Identity Preservation and Diaspora Relations in the USA: 
the Hungarian Community of New Brunswick, New Jersey

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Abstract

The purpose of this dissertation is to study the ethnic identity preservation and transnational relations of Hungarians living in New Brunswick, NJ in the past 100 years. It is the continuation of my master’s thesis in which I investigated the heritage maintenance of Hungarian immigrants to New Jersey. Whereas in my master’s thesis I primarily concentrated on the relationship between language transmission and the past and present of Hungarian institutions in New Brunswick, for the present study I have decided to mainly focus on other aspects of identity preservation that I did not study in depth before, such as the use of ethnic symbols, transnationalism in the past and present, as well as intermarriages.

I have primarily based my research on semi-structured qualitative interviews, which I began in 2008. Between 2008 and 2019, I have conducted 72 interviews with 87 people in New Jersey, in Budapest, Hungary, as well as some through telephone or Skye. The majority of my interview subjects were either Cold War immigrants themselves (Post-World War II émigrés, 1956ers, and people who left Hungary until the fall of communism) or the descendants of these Cold War immigrants.

Not all interviews have been conducted by myself. For the present research, I have also made use of interviews conducted by Timea Oláh, who focused on the cohort of the Old Hungarian immigrants who left Hungary at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The interviews were entrusted to me by the late researcher’s husband. Oláh conducted 19 qualitative interviews with second and third-generation Hungarian Americans who were the descendants of the earliest immigrants to New Brunswick. Although we started conducting our interviews apart from each other, the majority of her research questions can be well-aligned to my ones, e.g., concerning the theme of language transmission to the offspring and education in the mother tongue, relations with the homeland, intermarriages, and community relations, as well as ethnic identity.

In this research, I concentrate on the theories expressed by various scholars (e.g. Anny Bakalian, Matthew A. Jendian, and Zoltán Fejős) who claim that that assimilation and identity retention can coexist. I apply this thesis to the group studied by Timea Oláh, the second generation of Hungarian immigrants who arrived in New Brunswick before World War I. I argue that even if their primary identity is American, they have retained a secondary Hungarian identity, which is close to the symbolic identity expressed by Gans. I claim that they have a dual Hungarian-American identity, just like the group studied by myself, the children and grandchildren of the Hungarian refugees and immigrants who arrived between the early 1950s and the 1980s. I argue that contrarily to the cohort studied by Oláh, the primary identity of this latter group is Hungarian, at least in the case of those who are active members of the Hungarian community and especially of the Hungarian Scout Association Abroad.

Concerning the issue of identity preservation, an important theme to mention is language transmission. For the Cold War immigrants, who were often embedded in the network of the Hungarian Scouts in Exile, language preservation has been the primary symbol of Hungarian ethnic identity maintenance. For this reason, research partly focuses on sociolinguistic issues as well.

Ethnic symbols also play an important role in identity maintenance. Since the Hungarian immigrants of the 1950s and 1960s have chosen their visible ethnic symbols from the domain of folk art and folk music, I have decided to also involve ethnographic studies in this research. I argue that one of the reasons why the earliest Hungarian immigrants experienced difficulties with getting along with the later immigrants was due to the difference between their preferences of ethnic symbols.
From a cultural point of view, the two main cohorts of Hungarians have assimilated into the dominant US culture and have retained their ethnic identity to different degrees. The extent to which they became American or remained Hungarian depended largely on the eras in which they were born, on historic circumstances (e. g., whether there was war or peace), and the immigration policies of the United States. Nevertheless, the members of both groups are fierce American citizens and at the same time also proud of their ethnic background. Since they were able to reach a middle-class lifestyle in the United States, their integration into the United States can be considered successful.
Acknowledgments

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Among the people I met in Budapest, I would like to thank all those who have helped me in the form of either oral or written consultations ever since I have started my doctoral journey: Judit Kesserű Némethy, Zsuzsanna Volekné Temesi, Mihály Hoppál, Zoltán Fejős, Judith and Kálmán Magyar, Károly Jókay, András Ludányi, Mónika Fodor, Annamária Ulla Szabó-Törpényi, and Professor Tamás Rudas. I am especially grateful to Ilona Kovács for the countless times she received me in her home for consultations. The written and oral conversations I have had with the above-mentioned persons have been eye-opening for me. Two of my Ph.D. mates, Dániel Cseh and Nóra Deák, the head of the SEAS Library, have been available for me on countless occasions and have provided me with a great deal of help. I am especially grateful to Nóra Deák for the technical help she provided me with MTMT and for proofreading one of my articles that appeared in Hungarian. I have received support from
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Chapter 1

Introduction

Migration is a historically occurring worldwide phenomenon. Today there are heated debates taking place about its dangers and benefits, just like the debates on immigration that took place in the United States a century ago. Some members of receiving societies question whether immigrants and their descendants can or will assimilate into the new environment, while immigrants are often preoccupied with how they and their later generations can retain their identity or resist assimilation. The same way some nations are worried that the newly arrived immigrants to Europe might not integrate into local cultures, the Hungarians’ and other New Immigrants’ ability to assimilate and integrate into American society was also questioned at the time of their arrival in their new homeland at the beginning of the twentieth century. Meanwhile, in the past century, various Hungarian governments have put effort into maintaining ties with their nationals and their descendants living abroad and to help them keep their Hungarian identity.

Although the topic of assimilation is not at the center of sociological studies anymore, transnationalism and diaspora relations being among the most researched areas of our times, it still remains an interesting issue for those who wish to resist giving up their immigrant identity. This is especially true for the members of smaller nations, such as Armenians and Jews, who make up prototypical diaspora nations. For the former group, the issue has such significance, that they even refer to it as the “white genocide.” Likewise, assimilation is also an intriguing subject for Hungarians, who not only have fellow citizens and compatriots living as members of ethnic minorities in the countries neighboring Hungary, but whose nationals have also spread over continents after the Second World War and 1956. The population I am focusing on, namely, the Hungarian Americans who have been active members of the New
Brunswick Hungarian community in New Jersey, are also involved in the anti-assimilatory process, while at the same time they have become integrated and loyal citizens of the United States.

1.1. Research Questions

The purpose of this dissertation is to examine the ethnic identity retention patterns among the Hungarian Americans of New Brunswick, New Jersey and their connections to the homeland in the past 100 years. Based on qualitative interviews which I use as my primary sources, I am trying to answer the question of whether Hungarian Americans have any general characteristics or whether the Americanization and Hungarian identity retention of immigrants and their descendants who are active members of an ethnic community depend on the circumstances of their immigration and time of arrival.

The research aims of my dissertation are to answer the following questions:

1. To what extent have the various Hungarian immigrant groups assimilated?
2. Is the knowledge of Hungarian necessary to maintain one’s identity?
3. How did the immigrants’ ethnic or national identity influence their relations with Hungary and their visits to the ethnic homeland?
4. What role does religion play in maintaining one’s ethnic identity?
5. What role do education and one’s socioeconomic status play in identity retention and assimilation?
6. What role do cultural symbols play in ethnic identity preservation and group relations?
7. In what way do naming patterns reflect ethnic identity?

1.2. Research Methods and Research History

I have been acquainted with the New Brunswick Hungarian community ever since my childhood. As the daughter of a visiting professor at Rutgers University in New Brunswick
and the Institute for Advanced Studies in Princeton, I had the possibility to spend several schoolyears on separate occasions and thus to participate in the community activities of the local Hungarians. These separate school years and later university semesters served as a foundation for my later studies in the sense that thanks to my involvement in the community, I had the chance of being a quasi-participant observer. Moreover, having received my secondary socialization not only in Hungary, but also in the United States, I was able to simultaneously view the community both from an insider’s point of view (that of a local Hungarian American), which is crucial in ethnographic and sociolinguistic research, and also from that of an outsider (that of a Hungarian from Hungary), which is needed for performing an objective analysis.

I have been studying the language and identity preservation of the New Brunswick Hungarians since my university years, attending Professor Tibor Frank’s intriguing seminars on immigration to the United States, among which two also dealt with Hungarian immigration in particular. In 2008 I was granted the possibility to engage in a six-week-long fieldwork in New Brunswick, New Jersey for my master’s thesis at my own expense, but with the help of local Hungarian-American families who granted me accommodation. The American Hungarian Foundation also gave me great support and enabled me to use their library. Given the vicinity of Rutgers University, I was fortunate to have the chance to make use of Alexander Library’s collection related to Hungarian-American materials. A year later, in 2009 I returned for another five-week-long research, taking advantage of the opportunity that my father was a visiting professor at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton. In 2008-2009 I conducted 52 interviews in New Brunswick and its surroundings, as well as a few interviews in Passaic, NJ. Four of these interviews were group interviews (most of them were made with families) and the rest of them were personal interviews. The cumulative length of the interviews was 28.5 hours. A year after graduating from ELTE, I decided to continue my
research on the New Brunswick Hungarian community in the form of doctoral studies at the same university.

The present work is an interdisciplinary dissertation. As a former student of American Studies, I had the fortune to obtain an education based on interdisciplinarity and multidisciplinarity, which allowed me to not only engage in the history of American ethnic groups but to also take courses related to ethnic studies and sociology. My former master’s thesis- and current Ph.D. advisor, Professor Tibor Frank especially encouraged me to not only discuss the identity maintenance of Hungarian Americans from a historical and sociological perspective but to specifically concentrate on its linguistic aspect, language maintenance, and language transmission. Given that I had also received training in sociolinguistics in Italian Studies, Professor Frank persuaded me to look at the same topic also from the point of view of sociolinguistics and bilingualism. Although the Department of American Studies at ELTE did not offer any courses related to sociolinguistics neither at an undergraduate nor at a postgraduate level, I had the opportunity to take freely elected Ph.D. courses at my university offered by well-known scholars such as Jenő Kiss, Csilla Bartha, and Judit Navracsics. Since folk culture is such an essential component of identity maintenance in the East Coast United States, I decided to also dedicate a part of my doctoral thesis to this aspect, looking at it primarily from a historical approach and taking advantage of the help provided by experts of ethnography such as Mihály Hoppál, Piroska Nagy, and Zoltán Fejős. As a result, besides oral history, for my dissertation, I have applied a combination of methods used in the fields of sociology, sociolinguistics, and ethnography.

As a doctoral candidate, I have based my current research on my master’s thesis. In order not to fall into the trap of repeating my previous results, I decided to shift my attention, which I had previously directed for the most part at the role local Hungarian-American organizations play in language maintenance, to themes with which I had not dealt with in
depth in my thesis (e.g. intermarriage, transnationalism and return migration, besides issues related to folk dancing).

Another approach I took, inspired by Anna Borbély’s longitudinal studies on the language shift of Romanian communities in Hungary,¹ was to examine the changes that have taken place roughly within a decade since my previous fieldworks in 2008 and 2009. Given that the changes that can take place in an immigrant community within a decade are not always significant, I decided to focus on the families who already had small children in 2008-2009 or who have had their first children since that time. Another area where major changes can take place is in the state of ethnic churches; therefore, I also conducted new interviews with the pastor and the priest of the two still functioning Hungarian churches in New Brunswick.

Until I finally had the chance to travel back to New Brunswick, I conducted Skype interviews and personal ones in Budapest with Hungarian-American returnees and those who were spending their vacation in Hungary. The first phase of interviewing took place between 2011 and 2014 for the purpose of research papers I submitted for my doctoral seminars, while the second one began in 2016 and lasted until my above-mentioned departure to New Brunswick in September 2017. I conducted 9 interviews during the first phase and 12 during the second phase.

I have basically followed an inductive approach during the course of my research. The themes I have chosen for my dissertation were partly drawn from previous interviews and partly from my own bicultural experience and above-mentioned quasi-participant observation. The initial themes I concentrated on were intermarriages, return migration to Hungary, and the changes that took place within a decade since my last field research. Gradually, inspired

¹ See, for instance, Anna Borbély, Nyelvcsere: Szociolingvisztikai kutatások a magyarországi románok közösségében (Budapest: MTA Research Institute for Linguistics, 2001); Anna Borbély, Kényelvűség: Variabilitás és változás magyarországi közösségekben (Budapest: L’Harmattan, 2014).
by the conversations carried out during the interviews I conducted in Budapest in the summer of 2017, I later also became interested in the connections between folk dancing and transnational relations, which I was able to study more thoroughly in the United States.

In September-October 2017 I finally had the opportunity to return to New Brunswick, to carry out the necessary field research required for the completion of my dissertation. Given that I had to finance my stay out of my own budget, I could only limit the time spent there to approximately three and a half weeks. Again, I could make use of the vast collections of the American Hungarian Foundation and Rutgers University’s Alexander Library, together with the latter’s databases. During this relatively short period of time, I conducted 17 interviews with 16 people. (Two of the interviews were almost immediate follow-up interviews and one of them was recorded with two interviewees.) A few months after my return to Hungary, in November and December, I also carried out two interviews with three people in Budapest, whom I had contacted and met during my stay in New Brunswick. Finally, the last interview took place in 2019, also in Budapest.

The total number of people I interviewed between 2008 and 2019 is 86. Within this group, 29 were first-generation immigrants, who arrived in the United States at age 15+. (Among them two were raised by Hungarian immigrant parents in Argentina.) Eight people arrived during their early teens, between the ages of 7-14, to whom I refer as 1.5 generation immigrants. Twenty of my interviewees belonged to the second generation. Six of my interview subjects belonged to the 2.5 generation, with Hungarian ancestors on their American side as well. Ten people formed part of the third generation (among whom four were the grandchildren of Old Hungarian immigrants from the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries) and one child was practically between the third and the fourth generation. Some people are difficult to categorize. Two of my informants could be classified as members of the second generation from an American (immigrant) perspective. However, since their father
was born in Argentina, from the (emigrant) Hungarian point of view, they better fit the category of 2.5 generation, when taking into consideration the relation between Hungarian language transmission and the number of generations born outside of Hungary. Finally, some belong to a non-applicable category: among them, four people were non-immigrant Hungarians and three were non-Hungarian Americans who had connections to Hungary or the local Hungarian community.

In contrast to my master’s thesis, which was primarily built on personal interviews and a questionnaire as my primary sources, I decided to only rely on oral sources, due to both the physical and the time limits of my doctoral research. Therefore, the primary sources gathered in this dissertation are personal and Skype interviews. At this point, it has to be mentioned that not all of the interviews were conducted by myself, for about one-third of them were gathered by another researcher, Tímea Oláh. Oláh was a former Fulbright-grantee from the University of Debrecen, who was likewise researching the ethnic identity maintenance of the New Brunswick Hungarians. From August 2012 to February 2013 Timea Oláh did a six-month-long field study on the ethnic identity and assimilation patterns of the children of “New Immigrant” Hungarian Americans who grew up in the New Brunswick community.\(^2\) Unfortunately, her untimely death made it impossible for her to publish or even elaborate on her research. Still, fortunately, she was able to present a summary of her fieldwork and its main results at the 2014 HAAS conference, after which we also exchanged messages about our conference presentations held in the same session.\(^3\)

I was fortunate to be put in touch with the researcher through her supervisor, Tibor Glant, who suggested that she contact me through email, while she was conducting her


fieldwork in New Brunswick. This resulted in the exchange of several emails and also served
as an opportunity for us to outline the borders of our research areas. Following Tímea Oláh’s
return to Hungary, personal encounters also took place between us after her return to
Hungary. As it has been mentioned in the acknowledgments, with the help of Professor Tibor
Glant, Tímea Oláh’s husband, Csaba Vágó provided me with the soundtracks of her
interviews and some of her notes (e.g. spreadsheets with aggregated information along with a
well-documented PowerPoint presentation of the above-mentioned conference) as well as
with transcripts and photographs.

Oláh based her research on contemporary newspapers and archives, besides
conducting personal interviews with the children of the early twentieth century Hungarian
immigrants to New Brunswick. She carried out 11 qualitative interviews with second-
generation Hungarian Americans, among whom one person was practically a 1.5 generation
immigrant, taking into consideration that she had lived in Hungary until age 10. Among the
additional 8 interviews, two were made with 2.5 generation Hungarian Americans, four with
third-generation Hungarian-Americans, and the remaining two with American widows who
had been married to Hungarian Americans. She also has several hours of recorded
conversations with professor August J. Molnar, an expert in the field, who was himself a
second-generation Hungarian American from Cleveland. The total number of hours recorded
by the researcher is 27.5. Oláh recruited her participants through the local Hungarian churches
or those that were formerly Hungarian but still operate today. She also relied on the references
of the once-active community members for finding interview subjects.4

Although the number of interviews Oláh conducted (19) seems to be relatively small,
hers research is nevertheless significant when taking into account the age of the interviewees,
who were approximately 80-100 years old at the time of the interview. The interview

(lecture presented at the HAAS10 conference).
questions posed by the researcher were centered around the following topics: the socio-economic background of the interviewees and their parents, reasons for the parents’ emigration, the ethnic identity of the second and third generations, language use and Hungarian-language instruction, preservation of Hungarian customs, Hungarian-American community life, possible discrimination against Hungarians, transnational relations between the Hungarian community and Hungary, and the Old Hungarian’s involvement in receiving 1956 immigrants.5

The research methods used by Timea Oláh resembled the ones used by myself to a considerable degree. Both of us conducted semi-structured interviews for the purpose of performing a multiple case study analysis. Although we examined different periods of Hungarian immigration to New Brunswick, both of us reflected on a range of similar topics, such as growing up in the Hungarian neighborhood and experiencing Hungarian community life; the language used by the younger, American-born generation with siblings and peers; native-language education and reading and writing in Hungarian; travels to Hungary and keeping in touch with Hungarian relatives; celebrating Hungarian feasts; intermarriages; and finally, questions of ethnic or national identity. The questions posed by Oláh in her interviews influenced the questions I formulated for my own interview subjects in 2017, approximately a year after having received the collection of her interviews. Likewise, it is also plausible that my study, which appeared on my previous fieldwork in 2011 and which she had read by the time she initiated her fieldwork, could have inspired her research questions as well. Consequently, a reciprocal influence might have taken place.

Concerning the data collected by Oláh on the cohort of the Old Hungarians and their descendants, I decided to mostly focus on the themes that are relevant to my study as well, in connection with the group that is presently still active in New Brunswick. Among these are

Hungarian language transmission and mother tongue education, as well as issues related to ethnic identity and transnationalism. One exception is the theme of social mobility of the Old Hungarians, which was a crucial issue for the early twentieth-century immigrants along with their children and grandchildren and with which Oláh wished to fill a previously existing research gap.

There were also other differences in focus between my research and that of Timea Oláh’s. Since Hungarian scouting and folk dancing have played an important role in the post-World War II diaspora’s identity maintenance, I naturally concentrated on these themes. On the other hand, Hungarian scouting did not exist in America before the arrival of the Displaced Persons: at that time, only American scouting was available in New Brunswick. Thus, it did not exert an influence on Hungarian identity maintenance and Oláh could evidently not delve into this topic. Another intriguing topic, Hungarian folklore and the role of folk dancing were likewise not dealt with in Oláh’s research.

1.3. Outline of the Dissertation

Chapter 2 introduces the theoretical background of my dissertation. It addresses the three main Americanization paradigms and how cultural pluralism relates to multiculturalism, symbolic ethnicity, and the role of cultural symbols in ethnic heritage preservation, as well as the possible coexistence of assimilation and ethnic identity retention. Finally, it introduces the concept of long-distance nationalism and its relation to Hungarian Americans’ links with the ethnic homeland during the Cold War.

Chapter 3 outlines the main phases of Hungarian immigration to New Brunswick and the USA by concentrating on the Old Hungarians or “New Immigrant” Hungarians, the Displaced Persons, the 1956ers, and the Hungarians who arrived after the fall of socialism. It also discusses the relations between the pre-World War I immigrants and the later Cold War refugees, stating that practically, two parallel Hungarian-American communities were formed.
between the Old Hungarians and the Cold War refugees in New Brunswick. Finally, the last two subchapters examine the changes between 200 and 2009, and 2009 and 2017, respectively.

Chapter 4 addresses the second generation of the earliest Hungarian immigrants to New Brunswick, with respect to their time of birth, social mobility, Hungarian language maintenance, and education in the mother tongue. It also discusses the “New Immigrant” Hungarians’ ethnic identity and relations with the homeland.

Chapter 5 offers a broader picture of the Hungarian émigré community’s (what later came to be known as the Hungarian diaspora) transnational relations with the homeland during the Cold War. The reception of Hungarian folk culture (especially folk dancing and folk music) is also discussed from this point of view. Finally, the last section is about the second and third-generation Hungarians’ “return” to the ancestral homeland.

Chapter 6 explores issues related to the integration and ethnic identity retention of Hungarian Americans, focusing on the New Brunswick community. The first subchapter discusses the role of religion and ethnic churches, church closings and church mergers across the United States, and the current state of the Hungarian religious institutions in New Brunswick. The other subchapters treat the topics of intermarriages and the odds of passing on the Hungarian language to the offspring, name choices, as well as feasts and holidays. Attention is also given to having a Hungarian identity without knowing the ethnic language and, finally, to a relatively new phenomenon, the “recreation” of a tiny Hungarian neighborhood in the suburbs of New Brunswick.

1.4. The Original Contributions to the Field

From a thematic point of view, the original contribution to scholarship in this doctoral thesis is the following. Based on my research on the existing scholarly literature, I have not found any studies dealing with a comparison between second-generation Hungarian
Americans belonging to two different cohorts. My second original contribution was to perform a longitudinal study on the New Brunswick Hungarian community in real time, by specifically concentrating on the second and later generations of Cold War immigrants. A third contribution was to explore the return migration of Hungarian Americans born raised in the United States. A fourth contribution was to enumerate the factors that enable Hungarians married to a non-Hungarian to maintain and transmit the Hungarian language to their offspring.

From an interpretational/theoretical point of view, my original contribution to the field was to reflect on the relationship and particularly the conflicts between the cohort of the Old Hungarians and that of the Cold War immigrants in terms of the four basic Americanization models.
Chapter 2

Theoretical Frameworks

2.1. Americanization Paradigms

Regarding the Americanization process of the early twentieth-century immigrants, scholars differentiate between three different types of Americanization models or theories of immigrant adjustment, namely, the *melting pot*, *Anglo-conformity*, and *cultural pluralism*.\(^6\) They were both descriptive models describing reality and also goal models or ideologies which often coexisted simultaneously and were propagated by different segments of American society. Whereas all of these paradigms advocated the use of English as a lingua franca, they were distinct in several ways. Since they have been sometimes used interchangeably by laypersons, it is important to clarify the differences between these concepts.\(^7\)

The conceptual metaphor of the *melting pot* and thus the ideology behind it was existent already in the eighteenth century, even though the term itself received widespread public attention only later, thanks to Israel Zangwill’s popular play bearing the same title, which was first performed in 1908. Previous examples of the appliance of the metaphor prior to Zangwill’s drama are the following. J. Hector St. John Crèvecoeur made use of this metaphor as early as in 1782, in his fictional collection of correspondences intitled *Letters from an American Farmer*. In Letter III he asks “What then is the American, this new man?” The response to it is, “he is either an European, or the descendant of an European, hence that strange mixture of blood, which you will find in no other country. I could point out to you a

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\(^7\) Gordon, “Assimilation in America,” 263.
family whose grandfather was an Englishman, whose wife was Dutch, whose son married a French woman, and whose present four sons have now four wives of different nations.” Crèvecoeur’s conception of the typical American is a person of a mixed Western and Northern European background, whose Americanness is defined primarily based on political terms and on his or her way of life. Crèvecoeur further states, “Here individuals of all nations are melted into a new race of men, whose labours and posterity will one day cause great changes in the world.” The metaphor later reappeared in Ralph Waldo Emerson’s journal in 1845. Emerson imagined the future American as a blend of not only European races (e.g. Irish, Germans, Swedes, Poles, and Cossacks) but also of other continents (e.g. Africans and Polynesians), and compared it to the “intermixture of silver and gold and other metals” which construct an even more precious alloy. Finally, he adds, “La Nature aime les croisements.” Subsequently, in Frederick Jackson Turner’s paper entitled “The Significance of the Frontier in American History” in 1893, it was the western frontier itself which was identified as the melting pot: “In the crucible of the frontier the immigrants were Americanized, liberated, and fused into a mixed race, English neither in personality nor characteristics.” Lastly, Zangwill’s 1908 play incorporates Western, Eastern and Southern Europeans into his vision of the new American type, and includes Middle Easterners, Blacks and Asians well.

The melting-pot metaphor is primarily used in reference to the United States’ turn-of-the-century open-door immigration policy and its optimistic attitude with regards to the emergence of a new American character as an outcome of the transformation of immigrants of

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various national, racial, and religious backgrounds. Various scholars have provided different interpretations of the melting-pot metaphor. Anny Bakalian argues that contrarily to the aggressive promotion of Anglo-conformity, “the melting pot ideology gave credit to the immigrants’ heritage and assumed that each would contribute in a small way to the emergent American character, which was to remain basically Anglo-Saxon.” Peter D. Salins asserts that besides this prevalent understanding of the concept, the metaphor also implied that the “native” Anglo-Saxon population would be dramatically changed by this crucible and be “blended beyond recognition.”

The second model, Anglo-conformity, is an umbrella term that covers various attitudes towards immigration and assimilation ranging from a more moderate stance of welcoming immigration as long as the immigrants adapt to Anglo-Saxon norms, to the racist and exclusionist principles of nativism. At their core, however, all of these perspectives share a common desire to have an institutional system based on Anglo-Saxon principles laid down by the Founding Fathers and to have the English language and cultural heritage at the heart of American society. In 1961 Milton Gordon wrote that this paradigm had been the most prevalent one up to that point in the history of the nation.

In a political sense, Anglo-conformity became a prevalent ideology in the 1920s, when influenced by the theories of social Darwinism, many Americans started to see the melting-pot ideology as a failure. The principles of nativist Anglo-conformity were based on the notion that the Anglo-Saxon type—sometimes referred to as the Nordic type, with the inclusion of earlier immigrant groups such as the Germans, the Dutch, the Scandinavians, and

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16 Gordon, “Assimilation in America,” 265-266.
other Old Immigrant groups—was both genetically and culturally superior to the newer immigrant types, and called for a submission to Anglo-Saxon culture. It demanded that immigrants and their descendants completely discard their native language, ethnic identity, and loyalty to their natal homeland. With the massive immigration of the so-called New Immigrants, bilingualism and biculturalism, which were previously relatively well tolerated by the “native” population, became unacceptable in the eyes of the already established Americans. It was during this period, when the “one nation, one language” ideology emerged and brought with it a series of state legislations that prohibited or restricted education in foreign or immigrant languages, especially in German. During and after the First World War, Presidents Woodrow Wilson and Theodore Roosevelt stressed that one could not be a loyal citizen of the United States and another country simultaneously. President Roosevelt also argued, “We have room for but one language here, and that is the English language . . .” The Anglo-conformist or nativist ideology largely manifested itself in the aggressive assimilationist policies of the public-school system, in the promotion of eugenics, and the immigration restriction movement. After the passing of the 1917 literacy bill and the first Quota Law of 1921, it later culminated in the Johnson-Reed Act of 1924, which restricted immigration to 2 percent based on the 1890 Census.

18 The Old Immigrants were European immigrants of a North-Western, mainly Irish, German, Swiss, and Scandinavian background, who arrived in the U.S. roughly between the 1920s and 1890. Tibor Frank and Tamás Magyaries, Handouts for U.S. History: A Study Guide and Workbook (Budapest: Antall József Knowledge Centre, 2018), 250.
20 Bakalian, Armenian Americans: From Being to Feeling Armenian, 30.
21 New Immigrants: immigrants of Southern and Eastern European background (predominantly economic migrants from Italy and the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, but also Jews fleeing pogroms in Russia) who arrived in the United States at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, after the Old Immigrants. Frank and Magyaries, Handouts for U.S. History, 250-251.
22 Aneta Pavlenko, “‘We have room for but one language here’: Language and national identity in the US at the turn of the 20th century,” Multilingua 21 (2002), 163-196.
23 Aneta Pavlenko, “‘We have room for but one language here,’”183.
24 For further reading, see Bakalian, Armenian Americans: From Being to Feeling Armenian, 31; Frank, “From Nativism to the Quota Laws,” 107.
The third ideology was promoted by Horace M. Kallen, who envisioned a nation built upon the ideals of *cultural pluralism*. In 1915 Kallen conceptualized American society as being similar to an orchestra, where each European immigrant group would represent a different instrument and yet create a harmonious musical piece together. He nevertheless imagined the American nation as being governed by the same political principles and having English as the common language of the democratic federal republic. In other words, he advocated that immigrants keep their language and customs, but at the same time adhere to a dominant political culture.

In the 1970s the concept of cultural pluralism was redefined by social scholars. Antonia Pantoja et al. (1976) cite Bruce Gaarder (1971), who further added that “this pluralism would enrich and strengthen the nation.” In addition, Pantoja et al. state that the ethnic communities would have to “adhere to a universal value” and that “cultural pluralism can not exist in a society where culturally different communities exist in isolation from each other or/and in competition under unequal conditions.”

The principles of cultural pluralism are generally only tolerated in times of peace. In times of war, this hardly becomes possible. Zoltán Fejős states that during the critical years of World War I, immigrants could not openly manifest their dual attachment to both homelands, especially to their native homeland. Rather, they were expected to express their loyalty to the new homeland. According to Anny Bakalian, “with the participation of the United States in

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World War II, ethnicity faded once again as a dimension in American identity because the unity of the nation was at stake.”

The second half of the 1930s saw a period of ethnic renaissance in the United States. Zoltán Fejős writes that this was a short-lived revival, which has received relatively little attention. It started with the economic recovery after the Great Depression in ca. 1934–1935 and was brought to an end by the Second World War. A characteristic phenomenon of this era was the presence of ethnic festivals. In fact, in the interwar period almost every Hungarian-American settlement had its own ethnic festival, too.

Anita Máté calls attention to the fact that there was an immense difference between the 1920s and 1930s in terms of how the Hungarian-American youth rejected or embraced their heritage. The reasons for this were the following. Firstly, by that time, third-generation ethnics were able to integrate into American society to such an extent that they no longer felt they had to be ashamed of their ethnic origin. Second, there was a change in the social-political atmosphere of the United States. Whereas after the First World War, there was immense pressure on immigrants and their children to assimilate, this pressure had eased by the 1930s. This was partly a result of the fact that by organizing ethnic festivals and the spreading of radio, certain elements of the immigrants’ cultures became more acceptable to the American mainstream and made their way into the dominant culture.

When referring to the Americanization process of the Hungarian immigrants of Chicago in the first half of the twentieth century, Zoltán Fejős refers to the concept of cultural pluralism in alignment with the above-cited authors by presenting concrete examples for this Americanization paradigm. Fejős argues that the immigrants did not wish to generate ethnic

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30 Bakalian, Armenian Americans: From Being to Feeling Armenian, 33.
31 Fejős, A chicagói magyarok, 205-206.
awareness by excluding themselves from American society. Concerning contemporary Hungarian-American publications published by the immigrant generation with the purpose of instilling ethnic pride in their children’s generation, the author underlines that these writings indicated that “cultural and ethnic features (could) enrich the image of American society. The parents’ traditions and the culture of the old country were not presented as selfish values, but as means by which they could find their way to other ethnic groups as well as to American society.” In this sense, ethnic culture was conceived of as a kind of “symbolic capital,” with the help of which the ethnics could enrich American society.\(^{34}\)

### 2.2. Multiculturalism and Cultural Identities

Although cultural pluralism was a forerunner of multiculturalism, the two concepts are not to be confused with each other.\(^ {35}\) If one were to place the two concepts on a continuum ranging from \textit{assimilation} in the sense of \textit{amalgamation} to \textit{non-assimilation}, then cultural pluralism would be found between the melting-pot paradigm and that of multiculturalism. According to Jane Barnes Mack, author of “Cultural Pluralism and Multiculturalism: E Pluribus Unum or Ex Uno Plura?”\(^ {36}\) (1994), “cultural pluralists stress what \textit{unites} a culture rather than what divides it. They stress the “unum” over the “plura”.\(^ {37}\) One of the unifying aspects of American society is adhering to the ideals laid down by the Founding Fathers; “individual liberty” and “legal equality”: in other words, to the democratic principles of American nationhood.\(^ {38}\) Mack contrasts this conception of cultural pluralism with that of

\(^{34}\) My translation of; original: „a kulturális, etnikai sajátosságok gazdagít(hat)ják az amerikai társadalom arculatát. A szülők hagyományait, az óhazai kultúrát nem öncélű értéknek állították be, hanem olyan eszköznek, amellyel utat találhatnak más etnikai csoportokhoz, illetve az amerikai társadalomhoz.” Fejős, \textit{A chicagói magyarok két nemzedéke 1890-1940}, 188.

\(^{35}\) Salins, \textit{Assimilation, American Style}, 47.

\(^{36}\) \textit{E pluribus unum}: “Out of many, one.” \textit{Ex uno plura}: “many out of one.”

\(^{37}\) Jane Barnes Mack, “Cultural Pluralism and Multiculturalism: E Pluribus Unum or Ex Uno Plura?”\(^ {38}\)

\(^{38}\) Mack, “Cultural Pluralism and Multiculturalism,” 70.
multiculturalism, arguing that multiculturalists dismiss universality, which in turn leads to cultural relativism; namely, that all cultures are equal and that even certain harmful cultural practices of an ethnic minority should be accepted. The author also argues that multiculturalists reject the influence of Western civilization and specifically that of Eurocentrism. Based on Mack’s definition of multiculturalism, it can be stated that while both multiculturalism and cultural pluralism emphasize the value of diversity, the difference between the two concepts is that multiculturalism does not require the existence of a dominant culture, whereas cultural pluralism does.

Beginning in the 1990s there was a growing number of scholars who criticized multiculturalism, or at least its extreme forms, on the basis that the unity of the nation could be at stake. It is also for this reason that Peter D. Salins views multiculturalism as a dangerous ideology. In his book Assimilation, American Style (1997), he asserts that the reason why the ethnic minorities of the United States managed to coexist peacefully with each other can be found in America’s ability to assimilate them in an unforced manner, largely due to the public-school system, which granted universal public education to all. Although the author does acknowledge with regret that at the time of the immigration of the Irish Catholics and later with massive influx of the New Immigrants, there was some aggressive assimilation taking place in public schools (e.g. the ridiculing of immigrant parents’ traditions and discouraging children from using their native language or accents, in the case of the Irish Catholics), Salins claims that America eventually found its own successful assimilation paradigm which he calls “assimilation American style.” With the help of this model, the immigrants’ children and grandchildren were allowed to become American without having to

40 For further reference, see Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., The Disuniting of America: Reflections on a Multicultural Society (place: W. W. Norton & Company, 1992); Nathan Glazer, We are All Multiculturalists Now (Cambridge, Mass. and London, England: Harvard University Press, 1997)
41 Salins, Assimilation, American Style, 67-69.
reject their ethnic cultures. Salins contrasts the earlier school curriculum, which was universal in the entire United States, to the recent antiassimilationist one driven by the ideas of multiculturalism. Although he states that the multiculturalist curriculum had not yet become neither commonly widespread nor officially established throughout the country by the time his book appeared at the end of the 1990s, he criticizes it on the basis that it is “the disparagement, if not outright demonization, of America’s history, its civic institutions, and its great political and civic leaders.” His main points of criticism include portraying Christopher Columbus as a perpetrator of genocide mainly for spreading European diseases to native Americans, describing the American Constitution as a plagiarized document from the Algonquins, and teaching George Washington and the War of Independence as mere side notes, instead focusing on Native-American and African-American culture and history.

The concepts of multiculturalism and cultural identities are closely linked to each other. A multiculturalist society allows its members to have more than one ethnic or national identity and even to have a stable bicultural identity. When referring to people with multicultural identities, sociologist Károly Nagy discusses the phenomenon of having a dual identity. Given that the content of a human being’s personality is culture specific, in case people become familiar with the elements of more than one culture, they will develop a multicultural identity: first through their primary and later through their secondary socialization. Nagy makes a distinction between individuals who are passively multicultural (people who have adopted elements of foreign cultures in their everyday lives, e.g. from the domains of classical literature and music, or popular culture) and those who are actively multicultural. Actively multicultural individuals are people who have integrated the definitions, languages, values and norms, customs, ethics, lifestyles, and ways of self-

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42 Salins, *Assimilation, American Style*, 83.
44 Salins, *Assimilation, American Style*, 80-82.
expression of two or more cultures into their personalities and practice them on a regular basis. Although some might compare the phenomenon of having a multicultural identity to having schizophrenia, Nagy argues that it is perfectly normal for one to have a dual identity. Nevertheless, he acknowledges that possessing more than one cultural identity can involve conflicts at times, especially if certain components of a person’s culture are in opposition to each other, or at any rate significantly differ from each other. In case two cultures or ethnic groups come into a political or military conflict with each other (e.g. in the case of the Japanese Americans who have been interned in 1942 as enemy aliens of the United States), intercultural conflicts can also result in interpersonal conflicts or identity crises.

Zoltán Fejős has also dealt with the question of dual identity from a historical perspective. As it has been mentioned above, war times make it difficult for bicultural people to sustain their dual loyalties. Fejős writes that the increasing American nativist and nationalist movements, which resulted in the restriction of immigration in the early 1920s and in declaring the New Immigrants “unwanted,” had an evident effect on the evolution of the identity of those people who chose not to repatriate to Hungary, but to permanently establish themselves in America. Concerning the second generation, the ethnographer asserts that it was possible to have a dual identity based on a high knowledge-level of both languages and cultures. However, this elite-like behavior was only characteristic of a minority of the children of the economic migrants of the early twentieth century.

Sociolinguist Annamária Ulla Szabó-Törpényi examined the identity of French-Hungarian bilinguals living in Paris. In her article entitled “Studies about French-Hungarian identity,” Szabó-Törpényi claims that her French-born second-generation interview subjects had a single complex identity instead of having a dual identity. Although the author does not
overtly state the difference between the two concepts in her paper, she refers to the fact that her interview subjects received their secondary socialization, e.g. their schooling in France, whereas her interviewees drew their Hungarian cultural influence from the home environment, through celebrating Hungarian feasts and speaking Hungarian in the family, and primarily not from a direct cultural influence in Hungary. Although later in her dissertation bearing the title “Szociolingviszikai vizsgálatok franciaországi magyarak körében” (2013) Szabó-Törpényi only applied the standard term dual identity throughout the entire work, I will make use of the aforementioned term coined by the same author to refer to my own second-generation Hungarian-American interview subjects who stated that they can neither identify with a monocultural Hungarian nor with a monocultural American, meaning that a person with a dual identity is not the sum of two persons with a single national identity.

2.3. Criticism of the Straight-line Theory

According to the straight-line theory, the end result of the acculturation and assimilation process will either be the total loss or at any rate an attenuation of ethnic identity. The term was coined by Neil Sandberg in 1974; however, its roots go back to the 1920s and early 1930s. This phenomenon has also been referred to as a unilinear or a zero-sum trajectory and is based on the hypothesis that the extent to which people assimilate into the host culture, to the same extent will their ethnic identity be weakened, and to the extent people hold on to their identity, to that extent it will hinder their integration. Milton Gordon

(1964) conceived of this process as having seven dimensions. The first four of these are cultural- or behavioral assimilation (also referred to as acculturation), structural assimilation (gaining entry into the more elite social circles of the host society), marital assimilation, and finally, identificational assimilation (identifying oneself to a full extent with the members of the host society). Gordons notes that behavioral assimilation does not necessarily precede structural assimilation. He sees structural assimilation as a requirement of all other types of assimilation and states that once structural assimilation takes place, then the ethnic group will be completely absorbed into the larger society.54

The theory claiming that ethnic groups will inevitably and totally blend into the American nation has been criticized by several scholars. One of the early critics of the straight-line theory has been Marcus Lee Hansen. In his 1938 essay, Hansen argued against the straight-line theory, claiming, “what the son wishes to forget the grandson wishes to remember” by citing examples of various groups of immigrants such as the Scotch-Irish, the Germans, and the Scandinavians, along with the descendants of the Confederate veterans, where the third generation experienced a renewed interest in the ethnicity of their grandparents’ generation or recultivated their patriotism.56 Contrarily to the second generation, the third generation “have no reason to feel any inferiority when they look about them. They are American born. Their speech is the same as that of those with whom they associate. Their material wealth is the average possession of the typical citizen.”57 Hansen also added, “whenever any immigrant group reaches the third generation stage in its development a spontaneous and almost irresistible impulse arises which forces the thoughts of many people of different professions, different positions in life and different points of view to

interest themselves in that one factor which they have in common: heritage—the heritage of blood.”

Nathan Glazer and Daniel P. Moynihan, authors of *Beyond the Melting Pot* (2nd. ed., 1970), also doubted that ethnic groups would completely fade into the American mainstream. Noting on one part that the American mainstream was constantly changing and that there were indeed some groups (e.g. the German Americans) that had become assimilated to a considerable extent by the 1960s and 1970s, they also noted that the presence of certain ethnic and racial groups (e.g. the African Americans, Puerto Ricans, Jews, Italians, and the Irish) was still visible in New York City in those decades, approximately forty years after massive immigration to the United States and to the city itself had been stopped. One of their most commonly quoted arguments was the following in 1963: “the point about the melting pot is that it did not happen.”

### 2.4. Symbolic Ethnicity and Cultural Symbols

The concept of *symbolic ethnicity* emerged in 1979 and was introduced by Herbert J. Gans in his paper entitled “Symbolic Ethnicity: The Future of Ethnic Groups in America.” Gans reacted to Marcus Lee Hansen’s thesis about the third generation’s re-embracement of ethnicity. Contrarily to Hansen, Gans held that there was no true revival of ethnicity going on. He stated that acculturation and assimilation were not temporary processes that would be halted with the coming of the third generation. Moreover, he asserted that the changes that had taken place with the coming of the third and fourth generations did not contradict straight-

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59 Bakalian, *Armenian-Americans*, 42.
61 Glazer and Moynihan, *Beyond the Melting Pot*, 290.
line theory, for according to the author, what seemed to be incongruent with the straight-line theory was only a manifestation of “symbolic ethnicity.”Although Gans primarily used the term “symbolic ethnicity” in connection with the third generation, he stated that phenomenon could have appeared even earlier, with the immigrant generation itself, and contended that it could well persist into the later generations.

According to Gans, “ethnic identity can be expressed in either action or feeling, or a combination of these.” For instance, the grandchildren and great-grandchildren of the New Immigrants, e.g. the American Jews or the Italians, do not need to be actively involved in ethnic organizations to identify as a member of a certain ethnic group. Gans believes that in the case of the American Jews, the symbol of the Holocaust started to emerge in order to counteract the rising number of intermarriages and the declining rates of synagogue participation, recalling that from 1949 to 1950, the Jews in a particular community studied by the author hardly mentioned the occurrence of the Holocaust. Gans observed that “if being Jewish need only mean feeling Jewish and attending to Jewish symbols, the transmission of Jewish identity to the next generation is fairly easily achieved, even by non-Jewish parents. Although little is known about socialization for Jewish identity, it may require only a minimum of parental action, no cultural or organizational affiliation, and perhaps not even a Jewish education for the children.” For instance, non-religious Jews can identify with Jewish liberal or socialist ideologies, with the Jewish intellectuals and artists, or not attend college classes on Yom Kippur, even if they do not take part in synagogue services.

The concept of symbolic ethnicity has been discussed in several later studies. Richard Alba (1990) discusses symbolic ethnicity as a sort of hobby, or leisure-time activity, which

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neither requires a full commitment to one’s ethnic group, neither an in-depth knowledge of one’s ancestral culture. For Irish Americans, participating in a Saint Patrick’s Day parade can be a form of symbolic ethnicity, for instance.\textsuperscript{70} Mary C. Waters points out that while symbolic ethnicity is optional for Americans of European descent, meaning that they can choose to identify with a particular European ethnic group or think of themselves as only Americans, non-white Americans do not have this choice. For non-Caucasian Americans, as in the case of people with Asian, African, Hispanic, or a Native American heritage, ethnicity is not optional; instead, it will be ascribed to them based on their visible physical traits.\textsuperscript{71}

Several scholars have written on the topic of symbolic ethnicity in relation to Armenian Americans. As reflected in the title of her book, \textit{Armenian-Americans: From Being to Feeling Armenian} (1993), Anny Bakalian emphasizes that there has been no return to the behavioral aspects of ethnicity in the case of the grandchildren and great-grandchildren of Armenian immigrants: “The behavior of later-generation descendants is not Armenian in form or content. Yet, they feel Armenian, they identify themselves as American-Armenian, and they are fiercely proud of most things and people Armenian. Armenianness becomes voluntary, conscious, rationalistic, segmental, transitory, sporadic, that is, symbolic.”\textsuperscript{72} Bakalian points out that practicing Armenian culinary traditions is a widespread manifestation of symbolic ethnicity, for cooking Armenian dishes requires less time, effort, and money than learning to read and write in Armenian in a school environment.\textsuperscript{73} Matthew A. Jendian, author of \textit{Becoming American, Remaining Ethnic} (2008) calls attention to the fact that in contrast to the members of the earlier generations, later-generation Armenians rather go out to consume Armenian food in restaurants than prepare it themselves, often because they lack the


\textsuperscript{72} Bakalian, \textit{Armenian-Americans}, 431.

\textsuperscript{73} Bakalian, \textit{Armenian-Americans}, 437.
necessary skills to do so. Contrarily to the findings published in previous studies by scholars who suggest that the ethnic identity of the later generations is a weakened one (e.g. Richard Alba, who famously mentioned the “twilight of ethnicity” in the case of the descendants of white immigrants), Jendian asserts that the importance of symbolic ethnicity in the case of later-generation white ethnic Americans should not be underestimated. Agreeing with Isajiw, Jendian argues that it would be incorrect to imply that symbolic ethnicity does not have any significance.

Zoltán Fejős’s findings about the first and second generation of New Immigrant Chicago Hungarians can also be brought in alignment with those of the previously mentioned scholars. Although the term symbolic ethnicity is not explicitly mentioned in the author’s book, the author provides a detailed discussion of the role played by ethnic and cultural symbols in Chicago’s Hungarian immigrant community. According to Fejős, it takes time for certain cultural phenomena to become symbols, which, in the case of the Chicago Hungarians have been selected through their quest for self-representation. Similarly to Gans, who claims that cultural practices can become abstracted from the Old World culture of the immigrants and become quasi stand-alone ethnic symbols in the New World (e.g. Hanukkah or the feast-days of popular Catholic saints), Fejős also claims that certain symbols (for instance, the bridal dress worn in Kalotaszeg), are taken out of their original context, and instead of remaining a symbol of local identity, they become national or ethnic symbols for the Hungarians living in the United States. Fejős underlines that the fragmented knowledge of

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Hungarian history and culture on the part of second-generation Hungarian Americans also led to the consolidation of ethnic symbols, such as the ones taken from Hungary’s glorious historical past, famous Hungarians, derivates of Hungarian folklore or pseudo-folklore, as well as the contributions made by Hungarians to American culture and civilization.\(^{79}\) Just like Bakalian, who commented on the fact that there has been no return to the “traditional and behavioral forms of ethnicity” when ethnic activism resurfaced in the 1960s,\(^{80}\) Fejős writes that “ethnic links and maintaining an awareness of origins does not necessarily mean a real membership of the group nor total acceptance of forms of behavior from the ethnic past. It is more important to be able to choose an identity and to assume simple values which can be practiced on less risky scenes of life and still differ from the culture of the majority.”\(^{81}\)

### 2.5. The Coexistence of Assimilation and Identity Retention

Beginning in the 1990s, several authors began to question the zero-sum assimilation model and claim that ethnic identity retention and assimilation could go hand in hand with each other.\(^{82}\) Anny Bakalian (1993), arguing that Milton Gordon’s assimilation theory did not fully hold true for the descendants of Armenian immigrants to the United States, formulated her thesis the following way: “Assimilation can continue its course, at least for some time, without substantially decreasing levels of Armenian identity, sense of peoplehood and familism.”\(^{83}\) She found that ethnic identity could persist in the later generations, even if one can only speak of a symbolic ethnicity in their case.\(^{84}\)

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\(^{80}\) Bakalian, *Armenian-Americans*, 435.
\(^{81}\) Fejős, *A chicagói magyarok*, 297.
Isajiw (2003) and Jendian (2008) came to similar conclusions. Understanding assimilation in terms of integration into mainstream society, Isajiw argues that retaining one’s ethnic identity per se does not hinder the individual’s social mobility. Based on his studies performed on four different Canadian ethnic groups (Germans, Italians, Jews, and Ukrainians), he found that his participants belonging to various generations could choose certain cultural elements both from the immigrant as well as from the mainstream culture. Isajiw also revealed that second and third-generation ethnics constructed their identities from both cultures.°° Thus, becoming Canadian and remaining ethnic is not necessarily paradoxical, for the two can also complement each other. Jendian (2008) refers to this same phenomenon as the bi-cultural model of assimilation. He conceives of the two cultures, the American and the Armenian one as coexisting peacefully along with each other in different dimensions.°°° He also adds: “The view of assimilation versus ethnicity creates somewhat of a false dichotomy, an either-or fallacy that individuals in the United States either become American or remain ethnic.”°°°

Zoltán Fejős (1993) made similar observations from a historical point of view. He discusses the transformation of original cultural traditions that the immigrants have brought with themselves to the New World. He claims that in America, these traditions have gone through a process of typification and simplification. Fejős asserts that in the case of the Chicago Hungarians in the first decades of the twentieth century, “ethnic culture was created in a historical process which resulted in the Americanization of old world traditions. In the examined period Americanization meant a change which did not mean an extinction of transplanted cultural entities, rather it developed a new cultural language.”°°°° This cultural language was not based on empirical life experiences as in the case of the immigrant

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°°° Jendian, Becoming American, Remaining Ethnic, 4-5.
°°°° Jendian, Becoming American, Remaining Ethnic, 37.
°°°°° Fejős, A chicagói magyarok, 296.
generation, but rather meant the creation of a new mythical cultural tradition, which was based on a set of symbols.\(^89\) According to the author, the ethnic movement that began in the mid-1930s and was stopped by the outbreak of World War II was not the result of antiassimilationist endeavors and can only be understood in the light of the assimilation process. Once the immigrants had achieved relative financial well-being, they were not ashamed of their ethnic background and were proud enough to celebrate their heritage (e.g. by participating in multicultural festivals and with the help of the international dance movement).\(^90\)

2.6. Long-distance Nationalism

In the context of transnational relations during the Cold War, I will base my research on the concept of long-distance nationalism, coined by Benedict Anderson (1992). The author called attention to the fact that there are some émigrés who engage in the politics of the mother country without traveling there. He particularly referred to the movement to liberate the Khalistan region of India, which was initiated by diaspora nationals outside of India. Anderson cited the example of a Sikh man who lived in Toronto and participated in the politics of his homeland through email correspondence, in the form of long-distance nationalism, without the risk of being arrested. Anderson also mentions that there are non-violent ethno-nationalists who live abroad (e.g. the Cubans in Miami and Ukrainians in Ontario) and who “have no serious intention of going back to a home, which, as time passes, more and more serves as a phantom bedrock for an embattled metropolitan ethnic identity.”\(^91\)

\(^89\) Fejős, A chicagói magyarok, 1993, 223.
\(^90\) Fejős, A chicagói magyarok, 296-297.
Éva Huseby-Darvas applies Benedict’s concept of long-distance nationalism to her paper on Hungarian return-migrants. Although this is not stated in her paper that was first published in 2004, she most probably refers to the returnees of the early 1990s who resettled in Hungary after the demise of communism. She particularly calls attention to the fact that many Hungarian émigrés had been planning to repatriate in case a regime change might take place, and when this finally happened in 1989, a large number of these people realized they could not return home and were best able to serve their country from abroad. The author writes, “when immigrants and refugees did return to Hungary, the country that they found bore little resemblance to the place of their dreams. Instead of the imagined homeland and the crucial roles that they would play in it, the returnees found poverty and troublesome shadows of past regimes.”92 What was even worst for the emigrants, the native Hungarians refused to accept their knowledge gained in the West, which they were willing to share with the locals for the benefit of the home country. Huseby-Darvas asserts that in some cases, Hungarians living abroad claim the reason they do not return to the homeland permanently is “because the diaspora possesses a kind of insight and impact that is lacking among the natives in the homeland. It is a kind of virtual homecoming, one where actually moving from the U.S. is replaced by an ideological springboard for remaining abroad to actively shape Hungary’s contemporary political events and the future of the homeland.”93

In 2005, Nina Glick Schiller defined long-distance nationalism in the following way. She claims that various activities undertaken by long-distance nationalists, such as “voting, demonstrating, lobbying, contributing money, creating works of art, fighting, killing, and dying,” are projected toward a geographic territory that is envisioned as the ancestral

homeland for members of a given nation that live outside its borders. These nationals, who usually form an exile community, try to actively influence the politics of the considered homeland. The author argues that long-distance nationalism can be practiced in four main ways: supporting anti-colonial struggles (e.g. in the case of Mahatma Gandhi from South Africa), advocating separatism (in the case of nationals living abroad who were committed to the dismemberment of Yugoslavia), trying to influence regime change (for instance, the Cubans in exile who tried to overthrow the Castro regime), and finally, also in a non-oppositional way, by participating in homeland politics despite living abroad (e.g. by financially supporting certain political parties of the homeland or lobbying in favor of it).

2.7. Sociolinguistic Approaches to Ethnic Identity

a. Language Maintenance and Language Transmission

The first scholar to study the language shift of a bilingual community from a longitudinal point of view in Hungary was Anna Borbély. As a sociolinguist, Borbély made several repeated visits to study the language shift from Romanian to Hungarian in her hometown village, Kétegyháza. The author returned to Kétegyháza at the turn of each decade, in 1990 (T1), 2000/2001 (T2), and 2010/2011 (T3). She used the panel research method, meaning that during her consecutive field researches she aimed to reinterview the same set of people she interviewed at T1. Borbély’s findings showed that the language shift in the particular case she studied could be described as an “oscillatory movement” rather than a linear or gradual process, because in over fifty percent of the language use situations she examined, the use of Romanian had increased instead of the majority language, due to certain changes that took

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place within the community.\textsuperscript{96} The author acknowledged that this is only true at the situational level, whereas a gradual language shift was undoubtedly occurring from a generational aspect.

From a theoretical point of view, I will apply Csilla Bartha’s findings (2002; 2003) from her 1994 field research concerning the parental language use strategies applied by New Brunswick Hungarians to transmit the Hungarian language to the offspring. The author interviewed first and second-generation Hungarian Americans who arrived after World War II, the outbreak of the 1956 Revolution, and after 1960, respectively. She identified three kinds of basic approaches towards language use: the authoritative, the interactional, and the integrative models.

1) **The authoritative model.**

In the families that follow the authoritative model, children are made to use Hungarian in every situation. Parents constantly remind their children as well as those of others to speak Hungarian at all times, both at home and during community events. This is most characteristic of DP families who have a purist mindset about Hungarian language use. The norms accepted by the Hungarian community also conform to this ideology; therefore, the families that choose this strategy have a relatively high prestige within the community. Since a similar language use strategy is applied by the Hungarian Scouts of the diaspora, scout leaders usually come from families that have applied this model.\textsuperscript{97}

2) **The interactional model**

This strategy is usually not applied consciously. Speakers use both English and Hungarian depending on the topic of the conversation and the situation (e.g. the partner to


whom one is speaking, the locale where the conversation takes place, etc.). The parents who follow this model usually speak both languages with their children; however, they often adjust to the language choice of the child. It is natural for people to use the interactional model in case they acquired the two languages in different contexts. Bartha claims that it is mostly 1956-er families that use this strategy, where the parents speak not only Hungarian but also English at a very high level and hardly without an accent.98

3) **The integrative model**

Parents who choose this strategy apply it based on the false conception that bilingualism can impede a child’s integration. They believe that knowing two languages will have a detrimental effect on the child’s cognitive development and that it will retard the child’s English language learning process as well as his or her integration and social mobility later on. This kind of strategy is commonly applied by parents who have a strong Hungarian accent in English and also by ethnically mixed families.99

Bartha argues that the concept of being Hungarian has distinct meanings throughout different Hungarian-American communities. Whereas in Detroit (1987) she found that speaking Hungarian was not an essential requirement for a person to consider oneself a Hungarian, in New Brunswick, she revealed that the knowledge of Hungarian was a primary symbol of ethnic identity. Here, the members of the second generation consciously strived to improve their vocabulary and tried to avoid talking about themes that they could not discuss without resorting to the use of English. According to the author, the purist mindset that forms the prevailing language ideology in the community (e.g. the stigmatization of incorrect language use in Hungarian) is responsible for the fact that the process of language shift is taking place at a much slower pace in New Brunswick than in the case of other Hungarian-

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American communities, e.g. in Detroit, South Bend, and McKeesport (communities established by the Old Hungarians, who arrived at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries). She found that whereas in the case of communities established by the Old Hungarians this process was usually over within the span of three generations, in the case of New Brunswick this took place at a much slower rate.\textsuperscript{100}

As a scout leader, Judit Kesserű Némethy had the opportunity to observe the language use of second and third-generation Hungarians living in the United States and Argentina. At a conference presentation in 1988 she stated that until age 5 to 6, when children enter Hungarian scouting abroad, they are usually fluent in Hungarian and willing to speak the language. However, their Hungarian language skills begin to fade at around age 12, when they start to enter their teenage years. Besides rebelling against general rules as other people of their age usually do, they also object to having to speak Hungarian. This leads to a decrease in their Hungarian vocabulary. By the time they become teenagers, their dominant language will no longer be Hungarian but English. Némethy Kesserű states that this kind of rebellion against parental and community expectations manifests itself in two ways. The first one is a slang style speech used consciously by young people when they mix the two languages (here the author uses the general term \textit{code-switching}; however, others refer to this as \textit{code-mixing}):

1) “Mondtam már, \textit{you guys}, egy csomó stuffot be kell magolni az aki [akadály] versenyre.”

2) “Az egy \textit{mix between} rágógumi és kréta.”

The second is when adolescents conform to the expectation of having to speak Hungarian (for instance in the scout home), but literally translate the words they would like to say in English by the use of calques:

1) “Felnéztem a szót.” (I looked up the word.)

\textsuperscript{100}Bartha, “Nyelvhasználat, nyelvmegtartás, nyelvcsere,” 130-133.
2) “Csinálok barátokat.” (I make friends.)

The author also emphasizes that this kind of bilingual speech reflects the dual identity of the teenagers; namely, that they wish to express that they are not only Hungarian but also American. At the same time, she calls attention to the fact that if someone gets too much used to mixing the two languages, it will be extremely difficult for the person to speak exclusively in one language.101

b. The Relationship between Name-giving and Ethnic Identity

From a methodological point of view, I have used the following studies as the basis of my research. To analyze the naming patterns of the Hungarians of New Brunswick, I will resort to Annamária Ulla Szabó-Törpényi’s findings. In her sociolinguistic research about the language and ethnic identity retention of Hungarians living in France, Szabó-Törpényi set up four categories to describe the kind of given names chosen by her interview subjects for their children:

1) Hungarian names (or names considered to be Hungarian)
2) French names
3) Neutral (international) type 1
4) Neutral (international) type 2

The author found that the naming tendencies applied by Hungarian immigrants in France show historical differences based on when their children were born. The members of the second generation can be divided into two subgroups: people born between 1970 and 1995, and those born between 1995 and 2010. During the 1970s and 1980s, political émigrés generally preferred to give typical French names to their children (e.g. Cédric and Claire-Anne), displaying their eagerness to assimilate into French society. On the other hand, after

101 Judit Némethné Kesserű, “Az amerikai magyar tizenévesek kétnyelvűsége,” 4-5.
the fall of communism and especially after the turn of the millennium, neutral type 2 names have become increasingly popular among Hungarians living in France. These are almost identical in French and Hungarian: Sara/Sára, Liza, Victor/Viktor, Daniel/Dániel. This latter type of name choice also reflects the parents’ desire to instill a dual identity into their children.102

c. Feasts and Holidays

The same author has also studied the connections between celebrating Hungarian feast days and national holidays. Szabó-Törpényi found that although the participants of her study (members of the second generation) had received their formal schooling in France and without having obtained any formal education in Hungarian, the fact that they held onto Hungarian traditions and used the Hungarian language at home helped them to integrate the elements of both French and Hungarian culture into their identity. The kind of Hungarian celebrations that her informants attended were the Hungarian national holidays of March 15 and October 23 (in France, during the school year) and August 20 (in Hungary, during vacation time). Family festivities to which her participants referred to as Hungarian feasts were the feast of St. Nicholas (Mikulás) and name days, which are not celebrated by French people but which have been kept by the families she interviewed.103 The author also examined how Hungarians living in Paris and in the Île-de-France region of France (also known as the “Paris region”) celebrate the two major international holidays, Christmas and Easter. Interestingly, she found that the majority of her interviewees (55 percent) celebrated Christmas according to Hungarian customs, that is, exchanging presents on Christmas Eve

102 Other practices that prevailed during this period were the use of the French variant of international type 2 names outside of the home and the use of their Hungarian variants inside the home, e.g. Alexandre (Sándor), Christian (Kristián), and Sophie (Zsófia). Naturally, the author also encountered names that showed an anti-assimilationist tendency, in the case of families where children received a typical and often untranslatable Hungarian name, e.g. Jenő (Eugene) and Attila. Annamária Ulla Szabó-Törpényi, “Szociolingvisztikai vizsgálatok franciaországi magyarak körében,” (PhD diss., Eötvös Loránd University, 2013), 243-246.
(December 24), instead of doing it the French way, on Christmas Day (December 25). 65 percent of her informants also prepared traditional Hungarian desserts for Christmas, such as *beigli*, which sometimes even replaces its French counterpart, *bûche de Noël*. The author had similar findings in connection with Easter as well, namely, that 55 percent of her informants had kept the Hungarian custom of *locsolás* (sprinkling girls with cologne water) and dying eggs. The people who wished to follow the French traditions and gave up all Hungarian ones told the researchers that they were afraid their child might suffer “disadvantages” and be “discriminated against” in school.\(^\text{104}\)

### 2.8. Generational Categories

Although some children of immigrants refer to themselves as the first generation, meaning that they were the first generation to be born outside of the ethnic homeland, for most Americans, the term *first generation* indicates a person who has immigrated to the United States. This also corresponds to the definition provided by the US Census Bureau; that “the first generation refers to those who are foreign-born.”\(^\text{105}\) Most sociologists, sociolinguists, and historians also agree upon these categorizations. Based on this understanding, the US-born children of immigrant parents will be referred to as members of the *second generation*. According to the US Census Bureau, “the second generation refers to those with at least one foreign-born parent.”\(^\text{106}\)

However, real-life cases are more complicated. From a practical point of view, a person who was born outside of the United States but arrived there at a very early age can show more similarities in his or her attitudes and behavior to those who belong to the second generation. A person’s age at the time of arrival is a crucial factor in determining to what


\(^{106}\) US Census State Bureau, “Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs).”
extent one can integrate into the host culture or identify with the members of the host society and learn the new language at a native level, without an accent. For this reason, many scholars refer to those who have been living in the receiving country since the age of six as members of the second generation.\(^\text{107}\) Portes and Rumbaut (2001) have extended this limit to 12 years of age and claim that people with one native-born parent can also be included in this category.\(^\text{108}\)

Beginning in the 1940s and 1950s, some scholars started to apply an independent category for those who arrived in the host country as teenagers. In 1945 W. Lloyd Warner and Leo Srole distinguished between two types of immigrants, those who immigrated after age 18 (whom they called the \(P1\) generation) and those who came before this age (\(P2\) generation).\(^\text{109}\)

In 1958 W. I. Thomas and Florian Znaniecki invented the term \textit{half-second generation}, referring to the same latter category.\(^\text{110}\) Later, in 1988 Rubén G. Rumbaut and Kenji Ima applied this concept to describe the case of South Asian (Vietnamese, Khmer and Hmong) children of refugees, who arrived in the United States between the ages of 6 and 14. Rumbaut and Kenji point out that these refugee youth are between the first and the second generation in the following sense:

1) The decision to emigrate was not theirs but their parents’.


2) They have personal memories of the ethnic homeland, unlike in the case of US-born children of immigrants whose concept of the “homeland” is mostly based on parental recollections.

3) They were born in the country of emigration but have received most of their schooling in the new homeland, during “the key formative periods of adolescence and early childhoods.”

4) They can be described as an in-between-generation in the sense that “they are in many ways marginal to both the new and the old worlds, for while they straddle both worlds they are in some sense fully part of neither of them.”

Scholars tend to include different age groups when applying the term 1.5 generation. The consensus is also lacking on from what age should immigrants be considered members of the first generation. In 1997, sociolinguist Erzsébet Zelliger, noted that people who have left their birth country before age 18 should be included in a separate category from those who emigrate during their adult years. The reason for this, she claims, is that people over 18 have usually completed their upper secondary education in the homeland and laid down the maturity exam (e.g. in the case of Hungarian émigrés to Austria). Larissa Remennick (2003), who studied the integration of Russian Jewish adolescents who immigrated with their parents to Israel, also set the upper age limit of the 1.5 generation category at 18, claiming that that is the age when the mandatory military service begins. The author found that the main challenges for these youths after settling in Israel were the following: “mental and cultural differences with Israelis,” “facing language barrier and learning Hebrew,” and

112 Rumbaut and Ima, The Adaptation of Southeast Asian Refugee Youth, 22-23.
“nostalgia for the lost home and friends.” Although most of them were eventually able to
overcome these difficulties (e.g. the language problem, in most cases), many reported that
they still felt the existence of a cultural gap with the local population. Rubén Rumbeaut
(2004) has referred to this group (people between the ages of 13 and 17) as the 1.25
generation, alluding to the fact that they are closer to the first generation, but not exactly like
them. In his same study, he also set up the category of the 1.75 generation, designating those
children who leave their homeland at a very early age (0-5). He asserts that people belonging
to this cohort usually do not have any memories of their country of origin and did not receive
any education in the old homeland. They usually have no accent in English and their
socialization took place almost exclusively in America. Finally, Rumbaut uses the generally
accepted term of 1.5 generation for those who arrive in the new homeland between ages 6-
12.

Another interesting question is where to include US-born people with one foreign-
born parent and one native-born one. Although the US Census Bureau discusses them as
second-generation individuals; clearly, they are between the second and the third generation.
S. Karthrick Ramakrishnan (2004) argues that these individuals should not be lumped
together with the second generation and asserts that they should instead form a separate
category, that of the 2.5 generation. The author bases his claims on the fact that those who
belong to this specific subgroup account for approximately half the population of the children
of immigrants (the traditional second generation) in the United States. He states that they are
more likely to be born of interracial marriages (due to the prevalence of whites and African
Americans among the non-immigrants) and to have higher educational attainment (except, for

115 Remenick, “The 1.5-Generation of Russian Immigrants,” 11.
117 S. Karthick Ramakrishnan, “Second Generation Immigrants? The ‘2.5 Generation’ in the United States,”
Social Science Quarterly 85, no. 2 (June 2004), 382.
instance in the case of Cubans or Indians) and income than those who have two foreign-born parents.118

For the present research, I will be using the following categories. I will apply the term 1.5 generation immigrants for those who arrived in their early teenage years, between ages 7-14. I have decided upon this classification because children over six years of age already have some memory of their birth country and are usually capable of learning the language of the host country either without any accent or with only a slight one. In the case of most of my interview subjects who arrived after age ten, I have noticed that they felt eradicated from the homeland (or the country where they were living previously as refugees), in the sense that it was their parents’ decision to leave and not theirs. Thus, they initially felt reluctant to adjust to the new environment. I have set the upper age limit at age 14 because this is the age when one terminates middle school. Generally, people who belong to this cohort have begun their primary education in their birth country and have finished lower secondary education (middle school) in the new homeland.

I will also distinguish between the concepts of second generation and 2.5 generation. Under the term second generation, I imply a person who has two immigrant parents, including those who were foreign-born but have been living in the United States since age six. Following Ramakrishnan’s suggestion, I will use 2.5 generation immigrant for people who have one immigrant parent and one native-born parent. I find this distinction necessary for examining the success of Hungarian language maintenance.

Chapter 3

The Case of New Brunswick: Parallel Hungarian-American Communities

3.1. The History of Hungarian Immigration to New Brunswick

The city of New Brunswick, located in Middlesex County, is approximately 350 years old. The city was founded by British settlers in 1675. Given its favorable position, lying between Philadelphia and New York on the banks of the Raritan River, it became a center of industrialization in the middle of the 1800s. In the 1920s, the majority of its inhabitants were of Dutch origin.119

Besides the earliest immigrants who came with Lajos (Louis) Kossuth in 1849, Hungarians kept arriving in New Jersey in four main waves. The first Hungarian family to settle in New Brunswick were the Rucks in 1888, as part of the emigrants who left Hungary at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in the hope of a better living.120 This group is frequently referred to as the Old Hungarians (őreg amerikások). Most of them arrived in the country between 1880 and World War I and initially, did not plan to settle permanently. The majority of the emigrants were agricultural laborers, peasants, and farmhands.121 Approximately 5-6000 Hungarians settled in New Brunswick before the First World War.122 Most of the Hungarians were hired by the New Brunswick Cigar Company and Johnson & Johnson Company, which had its headquarters in the city.123

According to Father Julián Füzér, the Hungarian immigrants were favored over other nationalities of Central Eastern and Southern Europe. The local American employers preferred to hire them because they were known for performing “hard and honest work” and because nearly half of them were Protestants. Moreover, they had a very low crime rate. Füzér writes, “The neatness of their homes and the cleanliness of the streets was truly remarkable. Potted geraniums decorated the porches where the Hungarians lived. … In the little gardens behind their homes, they grew tomatoes, paprikas, vegetables, and blooming flowers.”

The Hungarian immigrants to the city established six Hungarian churches and a synagogue in the first two decades of the twentieth century. The Bayard Street Presbyterian Church was established in 1903, St. Ladislaus Church in 1904, Ascension Lutheran Church in 1910, and High Street Baptist Church in 1914. A year later, the Magyar Reformed Church was established in 1915. In the same year, the Byzantine Catholics parted from the Roman Rite Catholics and founded their own church, St. Joseph’s parish. Finally, in 1918, the Jewish Hungarians founded Ohav Emeth Congregation (today found in Highland Park). Among these, St. Ladislaus Church and the Magyar Reformed Church still offer services in Hungarian. St. Ladislaus also had a parish school established, St. Ladislaus School (Szent László Iskola), which formally opened in 1914 and operated until the end of the 1990s.

Another institution that is still functioning today is the Hungarian American Athletic Club (HAAC), founded on July 4, 1913. Although today it mainly serves as a meeting place where Hungarians can socialize with each other, it was originally established to provide space

124 Fuzer, Saint Ladislaus Parish, 2.
125 Prékopa, “Hungarian Immigrants in the United States,” 11; Fuzer, Saint Ladislaus Parish, 2.
for the Hungarian youth who wished to practice athletic activities. The young Hungarian Americans of New Brunswick had a baseball team that defeated the New Brunswick firefighters’ team and won first place in the Middlesex County championships. This result was significant because the firefighters’ team was well-known in the whole of New Jersey. After their victory, the New Brunswick Young Hungarians decided to found their own athletic club where they could practice sports (wrestling and bowling besides baseball).\textsuperscript{128}

Hungarian immigrants to New Brunswick arrived in the form of chain migration.\textsuperscript{129} People often settled from the same villages, in the sense that they followed their siblings or aunts and uncles to the New World. Consequently, those who were Catholic and founded St. Ladislaus Church usually came from Vas county, whereas the Reformed Hungarians generally arrived from Zemplén county and the Transdanubian region.\textsuperscript{130}

New Brunswick was populated by several nationality groups in the early decades of the twentieth century. For instance, in 1910, the Irish, the Russians, the Germans, and Italians, besides the Hungarians all had a strong presence in the city.\textsuperscript{131} The Second Ward was predominantly Italian, the previously settled Irish mainly lived in the Sixth Ward, and the Hungarians populated the Fifth Ward.\textsuperscript{132} The 1920 US Census showed that the Hungarians constituted the largest ethnic group in New Brunswick.\textsuperscript{133}

As it is well known, emigration to the United States was halted first by the Emergency Quota Act of 1921 and later by the Immigration Restriction Act of 1924 (the Johnson-Reed Act). The first “Quota Act” restricted the number of people who could yearly enter the United


\textsuperscript{129} Julianna Puskás, Ties that Bind, Ties that Divide: 100 Years of Hungarian Experience in the United States (New York: Holmes & Meier, 2000), 117-118.


\textsuperscript{132} E. Cs. and W. Cs., interview by Timea Oláh, February 12, 2013.

\textsuperscript{133} Smith, “The Hungarians in New Brunswick,” 19.
States from each country to 3 percent of the population registered at the time of the 1910 Census. The second “Quota Act” went even further and limited this number to 2 percent of the 1890 Census. This practically brought to a halt the large-scale immigration of Hungarians and other Central and Southern European immigrants. A few years prior to this change, after the termination of World War I, in 1919, a reverse migration took place to the old homeland, which lasted for approximately one year. Interestingly, according to the State Census of 1920, the Hungarian population had decreased by 2,371 people in New Brunswick. However, many of the Hungarians decided to resettle in America, many of whom were affected by the Peace Treaty of Trianon in the sense that their homelands were now no longer a part of Hungary.

Nearly thirty years after the Johnson-Reed Act, a new wave of Hungarians settled in New Brunswick after World War II. This group is known as the Displaced Persons, or DPs. They were primarily formed by Eastern European refugees who fled their countries as the Soviet Army was advancing westward near the end of World War II. Many of these people, including the Hungarians, were forced to stay in Austrian and German refugee camps, sometimes even for eleven years, until they were allowed to emigrate to various continents.

A large number of the DPs chose to settle down in Latin American countries, primarily in Argentina, Brazil, and Venezuela. Hungarian emigration to Argentina began as early as 1947-1949. The Displaced Persons Acts of 1948 and 1950 enabled approximately 17,000 Hungarians to immigrate to the United States. By 1953 another ca. 9,700 people were allowed to enter the country, making their total number 26,377. Contrarily to other communities

136 Fuzer, Saint Ladislaus Parish, 3.
that received a larger number of DPs (e.g., Cleveland, OH), relatively few of them came to live in New Brunswick, only 153 families.\textsuperscript{140}

The DPs consisted of two distinct groups, those who left Hungary in 1945 (also referred to as the 45-\textit{ers}) and those who emigrated in 1946-1947 (the 47-\textit{ers}).\textsuperscript{141} Most of the people who left Hungary in 1945 were ex-soldiers or military officials, policemen, gendarmes, government employees, politicians and lawyers, wealthy landowners, and factory owners who escaped from the Soviets and feared a possible communist takeover.\textsuperscript{142} A large segment of the 45-\textit{ers} originated from the Hungarian gentry. The majority of them had completed military or law degrees, which they could not make use of in the United States. Coupled with the fact that most of them did not know English, they were forced to resort to physical work in factories or take on lower prestige technical jobs, which meant a downgrade in their social status that often lasted until the end of their lives.\textsuperscript{143} According to András Ludányi, this was generally true for most of the Displaced Persons who settled in New Brunswick, too.\textsuperscript{144}

The children of the Displaced Persons (referred to as the \textit{DP generation}) also deserve mention. They were able to break away from the working-class conditions their parents found themselves in upon their emigration. Most of them went to college and received professional degrees.\textsuperscript{145} At the same time, they did not shun their ethnic background but exerted pride in being Hungarians.\textsuperscript{146}

\textsuperscript{141} Eszter Kovács, “Magyar diaszpórapolitika 1990 után az állam és a diaszpóra perspektívájából,” (PhD diss., Pázmány Péter Catholic University, 2018), 23.
\textsuperscript{144} András Ludányi, interview by the author, October 22, 2020.
\textsuperscript{145} This is true for all of my interview subjects who belong to this cohort.
\textsuperscript{146} Tamas, “Evolution of a Global Community,” 618.
The Displaced Persons founded two transnational Hungarian organizations, the World Federation of Hungarian Veterans (Magyar Harcosok Bajtársi Közössége) and the Hungarian Scout Association in Exile (today called the Hungarian Scout Association Abroad). The origin of these organizations can be traced back to refugee camps in Austria and Germany.\textsuperscript{147} One of the major achievements of the Displaced Persons was the establishment of this latter organization, since it was very effective in keeping together the Hungarian youth and in enabling the transmission of the Hungarian language to the younger generations. Gábor Bodnár, the President of the Association, decided that only those children could enter scouting who knew Hungarian and demanded that only Hungarian be used during scout activities.\textsuperscript{148} Hungarian scouting kept together the children of the émigrés who left the Austrian and German DP camps for various continents. Friendships and even marriages have been formed across borders (e.g., between the Hungarians living in the USA and Argentina) that still last today.

Ever since 1964, the formation of Hungarian scout leaders has taken place in Sándor Sik Scout Camp (Sík Sándor Cserkészpark) in Fillmore, New York (South of Buffalo). Here, where people from North America, Australia, Europe, and Latin America have a chance to meet and get to know each other for ten days. Also, the language used among the scouts coming from different countries is still Hungarian. Even third and fourth-generation Hungarian scout leaders from Argentina can speak Hungarian, even if they tend to speak Spanish among themselves.\textsuperscript{149} In this sense, I argue that the Hungarian Scout Association in Exile was one of the influential organizations that enabled the formation of a Hungarian diaspora after World War II.


The Displaced Persons were followed by the 1956ers in New Brunswick. Given the vicinity of Camp Kilmer, a former military base where most of the 56ers were processed upon their arrival in the United States, New Brunswick received a large number of refugees after the failed Revolution of 1956. Out of the ca. 200,000 Hungarians who left Hungary, 150,4470 refugees were accommodated in the United States, according to the reports filed for the UNHCR. Of this number, ca. 32,000 people were processed at Camp Kilmer.151 The 1956ers were of a mixed background. Whereas initially, the people who left Hungary in 1956 were villagers from Western Hungary close to the Austrian border, later it was mostly the urban population that decided to leave the country, slightly more than half of them from Budapest.152 Contrarily to the 45ers, the 56ers were better able to find employment on the job market, either as professional or skilled workers.153 The representatives of several industrial firms and interest groups, including the entertainment industry, came to Camp Kilmer to recruit employees among the refugees. The fact that at that time, there were hardly any refugees or guest workers arriving from the Mediterranean Sea also helped the employment opportunities of the 1956ers.154 Magdolna Varga, who left Hungary with her parents in 1956, recalls that a large segment of the 56ers were hired by Johnson & Johnson Co. and other factories.155

Certain educational institutions organized English language courses for the refugees. With the help of the Ford Foundation and the Rockefeller Foundation, those who wished to

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153 István Kun-Szabó, interview by the author, September 2, 2008; Pastor, “Reception and Settlement of Hungarian Refugees,” 201.
154 Kecskés, “Tárt karokkal várt kitántorgók.”
start or continue their university education in the United States were given the opportunity to learn English at Bard and St. Michaels Colleges.\textsuperscript{156} One of my interviewees, Tamás Tamás also attended the language course offered at Bard College during the winter of 1956-57. Thanks to this program, he learned to communicate in English sentences about two months after starting the course. On the other hand, the 1956ers who did not have such an opportunity could only speak a few words of English.\textsuperscript{157} Beginning in 1957, Rutgers University also offered an eight-week-long language course for more than forty Hungarian students.\textsuperscript{158}

As it is well-known, many of the 1956ers received a college or a university education. A large number of the Hungarians who stayed in the New Brunswick area went to Rutgers University. Tamás Tamás remembers about twenty-four 1956ers who enrolled at Rutgers alongside with him, but he states this number must have been higher.\textsuperscript{159} Despite the well-known fact the 1956ers were granted special scholarships, several people I talked to had to take on some kind of work as students. For instance, Károly Nagy received a scholarship for foreign students, which covered only a part of his expenses. While taking courses, he took on dish-washing, pianist, and newspaper delivery jobs to pay for his food and living expenses, besides the textbooks.\textsuperscript{160} The local Hungarians of New Brunswick also supported the Hungarian students, among them Tamás Tamás. Although this was a great help in itself, each summer he had to work many hours to earn enough money to cover his food expenditures.\textsuperscript{161} In the summers of 1958 and 1959, he lived together with another Hungarian and about a dozen poor American students. They had to work 80-85 hours per week in order to be able to continue their studies in September.\textsuperscript{162}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[157] Tamás Tamás, interview by the author, September 3, 2008.
\item[159] Tamás Tamás, email message to author, November 29, 2006.
\item[160] Károly Nagy, interview by the author, September 15, 2008.
\item[161] Tamás Tamás, interview by the author, September 3, 2008.
\item[162] Tamás Tamás, email message to author, November 30, 2006, quoted by Pintz, “Hungarian Immigrants in New Brunswick,” 266.
\end{footnotes}
According to Gusztáv D. Kecskés, the success of the 1956ers lied in the fact that the majority of them were young, healthy, well-educated, and single men who could be put to work almost at an instant. Moreover, there was no doubt that they were anti-communists. The fact that they were white and relatively few in numbers also helped their integration.  

In New Brunswick, the 1956ers helped revitalize Hungarian scouting established by the Displaced Persons. Whereas the girl scout troop was functioning well under the leadership of Judit Olesváry, the boy scout troop became disintegrated. Thus, in 1959, at the request of Gábor Bodnár, Tamás Tamás began to reorganize the local boy scout troop by recruiting the children of fellow 1956ers in New Brunswick and its surroundings. Helped by other local families, by ca. 1961-62, he managed to build up a troop of ca. 36-38 members.

As stated above, the 1956ers also joined the HAAC. They helped raise money for the renovation of the previous Clubhouse bought in 1921. Between the 1930s and 1950s, soccer, basketball, and fencing were also introduced in the Club, among which soccer became the most popular, due to the arrival of the 1956ers. The old Clubhouse, found on 198 Somerset Street, was demolished in the mid-2000s due to the expansion of Robert Wood Johnson Hospital. Presently, the building serves for holding dinners, commemorations of March 15 and October 23, as well as dance rehearsals and festivals. The new building of the athletic club, very close to the old building in the heart of the once existing Hungarian neighborhood (Somerset Street 233), was inaugurated in 2006 and is a source of pride for the local Hungarians.

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163 Kecskés, “Tárt karokkal várt kitántorgók.”
164 Tamás Tamás, interview by the author, September 3, 2008; Tamás Tamás, interview by Zsuzsanna Volekné Temesi, December 11, 2015, Collection of Historical Interviews, National Széchényi Library, Budapest, Hungary.
After the fall of socialism in 1989-1990, a new wave of immigrants appeared in the United States. The Cold War immigrants call them the “Újmagyarok” (New Hungarians). András Ludányi refers to these people as the “kiszívárgó magyarok” or “seepage Hungarians.” They do not form a homogeneous group, for they consist of ex-baby-sitters, university professors, and blue-collar workers. A considerable segment of these people are undocumented immigrants. Within the course of 12 years, from 2000 to 2012, their number has increased by roughly 200,000, from 1,398,724 to 1,537,205, based on the U.S. Census Bureau’s statistics.

Initially, these new immigrants do not wish to join the Hungarian communities, but usually only after becoming settled and integrated into the United States. In 2008, I spoke to two mothers who joined the New Brunswick Hungarians after their children’s birth. One of them (Informant # 9, F, b. 1972) stated that it was at that point that she realized that she was not familiar with American children’s literature and that she wished to read to her child the stories on which she was brought up in Hungary. Another (Informant # 6, F, b. 1978) stated that she wanted to celebrate certain holidays, such as Mother’s Day and Christmas, in the Hungarian way because she did not want to break away from her roots. Today, the majority of the children who attend Széchenyi Hungarian Kindergarten and the Hungarian boy and girl scout troops belong to this group. Interestingly, only a few of these new families have joined the Hungarian churches. This is true both in the case of New Brunswick, New York City, and many other Hungarian-American communities.

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3.2. The Formation of Parallel Hungarian-American Communities

Based on the interviews conducted by Tímea Oláh and myself, it became evident that there was a rift within the Hungarian American community of New Brunswick. At the time when I started my research for my master’s thesis during my university years, I was eager to find out what happened to the descendants of the old immigrants, who arrived before World War One. However, most Hungarians who I talked to (mostly 1956ers and other Cold War immigrants) told me that they have assimilated by that time and that they were not active in the local Hungarian-American organizations anymore. Interestingly, at a conference where I mentioned this statement, Tímea Oláh presented a different thesis, claiming that the second generation of the Old Hungarian immigrants has not become absorbed by American society. Years later, when I received her interviews, I realized that one could practically speak of two parallel Hungarian-American communities that existed simultaneously side-by-side each other, rather than community. The above-mentioned rift mainly existed between the immigrants who arrived before the First World War and those who came during the Cold War (the Displaced Persons, the 1956ers and the later immigrants who came mostly as defectors in the 1960s, ‘70s, and ’80), and it naturally involved the immigrants’ and the refugees’ children as well. Naturally, the abyss between the two groups was not insurmountable; however, the members of the two groups remained relatively disconnected, which meant that they did not tend to socialize with each other.

The earliest written source I found dealing with the relations between the two cohorts was by Jeanne T. Reock (1953). In her senior paper, the author discusses the lines of division within the New Brunswick Hungarian community, for instance, based on the immigrants’ time of arrival. The author states that the Old Hungarians were eager to help the Displaced Persons, who had been settled in New Brunswick for approximately four or five years, with finding them work and accommodation. However, instead of the gratitude they expected, they
were met with disdain. The old-timers, who used to be “near the bottom of Hungary’s social order,” were annoyed by the DPs’ aristocratic manners, such as heal clicking, wearing monocles, and hand-kissing.172 The author writes, “the accepted philosophy now is to leave the ‘DP’s’ alone and let them find their own way into community life.”

Although some of them had joined the local Hungarian churches and organizations by the early 1950s, the DPs tended to stay apart from the circles of the Old Hungarians by creating their own cultural events.173 Despite the fact that the younger generation of the early immigrants was also invited to join, for them, the DPs seemed to be too “intellectual.” Nevertheless, the DPs stayed in the neighborhood because they wished to remain Hungarian and valued the fact that the Hungarian language was still spoken there.174

Julianna Puskás’s observations are similar in this respect to the ones made by Reock. Puskás emphasized that one of the dividing lines was caused by the rural background of the pre-World War immigrants, which stood in sharp contrast to the urban upbringing of most DPs. There were also enormous differences in their education levels: the old-timers had received only a very basic elementary schooling before their emigration, whereas many among the newly arrived were highly educated and often spoke many languages.175 Puskás claims that “the world of the ‘old’ economic migrants—whether they were members of the first, second, or third generation—was so fundamentally different from that of the ‘new’ political refugees that the members of the two groups could never find common ground, not even with the passing of years.”176

As stated above, the Displaced Persons rarely joined the organizations established by the old-timers. In fact, one of Timea Oláh’s informants (M., b. 1931) resented the fact that the

175 Julianna Puskás, Ties that Bind, Ties that Divide, 282.
176 Puskás, Ties that Bind, Ties that Divide, 283.
DPs initially did not support the Hungarian American Athletic Club, because according to him, they “felt somewhat superior” to the Old Hungarians. They instead formed their own association, the Hungarian Scout Association in Exile. Hungarian scouting did not exist in America before the arrival of the post-World War II refugees. The sons and daughters of the old-timers did join the local Girl or Boy Scouts; however, that was American scouting. Another youth organization, the YMCA was also popular among the children of immigrants at that time, but that was an American organization as well. Interestingly, none of Oláh’s interview subjects joined the Hungarian Scouts in New Brunswick, and neither did their children. One probable reason for this was the strict adherence to the Hungarian language and the fact that those who did not speak the language were not allowed to join. Although the sons and daughters of the Old Hungarians could still speak Hungarian, they were not used to having rigorous language use regulations, and their children were even less fluent in Hungarian.177

Tamas Tamas notes that this separation was partly caused by the DPs’ fall in social status and that they compensated for this downward mobility by forming their own cliques. This way, they could at least preserve their prestigious social status within their own circles. The author writes, “at least among their peers, they could claim superiority over their working-class co-workers as well as over most Old Hungarians and their children.”178

In 1956, both the elderly Hungarians and the younger generation born in America volunteered to help the refugees. Several of Timea Oláh’s interview subjects stated that either they or one of their parents, mostly the women, were involved in providing interpretation services for the government and in helping to find accommodation and jobs for the newly arrived. Mrs. Frank Sütő and Anna Kara, the American-born wife of Peter Kara, a prominent musician of Hungarian heritage and the fire chief of the New Brunswick Fire Department,

\footnote{177 E. D., interview by Timea Oláh, January 29, 2013.}
\footnote{178 Tamas, “Evolution of a Global Community,” 618.}
were among the main coordinators who helped at Camp Kilmer. Interestingly, in her recollections Mrs. Kara mentions that she could speak very little Hungarian; nevertheless, she was asked to help at the outbreak of the Revolution, due to her excellent connections, being the President of the local Hungarian Democratic club and also a leading figure at St. Ladislaus Parish. Tamás Tamás, who escaped from Hungary at that time, recalls that the Old Hungarians collected clothes and helped with organizing travel for the 1956ers. Many of the daughters of Old Hungarian immigrants took unpaid leave to help at Camp Kilmer. Although the first generation also assisted the newcomers, the members of the second generation were physically more involved, due to their younger age. According to A. K. (F, b. 1921), it was the immigrant generation that officially signed for the refugees; however, it was their children who practically took care of them.

Besides the laypeople, several organizations also assisted the 1956ers. Most of the coordinating activities were performed by the local Hungarian churches. Likewise, the various Hungarian clubs of the nearby cities (e.g. the above-mentioned Democratic Club of New Brunswick) chipped in by bringing the refugees out of the camp and finding them work.

Mr. James Kosa stated that the Magyar Savings & Loan Association also actively helped the refugees. He and the other leaders of the Association helped the 56ers find their relatives who were already living in the United States. It is especially interesting to analyze the relationship between the 1956ers and the earlier Hungarian immigrants. Many of my 1956er informants told me that they were sponsored by a relative who had already been settled in New Brunswick and arrived during the large-scale migration that took place before World War One. Although the relatives

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180 Tamás Tamás, interview by the author, October 3, 2017.
belonging to the two different cohorts generally got along well with each other, this was less true for the community on a larger scale. For instance, Elemér Bakó’s and Tímea Oláh’s interviewees have stated that the new refugees were “aggressive,” “boasting,” and “rich.” The 1956ers, on the other hand, felt jealousy on the part of the already established Hungarians over their fast social advancement and surprise if someone planned to go to university. For instance, they expected one of my informants, the daughter of a former factory manager to become a servant, and her husband recalls that an Old Hungarian could not understand how someone could be a licensed mechanic if the person had just arrived from Hungary.184

The misunderstandings that took place between the two groups were caused by the social and cultural differences between the two groups. The 1956ers and the later Cold War immigrants explicitly stated that these were class discrepancies, while one of the old-timers acknowledged that they were distinct from the newcomers in that they had all come from a village background. The Cold War immigrants, who had been raised on high literature, found the poetry performed by the already established Hungarians to be of poor quality. There was also a difference in taste between the two groups based on the cultural values they held. The old-timers and their descendants preferred to wear the so-called magyar ruha to festive events, whereas the newer immigrants preferred to wear peasant dresses and criticized the magyar ruha as not being an authentic folkwear. (This issue will be discussed in depth in Chapter 5.)185

Károly Balla, who arrived in New Brunswick in the late 1960s, recalls that the community was basically split into three parts, based on when the Hungarian immigrants emigrated from Hungary. The Old Hungarians formed one group, those who arrived after the Second World War formed another, and the third group was formed by the 1956ers. Since he

184 Mária Tamás and Tamás Tamás, interview by the author, October 3, 2017.
also arrived in the United States as a refugee who defected from communist Hungary, Mr. Balla mostly socialized with the 1956ers. The old-timers believed that the later immigrants were communists, even those who came to America in order to escape communism. The 56ers, on the other hand, considered both the Old Hungarians and the DPs retrogrades.\textsuperscript{186} The 45-ers, for instance, had a club made up of ex-soldiers and gendarmes. The members used to wear swords to their meetings and people received a higher rank every four years, e.g. from lieutenant to captain to major. For the 56ers and the later immigrants, who were already raised in a different environment in communist Hungary, these practices already seemed strange and outdated, even if they did not sympathize with communism at all.\textsuperscript{187}

### 3.3. Changes between 2000 and 2009

Bilingual communities, especially immigrant communities, can go through visible changes even within a few years, let alone within a decade. Since I usually had the opportunity to visit New Brunswick approximately every eight years, the changes that had occurred within this time span were always noticeable. In New Brunswick, I have witnessed several changes between 2000 and my subsequent return to the local Hungarian community in 2008 and 2009. Among these was the formation of a smaller scale Hungarian neighborhood in the suburbs of New Brunswick, in Somerset, NJ, which will be discussed in Chapter 6). Also, the younger members of the community who belong to the second or 2.5 generation started having their first children in the mid to late 2000s. These new parents are the children of Displaced Persons and 1956ers who are 1.5 generation immigrants. The other people who also started forming families are mostly first-generation Hungarian immigrants from Romania and Slovakia. They have been active members of the community for decades and sometimes

\textsuperscript{186} Károly Balla and Agnes Balla, interview by the author, May 31, 2017.
\textsuperscript{187} Károly Balla, interview by the author, May 31, 2017.
intermarried with the above mentioned American-born generations. Some people refer to this as a “baby boom” within the local community, which lasted roughly until the early 2010s.

As will be noted later in Chapter 6, those who were especially active in the community (e.g., as scouts or folk dancers) were eager to continue their parents’ method of only using Hungarian with their children until they reached school age. Whereas in their late twenties, these parents primarily spoke English to each other or mixed the two languages (given that English is their dominant language), once they reached their mid-thirties, as young parents, they consciously tried to speak more and more Hungarian among themselves. This sometimes happened even before the birth of their children and was true both in the family and within their circle of friends. After many years of having no everyday Hungarian preschool in the area, Aprókfalva Montessori Preschool was opened in 2006 in Piscataway, the suburbs of New Brunswick, at the request of the above-mentioned parents. These American-born parents used to attend an everyday Hungarian preschool in New Brunswick that was run by Agnes Balla, the mother of the preschool teacher (Enikő Gorondi), who presently operates Aprókfalva Montessori Preschool.188

Despite these positive changes involving counter-assimilationist strategies, other transformations within the community pointed towards assimilation and language shift. In 2008 I noticed that a large degree of intermarriages had taken place since my last visit in 2000. Also, many children attending Széchenyi Hungarian Saturday School and Kindergarten had only a fragmented knowledge of Hungarian, whereas earlier in 1999/2000, nearly all of the pupils were fluent in the language, even if teachers often had to remind them to speak Hungarian. Another change was that by 2008 the majority of the students were no longer of a Cold War background. Many of them were the children of newer immigrants, who arrived after the collapse of socialism and to whom the earlier established Hungarians referred to as

the “újmagyarok.” Also, a significant number of them were born out of intermarriages with a non-Hungarian spouse.

3.4. Recent Developments in the Last Decade

Upon my visit to New Brunswick in 2017, I witnessed the following changes that took place roughly over a decade, from 2008-2009. By that time, several Hungarian organizations, programs, and events had ceased to exist or function, primarily due to the illness or the death of first-generation community leaders. Although there would be a need for these occasions on the part of Hungarian community members, it has become increasingly difficult to find people who would organize such events. Nearly everyone has to deal with an increased workload with respect to ten or twenty years ago; therefore, it is challenging to recruit community organizers who are not pensioners. Parents with young children have also become busier, especially at present times, during the Covid crisis.189 The Hungarian Alumni Association (Rutgers Öregdiák Szövetség - Bessenyi György Kör) used to hold regular meetings in 2008 and 2009, until one of its remaining founding members, Károly Nagy, passed away in 2011. The same fate awaited the Bolyai Lecture Series on Arts and Sciences (Bolyai Kör) when its founder and primary organizer, András Prékopa, passed away in 2016. Similarly, the regular poetry events organized by A Vers Hangja Irodalmi Kör (The Verse and Sound Literary Circle) have not been held since ca. 2017-2018. The weekly broadcasts of the Hungarian Radio Hour have also stopped. Unfortunately, the founding member of the American Hungarian Foundation, August J. Molnar also died in 2016. Professor Molnar’s expertise and connections cannot be substituted, but thankfully, the institution is still running under the direction of Melissa Katkó Pepin. Rutgers University no longer receives Hungarian language instructors from Hungary due to budget cuts and the falling rate of enrollment on the students’

part.\textsuperscript{190} The organizations and institutions mentioned above hosted high-quality programs and events in Hungarian history and politics, literature, and sciences, mostly in Hungarian. They were mainly attended by adults, particularly the lectures of the Hungarian Alumni Association and the Bolyai Lecture Series.

At the same time, there are still a variety of activities that children can attend. Pici Maci Toddler Music Class, Aprókfalva Montessori Preschool, Széchenyi Hungarian Saturday School and Kindergarten besides the Hungarian Scout Association Abroad all offer educational opportunities for children. Given the new wave of immigrants from Hungary and the previously mentioned “baby boom,” there is a demand for these activities. There has also been an increase in the number of children who attend them. According to a former principal of the Saturday School and Kindergarten, there were roughly one hundred children who enrolled in the institution in 2017.\textsuperscript{191} As a participant observer, I have noticed that the school-aged children who attend the Saturday school tend to use English among themselves during class and that the teachers continually had to remind them to speak Hungarian. This was true both for the children of the newly arrived immigrants and for those who had American-born parents that followed the authoritative model of language maintenance (mentioned in Chapter 2) at home, who attended the same class I visited.

\textsuperscript{190} Jim Niessen, email message to author, November 2, 2020. 
\textsuperscript{191} Ildikó Bézi, interview by the author, September 30, 2017.
Chapter 4

The Second Generation of Old Hungarians in New Brunswick

Although several journalistic and academic works have been written on Hungarian-American immigrants ever since the early 1900s, significant research in this area and specifically on the economic migrants of the early twentieth century only came about in the 1950s and 1960s. One reason for this was the birth of the Ethnic Renaissance movement, which drew the attention of scholars to East and Central European immigrants. Another reason was the appearance of the DP and 1956 refugees on American soil. The field of Ethnic Studies started to emerge in the United States, in the wake of the bicentennial celebrations of 1976, when the United States was preparing to celebrate the 200th anniversary of its existence. This also led to an increasing interest in the ethnicities of the country.

Concerning the inquiries performed in Hungary, Julianna Puskás states that the question of Hungarian emigration was at the forefront of publications only until 1914. Subsequently, Hungarian Americans only started to receive attention after several decades of relatively little scholarly interest, roughly during the same time when this began taking place in America, in the 1960s and 1970s. Since the Hungarian Communist government considered the Cold War émigrés to be their political enemies, with some exceptions, researchers in those decades mostly focused on the various groups of Hungarian immigrants who left Hungary before the end of World War II (e.g. the Kossuth émigrés, the Old Hungarians, and to some extent, the Hungarians who left in 1919 after the demise of the Hungarian Soviet Republic).

192 Julianna Puskás, Kivándorló Magyarok az Egyesült Államokban 1880-1940, 50-54.
194 Puskás, Kivándorló Magyarok az Egyesült Államokban, 44.
196 For instance, Miklós Szántó wrote about the DP wave of emigrants and the 1956ers. Miklós Szántó, Magyarok Amerikában (Budapest: Gondolat, 1984).
197 Puskás, Kivándorló Magyarok az Egyesült Államokban, 48-50.
Although at first the research concerning Hungarian Americans mainly centered on the leftist movements,\(^{198}\) later it was the Old Hungarians, the immigrants who left Hungary roughly between 1880 and the First World War, who became one of the most studied groups at that time. Ethnographic, linguistic, and historical studies on Hungarian Americans began to spread in the 1980s, while most of the publications in this area appeared between the late 1980s and mid-1990s.\(^{199}\) At that time, scholars primarily turned their attention to the first, immigrant generation.

### 4.1. Scholarly Literature on the Second Generation of Old Hungarians

The academic researchers who have dealt with the second generation of Old Hungarians in the last decades are the following: Julianna Puskás, Zoltán Fejős, Yolan Varga, and recently Ilona Kovács, as well as Timea Oláh. Among them, Timea Oláh was unable to publish her results due to her early death. With the exception of Zoltán Fejős, all of these researchers have studied the case of the children of Old Hungarian immigrants to New Brunswick. Apart from Julianna Puskás, who primarily concentrated on first-generation Hungarian immigrants, the rest of the scholars have turned their full attention to the second generation of this group. Next, I will only discuss those specific works by the above-mentioned authors that handle the theme of the second generation.

As the daughter of an immigrant to New Brunswick, NJ, Julianna Puskás began to explore Hungarian-American communities as a pioneer in the 1970s. She made several study trips to the United States between 1972 and 1985. Puskás interviewed first-, second-, and

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\(^{198}\) Puskás, *Kivándorló Magyarok az Egyesült Államokban*, 49.

third-generation Hungarian Americans and also carried out participant observation. The number of interviews she conducted was more than 500. In her monographic book entitled *Ties that Bind, Ties that Divide* (2000), Julianna Puskás dedicated a whole chapter to the sons and daughters of the Old Hungarians. Moreover, since her research also included a microanalysis within a broader macroanalysis, the author chose to study the chain migration from her native village of Szamosszeg to New Brunswick, NJ. Most of the questions asked from the immigrants’ children were related to the parents’ lives, instead of the members of the second generation themselves. However, Puskás also collected information concerning the assimilation, integration, and identity change of the second generation in terms of its geographical and social mobility, language use, marriage patterns, and attachment to the Hungarian community.

*Ties that Bind, Ties that Divide* was based on a previous book by the same author, published under the title *Kivándorló magyarok az Egyesült Államokban 1880-1940* (1982). This previous book already contained subchapters on the second generation of Old Hungarians and is written from a fairly different light. Firstly, Puskás published *Kivándorló magyarok az Egyesült Államokban* in 1982, at a time when there was still Communist Hungary. Consequently, she sheds more light on the socialist and social democratic activities which were led by Hungarian Americans in the United States. On the other hand, in *Ties that Bind, Ties that Divide* she only discusses this topic very briefly, presumably because the book was written for an American audience and because it appeared approximately twenty years later, in 2000, when Communism was already over in Hungary. Secondly, it is interesting that *Kivándorló magyarok az Egyesült Államokban* places more emphasis on the general

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shame that many second-generation immigrants felt about being Hungarian and their willingness to become American while letting go of anything Hungarian. It also focuses more on the generational and cultural gap between the immigrant parents and their US-born children than *Ties that Bind, Ties that Divide.*

*A Chicagói magyarok két nemzedéke 1890-1940* by Zoltán Fejős appeared in 1993. He began his research in Chicago in 1984 and later returned there to finish his project in 1988 and 1992. Fejős chose two generations of immigrant Hungarians as the objects of his study, that of the Old Hungarians’ immigrant generation and that of their children’s generation. The time frame dedicated to the second generation covers the period running from the end of the 1890s to the end of the 1930s. As opposed to Julianna Puskás, who studied various Hungarian immigrant communities of the United States, doing both a macro- and a microanalysis, Fejős chose to perform a local study and to concentrate on the Chicago Hungarians. His book is an interdisciplinary work, which draws from the fields of ethnography, history, and anthropology, as well as ethnic studies.

Yolan Varga, in collaboration with Emil Varga, published *Children of Ellis Island: The Experiences of Hungarian-Americans* in 1988. The book contains the recollections of the Varga siblings and deals with the Americanization of the children of Hungarian immigrants at the time of the Great Depression. It also presents interesting information on the social mobility of Hungarian Americans, based on Yolan and Emil Varga’s own experience. Since Yolan and Emil Varga were well-known members of the Hungarian community of the Old Hungarians, their stories can be treated as case studies.

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203 For further detail about the second generation, see Puskás, *Kivándorló magyarok az Egyesült Államokban,* 362-366 and 388-394.
Within the last decade, two researchers have dealt intensely with the second generation of the Old Hungarians who grew up in the early decades of the twentieth century in New Brunswick, NJ. The first to study this group was Ilona Kovács, who was followed by Timea Oláh. Ilona Kovács performed two studies on the above-mentioned group. For the first one, *Katonalevelek/Soldier Letters*, the author published and analyzed a collection of letters written by second-generation Hungarian-American World War II soldiers to their pastor.²⁰⁶ The letters, written between 1942 and 1945 to Rev. András Kósa of the Magyar Reformed Church, who was also the president of the Hungarian Defense Council, were found by Kovács at Rutgers University’s archives in 1995.²⁰⁷

One year after the release of *Katonalevelek*, Kovács tackled a new project in 2013, continuing her previous study on the soldier letters. The scope of her research was to assess the readjustment of the veterans into the labor market and the local Hungarian-American Community. The researcher also examined whether there were any changes in the ex-soldiers’ social status and living circumstances after returning from the US Army and whether they took advantage of the G.I. Bill.²⁰⁸ Other important topics covered by Kovács concern the language use and the ethnic identity of the veteran’s generation. She also touches upon similar themes regarding the successive third generation; for instance, she deals with the immigrants’ grandchildren’s ties to the local Hungarian community. Kovács conducted her interviews in May-June of 2013. The period studied by the author begins with the post-Second World War period and ends with the 1960s. Although her research has not yet been published, Kovács

²⁰⁸ *G.I. Bill* was the popular term used for the *Servicemen’s Readjustment Act* (1944), which provided the returning soldiers from World War II with assistance in terms of education, housing, health care, and employment.
presented her findings at at least two conferences in 2015 and later provided me with her manuscript and gave me permission to summarize her results.\textsuperscript{209}

As a Fulbright scholar, Timea Oláh conducted research in New Brunswick between 2012 and 2013, also concerning the children of Hungarian immigrants who came to the United States before the First World War. Contrarily to Ilona Kovács, Oláh’s research did not focus almost entirely on the Reformed Hungarians. The scope of her research was to study the second generation of Old Hungarians who were born in the early decades of the twentieth century from the point of view of their social mobility, as well as to determine to what degree they held on to their Hungarian identity and how this was manifested in their language use, community membership, and activities performed within the local Hungarian community of Old Hungarians.\textsuperscript{210} Although most of her interview subjects were born in the 1920s and 1930s, some were born in the 1910s. The period studied by the researcher also involved those born in the early 1900s and 1910s, the parents of third-generation Hungarian Americans she could reach. Oláh mainly asked her informants about their childhood and their youth; however, some of her interview questions regarded the present time, when her research was undertaken.

Besides the above-mentioned published works and conference presentations, there are some unpublished manuscripts that provide valuable information about the first and second generation of Old Hungarians who lived in New Brunswick. One of the oldest documents is a Rutgers term paper found at the University’s Special Collections University Archives under  


\textsuperscript{210} Timea Oláh, email message to author, September 11, 2012; Oláh did not intend to focus on the second generation of the Cold War immigrants, only on that of the Old Hungarians. Timea Oláh, email message to author, September 29, 2012.
the title “The Development of the Hungarians in New Brunswick.” It was written by Gyögy Enyedi and dates back to 1937. Enyedi based his research on personal interviews, Census figures, and other statistical data. He investigated the social mobility (e.g. from the point of view of education and income) of the New Brunswick Hungarians as well as their acceptance by the host society at the time when he conducted his research.211 Jeanne T. Reock’s senior paper in Sociology, dating back to 1953, also offers valuable insight into the group solidarity and the divisions which existed within the Hungarian community of New Brunswick. It is especially intriguing to read about the questions of intermarriage, interreligious conflicts, and misunderstandings between the then newly arrived Displaced Persons and the already established Hungarian Americans of the city, all mentioned by the author.212 David Burden Smith’s master's thesis from 1965 is a social geographical study in which the author mainly focuses on the time period ranging from 1905, roughly from the beginning of Hungarian immigration to New Brunswick, to 1920. Smith primarily based his inquiry on the manuscripts of the New Jersey State Census data collected in 1905 and 1915 and provides important information on the geographical-, age-, and sex distribution, as well as the occupation and marital status, including the intermarriage of foreign- and US-born Hungarians in New Brunswick.213 Finally, Florence Belding’s 1980 term paper briefly discusses the ethnic consciousness and assimilation of the first, second, and third generations of New Brunswick Hungarians into the host society.214

At this point, Elemér Bakó’s name has to be mentioned as well, who conducted several linguistic interviews in New Jersey between 1961 and 1963 with the help of the

American Hungarian Foundation in New Brunswick. A handful of these interviews were conducted in New Brunswick. Bakó’s scope was to draw a linguistic map of the Hungarian dialects spoken in New Jersey. Although he primarily interviewed first-generation immigrants, one of the New Brunswick-related interviews was made with a second-generation Hungarian woman (Jenőné Vajay), who was born in New Brunswick in 1898.215

4.2. Demographic Issues Concerning the Children of Immigrants

A relevant question to ask is when the majority of second-generation Hungarians were born in New Brunswick. Most of Timea Oláh’s and Ilona Kovács’s informants, who were the children of the pioneer generation, grew up in the 1920s and 1930s. This was partly because their interviews were made relatively late in time, in 2012 and 2013. Interestingly, the birth years of their interviewees also correspond to what is stated in Yolan Varga’s book, published much earlier, in 1988, namely that they and their friends grew up during the Great Depression.216 Since the large-scale emigration of Hungarians to the United States roughly took place between 1880 and the First World War, and given that the first Hungarian family to settle in the city arrived in 1888,217 one might wonder why the majority of the above-mentioned researchers’ subjects were born forty or fifty years after Hungarians started leaving their country in great numbers. How many children could have been born from Hungarian parents at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries in New Brunswick? Given that there is a scarcity of information concerning second-generation children born around the year 1900, one might ask whether they existed in relevant numbers at all. From Elemér Bakó’s and Timea Oláh’s interviews one can learn that there were already some children of Hungarian

217 August J. Molnar, “Hungarian Pioneers and Immigrants in New Jersey,” 258.
immigrants living in New Brunswick at the beginning of the 1900s and 1910s who were either born in the United States or brought there at a very early age.\textsuperscript{218}

Despite the fact that the Hungarians made up a significant portion of the city’s population, David Burden Smith’s social geography paper from 1965 has shown that there were relatively few married people among the Hungarian immigrants in New Brunswick in both 1905 as well as in 1915. In 1905 64.2 percent of the city’s Hungarian men and women were single. Even though the majority of Hungarians still remained unmarried ten years later, in 1915, by that time this number had shrunk to 57.7 percent.\textsuperscript{219} This was partly due to the dominance of women among the Hungarian immigrants in New Brunswick. In fact, in 1905 63.8 percent of New Brunswick’s Hungarian population were women, whereas only 36.2 of them were men, which means that roughly two-thirds of Hungarians were women at that time. As opposed to other immigrant towns, where young males constituted the majority, in the earliest years of the 1900s women were more wanted in New Brunswick than men. This was because the New Brunswick Cigar Company and the smaller cigar factories along with Johnson & Johnson preferred to hire women in the production of cigars and medical sundries, respectively.\textsuperscript{220} On the other hand, initially, men rather sought work in the steel and mining industries which New Brunswick could not offer.\textsuperscript{221} Another reason for the predominance of unmarried Hungarians was the relatively large number of teenage Hungarian girls in New Brunswick.\textsuperscript{222} Interestingly, by 1915 the number of male and female Hungarians almost leveled out to a 45 and 55 percent ratio, respectively. By that time the need for male labor had grown, which led to a rise in the number of men employed on the railroads and in foundries.\textsuperscript{223} Smith claims that the prevalence of single Hungarian women could also have

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{219} Smith, “The Hungarians in New Brunswick,” 47.
\textsuperscript{220} Smith, “The Hungarians in New Brunswick,” 32-33.
\textsuperscript{221} Smith, “The Hungarians in New Brunswick,” 40.
\textsuperscript{222} Smith, “The Hungarians in New Brunswick,” 32.
\textsuperscript{223} Smith, “The Hungarians in New Brunswick,” 41.
\end{footnotesize}
attracted the Hungarian males to New Brunswick. Presumably for these reasons, by 1915 the number of unmarried Hungarians had decreased to 57.7 percent.\textsuperscript{224} Along with the rise in marriages from 1905 to 1915 came naturally an increase in the proportion of US-born Hungarian children in the city. Whereas in 1905 US-born Hungarian children comprised only 14.3 percent of New Brunswick’s Hungarian population, by 1915 they already represented 28.8 percent or roughly one-third of it.\textsuperscript{225} Based on these statistics, along with the fact that in the early decades of the twentieth century it was normal to have an age difference of as much as twenty years between siblings, one could argue that the children of the first wave of Hungarian immigrants were born in the period which began right at the turn of the century and lasted until the 1930s.

\textbf{4.3. Social Mobility}

Up to this point, most studies dealing with the turn-of-the-century Hungarian immigrants and their children have focused on the ethnic awareness and the integration of this cohort. The latter can be measured by taking into account various factors, including the social mobility of its members in terms of income, housing and education, and also by their ability to speak English. In 1993 Fejős stated that the second generation of Old Hungarians was a relatively unknown group. He claimed that there was a scarcity of information not only in terms of how its members approached their ethnicity but also in terms of their social mobility and how they could fit into mainstream American society.\textsuperscript{226}

Regarding the question of social mobility, there were two central aims that immigrants and their children opted for: education and financial security. Several sources dealing with the Old Hungarians of New Brunswick testify that the priorities were usually set in the following

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{225} Smith, “The Hungarians in New Brunswick,” 44.
\bibitem{226} Fejős, \textit{A chicagói magyarok}, 162-163.
\end{thebibliography}
way: thriftiness and work came first, as a means to achieve financial security, and the need for education usually came second. For example, Yolan Varga discusses the educational opportunities that were open to second-generation Hungarian Americans. Generally, most immigrant parents could not afford to send their oldest child to high school. However, during the Depression years, when only a few people could find employment and high schools were free anyway, it made it easier for the children of the immigrants to study further. This did not apply for college education though, which was not free. For this reason, only a small segment of their generation could pay for higher education. Yolan and Emil Varga were among these few people. Ms. Varga remembers that her yearly tuition at NJC (today’s Douglass College at Rutgers University, located in New Brunswick) totaled $125 for the first semester and $98 for the second. One semester’s fees equaled about 10 weeks’ earnings that her father received. Emil, on the other hand, attended the New Brunswick Theological Seminary on scholarship. 227

Julianna Puskás and Ilona Kovács had similar findings concerning the education of the children of Hungarian immigrants in New Brunswick. The first and second-generation Hungarians were mostly blue-collar workers and only a few of the immigrants’ children obtained a college education. Ilona Kovács quotes Rev. Joseph Bodnar of the Bayard Street Presbyterian Church, who told her that Hungarian-American veterans returning to their hometown after the Second World War generally did not opt for college. Most of them had received an education up to the 5th, 6th, or 8th grade. 228 On the other hand, Puskás states that by the 1970s most members of the third-generation received at least a high school degree but often a university degree as well. By that time the importance of education also preceded that

227 Varga and Varga, *Children of Ellis Island*, 150.
of material gains.\textsuperscript{229} This is also confirmed by Kovács, who writes that all of the veteran’s children attended college.\textsuperscript{230}

Despite the fact that education was not in the forefront, several sources state that Hungarian Americans, most of them coming from a peasant background, could gradually move into the middle class. Julianna Puskás discusses the Cleveland Hungarians’ social mobility in “The Magyars in Cleveland, 1880-1930” (2002). The author claims that “by the 1910s, the Buckeye neighborhood had formed itself into a structured micro-society, with its own internal status hierarchy.”\textsuperscript{231} One of the first steps in the social mobility process of the pioneer generation was to take in lodgers, that is, to become a burdosgazda.\textsuperscript{232} Later they could establish their own small business, for instance, a tavern, a grocery store, or a butcher shop, drawing customers from the immigrant community. Other popular forms of entrepreneurship were opening a saloon (korcsma) or becoming an immigrant banker.\textsuperscript{233} Bankers often served as travel- or real estate agents as well. Puskás states that until the turn of the 19\textsuperscript{th} and 20\textsuperscript{th} centuries, most of these small entrepreneurs consisted of people who had practiced the same or a similar profession in Hungary as tradesmen or craftsmen, prior to their emigration. Peasants were only able to get into these positions after the beginning of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century.\textsuperscript{234}

Ilona Kovács particularly concentrates on the economic advancement of World War II veterans. She asserts that the ex-soldiers could easily reintegrate into the workplace thanks to the G. I. Bill, which required that corporations take back their former employees who served in the US military during the war. This way, many second-generation Hungarian Americans

\textsuperscript{229} Puskás, \textit{Ties that Bind, Ties that Divide}, 294.
\textsuperscript{232} Burdosgazda: the owner of a boarding house.
\textsuperscript{233} Korcsma: a place or a sort of pub where people could not only have a drink, but also eat. Korcsmas also served as socialization centers.
could return to their previous workplace at Johnson & Johnson, the Lefkovits leather factory,\textsuperscript{235} the cigar factory, and the needle factory, among others. With some exceptions, e.g. those who were able to establish their own businesses or were hired by a relative who ran a family business, most of the veterans held blue-collar jobs. Concerning the issue of housing, they were generally cautious about taking out federal loans and therefore did not take advantage of the G.I. Bill either. Rev. Bodnar also told Ilona Kovács that the general image of Hungarians was that they were “big savers” and that they were known by Americans as people who did not go into debt.\textsuperscript{236} If they were in need of money, they borrowed from family members. In another interview August J. Molnar informed the researcher that in case Hungarian Americans wanted to buy a home, they could turn to the Magyar Bank for a loan, for it offered cheaper interest rates with respect to the federal loans.\textsuperscript{237} Kovács concludes that the children of the pioneer generation were contented with their working-class status and given their thriftiness, they were able to secure for themselves a middle-class lifestyle, thanks to the booming postwar economy of the 1950s and 1960s.\textsuperscript{238}

Similarly to Ilona Kovács, Yolan Varga also emphasizes that the immigrants’ children were generally satisfied with their social circumstances: “We were, after all, never a part of the Great Gatsby circle that F. Scott Fitzgerald wrote about. But we knew how to enjoy the little we had.”\textsuperscript{239} Ms. Varga recalls, “we were considered to be ‘millionaires’ if for no other reasons than that our father was working and we went to college.” Her father, who worked for the local Johnson & Johnson Co., as did most of the Hungarian men of the neighborhood, and her mother, who also worked throughout Yolan and Emil’s schoolyears, were eventually able

\textsuperscript{235} The Lefkovits leather factory was operated by a Hungarian Jew, József Lefkovits, who preferred to hire local Hungarians. K. A., interview by Tímea Oláh, January 16, 2013.


\textsuperscript{239} Varga and Varga, Children of Ellis Island, 51.
to build their own house and pay back their mortgage despite the Depression years. This can be seen as remarkable progress, given that earlier Yolan, Emil, and their parents used to live in flats which lacked not only a bathroom but also gas and electricity.

Timea Oláh’s interview questions centered around who could get into prestigious positions among the Hungarians of the city. Until the 1950s, it was the Jews who had economic power and it was the Irish who ran the city’s government in New Brunswick. The latter also controlled the local Fire Department and the Police Department, affairs which were considered a part of politics at that time. The Irish were also in a more advantageous situation than other immigrant groups due to their proficient English skills. A. K. (F, b. 1921), who as a young girl was often mistaken for an Irish girl based on her outer appearance, told Timea Oláh, “Lots of times I would hear remarks against the Hungarians and Italians moving on the street.” These statements were about Hungarians interfering with Irish affairs and came from the fact that the Irish did not want to lose control over the city, for “back in those days all the policemen were Irish, and all the firemen were Irish, and anyone that worked for the city was Irish. So, you know, they liked to keep their group together.”

Several of Oláh’s interview subjects have confirmed that the Hungarians of the immigrant generation could rarely acquire the above-mentioned positions. This was mainly due to the fact that the immigrants generally had a low level of education and English knowledge. Another reason for this was that they were not familiar with how American and

240 Varga and Varga, Children of Ellis Island, 133.
241 Varga and Varga, Children of Ellis Island, 24-25.
242 K. B., interview by Timea Oláh, September 13, 2012.
244 A. K., interview by Timea Oláh, February 24, 2013.
specifically local politics functioned.\textsuperscript{246} The fact that they were unable to unite as an ethnic group was also a crucial reason.\textsuperscript{247}

Concerning party politics, it has to be underlined that the cohort of the Old Hungarians and their descendants have mostly sided with the Democrats ever since the 1930s, whereas before that time a large number of Hungarians used to sympathize with the Republicans. Nevertheless, the Republicans never got as many votes as did the Democrats later, due to several reasons. Despite the fact that Hungarians lived in great numbers in New Brunswick at the beginning of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century, they could not exert political pressure before the First World War, because they did not have enough citizens who were eligible to vote.\textsuperscript{248}

In the 1930s the Republicans lost popularity among the Hungarians due to at least three factors. Locally, the party was able to cause a division within the New Brunswick community between roughly 1919 and 1930. When a group of Hungarians realized that this had prevented them from gaining political power in the city, they formed the American Hungarian Democratic Club of New Brunswick, which later successfully planted people of Hungarian descent into different offices at the police department, the tax office and the post office. The founding of the Democratic Club also led to the appointment of the first Hungarian city physician in 1930, Dr. Ladislaus A. M. Feher, who was of Hungarian parentage but educated in the United States. It also contributed to the first Hungarians running for city commissioner in New Brunswick in 1935.\textsuperscript{249} Another cause of the Democrats’ rising popularity, not just locally but countrywide among other ethnic groups as well, was the Great Depression, which, as it is well known, was partly triggered by Republican \textit{laissez-faire} politics. August J. Molnar, who lived through the Great Depression, remembers that after

\textsuperscript{246} I. S., interview by Timea Oláh, February 22, 2013.
\textsuperscript{247} August J. Molnar, interview by Timea Oláh, September 4, 2012.
\textsuperscript{248} August J. Molnar, interview by Timea Oláh, September 4, 2012.
1929 the everyday worker was left without employment and money. Even if someone owned his or her own house, it was a struggle to keep the house. Roosevelt’s New Deal granted new opportunities, especially in employment, which favorably affected the immigrant groups as well. For instance, one of the well-known agencies set up by Roosevelt, the WPA (*Works Progress Administration*, later known as the *Work Project Administration*), not only provided jobs for the unemployed but started collecting information about America’s ethnic groups as well. Evidently, the immigrant groups benefited from Roosevelt’s social policies, even if those who were the most favorably affected were the generations already born in the United States. Finally, the fact that Zoltán Gombos, the owner and editor of the Cleveland Hungarian newspaper *Szabadság* (who later also bought the New York-based *Amerikai Magyar Népszava*), supported the Democrats was influential in this respect, too.\(^\text{250}\)

The first people to obtain city offices came with the second generation, who were better educated than the pioneer generation.\(^\text{251}\) One such example was Thomas G. Radics, who was born in Hungary and arrived in the United States at age 2. He was the first Hungarian to become a city commissioner around the early 1940s. His daughter, E. Cs. (F, b. ca. 1925), believes that Radics owed his success to the fact that he was a “very outgoing” man. Radics represented the Democratic Party and was in charge of public grounds. In the 1940s there used to be a run-down neighborhood in the outskirts of New Brunswick (Burnet Street, which still exists today, but now also includes a part of Route 18). The area had low water pressure and it was characterized by the presence of cold-water flats. As a result, Radics had a water tower built there. Given that there were many children living in the neighborhood, E. Cs. also visited the area as a young nurse and remembers that one could find mice in the dwellings. Since one of Radics’s intentions was to clean up the neighborhood, he did a lot to

\(^{250}\) August J. Molnar, interview by Timea Oláh, September 4, 2012.
\(^{251}\) E. D., interview by Timea Oláh, January 29, 2013.
have people’s living circumstances changed. He later became postmaster in ca. 1950. He was pushed out of this latter seat in 1959 by a Republican and fellow-Hungarian American (Adalbert S. "Bill" Fekete), who was interestingly his wife’s nephew.

Other Hungarians who later on became commissioners were Luke (Lukács) J. Horvath and John A. Smith. Luke Horvath, whose parents emigrated from Hungary, came from the Fifth Ward, the heart of the Hungarian community. Non-Hungarians also knew him, for he owned a prominent men’s clothing store on Easton Avenue. It is thus presumable that non-Hungarians also voted for him. Mr. Horvath served as a city commissioner for 18 years until 1967, when he was defeated by John A. Smith, a fellow Hungarian American. John A. Smith was born in 1928. His family’s name was originally Kovács and he was an attorney. At that time there were already five commissioners working for the city besides the mayor. Practically, each commissioner represented an ethnic group (e.g. the Irish, Italians, and African Americans besides the Hungarians). Smith later also became a Middlesex County commissioner.

Although New Brunswick never had a Hungarian mayor, Hungarians usually had representation in the city government. Interestingly, the first African-American mayor of the city was Aldrage B. Cooper, who came into office in 1974. He became a city

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252 E. Cs. and W. Cs., interview by Tímea Oláh, February 12, 2013.
commissioner prior to that, in 1967, as a part of the “New Five” together with John A. Smith.259

Becoming a fireman or a policeman was also a form of social advancement. According to K. A. (M, b. 1931), only a few people got these jobs among the second and third generations of Hungarians.260 The first person of Hungarian descent to become a policeman in New Brunswick obtained the job at the local police department through the American Hungarian Democratic Club, approximately one month after it was established.261 K. B. recalls that until the 1950s, a Hungarian (or anyone who was non-Irish) had to hope for a miracle to be selected into this position because of the Irish dominance at the local police department at that time. When her brother, a third-generation Hungarian American wished to become a policeman, her mother became a Democratic committeewoman. Through her connections, partly with local Jewish Americans, she found jobs for extended family members and acquaintances. She was also hoping to secure the dream job for her son. In addition, the entire family attended a series of novena masses nine Wednesdays in a row at a nearby Catholic Church dedicated to Saint Cecilia, praying for a miracle to happen.262 K. B.’s brother received the notice of his acceptance as a police officer after the last day of the novena, which was taken by the family as a sign of heavenly intercession, for at that time it seemed impossible for a Hungarian to enter into that position.263

Firefighters were also respected members of the community. According to K. A., the reason for this was that firemen were paid well and they basically did not have to perform hard work.264 It was the Kara brothers, Peter and Julius (Gyula) Kara, who were the first

262 A novena is a form of mainly Roman Catholic devotion that a person should pray on nine successive occasions, usually on a daily or weekly basis. Masses can also be offered in the form of novenas.
263 K. B., interview by Timea Oláh, September 13, 2012.
Hungarians to be hired as firefighters, also in the 1930s. They were born in Hungary in the first decade of the 1900s but had lived in America since a young age. A. K. remembers that the Kara brothers used to work as house painters before they were employed by the Fire Department. She stated that being a firefighter was a prestigious occupation, because “it was a paid position, it was not a volunteer.” Interestingly, A. K.’s husband, a fellow Hungarian-American, also became a fireman later. He got the job after he returned from World War II as a veteran. The Nemeth brothers were likewise firefighters and together with the Kara brothers, they formed the Kara-Nemeth Radio Orchestra. The Kara-Nemeth brothers were well-known for playing Hungarian music in the neighborhood (for instance, at weddings) and they also had a weekly radio hour called “Hungarian Melody Time.” The type of music they played during this musical hour was Hungarian gypsy music (nóta).

Elemér Bakó’s linguistic interviews recorded in the 1960s can give a great insight into how some Hungarians who immigrated to the United States at the turn of the century without a college education or even a high school diploma could become prominent businessmen and politicians of the city. It is especially useful to highlight the names of Mr. Kosa and Mr. Biro as relevant case studies. Imre Kosa, born in Hungary in 1895, arrived in New Brunswick at age 16 in 1912 and started working at Johnson & Johnson factory, like many other Hungarians. However, he was disturbed by the loud sound of the machines. Two years after his arrival, in 1914, he found a well-paying job at Simplex Automobile Company, which manufactured car parts based on the metric system. Since unlike the average Hungarian, only a few Americans were educated in the metric system, Mr. Kosa was needed for that job.

266 A. K., interview by Timea Oláh, February 24, 2013.
269 Agnes and Karoly Balla, personal communication, October 26, 2018.
Later, he opened his own travel agency in 1919. At that time, Mr. Kosa realized that this was a profitable job, for after the First World War there were huge masses of Hungarians migrating back to Hungary in the hope of resettling and buying land there. He continued this business until 1954, when his son took over the Kosa Agency. Though unsuccessfully, Mr. Kosa also ran for city commissioner in 1935. After a failed early attempt made by his compatriots to get into the city government in 1915, he was among the first Hungarians to run for this post along with two other candidates.

Another interesting case is that of Peter Biro, whose sister was married to Imre Kosa. Born in Hungary in 1898, he arrived in the United States in 1913, at age 15. Prior to his immigration, Mr. Biro had completed six years of schooling in Hungary. He first worked at one of the local cigar factories in New Brunswick, earning 50 cents a day and working 10 hours. Later on, Mr. Biro became a skilled worker at the Michelin Tire Factory, where he already earned 75 cents per day. Upon medical advice, he changed jobs and bought a farm in order to be able to work under more healthy conditions. Upon buying the farm, he realized how much profit the real estate agent had made out of selling it to him. Therefore, Mr. Biro decided to join a real estate business co-owned by Imre Kosa and Géza Stamberger in 1922, after acquiring the necessary real estate patent. His company later became independent from his brother-in-law’s and became known as Peter Biro and Sons (Bíró Péter és Fiai) and offered insurance, money transfer and notary services, besides organizing travel. Many Hungarian Americans, even those who arrived during the Cold War, have purchased their

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270 Imre Kosa, interview by Elemér Bakó, May 7, 1961.
homes through Mr. Biro’s French Street office. At the time of the interview, in 1963, Mr. Biro was living in a 19-room house. He purchased the home from the National Bank Of New Jersey in 1937, during the Great Depression, at a time when many struggled to keep their homes. The bank willingly accepted his first offer right away.

Although the first Hungarian Americans to obtain political offices did not come from the first generation, Mr. Biro also became involved in local politics later on. His first endeavor to get into City Hall was in 1939, after the New Brunswick Hungarians had chosen to back him in an informal primary. Nevertheless, he later withdrew from candidacy because he was promised to be given the commission seat in case of the next vacancy. In 1943 he revealed that until that time three men had been appointed commissioners and that the promise made to him still had not yet been fulfilled. Nevertheless, in his 1963 interview, he stated that he had served as a city commissioner for New Brunswick for 12 years. Between 1956 and 1966 Mr. Biro was an election board commissioner for Middlesex County. It was Mr. Biro and the four other members of the board who were appointed by the mayor that started the parking authority business in New Brunswick. At one time there used to be a shortage in parking facilities in the city, which caused financial losses for shop owners and other businessmen, given that customers rather preferred to shop at the shopping malls right outside of the city. To solve this problem, they came up with the idea of constructing parking lots in downtown New Brunswick. One such multi-story parking lot was the one built between Church and Peterson Streets. To realize this project, they bought several old houses on a loan, which were already in a bad state and which the city later tore down. In 1963 Mr. Biro claimed that the parking lot had a value of 500,000 dollars. By that time there were

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273 Karoly Balla, personal communication, October 26, 2018.
275 “Peter Biro, 84, founded firm; was active in city politics, clubs,” The Central New Jersey Home News, September 9, 1983, 11, https://www.newspapers.com/clip/29723822/peter_biro_obituary/; Jeanne T. Reock mentions the fact that Peter Biro was fooled by the city government and refers to him under the pseudonym Enno Pavleczyk. Reock, “The Hungarian Community of New Brunswick,” 32.
already 7 to 8 such parking lots built in New Brunswick, all of them owned by the city. The business meant a profit for New Brunswick, without being a burden on taxpayers.276

The founders of the Magyar Building & Loan Association of New Brunswick, NJ exemplify both the classic American rags-to-riches success stories and they also verify Julianna Puskás’s observations about the social mobility process of Hungarian immigrants. The financial institution was founded in 1922 by a group of Hungarian-born businessmen. Originally, its primary purpose was to ensure real estate loans for fellow Hungarian immigrants. After the First World War, Hungarians were considered nationals of an enemy state, so they could not secure loans for themselves to buy or build a home. Among the founding members of the Magyar Building & Loan Association were the above-mentioned travel agents James (Imre) Kosa and Peter Biro; Michael (Mihály) Huszar, pub-owner; Louis (Lajos) Gyarmati, owner of a butcher shop; and Imre Szabó, who was an iron trader.277

The Magyar Building and Loan Association became one of the strongest financial institutions of Middlesex County. Whereas a large number of American financial institutions went bankrupt during the Great Depression, this did not happen to the Magyar Building and Loan Association. One of the possible reasons for this was that they only provided loans for building or buying homes, and did not provide loans for shares. Another one was their great organizing ability. Each of the members of the Magyar Building and Loan Association worked hard to recruit new clients with the help of their private businesses. They even organized competitions among themselves for this purpose. The members of the Board of Directors were divided into two groups, led by Mr. Kosa and Mr. Biro, and the party that won received a dinner invitation from the losing party.278 By 1960 the institution, at that time already called the Magyar Savings and Loan Association, had an asset of more than ten

276 Peter Biro, interview by Elemér Bakó, June 9, 1963; “Peter Biro, 84,” 11.
278 Imre Kosa, interview by Elemér Bakó, May 7, 1961.
By 1961 the institution had clients from 48 U.S. states, Hungarians and non-Hungarians alike, e.g. Italians and Germans, all of whom at one time lived in New Brunswick and stayed loyal to the association even after moving away from New Jersey.280

4.4. Hungarian Language Maintenance and Native Tongue Education

In order to understand the ethnic identity of the second generation of Old Hungarians, it is necessary to examine several components of their identity, such as their language use, relations with the ethnic homeland, religious affiliation, and also other aspects, for instance, their community activities and membership, as well as who they socialized with. One of the most ambiguous themes concerns to what degree they learned and cultivated the Hungarian language. According to August J. Molnar, the children of the immigrants generally went to American public schools; however, given that in the early years (ca. between 1890 and the early 1900s) Hungarians were planning to stay for only a short period, many churches organized part-time Hungarian schools at an elementary level to provide for some kind of Hungarian education in case their children were to return to Hungary eventually. There was still a demand for this kind of education during the Great Depression, when many families returned to Hungary.281 In the early years of the 1900s, the Hungarian government also supported the native language instruction of the immigrants’ children through the so-called “American Action.” The government’s goal was to prevent the assimilation of Hungarian children and, as stated above by Molnar, to provide them with the necessary education that would facilitate the Hungarian families’ return to the homeland.282

The interviews made by Oláh reveal that a large number of second-generation children got some kind of Hungarian education. They generally learned to read and write in Hungarian and spoke Hungarian with their immigrant parents. It was not uncommon for them to read aloud the local Hungarian newspapers for their parents.

Catholic schools provided an opportunity for the members of ethnic groups to become engaged in their language and culture.283 In New Brunswick, for example, the Germans could attend St. John’s School, while many of the Hungarian Catholics went to St. Ladislaus School (Szent László Iskola).284 St. Ladislaus School was formed by a nursery school (csecsemő és napközi otthon), a kindergarten (óvoda), and an elementary school running until the eighth grade.285 From Oláh’s interviews, one can learn that Hungarian-born parents chose to send their children St. Ladislaus School for mainly two reasons. Firstly, it provided religious education. The second reason, namely, that it was a Hungarian school, was also important, but somewhat less crucial for parents than its religious aspect.

In the early years of the school’s existence, lessons were mostly in Hungarian and the school followed an all-Hungarian curriculum. Based on a 1939 souvenir book written by Father Szaléz Kiss, one can learn that St. Ladislaus School was informally established in 1907 and later officially opened in 1914. The language of instruction became English; however, the sisters who taught at the school were free to incorporate the Hungarian language into the curriculum.286 K. B. stated that her mother, a daughter of Hungarian immigrants who was born in the United States in 1907, was taken out of St. Ladislaus School as a third-grader (at ca. age 8-9) and was laughed at when she entered public school because of her poor English knowledge when she said “five yards of onions” instead of “five pounds.” This shows that the

283 Fejős, A chicagói magyarok, 166.
284 K. B., interview by Timea Oláh, September 13, 2012.
earliest members of the first American-born generation were brought up in an almost entirely Hungarian-speaking environment.\(^{287}\) Father Kiss admits that the fact that in the first seven years of the school’s history children were taught based on an exclusively Hungarian curriculum was not beneficial for the Hungarian youth: “The all Hungarian school became a disadvantage for the future of our young people. They were left behind in the field of American education, the necessary elite were not reared and if they were, we lost them.”\(^{288}\)

Partly due to the above-cited reason and because St. Ladislaus became an officially recognized school (New Jersey law required that part of the instruction had to be carried out in English), in the later years, lessons were taught in English and only a very basic education was provided in Hungarian. A. K., recalls that she was put in St. Ladislaus’ nursery at age two and a half, around 1924. The nursery school was found in the same building which today gives home to the building of Széchenyi Hungarian School and Kindergarten. The nursery school, the kindergarten, and the elementary school were all run by Hungarian nuns from the order of the Daughters of Divine Charity (Isteni Szeretet Leányai). Whereas in the nursery school and in kindergarten the sisters spoke Hungarian, by the time the children entered school they were taught primarily in English; however, they learned to read and write in both languages.\(^{289}\) It is important to note that many of Timea Oláh’s interview subjects went to St. Ladislaus School and that it was not uncommon for them to continue at St. Peter’s High School, another Catholic school which belonged to the local Irish church, St. Peter’s. Given that both of them were parochial schools, students had to pay some form of tuition at both institutions. E. Cs., for instance, who was born in the mid-1920s, told Oláh that her father was a member of both parishes where he paid regular membership fees. In the case of St. Peter’s

\(^{287}\) K. B., interview by Timea Oláh, September 13, 2012.
this meant a payment of 15 dollars per month. As a result, his children did not have to pay any extra tuition fees.\textsuperscript{290}

Olah’s interviews testify that supplementary forms of Hungarian education besides day schools were very common in the case of the immigrants’ children. Parishes usually also provided other part-time forms of education in Hungarian, e. g. Friday school, Saturday school, and Sunday school in various settlements.\textsuperscript{291} Two of Olah’s interviewees who attended the Reformed Church mentioned that they went to Sunday school after the church services. Although Sunday school mostly concerned religious education, e. g. learning about Martin Luther, Hungarian hymns were taught as well.

Organizing summer school for the children was especially popular at that time. Zoltán Fejős writes that the first summer school was opened in Bridgeport, CT in 1897 and that this form of schooling first spread across country’s various Hungarian communities through the Reformed churches.\textsuperscript{292} Among Oláh’s interviewees, one person went to summer school in Cleveland, OH, one person in Bridgeport, CT, and two other ladies talked about their experiences in Carteret and New Brunswick, NJ, respectively. All of them belonged to the Reformed Church. In the case of New Brunswick, summer school was a relief for working parents, especially since many women among the pioneer generation were also employed out of necessity besides the men. Both in Carteret as well as in New Brunswick children learned to read and write in Hungarian, and got acquainted with Hungarian history and songs. C. B. went to summer school in Carteret in the early 1950s, before the arrival of the 1956ers. There, the summer school lasted for one month, with daily lessons from 9. a.m. to 1. p.m. About 100 children attended the classes which were held in a public school that the church rented out for

\textsuperscript{290} E. Cs., interview by Timea Oláh, February 12, 2013.
\textsuperscript{292} Fejős, A chicagói magyarok, 166.
this purpose. J. W. recalls that in New Brunswick all materials were taught in Hungarian. While the reading, writing, and history lessons took place before noon, after lunch the children had a chance to be engaged in the more enjoyable activities: the girls were taught embroidery by the minister’s wife on the porch while the boys learned to do woodwork. Singing Hungarian songs was also a part of these pleasurable activities. Summer school lasted six weeks in New Brunswick and the tuition fee was three dollars for the entire period. This was not cheap, but people could afford it.

Whereas the language used in the household with parents was usually Hungarian, the children of the earliest wave of Hungarian immigrants usually spoke English with each other and put less of an emphasis on maintaining the Hungarian language or passing it on to the next generation. In the case of the veterans who returned from World War Two, Ilona Kovács notes that most Hungarian Americans lived in two-family homes in New Brunswick. The older generation, the grandparents usually lived downstairs, while the younger generation lived upstairs with their children. Although they usually spoke English within the nuclear family, most of them also knew or at least understood Hungarian. The grandchildren, the members of the third generation, often learned Hungarian living with their grandparents. Despite this fact, it is important to note that by the time Ilona Kovács interviewed people belonging to the third generation in 2013, they were only able to express themselves in a fragmented Hungarian which consisted of a few words, phrases, and songs they remembered, even if they could still understand the language to some degree.

In most Hungarian-American communities formed by the pre-World War I immigrants, small children belonging to the second and the third generations rarely spoke to each other in Hungarian. C. B., who had a US-born father raised in Hungary and a Hungarian-

293 C. B., interview by Timea Oláh, February 5, 2013.
born mother, asserted that she was always amazed to hear little children speak Hungarian in today's Hungarian-American community formed by the descendants of the Cold War immigrants and the newly arrived Hungarians. Indeed, at the time when she grew up in Carteret, another town in New Jersey which accommodated Hungarian immigrants at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, only old people used to speak Hungarian among themselves. Although C. B. used Hungarian with her mother, she always spoke English with her Hungarian friends and later with her husband as well. She recalls that when she was an adolescent in the 1950s, there were no other Hungarian institutions or community centers besides the churches in Carteret. By the time she reached the age of being able to attend a youth group through the local church, all of its activities took place in English, for instance, the dance rehearsals and the drama club organized by the minister. Despite the fact that C. B.’s husband was also raised in a Hungarian family, given that he was the third child out of the parents’ four children, due to the influence of the older siblings, more English had already infiltrated the language than in the case of the first child. Naturally, the siblings generally spoke English whenever they were among themselves. Interestingly, C. B. stated that the reason why she spoke English with her husband was because of his inadequate knowledge of Hungarian. Whereas he used the formal form of conjugation (magázás) when addressing his wife, he used the informal one (tegezés) with his wife’s mother.296

The language of the interviews conducted by Timea Oláh is also worthwhile to discuss. In an email correspondence I exchanged with the researcher, she revealed to me that nearly all of the second-generation Hungarian Americans she met used English instead of Hungarian in their daily lives. 10 out of the 11 interviews she conducted with second-generation Hungarian Americans were basically carried out in English, although some contained longer conversations in broken Hungarian. Nevertheless, insertions in Hungarian,

mostly words are common in the case of direct quotations. Many of her interviewees justified not speaking Hungarian anymore with the mere fact that those who used to speak the language around them were not alive anymore. As a result of the advanced age of the informants, many experienced difficulties with recalling Hungarian words and memories. One of her interviewees tried to express herself in Hungarian but became so embarrassed that she did not continue in Hungarian. Oláh found it very moving when another one of her participants, “an old man started singing the Hungarian anthem, and became so emotional that his voice broke after a few lines. Being frustrated by the fact that he could not recall the lines, he slammed his fist on the table.”

Nevertheless, Oláh did meet descendants of Old Hungarians who spoke fluent Hungarian or were able to carry out a conversation in the language. One of her interview subjects (K. A., born in 1931) was able to express himself very smoothly in Hungarian, in spite of the fact that he did not attend Hungarian church and community events anymore, given that he was already living outside of New Brunswick, in Highland Park, at the time of the interview. The reason for this is that although K. A. was born in the United States, he was brought back to Hungary at a young age and lived there roughly until age 18. Another interview subject Oláh spoke to was a lady whose relatives defected to New Brunswick during socialist times. The woman was able to relearn Hungarian by helping her newly arrived relatives. Although the lady spoke broken Hungarian and had an American accent, she was able to engage in a longer conversation and speak Hungarian fluently during the interview. Oláh also reported having met two elderly women who still kept in touch with their relatives in Hungary through telephone calls and interacted with them in Hungarian: one of them was 100 years old at the time of the interview in 2013.

297 My translation; original: “Pl. egy idos bacsi, aki elkezdte enekelni a Himnuszt, aminek mar az elso sorai kozben elcsuklott a hangja, annyira elerzekenyult, aztan a szovegbe beleakadt, es az asztalt csapkodta duheben, hogy nem jut az eszebe..” Tímea Oláh, Facebook direct message to author, June 1, 2014.

298 Tímea Oláh, Facebook direct message to author, June 1, 2014.
4.5. Transnational Relations with the Homeland

The previous examples evidently point to the importance of transnational relations between immigrants or their descendants and their land of origin. It is a well-known fact among historians that the early immigrants coming from Eastern-, Central-, and Southern Europe did not have definite plans of settlement in the United States. Likewise, the original aim of the Hungarian pioneers was to save enough money to eventually be able to buy land in their homeland and resettle there. As stated above in connection with Imre Kosa’s interview, in 1919 there was a huge wave of remigration to the homeland, after the end of the First World War. Unfortunately, the Hungarian returnees had to realize that the landowners were not willing to sell their lands for “any money, even if they offered to pay with gold.” Consequently, a large majority of those who were wishing to resettle in Hungary changed their minds approximately within a year and returned to the United States to settle there permanently.299

Nevertheless, relations between the homeland and the Hungarians living in the United States remained close. The interviews conducted by Timea Oláh and Elemér Bakó can be considered interesting case studies of these connections. They reveal that the Hungarian immigrants and even their children themselves often spent a longer period of time in Hungary than one would expect, often at least a year or several years, for various reasons. Many parents back sent their American-born children to stay with the relatives in the homeland to provide them with some knowledge of Hungarian language and culture, and later brought them back to the United States when they were around age eight.300 Oftentimes, the immigrants themselves were sent home by their doctor if they had overworked themselves in

300 K. B., interview by Timea Oláh, September 13, 2012.
the United States and had health issues and needed to be healed. For instance, two of Elemér Bakó’s interviewees who were working in New Brunswick were sent back to Hungary for this reason. Györgyné Domiter was advised to return to Balázsfalva, Vas county, to get a change of fresh air. Consequently, she stayed home with her husband for one year in 1909-1910 and her abdominal pain, caused by anemia, was almost immediately gone. Some Hungarians were temporarily drawn home during the early years of the Great Depression. When K. A.’s father lost his job in the rubber factory in 1932, his mother decided to move back to Hungary with her American-born children. K. A. was six months old at that time. The reason for this was that his maternal grandfather was a landowner and his land seemed to be like Canaan for them, where they could swim in milk and honey. Although the father was able to find work by the end of the 1930s, World War II broke out, and the family was stuck in Hungary until the early 1950s, due to the onset of communism. K. A. and his family were finally able to return to New Brunswick after two years of trying because previously the Soviets did not let them leave the border, despite the fact that they had American passports.

K. B.’s family became similarly torn apart during the Cold War. In 1932 her grandfather decided to return to Hungary to “die in the country he loved.” One of K. B.’s aunts also accompanied her father who died a few years later, and an older sister of hers, who stayed in Hungary for a year when she was eight years old. K. B.’s aunt continued to travel back and forth between Hungary and the United States until she was stuck behind the iron curtain and forced to stay in Hungary permanently, never being able to see her family in America again.

304 K. B., interview by Timea Oláh, September 13, 2012.
Most Hungarian Americans remained in constant communication with their relatives who stayed behind in Hungary. Olah’s interviews reveal that it was usual for people to exchange weekly letters and to send home money and medications. One family, for example, regularly remitted money for food through the *Peter Biro and Sons* travel and insurance agency. They continued to send home packages with clothing and medicine during World War II and during communism.305 Another lady happened to be traveling to Hungary at the outbreak of the Second World War, in 1939. She had several hundred dollars hidden in her belt, which she and her mother brought home for an acquaintance of one of her colleague’s in Hungary. She herself also continued remitting money to her relatives, just as her mother used to do when she was alive, until about five years before the interview took place in 2013.306

It is also interesting to examine how frequently people traveled to Hungary. For various reasons, some never returned to the country where they or their parents were born. Besides the obvious fact that the iron curtain split many families apart, in their later years, some were hindered from traveling home by serious illness, while the younger generation could have been influenced by the image of rural Hungary that was transmitted to them by their family members. An interesting case study is that of a woman was born in 1934 (A. A.) and whose mother came from the village of Pócspetri, found in today’s Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg county in Hungary. When asked why she never had visited Hungary, she answered that it was due to the social conditions that her relatives talked about, for example, the ones that existed when her mother grew up (e.g. the presence of outhouses and dirt floors in village houses, along with straw mattresses). She was also kept back from visiting the old country by a story told by her godparents who lived in the United States and went back to visit their relatives in the same village. Since there was no bathroom in the newly-built but yet unfinished house where they stayed, when A. A.’s godfather wished to take a shower, they put

305 K. B., interview by Timea Oláh, September 13, 2012.
a large water basin outside and waited for the sun to heated up the water inside it. They then poured it into a watering can. A. A.’s godmother started showering her husband from the can, standing on a chair. Interestingly, neither did A. A.’s mother or her mother’s brother ever travel back to Hungary either. She stated that their main reasons for this were that it was difficult to find a job, incomes were low, vacation time was restricted, and in case people had a job, they were afraid to lose it, given that the workforce could easily be replaced. The fact that her parents’ generation had also lived through the Great Depression also affected their choice to refrain from traveling.307

Nevertheless, several of Oláh’s interview subjects stated that they had been to Hungary on several occasions. They did not refrain from traveling overseas even when transatlantic voyages took place by ship, and also later during the Cold War, when transportation between the two countries was already faster but political relations between Hungary and the United States were restrained. 7 out of the 11 second-generation Hungarian Americans interviewed by Oláh asserted that they had traveled to Hungary, among whom one person had been there only once, four people between two and five times, and two people more than five times. Although these numbers do not have a statistical significance per se, they give the general image that even if voyages to Hungary were not as frequent as they are today, the community of the Old Hungarians was still connected to the mother country in some way. Julianna Puskás writes that it was after the Amnesty of 1963 when Hungarians started to travel to the homeland in great numbers, primarily the 1956ers, but also those who were still alive among the Old Hungarians.308

308 Puskás, Ties that Bind, Ties that Divide, 293.
4.6. The Ethnic Identity of Second-Generation

Indirectly, the above-mentioned issues, such as the use of language and the relations with the homeland, give some insight into the ethnic identity of the children of the Old Hungarian immigrants. Timea Oláh’s interview questions also directly addressed this issue. All of her informants acknowledged their Hungarian roots, for instance through their affiliation with the Hungarian churches, and many were proud of having Hungarian ancestry. Nevertheless, slightly more than the majority of the people she asked stated that they felt mostly American. This is primarily because they were raised in America. A. A. (F, b. 1934) who was born of Hungarian parents in New Brunswick, stated, “here, all of us, householdwise—with my aunt, my grandmother, and us—once we were here, we were American. And we had Hungarian background, and I don’t say we ignored it, but I personally never went out of my way that ‘I have to do this or I have to find out about this because I want to know about it. I just took things for granted.” J. K. (F, b. 1912), who arrived in the United States at age ten in 1922, admitted that she “became Americanized very quickly. But the Hungarian was always behind.” She also said, “we wanted to become Americanized and blend in. […] Because we came to establish a new way of life and blend in with the local residents.” At the same time, she claimed that American society never pushed her to become American. At home in the family, they spoke Hungarian, but in case they were with non-Hungarians they used English so that they would not become offended by not understanding what they spoke.

Two of her informants who belonged to the second generation revealed that they had a strong Hungarian identity; however, they seemed somewhat reluctant to acknowledge it. For instance, A. K. (F, b. 1921) told Oláh, “regarding the culture, there wasn’t any thought, it was

309 A. A., interview by Timea Oláh, February 19, 2013
310 J. K., interview by Timea Oláh, January 10, 2013.
311 J. K., interview by Timea Oláh, January 10, 2013.
just a natural thing that half of me is Hungarian and half is American. Equal. I always considered it equal. But I don’t, you know, talk about it like, to any of my friends ‘cause they’d think I’m weird.”^312\footnote{A. K., interview by Timea Oláh} K. A. (M, b. 1931), who was born in New Brunswick but raised in Hungary and returned to the United States in his early twenties, was not ashamed to say that he was a Hungarian. He asserted, “since we are living here, we have to say we are Hungarian Americans,”^313\footnote{My translation of; original: “mivel itt élünk, há’, azt kell, hogy mondjuk, hogy amerikai magyar.”} but he confessed that he felt more Hungarian than American.^314\footnote{K. A., interview by Tímea Oláh, E. D, interview by Tímea Oláh; A. K., interview by Timea Oláh; K. A., interview by Timea Oláh, K. B., int interview by Timea Oláh.} The children of Hungarian immigrants grew up and went to school with other descendants of immigrants, such as the Italians, the Germans, and the Irish. Although they also socialized with other young Hungarians at weddings, picnics, and other social events (for instance, the Saint Emeric Club in the case of Catholic boys) and often married another Hungarian from the community (whereas they rarely married a Dutch or an Anglo-American), they formed very close friendships with the members of the above-mentioned ethnic groups and even attended their festive events.\footnote{E. D, interview by Timea Oláh; A. K., interview by Timea Oláh; K. A., interview by Timea Oláh, K. B., int interview by Timea Oláh.} To put it with Timea Oláh’s words, “their integration to American society was not due to discrimination, but they took it as a natural process.”^316\footnote{Tímea Oláh, “The children of ‘New Immigrant’ Hungarians in New Brunswick, N. J. – An Oral History” (lecture presented at the HAAS10 conference).}
Chapter 5

Transnationalism and Long-distance Nationalism

Transnationalism refers to the process when immigrants remain in contact with their country of origin either through communication or by making travels to the homeland. Similarly, one can foster transnational relations with other compatriots of a given diaspora. With the advent of modern technology, communication between the old and the new homeland has become ever easier. Whereas a few decades ago the fastest way to communicate with relatives and friends at home was through the telephone, in the past ca. 15 years new advances have been made in technology. For instance, Skype, Messenger, and similar apps enable people not only to hear each other but also to see each other. Moreover, whereas once people had to make costly long-distance calls or resort to relatively cheap calling-cards at best, now they can practically make costless unlimited calls through the internet.

Although in the middle of the 1990s and the early 2000s sociologists still published important papers and books on the question of assimilation, roughly during this same period researchers gradually shifted their attention to the topics related to transnationalism and diaspora relations. Instead of focusing on the loss or erosion of ethnic identity, the new publications focused on the identity retention of immigrants and their ties to the homeland.317

In my 2009 master’s thesis, I have found that the Hungarian Americans active within the New Brunswick community were in regular touch with friends and relatives in Hungary. Based on a questionnaire which I distributed to 63 people, it became evident that only one

person did not have any acquaintances in Hungary, who nevertheless regularly corresponded with his Hungarian relatives in Argentina. Moreover, a large majority of my informants made visits to Hungary or their native homelands in the Carpathian basin every few years.318

By now, roughly ten years later, the relations between the diaspora and Hungary have become more intense. Although during my 2017 fieldwork I did not resort to the use of questionnaires due to the shortness of time that was available for my visit, in the last four years I have been surprised to see the growing number of Hungarian Americans among my Facebook acquaintances who visit Hungary each summer, even people who are married to non-Hungarians or whose children only speak very little Hungarian.

Since my Hungarian-American friends and acquaintances have actively held on to their Hungarian identity for decades, my original presumption was that the Hungarians in exile had always supported the idea of making visits to the homeland. As my research went ahead, I discovered that the worldwide community of Hungarian political émigrés (emigráció) had been starkly divided over the question of whether people should be in touch with Hungary. Most Hungarians who emigrated to the West opposed having relations with the Hungarian government, and not specifically with the people of Hungary.

5.1. Contacts with the Mother Country during the Cold War

Although today’s Hungarian diaspora members engage in transnational practices with the homeland while also embracing long-distance nationalism, for many decades, the Hungarians of the United States practiced long-distance nationalism without having any direct connections with Hungary. As stated in the Introduction, in connection with the term long-distance nationalism applied by Éva Huseby-Darvas, this took place during the Cold War when ties with the Hungarian government and the people of the homeland were restrained.

Although some émigrés, who were referred to as “dissidents” by the Hungarian government, were indeed not granted permission to reenter Hungary, this kind of disconnection from the homeland often became voluntary after the amnesty of 1963. It was nurtured by the political ideals of anti-communism, which resulted in isolation from the mother country and its government. It was also fostered by the fear of having communist agents in the United States and abroad, in other exile communities. The isolation mentioned above lasted until the fall of socialism.

There are relatively few sources that examine the exile communities’ relations with the homeland during the Cold War. Even though the study of transnational ties to the homeland is at present times a prevalent object of study within the field of sociology, this theme has been forgotten by now. Relatively few scholars have written about the criticism directed at the Native Tongue Conference (Anyanyelvi Konferencia) and about the those who refused to return to Hungary as long as the country was under communist rule. Even in the previous decades, only a few authors had dealt with this topic, among them Miklós Szántó (1984), Tamás Tamás (1993) and Gyula Borbándi (1989, 1996). The protests organized by Hungarian Americans who disfavored the return of the Holy Crown of Hungary have been reported for instance by Tibor Glant and in the above-cited article by Tamás, who also discusses the conservative Hungarian émigrés’ antagonism to détente. András Ludányi and Tibor Cseh have mentioned that some invitees of the Magyar Baráti Közösség (Hungarian

319 Hungarians who left the country without a permission were designated as “dissidents” by the socialist Hungarian government during the Cold War. Although its original meaning was equivalent to the English word dissident, it practically denoted someone who opposed communism and defected to the West. The term had a negative connotation for people who escaped the regime.


Communion of Friends), for instance, folksinger Ferenc Béres along with Sándor Püski and his wife were considered to be suspicious in 1972, even if they stood in opposition to communism. The simple reason for this was that they came from Hungary and that the majority of conservative Hungarian Americans believed that András Sütő was a “communist agitator” when he first toured the Hungarian-American communities in the early 1970s.322

The worldwide community of émigrés was divided over the issue of traveling home and maintaining relations with communist Hungary. In a 1970 Yearbook of the Hungarian Saturday Classes (Hétvégi Magyar Iskola) organized in New Brunswick, NJ, Károly Nagy argued that some form of contact with the mother country was needed for exile Hungarians to be able to maintain their language and to prevent them from forming a subculture. Nagy recognized that certain Hungarian groups had adopted behavioral and speech norms that resembled neither those of mainstream American culture nor the way people talked and behaved in contemporary Hungary. In this, he saw the danger of becoming an isolated, ghetto-like community. He also underlined that it was important for Hungarian-American schools and other organizations to transmit a realistic image of Hungarian society and culture and found it problematic that instead, they were creating a fictitious and romantic vision of Hungary and its people. Therefore, among others, Nagy proposed to have youth novels and study books as well as journals sent from Hungary and to establish scholarships for Hungarian students abroad to spend a year or at least a summer in a Hungarian school in Hungary.323

In the meanwhile, Károly Nagy contacted Zoltán Kodály, Gyula Illyés, and Mihály Váci; well-known public figures in Hungary at that time. The latter, a member of Parliament,

was especially moved by the cause and started to publicize the issue to help Hungarian schools abroad. He proposed to have textbooks issued for them and helped organize the I. Native Tongue Conference, which was held in 1970, in Budapest and Debrecen.324 The later conferences were held in 1973 and 1977. They continued in the 1980s and even after the democratic transition.325 In a 2008 interview, Károly Nagy told me that it took years to have the textbooks ready, with the cooperation of textbook writers from Hungary. Their scope was to have textbooks that lacked all kinds of religious and political propaganda and to have the works of contemporary Hungarian authors included in them, not only from Hungary but also from the neighboring countries with Hungarian minorities and also from the West.326

This later caused severe debates within the émigrés community because not everyone wished to establish contacts with the mother country. The right-wing and fiercely anti-communist section of the émigré community, especially the Displaced Persons and some 1956ers opposed establishing any dialogue with Hungary's communist government, which they viewed as illegitimate. Besides Cardinal József Mindszenty, several organizations, such as the World Federation of Hungarian Freedom Fighters (Magyar Szabadságharcos Világszövetség) and the Hungarian scouts also opposed the Native Tongue Conferences and having textbooks brought from Hungary for second-generation children who were studying in weekend Hungarian schools.327 Although Károly Nagy had worked hard to erase all propaganda from the books, the more conservative émigrés still felt the communist influence in it. For instance, they would have preferred the use of Mikulás instead of télapó,328 which

327 Szántó, Magyarok Amerikában, 175; Borbándi, A magyar emigráció életrajza, vol. 2, 238-245.
328 Télapó and Mikulás both denote Santa Claus. Whereas Mikulás alludes to the figure of St. Nicolas, who is traditionally celebrated on the 6th of December in Hungary, the figure of the Télapó, literally meaning “Father Winter,” was a socialist creation to push the feast of St. Nicolas into the background.
The circles of Hungarians mentioned above morally opposed having any contacts with the communist state and its representatives. They proposed to educate the younger generation with the help of the Churches, conservative weekend schools, and the scouts, without the involvement of the Native Tongue Conference or the Hungarian government. The official stance of the Hungarian Scout Association in Exile was that they would not establish any connections with the Hungarian government until scouting was not allowed to function once again in Hungary. In his 1973 testament, Cardinal Mindszenty proposed to Hungarians not to visit the homeland and not to finance the “nation-killers,” those who have expelled the émigrés, as long as the country was under Soviet occupation and religion was suppressed in Hungary. On the other hand, he suggested that Hungarians living abroad should not give up their identity but return home “once the star of faith and Hungarianness shall rise” in the country. In the meantime, he underlined the importance of Hungarian schools.

The return of the Royal Crown of Hungary caused similar heated debates in the 1970s. As in the case of the Native Language Conferences, the Cold War elite's conservative segment fiercely opposed the return of the Crown once they found out about its initiative during Jimmy Carter’s presidency in 1977. The Holy Crown and other regalia had been entrusted into the hands of the Americans when Hungary was occupied in 1945. Later, they were kept secretly in Fort Knox for many decades. Since the American administrations refused to acknowledge the Hungarian dictatorships as legitimate governments, initiating talks about restituting the regalia was out of the question until the relations with Central and

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331 My translation of; original “amikor a hit és a magyarság napja felkél otthon.” Borbándi, A magyar emigráció életrajza 1945-1985, 82-83.
332 Glant, A Szent Korona amerikai kalandja, 175-179.
Eastern Europe started to ease in the middle of the 1970s. Since the Holy Crown had been a symbol of legitimacy for centuries in Hungary, most Hungarian Americans opposed its return, claiming that it would legitimize the communist government that they viewed as illegitimate. The Hungarian Americans organized three protests in November-December of 1977. The first one was held on November 9, in front of the White House. Among the approximately 200 demonstrators were Displaced Persons and 1956ers, such as Father Julián Füzér, the parish priest of St. Ladislaus Church in New Brunswick, József Kővágó, ex-mayor of Budapest and András Pogány, who represented the World Federation of Hungarian Freedom Fighters. The second one was held at Capitol Hill on November 29, with ca. 2500-3000 protesters who represented 80 Hungarian-American organizations. Here, Tibor Bódi, one of the organizers, claimed that returning the Crown was similar to “hitting the Hungarian community in the face” and that he did not understand how Carter, a Christian politician himself and the advocate of human rights, could hand over the Hungarian nation’s most precious treasure to its communist oppressors. The third protest took place on December 26. This was a car protest that started from the Hungarian St. Stephen’s Church in New York. The final destination was Independence Hall in Philadelphia. The caravan also stopped in Woodbridge, NJ, a center for Hungarian immigrants at that time, and Trenton, the capital of New Jersey, the home of many East European immigrants.

Tamás Tamás states that the Hungarians living in the United States were divided over the question of détente, initiated by President Nixon. The more conservative segment of Hungarians wished to roll back communism by force and opposed any dialogue, contrarily to

336 Glant, A Szent Korona amerikai kalandja, 178-179.
the faction composed by the “bridge-builders,” for instance, the participants of the Native Tongue Conferences. Consequently, they were seriously disturbed by all of these developments, especially because “rather than liberating Eastern Europe, Nixon made peace with Soviet leader Brezhnev and announced détente.”

The group of Hungarian immigrants who traveled the least to Hungary were the Displaced Persons. On the other hand, the 1956-ers and the so-called Kádár’s orphans, who arrived in the United States between the 1960s and the 1980s, were generally more liberal in this respect. Regarding my interviews, it can be stated that it was primarily second-generation Hungarian Americans who discussed this issue with me, whereas, with a few exceptions, the first-generation members were quite reserved when talking about this topic. Several factors probably caused their resistance to travel home. Most likely, one of these was the trauma they underwent, for there are several accounts of families who had to escape the country through barbed wire with the help of smugglers. This is highlighted, for instance, in An American Rhapsody, written and directed by Éva Gárdos, who put to screen her own family’s story of escaping the country in the early 1950s. One of the shocking moments of her semi-autobiographical movie is when the protagonist Suzanne learns that her grandfather was shot dead by a Russian soldier at a Restaurant in Budapest, which her mother had never talked about and was the major reason why she was afraid to let her daughter visit Hungary in the 1960s.

Even though the DPs disfavored making travels to Hungary, based on my interviews conducted in 2008-2009 and 2017, it appeared that this group was the most successful in passing on the Hungarian language and identity to their offspring compared to the other

338 The term Kádár’s orphans is used by Éva Huseby-Darvas in Hungarians in Michigan (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2003), 27.
waves of Hungarian immigrants. I assume that the reason for this is that the Displaced Persons viewed their stay in the United States as a temporary one, in the hope that Hungary might be liberated someday. This is discussed in some of the oral history interviews conducted for the Memory Project by Réka Pigniczky and Andrea Lauer Rice. For instance, László Hajdu-Németh revealed that his father, who used to be a part of the Smallholders Party (Kisgazdapárt) in Hungary before the communist takeover and fled Hungary in 1947, traveled back to the country as a member of a US delegation when the Revolution broke out in 1956 and stayed there until the Hungarians suffered defeat from the Russians in November. At that time, the Magyar Nemzeti Bizottmány (Hungarian National Council), formed of former anti-communist politicians who had emigrated to the West, was in close cooperation with the American government. The members of the organization anticipated that “in case of a political change, they would resume their role in the political life of the country.”

In another interview given to Réka Pigniczky, András Ludányi, the son of DP immigrants, also mentions that he and about 60-70 other people signed up for “potential service” at St. Emeric Club in New York, when the Revolution began in Hungary in 1956. Although this number was insufficient to provide significant help to Hungary, it was nevertheless a sign of willingness to take up arms if needed. Ludányi also participated in the so-called Lővészmozgalom (Shooters’ club). The organization was founded by another DP, Zoltán Vasváry, who, after the defeat of the 1956 Revolution, decided to train young people for a possible liberation of Hungary when he understood that America was not planning to intervene to rescue the country. The military practices took place at a farm in Rummerfield, PA, along the Susquehanna River from 1960 until 1989 and involved target shooting and parachuting. The historian recalls that in the beginning, “the Lővészmozgalom had as its objective—Vasvári Zoltán told us this—that we were training to eventually help liberate

Hungary. That we would eventually either become paratroopers or, in some way, cross the border and go back to Hungary as part of a liberation organization."  

By the end of the organization’s existence, its members had no serious intention of being involved in armed conflict and instead focused on transmitting Hungarian identity to the next generation.

The above-mentioned assumption seems to correspond to what has been stated by one of my Austrian-born interview subjects (M, b. 1964) whose parents left Hungary in 1948 and 1949 and arrived in the United States in the early 1950s. He stated that his family laid great emphasis on teaching him to read, write, and speak in Hungarian because they were hoping to resettle in Hungary one day. His parents, who belonged to the DP wave of emigrants, were in touch with other Hungarians living in various countries (e.g., Germany, Austria, and the United States), mainly ex-soldiers and gendarmes (csendőrök) who were hoping to take part in the formation of a new government in 1956. In fact, after gaining US citizenship, they moved back to Austria in 1959 and stayed in Németújvár (Güssing) until 1967 to be as close to Hungary as possible in case there might be an anti-communist takeover in the country.

The Cold War immigrants have basically fostered two seemingly opposite types of images of Hungary. One consisted of an idealized image of Hungarianness transmitted by the Hungarian Scout Association in Exile and the 1956ers. Piroska Nagy recalls that the DPs fostered a romantic idea of Hungary based on mythological elements such as the legends of the wonder stag (csodaszarvas) and the Turul bird. It was a virtual image that was similar to the one described by Gyula Illyés in his poem “Haza a magasban” (“Homeland aloft”). Her father and other 1956ers, as well as others who left Hungary in the 1960s and 1970s, also had a very positive attitude towards Hungary, which was driven by the love for their country and the homesickness they experienced. In fact, she often felt that the country her parents’

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generation had in mind was not a real place, but rather a sentiment. Contrarily to the favorable image drawn by the émigrés, in the real Hungary she encountered when she moved there in the early 1980s she had to get used to the fact that sometimes she could not find items such as paper tissues or toilet paper in the shops and that she once had to stand in line to buy a washing machine.343

The other idea consisted of a country in black-and-white, affected by its turbulent history. This has been described by two of my American-born informants and Réka Pigniczky’s documentary, *Inkubátor (Incubator)*. The above-mentioned interview subjects who are siblings were born in the 1970s of parents with a DP background. Informant # 64 (M, b. 1973) stated that their father was unwilling to go back to Hungary as long as it was under communist rule and remembers that those who paid a visit to the country were sort of labeled as communists. The first time he traveled to Hungary was in ca. 1988-1989, before the regime change took place. The first time his sister, Informant # 65 (b. 1976), “returned” was in 1996, at age 19, with two other siblings and a friend. Both of them mentioned that before they first visited the homeland, they had a black-and-white image of the country. This was partly due to the fact that the textbooks from which they had studied at the Saturday school only contained black-and-white photographs. Moreover, they mostly featured historical events, for instance, wars, and rarely showed happy feasts and celebrations. The fact that they had a conception of an underdeveloped, communist country also corresponded to the black-and-white images.

Réka Pigniczky and one of her interview subjects describe a similar conception of Cold-War Hungary. Pigniczky recalls that her generation, born at the end of the 1960s in the United States, held a caricature-like image of a country under communist oppression, “where

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343 During my visits to the Hungarian-American community of New Brunswick in the late 1990s-early 2000s and in 2008-2009 I could still sense this idealized image of Hungary. In 2008, I wrote “countless people have told me in New Jersey that the first encounter of their children with Hungarian reality was deluding. The negative experience of theirs might be explained with the strong idealistic image of Hungary that has been passed onto them by their parents.” Pintz, “Preserving Ethnic Heritage in New Jersey,” 57-59.
nobody is happy, and where everybody is afraid.” This was a simplified image that was enhanced by the Cold War atmosphere of the Reagan administration. In the same documentary, Csilla Csoboth talked about a similar image and attitude towards traveling home: “There is communism over there, life is suppressed, and as long as there is communism, my father would not go back.”

Réka Pigniczky uses the word incubator to describe the circumstances in which Hungarian identity and language were passed on to the offspring. Since the émigrés and their children generally did not travel home, they created an artificial Hungary which primarily centered around folk dancing and scouting, but also around attending Hungarian balls for the older generation. Hungarian butchers were found in each of these Little Hungarysts. Pigniczky’s metaphor of the incubator can be connected to the previously cited theory applied by Éva Huseby-Darvas in connection with Benedict Anderson’s concept of long-distance nationalism. Although this is not mentioned in the documentary, it can be presumed that the reason why these artificial Hungarysts emerged in the diaspora was that the émigrés were cut off from the mother country. In case they had had a day-to-day or at least a regular contact with the homeland, their image of the it would have been much more realistic.

5.2. The Reception of Hungarian Folk Culture in the Eastern United States

In case a Hungarian from Hungary were to visit a Hungarian-American community in the United States, he or she would be struck by the degree to which folkloristic elements are at the forefront of community events. This is because in Hungary, only a small segment of society shows an interest in folk culture. While today the ethnic identity maintenance of Hungarian Americans very much centers around folk costumes, folk dances, and folk music,

this has not always been the case. The pre-World War One Hungarian immigrants and their children were less inspired by folk culture than the Cold War immigrants; nevertheless, they clung to their own ethnic symbols as well.

5.2.1. Clashes over the Use of Ethnic Symbols

With the help of ethnic costumes, music, and dances, Hungarian Americans have put their culture on display on the occasion of Hungarian festivals. According to Mihály Hoppál, “objects in fact are capable of expressing the message of ethnic identity, and the most striking of these is costume” (1989). Zoltán Fejős (1987) states that ethnic symbols serve to set an immigrant group apart from the others. The so-called magyar ruha (Hungarian dress) fulfilled this need for the Old Hungarians. This costume, which was especially popular among women, consisted of a tiara (párta), a red vest, and a tricolor ribbon attached to the skirt. It was widespread among all Hungarian communities in the United States, and the Louisiana Hungarians of Árpádhon still wear these costumes.

The selection of distinct symbols led to clashes within the Hungarian community based on when the immigrants arrived in the United States. Ágnes Balla, who settled in New Brunswick in the early 1970s, recalls that the magyar ruha caused a clash between the Old Hungarians and the Cold War immigrants who arrived after 1945, 1956, and later from the 1960s until the 1980s. These new immigrants laid great emphasis on wearing traditional folk costumes and tried to make them as authentic as possible. A few of my informants stated that they saw the Hungarian dress worn by the Old Hungarians' cohort as being “tasteless.”

Many were also irritated by the fact that the *magyar ruha* was not tied to any specific region of Hungary and that it was not a genuine peasant costume. The Old Hungarians, on the other hand, cherished the *magyar ruha* to such an extent that their costumes had been passed down from generation to generation. Ilona Kovács recalls that a third-generation Hungarian American once said to her, referring to the folk costumes popularized by the Cold War immigrants: “these Hungarian dresses that people wear today are not comparable to those that we used to have…”

The Cold War immigrants had the false assumption that the *magyar ruha*, which they saw as a pseudo-folk costume, was a product of the immigrants’ imagination that it was created in the United States. The Cold War immigrants, who had somewhat strained relations with the group of earlier immigrants, probably presumed that the Old Hungarians had cut most of their ties with Hungary upon their emigration, which was not true. The Hungarian dress, which to some extent resembled peasant folk costumes worn by men and women, originated from the so-called *diszmagyar*, worn by the Hungarian elite classes.

The Hungarian dress became especially popular during the interwar period in Hungary, during the Horthy regime. According to Mihály Hoppál, the Old Hungarians frequently traveled between Hungary and the United States until the Second World War and brought these dresses to the USA. He also presumes that people could see images of the Hungarian dress in contemporary movies that also circulated in the United States and were made primarily in the 1940s. One such example is *Borcsa Amerikában (Barbara in America)*, which was released overseas in 1939. Although he underlines that it was not a real folk

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349 Ilona Kovács, personal communication, March 12, 2018.
350 Fejős, “‘Magyar ruha’, ‘szüreti bál’,” 275; Fülemile, “Hagyományőrzés az öltözködésben,” 186-188.
costume, Hoppál referred it to as a “pseudo-folk costume” in the sense that it became a “symbol of patriotism.”

The Old Hungarians did not preserve Hungarian peasant culture to such an extent as the Cold War immigrants expected them to do so. In fact, various ethnographers have stated that these people, mostly of an agrarian background, were keen on getting rid of their peasant heritage and wished to become a part of the middle class. Another reason why specific village traditions were lost in the United States was that immigrants of a given Hungarian-American community came from various regions of Hungary that had completely different dance styles. Mihály Hoppál writes that the Old Hungarians of South Bend created a simplified form of csárdás in the United States. Gypsy musicians usually provided entertainment with the so-called magyar nóta. In New Brunswick, too, the Kara-Nemeth Orchestra played Hungarian Gypsy music (kávéházi cigányzene), which was highly popular in Hungary until the middle of the twentieth century.

Regarding the present-day situation, visitors going to Hungarian-American communities today would assume that the Hungarian Americans’ appreciation for folk culture was passed down from generation to generation from their immigrant ancestors, as a continuation of village traditions. In reality, this was not precisely the case. In the case of New Brunswick, many of the presently active Hungarians who are active folk dancers have ancestors who immigrated to America from cities, not villages. Based on my personal

355 Judith and Kálmán Magyar, interview by the author, December 5, 2017; It is important to note that Hungarian folk dances have also been preserved in some cases, for instance, within the isolated community of Árpádhon (officially called Albany), which was the only agrarian settlement formed by Hungarian immigrants. They still perform a traditional harvest dance that has become extinct in Hungary. Royanne Kropog, The Story of Árpádhon: Hungarian Settlement, Louisiana 1896-2006 (Baton Rouge, LA: Moran Printing Inc. 2006), 153.
358 Ágnes Balla, interview by the author, October 7, 2006.
interviews, it became evident that their parents and grandparents, who were DPs, 56ers, or immigrants who arrived later during the Cold War, initially had very little knowledge of folk culture, even in the case of people who originated from villages.

An example of this is the case of Judith and Kálmán Magyar, who later became central figures within the Hungarian-American diaspora (at that time referred to as the emigráció, or exile). Before they arrived in the United States in the early 1960s, they knew very little about folk culture. In a personal interview with the couple, Kálmán Magyar stated that he was not interested in folk culture at all. At the same time, his wife Judith’s family fostered an intellectual interest in it. It was in the United States where they became enthusiastic about folk culture upon joining the Hungária Folkdance Ensemble, which constituted a part of their quest for identity. Since they had no direct access to authentic folk music or folk dances at that time, they had to rely on soundless video recordings. For instance, they had one produced during the so-called Gyöngyösbokréta era in the interwar period, and the others by György Martin, one of the founders of the so-called táncház movement who collected folk music and dances from the 1950s onwards. They also made use of books that described the dance steps, which they received from the World Federation of Hungarians and the ones they bought from the Püski-Corvin publishing house.

The case of the New Brunswick Hungarians is also interesting to consider. The Teszár brothers, Tamás and Róbert Teszár, served the New Brunswick community in terms of folk dancing and folk art. In the 1970s and 1980s, they went directly to the villages in Hungary to learn folk dances and collect materials that could later be put on display in museums or sold in the United States (e.g., folk costumes, furniture, plates, jugs, boots, pillows, and other

The táncház (dance house) movement began at the end of the 1960s, in Transylvania. The term originates from the village of Szék in Transylvania, under which the villagers meant a house that young people rented out for dance gatherings. The practice of organizing dance houses existed throughout Transylvania, not just locally in Szék. At the birth of the movement, Béla Bartók and Zoltán Kodály’s musical heritage still lived on in the form of choreographies on stage; however, in a highly stylized way. Consequently, it had lost its appeal for young people, who were cut off from the possibility of seeing and hearing original peasant music and dances. During this time, folk dances came off stage to the dance floor, with the birth of the táncház movement.

The táncház style of dancing was significantly different from the earlier folkdance styles. The táncház method relied on improvisation to a much greater extent than the previous ones. For instance, the Gyöngyösbokréta movement and the so-called Rábai style, the leading style at that time, basically relied on choreographies and staged dances. One would presume that it was easy to improvise, but that was not the case, because people had to learn the dances

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of each region to improvise. The same was true for playing music in the musicians’ case. The first táncház in Budapest was organized and created based on Szék traditions, in May 1972. Zoltán Kallós recalls that initially, it was mostly the members of the dance ensembles that tried to dance to the táncház music. However, they met with the difficulty of not knowing how to dance when they were off stage because they were only used to dancing choreographed dances. György Martin and Sándor Timár became aware of this problem early on and tried to come up with a method that could teach people how to dance improvised dances, which they compared to learning a language at a native level.\footnote{László Diószegi, “A magyar néptánc történelmi pillanatai: A Gyöngyösbokrétától a Táncházig,” Magyar Művészet 2, nos. 3-4 (October 2014): 55, http://www.mma.hu/documents/10180/5878401/MM2014_3-4.pdf/31b56023-1d3d-4d26-95af-c0f0bd2a01c4; Zoltán Kallós, interview, Büszkeségeink, a Hungarikumok: A táncház módszer.}

The dance house movement also spread to other continents later, among them the United States. Naturally, the Hungarian emigrants living in the United States also got introduced to this method in the later years. However, interestingly, only a small segment of the Hungarians appreciated this style early on, whereas most Hungarian Americans did not adopt the táncház style still for at least a decade or more. Therefore, it is relevant to ask how the dance house movement was received in America. It is especially useful to examine this question by focusing on the emigrant communities’ relations with Hungary.

The first Hungarian Americans got introduced to the dance house method in the middle of the 1970s. Kálmán Dreisziger, the leader of the Kodály Ensemble, started rehearsals in this style in Toronto (1975-1976) and Judith and Kálmán Magyar as the leaders of Hungária Folkdance Ensemble in New York. Other such dance instructors in the United States were Andor Czompó and Éva Mária Kish.\footnote{Stephen Satory, “Táncház: Improvisatory Folk-Dancing and String Playing in Toronto’s Hungarian Community,” Hungarian Studies Review 13, no. 2 (Fall 1986): 54, http://efolyoirat.oszk.hu/00000/00015/pdf/HSR_1986_2_053-062.pdf; Judith and Kálmán Magyar, interview by Csibi Loránd, July 16, 2016.}
Although Canada is not a part of the United States, Canadian Hungarians must also be mentioned at this point, due to their vicinity to the United States, especially those living in Southern Canada. Kálmán Dreisziger writes that the Toronto community was introduced to the táncház tradition very close in time to when the movement started in Hungary, thanks to the Verseghy brothers. Dreisziger himself was also influential in bringing the táncház style to Toronto.  

Although Judith and Kálmán got acquainted with the táncház method already earlier, it was in the middle of the 1970s when they first got inspired by it. They attended the Washington Bicentennial Festival of American Folklife, held in June 1976, on the 200th anniversary of the American nation's foundation. Folk dancers, musicians, and singers were invited from various American ethnic groups (e.g., Romanians, Hungarians, and Yemenis), which enabled many Americans “to trace their family folk traditions and ethnic backgrounds all the way back to Old World roots.” Choreographer László Vásárhelyi, one of the major figures of the Hungarian folk dance movement, collected a group of dancers from the best village dancers from Hungary, (older dancers from Lőrincréve, Kalocsa, Rábaköz, and Nagyecsed) who were invited to perform at the festival along with the younger dancers of the Bartók Ensemble and folk artists from Hungary. The Magyars produced two records with the invitees, which they released one year later in 1977.

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That same summer, the couple visited Transylvania for the first time. In August 1976, Károly Falvay, the President of the World Federation of Hungarians, took them to Válaszút, where they met Zoltán Kallós for the first time. Kallós requested them to assist him by releasing the music he had collected from the Mezőség and Gyimes regions. On their way home, they had to hide the recordings from the Romanian border agents because at that time it was illegal to transport any cultural material out of the country. Kálmán and Judith brought the music over to America, where they released the material under Kallós’s name. This was the first document that testified that there was original Hungarian folk music in Romania, and it was also used by László Hámos, who in the same year co-founded the Committee for Human Rights in Rumania, as proof of this fact. Since the state of Hungarian minorities was treated as a taboo subject in communist Hungary, many Hungarians knew very little about their compatriots living in Transylvania and the other neighboring countries, including the musical traditions of Hungarians living outside of Hungary’s borders. The same was true even for a part of the 1956ers, to whom Transylvanian music and dances seemed strange at first and who were usually accustomed to nőta music.371

Some non-Hungarians also joined the táncház movement in the United States, known as the international or recreational folk dancers. International folk dancing was a popular activity among college students. The movement initiated at the beginning of the 20th century and reached its climax in the 1970s and 1980s. During this time, some young Americans, who had no Hungarian heritage at all, got introduced to the dance house movement (e.g. Judy

Olson and Cathy Lamont). By traveling to Transylvania, they have learned the Hungarian language and teach Hungarian folk dances in New York and Washington even today.\(^{372}\)

Despite the fact that there were already some Hungarians and Americans who practiced dancing in the \textit{táncház} style in the 1970s and 1980s, the movement itself gained acceptance only gradually among the majority of Hungarian Americans. For one to understand this, it has to be stated that this was an “underground movement” when it began in Hungary. It was started by university students who were in their twenties and who, according to Kálmán Magyar, resembled the hippies. Many of the young men used to have long hair, for instance. Some of the “dance housers” (\textit{táncházasok}) sponsored by the Magyars to tour the United States initially objected to putting on a white shirt before their performance. One of them even wished to wear a headband.\(^{373}\)

In a 1986 article, Stephen Satory writes that the majority of Toronto Hungarians did not sympathize with this movement. They associated it with lots of partying, drinking, and smoking. To them, it seemed like giving performances in the dance house style did not require hard work.\(^{374}\) One of my interview subjects, István Horváth, who was part of the Regős folk dance group in New Brunswick, NJ, stated that the choreographed dances they performed required much more physical strength and time to learn than the improvised dances presented in the \textit{táncház} style. In fact, the Regős scouts used to hold weekly rehearsals that had an average length of 8-10 hours, and most of the dancers felt fit enough to continue only until their early thirties.\(^{375}\)

Another explanation for the relatively late acceptance of the \textit{táncház} movement among Hungarian American communities was provided by Piroska Nagy, the daughter of sociologist

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\(^{373}\) Judith and Kálmán Magyar, interview by the author, December 5, 2017.

\(^{374}\) Satory, “\textit{Táncház}: Improvisatory Folk-Dancing,” 56-57.

\(^{375}\) István Horváth, interview by the author, October 3, 2017.
Károly Nagy. Piroska Nagy received a degree in Ethnography in the middle of the 1980s at ELTE and submitted a thesis about the Hungária Folkdance Ensemble. She believes that one of the reasons why the dance house movement got accepted relatively late among the majority of Hungarian Americans was that the exile community (emigráció) had been divided over the issue of traveling home and keeping in touch with the Hungarian government. Some organizations, e.g. the scouts were reluctant to travel to Hungary due to political reasons and many Catholics also disfavored making visits to the homeland as long as it was under communist rule. According to the hypothesis expressed by Piroska Nagy, since the Hungarian-American communities had been cut off from the homeland during the Cold War, they were not aware of the fact that the táncház movement was a quasi-resistance movement in Hungary and Romania.376

The main problem in the eyes of the sternly anti-communist Hungarian Americans was that the Hungarians living in the United States could only keep in touch with the members of the táncház movement through the World Federation of Hungarians (Magyarok Világszövetsége). According to Kálmán Magyar, they had no other possibility but to contact the organization if they wanted to have teachers from Hungary come to the United States on the occasion of folk dance camps. At that time, a person had to go to the Hungarian embassy and file a request to invite dance instructors from Hungary. Given that the World Federation of Hungarians was run by the communist government during the Kádár regime, those who came in touch with the organization or traveled to Hungary were labeled as communists by some members of the emigré circles for keeping in touch with the Hungarian state. It has to be mentioned that the people I spoke to are still divided over this issue. Some still believe that it was problematic to be in touch with the organization, while Kálmán Magyar states that Hungarian Americans would have been isolated from the táncház movement had it not been

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for the World Federation of Hungarians: “The goal of the WFH was to help all Hungarians abroad, who accepted their help. Many people did not accept their help, and those who did became suspicious right away” during the Kádár regime.  

Judith and Kálmán Magyar were also considered to be suspicious by some Hungarian Americans who were hostile to the fact the Magyars made visits to Hungary and to Transylvania in the 1970s and 1980s. In 1977 the WFH organized a Native Tongue Conference. A few dance groups were also invited to the conference, together with Hungária Folkdance Ensemble. After the Magyars returned to the United States from Hungary, they were excluded from the Hungarian House of New York, where they previously used to hold their dance rehearsals. It was at this point when the couple decided to join the Passaic Hungarian community in New Jersey. In 1987 the Hungária Folkdance Ensemble was again invited to Hungary to produce a performance on the theme of emigration. On that occasion, it was the local Hungarian priest of the Passaic Catholic church who referred to them as communists for having gone to Hungary and managed to have the museum closed down, which was founded by the Magyars. However, contrarily to ten years earlier, this time many people stood up for Judith and Kálmán: they knew they were not communists, partly because the couple had taught most people’s children in Passaic.  

It is essential to mention that the Magyars had always been pushing the limits while they were in Hungary. For instance, their 1977 production theme was the Revolution of 1956, after a dance production which they had produced earlier in the United States, under the title *In Memoriam 1956*. Although the final title of the performance they put on stage was *In Memoriam*, insiders must have been aware that the title was an allusion to the Revolution itself.

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378 Judith and Kálmán Magyar, interview by the author, December 5, 2017
It was mostly the Hungarian Scouts who found it problematic to travel to Hungary and cooperate with the Hungarian government. According to Kálmán Magyar, although folk dancing was an important part of Hungarian scouting and a popular children’s activity, the Hungarian Scouts were not keen on putting too much of an emphasis on dancing. Indeed, they were afraid children might not want to learn to tie knots or play számháború.\textsuperscript{379} This was actually a real concern because many broke away from scouting by becoming too much involved in Hungarian folk dancing.\textsuperscript{380}

Until now, there has been very little published material on the question of when the dance house movement became widely accepted among North American Hungarian communities. Kálmán Dreisziger, in his article on the origins of the táncház movement in North America, states that the earliest centers where people started rehearsals in this style besides the previously mentioned New York-New Jersey area were California in the Western United States and Toronto in Canada, in the 1970s.\textsuperscript{381} Nevertheless, as stated above, from Satory’s previously-cited article, one can learn that the dance house style was still not universally accepted at a community level in Toronto in 1986.

As in the case of many other Hungarian-American communities, the táncház method got introduced relatively late to New Brunswick as well. At the end of the 1990s, the New Brunswick Hungarians received an invitation to perform at the Flower Carnival in Debrecen, the sister city of New Brunswick. That was when the Csűrdöngölő Folk Ensemble was formed in 1998. Its members were second-generation Hungarian Americans from New Brunswick. Zoltán Zsuráfszky taught them for a month, and thus they adopted the dance house style.\textsuperscript{382} The members of the ensemble are still active. Usually, they perform to live music, which is supplied by Életfa Hungarian Folk Band (founded in 1987 by Ildikó and Kálmán Magyar Jr,

\textsuperscript{379} Számháború (\textit{war of numbers}) is a popular Hungarian strategical game played by children and young adults.
\textsuperscript{380} Judith and Kálmán Magyar, interview by the author, December 5, 2017.
\textsuperscript{381} Dreisziger, “Az észak-amerikai magyar táncházmozgalom,” 310-311.
\textsuperscript{382} László Hajdu-Németh Sr., interview by the author, September 9, 2017.
the children of Judith and Kálmán Magyar) who, on the other hand, have also been playing in this style ever since the movement began.383

In 2005 Kálmán Dreisziger published an article about North American folk dance camps called Symposium tábor. Based on its content, it is evident that the táncház method was already widespread by the time the paper appeared. Among the 40 camp participants who filled out the questionnaire, only 16 had had an experience of fewer than ten years of folk dancing. Although the theme of the survey revolved around the question of authenticity and was not concerned with the issue of improvisation vs. fixed choreography, from the results, one can learn that the most favored type of regional dance dialects were Transylvanian dances (e.g. those from the Mezőség and Kalotaszeg regions), while the musical bands that received a large number of mentions were well-known revival bands from Hungary such as Tükrös, Ökrös, Téka, and Muzsikás, along with Sándor Fodor “Neti”, the famous Gypsy fiddler from Kalotaszeg.384 Based on this information, it is evident that the táncház style of dancing and performing music was already popular among the participants of the Symposium. In fact, Sándor Timár, one of the pioneer instructors of the táncház method, was a regular invitee along with his wife, Böske, at the annually organized camps which were initiated by Judith and Kálmán Magyar in 1978. The members of Téka Ensemble were also recurring guests, who provided the music.385

By today, Hungarian Americans’ ties to Hungary have intensified. It is not uncommon for second or sometimes even third-generation Hungarian Americans to move to Hungary for an indefinite period. Many of these people, who are in their mid to late forties today, have children who are active folk dancers in Hungary. One example which caught the attention of

the Hungarian media is the case of the Hajdu-Németh siblings (Judith and Kálmán Magyars grandchildren) who have been active participants of the Fölszállott a Páva folk music and dance competitions in recent years. At age nine, in 2015, the oldest sibling, László, made it to the semi-final as a solo violinist. One year later, he and his brother Balázs reached the finals, forming part of the Sarjú banda (László as the primás and Balázs as the second violinist). Finally, last year, in 2019, already as a teenager, László got into the final competitions once again, while his younger brother and sister, Balázs and Ilona made it to the semi-finals in the dancers’ category.

Presently, the Hungarian government actively supports the Hungarian diaspora with countless projects. Among these are the Rákóczi Diaspora-, the Mikes Kelemen-, and the Kőrösi Csoma Programs. This last one also focuses on the preservation of folk culture. According to Kálmán Magyar, by today, the Hungarian diaspora has shrunk in terms of its membership to such a degree that lone entrepreneurs would go bankrupt. They would not be able to finance the tours of musicians and dancers from Hungary the way he and Judith were able to do so once, thanks to the support of Hungarian community members throughout the country.

Fortunately, the Hungarian Initiatives Foundation (HIF) also chips in with sponsoring dance camps and festivals in the United States. One of these is the Csipke Tábor, a dance camp organized by Andrea and József Salamon in Michigan, who invite folk dance instructors from Hungary each summer. A few years ago, in September 2017 the I. North American Hungarian Folk Dance Gathering, Toborzó, was held in New Brunswick, NJ, which I was

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386 The primás is the leading violinist in a band.
388 Judit and Kálmán Magyar, interview by the author, December 5, 2017.
lucky to attend. This was also backed by the HIF. Dancers from Hungary were invited to perform (e.g., Gerda Marosy and Tamás Józsa), and one of the guest lecturers was historian and choreographer László Diószegi. The invitees all participated in the 2017 Felszállott a Páva competition; László Diószegi as a member of the jury.

Musicians and folk dance groups from Hungary have been touring the United States and Canada for decades. In 1998 and 1999, violinist Sándor Fodor “Neti” toured the country together with cimbalom player Kálmán Balogh and the Ökrös Ensemble. Two of their most notable concerts were with the Brooklyn Philharmonic Orchestra and the Philadelphia Symphonic Orchestra.390 Among the most successful dance performances were Csárdás! The Tango of the East (2000, 2004), Gypsy Spirit, the Journey of the Roma (2004, 2018), and Spirit of Hungary (2016). They were all choreographed by Zoltán Zsuráfszky and produced or organized by Kálmán Magyar.391 Another recent initiative was a twinning agreement between a children’s folk dance group based in Angyalföld, a neighborhood in Budapest (Vadvirág), and another one from New Brunswick (Mákvirág).392

The American public’s reception of Hungarian folk dance and music cannot be compared to that of any other musical style performed by Hungarian musicians. In America, even our best jazz musicians were not as appreciated as the Hungarian State Folk Ensemble or Zoltán Zsuráfszky, who the Magyars invited to perform there. Indeed, they could offer something that others could not.

5.3. Return Migration of Second- and Later-Generation Immigrants

Hungarian Americans’ relations with the homeland had been strained until the détente, roughly until 1989, the beginning of the democratic transition. As mentioned in the previous subchapter, those who kept in touch with the Hungarian elite and regularly traveled to Hungary and Transylvania with their families during the Cold War (even in the early 1980s) were labeled as “communists” by some diaspora Hungarians. After 1989 many retired first- and second-generation immigrants in their early twenties decided to “return” to the newly liberated Hungary to settle there for several years. Throughout my previous research and stays in New Brunswick, I have encountered several people who came to live in Hungary for a longer time period. Most of them were children of 1956-ers, but some were children of immigrants who left Hungary or Transylvania later during the Cold War. The majority of these people have already returned to the United States after several years of residence in Hungary. Some eventually returned to Hungary for the second time in their early forties and were among the people interviewed for the present research.

5.3.1. Return Migration in the Media and the Scholarly Literature

Until the mid-2000s, hardly any scholarly attention had been paid to the return migration and the transnational activities of second- and later-generation immigrants. Indeed, until then, scholars had mostly focused on the activities of foreign-born immigrants. Only a few studies have dealt with the return of Hungarian-Americans to their native or ancestral homeland, and even these mostly concern the remigration of first-generation immigrants.

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393 For an extended version of this subchapter in Hungarian, see Katalin Pintz, “Két hazához tartozni: A New Jerseyben felnőtt ‘hazatelepülő’ amerikai magyarok identitása és nyelvhasználata,” in Az emberi sors és a történelem kereszteződésében/At the Crossroads of Human Fate and History, eds. Nóra Deák et al. Budapest: Eötvös Loránd University, 2019, 443-461.
394 This is also stated in Réka Pigniczky’s documentary, *Inkubátor. Inkubátor*, directed by Réka Pigniczky.
The Hungarian media picked up on this topic only very recently. In 2017 a journalist named Péter Gyuricza published a collection of interviews under the title *Visszidensek*, a term by which many Cold War repatriates refer to themselves, alluding to the word *disszidens* (defector). Since then, a new volume of interviews has appeared in 2018. In 2019, people could hear about Hungarians escaping the Maduro regime in Venezuela, fleeing communism for the second time. Gábor Tóth’s recent documentary, *Hazatérők*, (2019) has been aired by Echo TV. In the same year, the Hungarian media also picked up on the news that in 2018, for the first time in several years, the country had slightly more returning Hungarians than people leaving the country, among the native-born. The data was originally published by the Hungarian Central Statistical Office (KSH).

5.3.2. Methodology

This project is a subtopic of my doctoral research concerning the identity preservation and diaspora relations of the Hungarian Americans of New Brunswick, NJ. I have based my research on ten qualitative interviews which I carried out between 2011 and 2017. The average length of these in-depth interviews was 1.5-2 hours. Nine out of ten of the interviews were recorded in Budapest, and one of them was a Skype interview. All of my research subjects were either born or raised in the United States, specifically in New Jersey and belonged to the New Brunswick or the Passaic communities. I have previously interviewed four out of these ten people in New Brunswick as a part of my earlier fieldwork in 2008.

Since the East Coast of the United States has received countless immigration waves ever since the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, it was usual for the Hungarians belonging to

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397 Hazatérők: Másodsorban menekülnek a kommunizmus elől a venezuelai magyarak, directed by Gábor Tóth (Solve Art Kft, 2018).

398 Áron, “Fordulat a magyar kivándorlásban: többen jönnek haza, mint amennyien elmennek,” *Újpesti Hírek* (blog), May 21, 2019, http://ujpestihirek.hu/index.php/orszag-vilag/fordulat-a-magyar-kivandorlasban-tobben-jonnek-haza-mint-amennyien-elmennek?fbclid=IwAR0MKacKS8yUzLiVmBMPCdotynvVHYHQahSjjj04bmdAx3aXVa0h8k61RVM.
the various immigration waves to intermarry among themselves. Consequently, it is difficult to place most people of Hungarian descent into the traditional generational categories established by sociologists. Only six out of ten of my informants belong to a clear-cut generational cohort. Five of these six people are second-generation Hungarian Americans and one of them immigrated to the United States at age 12, making him a 1.5 generation immigrant. Three of them are practically between the second and the third generation and one of my informants is practically a third-generation Hungarian American. Their parents and grandparents were all Cold War immigrants who left Hungary after the Second World War, 1956, or later in the 1970s.

5.3.3. Research Questions

The scope of my research was to identify to what extent Hungarian-American return migrants could integrate into Hungarian society and whether there was any change in their ethnic or national identification after moving to Hungary. I also wished to investigate what kind of linguistic or cultural changes people have undergone after settling in Hungary for a longer time, whether they are single or have families (in the sense that they have children who are living with them in Hungary). I was especially interested to find answers to the following questions. Were there any changes that occurred in terms of their language use with their spouse and children? Did they remain attached to the Hungarian symbols and cultural practices after moving to Hungary?

5.3.4. Reasons for Return

The people I have asked were drawn to Hungary for several reasons, which were often intertwining. Several people came because they sought adventure and wished to try out what life is like in Hungary, e.g. as a student or as a professional. Among those who came for study reasons, some chose Hungary because the country’s tuition fees are less high than in the case of the United States. Again, others were drawn by family ties, for instance, by repatriated
parents or by the parents of a Hungarian spouse. Those who had already completed their education pursue job opportunities in Hungary. Most of them had been making regular visits to Hungary since their youth before their decision to settle down. Previous summer vacations spent in Hungary were also a driving force behind their “return.” Two of my interview subjects stated that local Hungarians are surprised to hear that a person would want to move back from the United States. Some have a misconception that those who decide to “return” were not successful enough in the United States and were unable to integrate into American society. Others believe Hungary is a wrong destination: one of my interviewees (M, b. 1969) was even told that he “got on the wrong plane.”399 The majority of Hungarian Americans have sentimental rather than economic reasons for migrating back to their country of birth or the land of their ancestors. In fact, most of them have left behind well-paying New York jobs. Although people usually did not state this overtly, they are usually driven by a desire to resist assimilation and not by the lack of integration.

Péter Gyuricza also deals with the driving forces behind return in his previously mentioned collection of interviews entitled Visszidensek (2017). Most of his interview subjects have left Hungary during the Cold War and resettled there after the collapse of communism from Latin America, North America, and Western Europe. Similar to what my informants have stated, Péter Gyuricza’s interviewees also have a strong national identity: they were often motivated to return by a nation-building desire and an appreciation for Hungarian culture (e.g. folk dances or Hungarian Gypsy Music).400

399 This corresponds to what Julianna Puskás (2000) found concerning the image people had of Hungarian returnees at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. She stated that contrarily to what local Hungarians believed, those who were really unsuccessful usually never returned to Hungary out of a feeling of shame, while others did return because their original plan was to buy land in Hungary. Julianna Puskás, Ties that Bind, Ties that Divide (New York/London: Holmes & Meier, 2000): 53-54, 84.
400 Gyuricza, Visszidensek.
5.3.5. The Theme of Integration in the Literature on Return Migration

Unfortunately, the integration of diasporic returnees does not always go smoothly. International research has shown that diasporic return migration, when later-generation immigrants settle down in the land of their ancestors, often results in disillusionment and identity shift. Tsuda (2003) has studied the case of Japanese Brazilians who, after settling in Japan, become marginalized due to their poor language skills and inferior social position (coming from a less developed country) and begin to embrace their Brazilian identity. They begin to act Brazilian by dancing the samba (something that only a few of them know how to dance authentically) and by wearing Brazilian cultural symbols, such as T-shirts with the Brazilian flag.  

Anastasia Christou and Russell King have studied diasporic relations of German- and American-born second-generation return migrants to Greece and their integration into Greek society. Most Greeks who “return home” to the land of their ancestors are triggered by idealistic motives, but unfortunately, after their return, they are often become shocked by the corruption and chaos that exists in Greece. They also experience difficulties with integrating into local society, which does not consider them entirely Greek. All these experiences have strengthened their relations with the diaspora, that is, with their relatives who have remained home in the host country. This sometimes results in a reverse migration to the host country, where they were born.

Sossie Kasbarian (2009) investigates the relationship between the Armenian diaspora and the Republic of Armenia. Kasbarian notes that most diasporans originate from Western

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Armenia, the historical land that is presently known as eastern Turkey, as opposed to the territory of present-day Armenia. Instead of referring to the Republic of Armenia as a homeland to the descendants of genocide survivors, she states that it is more appropriate to call it a step-homeland in the case of “returning” diaspora Armenians. The author refers to the return migrants from the post-genocide diaspora (as opposed to those Armenians who have returned from the republics of the former Soviet Union where they have formed a new diaspora) who chose to live in Armenia for varying periods as sojourners, instead of calling them repatriates: “we are considering a ‘return’ that is in all likelihood not permanent and to a territory that is not the ancestral homeland.” Kasbarian states that the notion of sojourning “stresses the reluctance of the individual to assimilate to the new society.” She mentions that even those who intend to settle for a long time live a transnational form of life, traveling back-and-forth between the two countries and maintain family and professional relations in both of their homelands. The author also notes that most of these sojourners have kept their physical homes in their other homeland as a “security blanket” to which they can always return.

Daniel Fittante explores the common theme behind the experiences of North American “return migrants” to Armenia based on a nine-month-long fieldwork and participant observation he conducted in Yerevan in the academic year 2015-2016. The North-American Armenians who have repatriated to Armenia are relatively recent immigrants there. Unlike some return migrants who have repatriated from developing countries (e.g. Japanese Brazilians relocated to Japan), North-American Armenians usually return for ethnonational reasons. Most of the people interviewed by Fittante have a middle-class background and all but one had a degree. When asked what Armenia had meant to them during the time they

grew up (when it was still a part of the Soviet Union), many of Fittante's interviewees answered that they experienced a kind of neutral attachment towards Soviet Armenia until the dissolution of the Soviet Union (1991), which roughly coincided with the 6.8 magnitude earthquake that affected Northern Armenia (1988) and the beginning of the conflicts with Azerbaijan (1992). All of these events had directed the attention of the diaspora to Armenia. Consequently, many diaspora Armenians decided to “move back” to Armenia at the end of the 1990s, for whom the country was usually more of an abstraction rather than a reality and not even their ancestral land in the proper sense.405

By quoting previous studies, the author sheds light on the fact that “ancestral return” (the type of ethnic return migration that is driven by sentimental rather than economic or political reasons) often ends in disillusionment, which in turn leads to a new return migration to the natal homeland or another imagined one.406 Many studies have identified problems of integration for ethnic return migrants, which partly result from very high expectations and partly from a kind of constructed or “forged” identity that is usually formed in the diasporas of many nations. Fittante claims that paradoxically many return migrants remain in the ethnic homeland despite this negative experience and “remain emotionally connected to and physically present in the perceived homeland, despite their disengagement from the local realities.”407 Fittante has found that the reason why North American Armenians choose to remain in Armenia is because they feel they have a sort of mission to rebuild Armenia and to grant it a favorable image, even if most do not feel connected to the local population, neither culturally, nor linguistically. Moreover, return migrants from the United States and Canada are generally in a more privileged social position in Armenia and have access to

higher earnings and a more comfortable lifestyle than the majority of local Armenians (161-162). The author states that North American Armenians “have no intention of making it [local Armenian culture] their own” and “since integration is not the main goal, disengagement from the local population is not an insurmountable problem.”

“Extra Hungariam Non Est Vita? The Relationships between Hungarian Immigrants and their Homeland” (originally published in 2004) by Éva Huseby-Darvas is one of the few publications that deal with return migration to Hungary. The title of the article refers to a saying commonly repeated by Hungarians, “Extra Hungarim non est vita” a perception commonly held by Hungarians who believe that there is no life outside of Hungary. Referring to the term coined by Benedict Anderson (1992), in 2004 Huseby-Darvas claimed that many Hungarian Americans practiced long-distance nationalism, which often resulted in a virtual, but no actual return in the case of political émigrés: their return was only talked about but never realized, even after fall of the iron curtain. Based on her decades-long fieldwork among Hungarian Americans (mainly in Michigan) and based on cinematographic and theatrical representations of homecoming, the author concludes that “instead of the warm homecoming imagined by the émigrés, they often descended into an abyss of mutual misunderstanding with their Hungarian counterparts.” Huseby-Darvas suggests that after the émigré experiences this kind of disillusionment, “one can never really go home again.” Some exceptions to this are retirees who choose to move to luxurious elderly homes built for potential repatriates who chose to live in an “isolated bubble”, or “homecoming in death”, that

408 Fittante, “Connection without Engagement,” 161-162.
is, reburying deceased Hungarian Americans who wished to rest in Hungarian soil (8-11). Finally, the author refutes the claim “Extra Hungariam non est vita” and states that there is life outside of Hungary.

5.3.6. The Integration of Hungarian Return Migrants from New Jersey

Even though a considerable number of Hungarians have decided to settle in Hungary on a long-term basis, often for several years, most of them have only established superfluous ties with the local population. Several people have stated that they had difficulties with integrating into local Hungarian society. The reason for this is that their primary socialization took place outside of Hungary, in the United States. Therefore, they were raised in a different cultural environment, even if their parents themselves had arrived from Hungary. As a result, many of my informants experienced misunderstandings when they established contacts with local Hungarians.

Just like in the case of the ancestral return migrants to Greece, many Hungarian Americans have also experienced disappointment upon their “return.” This partly stems from the idealized image of Hungary and Hungarians that has been passed on by the Displaced Persons and 1956ers, which the American-born generations still try to transmit to their children, for instance, through scouting. This image of Hungary and Hungarians does not entirely correspond to reality, for rather than portraying a realistic picture, it rather serves the purpose of transmitting positive feelings about being Hungarian, to which children born in the diaspora can also relate. Due to their high expectations, ethnic return migrants to Hungary have also experienced a kind of disillusionment, just like their Greek and Armenian counterparts. Some of them underlined that they were annoyed by the fact that some Hungarians do not appreciate their own culture and being Hungarian. (Valahol majd megmagyarázni a következő fogalmakat: ethnic return migration, return migration (Tsuda

413 Huseby-Darvas, “Extra Hungariam Non Est Vita?”, 8-11.
The above-mentioned disillusionment is mostly characteristic of the generations who were born or grew up during the Cold War, when the relations between the two countries were severely restricted and when Hungarian emigrants remained connected to the mother country by practicing long-distance nationalism, as described by Benedict Anderson and Éva Huseby-Darvas. Similarly, this mentality is probably also characteristic of those who cannot afford to travel to Hungary regularly and are therefore less acquainted with local realities.

It is important to note that there has been an increased interest in Hungary after the fall of communism on the part of second-generation youth, especially among the children of 1956ers. In the 1990s many young Hungarian Americans came to Hungary to complete their higher education there. Similar to them, the Hungarian Americans who belong to the New Brunswick community and in some cases their parents as well have chosen to resettle permanently in Hungary or live between two countries, dividing their time between the United States and Hungary. At present times the old country and the diaspora communities are closely connected by transnational relations. In order to teach children Hungarian, many families try to spend as much time in Hungary as possible and connect their travel to the country with spending their vacation in other European lands. Presumably, the children of these people, who usually belong to the third generation, already have a more realistic image of Hungary and fewer expectations at the same time. Therefore, one might assume that they are not subject to such a degree of disillusionment as mentioned above.

It is interesting to ask to what degree Hungarian Americans can integrate into their parents’ homeland if they were not raised in Hungary. Informant # 37 (b. 1960) has stated that there are two ways a person can integrate. The first way is to establish oneself financially, for instance, by setting up a home. The second way is to create bonds with the local population. Like for many others, it was easier for him to set up a home than to establish friendships with local Hungarians. It can generally be stated that for the Hungarians who were raised in
America and decide to settle in Hungary for an indefinite period, at first it is not easy to find a common voice with local Hungarians. This stems from the fact that even though they have held onto many Hungarian customs (e.g. celebrating national holidays, religious and family feasts), their mentality has been shaped by the American school system. A female informant, who arrived in Hungary as a university student in the early 1980s, when there was still socialism in Hungary, recalls that in those years it was normal to have a lack of choice or a shortage of goods in the stores. Her strong optimism which was instilled into her by the American school system, where children are often told: “you can even become an astronaut” or “you can even become the President of the United States” stood in sharp contrast with the general pessimism of Hungarians. Consequently, her fellow students often looked at her as if she had come from another planet. Many have shed light on the fact that they feel that this Hungarian mentality derives from communism, and even though the situation is significantly better by now, the previous negative experiences still affect the generation that is growing up right now.

Due to the lack of certain cultural or local knowledge, even those Hungarian Americans can experience difficulties who have such an excellent knowledge of Hungarian that a native Hungarian would not be able to tell that they were raised outside of Hungary. One of my interview subjects told me that he once received a business order from a considerably well-known restaurant in the heart of Budapest (Mátyás-pince). Given that he was not familiar with the location of the restaurant, the ordering party did not consider him a serious business partner. Another acquaintance of mine, who also has no accent in Hungarian, had a similar experience when native Hungarians looked at him strangely for asking where Gödöllő (a neighboring town of Budapest) was found. All these events, together with the fact that Hungarian Americans usually do not want to let others know that they come from the United States, can all lead to misunderstandings.
It is important to note that having children and participating in folk dancing can have a positive effect on creating bonds with the local population. (The theme of folk dancing will be discussed in detail in a later section of this chapter.) I have observed that the families who have school-aged children (all of them attend local Hungarian school) are able to connect much easier to local families. Hungarian American children have formed friendships through regular schools or musical schools, folk dancing, and scouting and feel totally at home in the Hungarian environment. Consequently, their parents also began to socialize with the parents of their children’s friends, with whom they usually share the same values.

Although there are some exceptions, most Hungarians who were born or raised in the United States do not plan to settle permanently in our homeland. This corresponds to Sossie Kasbarian’s above-quoted statement about Armenian-American sojourners in the Republic of Armenia. It can generally be stated that the people I have asked have not lost touch with the Hungarian-American diaspora. They remain in touch with other Hungarians living in the United States through family relations and friendships (e.g. with the help of North American folkdance camps). Informant # 37 has stressed that he is still emotionally attached to his host country: although he had been living in Hungary for nine years by the time of the interview, he has kept his home in the United States, regularly pays for his health insurance and pays his tax bills to ensure an eventual return to New Brunswick one day.

Naturally, some people have stated that they can envision their future in Hungary and even consider settling down permanently. Budapest not only attracts many foreign citizens but serves as a magnet for many Hungarian Americans as well: several of my interview subjects have expressed that they feel at home in the city. One of my interviewees has resettled in the United States for a few years to earn some money there but has since then has returned to live in Hungary with her husband.

5.3.7. **Dual identity**

All of my interview subjects, just like the people I interviewed previously in New Jersey in 2008, have a dual Hungarian-American identity. Most of them actively preserve their heritage and attend the activities organized by the local Hungarian community. As stated in the Introduction, Károly Nagy refers to these people as multicultural individuals. The primary socialization of most Hungarians who were raised in the United States took place among Hungarians (except in the case of those who grew up in an ethnically mixed household), whereas their secondary socialization, through their schooling, in an American environment. Thus, they have acquired the language, customs, and values of both cultures.

Based on my observations, it can be stated that most Hungarians continue to live the lifestyle they used to live in the United States. From a cultural point of view, they do not entirely blend into the local population, and they cannot identify themselves with local Hungarians. They cherish certain Hungarian cultural symbols and traditions (e.g. folk dancing and the Easter sprinkling) more than Hungarians do in Hungary. On the other hand, they are rather American in their mentality. Consequently, they form a separate and positive subculture both in the ethnic homeland as well as in the United States.

Some Hungarian Americans living in Hungary struggle with not being able to consider any country their homeland, despite the fact that they are familiar with both cultures. Eszter Pigniczky has given voice to this in the documentary *Inkubátor*, upon being asked whether she considers herself a Hungarian or an American. She claimed that although she, as a Hungarian American, who was born in the United States and raised in both cultures, she did not feel she belonged to any of these cultures, but to something that was a new formation.\(^{415}\) A similar thought has been shared by one of my female interviewees (Informant # 43) who stated that she has to cope with a sense of “homelessness”: once they will have permanently

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\(^{415}\) *Inkubátor*, directed by Réka Pigniczky.
returned to the United States, she would already be planning her family’s two-month-long vacation in Hungary.

Tsuda (2013) has similar insights concerning Japanese Brazilians who go through a sort of identity shift upon their “return” to Japan. According to Tsuda, second or later generation ethnics who return to the land of their ancestors practically have two homelands, their natal homeland and their ethnic homeland. The author writes, “when they return-migrate to their ethnic homeland, they become minorities all over again because of their foreign cultural upbringing, causing some of them to feel that they are a people without a homeland.”

416 Tsuda differentiates between the concepts of homeland vs home. By homeland, he refers to “a place of origin to which someone feels emotionally attached,” whereas he describes home as “a stable place of residence that feels secure, comfortable, and familiar.”

According to the author, it is through migration and physical separation that migrants returning to the ethnic homeland discover which country they consider their homeland. Often, they will prefer their birth county over their ancestral land.

418 The dual identity of return migrants from New Jersey manifests itself in their language use (they mix English and Hungarian to the same extent as they used to in America) and in the fact that they primarily socialize with other Hungarian Americans or Hungarians from abroad (e.g. Canada, Transylvania, and Slovakia) in Hungary, too. The reason for this is that Hungarian Americans feel that other Hungarians who grew up in the Hungarian diaspora abroad as members of an ethnic minority can better understand their background than the Hungarians of Hungary.

The issue of dual citizenship is closely connected to that of dual identity. One of the legal prerequisites of repatriation to Hungary is to have dual citizenship. Although I did not plan to ask this question before the interviews, many of my informants told me that they had acquired dual citizenship. Moreover, during my 2017 research trip in New Jersey, several Hungarians who actively preserve their cultural heritage have told me that they or their children would like to get Hungarian citizenship besides their already existing American one. This was often initiated by the younger, third generation, even in the case of some people who do not speak Hungarian any more but are culturally still connected to their Hungarian heritage.

5.3.8. Cultural Changes after the “Return”

Certain cultural changes have taken place after repatriation, regarding some practices and attitudes that have characterized the lives of the returnees in the United States. Among these are the main identity components of the Hungarian Americans of the East Coast, Hungarian language maintenance and folk dancing. One can also detect a change in attending Hungarian scouting, which is also a crucial means of identity preservation. In some cases, people experience a shift in identity, which leads to the strengthening of their American identity.

Language maintenance is one of the main identity components of the Hungarians of the New Brunswick community, according to Csilla Bartha (2002). In a broader sense, this is generally true for the Hungarians of the East Coast as well. In New Brunswick, it is natural for parents to talk to their children only in Hungarian in their early years until they go to school. Bartha referred to this ideology as the authoritative model of parental upbringing and claims that it comes from a purist language ideology. The same rules apply to the scout home,

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419 Csilla Bartha, “Nyelvhasználat, nyelvmegtartás, nyelvcsere,” 133.
where older scout leaders purposefully only communicate with small children in Hungarian.\(^{420}\)

The majority of people asked have stated that even if most of them are stable bilinguals, since they were brought up speaking only Hungarian with their parents, communicating in English with their children does not come naturally for them. Although two people did state that they also speak English with their children, most of my interview subjects rather preferred alternative methods for teaching them English, for instance by having them watch English language DVDs, or paying a private teacher who is a native speaker. One of my informants (M, b. 1969) has stated that his wife wanted him to speak in English with their children. He told his wife, who is a native of Transylvania that he would be willing to speak to them in English if she, in turn, spoke to them in Romanian. It was at this point that she got to understand her husband’s attitude. Since the interview, I have heard that he placed his children into an international Kindergarten.

Although all ten of my informants have been using Hungarian since their infancy, only two of them stated that they spoke both English and Hungarian to their children and that this came naturally to them. Informant # 46 (F), who intermarried with an American and whose children were born in America, said that she had been speaking to her oldest child in English until he was six months old. Later, she consciously changed to Hungarian. She admitted that she primarily thought in English even after having spent several years in Hungary. Therefore, in situations where it is difficult to control one’s speech (for instance when feeling anger), she rather tends to use English with her children. Informant # 50 (F), has been living in Hungary since her university years, thus her children were born in Hungary. She asserts that it is a part of her identity that she can discuss certain things more freely in English. Initially, at the time when her children were born, it was not natural for her to communicate in English with them,

\(^{420}\) Bartha, “Nyelvhasználat, nyelvmegtartás, nyelvcsere,” 127; Bartha, “Constructing Different Ethnic Identities,” 25.
partly because of her family and community upbringing in New Brunswick, where great emphasis was laid on Hungarian language use. However, after they reached a few years of age, she decidedly began to speak to them in English (e.g. with her daughter on the tram, who replied to her in Hungarian). Additionally, her children also attended a semester in the American school system. The informant revealed that she rather talked about her emotions in English to her son and daughter. As to what regards the English language competence of her children who are already adults, she asserted that her daughter did not have any accent in English, whereas her son had a slight accent. On the other hand, her son has better English spelling skills, while her daughter could reach the brother’s level only with the help of conscious practice.

It is also interesting to examine the possible identity shift of Hungarian Americans who move to Hungary. For many of them, Hungarian identity is in the forefront; however, in some cases, their “return” to the ancestral homeland has led to a strengthening of their American identity. Informant # 62 stated that she could not entirely identify herself either with Americans or with Hungarians. When she went to school in the United States she was known as the Hungarian girl and she always used to say, “I’m Hungarian.” After she came to study at the University of Veterinary Medicine in Budapest, she felt the need to tell people that she was American in case they might judge her why she did not speak Hungarian perfectly (she was not familiar with certain expressions and magázás, the formal way of addressing people). At the time of the interview, she was still unable to decide whether she mainly considered herself an American, a Hungarian, or a Hungarian-American. Although the force of assimilation is very strong in the United States, given that it is a welcoming country, it only depends on one’s family circumstances and a private decision whether immigrants and their descendants can successfully preserve their ethnicity. It is for this reason that she embraces her American identity, too.
Folk dancing, folk music, and folk objects (furniture, embroideries, and pottery) are important cultural symbols for Hungarian Americans. Although some people attend dance house meetings less frequently than they used to in the United States, Hungarian Americans continue to cherish these objects of folk art upon which they consider representations of authentic folk culture. Even though most Hungarian Americans regret that the Hungarians of the homeland generally do not value folk culture, many of them have joined the táncház movement in Budapest and state that this movement connects them to local Hungarians in Budapest. One of my female informants (b. 1978) has expressed that since the movement has its roots in Hungary, for her attending dance house events in Budapest is like finding its source, the “pure fountain.” Hungária Folkdance Ensemble has played a pivotal role in this, of which she used to be a member as well.

The success of the Hajdu-Németh siblings in the Felszállott a Páva contest has been reported in the previous subchapter. The children competing against each other in 2016 formed such good friendships, that László and Balázs formed the earlier mentioned Sarjú banda. In 2017 their father, who along with his wife used to perform in several cities of North America and Hungary as members of the Életfa Folk Band, asserted that their oldest son was more proficient at playing the violin and folk dancing than they were.

The Hungarian Scout Association Abroad plays a special role in binding together the Hungarians living in the various countries and continents of the diaspora, among them the North-American Hungarians. Scouting is especially notable for its community-building effect. Most of my informants have participated in the scout movement during their youth, through which they gained lifelong memories. Some of my informants’ children joined the Hungarian Scouts of New Brunswick before moving to Hungary or during a longer stay there. Since all of the children had very positive experiences, it is understandable that all of my interview
subjects wanted their children to join the scout movement in Hungary, too. Some of their children joined the scouts by themselves.

However, Hungarian scouting in Hungary caused a general delusion for most return migrants. Nine out of ten of my informants have said that their children did not continue Hungarian scouting after they moved to Hungary. The reason behind this is that whereas in America Hungarian scouting serves as a tool to maintain Hungarian language and culture, Hungarian scouting in Hungary is “not Hungarian enough” for them and it mostly concentrates on religion. Two of my interview subjects have stated that they joined the scouting movement in Hungary, given their previous positive experiences in New Brunswick. However, soon they became too disappointed and stopped going to scouting events. Informant # 46 stated that she and her children could not grasp the purpose of scouting in Hungary. Since at the time of the interview they were living in a village near the Slovak border (in Nógrad county), it occurred to her to have her children join the Hungarian Scouts in Fülek, Slovakia, where Hungarians are in a similar minority situation and have to make similar efforts to resist giving up their identity, just like in the United States. However, given their negative experiences in Hungary, her children were unwilling to try it out (they said they would only reattend scouting if they were in New Brunswick).

According to Informant # 62 (2011), scouting in Hungary “is more ‘scoutly’ than in the United States. Here in Hungary, scouting is all about scouting. At home in America, scouting was a means through which people could transmit Hungarianness.” Partly as a result of this and partly due to their adult age, none of my interview subjects joined scouting in Hungary. Except for one of my interviewees, none of them had children who attended scouting on a long-term basis. Since most of them are planning to move back to America one

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421 My translation of; original: “[Magyarországon] cserkészsebb a cserkészset. Itt a cserkészetről szól, csakis. És otthon Amerikában a cserkészset az egy eszköz volt, hogy a magyarságot tovább adják.”
day, they believe that their children will be able to fulfill the required exams to be able to take part in community events, in case it will be necessary.

Only one parent (Informant # 37, in 2016) claimed that he did not mind that scouting in Hungary lacked Hungarian features. He and his wife expressed that they liked scouting in Hungary because it had a positive character-building effect on their sons and they were happy with the moral education it provided. The father stated that teenage boys like to push the boundaries, exploring what they are capable of and that scouting offers challenges in terms of skills, problem-solving, and testing their character. His wife, who was raised in Hungary and was also present at the interview, underlined that scouting goes against the tide of global culture that dictates trends and that it also teaches children values. Moreover, she felt that even if they were preaching all the time, she and her husband would have less of an influence on their children than the group of teenagers who are of their age.

The force of assimilation is so strong in the United States that it practically affects all families and communities. Although my participants did not state this overtly, it is highly probable that their “return” is a result of their anti-assimilationist attitude. Although the Hungarian law officially considers them repatriates, most Hungarian-American “returnees” do not plan to settle permanently in Hungary. All of my interview subjects maintain active ties with their diaspora community through their parents, siblings, or folk dancing. Partly as a result of this, most of them do not wish to completely assimilate into the local Hungarian population. Since they feel they belong to both cultures which sometimes show variations in terms of their value system and mentality, they cannot entirely identify themselves neither with monocultural Americans nor with monocultural Hungarians. They consider themselves members of a subculture, in a positive sense. Their integration into US society can be considered successful since at present times they hold good positions both in Hungary, the same way as they used to in the United States. Despite the fact that most of them
communicate in Hungarian with their children, the English language and its interference are still present in their language use, which forms an integral part of their identity.
Chapter 6
Integration and Ethnic Identity Retention in New Brunswick

6.1. The Role of Religion

It is a well-known fact that religion can play a significant role in ethnic identity maintenance. One example that might come to people’s minds is that Jewish identity was passed on through the Jewish faith for centuries before the State of Israel was formed. Likewise, the Armenian churches—primarily the Armenian Apostolic Church (the national church of the Armenians)—have assumed a similar role. Since the Armenian nation was practically without a state for approximately one thousand years before the Republic of Armenia was established in 1991, the Armenian Apostolic Church helped keep alive the ethnic identity of Armenians living under foreign rule.422

Various scholars have noted that being affiliated with a national church may slow down the assimilation process. In 1990, Richard Alba projected that European ethnic groups would eventually assimilate into a new formation, that of the “European-Americans.”423 A few years later, in 1993, Anny Bakalian reacted to Alba’s thesis, claiming that Armenian-Americans were “unlikely to blend into this nondescript European-American group in the near future.” She claims that as in the case of the Jews and the Greeks, being a member of the Armenian Apostolic Church tends to strengthen ethnic identity.424 Likewise, Jendian also found that being affiliated with such a network of one’s coethnics attenuated the generational effect described by straight-line theory.425 Citing Charles Moskos, Yiorgos Anagnostou (2009) also underlines the importance of religion in connection with the Greek Orthodox

422 Benedek Zsigmond, personal communication, November 5, 2015.
423 Alba, The Transformation of White America, 3.
424 Bakalian, Armenian Americans, 47 -48.
425 Jendian, Becoming American, Remaining Ethnic, 79.
Church: “for the American born, even as the immigrant past fades, the church community becomes the primary definer of Greek ethnicity.”

Being affiliated with an Eastern church can also have a positive effect on language maintenance. In connection with measuring the language transmission scores of thirteen Caucasian ethnic groups, John E. Hoffman (1966) argued that “the sacred tongues of the Eastern Churches undoubtedly reinforce the use of their secular offspring more directly than is possible in the case of Catholic churches of the Latin rite.” Among the thirteen ethnic groups, Armenians ranked first, Greeks second, and Ukrainians third, followed by Lithuanians. The remaining nine ones were all nations with a Catholic majority, except for Russians and Carpatho-Russians. For instance, Hungarians were no. 9 on the list, while Italians occupied no. 11, and Germans no. 13.

Hungarian sociolinguists also emphasized the role of the Orthodox churches in language maintenance. The so-called HuBiling project, managed by Anna Borbély and coordinated by Csilla Bartha between 2003 and 2004, involved a simultaneous study of six linguistic minorities in Hungary (Germans, Slovaks, Romanians, Serbs, Boyash, and Roma speakers). The project results yielded that after the Romani, it was the Serbs, followed by the Romanians, who had the highest scores of language maintenance. Borbély argues that except in the case of the Romani, this can be attributed to the effect of the Orthodox churches, where rituals are conducted in a language other than the state language.

428 Hofman, “Mother Tongue Retentiveness in Ethnic Parishes,” 135.
6.1.1. Church Closings and Mergers

The latter half of the twentieth century saw a large number of Catholic churches that were closed down, primarily ethnic ones. The process took place in three main waves. The first phase began when white ethnics started moving out to the suburbs from immigrant neighborhoods. This was caused by the influx of African American residents, which in turn was triggered by the Shelley v. Kraemer Supreme Court decision of 1948, which put an end to housing segregation. As a result of this population shift, certain immigrant neighborhoods became deserted or inhabited by people of a more impoverished background with respect to their previous residents. Consequently, several churches became abandoned or neglected. Finally, many of them had to be closed down in the 1960s and 70s. The second wave took place in the 1980s and 1990s, when people started moving to the Sun Belt from the industrial regions of the Eastern and North Eastern United States. The third phase can be traced back to 2002 and still lasts today. This will be discussed in detail in the following.430

The issue of modern-day church closings was investigated by Viktória Somogyi, codirector of Foreclosing on Faith / A hit kiárusítása (2017) with Jeff MacIntyre. According to Somogyi, this last phase was indirectly triggered by the sexual abuse crisis that broke out in Boston in 2002, which later spread to the entire nation. As a result of the scandals, the Church had to pay 85 million dollars in compensation for the damages. At the same time, certain dioceses started experiencing financial problems, partly because many Catholics stopped supporting the Church.431

Several Hungarian churches were affected by the closings and mergers in the last ten years. The most famous case is that of St. Emeric Church of Cleveland, but the Hungarian media also reported about St. Stephen’s Church in Dayton, Ohio and another St. Stephen’s in

431 Foreclosing on Faith / A hit kiárusítása, directed and produced by Viktoria Somogyi and Jeff MacIntyre, written by Viktoria Somogyi, (Content Media Group, 2017).
New York City. Bishop Richard Lennon was installed in the Cleveland Archdiocese in 2007. After his arrival there, he started reconfiguring the archdiocese. Consequently, in 2009 and 2010, more than fifty parishes were shut down Cleveland, Ohio. Interestingly, 35 of these had an ethnic background. According to Bishop Lennon, the reasons for the church closings were the following: “population shift,” “financial hardship,” and the shortage of priests. Several American media outlets reported about the protests organized by the members of the affected parishes. According to Patricia Singleton, parishioners began protesting because “many of the ones that he has closed did not meet those conditions to be closed. St. Emeric is definitely one of them.” In fact, Endre Szentkirályi writes that 356 registered families were registered at the parish and that the number of people who attended mass on Sundays even grew to 110-140 in the last year before the shutdown.

The parishioners of twelve of the above mentioned fifty parishes appealed to the Vatican against the Bishop’s decision, including St. Emeric Church. The parish had only ten days to appeal after the bishop’s announcement. One of its members, Miklós Peller, who acknowledged that he knew they had “less than one percent chance of winning this thing.” As a layman, Mr. Peller started to study canon law and filed an appeal to the Congregation of the Clergy of the Vatican. In an unprecedented move, in 2012, the Vatican overruled Bishop Lennon’s decision to close the above mentioned twelve parishes.

St. Stephen’s Church in Dayton, also in Ohio, was forced to shut down a few years later, in 2015. Its parishioners decided not to appeal against the decision. The Archdiocese of Cincinnati claimed that the reasons for closing the parish were that it neither had enough tax payers nor a sufficient number of Hungarian members. Nevertheless, the church was always

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432 Foreclosing on Faith, directed by Viktoria Somogyi and Jeff MacIntyre.
433 Foreclosing on Faith, directed by Viktoria Somogyi and Jeff MacIntyre.
435 Foreclosing on Faith, directed by Viktoria Somogyi and Jeff MacIntyre.
full: approximately 150-200 people attended the masses each Sunday. Most of them were non-Hungarians, but there were also third and fourth-generation Hungarians among them, who continued to pray and sing in Hungarian during the services. The parish was able to sustain itself from work done by American and Hungarian women.\textsuperscript{436} Parish members were hoping that the edifice could be preserved in the form of a museum. Unfortunately, the archdiocese later sold it to the Greek Catholic Church, which required St. Stephen’s to empty the church building.\textsuperscript{437}

In 2015, 112 parishes were merged into 55 ones, and 31 churches were permanently shut down, as part of a broader plan of realignment in the Archdiocese of New York.\textsuperscript{438} The decision was brought by Cardinal Timothy Dolan, Archbishop of New York. According to Kalman A. Csanyi, the archdiocese also had economic reasons for the reconfiguration: “Eight of the eleven churches that closed in Manhattan were all churches that are soon going to be next to the new 2\textsuperscript{nd} Avenue Subway. The values, for example, on this block, have gone up in the past year 30 percent.”\textsuperscript{439}

Cardinal Dolan’s decision also affected St. Stephen of Hungary, a former Franciscan parish, which used to be the only Hungarian church in the metropolis. Since the parish encountered financial difficulties, the Archdiocese took it over with the requirement that the parish could not have a Hungarian pastor in the future. Given that there is a Catholic school functioning attached to the church, masses continue to be celebrated there. However, the Hungarian community is not allowed to use the church building anymore. The Hungarian masses are now held in a German church (St. Monica’s). Since the merger, the number of

rikai_magyar_templom!/hu-1135969.

\textsuperscript{437} Foreclosing on Faith, directed by Viktoria Somogyi and Jeff MacIntyre.


\textsuperscript{439} Foreclosing on Faith, directed by Viktoria Somogyi and Jeff MacIntyre.
faithful coming to Sunday services has decreased from 60 to approximately 30-35. According to Father Imre Juhász, significantly fewer people attended St. Stephen’s feast in 2016, one year after the merger, than the year before.440

In a radio interview, Father Juhász discussed the current and the past role of St. Stephen’s in the life of the Hungarians of New York. Initially, in the first half of the twentieth century, it also had a cultural function besides a religious one. Dances and dinners were held at the parish, and theater groups put on plays. A large segment of the people who arrived from Hungary after the Second World War and the Revolution were still practicing Catholics. However, since Christianity was oppressed during the communist era, there are very few churchgoers among the newly arrived Hungarians, many of whom are not even baptized. For this reason, they do not need any pastoral care. Interestingly, the youngest generation of the local Hungarian scouts did not participate in the church services, either. The majority of the faithful who attended the church before the merger were elderly people. Most of their children had already moved away from the area, and only a few of them had grandchildren who spoke Hungarian.441

Church closings and sellings also affect the Reformed Hungarians of the East Coast. Many older members have either died or have a low pension and have chosen to move to Florida (for instance, to Miami), where the cost of living is more affordable than in New Jersey. Many churches in New Jersey were closed or sold in the last ten years, such as in Perth Amboy, Cliffside, and Lynden. The cities in Pennsylvania are also going through a crisis, where many industries have closed down. Since there are no job opportunities in this region, there are no newcomers to join the once flourishing Hungarian communities. Even second and third-generation Hungarians are moving away from Pennsylvania (e.g., from

440 Imre Juhász, interview by the author, November 22, 2016.
Pittsburgh and Philadelphia). The metropolises (e.g., New York and the large cities in California) are in a more favorable position from this point of view, just as New Brunswick. Nevertheless, there is a general movement from the East to the West and South. New congregations have been formed in Denver, CO, Atlanta, GA, and Las Vegas, NE. The case is similar for the Roman Catholic Church, where new parishes have been established. Also, the newest Hungarian immigrants now move directly from Hungary to Florida.

6.1.2. Hungarian Churches in New Brunswick

As stated in Chapter 3, the early immigrants to New Brunswick founded six Hungarian churches and one synagogue at the beginning of the twentieth century. Currently, Hungarian services are held in only two of these churches, St. Ladislaus Roman Catholic Church and the Magyar Reformed Church. Ascension Lutheran Church and St. Joseph’s Byzantine Catholic Hungarian Church are very small faith communities. Today there are only a few Hungarians or people of Hungarian descent who attend these churches.

Very few sources can be found about St. Joseph’s Byzantine Catholic Church. Rev. Zsolt Ötvös remembers that when he arrived in New Brunswick in 2008, St. Joseph still had a Hungarian priest, but he retired soon after. Consequently, Hungarian masses were no longer held at the parish. The Hungarian priest was followed by one of German descent, and later by another one of Italian heritage. In 2016, Zsuzsanna Volekné Temesi interviewed Emil Ruszinko as a part of the Mikes Kelemen Program. Like Mr. Ruszinko and his parents, many parishioners who used to be part of this parish are of Subcarpathian origin. Zoltán Fejős notes that it was more challenging for Greek Catholic churches to maintain their Hungarian

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442 Zsolt Ötvös, interview by the author, January 27, 2017; Károly Jókay, email message to author, October 1, 2020.
444 Viktória Somogyi, “A hit kiárusítása – Nyilvános beszélgetés és gondolatok a filmről.”
445 Károly Jókay, email message to author, October 1, 2020.
character because many Greek Catholics have a Slavic, usually a Rusyn or a Slovak ethnic background. Mr. Ruszinkó recalls that the English language was first introduced in the parish in 1955 because not all parish members were Hungarian.

Bayard Street Presbyterian Church is still functioning. It houses a predominantly American congregation, with many Hispanic and Indian members. It used to form one congregation with the Magyar Reformed Church until a split that occurred in 1912. The reason behind the conflict was that the former party wished to be affiliated with an American church body, while the latter one wished to be connected to the Reformed Church of Hungary. Even today, some members of the Presbyterian congregation have Hungarian connections, either by birth or by marriage. The pastor, Joseph Bodnar, is a third-generation Hungarian who can also speak the language of his ancestors. The Bayard Street Presbyterian Church also participates in the celebration of the yearly Hungarian Festival. It was also a founding member of the Hungarian Civic Association in 1975, which is in charge of organizing the Festival.

Unlike the Roman Catholic parishes, the congregation of the Magyar Reformed Church has almost complete autonomy. Although the dean (esperes) and the bishop have a say in the life of the classis (egyházmegye) and of the synod (egyházkerület) of which they are in charge of; nevertheless, the congregations enjoy a considerable degree of freedom from external control. Whereas many American Catholic clergy leaders show insensitivity towards the need of the faithful to have masses held in their native tongues, the Magyar Reformed Church has always maintained its Hungarian nature, despite the fact that people

449 Ilona Kovács, personal communication, March 12, 2018.
have been able to attend English language services for 90 years.\footnote{Zsolt Ötvös, interview by the author, November 4, 2009: Imre Juhász, interview by the author, November 22, 2016.} An interesting fact that Rev. Zsolt Ötvös mentioned in 2009 is that several people participated in the Magyar Reformed Church’s English-language services among those who could not speak Hungarian but were very proud of their Hungarian descent.\footnote{Zsolt Ötvös, interview by the author, November 4, 2009.} On the other hand, Fr. Imre Juhász did not get acquainted with any of the Old Hungarians’ descendants among the parishioners of St. Ladislaus.\footnote{Imre Juhász, interview by the author, November 22, 2016.}

Rev. Ötvös claims that the faith communities that host services only in Hungarian will eventually start experiencing a drawback in the long run. The reason for this is that most second and third-generation Hungarians primarily wish to attend celebrations in English and not in Hungarian. For instance, in Canada, where the Reverend also served, Hungarian Reformed congregations rarely hold English services. As a result, they have lost many members because the people who wished to continue going to church have joined non-Hungarian congregations of other Protestant denominations.\footnote{Zsolt Ötvös, interview by the author, January 27, 2017.}

The Magyar Reformed Church of New Brunswick, for instance, started hosting services in English already in the 1930s. This has proved to be beneficial for the congregation for several reasons. In 2017 more people attended the English-language services of the church than the Hungarian ones. In case they did not offer celebrations in English, less than half of the congregants would not be attending the church. The American-born generations are usually financially more established than the immigrants. The church has second, third, and fourth-generation members who do not speak Hungarian but were baptized or confirmed there. Some of them actively help the congregation both financially and by doing volunteer work.\footnote{Zsolt Ötvös, interview by the author, January 27, 2017.}
St. Ladislaus Church also played a crucial role in Hungarian identity maintenance. The church was originally built in a neo-baroque style by the earliest immigrants to New Brunswick.\textsuperscript{459} Father Julián Füzér had the building restored after his arrival in the early 1970s.\textsuperscript{460} He invited Father Asztrik Kákonyi, a Franciscan friar from Hungary, to do the restoration works, who prepared the stained glass windows of the entrance doors and those depicting Hungarian saints on the sidewalls of the church.\textsuperscript{461} After the restoration, the church received a neogothic style in the interior. A few changes have also been made to the church’s façade. Most of the Hungarians who came during the Cold War were very pleased by the artistic changes. On the other hand, some, especially those who arrived before World War One and were the founding members, felt disappointed and hurt by the fact that the church they had built was transformed.\textsuperscript{462}

Cardinal Mindszenty reconsecrated the newly renovated church during his visit to New Brunswick in 1973. He was informally invited by Lajos Hajdu-Németh and his wife, parishioners of St. Ladislaus Church.\textsuperscript{463} Ten thousand people attended the Holy Mass and the reconsecration besides the representatives of the press and the television networks. After the homily, a large-scale reception was organized in honor of the Cardinal, with the attendance of the governor of New Jersey and Mayor of New Brunswick, Patricia Sheehan. In 1974, the place was named Mindszenty Square in honor of the Cardinal. Three years after his visit, in 1976, a bronze statue was erected next to the church, where he gave his speech.\textsuperscript{464}


\textsuperscript{462} Mária Tamás and Tamás Tamás, interview by the author, October 3, 2017; Tamás Tamás, “Magyarországi katolikus templomépítők.”

\textsuperscript{463} László Hajdu-Németh, \textit{Az Isten embere}, episode 1, directed by Tamás Széles (Debrecen Televisió, 2014), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CChBHDDYFt8.

Cardinal’s visit to many Hungarian communities in the United States made a lasting impression on the Hungarians he met. Wherever he went, he urged his compatriots to pass on the Hungarian language to the youngest generation. During the speech he gave in New Brunswick, he declared, “It is not possible to celebrate St. Stephen if his language is let to die out in Hungarian families.”

6.1.3. Changes within the Last Decade (2008-2017)

The two Hungarian churches that still offer services in Hungarian, St. Ladislaus Church and the Magyar Reformed Church, went through several transformations between 2008 and 2017. Although the congregation of the Magyar Reformed Church enjoys more independence from the bishop than the ethnic parishes that belong to the Catholic Church, the separation of church and state poses a financial challenge for all faith communities in the United States, for they need to be self-supporting. Another difficulty that both faith communities have to face is the loss of old members and the fact that the newly arrived Hungarians are generally not religious and therefore do not seek pastoral guidance. Consequently, it is difficult to recruit new members, and this leads to shrinking communities.

In 2014, Saint Ladislaus Church was merged with two other ethnic parishes, a Polish (St. Joseph Church) and a Mexican one (Sacred Heart Church), into what is today called Holy Family Parish. Although luckily, each of the churches could keep their buildings, financially, they became one parish. Fr. Capistran (Lawrence) Polgar (1940-2019), the last Hungarian

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465 My translation of, original: “Szent Istvánt nem lehet úgy ünnepelni, hogy a nyelve meghaljon a magyar családokban.” Az Isten embere, episode 1, directed by Tamás Széles.
466 The term Magyar Reformed Church both refers to the name of the church building and that of the congregation.
parish priest of St. Ladislaus Church, was sent into retirement in 2013. He was a third-
generation Hungarian who was born in New Brunswick and whose grandfather, István
Gerencsér, was one of the founding members of St. Ladislaus.469 As a child, Fr. Capistran was
not raised with the Hungarian language, but he could understand it to some degree, having
grown up among Hungarians. He was also the last Franciscan friar to serve the church
because the parish ceased to function as a Franciscan church after the merger. According to
the rules of the Franciscan order, there should be at least two or three friars living together in
a convent. Since Fr. Capistran was living on his own and given his elderly age, the Franciscan
order decided to assign St. Ladislaus to the diocese. This practically meant the loss of the
parish’s relative autonomy: whereas previously, it was under the leadership of the Franciscan
superior, it now came under the bishop’s jurisdiction.

The parishioners of St. Ladislaus, led by Gyula Varga, Magdolna Varga, and László
Hajdu-Németh, filed several appeals against the decision to unify the three churches.
Unfortunately, even their final appeal to the Apostolic Signatura (the supreme court of the
Vatican) was eventually denied.470 The main reason for this was that the bishops and
archbishops had already learned from the errors made by Bishop Lennon in the case of St.
Emerc’s Church and the other eleven churches that were closed in the Cleveland Diocese but
later had to be reopened.471 Indeed, the Vatican can only overrule a bishop’s or an
archbishop’s decision if he has made a mistake from the point of view of canon law.472

As a last resort, they planned to submit a request to Pope Francis. They contacted
Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, who was willing to send a letter through the apostolic nuncio to

469 Capistran Polgar, interview by the author, August 28, 2008; “Father Capistran (Lawrence) Polgar, OFM,”
lawrence&pid=192738877&fhid=13963; Tamás Tamás, “Magyarországi katolikus templomépítők.”
470 Gyula Varga, interview by Zsuzsanna Volekné Temesi, February 26, 2016, Collection of Historical
Interviews, National Széchényi Library, Budapest, Hungary; Tamás Tamás, “Magyarországi katolikus
templomépítők.”
471 Imre Juhász, interview by the author, November 22, 2016..
472 Viktória Somogyi, “A hit kiárusítása – Nyilvános beszélgetés és gondolatok a filmről.”
plead for St. Ladislaus’ case. Unfortunately, the migration crisis interrupted this endeavor in 2015, when the relations between the Prime Minister and Pope Francis deteriorated.473

Despite these failed attempts, the parishioners of St. Ladislaus had the creative idea to invite Fr. Imre Juhász, a Hungarian-born diocesan priest,474 who was serving in Mexico at the time when the church merger was announced. Since approximately 70 percent of the people living in the Diocese of Metuchen (where St. Ladislaus is also found) are Hispanic, there was a need for a Spanish-speaking priest. The parishioners initiated talks with the bishop to have the father relocated from Mexico to serve the Hungarian Catholic community in New Brunswick.475 Fr. Imre proved to be a popular member of the community, not only among Catholics but those who are not religious as well. He actively takes part in several events and not just in religious ones, such as picnics, festivals, and other meetings organized throughout the Hungarian communities of New Jersey and the United States.

Before the arrival of Father Imre Juhász, the parish community had been without a fluently Hungarian speaking priest for several years. Fr. Capistran, the parish priest of St. Ladislaus from 1998 to 2013, was a third-generation immigrant who grew up in a household where English was the main language.476 He was proud of his Hungarian heritage, took Hungarian lessons, and traveled several times to Hungary to improve his language skills.477 Even if the songs and the other parts of the mass he gave were in Hungarian, he always delivered his sermons in English. During this time, for instance, in 2008 and 2009, many Hungarian Catholics, who wished to hear a homily in their native tongue, joined the Magyar

474 Diocesan priests are secular clerics who are not members of religious orders.
477 Capistran Polgar, interview by the author, August 28, 2008.
Reformed Church’s service after having attended Catholic mass on Sundays. This ceased to be
the case after Fr. Imre Juhász became the parochial vicar of New Brunswick.

Another disadvantageous outcome of the merger was that St. Ladislaus was converted
into a territorial parish, whereas it previously used to be a personal parish.⁴⁷⁸ Personal
parishes usually serve a specific community who belong to a particular rite or nationality (e.g.
Hungarians who attend masses in their native language); therefore, their members can live
anywhere, even in a far-away town. In the case of territorial parishes, the parishioners who
belong to a given parish must live in the area surrounding a specific church.⁴⁷⁹ As a result of
the merger, St. Ladislaus can only count those Hungarians among its members who live in the
church’s territory. Practically, this means that two Hungarian families remained out of the ca.
300 previous ones. This is a significant financial drawback for the newly created parish. After
the merger, practically, both the Hungarians and the Mexicans stopped supporting the parish,
given that they were unsure where their money would end up. For instance, the Hungarian
women used to bake ca. 1200-1300 pieces of kalács and beigli twice a year, from which they
had an income of approximately 8-9000 dollars. The Mexicans also used to cook and sell
goods for their parish, but these income sources have ceased by now. According to Fr. Imre
Juhász, if it were not for the real estate properties that the parish has, it would have long
become broken.⁴⁸⁰

The Magyar Reformed Church also started to experience difficulties during the last
decade. Between 2009 and 2017, the congregation lost approximately 80 members, roughly
ten people each year. Besides the members who have passed away, a large number of the
pensioners have moved to Florida. The reason for this is that the average rate of property tax
one has to pay for a house in New Jersey is ca. $8-10,000, whereas in Florida, this would be

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⁴⁷⁸ Imre Juhász, interview by the author, November 22, 2016.
⁴⁷⁹ Miklós Peller, interview, Foreclosing on Faith, directed by Viktória Somogyi and Jeff MacIntyre; Fejős, “A
tengerentúli magyar egyházzak.”
⁴⁸⁰ Imre Juhász, interview by the author, November 22, 2016.
around $1,000. The Reverend has stated that in the last three to four years prior to the interview, at least four or five families, who were very active in the community, had sold their houses and moved to Florida. This has led to a decrease in the number of people who attended the service in Hungarian. Whereas in 2009, there were usually about 40 to 50 people who went to service each Sunday, by 2017, this number had shrunk to 30 to 35.\footnote{Zsolt Ötvös, interview by the author, January 27, 2017.}

Fortunately, there is a supply of new Hungarians; however, only a smaller segment of them have become integrated into the community. A large number of these people are undocumented immigrants who practically form a separate community. Although they take their children to the Hungarian Saturday school and scouting and attend the events organized by the Hungarian American Athletic Club, only few of them have joined the churches and participate in local cultural events.\footnote{Zsolt Ötvös, interview by the author, January 27, 2017.}

A great dilemma for the Magyar Reformed Church is how to achieve a balance between providing spiritual activities and sustaining itself financially. The congregation has lost many old women who used to volunteer to make \textit{hurka}, \textit{kolbász}, and stuffed cabbage. This was an essential part of the church’s community life. However, it is becoming more and more difficult to keep up these activities. The new generation of immigrants is not interested in making \textit{hurka-kolbász}; thus, the congregation is trying to find new creative ways to recruit new members. Another problem the church has to face is that most of the young Hungarians who arrive from Hungary are not religious. Therefore, the church community organizes skating events, movie and bowling nights, where congregation members can meet the newcomers. The goal would be to primarily concentrate on religion because the Hungarians who seek only cultural activities have the opportunity to join the scouts and the Hungarian American Athletic Club. This is a challenge for many congregations because they also need to support themselves due to the separation of church and state.
6.2. The Language Preservation of the American-born generations

The interviews I conducted in 2008 and 2009 revealed that the second generation of the Cold War immigrants had a strict upbringing. The majority of my interview subjects belonging to this cohort were born in the 1960s and 70s in New Brunswick, NJ. The custom within the New Brunswick community was that parents (even American-born ones) only spoke to their children in Hungarian until they reached age five, the age of going to school. As children, they were constantly reminded by their parents and other community members to speak Hungarian. This was true both in the family setting and in scouting as well. From a sociolinguistic point of view, Csilla Bartha referred to this as the authoritative model of upbringing.\textsuperscript{483} As teenagers, my informants often rebelled against having to speak Hungarian. It was not unusual for many of them to use either English or a mixture of English and Hungarian (either code-mixing and code-switching) secretly with each other when their parents were not around.

When my American-born interview subjects reached a certain age and started having children themselves or were expecting their first child, they consciously tried to speak as much Hungarian among themselves as they could. Another strategy they adopted was to only talk in Hungarian with their children until they reached the age of going to school. This way, they continued the language transmission strategy applied by their parents when they were children and young adults. This and the annoyance mentioned above at having to speak Hungarian corresponds to the observations made by Judith Kesserű Némethy, who discussed the changing attitudes of second and third-generation Hungarians towards Hungarian language use. Besides mentioning that teenagers often rebel against the parental expectations

\textsuperscript{483} Bartha, “Nyelvhasználat, nyelvmegtartás, nyelvcsere,” 127; Bartha, “Constructing Different Ethnic Identities,” 26.
of speaking Hungarian, she also noticed that many of her students became interested in their Hungarian ethnicity and reacquired the language after reaching adulthood.\textsuperscript{484}

The children of the Cold War immigrants have had opportunities to study Hungarian in an institutionalized form besides practicing the language at home. A group of 1956ers (Hungarian Students at Rutgers), who later became known as the Hungarian Alumni Association, founded the Hungarian Saturday Classes (\textit{Hétvégi Magyar Iskola}) at Rutgers University in 1960. Since a growing number of 56ers started having children at that time, they wanted to ensure that their children receive education in their native tongue.\textsuperscript{485} In 1973 a split occurred within the school when some parents disagreeing with the Alumni Association’s involvement in the Native Tongue Conferences decided to found a new school. This separation was led by the Hungarian scouts and became known as the Széchenyi Saturday School, which operates to this day. Among its most well-known principles were Gyula Varga, Zsolt Balla, and Juan (János) Gorondi.\textsuperscript{486}

Hungarian lessons were reintroduced to St. Ladislaus school in the early 1970s. In the schoolyear of 1971-72, the newly arrived parish priest, father Julián Füzér hired two Hungarian teachers after thirty years of having no Hungarian-language education at the school.\textsuperscript{487} The school’s curriculum offered Hungarian lessons, with a focus on Hungarian culture. One of my interview subjects (Informant # 41), a child of 56ers who graduated from St. Ladislaus, began school in 1971. She recalls that they were taught by American-born Hungarian nuns, but not all of them spoke Hungarian. Approximately 25 percent of the children could not speak English since they were children of Hungarian immigrants. Nevertheless, this was not a problem for them because many had older siblings who had

\textsuperscript{484} Judit Kesserű Némethy, “Az amerikai magyar tizenévesek kétnyelvűsége,” (paper presented at the 1988 AHEA Conference), 4-6, unpublished manuscript, Microsoft Word file.
\textsuperscript{485} Károly Nagy, interview by the author, September 15, 2008, quoted by Pintz, “Hungarian Heritage Maintenance in the USA,” 103-104.
\textsuperscript{486} Gyula Varga, interview by Zsuzsanna Volekné Temesi, February 26, 2016.
\textsuperscript{487} István Hegedűs, “A 110 éves Szent László Templom.”
already acquired the language at school. Thus, many of them could already understand some English when they entered Kindergarten. 

Unfortunately, the school started experiencing financial problems and finally, it had to be closed down in 1996. Since the state does not support Catholic schools in the United States, students who enroll in religious institutions must pay tuition. By the end of the school’s existence, many students either did not pay or were unable to pay. Another problem was the expenses related to maintaining the school, e.g., hiring teachers and paying for the cleaning personnel. Whereas the children of the 1956ers were taught by nuns who were not paid for teaching, the teachers who taught at the school in the later decades were laypeople (meaning they were not religious sisters), which further increased the necessary payments.488

The nearby Rutgers University also offered courses through a Hungarian minor. A few of my acquaintances made use of this opportunity and enrolled in the program. One of my interviewees (Informant # 45) stated that this helped her pass on the Hungarian language to her children. Another person (Informant # 32) said that it was thanks to this program that her daughter later received a degree at Corvinus University in Budapest.

6.1.1. Language Transmission to the Youngest Generation

The majority of the active parents within the Hungarian community of New Brunswick consider it a value if their child knows more than one language or culture. They believe that teaching Hungarian is not harmful but definitely useful for the child. They are convinced that it will not hinder their integration or chances of learning English at a proficient level. Apart from the Hungarians who arrived in America as adults, most of these parents are bilingual speakers themselves. Besides a relative minority that stated that not knowing English at first caused them difficulties, ca. 95 percent of the parents said they had no problems with starting school, even if they did not initially understand the language. Most of

them became fluent in English within a few months and, naturally, speak it at a native level. Interestingly, some of the newly arrived Hungarians were of a different opinion and wanted their children to know some English before starting Kindergarten. According to the American-born Hungarians, the reason for this is that they are probably not aware of how quickly a child can learn a new language. Also, another explanation might be that these parents are not familiar with the American school system. Contrarily to the Hungarian school system, where children are expected to read, write, do homework, and learn poems by heart already in the first grade, the first year of school in the United States begins with Kindergarten, which is rather an extension of preschool and is about learning playfully.

My main research questions concerning language transmission to the youngest generation of Hungarian Americans were the following. Did the parents teach their children Hungarian before they started school? To what extent could children keep up with their Hungarian language skills after beginning school?

The people who have a strong Hungarian identity (e.g., the most active members of the community or who frequently travel to Hungary) have continued the strategy applied by their parents, namely, that they only use Hungarian with their children until they reach the age of five. This is interesting because these parents were already born in the United States and are thus more fluent in English than Hungarian. Contrarily to when they grew up, when there was no Hungarian television available in the country, these second and 2.5 generation parents consciously played Hungarian DVDs to their children. One father even bought a Hungarian-speaking teddy bear for their children, while another had Duna TV installed into their home in the 2000s. Naturally, the internet was also a rich resource for them. This conscious attitude is also characteristic of the three Hungarian mothers I interviewed, who are married to or living with a non-Hungarian partner.
In other families, especially those who live too far away to regularly participate in community events or where one of the parents does not speak Hungarian, the children practically do not speak Hungarian. Nevertheless, there are some exceptions, e.g., when the parent is very motivated to talk to them in Hungarian or take them to Hungary for vacations. Even in these cases, the level of the children’s Hungarian language knowledge does not reach that of those who grow up close to New Brunswick, where they can attend Hungarian scouting and receive some form of formal schooling in Hungarian. Informant # 62 (F, b. 1985) has mentioned that two of her Hungarian friends who used to be active scouts in the Hungarian community have American spouses. Both of them live a long distance away from New Brunswick and, therefore, cannot take their children to Hungarian scouting or other Hungarian activities. One of them, a third-generation Hungarian mother, still speaks to her children in Hungarian, who can converse in the language to some extent and comprehend the language. The other friend’s daughters, on the other hand, can only understand a few words of Hungarian. The daughter of Informant # 62, who is a 3.5 generation Hungarian and who was ca. 4 years old at the time of the interview, only understood Hungarian at that time. When their group of friends came together, there was a point in their lives when their children did not share a common language in which they could communicate. This points to the observation made by Károly Jókay, who claims that it is only possible to pass on the Hungarian language to the third generation in communities where the Hungarian scouting is also present (along with a Saturday school or a folkdance group, or at any rate a Hungarian church or some other type of organization).489

Aprókfalva Montessori Preschool, the only everyday Hungarian preschool in the area, is of great help to the community. One of the mothers I interviewed (Informant # 45, F, b. 1971), who was planning to send her daughter to Aprókfalva Montessori Preschool, said that

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489 Károly Jókay, Facebook direct message to author, October 30, 2020.
she would take her out a few months before she would start school and place her into an American preschool. The reason for this was a nearby private school (St. Matthias) held an entrance exam and required children to know English. Nevertheless, from the reinterviews conducted eight to nine years later, it became clear that neither my above-mentioned informant nor the others I asked took their children out of the Hungarian preschool to have them learn English. In the meantime, the preschool’s curriculum had changed in the sense that now children can stay there for Kindergarten as well. Consequently, there is an opportunity for the children who wish to stay there for the last year to learn English for a few months before starting the first grade. Since the preschool offers solid preparation in other materials, for instance, in mathematics, the amount of English they learn there is sufficient for them to get along with in an American school.

An interesting case study to mention is that of Informant # 44 (M, b. 1970), a second-generation Hungarian who was born in New Brunswick. He and his Transylvanian-born wife wished to enroll their son into a nearby Catholic elementary school. However, he was refused acceptance because he did not speak Hungarian at that time. Consequently, all of the other Hungarian families took their children out of the school and enrolled them into another Catholic school, St. Augustine of Canterbury School, in Kendall Park. According to my informant, it was at that point when the former school realized how many of their students were Hungarian. Later on, many other Hungarian families also sent their children to St. Augustine, along with the mother mentioned above. In 2016 there were at least ten Hungarian children traveling on the same school bus from Somerset, NJ (a neighboring town of New Brunswick). In 2017 there were at least 17 Hungarian children enrolled in the school.

Interestingly, when their children were only a few years old (approximately one to four), the parents remarked that their children could already understand many words or phrases in English. Even if they were primarily surrounded by Hungarians, they were not cut
off from the outside world. One parent (Informant # 45), who is married to another second-generation Hungarian, mentioned that at age one, her daughter could understand English words such as “feet” and “bye-bye,” even if they tried to only speak Hungarian in the household. Another parent (Informant # 43, F. 1971) was surprised to hear from their neighbor that their son, who was ca. four years old in 2008 and was taking violin lessons in English, could carry on a simple conversation in the language.

Thanks to the conscious language transmission efforts on the part of the parents I interviewed in 2008, their children could still speak Hungarian fluently in 2017, after starting school. This could be realized by implying a combination of strategies. For instance, two mothers stated that they spend their summer vacation in Hungary each year with their children. One of them (Informant # 45) has remarked that ever since her children started school, each year, by the end of May, her children begin to mix Hungarian and English. Therefore, as soon as the school year ends in June, they fly to Hungary, where they send their children to summer camp in Budapest, a swim camp attended by native-born Hungarian children. Many families read in Hungarian to their children, sometimes by translating from English. Two of them had their children watch animated movies and movie series in Hungarian (e.g., Madagascar, Pokémon, Strawberry Shortcake, and even the Walt Disney ones). Naturally, they do watch some classics in English as well. For instance, one mother mentioned that they watched The Sound of Music in English. The presence of Hungarian grandparents is also crucial. Their children have close contact with the grandparents, most of whom arrived between the early 1950s and 70s as first or 1.5 generation immigrants. One of these families moved to Hungary approximately eight years ago when the father asked to be transferred to the Budapest office of one of the major international financial services companies. Another one arrived in Budapest very recently, and they are planning to stay for at least one school semester.
The children I spoke with (who were between 7 to 13 at that time) were fluent in Hungarian. Some naturally had an English intonation, a somewhat stronger one than what their parents have. Although the majority of the children did not reach the age of puberty by the time I interviewed their parents, they did not show any resistance towards having to speak Hungarian. Nevertheless, I have observed that the children tend to talk to each other in English in the Hungarian school and continuously had to be reminded to speak Hungarian, just like their parents once had to be. Interestingly, several of these parents stated that they never talked to each other in Hungarian when they were children unless their parents were around. One mother even used to hate Hungarian when she was a teenager. One father (Informant # 44, b. 1970) stated that when he and his peers were children, they never spoke to each other in Hungarian. On the other hand, he claims that his children now use more Hungarian with their friends than when they were of the same age.

In the case of those children who experience some kind of learning problem, it is increasingly difficult to keep up with the Hungarian language once they start learning English in school. The reason for this is that as it was in the past, teachers still advise parents not to use more than one language at home. Since English is the majority language, these parents usually stop speaking Hungarian to their children. Consequently, their Hungarian language knowledge will gradually fade away.490

6.3. Intermarriages, Assimilation, and the Odds of Language Transmission

Several factors can counterbalance the weakening of ethnic identity of children born of intermarriages. These are crucial not only in the case of children who come from ethnically mixed families but for any child who is raised outside of the ethnic homeland. Generally, the presence of a partner or a spouse belonging to the majority culture will negatively affect the

490 Réka Gorondi, interview by the author, April 21, 2017.
language maintenance of the person belonging to the minority culture, in this case, on the Hungarian partner or spouse. In the families formed of mixed marriages, it is even more challenging to pass on the native tongue of the given parent. However, my interviews have shown that it is possible to teach the Hungarian language to children born out of interethnic marriages. Each of the following factors greatly facilitates this process:

1) The spouse’s ability to understand the minority language
2) The effect of the environment (place of residence and community)
3) Keeping in touch with Hungarian relatives
4) Visits to the homeland

I have found that these factors do not have to be present simultaneously for language transmission to be successful.

6.4. Name Choices

My preliminary impressions concerning the naming trends of New Brunswick Hungarians are the following. As in the case of the Hungarians in France studied by Annamária Ulla Szabó-Törpényi (see Introduction), the type of names Hungarian-American parents give to their children reflects their stance on identity maintenance and transmission, as well as their attitude towards assimilation, especially as to what regards language transmission.\footnote{Cf. Annamária Ulla Szabó-Törpényi, “Szociolingviszikai vizsgálatok franciaországi magyarok körében,” (PhD diss., Eötvös Loránd University, 2013), 235-245.} Especially in the case of DP families, but also in the case of 1956ers and later immigrants of the Cold War, where the Hungarian language has most often been kept alive, I have witnessed that they are not only eager to pass on the heritage language to their children and grandchildren, but people also prefer to give Hungarian names. This is most characteristic of those who joined the Scouts: both in the case of first-generation parents and also in the case of 1.5 generation immigrants. These parents have chosen either typical Hungarian names that
do not have an English translation or are typically not used in English (e.g. Ildikó, Csilla, Emőke, László) or Hungarian variants of international names (e.g. Katalin, Erzsébet, Miklós, Gergely). I have also noticed a similar approach in the case of Hungarian families who come from the former Hungarian territories of the Carpathian basin and grew up as members of the Hungarian minority (e.g., Transylvanian Hungarians). Those who were given a Hungarian first name or a Hungarian variant of an international name, usually come from families that put great emphasis on speaking Hungarian. On the other hand, people who have typical American names are less likely to speak Hungarian fluently or at least confidently.

6.5. Feasts and Holidays

Many of the second-generation Hungarians I interviewed (typically, who are actively involved in the Hungarian community) feel emotionally less attached to certain American feast days and national holidays. For instance, one of my interviewees (F, b. 1985) said that although they celebrate Thanksgiving, they do not eat turkey on these occasions, because her family does not like turkey. She also stated that she is emotionally more attached to say, the Hungarian national holiday March 15, than its American equivalent, 4th of July. She believes that the reason for this is that whereas her ancestors lived in Hungary at the time of the Hungarian Revolution War of Independence of 1848, she did not have any forefathers who fought for the American colonies’ independence in the 1700s. On the other hand, Halloween, which is becoming increasingly popular also in Hungary, is celebrated by nearly all members of the community, who come together each year to take their children trick-or-treating. Regarding the national holidays of Hungary, nearly all of my interviewees stated that they regularly attend the March 15 and October 23 celebrations in the Hungarian American Athletic Club. August 20 is an exception, since most people are on vacation during that time.
Interestingly, certain Hungarian feasts and their mode of celebration have been preserved to a large extent in the families of my informants. This is true even for those married to non-Hungarians or who have been born of ethnically mixed marriages. For instance, almost all of the people I interviewed celebrate Mikulás in the family, even those who speak very little Hungarian (e.g., those who belong to the third generation). The Hungarian scouts also celebrate Mikulás every year. Interestingly, the fact that Hungarians celebrate St. Nicholas on December 6 does not conflict with the fact that in America, Santa brings presents on Christmas day.

Likewise, the Hungarians who are presently active within the community still celebrate Easter Monday together based on Hungarian traditions, preserving the custom of locsolkodás. Unlike in Hungary, where the girls of each family welcome the boys and young men who come to sprinkle the girls, the Hungarian scouts gather at someone’s house, both boys and girls. I have been a witness to one of these events in the early 2000s. The girls (at that time in their late 20s) prepared meticulously decorated Easter eggs. The boys composed a self-written poem for the occasion, which they read out loud to the girls. After sprinkling them with cologne, the girls gave them the dyed eggs in return, as it is done in Hungary. This practice has been kept alive up to present times.

Christmas is basically celebrated in a mixed way, partly due to the large number of intermarriages that have taken place among second-generation Hungarians. Mixed-marriage families usually set up their Christmas trees at the beginning of December. Some families, mainly where both the wife and the husband are Hungarian, have continued the Hungarian tradition of decorating the Christmas tree at the last moment, on the 24th. It is on this day that most of the families start their celebrations. Usually, it is either the Christchild (Jézuska) who brings the presents or the angels, just like in Hungary. Some people also celebrate Christmas

492 Mikulás, celebrated on December 6, is the feast day of St. Nicholas (practically, Santa Claus) celebrated in Hungary and in Eastern European countries.
Day (December 25) with the extended family, including the grandparents, even if people already exchange gifts the previous evening within the nuclear family. This practice may also benefit the American relatives (e.g., the parents-in-law) because this way, both the nuclear and the extended family get a chance to have their prime time together.

6.6. Feeling Hungarian without Speaking Hungarian

The question of whether one needs to speak the language of the homeland in order to feel a part of a certain nation is crucial in some countries. The majority of Hungarians also agree with this claim, especially the native Hungarians. Hence, the saying “Nyelvében él a nemzet.”\(^493\) As stated earlier in the Introduction, Csilla Bartha points out that the Hungarians in the United States have two kinds of attitudes towards this question: while some, typically the members of the Old Hungarian settlements, consider a person Hungarian if his or her ancestors came from Hungary, for other Hungarians, for instance, in the case of New Brunswick (e.g. for people of a 1956er or a DP background), a person is considered Hungarian if he or she knows the language.\(^494\) It is perhaps for this reason that I could only interview three people of this category who have some kind of connection to the Hungarian community, since in New Brunswick, “Hungarian language is the key indicator to determine group membership.”\(^495\)

Given the small number of people involved in this group, this subchapter can be regarded as a collection of case studies. However, important observations can be made even based on these few cases. The people of this category who I met or interviewed are usually beyond the second generation (usually 2.5 or third-generation Hungarians). It can generally be stated that their primary identity is American and to use the term coined by Gans, they have a

\(^{493}\) Nyelvében él a nemzet: The nation lives within its language.
\(^{494}\) Bartha, “Nyelvhasználat, nyelvmegtartás, nyelvcsere,” 130-133.
\(^{495}\) Bartha, “Constructing Different Ethnic Identities,” 31.
symbolic ethnic identity (See Introduction).\textsuperscript{496} Even if this identity is a weaker one, the connection to Hungarian culture is not insignificant to the people I interviewed.

This is primarily manifested in their appreciation for Hungarian food. For instance, one of my interviewees (Informant # 73, b. 1996), a third-generation Hungarian, was proud to bring a kolbász sandwich every day to school, this way proudly displaying her Hungarian background. Another person I interviewed, also of the third generation (F, b. 1981), is not ashamed to cook in a bogrács in her garden, despite the fact that her neighbors look at her strangely for doing this. Hungarian food is also a component of culture that they grew familiar with in the United States as children and which makes them feel at home in Hungary.

Although they do not speak Hungarian fluently, all three of my interview subjects have been enrolled at some point in their lives in the Hungarian as Second Language classes in New Brunswick. For one of my interview subjects (Informant # 67), the motivation to learn Hungarian was to be able to communicate with his relatives in Hungary and it was triggered by the death of one of his elderly family members, with whom he was never able to speak without the help of a translator. It was for this reason that he started attending the events of the HAAC (Hungarian American Athletic Club) and later even became a member of it.

\textbf{6.7. Recreating a Hungarian Neighborhood}

An interesting phenomenon that I noticed in 2008 as part of the changes that were taking place within a decade after my last visit to New Brunswick was that a small segment of the Hungarian active in the local community had recreated a small Hungarian neighborhood in one of the suburbs of the city.\textsuperscript{497} Some families that are either related to each other or form strong friendships have purchased houses next to each other in one of the streets of Somerset, NJ. Somerset is a pleasant, middle-class town that lies adjacent to New Brunswick. The

\textsuperscript{496} Gans, “Symbolic Ethnicity.”
\textsuperscript{497} Katalin Pintz, “Hungarian Heritage Maintenance,” 86.
couples, who were in their mid-thirties about ten years ago and were active members of the New Brunswick community, were having their first children in those years. By settling down next to each other, they could secure a nearly all-Hungarian surrounding for their children, even if most of these parents were already born in the United States. This can be viewed as a part of their anti-assimilationist strategies in their struggle to maintain their ethnic language and identity.
Results and Conclusions

The result of my 2008 interviews showed that the children and grandchildren of the DPs, 1956ers and later Cold War immigrants, who today are in their mid-thirties and forties, usually had a complex dual Hungarian-American identity. Based on Annamária Ulla Szabó-Törpényi’s findings about second-generation French Hungarians having a single complex identity and Károly Nagy’s statement about Hungarian Americans possessing a dual national identity, I argue that the second and third generation of the Cold War immigrants, who were born and raised in the United States, generally have a complex and mixed Hungarian-American identity. Although the people who pertain to this group feel connected to both nations, most of them cannot fully identify themselves either with monocultural Hungarians from Hungary or with monocultural Americans. Since their primary socialization took place among Hungarians and given that most of them learned Hungarian as their first language before having acquired English, they refer to themselves as Hungarians. On the other hand, they also consider themselves American, for several reasons. One reason is that their secondary socialization took place in the United States. Another reason is the gratitude they feel towards Americans who accommodated the Hungarian refugees settling in the United States and who allowed them to maintain their culture in a foreign land.

Even though second-generation Hungarian Americans with a Cold War background often mixed the two languages when talking to each other, they were keen on passing on Hungarian to the next generation and accepted the principle that only Hungarian should be spoken in the scout home. The main components of their ethnic identity are preserving the language and learning folk dances, besides keeping up the heritage of 1956. Tímea Oláh’s interviews showed a different result. Her interview subjects also had an attachment to Hungarian culture and were also raised in a Hungarian cultural environment by their parents.
They also received some kind of basic Hungarian education (e.g. they learned to read and write) when they were young. Some tended to mix Hungarian and English, and some also passed on the Hungarian language to the next, the third generation; however, it was unusual to hear small children speak Hungarian to each other.

Most of Timea Oláh’s interview subjects have expressed that their primary identity is American, and Hungarian is secondary. For this group, their Hungarian identity is manifested in the love of their family, cooking Hungarian food, and religion. Only one lady mentioned wearing Hungarian peasant clothes to church, which was plausibly the magyar ruha. Many of Oláh’s interview subjects remained loyal to either one of the Hungarian churches. They also knew people of their own generation or their parents’ generation who were active members of a Hungarian organization. Some never traveled home; however, there were others who made a few visits to Hungary. Some returned for several years, sometimes involuntarily, while others chose to repatriate. Nevertheless, there was constant communication with relatives left behind, which took place in the form of letters and later telephone calls. Sending money and clothing to Hungarian relatives was also very common.

I. To what extent have the various Hungarian immigrant groups assimilated?

The most interesting question is whether the group studied by Oláh was indeed a “lost generation,” that is, whether or not they lost their Hungarian identity. For the children and grandchildren of the 1956ers, DPs, and other Cold War immigrants, they indeed seem to be like that. Nevertheless, despite the assimilationist policies of the early twentieth centuries and the effects of the two world wars, Oláh’s interview subjects themselves did not state that they, the members of the second generation, were shunned or pushed to Americanize. Given that New Brunswick was an ethnically mixed town formed by various New Immigrant groups, the Americanization of second-generation Hungarian Americans was a natural result of their growing up with the children of immigrants belonging to other nationalities, despite the fact
that they did not regard this as an assimilation process in the sense of giving up one’s culture. However, since they have maintained some components of Hungarian culture, it can be argued that the complete assimilation of the second-generation of Old Hungarians did not take place.

The DPs and 1956ers in New Brunswick, joined by the later Cold War immigrants, had a very strong Hungarian identity and were better able to pass it on to the next generation than the Old Hungarians were able to do it, to the point that some of Timea Oláh’s interview subjects saw them as not being Americanized or Americanized to a sufficient degree, and they also saw them as people who excluded themselves from American social spheres. The group composed by the Cold War immigrants only resisted cultural assimilation, not integration. The fact that they were more educated than the majority of the Old Hungarians and their children, either having received it prior to their emigration in Hungary or upon their immigration in the United States, helped their integration into American society. In this sense, the later immigrants were similar to the Armenian Americans who have become acculturated into American society, but not have not given up their cultural heritage.

Although very few interviews deal with the differences between the two groups, Zoltán Fejős’s statement seems to hold true for the children of the Old Hungarians about their heritage maintenance being a manifestation of cultural pluralism and thus their integration into American society. According to the principles of cultural pluralism, the members of ethnic groups were allowed to preserve their cultural heritage; however, this did not have a selfish purpose in itself, but the aim was to enrich American society. Consequently, in their case, American identity was in the foreground, while the Hungarian one was relegated to the background.

Contrarily to the aforementioned generation, the Cold War immigrants’ children and grandchildren adhered to multiculturalism ideas, which, as opposed to the ideology of cultural
pluralism, does not require the presence of a dominant culture. In other words, it does not demand that people become Americanized but encourages them to retain their heritage. Therefore, at present times it is much more acceptable to retain a strong Hungarian identity than it was in the past, when the second generation of the early twentieth century immigrants were growing up.

Although most of my interview subjects usually have a dual Hungarian-American identity, in most cases, their Hungarian identity seems to be stronger than their American one, based on their naming practices and celebrations of feast days. This gives a plausible explanation for why the members of the two groups struggled to come to common terms with each other. Whereas the children of the Old Hungarians appeared to be too American for the later Hungarian immigrants, in the eyes of the Old Hungarians and their descendants the members of this latter group seemed to isolate themselves from American society, which created the impression that they were not enough Americanized.

Besides the fact that one group adhered to the principles of cultural pluralism and the other to multiculturalism, other reasons for the two groups not getting along well with each other are to be found in differences in their general level of education and class background, in their upbringing and use of cultural symbols, in their time of emigration, and in the local circumstances concerning the receptiveness of mainstream American society towards immigrants.

With the formation of the Hungarian Scout Association in Exeteris, a closely-knit diaspora was created upon the emigration of the Displaced Persons, who kept in touch with each other even after they spread out from the DP camps to the various continents. Today this organization still plays a crucial role in keeping the diaspora together. It was less characteristic of the Old Hungarians to maintain diaspora relations. The Old Hungarians did not have such close relations with other Hungarians living outside of Hungary, and people
coming from different towns and cities did not hold regular meetings in the United States, besides keeping in touch through the Verhovay Association.

II. Is the knowledge of Hungarian necessary to maintain one’s identity?

One of the striking differences between the two groups (my interview subjects and those of Timea Oláh) is the degree to which their members implemented conscious language maintenance strategies in the sense of passing on Hungarian to the next generation. Despite the fact that both groups provided some sort of additional education in the mother tongue for children and that the children of the Old Hungarians had to speak Hungarian with their immigrant parents partly out of necessity; contrarily to my interview subjects, Oláh’s interviewees did not mention that they were made to communicate in Hungarian with other children. On the other hand, the other group studied by myself to this day uses conscious language maintenance methods. This is manifested in scouting activities, in their home language usage, and also other kinds of creative endeavors such as traveling to Hungary frequently, watching movies only in Hungarian, etc.

For the Old Hungarians and their descendants, ethnic life centered around religion and community-based activities. Although the knowledge of Hungarian was necessary to interact with the parents and grandparents of the immigrant generation, language maintenance was not an essential component of identity maintenance. Since, on the other hand, language maintenance is one of the main components of identity preservation for the Cold War immigrants and their descendants, this caused clashes within the community.

Based on these results and those concerning later-generation Hungarian Americans of any immigrant (including DP) background born out of intermarriages, it can be stated that the knowledge of the Hungarian language is not a necessary requirement for ethnic identity preservation. Even people who speak only a few words of Hungarian can have a secondary Hungarian identity, regardless of the fact that this, in Herbert J. Gans’ words, might only be a
manifestation of “symbolic ethnicity” or, at any rate, a weaker type of identity. In the case of those who do not have adequate language skills, their Hungarian identity can manifest itself in making voluntary travels to the ethnic homeland, taking part in Hungarian-American community activities, or practicing Hungarian food-related customs in front of non-Hungarians.

III. How did the immigrants’ ethnic or national identity influence their relations with Hungary and their visits to the ethnic homeland?

Although making frequent travels to the ethnic homeland is a manifestation of one’s ethnic identity, the statement that the stronger one’s ethnic identity is, the stronger the person’s relations with the ethnic homeland will be, does not necessarily hold true. Evidence for this is shown by the case of the DPs, the Scouts, and that of Cardinal Mindszenty, who disfavored making visits to Hungary and having relations with the Hungarian government based on their political beliefs, while at the same time showing fierce resistance to assimilation in the form of long-distance nationalism. This way, they practiced long-distance nationalism without being engaged in transnationalism with the homeland. On the other hand, other Cold War immigrants—those with a 1956er background in particular, such as those affiliated with the Native Tongue Conference and the táncház movement—chose opposite anti-assimilationist strategies, concluding that ethnic identity- and ethnic language retention and transmission was impossible without fostering ties with the mother country.

This phenomenon changed after the demise of socialism. The transition initiated a period of intense back-and-forth travel and repatriation for many of the Cold War immigrants themselves, while the younger generation was also eager to explore the ethnic homeland. New Brunswick’s example shows that today the Hungarian diaspora is also shaped by its transnational relations with the ethnic homeland. The gradual assimilation of Hungarian Americans into American society goes hand in hand with applying certain anti-assimilationist
strategies, for instance making frequent visits or returning to the ethnic homeland for an indefinite time period in the case of the first and later generations. Although this return movement to the ethnic homeland can result in a temporary loss of active members both on a short-term basis as well as in the long run, it can also be beneficial for the diaspora, for it intensifies the relations between the old and the new homeland through family relationships and friendships. Simultaneously, it also enhances the success of language maintenance in the ethnic community.

The above-mentioned practice of long-distance nationalism without return also affected the image that Hungarian immigrants and their American-born offspring had of the home country. The metaphor of the incubator, applied by Réka Pigniczky in her documentary bearing the same title, perfectly describes the Little Hungarians where Hungarian language and culture were kept alive in the United States. Although most Hungarian-born immigrants of the Cold War, being fierce anti-communists, did not see the currently existing social system in Hungary in an idealized way at all, in America, they constructed an idealized picture of Hungary, an image which was passed on to their children and grandchildren partly through scouting and folk dance rehearsals. The reason for this seemingly contradictory behavior was to instill ethnic pride into the younger generation and to preserve an image of the “real” or ideal Hungary that they wished to have. The transition period opened up possibilities of travel to Eastern and Central Europe, and the younger generations were eager to explore the real Hungary. However, this also went together with crushing the idealized image painted by their parents of the natal homeland, an experience which was at times disappointing for them and consequently led to misunderstandings between the Hungarians of the homeland and those coming from America. Given that by today travels between Hungary and other parts of the diaspora, especially the United States, have become more frequent than ever before, it can be
assumed that the youngest generation will gain a more realistic image of the ancestral homeland and will hopefully not have to undergo this kind of disillusionment.

IV. What role does religion play in maintaining one’s ethnic identity?

Being affiliated with an ethnic-religious denomination or an ethnic church can positively influence identity maintenance for generations. This is well known for the Jews and the Armenians, who without having had a nation-state for centuries, were able to keep their heritage and identity with the help of religion. As mentioned above, religion was one of the main components of identity maintenance both for the Old Hungarians and their children, as well as for the group comprised of the Cold War immigrants. Despite the fact that the presence of the Hungarian churches is still crucial in preserving Hungarian identity in New Brunswick, today religion plays a much lesser role in this, mainly for the reason that the large number of new Hungarian immigrants who would mean a reinforcement for the churches are either not religious or do not go to church regularly.

V. What role does education and one’s socioeconomic status play in identity retention and assimilation?

The role played by one’s socioeconomic background, such as education and income, remains ambiguous. In the case of Armenian Americans, having a good socio-economic situation is often a prerequisite for belonging to the ethnic group. In the case of the Old Hungarians and some 1956ers, those who were able to attain higher education had more social interactions with non-Hungarians. Such examples show that by the means of integration or structural assimilation, people are also better able to culturally assimilate. Nevertheless, this is a voluntary process and therefore depends on the individual.

VI. What role do cultural symbols play in ethnic identity preservation and group relations?
Based on Zoltán Fejős’s research, it can be stated that the preservation of Hungarian identity can also take place through the transformation of the ethnic culture in the new environment. Certain cultural symbols may gain more popularity in the new homeland and in the diaspora than they do in the old country. Unfortunately, this can also lead to the simplification of the original culture (e.g. promoting folk dances at the expense of Hungarian literature).

Cultural or ethnic symbols play an essential role in forming ethnic identity and group relations, especially toward the later generations. The weakening of the later generations’ material knowledge about Hungarian high- and everyday culture goes hand in hand with the increasing importance of ethnic symbols in ethnic identity maintenance. Since this is not a conscious process, clashes can occur between members of later and earlier immigrants of the same ethnic group, or between the members of the ethnic group and those living in the natal homeland. Similarly, disagreements also took place between the Hungarians who settled in New Brunswick in the early twentieth century and the later arrived group formed by the Cold war immigrants about the value of the magyar ruha and peasant folk costumes.

The extensive use of certain symbols pertaining to the realms of folk culture and history by the presently active Hungarians in New Brunswick, such as Hungarian folk dances, folk costumes, and keeping alive the memory of 1956 is likewise a cause of misunderstandings between the Hungarians living in the ethnic homeland and those in the New World. The Hungarian Americans who are active members of the diaspora often complain that the Hungarians of the homeland possess a weaker national identity then they do. One reason for this is that the Hungarians who live in Hungary can choose from a variety of cultural symbols to express their identity, not only from the ones related to folk culture, which for many of them rather express a kind of agrarian lifestyle of the past or simply a local
cultural identity. For certain historical-political reasons, 1956 is not a commonly shared national symbol by all Hungarians living in Hungary either.

The popularity of certain cultural symbols also results from the fact that they can have a positive impact on building community relations in the diaspora. The celebration of national holidays besides folkdance rehearsals, ethnic festivals, and dances can serve as social instruments of forming and keeping up relations within an ethnic community. Moreover, cultural symbols can create a sense of “we-hood”, and thus bind members of an ethnic community together, even when the ethnic language is waning.

VII. In what way do naming patterns reflect ethnic identity?

Naming practices and name changes can reflect attitudes on assimilation, identity retention, and integration. In the case of children born in the United States, the name given to them by their parents can also reflect the parents’ attitude towards heritage language transmission. Although the sample of names I have gathered is not representative, based on the given names of my American-born interview subjects, it can be concluded that those who have a typical Hungarian first name or use a Hungarian variant of an international first name usually have a strong Hungarian identity and have maintained the Hungarian language into their adulthood, presumably due to parental upbringing. Whereas all of my interview subjects have some degree of Hungarian identity and value their Hungarian heritage, it can be stated that those who do not speak Hungarian fluently either have a typical and untranslatable American name or use an English variant of an international Christian name.

The pressure to Americanize the foreign populations and their offspring in the early decades of the 20th century sometimes manifested itself in immigrants changing their first and last names, and often in giving mostly English or English versions of international names to their children, who tended to pronounce their family names according to English phonetic rules. On the other hand, the Cold War immigrants who remained active in the New
Brunswick community either gave untranslatable Hungarian names to their children or the Hungarian variants of international names, as an expression of their resistance to ethnic assimilation. The reason for this can also be found in the fact that many of the Cold War immigrants, especially the DPs, were hoping to be able to return to Hungary in the event of a possible anti-communist takeover and in the beginning viewed their stay in the United States as a temporary one. Therefore, initially, integration into American society was not among their primary concerns.

Although uniquely Hungarian names are still in fashion in some families, in the case of second- or later-generation Hungarian-American parents by the mid-2000s this general attitude has shifted towards giving names that have an identical or at least a fairly similar form both in English and in Hungarian. Based on the theory expressed by Annamária Ulla Szabó-Törpényi, it can be assumed that this new naming practice reflects the dual identity that parents wish to instill in their children or possess themselves as well.
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Journal Articles


**Theses, Dissertations, and Unpublished Manuscripts**


Magazine articles


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**Websites and Online Sources**


### Appendices

#### Appendix I

**Complete List of Respondents**

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New Brunswick, NJ

USA

USA

USA

USA

Hungary

Hungary

ca. 2009

ca. 2009

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27-Sep-17

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18-Sep-08

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28-Oct-09

22-Nov-16

15-Sep-08
Appendix II

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Appendix III
The Home Objects of Old Hungarians
Photographs by Timea Oláh

Courtesy of Csaba Vágó

205
Courtesy of Csaba Vágó
Appendix IV

Hungarian Churches and Schools of New Brunswick

St. Ladislaus Church at Minszenty Square

Photograph by the author

The interior of St. Ladislaus, marking its rededication

Photograph by Timea Oláh, Courtesy of Csaba Vágó
A stained-glass window made by Fr. Asztrak Kákonyi

The interior of St. Ladislaus

Photographs by Tímea Oláh, courtesy of Csaba Vágó
The once functioning St. Ladislaus School

Photographs by the author
The exterior of the Magyar Reformed Church

Photographs by the author
The interior of the Magyar Reformed Church

Photographs by Timea Oláh, Courtesy of Csaba Vágó
Széchenyi Magyar Iskola on Plum Street (2000)

Széchenyi Magyar Iskola (2017)

Photographs by the author
Appendix V

Past and Present Sites of Hungarian Presence

Above: Budapest Bar on Somerset Street, New Brunswick, June 2000

Below: The same building in 2017, transformed into a Mexican restaurant

Photographs by the author
The once existing Chardash Restaurant on Somerset Street (2000)

The memorial of the 1956 Revolution (2008)

Photographs by the author
The new building of the Hungarian American Athletic Club, Somerset Street (2009)

Photographs by the author
The American Hungarian Foundation (AHF) in 2009

A portrait of August J. Molnar at the AHF (2017)

Photographs by the author

Magyar Bank on Somerset Street (2017)

Photographs by the author
The last Hungarian butcher’s shop on Robinson Street, New Brunswick (2017)

Kossuth Park, New Brunswick (2017)

Photographs by the author
The house in Kossuth Street, where Lajos Kossuth stayed, according to an urban legend

Photographs by the author (2017)
Appendix VI

Ethnic Symbols and Community Life in the 1930s-1940s

Dancers of the Workers’ Club wearing the Hungarian dress, 1941
Source: A chicagói magyarok két nemzedéke 1890-1940
Courtesy of Zoltán Fejős

Hungarian picnic at Bohemian Hall in New York, ca. 1938
Source: The Hungarian Legacy in America (2007)
Photo by John Albók, courtesy of Ilona Kovács
Búzavirág Dance Group, 1939 (“Bugac Puszta,” New Jersey)

Photo by John Albók, courtesy of the AHF

Hungarian Day, 1939 (“Bugac Puszta,” New Jersey)

Photo by John Albók, courtesy of the AHF
Appendix VII

Folk Art and Folk Costumes (1970s-Present)

Pontozó, 1975

Courtesy of Judit and Kálmán Magyar

Regős scout dancers, 1976

Courtesy of Judit and Kálmán Magyar
Above: Hungária Folkdance Ensemble, ca. 1978

Below: Hungária Folkdance Ensemble, Passaic, 1980s

Courtesy of Judit and Kálmán Magyar
Above: Traditional Hungarian Easter Eggs painted by the community members
Below: Being Hungarian in the USA
Courtesy of Ágnes Balla (1970s)
St. Stephen day’s picnic in Passaic, NJ (2008)

Folk art exhibit at the AHF (2009)

Photographs by the author
Csipke Tábor, 2015

© LilyErdy

Courtesy of Lily Erdy
Above: Toborzó, the first North American Folkdance Gathering, 2017

Below: From the collection of the Museum of the AHF, 2017

Photographs by the author
Appendix VIII

New Brunswick in the 1980s

Photographs by Suzanne Szasz

Participants of the Hungarian Festival in Somerset Street (94.250)

Courtesy of the Hungarian National Museum

Hungarian Men Celebrating in the HAAC after the Hungarian Festival (94.255)

Courtesy of the Hungarian National Museum
The Hungarian Festival begins with a Procession (94.247)

Courtesy of the Hungarian National Museum

Students at Saint Ladislaus School (94.191)

Courtesy of the Hungarian National Museum
Appendix IX

New Brunswick Today

The former Hungarian neighborhood today is part of the Mexican neighborhood (2017)

The former building of András Hamza’s printing office on Hamilton Street (2017)

Photographs by the author