

# Transboundary Symbiosis over the Danube: III

Re-thinking the meaning  
of Symbiosis -Past,  
Present and Future

Edited by

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and

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**Transboundary Symbiosis over the Danube: III**  
Re-thinking the meaning of Symbiosis—Past, Present and Future

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>Preface</i>	.....	5
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## I. Investigating the Past

### Chapter 1

*Propaganda and “Realpolitik.” T. G. Masaryk and His Attitude towards Hungary and the Magyars during and after World War I.*

Dušan KOVÁČ	.....	7
-------------	-------	---

### Chapter 2

*Upheaval of 1918/1919 in Pressburg/Bratislava*

*–An example of differing representations of a common past in Historiography*

Gabriela DUDEKOVÁ KOVÁČOVÁ	.....	21
----------------------------	-------	----

### Chapter 3

*The Aftermath of Renaming Bratislava after 1919*

*–A Reflection on the Name of a City in the Borderlands(Part III)*

Susumu NAGAYO	.....	37
---------------	-------	----

## II. Viewing the Present

### Chapter 4

*Memory of the First World War*

*–A “resurrection” of a Prisoners of War Cemetery* ..... 59

Barnabás VAJDA		
----------------	--	--

**Chapter 5***National Identity as Future Aspirations**–Analysing the Results of Questionnaires of Hungarian Students at Selye János University in Komárno, Slovakia, in 2011 and 2014*

Tatsuya NAKAZAWA ..... 69

**Chapter 6***Interdisciplinary Approaches in the Research of the Slovak-Hungarian Relationships in History**–Possibilities of Cooperation in the Humanities and Social Sciences*

Štefan ŠUTAJ ..... 77

**III. Sounding the Future****Chapter 7***Hungarian “Minority” Networks and Borderland Community under Political Influences of the Slovak-Hungarian Cross-border Cooperation*

Yuko KAMBARA ..... 93

**Chapter 8***Another Referendum in 2016 on Migration in Hungary**–A New Europe from East?*

Osamu IEDA ..... 113

*Record on our panel at the IX ICCEES World Congress, Makuhari, 2015* ..... 131*Report of the joint project “Road to a Multidimensional Ethnic Symbiosis: The Mid-Danube Region and EU Integration” (2013-2018)* ..... 143

# National Identity as Future Aspirations

## —Analysing the Results of Questionnaires of Hungarian Students at Selye János University in Komárno, Slovakia, in 2011 and 2014

Tatsuya Nakazawa  
(Tokai University, Tokyo, Japan)

### Introduction: Purpose of paper, with details of survey implementation and sample composition

The main purpose of my longitudinal studies<sup>1</sup> is to analyse the structure and dynamic nature of the identities of young Hungarians living in Slovakia, thereby providing a form of objective source material for possibly predicting the future status of Hungarians in Slovakia.

This paper consists of an analysis of the results of a questionnaire survey given to students at the Faculty of Education at Selye János University in Komárno in Slovakia, first from March 16-21, 2011, with the aid of a grant from the Toyota Foundation and then again from March 1-5, 2014, with a Grant-in-aid for scientific research in Japan. This university was founded in 2004 to serve

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1 Tatsuya Nakazawa, “Boundary Mechanisms in the Formulation of National Identity: A Case Study of Students in the English Departments at Selye János University”, *Eruditio-Educatio*, 7-3, 2012, pp. 106-121; “Boundary Mechanisms in the Formulation of National Identity: A Case Study of Students in the Hungarian Department at Selye János University”, *Slavic Eurasian Studies*, 27, 2014, pp. 69-101; “Boundary Mechanisms in the Formulation of National Identity: A Case Study of Students in the Slovak Department at Selye János University”, *Slavic Eurasian Studies*, 29, 2015, pp. 125-160.

students from the Hungarian minority in Slovakia, and is the first Hungarian-language university in Slovakia. The subjects represent an excellent resource for gaining an understanding of one facet of the attitudes of Slovakia's young Hungarian population that is receiving a higher education. Before the survey, I created an English-language questionnaire comprising 53 items on the basis of questionnaires used in opinion surveys of minorities around the world and made adjustments tailored to the state of affairs in Slovakia and Hungary. Prior to starting the survey, I sent a written request to Professor László Szarka and Doctor Barnabás Vajda at the Faculty of Education. Their consent was obtained in a subsequent meeting, and they assisted in the distribution and collection of the questionnaire to students.

The same questionnaire was distributed to 271 second- and third- year students in five humanities departments at the Faculty of Education of Selye János University in 2011 and 2014. A total of 223 samples were collected, constituting a response rate of 82.2 percent. English-language surveys were distributed to students in the English department, while the same questionnaire, translated by Professor Szarka and Doctor Vajda into Hungarian, was distributed to students in other departments after it was confirmed that the translation was exact. Gender was not taken into account.

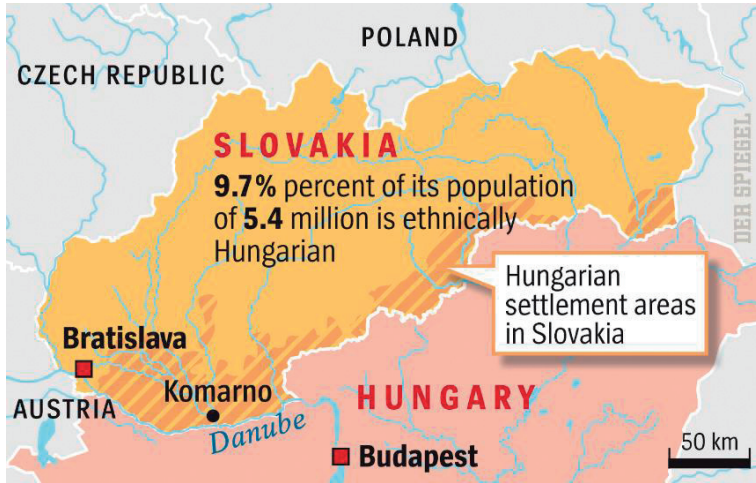
In this paper, I focus my analysis on several clear mechanisms that emerged from the questionnaires for shaping the boundaries of the national identities of the faculty's students. I omit any analysis of the correlation between official-multiculturalism and nationalism as seen from the perspective of the globalization of higher education through the Bologna Process. Additionally, again given the very limited number of characters, I have to omit a longitudinal comparison between the 2011 and 2014 surveys.

## **I. Pre-Conditions**

According to Questions 1, 20 and 21, 168 (75.3%) of all students were born after 1989, belonging to a generation that has not experienced the socialist system or the Czecho-Slovak era. Additionally, the majority of students were born and brought up in southern Slovakia, especially, in descending order, Komárno, Dunajská Streda, Nové Zámky, Šahy, Kráľovský Chlmec, Štúrovo, and Rimavská Sobota (Qs 2, 3). According to Question 16, 78.8% are graduates from gymnasiums, while the others are from industrial training schools, voca-

tional schools, nursing colleges, music colleges, and other universities.

### Distribution Map: Hungarian Minority in Border Land in Southern Slovakia



Source: <http://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/bild-649443-16028.html> (retrieved 23/1/2018)

## II. Analysis

As shown in Table 1, the identities of all students conform largely to 5 types.

Type 1: Exclusive identity of ‘Hungarian’ (9%; 20 students). Type 2: Composite identity of ‘Hungarian + Hungarian in Slovakia + $\alpha$ ’ (29%; 65 students). Type 3: Exclusive identity of ‘Hungarian in Slovakia’ (29%; 65 students). Type 4: Composite identity of ‘Hungarian in Slovakia + $\alpha$ ’ (17%; 38 students). Type 5: Composite identity of ‘Citizen of the Slovak Republic + $\alpha$ ’ (6%; 13 students). Others: (10%; 22 students).

**Table 1 Result**  
**Question 4: With which of the following identities do you strongly identify with?**  
**Please circle the appropriate answer.**  
**You may choose more than one.**

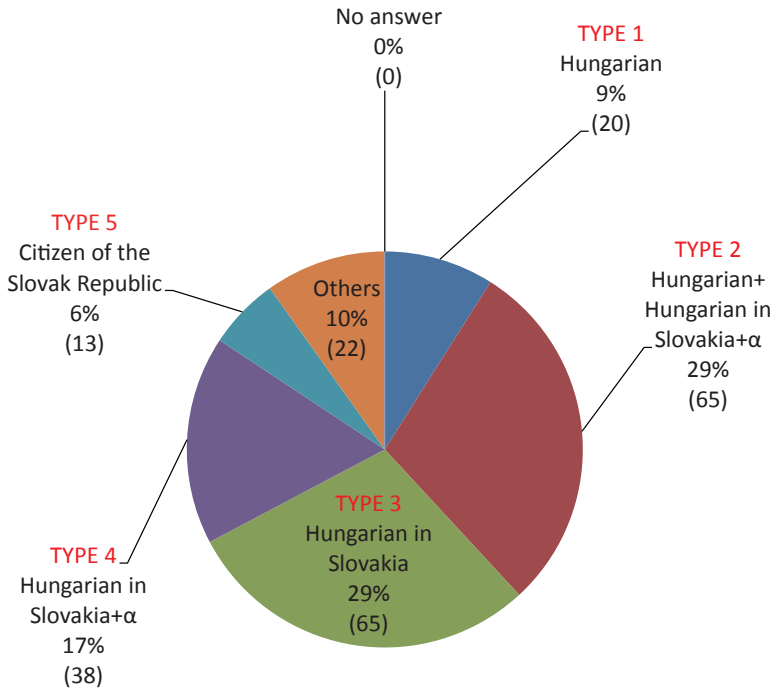




Table 2 on the following page represents ten major boundary mechanisms that form all 5 types.

Table 2: Boundary mechanisms

	Q. 5	Q. 7	Q. 22	Q. 23	Q. 25, 36	Q. 34	Q. 35	Q. 10,13	Q. 45,47	Q. 38
	Slovak Relatives	Daily language	Contact with Slovaks	Contact with Hungarians in Hungary	Political inconvenience	Economic insufficiency	Cultural oppression	Aspirations for future employment	Hungarian	Symbolic resources :area
<b>Type 1</b> 9%(20)	No one	Hungarian (no Slovak)	Nothing	much	Yes	Yes	Yes	teacher official	standard	home-town Hungary
<b>Type 2</b> 29%(65)	No one	Hungarian (little Slovak)	little	much	Yes	Yes	Yes	teacher official manager	dialect	home-town Hungary and Slovakia
<b>Type 3</b> 29%(65)	No one	Hungarian (little Slovak)	little	nothing	No	No	No	business-man/ woman	standard and dialect	Hungary and Slovakia
<b>Type 4</b> 17%(38)	No one	Hungarian and Slovak	much	little	No	No	No	business-man/ woman	dialect	home-town
<b>Type 5</b> 6%(13)	Yes	Hungarian and Slovak	much	nothing	No	No	little	business-man/ woman manager	dialect	Europe

It is apparent that from Type 1 to Type 5, in descending order, there is a commensurate 2.2. gradual increase in non-nationalistic characteristics (coloured blue). Each type is interesting; however, here I should focus on the most important boundary which divides all five types into two distinct patterns. As shown in the table, we find that a definite boundary exists between type 2 and 3. About 60% of all students are concentrated in these types, so they seem to represent typical identities of the majority of students in this faculty.

The typical student who conforms to Type 2 (composite identity of ‘Hungarian + Hungarian in Slovakia + $\alpha$ ’) (A) has no Slovak relatives; (B) speaks Hungarian as the language of day-to-day communication (Q 7), living in a social environment where communication can take place with Slovak neighbours by speaking Hungarian (Qs 7, 8); (C) has little experience of interaction with Slovaks inside the Slovak Republic, (D) retains strong ethnic ties to Hungarians in Hungary (Qs 21, 22, and 23); (E) does feel politically disaffected (Q 36), (F) economically disadvantaged (Q 34), and (G) culturally oppressed (Q 35); (H) has aspirations of becoming a teacher, state or local official, manager in local cultural institutions and so forth in wider Slovakia or Hungary as well as their hometowns; (I) is emotionally attached to Slovakia, Hungary and their hometowns (Q 38); In other words, state-consciousness coexists with regional consciousness; and (J) despite keeping a strong inclination towards protecting the dialect spoken by Hungarians in Slovakia, does not believe that fluency in Hungarian is necessarily advantageous within Slovakia (Qs 41, 47). In other words, they are sceptical of the value of bilingualism. Generally, Type 2 students belong to a lower socioeconomic bracket, many having parents employed in unskilled labour professions (Qs 17, 18).

The characteristics of a typical Type 3 (exclusive identity of ‘Hungarian in Slovakia’) student are as follows: Like Type 2, (A) has no Slovak relatives; (B) speaks Hungarian as the language of day-to-day communication (Q 7), existing in a social environment where communication can take place with Slovak neighbours by speaking Hungarian (Qs 7, 8); (C) has little contact with Slovaks, but also (D) has no contact with Hungarians in Hungary; (E) does not feel politically disaffected (Q 36), (F) economically disadvantaged (Q 34), or (G) culturally oppressed (Q 35). Overall, Type 3 may be said to be an identity common among students who achieve their own kind of success within the Slovak Republic by building their own stable spaces for daily life. (I) In relation to this, has aspirations of becoming a business-man/woman in Slovakia or Hungary or

the EU region. They are emotionally attached to both Slovakia and Hungary (Q 38), but are not so concerned with their hometowns; that is, may be said to be strongly state-orientated (Qs 38, 39). In addition, (J) believes that they should be able to speak the official language of Hungary, rather than the local dialect of Hungarians in Slovakia (Q 47).

## Conclusion

The above-mentioned characteristics not only form the core characteristics of both Types 2 and 3, they also serve as boundary mechanisms vis-à-vis other identities. Thus, I conclude that political convenience / inconvenience, economic advantage / disadvantage, cultural oppression / non-oppression, and future employment aspirations, i.e., the perception of one's social environment, mainly forms boundary mechanisms between Type 2 and 3.

Type 2 (the composite identity of 'Hungarian + Hungarian in Slovakia+ $\alpha$ ') differs completely from Type 3. Students in Type 2 have grown up in relatively low-income households, and they even now lack a sense of political, economic, or cultural fulfilment. This type is also characteristically concentrated in the Hungarian language department in 2011 (however, in 2014, the number of Type 2 students increases in all departments). What is interesting is the fact that Type 2 does not tend to embrace the 'bilingualism of official multiculturalism', and has antipathy towards the globalism of the global elite.

In contrast, the Type 3 (exclusive identity of 'Hungarian in Slovakia') identity was common among students who sought to build a relatively stable space for themselves within the Slovak Republic. These students were concentrated in the English department, where students have a comparatively higher degree of linguistic fluency than in other departments. Type 3 students held positive views towards both the Slovak Republic and the EU, and in that sense had an element of civic nationalism and were 'pro the official multiculturalism'. In fact, the Type 3 identity does not require ethnic ties in its interactions or personal connections, but is developing in a direction consistent with that of the so-called global elite, compatible with globalism. Conversely, this is not the case with Type 2.

In addition, we notice that both types of students' aspirations for future employment differ quite significantly. Most Type 2 students desire to become teachers or officials in their hometowns or other cities in Slovakia or Hungary;

however, many Type 3 students wish to become business-men/women in Slovakia or Hungary or the EU region. From this perspective, Type 2 pursues symbiosis with Slovaks, being more conscious of the “existence of conflict” or “social difference between them”. Conversely, while Type 3 pursues symbiosis with Slovaks, they are more conscious of “avoiding conflict or social difference between them”. In this sense, their current national identity may be said to be a sort of “projection of an ideal future condition”. For Type 2, the more acutely a lack of sense of fulfilment is felt with the present situation around them, the more plural and complex their identity will become in their quest for future various living spaces. Conversely, for Type 3, where there is a greater sense of fulfilment with the status quo in a space of stability, this will often result in a singular identity.

What has become clear from the 2011 and 2014 surveys described above is that the national identity of the young Hungarian minority is shaped referentially with respect to the nature of the perceived social environment in which an individual is placed, and, particularly, the nature of communication and daily interactions with one’s neighbours (including Slovak neighbours), and then by one’s own political, economic, and cultural experiences, or future employment aspirations. As such, national identity is by no means immutable, and could potentially be altered in any number of ways by future changes in social environment or the accumulation of individual experiences. That said, these findings should best be characterised as a hypothesis in need of further future explanation through a close investigation based on longitudinal research to be continued over the next few years.

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