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VARIANTS OF ETHNICITY

IDENTITIES IN THE HUNGARIAN DIASPORA IN THE UNITED STATES

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Abstract: Ethnic identities are socially defined cultural contracts. Reworkings take place according to historic changes as well as in specific social situations. To speak about identity of 'X'-s and of 'Y'-s is a complex issue mainly in diasporic contexts where a uniform or homogeneous identity of the specific ethnic categories and groups is hardly accepted. In spite of this, in public discourse it is common to speak about the identity of Hungarian-Americans for instance. Based on historical and contemporary investigations of Hungarian immigrants and their descendants in the United States the paper analyses the complexity of ethnic identities. It does so in particular by raising the problem of ethnic identity from two directions: on the one hand, taking into account the differing situation of those who emigrated and of their descendants and, on the other hand, on the basis of theoretical considerations. Variants of ethnic self and group identification is related to historical flows of immigrants, size and composition of population concerned as well as to power relations.

Keywords: transnational migration, ethnicity, ethnic categorization and identification, diaspora, Hungarian-Americans

How homogeneous is an ethnic group in the cultural sense? How constant and how identical are the forms and manifestations of belonging to the ethnic group? Particularly in cases where the ethnic group is spectacularly fragmented geographically. My article deals with these general problems, although only from a narrower viewpoint, based on my investigations into historical changes within clearly defined limits of space and time among the Hungarian-Americans.[1] However, the lessons that can be learnt from the past can provide a good basis for the substantive examination of questions aimed at understanding the present situation, and at the same time have general theoretical validity indicated by the above questions. This paper is principally a theoretical frame, and as such it represents the generalisation of my findings to date and also the main direction of my current research, and at the same time it aims to provide considerations for exploring the fringe areas of what Tamás Hofer has called the "mental map" of the Hungarian people (HOFER 1994: 1386). It

[1] Continuing my earlier work (FEJŐS 1988; 1993), at present I am studying the second generation of Hungarian-Americans in the period 1920–60. Hungarians who lived or live in Bridgeport, Connecticut and vicinity, supplemented by data and observations from elsewhere, constitute the empirical base of the research. The work has been assisted by a 3-month Fulbright scholarship in 1993 and by grant No. 396 from OKTK in 1994–96.

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does so in particular by raising the problem of ethnic identity from two directions: on the one hand, taking into account the differing situation of those who emigrated and of their descendants, and, on the other hand, on the basis of theoretical considerations.

As a starting point, I cite a typical declaration which clearly shows the widespread misunderstandings regarding the Hungarian-Americans. “We are building excellent relations (…) with the approximately 1.7 million Hungarians living in the United States,” the Hungarian foreign minister declared in Spring 1991.[2] The sentence given as an example is not an exception; a host of similar examples could be read and heard since then, including some that are even less sound as regards the numbers mentioned. It is not my intention to deal with the political circumstances and message of the above claim, instead I shall attempt to throw light on the essence and significance of the problems behind the sentence and place it in a theoretical context. To begin with, three main questions are involved: the *numbers,* the *concept of “Hungarian people”* and a few aspects of *contacts with the old country.*

THE LIMITS OF MEASURABILITY

Two related questions arise regarding the size of the Hungarian diaspora in the United States: one is the problem of the censuses (and the related estimates), and the other is the independent – we could even say manipulative – use of the data. Proper evaluation of census data and statistics is, of course, a question of expertise and it is only possible here to sum up the most important considerations. “Lay” use of the data should be avoided, not simply because of the lack of precision and obvious errors, but also from the viewpoint of the interpretation of ethnicity.

The ethnic and cultural composition of the population of the United States can be measured mainly (but not exclusively) from the data of the censuses held every ten years. However, the data series can give only an approximate picture of this composition or, more precisely, they provide a few parameters which can help in the quantitative description of the composition of the population. Since the census of 1980, deductions can be made concerning the size of the different ethnic groups on the basis of the following three categories: the country of birth of immigrants, the language – other than English – spoken at home in the family by persons over the age of five years, and ancestry. Earlier censuses took into account – although not always – the mother tongue, the number of children of foreign born parents (in cases also the children of these children), that is, the second (or possibly the third) generation, but they did not consider the category of active language use or the problem of “ancestry”.

[2] Géza Jeszenszky gives interview to our paper. *Magyar Hírlap,* April 27, 1991.

On the basis of birth in Hungary, the 1980 census in the United States found 144,368 persons and the 1990 census 110,337 persons. This statistical indicator is relatively straightforward but, in the case of Hungarians, it obviously restricts the number of first generation emigrants from the Hungarian-speaking territory. In contrast there is no figure on how many Hungarians settled in the United States as citizens of the neighbouring countries. However, this question only slightly modifies the basic situation that the size of the emigrant generation is now quite small, even if we take into account also Hungarians born in Romania, the former Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia. (It is generally assumed that the numbers who left these regions always exceeded the emigration of minorities from Hungary, but it is almost impossible to prove this and perhaps only the figures for crisis situations, such as the last decade of the Ceauşescu era, can be accepted without reservations.)

The figures on the numbers speaking a language other than English in the family show different data, but ones that are related to the above factor. From the viewpoint of active language use, the census found 178,995 Hungarians over the age of five in 1980 and 147,902 in 1990. But other indicators should be taken into account here for a proper interpretation of these figures. A comparison of those speaking Hungarian at home and those born in Hungary shows that in 1980 27.7 percent of the latter (40,021 persons) also used exclusively English at home. It is clear that we cannot automatically equate those born in Hungary with those speaking Hungarian. However, the figures on family size show that Hungarian is regularly spoken in close to 80,000 families, and both Hungarian and English are used in approximately the same number of families. It should also be noted that more than 70 percent of all those speaking Hungarian were over the age of 45; in 1990 this was almost certainly the case for even elder people.[3] The potential circle of those most likely to maintain Hungarian-language culture is thus characterised by ageing, declining numbers and a low proportion by American standards.

The census category aimed at determining foreign origin of the population – figuring in the statistics as "ancestry" – raises far more problems of interpretation than the figures on country of birth and language used in the family. (This survey does not cover the full population but is based on sampling.) The misunderstandings primarily arise from the fact that the "ancestry" data are frequently interpreted as identification both by representatives of the ethnic groups and outsiders unfamiliar with the real conditions. But this is far from being the case, although it cannot be excluded for individuals. If someone knows, for example, that one of his ancestors was born in Hungary, he qualifies statistically as being of Hungarian ancestry (provided he indicated this at all in answer to the relevant census question), regardless of whether it means something to him or not. It is, of course, true that conscious failure to disclose any kind of information regarding ancestry or foreign origin repre-

[3] For a detailed analysis of the 1980 census, see FEJŐS 1988. The 1990 census data are available in printed form to only a limited extent. The data cited here are from the U.S. Bureau of Census electronic databases Summary Tape Files 3 and 4, which I was able to use in the library of Yale University. A few data series have also been published in Hungary: NAGY 1993; NAGY–PAPP 1998.

sents a choice of identity (although this cannot be distinguished in a measurable way within the census category of “American”). Clearly, this census indicator regarding ancestry determines – or could determine – the ethnic composition of the population on very uncertain grounds.

The “1.7 million” can be attributed to this “ancestry” category applied in 1980 for the first time in the history of the ten-yearly censuses. It was shown in that year that 1,776,902 persons are partly or wholly of Hungarian ancestry, more precisely of Hungarian ancestry or with ancestors from Hungary. Under ancestry (or origin), people could name the nationality or genealogical group or the country in which the individual – or any of his parents or ancestors – were born. Of this total, 727,223 were “purely Hungarian”, the remainder being of mixed, only partly Hungarian ancestry (e.g. Hungarian–Slovak, German–Hungarian, etc.). Obviously, “mixed ancestry” is a rather loose category and such ancestry data should be used with great caution (FEJŐS 1988: 200–210; WATERS 1990: 21–26, 46–51; cf. MAGOCSI 1987). Ten years later the procedure was refined and the explanation attached to the question on the census form was slightly modified. As a result, the data series for 1980 and 1990 cannot be compared with certainty. In 1990 the census found 1,582,302 persons of Hungarian ancestry (from Hungary, etc.); 997,545 listed Hungarian ancestry first and 584,757 listed it second. Solely Hungarian ancestry was recorded in 596,913 cases. Presumably – but not necessarily – those who spoke Hungarian at home regarded themselves as being of Hungarian ancestry and they made up the 24.8 percent of solely Hungarian ancestry (9.4 percent of all persons with Hungarian ancestry). The majority thus came from second, third or even later generations born in the United States, in whose case the borders of ethnic identity are rather fluid, blurred and changeable. It must be stressed once again that ethnic identity and the quantitative figures for “ancestry” are not the same phenomena. Independent investigations are required to show 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. The relationship between the American and the ethnic identities is another matter and can be characterised by a whole range of choices. Research shows that today ethnic identity – at least in the case of the white population of European origin – is of a voluntary nature, a question of consciousness or emotional option and as such is not necessarily constant but changes according to the given situation.[4]

We thus have in our possession various indicators, different data series which reflect the ethnic, cultural, language, ancestry and other differences existing in American society in differing ways. These can also refer at the same time to variants of ethnicity; the most obvious is the quantitative indicator showing the numbers who speak Hungarian at home. However we interpret the census data and whichever data series we regard as authoritative, they have a far-reaching influence on thinking

[4] These are now widely shared recognitions; only as an example: GANS 1979; WATERS 1990; BYRON 1995, 1998.

about American ethnic groups and ethnicity. It is not surprising that the data on ancestry – misunderstood to a considerable degree and often boldly rounded upwards – are becoming increasingly popular in everyday use. This is characteristic not only of manifestations by politicians, journalists and laymen in the distant "old country" but can also be observed within the American ethnic groups. In part it is simply a lack of information or misunderstanding of the statistics and in part, which is much more important, it arises from a more or less conscious use of terms and thinking. Naturally, this is not an exclusively Hungarian characteristic: other groups make use of similar exaggerations and, according to some opinions, do so far more boldly than the Hungarians. Two factors must be mentioned by way of explanation. Firstly, it can be accepted that the question of "How many are we?" is important for the collective identity of all groups. The collective self-image can be strengthened by instinctively or, even more, by deliberately increasing the numbers. The more we are, the more significant and distinguished we appear and the more advantageous the position in which "our" group can be shown. Of course, in the ethnically (and "racially") enormously varied American society, the principle of "bigger is better" serves not only as understandable compensation for insignificance and collective weakness or for positive self-esteem, but – principally in the case of the genuinely large groups – as a means in the often intense rivalry among such groups. Secondly, it can be observed that the question of the size of ethnic groups indirectly plays a role in the election struggles. To a certain extent for the reasons mentioned above, because of the competition among the groups, and in particular because often a relatively few voters can influence the election results, the "ethnic vote" has increased in value. The elections for representatives, state governors and city mayors are/can be decided by the votes of ethnic groups. For this reason the politically more active leaders of ethnic groups, including those of European origin, consider it more advantageous for election purposes if they are able to refer to the largest possible community in exerting political pressure. This is why politicians also pay attention to the figures published by the Census Bureau for electoral districts. It is not the purpose of this paper to analyse this question in greater detail but it is perhaps already clear from what has been said that the significance of the monitoring and manipulative use of group size should not be underestimated.

An essential conclusion to be drawn from the above is that there are important connections between the results of censuses and social and political thinking. In 1980, under the influence of the previous decade, to meet the demands of multiculturalism and movements attacking the ideology of assimilation, the Census Bureau made an attempt to measure the size of the population of foreign origin. As a consequence of the new procedure introducing the category of "ancestry", from 1980 the census changed the self-image of American ethnic groups and the image formed of these groups in society as a whole. Indirectly it also modified the opinion held of emigrants and their descendants in the countries sending migrants. Previously the census reflected and at the same time "sanctified" the general, "official" notion since it published data only on immigrants and the children of immigrant parents, in other words, it acknowledged only these two (at times three) generations, indicating the

rapid and straightforward course of assimilation. The picture has changed since 1980. Quantified data indicate the ethnic and cultural variety of the population, regardless of how many generations back the ancestors concerned arrived in America. The essential thing is the changed categorisation which in turn influences the life and self-image of the groups.

THE LIMITS OF DESIGNATIONS

The problem of interpreting census data already indicates that it is impossible to speak of "Hungarian-Americans" as a collectivity (*amerikai magyarság*) and especially of the "1.7 million-strong Hungarian-Americans" or in the nineties of one and a half million Hungarian-Americans. The frequent notion and everyday usage which in various periods over the past one hundred years referred to the Hungarians settled in the United States as a unit is unacceptable. It can be said that the "Hungarian Americans" as a collectivity does not have a century-long history, although in a number of places institutions, particularly churches, have celebrated their centenary. It is enough to leaf through the commemorative publications issued on such occasions to see the change in the internal content of the institutional continuity. Different waves of immigration, the mingling of generations, in cases even change(s) in the name of the church or other organisation concerned indicate the internal transformations expressing changes in the meaning of ethnicity. The immigration periods, the internal social, cultural and political divisions and differences between the generations shape the varied concepts, strategies and mechanisms for the structuring of ethnic identity.

However, the loose everyday usage points to two questions that can also be raised in theory. The first could be called the problem of *designation* and the second that of *belonging.*

In a general sense all identity can be conceived as a question of name and designation. The British anthropologist Richard JENKINS (1994: 218; 1997: 167–168) refers to this when he expresses the view that identity can be broken down into two related but relatively independent levels: nominal and virtual identity. The first applies to names and designation, the second to experience, to what the name means, in the first place for the person who is named. It is important that while the name remains constant its meaning may change (or vice versa). As a consequence, the name of any human group arising from a natural human demand does not designate an unchanging entity. But while the content behind the name is changeable, the name in itself refers to the creation of collective identity. The various terms used by Hungarians (in Hungary) in connection with the nation clearly reflect the uncertainty in naming the different geographical groups of the Hungarian ethnos. In part following the pattern of "*erdélyi magyarság*" [Hungarians in Transylvania as a collectivity] and "*szlovákiai magyarság*" [Hungarians in Slovakia as a collectivity] – in itself a usage that raises problems – the term "*amerikai magyarság*" is gaining increasing currency. And this question leads to the second consideration.

The formula "Hungarian-Americans" meant as a collectivity (and its use) explicitly refers to a particular concept of the belonging of emigrants and their descendants, similar to that which Gregory JUSDANIS (1991) has pointed out in his analysis of the Greek diaspora. This usage covertly implies a notion, namely that the Hungarian-Americans represent an extension of the old country. This is a typical first generation notion, characteristic of migrants, which evaluated migration and its consequences from the viewpoint of the participants and the old country. However the extension meaning changes historically and in the different stages of emigration. The examples speak for themselves: for example, during the great wave of economic emigration the departure of the migrant workers was marked by a temporariness, they firmly intended to return and the return of migrants was a frequent occurrence. The old country gave meaning to the activity of the political emigrants following the Second World War, even though they could not see any real possibility or precise time for returning home. In both cases, the feeling or idea that the departure was temporary meant that they defined themselves as part of the old country finding themselves in a distant land or exiled there. This is how they were seen from the sending country too, but in the limited openness of the period stigmatising expressions became associated with them. The official stigmatisation of the political emigrants expressed this relationship in an unequivocally negative form. In each wave of emigration the initial situation changed over time. The historical investigations clearly show that even the emigrants themselves cannot be regarded as the unchanged distant representatives of those who remained at home. After they settled in the new country they were no longer their "old selves" either, they went through changes and increasingly differ from those who remained at home. With time, the meaning of belonging to the old country also became more nuanced, but the designation nevertheless remained. The notion of the "Hungarian-Americans" exists as one of the variants of the "Hungarians living abroad" or, more recently, the "Hungarians beyond the borders", which one-sidedly distorts the real situation. Referring in advance to what will be discussed later, it could be said that this "extension conception" is the fruit of the categorisation procedure of politicians and opinion-makers in the sending country, with which *a part* of those living in the diaspora identify, or who express (and experience) their identity on the basis of this logic.

The self-definition of the generation(s) born in the United States differs significantly from this view. It is quite obvious that because of their birth and citizenship they cannot be regarded as individuals of another country, a European nation-state, living abroad. They do not define themselves as Hungarians who emigrated, or who fled or were exiled. They are primarily participants of American society and history, but this does not exclude the possibility that they differ or may consciously distinguish themselves on occasions from the society as a whole or any of its components. In cases, although with very slight practical implications, they can be found among members of even the fourth or fifth generation descended from immigrants (BYRON 1995; 1998). An important factor here is the constantly changing direction of the American public mood and public opinion, indicating or expressing in American society the openly stated or hidden ideals of ethnic facts, the relationships of the

immigrants and the different ethnic groups. This is one of the reasons why it is obvious that "differing" applied from the ethnic viewpoint 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. In reality this conscious activity and the spontaneous processes influence and shape each other.

We thus have two opposing conceptions which can be expressed as the traditional national identity and the opposite of ethnic identity. However, the historical and current data suggest that in reality broad circles of Hungarian-Americans cannot be characterised by these two "pure" types. It has already been noted that it is an error to regard all those who were born in Hungary (or in the Hungarian-inhabited localities of the neighbouring countries) simply as "Hungarians living abroad", although they are undoubtedly closer to the "old country" model of identity than the American-born children of immigrant Hungarians. One of the strongest proofs of this is that it is generally only an insignificant minority who respond to the recurrent appeals to return addressed from the native land to the "Hungarian-Americans". This could be seen again after 1989: some people have returned, but the numbers are not large and even despite a few better known examples of roles undertaken in politics and public life (BORBÁNDI 1996) the tendency is not characteristic. A complex web of dual bonds inevitably arises also in the case of generations who have emigrated or fled for political reasons, becoming a characteristic feature of the necessary integration in the new environment and the diaspora situation. Indeed, it is not difficult to find individuals who do not regard themselves as distant "extensions" of the old country even though they are first generation immigrants. It follows from all this that the criteria of belonging to the ethnos cannot be restricted – especially in today's world – to the exclusiveness of identity determined as a function of the nation-state frames. It is surprising that, although in Hungary the notion of "Hungarian people" does not evoke the concept of nation-state since the territory inhabited by Hungarians does not coincide with the borders of the state, in the evaluation of emigrants and their descendants it is precisely the necessary but simplifying procedure of designation that nevertheless indicates the persistent existence of thinking in terms of nation-state frames.

THE LIMITS OF DIASPORA BONDS

In examining the variants of ethnicity we need to focus also on the concept and phenomenon of diaspora identity, even though attempts are being made to explain very differing past and present variants of ethnic relations with this currently fashionable concept, not to mention the origin of the expression and its concrete historical content (SAFRAN 1991; MÉDAM 1993; CLIFFORD 1996; TÖLÖLYAN 1996; COHEN 1997; VETROVEC 1997; FEJŐS 1995; 1999). In the case of the Hungarians over the past century the diaspora nature of the life of emigrants (and their descendants) has only rarely been expressed consciously, but sooner or later those involved in each

wave of migration came to recognise the distinctive features of “Hungarian America”, differing from those of the old country. It is my experience that a clearer expression of this can be perceived in periods of change of generation on a substantial scale in the sociological sense: in the early 1920s, at the turn of the 1930s to 1940s, after the Second World War, and with varying intensity in the last two decades. However, the awareness of difference from the old country naturally did not have the same meaning in all cases and was not of the same significance. Reconstruction of the historical patterns of diaspora awareness and diaspora identity and changes in their meaning, and an examination of their present possibilities are a task for future research. In the following we need to examine whether we can speak at all of a Hungarian diaspora and, if so, when it was formed in the United States (or Canada, certain countries of South America), in the true, terminological sense of the word, in other words, if we do not use this expression simply in a descriptive way to designate our former compatriots who found themselves on distant continents. Another question to be considered is to what extent and with what restrictions they have true diaspora identity. I shall deal here with two of the many ties which can make this possible (cf. CORNELL 1996).

The extract from an interview cited in the introduction refers to something presumed to exist on the basis of relations between politically active partners: a certain degree of conscious relations between diaspora and old country. But the behaviour of the stratum showing an interest in day-to-day politics in the old country is not characteristic of the diaspora as a whole and cannot be held up as an example for everyone. As an identity formula in time and in the sociological sense it is characteristic only to a limited extent even of the members of the first generation, that is, those who emigrated (cf. VÁRDY–VÁRDY HUSZÁR 1996; VÁRDY 1999). At the same time, the fabric of the diaspora is woven from many more threads both sociologically and culturally. It exists also in the form of human relations and networks of small and large organisations and communities spanning great distances. Besides (and even instead of) the traditional modes of communication, such as family correspondence and news of emigrants in the press, the possibilities created by modern technology are now being used to maintain these networks and are also shaping relations with the old country. An Indian commentator (KARAMCHETI 1992: 269–272) considers that memory and “technology” can also maintain the diaspora, indicating with the latter the significance of modern means of communication and transport. It is true in the case of Hungarians too that frequent travel – the spread of “diaspora tourism” – the cheap and simple means of recording and spreading audio and visual information, the fax machine and more recently e-mail and the Internet have a strong positive influence on maintaining and rebuilding ethnic relations. The latter could be seen in the period of the change of political system in Hungary which largely coincided with the early days of e-mail.[5] The Internet now helps individuals

[5] HANÁK 1993 briefly describes the different news groups formed in 1988–90 and the role of the network. TEITELBAUM 1994/95 has discussed the role of the Internet from the viewpoint of Jews.

and groups living far apart – within North America and outside that region – to maintain almost daily contact at private level, which is not the same thing as following events in political and public life in Hungary (although it may also include this). In general it can also be said that the ties between the diaspora and the central territories of the Hungarian ethnos are not necessarily all of the same strength, nor are they necessarily marked by the intention to pursue political aims. Indeed, on occasion they are very active or can be easily mobilised even without a political or ideological content. As a recent example that came to my attention as a member of an e-mail network, I can mention the case of the floods in Subcarpathia in 1999 when a number of descendants of emigrants born in Visk (Viskovo, Ukraine) beside the Tisza River followed the events through news and reports on American TV channels and from information available on the Internet, and sent aid to the "old country". A great variety of similar examples occur from time to time, which also indicates that, compared to the recent emigrant groups with strong ideological commitment, for the majority, especially the American-born descendants, the feeling of solidarity with the "old country" is only of an occasional nature, although it can be mobilised at times.

The ties do not exclusively mean a real network of social contacts with changing content; they may take the form of consciousness and be expressions of personal experiences and feelings. The past, memories and cultural symbols can also help the individual to identify with a group of people who have not been or cannot be experienced personally, which does not maintain real social contacts or only at a minimal level. The emergence and activity of transnational relations and communities, as well as individual identity are nourished to a large extent by the imagined, common past. The past, as a remembered image, a memory, and as a text tradition which can be adopted, experienced and constantly renewed, also offers a source of identification. In this way outstanding and often strongly idealised events of the national past, national heroes and the respect and appreciation of the achievement of world famous figures, whether Nobel Prize scientists, artists or sportsmen, also give individuals the possibility for identification. Through respect of the heroes and outstanding figures, the individual can perceive points of reference in a concrete form and by identifying with these can consider himself part of the imagined community. The great and heroic figures embody the abstract community with which the individual can on occasion enrich his self-image, or if, through birth and education he already belongs predominantly to another cultural community, he can at times distinguish himself from his fellows and environment (FEJŐS 1993: 186–188; 1999). Obviously, the durability and significance of such a choice differs greatly between first generation emigrants and their descendants.

Nowadays it can be observed that diasporas (can) become points of crystallisation for transnational forms of identity, independent of nations and citizenship, in contrast with or supplementing nation-state identity. This question exceeds the theme of the present paper in a number of respects but it is of note here in that, on the basis of this conception, we see the diaspora rather as an independent, separate world than as a simple remote modification of the "old country". This is true even in cases when the existence of the diaspora – or at least the views and behaviour of

leading figures strongly influencing the diaspora – is determined by special attention paid to the old country and by political and economic actions aimed at influencing and changing conditions there (such as certain groups of the former participants in the 1956 uprising). Further research is needed to clarify the extent to which Hungarians are characterised by such an "independent world" which can be assumed in theory and on the basis of historical experiences to exist among populations of migrant origin and which in cases is clearly manifested today. There are big differences between a diaspora which is active politically and ideologically or even only culturally, and generally maintains strong institutional ties organised by immigrants, and a "latent" diaspora consisting of the descendants of former immigrants active only on occasions. The Hungarian-speaking diaspora and institutional system in the United States is at present again shrinking in a very visible way and its members have a very strong sense of decay (cf. NAGY–PAPP 1998), which can be properly understood from the viewpoint of the "extension" conception discussed above. In the wider sense we can nevertheless raise the question: is the present differentiated mode of existence of the Hungarian ethnos characterised everywhere by the same identity? And in general, does the same identity *have to be* characterised by the same content and the same pattern in the organisation of culture? Far from it, but following the presumed multi-centred pattern of the Hungarian language and Hungarian literature, can it be claimed that the Hungarian ethnos is characterised by pluralism of national/ethnic identities, with the independent diaspora awareness(es) representing one or more variants, or even alternative possibilities? While linguists are strongly divided on the question of the emergence of different Hungarian language standards and the use of language varieties (LANSTYÁK 1995; BENKŐ 1996), in the area of literature which represents a more special potential case we are more ready to accept the existence of independent centres. I believe that we do not yet have sufficient data and experience to give a sound answer to this question based on a wider view and taking into account other cultural features and elements of consciousness. At the same time, the conceptual frame I have outlined can help to identify further identity formulas. Obviously, the Hungarian ethnos in the cultural and ethnic sense has a centre to which external "planets" are linked by stronger or weaker ties. It is difficult to imagine the creation and maintenance of ethnic identity if a group or any of its members make themselves *fully* independent of the culture, language and ideals of the centre, ignoring it entirely. However, there is every indication that it is possible to shape an identity with national and ethnic ties in the cultural sense *without fully accepting* the set of symbols and attitudes of the centre, and even with all its independence, the "core territories" represent the point of reference for such identity. Such diaspora identities enrich the mode of existence of the ethnos, but obviously can also exist in themselves in varying degrees.

THE CRITERIA FOR IDENTIFYING ETHNIC DIFFERENCES

The observations made so far regarding the number of Hungarian-Americans, their designation and their relationship to the territory from which they came and originated can also be expressed on a more general level. As regards the population size and group designation, it could be seen that as a result of external classification a certain part of the population is qualified as a unit having identical nature, content, etc. It could also be perceived that this influences and is closely related to the internal self-definition of individuals and groups. From the theoretical viewpoint we are dealing here with two definitions of ethnicity which are related but can – and should – be separated for the purpose of analysis (JENKINS 1994; 1997: 52–70; cf. ERIKSEN 1993: 18–35).There is a difference between the *internal* definition of individual and collective identity, that is, self-definition, and *external* classification into categories. From the sociological and anthropological viewpoint we speak of categorisation when we identify a unit on the basis of the similarity that can be found in one or two parameters of its members. The members of a society born in a given year, workers in agriculture, persons voting for a socialist party, women living in towns, all form categories. In contrast, we can speak of a group when it is created by relations among the group members, e.g. by some degree of co-operation, or even by the awareness of belonging together. This distinction naturally applies in social life as a whole, not merely in the case of ethnicity (JENKINS 1996: 80–89). In our case it is clear that applying this two-fold consideration makes it easier to interpret the characteristics of the fringe areas of the Hungarian ethnos, including the "Hungarian-Americans". On the one hand it can be seen in theory that the population distinguished as a result of categorisations – e.g. the unit identifiable in statistics as "of Hungarian origin", the "Hungarian-Americans" thought as a collectivity mentioned by politicians – cannot be identified with a sociological group having collective identity. On the other hand, by making such an analytical distinction between the internal and external definition of ethnicity – in other words the variants of ethnicity – it is possible to draw a more nuanced picture.

Researchers examining individual groups generally concentrate on the internal self-definition. This is particularly striking in the case of anthropological or ethnographic works, but historical and sociological studies written on the various immigrant and ethnic groups in the United States are also generally group-oriented. This means that the emphasis is placed on the internal processes maintaining identity, on its institutional, organisational frames and on the social relations defining the group(s) and community or communities. In such an approach we can learn the processes and criteria of internal group identity and individual self-identity. Social, generational and other differences within the group, including the ways of leaving the community or communities become clear. But there are far fewer works of sociology or anthropology examining phenomena of social history or the present time which place this internal viewpoint in an overall social frame and attempt to show the movement and changes of the different groups (and in them the individuals) in

such a broad context. In his works cited above Richard Jenkins points out that external categorisation plays a much more important role than has been indicated to date by research focusing on the internal organisation of groups and their self-distinction. This is all the more so because, as he notes, categorisation is closely related to power, particularly to state or local political power relations (JENKINS 1997: 70–73; HAGENDOORN 1993). This is obvious in the case of American immigrants because their self-definition – as I have mentioned – undoubtedly depends on the general social norms related to the ethnic and cultural unity or variety of American society, which are also manifested in the activity of political or public institutions. The 1920s and the 1950s when strong assimilation was expected had a different atmosphere from the period of multiculturalism. What is needed now is an attempt to make such a combined external and internal definition of ethnicity in the context of social history and in today's circumstances. This is important because it is only in this way that we can record and typify the variants of ethnic commitment depending on space, time and situations and of differing strength.

Arthur Mann (1979) is one of the few who has attempted to define the different paths of ethnic self-classification within the general American identity. In his book, *The One and the Many,* which appeared two decades ago, in the years when the public mood rejected assimilation, he left no doubt that the population of European birth or origin is far from regarding itself as definable in a constant way on an ethnic basis. Apart from the way other groups of society in general and their institutions regard them, in Mann's opinion this American population with its distinctive ethnic background can be classified into at least four groups. It must be stressed in the light of the above that external definition is far from being a neutral classification; it strongly contributes to shaping the possibilities for personal choice and the choice made in given situations. Mann's four categories based on ethnic self-identity are the following: (1) total identifiers with the ethnic community, (2) the partial identifiers, (3) the disaffiliates, those who have broken away from the community, (4) the hybrids (MANN 1979: 171–172). These obvious categories can give only a very broad picture of American ethnic differences, including the ethnicity of Hungarians. They are, however, useful in that they indicate the larger groups that can be formed together with and on the basis of individual variants. In other words, these categories generalise different characteristic traits of individual behaviour forms and the collective forms of ethnicity on a broader scale.

Representatives of the first type always come from recent immigrants, but in the absence of mass immigration this is no longer characteristic of Hungarians or occurs only in isolated cases. Even then it has only limited validity because the condition does not exist: a *full* ethnic community maintained by institutions and cultural orientation. Not even all those mentioned in the census data as being born in Hungary can be classified here; probably this is the case for only a very small minority. The majority of those born in Hungary belong in the second group; for these people ethnic bonds could for the most part still be the decisive factor at the level of primary group relations, and also in the cultivation of language and cultural values. The third type of ethnicity is represented by quantitatively far more people than in the

first two groups. All those who, although American-born, were socialised in part within ethnic frames can be classified here. These are the members of the second and third generation who are still bound by many ties in both social status and cultural orientation to their parents who immigrated or grew up in an ethnic environment, but who have largely broken away from the ethnic organisations and communities and the ethnic mode of existence. They generally have higher education or may be skilled workers, and on occasion may again attribute significance to their ancestry. In American society this type of persons who have broken away from the various ethnic communities forms a distinctive group since what the members have in common is not the same origin but a very similar life career; its representatives were the loudest spokesmen in the period of ethnic renaissance. Mann regards the fourth type as the result of the American melting-pot because the average American can find strands of various ethnic origin among his ancestors but this has no special significance for him. It should be added that the knowledge of foreign origin, perhaps keeping a record of it, moreover along a number of strands does nevertheless ensure a minimum possibility for representatives of this type to express at times that they are Americans in a special way. This special way may on rare occasions go together with the knowledge or use of a cultural symbol of an ethnic nature, but this kind of ethnicity is essentially not elaborated, it is "something with little content" (LEVINE 1999: 179) from the cultural point of view. In the recent censuses millions of people of this type have been classified under the category of "mixed ancestry". As we have already seen, in the case of Hungarians there were at least one million such people in the censuses of both 1980 and 1990. The two latter strata are certainly the main producers and potential consumers of such products of popular culture of an ethnic style as video films and CDs evoking ethnic traditions, souvenirs, romantic stories and tales of the old country, etc. In the case of the very large immigrant groups of the past – the Irish, Germans, Italians, Poles and others – they can be estimated in the millions and if they wish they have an abundant choice of goods meeting such demands. "Those with an interest in their ancestral heritage," says Reginald BYRON (1995: 39) who studied the Irish, "can buy it, or more of it, like any other leisure product or service." Because of the differences in numbers, Hungarian products play a more modest role on the market of such services expanding the range of today's consumer society; perhaps patches of Hungarian colour can be perceived more readily by the followers of rather "hybrid origin" of the folk dance movement now popular in American universities or the more recent world music trends.

This typology gives only an approximate picture of the variants of ethnicity. It needs to be supplemented with groups less constant than the four categories occurring in everyday interactions and characterising much more dynamic identity strategies and mechanisms. Since these are not so clearly defined as the groups described above, it is more difficult to recognise them and sum up their characteristics. Their frequency and proportions cannot be quantified. The above four types essentially distinguish the variants of ethnicity on the basis of the group definition, that is ethnic self-classification. Another possibility for forming groups is to take the categorisa-

tion as a point of departure. In general there are few points of reference since we have to examine case by case the meaning of the external categorisation and its events occurring under formal or informal circumstances[6], and how they influence the internal group- and self-definition.

We can mention in the first place in this context, use of the ancestry category of censuses, its social background and social consequences already discussed. Secondly it is worth considering the likewise general problem concerning the influence of the image or images formed of Hungarians. On the whole it can be regarded as true that Hungarians in the United States and Canada as immigrants and/or individuals or a group of foreign origin are not subject to stigmatisation and so they are far less likely to suffer an inferiority complex in situations of social interaction which would cause them to hide or deny their identity as happened, among others, in the 1920s. We need to take into account here the link between the class situation and ethnic status which had a far-reaching influence in shaping the diaspora (cf. GABACCIA–OTTANELLI 1997). In the opposite sense we find the influence of 1956, when even Hungarians who had immigrated earlier felt a sudden change in the not very favourable attitude they experienced towards themselves, and the newly arrived refugees were surrounded by the clearly expressed sympathy of society and helped in their integration. This also explains why the 1956 refugee group are among the most successful and productive of all American immigrants.[7] Besides these few examples, only an analysis of individual cases and typical social situations could reveal what negative – or possibly even positive – cases of categorisation occur in everyday life and what influence this has on the internal shaping of ethnic identity. All this needs to be studied mainly from the aspect of social experience rather than subjective feelings.

Thirdly, we need to consider the relationship which places the ethnic group or individuals, including Hungarians, in a broader context than an ethnic category. This means a frame of definition which is in part still ethnic but in part also social. The result is broad categories of classification which also apply to Hungarians. Just as the immigrants sooner or later form ethnic communities and groups, so in the new environment they become "Europeans" and – what is more important – also "whites" (cf. ROEDIGER 1991). The latter is an ethnic-racial category quite clearly based on contrast, arising from the inter-ethnic – or more precisely inter-racial – relations and conflicts of the urban industrial environment. In this way the ethnic-type categories

[6] JENKINS 1996: 63–70 examines the most characteristic situations of interaction along an informal-formal axis. They are: primary socialisation, routine public interaction, sexual relationships, communal relationships, membership of informal groups, marriage and kinship, market relationships, employment, administrative allocation, organized politics, official classification.

[7] This is, of course, related to the level of qualifications, the favourable American employment conditions of the period and other factors. Other considerations must be taken into account for comparison with other groups (cf. PORTES–RUMBAUT 1990). It is also beyond doubt that the collective self-image of the 1956 refugees is determined by the success and productiveness; it would be instructive to examine this from the angle of individual life careers and mobility patterns, especially among the non-intellectual strata as well.

of Hungarian immigrants and their children are expanded: "immigrants", "Hungarians" or "of Hungarian origin", "Europeans" and "whites". No substantive study has been made to determine when in the dual process of classification and self-definition the Hungarians began to be aware that they were whites. On the basis of my data for Chicago and Bridgeport, Connecticut it seems to me that after the not particularly conscious precedents of a simple but general aversion to the black population, this happened in the 1950s–1960s when their residential environment underwent social transformation. The black civil rights movement and the white ethnic revival added new elements to this self-image. Other comprehensive categories which also influence the judgement of Hungarians are mainly of a social nature: working class, middle class, suburban population, university intellectuals, larger age groups (e.g. pensioners), etc. These are not only more or less linked to ethnic categorisation but also provide ties to other sectors of society, influencing the organisation and shaping of the elements of identity.

Fourthly, I wish to stress the classification taking place within the given ethnic category. No mention has been made so far of how strongly ethnic identity is related to the procedures of categorisation within a class which is identical from the outside. Not only do American society, or particular immigrant groups or, in cases social and political institutions qualify the citizens of the state, but the individual's own group interpreted in the broadest sense also uses the means of classification. The facts of the history of immigration provide quite a lot of data on this, although research has not yet made a systematic evaluation of the known differences between waves of immigration as regards changes in Hungarian-American identity (BOROS 1959; SZÁNTÓ 1984; VÁRDY 1985). Numerous conjectures are known in the Hungarian-American context which express community and individual self-images. On the basis of contrasts these reflect their own imagined differences believed to be important: who is a real Hungarian in America, in what way is this manifested, how can belonging to the Hungarian people be shown in a suitable way, who looks down on whom, and so on. Such questions arise under very differing circumstances – in local social situations, in differences of views between institutions, in ideological and political contexts – and have a major influence on formulating and shaping identity. This mode of classification qualifies outwards (often stigmatising) and creates identity inwards. Despite its importance, research has only barely touched on this dual group- and identity-forming mechanism, even though it can be observed in such very differing things as rival conceptions of the traditions (DÉGH 1977–78), or in another situation, in ideological conflicts between political emigrants of different periods (BORBÁNDI 1993). Together with a future summing up of data on the tensions and conflicts and on opposing conceptions of the nature of Hungarianness, it can also be of value to take further theoretical considerations into account for an interpretation of such procedures.

The conception that I had followed in the wake of Richard Jenkins and others was recently corrected by Hal B. Levine who interprets ethnicity as being fundamentally a classification procedure. He sees this operation as a being a means of cognition which at the same time explains the meaning and reinforcement of group

differences and so also their transmission. According to his definition expressing the essence, "ethnicity is that method of classifying people (both of self and other) that uses origin (socially constructed) as its primary reference" (LEVINE 1999: 168). Ethnicity thus derives from people's special mode of classification according to origin, and as such its production is a socially determined and its existence a dynamic process. It is important that a distinction must be made between the activity of classification and the category systems arising as a result. I would add that a role is also played in classification by the categories of self- and hetero-classification already in circulation which thereby gain further reinforcement and also act directly as ad hoc labels having important significance for the acting individuals or groups.

All this further refines what has been said earlier and provides a better theoretical basis for it. In this way, regarding the phenomena already observed in connection with the self-definition of groups and communities, we can now see more clearly that both self-definition and maintenance of the group arise from social classification based on origin. As we have seen, the concept, nature and meaning of origin changes historically. In self-classification in the case of Mann's "hybrids", for example, it has lost its content and only comes to the fore occasionally, and the act of classification is not of decisive validity from the cognitive viewpoint and does not play a role in determining behaviour. In contrast, and this brings me back to the starting point of this train of thought, it can be clearly observed within the category of "Hungarian-Americans" that distinguishing groups, strata and generations – by activity, values, language skills, use of symbols, ties to Hungary, etc. – results in the appearance of distinctive variants of Hungarian identity. Here, the classification of members of the wider we group and the internal self-definition based on this play an important role.

SUMMING UP

People can identify themselves in various ways. They may refer to their real or imagined – and thus fictive – ancestry, language, cultural knowledge, to small or large communities of which they regard themselves as a member on the basis of identical aims, interests or common activities, or simply because they imagine that they are similar to many of their fellows without in fact knowing the majority of them in reality. There are moments and social situations when these considerations are more important for the individual than whether they are men or women, their place of residence, occupation, even their religious or political convictions, and so on. Often it is only the language or the culture that plays a major role. In their everyday lives and behaviour these most often come to the fore when they compare themselves with others, or for some reason consciously seek an answer to who they are and who they are not. These are the minimum and most essential tools and conditions of self-classification and the classification of others on the basis of which it is possible to talk of ethnic differences and belonging to an ethnic group. People do not constantly invent new ethnic definitions but they do shape the patterns produced by their predecessors and maintained and circulated by ideals, inter-group relations

and institutions. In this way they reinforce individual and collective identity while at the same time signalling which of the identities in circulation they consider to have significance. If we are really curious to know the criteria of belonging to an ethnic group and the way people mark out the ethnic domain of their social space, we need to observe simultaneously our own social classification procedures and those of our environment.

At the fringe of an ethnic group – among those who live their lives within the frame of another state, and even more among those who were born in a foreign land – these classifications and choices can differ greatly with the situation. In this way the image of the ethnic group changes, it does not show the expression of some kind of eternal essence and truth, its edges are blurred, but at times may also become more marked. But it is certain that this is true of the image not only at the borders.

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