherness, revealing conflict, and declaring value judgment.

1 Aki már Amerikában született és a szülei is Amerikába jöttek, azok ugye jobban  
2 elfogadók. Minél jobban eltávolodnak az emberek az eredeti mivoltjuktól annál  
3 nehezebben fogadják el az újdonsült amerikaiakat. De persze mindenki  
4 Amerikában újdonsült mert kétszáz év, az mi, az semmi.  
5 De például a mi szomszédunk, ahol most lakunk, nagyon műveletlen tag. Rendes  
6 úgy értem a kertje rendben van, mindent elintéz, segít ha kéred segítségül. De ez  
7 csak műveletlenségre vall a következő megjegyzése. Vajk annyi idős volt, hát  
8 egy évvel idősebb Enesénél, rendesen karattyolt magyarul, gyönyörűen beszélt  
9 magyarul, egy szót nem tudott angolul, illetve "hi," meg "bye" meg ilyenek. És  
10 ott a szomszédal van kerítésünk. Illetve nem jellemző a környékre a kerítés, de  
11 nálunk van mert a kisgyerekek ne szabaduljanak el, és odament a szomszédal  
12 beszélgetni a Vajk. És ő magyarul nyomta a szöveget és akkor elkezdett  
13 üvöltözni a tag, hogy, "Blah, blah, blah, I don't understand you, speak English,  
14 you're in America." Na most mindig vannak ilyen emberek.  
15 Akkor volt egy óvoda. Volt egy óvónő, aki amikor beiratkoztunk az óvodába  
16 akkor találta azt mondani, hogy "hát tudod, otthon angolul kell beszéljél hogy ne  
17 maradjon le a gyerek." Na 1998-ban, vagy 1999-ben, vagy 2000-ben ilyen  
18 badarságot senki se mond. De még ott az óvodában. Azonnal jelentkeztem az  
19 igazgatónál, hogy már bocs, ennél az óvó néninél nem, vagyis akkor  
20 jelentkezünk, hogy oda ne rakj be, mert akkor baj lesz. Szerencsére nem is raktak  
21 be oda. Ez a mentalitás sajnos még Amerikában él.  
22 Hát miért lehetett azt csinálni a japánokkal, miért lehetett azt csinálni az  
23 indiánokkal? Mert ez a tömegszellem magával ragadja egy normálisan  
24 gondolkodó embert. Illetve az amerikaiak el vannak tökélve hogy nincs jobb  
25 ország. Soknak nincs is útlevelük. Hát miért hagynák el Amerikának a határait, a  
26 TV-n keresztül mindent meg lehet ismerni. Hawaii-ba el tudok menni nyaralni.  
27 Ezen kívül mi dolgom lenne máshol. Ez is van Amerikában sajnos. És hát ott az  
28 a, ott a szomszédságunkban csak azért tudják hol van Magyarország, mert piros  
29 fehér zöld zászlót rakunk ki a házunk elé Szent István napjára. Szóval ez szomorú  
30 tény, de így van. (Appendix C, *Interview 8/2*)

In this argumentative narrative, Eszti linked two episodes in order to illustrate conventionalized descriptions about the intolerance of Americans towards other more recent ethnics and immigrants. The introduction (lines 1-4) presents a broad generalization about how the attitude towards ethnics and immigrants changes across generations. The viewpoint resonates with the broad social debates about the necessity of introducing stricter controls in immigration to the United States of America (Reimers 132-149). Eszti concluded that all Americans are recent immigrants because 200 years of American history is very short (line 4) compared to the unspoken 1,000 years of Hungary. There is no protagonist in this part, because there is no need for one. The declarative utterances about the collectively hostile behavior of Americans towards newcomers reflect a stereotype, part of the cultural imagination and consciousness framed by recent political, literary, and cultural discourses. Stereotypes, these rigid and fixed pieces of information regarding Americans, distance Eszti from people who do not understand first-generation ethnic Americans. At the same time the use of stereotypes emphasizes and introduces how she makes conceited efforts to preserve her unique Hungarianness in America.

The matrix language of the narrative is Hungarian and there are embedded uses of English. Telling the story in Hungarian is important because Eszti focused on Americans and used a distinctive language to position herself as the other. The first episode (lines 5-14) recounts an instance of the stereotypical American bigotry against non-English speaking. Eszti's son was speaking in Hungarian to their neighbor who replied in English and objected to him using another language. Hungarian is the mother tongue of Vajk and he only spoke words in English at that time which Eszti indicated with intra-sentential switches (line 9). The next use of English occurs in line 13 and 14 when Eszti quoted the neighbor's words. The use of direct reported speech and code-switching emphasized and confirmed the neighbor's unsophisticated (line 7) behavior. For Eszti bilingualism and biculturalism are so valuable sources of socialization that stereotypical constructions such as the neighbor's attitude only strengthen and justify her choice. She concluded the episode with similar generalization (line 14). According to Eszti, the utterance of the neighbor reflected stereotypical views in American society she wanted to be distinguished from. The conflict in the episode illustrates how the senses of otherness and difference are constructed against conventionalized ways of thinking in stereotypes.

The second episode (lines 15-21) is built around a similar conflict that emerged between Eszti and the kindergarten teacher because Eszti spoke Hungarian to her children. At this point Eszti only reported the teacher's words (lines 16-17) to distance herself from such



an outmoded and stereotypical linguistic view (lines 18-19). She indicated her position with the choice of an emotionally loaded word [such foolishness] (line 18) and negation as well as overgeneralization [nobody ever says] (line 18). The kindergarten teacher described some broad conceptualizations of nativist fears (Reimers) in terms of stereotypes. Józsi Temesvári referred to a similar situation of not knowing English when he first went to school. “When I went to school I came to a culture shock syndrome, where everybody was speaking English and I didn’t understand the language. So I was held back a year till I well within a year, young children pick up the language very quickly” (Appendix C, *Interview 9/1*). Nevertheless, even this experience does not justify the kindergarten teacher fully. The episode ends in a coda (line 21) that is Eszti’s stereotypization of the event. The deictic term “ez” [this] (line 21) in the sentence refers to the context of the story, and serves as a bridge toward generalizing the experience.

The concluding part of the narrative continues from the episode coda of the second part and presents general references from American history (lines 22-23) such as the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II and the treatment of Native Americans through the course of American history. In Eszti’s view, stereotypical thinking rules the crowd and justifies actions that are otherwise easily discarded, or even despised. She then listed a set of stereotypical statements about Americans as ignorant and lacking interest (lines 24-30). Stereotypes function as declaring value judgments and setting the standard for comparison to calibrate themselves as bicultural. Putting together the three episode codas (lines 14, 21 and 29-30) they logically follow one another and build the stereotypical reference in Eszti’s argument. In the narrative Eszti applied a technique of building stereotypes into concrete events to establish and increase the credibility and validity. She justified her own references to conventionalized ways of thinking whereas successfully defied others, thus distinguishing herself from them. Such duality of using stereotypes is made possible in a narrative structure when the narrator is the protagonist in the narrative.

Matyi Tábor applied a similar strategy to justify the distance between native Hungarians and Hungarian-Americans in the following narrative. The story is more a description of Matyi’s experiences about encountering Hungarian life in its full blow than a recount of a personal event. Political and sometimes cultural attitudes in contemporary Hungary trigger some disappointment among second and third generation Hungarian-Americans who decided to relocate out of genuine interest for shorter or longer periods of time (Várdy and Szendrey qtd. in section 3.1.2). They brought with them the experience deriving from the stories of their parents and the Hungarian-American community, which

Endre summed up: “so for me growing up it was always “a magyar ember becsületes, rendes ember” (Appendix C, *Interview 4/1*). Matyi positioned himself as a Hungarian-American with his claim that the described attitude is “ridiculous” (line 4), something he was not socialized into and is not acceptable for him.

1 But I’ve noticed that within the Hungarian society there are very many a widely  
2 varied strata in terms of social and political views and monetary resources. The  
3 society, the organizations that exist all are filled with such political infighting and  
4 bickering that is ridiculous. Just because somebody that they don’t like proposes  
5 something they immediately shoot it down. It’s like crabs in a bucket. They pull  
6 the other down that’s almost escaping instead of helping them out. (Appendix C,  
*Interview 5/1*)

In the orientation narrative, Matyi invoked states and conditions instead of concrete events and he talked about the attitude to signify the distance between his standpoint and the attitude and life of native Hungarians. The application of the ethnic label “Hungarian” (line 1) expresses distance rather than identification because it describes a society to which the narrator does not belong. The description centers on Hungarians who are others from Matyi’s point of view and he assessed the behavior, position and beliefs of these others. The explicit evaluation, nevertheless, presents the hearer with implicit evaluation of the self and the community he or she belongs to that is defined in contrary. De Fina calls such link “relevance relationship” in which the discursively sustained positions become pivotal strategies within the narrative construction of the self and others (152).

The story has no protagonist; Matyi spoke in general terms about things he witnessed in Hungary as an omniscient narrator. By using the expression “I’ve noticed” (line 1) and the use of the personal pronoun “they” twice (line 4-5) he positions himself relative to Hungary and Hungarians as insider and outsider at the same time. He understands what goes on, however, he decides to stay away from it. The personal pronoun “they” and the indefinite pronoun “somebody” (line 4) provide the information that the story does not refer to a particular person rather it aims at conventionalizing and generalizing information. Thus, for him Hungarianness does not imply identification with contemporary values and ways of behaving. This attitude is reflected in Matyi’s characterization of Hungarians with a proverb in the story coda entirely alien to Hungarian culture, “like crabs in a bucket” (line 5). Matyi even explains it knowing or at least feeling the lack of cultural context. The simile together with the explanation opens up the perspective of the narrative further. The comparison generalizes the experience adding more emphasis and emotional content to the distance between Hungarians and Hungarian-Americans. It makes the hearer-reader Hungarians think

about the observation: are we truly unrelenting and not thinking about potential consequences? Do we act like crabs in a bucket?

While Matyi's experience of ethnic liminality allowed him to use experiences to support his self-construct and discursively create other Hungarians with the help of stereotypes, Rob talked about the dynamics of how Americans and Hungarians relate to community. In contrast to Eszti's narrative about occasional anti-ethnic American attitudes he gave a broad stereotypical account of Hungarian people regarding their incapacities to build and maintain communities. Within the structure of otherness and borderland existence, his insights strengthen his insider-outsider position.

1 I think two things that are also, that I notice if you wanna call me an outsider  
2 when it comes to getting involved with the Hungarian community is Hungarian  
3 people in general are very, very skeptical, towards anything new. And especially  
4 if anything goes, oh, this is really good, and you gotta try this, this is gonna be  
5 wonderful. Then they are gonna be skeptical, negative, pessimistic, almost closed  
6 and there is a sense of you know that this is a lie. This is not true. And that might  
7 be even more so if someone says it comes from America. I'm not exactly sure  
8 why that is but there is very much of an anti-American flavor and lots of times  
9 when I give a talk the first twenty minutes I can see it in people's eyes they are  
10 skeptical. If they've never met me before they don't know who I am, then first  
11 twenty minutes is you know what does he wanna say. Can anything good come  
12 from America? That type of an attitude. And then as they begin to hear the  
13 teaching usually they relax and they too take in the information and learn. But the  
14 first twenty minutes is usually a wall. And that's different, I think the American  
15 people are much more open, and they're not so critical, maybe a little more naïve.  
16 Trying to think of why that could be. [...] And so I think the Hungarian people in  
17 many ways, I don't say they are defined by that but that's true of them they are  
18 very doubtful, skeptical pessimistic about anything new. That's the first thing.  
19 You don't see that in the American communities. It's much more their naïvity,  
20 it's much more their openness.  
21 The second thing about the Hungarian community is that very few of them, very  
22 few, it's difficult, I would say live in community. I think Hungarians, they love  
23 conversations, and they can have deep friendships, and the family is very, very  
24 important but at the same time because I think there is so much impact. Let me  
25 give you an example.  
26 Last night we had társasház közgyűlés volt. And I mean if someone asked me  
27 would you wanna go to the közgyűlés meeting or would you wanna go to the  
28 dentist and have him pull your teeth. And I'd choose pull my teeth, I mean it was  
29 just a kínzás, it was just a torture, to listen to the people. And I'm just trying to  
30 sum up what happened last night. And it's this person doesn't trust this person  
31 because this person believes that this person is putting money into their pocket  
32 and using everybody else and so there is this total lack of trust and a total  
33 inability to work with one another. And there is just all this blaming, if something  
34 goes wrong, and who is at fault here, and then if they fall and get around to  
35 looking at a solution then three or four people have different opinions on this  
36 should be the best solution. And it's just a total inability to work with one  
37 another and live with one another. (Appendix C, *Interview 6/3*)

The argumentative narrative presents a set of open generalizations about the extreme skepticism and Ameriphobia of Hungarian people and the qualities and types of behavior that make it hard for Rob to initiate and support community-based activities. The arguments build a causality that Hungarian people in the narrator's view have to go a very long way until they learn or relearn to create communities in various fields of life. They will not be able to develop spiritually, intellectually, personally unless they change the almost hostile attitude toward building cooperative relationships in smaller and larger groups. Rob described this hostility as a major obstacle to development. He could make such insight, as part of his mission in ministry in Hungary is to facilitate small group and community building (Appendix C, *Interviews* 6/1, 6/2, 6/3). The matrix language of the narrative is English and there are three instances of short intra-sentential switches of English into Hungarian. There are two episodes in the story; each focuses on one generalized feature of futile Hungarian arrangements in attempts to collaborate.

The first episode (lines 1-20) is about the occasional anti-American feeling among Hungarians that Rob had to cope with in his daily work. In the previous narrative Eszti talked about the still palpable presence of anti-ethnic, nativist or even xenophobic feelings in the United States of America. She stereotyped these features to emphasize her tolerance and understanding and construct her otherness as a second-generation Hungarian-American. Rob's similar background is perceived in Hungary as American and at the beginning of each new encounter, it is targeted by strong Ameriphobia (lines 6-7). The stereotypical attitude recounted in Eszti's and Rob's narratives depicts a desire for affiliation and recognition as a group, against an outsider who represents otherness. These characteristics are deeply engrained in the construct of identity, as I argued in section 1.3.3. Both features comply with an approach to the self as a process that is continuously made and re-made of social events one participates in, which are woven into a personal narrative by memory. Stereotypes make it easier to remember and recall as they classify some of the events, people and characteristics.

The use of reported speech to present some of the stereotypical thoughts and expectations (lines 10-11) expresses and even exaggerates the feelings of Ameriphobia Rob described earlier. Nobody actually uttered these words, so it is false reported speech. The technique serves functions that are similar to real reported speech such as adding emphasis, invoking the other people into the dialogue and distancing the narrator-protagonist from what is reported due to the distinctive management of the story world and the storytelling world. In the rest of the stereotypical script, Hungarians are compared to Americans (lines 16-20), which becomes an episode coda. The utterance summarizes and reinforces what was said

before. The experience of the spiritual borderland existence provides insights into how these ethnic traits define attitudes and the second episode follows logically from this comparison. The story is about the meeting of owners in a condominium complex and how they were unable to solve the problem of replacing the boiler of the central heating system. In Rob's view such problems in the "társasház" [condominium complex] (line 26) occurred because Hungarians were unable to cooperate. Thus, the narrative episode may be regarded a causal sequence (McAdams, *Coding Narrative* 3). The negative experience should have led to interpersonal growth and a development of community; otherwise, the condominium complex could not have had its heating reinstalled.

Rob used the words "társasház közgyűlés" [condominium owners' meeting] (lines 26 and 27) and "társasház" [condominium complex] in Hungarian because it is hard to find English equivalents due to the property ownership differences. The word "kínzás" appeared first in Hungarian (line 29), then Rob immediately translated it into English (line 29). Using both versions reinforces the main message that members behaved in a way that was barely tolerable to someone who is socialized into more dynamic reasonable community negotiations. The episode is built around the conflict among the condominium owners and there is not the slightest capacity to cooperate toward finding a solution. In the conflict, Rob emphasized the lack of trust (line 30), suspicion of bribery (line 31), and a total inability to work together (lines 32-33 and 36) as crucial features of fellow condominium owners who are native Hungarians. Thus, the conflict positions Rob in contrast to the characterization of the rest of people at the meeting in terms of the capacity to discuss matters in order to find solutions. Descriptions are not neutral and the story tends to polarize rather than balance the characters and their views. The stereotypical remarks in the narrative summarized the interactions (lines 29-37) and drew a sharp line between the self (narrator) and the other (native Hungarian condominium owners). The story coda refers to the particular relationships mentioned in the episode, yet the use of the deictic word "it" (line 36) makes the content of the narrative valid in general.

To summarize, as I have discussed in sections 1.4.3 and 4.2.2, the close-reading of selected stories demonstrate how the application of particular devices serve the local and particular intentions of the narrator in the story. Interactions between these components and the narratives themselves, however, can only be described in a more holistic environment provided by the chaos/complexity perspective on narrative identity. Narratives based on stereotypical descriptions and frames emerge in personal histories independent from one another, however, they connect on a larger scheme of Hungarian-American ethnic

background. In the case of some stories (Eszti and Rob in this section), I have demonstrated that it is possible to consider them as if they were told in response to one another in a broader dialogical framework of similar ideas regarding a topic such as interethnic conflict. The loosely relatable dialogue resonates with attitudes, like or dislike, not only relative to concrete features of distinctive cultural representations and backgrounds but they also become relational points against which otherness can be measured. The meta-narrative is nonlinear because various experiences of interviewees appear at different times and locales, yet they connect to the same theme dynamically. Random links that relate the stories construct the meta-narrative as a process rather than a state of ethnicity. Membership in a group means that the individual is familiar with the existing stereotypes, can apply them adequately and he or she participates in creating them. The source of free energy necessary for an ethnic community and individual as complex systems may be in the surrounding society.

The narratives I interpreted from the perspective of the meaning and use of stereotypes conventionalized the linguistic representations of cultural content mostly in the use of third person plural pronouns referring to a general subject, indefinite pronouns, and deictic words. Such devices emphasized the general significance attributed to particular events that occurred in the stories. In Bhabha's interpretation, stereotypes construct colonial discourse in creating ambivalence and repetition. In the case of personal narratives related to ethno-cultural identity these conventionalized forms of speech engrave a sharp self-imposed demarcation from the stereotypically constructed discursive communities. Stereotypes in these narratives similarly to literary, mythical and legendary characteristics (Rorty qtd. in Geertz, *Az értelmzés* 380) serve to distinguish the self from another person or group. Thus, the uses and discursive meaning of stereotypes relate to other forms of representation such as language choice, code-switching and the importance of canonical literary pieces in identity forming and construction I have dealt with in this section. A chaos/complexity perspective provides a holistic insight into how these forms of representation help build the dynamic, nonlinear process-based narrative ethno-cultural identity.

#### **4.3 QUESTIONS OF ACCULTURATION AND ETHNIC PERSPECTIVES**

Several themes appeared in the interviews that encapsulate the content of current canonical definitions on acculturation and ethnicity described in chapter two of the dissertation. My conversational partners talked about how they celebrated major holidays on a personal and community level, how they interpret and apply Hungarian folklore, the Philadelphia Magyar

Tanya as a community and that maintaining ethnic identity is based on choice and effort. Weber emphasized the subjective belief in common descent and the variability of physical or custom-based similarities in ethnic communities (56). Thus, narratively constructed ethnic identity is situational, reciprocal, and a matter of cultural and biological survival. Its situationality means that my interviewees created narrative structures that reflect voluntary, bidirectional acculturation as outlined in chapter 2.1.2. In this scheme, their stories on ethnicity are tied to particular events and locations that characterize the situations. Reciprocity of ethnic identification means that the individual identifies as a member him/herself of a particular ethnic group as well as the group identifies him or her as a member. In this section of the dissertation, I will look at how the story themes of customs and traditions, community building and ethnic self-awareness construct a dynamic meta-narrative of ethno-cultural identity.

#### **4.3.1 *They think it's amerikai magyar, so snassz—traditions and customs***

Interviewees often mentioned various traditions, folkways and customs to illustrate their views as to how bicultural existence (chapter 2.1.2) liberates them from oblivion by giving distinctive frames of cultural knowledge and constrains by imposing on them a particular structure (Kramsch 65). Some descriptions of these traditionalized forms of behavior have provided the structure of personal narratives, which fall in three major groups. The first group consists of stories that chronicle how personal and family traditions and customs are held and celebrated. The second cohort of narratives sets value judgments or evaluates American ways of culture to position narrators as well as protagonists as Hungarian-American. The third major theme encapsulates how Hungarian-Americans create new traditions that establish new communities. The following story represents the first group in which Ildikó has told how they organize the age-old Hungarian Easter tradition of sprinkling girls in a way that acknowledges the distinctive American settlement patterns.

- 1 **IV:** Well, Easter we usually have locsolás and the scouts also do that. Well, I
- 2 make eggs every year even now, with the wax and all that. I always like doing
- 3 that. And I still do. And when we were kids my father and my uncle and some of
- 4 the other parents would get the boys together like my cousins and my brothers
- 5 and everyone and then they would go visit everyone. And you know sprinkle
- 6 them you know and say little poems. But now there are so many people and
- 7 everyone lives all over the place what they've been doing for quite a few years,
- 8 for seven-eight years now the girls all get together at one person's house and then
- 9 we all just kind of have a girls' night and you know have food whatever and then
- 10 the boys together they usually write us a song and then they sing us the song and

11 then they each get an egg and that's it.  
 12 **M:** It's neat how you tailored the custom to your needs.  
 13 **IV:** Yeah, well everyone lives you know I mean it takes twenty minutes you  
 14 know people live pretty far from one another. I mean some people live five-ten  
 15 minutes of each other but by the time you go everywhere and then people get left  
 16 out and so this way everyone. And the girls' night is a lot of fun and then it is not  
 17 so stressful for the boys either to kind of spend their night running around they'll  
 18 still usually my brothers and my cousins will go to like earlier to visit like older  
 19 when my grandmother was alive, my grandmother and people like that, but and  
 20 they still do that and then they go to the younger girls which is all in once, we  
 21 make it easy for them. Some of the girls are my relatives but some are friends.  
 22 Mostly from the scouts, friends. But we have lots of relatives here and there. (Appendix  
 C, *Interview 10/2*)

The narrative combines the form and structure of a chronicle and a prototypical narrative, as it invokes a series of events ordered temporally as well as spatially and conveys a specific message about the creative use of traditions. The story is descriptive in its nature, yet it also makes a point about how traditions serve as frames of cultural attitudes, which thus offer the flexibility of personalization. The language of the narrative is English. Ildikó used the word “locsolás” once in Hungarian (line 1), thus applying an intra-sentential code-switching possibly to express the view that the custom itself is not practiced in mainstream American communities and families. At the beginning of the story, she made sure that both of us understood the same thing that she was going to talk about, since the custom does not exist in the United States of America. The function of this code-switching is to specify the information that is told as particularly Hungarian. Narrative time does not equal real time; in line 2-3, Ildikó stated that she made eggs every year decorated with the wax that she liked very much. After talking about an Easter tradition in general, a description follows (line 3-6) how celebrating Easter Monday used to be very similar to the original Hungarian customs including time consuming visits to close relatives and family friends. To keep the tradition going and at the same time adapt it to the American settlement patterns where people live at considerable distances from one another Ildikó talked about their invention. The “girls' night” (line 9), bring all girls who expect to be sprinkled spend Easter night together to wait for the boys, who sing a song that they write instead of something conventional (lines 9-11). In the coda (line 22) Ildikó justified the idea of the girls' night as they have a lot of relatives here and there.

The change of Easter sprinkling tradition is a manifestation of reciprocity of ethno-cultural identity. The individual identifies with a group through learning its traditions, in this case, how Hungarian people celebrate Easter Monday. However, the original folkways are too difficult under the new circumstances, so they are tailored to new needs to create sustainable



ethnic traditions. The group acknowledges the individual through their participation in ethnic customs and allows their creative use. The change was necessary, as Ildikó argued (lines 16-17), because without it keeping the tradition would be “stressful” (line 17) thus become negative and disorienting to the group. Liminality in this case refers to the opportunity to adapt customs and the freedom to create new forms of celebration based on old-country folkways, which reflect the needs of the Hungarian-American community. The adapted tradition would thus become more than a mere ethnic symbol (Gans 204) that people may be nostalgically connected to as explained in section 2.1.3. It is a source of reciprocal ethnic identification and a means of bidirectional acculturation. Therefore, the narrative is not only a chronicle of celebrating Easter Monday, but it conveys a specific message regarding the dynamic nature of traditions opposed to viewing them as fossils of past socio-cultural formations. It is argued in the story that traditions do offer the freedom to be created and re-created in order to give the community a fresh start. Hence, the narrative construction of traditions follows the dynamics of the chaos and complexity perspective.

Ethnic festivals are traditionally held in major Hungarian-American community centers. A custom that has not been based on any ancestral folk traditions provides the opportunity for Hungarian-Americans to meet, build friendships, and strengthen community life at a given time of the year. According to the narratives, ethnic food is usually in the center of the event. Eszti talked about the kind of Hungarian food her family frequently prepared and ate and in connection with strudel, she said that very few people made it in the traditional way except at ethnic festivals.

- 1 I mean you can make rétes because you have filled dough, just like the pre-
- 2 prepared just like you can buy at Auchan here, the réteslapok. And a lot of people
- 3 make rétes that way. But at the Hungarian Magyar Tanya we still make rétes the
- 4 traditional way. Lots of Hungarian festivals throughout the country. And that has
- 5 become so well-known that for instance the Magyar Tanya has one in July, it's
- 6 worth going. It's kirakodó vásár, of course anything that you think that is
- 7 Hungarian to eat is there. By the big pool, and there is soccer, and then ping-pong
- 8 matches, Hungarian folk-dance troops dance, Hungarian music. But there is a
- 9 magyar nap in New Brunswick, there is cserkész nap in Cleveland, there is a
- 10 Szent István nap in San Francisco. So every city has something. They used to be
- 11 a lot more traditionally Hungarian. I mean a lot of these are becoming you know
- 12 commercialized. It has become such a big event that it renders to become
- 13 commercial. But to the Hungarian, Magyar Tanya Hungarian Day people as far as
- 14 Florida come to visit. So all along the coast people go to that one. (Appendix C,  
*Interview 8/1*)

In this orientation narrative, Eszti described the Hungarian-American festival as a tradition that migration experience has called into life. A tradition that bears only some structurally-

based similarity with ancestral homeland experience, has more to do with the American way of celebrating ethnicity and multiculturalism. The narrator is not the protagonist because the story aims at presenting descriptions of occasional ethnically tinged gatherings that have become traditionalized. The matrix language of the narrative is English, and the embedded language is Hungarian; however, it is used only a few times. In Eszti's view (lines 1-3), nowadays very few people undertake to make strudel in the traditional way, mainly because it is too time-consuming. She has personal experience in that (lines 3-4), and as a comparison she switches to Hungarian to refer to the pre-prepared strudel dough sheets, "réteslapok" (line 2) available at one of the large chain supermarkets in Hungary (line 2) as well as in the United States. Preparing strudel that way does not require one to be Hungarian. The word "rétes" is used in Hungarian, and the narrator's intra-sentential code-switches (lines 1-4) emphasize the distinction between the Hungarian "rétes" and the German "strudel," a term borrowed to signify a similar kind of pastry. Other instances of using Hungarian are names of events which emphasizes the Hungarianness of these events such as "kirakodó vásár" [fair] (line 6), "magyar nap" [Hungarian day] (line 9), "cserkész nap" [scout day] (line 9), "Szent István nap" [August 20<sup>th</sup>] (line 10).

Eszti described events at the Magyar Tanya Hungarian Day in the main part of the narrative (lines 3-8), which she calibrated as very good and "worth going" (line 5). Familiarity with all the different Hungarian-American festivals (line 4) entitles Eszti to talk about and compare these events as well as to reconstruct the birth of a tradition discursively. In their structure, these events resemble annual village or parish days that most Hungarian villages have, yet the aim is to celebrate ethnicity and the ethnic community. At one point Eszti even hinted (lines 10-11) that the festivals used to be a lot more traditional. Tradition in this structure is opposed to the commercialism of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (lines 11-12), something that only privileged communities and individuals have access to. According to the narrative, being ethnic is a source of such privileges and it offers varied leisure time activities and unique opportunities. In the story coda (line 14), Eszti evaluated and generalized the experience to give additional emphasis to the value that the tradition of celebrating Hungarianness may have.

Some of the interviewees not only watched folk dance performances at various festivals but also actively participated in them. Endre and I talked about his involvement in folk dancing. It was a reward in scouting for new patrol leaders that they could join the folk dance group. Performances enabled members to meet and learn about other ethnic groups, thus being ethnic became a ground for socialization. When I asked him to describe how the

performances went he told the following story, which has two parts that follow two distinctive narrative structures according to their function and content. The matrix language of the narrative is English Hungarian embedded. Uses of Hungarian play a very significant role to express cultural content in the narrative.

1 We would start with a short prayer or some kind of formality and then we would  
2 have a warm-up, and then we would have dancing, some kind of singing.  
3 Depending on the time of the year, before Easter we would decorate eggs,  
4 sometimes we had carving, I know how to play the recorder. But a lot of dancing,  
5 mostly dancing. And it would be practicing for a particular performance. We  
6 would do the harvest festival circuit, the fall. So I'd say in September and  
7 October pretty much every weekend was booked when we would go to the West  
8 Side Reformed Church on one Sunday, Saint Emeric's on another Sunday, the  
9 East Side Reformed Church on the next weekend, and then we would go to  
10 Fairport Harbor, then we would go to Toledo, so whichever church or  
11 organization had its picnic or its harvest festival we would be you know the  
12 performers. And it was also interesting seeing them because in some of the  
13 churches we would be one performer and then the kids from the church would be  
14 another group which is a totally different, it's a very interesting active folk  
15 tradition as it were.  
16 Which Hungarian these néprajz real researchers look down on them because they  
17 think it's amerikai magyar, so snassz, it's not really you know nem is tudnak  
18 magyarul és nem is igazi népszokás. You know just really because they wear the  
19 white dress with the red white green stripes and the red top which by the way was  
20 a kind of a népviselet in the late nineteenth century. But to me it has a lot of value  
21 because you know the person who is teaching the dance she learned it from her  
22 mom who did it for forty years and her grandmother is the one who came to  
23 America so they have very, very faint ties to Hungary yet they're continuing this  
24 tradition three generations down. And then I guess that's why I was resent with  
25 these folk experts. They kind of look down on this and I just feel I know my  
26 interactions with them. Because I know and I've seen so many people who come  
27 to the United States and assimilate and don't know Hungarian any more. And I  
28 know what an effort it entails and that's what. And I guess maybe it's just  
29 insecurity on my own behalf is that they don't take this seriously. They don't take  
30 the Hungarian American tradition seriously. But they go to Transylvania and they  
31 take that seriously because even though you know it's Coca Cola or whatever it  
32 happens to be but because it happens to be invisible there that's important. But if  
33 something happens to be in America it's just snassz. (Appendix C, *Interview 4/3*)

In the first part (lines 1-15), Endre talked about the folk dance group meetings and how they prepared for performances and recalled a sequence of events that took place during rehearsals. It is a personal experience story in the form of a chronicle that presents a series of events (lines 1-6) in concordant unity. Narrative time links the events – it does not matter which September or October (lines 6-7) appears in the chronicle – that are sometimes discordant and disparate because of the considerable time span. Programs of the meeting consisted of dancing and other folk crafts (lines 3-4), thus it had a holistic approach to understanding Hungarianness in terms of traditions. The narrator-protagonist took part and assumed

responsibility in the process of maintaining the Hungarian-American tradition that is a result of the migration experience. In the first part of the narrative Endre almost exclusively uses the personal pronoun “we” to talk about members of the dance group and positions himself as part of it. The pronominal switch from “we” to “I” (line 4) sets forth an important piece of information that Endre had a talent the group could make good use of. The device emphasizes his role in maintaining the tradition as a form of communicating ethno-cultural identity. The episode closes with a conclusion that participation in a dance group offers two perspectives. The first is knowing and taking part in activities that aim at maintaining traditions is an important source of community and the second that the experience is eye-opening in how traditions are born.

The second part of the narrative (lines 16-33) starts with a sharp functional and structural shift from chronicle to a conflict narrative. Some ethnographers have ruthlessly downgraded (lines 16-18) the traditions Endre and other members of the dance group considered folk and found worth planting the effort. Hungarian-American folk is characterized in contrast to Hungarian and Transylvanian folkways. Endre felt he had to position himself as a Hungarian-American as opposed to Hungarians in the Carpathian Basin. Such forced positioning nevertheless is very painful, because it negates the authenticity of their Hungarianness, which is already very fragile due to the migration experience. Ethnographers are referred to anonymously as “néprajz researchers” (line 16), the abrupt intra-sentential switch to the Hungarian word for ethnography reinforces the main message that they are from Hungary. The deictic use of the demonstrative pronoun “these” (line 16) points to the referents instead of naming them explicitly. In this case, the device has the effect of identifying someone who is close in time, but remote in cultural understanding. The sentence continues with further code-switches (lines 17-18) and the first appearance of the word “snasz” (line 17) indicates the alleged commonality of Hungarian-American folk culture. False reported speech (lines 16-18) is a discursive denotation of the insult and indicates the lurking presence of a second narrative encapsulating mainstream Hungarian rhetoric in folk and ethnographic research. It is not important who said exactly what words, reporting them, however, distances Endre and other Hungarian-Americans from the utterance. Switching to Hungarian (lines 17-18) signifies that the ethnographer’s words hurt the narrator-protagonist.

Endre mentioned how he held the tradition so dear (lines 20-24), since it already outlived three generations and had been passed on to them. Traditions are a very special case of communication, as argued in section 2.2.3, in which knowledge is exchanged vertically

from one generation to another rather than horizontally or reciprocally (Assmann 8). Thus, its function is to create and strengthen ethno-cultural identification against the strong assimilative drive within American society (lines 26-28). Endre accepted that the Hungarian-American tradition was distinct from the Hungarian folkways in Transylvania or in Hungary; however, he felt they were equally respectable due to the effort (lines 27-28) it entailed. At this point Endre draws upon the implication of folk as genres created and maintained by the people through generations. However, folk does not necessarily disappear with the global extension of multimedia resources and according to the narrator it serves the old-new purpose of community forming as well as keeping it going.

The personal pronoun “they” is used throughout the second part to refer to people who question the validity of ethnic customs. These traditions are invented and maintained against the mainstream society and do not necessarily have everyday relevance. The second part of the narrative makes a point that these traditions are not the mere replication of ancestral cultural practices; they are rather drawn upon what immigrants brought with them. Folk loses its original meaning, yet gains a new role in creating group cohesion and the role of the scale against which knowledge is created. Such narrative construction of Hungarian-American traditions reflect borderland existence or the experience of liminality that I discussed in connection with the discursively formulated senses of geography in section 4.1.3.

In the abstract perspective of chaos and complexity theory the construction of traditions takes place as a synthesis of the interactions of cultural actors and participants of the given culture. In their narratives my conversational partners verbalized the process how the group of Hungarian-Americans create a reserve of traditions. These individual constituents build new ethnic customs that cannot be anticipated or foretold because of the dynamics and versatility of the group. In the case of ethnic customs spontaneous changes, or in chaos/complexity rhetoric, restructurings take place to establish higher orders of complexity. In Ildikó’s description of the customized Easter night gathering change is meant to release tension that the indirect application of ancestral customs would have generated. Equilibrium is reached because the community could eliminate the stress, which could have killed the wish to keep the tradition itself. Likewise the resentment Endre expressed may be the source of creative energy for the community, because it makes them recognize the sources of renewal and thus continuity. Therefore, the chaos/complexity perspective offers a wider interaction-based view on traditions: how they build ethnic communities or strengthen ethno-cultural identification.

#### **4.3.2 *If I meet Hungarians that's fine [...] but I don't seek them*—the role of community in ethno-cultural identity construction**

In the narratives that I have analyzed so far interviewees told stories about particular themes, such as their family, the importance of Hungary in their lives, learning and using Hungarian and through theme-related discourse they negotiated their position in a larger ethnic or non-ethnic community. Nevertheless, another set of stories recounts how they build communities as well as the role some of these people play in maintaining the community. A close reading of narratives reveals that the principle of reciprocity is crucial in dealing with ethnic communities. Related to the knowledge and interpretations of Hungarian literature I have concluded in section 4.2.2 that the community forms canonical narratives, in history as well as in literature, and the narratives in turn create communities. In section 4.3.1, I have argued that traditions empower community members through their roles in keeping and passing on traditions and even changes in traditions carry important meaning from the aspect of group maintenance. The small-world network concept within the chaos/complexity perspective explains the principle of reciprocity and how these groups empower their members so that they would in turn, as Endre said, “keep the flame alive” (Appendix C, *Interview 4/1*).

Community is a social formation that is also likely to emerge in the wake of the migration experience. People who for one reason or another decide to leave their ancestral homeland seek each other's company in order to find comfort and security. They are willing to act together and take efforts to develop toward a common goal of acculturation and cultural survival. Since its earliest colonial beginnings, the United States of America has seen multiple instances of ethnic community formations by people who once uprooted attempted to become re-rooted with the help and support of fellow ethnics. Hungarian immigrants acted likewise establishing communities and seeking membership in already existing ones, as I have written in chapter 3.1 about the history of Hungarians in America. My informants have given several accounts of how their parents, grandparents or other relatives found it so important to find fellow Hungarians and establish their new residence based on the experience of earlier immigrants. Józsi spoke about his aunt Kati néni that she and her family “went to Cleveland before the whole family came out, because there is a bigger population of Hungarians there. So they were able to help each other” (Appendix C, *Interview 9/2*). Accordingly, community as a source of help and mutual assistance gains a lot of significance in the wake of relocation. Eszti recounts how her parents also sought the company of fellow fifty-sixers and finally established various communities.

So in '63 or '62, 1962, well, of course all the fifty-sixers eventually found each other. Because I mean what do you do? You don't speak the language. You wanna talk to somebody, you wanna meet old friends, and there were of course churches, and various clubs and groups that would meet in Philadelphia and most major cities throughout the United States. And everyone eventually found these places. (Appendix C, *Interview 8/1*)

Thus, migratory background often triggers community membership to share similar cultural background and understanding as well as potential help. Rob also grew up with the community experience at the Hungarian Catholic Church in Saint Louis that his parents attended. As a missionary in Hungary he defined one of his goals to establish communities within the Reformed Church in Hungary. He defined community and friendship as binaries in a response to my question about his 1987 visit to Hungary. At that time, he and fellow Americans came to Hungary with a group called Campus Crusade for Christ and they experienced the utmost relation-oriented attitude of Hungarians, which he senses to this day.

1 To this day I go to the Millenáris Park here and if I have time then after I grab  
2 something to eat I go to the park and start reading. My job is such that why read  
3 at home, I can go to the park and read, so I read. And sometimes I'll just look  
4 around and I'll see people just talking. It can be two girls, two guys, lovers,  
5 business people, just whatever. And people I think really make it a part of their  
6 life still in Hungary. And call a friend and say 'Hey let's just go to the park and  
7 talk.' In America that would be much rarer. That level of relationship or  
8 friendship is much rarer in America than in Hungary. In Hungary it still exists  
9 where people see the importance of relationship.  
10 I don't know, if I wanna put a difference on it I see friendship or relationship I  
11 see it a little bit different than community. It's not quite the same thing.  
12 Community is a group of people who all believe in similar things, they all want to  
13 go in the same the direction, they all want to help each other, they are all there for  
14 one another. And I may not have a close-close friend, my goal there is to help  
15 with the blessing to really help the other people. Now if someone takes that  
16 interest in me and we have a close friendship szuper, that's really wonderful. But  
17 the community is a little bit different than friendship. 'Cause friendship could be,  
18 'Hey I'm inviting John and Mary over for dinner on Friday night'. And they're  
19 gonna come over the Following weekend and they're gonna come over the  
20 following weekend, and they're our best friends but we don't really live in  
21 community with other people we just have a few close friends és ez itt zárt kör  
22 nemcsak engedjük mi bárki ide be. És ez, I do think the Bible calls us more to  
23 community than to friendship. And so what I want to establish in Hungary is  
24 communities of people. (Appendix C, *Interview 6/3*)

Rob tells this argumentative narrative to distinguish between two essential forms of social relationships and to support the open generalization that Hungarians are not community people. At the same time, he also attempts to persuade the hearer about the importance of the social formation. The narrative is structured around the rhetorical set of binaries, community and friendship. In the first part (lines 1-9), the narrator describes the kind of relationships he

sees among Hungarians and emphasizes how important he finds that two people can get so honest and close to one another in friendship. In his explanation of friendship or relationship, Rob uses an imaginary dialogue (lines 6-7), which is reported in the narrative. The false reported speech sets apart the story world from the storytelling world, where the story world refers to Hungarians and the storytelling world relates to Rob's personal and professional experience as a Hungarian-American. The two cultures, American and Hungarian, are compared and contrasted (lines 7-9) regarding attitudes to relationships and friendships at this point although Rob makes no value judgment.

The second part of the narrative (lines 10-24) presents the main argument about the difference between relationships and communities. Rob explains the term "community" (lines 12-15) and the matter-of-fact definition is marked discursively with a pronominal switch. Rob uses the first person singular throughout the narrative except in the definition of community where the third person plural personal pronoun occurs. Thus, it is not a personal view or opinion; it is a fact. A definition clarifies the point Rob intends to make, that this social formation is missing in contemporary Hungary. No matter how deep relationships Hungarians are able to have if they cannot build common goal-based cooperation that would be necessary for social and cultural betterment. The key features of community are exemplified as binaries to the core traits of close friendship. False reported speech (lines 17-18) of the words of imaginary friends illustrates the point and distances the narrator from the attitude.

Friendship, according to Rob, may stem from mutually developing intellectual and emotional accord and a circle of a few close friends may look like a community at first sight because they seek the company of each other on a regular basis. The main message part is emphasized and reinforced in code-switching (line 21). In the utterance Rob embeds in Hungarian (lines 21-22), he not only translates the word "close" but also clarifies what he means by it namely that nobody is allowed in it. Such a relationship would not invite and encourage a wider cohort of interested people to familiarize with common issues, problems and participate in problem solving together. Therefore, the rhetorical set of binary is a device that presents Rob's views on community versus friendship and positions him as a Hungarian-American.

The multiple efforts of Hungarians to establish various communities prove how migration and borderland existence create beliefs in similar ideas, principles and interests as well as trigger the necessity and personal need to work together toward common goals. I have already quoted Eszti on her childhood experiences at the Philadelphia Magyar Tanya in section 4.1.3, which is one such community formation for the cultural survival and smooth



bidirectional acculturation. In the following narrative, Endre told the story of the birth of the idea and the creation of the site. Regarding the language of the narrative, Hungarian is embedded into English, which is the matrix language.

- 1     **ESz:** It's also like where my wife grew up in Philadelphia, where we currently  
2     spend a lot of time, Philadelphia Magyar Tanya. You know he [Gábor Áron]  
3     visited there several times because he is a good friend of Szodfridt Jóska bácsi  
4     and he was also an interesting character. I guess he also exemplifies the kind of  
5     guy, the kind of Hungarian that I was raised to respect or just grew to respect.  
6     Uhm. "Ő egy magyar katonatiszt, aki becsületes, aki nem ijed meg, de dolgozik a  
7     közösségért." That's how I'd sum it up. I mean Jóska bácsi he spent time in  
8     Siberia as well, and came back and then before '56 they shut him in prison and he  
9     left in '56.  
10    And then he came to Philadelphia and, and kind of a funny story, he. There was a  
11    Hungarian organization and they got angry at each other and they couldn't agree,  
12    and so they said, "Jóska vedd át ennek az elnökségét és oszlasd fel a csoport  
13    vagyont." So finally it was the way, 'cause there was like \$64 or something that  
14    he had to distribute 'cause they, the members couldn't agree. And so, he said  
15    these were just temporary little things and so he said OK, and he became the  
16    president and has been the president ever since, and he turned it into a I wouldn't  
17    say a Hungarian village near Philadelphia in terms of it's a Hungarian community  
18    near Philadelphia with a beautiful pool, a hundred acres, fifty camp-sites uhm,  
19    and an active social life. And so you know Tollas Tibor would go there, Gábor  
20    Áron would go there, they would invite other authors. Folk festivals maintain  
21    Hungarian traditions, and they still do so. We're still a part of that. We are card-  
22    carrying members. He passed away two years ago. But you know even at age 85  
23    he would still be on a bulldozer doing the stuff then. I guess the other thing about  
24    him and about the other people is they would work hard but they also knew when  
25    to put on a suit and when to behave in different social circumstances. I mean I  
26    never saw them unshaven, unkempt, you know I saw them, I've seen them  
27    muddy, I've seen them wearing you know muddy boots and muddy clothes and  
28    everything uhm but never you know slovenly, just disheveled, unkempt, messy.  
29    **M:** Were they something of an example for the community?  
30    **ESz:** Yeah, they had a sense of what is proper, just "noblesse oblige." (Appendix C,  
    *Interview 4/2*)

In this orientation narrative, Endre makes a point about the importance of community sites in the development of Hungarian-Americans as a group. He recounts the story of establishing the place and developing it into a large-scale cultural-geographical representation of the Philadelphia and wider vicinity Hungarian-American contingent. The story starts with a presentation of Endre and his wife, Eszti's personal experience in connection with the Magyar Tanya. The episode illustrates that the place is very important to people and ties are stronger than a simple membership in a club or organization. As an introduction, it makes the events that follow rhetorically more convincing. Endre refers back to Gábor Áron he talked about in a narrative that I quoted in section 4.2.2 on literature. The writer befriended "Szodfridt Jóska bácsi" (line 3) a founding father of the idea and an active member in developing the place to

what it is today. For the narrator “Szodfridt Jóska bácsi” carries the features of an archetypal Hungarian of the lost generation of DPs and fifty-sixers that several of my interviewees have mentioned does not exist any longer. He was sent to forced labor in Siberia (lines 7-8) and did time in prison in 1956 (line 8) and these facts qualify him as an archetypal ’56 immigrant. The key features appear in a sentence that Endre says in Hungarian. An inter-sentential code-switching (lines 6-7) carries information that is not said in English yet it is a main part of the message and characterizes a fifty-sixer in Hungarian. The sentence is an inventory of key attributes of a former military officer such as honesty, courage and hard-work in and for the community (lines 6-7), tidy, well-mannered, and impeccably-groomed (lines 25 and 28).

According to its content, the narrative is a story of settlement because it tells how it was very important for the characters to state and reinforce their group affiliation and the positive valence it carries for group members. The second part of the story (lines 10-23) presents a narrative within the narrative about how the idea of Magyar Tanya emerged from a petty group conflict. Owing to the hard-working and resourcefulness of “Szodfridt Jóska bácsi” the place turned into a flourishing community center (lines 16-19). The peak of the story is indicated in an intra-sentential code-switching (lines 12-13), in which Endre recalls the words of the participants at the meeting in a direct reported speech indicating a narrative that was once told to him. Hence, the meeting most probably took place in Hungarian. The quotation invokes his parents’ generation and the information flow is vertical rather than horizontal or reciprocal similarly to how traditions are passed on in Assmann’s theory (8). The embedded narrative is about how the community formulated around a culturally iconic location. It becomes a tradition to remember the momentous episodes and noteworthy figures of the time and hand down the narrative from father to son. Thus, it resembles the function and pattern of myths of origin and indeed becomes one for the people related to the Magyar Tanya.

A myth of origin construed within the framework of liminal existence functions to justify the distinction from the ancestral culture and to position members of the community within the target society. Hence, it serves bidirectional acculturation that spans more than one generation, thus maintaining the sense of borderland existence. Part of successful acculturation, defined in section 2.1.2, is hard work as the narrative argues (lines 6-7 and 23-24). Within the context of migration, the willingness to work hard is necessary to reveal one’s intention to become part of the target society and accept the challenges of acculturation, namely conforming to American knowledge, attitudes, cultural beliefs, values, and practices. In Eszti’s view “to stay Hungarian, you have to do extra stuff. You have to get involved in

Hungarian community life, you have to be willing to work for the Hungarian community for free” (Appendix C, *Interview 8/3*). Working hard and being proper are the cornerstones of the Hungarian-American community at Magyar Tanya, as well as at the Hungarian-American churches and the organization called Hungarian Scouting in Exeteris [Külföldi Magyar Cserkészszövetség] are significant examples of lasting community formations that my informants frequently mentioned.

The dynamics of such communities may also be interpreted along the small-world network perspective. Small-world networks are group formations according to the operative principle of chaos/complexity theory and, as described in section 1.4.3, they encapsulate cohorts of people that interact (Mc Gill, *Small 2*). If there are few links between the people, the group loses its effectiveness and it very likely disintegrates. Too many links however, disorientate members from the focus of the group and they cannot get on with the tasks of the group. According to the narrative, Magyar Tanya offers an empowering site for visiting Hungarian-Americans to build and maintain community according to the operative principle of small group networks. Magyar Tanya as a geographical cultural icon provided a goal for a group of people as well as a foundation of personal and community stories. As I argued in chapter 1.4.3, collective cultural experience appears in individual stories and once the community accepts and legitimizes them, they become part of the loose communal identity narrative structure. The myth of origin within liminal existence and similar shared stories provide such a framework to interactions and reach all members who volunteer to participate in it.

#### **4.3.3 *I just feel unique*—self-reference and self awareness and a rite of passage**

Theoretical discourses on identity, as discussed in chapter one, approach the term from distinctive viewpoints and arrive at similar conclusions that identity as self-sameness is constructed in an infinite process of entering relationships and interactions. Thus, the individual creates boundaries that separate the self from other unities. Ethnicity is a variable of identity, which can have “a range of meanings attached to it” (Waters 93). Yet identification with a particular ethnic group may not mean that the person has a well-rounded idea of what that ethnicity entails (Waters 144). The analytical concepts of self-reference and self-awareness label ways of approaching and describing the self as Hungarian-American that occurred in personal narratives to describe the ethno-cultural identifications of my conversational partners. Terms such as different or unique are frequently used to position

themselves. Uniqueness with its potentially wide spectrum of usage may express both positive feelings and less approval toward ethnic practices whatever those might be. As a concept, it reflects the elusiveness of the ethnic label that may encompass embarrassment, culture shock as well as pride, euphoria, and empowerment. It provides an interpretive background to Ildikó's experience of "we just are" (Appendix C, *Interview 10/3*). In the first story, Kathryn tells that Hungarian food is important for her not only because of its taste but also because knowing and liking it set her position as unique. The language of the story is English, only one word is used in Hungarian.

- 1     **KSz:** Like compared to other people I'm more aware, because my dad is an  
2     immigrant. And things like the ball we went to or picnics, and they speak  
3     Hungarian, my dad talks so often to me. Every time he comes to visit he brings  
4     some food and my friends ask: "What's that, what are you eating?" And so.  
5     **M:** Do they ever wanna try it?  
6     **KSz:** Yeah. Like palacsinta. Yeah. They, they say, "ugh, that's gross," and then I  
7     make it and they like it. So Americans try to make goulash, but it's not like the  
8     same. So compared to someone who says they are Italian, German, I think I'm a  
9     little more unique. (Appendix C, *Interview 1/1*)

In this short argumentative narrative, Kathryn's view shows her understanding of uniqueness as a complex concept involving several features she listed as indicators of her Hungarianness. The characteristics that occur in the story support open generalizations about the specific ethnic attributes that in Kathryn's point of view make her Hungarian. Awareness in her narratives (line 1) means social alertness and tolerance of immigrants an attitude she acquired through his father's experience. Kathryn then lists a few community-related social events she participated in with her parents (lines 2-3). There is a pronominal switch in the second half of the sentence (line 2) from first person plural to third person plural indicating that Kathryn does not speak Hungarian. At one point in the interview she expressed that she wished she could, yet also added that her father could still teach her if she decided so. However, she is familiar with the way the language sounds and the fact that the language exists. Food (lines 3-4) is a cultural referential point, as the recipes are conceived as the heritage of the group. Thus, knowing and liking different sorts of ethnic food are cultural referential points. It is so exotic that it even makes her more ethnic than the representatives of other ethnic groups (lines 8-9). As such, they are a part of the spiritual possessions of a group that positions the members into their distinctive place in the world (Kuper 65).

Kathryn constructs her self-reference as unique in narrating her own and her friends' reaction to Hungarian ethnic food. Two responses occur in the form of direct reported speech (lines 4 and 6) to express the difference between the standpoints. Quoting such views

emphasizes that the narrator-protagonist is more tolerant not only toward people and attitudes but also tastes and food that are not part of the regular American diet. Familiarity with dishes that she grew to like and that are found hardly edible (line 6) calibrates her as not average. Knowledge of ethnic culinary customs is status enhancing for her, as she knows the original as well as the American version (lines 7-8). Besides food, Kathryn referred to other forms of knowledge that she felt set her apart from simple mainstream. Awareness of the geographical location of her ancestors and the ability to go and visit Hungary are equally important for her and status enhancing as well as the accessibility of authentic Hungarian recipes. Uniqueness just like in the next story sets her apart from even other ethnic American acquaintances and the difference is undoubtedly to her advantage.

- 1 **KSz:** When I was in Italy my friend who I was visiting was just in Budapest and
- 2 uhm I just felt it was nice I could say I've been there. Mentioning some things to
- 3 her about the country. I don't feel like many people say they're gonna go to
- 4 Hungary. They say, you should go to Germany and then maybe Hungary. So I
- 5 think it'd be nice if more people would visit the country so, in that sense I like
- 6 that because I'm Hungarian. I just feel unique. I don't, there's not many
- 7 Hungarians that I run into on a daily basis that I know about. So.
- 8 **M:** What do you mean by unique?
- 9 **KSz:** I just feel unique that I'm that nationality. Because there are so many
- 10 Germans, there are so many Italians. But Hungary is sort of a smaller country.
- 11 Not smaller but I just think it's pushed aside. I don't think many people like a lot
- 12 of Americans ask me if I speak Hungary, not Hungarian they don't, that's how
- 13 ignorant are they, some of them think they don't even have a language. If people
- 14 speak German there. So it's just surprising. (Appendix C, *Interview 1/3*)

In this passage, Kathryn describes her Hungarianness as unique because in contrast with other ethnic groups present in American society relatively few share this quality (lines 6-7). The narrative is argumentative about the importance of having a sense of geography oriented towards the ancestral homeland. The opportunity to visit Hungary (line 2) and knowing about its whereabouts (lines 2-3) are sources of uniqueness for Kathryn and interpreting this aspect, she expresses the attitudinal dimension of her bidirectional acculturation. The narrative conceptualization of uniqueness as part of the ethno-cultural identity of the individual reflects her claim of being a part of a group based on shared features without physically sharing the space with the group. The abstractness of the category frames discourses about membership and the feature becomes particular, categorical or even essential to ethno-cultural identity, as discussed in section 1.2.3 (Calhoun 26). Such categorical attributes may emerge in the rhetorical practice of binary oppositions such as the ignorance of Americans (lines 12-13) versus the knowledgeability of ethnic Americans who cherish their ancestral roots. The technique of reporting a question (line 12) without the agent or time distances Kathryn from

such instances and deflects her responsibility as to the categorical use. Thus, uniqueness becomes a source of ethnic prestige and pride that are crucial toward the sustainability of ethnicity in an American context.

Besides food and an occasional visit to Hungary or the peculiarity of the small nation, Kathryn also talked about a more controversial experience of attending a debutante ball when she was 15 years old. The experience also contributes to why she feels unique, though in a much more controversial, even negative way.

- 1     **M:** Can you tell me about that ball?  
2     **KSz:** Yeah, I did not really want to do it, but my dad really wanted me. Well, he  
3     thought it would be a good idea. So, I just remember getting a dress. I just  
4     stopped. I was connected with some man, like another person of my age that I  
5     didn't know. I didn't know anybody there. I just and we, I remember we entered  
6     the dance floor doing some ceremonial dance. We ate dinner and.  
7     **M:** Did they explain to you what kind of dance it was?  
8     **KSz:** Yeah, I mean I forgot now, I mean I know that it was a coming of age  
9     ritual. It's a time when daughters used to get married.  
10    **M:** Did you feel strange?  
11    **KSz:** Yeah, because I feel like I'm so Americanized and I mean not I'm  
12    Hungarian but, I'm not well, I didn't come here. Even though I'm first  
13    generation. (Appendix C, *Interview 1/1*)

Upon transcribing the interview, I felt I did not know enough about this event in Kathryn's life, so according to the traditions of qualitative interviewing, I decided to ask back for further details. As her answer, she came up with a second, only slightly different, yet more packed narrative. For an easier handling of the data in the interpretative paragraphs, I number the lines of the second narrative consecutively because they belong together.

- 14    **KSz:** My dad would have really been happy if I did it so my mom decided that I  
15    should. And we went to both of my parents were at the ball. It was in a big  
16    banquet room, like where a wedding would take place. And I remember we had  
17    to go upstairs and rehearse just who we were gonna be matched up with and then  
18    we walked in and got a circle, we were just doing songs, I don't remember the  
19    songs at all.  
20    **M:** Did you have to learn them for this occasion?  
21    **KSz:** Uhm. I think everyone else was singing but I was just uhm, 'cause it was  
22    the day of you know.  
23    **M:** So you didn't do any of the rehearsals?  
24    **KSz:** Mmm. I didn't. Maybe there were but my mom didn't tell me about it. And  
25    then we just ate with our families and that was it, really.  
26    **M:** Was there much dancing?  
27    **KSz:** Yeah I danced with my dad. And my grandma was there so I danced with  
28    my grandfather. It was I did it for them. [...]  
29    **M:** How did you feel during the ball?  
30    **KSz:** I was sort of not embarrassed but they don't do that in the United States. So  
31    I sort of felt like a nerd. None of my friends really understood what I was doing.  
32    So but I mean it's a neat thing Hungarians used to do, right? They don't do that

In this chronicle of her personal experience, Kathryn told how she felt that some aspects of her heritage made her unique, something she did not necessarily desire, and an average American did not normally do. The story is on the verge of description and narrative evaluation of a series of events related to a rite of passage in a classical anthropological sense. Kathryn perceives Hungary still as much of an exotic destination, which legitimized her position as unique, therefore status enhancing. Participating in a debutante ball in her view seems, however, way beyond any rational account for being Hungarian in America (lines 11-12). She seeks to justify her view by accrediting the idea as neat (line 33), whereas discrediting the timing and location (lines 31-32 and 33-34). She closes the narrative with asking back for consent (lines 33-34). The device in the story coda emphasizes the main message namely that Kathryn expresses uncertainty about her participation in a tradition that is so vaguely defined (lines 8-9).

The first account of the ball and the narrator-protagonist's participation in it (lines 1-12) gives only a few details of how the events followed, however, the information occurs in the language of negation. Negation in László's approach to narratives often means ambivalence, as it may bring about the reversal of the original meaning, emphasize a particular aspect of the construct, yet it does not deny the event or phenomenon itself (*A narratív* 1374). Negation is considered as a very human and spontaneous expression of one's views and attitude (László, *A narratív* 1374). Kathryn starts the story (line 2) with a sentence that has two clauses. The first one is a negative about her intention, whereas the second one is assertive about her father's wish to participate. The story starts out with a definite wish to distance the experience as much as possible. It also prepares her overall feelings toward the event as strange and outmoded in her current position. The informal use of the determiner "some" (line 4 and 6) strengthens the feeling of a lack of interest and knowledge that Kathryn articulates both formally and in its content. The fact that she did not know anybody apart from her parents and grandparents (line 5) encapsulates that she was not a member of the ethnic community that held the debutante ball. Even the explanation of her outsider status is presented in a negative structure (line 12) that she is not an immigrant.

Kathryn told the second narrative (lines 15-34) in our third interview, so she presented a less spontaneous, a bit more rehearsed account of the episode. This time it turns out that the decision to participate was of her parents' entirely (lines 15-16). Even the structure of negation reoccurs (lines 19-20, 25 and 31) yet a little less frequently than when the story was

told for the first time. The use of negation in the narrative presentation of the ball implies that though it is valueless as a source of uniqueness and it is far from status enhancing. When she reflects on her feelings towards the experience, Kathryn says she felt culturally inept and unstylish and uses the word “nerd” (line 32) to sharpen her point. Thinking this way was also due to peer pressure (line 32) who considered such ethnic practices out of the line, for instance “nerd” (line 32) is a peer-group vocabulary item.

The conceptualization of the debutante ball as a rite of passage in a cultural anthropological sense unfolds the meaning of the narrative from yet another perspective. I have described rites of passage in section 2.1.1 as well as culturally marked activities within a community that are connected to the transition from one stage of life to another. Endre and Ildikó also referred to the debutante or sweet-sixteen ball, which in their view is a crucial event in the life of the sixteen-year-old Hungarian-American who is brought up as a member of the local or wider Hungarian-American community. Endre even argues that participating in Hungarian balls provided him with knowledge that he could hardly acquire from other sources. “You know an average American wears a tux twice in his life. At a wedding and at a prom, OK. But by the time I went to my prom I had worn a tux about twelve times. I mean I feel perfectly comfortable in high society type of circumstances and I think that is because” (Appendix C, *Interview 4/1*). According to their narratives, the ball is a way to celebrate the community as an entity as well as its debutante members who accept the conventions at least for some time.

1 So there'd be opening dance, couples or dads would introduce their daughters,  
2 uhm. And then there was usually mostly maybe two thirds formal ball and  
3 dancing Tangos and Polkas and Waltzes. And then some modern music but it was  
4 always some traditional band or orchestra. And then we would drink and  
5 socialize until three hours in the morning like 2 or 3 or 4 am. The same basic  
6 pattern in most of these cities.  
7 And it was like kind of a, it was a certain way of behaving, that was expected,  
8 that was kind of, especially with the scouts it was kind of we enforced and pushed  
9 it that you know we would. OK, then look you asked the girl to dance if she was  
10 sitting around that's one of the polite things, and you even asked the ugly girls  
11 and by the same token the girl had to say yes even if the guy's creepy, can't say  
12 no I don't wanna dance. [...] At a Hungarian ball it's more a high society type of  
13 thing. I think those types of events prepared me for just common social  
14 interactions among the elite, whether here or wherever. (Appendix C, *Interview 4/1*)

The first part of the narrative (lines 1-6) is a chronicle of the ball, not a particular one, as Endre participated in several balls in several cities and he compares the experiences (lines 5-6). Comparing the description with the one Kathryn provides in her narrative justifies the claim that debutante balls share basic patterns. Sixteen-year-olds are in the center for whom



the event is the middle stage or liminality of a rite of passage. The participant individual may have a full understanding of the event if the person knows the community and has been part of it before the ritual takes place. Without the community setting, as Kathryn's narrative proves, the rite of passage loses its meaning and may even push the individual further off from the group. Endre's narrative continues with an argumentative part (lines 7-14) in which he claims that debutante balls not only have symbolic meaning as traditional rites of passage but they socialize the individual by taking him or her through a training of manners. As opposed to Kathryn's experience, Endre claims that such events help understand high society mannerism (lines 12-14) and make it easier for them to accommodate. Thus, the debutante ball as a rite of passage eventually leads to bidirectional acculturation and participants become members of the Hungarian-American community. At the same time, they are Americans who can gain advantage of their uniqueness deriving from the ethno-cultural identity.

Uniqueness is status enhancing because it is based on nonconformity that individual choices are possible only if the person reaches out for means of culture as a source of differences. These alternatives do not have to epitomize ethnicity in a strict sense, whereas a person may use his ethno-cultural background as a legitimate source of uniqueness. Conformity with the norm is status enhancing, therefore the only source of success. It is possible to distinguish what is positively and negatively unique and set clear boundaries between ethnic features that one wishes to maintain or reject. Peter Hevesi stated that in his view, ethnicity does not fulfill the role of forming one's identity any longer, so he approaches the concept to free himself from ethnic constraints.

- 1 I think that enough time has now gone by and enough generations where people
- 2 are no longer and I'm only saying my experience because I know this is not true
- 3 for every family and every situation. But I think that through intermarriage
- 4 through integration with a very multicultural, varied experience people are losing
- 5 their identity as something in my slice of Americana, which is in the Midwest.  
(Appendix C, *Interview 2/2*)

This opinion reflects a firm belief of America in a postethnic perspective discussed in section 2.1.4 in terms of advocating voluntary rather than involuntary affiliations with a particular group or community. Peter finds that local ethnic communities have created an extended global scale community, which has a much stronger reality and influence on its members than the former ethnically demarcated groups. Nevertheless, he acknowledges that diversity has much influence and individuals often choose membership in local communities as well as in global ones (lines 2-3). Hence, Peter conceptualizes his ethno-cultural identity as transnational in which few cultural ingredients are Hungarian.

The narratives I have analyzed and discussed in this section of the dissertation epitomize the process how local transactions through passage rites build trajectories of being ethnic. Uniqueness, both in a positive and negative sense, is a status that informants gain via experiencing rites of passage such as visiting the ancestral homeland, participating in events such as the debutante ball or liking and being able to prepare ethnic food. In a chaos/complexity perspective, passage rites do not allow for a linear progression of ethno-cultural identity based on equilibrium and stability. They are rather constructed in continuous action, reaction and interaction with the environment and thus enhance bidirectional acculturation. Ethnicity is not a primordial feature or an attribute signifying particularity; it is a segment of global culture created within the interactions of members in local communities. The existence of passage rites, however, defies the relevance of the postethnic perspective because it proves the reciprocal nature of the narratively constructed ethno-cultural identity.

#### **4.4 A SENSE OF NOT US—CONCLUSIONS**

In this chapter of the dissertation I have attempted to point out that narrative is an optimal genre and tool to examine the discursive construction of ethno-cultural identity. There are numerous funny and sad, complex and intriguing stories interviewees told to help understand their choices. These narratives encapsulate individual experiences into which the personal and cultural environments are deeply ingrained linguistically, rhetorically and with regard to content. All stories were elicited from second and third generation Hungarian-Americans, thus they presented several concordant themes and devices. Due to the qualitative nature of the study, however, I did not analyze the number of participant narratives and episodes or draw discourse analytic conclusions about the amount of occurrences regarding those themes and devices. I have interpreted these thematic and linguistic concurrences in a chaos/complexity perspective in which narratives are the emergent properties of a system of ethno-cultural identity. Individual narratives interact in this larger system of imaginary communication thus creating and maintaining a unique, single meta-narrative of liminality and bidirectional acculturation.

Narrative analysis is a field in which stories as a source of data may yield numerous interpretations through deepening or widening the examination of emerging analytical concepts. Therefore, I tried to establish those terms and ideas that interviewees use independently from one another to build their ethno-cultural identity in terms of theme and language. These concepts at the same time prove to buttress the meta-narrative frame of

liminality and bidirectional acculturation regardless of community membership. In the case of some narratives, bidirectional acculturation becomes tridirectional, as the narrator-protagonist talks about his or her acculturation into the American society, the Hungarian émigré community in the United States of America and Hungarian society while staying in Hungary for a longer period. Thematic terms that I have dealt with in the analysis are passage rites, myths of origins, the creation of archetypes, senses of history and geography, and the double narrative structure. Linguistic tools that have proved to play a significant role in the narrative construction of ethno-cultural identity are pronominal switches, synecdoche, rhetorical binary oppositions, uses of direct and indirect speech, code-switching and mixing.

The double narrative structure lays down and formats the experiences of immigrating generations and their progeny. Pronominal switches, as well as the use of direct and indirect speech mark stepping from one narrative structure to the other. The fact that one narrative often builds on the preliminarily existing other emphasizes the powerful role of personal and canonical history in constructing ethno-cultural identity. Combining the two forms of history serves the function to justify immigration and makes liminality or borderland existence status enhancing. Alternation of direct and indirect speech expresses agreement, disagreement or difference in points of view, which positions narrator-protagonists in American society, yet builds the discursive relationship with the immigrant generation. Liminality, however, demarcates and maintains being different and identity is created in difference. Reported speech and constructed dialogues express disagreement or different points of view, thus they create and strengthen the status of distinctiveness, which is crucial from the aspect of identity construction. The active role of speakers in dialogues parallels the active role assumed in the process of immigration.

According to the narratives, several sources fuel second- and third-generation Hungarian-American identity such as Transylvanian Hungarian culture, the culture of other Hungarian communities living off the borders of present day Hungary in and outside the Carpathian basin, as well as the Hungarian-American community. In the narrative construction of their ethno-cultural identity, my conversational partners pull together strings of versatile cultural fragments from the resources they can access in order to build a norm of Hungarianness in America. I have found that the rhetoric of binaries appears in the narratives to set this norm through the comparison of cultures. Norms in turn create communities with voluntary membership in them. Binaries thus have the function of discursive construction of communities and a tool of expressing bidirectional acculturation should the individual decide to remain unaffiliated to the community. The narrativization of traditions signifies the

relationship of the narrator-protagonist with the communities either real or imaginary. Traditions offer the freedom to be created and recreated in order to give the community a fresh start. The construction process happens via the interactions of cultural actors who verbalize the process. One of the most important tools that describe as well as build traditions is code-switching which is also a firm indicator of bidirectional acculturation and liminality. Narratives not only help understand cultures but they also produce them.

The abstract perspective of chaos and complexity theory offers a wider interaction-based view on the dynamics of the narrative construction of ethno-cultural identity. Individual stories exhibit how these people are connected without necessarily knowing one another. The opinions and views they put forth converge toward a meta-narrative, which is loaded with the discursive features of being Hungarian-American. Taking a step from the level of individual narratives to looking at them as a system interactions between the episodes and characterizations opens up and builds a broader dialogical framework. Seemingly, random links relate single narratives and construct the meta-narrative dynamically through process. Therefore, narrative ethno-cultural identity is not static as it is so profoundly dependent on interactions. Due to their dynamics, narratives always assume some kind of an audience and the stories that I have heard argue that maintaining Hungarian-Americanness is a mission. Completing this mission often means, “struggling to remain Hungarian” as Eszti Pigniczky has pointed out, “because assimilation happens so fast” (Appendix C, *Interview 8/1*). Nevertheless, verbalizing the process invokes the audience as well to take part and not only understand it but also help construct the narrative. “So it’s not something questioned, it’s part of your life” (Pigniczky, Eszti, Appendix C, *Interview 8/1*).

# Chapter Five

## Text, context and content—the role of ethno-cultural identity in interpreting the short story

### *Homecoming and Hazaérkezés*

Our goal is understanding, but attaining one level of understanding is only to acknowledge that yet another level of understanding lies just beyond our ken. (Lawless 127)

In this chapter I will discuss the findings of a research in which first-, second- and later-generation Hungarian-Americans and native Hungarians read a short story by Árpád Göncz entitled *Hazaérkezés* in translation as well as in the original and reflected on their understanding of the story. The focus of the dissertation is the study of identity expressed in narrative, and at this stage, the interpretation is based on a canonical narrative that respondents read and unpack. Instead of constructing personal histories this time, they deconstruct a particular narrative to reflect on their ways of perceiving culture and position themselves relative to it. Regarding the relationship of identity and narrative, in a study of personal histories I have demonstrated in a study of personal histories that manifestations of identity, communal norms and the criteria of value hierarchy are encoded in various discourses. These modes of representation characterize the community that has brought them about and hosts them and the narratives function as a source of cultural reproduction and survival.

The narratives discussed in Chapter 4 resonate with the widely shared assumption that language plays a critical role in the process of negotiating ethno-cultural identity. Narratives, whether personal or literary, offer culturally and historically founded interpretation of the world that human personality constructs. The question remains open as to the extent of understanding the non-universal, therefore, highly culture-dependent parts of a canonical piece of literature. I have attempted to encapsulate the holistic, dynamic and contextualized nature of narrative identity, which is also present in any literary piece. Considering the role of the sense of literature in constructing ethno-cultural identity discussed in section 4.1.3, the

present study is aimed at revealing whether it can be created via reading literature in translation and if it helps articulate the conceptualization of ethno-cultural affiliation. The responses of informants espouse three major issues concerning the codability of culture across languages: (1) linguistic expression and embodiment of cultural reality, (2) ways in which translation influences the transmission of cultural content, and (3) the extent to which participants' perception of culture encompasses common cultural assumptions.

## **5.1 BACKGROUND TO STUDY**

Theoretical scaffolding to this research draws upon multidisciplinary sources and justifies the claim that readers of literature not only read literature but also use their reading experience to construct identities. I described in section 1.4 how personal and institutionalized memory is crucial in the process of acculturation and forming communities as well as ethnic groups. Canonical literary narratives summarize community experience and maintain it in the form of a pool of cultural knowledge that is accessible for members of the community through language. Thus, language is an essential component of narrative, as it helps initiate the individual into the community. Stories maintain language in its role of creating communities and institute the rules and behavioral patterns in it. Three major fields support the structure and the findings of the present study in this triangular theoretical construct of narrative, identity, and language. These are (1) the characteristics of short story as a literary genre, (2) issues in culture and cognition: the translatability of cultural content, and (3) chaos/complexity theory as a frame of reference to narrative and meta-narrative identity construction.

### **5.1.1 Narrative identity construction in short story as a genre**

Narratologically speaking, the short story as a genre may stress particular elements of fiction such as plot, character, atmosphere, theme or any combination of the four (Turco 21). A short story is less likely to present character development; more often it reveals a character's personality or state of mind by means of depicting her or his actions and thoughts (Guerin et al. 88-89; Turco 68). In short fiction it is possible to trace the most telling word, expression or phrase, "the recurring or patterned imagery, the symbolic object or character, the hint of or clue to meaning greater than that of the action or plot alone" (Guerin et al. 88). The images, motifs or devices can offer the clue to understanding the cultural content and the potential to

serve as a source of cohesion within the community. Short story as a literary genre originated in the oral story-telling tradition (Rohrberger 7; Turco 43) which fact accounts for the similarities that episodic personal narratives and short stories may share such as the management of time, space, and linearity.

Ricoeur's distinction of historical versus personal time as well as Bergson's juxtaposition of diachronic or clock time and synchronic time or duration reviewed in part 1.4.1 contextualize the temporal dimension of both short story and life narrative as personal time expressed in duration. Mary Rohrberger suggests that short stories be defined in terms of a synchronic base (8). Thus, narrative temporality connects the past with the future, as the emphasis is on the sequence of events that construct the identity rather than their exact location on a real timeline. The presence of real happenings and characters mixed with "internal referents" in often dreamlike or surrealistic sequence of events establishes a sense of time that breaks linearity to render narrative lifelike in the Brunerian sense (*Actual* 13-16) as explained in sections 1.4.1 and 4.1.2. Rohrberger even holds that the genre remained intact through all the surface modifications in its history, as the "analogical mode" it displays "defied linearity and arrested time and movement in an eternal and continuous present" (7-8). Such connection of time and space in the short story underlies making sense of storied personal experience as a socially situated enterprise rather than a long-term autobiographical project according to Thorne's distinction of narrative power and meanings of stories defined in part 1.4.2.

These genre-based features of the short story may serve the function of analytical tools to unpack the multiple substructures that build the narrative. Such frames that are made up of images and actions create patterns of identity. The story braids identities into a texture with three components that are the reader, the writer and the protagonist who constitute an imaginary community with shared cultural knowledge. The temporal, spatial and sequential structure of the short story reflects the process of narrative identity construction as readers of *Homecoming* and *Hazaérkezés* reflect upon their understanding in the study.

### **5.1.2 Translatability of narrative ethno-cultural identity**

Research in the field of culture, language, and cognition has historically sided along two opposing views (Jameson 293-95; Kramsch 11-15; Lyons 307-10). Reviewed in section 1.3.2, the cultural relativist view posits that mostly culturally defined language associations and perceptual learning frame the mental images of the world. The universalist view, nevertheless, underlines the role of “panhuman cognitive universals” (Jameson 293) a concept similar to Anna Wierzbicka’s “natural semantic metalanguage” (135), and “socio-cultural evolutionary processes” (Jameson 293), in the naming and categorization of cultural phenomena. Both perspectives of the relationship between language and culture bring up the issue of codability and translatability of cultural matters. The more so, as in John Lyons’ view, a high proportion of the social and expressive meanings of words and phrases that compose utterances is non-universal and culture-dependent (323). Thus, the translation of such expressions may lead to the imposition of “culturally alien categories” (Goddard 110) on distinctive lingua-cultural and conceptual systems. Such problem of translatability may also result from “lexical gaps” (Lyons 310), the absence of appropriate words that make exact translation between languages difficult. The information that is lost due to the intranslatability of certain semantically relevant categories has to be restored from the context (Lyons 311). Interviewees in their personal narratives (Appendix C) analyzed in Chapter 4 often turned to code-switching, a solution they used to eliminate the problems due to lexical gaps as well as to make their accounts more authentic and valid. In the case of a published piece of literature, however, this strategy is not applicable and inaccuracies in translation may result in a form of culture shock. This kind of culture shock appears because the reader has an inappropriate knowledge of the context which gap cannot be bridged simply by the words of the story.

Questions of translatability and intranslatability are deeply entangled with the approach to stories as a means of making sense of lived experience. As I summarized in part 1.4.2, individuals make sense of themselves through their involvement with others and such interaction may trigger changes. Stories are accounts of these multifaceted social and cultural interactions and situations. Through the narratives whether they read them or tell them, people put together who they are thus spelling out lived experience. Translation narrows down the interpretative framework and the levels of contextualizing the storied experience. Events and characters are no longer lingua-culturally embedded, they may become actors in a rigid intercultural locale. The dynamic construct of narrative identity is contextualized in the static fabrication of translation which fact assumingly makes it harder to make sense of the story, as is the case in the present study. Nevertheless, Lyons holds that:



although it may be impossible to translate all the sentences of one language into the sentence of another without distortion or makeshift compromises, it is usually possible to get someone who does not know the language and culture of the original to understand more or less satisfactorily, even those culture-dependent expressions which resist translation into any language with which he is familiar. (323)

This statement is defied when the problem of translation is related to ethno-cultural identity construction and language plays out as postulated crucial cultural information that speakers identify with. Thus, the narrative carries indispensable information through its language, which may get lost in translation. The present study in which different cohorts of participants are asked to read a short story in its original and in translation seeks to answer the question to what extent such information gap can be bridged and made up for.

### **5.1.3 Understanding narrative identity in chaos/complexity perspective**

The analysis of personal narratives and a review of the related literature have led me to the conclusion at the end of chapter four that the abstract framework of chaos and complexity theory provides a more intricate, largely interaction-based prospect regarding the narrative construction of ethno-cultural identity. The responses to the questions based on reading *Homecoming* (Appendix D) and *Hazaérkezés* (Appendix E), thus, create a system that is neither deterministic nor completely random, though it exhibits both sets of characteristics. The distinctive constituents of the system—responses to questions in the study questionnaire—are linked and interact with one another. Such interactions are encoded to bring about communities through reading. Moreover, participants categorize themselves as members in one group or another and their readings signify group affiliations. The environment of reading is cultural knowledge, which allows for importing free energy and creates more refined understandings of translated cultural elements. Building ethno-cultural identities through reading a canonical literary short story is a nonlinear process, as it may have little impact upon the first encounter and be more affective along further readings.

Two identities are constructed while reading the short story. One emerges via the reconstruction of the writer's experience and the wider socio-cultural context in which the protagonist is part of the events that take place. Interpretation of these events places the story into an own narrative identity grid of the reader. Nevertheless, the story also influences and constructs the identity of the reader. The short story as a genre intertwines potential interpretations into a nonlinear, interactive framework. Moreover, narrative identity in a chaos/complexity perspective is an attempt to explain the behavior of the self as a whole

rather than taking it apart. An understanding of the triangle of writer-reader-protagonist holistically through their real and imaginary interactions constructs and reconstructs the self in individual as well as social context. The present study is an attempt to reveal how the genre specific features of the short story and the process of reading it in the original and in translation adds to the construct of ethno-cultural identity within a chaos/complexity frame.

## **5.2 RESEARCH DESIGN**

The design of this study aims at connecting the traditions of qualitative research with the technique of questionnaire-based survey to elicit responses regarding the understanding and relevance of a translated short story by Árpád Göncz entitled *Homecoming* (Appendix D) and the original *Hazaérkezés* (Appendix E). The questionnaire (Appendix D and E) contains only open questions to respect and emphasize the multifaceted nature of potential presumptions concerning the context and content of the short story. Via administration of the questionnaire in distinctive cohorts of respondents, I examine the ways how the ethno-cultural identity of the respondents influences and formulates their readings. Participants were not familiar with the author and the title of the story during the research to avoid previous conceptualizations based on such information. Due to the qualitative nature of the research and the low number of participating persons, the study seeks to find out about three assumptions. First, according to the current research trends and findings reviewed in chapter 1.3.2 and 5.1.2 regarding the translatability of narrative identity the study aims to explore the role of language in providing and transmitting cultural information as well as how translation modifies such context and content. The second research question focuses on the relationship between the ethno-cultural background of participants and its influence on understanding the story. It is assumed that the more actively they participate in Hungarian culture the easier it is for them to make sense of it. The third issue that the study deals with is the meta-narrative frame according to the chaos/complexity perspective that is constructed from the individual responses resonating with one another in a wider cultural scheme.

### **5.2.1 Participants**

Altogether 28 volunteers participated in the research and there were four background characteristics, age, occupation, nationality and immigrants status, the fourth one only if applicable in the case of Hungarian-Americans. The age of participants ranged between 20

through 70 years. Regarding occupation, twelve informants were full-time students at the time of the survey and sixteen people had various professions; all of them had college degrees. In this respect, the two cohorts are convenience samples, since all respondents are highly educated and it is assumed that they are familiar with techniques of close reading. Occupation is a characteristic feature that further controls and limits the generalizability of the study. According to nationality, the cohort can be divided into two large groups. Fifteen Hungarian-Americans and thirteen Hungarians took part in the study. It is assumed that the dominant national context of one's ethno-cultural identity is key to understanding the cultural theme and content of literature. The fourth characteristic feature, immigrant status in the case of Hungarian-Americans is closely related to nationality and divides the two groups into further smaller cohorts.

Along these four characteristic features and the language of the short story in which they read it, participants constitute five groups that I will refer to in the results section (5.3) of this chapter. According to their ethno-cultural background, respondents were Hungarians, first-generation Hungarian-Americans and second-, or later-generation Hungarian-Americans. The cohort of Hungarian respondents divides into two further groups, those who read the story in Hungarian, and in English. I divided the cohort of first-generation Hungarian-Americans to two groups, those who immigrated in America due to the abortive 1956 revolution in Hungary and so-called new immigrants who arrived in the U.S.A. commencing from the 1970s. The reason for such distinction is that the short story takes place in the early 1960s (Appendix D and E) and I expected that those who had personal experiences of the revolution would have a better understanding of the context and cultural references. Table 1 contains the personal data of participants. When a particular category has no meaning in the case of the respondent the abbreviation of the term non-applicable (N/A) is used. None of the respondents took part as conversational partners in the interview-based study discussed in Chapter 4.

**Table 1 Respondents**

<b>Respondent</b>	<b>Country of residence</b>	<b>Language of reading the story</b>	<b>Immigrant status generation</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Date of immigration</b>	<b>Sex</b>	<b>Occupation</b>
1	Hungary	Hungarian	N/A	62	N/A	M	Architect
2	Hungary	Hungarian	N/A	22	N/A	F	Student

3	Hungary	Hungarian	N/A	33	N/A	M	Architect
4	Hungary	Hungarian	N/A	24	N/A	F	Student
5	Hungary	Hungarian	N/A	24	N/A	F	Student
6	Hungary	Hungarian	N/A	23	N/A	F	Student
7	Hungary	English	N/A	21	N/A	F	Student
8	Hungary	English	N/A	21	N/A	F	Student
9	Hungary	English	N/A	20	N/A	F	Student
10	Hungary	English	N/A	29	N/A	F	Teacher
11	Hungary	English	N/A	22	N/A	F	Student
12	Hungary	English	N/A	21	N/A	F	Student
13	Hungary	English	N/A	23	N/A	F	Student
14	U.S.A	English	4 <sup>th</sup>	64	N/A	M	Retired Chemist
15	U.S.A	English	3 <sup>rd</sup>	55	N/A	F	Professor
16	U.S.A.	English	2 <sup>nd</sup>	31	N/A	M	Law Student
17	U.S.A.	English	2 <sup>nd</sup>	36	N/A	F	Psychotherapist
18	U.S.A.	English	2 <sup>nd</sup>	20	N/A	M	Student
19	U.S.A.	English	1 <sup>st</sup>	38	1974	F	Budget Supervisor
20	U.S.A.	English	1 <sup>st</sup>	53	1981	M	Realtor
21	U.S.A.	English	1 <sup>st</sup>	32	1990	M	Financial Analyst
22	U.S.A.	English	1 <sup>st</sup>	28	1998	F	Air Coordinator
23	U.S.A.	English	1 <sup>st</sup>	36	2000	F	Homemaker (Teacher)
24	U.S.A.	English	1 <sup>st</sup>	62	1959	M	Retired Electr. Engineer
25	U.S.A.	English	1 <sup>st</sup>	70	1957	M	Retired Physician
26	U.S.A.	English	1 <sup>st</sup>	63	1960 (left H. in 1956)	M	Engineer
27	U.S.A.	English	1 <sup>st</sup>	70	1957	M	Mechanical Engineer
28	U.S.A.	English	1 <sup>st</sup>	58	1957	M	Accountant

In the first cohort, six Hungarians read the story and answered the questions in Hungarian (Table 1, lines 1-6). Their age ranged between 22 through 62, four of them were female students at the University of Pécs and two of them male architects. Seven Hungarian participants read the short story in English (Table 1, lines 7-13). Six of them were female students at the University of Pécs between 21 and 23 years of age and one female teacher aged 29 was a member of the cohort. Five second- or later-generation Hungarian-Americans, aged 20-64, participated in the study (Table 1, lines 14-18). Two of them were male students, one male and two of them female professionals. Five first-generation Hungarian-Americans belong to the cohort of new immigrants (Table 1, lines 19-23): three females, their age ranged between 28 and 53 two of whom were professionals and one person was a homemaker at the time of taking part in the research. The last group consisted of male fifty-sixers, all of whom left their native Hungary in the wake of the 1956 revolution (Table 1, lines 24-28). Their age ranged between 62 and 58. Participation in the research was voluntary, respondents could choose to stay anonymous, and all of them did.

### **5.2.2 Instrument**

The instrument of the study was based on two versions, English and Hungarian, of a short story written by Árpád Göncz. I chose *Homecoming* and *Hazaérkezés* (Göncz, *Homecoming*, Göncz, *Hazaérkezés*) (Appendix D and E) because the story was assumed to be unknown to participants. The study is qualitative and the conclusions in section 4.2.2 about reading literature and readings of literature in the narrative-based study support the theme and construct of the present work. Partly due to its qualitative nature the goal is more to generate and pilot ideas and reveal interdependencies rather than to test or attempt to validate particular previously set hypotheses. The first part of the instrument constitutes the story itself, which is half a page long (Appendix D and E). Therefore, the length of the task encouraged volunteering participants. The protagonist is a man who was imprisoned in the wake of the 1956 revolution assumedly for trumped-up charges. Upon leaving jail, he meets his family and acquaintances. In the third part of the story he reunites with his son not only physically but spiritually as well. The story bears the genre-specific features of short stories and it is more about feelings and sensual experiences than actual events; however, a sequence of actions is clearly there. Respondents worked with a retyped version of the story instead of a photocopy of the original. Hence, the answer sheet does not contain the name of the author or any other information to avoid preconceived answers. In the instructions, I asked participants

to read the short story and answer the questions according to how they thought and felt about it.

In the second part of the instrument, eleven open-ended questions were designed concerning the plot that enquired about understanding the text. The answer sheet contained both the short story and the list of questions with enough space for the responses (Appendix D and E). The first question asked about the general impressions regarding the story, whether respondents liked it or not and why they thought so. As a lead-in, it helps bridge the gap between the story world (De Fina 95-96) and the reader, urging him or her to organize thinking and impressions about the story. It does not aim at triggering concrete facts or viewpoints rather it is meant to eliminate the stressful atmosphere potentially created by the inquiry. The second point deals with the location and timing of the events and asks participants to guess. The third question is closely related to the second, as it asks for concrete textual references that helped identify the previously stated information on place and time. The responses may map into the linguistic coding of narrative temporality that connects the past and the future to highlight the sequence of events rather than their exact timing. The fourth and fifth questions also belong together in a similar manner. Participants are asked to characterize the society in which the events take place and to identify the linguistic devices that convey such information for them. In questions 2 and 3 as well as 4 and 5 I intended to gain data regarding issues of translatability and intranslatability of information in the story as a means of making sense of lived experience.

The sixth point of inquiry asks about the intricate parts of the piece as well as what causes those difficulties in understanding. The aim of collecting such data is to find out more about the culture-specific information that is assumed to be hard to encode in a second as well as in the native language. Questions seven through nine deal with the protagonist and require that participants apply similar strategies to decode culturally-embedded messages as they did in answering question two. The answer sheets in English and Hungarian differed in terms of the last two questions. The tenth question (Appendix D) in the English version inquires whether the story would be different if it were an American short story. The eleventh question asks in what ways respondents find the short story unique. Its major function is stepping down and providing the opportunity to tie up the threads concerning personal views of the story as well as to relate to the first question. The second, fourth, seventh, eighth and ninth questions also seek to learn about the broader cultural meta-narrative that participants apply to make sense of the story. Moreover, they also inquire into whether the reader responses actually

interact according to the chaos/complexity perspective in this wider scheme of cultural meta-narrative, like it has been exemplified in the narrative-based study in Chapter 4.

### **5.2.3 Procedures**

Participants for this qualitative study were randomly selected. I asked altogether 48 native Hungarians to join in the research. I announced a call for volunteers in two of the courses I taught with 43 students at the Department of English Literatures and Cultures at the University of Pécs, in the 2001/2002 academic year. I had explained the purpose of the study to them and they could choose whether to read the story in English or Hungarian. Ten students returned the answer sheet; six of them read it and answered the questions in English and four in Hungarian. In order to trigger a wider spectrum of views and understandings, I attempted to invite professionals as well, mainly people whom I had some acquaintance with. Three persons volunteered and sent back the answer-sheet; two architects who read the story in Hungarian, and a teacher of Spanish and History read it and answered the questions in English. Participants were told to take the story and the answer sheet home and return it whenever it was convenient for them. Regarding Hungarian-American participants, I resorted to e-mail and regular mail correspondence, and I attempted to invite people through the contact persons of various Hungarian organizations in the United States of America. Eventually 15 Hungarian-Americans responded, ten people from the San Francisco Bay Area Hungarian e-mail list, three persons from the Detroit-Saginaw Area Hungarians and two from the Minnesota Hungarians. Fourteen respondents gave the answer sheet to me directly, three mailed it, and eleven persons sent it back via e-mail. The data-base has not been electronically processed; it is paper-based. In the case of quotations in section 5.3 that come that from the replies of particular participants, I mark only the characteristic features of the person.

All participants gave short, maximum 1-2-sentence-long answers to the questions. One of the most widely used techniques of analyzing qualitative data is coding (Rubin and Rubin 227-256). Exploring themes and concepts through coding in the ethnographic sense of the word (Becker; Rubin and Rubin; Spradley) as outlined in section 3.2.4, would be hard because concrete questions trigger short and focused responses. Moreover, the questions already establish the codes regarding the answers; therefore, an attempt to establish new coding labels may prove superfluous. Categorization of responses proved to be a relevant technique to deal with the data due to the length of the answers as well as the nature of the data collection. Six major thematic-analytical categories have emerged: (1) impressions about

the story, (2) textual expression and understanding of time, (3) textual expression and understanding of location, (4) the protagonist, (5) defining cultural contexts, and (6) uniqueness as a narrative frame of ethno-cultural identity. Broad generalizations or trends would not be valid and reliable at this stage because of the limited number of participants, thus, the aim was to present and interpret the diversity of answers.

### **5.3 READING *HOMECOMING* AND *HAZAÉRKEZÉS*—RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

In this section, I give a detailed analysis of the responses participants gave to the questions. To follow the structure that the categorization of the data rendered, I discuss the questions as part of the six major thematic-analytical categories. The account and discussion of the results is aimed to find out about the three issues of (1) codability of cultural information across languages, (2) the role of ethno-cultural identity in understanding culturally embedded information, and (3) convergence of individual readings toward a common cultural meta-narrative frame that can be defined in the scheme of ethno-cultural identity. The title of the story, in English or in Hungarian, indicates the language in which respondents read it. In the forthcoming sections, I will refer to respondents by their profession and their age in parenthesis and for the easy reference of other characteristic features please check Table 1.

#### **5.3.1 *Nice theme but sad*—general impressions about the story**

The first question (Appendix D and E) inquired into why participants liked the story. Most unanimous opinions appeared in two cohorts. Second- or later-generation Hungarian-Americans felt rather ambiguous or did not like the story at all, except for a 55-year-old professor, who liked the message, nevertheless, she mentioned poor grammar and form as problems that she “got put off by.” The main reasons behind dislike focused on a lack of optimism and strange forms of use and structure. A law student aged 31, wrote it was rather depressing, however, he gave no specific reason why he thought so. Two respondents, a 36-year-old psychotherapist and a 64-year-old retired male chemist claimed they somewhat enjoyed *Homecoming*. One of them mentioned imagery that she considered nice, the other person answered that the story was touching and likeable with a hint at potential “happy ending,” yet irritating due to its poor referents. Overall, they did not like the plot. For the fifth



participant in the cohort, a student aged 20, the story was problematic due to confusing parts and the difficulty to follow.

Among Hungarians who read the story in Hungarian similarly homogeneous views were found, yet in the other direction. Five respondents of the total six agreed that they liked *Hazaérkezés* and one person claimed that the story was strange but not bad. Even some convergence could be observed among the explanations participants gave. Two persons found it important to note that the story was brief and concise and two other, a 22-year-old student and a 62-year-old architect emphasized the beauty of the father-son relationship. The optimism of the story and the power of freedom as opposed to prison was a reason for liking *Hazaérkezés*, stated by an architect, aged 33. Comparing the two cohorts the difference in the overall impression is sharp and may be explained by the role of translation. Hungarian readers not only read the story in their native language but also shared a knowledge of the historical-cultural context, which makes up for the gaps created by the genre of the short story. It aims to provide the fragmented images and the impressions of *Hazaérkezés* without explanations regarding the contemporary social-historical-cultural setting. Without that and the further translation-related gaps such as “poor referents,” the story loses some of its original character and flow.

Fifty-sixers and Hungarian respondents who read the story in English liked and disliked it in similar proportions. From among the five fifty-sixers, three liked *Homecoming*. A retired physician aged 70 said the story was very touching and according to a 62-year-old retired electrical engineer, it was easy to follow as well as relaxing. A 58-year-old accountant mentioned the happy little family as a reason. One person, a 70-year-old mechanical engineer said he could not decide whether he did or did not like the story, and an engineer, 63 years of age, argued that the story was too depressing, a kind he had “heard enough.” Within the cohort of seven Hungarian respondents reading *Homecoming*, four persons answered that they liked the story. Three students aged 20 and 21 found its atmosphere very optimistic and filled with the sense of opportunity to start life over again. A 23-year-old student felt the story was expressive and characteristic. A teacher aged 29 said she did not like the story because it said nothing. A 21-year-old student did not answer the question and a 22-year-old student wrote she felt “nothing special” about *Homecoming*, thus she could not decide whether she liked it or not.

Respondents in the cohort of new immigrants expressed the most varied attitude toward *Homecoming*. Only a 36-year-old homemaker wrote that she liked the story because its simple sentences transmitted powerful feelings. An air-coordinator, aged 28, considered

*Homecoming* “a touching story” due to its theme about reuniting with the loved ones, a momentous event that she experienced herself. A 32-year-old financial analyst held the story to be a “fairly ordinary” one, whereas a budget supervisor aged 38 found it “okay” and commented on its theme, as “nice [...] but sad.” A 53-year-old realtor was rather puzzled about the characters and the plot. “Nem nagyon tudom, hogy ki kicsoda, és hogy miről szól. Az ‘in the woods’ része kellemes és lírikus.”

As I wrote in section 5.2.3 this first question serves the function of leading into thinking about the story, thus links the story-world (De Fina 95-96) with the reader’s world. Looking at the homogeneity of views in particular cohorts, Hungarian respondents who read *Hazaérkezés* display the most unanimously positive attitude toward the story. Participants supported their views with arguments based on the events and characters unlike those who read the story in English. In the case of *Homecoming*, reasons that explained choices of like and dislike were more often centered on feelings, or the overall atmosphere, features that were transmitted more by the connotation, rather than the primary meaning of words and expressions in the story. Some readers even voiced their confusion as to the overall meaning, which fact may indicate the translation could bring forth a gap in cultural content leading to inadequacies in making sense of stories as lived cultural experience.

### **5.3.2 *Exotic birds are nowhere to be found*—expression and understanding of location**

Construction and de-construction of narrative geography can be traced in the responses to the first part of question 2 and 3 (Appendix D and E). In this section of the paper, I analyze and discuss the elicited information about where the story took place as well as the concrete textual references in support of the readers’ assumptions. Ethno-cultural identity is a concept that emerges relative to both space and place as reviewed in chapter 2.2.2. Particular places, which are recognizable geographical locations, host ethno-cultural identities and become homelands through the sense of geography of its inhabitants. The narrative analysis of life histories in section 4.1.3 revealed that a sense of geography reflects an awareness of and connection to a particular geographical location and ethno-cultural identification happens through a self-definition within that location. That place becomes a narrative frame through the shared knowledge and understanding of the dwellers. The short story *Hazaérkezés* and its translated version *Homecoming* present a form of cultural geographical memory (Assmann 6-8) through encoded references to the place of events.

Second- or later-generation Hungarian Americans seemed unsure and even hesitant to give concrete guesses about the location of the story. The psychotherapist (36) said she had no idea where the story took place since there was no clue. The retired chemist claimed that since the request to participate in the study came from the Hungarian Mailing List, the story probably took place in Hungary and he emphasized the beginning of communism as a major clue in his answer. The professor (55) located the events “anywhere in Europe,” whereas the law student (31) responded that the events possibly happened in a “developing or politically unstable country.” He deciphered the information from the form of addressing the protagonist, “my dear man” (line 10, Appendix D), which expression for him reflected a subordinate position of the protagonist. The student (20) said the story took place in the forest and identified lines 4 and 5 as clues. Respondents in the cohort based their guesses on relational information or such extra-study data as, for example, where the request to participate came from.

Among the recently immigrated first-generation Hungarian-Americans, three respondents mentioned Europe as the geographical context of the story. Two of them, the air-coordinator (28) and the homemaker (36), placed the events possibly in Hungary. The air-coordinator, however, argued, that “yellow streetcars are still around in Hungary. I would have to say it is a story taking place in Eastern Europe. On the other hand, exotic birds are nowhere to be found in that area. Let’s say it is somewhere in South America.” The realtor (53) also hesitated and eventually marked Europe, Boston, New Orleans or South America as potential places of the story. The budget supervisor (38) wrote that the events happened in South Africa, whereas the financial analyst (32) thought the story took place in New York. Responses of the five first-generation fifty-sixers were similarly multifarious. The mechanical engineer (70) placed the events in Hungary and he based his presumption on the information that the protagonist was jailed. The retired physician (70) claimed that the events took place in Budapest, and the engineer (63) wrote the events could be located somewhere “behind the iron curtain.” Both respondents mentioned the same linguistic clues, “yellow streetcars” (line 5, Appendix D) and the attitude of people toward someone who did time in prison (lines 8-9, Appendix D). The retired electrical engineer (62) answered that the story took place in England because the term “get soused” (line 1, Appendix D), according to him is rarely used in American English. The accountant (58) wrote that the location was “one of the southern states” and found lines 6-7 (Appendix D) most informative.

Among the Hungarian respondents, all females, who chose to read the short story in English, six were students, and one of them teacher. Of the six students who read

*Homecoming*, four said that the story probably took place in Hungary. Three of them (20, 21) held that lines 8-11 proved to be the most telling part. Similarly to some first-generation Hungarian-Americans, both recent immigrants and fifty-sixers, the expression “yellow streetcars” (line 5, Appendix D) as well as the first two lines (Appendix D) about the jail-leaving scene explained the answer of a participant (21). A student (22) claimed that the story “could take place anywhere,” and she found the imprisonment of the protagonist crucial. Only one respondent (22) wrote that the events happened somewhere in the U.S.A. The teacher (29) gave no concrete location; she answered that the story could take place in any “small village or downtown.”

Hungarians reading *Hazaérkezés* found the location slightly less problematic than respondents did in the other cohorts. Four persons, the architect (33) and three students (23, 24) answered that the story very likely took place in Hungary or Budapest. They deciphered their views from the dialogues, and the imprisonment of the protagonist. Lines 10-11 meant for these respondents that he was jailed for trumped-up charges, something that most people could have been locked up for in the late 1950s in Hungary. “Valószínűleg politikai indokból került börtönbe, olyasvalamiért amit bárki elkövetett—elkövethetett volna, pl. rendszerellenesség.” Description of the city with the yellow streetcars also meant a source of identification of Hungary and Budapest. The architect (62) and a student (22) did not write anything related to the location.

In all cohorts except for the group of second- or later-generation Hungarian Americans, the most frequently mentioned element in the story that provided some clue in guessing the location of the events as Hungary or Budapest is “streetcars yellow” (line 5, Appendix D). Awareness of the cultural topography of Hungary and Budapest helped respondents identify the location and place themselves as knowledgeable members of a particular group. Responses demonstrate that the structure “sárgák a villamosok” (line 6, Appendix E) is a verbalization of lived experience, which carries translatable semantic categories without losing information for those who have a personal knowledge of it. The management of space in the short story is genre specific; narrative spatiality is constructed through elements of cultural topography without the long detailed description of the place.

### **5.3.3 *Pocket watches aren't modern—expression and understanding of time***

Besides the geographical context of the short story, question 2 also inquired about the time when the events might have taken place. Participants did not know about the writer or the title

of the story; thus, they lacked an important source of information regarding the question. Narrative or synchronic time is perceivable through the sequence of events rather than diachronic or clock time as outlined in sections 1.4.1 and 5.1.1. Nevertheless, the linguistic management of synchronicity with the occasionally defied linearity and eternal present may provide only slight help toward establishing the time context of the story.

Three respondents within the cohort of second- or later-generation Hungarian-Americans thought that “closing the watch put it in an older time period” because “pocket watches aren’t modern.” Based on this clue, the retired chemist (64) wrote that the events took place at the beginning of communist control, around 1945. The professor (55) timed the plot in the 1930s-1950s. According to the psychotherapist (36), the story likely happened in the 1920s or 1930s. The two students in the cohort gave no specific answer. The law student (31) only answered “earlier time,” whereas the student (20) responded “in the summer.” At this point, the problem of translatability has emerged because the phrase in the original story: “a férfi az óráját csatolta föl” (line 2, Appendix E), is translated into English as “the man closed his watch” (line 2, Appendix D). A detail that is not even culture specific, thus seems of little significance at first sight becomes decisive as a marker of time. The expression “closing the watch,” for these participants carried the connotation that the protagonist had a pocket watch that had been in use before wristwatches became widespread. Thus, translation created a semantic gap, which led to an overall misplacement of narrative time and could have been avoided, had the translator been more alert to such fine distinctions in the social and expressive meaning of the term.

First-generation Hungarian-Americans gave answers that are more varied. Likewise, in the cohort of second- or later-generation Hungarian-Americans, two respondents found the protagonist closing his “pocket watch” an important point of reference that the story took place sometime in the first half of the twentieth century. The realtor (53) cited the expression “closed the watch” that he thought set events in the period between the “turn of the century and WWII,” whereas the financial analyst (32) only mentioned “pocket watch” without exactly quoting the text and timed the story for him in the 1930s and 1940s. The budget supervisor (38) wrote “after Apartheid” that is roughly the last decade of the twentieth century and the air-coordinator (28) gave a very wide time span, “nowadays, or any time between now and the 1900s” and argued, “yellow streetcars are still around in Hungary.” Items of cultural topography serve as time referents in this case. The homemaker (36) wrote nothing in response to this part of the question, yet she commented that “there are signs the story has

been translated from another language [...] and there is some vocabulary that would likely be expressed differently in US English (getting soused, thrashing, an almost smile).”

All five fifty-sixers gave different answers to the question when the story might have taken place. The retired physician (70) wrote that events likely happened in 1990 because of the “yellow streetcars” and the episode “people who crossed the street to shake hands.” The mechanical engineer (70) timed the events “after 1956” because of “the guy put into prison.” The accountant (58) replied that the story happened “approximately 60 or more years ago” and he found lines 6-7 “it’s a miracle that someone didn’t give him a thrashing” (Appendix D) most informative in this regard. The engineer (63) gave no specific answer; however, he referred to the location, “behind the iron curtain” and the period of it. For him “streetcars yellow” (line 5, Appendix D) and lines 8-9 (Appendix D) helped contextualize the story. The retired electrical engineer (62) wrote nothing to this part of the inquiry.

Of the seven Hungarians who read the story in English two students (21) thought that it took place in the early 1960s, however, definitely in the wake of the 1956 revolution which they considered to be antecedent to the events and circumstances described in the story. The most telling part for them was lines 8-11 (Appendix D). The student (20) thought that the story took place at the end of the 1980s, because the plot certainly had something to do with changing the political system. A description of politically as well as culturally inappropriate behavior described in lines 8 and 9 (Appendix D) helped make her judgment. One student (22) wrote that the events likely happened during “communism or after.” The 21-year-old student who replied that the story took place somewhere in the US also timed it in the 1960s or 70s. She found the expressions “yellow streetcars” and “women were colored” (line 5, Appendix D) most significant, which told most about the place. The misunderstanding may as well be a consequence of reading the translated version of the story, as the word “colored” (line 5, Appendix D) used in connection with people has a strong cultural connotation in U.S. English. The law student of second-generation Hungarian ancestry referred to the same linguistic phenomenon in his answer to the tenth question. Two respondents, the 29-year-old teacher and the 23-year-old student wrote nothing to this part of the question.

Two students aged 24 of the six respondents who read *Hazaérkezés* replied that the story occurred in the 1960s or closely after the 1956 revolution. They both found lines 8-12 (Appendix E) decisive and one of them even explained the nature of “kellemetlenség” [inconvenience] as punishment for something that anybody could have committed e.g., not agreeing with the political system. The architect (33) and the 23-year-old student wrote that the story took place during communism, sometime in the past regime in Hungary. Two

respondents gave rather wide periods. According to the architect (62), the events occurred nowadays or in the second half of the twentieth century, and he argued that the story has a “modern character,” as well as the wristwatch is also a contemporary item of use: “a karóra is kortárs elem.” The wristwatch as well as the pocket watch are important markers of narrative time. The female student aged 22 replied that the story took place in the summer, “probably nowadays,” and found the fourth sentence (line 5) most informative about the timing.

Obviously, lines 8-11 presented such semantic elements and discourse features that were familiar to native Hungarian readers no matter if they read the text in their mother tongue or translation and provided them with clues concerning the place and time of the events. Six years in prison labeled as a “little inconvenience” has turned out to be an unacceptable semantic relationship for readers growing up outside Hungary. Albeit the translation “inconvenience” (line 10, Appendix D) covered the original concept well, the word “kellemtelenség” (line 10, Appendix E) in the social, historical, and cultural context of the story has a strong connotation, which Hungarian readers did recognize. Inconvenience at this point in the story refers back to the protagonist doing time in jail and the lack of minimal cultural overlap may have made it hard to unpack the cultural clue. Semantic explication (Wierzbicka 135) could help bridge the gap and level the cultural content of the two structures.

The second textual reference, which has triggered distinctive understandings of narrative time is the wristwatch-pocket watch duality expressed as “felcsatolta az óráját”—“closed his watch” in line 2 (Appendix D and E). Hungarian respondents who read *Homecoming*, however, did not find the phrase “closed his watch” informative about when the story took place. The distinction between closing the watch and putting on the watch seems important for Hungarian-American respondents in the three cohorts. Such difference in understanding the clue may be a result of distinctive levels of proficiency in the cohorts. Hungarian students of English as a foreign language may have not met contexts of language use that are meaningful enough to host such subtle variations; thus they did not recognize it.

#### **5.3.4 *Totalitarian but trying to live a normal life*—society as a context of ethno-cultural identity**

The fourth question (Appendix D and E) aimed at finding out about the society where the story takes place and the fifth question (Appendix D and E) presented an inquiry about the particular part, which helped identify the features participants mentioned. The answers were

in line with the responses given to the second and third questions; a fact that the 63-year-old fifty-sixer articulated clearly as he replied, “because of 2 above, I know it’s an autocracy.” He identified the location of the story in an answer to question two as “somewhere behind what used to be called the ‘iron curtain’.”

In the cohort of second- or later-generation Hungarian-Americans, three persons used adjectives with strong negative connotation. The retired chemist (64) of fourth generation Hungarian-American ancestry wrote the society is likely “totalitarian but trying to live a normal life.” The “old-fashioned” word “soused” (line 1, Appendix D) and the outing in the wood, which is “not modernly urban,” supported his view. The professor (55) assumed that it is “possibly repressive politically” and she found lines 6-7 (Appendix D) informative about it. The psychotherapist (36) inferred that the society was “fickle” and “shallow, except for those close to him” based on lines 8-11. The law student (31) replied that the story took place in “a society that is changing” based on the informal way of addressing the protagonist “my dear man” (line 10, Appendix D). The student (20) wrote, “it’s difficult to tell [...] because the story lacks a logical flow and transition of ideas.” The responses reflect that narratives are embedded in time also through their historically characteristic language use, which even without particularly strong referencing helps identify the period. Thus, despite the earlier described problems in translation second- or later-generation Hungarian-American participants were able to decipher relevant information regarding the social context of *Homecoming*.

In the cohort of first-generation recent immigrant Hungarian-Americans, responses are more heterogeneous than in the case of second- or later-generation Hungarian-Americans. In her reply, the budget supervisor (38), described the society as “more tolerant, integrated” and this answer followed her guess of the time logically, during the Apartheid, and the place, South Africa, of the story. Lines six and seven (Appendix D) imparted this idea for her. The air-coordinator (28) wrote the opposite: the society was “prejudiced” and the “choice of words” was most informative for her. Based on lines 8-12, the realtor (53) described the society as “opportunistic” and “compassionate.” The financial analyst (32) stated it was “depression hit,” and supported his assumptions by quoting words such as “my dear man; outing; thrashing; soured” (Appendix D). The homemaker (36) portrayed the social context as “some changes seem to have taken place; something bad might be over” and she found lines eight and nine instructive, as “people are no longer afraid to talk to this person.” According to her, the “possible metaphor: colors/sunlight of the ‘raging summer’, repeated throughout the story” evoked happiness, beauty, and liberation. There is little accordance in either the



answers or the story part that respondents used to make their conclusions regarding the social context of events. As I have noted, responses to the second point of inquiry set the answer to this question. Participants remained coherent to their views and attempted to find relevant textual support.

From among the five fifty-sixers two gave descriptions that fit post 1956 Hungarian society. The engineer (63) based his reply on lines eight and nine and portrayed the society as autocratic. The mechanical engineer (70) wrote it was a chaotic system, which “forced ideology on people.” For him the entire story carried the necessary information. The retired physician of the same age answered that events took place in a country “liberated from communist leadership” and he based his opinion on the “changed attitude of the guards and the people who recognized him.” The accountant (58) replied that the society – U.S. South in the 1930s and 40s – was “prejudicial” and found that lines 6-7 (Appendix D) were most informative about it. The retired electrical engineer (62) did not specify the society in his response, only wrote that the location was “family-centered” based on line 16 (Appendix D). Three answers related the story to communism in Hungary, which was a state they also survived, thus, they position themselves relative to the protagonist as survivors of early communism.

Four of seven Hungarians who read *Homecoming* described the society with adjectives that have negative connotation. Three students (20, 22) answered that events took place in a “corrupt and false,” “suppressed society” “that had to give up moral and ethic values.” They drew this information mostly from line 10 (Appendix D), as well as nouns and adjectives. Two students (21, 23) portrayed the country as “hypocritical,” “antisocial and authoritative” based on lines 1-2 and 8-11 (Appendix D). The teacher (29) wrote the society was “classic,” where people belong to the middle class. She gave a list of words such as: “prisons, streetcars, wedding-ring, little boys, Sundays” that exemplified the key features of the place. One student (21) replied with a binary: the society was “calm” and “changing” at the same time and found lines 1; 12-14 (Appendix D) most informative about it. Five respondents in this cohort gave similarly negative descriptions of the society; nevertheless, they established their opinions on distinctive textual references. The two remaining participants of the group avoided sharp judgmental descriptions.

Five persons of the six who read *Hazaérkezés* answered the question in negative terms regardless of their occupation, age or sex. Words such as hypocrisy, fear, limited freedom, resignation expressed the views of the readers. All five of them, four students (22, 23, 24) and the architect (33), found lines 8-11 most telling about the society. Besides lines 8-11, one

student (23) also wrote that the warning of the prison guard portrays the society best because “ez a bevett szokás, az emberek a kocsmában kiélik minden lázadásukat, dühüket, elégedetlenségüket.” Thus, information from the story and the reader’s socio-cultural knowledge are linked at this stage. The application of such knowledge helps personalize the story and identify with the protagonist as a member of the community with shared history (Assmann 6-8). The architect (62) characterized the society without any value judgment, as modern or maybe immediate past, which he deciphered from the entire story. Answers in this cohort of readers show much unanimity. Therefore, as quoted in section 2.2.3, sharing the language and culture of the writer enables the reader to make sense of the social norms and values that are inscribed in cultural memory. Familiarity with culturally-embedded linguistic signs makes the individual reader knowledgeable of the communal conscience and constructs the person’s cultural authority.

The majority of respondents, irrespective of their ethno-cultural identity, wrote adjectives that focused on similar qualities often with strong negative connotation such as stress, tension, oppression, lack of openness, inconstant, fickle, authoritative government, and hypocritical. The two paragraphs (lines 1-2 and 8-11) most participants found informative about the society revealed the tension resulting from the binary opposition of universal images. Someone who was so careful about his wedding ring and watch was not normally expected to go to the “first bar and get soused” or even be a criminal (lines 1-2 Appendix D). Such surface-level controversy played the role of semantic explication, defined in section 1.3.2 (Wierzbicka 135), turning readers’ attention toward hidden cultural information rather than the surface level even in the case of such readers who did not possess background information on culture. Addressing someone “My dear man” (line 10, Appendix A) after not having seen the person for six years seemed disdainful and meant looking down upon the person and thus readers gained additional information about the society and culture. As I argued in sections 4.2.1 and 4.4, uses and recognition of the rhetoric of binaries inscribe the norm through the comparison of cultures. Binaries construct communities discursively because they describe voluntary membership in the groups. Thus, the codability of such cultural knowledge involves multiple levels of storied experience.

### **5.3.5 *There is nothing confusing for those of us who lived there*—on confusing parts of the story**

The sixth question aimed to inquire about the intricate parts of the short story, as well as what caused those difficulties. Responses are assumed to provide information regarding the culture-specific information that is hard to decode in a distinctive language. The relevance of the question is further justified in some of the conclusive remarks in sections 1.3.3 and 1.4 regarding language, identity, and narrative. Expressions of identity, community norms and value hierarchies are encoded in various discourses. These discourses formulate narratives, which in turn construct identities. However, if the narratives are products of another cultural setting, moreover, translated from another language, such decontextualization may result in confusion regarding the issues that the narrative is meant to open up. The cohort of native speakers of Hungarian who read the story in Hungarian may serve as a control group, as they were assumed to be able to understand the story in its entirety.

All members of the cohort of second- or later-generation Hungarian-Americans found some parts confusing. Two participants, the professor (55) and the law student (31) replied that the behavior of characters described in lines 8-11 (Appendix D) was not clear, namely, whether the writer “is referring to prison or before prison.” The psychotherapist (36) lacked a “clear transition from his [the protagonist’s] leaving prison to his walk with his son,” which part actually includes lines 8-11 (Appendix D). It is important to note that this same section of the story was claimed to be informative about the society for native Hungarians as well as for some first-generation Hungarian-American participants, regardless of the language in which they read it. The retired chemist (64) did not understand why “the boy would be so friendly.” The student (20) found the entire story “confusing and the ideas fragmented; difficult to figure out when things are happening.”

Responses show more variety in the cohort of first-generation recently immigrated Hungarian-Americans. The budget supervisor (38) wrote that the part when the family goes on an outing in the wood (lines 16-20, Appendix D) was problematic, but gave no reasons why she thought so. The realtor (53) found line 5 (Appendix D) confusing. He could not decide whether “women looked like colored, exotic birds,” “women were wearing colorful outfits,” “women were painted as exotic birds,” or “women were wearing exotic birds on their heads.” The financial analyst (32) had problems with the “Sunday outing” part because he felt that “there was no transition between his [the protagonist’s] prison release and the hike.” This respondent, similarly to the psychotherapist in the previously described cohort, emphasized the fragmented nature of the story, lacking smooth transition from one episode to the other. The air-coordinator (28) found lines 6 and 7 confusing, yet gave no specifications why she replied that. The homemaker (36) replied that lines 8-11 had more than one potential

understanding. “Does he consider them [people who the protagonist met upon his release from jail] insincere, or is he upset that they did escape imprisonment while he did not.” In both cohorts, the effects of translation – the inappropriate management of potential cultural clues – strengthened the genre-specific features of the short story such as: little emphasis on the linearity of action or plot and a lack of the description of character development. These together may have led to the confusion of some readers.

The fifty-sixers who read *Homecoming* were more definite that they understood the story in its entirety. The retired electrical engineer (62) answered he was not sure of the expression “‘understood his hand’ at first, altogether I could guess the meaning.” The accountant (58) found lines 8-11 confusing. “Why would others wanna shake hands with him?” He thought the story took place in the southern states of the U.S.A.; therefore, he could hardly contextualize the episode. Three persons in the cohort answered that there was nothing confusing about *Homecoming*. The mechanical engineer (70) simply wrote that everything was understandable “after I made up my mind.” The retired physician (70) even replied that “maybe I added to the story, from my memory bank” thus, treating the narrative as a personal episode. The engineer (63) claimed that “once you identify 2 [question 2, Appendix D] there is nothing confusing for those of us who lived there.” These three answers exemplify that a shared cultural and historical background not only makes the text more easily understandable but the readers also recognize why the writer-narrator tells the particular story. The responses show how these participants look at *Homecoming* as a life story, as defined in section 1.4.2, which includes socio-culturally contextualized actions and identity performances, rather than a canonical literary piece. It is a culturally available script, which individuals can make use of to construct their own ethno-cultural identities, as well as that of others.

Among Hungarians who read *Homecoming*, two students (20, 21) said there was nothing confusing about the short story. Two respondents wrote that the father—son relationship was perplexing. One of them (21) found the scene “when the man plays with his son” problematic, yet she gave no reason why she found so. The teacher (29) could not decide “whose son” the little boy was, as the protagonist “never mentioned his son.” A student (22) wrote that lines 10-11 (Appendix D) were ambiguous, because she could not make out the meaning of the form of addressing the protagonist “My dear man.” According to a 21-year-old student, “he [the protagonist] could have been happier walking in the sunshine. A student (23) replied that the binary opposition “prison—protective” is confusing; it signifies that the country in which the story took place was in chaos. She certainly found an important poetic use of the rhetoric of binary.

In the cohort of native Hungarians reading *Hazaérkezés*, only one respondent mentioned a confusing episode – “az apa-fiú rész, amikor az erdőben vannak” – the earlier described forest scene, with father and son playing together. The remaining five participants unanimously answered they found nothing that was confusing or hard to understand in the story. Thus, for these persons the short story fits into the collective memory they share, and it encodes an important event they exchange and communicate vertically from one generation to the other, as described in section 2.2.3, on the narrative construction of ethno-cultural identity.

The results show that the most frequently mentioned confusing episodes were described in lines 8-11, the part that helped a lot to understand the spatial and time context for others. A lack of smooth transition from the prison scene to the family outing (lines 14-20 Appendix D), referred to twice, emphasizes the episodic nature of the genre of the short story rather than linearity. Nevertheless, such fragmented references make the scenes harder to contextualize and relate. The results allow the assumption that the lack of verbal information missed by Hungarian-Americans due to the genre and the fact that they read the story in translation, was made up for by a ‘collective psyche or identity’. Such knowledge includes historical events and reality closely tied to semantic and discourse features and registers in the case of native Hungarians.

### **5.3.6 *Anyone [...] can relate to this man—the protagonist***

Questions 7-9 (Appendix D and E) dealt with the protagonist: how participants felt about him, who they thought he was, and why possibly he had been jailed. I discuss the results of these three questions in one section because the three questions all navigate the readers toward thinking about the main character. In the cohort of second- or later-generation Hungarian-Americans two persons described the protagonist as a “good man” who they sympathize with, because he was an innocent victim of political charges. The professor (55) replied that he was jailed for a political offense and the law student (31) wrote that he very likely “opposed the regime.” The retired chemist (64) replied that the man was an “ordinary, common person” who “spoke up about individual rights,” thus, it was “not sure if he is going to fit the society.” The psychotherapist wrote that the main character was imprisoned for moral injustice against culture and once he identified with loss, he returns to society. The student (20) replied that the protagonist “seems different each time. He thought it was “too difficult to tell from the logical flow of the story” why he was jailed. Four of the five members of the group assumed that the

reason for imprisonment was not a common, petty crime, but something political. This result proves the translatability of major clues.

In the cohort of first-generation Hungarian-Americans who relocated in the United States of America after the 1970s three participants replied that the protagonist was a political convict. The realtor (53) found him a “quiet, modest, intelligent family man” who was an ex-convict and a writer. The air-coordinator (28) noted that he was “someone who was not willing to be swallowed into the system he couldn’t identify with.” The man reminded the respondent of the “early 90s and late 80s in Eastern Europe, anyone from that continent can relate to this man. Either by experience or by stories of the older generation.” The homemaker (36) wrote that the protagonist was “likely not a criminal, but a political dissident, possibly well-known.” The budget supervisor (38) thought the central character was Nelson Mandela and he was jailed for his revolutionary and social change-related advocacies. Although this view set the context afar from the real geographical and time context of the story, the respondent did recognize that the protagonist was charged with political activities against the current regime. Only the financial analyst (32) answered that the hero was a “white man, possibly European immigrant, poor, honest” and his imprisonment for “some petty crime or fighting, stealing food” was “in error or at least unfair.”

Results show slightly less coherence in the reactions of the fifty-sixers. Three participants wrote that the protagonist was a political prisoner they sympathized with, “someone who stood up for his beliefs.” The retired physician (70) “did not recognize the subject.” The engineer (63) wrote that the story depicted someone “who stood up for his beliefs or just happened to be at the wrong place at the wrong time.” The mechanical engineer (70) replied that the hero was a “victim, professional or intellectual.” The retired electrical (62) engineer had “no particular feeling,” because he thought the story did not provide “enough information,” yet the crime he felt, was “possibly drinking-related.” The accountant (58) answered that he was not sorry because “the guy was probably guilty.” Interestingly enough nobody in this group mentioned the possible participation of the main character in the 1956 revolution in Hungary, of which they themselves had an immediate knowledge, yet had no prison experiences.

Of the native Hungarians who read *Homecoming* six described the protagonist positively, which makes this cohort very homogeneous. Two students (21) explained the man’s imprisonment with his political role in 1956 and felt sympathy and respect towards him for his sufferings. Two students (20, 23), gave a similar description about the protagonist, and stated that he was probably jailed for political reasons. The teacher (29) replied that the man

was an “unfortunate person,” a “white collar man” who got to prison due to some “misunderstanding” because he “wasn’t guilty.” According to the 22-year-old student, the hero was an “average man with wife and children.” She “felt sorry because he spent 6 years in prison,” yet in her view the “text doesn’t suggest anything” regarding the reasons for imprisonment, “so it could’ve been anything.” A student (21) depicted the main character in most degenerate terms, as an “ordinary political or business gambler who got caught.” “He doesn’t really involve himself in his life; probably mentally damaged.” The reason for six years in jail in her opinion was “cheating.” This summary of the responses in this cohort shows that most respondents understood the essential features of the protagonist, even though his participation in the 1956 revolution or his innocence were not explicitly verbalized.

Similar homogeneity of responses can be found in the answers of the six native Hungarians who read *Hazaérkezés*. Even though nobody identified the protagonist with the 1956 revolution, everybody understood his imprisonment as victimization under the totalitarian rule. Three respondents gave no specific answer regarding the protagonist. According to the architect (62), he can be anybody. The 22-year-old student did not write anything, whereas the architect (33) noted that the story lacked enough information concerning who the protagonist was. A student aged 24 noted that the hero would probably become famous later. “Ha bűnöző lenne a felesége nem vár rá, és pláne a gyereket nem engedi hozzá”—thought another student (23) in the cohort. Three of the six respondents emphasized that the protagonist was an average person, part of the crowd, at the time of the story. Nevertheless, responses seem to resonate in their content, which may also reflect that they read the story in their native language.

Compared to earlier questions, inquiries regarding the protagonist have yielded the strongest consensus in all cohorts. Answers to the question about the time and place of the events, however, determined most of responses given to the points of inquiry about the protagonist, as well. Once the context is set, it is culturally appropriate in western democracies to feel sympathy toward someone put into prison due to trumped-up charges, regardless where it actually happened.

### **5.3.7 *You wouldn’t use the word ‘colored’—assuming the story was American***

The tenth question in the English version (Appendix D) inquired about how the story would have been different had it been an American one. Respondents who read *Hazaérkezés* did not have to deal with this issue (Appendix E). It is a hypothetical question, which has aimed to

bring forth explicit views about the cultural contexts and their linguistic expression rather than expect participants to come up with complex literary comparisons.

In the cohort of second- or later-generation Hungarian-Americans three respondents mentioned language use would be different. The law student (31) claimed “you wouldn’t use the word ‘colored’ to describe a person. The man would be black and the time would be the 60s,” as actually one fifty-sixer guessed in response to question two (sections 5.2.2 and 5.2.3). The retired chemist (64) wrote that the man “wouldn’t have been so separated from the outside world,” and added that words and expressions such as “thrashing,” and “the boy ‘understood’ his hand” would not be used in an American story. The psychotherapist (36) only replied, “some of the language would be different.” The professor (55) criticized language use in her answer to the first question, and at this point, she added that an American story would present “more detail about why in jail and who the person is.” The student (20) said that the story “would flow more logically” if it were American. These answers show that respondents could hold on more to exact language features than the implicit cultural themes and content, which could only be guessed from hints.

Recently immigrated Hungarian-Americans gave more varied answers than did members in the previously described cohort. Only one respondent, realtor (53) mentioned language as a prime source of potential difference. The budget supervisor (38) and the air-coordinator (28) gave no answer to the question. The financial analyst (32) assumed that “it was an American short story written in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.” The homemaker (36), however, gave a profound explication of the point. “An American story about a similar situation would have to be a lot more explicit for American readers to understand. People would need to be given specific details about why the man was in prison, why people used to avoid him, why he’s being released etc.” The stereotypical view is close to the first narrative in section 4.1.3, which portrays a cross-cultural misunderstanding about reading cultural symbols. Similar to that narrative the respondent at this point argues for the repressiveness of in-group essentialism reviewed in section 1.2.3.

All five fifty-sixers gave distinctive responses. The retired electrical engineer (62) answered that in an American story “different expressions would be used for ‘thrashing’, ‘soused’ and ‘dear man’.” Two participants referred to the time spent in prison as a source of potential difference. The retired physician (70) argued that the protagonist “would not have been in prison,” whereas the mechanical engineer (70) wrote that in an American story if someone had been jailed, he probably “would have had a reason.” The accountant (58) answered that the story would not be any different. The engineer (63) replied “they would go



home in a car or on a bus,” as he did not think there was a prison in the U.S.A. “close to the streets where people walk and meet each other.” Such reference to a cross-cultural difference in urban development exemplifies key features of the narrative construction of ethno-cultural identity revised in chapters 2.2.2 and 2.2.3. Characters in these stories are often depicted and received as real-life people, portrayed according to canonical socio-cultural norms and values (Hoffman, *Life* 1; László, *Társas* 47). The location of prisons is a socio-cultural norm defined by urban planning directives. The recognition of such slight difference with the help of senses of geography, defined in section 4.1.3, proves that the reader is a member of both ethno-culturally distinguishable communities. Furthermore, in the response the protagonist is allowed or denied to become part of the imaginary community of the particular cohort of respondents.

In the cohort of native Hungarians who read *Homecoming* nobody used the language of the short story as a clue to answering the question, unlike in the groups described so far. This fact may be explained with the difference in their proficiency level compared to Hungarian Americans as argued in section 5.3.2. Two students (21, 22) left at this point the answer sheet blank. The responses of three students (20, 21) are in accordance, as they think the protagonist would not have been jailed based on trumped-up political charges. The 23-year-old student wrote that in an American story “more emphasis” would fall “on individual characteristics rather than the family.” The teacher (29) held that the story reminded her rather of a Latin American short story. In her response, the participant relies on stereotypes likewise the homemaker (36) in the cohort of first-generation Hungarian-Americans, which in the Rortyan-Geertzian sense outlined in section 2.2.3, serve to mark the spaces for ethnicities.

Responses revealed potential content- and language-related differences because the question itself encouraged participants to side along cultural and literary stereotypes. In the cohort of native Hungarians reading *Homecoming*, some of them even found the theme irrelevant in any other socio-cultural context but post-1956 communist Hungary. The fact that they understood the cultural clues regarding context and content resulted in attributing importance to earlier described elements of the plot. Responses of second- or later-generation Hungarian-Americans also seem to be homogeneous, because they relied on language use that they perceived as somewhat different from standard American use. Thus, participants with only few exceptions marked distinctive features of narrative cultures in which they constructed their membership.

### **5.3.8 *A story doesn't have to be unique to touch you—uniqueness***

The 11<sup>th</sup> question (Appendix D; 10<sup>th</sup> question, Appendix E) asked if participants found the story unique in any sort of way. The form of inquiry did not specify any particular field in which participants would be expected to think. The aim was to elicit the widest possible range of responses. I included the concept of uniqueness into the possible readings of the story in part because some of my conversational partners in the study of ethno-cultural identity narratives in Chapter 4 referred to the notion in different contexts. The question of its relevance in understanding a Hungarian short-story in translation as well as in the original is assumed to reveal more about the way respondents position themselves relative to the protagonist and the social-cultural-geographical context of the short story.

Five respondents in the cohort of second- or later-generation Hungarian-Americans listed distinctive sources of uniqueness. Two participants found the plot peculiar. The law student (31) answered that that the time the protagonist spent with his family made it unique, whereas the retired chemist (64) noted “that he could actually go back to where, or approximately where he was before he’d been jailed” was unique. The psychotherapist (36) found language use to be a relevant source of uniqueness. For the professor (55) this feature was based on the “vagueness” of the story. The student (20) wrote: “It’s unique in the sense that it’s really difficult to follow what’s going on.”

Three persons from among the recent immigrant Hungarian-American cohort answered that the short story was not unique. The budget supervisor (38) claimed that “this kind of event has happened many times in many countries.” The realtor (53) noted the story was not very unique, however, he would “want to learn more about the man’s life.” According to the financial analyst (32) the “story was not unique.” In the opinion of two participants, its linguistic and formal features make it unique. The air-coordinator (28) viewed “well-chosen words, simple sentences” a sign of uniqueness despite the fact that she read the story in translation. The homemaker (36) found the story “short and concise.”

In the group of fifty-sixers the retired electrical engineer (62) answered the question similarly to the air-coordinator and the homemaker in the previous cohort, in terms of formal characteristics. He held that the story “does convey ‘homecoming’ in remarkably few paragraphs.” Three participants said nothing was unique about the story. The mechanical engineer (70) and the accountant (58) left the question entirely blank, whereas the engineer (63) said there was “nothing unique about the story itself” and added, “a story does not have to be unique to touch you.” The retired physician (70) found certain thematic elements unique, namely the “sensitive family, picture, the sensitive son and wife” unique.

Hungarian participants who read *Homecoming* gave a wider spectrum of answers, which can mostly be grouped around theme and structure. Nobody mentioned language. This fact may again be related issues in the proficiency of the respondents. Two students (22, 23) thought the story left too many questions and contradictions open that made it unique. This opinion resonates the judgment of the third-generation professor (55) who mentioned vagueness as a source of uniqueness. One participant mentioned the atmosphere and compared the story to Tibor Déry's short story *Szerelem*. "Only people from Hungary or countries in Eastern Europe who have suffered the oppression of Russia can fully understand it." The 20-year-old student wrote that the "part when the family goes out" makes the story unique. The teacher (29) found it interesting that "everything is described from the point of view of our man." A The student aged 21 gave no answer to the question. In the cohort of respondents who read *Hazaérkezés* two students, aged 22 and 23, left the answer space blank. Three respondents, the architect (62) and two students (24) answered that the story was in no sense unique. The architect (33) wrote it was an average description of early 1960s Hungarian society.

Responses to this question showed more variety than to other ones because the concept of uniqueness is vague enough to allow for less schematic or text-based interpretations. Some respondents sought for positive features in this category, others listed neutral or even negative features. Translation made a difference only for readers who were non-native speakers of Hungarian, and lived outside Hungary; therefore, they had not enough insights into the culture. These participants found language or the logic of the story peculiar, whereas respondents in the other two cohorts used extra-linguistic information such as content and context to define the uniqueness of *Homecoming* and *Hazaérkezés*.

## 5.4 CONCLUDING REMARKS

In this chapter of the dissertation, I have discussed the results of a qualitative study that sheds light on the features of canonical narratives to construct and refine ethno-cultural identity. Moreover, the study aimed to reveal the role of language in understanding and interpreting socio-cultural references. Responses of 28 first-, second- and later-generation Hungarian-Americans and native Hungarians to the short story by Árpád Göncz *Hazaérkezés*, and its English translation *Homecoming*, position them relative to the ethno-cultural identity, communal norms, and the value hierarchy encoded in it. The responses of participants encapsulate the codability of culture across languages along three main concepts: (1) the

linguistic expression and embodiment of cultural reality, (2) the impact of translation on understanding cultural context and content, and (3) the ways in which individual ethno-cultural affiliations encompass common cultural assumptions. These issues appear in a triangular theoretical construct of narrative, identity, and language scaffolded by (1) features of the short story as a literary genre, (2) culture and cognition: the translatability of culture, and (3) narrative and meta-narrative identity construction in a chaos/complexity perspective. Although the qualitative nature of the study limits the generalizability of results, it also helps open up a wide range of contexts in which the story has been read in order to gain insights into the conceptualization of ethno-cultural identity through reading literature.

As a short story, *Hazaérkezés* [*Homecoming*] stresses particular elements of plot, character, atmosphere and theme in a culturally patterned imagery. Thus, responses are supposedly discursive markers of cultural communities in which such pieces of literature trigger the meta-narrative construction of ethno-cultural identity. Questions 2, 4, 7, 8 and 9 are assumed to elicit thinking along the ethno-cultural meta-narrative. Answers regarding the location and time of the events in the short story proved most controversial. One reason is that these questions required concrete answers, whereas the story contained only abstract information. Participants who shared the writer's mother tongue were more able to unfold the cultural clues regardless of the language in which they read the story. A particular homogeneity of responses can be observed among native Hungarian readers of *Hazaérkezés*, which fact proves that the story braids identity into a texture of three components: reader, writer and the protagonist who constitute a discursively existing imaginary community with shared cultural knowledge. Likewise, the similarity of difficulties in understanding the story brings together members in the cohort of second- or later-generation Hungarian-Americans who grew up without close cultural contact and had problems finding that information. Although there are agreements in the answers of the remaining three cohorts, they show much less harmony of opinions overall. Such little concord, nevertheless demarcates the liminal status of respondents as first-generation Hungarian-Americans as well as native Hungarians reading a short story in English. Thus, the findings of the study add to the earlier set definition of liminality in section 4.1, as the concept also includes the status created via the spiritual journey from one culture to the other, implemented in a reading experience in a language different from one's mother tongue, besides physical relocation.

A short story often presents narratives similar to oral histories in connecting time and space to make sense of storied personal experience as a socially and culturally embedded enterprise. The emphasis is on the episodic description of events rather than character

development, not necessarily in a strictly linear structure. Such lack of linearity and the social-cultural load of the text create much of the difficulties in translation, as well. Translation does not change the core features of the rhetoric, such as the major linguistic devices that describe the positioning of characters relative to one another. Nevertheless, respondents who read *Homecoming* found certain parts vague and inarticulate to help understand the story in its entirety. This feature frequently appears in the answers of Hungarian-American participants, especially second- or later-generation but also in the case of some first-generation respondents, as they attempt to define cultural contexts without the connotations of historical period- and society-specific language use.

In some cases, such as the use of the word “colored,” translation did not take away but added new secondary social-cultural meaning, which also turned out to be disturbing to a large extent. In the case of native Hungarians reading *Hazaérkezés* or even *Homecoming*, their sociocultural competence and collective psyche helped them toward a more complex understanding. Socialization, as outlined in chapter 1.2.1, means learning the ‘collective psyche’ together with the acquisition of the mother tongue and sociocultural competence defined in section 1.3.4, including the history, geography, and culture of one’s native country. Thus, the study exemplifies how a ‘collective psyche or identity’ could make up for the lack of verbal information in which historical events and reality are closely tied to discourse features and registers. Some non-native Hungarians in the study have greatly missed this kind of knowledge the lack of which was exacerbated by the inadequacies of translation.

Besides the role of translation in losing and reproducing cultural information, the concordance of answers within the cohorts illustrates yet the existence of cultural meta-narratives. These interpretive grids, as defined in Chapter 4, provide the initial background for narrative socialization as well as ethno-cultural identity in a chaos/complexity perspective. As the present study has shown, meta-narrative constructs also define ways of understanding and interpreting canonical narratives relative to individual experience. The ethno-cultural meta-narratives can be recognized as participants in distinctive cohorts explain their choices and interpretations often along very similar social, cultural or geographical and geo-political patterns. Responses are most palpably dependent on this narrative grid in the case of second- or later-generation Hungarian-Americans and native Hungarian readers of *Hazaérkezés*. For them the short story exposes a fundamental structure, which systematically hosts their interpretations and connects them into an imaginary community along the principles of small-world networks.

Small-world networks defined in sections 1.4.3 and 4.3.2 are frameworks that describe the interactions of group members relative to one another. Thus, it becomes visible how in these two cohorts it is not only the personal features of respondents that place them in the group, but also their responses connect to one another based on the ethno-cultural meta-narrative grid of understanding the story. According to findings of the study, meta-narrative frames in the other three parties display similar cohort-building capacity; however, cohort boundaries sometimes grow blurred due to the experience of liminality. Participants from one group give responses in some cases that are closer to the way of thinking characteristic to the other cohort and the dynamics of answers thus relating to one another can be interpreted according to the chaos/complexity perspective. Cohort boundaries are strengthened by the reading experience, thus, reading literature becomes a marker of ethno-cultural identity, as the narrative ethnic experiences have also proved in Chapter 4. Reading culture is more than just topic- and content-based information, it also requires searching for linguistic clues and implications that add to the content. The approach to the responses revealed how participants applied an analysis of discourse and semantic features in order to understand ethno-cultural experience recapitulated in language. The study reveals some aspects of how reading literary narratives in translation and in the original maintains ethno-cultural experience, as well as how language construes narrative.

## Conclusion

In the introduction I argued that communal existence and self-understanding are mutually interdependent and this relationship can be traced in distinctive narrative forms of social and cultural interaction. In an attempt to examine the metaphorical meanings and background of the “slice of Americana” (Appendix C, *Interview 2/1*) the present dissertation has aimed to explore perspectives of narratively constructed ethno-cultural identity in a Hungarian-American as well as a comparative Hungarian-American and Hungarian contextual framework. The construct is approached from a theoretical aspect as well as through the findings of empirical research work.

The conceptualization of narrative ethno-cultural identity in Chapter 1 emerges as an interwoven texture of historical and current views on personal, social, cultural and narrative identity. In Chapter 2 identity is related to key notions of ethnicity such as acculturation, assimilation and pluralism in order to underpin the process of ethnogenesis, a concept that hosts the narrative construction of ethno-cultural identity. The application of a chaos/complexity perspective provides a holistic insight into how these forms of representation appear as dynamic, nonlinear and process-based. Chapter 3 presents examples from the current as well as the historical research canon, which exemplify and relate to the review of theoretical approaches.

Two qualitative empirical studies, both revolving around stories, inquired into the narrative articulation of ethno-cultural identity. In the first study, outlined in Chapter 4, narratives are elicited from the participants about their lives in order to exemplify analytical concepts and idea frames that construct narrative ethno-cultural identity. Manifestations of ethnicity are discussed as they appear in the life stories that describe these persons’ “slice of Americana.” In the second study, in Chapter 5, the trigger is a canonical narrative and it aims to map issues of: (1) codability of cultural content, and (2) the reciprocal relationship between reading canonical ethnic literature and the construction of ethno-cultural identity. I asked respondents to read two versions, English and Hungarian, of a short story instead of telling their own narratives. Their reactions are assumed to show particular signs and ways in which the ethno-cultural background influences the interpretation of a narrative. In what follows I summarize how the reviewed literature and the findings of the two empirical studies relate to the research questions stated in the introduction.

## **6.1 Identity, ethnicity, language, and the narrative construction of ethno-cultural identity**

The disciplinary contextualization of identity has built strongly on the genealogical dilemma of the soul and the self (Calhoun 10-17) and it expressed most of the key concepts that have recurred in the analysis of the interview-based narratives (Chapter 4). Identity encapsulates an access to the individual's own past and personal history, which is at the same time restricted in the case of others (Locke 201-202; Olson 2; Shoemaker, *Personal Identity* 661). Memory, the continuity of memory and subjectivity define the self that is established relative to perceiving others. The dynamics of human relationships point toward the importance of interactions in discussing constructs of identity. The self-reflexive nature of the concept implies that the individual negotiates a given moment in his/her personal history. Thus, identity implies the verbal and nonverbal representations of patterns, norms, values, and attitudes through negotiation and interactions. These features demarcate particular groups of individuals as communities. Individuals bring their identities to interact with one another and build communities through understanding the discourse resulting from various interactions. The discourses build narratives and the narratives construct identities.

In a narrative mode of thinking stories are a means of making sense of lived experience that depends on cultural conventions and the course of life in a particular culture. Personal narratives reflect prevalent cultural ideas through the events that appear in them as well as through language use. These events and the language of narrating the events constitute individual and group memory that defines the self and identity. Culture creates the narrative models by means of language, which in turn serve as a way to describe, maintain and pass on the course of life and the identity of members in that culture. Aspects of the relationship between language and culture are discussed in an analysis of the reactions to a short story read in translation and in the original (Chapter 5). The chaos/complexity theory offers a well-rounded perspective to look at groups of people who interact and helps explain how identity is constructed narratively. Individuals tell their own stories of certain events and within a shared cultural grid they exchange and reconstruct distinctive ways of narrating these events until the final version is legitimized according to the principles of the small-world phenomenon. Thus, individual stories build collective cultural knowledge; first, they are personalized and once the community recognizes the stories, they serve as a frame of a communal identity narrative.

A review of paradigmatic theories of ethnicity (Bhabha; Guibernau and Rex; Hollinger; Kuper; Rosaldo; Sollors; Waters; Wieviorka) finds that there are two major



approaches to define the construct of ethnicity. Postmodern constructionist perspectives hold that ethno-cultural identity is increasingly individual, decentered, and fractured, as it is a concept based on the definition of otherness. An opposing view posits that ethnicity provides the individual with a steady point of reference in the fragmented concept of identity. In this approach the role of language, borderland existence or liminality, and rites of passage are ways to tackle separation and to position the individual in the community. These concepts define acculturation as ethno-cultural change, or else the internalization of a discourse community's culture.

Narrative ethno-cultural identity construction in a chaos/complexity perspective implies that a person may internalize the culture of more than one community. Dual or bidirectional acculturation implies belonging to two distinctive cultural and discourse groups and this membership is expressed through various linguistic and narrative tools. Narratives offer a convenient framework to describe the process of bidirectional acculturation, as they articulate group cohesion and the relationship of the individual and the community in the plot and by means of linguistic and rhetorical devices. The quantitative surveys of ethnic groups in reviewed studies do not provide in depth information regarding the content and nature of acculturation. Narratives, however, offer a dynamic, on-going, formative and transformative approach to examining ethno-cultural identity regardless of the degree and nature of ethnic ancestry. Thus, the self-reflective, dynamic and continuously changing identity is blended with the traditionally community-based feature of ethnicity in narrative structure. In the dissertation, the constructs of ethnicity and identity are discussed in a chaos/complexity perspective to maintain their categorical features and supplement one another conceptually. The two qualitative studies discussed in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5, were designed and implemented to tap into the issues of the narrative framing of a "slice of Americana" or else ethno-cultural identity.

## **6.2 Narrative frames of ethno-cultural communities**

The first study is based on the analysis of personal narratives about manifestations of ethnic Hungarianness in a present day North-American context. The narratives were elicited in twenty-eight ethnographic interviews with ten second-generation Hungarian-Americans. A

short introduction of the history and present concerns of Hungarian-Americans established that it is hard to talk about them as a collectivity or an ethnic minority. Occasionally Hungarian-Americans as members of a diaspora use their ethnic origins to distinguish consciously their “slice of Americana” from the rest of mainstream American society. Based on the review of theoretical issues, the study found answers to three questions: (1) thematic concepts of ethnic duality, (2) linguistic expression of the acculturation process, centering on the content and nature of values ascribed to the group, and (3) the narrative modes of ethno-cultural identity construction. I have discussed these features in a chaos/complexity perspective in which narratives are told as the emergent properties of ethno-cultural identity. Individual stories interact in this extended system of imaginary communication, thus constructing a single, distinctively characteristic meta-narrative of liminality, bi- and occasionally tridirectional acculturation, and community maintenance.

The stories I analyzed revealed how the individual ethnic experiences of liminality resonate with one another along the interrelated thematic concepts of (1) the sense of history, (2) the sense of geography, (3) the creation of archetypes, (4) myths of origins, and (5) rites of passage. The senses of history and geography connect ethno-cultural identity to historical time and emphasize its spatiality. The former emerges through the account of interviewees regarding their families’ involvement in major historical events in the ancestral homeland. The storied experience of parents and grandparents brings about a specific archive of historical narratives in which characters often also stage archetypal images. Their second- and third-generation descendants construct a sense of history via becoming the narrator and sometimes investigator of those episodes who unpack and pass on the meaning of archetypes. The ethnically demarcated status of liminality in this context refers to the active contribution to creating and maintaining individual interpretations as well as the canonical portrayal of historical events regarding the ancestral homeland. The sense of geography is built through the discursive use of recognizable places in narrating visits to Hungary, temporary or permanent relocation to Hungary, and the stays at Hungarian-American communal gathering sites in the United States of America. Knowing history and geography provides an understanding of the ancestor group’s existence in time and space and constructs the descendant group through meta-narratives, which unfold from the personal stories.

Archetypes that are concomitant features of commemorated history explain the success of community formation and maintenance. They play key roles in myths of origin constructed within the schema of liminal existence and serve the function of justifying the distinction from the ancestral culture and positioning members of the ethnic community

within the target society. If archetypes feature key characters in the process of narrative ethno-cultural identity construction, rites of passage demonstrate the reciprocal dynamics of the ethnic community even if it is discursive or imaginary. In a chaos/complexity perspective, passage rites occur in prolonged interaction with the environment and support bi- or occasionally tridirectional acculturation.

In this narrative study in Chapter 4, I found that individual experiences of interviewees' "slice of Americana" tend to converge toward a common meta-narrative regardless of community membership. This meta-narrative grid does not define the detailed content of ethno-cultural existence; however, it holds together a set of attitudinal and linguistic frames of interpretation as well as it forges interactions in a way that all members are reached. Thus, identity develops as narrators negotiate the thematic concepts through manipulating a wide range of linguistic choices. For example, when I discussed the use of synecdoche as a tool to create a sense of geography I concluded that the device positions and empowers the person at the same time within an unmarked, and de-ethnicized white American identity.

Uses of rhetorical binaries present ways of behaving in stereotypes and generalities to mark the distance between the narrator as a member of the archetypal immigrant community in America and the ancestral sources that fuel this cultural knowledge. I have found that narrative binaries set the norm of the non-immigrant status of ethnicity through the comparison of cultures and these norms create communities with voluntary membership. Oppositions hence construct communities discursively, express bidirectional acculturation and explain choices of affiliation or unaffiliation with the community. Beside the rhetoric of binaries, one of the most widely applicable linguistic tools of ethno-cultural identity construction is code-switching. The discussion of narratives revealed that the change of language emblemizes group membership and links the two worlds in which identity is meaningful, the story world and the story-telling world. Language use is a matter of choice and it becomes a prime indicator of liminality, as the continuous necessity to decide about alternatives marks this status.

Regarding the narrative modes of ethno-cultural identity construction, I have found that a double narrative structure arranges and formulates the discursive experiences of immigrating generations and their descendants. The use of direct and indirect speech as well as pronominal switches denote moving from one narrative to the other. Structuring one narrative on an existing other marks the importance of personal and commemorated history in identity construction. Combination of the two sources of history justifies the decision to

relocate and makes liminality a positive experience with the choices it offers. Alternation of direct and indirect speech builds the discursive relationship between the narrator and the other characters in the story, and position the former relative to the latter. A further relationship between interviewer and informant has been established, as I offered that my analysis could be read and commented on. Endre Szentkirályi did so and offered his views regarding some of the interpretations. Thus, reciprocal ethnography was built in the study as well, that relied on the knowledge of informants that they may not have been able to express in the exact way they wanted to.

Approaching the stories in a chaos/complexity theory reveals the second narrative mode, which is a wider interaction-based view of the dynamics of the narrative construction of ethno-cultural identity. The thematic connection and the related linguistic expression exhibit how the narrators are connected without necessarily knowing one another. The episodes reveal opinions that converge toward a meta-narrative of being Hungarian in America. Considering the narratives as a system of interactions unveils a broader dialogical framework. Links that relate single narratives seem random at first sight and they build the meta-narrative dynamically through a process. These two modes of narrative not only describe how people relate to their ethnicity but also serve as a source of distinctiveness in themselves to represent the continuous state of flux cultural identities are in.

In the second study in Chapter 5, I discussed the ways in which a canonical short story empowers its readers to connect narrative and ethno-cultural identity. This inquiry together with the first one was meant to encapsulate the holistic, dynamic and contextualized nature of narrative ethno-cultural identity in terms of creating a theoretical and empirical scaffolding of narrative, language, and identity. Twenty-eight first-, second- and later-generation Hungarian-Americans and native Hungarians read the short story by Árpád Göncz, *Homecoming* as well as its original Hungarian version, *Hazaérkezés* and responded to questions about it. Answers of participants shed light on three issues concerning the codability of culture across languages: (1) linguistic expression of cultural reality, (2) implications of translating cultural content and context, and (3) the role of ethno-cultural affiliations in encompassing common cultural assumptions. Discussion of the results was built on an explanation of responses through the genre specific features of the short story as well as issues in culture and cognition such as the translatability of culture. The study relates to the narrative inquiry discussed in Chapter 4, as the findings exemplify the narrative and meta-narrative identity construction in a chaos/complexity perspective.

Along the conclusive remarks in section 5.4, two aspects regarding this study relate to the work on personal stories. First, the manipulation of narrative time displays similar features in both cases when narratives were elicited from interviewees and when respondents dealt with a narrative that they were provided with. Narrative time spreads across generations without strict linearity and links representatives of distinctive generations. Those respondents who had their own experience related to the events depicted in the story understood the events more in their complexity than those who did not have such bold experience. This knowledge may, however, be composed of the narrativized involvement of descendants through a sense of history, which was sometimes the case. Encapsulated here is the recognition of more than one way in which the meta-narrative grid of the community is created.

Second, the answers show how the canonical narrative is built into personal narratives to create a double narrative structure outlined in the discussion of life stories in Chapter 4. Readers of the *Hazaérkezés* often displayed their status of liminality in their responses. Furthermore, the studies defy the assumptions that the contemporary notion of ethno-cultural identity in the case of white Americans of European descent implies an explicitly de-ethnicized or post-ethnic construct, unveiled to serve an “unmarked, local, white American identity” (French 10). The meta-narrative structure of individual ethnic experiences justifies the intention to remain marked at least in certain chosen aspects in the lives of interviewees.

### **6.3 Perspectives for further research**

The attempt to pull together the threads of theoretical research and empirical studies hardly means that the story, told in this dissertation, has come to an end. Life stories as well as attempts at understanding canonical narratives are infinite, as the double narrative structure shows, as even after the death or disappearance of the narrator-protagonist they continue their existence and create new meanings in various other narrators’ stories. Moreover, reading a particular story may bring about as many different understandings as the variability of contexts in which it is read. The qualitative studies of these kinds, nevertheless, have their drawbacks. I attempted to consider the difficulties as well as the narrow generalizability of the results. Life stories of ten second-generation Hungarian-Americans and the reactions of 28 Hungarian-American and Hungarian people to a particular piece of short fiction compose a

milieu that has limited relevance from the perspective of the boundless variety of ethnic spaces and contexts. The nature of data collection has, however, presented me with a large amount of information that its handling seemed beyond me at times. Thus, an important source of limitation is the low number of participants that shifted the goal of the two empirical studies to in-depth explorations of specific research issues instead of voicing broad statements. This is actually in line with the aims deriving from ethnography and qualitative studies.

There is a number of ways in which the two studies outlined in the dissertation could be extended. To connect the data to larger similarly focused databases would allow for comparisons of results as well as the research questions. It would especially be interesting in the case of the assumption that all these individual narratives are linked in a large meta-narrative of ethno-cultural identity. This meta-narrative operates along the principles of systems in the chaos/complexity perspective. The results of the studies show that this meta-narrative grid locates ethno-cultural identity and if an individual accepts the structure he or she becomes part of the community whether imaginary or real.

Furthermore, I have not discussed the narratives along the gender or place of residence of informants, as they were few in number. Looking at more narratives in databases would allow for conclusions based on these features. Would there be more participants recruited and involved new research questions could be put forward, such as the interdependence of answers with the occupation and age of the respondents. Due to the low number of participants, I have not been able to address the question how these features define and correlate with the answers. Such extension of the study would bring about important conclusions about the translatability of cultural content. Neither have I investigated the question how the interviewing situation and thinking about the theme or the answer sheet next to the short story influenced responses. The scarcity of similar comparable studies impedes far-reaching conclusions regarding this issue, which would be an interesting theme or research.

One way of conquering the immense challenge of the tiresome duty of analyzing such huge amount of data could be computer-based processing. However, the digital coding of ethnographic interviews would mean losing a considerable bulk of information on rapports and would destroy the relationship that I had with informants simply by the loss of continuity of the interactions. While working with the data I not only read the transcribed sentences, but also remembered the voice, the face and the gestures, when they accompanied utterances, which also gathered momentum in the analysis. It was good to see these people become

emotional during our talks, experience their laughing, becoming louder, more persuasive, one person even cried, as I knew that they became deeply involved, as their stories were part of the Brunerian life history. A combined comparative, computerized and traditional processing of the data may well complement each other and generate even more well-rounded and all-embracing conclusions. Nonetheless, even at this stage, the interviews brought about a more eye-opening experience I would ever think of, as I had to get used to being silent even when I felt the urge to argue, which I could eventually do while discussing the stories. This narrativized “slice of Americana” resembles a finely textured spiderweb in which the thread never runs out or ends although the web seems a perfect construct, together with its lack of linearity.

# *Egy szelet Amerika*

## **Az etnokulturális identitás narratív leképezése amerikai magyar kontextusban Magyar nyelvű összefoglalás**

– Maga fuvaros? – szólt előre Józsi, unalmában az embernek. Eszter mindig összerenzen, ha Józsi parasztokhoz szólt. Ez a „maga” olyan volt, mintha egy sipka, arc, bajusz, általában minden személyes tulajdonság nélküli lényhez intézte volna, akinek egyetlen tulajdonsága, hogy felelni tud. (Németh 210)

Identitásról beszélni ma annyit jelent, mint önálló paradigmát teremteni az egyes tudományágak gondolati és módszertani eszköztárának felhasználásával. Az ókori filozófiákban gyökerező fogalom tartalmának meghatározása a különböző korokban is az egyén más személyekhez illetőleg csoporthoz viszonyuló önmeghatározásán alapult. Az identitás elméleti és empirikus megközelítései hangsúlyozzák a koncepció dinamikus, interakciókon alapuló jellegét, amely jól nyomon követhető a különböző céllal létrehozott és eltérő típusú narratívákban. E történetek sajátos összetettségében és árnyaltságában írják le az emberi élettapasztalat sokrétűségét, amelyet az identitás át meg átszó, valamint egyéni keretbe helyez. A mottóban Németh László regényéből idézett szereplő beszélgetőpartnerének is számos tulajdonságát tagadja, egyedül a kommunikációkészségét ismeri el. Ezzel azonban megmarad az identitásteremtés egy fontos csatornája, amellyel az egyén újra és újra megalkothatja élettörténetének epizódjait, elbeszélve önmaga és mások számára személyes, és adott esetben etnokulturális identitását is.

### **1. A dolgozat célja és a téma indoklása**

#### **1.1 A dolgozat célja**

A dolgozat célja bemutatni és elemezni, az Amerikai Egyesült Államokban, diaszpórában élő magyarság kontextusában, a narratívákban létrehozott és elbeszélte etnokulturális identitás nyelvi és tartalmi vonatkozásait. A munka áttekinti az identitás ezen belül az etnokulturális identitás fogalomtörténeti előzményeit, majd összekapcsolja azokat a narratíva mint eszköz vizsgálatával. A megközelítés bizonyítja, hogy az egyén történetekben teszi közzé—és mások



számára hozzáférhetővé—etno-kulturális identitását, tehát a narratíva csoporttagságának egyik fontos fóruma. Az elméleti háttérből kiinduló és oda visszaérkező elemzések nemcsak azt hivatottak bemutatni, miként felelhet adott személy e kérdésre: „ki vagyok én?,” hanem azt is, hogyan válik a káosz és komplexitás elmélet segítségével értelmezett narratív keret a szocializáció és a közösségfenntartás eszközévé. Módszertani szempontból a dolgozat arra a problémára is keresi a választ, milyen módokon rekonstruálható az etnokulturális identitás az adott narratíva értelmezéséből, és ebben a folyamatban kiemelt szerepet kap a nyelv, mint a kulturális tartalom hordozója.

## 1.2 A témaválasztás indoklása

A témaválasztás aktualitása három fő szempont szerint indokolható. Az **első**, miszerint az elmúlt két évtized során a narratívakutatás fokozottan nyert teret, tudománytörténeti érv. Ez a folyamat felerősítette a tárgy diszciplína-közi jellegét, így az alkalmazott nyelvészet, kultúra, irodalom, szociológia, kulturális antropológia pszichológia, amerikanisztika megközelítési módjainak egymáshoz igazodását. A kérdéskör népszerűségének egyik oka hogy a narratív identitás nem statikus, hanem interakciókon alapul. Kutatása tehát nem hagyhatja figyelmen kívül a kutatott csoportok és személyek, illetőleg a kutató saját etnokulturális helyzetének sajátosságait, mert a történet mindig egy adott kontextusban valakihez szól. Minden narratíva egyéni, így elemzésük és értelmezésük akkor hoz sokrétű és mélyreható eredményeket, amennyiben az ilyen tárgyú kutatások összekapcsolhatók.

A **második** érv alkalmazott nyelvészeti indíttatású. A narratívák elmondásakor illetve egy irodalmi szöveg értelmezésekor kiemelt szerepet játszik a nyelvi eszközök tárháza, amely a kulturális és etnikai tartalmak hordozója. Az etnokulturális identitás kifejezésében a nyelv kettős szerepet tölt be. Egyfelől folyamatos jelenlétével állandóságot és csoportkohéziót teremt és tart fenn az adott nyelven beszélő csoportban, biztosítva a közös tudás meglétét és örökítését (Bruner, *Life* 693-4; Bamberg, *Positioning*; Hoffman, *Life* 1-8). Másfelől pedig, mivel a nyelv valamennyi megjelenési formája kulturálisan meghatározott, így a megnyilatkozások az egyént, a nyelv használóját, mint kulturális egységet képviseli (Kramsch 8-9). Ezért fontos tehát, hogy élettörténetek valamint irodalmi narratíva értelmezések nyelvi szempontból is elemzés tárgyául szolgálnak, mert számos adalékot nyújtanak a nyelv és kultúra viszonyát leíró elméleti megközelítésekhez.

A téma indoklásának **harmadik** pillére az amerikanisztika és a kulturális antropológia szakterületek profiljából eredeztethető. Az első empirikus tanulmányban (4. fejezet) szereplő

személyek másodgenerációs amerikai egyesült államokbeli magyarok, akik egy etnikai szempontból törékeny tágabb csoport tagjai. Önbevallásuk szerint is nagy az asszimilációs vonzás, amely Farney szerint „Amerika igazi sikertörténete és diadala” (189). Így, kvalitatív mélyinterjúk során elbeszélte történeteik így nemcsak mint narratívaelemzések tárgyai fontosak, hanem olyan sorsok és életutak példái, amelyek részletesen, személyes perspektívából mutatnak be egyet az Amerikai Egyesült Államokban élő etnikai csoportok közül. Nem elhanyagolható az a tény sem, hogy életút-történeteik a diaszpórában élő magyarság etnográfiai értelemben vett túlélésének lehetőségeit tárják fel, amely ma több kulturális és politikai fórum napirendjének állandó pontja. Másfelől az elbeszélések és a hozzájuk fűzött narratívaelemzések új szemszögből értelmezik azt a kanonikus amerikai etnikumfelfogást, mely szerint az európai származású fehér bőrű csoportok esetében az etnokulturális identitás mindössze egy homogén keret, amely jelöletlen, lokális, fehér amerikai csoportban helyezi el az egyént (French 10).

A dolgozat öt fejezetből áll. Az első rész áttekintést ad az identitás fogalomtörténetéről, valamint néhány a későbbi elemzés szempontjából kiemelkedően fontos identitáskonstrukcióról. Ez utóbbiakat különböző klasszikus és újabb tudományterületek, így az alkalmazott nyelvészet, szociológia, kulturális antropológia, pszichológia és az amerikanisztika hívták életre. A válogatás korántsem a teljesség igényével készült, elsősorban az empirikus tanulmányok jellege valamint saját kutatói és oktatói tevékenységem—amely az alkalmazott nyelvészet, amerikanisztika és kulturális antropológia területeit ölelik fel—határozza meg. A második fejezet tárgya az etnokulturális identitás elméleti háttere, amely olyan kulcsfogalmak definícióit nyújtja, mint az asszimiláció, akkulturáció és a pluralizmus. Mindkét fejezetben részletesen bemutatom a narratívák mint identitás illetve etnokulturális identitás hordozók értelmezésének elméleti kereteit.

A harmadik fejezetben a kutatás hátterét írom le. Az Amerikai Egyesült Államokban élő magyarság rövid történetét követi a kvalitatív kutatásmódszertan, ezen belül a mélyinterjú alkalmazási és értelmezési aspektusai. A negyedik és az ötödik fejezet egy-egy önálló, csak témájában összefüggő, kvalitatív empirikus vizsgálat eredményeit tárgyalja. A negyedik részben másodgenerációs amerikai magyarokkal készített mélyinterjúkban felbukkanó élettörténeti epizódokat elemzek az etnokulturális identitás tartalmi és nyelvi vonatkozásainak feltárása céljából. Az ötödik fejezetben leírt tanulmány elsősorban a kulturális tartalmak nyelvi kifejezésének kérdéseit valamint az irodalom etnokulturális kohézió-teremtő lehetőségeit tárja fe. Huszonnyolc önként vállalkozó magyar és amerikai magyar személy

eredeti magyar nyelven illetve angol fordításban olvasott egy irodalmi szöveget, majd a szövegre vonatkozó tizenegy kérdésre válaszolt.

## **2. A kulturális identitás elméleti háttere**

Az identitás számos tudományági megközelítésben használt fogalom, azonban definiálására vonatkozó elméletek nem törekszenek konszenzusra. Hosszú ideje filozófiai viták tárgyát képezik azon logikailag szükséges és elégséges feltételek, melyek alapján az egyén egy adott pillanatban valamint egy más időpontban önmagával összehasonlítható és megegyező (Shoemaker, *Identity* 8-12; Olson 1-2). Ez a megállapítás különösen érvényes a narratívákban létrehozott identitás mivoltára.

### **2.1 Az identitás fogalmának tudománytörténeti áttekintése**

Az identitás definiálásának filozófiai alapja a lélek és az én kapcsolata (Calhoun 10-17; Gleason 124-29), melynek kulcskérdései a mélyinterjúk (C függelék) során elbeszélte történetekben is újra meg újra felbukkannak. Az önazonosság ebben a viszonyban hozzáférést jelent az egyén múltjához és éntörténetéhez ugyanakkor ezt más személyek esetében nem elérhető (Locke 201-02; Olson 2; Shoemaker, *Personal Identity* 661). Az emlékezet, az emlékezet folytonossága valamint az én szubjektív volta határozza meg az egyént, akinek identitása más személyekhez viszonyítva bontakozik ki (Bhabha 66-84). Az identitás tehát elválaszthatatlan a kultúra fogalmától, Grossberg szerint a kultúráról való gondolkodás egyenlő az identitás tanulmányozásával (87). Az emberi kapcsolatok dinamikája ugyanakkor hangsúlyozza az interakciók szerepét az önmeghatározás szerkezeti felépítésében (Calhoun 16; Gleason 125). Hall értelmezésében az identitás és a különbségek logikája a kölcsönösség elve mentén kapcsolódnak össze hiszen az identitást mindig a másoktól való eltérés határozza meg, és ez a különbözőség az identitásból fakad (4).

A fogalom reflexív természete arra utal, miszerint az egyén mindig egy adott pillanatot emel ki saját élettörténetéből, melyet a körülmények függvényében ad közre. Az identitás csak részben állandó a külvilággal fenntartott párbeszéd eredménye, mely a múltra építkezve tartja fenn magát a jelenben és születhet újjá a jövőben (Baldwin, Longhurst, McCracken, Ogborn és Smith 224-25). Ebben a megközelítésben verbális és nonverbális reprezentációk, minták, normák, értékek és attitűdök határozzák meg az éntudatot, amelyek hasonlósága

alapján az egyének csoportja elhatárolódik és közösséget alkot. A tagok identitásuk révén lépnek interakcióba egymással, és az interakciók során létrejövő diskurzusban építik fel a csoportot. A diskurzus során történetek formálódnak és ezek visszahatnak a közösséget alkotó egyének saját és csoportidentitására.

## 2.2 Identitás és narratíva

Az identitás narratív paradigmában való kifejezése konstrukcionista felfogás (Brockmeier és Harré; Bruner, *The narrative*; László). Eszerint az egyén önmeghatározása a külvilággal fenntartott folyamatos kapcsolat során bontakozik ki. Ezzel ellentétben az esszencialista nézetek úgy tartják, hogy az identitás természetesen adott, illetőleg individuális döntések eredménye (Bodó 47-48; Calhoun 12-20). Ugyanakkor a konstrukcionizmus eredetileg tagadja, hogy létezik a csoporttagok valamely közös vonásán alapuló kollektív identitás. Ezt az ellentmondást oldja fel a narratív paradigma, mivel az egyes közösségek kohéziója nem tulajdonságokon vagy közösen vallott nézeteken alapul, hanem—mint azt a dolgozatban leírt két empirikus tanulmány is igazolja—történeteik egy közös metanarratívában kapcsolódnak össze.

A narratív paradigma szerint a történetek az átélt események értelmezésének eszközei, melyeket kulturális törvényszerűségek határoznak meg. A történetek verbális aspektusa a nyelv, amely nemcsak a kulturális tartalmakat fejezi ki, hanem ezek segítségével létrehozza az identitást is. A nyelv és identitás összefüggéseire vonatkozó kutatások középpontjában a nyelv speciális regisztereinek elsajátítása valamint az azoknak megfelelő identitás normákat magukban foglaló kompetenciák egyidejű tanulása áll (Lemke, *Language* 68; Norton 5). Heller vélekedésében az identitás tanulmányozása azért is elválaszthatatlan a nyelvtől, mert az egyén adott helyen és időben a nyelv eszközeivel határozza meg önazonosságát (idézi Norton 5). Az adott kultúrában élő emberek a nyelv segítségével hozzák létre narratíváikat, melyek leírják, fenntartják és átörökítik az életutak történeteit, valamint az egyazon kultúrában élők személyes és csoportidentitását.

A narratív gondolkodás célja elsődlegesen nem az igazság visszaadása, hanem az életszerűség (Bruner, *Actual* 13-6). Így a történetekben való gondolkodás nem csupán sajátos kognitív logikát kínál a szándékolt cselekvések, gondolatok és érzések aktualizálásához, hanem felhasználja a képek, illetve az idő és a perspektíva síkjait is (László 49). A narratívát idő perspektívája és referencialitása határozza meg. A valós idő érzékelése—múlt, jelen, jövő—valójában a történet része, ugyanakkor hiába keresnénk nem kapunk róla pontos leképeződést

(Deleuze 37-50; Labov és Waletzky 17; László, *Társas* 61; Ricoeur, *Time* 3:108-09). Egy narratíva mindig időben kontextualizált eseménysort mond el. Az epizódok felszabdadják az időt és létrehozzák a történetet mesélő egyén számára releváns narratív időt. Így az események értelmezése meghatározza az idő lényegét is. A referencialitás szempontjából pedig egy eseménysor elmondása vagy leírása csak akkor tekinthető narratívának ha az események a történetmondástól függetlenek.

A narratív perspektívában értelmezett kulturális identitás holisztikus, dinamikus és kontextusfüggő, amely jól modellezhető a kaosz- és komplexitáselméletek összefüggésében. Ez a fogalomrendszer sokrétűen alkalmazható gondolkodásbeli alternatívát kínál számos, nemcsak a természettudományokat érintő területen. A komplexitás elmélet alapja az a felismerés, hogy egyes elemeket egymással való kölcsönhatásukban vizsgálva juthatunk olyan következtetésekre, melyeket az egyes elemek viselkedésének elemzésekor hiába kutatnánk (Larsen-Freeman 33-8; McGill, *Chaos* 1; Vicsek 1; Waldrop 9-12). A narratív identitás a rendszernek szempontjából három fontos tulajdonsága van. (1) A komplex rendszerek alkotóelemei egymással kölcsönhatásba lépve önszervező módon működnek, mely kihat a részek valamennyi szintjére. Egyetlen narratíván belül az alkotóelemek azon epizódok, melyek az adott élethelyzetben elhelyezik és meghatározzák az egyén identitását. A közösségben ugyanakkor több személy számos történet szerzője és mesélője, amelyek a csoportkohézió végett konvergálnak egy közös metanarratíva irányába. (2) A komplex rendszerek sajátossága, hogy elemeik hálózatot alkotnak. Ilyen hálózatban értelmezhetők a közösségek tagjai is, narratív identitásuk, pedig a dinamikus interakciók tárháza. Ha túl sok vagy túl kevés az interakció a csoport fenntarthatatlanná válik. Itt fontos kiemelni a történeteknek a közösség szintjén létrejövő interakció-szabályozó szerepét. Egy letisztult, kerek történet ugyanis mindig a csoport együttgondolkodásának eredménye. (3) Végül pedig a komplex rendszerek jellemzője a peremlét állapota, amely liminalitásként definiálva meghatározó eleme a narratívákban felépülő etnokulturális identitásnak.

### **3. Az etnokulturális identitás fogalmi és empirikus perspektívái**

Az etnicitás mint megkülönböztető identitásjegy korántsem újkeletű, széleskörű társadalomtudományi érdeklődésre azonban csak a múlt század hatvanas éveitől tart számot. Az eltérő és sokrétű jórészt elméleti síkon zajló viták arról tanúskodnak miszerint az etnicitás nem definiálható pusztán az egyén vagy az őt körülvevő csoport etnikai jellemzőinek

összesítésével (Guibernau és Rex 1; Szarka 15). Az olyan objektíven meghatározható tulajdonságokon túl, mint a nyelv, származás, vallás, szokások számos olyan viszonyrendszer is közrejátszik a fogalom meghatározásában, amelyek a dolgozat korábbi fejezetében az identitás kapcsán szerepeltek. Ugyanakkor, az etnikum, etnicitás, etnokulturális identitás kutatása történelmi, társadalmi és kulturális okok folytán eltérő kontextust és megközelítésmódokat kanonizált Európában illetve az Amerikai Egyesült Államokban éppen a felgyorsult asszimiláció és sajátos amerikai nemzettudat kiépülése kapcsán. Fontosnak tartom tehát hangsúlyozni, hogy a dolgozat vizsgálódásának tárgya az Amerikai Egyesült Államokban élő magyarság, mely csoport etnicitásának leírása elméleti és empirikus megközelítésben is sokban eltér a területen zajló európai tudományos diskurzustól.

### **3.1 Az etnicitás néhány elmélete az Amerikai Egyesült Államok kontextusában**

Az etnicitás paradigmaticus elméleteinek áttekintéséből két fő irányzat mutatható ki (Bhabha; Guibernau és Rex; Hollinger; Kuper; Rosaldo; Sollors; Waters; Wieviorka). Posztmodern konstrukcionista vélekedések szerint az etnokulturális identitás fokozottan individuális, decentralizált és töredezett, elsősorban azért, mert a fogalom jelentése a mássághoz viszonyítva teljesebb. A posztetnicitás koncepciója ezzel összhangban az etnikumot rendkívül rugalmas konstrukcióként kezeli, mely önként választott kötöttségeken alapul, ugyanakkor más csoportok tagjaival szemben befogadó (Hollinger 105-29). Másfelől Rosaldo helyesen állapítja meg, hogy az etnicitás az egyén számára olyan állandó vonatkoztatási pont, amely köré szerveződnek a kulturális identitás egyéb kevésbé kötött vagy akár teljes egészében szabad alkotóelemei. Így valójában ez a gondolatmenet nem annyira cáfolata a posztmodern elméleteknek, mint inkább azok kontextualizált, valós emberi viselkedések függvényében alakított változata. A megközelítés három pillére a nyelv szerepe, a határlát vagy liminalitás, valamint a beavatási rítus, mint hatékony eszköz az egyén közösségbe emeléséhez illetve az elidegenedés megakadályozásának.

Az etnicitás átfogó elméleti megközelítésmódjai olyan fogalmi strukturákkal határolhatók be, mint az akkulturáció, asszimiláció, valamint a pluralizmus így ezeket a dolgozatban igyekeztem több szempontból definiálni. Az akkulturáció egy közös diskurzuson alapuló csoport kultúrájának az egyén saját döntésén alapuló internalizációja (Kramsch; Weinstock). A folyamat célja Duan és Vu vélekedésében esetenként kétirányú: ha az egyén funkcionálisan magas szinten akkulturálódik a célkultúrában, ugyanakkor nem mond le saját vagy családja származás szerinti kulturális háttéréről. A fogalom hasonló tartalmát Franklin és

Moss kettős akkulturációként definiálja, amely magában foglalja egy csoport belső kohéziójának megteremtését, illetve a célkultúrába való integrálódását. A kétirányú, vagy kettős akkulturáció narratívákban azért jól leírható narratívákban, mert a történeti szerkezet interakciókon alapuló dinamikájával nemcsak a történetet alkotó cselekménysort adja vissza, hanem nyelvi és retorikai eszközeivel is alátámasztja a csoportokhoz tartozást és kohéziót.

Számos tudományos megközelítés (Berry; Gleason; Min és Rose; Neto; Weinstock) az akkulturációt eltérő fázisokra bontja, melyek közül az asszimiláció az egyik konszenzusos elem. Az asszimiláció az egyén vagy csoport eredeti etnicitásának teljes elvesztése, amely egyet jelent a domináns kultúrába történő beolvadással (Weinstock). Ezt a gondolatmenetet fűzi tovább Gans, aki szerint az asszimiláció nem zárja ki a szimbolikus etnicitás meglétét, amely az egykori bevándorlók amerikai leszármazottainak etnikai gyökereihez visszatérést jelent (193). Ez a fordulat azonban nem a valamikori anyaországhoz, illetve nyelvhez való feltétlen kötődést jelenti, bár ezt sem zárja ki. Sokkal inkább a vallás, vagy egy szinte elhanyagolható apró, nemzeti, táji, esetenként tág családi vonások, szokások tudatos újratanulása, átértelmezése, az amerikai létben fenntarthatóvá tétele. Gans (210-17) ezeket az újratanult, egykori jelentésüket elvesztett, de újjal felruházott tulajdonságokat definiálja etnikai szimbólumokként, és az azokat vállaló személyek mintegy másodlagos etnokulturális hovatartozását szimbolikus etnikumként. A folyamat jól értelmezhető az amerikai etnogenezis részeként, vagyis az Egyesült Államokban élő etnikai csoportok formálódásában szerepet játszó tényezőként.

Az egyes etnikai csoportok közötti éles kulturális különbségek elmosódását emeli ki Gans megközelítéséhez hasonlóan Gleason pluralizmus-felfogása. Eszerint a pluralizmus már nem a csoportok közötti viszonyrendszerek rendezőelve, sokkal inkább a társadalmi interakció egyik sajátos formája (Gleason 39; Higham 196-230). A kulturális pluralizmus az asszimiláció miatt már nem helytálló fogalom. Ugyanakkor a strukturális pluralizmus kifejezi azt a tartalmat mely szerint az egyének önmeghatározásában informálisan még mindig fontos szerepe van az etnicitásnak, jóllehet sokan közülük visszautasítanának egy markánsabb megkülönböztetést. Ez a fajta pluralizmus-értelmezés tehát szorosan kapcsolódik Hollinger posztetnicitás-elméletéhez.

Az itt leírt fogalmak és gondolatmenetek többféle megközelítésben és szinten kapcsolják össze az etnokulturális identitást egy csoport tagjainak közös tudásában megjelenő múlt és történelem, nyelv valamint szokások ismeretével. A kollektív emlékezet egyik legjellemzőbb megjelenési módja a narratíva, amely gyakorta egészen a közösség gyökereihez nyúlik vissza. A történetek elmondói és ismerői ebben a narratív keretben körvonalazzák az

„én” és a „másik” közötti határmezsgyét és ezzel megerősítik a különbözőséget. Etnokulturális szempontból ezek az eltérések történelmi konstrukciók, amelyek a csoport tevékenységétől függetlenül tovább léteznek (Fejős *Variants* 363-70. A narratív etnokulturális identitásban az identitás folyamatosan változó, dinamikus és reflexív jellege és a hagyományosan közösségi alapú etnicitás fogalmi szerkezete kiegészítik egymást és ez a kapcsolat a korábban leírt káosz/komplexitás perspektívában jól megfogható.

### 3.2 Kutatási előzmények

Az etnokulturális identitás kapcsán folyó sokrétű kutatómunka alapja az a feltételezés mely szerint identitás, etnicitás és kultúra folytonos kölcsönhatásban léteznek. Viszonyuk az önmagunkról, másokról és a kettő kapcsolatáról alkotott sémák függvénye (Markus és Kitayama 224-26). Ezek a sémák meghatározók az egyénre nézve, ugyanakkor következményei annak a kulturális közegnek, amelyben létrejönnek. A narratívák pedig a diskurzus során létrejövő és elbeszéltné etnokulturális identitás kontextusaként határozhatók meg. A dolgozat témája és célkitűzése szempontjából fontos tanulmányokat három csoportban foglaltam össze: (1) kutatástörténeti perspektíva, (2) narratív etnokulturális identitás, (3) nyelv és etnokulturális identitás.

Az Amerikai Egyesült Államokban élő etnikai csoportok körében végzett kutatómunka elsősorban a szociológia és kulturális antropológia területéről indult el a XX. század elején. A korai vizsgálódások célja egészen az 1960-s évekig az volt, hogy számszerű adatok tükrében leírja az akkulturáció és asszimiláció fázisait, eredményét. Az egyes csoportok társadalmi beilleszkedését két véglet, a teljes amerikanizáció és a kulturális pluralizmus, között helyezték el. A század második felére a hangsúly az európai származású amerikaiak etnokulturális identitásának vizsgálatáról a hispán, ázsiai és afro-amerikai származású csoportok irányába tolódott el egyre több kvalitatív és ezen belül narratív szempont figyelembe vételével.

Az etnokulturális identitáshoz kapcsolódó narratívákon alapuló kvalitatív kutatások célja nemcsak a fogalom tartalmi vonatkozásainak jellemzése, hanem az identitás szövegbeli, lexikális és interakció szintjein történő felépítése (De Fina). A történetek feltárása során a személyes tapasztalatok kulturálisan is meghatározott keretek között értelmezhetők. Így az egyén saját illetve csoportja etnokulturális identitását nemcsak elbeszéli, hanem a narratív diskurzus során létre is hozza azt. A narrátor következetesen alkalmazza azokat a nyelvi stratégiákat és mechanizmusokat, amelyekkel jellemzi önmagát, szerepét, és másokhoz való



viszonyát a csoportban. A narratív keretben értelmezett etnokulturális identitás tehát szorosan kötődik a nyelvhez. A kettő viszonyának a dolgozathoz szorosan kapcsolódó aspektusai a nyelvi akkulturáció és a kritikus periódus hatásai illetőleg a nyelvválasztás és a kódváltás jelensége. A nyelvhasználat és a kulturális tartalom összefüggésének kérdése fontos eleme a negyedik fejezetben feldolgozott interjúk során kirajzolódó etnikai önarcképnek éppúgy, mint a második tanulmányban (5. fejezet) szereplő novella olvasásakor felmerülő jelenségeknek.

#### **4. Narratívák az etnikumról—a kvalitatív kutatási háttér és szerkezet**

A disszertációban leírt mindkét kutatás az Amerikai Egyesült Államokban, diaszpórában élő magyarok kontextusában készült. Ennek megfelelően a fejezet rövid áttekintést ad az amerikai magyarok bevándorlási és letelepedési történetéről. Az összefoglalás elsősorban azokat a tendenciákat emeli ki, amelyek magyarázatul szolgálnak a tanulmányokban szereplő jelenségekhez, válaszokhoz. A második részben a mélyinterjú felvételének, kódolásának és értelmezésének módszertani kereteit írom le.

##### **4.1 Az amerikai magyarság bevándorlásának és letelepedésének rövid története**

A 2000. évi népszámlás adatai szerint 1 398 702 amerikai vallotta, hogy valamely őse vagy családtagja magyar származású (Brittingham és de la Cruz 4). Jóllehet magyarok a legnagyobb számban 1871 és 1913 között érkeztek az Amerikai Egyesült Államokba, bevándorlásuk szinte egyidejűleg kezdődött a kontinensre érkező más európai telepesekével (Benkart; Várdy; Weinstock). A XIX. század közepétől egykori honfitársaink folyamatosan, és egyre növekvő számban keresték boldogulásukat a politikai és gazdasági ígéretek földjén. Az egyes források a magyar bevándorlók több jelentős hullámát periodizálják (Benkart; Gracza és Gracza; Széplaki; Várdy; Weinstock), amelyek során eltérő társadalmi csoportok különböző célokkal és elvárásokkal települtek az Amerikai Egyesült Államokba. Ennek megfelelően magyarságtudatuk megőrzésének igénye sem egyező, amely többek között a különböző szervezetek, segélyegyletek, klubok tagságán és fennálásának történetén mérhető le.

Napjainkban az amerikai magyarság mintegy 80 százaléka kilenc északkeleti államban – Ohio, New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, Connecticut, Wisconsin – él, valamint rajtuk kívül jelentős számú magyar származású lakosa van Florida,

California és Texas államoknak (Várdy és Szendrey 16). Ugyanakkor Fejős úgy véli, hogy az „amerikai magyarság” mint homogén csoport létezése nem eredeztethető a népszámlálás adataiból (*Variants* 368-69). A közösség tagjainak önmeghatározása alapján inkább diaszpóráról, mint etnikai kisebbségről beszélhetünk. Várdy és Szendrey szerint a két legfontosabb kérdés a kulturális túlélés és a mai Magyarországhoz fűződő kötelékek rendezése. Ugyanakkor a magukat magyar származásúnak valló amerikai állampolgárok többsége negyed- és ötödgenerációs, akik közül csak kevesen beszélik egykori bevándorló ősük anyanyelvét, és identitásukra nem jellemző a magyarságtudat bármilyen formája. Legnagyobb részük csak felületesen van tisztában a magyar hagyományokkal illetőleg a mai magyarországi viszonyokkal. A rendszerváltást követően megnőtt az érdeklődés a valamikori családi óhaza iránt, számos másod-, harmad-, esetleg negyedgenerációs amerikai magyar döntött úgy hogy rövidebb-hosszabb időre Magyarországra költözik. Ezt a döntést a politikai nyitással együtt járó gazdasági lehetőségek is indokolták. Az etnokulturális identitás kapcsán folytatott kutatásokban visszatérésük új kötődések vizsgálatát és értelmezését teszi szükségessé. Fontos kérdés az is, hogy a magyar nyelvet már nem beszélő, de magyar származásukat valló egyének milyen módon kapcsolódhatnak be az egyes kulturális és szakmai szervezetek tevékenységébe igényük szerint.

#### **4.2 A narratív kutatás módszertani háttere**

A disszertáció 4. fejezetében elemzett narratívák másodgenerációs amerikai magyarokkal készített mélyinterjúk során hangoztak el. A kvalitatív, vagy mélyinterjú az etnográfiai terepmunka eszköze, melynek segítségével feltárhatjuk miként vélekednek és érznek mások arról a közegről amelyben élnek (Denzin és Lincoln; Fontana és Frey; Rubin és Rubin; Spradley). Denzin és Lincoln megállapítják, hogy az interjúk korát éljük, amikor is a posztmodern társadalmak tagjai úgy vélik az interjúk fontos információkat hoznak felszínre átélt eseményekről és azok jelentéséről (633). Rubin és Rubin a kvalitatív interjúk négy fontos szerkezeti elemét hangsúlyozza. Az első szerint az interjú valójában beszélgetés, melynek során a következő kérdés az előzőekben elmondottakon alapul. Másodszer a mélyinterjú műfaja lehetővé teszi, hogy a témához kapcsolódó szókinccset és gondolkodásmódot az interjúalany világán keresztül ismerjük meg. Harmadszor az interjúalanyok inkább partnerei a kutatónak, mint a kutatás tárgyai. Az egyenrangú viszony egyik fontos következménye, miszerint a „beszélgetőpartnerek” (Rubin és Rubin 10) a beszélgetést más olyan témák felé irányíthatják, amelyben kompetensebbnek érzik magukat, mint a kiinduló kérdésekben

felvetett területek. Negyedszer a kvalitatív interjú során a kutató maga sem maradhat távolságtartó, közömbös vagy érzelmileg kívülálló.

A névhasználat a mélyinterjúk során kapott információk feldolgozásának és közzétételének különösen fontos kérdése. Az esetleges problémák elkerülése végett a disszertációban leírt kutatás valamennyi résztvevője nyilatkozatban járult hozzá saját nevének használatához illetve egy esetben megtagadta azt. A célra felhasznált angol nyelvű keretszöveg az „A” függelékben található. Összesen 10 személy vett részt a kutatásban. Közülük 8 fővel személyenként három körülbelül egy órás interjút készítettem eltérő időpontokban. Két személlyel összesen két alkalommal beszéltem, így egészében 28 interjú áll rendelkezésemre. Ketten, Christopher Kovach és Kathryn Szigetvari a University of Iowa hallgatói, egy fő, hivatkozási nevén Peter Hevesi, ugyanezen egyetem személyzeti igazgatója volt az interjúk idején, a 2000/2001. tanévben. Robert Fűtő missziós szolgálatot teljesítő református lelkész Budapesten, akinek ajánlásával megkerestem József Temesvárit, a „Taking Christ to Millions (TCM)” elnevezésű osztrák székhelyű misszionárius szervezet magyarországi ügyintézőjét. Velük 2005 nyarán és őszén beszélgettem. Endre Szentkirályi a 2004/2005. tanévet Budapesten töltötte családjával. Felesége Eszter Pigniczky, főállású négy gyermekes anyja is vállalkozott az interjúra. Mathias Tabor a Balassi Bálint Intézet, míg Levente Szentkirályi a Közép-európai Egyetem hallgatója volt a 2004/2005. tanévben. Mind a négyükkel 2005. tavaszán készítettem interjút. Ildikó Varga egy budapesti könyvvizsgáló cég alkalmazottjaként néhány évet Magyarországon szándékozik tölteni. Beszélgetéseinkre 2005. decemberben került sor. Az interjúk teljes egészében átírt, angol—és helyenként magyar—nyelvű anyaga a „C” függelékben olvasható.

Az így kapott átiratokat kézi módszerrel dolgoztam fel. A válaszok kódolása során olyan kategóriák születtek, amelyek hasonló fogalmakat, témákat, gondolatokat kapcsolnak és foglalnak össze. A „B” függelékben egy rövid, kódolt átirat található, amely bemutatja a módszert. Az interjúk során elbeszélt narratívákat De Fina és McAdams tipológiája szerint csoportosítottam funkció és tartalom szerint. Funkciója szerint az adott narratíva argumentatív, orientációs, krónika, prototípust bemutató, valamint ok-okozati összefüggést feltáró lehet. Tartalmuk lehet személyes élmény, letelepedés, vagy konfliktus. A kódolás és a fenti kategóriák segítségével kilenc kulcsmotívum mentén írható le a kutatásban szereplő másodgenerációs magyar amerikaiak narratív etnokulturális identitása, amelyet három nagy tematikus csoportban elemeztem.

- Liminalitás vagy határlét: (1) etnikai gyökerek, (2) történelemtudat, (3) földrajztudat.

- Az etnokulturális identitás reprezentációi: (1) nyelvválasztás és nyelváltás, (2) etnikai irodalom, (3) sztereotípiák.
- Az akkulturáció perspektívái: (1) szokások és hagyományok, (2) közösség, (3) „kivételesnek lenni”—önreflexió és éntudatosság.

## **5. *Két olyan világ, amit nem lehet egyeztetni*—másodgenerációs magyar-amerikaiakkal készített mélyinterjúk során elbeszélte történetek tematikus elemzése az etnokulturális identitás fogalmi és tartalmi meghatározásához**

A fejezetben elemzett személyes történetek jól illusztrálják azt a folyamatot, ahogyan a tágabb értelemben definiált kultúra elemei és az egyén saját szűkebb kulturális közegének alkotórészei összefonódnak és létrehoznak egy harmadik kulturális keretet, amelyben ugyanez a személy egy új közösség léteért és fennmaradásáért felelős. A narratíva tehát optimális műfaji keret az etnokulturális identitás diskurzív konstrukciójának vizsgálatához. A tanulmány a következő három fő problémára keres választ:

- Az etnikai kettősség tartalmi vonatkozásai külön hangsúlyozva a csoport pozitív jellemzőit.
- Az akkulturáció folyamatának nyelvi kifejeződése.
- A etnokulturális identitás konstruálásának narratív módjai.

Ezeket a kérdéseket a káosz/komplexitás elmélet fogalomrendszerében igyekeztem elhelyezni, amelyben a személyes történetek az etnokulturális identitás formálódó, emergens vonásaiként értelmezhetők.

### **5.1 Liminalitás vagy határlét**

A másod- vagy harmadgenerációs magukat etnikai eredetűnek valló amerikaiakat mindössze egy vagy két nemzedék választja el az áttelepülés tapasztalatától. A kivándorlással hátrahagyott jól ismert földrajzi, nyelvi, kulturális, pszichológiai és antropológiai értelemben vett határok helyett csak a földrajz adott, a többi újra kell rajzolni. Maga a liminalitás fogalom határvonalak mentén való létezés jelent. Ezek a folyamatos határvonalak olyan

kulturális tereket, dolgokat, eseményeket jelölnek—amelyek részben vagy teljesen—átmeneti rítusok során jönnek létre. A liminalitás fontos eleme a szüntelen értelmezés és értékelés szükségessége mivel ezek a folyamatok teszik legitimé a határterületként létező kulturális tereket, dolgokat és eseményeket.

A határlétben az etnokulturális identitást a történelemtudat helyezi el történeti időben, a földrajztudat pedig térben. Interjúalanyaim történelmi tudatosságukat elődeik fontos magyar vagy Magyarországot is érintő történelmi eseményekben való részvételének elmondása során építették fel. Ilyenek például az 1956-s forradalom vagy a második világháború. A szülők és nagyszülők elbeszélte tapasztalatai gyermekeik és unokáik számára a történelmi narratívák olyan archívumát hozzák létre, amelyben a szereplők gyakran egyúttal archetípusok is. A második illetve harmadik nemzedék tagjai az epizódok narrátorai és kutatói is egyben, akik értelmezik és átörökítik az archetípusokat és azok jelentését. Tehát az etnikai értelemben körvonalazott liminalitás a bevándorolt elődök hazájában lezajlott történelmi események egyéni és kanonikus értelmezésének egybevetését és megőrzését jelenti. Időből térbe érkezve, a földrajztudatot diskurzív szinten a rövid látogatások, a végleges vagy ideiglenes magyarországi letelepedésről szóló történetekben szereplő helyszínek, és az amerikai magyarság néhány széles körben ismert egyesült államokbeli közösségi találkozóhelyével kapcsolatos élmények elbeszélése hozza létre. A földrajztudat egyik gyakran alkalmazott nyelvi kifejezőeszköze a szinekdoché, amely a magyarságtudat mellé jelöletlen, fehér amerikai identitással ruházza fel a narrátort. Fontos megemlíteni a narratívákban körvonalazódó transznacionalizáció folyamatát, amely a vándorlás és letelepedés kapcsán hozott döntéseket visszafordíthatóvá, átmenetivé teszi ezzel is állandósítva az etnicitás liminalitását.

A narratívák tematikus egymás mellé helyezése megmutatja, hogy azok egymással interakcióban vannak egy képzeletbeli kiterjedt kommunikáció-rendszeren belül. Így tehát létrehoznak egy, a liminalitásról és a kétirányú akkulturációról szóló, csoportra jellemző metanarratívát. Az egyének történetei a beszélő csoporttagságától függetlenül konvergálnak a metanarratíva felé. Ez a metanarratív keret nem részletezi az etnokulturális identitás mibenlétét. Ugyanakkor egy viselkedésbeli és nyelvi értelmezési keretet hoz létre, amelyben az interakciók a csoport tagjai számára elérhetővé válnak. Az epizódok azt mutatják, hogy a narratív liminalitás és a kétirányú akkulturáció a szülők és a nagyszülők diskurzív migrációélménye, történelmi eseményekben való részvétele, valamint az interjúalanyok közvetlen utazási és letelepedési tapasztalatai alapján épül fel. Számos nyelvi eszköz, így a

függő beszéd, névmás váltások, valamint a szinekdoché rekonstruálják az archetipikus történetfonalat és így a metanarratívát.

## **5.2 Az etnokulturális identitás nyelvi reprezentációi**

A történetek eltérő reprezentációs formában jelenítenek meg eseményeket, szereplőket, tulajdonságokat, melyeknek közös vonása a nyelv, mint eszköz. A nyelvválasztás az etnokulturális identitás egyik legkézenfekvőbb jellemzője. Mivel a beszélgetéseket angol nyelven folytattuk, így gyakran előfordult, hogy az interjúalanyok magyarra váltottak, mondat közben, mondatok között, egy történeten belül, vagy akár csak egy szó erejéig. Az is előfordult, hogy magyarul kezdtek beszélni és később váltottak angolra. Az etnicitás második fontos nyelvhez is kapcsolódó reprezentációja az etnikai irodalom ismerete, napi szintű olvasása. Irodalmi ízlésük és olvasataik szintén a liminalitást erősítik. A nyelvi reprezentációk harmadik fontos forrása a narratív sztereotípiák, amelyek meghatározók az etnokulturális identitás tartalmára nézve.

Az interjúban résztvevő személyek magyar nyelvismerete széles skálán mozog, néhányan közülük anyanyelvi szinten beszélnek, míg a másik véglet mindössze néhány szó ismerete. Ennek ellenére alkalmanként valamennyien nyelvet váltottak, még ha csak néhány szó erejéig is. Az angol és a magyar nyelv egy történeten belüli alternatív használata jellemzi az egyén nyelvi akkulturációjának fázisát, tudatos erőfeszítését elődei nyelvének megőrzésére, valamint a csoporton belüli és kívüli normák egyértelmű elhatárolását (Gumperz 65). A történetekben előforduló kódváltások három fő típusa Myers-Scotton tipológiáját követve: (1) mondatok közötti kódváltás, (2) mondaton belüli kódváltás, (3) kódváltás a mondaton belül mindössze egy szó erejéig. A kódváltások, és a nyelvválasztás közvetítő szerepet tölt be a két etnokulturális közeg összekapcsolásában, valamint a csoporthoz való tartozást jelképezi. A kódváltás a kétirányú akkulturáció és a liminalitás egyik markáns vonatkozása, míg a kanonikus magyar irodalmi alkotások ismerete egy olyan feltételesen létező határvonal, amely a csoportot körvonalazza.

Az interjúalanyok többsége, tíz főből hatan, elmondásuk szerint rendszeresen olvasnak magyar irodalmat az eredeti nyelven. A művekről szóló történetekben sok szó esik az elbeszélő saját olvasatáról, amely mintegy magyarázatul is szolgál a regény vagy versek kiválasztásához. A káosz/komplexitás elmélet gondolatmenetét követve megállapítható, hogy a narratívákban megjelenő értelmezések egy közös, magyarságtudaton alapuló, interpretációs

keretben helyezkednek el. Ha a narratívákat nem egyenként vesszük figyelembe hanem a metanarratív párbeszéd részeként, feltárul előttünk az irodalom kohézióteremtő képessége egy olyan közegben, amely nem létrehozta csak élményszerűen befogadja azt. Az olvasatok időben és térben egymástól távol vannak, a rendszer nem lineáris. Az olvasáskor létrejövő eltérő mentális reprezentációk viszonyítási pontok, melyekhez képest leírható az olvasó mássága. Így tehát a csoporttagság feltétele, hogy az egyén ismerje a kanonikus irodalmat, amelynek jelentéseit saját migrációs és határlét élményének perspektívájában értelmez.

A narratív etnokulturális identitás nyelvi reprezentációinak harmadik formája a sztereotípiák használata. A különböző kontextusokban megjelenő sztereotípiák összehasonlítási alapul szolgálnak, konfliktusokat írnak le, valamint értékrendszerekhez viszonyítanak. Nyelvi kifejezőeszközeik a többes szám harmadik személyű névmások általános alany értelemben történő használata, határozatlan névmások és mutatószavak gyakori jelenléte. Ezek a formák hangsúlyozzák a történetekben felmerülő egyes eseményeknek diskurzívan tulajdonított általános érvényt. Bhabha szerint a sztereotípiák ambivalens érzéseket keltenek, valamint hangsúlyozzák a történések ismétlődő voltát. Az etnokulturális identitás kapcsán elbeszélte narratívákban ezek a konvencionális beszédfordulatok és formák a beszélőnek a sztereotípiákban létrehozott diskurzív közösségektől való éles elhatárolódását fejezik ki. A sztereotípiák hasonlóan az irodalmi, mitológiai és legendabéli jellemző vonásokhoz, megkülönböztetik az egyént más személyektől vagy a csoporttól (Geertz). Ennek megfelelően az ellentéppárokkal jellemzett események, személyek fordulnak elő leggyakrabban a sztereotípiákkal tűzdelt történetekben. Ebben a funkciójukban tehát szorosan kapcsolódnak a fejezetben leírt nyelvi reprezentációs formákhoz.

### **5. 3 Az akkulturáció kérdése**

A narratív etnokulturális identitás a kettős akkulturáció során helyzetfüggővé formálódik és a kölcsönösség elve alapján tartható fenn. A történetek olyan eseményekhez és helyszínekhez kapcsolódnak, amelyek etnikai szempontból befolyásolják és meghatározzák a csoport és az egyén viszonyát egy adott helyzetben. A reciprocitás vagy kölcsönösség elve szerint az etnikai azonosságtudat kialakulása egyfelől attól függ, hogy egyén önmagát az etnikai csoport tagjának vallja-e, illetőleg attól, hogy az etnikai csoport hitelesíti-e az egyén tagságát. A kettős akkulturáció folyamatának meghatározásához a szokásokat, tradíciókat,

közösségépítést és közösségi létet, valamint az önreflexió és az átmeneti rítusok kapcsolódását középpontba helyező történetek bizonyultak alkalmasnak.

Az interjúalanyok gyakran beszéltek azokról a sokszínű hagyományokról és szokásokról, amelyek a kulturális kettősségben való létezést meghosszabbítják, megakadályozzák a feledéssel járó egysíkú szürkeségbe olvadást ugyanakkor egy struktúra kötöttségével erősítik az összetartozást. A narratívákban közzétett hagyományok egy csoportja például az egykori sátoros ünnepek szokásait kontextualizálta amerikai magyar közösségi napokká. Ezekben a diskurzív hagyományokban hangsúlyozottan szerepel az élő közösség dinamikája, akik elsősorban a tradíciók fennmaradásáért felelnek nem pedig a kőbe vésett jelleg megőrzéséért. Így a kölcsönösség elve szerint a hagyományok fenntartják a közösséget, a közösség pedig a hagyományokat anélkül, hogy az egyének élettere szűkülne. A tradíciókban az adott kultúra tagjai interakciók szintézisét hozzák létre és a meglévő szokások tárháza—az interakciók dinamikájával és sokféleségével együtt—jó alapot ad új hagyományok kialakításához, az etnicitás fenntarthatóságához.

Az etnokulturális identitás meghatározásának egyik módja a közösségek feltérképezése. A beszélgetésekben résztvevő személyek arról is sokat és sokféleképpen beszéltek, hogy ők maguk miként hoznak létre közösségeket. A történelemtudat és az irodalom kapcsán már megállapítható volt, hogy a közösség hozza létre a kanonikussá váló narratívákat, amelyek aztán újra közösségformáló erővel bírnak. A közösség ugyanakkor olyan társas formáció, amely az áttelepülés nyomán is hamar létrejön. A migrációval elveszített kötelékek újrateemtése elsődleges cél, ugyanakkor a két irányban zajló akkulturáció tapasztalatainak megosztása is fontos a sikeres alkalmazkodás illetve a kulturális túlélés tekintetében. Az újonnan létrehozott csoportosulások története gyakran eredetmítosz funkciót is betölt. Az ilyen narratívák a közösség liminális létében igazolják a valamikori szülőktől való elszakadást, valamint beillesztik az egyén és a csoportot a célkulturába. Az eredetmítoszok tehát a kétirányú akkulturáció, valamint vele együtt a határlét fenntartását biztosítják, csakúgy mint az átmeneti rítusokban formálódó önreflexió és éntudatosság. A közösségekben gyakorolt átmeneti rítusok is a kétirányú illetve ebben az esetben akár háromirányú akkulturációt szolgálják, hiszen „kivételesnek lenni” (Kathryn Szigetvari „C” függelék 1/1. interjú) annyit jelent, mint egyszerre tartozni a magyar amerikai közösséghez, a magyarsághoz, valamint az amerikai társadalomhoz.

A közösségek születésének és működésének dinamikája jól értelmezhető a káosz/komplexitás elmélet hálózatépítési és fennmaradási perspektívájában. A hálózatok emberi interakciókon alapuló csoportok. Ha a tagok közötti kapcsolatok száma kevés, a



csoport megszűnik, és erre is szerepel néhány példa az elemzett történetek között. Ha túl sok az interakció, akkor a résztvevők figyelme elterelődik a csoport tényleges céljairól és hosszú távon szintén működési zavar állhat be, vagy pedig a csoport akár teljes egészében széteshet. A történetekben gyakran szereplő philadelphiai „Magyar Tanya” jól példázza a közösség narratív komplex hálózatként modellezhető működését, ahol a helyszín mára kultúrföldrajzi értelemben vett ikonná vált. A közösségi kulturális élmények egyéni történetekben jelennek meg és részeivé lesznek egy laza narratív közösségi identitás struktúrájának. A liminalitásban létrehozott eredetmítoszok és hasonló történetek tehát az interakciók olyan kerete, amely mindenki számára elérhető.

## **6. Szövegolvasat és kulturális háttér—az etnokulturális identitás szerepe Göncz Árpád *Hazaérkezés* című novellája és annak angol nyelvű fordítása értelmezésében**

Ez a fejezet a narratívaértelmezés tág keretein belül kapcsolódik a korábbiakban leírt személyes történetek elemzéseiből adódó következtetésekhez. A tanulmány célja egy kvalitatív empirikus vizsgálat eredményeinek tárgyalásán keresztül bemutatni, hogy miként értelmezhetjük az etnokulturális identitást egy kanonikus narratíva olvasatán keresztül. Göncz Árpád *Hazaérkezés* című novelláját (E függelék) és annak angol nyelvű fordítását, *Homecoming*, (D függelék) olvasta összesen 28 amerikai magyar és magyar személy. A történet nagyon rövid, mindössze 26 sor. A főhős hatévnyi büntetése letöltését követően indul haza a börtönből. Ismerőseivel találkozik az utcán, majd a harmadik epizódban feleségével és kisfiával erdei kirándulásra megy. Az olvasást követően a résztvevők a novella alapján feltett 10 illetve 11 kérdésre (E és D függelék) válaszoltak. Válaszaikból arra igyekeztem rávilágítani, vajon a fordításban olvasott irodalom értelmezése visszatükrözi-e az etnokulturális hovatartozást. A novellát követő kérdőívben kapott válaszok a következő három fő témát tárják fel:

- A kulturális valóság nyelvi kifejezésmódjai.
- A kulturális tartalom és kontextus alakulása a fordítás nyomán.
- A résztvevők egyéni kultúrafelfogása mennyiben kapcsolódik össze egy kulturális metanarratívában.

### **6.1 A kutatás elméleti háttere**

A tanulmány kiindulópontja háromszögeli a narratíva, identitás és nyelv kérdéskörét. Ezen belül fontos megemlíteni a műfajspecifikus idő- és térkezelést a novellában valamint a linearitás problematikáját. A narratív temporalitás összekapcsolja a múltat a jövővel így hangsúlyozva az eseménysort, melynek során az identitás kirajzolódik. Rohrberger vélekedésében a műfaji keretek nem teszik lehetővé a lineáris cselekményláncot, így az időt és az egyes mozzanatok örökkévaló jelenben ábrázolják (7-8). A tér és idő kapcsolata tehát alátámasztja, hogy a novellában elbeszélte személyhez kötődő eseményeket társadalmi és kulturális keretbe ágyazva értelmezzük. Ugyanakkor fontos az a kérdés is, hogy ez a szociokulturális háttér mennyiben függ a történet eredeti nyelvétől. A fordítás és fordíthatóság dilemmái számos megközelítésben vizsgálják azokat a fogalomcsoportokat, amelyek részét képezik az egyetemes emberi észlelésnek és gondolkodásnak, és azokat amelyek ezen kívül esnek (Jameson; Wierzbicka). A fordíthatatlanság következtében elveszett információk persze valamelyest pótolhatók a kontextus alapján (Lyons). Az ilyen és hasonló helyzetekre jellemző a kódváltás, mint áthidaló stratégia. Ilyet a korábbi fejezetben elemzett narratívák szerzői is gyakran alkalmaztak. Ugyanakkor kanonikus irodalmi alkotások esetében ez a lehetőség nem áll rendelkezésre, így a kulturális tartalom fordításából adódó hiányok leküzdése nehezen megoldható. Jelen tanulmány is keresi a választ erre a kérdésre.

## 6.2 A kutatás felépítése

A kutatás kvalitatív, célja nem átfogó tendenciák kimutatása, hanem a nyelv, identitás, és narratíva összefonódó dilemmáinak tisztázásához szükséges tényezőket találni. Huszonnyolc fő vállalta a közreműködést, közülük senki sem szerepelt az előző részben tárgyalt mélyinterjúkon alapuló vizsgálatban. Mindösszesen tizenöt másod-, harmad-, és negyedgenerációs amerikai magyar valamint tizenhárom magyar személy vett részt. Ez utóbbiak közül hatan magyar nyelven olvasták az eredeti novellát és válaszoltak a kérdésekre, hét fő pedig angolul. A résztvevők adatait az 1. számú táblázatban foglaltam össze. Amennyiben az adott kategória nem érvényes az N/A (nem alkalmazható) rövidítéssel jelöltem.

### 1. Táblázat

#### Válaszadók jellemző tulajdonágai

Válasz- adó	Lakóhely /	Olvasás és válasz-	Bevándorlás szerinti	Kor	USA-ba település	Nem	Foglalkozás
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	<b>ország</b>	<b>adás nyelve</b>	<b>státusz / generáció száma</b>		<b>ideje</b>		
1	Magyarország	magyar	N/A	62	N/A	F	Építész
2	Magyarország	magyar	N/A	22	N/A	N	Hallgató
3	Magyarország	magyar	N/A	33	N/A	F	Építész
4	Magyarország	magyar	N/A	24	N/A	N	Hallgató
5	Magyarország	magyar	N/A	24	N/A	N	Hallgató
6	Magyarország	magyar	N/A	23	N/A	N	Hallgató
7	Magyarország	angol	N/A	21	N/A	N	Hallgató
8	Magyarország	angol	N/A	21	N/A	N	Hallgató
9	Magyarország	angol	N/A	20	N/A	N	Hallgató
10	Magyarország	angol	N/A	29	N/A	N	Tanár
11	Magyarország	angol	N/A	22	N/A	N	Hallgató
12	Magyarország	angol	N/A	21	N/A	N	Hallgató
13	Magyarország	angol	N/A	23	N/A	N	Hallgató
14	U.S.A	angol	4.	64	N/A	F	Nyugdíjas vegyész
15	U.S.A	angol	3.	55	N/A	N	Professzor
16	U.S.A.	angol	2.	31	N/A	F	Joghallgató
17	U.S.A.	angol	2.	36	N/A	N	Pszichológus
18	U.S.A.	angol	2.	20	N/A	F	Hallgató
19	U.S.A.	angol	1.	38	1974	N	Gazdasági ügyintéző
20	U.S.A.	angol	1.	53	1981	F	Ingatlan- ügynök
21	U.S.A.	angol	1.	32	1990	F	Elemző
22	U.S.A.	angol	1.	28	1998	N	Repülőjegy értékesítő
23	U.S.A.	angol	1.	36	2000	N	Főállású anyá, (tanár)
24	U.S.A.	angol	1.	62	1959	F	Nyugdíjas vill. mérnök
25	U.S.A.	angol	1.	70	1957	F	Nyugdíjas orvos

26	U.S.A.	angol	1.	63	1960	F	Mérnök
27	U.S.A.	angol	1.	70	1957	F	Gépész Mérnök
28	U.S.A.	angol	1.	58	1957	F	Könyvelő

A válaszadók cím és szerző nélkül kapták kézhez a novellát, elsősorban azért, hogy az író személye ne befolyásolja véleményüket. A válaszlap tartalmazta a történetet és a kapcsolódó kérdéseket magyar (E függelék) és angol nyelven (D függelék). Az adatokat kézzel dolgoztam fel. A maximum 1-2 soros válaszokat hat tematikus-elemző kategóriába soroltam be, melyek a következők: (1) benyomások a történetről, (2) a narratív idő kifejezése és értelmezése, (3) a helyszínre vonatkozó utalások és azok értelmezése, (4) a főszereplő, valamint (5) a kulturális közeg meghatározása, végül (6) a történet „különös volta” mint az etnokulturális identitás meghatározási kerete. Az egyes témákon belül a válaszokat a résztvevők etnikai háttere és a válaszadás nyelve szerint elemeztem. Így a vizsgálat a következő öt csoportra vonatkozott:

- (1) a novellát angol nyelven olvasó másod- illetve többedgenerációs magyar származású amerikaiak,
- (2) a novellát angol nyelven olvasó első generációs újbevándorlók (1970-s évektől),
- (3) a novellát angol nyelven olvasó első generációs „ötvenhatosok” (1956-1960),
- (4) a novellát angol nyelven olvasó magyarok,
- (5) a novellát magyar nyelven olvasó magyarok.

### 6.3 Eredmények és következtetések

Az első kérdés célja (E függelék), hogy bevezesse a novelláról való gondolkodást és összekapcsolja a történet világát az olvasóval. Erre a kérdésre a legeggyöntetűbb véleményt a magyar nyelven olvasók adták, akiknek kivétel nélkül tetszett a novella. A második és harmadik kérdés (E függelék) a narratív földrajz és idő értelmezésének fordítás adta korlátait tárja fel. Az első csoport kivételével a válaszadók többsége fontos elemként jelölte meg a „sárga villamost” (6. sor E függelék), melynek segítségével a helyszínt Budapestnek vélték. Itt tehát egyértelműen fordítható szemantikai kategóriáról van szó, amelynek ismerete a válaszadót az adott etnokulturális csoport tagjaként határozza meg. Az időmeghatározás kapcsán már eltérő válaszok születtek és felszínre került egy fordításbeli probléma is, az óra felcsatolása (2. sor E függelék). Ennek külön érdekessége az, hogy az első csoport számára félrevezető volt a fordítás, az angol nyelvet nem anyanyelvi szinten beszélők (2., 3., és 4.

csoport) számára viszont ez nem jelentett problémát. A magyar nyelven olvasók számára félreérthetetlenek voltak a narratív időre vonatkozó utalások.

A 4. és 5. kérdés a novella társadalmi háttérének olvasatáról gyűjt információt. A válaszadók többsége etnokulturális háttérüktől függetlenül negatív jelzőkkel jellemezte ezt a társadalmat, mint például „elnyomó,” „feszült,” „instabil,” „diktatórikus.” A 6. kérdés a novella nehezen érthető részeit hivatott feltárni és egyértelműen a fordítás dilemmáihoz kapcsolódik. A leggyakrabban említett rész a 8-11. sor volt (E függelék) különösen a töredékinformációk miatt. A főhős kilétére, bebörtönzésének okára vonatkozó információkat tárja fel a 7., 8., és a 9. kérdés. A korábbi válaszokban tapasztalható eltérések itt nem jelentkeznek, valamennyi csoportban hasonlóan vélekedtek. Az angol nyelvű válaszlapon szereplő 10. kérdést a magyar nyelvű lap nem tartalmazza, mivel a válaszadóknak kellett reflektálniuk arra, mi lenne más a novellában, ha az amerikai szerzőtől származna. A válaszok elsősorban a nyelvhasználat köré csoportosulnak, tehát a résztvevők a kulturális tartalomhoz a résztvevők más nyelvi formát tartanak helyesnek. A válaszok összevetésekor ismét felmerült a nyelvi szint kérdése. Az angol anyanyelvű közreműködők egyöntetűen nyelvi kifejezőeszközöket jelöltek meg, míg az elsőgenerációs amerikai magyarok közül mindössze egyetlen válaszadó vélekedett hasonlóan. A 10. kérdésben (11. az angol nyelvű válaszlapon) a kérdés arra irányult, hogy különös-e a novella. A kategória tág volta miatt a válaszok is sokfélék. Itt az első csoport válaszai kevésbé kultúra-specifikusak inkább a novella nehezen követhető logikáját és formai elemeit emelték ki.

Azok a válaszadók, akik ismerik az író anyanyelvét, jobban megértették a novella kulturális vonatkozásait még abban az esetben is amikor fordításban olvasták a novellát. Így tehát az olvasó, az író és a főhős közös kulturális tudáson alapuló etnokulturális identitása egy diskurzív csoportot alkot. Ugyanakkor a szoros kulturális kapcsolat nélkül felnőtt másod- és többedgenerációs amerikai magyar válaszadók nehézségeinek hasonlósága is csoportképző. A novella műfaji sajátosságai, így a linearitás hiánya, az események epizodikus leírása illetve a szöveg szocio-kulturális konnotációja szintén információvesztés eredményez a fordítás során. Jóllehet az angol változatban a fordító igyekszik maximálisan visszaadni a nyelvi és retorikai eszközök alapvető vonásait, az olvasók, elsősorban a másod- és többedgenerációs amerikai magyarok, gyakran hiányolták az elégséges kulturális információ meglétét. Kiváltképpen érdekes lehet az a tény, hogy az egyes csoportok tagjai gyakran magyarázták válaszaikat hasonló társadalmi, kulturális, földrajzi vagy geopolitikai minták alapján. Ez a metanarratív keret legélesebb a másod- és többedgenerációs amerikai magyar illetve a novellát magyar nyelven olvasó magyar válaszadók körében. A válaszok itt leírt megközelítése széles körben

érvényes tendenciákat ugyan nem mutat ki, de mindenképpen érdekes adalékokat szolgál a válaszadók diskurzus és szemantikai analízis stratégiáiról melyekkel a nyelvben kódolt etnokulturális tapasztalatot saját identitásuk tükrében értelmezik.

## **7. A dolgozat következtetései és a kutatás további perspektívái**

A bevezetésében leírtak szerint a közösségi lét és az önértelmezés kölcsönösen összefüggenek és kapcsolatuk a társadalmi és kulturális interakciók sajátos narratív formáiban jól nyomon követhető. Munkámban igyekeztem feltárni a személyes és kanonikus történetekben leképeződő narratív etnokulturális identitás tartalmi és szerkezeti vonatkozásait amerikai magyar kontextusban. A kérdéskört elméleti és empirikus módon is megközelítettem. Megkíséreltem Peter Hevesi saját etnicitásáról vallott metaforikus összegzésének értelmezésére, mely így hangzott el: „egy szelet Amerika, ami az enyém.”

A narratív gondolkodásban a történetek az átélt élményeket magyarázzák és kontextualizálják. Ez a folyamat az adott kultúrában érvényes konvencióktól függ. A személyes narratívák éppúgy, mint a kanonikus narratívák az uralkodó kulturális eszméket a leírt eseményeken és a nyelvi formákon keresztül tükrözik vissza. Ezek az epizódok valamint a leíró nyelvi eszközök együttesen hozzák létre az egyéni és csoportos emlékezetet, mely meghatározza az éntudatot és annak etnokulturális vonatkozásait. A kultúra a narratívákat a nyelvben hozza létre, a narratívák pedig elbeszélnek, fenntartják és továbbörökítik a nyelvet és a kultúrát. Ebben a kölcsönös viszonyban diskurzívan konstruálhatók azok a határvonalak, amelyek az etnokulturális alapokon épült csoportok létét fenntartják. A narratív etnokulturális identitás felépítése káosz/komplexitás elméleti keretében arra utal, hogy az egyén akkulturációja esetenként két vagy akár háromirányú is lehet. A csoportokhoz tartozás egyéni szinten megjelenő nyelvi és narratív eszközei nem írhatók le lineárisan, hiszen egyik a másikkal egyidejűleg de különböző síkon zajlik.

A történetek együttes olvasatából egy olyan másodlagos narratív struktúra bontakozik ki, amely kiszélesíti a történetekben létrehozott etnokulturális identitás interakciókon alapuló dinamikáját. Nemcsak az egyes spontán felmerülő témák azonosak, de a nyelvi és retorikai kifejezőmódok is, valamint nem ritka az sem, hogy egyik történet mint folyománya egy teljesen máshol más személytől hallott narratívának. Ezekben a hasonlóságokban maguk az elbeszélők is összekapcsolódnak, jóllehet a valóságban soha nem válaszoltak egymás problémafelvetésére. Az epizódok egy olyan metanarratív keretbe illeszkednek, amely valójában a másodgenerációs amerikai magyar lét története. A metanarratív keret nemcsak azt

mutatja meg hogy a közösség tagjai miként élik meg etnicitásukat, hanem annak ismerete az önkéntes csoporttagság, illetőleg a megkülönböztetés forrása is.

Az elméleti irányzatok, valamint az empirikus tanulmányok összekapcsolására tett kísérlet aligha jelenti azt, hogy a disszertációban leírt történet a végéhez ért volna. A személyes életutak elbeszélése mindig végtelenített. Ahogy a feltárt narratíva-szerkezet mutatja, az egyes epizódok még a krónikás esetleges halála után is tovább élnek és új jelentéseket kapnak a leszármazottak vagy akár a csoport történeteiben. A második tanulmány alapján elmondhatjuk, hogy egy kanonikus narratíva is összetett jelentéstartalmakat hordoz akkor is, ha e jelentéstartalmak csupán azon kulturális közegek függvényében érvényesek, amelyben olvassák őket. A dolgozatban kifejtett kvalitatív vizsgálatoknak fő hátránya az általánosíthatóság csekély mértéke. Tíz másodgenerációs amerikai magyar mélyinterjúk során elmondott személyes történetei és 28 amerikai és magyarországi magyar olvasata egy novelláról olyan miliőt teremt, amely csak egy apró szegmense a világban létező etnokulturális tereknek és kontextusoknak. Így a két tanulmány kvalitatív jellege alacsony számú résztvevő bevonásával a kutatói kérdés inkább mélységekre törekvő feltárását, mint széles körben érvényes következtetések levonását tette lehetővé.

A vizsgálatok számos módon és irányban kiterjeszthetők. Az egyik lehetséges folytatás az itt felhasznált személyes narratívák nagyobb, hasonló módszerekkel, gyűjtött és fókuszált adatokhoz kapcsolása. Az így létrejövő adatbázisban lehetőség nyílna a feltételezések tágabb értelmezésére. Ez különösen érdekes lehet az etnokulturális identitásról szóló metanarratíva leírásához. A hatalmas mennyiségű adathalmaz hatékonyabb feldolgozása érdekében számítógépes programot is használhattam volna. Az anyag első feldolgozása során nem tettem, mert úgy éreztem a mélyinterjúk digitális kódolásával olyan információkat veszíthetek el, mint az interjúalany és kutató folyamatosan épülő viszonya. Az interjúk átírása és kódolása során nemcsak a szöveget olvastam, de felvonultak előttem arcok, gesztusok, hangok, amelyek a szöveges megnyilvánulásokat kísérték és a tárgyalás során segítettek az elemeket helyükre illeszteni. Jó volt látni beszélgetőtársaimat nevetni, meggyőzőbbé, hangosabbá válni, egyikük a családi emlékeket meg is könnyezte. Így biztos lehettem benne, hogy a történetek a bruneri életút-narratíva epizódjai. Az összevetésként felhasználható digitális kódolás ugyanakkor sok új aspektusra és értelmezési lehetőségre vezethet el, ami ekkora adatmennyiség vizsgálatakor nem elhanyagolható és a jelen disszertációból kimaradt. Ez a narratív „Amerika-szelet” olyan, mint egy finoman szőtt pókháló, amelyben a fonal vége egyben az eleje is, és bár a háló nem lineáris szerkezet, mégis tökéletesen befejezett, kerek egész.





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# Appendices

## Appendix A

### STATEMENT OF INFORMANT CONSENT

PROJECT TITLE: Culture and Identity  
RESEARCHER: Monika Fodor, Assistant Lecturer  
Department of English Speaking Literatures and Cultures  
University of Pécs  
H-7624 Ifjúság u. 6.  
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PURPOSE: This is a research study. Its purpose is to gain a deeper understanding how American people who have some relationship to Hungarian culture in their background experience and personalize American culture. I am inviting people with some Hungarian culture in their heritage to talk about and share their experiences of American culture, because it may lead to deeper cross-cultural understandings. People willing to participate will be asked to contribute not more than 2-3 hours of their time during March and April 2001.

PROCEDURES: If you agree to participate, we will set up appointments according to your schedule, and talk about your experiences and views about this culture. In order to help me with the write-up, I would like to audio tape our conversations, however, should you wish to look at the transcripts or the report in its first draft or finalized form you may and welcome to do so as well as comment on them.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION: All participation is voluntary if you decide to withdraw from any further participation you may do so at any time. You may also choose not to answer any of the questions during the interviews.

RISKS: There are no foreseeable risks to participating in this study.

BENEFITS: There are no personal benefits for taking part in this research. Nevertheless, I do hope that those who read the follow-up report will benefit by understanding more about the dynamics of American culture as well as the active role of its participants.

CONFIDENTIALITY: Tape-recorded material and notes from this project will be maintained and kept confidential to the extent permitted by law. However, federal government regulatory agencies and the University of Iowa Institutional Review Board may inspect and copy a subject's records pertaining to the research, and these records may contain personal identifiers. Except during the review and analysis, the tapes and notes will be secured in my home. You have the option to decide whether you want to be identified or named in the reports or publications of this study. In the absence of your approval results will be reported in a way that subjects cannot be identified.

By initialing in one of the space provided below, please verify that you either  
\_\_\_\_\_ A) want to be credited as a source in reports and publications from this project.

Or

\_\_\_\_\_ B) do not want to be identified as a source in reports and publications from this project.

QUESTIONS: If you have any questions about this study, please contact me: Monika Fodor (Phone 72 216 822 or 70 368 95 22). E-mail: [mfodor@btk.pte.hu](mailto:mfodor@btk.pte.hu)

### INFORMANT CONSENT

I \_\_\_\_\_ (informant's name), hereby certify that I have been told by Monika Fodor, about her research on the dynamics of American culture.

I was told about the purposes and procedures to be followed and the nature of my participation. I have had ample help and time to consider the possible risks and benefits to me and to others from the research. I have also been told the extent to which any records which may identify me will be kept confidential.

I understand that I have the right to ask questions at any time and that I can contact the researcher, Monika Fodor (Phone 216 822 or 70 368 95 22). E-mail: [mfodor@btk.pte.hu](mailto:mfodor@btk.pte.hu) for answers about the research and my rights.

I understand that my participation is voluntary, that I may refuse to participate or withdraw my consent and stop taking part at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which I may be entitled.

AUDIO TAPING AGREEMENT: Please initial in the space below to verify that you understand that our conversations will be recorded. \_\_\_\_\_

RESEARCHER'S STATEMENT: I have discussed the above points with the informant or the legally authorized representative, using a translator when necessary. It is my opinion that the subject understands the risks, benefits, and obligations involved in participating in this project.

Researcher's name (printed): \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of researcher: \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you very much for participating in this study.

## Appendix B

### CODING SAMPLE

The story occurred toward the end of the first interview with Christopher Kovach and was follow-up to an earlier story. In this Christopher told me about his most recent visit to Hungary, and how his Hungarian American father and his Hungarian cousin had an argument about the validity vs. fallacy of the philosophy that surrounds the theory of evolution. Remarks in {} identify coding subcategories.

**M:** And they were arguing about these very current things? I mean you think the difference in their argument was more like a cultural thing?

**CK:** Could be. But it's hard to say how much it's a cultural thing or he [Christopher's cousin] was just a bit more fashionable, modern and [...] {global culture, recently Hungarian}.

But for that reason it might as well be thought out because it's kind of how everybody relates to each other. But I know that reminds me of another story, which uhm I was walking with another one of my cousins in Budapest {visiting Hungary; seeing and knowing sites} and we were walking up like it's the Freedom Statue.

The woman holding an olive branch {cultural icons} {familiarity with cultural icons} and she [Christopher's other cousin] was telling me that the person who designed this statue originally wanted it to be an airplane. [Laughs]. And then this was because his son was a bomber pilot and died in the war. And, and she [Christopher's cousin] said: "So this olive branch represents his son" or something like that. I was asking her it really didn't make sense to me because usually when you have something representing something it's kind of concrete representing something abstract, and that was kind of odd that something abstract represents something concrete {universal knowledge} and she was, she was telling me that Americans just don't understand {stereotypes} how symbolism, like we don't understand how symbolism works {Hungarian psyche} because we grew up in, in an environment where expression is so free {freedom of expression vs. communism}

that you don't, there is none of this kind of necessity to see clear. This is something else that which existed in the communism, {communism; here a source of knowledge not available for outsiders} and so. {failure in intercultural communication}

**M:** Did you accept this accusation that Americans don't understand this kind of "double psyche" [a term introduced and used by the informant earlier in the interview to describe Hungarian consciousness]?

**CK:** Oh yeah. I accept that. I didn't really accept that I didn't really understand it. {confirms his Hungarian background} {choices}

I felt I understood it, but I didn't really understand the purpose for it. I guess and uhm I don't think that American culture is a lot more open and superficial, {superficiality} and there isn't that kind of in-depth meaning for most of the things. {stereotypes}

## Appendix D

### HOMECOMING

1. “And see that you don’t stop at the first bar and get soused,” said the prison guard, as
2. the man closed his watch and put the wedding ring on his finger. For the first time in
3. six years, he didn’t answer.
4. Outside, summer raged. The colors. The sky was blue, the trees green, the
5. streetcars yellow. Women were colored, exotic birds.
6. He stared at awe at everything and everyone; it’s a miracle that someone didn’t
7. give him a thrashing.
8. Those who once crossed over to the other side in order to avoid him now crossed
9. over to greet him and shake his hand.
10. “My dear man, I hear you had a little inconvenience ... believe me, I only escaped
11. it by the skin of my teeth ...”
12. Here he wasn’t protected from them by the prison’s clear-cut black and white set
13. of norms.
14. His wife took him on an outing one Sunday. Him and the little boy. The boy who
15. was six months old then and is almost seven now.
16. In the woods on the trail, the little boy said, “Daddy you lead” and closed his
17. eyes. The boy understood his hand; for over a minute he stepped, blindly, around
18. stones, branches, puddles, tracks. Then the little boy opened his eyes and said: “Now I
19. lead, Daddy.” He closed his eyes and took almost ten steps blindly. He, too,
20. understood the little boy’s hand.
21. Then he opened his eyes and, from the corner of his eye, he saw an almost smile
22. on his wife’s lips. The wife noticed that he saw.
23. The sky was blue, the foliage green, and through the leaks in the green foliage,
24. thick, rich sunlight poured onto the stones, the branches, the puddles.

1. Did you like the story? Why?
2. Where and when do you think it takes place?
3. Which part /sentence/word is most informative about it?
4. How would you describe the society the story takes place in?
5. Which elements of language have helped you identify these features?
6. Is there any part of the story that seems confusing? Why
7. How do you feel about the man?
8. Who do you think he is?
9. Why do you think the man had been jailed?
10. If it were an American short story, how would it be different?
11. What do you think makes it unique?

## Appendix E

### HAZAÉRKEZÉS

1. - Aztán ne ám, hogy bemenjen az első kocsmába, és leigya magát – mondta az
2. őrmester, miközben a férfi az óráját csatolta föl, s ujjára húzta a karikagyűrűt. Hat év
3. után először.
4. Nem felelt.
5. Odakint tombolt a nyár. A színek.
6. Kék volt az ég, zöldek a fák, sárgák a villamosok. A nők tarka díszmadarak.
7. Mindent és mindenkit megbámult: csoda, hogy föl nem pofozták.
8. Aki annak idején, ha látta, átment előle a túloldalra, most átjött a túloldáról és
9. hosszan rázogatta a kezét:
10. - Öregem, hallom, volt egy kis kellemetlenséged... hidd el, én is csak ügyyel-
11. bajjal...
12. Itt nem védte tőlük a börtön fekete-fehér egyértelműsége.
13. Felesége egy vasárnap elvitte kirándulni. Őt meg a kisfiút. Aki féléves volt annak
14. idején, most meg már majdnem hét.
15. Az erdőben, az úton, a kisfiú azt mondta: - Apa, most vezess – és behunyta a
16. szemét.
17. Értette a kezét: jó egy percig kerülgetett vakon követ, hullott ágat, kátyút,
18. kerékvágást.
19. Aztán a kisfiú kinyitotta a szemét, és azt mondta: - Most te, Apa!
20. Engedelmesen behunyta a szemét, s ment is vagy tíz lépést, vakon.
21. Ő is értette a kisfiú kezét.
22. Aztán kinyitotta a szemét, s a szeme sarkából látta a felesége száján a
23. majdnemmosolyt.
24. Az asszony látta, hogy ő látja.
25. Az ég kék volt, a lomb zöld, s a zöld lomb lékein vastag pászmákban csurgott az
26. útra – köre, hullott ágra, kátyúra – a napfény.

1. Tetszett a novella? Miért?
2. Szerinted hol és mikor játszódhat?
3. A szöveg melyik része tartalmaz erre vonatkozó utalást?
4. Jellemezd röviden a társadalmat, ahol játszódhat.
5. Milyen szövegbeli utalások támasztják alá az előbbi leírást?
6. Van a novellának olyan része, amely nehezen érthető? Melyik az és mi okozza a nehézséget?
7. Mit gondolsz a főhősről?
8. Szerinted ki ő?
9. Szerinted miért került börtönbe?
10. Különösnek találod-e a novellát, és ha igen miért?