
The Biographies and Identities of the Young Polish Immigrants in Germany after 1989

D i s s e r t a t i o n

zur Erlangung des akademischen Grades
Doktor der Philosophie

genehmigt durch die Fakultät
für Geistes-, Sozial- und Erziehungswissenschaften
der Otto-von-Guericke-Universität Magdeburg

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Eingereicht am: 27. 11. 2006

Verteidigung der Dissertation am: 18.10.2007

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Katarzyna M. Waniek

Acknowledgements

I am deeply indebted to my supervisor Prof. Dr. Fritz Schütze for his guidance, inspiration and encouragement. I have been honoured to work as a student and a PhD student with Dr. Thomas Reim and PD Dr. Bärbel Treichel. I am thankful for their help and support. I greatly appreciate their bright research style.

I remain grateful to the members of University of Łódź: Marek Czyżewski, Kaja Kaźmierksa, Andrzej Piotrowski, Alicja Rokuszewska–Pawełek and many others for their passionate introduction to the concepts of Fritz Schütze. A special acknowledgment goes to Marek Czyżewski and Andrzej Piotrowski for valuable discussions, insightful comments and thought-provoking criticism.

I am thankful to Stephen Ibbotson for his critical reading and English language correction.

☞ To Zbyszek, Zosia and Antek ☛

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Introduction

The rapid social, economic and political changes (i.e., opening up of state borders, rapidly increasing possibilities of communication and travelling, economical and democratic development) which have been taking place in the unifying Europe¹ during recent decades have forced many individuals to work on their identities. Everett V. Stonequist in his famous work 'The Marginal Man' claims:

The modern world of economic competition and shifting social relations places the individual in a situation where change and uncertainty are the keynotes. Fixed or permanent adjustments become impossible. The world moves and the individual must continually readjust himself. The possibility that he will not do this is greater than ever before. Social maladjustment, whether slight or great, then becomes characteristic of modern man. (Stonequist, 1961: 2).

The importance and the strength of international boundaries have declined in recent years. The freedom of movement, that is enabled as course of this, presents one of the main goals of the European Union. Consequently, there are more and more people who participate in two (or more) historic traditions, cultural patterns, languages, moral codes and political loyalties. In this study it will be shown that although the significance of the European identity work becomes pivotal, the issue of national identity still remains of crucial importance for many persons. This matter will be approached at a microsociological level and analysed from the viewpoint of ordinary persons who - through their immigration - cross cultural and social borders. One of the most intriguing examples of this phenomenon may be found in biographies of young Poles living in Germany. Consequently, the main objective in this study is to explore the process of immigration of the young Polish people to Germany. Through the analysis of their autobiographical narrative interviews the manner in which the experience of living abroad and approaching a group of different culture can influence one's national identity and biography will be meticulously examined. The focus will be directed specifically at the

¹ In the wider context, this process is known as globalization, i.e., the unabated proliferation of economic and cultural exchange around the world resulting from the rapid growth of information and communications technologies. According to Martin Heidegger, it brings about alternations in the spatial and temporal forms of human life. He writes: 'All distances in time and space are shrinking. Man now reaches overnight, by places, places which formerly took weeks and months of travel.' Heidegger M., 1971, *The Thing*, in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, Harper and Row, New York, p. 140.

way in which immigrants struggle with their 'otherness', 'strangeness' and marginality as well as at their biographical work concerning national identities, conceptions of 'we-ness' and embedded collective memories. Furthermore, their different ways to the desired, although idealised, attitude to both cultures i.e., the Polish and the German will be the subject of intense scrutiny.

This study is concerned with the Poles who left their homeland voluntarily and trouble-free in the period between the fall of communism in Poland in 1989 and the eastern enlargement of the EU in May 2004. It concentrates on people who were young at the time of their arrival in Germany (i.e., not older than 30 years) and therefore constitute a group of a 'new' or 'young' generation of the Polish immigrants in Germany. This distinction is fundamental, because the social and biographical situation of so-called 'old' immigrants (these who came to Germany before 1989 as re-settlers, asylum-seekers or refugees, often having no possibility of going back) often seems to be diametrically different.

Taking into account reasons that are behind the decision of the young Poles to come or stay in Germany² I have initially identified three different types of immigration.

Firstly, there are immigrants whose residence in Germany is motivated by economic needs (differentials in wages and employment conditions between Poland and Germany). To a large degree this is connected with the young Silesians making use of replacement procedures³ and their massive influx fuelled by extreme economic and political instability in Poland in the early 90's.⁴ Still trusting certain family histories and myths presenting Germany as an affluent, rich country, they believed that they could find employment easily grow rich in a very short period of time. By virtue of proving their German origin⁵ the Silesians obtained German citizenship and thereby gained access to the legal labour

² I would like to stress that I use two terms 'come' or 'stay' because in some cases the cause of coming to Germany differs from the reason for staying.

³ German's Basic Law gives persons of German origin (and their descendant) who were trapped in Eastern Europe and the ex-USSR after the Second World War the right to migrate to Germany as German citizens.

⁴ According to Migration News, July 2001, Vol. 8, No. 7: 'The peak of ethnic German arrivals was in 1989, when 397,000 arrived, led by 250.000 Poles.

⁵ An individual has to provide a documentary proof of being either of German nationality (Staatsangehörige) or of German ethnicity (Volkszugehörige).

market. It is interesting, however, that in none of the collected cases analysed in this study the sense of belonging to the German culture was the root cause of emigration.

Secondly, there are immigrants whose choice to live in Germany arose out of personal reasons (usually because of a marriage to a German). In most cases these were young Polish women who decided to move to Germany and live with their husbands. This often involved postponing their own plans for the future. Although these immigrants enjoyed (at least formally) full social and economic rights, they often faced many difficulties in finding full employment, and had no access to participation in most areas of the formal political process. The majority of Poles married to Germans prefer keeping their Polish passports with permanent residence visas as opposed to obtaining German citizenship. This may be one of the symbolical steps that allows them to keep their 'self-historical identity' and find areas in their lives which let them make their own plans.

Thirdly, there are immigrants stimulated by the need to develop a professional career having perceived more favourable conditions abroad. This concerns highly professional workers; either experts trained in narrow fields or well educated specialists in particular disciplines. Some are also able to work illegally by virtue of the specific character of their profession, they can also work legally.⁶

After identifying the initial characteristics of the subject matter of this study, its content will be presented.

The first three chapters provide a delineation of the theoretical and methodological framework of the study and the rationale for selecting the symbolic interactionism approach - one of the major theoretical perspectives in sociology - in order to guide the inquiry into young Polish immigration in Germany. I begin with outlining the main concepts and ideas of symbolic interactionism in Chapter 1: **Overview and delineation of theoretical concepts**. In this chapter its origin (pragmatic philosophy) and different ways of its development (i.e., symbolic interactionism of George Herbert Mead and Herbert Blumer, phenomenology of Alfred Schütz, the Chicago School of Sociology and Anselm

⁶ Before joining the European Union Poles who wanted to work in Germany or any other EU country had to wrestle with many difficulties. They were not allowed to work if there was any German who could do the same job. Their potential employer, thus, was obliged to prove that professional skills of a Pole were indispensable or unique in the work she or he was to do. Some of them, however, avoided this official procedures and requirements to save on costs of keeping an employee (like for instance paying his or her insurance etc.). I will show it in my study discussing biographies of two Polish immigrants who are professional horse-riders and no one can check if they ride as trainers, teachers or as clients.

L. Strauss, dramaturgy of Erving Goffman, ethnomethodology of Harold Garfinkel, and conversation analysis of Harvey Sacks) are discussed. Regardless of the many crucial differences among the enumerated approaches, symbolic interactionism is treated as the homogenous background of theoretical considerations. Its basic assumption is that human society involves a continual process in which each participant defines his or her identity for the other and also interprets the other's self-concept.⁷ This statement constitutes a frame of reference for the analysis of the identities of the young Polish immigrants in Germany presented in this study. The second part of this chapter deals with the issue of national identity. This phenomenon is seen here as a very specific 'dimension' or 'component' of one's self-concept that – as the autobiographical narrative interviews with the young Poles prove – 'is activated' and becomes of crucial importance while abroad. To understand this very peculiar 'kind' of self-identification (i.e., referring to one's belonging to a certain collectivity and especially a nation), it is essential to know what the very term 'nation' stands for. In this connection, the most influential theories concerning this issue are sketched out. Finally, a means of approaching the problem of nation and national identity that determines the mode of viewing these aspects throughout this study is suggested.

Symbolic interactionists see humans as active and creative participants who create their social world in the continuous process of interpretation inherently embedded in social interactions. Thus, in the flow of the interaction processes the self (identity) - as well as the meaning of other objects - is constructed and negotiated. Significant interactional episodes are sedimented and stored in one's memory which subsequently makes up an individual biography. For this reason, it is argued in this study that one of the best ways to gain an insight into the process of identity construction, its changes and development has been proposed by Fritz Schütze in his **autobiographical narrative interview method** described in Chapter 2. It finds its roots in "grounded theory" developed by B. Glaser and A.L. Strauss as well as in linguistic knowledge concerning the production of talk and narration. Biographical materials, which are the basis of analysis in this approach, are gathered through the application of the narrative interview technique arising out of the everyday competencies of any person to tell about his or her life. Thus, an individual (narrator/informant), in response to the stimulus (i.e., a researcher's question) recapitulates

⁷ Cf. Shibutani T, 1961, *Society and Personality: An Interactionist Approach to Social psychology*, Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, pp. 92-93.

extempore⁸ a set of life experiences that are tape-recorded. The proper aim of this biographical method is the detailed reconstruction of the factual course of the chain of events in a narrator's life and the analysis of sociological features, preconditions and consequences of this course.⁹ The data collected with the use of this technique are then transcribed and subjected to a meticulous analysis. This, in turn, enables the researcher to describe an individual's life course in terms of four basic types of biographical experience (i.e., biographical structural processes): institutional action scheme, biographical action scheme, biographical metamorphosis and trajectory. Their sequential order, competition and influence within an individual biography create a unique portrait of a narrator that is contrasted with (by means of the contrastive comparison) and compared to the profiles of other informants. As a result of this analytical process a theoretical model emerges.

Chapter 3 discusses **the generalised concept of trajectory with special attention to the immigrant trajectory**. Its main purpose is to explicate *disorderly social processes and processes of suffering* (Riemann, Schütze, 1991: 337) that are the dominant experience of the most young Poles in the early (sometimes also later) stages of their immigration career. While referring to the concept of trajectory as proposed by A.L. Strauss and his co-workers, Riemann and Schütze point out to the 'night' side of the social reality which is neglected within the scope of interpretative sociology. They show that in individual biography there are also chaotic, disordered, and painful often filled with extreme suffering experiences that cause an afflicted person to be incapable of sustaining control over his or her life circumstances. Riemann and Schütze, however, prove that the trajectory process – allegedly disarrayed – has its inner dynamics and a sequential organization. At the centre of attention of this research are these issues of the immigration process. These are often dominated by a disorder of expectation, orientation, and relationship both to one's world and one's identity thus causing feelings of despair, alienation and estrangement.

The next two chapters offer an insight into two biographical processes characteristic of the immigration career and sociobiographical conditions that support their

⁸ Extempore storytelling means that it is told without previous preparation or practice. The story is reconstructed off-the-cuff. Its main aim is to prevent calculated – and, thus, inauthentic – accounts.

⁹ Czyżewski M., Rokuszewska-Pawełek A., 1989/90, 'Analiza autobiografii Rudolpha Hössa', *Kultura i Społeczeństwo*, Vol. 33, No. 2, p. 38.

dynamics. Thus, in Chapter 4 primary attention is given to the trajectory process and in Chapter 5 emphasis is placed on adjustment, assimilation and metamorphosis.

In Chapter 4 **a description of some framing conditions that disturb the immigration process and/or enhance the trajectory development process** an attempt is made to illustrate and analyse various social and biographical circumstances that make the immigration process difficult or that result in starting the trajectory dynamics. I refer here to my own research based on the analysis of autobiographical narrative interviews with young Poles in Germany. The interactional episodes in which the narrators are confronted unexpectedly with a conflicting image of their national identity in the eyes of their German partners are discussed first. The collected autobiographical materials prove that in the flow of the interaction process with the native members of the approached country the informants' self-concept becomes problematical, either because of divergent interpretations of the wartime events, or because of a pejorative connotation of the term 'a Pole' - a stereotypical picture the Germans 'carry in their heads' (Lippmann, 1946: 67) and consequent stigmatisation. Interestingly enough, the narrators not only report these situations in which their Polish identification negatively affects the course of interactions, but also attempt to explicate and account for the origin of this prejudiced image and prove that they are not this kind of a Pole who contributed to the creation of this stereotypical view. In doing so they construct a certain type of a Polish 'caffone', i.e., a simpleton who comes from Poland to earn money (often dishonestly) in Germany, behaves badly (begs, wangles, steals, etc) and does not care about the impression this causes. In this connection, in dealing with their national identity they not only present 'who they are', but also 'who they are not'.

Subsequently, it is explicated how the impossibility of continuing relevant biographical plans concerning one's professional career or incapacity of maintaining crucial relationships while abroad negatively affect the informants' immigration process. The former situation is typical for well-educated young women who after getting married to a German decided to establish their homes in Germany. Although the support of their German spouses (significant others) helps them wade through the process of assimilation successfully, construct normality and stabilization of their courses of life, the necessity of abandoning important biographical plans connected with their professional career severely disturbs this process. The latter case concerns the situations in which the narrators' beloved

persons stay in Poland, and, therefore, their life paths begin to separate and continue in different directions. Unfortunately, it usually puts an end to their relationship and causes suffering on both sides. If their emotional bond was of great importance to the informants, from the current perspective they usually consider the loss of the beloved person as a very harmful sacrifice they had to make while staying abroad. This often seriously undermines the sense of their immigration and disturbs or sometimes thwarts the assimilation process.

In the next section the issue of disillusionment (i.e., the clash of expectations relating to one's immigration career with the reality found abroad) is taken up and painstakingly considered. It often happens that potential immigrants create very illusory images (much better than the real ones) of the country of destination, and therefore are not prepared for many contingencies with which they are confronted. The very positive picture of the approached country is usually based on falsified and distorted information conveyed by the 'old' immigration. In this connection, not only the immigrants' disappointment, caused by realizing that the reality of their life abroad is diametrically different from that expected is explored but also the influence of the process of the chain migration by virtue of which still new people are attracted and want to emigrate is dealt with. To explicate the phenomenon thoroughly three different standpoints displayed in the collected autobiographical narrative interviews are analysed: the perspective of a person who was 'seduced' by the embellished picture of the approached country, the perspective of a 'seducer', i.e., a person who is aware of the impression he makes on his fellow-citizens while visiting his country of origin and its enticing character, and finally, the point of view of a person who by means of deception forced his family member to immigrate.

This chapter also concentrates on the process of becoming a cultural hybrid. It starts with recognition of certain differences between one's own culture and the approached culture that finally results in creating one's national identity on the basis of the distinction between homogenous 'we' and heterogeneous 'they'. An attempt is made here to answer the question why and how the informants' alienation from their symbolic universes (i.e., known schemes of references and patterns of conducts) brings confusion, disorder, anxiety and suffering into the immigration process. Finally, I draw on the classic discussion of marginality introduced by Robert E. Park extended later by Everett V. Stonequist and Georg Simmel's and Alfred Schütz's concepts of 'the stranger' to show how painful and

dramatic the life course of a person suspended between two cultures may be. I especially point at the individual's difficulty in establishing his or her identity in the situation of

(...) psychological uncertainty between two (or more) social worlds; reflecting in his soul the discords and harmonies, repulsions and attractions of these worlds, one of each is always 'dominant' over the other. (Stonequist, 1961: 9).

Finally, the issue of the homecoming experience is explicated and elaborated. The starting point for considerations here is the idea of 'the homcomer' outlined by Alfred Schütz. He points out that one's separation from home interrupts the community of space and time shared with those who stayed. Paradoxically enough, the homcomer becomes a stranger at his or her own home. Accordingly, the main purpose of the analysis is to identify and characterise certain implications of the nagging feeling of being a stranger in one's home country for the individual biography. Here, I suggest that there are at least three consequences of this experience. Firstly, people may feel that they should immediately return to their country of origin to save their identity. Secondly, an immigrant may recognise his or her choice of leaving the home country as the right one, because he or she finds it worse, poorer and less prospective etc. Thirdly, individuals' visits at home may provide them with some strategies of diminishing their country of origin. Here, the focus is on commonsense reasoning by means of which people make sense of their immigration career. It is my contention that they usually reduce the significance of their home country by referring to trifling examples of things which seem to be worse in Poland in order to diminish the profound social and psychological costs of being torn by two loyalties and responsibilities (Cf. Schütz, 1990b) and in order to support their adaptation process.

In **Chapter 5: Heading for successful adjustment and assimilation** the immigrants' ways of coping with the new reality that let them disentangle from the trajectory process and give meaning and shape to their life-world again are followed. Many narrators' immigration careers show that the assimilation process usually entails difficult and often continuing attempts to reconcile both cultures in order to find a creative and satisfying way of life. Since it is a constant process that may be never accomplished I suggest to call it: *heading for adjustment*. The idea of cultural bivalence (i.e., a situation in which individuals reveal competence and proficiency in as well as ascribe the same value to both or more cultures they live in), elaborated by a famous Polish sociologist – Antonina Kłoskowska, is

proposed here as the ideal type of assimilation – the avowed aim at which one's efforts should be directed.

To give some theoretical insight into the process of regaining one's sense of life and rebuilding one's satisfactory self-identification after severe and painful experiences of alienation and strangeness the concepts of 'biographical work' by Anselm L. Strauss and 'comeback process' by Juliet Corbin and A.L. Strauss are introduced and discussed. Subsequently, the social and biographical circumstances in which the process of adjustment is initiated and the way its development is supported are analysed.

Firstly, I depict how participation in social worlds in T. Shibutani and A.L. Strauss' sense (i.e., groups of people who share certain interests, are committed to certain activities and adhere to common ideology¹⁰) lets the immigrants plan and organize their everyday life again and release their capacity for developing a new creative way of live. It usually puts the process of biographical metamorphosis in motion and leads to the transformation of the immigrants' identity.

Secondly, the role of biographical caretakers (either family members or friends) in the assimilation process is carefully examined. The biographical caretakers who are indigenous members of the approached community and thus, competent users of its norms, meanings, values and ways of conduct are usually the best guides to their culture. For this reason, the relationship between a Pole and a German and their emotional involvement seems to be one of the most significant factors supporting the assimilation process.

I also attempt to bear out here that in the very specific life-situation of the young Silesians (who often in Poland also live in some sort of national community) the immersion in their own national 'ghetto' may facilitate they career abroad. I would argue that contrary to many other national groups whose members are arrested within the 'ghetto' situation¹¹ abroad, therefore stifling assimilation – Silesians usually gain a lot of advantages from this situation and adjust to the new surrounding easier.¹²

¹⁰ See: Strauss A.L., 1993, *Continual Permutation of Action*, Aldine de Gruyter, New York, p. 212.

¹¹ Cf. Schütze F., npd, *Outline for the Method of Biography Analysis* (transcript), p. 20.

¹² Silesians, for instance, are quick at learning German and soon after their arrival they establish many contacts with Germans. Still, their national 'ghetto' is the main reference group.

Finally, the intermediary role of the ‘marginal man’, who lives in two cultures and who tends to act as a representative of his or her home country thus changing the image of Poles in the eyes of Germans is considered. It is usually connected with his or her biographical actions schemes and voluntary involvement in finding understanding and reaching an agreement with the members of the approached culture/nation. In short, the entrepreneur attempts to penetrate and enter the foreign culture and, at the same time present his or her culture abroad in a favourable and positive way.

It is very important to note here that the enumerated frame conditions of the basic structures of biographical experience (i.e., the trajectory process and the process of assimilation and metamorphosis) usually predominate certain stages of the immigrants’ biography. For this reason, as well as for analytical purposes, they are to be discussed separately. Nevertheless, we must remember that in an individual biography they may overlap, alternate one another, affect and influence each other.

At this point, I would like to shortly discuss my personal motivation for writing my dissertation thesis on the young Polish immigration in Germany. It was initially inspired by my half-a-year stay in Germany as a student. During this stay I met a few young Polish people, who had decided to leave Poland and – in spite of many difficulties – stayed in Germany. It was in times (the end of the 90’s) when the situation in Poland after the intensive period of transformation became relatively stable and predictable in political and economical terms. Still, there were a lot of young people who were not satisfied with the degree of opportunity provided by their homeland and found Germany a better place for their personal and professional development. Their life histories were very fascinating and inspired me to explore the issue of the Poles living in Germany further. Taking into account the very peculiar relationship between the two countries, which is very complex and intriguing I wondered how young Poles coped with their national identity in Germany. On the one hand, there are a lot of dramatic events and occurrences in the common history of Poland and Germany (to mention just a few still reproduced in the Polish collective memory like the Battle of Grunwald in 1410, three Partitions of Poland in 1772, 1793 and 1795, the Nazi Supremacy 1939-1945 and the Warsaw Rising in 1944) that still frame the image of Germany in Poland.¹³ On the other hand, Poland and Germany are neighbour

¹³ Antonina Kłosowska suggests that after the Second World War and the German occupation of Poland, certain negative stereotypes on Germans were fixed and reproduced in Poland. She claims: ‘It most certainly makes a difference

countries connected with economic and political cooperation within the European Union (even before 1 May 2004 when Poland was only an acceding country) through the intense exchange of material and intellectual goods.

The choice of the research method is also not accidental. The autobiographical narrative interview method elaborated by Fritz Schütze gained recognition in the field of biography research and is treated as one of the best developed and influential approaches. I believe it is the best way to reconstruct, explicate and describe social and biographical processes. I have familiarised with this method as a student of University of Łódź where I have met a lot of enthusiasts and propagators of it. Practising the method of research in my own Ph.D. thesis under the very master's supervision gives me the best opportunity to improve my technical and analytical skills and support my development as a social scientist.

whether the first words of a foreign language heard and retained in memory are the cries of 'Raus!' and 'Los!' uttered by the hoarse voices of gendarmes, or the verse: 'Auf allen Gipfeln ist Ruh', read by a teacher in the calmness of a classroom.' See: Kłoskowska A., 1992a, 'Neighbourhood Cultures: Some Aspects of Difficult Historical Neighbourhoods', *International Sociology*, Vol. 7, No. 1, p. 63.

Chapter 1

Overview and Delineation of Theoretical Concepts

The aim of this chapter is to give an overview of the sociological concepts concerned with the problem of the self construction, nation and national identity. I will discuss them in detail in the next chapters of this work if they either support the theories generated from the collected data or if they explicate the analysed phenomena in a suitably manner. For this reason, I will only mention here the general assumptions of these theories which frame my way of thinking in order to introduce the reader to them, and thus to facilitate the reception of my thesis. I will start with the delineation of the interpretative sociology approach to society and identity and concentrate on its main assumption that:

The self is not a private or personal entity, nor even strictly the individual human body. It is, first of all, a viewpoint, one that always involves other people looking upon the self from outside. (Collins, 1988: 230).

Therefore, I will strongly oppose those social theories deriving from the positivistic and normative approach in sociology and methods that treat identities as demographic facts. The reason for this is that they are not attentive enough to and respectful enough of the everyday world of ordinary people that is of crucial importance for sociology. Accordingly, all these approaches in which individuals are objectified irrespective of the situation and their actions are seen to have predicable consequences will be passed over. This study will be anchored in the tradition of symbolic interactionism, which – according to Herbert Blumer is:

(...) a down-to-earth approach to the scientific study of human group life and human conduct. Its empirical world is the natural world of such group life and conduct. It lodges its problems in this natural world, conducts its studies in it, and derives its interpretations from such naturalistic studies. (Blumer, 1969: 47).

In the light of these considerations, the concept of national identity will be discussed. I find it very important because, as the autobiographical narrative interviews with the young Poles show, national self-concepts become of main significance and influence while abroad. The data collected for this study exhibit that the narrators during

their immigration career become aware of, or – in other words – discover their national identity and its influence on their lives. It is seen not only in the ways they respond to situations in which they are addressed as members of a certain national group (Poles) and their description of the host nation (Germans), but also in their fashion of reporting the situations in which their national identity is at stake as well as in mode of argumentation and style of self-presentation. In the great majority of their face-to-face encounters with German partners, the interviewees refer to their past experiences and socially derived knowledge presupposing that members of the host society hold prejudiced attitudes towards them. Consequently, they either actually experience discriminatory or offensive behaviour or assume that every interaction is full of opportunities for things to go awry. This continuous practice of looking at one's self through the eyes of others usually entails some degree of suffering and strangeness towards the new surrounding reality and the self.¹ This process is the main subject-matter of this study.

¹ See: Strauss A., 1993, *Continual Permutations of Action*, Aldine de Gruyter, New York, p. 44

1.1. Interpretative sociology i.e., symbolic interactionism phenomenology and ethnomethodology as the main frame of reference in this study.

The analytical and methodological framework of this study is marked out by the interpretative sociology line of thought which has its roots in the works of pragmatics philosophers such as: Charles S. Peirce, William James, Charles H. Cooley, John Dewey, George H. Mead, and Herbert Blumer. It takes the position that sociology should investigate social life from the point of view of those who live in it, i.e., individuals who act according to the meaning ascribed to the situation they are in. The meaning is negotiated in the process of social interaction in which participants define for others the way they perceive the situation and interpret the others' ways of seeing it. Fritz Schütze maintains that interpretative sociology includes:

(...) alle Theorieansätze, die vom sinnhaften, symbolischen, sprachlichen Character der sozialen Realität ausgehen; die also betonen, daß die Gesellschaftsmitglieder stets vor der Aufgabe stehen, die Interaktionszüge der Mitakteure und die vorgegeben sozialen Rahmen der Interaktion sowie die institutionellen Manifestationen der Gesellschaft zu interpretieren, bevor sie selber handeln können. (Schütze, 1996: 126).

(...) all these theoretical approaches that derive from the meaningful, symbolic and linguistic character of the social reality, and that emphasize that the members of a society constantly face the task of interpretation of their fellow interactants moves, the social frames of interaction, as well as the institutional manifestations of the society, before they begin to act themselves (translated by the author).

This concept is common to sociologists working in the 1920s and 1930s at the University of Chicago like Robert Park, William I. Thomas, Florian Znaniecki, Ernest Burgess, Everett Hughes (known as the Chicago School of Sociology), to A.L. Strauss and his co-workers (representatives of the next generation of Chicago sociologists), Alfred Schütz's phenomenology, Harold Garfinkel's ethnomethodology and Harvey Sacks' conversation analysis, as well as to Erving Goffman's dramaturgy.² In this chapter I will briefly discuss

² There are many, often fundamental, discrepancies among the mentioned orientations, but for the purposes of my work I refer to their common background.

their basic assumptions and tools that provide inspiration and analytical insights for my considerations. Throughout my work, however, I will discuss in detail the set of concepts elaborated in the field of interpretative sociology whenever they serve as valid accounts of observed social phenomena. They are not treated as hypotheses which are to be confirmed but rather as available resources of possible interpretations corresponding to the findings generated from the collected data.³ I will follow Schütze's understanding of the main content of symbolic interactionism. He explicates:

All that is social - including what is characterised as regulations for the behaviours of members of society - is produced through social interaction, reproduced through social interaction and altered through social interaction. (Schütze, 1987a).

The analysis and understanding of society thus presupposes the analysis and understanding of the fundamental processes of interaction.⁴

George Herbert Mead transplanted the pragmatic project developed by Ch.S. Pierce, W. James and J. Dewey into the field of social sciences. Mead's concept (expanded by Herbert Blumer) of treating the self as active and reflexive as well as an agent responsible for creatively constructing socially determined symbolic interaction. He stresses the symbolic nature of human social life where meanings are: *social products formed through activities of people interacting. (Blumer, 1969: 5).*⁵

Blumer's explication of Mead's conception of the self constitutes our starting point for this analysis.⁶ In their understanding the self consists of the 'I' (the free, active and spontaneous self), imaginatively trying out different 'me's' (images of the self involved in

³ I follow here the grounded theory methodology as established by B.G. Glaser and A.L. Strauss (1967). Please see the next chapter for more information.

⁴ See: Bokszański Z., 1985, 'Rodzaje zainteresowań aktorem społecznym, czyli o tzw. Socjologii osobowości', Folia Sociologica Wyd. Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, Łódź, and Piotrowski A., 1985, 'Osobowość a tożsamość. O pewnej tendencji we współczesnej socjologii interakcji', Folia Sociologica, z. 12, Wyd. Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, Łódź.

⁵ For symbolic interactionists social objects are constructs not 'self-existing entities with intrinsic natures.' Blumer H., 'Sociological Implications of the thought of George Herbert Mead', American Journal of Sociology, 1966, p. 539.

⁶ Cooley in his conception of the self described metaphorically as 'looking-glass effect' passes over the 'I' dimension of the human self. He believes that the self is totally determined by social contacts. However, both W. James and G.H. Mead claim that the self has two components: the 'I' and the 'me'. Thus an individual not only is capable to see him- or herself from the point of view of others, but also – as an active subject - is able to carry on independent spontaneous conducts. Moreover, they both maintain that the self. i.e., individual process of consciousness is a derivative of the original relation between a man and the environment. See: Czyżewski M., 1985, 'Problem podmiotowości we współczesnej socjologii interakcji. Jaźń i jej zniesienie', Part 1, Kultura i Społeczeństwo, No. 3, pp. 32-33.

different possible actions in the face of interaction partners and the Generalised Other, i.e., imagined witness of these fictional actions). The self, thus, emerges in social interactions in which an individual takes the role and the perspective of the other⁷ by ‘standing in his shoes’. In so doing, he or she takes into account not only the situation and its context, but also the other’s identity and one’s own identity in the eyes of the other. Blumer claims that symbolic interactionism rests on three basic premises that:

- 1) all human actions directed towards both other human beings and physical objects are based on the meaning that these objects have for the person who acts;
- 2) the meaning - Blumer stresses – ‘*is not intrinsic to the object*’ (Blumer, 1969: 68), but derives from the social interaction, or, in other words, arise out of mutual interaction of acting individuals who define the meaning of indicated objects (including their self-concepts⁸, and the interpretation of the other identities);

and that:

- 3) the meaning is never fixed and firmly established, but constantly modified through an interpretative process.⁹

It is relevant that: firstly, an individual indicates to him- or herself the things towards which he or she is acting through communication with him- or herself (i.e., treating oneself as an object), and, secondly, by virtue of this internal communication the person

(...) selects, checks, suspends, regroupes, and transforms the meanings in the light of the situation, in which he is placed and the direction of his action.(Blumer, 1969: 5).

Blumer confirms – in accordance with the pragmatic position - the indissoluble connection between the self and identity (i.e., self-identifications of the individual and the other’s

⁷ Contrary to Mead, Blumer treats taking the role of the other as a process involving creative and constitutive elements. An individual, thus, not only takes the other’s point of view into account, but also interprets it creatively, what – in turn - enables the reflexive control over his or her own actions through considering, modifying or desisting from his or her line of action. See: Czyżewski M., 1985, ‘Problem...’, op. cit., p. 35.

⁸ Blumer highlights: ‘(...) a human being can be an object of his own action (...) he acts toward himself and guides himself in his action toward others on the basis of the kind of object he is to himself.’ Blumer H., 1969, *Symbolic Interactionism, Perspective and Method*, University of California Press, Berkley, p. 12.

⁹ See: Blumer H., 1969, *Symbolic Interactionism*, op. cit., pp. 2-5.

identification of his or her identity in the interaction process). Blumer claims that recognizing one's other identities in the flow of communication is the major task he or she must perform, defining the situation, on the other hand, actions or occurrences is of a minor interest.¹⁰ For this reason, the most important research questions in the field of interpretative sociology concern individuals' identities.¹¹ Defining one's identity for the other and one's interpretation of the other's identity makes the ongoing interaction predictable. This also involves understanding the other's motives and ascertaining the consequences of these conducts.¹²

Theoretical and methodological inspirations of the pragmatic philosophy and the definition of the situation coined by W.I. Thomas saying that: *If men define situations as real they are real in their consequences.* (Thomas, Thomas, 1928: 572) are the foundations of **the Chicago School of Sociology**. There was a twofold impetus to its development. On the one hand, its theoretical position was deeply influenced by the growth of cultural relativity (i.e., the idea that there are better and worse cultures is displaced by the view that all cultures are equal, but different) leading to a questioning of the existence of a universal set of values. On the other hand, the Chicagoan sociologists had to face, examine and understand significant social transformations that followed World War I and the Great Depression. This mainly involved the aspects of immigration, urbanization, and industrialization. These processes entailed such social phenomena as rapidly growing cities with their cultural diversity, ethnic conflicts, huge urban development and deviance or social disorganization.¹³ In the works of such sociologists like W.I. Thomas, F. Znaniecki, R. Park, E. Hughes, E. Burgess an emphasis is placed on the situational context of meaning as a communicative process located in interpretative acts. As opposed and hostile toward quantitative techniques of social research and especially sceptical about statistical approaches – their predominant methodical practices were: participant observation, case study, analysis of personal documents and life history (the later especially popularised by the Chicago School).¹⁴ Martin Bulmer writes:

¹⁰ This is also G.H. Mead, E. Goffman and A. Strauss's standpoint.

¹¹ Cf. Czyżewski M., 1985, 'Problem...', op. cit., p. 36.

¹² Cf. Piotrowski A., 1985, 'Pojęcie tożsamości w tradycji interakcjonizmu symbolicznego', *Kultura i Społeczeństwo*, No. 3, p. 66.

¹³ See: Strauss A., 1991, *Creating Sociological Awareness, Collective Images and Symbolic Representation*, Transaction Books, New Brunswick, especially chapter: 'The Chicago Tradition's Ongoing Theory of Action/ interaction.', pp. 3-32.

¹⁴ See: Harley L., 1987, *Myths of the Chicago School of Sociology*, Avebury, Aldershot, pp. 55-70.

A common element in the various pieces of research was the reliance upon a combination of different research methods to built up a multifaceted picture of the problem under investigation: the basic reference to ecological structure and mapping; the reliance on personal interviews and observation; the importance of life histories and personal documents; and the subsidiary though not insignificant place of statistics. (Bulmer, 1986: 108).

The publication of 'Polish Peasant in Europe and America' between 1918 and 1920 caused

a shift in sociology away from abstract theory and library research toward a more intimate acquaintance with the empirical world, studied nevertheless in terms of a theoretical frame.' (op. cit.: 45).

In the tradition of the Chicago School of Sociology the processual character of social phenomena and the subjective meaning given to it by experiencing individuals is of pivotal importance.¹⁵ While focusing their attention on social processes, the Chicagoan researchers were not primarily interested in their structural or functional descriptions, but in reconstruction of a '*natural history*' (i.e., reconstruction of the process in which given phenomena arose, took place or disappeared).¹⁶

One of the most outstanding figures continuing the research traditions and theoretical orientations of the Chicago School was **Anselm L. Strauss**. In his influential book 'Mirrors and Masks' he shows that, although the reciprocal definitions and interpretations of identity are the key issues negotiated in social interactions, they are - on the basis of its multidimensionality and changeability - vague and ambiguous. It makes any precise definition of the phenomena impossible; and only some 'sanitizing' may direct the researcher's investigations. Strauss says:

¹⁵ The main aim of the Chicago school of sociology is expressed in H. Becker introduction to one of the classical works of this school, that is C.R. Shaw's 'The Jack-Roller': 'As opposed to these more imaginative and humanistic forms, the life history is more down to earth, more devoted to our purposes than those of the author, less concerned with artistic values than with a faithful rendering of the subject's experience and interpretation of the world he lives in.' See: Becker H.S., 1966, Introduction, in Shaw C.R., The Jack-Roller. A Delinquent Boy's Own Story, The University of Chicago press, Chicago, p. vi.

¹⁶ See: Czyżewski M., 1996, Generalne kierunki opracowania, wymiary analityczna, in Czyżewski M., Rokuszewska-awełek A., Piotrowski A. (eds.), Biografia a tożsamość narodowa, Wyd. Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, Katedra Socjologii Kultury, Łódź, p. 50.

Face-to-face interaction is a fluid, moving, “running” process; during its course the participants take successive stances vis-à-vis each other. Sometimes they fence, sometimes they move in rhythmic psychological ballet, but always they move through successive phases of position. The initial reading of the other’s identity merely sets the stage for action, gives each some cues for his lines. (Strauss, 1969: 55).

This dynamic and fluent dimension of personal identity is, however, always intertwined with a human being’s self-conceptions implying roles and statuses, as well as with his or her relatively stable and trans-situational self that embraces his or her longer phases of biography or career. Strauss defines situations in which individuals become group representatives and role-players (as members of social groups and organizations) and their other identifications remain in the background as structured interactional processes.¹⁷ He draws our attention to the possibility that some of these roles and statuses may be imposed by the requirements of social groups, organizations and hierarchy. Strauss names this process as ‘status-forcing’. Further, he claims that there are two major types of this process: *up and down* when an individual changes his or her place in hierarchy within confines of a social group while being ashamed, deprecated, made a fool of etc.; and *in and out* when a person is either treated as a member of a group or is excluded from it.¹⁸ And finally, Strauss points at the individual’s capacity for gaining a sense of personal continuity through seeing him or herself in a horizon of past experiences and imagined future identities. These are the defining elements connected with a person’s biographical development and career.¹⁹ Of great importance for Strauss are interactions in which the individual cannot define his or her identity easily any longer²⁰ and

(...) certain critical incidents that occur to force a person to recognize that “I am not the same person as I was, as I used to be”. (...) These critical incidents constitute turning points in the onward movement of personal careers.” (Strauss, 1969: 93).

Such critical events force the individual to think over, re-consider, and re-valuate his or her identity and life situation, what Strauss depicts as biographical work.

¹⁷ See: Strauss A.L., 1969, *Mirrors and Masks. The Search for Identity*, Sociology Press, Mill Valley, pp. 69-71.

¹⁸ See: op. cit., pp. 76-77.

¹⁹ See: op. cit., pp. 144-147.

²⁰ The concept of awareness contexts elaborated together with Barney Glaser on the basis of observations of interactions between dying patients and medical staff is the prominent example of this matter. I refer to this concept in next chapters.

Moreover, observing interactions between dying patients and staff members in a hospital Strauss together with B.G. Glaser singled out four types of **awareness contexts**, i.e.: *the total combination of what each interactant in a situation knows about the identity of other and his own identity in the eyes of other*. If both interaction partners are aware of the other's true identity and their own identity in the eyes of the other we deal with **an open awareness context**. The modification of it is **a pretence awareness context**, i.e., the situation in which participants are fully aware of their identities, but, for certain reasons, they pretend not to be. Next, if an individual does not know the other's identity, or if she or he is totally unaware what is their true identity in the eyes of others **a closed awareness context** occurs. But, if at least one participant suspects, with varying degrees of certainty, the true identity of the other or the other's view of her or his identity **a suspicious awareness context** is established.²¹

Finally, I would like to address shortly the concept of trajectory developed by Strauss and his co-workers (Glaser, Strauss 1968; Strauss, Fagerhaugh, Suczek, Wiener, 1985) in their studies of illness. A. Strauss and J. Corbin explain that trajectory initially suggested showing a course of illness, its movement over time, and ultimately:

(...) has come to indicate (1) the course of illness and/or disability over time; (2) the action and interaction associated with its management; and (3) the outcomes of the management process, along with the impact of the illness itself, on the affected persons and their families (and in a less direct way on the health professionals); that (4) in turn come back to affect future management; and (5) ultimately affect the illness course itself.'
(Strauss, 1991: 149).

In the analysis of trajectory Strauss and his co-workers put forward some objective changes in an individual's situation resulting from long-term conforming to the requirements and rules of institutions (like hospitals) and their specific social relations, as well as related changes in an individual's subjective feelings and self-identifications.

²¹ See: Glaser B.G., Strauss A.L., 1964, Awareness Contexts and Social Interactions, American Sociological Review, Vol. 29, No. 5, p. 670.

In this study Schütze's application of the concept of trajectory to all disorderly social processes and processes of suffering is the fundamental frame of reference. The immigration process, thus, with a consequent breakdown of life world and falling short of expectations often brings about disorientation in everyday life world and distress.²² As - in cooperation with Gerhard Riemann - Schütze explains:

Severe suffering is a biographical phenomenon par excellence, since it impinges on the state of personal identities of the sufferers and their dependents, friends and relatives. The changes of personal identity caused by severe suffering and the biographical impact on the trajectory of suffering have severe consequences for the interaction, communication, and work processes between the sufferer and the persons dealing with her or him (...). Trajectory processes of suffering convey a sense of fate in the life of trajectory incumbents; they force them to see themselves as controlled by strange outer forces that cannot be influenced easily or at all. They reshape the present life situation, reverse expectations of the future, and mobilize reinterpretations of the life course.' (Riemann, Schütze, p. 338.)

In **Erving Goffman's** dramaturgical theory of self and interaction individual identity also comes to the fore. He begins his famous book *'Presentation of Self in Everyday Life'* with the observation:

When an individual enters the presence of others they commonly seek to acquire information about him or to bring into play information about him already possessed. They will be interested in his general socio-economic status, his conception of self, his trustworthiness, etc. Although some of this information seems to be sought as an end in itself, there are usually quite practical reasons for acquiring it. Information about the individual helps to define the situation, enabling others to know in advance what he will expect of them and what they may expect of him. (Goffman, 1990: 13).

His theatrical metaphor entails treating a person as a calculating strategist who plans and conducts his or her actions (performances) in everyday life with intent.²³ Thus, the actor's strongest desire while being on stage and performing before an audience is to accomplish it successfully. Goffman, in line with David Riesman concept of the *other-directed* type of

²² Please see Charter 3 for more details.

²³ See: Czyżewski, 1985, 'Problem...', op. cit., p. 47.

character²⁴ – claims that fear of failed performances, embracement and rejection are immanent part of every human action. Thus, in the flow of social encounters, which in our current world are becoming more and more fleeting – any individual attempts to give off the desired impressions (i.e., one makes others think of him or her in the way he or she wants them to think). In other words, by using appearance: way of speaking, gestures, clothes, facial expressions and so on, one informs his or her interaction partners who he or she is and how one should be treated. Establishing ‘who is who’ in the ongoing interaction, defining the situation as well as the agreement on issues that are to be taken into account is an ongoing negotiating process through which people finally arrive at ‘working consensus’ (*modus vivendi*)²⁵ Arguing that the self is created in social interactions, Goffman points at the ‘face’ as its key dimension, i.e.,

The positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact. (Goffman, 1972a: 319).

Furthermore, he claims that in face-to-face interactions participants share their moral responsibility for one another, which manifests itself in employing not only his own face-saving practices, but also in maintaining the other’s face. It means that during an encounter an individual has two points of view:

*(...) a defensive orientation toward saving his own face and a protective orientation toward saving the other’s face. (op. cit.: 325).*²⁶

Goffman also deals with situations in which an individual’s self (including his or her face) is spoiled through possessing a certain stigma.²⁷ He writes:

While the stranger is present before us, evidence can arise of his possessing an attribute that makes him different from others in the category of persons available for him to be, and of less desirable kind – in the extreme, a person who is quite thoroughly bad, or dangerous, or weak. He is thus reduced in our minds from a whole and usual person to a tainted, discounted one. Such an attribute is a stigma, especially when its discrediting effects is

²⁴ See: Riesman D., 1989, *The Lonely Crowd: A Study of the Changing American Character*, Yale University Press, London.

²⁵ See: Goffman E., 1990b, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Penguin Books, London, p. 21.

²⁶ For detailed explanation of defensive and protective practices see: op. cit., pp. 207-230.

²⁷ Goffman E., 1990a, *Stigma. Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*, Penguin Books, London.

very extensive; sometimes it is called a failing, a shortcoming, a handicap. (Goffman, 1990a: 12).

In this case the presentation of self is extremely problematical, both for those whose stigma is visible (e.g., amputees) and, therefore are discredited on the spot, and for those whose stigma may come to light at any moment of the ongoing interaction (e.g., former prisoners).

Finally, I would like to address shortly Goffman's concept of moral career developed with reference to patients in the mental hospitals or more generally people doomed to live (at least for some time) in healthcare (total) institutions. By this term he means

(...) the regular sequence of changes that career entails in the person's self and in his framework of imagery for judging himself and others. (Goffman, 1991: 119).

While subjected to a set of mortifying experiences, restrictions of freedom, and deprivations, a mental patient suffers from the loss of self-esteem and in this light reevaluates his or her biography.

Now, I wish to focus on **Schütz's phenomenology of the social world**. Alfred Schütz following the thought of Edmund Husserl and took Max Weber's ideas into account about the methodology of social sciences by develop in his own phenomenology of the social world. He takes the position that people encounter each other in an already constituted, meaningful, intersubjective life-world. Schütz explains that the

"World of daily life" should mean the interubjective world which existed long before our birth, experienced and interpreted by Others, our predecessors, as an organized world. Now it is given to our experience and interpretation. All interpretation of this world is based upon a stock of previous experiences of it, our own experiences and those handled down to us by our parents and teachers, which in the form of "knowledge at hand" function as a scheme of reference. (Schütz 1990a: 208).

Furthermore, he stresses that we share this world in common with our fellow-men and experience it in the basically same way. It stems from the fact, that the meanings of events

we are involved in and their interpretations are mediated through signs (which are products of our language in the form of typifications) that are common to all of us, that our knowledge at hand we use while dealing with everyday situations is socially derived. Because of this, we are capable of putting ourselves in the position of our interactive partners' position and taking their point of view, at the same time being aware that our fellow interactants are doing the same.

The next sociological orientations important for my study are **ethnomethodology and conversation analysis**. Ethnomethodology - in understanding of its founding father Harold Garfinkel – is the study of mundane 'methods' and procedures that people continuously employ to manage their everyday activities and make them accountable, rational, ordinary and reportable.²⁸ Instead of dealing with the social order *per se*, ethnomethodology attempts to discover and describe methods by which members of society produce a sense of social order. Following Schütz, Garfinkel claims that people see their world of daily life as pre-established and ordered reality that is sustained in their encounters as such through referring to taken-for-granted background assumptions, commonly shared knowledge and patterns of conducts.²⁹ All objects, constructs, concepts, descriptions and actions (utterances) in common-sense life have indexical properties (i.e., their sense and meaning is depended on the context in which they occur – shaped both by prior events or experiences and by expectations of its further development).³⁰ Thus, as Garfinkel shows, people in their practical reasoning constantly strive to perceive all situations in their life-world as instances of something familiar and pre-organised. When, in turn, these situations - by virtue of seeing them as illustrations of certain underlying pattern - are accomplished successfully, they become evidences or 'documents of' past events.³¹ This is, as Garfinkel explains, a 'documentary method of interpretation' that

²⁸ See: Livingston E., 1987, *Making Sense of Ethnomethodology*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, p. 10.

²⁹ Garfinkel stresses that although people presume and use certain governing rules and procedures in their everyday interactions, they do not realise their existence until they are broken. In his 'breaching experiments' he proved that only when shared understandings and basic expectations are not fulfilled people 'notice' them, because it makes them angry and impatient. See: Garfinkel H., 2002, *Studies in Ethnomethodology*, Polity Press, Cambridge, especially 'Studies of the routine grounds of everyday activities'.

³⁰ See: Flynn P.J., 1991, *The Ethnomethodological Movement; Sociosemiotic Interpretations*, Mouton de Gruyter, New York, p. 27; and Potter J., 1996, *Representing Reality, Discourse, Rhetoric and Social Construction*, Sage Publications, London, pp. 43-46.

³¹ Cf. Collins R., 1988, *Theoretical Sociology*, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Publishers, London, p. 279 and Potter J., 1996, *Representing...* op. cit., 49-50.

(...) consists of treating an actual appearance as 'the document of', as 'pointing to', as 'standing on behalf of a presupposed underlying pattern. Not only is the underlying pattern derived from its individual documentary evidences, but the individual documentary evidences, in their turn, are interpreted on the basis of 'what is known' about the underlying pattern. Each is used to elaborate the other.' (Garfinkel, 2002: 78).³²

Moreover, Garfinkel claims that interacting individuals (members) are unceasingly occupied with practical reasoning implying creation, modification and employment of commonsense knowledge in its social contexts.³³ Their actions not only reflect how their actions should be understood, but also how they interpret their partner's action and the very situation they are in. Garfinkel refers to this phenomenon as 'reflexivity'.

Conversation analysis is an approach to understanding 'talk-in-interaction'. As proposed by Harvey Sacks, it is deeply rooted in the findings of ethnomethodology and may be treated as the application of ethnomethodology to the studies of commonsense talk.³⁴ The main concern of this perspective is the meticulous analysis of tape-recorded 'naturally occurring' verbal interactions, i.e., the interactional construction of turns of talk and their sequential organization in the production and interpretation of meanings and local social structure within ongoing face-to-face conversations.³⁵ Marek Czyżewski points out that while symbolic interactionists attempt to answer the traditional questions of sociology concerning the nature and resources of social order and deals with them in fundamentally different ways than classical sociologists, conversation analysts do not touch upon traditional problems at all, but introduce new issues into sociology.³⁶ D. Benson and J.A. Hughes explain that:

(...) conversation analysis is not an enterprise designed to repair some perceived deficiency in 'conventional' sociology: a position it shares with ethnomethodology itself. Rather, it is geared to the description of the highly organized structure that talk,

³² See also: Czyżewski M., 1984, *Socjolog i życie potoczne. Studium z etnometodologii i współczesnej socjologii interakcji*, Wyd. Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, Łódź, p. 90 and following.

³³ See: Czyżewski M., 1985, 'Problem...', op. cit., p. 37.

³⁴ Cf. Czyżewski M., 1987, 'Interakcjonizm i analiza konwersacyjna jako sposoby badania biografii', *Kultura i Społeczeństwo*, No. 4, p. 212.

³⁵ It should be also mentioned here that, as Deirdre Boden emphasises: 'The interest of conversation analysis is not in language in a linguistic sense but rather in talk as the very hart of social interaction, and in the formal properties of social order or "structures of social action" (Atkinson, Heritage, 1984).' Boden D., 1990, *Conversation Analysis and Symbolic Interaction*, in Becker H.S., McCall M.M. (eds.), *Symbolic Interaction and Cultural Studies*, The University of Chicago Press, London, p. 247.

³⁶ Czyżewski M., 1987, 'Interakcjonizm...', op. cit., p. 210.

particularly as conversation, takes in all its extremely fine detail. As such, it could be claimed that conversation analysis represents a discipline in its own right, with its own internal interests, concerns and methods of study. (Benson, Hughes, 1983: 26).

Therefore, the research subject of conversation analysis is commonsense rules of practical reasoning enabling people to define, maintain, question and modify the meaning of social order within conversation and through this conversation.³⁷ Harvey Sacks and his associates Emmanuel Schegloff and Gail Jefferson maintain that what is said is not the way it is accidentally, that forms of words are not rough and ready make-dos, but are designed in their detail to be sensitive to their sequential context and to their role in interaction.³⁸ They claim that one of the most fundamental mechanisms in creating and maintaining social order is that activated in turn-taking during conversation. Essentially the participants of the interaction are then capable of arranging their conversation talks as ordered actions. Moreover, they argue that even paralinguistic and nonverbal phenomena in conversations (such as intonation, pauses, in-breaths, out-breaths, overlaps etc.) - treated by the most linguistic approaches as fuzzy as redundant issues - contribute to the creation of an organised social reality. A set of rules people employ when talking, was developed in which the seemingly banal observation that one person talks at a time and selects the next person to get the next turn (including him or herself, etc.) is of fundamental importance.³⁹ One of their key findings is that many turns come in pairs – a sequence of two utterances produced by different speakers, which are adjacent, i.e., a first part requires a particular second part.⁴⁰ Adjacency pairs are, thus, organised patterns of stable, recurrent actions that provide for, and reflect, order within a conversation. Their sociological importance is that they provide for, and reflect, order within conversation.⁴¹

To sum up, let us refer to D. Boden who explains that for ethnomethodologists and conversation analysts:

³⁷ Cf. op. cit.

³⁸ See: Sacks H., Schegloff E., Jefferson G., 1974, 'A simplest systematics for the organization of turn-taking in conversation', *Language* Vol. 50, pp. 696-735.

³⁹ Cf. Collins R., 1988, *Theoretical...*, op. cit., pp. 319-320. It is worth noticing that conversation analysis (like ethnomethodology) concentrates much of its attention on situations when some commonsense rules and patterns of action (talking) are broken.

⁴⁰ See: Schegloff E., Sacks H., 1973, 'Opening up closings', *Semiotica* (3/4), pp. 295-296.

⁴¹ See: Heritage J., *Garfinkel and Ethnomethodology*, Blackwell, Oxford, p. 249.

(...) social order is organized from within and social structure is thus endogenous to action. This does not intend, however, to suggest that there is no larger social order of which some local action is a constitutive. The central position of ethnomethodology is to insist that how, where, with whom, and even why particular aspects of social structure, biographical elements, or historical conditions are made relevant in concrete situations is a matter of member's methods. (Boden, 1994: 46).

1.2. A few remarks on the concept of national identity.

'The constitution of any human group is a symbolic not a physical fact.'

(Strauss, 1969: 149).

National identity – as a particular dimension of self-identification concerning individual ways of constructing and modes of communicating one's national belonging to others and interpreting their attitude towards his or her national self which is displayed both: in the autobiographical narrative interviews' content and its form of presentation is of central significance in my work. For this reason, I find it important to discuss the issue in the following outline. My position on the concept of identity which is rooted in the tradition of symbolic interactionism has been already discussed above. It is, therefore relevant to clarify the notion of 'nation' in its connection with the concept of national self-identification. It is not my aim here to provide an overview of diverse and complex concepts of a nation, nationalism and national identity which have arisen in the field of anthropology, cultural studies, sociology of culture and political sciences. They have undoubtedly shaped my sociological awareness and affect my way of thinking. The perspectives of acting and experiencing individuals are, however, of my fundamental concern here.

Two influential theories developed by Ernest Gellner and Benedict Anderson shape the current debate on nation and nationalism. Both reject the Romantic standpoint represented by Johann G. Herder in which the nation is conceived as a natural, quasi-eternal entity created by God and its language and culture as determinants of its role in history. E. Gellner explains that a nation emerges in the process of continual development and modernization of economics entailing a homogenous high culture with mass literacy, standardised educational and communication systems. In this connection, it is necessary to create, maintain and control a formal organization. It is, then, the task of a nation to protect an unalloyed culture.⁴² Gellner distinguishes two conditions which must be satisfied while talking about a nation: firstly,

⁴² See: Gellner E., 1983, *Nation and Nationalism*, Blackwell, Oxford pp. 51-52, see also: Guibernau M., 1996, *Nationalism; The Nation-State and Nationalism in the Twentieth Century*, Polity Press, Cambridge, pp. 76-80.

(...) two men are of the same nation if, and only if, they share the same culture, where culture, in turn, means a system of ideas and signs and associations and ways of behaving and communicating. Secondly, two men are of the same nation if, and only if, they recognize each other as belonging to the same nation. (Gellner, 1983: 7).

In a critical allusion to Gellner's theory Benedict Anderson claims that nations are invented and never existed before and the only thing that makes them distinct from each other is the way they are imagined.⁴³ They are imagined – as Anderson further argues – because:

(...) the members of even the smallest nations will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them; yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communication... The nation is imagined as limited because even the largest of them (...) has finite, if elastic, boundaries, beyond which lie other nations. No nation imagines itself coterminous with mankind (...) It is imagined as sovereign because the concept was born in an age in which Enlightenment and Revolution were destroying the legitimacy of the divinely-ordained, hierarchical dynastic realm (...) The gage and emblem of this freedom is the sovereign state. (Anderson, 1983: 15-16).

He claims that the problem of nations and nationalism emerged at the turn of the eighteenth to the nineteenth century and became pivotal in the aftermath of the process of decaying of two great systems or ideologies that made the world explicable and coherent: the religious community (caused by two main factors: the exploration of the non-European countries and ensuing widening of geographical and cultural horizons and the decay of the sacred language) and the dynastic realm (the automatic legitimacy of the sacral monarchy and its central position in society organization was questioned). The development of a vernacular print language (displacing Latin) – according to Anderson – is one of the most significant impetus to the spread of common ideas, shared beliefs and collective images – including nation. In short, he claims that the printed word contributed to the emergence of national consciousness.⁴⁴

⁴³ See: Anderson B., 1983, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London, pp. 14-16.

⁴⁴ See: Özkirimli U., 2000, *Theories of Nationalism. A Critical Introduction*, St. Martin's Press, New York, pp. 143-151.

This idea is crucial to my further considerations. The development of new tools and patterns of communication and ensuing growing power of the mass media (the press, radio and television) as well as standardization of educational system undoubtedly favour the creation and spread of the sense of national belonging, common history, shared ideology, perspectives and values.

For the purposes of my work I adopt Antonina Kłoskowska's – an outstanding Polish sociologist – perspective on national identity and Marek Czyżewski and Andrzej Piotrowski's explication of the current discursive and reproduction approaches.

For Kłoskowska the nation is a community of shared values, habits, attitudes and symbols constituting a sphere of expression and communication

(...) which is generally experienced by group members as more natural and more intimate than most relations with out groups (Kłoskowska, 1992a: 59).⁴⁵

They are transmitted in socialization and culturalisation⁴⁶, i.e., *the initiation and entrance into the universe of symbolic culture in general, including national culture* (Kłoskowska, 2001: 97) processes. Consequently, she defines national identity as a consciousness of being distinct from others and the sense of community with his or her own group as well as a consciousness of continuity and historical duration of the group and its filial connections.⁴⁷

There are two facets of the definition I would like to shortly discuss here. The first one concerns the phenomenon of seeing one's nation (national identity) as different from other nations. Kłoskowska's conception is in this point similar to Stuart Hall's reflections on

⁴⁵ Antonina Kłoskowska adopts many of Karl W. Deutsch's ideas. He defines a 'people' [nation] as a large group of individuals linked by complementary habits and facilities of communication. For Deutsch: 'membership in a people essentially consists in wide complementarity of social communication. It consists in the ability of communicate more effectively, and over a wider range of subjects, with the members of one large group than with outsiders.' (Deutsch, 1966, p. 97).

⁴⁶ Kłoskowska follows here Anthony D. Smith who claims that a nation is a historic community rooted in premodern ethnicities. This pre-existing history of the "group" shapes a sense of common identity and shared history. Cf. Smith A.D., 1986, *The Ethnic Origin of Nations*, Blackwell, Oxford.

⁴⁷ Kłoskowska A., 1992, 'Tożsamość i identyfikacja narodowa w perspektywie historycznej i psychologicznej', *Kultura i Społeczeństwo*, No. 1, p. 134. In the book 'The Discursive Construction of National Identity' Ruth Wodak and co-authors prove that Austrians depict themselves as different from Swiss and Germans, i.e., the nations which are believed to be very similar and to have common roots. See: Wodak R. de Cillia R., Reisigl M., Liebhart K., 1999, *The Discursive Construction of National Identity*, Edinburgh University Press, pp. 119-123.

cultural identity. He maintains that people belonging to a cultural community put an emphasis on its homogeneity and uniqueness and take no notice of its inner diversity; while perceiving and describing other nations or cultures (especially those very much alike) they concentrate on differences and inconsistencies.⁴⁸ This is also the argument of Samuel N. Eisenstadt and Bernhard Giesen. It is their contention that:

Collective identity is produced by the social construction of boundaries. (Eisenstadt, Giesen, 1995: 75)

Moreover, they claim that collective identity as socially constructed⁴⁹ is primarily based on the constitutive difference between ‘us’ and ‘them’, and the distinction between ‘the routine’ and ‘the extraordinary’ respectively.⁵⁰ This issue of seeing one’s own group (Poles) as homogenous (i.e., with common culture, values, habits, ways of conducts etc.) and distinct from others (Germans) is one of the major problems discussed in this work.

The second thing I find crucial is the role of history and collective memory in the construction of identity. Here I would like to refer to Anselm L. Strauss words:

The relation of personal identity to public history being what it is, there is a moral to be drawn for those of us who wish to study personal identity. Persons can be conceived as taking some particular stance toward the historical, suprapersonal part. They will be memorializing it, rejecting it, recreating it, cashing in on it, escaping, or in flight from it; these are but a few of countless possibilities. Personal styles are built around such possibilities, and entire series of personal acts may be viewed as strategies in rejecting, escaping, recapturing, and the like. (Strauss, 1969: 169).⁵¹

This issue is especially interesting in the context of Polish-German relations historically marked by dependence, conquest and occupation. In this study I show how essentially

⁴⁸ See: Hall S., 1996, The Question of Cultural Identity, in Hall S., Hubert D., Thompson K. (eds.), *Modernity: An Introduction to Modern Societies*, Cambridge, pp. 595-634.

⁴⁹ As the authors argue collective identity does not naturally emerge from some group properties, but is the product of some ‘collective author’ who suggests certain forms of discourse on the identity of a group. See: Bokszański Z., 1995, ‘Identity of the Social Actor and Social Change’, *Polish Sociological Review* 4 (112), p. 358.

⁵⁰ See: Eisenstadt S.N., Giesen B., 1995, ‘The Construction of Collective Identity’, *Archives Européennes de Sociologie* XXXVI (1), p. 80. It is worth mentioning that a similar argument was made earlier by F. Barth (1969). See: Barth F., 1996, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*, in Sollors W. (ed.), *Theories of Ethnicity: A Classical Reader*, Macmillan Press, London.

⁵¹ Neither S. Hall nor A. Strauss are isolated in their approaches to these issues, but to not make my explication more complicated I do not refer to other theorists.

different *shared group-perspectives bearing upon the past*' (op. cit.: 168) result not only in total spoilage of face-to-face interactions between the members of these two national groups, but also in (also unexpected, or devoid of consciousness reflection) manifestations of national identifications. In this connection the question why – in the case of Poles – their sense of being a victim occupies the central place in the construction of Polish identity come up for discussion.

The above considerations show that every national culture is composed of many diverse elements, or as K.W. Deutsch would say 'bricks'.⁵² Following P. Eglin's concept of '*culture as method*' employed in Czyżewski and Piotrowski's discussion of national identity, I treat it not only as a set of norms, patterns, values, common symbolizations and ideologies, but also as schemes of interpretations, cultural resources which enable people to define and construct their identities, formal discursive structures like modes of narration, argumentation and description of others (including stereotypes and prejudices), etc.⁵³ Piotrowski directs our attention to complementary sociological insights into collective identities. This standpoint of current theories of cultural reproduction developed by Pierre Bourdieu, Jean-Claude Passeron and Basil Bernstein who claim that forms of social consciousness⁵⁴ are products of symbolic violence which is controlled by cultural and political elites⁵⁵, Teun van Dijk's approach to the role of elites' discourse, especially in the form accessible to the public through the mass-media, is to create and regulate the thematic content, modes of formulating and legitimating both stereotypes and prejudices as well as collective identities.⁵⁶ Having in mind this conception in my work, I attempt to see how

⁵² Furthermore, Deutsch claims that: 'the nation is a community of communication composed of many diverse elements – 'bricks'. No single element is sufficient or even necessary for the existence of the nation. On the other hand, an entity that does not manifest any of the nation-forming elements cannot be a nation.' Kłoskowska, 2001a, p. 396.

⁵³ See: Piotrowski A., 1996, Wstęp, in Czyżewski M., Piotrowski A., Rokuszewska-Pawełek A. (eds.), *Biografia a tożsamość narodowa*, Wyd. Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, Katedra Socjologii Kultury, Łódź, p. 9, and Czyżewski M., 1996, *Generalne kierunki opracowania, wymiary analityczne*, op. cit., 48.

⁵⁴ The authors believe that social consciousness emotional dispositions and attitudes are shared collectively and internalised through socialization (education, politics, the mass media and everyday practices). See: Bourdieu P., Passeron J-C., 1977, *Reproduction in Education Society and Culture*, Sage Publications, London; and Bourdieu P., 1981, *Men and Machines*, in Knorr-Cetina K., Cicourel A.V. (eds.), *Advances in Social Theory and Methodology: Toward an Integration of Micro and Macro Sociologies*, Rutledge and Kegan Paul, Boston, pp. 304-317.

⁵⁵ A. Kłoskowska highlights that although national culture is not evenly distributed throughout all social classes, 'the elites are generally the guardians of the national heritage and they enforce its inculcation into mass consciousness by means of the educational system and cultural policy.' See: Kłoskowska A., 1992a, 'Neighbourhood Cultures: Some Aspects of Difficult Historical Neighbourhoods', *International Sociology*, Vol. 7, No. 1, p. 59. The position of a well-known Polish sociologist Florian Znaniecki is very similar. He believes that it is 'men of letters' (intellectuals) duty to create, maintain, develop and spread national culture.

⁵⁶ See: Piotrowski A., *Tożsamość zbiorowa*, in Czyżewski M., Kowalski S., Piotrowski A. (eds.), 1997, *Rytualny chaos. Studium dyskursu publicznego*, Wyd. Aureus, Kraków, pp. 188-189.

people brought up in a given (Polish) culture with its politics, educational system, history and everyday practices construct their national identity when – by virtue of their immigration to a foreign country (Germany) it comes under question. This entails considering not only what people say about their culture, nation, country, identity and foreign cultures, but also how they say it (how they narrate it or what forms of argumentations employ).

Taking into account the process of globalization provides the individual with growing abilities to move around the world and to contact with other ethnic or cultural groups, we may point out many situations in which a person must face the problem of defining his or her national (group) identity. For instance Kłoskowska deals with the frontier situation where, in her opinion, national culture, sentiments and identifications are strengthened. Robert E. Park in his classical analysis of ‘marginal man’ discusses different situations of living on the margin of two ethnic, religious, ideological or cultural groups. Under such social conditions an individual’s self (national)-concept may become problematical for many reasons. For instance: there are many possibilities of identifying oneself and the individual does not know which one to choose, or the individual’s identification is unfavourable, difficult and perhaps threatening to his or her actual social environment.⁵⁷ The life-situation of immigrants makes their national identity a pivotal issue. It only comes to the fore, because in their everyday interactions their national belonging is constantly pointed out as an object which has to be defined and interpreted.

To conclude, I believe that the immigrants’ national identity that brings about critical and turning point experiences may be reconstructed on the basis of autobiographical narrative interviews. They give an authentic insight into the individuals’ life, feelings and identity changes. As Howard S. Becker claims:

To understand why someone behaves as he does you must understand how it looked to him, what he thought he had to contend with, what alternatives he saw open to him; you can only understand the effects of opportunity structures, delinquent subculture, social norms, and other commonly invoked explanations of behaviour by seeing them from the actor’s point of view. (Becker, 1966: vi-vii).

⁵⁷ Cf. Melchior M., 1990, *Spoleczna tozsamosc jednostki*, Uniwersytet Warszawski, Instytut Nauk Spolecznych, Warszawa, p. 67.

Moreover, autobiographical renderings focus on subjective, interactional and processual aspects of the self-concept, usually not told in statistical reports.

It should be stressed here again that, while dealing with the concept of national identity in this study, I am interested not only in what people say about their country, culture or national belonging, but also in their strategies employed in the construction of their national self-identity. Thus, to come to fuller understanding of the process of the national identity construction, I take into consideration narrators' argumentational patterns, discursive practices and the ways of making distinctions between "us" and "them" while at the same time viewing their nation as unique and heterogeneous.

In the field of symbolic interactionism, as it was already mentioned, an individual's identity, or self-concept is constantly bestowed through the ongoing interactional process in which she or he must constantly take into account the other's perspective. The sum of decisive, critical or relevant episodes in one's life is his or her biography. For this reason, I find the autobiographical narrative interview method of Fritz Schütze in which the narrators *ex tempore* recollect the stream of outer events (mainly important interactive episodes), but also their original attitude towards them, their transformations due to new circumstances and experiences and their explanation in the interview situation, the best way to reconstruct biographical and social processes. An autobiographical storytelling gives us, then, an insight into the processual flow of events in one's biography and let us analyze certain phenomena's developments (i.e., how they arise, progress and possibly disappear). It enables us to reconstruct symbolic resources used by individuals in the process of recognizing and making up their collective identity. It is possible thanks to particular discourse structures contained in every narration both in accounts of events, conducts and interactions as well as in theoretical commentaries or argumentations. Therefore, we examine not only what has been reported (e.g. which cognitive structures, stereotypes or prejudices are used in reference to particular national groups), but also how certain things has been reported (e.g. which schemes of narration and argumentation, patterns of interpretation and modes of self-presentation are used).⁵⁸

⁵⁸ See: Piotrowski A., 1996, *Wstęp*, op. cit., p. 9.

Now, it becomes obvious that the autobiographical narrative interview method – unlike other quantitative methods of analysis – enable us to analyse both the processual aspects of the immigration process (especially why and how one's voluntary biographical action scheme transforms into the trajectory of suffering, and how this may be overcome), and the symbolic and cultural resources of the narrators' national (collective) identity.

Having briefly discussed the main theoretical concepts that set a basis for this study, I will now move on to the next chapter in which its methodological frame (i.e., the autobiographical narrative interview method) will be discussed.

Chapter 2

The Autobiographical Narrative Interview Method.

The empirical basis of this research conducted in this dissertation on the young Polish immigrants in Germany consists of autobiographical narrative interviews, i.e., spontaneously recollected by the informant - in the presence of hitherto unknown listener - sequences of events and his or her stance toward narrated experiences. They are taped and transcribed in detail (i.e., taking paralinguistic phenomena into consideration) and as such subjected to the meticulous analysis consequently leading to the theory generation. The data are gathered and analysed in accordance with the biographical methodology of Fritz Schütze. In the autobiographical narrative interview method the researcher must completely rely on the informant's accounts; nonetheless, very restricted ways of data collection, as well as carefully worked out rules and stages of data analysis enable the quality control.¹ The following chapter, thus, will deal with the mode of data gathering, their analysis, evaluation and the way of theory building is carried out.

2.1. Basic characteristics of the research method.

Adhering to the grounded theory mode of research and the linguistic knowledge concerning narration and commonsense communication Fritz Schütze developed theoretical and methodological foundations of biographical research based on **autobiographical spontaneous narratives**. Furthermore, following the line of thought of the symbolic interactionists, Schütze regards self concepts as a process rooted in social interactions – including face-to-face encounters with others, as well as the reflexive process of interacting with oneself and imagined significant other that create an individual's biography. Hence, the subject of analysis is the sedimentation of internal biographical experiences, i.e.: the external chain of events, the inner reactions relative to those events, as well as the state of understanding regarding events and experiences lived through and, by virtue of their biographical significance, preserved in an individual's

¹ Please note that the quality of the autobiographical narrative interview does not mean its compatibility with objective facts or things as they really happened, but its 'authenticity', i.e., its congruency with the informant's experiences and interpretations.

memory.² In Schütze's view that autobiographical spontaneous narratives constitute a relatively enclosed cultural form (e.g. narrative pressures, cognitive figures, and interplay between narrative and reflexive elements) provides the basis for his development of an interpretative method. This chapter will deal with the basic assumptions and methodological basis (including analytical procedure) of biographical research as established by Fritz Schütze that provides theoretical inspiration and methodological basis for my current work.

At the beginning I would like to address briefly, as already mentioned, the groundwork of the autobiographical narrative interview method as elaborated by Schütze. The grounded theory approach as developed by Barney G. Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss (Glaser, Strauss, 1967) provides an important foundation for Schütze's method. One of its most essential features is a withdrawal from previously established hypotheses and assumptions that can be proved in the research situation. Instead the emphasis is placed upon the theoretical structuring to be followed by a continuing comparative analysis of the collected data that then can shape further investigation, thus, enabling the generation of initial hypotheses resulting finally in the generation of theory. As Christa Hoffman-Riem puts forward the autobiographical narrative interview method of Fritz Schütze, which is based on everyday storytelling, comply with two fundamental principles of interpretative research: **the principle of openness and the principle of communication**. Hoffman-Riem explains that if the research procedure is to be open then

(...) the theoretical structuring of the research topic must be deferred until the research topic has been structured by the research subjects themselves. (Hoffman-Riem, 1990: 257).

The principle of communication is an essential prerequisite of the first principle.³ This implies that the researcher can only by virtue of a communicative relationship with the research subjects enter their meaning-structures and

(...) allows the system of communicative rules observed by the research subjects themselves to remain valid. (op. cit.).

² Cf. Schütze F., 1992b, 'Pressure and Guilt: War Experiences of a Young German Soldier and their Biographical Implications (Part 2)', *International Sociology* Vol. 7, No. 3, p. 338.

³ This denotes that only by means of methods based on communication between the researcher and the research subject adhering to the communicative rules, the principle of openness is fulfilled.

We will now consider the linguistic foundations of the autobiographical narrative interview method. The methodology of the narrative interview is based on linguistic knowledge about different communicative language schemes (description, narration, and argumentation) and their different functions within the text production. As Ingeborg Helling elucidates:

Experiences of the world are expressed in different linguistic forms. The form of description abstracts from the perspective of the speaker/ observer and presents information as a valid independently of that perspective. Such information can be true or false. The narrative form presents information from the perspective of the speaker and includes evaluation. It can be authentic or inauthentic. (Helling, 1988: 222).

Schütze proves, however, that the narrative accounts occurring without any previous preparations in the presence of a listener guarantee their authenticity and reliability. The autobiographical narrative interviews – as valid data – must be produced in **extempore** recollection of events.⁴ This means that the informant cannot construct and practice his or her accounts earlier. Instead he or she should recapitulate his or her life story in an of-the-cuff manner in the presence of the other person (listener/ researcher).⁵ In the presence of a listener, thus, the informant cannot fulfill his or her communicative tasks at random, but he or she must follow certain rules which would make his or her story comprehensible and coherent.⁶ The mechanism of spontaneous biographical narration yield insight into social reality and into the biographical dynamics and change. It is possible, because there is the parallelism between the chronology of experienced events and the order of narrative passages discovered by W. Labov and J. Waletzky (Labov, Waletzky, 1967: 20-21). In other words, the sequence of events occurring in the individual's life course must comply

⁴ There are two crucial issues which must be stressed here. To get the trustworthy and complete autobiographical rendering the informant (1) is not allowed to prepare or train his or her story earlier; (2) cannot know the interviewee beforehand to avoid a situation in which he or she do not focus or consider in detail or do not mention at all certain aspects of the life course, because he or she takes it for granted that the listener already knows. I deal with this issue while discussing the technique of the narrative interview.

⁵ The autobiographical narrative interview may be conducted by the researcher him- or herself, but this is not necessary. For this reason I rather use the term listener (i.e., any person who is qualified to carry out the narrative interview) while dealing with the very technique of interviewing.

⁶ There is a very important issue I want to take up here. The interviewee/ researcher must always remember that the informant is forced by the mechanisms of narrative rendering not only to tell, but also to re-experience certain (often painful) events in his or her life course. The narrator – quite unexpectedly to him- or herself must deal with problematical or hurtful matters, he or she would usually omit. He or she may thus, be forced to work on their biography and identity. This may have 'therapeutic' effects. For this reason, the listener has a moral responsibility for the informant. **Therapeutic aspects of the autobiographical narrative interviews** are discussed in Rosenthal G., 2003, 'The Healing Effects of Storytelling: On the Conditions of Curative Storytelling in the Context of Research and Counselling', *Qualitative Inquiry*, Vol. 9, No. 6, pp. 915-933.

with the order of clauses in narration. If this condition is not met, i.e. the order of the reported past events is changed, the interpretation of the original experiences is invalid (Labov, 1972: 359-360).⁷ Moreover, the narrator in his or her account not only reconstructs the temporal ordering of factual events in his or her life history as they have happened, but also recalls his or her inner states, emotions and feelings evoked by these experiences.

The autobiographical narrative interview exhibits the social construction of identity (Schütze, 1983: 86) and its continuous changes in the life-span. It does this by recapitulating past events and disclosing not only past autobiographical perspectives of the informant, but also through showing his or her current attitude towards the life world and events within it.⁸ It is so, because certain original experiences of the individual, as a result of incessantly occurring new events, undergo changes concerning their meaning and relevance to the whole life structure.⁹ The unfolding chain of events inevitably impinges on the person's sources and frames of interpretation and understanding of his or her own past conducts (and self-images), bygone social events and the other's former accomplishments. It also modifies the person's current system of relevance and attitudes towards recent life situations. The way in which personal experiences are ordered and stored in the biographical incumbent's memory is seen clearly through his or her modes of describing (presenting the content) and commenting (revealing one's own attitudes towards) on these past events as well as their integration into specific meaning structures. The autobiographical narrative interview, thus, gives us insight not only into the events taking place in the outer world, but also to the individual's inner feelings and the subjective meaning he or she bestows upon certain experiences of the life course.¹⁰ Moreover,

⁷ M.J Toolan draws our attention to the fact that the parallelism between the reported events and their original occurrences as recognised by Labov and Waletzky does not mean: 'the impossibility of reordering narrative clauses as such, but simply the impossibility of doing so while still telling the same story.' The author gives us the following example: '(1) John fell in the river, got very cold, and had two large whiskies; (2) John had two large whiskies, fell in the river, and got very cold'. We can see that the same clauses while differently ordered change the story told completely. See: Toolan M.J., 1994, *Narrative. A Critical Linguistic Introduction*, Routledge, London, p. 148.

⁸ This is one of the fundamental assumptions of symbolic interactionism that the self - like other objects - emerges in a constant process of interaction both with others and oneself, and its meaning (like the meaning of other objects) is never fixed, but varies with time, situation, new definitions and people acting toward it. Anselm L. Strauss writes: 'People become unique individuals precisely because their life courses and associated experiences are different. Those experiences become touchstones for the interpretation of events and situations. Yet while one interprets those events and situations - regardless of whether they involve interactions with inanimate objects or with other people - one constantly adjust conceptions of self and, therefore, one's action.' Strauss A.L., 1991, *Creating Sociological Awareness, Collective Images and Symbolic Representation*, Transaction Books, New Brunswick, p. 345

⁹ See: Schütz A., 1976, *The phenomenology of the Social World*, Heinemann Educational Books, London.

¹⁰ Halliday makes it clear that through the medium of language we gain access not only to the external events, but also to the inner world of human beings. He writes: 'Language has to interpret the whole of our experience, reducing the indefinitely varied phenomena of the world around us, and also of the world inside us, the process of our own

different perspectives of the informant toward the sense of self and internal negotiations of the meaning ascribed to certain life episodes are accessible. Apart from the narrator's experience, autobiographical rendering displays the historical, social and collective contexts in which the individual's course of life is entangled.

consciousness, to a manageable number of phenomena: types of processes, events and actions, classes of objects, people and institutions, and the like.' See: Halliday M.A.K., 1978, *Social Semiotic*, University Park Press, Baltimore, p. 21.

2.2. Language communication schemes and other formal textual phenomena of storytelling - their representational and communicative function.

According to Fritz Schütze on the basis of 'pure' spontaneous narration we may reliably reconstruct the individual's life course and capture conditions and circumstances under which he or she was acting or suffering. The autobiographical text, thus, gives us an insight not only into the past experiences of the narrator, but also into his or her orientations towards them then. Moreover, it displays how from the present perspective the informant considers, interprets and judge past events and discloses his or her attitude toward them. The autobiographical narrative interview as the individual's extempore recollection of the life course consists of certain characteristic constructing elements, i.e.: narration, description, theoretical commentary, argumentation and background construction.

We deal with **the communicative scheme of narration (storytelling)** when the informant recapitulates his or her experiences referring to their time and place, recalls problematical interactional episodes or their sequences, ways of coping with them and finally their interpretations and evaluations.¹¹ The narration - for the sake of its credibility guaranteed by the narrative constrains - is the major line of presentation. Schütze points out that narrative compounds reveal biographical process structures and *aspects of the overall structuring of the biography by textual markers and formal text structures*. (Schütze, 1992a: 203). Furthermore, while recapitulating the life course the narrator may focus on certain situations and by means of **the communicative scheme of description** depicts situational places, objects and characters. In **theoretical commentaries** the informant presents his or her view of certain events displaying, on the one hand, their causes and effects and, on the other, their judgments and evaluations. While formulating such opinions the narrator usually takes a stand of a detached observer and analyst.¹² The autobiographical narrative interview includes also **argumentative commentaries**, i.e., passages in which the informant exhibits some justifications and attitudes towards his or

¹¹ See: Kallmeyer W., Schütze F., 1977, Zur Konstitution Kommunikationsschemata der Sachverhaltsdarstellung, in Wegner D. (ed.), *Gesprächsanalysen*, Buske, Hamburg, p. 226.

¹² Czyżewski M., Rokuszewska-Pawełek A., 1989/90, 'Analiza autobiografii Rudolpha Hössa', *Kultura i Społeczeństwo*, Vol. 33, No. 2 and 3/4, p. 45.

her own biographical experiences, narrated events and relevant feelings. U. Apitzsch and L. Inowlotzky put it:

Argumentative sequences embedded in the narrative contain the autobiographical theory of the informant. (Apitzsch, Inowlotzky, 2000: 62).

While in a theoretical commentary the informant comments on social processes and occurrences in the life world, in an argumentative commentary he or she deals with the influence of the chain of events on their own experiences and feelings. The autobiographical commentaries are of reviewing, summarizing and finally evaluative character and enable the narrator to deal with problematical phases of his or her biography. For this reason they usually occur at the end of narrative compounds just before the coda section. Codas are formal markers of ending or beginning of certain parts of narration in the main signalled by typical utterances such as: *And it would be all...*, *This is how the story ends...*, *Then...*, *Next...*, etc.¹³ Autobiographical commentaries may support and explain the main story line, but may also facilitate

(...) to circumvent extempore narration of personal experiences proper by fleeing into thin abstract descriptions of social frames and into empty general statements of 'world principles' allegedly connected with sociobiographical processes. (Schütze, npd: 8).

It must be closely investigated in the analytical process what kinds of theories the informant develops and what is their role (orientation, explanation, legitimation, concealment etc.) in his or her autobiographical rendering.¹⁴ And, as it was mentioned earlier, they perform different function in the comprehension of reality.

There are also such points in the autobiographical storytelling when the narrator must withdraw from the main line of narration and introduce **background constructions**, i.e., text passages occurring when the sequence of events is so dense and complicated or the described social processes are so complex that the narrator cannot follow the chronological order of appearances any longer. The storyteller must, therefore, interrupt

¹³ Labov W., 1972, *Language in the Inner City. Studies in Black English Vernacular*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, p. 165.

¹⁴ Riemann G., Schütze F., 1987, *Some Notes on a Students Workshop on 'Biography Analysis, Interaction Analysis, and Analysis of Social Worlds'*, Newsletter #8, *Bibliography and Society*, p. 0062.

the presentational order of narration and step back to include some previously omitted experiences. Because they were passed over the narrator is not able to continue his or her recollections in the clear and comprehensible way. By virtue of the narrative constraints he or she is made to report hitherto 'neglected' events. The informant has to refer to these episodes in the life course which were skipped to make his or her account more transparent, consistent and reliable for the listener. This presentation in the form of 'aside' must be continued up to the moment where it converges with the main story line. In such cases the background constructions play the role of self-correcting devices restoring the order of recollections.¹⁵

Within the format of background construction the informant may also disclose experiences that are '**faded out of awareness**' and, for this reason, have been omitted from their 'proper' (i.e., corresponding with their factual temporal order) place in the unfolding narration. As we already know the dynamics of storytelling usually makes the narrator to address 'omitted' parts of his or her biography, otherwise his or her life story would be incomprehensible and nonsensical. But the informant not only passes over certain episodes, because he or she is not capable of discussing them simultaneously if they are too complex, but also because he or she is unwilling to talk about them. Passing over certain biographically relevant, but 'inconvenient' episodes (i.e., inexplicably harmful and/or undermining the individual's self-concept and/or his or her whole outlook on life) is of twofold character. The current fading out concerns situations when the narrator attempts to deliberately circumvent some painful or embarrassing experiences during the course of the narrative accounting, because either they are too painful to be told or in order to save his or her face in the eyes of the listener. They, however, may come to light as the result of the influence of the narrative constraints of extempore storytelling and are discussed within the format of the background construction.

There are also such episodes in the individual's biography that, for the sake of their enormous damaging potential, may not be available to conscious introspection since they have been removed from his or her memory straight away. The biographical incumbent may manage to arrange his or her recollections in a reasonably connected sequence of

¹⁵ Riemann G., 2003, A Joint Project Against the Backdrop of a Research Tradition: An Introduction to 'Doing Biographical Research'. Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/ Forum: Qualitative Research [On-line Journal], 4(3), Art. 18. Available at: <http://www.qualitative-research.net/fqs-texte/3-03/3-03hrsg-e.htm> [04.05.04].

events despite the lack of these crucial biographical experiences and work out some strategies to deal with his or her life without taking into account these events. We may say, thus, that during the narrative interview, the informant omits them as if it is 'automatic' and unintentional. This kind of fading out is impervious to the inner mechanisms of the autobiographical extempore narration and cannot be easily traced during the structural text analysis. It may, however, symptomatically reveal its influence in other crisis or traumatic life situations. Moreover, certain attempts of avoiding problematical events in the life course may leave meaningful gaps and disorder (e.g. striking lack of informant's knowledge of certain life circumstances, discrepancies between given pieces of information and the general interpretative scheme of explaining one's life) in the formal structure of the storytelling. It is the listener's task to address these vague and enigmatic parts of the narration in the second part of the interview and evoke additional narration by means of the direct request to come back and focus on certain unclear experiences.

It is now relevant to point out that the pragmatic function of background constructions inserted into the flow of narration is to give credence to the ongoing course of storytelling through making it coherent and, thus, understandable. Their analytical function, however, is on the one hand showing the contextual hierarchy of the presented events, and, on the other, disclosing faded out experiences.¹⁶ As Schütze emphasises:

(...) background constructions provide an important empirical key to the internal psychodynamics of the biographical incumbent and the collective constraints exerted on these inner (emotional, evaluative and cognitive) processes by the societal culture. (Schütze, 1992b: 355).

There are, finally, **coda parts** in every extempore narrative rendering. They aim at combining the past evaluations with the current perspectives relating to certain events in the narrator's life course. The biographical incumbent, firstly, sums up his or her storytelling and assesses the results of past events included in just finished narrative segment. Secondly, he or she considers and judges them from his or her current

¹⁶ Cf. Piotrowski A., 1996, Wstęp, in Czyżewski M., Piotrowski A., Rokuszewska-Pawełek A. (eds.), *Biografia a tożsamość narodowa*, Wyd. Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, Katedra Socjologii Kultury, Łódź, pp. 7-8.

perspective. The informant's analysis of the influence of the past experiences on his or her present situation particularly concerns transformations of his or her self-conceptions.

2.3. Narrative constraints.

Even though, the informant is given a free hand and can recapitulate the life course in his or her own way; he or she must continuously comply with the narrative rules which are effective only in the presence of the listening person. Helling argues:

(...) contrary to popular belief, stories cannot be told arbitrary because of mutual obligations. The speaker has to orient his/her activity towards the listener to make sure that she/he can understand the story; the listener has to give signs of her/ his ongoing understanding. (Helling, 1988: 223).

There are some mechanisms of storytelling (dynamic principles of the scheme of narration) which make the informant keep order and control over the flow of recollected course of events.¹⁷ Kallmeyer and Schütze pick out three narrative constraints: the constraint to go into details, the constraint to condense and the constraint to close the textual form.¹⁸

The constraint to go into details (*Detailierungszwang*) – makes the narrator to focus on his or her individual experiences in the life course and the specific for every person's biography succession of events (aftermaths and consequences of the consecutive episodes).¹⁹ In other words, the informant must give as much details (facets, features and linkage) of the recollected episodes as it is sufficient to make the whole life history plausible and coherent.

The constrain to condense (*Kondensierungszwang*) – means that the story teller picks out only the most important and key episodes and phenomena within the life course that let the listener to get the point. He or she recapitulates and elaborates these events that are of some relevance to the emergence and developments of the processes structures and their mutual reasonable relations.

The constrain to close the textual forms (*Gestaltsschließungszwang*) – indicates that the informant while taking up a certain thread in the life course is obliged to reconstruct it in a

¹⁷ Cf. Schütze F., 1992b, 'Pressure and Guilt...', op. cit., p. 348

¹⁸ See: Kallmeyer W., Schütze F., 1977, Zur Konstitution..., op. cit., p. 188.

¹⁹ Cf. Schütze F., 1992b, 'Pressure and Guilt...', op. cit., p. 348.

coherent and consistent way to create the whole [Gestalt] marked by its beginning and end. Putting it differently, since a topic (plot, description) has been already initiated, introduced or announced, it must be brought to its end and find its epilogue.

By virtue of the constant interplay of narrative constrains we may regard the informant's autobiography as authentic and to be trusted. As long as they are in force, we may assume that the flow of experiences in the life history of the narrator – even those that would not be recollected in a different communication situation, because of their problematical or confusing character (e.g. feelings of guilt, shame, or unspeakable suffering) – is consistent and reliable.²⁰ However, it may happen that the story teller completely disregards the narrative constrains through entering other communication schemes (e.g. extended argumentative commentaries) or by forcing the interviewer to talk in response to a long pause (through selecting him to adopt responsibility for the next phase of the turn-taking process).²¹ The practised interviewer, however, should hold off or postpone picking up his or her turn as long as it is possible and encourage the narrator to continue the rendering. Even if these attempts fail, still, the informant's efforts to gloss over or simplify tough biographical experiences are very important hints for the researcher in indicating the unfolding trajectory process.

As we already know, the autobiographical narrative interview gives us an insight into the chain of events in the individual's life course and into accompanying them emotions, feelings and interpretations. Thus, the main goal of its analysis is to find out what meanings the very experiencing object ascribes to his or her life. An attempt is made to reconstruct, interpret and understand past courses of action from the point of view of their participant, who not only recollects certain episodes from his or her biography, but also has to treat him- or herself as the object of them. The story teller is given complete freedom to categorise, judge and make sense of the experienced events without any suggestions from the interviewer. The authenticity and reliability of the autobiographical narrative account is assured by its structural features that let the researcher evaluate to what

²⁰ Hoffman-Riem emphasizes that: 'narrative constrains justify the "assumption of authenticity"; as long as they are effective it can be assumed that the perceptivity valid in the course of factual events will also be maintained in narration.' See: Hoffman-Riem, 1990, *The Adopted Child*, Transaction Publishers, New Brunswick, p. 258.

²¹ In the sequential organization of conversation a meaningful long pause is one of transmission-relevant places, i.e. points where the next speaker can be selected or select him- or herself to talk. For more details see: See: Sacks H., Schegloff E.A., Jefferson G., 1974, 'A Simplest Systematics for the Organization of Turn-Taking for Conversation', *Language* 50, pp. 696-735. See also: Kallmeyer W., Schütze F., 1976, 'Konversationanalyse', *Studium der Linguistik*, Jg.1, H.1, pp. 14-15 (Redeübergabe).

extent the interview reflects the actual course of events in the life course of the informant. It is also possible to empirically verify the narrator's endeavors to modify or intentionally distort his or her self-image. The narrator subjectively recapitulates the series of events in his or her biography as the object who acts, experiences and endures. His or her recollections are full of indexical expressions that understandable for the listener only in reference to the informant's biography as a whole. Reported interactional episodes, situations and their explicable connections, other person's utterances or the narrator's own accounts determine the level of indexicality²² and the level of narrativity.²³ Thus, every episode and person is tied to a particular time and place.

If the interview is not saturated with narration, but other sorts of text like descriptions or commentaries predominate, we may presume that the narrator endeavors to control his or her account, which, as a result, leads to the fading out of certain events and feelings. Our analytical attention, therefore, should be especially sensitised to those points where the narrator abandons the communication scheme of storytelling and involves him- or herself into argumentations and commentaries. According to Werner Kallmeyer and Fritz Schütze, the greater the number of pure narrative passages in the autobiographical interview the less these accounts are subjected to the control of the informant.²⁴

It seems to be impossible to fabricate the individual's life history without any prior considerations. It is, therefore, of great importance that the autobiographical narration is told without any previous preparations and recapitulated spontaneously in the presence of the listener. It is possible then to gain certainty that the narrator is focused on the real reconstruction of the course of events and does not create some well-thought-out, but unreal picture of hi or her identity and life. Summing up, we may say that the researcher may rely on the informant's rendering while controlling the quality of the interview by adhering to certain rules and stages of the analysis.

²² Indexical expression, that is expressions which derive their sense and meaning from the occasions on which they are used, such as 'this', 'that', 'you', 'I', and so on. The meaning of such words and the truth-value of expressions containing them, depend on such things as who was uttering the, when, where, and other contextual particularities. In other words, it is a class of expressions which make different sense in different places and times, and therefore have no fixed meanings. As ethnomethodologists and conversation analysts emphasize: the meaning of the whole natural language is dependent on the context in which the talk occurs. To understand it one must know something about the particular circumstances in which the utterance was made.

²³ Cf. Kaźmierska K., 1997, Wywiad narracyjny - technika i pojęcia analityczne, in Czyżewski M., Rokuszewska-Pawełek A., Piotrowski A. (eds.), *Biografia a tożsamość narodowa*, Uniwersytet Łódzki, Katedra Socjologii Kultury, Łódź, p. 39.

²⁴ See: Kallmeyer W., Schütze F., 1977, *Zur Konstitution...*, op. cit., p. 226.

2.4. Process structures of the life course.

On the basis of a considerable amount of empirical data Schütze postulated the existence of four basic processes of biographical experiences (process structures) – i.e., the individual's orientation toward certain phases of his or her life recapitulated in characteristic verbal forms. Every process structure is distinguished by its content, own sequential order, and mode of presentation. For Schütze it is important not only to scrutinise the content of the reported events, but also their formal textual realization (formal features). In other words, not only 'what' is told matters, but also 'how' it is recapitulated has a great meaning.²⁵ In every individual life course, thus, all structural processes occur (not necessary all of them) in different combinations, what makes every biography unique. They may appear together, be mutual exclusive and compete with each other, or one may be subordinated to the other, etc. On the one hand, the interplay of structural processes within the individual's life course enables the analyst to recognise certain types of life courses and the comparison of individual biographies. On the other hand, sequentially reconstructed biographical processes display the sequential order of social processes in which the narrator is intertwined, i.e., allow the study of processual character of social process through individual biographies (Schütze, 1981: 131-132).²⁶

Moreover, when we analyse and determine the kind of process structure based on the narrator's different way of narrating his or her experiences, it is of great importance to distinguish between intentional and conditional actions.²⁷ Schütze strongly emphasises that apart from certain life stages in which the person consciously organises his or her life world, there are also some extended phases of suffering in which the person cannot control his or her life any longer.²⁸

²⁵ Fritz Schütze in his autobiographical method combines two different approaches to biography. They – depending on research questions - treat biography **as a topic** (i.e., are connected with an attempt to answer the question 'how' certain sequences of events are presented in biographies); or **as a means** (i.e., deal with questions of 'what' the informant wants to say in his or her biography, which phases of his or her life course they tend to explicate). For more details see: Helling I., 1988, *The Life History Method - A Survey and a Discussion on with N.K. Denzin*, in Denzin N.K. (ed.), *Studies in Symbolic Interaction*, Vol. 9, p. 214, and (in Polish): Czyżewski M., Rokuszewska-Pawełek A., 1989/90, 'Analiza...', op. cit., p. 47.

²⁶ Schütze's way of perceiving the biographical processes refers to known in symbolic interactionism concepts of 'career' by E. Hughes (1971), 'moral career' by E. Goffman (1974), 'natural history' by R. Park (1967) and especially to A. Strauss' concept of 'structural processes' (1978).

²⁷ Schütze F., 1981, *Prozessstrukturen des Lebensablaufs*, in Matthes J., Pfeifenberger A., Stosberg M. (eds.), *Biographie in handlungswissenschaftlicher Perspektive*, Verlag der Nürnberger Forschungsvereinigung, Nürnberg, pp. 88-89.

²⁸ This issue will be discussed in depth in the next chapter.

The four basic kinds of the narrator's orientations toward his or her life and characteristic ways of their narrative rendering (namely, structural processes) are as follows:²⁹

Institutional action scheme (*institutionelle Ablaufmuster*) – depicts all these phases within the scope of the individual's biography when he or she follows pre-given stages of the life circle to fulfil culturally embedded expectations, aims according to socially established rules or patterns of action. Using Schütz's terms, we may say that this is a person's social stock of knowledge that in due time one should complete an education, marry and start a family, have children, make a professional career etc. Thus, any person knows and accepts without reservation that at a given phase of the life course he or she would take certain steps to comply with the institutional schedule. The individual is not only provided with the knowledge of what he or she is expected to, but also with appropriate scenarios for carrying out the institutional actions.

Biographical action scheme (*biographische Handlungsschemata*) – concerns all those life phases in which the individual's accomplishments are outcomes of his or her chosen interest and independently established and autonomously fulfilled goals. It is usually associated with careful forward planning (often requiring consultations with significant others) of actions and meticulous considerations of their possible results and modes of carrying out. A biographical action scheme depicts, thus, the intentional mode of relating to the individual's life, identity and to his or her own potential for construction and realization of certain plans in the life course. In this case, the style of narration is marked by intentional connectors within narrative units, like: *Since I wanted to do... I did...*

Biographical metamorphosis (*Wandlungsprozesse*) refers to processes of being confronted by the sudden and unexpected emergence of some self-creative capacity which drastically transforms the individual's outlook on his or her everyday world and identity. The person discovers certain fields of actions that make his or her life meaningful and valuable again. The biographical incumbent usually changes or modifies his or her past perspectives which implies establishing a new system of relevance and orientations. Schütze maintains that the individual who experiences biographical change comes to

²⁹ See: Schütze F., 1981, *Prozessstrukturen...*, op. cit.

different evaluations and attitudes towards central periods in his biography and towards his biographical identity. Anselm Strauss in his invaluable book ‘Mirrors and Masks’ points out:

With new experiences, everyone discovers new meanings and orderings in his career.
(Strauss, 1959: 146).

Furthermore, Schütze emphasises that in narrative unites including the metamorphosis experiences:

The style of rendering is marked by serious and often futile attempts to recollect the onset of the new creative capacities and their context of elicitation. (Schütze, 1992: 191).

Trajectory (*Verlaufskurven*) deals with the mechanics of the individual’s overwhelming suffering and the afflicted person’s understanding of his or her life situation. While exposed to the biographical processes of long-term suffering, which gradually moves into the centre of everyday life and biographical self-conception, the person loses the capacity to act intentionally and has an impression that he or she is controlled by some undefined outer forces. Feelings of total powerlessness and helplessness become dominant and the individual starts to passively react to extraneous conditions, what, in turn, creates complete disorder that cannot be mastered any more.³⁰ If biographical action plans and institutional action schemes are usually easily recognizable, because they are vividly dominant and explicitly expressed in the narration, trajectories are generally presented in recessive parts of the ongoing narration (i.e., mainly in background constructions).

It must be emphasised once more that we should always scrutinise not only ‘what’, but also ‘how’ certain parts of the life course are presented. If we consider for instance a case of becoming a doctor, it would be totally different process structure if we take into account a woman who was dreaming about curing children since her early childhood and finally becomes a pediatrician (biographical action scheme), another if we consider a case of a man whose father and grandfather was a doctor and he is also supposed to be a doctor what makes his life as if arranged in advance and the man accedes to it (institutional action

³⁰ The characteristic of trajectory is reduced here to its minimum that is indispensable to give the complete picture of the process structures. For details see the next chapter.

scheme), and still another case if the same man has totally different interests and plans, but is forced by ‘the implicit power of the family tradition’ (i.e., the institutional action scheme) to follow this line of action (this may lead to trajectory).

2.5. The technique of the autobiographical narrative interview.

Although the actual situation of narrative production is to a large extent created by the researcher, the attempt should be made to base it as much as possible upon naturally occurring commonsense rules of communication and communicative competencies of ordinary members of society.

Persuading the narrator to produce a narration is a very difficult task. There are several obstacles to be discussed. Generally speaking, people are used to the survey mode of research and are prepared for the question-answer conversation. Further, because this kind of social investigation is usually of highly formal character the informant may be convinced that he is to talk about hard facts of life not about his personal experiences and attitudes associated with the recollected events. It may seriously distort or even totally block the narration proper, because too early introduced argumentative passages annihilate the flow of recollections. Now, I will follow an explanation of the different phases of the interview process.

2.5.1. The warming up phase and making the narrator to feel at ease in the course of the interview.

The data-gathering situation in which we ask people to recollect their life must be based on a relation of trust. Thus, the pre-interview arrangements (usually described in the field-notes) concentrate on **warming up** our relations with the interviewer. This involves introducing ones self, presenting the scope and purpose of our study, explaining the motives for dealing with the topical field under scrutiny, and finally showing one's vivid and authentic interest in talking to the informant.

It is of great importance to **make the narrator to feel at ease during the interviewing situation**. There are several things we must take into account before asking the informant to render the course of his or her life. First of all, the narrator's privacy must be secured. For this reason it is important to arrange our meeting with the informant as a face-to-face situation without any additional observers and witnesses. The biographical incumbent's own surroundings is usually the most convenient location for conducting the

interview. This is because familiar milieu creates more favorable conditions. One must, however, find out if the potential presence of household members would not effect the unfolding narration. The informant may, thus, refrain from honest recapitulation of events and pertinent experiences for fear of being eavesdropped or suddenly interrupted. It is sometimes easier to confide to an unknown person than to significant others.³¹ The researcher must prepare him- or herself and the informant by reserving a great deal of time, because the autobiographical narration usually takes a few hours. The next important task is to accustom the story teller with the recording equipment. Most people do not like to be tape recorded and for this reason one must ensure the informants that the content of the tapes will be turn into the written form. All proper nouns – like names, including the narrator's name, and places would be changed here. It would be only transcription accessible to the researcher(s). Furthermore, it is necessary to inform the narrator that one would be taking notes during his or her rendering which should not influence and interrupt the course of the recollection in any way.

2.5.2. Eliciting and maintaining the spontaneous narration.

At this point, we should formulate **the narration question** so as to enable the autonomous recollection of the chain of personal experiences in the narrator's life course according to his or her own system of relevance. The informant must be encouraged to engage in the flow of the unfolding narration (i.e., chronological sequence of events and their impact on his or her identity) while not being supported by additional guidance of the researcher (questions and suggestions). Therefore, the listener should interrupt the ongoing story as little as possible and focus on maintaining the course of communication. The researcher's (listener's) level of interest should be constantly indicated by paralinguistic speech phenomena markers of interest and listening. These include for example: affirmative signals ('mhm', 'hmm'), eye contact, nodding one's head and gestures. Moreover, the listener must show respect to the interviewee as the only reliable expert in his or her own life. Only if the interviewer is genuinely interested in the filed under study,

³¹ In fact, it may happen that even a seemingly unsuitable place may meet the requirements of privacy. One of the interviews I conducted took place in a quite big cafeteria in Germany. Since I and the narrator were speaking Polish none could understand us – and thus separated by the language barrier the informant turned out to be extremely open and sincere, which (as his biography suggests) probably would not have been possible at his home. In such situations one must be sure that the equipment is sensitive enough to clearly record the informant's voice and muffle sound and murmurs coming from the hall.

is it possible to reliably conduct the interview.³² Carefully listening to the narration, the researcher must catch ambiguous, inaccurate or unfinished passages that should be addressed after the extempore storytelling has been completed.³³

There are two strategies (two different starting points) for inducing narration. An objective strategy in which the starting point is suggested by the interviewer; and a subjective strategy in which the starting point is chosen by the informant. In both cases the question should depict clearly the core theme and have unproblematic character (i.e., it cannot imply any accusations, or explicitly suggest orientation towards problematical areas of one's biography). Moreover, it should be formulated in such a way which enables the narrator to feel that he or she is the competent person to answer it. In this connection, the narrator should be encouraged to share his or her life history.

The spontaneous narration of the informant is the first part of the autobiographical narrative interview. When the story teller closes it with a coda, the researcher may start asking additional questions which firstly, carry additional narrative potentials, and secondly, elaborate the narrator's own theories.

2.5.3. Additional narrative questions.

The second part of the autobiographical narrative interview begins with questions pointing at eliciting additional narration: a) explaining ambiguities and vagueness' (*How did it happen that...?*); b) clarifying incomprehension (*Could you explain me again how it was that...?*); c) completing unfinished threads and plots (*Could you return to the moment when... and tell me what happened then?; Can you tell me the situation once again in detail?*); d) accounting for lacks of consistency, namely making clear certain nonsense and contradictions in the main story line: (*How it was that...?*). Generally speaking, these complementary questions are oriented towards gaining accounts of narrative potential to

³² The interviewer/ researcher should be really involved and interested in his or her investigations. Otherwise the research would fail.

³³ Only in peculiar cases may the listener ask the informant to deal with certain matters as they come. There is always a risk that after introducing questions during the autobiographical account the narrator stops adhering to the sequence of events in the life course and would involve in some theoretical considerations which – as the analysis of innumerable autobiographical narrations proves - make the return to the communicative scheme of narration very difficult or even impossible. .

complete information necessary for the research field under study.³⁴ They may not only supplement the whole life history, but may also explain why they were hitherto skipped or only cursorily mentioned. Again the narrator is given as much room as it is possible to present additional stories. In the analysis of the narrative text we must always take into account the informant's interpretation of this direct request. If he or she is forced too much some defending practices may occur again and instead of additional narration some argumentative passages may be introduced.

2.5.4. Additional questions concerning the informant's opinions and theories.

In contrast to both previous parts which are to elicit accounts based on communicative scheme of storytelling, in the third part of the interview the informant is asked to answer questions using the regularities of communicative schemes of description and argumentation.³⁵ Their aim is to disclose the narrator's own background theories, commentaries, opinions and evaluations related to his or her own life and social processes, as well as elaborating on contradictions in the narration and themes that are of specific interest to the researcher. Here the interviewer asks about: a) intentions, motives and feelings (*Why did you do so?; What were your feelings then?*); b) typical commentaries concerning typical course of events or typical attitudes (*Do you find it typical? Can you often observe this kind of...?*); c) personal opinions: (*Why, in our opinion, it looks this way?; How do you find it; What is your opinion about...*).

When there are no more questions and the narrator has nothing more to add, we may finish the recording. No matter how we evaluate the interview, we should express our gratefulness to the narrator for his or her cooperation. Our initial appraisal of its value and usefulness may be mistaken. The worth and theoretical potentiality of this material can only be disclosed after transcribing and meticulous analysis.

³⁴ See: Schütze F., 1983, 'Biographieforschung und narratives Interview', *Neue Praxis*, Jg. 13, p. 285.

³⁵ Cf. Schütze F., op. cit., and Helling I.K., 1988, *The Life History Method...*, op. cit., p. 223.

2.6. The analysis of the autobiographical narrative texts.

B.G. Glaser and A.L. Strauss highlight that grounded theory, unlike theories generated by means of logical deduction from *a priori* assumptions³⁶, is not based on a preconceived theoretical framework to test or verify already established categories, conceptions and hypothesis.³⁷ Isabelle Baszanger, one of Strauss' co-workers, says:

In sharp contrast with other research approaches of that era, grounded theory considers research to be a process in which empirical and theoretical work are linked in a constant reciprocal dialog. (Baszanger, 1998: 254).

Schütze puts forward in his approach to the biographical analysis that in order to move from a single cases analysis to more abstract and generalised theoretical conception it is essential to follow the methodological procedure of **pragmatic embedding**.³⁸ It is based on: continuous comparisons of the formal structure of the autobiographical text (how the narration is produced) with its content (what is said in the narration): systematic linkages of reported events with ways of their internal experiencing and modes of interpreting, and their relations to process structures in the life course and social processes occurring within the life course, as well as to the individual's biography as a whole. Adhering to the procedure of pragmatic embedding enables us, then, to understand sociobiographical processes in the life course of the narrator in a much broader context and to generalise from an individual case to the more universal incipient statements.

This way of methodological conduct is based on the abductive logic of research elaborated by Charles Peirce. This type of reasoning consists in continual moving between inductive and deductive thinking and constant verification of the emerging theory with new data. Schütze explains that the researcher adhering to the abductive logic of reasoning must freely step back and forth among different stages of the analytical process. These stages include: the single case analysis, the contrastive comparison (involving at least two cases),

³⁶ See: Glaser B.G., Strauss A.L., 1997, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*, Aldine, Chicago, p. 3.

³⁷ Op. cit., p. 45. The heart of the difference is between allowing the theory to emerge from the data as opposed to forcing it into preconceived frameworks or to testing hypotheses.

³⁸ Pragmatic embedding is used here as a translation for Schütze's concept of 'pragmatische Brechung': See: e.g. Schütze F., *Outline for Analysis of Topically Focused Autobiographical Texts – Using the Example of the 'Robert Rasmus' Account in Terkel's book, The 'Good War'*, typescript, p. 51.

and incipient theoretical generalizations (attempting to encompass the whole data).³⁹ He writes:

Abductive inquiry within qualitative biography research aims at the exploration of hitherto unknown or at least unnoticed mechanisms of social and biographical processes by careful analysis of single cases. It works at the explication of these mechanisms, their analytical connection and their systematic integration within a theoretical model on the base of contrastive comparisons of single case analyses' outcomes. Moreover it attempts to understand and explain the working principles and systematic interplays of structural processes operating within the unfolding of newly approached single cases. – the single cases analyzed on the preliminary base of theoretical models generated beforehand. They, in turn, undergo processes of differentiation and specification in the course of their application on additional single cases. (Schütze, npd: 2).

2.6.1. The single case analysis.

After transcribing a recorded narrative interview⁴⁰, one may start its analysis. During the initial inquiry one must take into account the way the interview was conducted, i.e., its context and conditions. First, we examine how the text was produced interactionally. This includes: what was the situation of interviewing, where did it take place, if there were any other persons present who could influence the flow of recollection (narrators may, thus, attempt to circumvent certain episodes and emotions in the presence of their relatives or friends, because they could hurt their feelings or have a negative impact on their relation), and if he or she had enough time to present his or her life story. The information is usually included in the field notes of the interviewer.

It is also necessary to show some potential mistakes, errors or 'slips-up' of the interviewer and their impact on the developing story-telling (failed elicitation of the narration, needless interruptions, untimely theoretical questions, etc).

The following steps of the autobiographical narrative interview analysis may be conducted:

³⁹ See: Schütze F., npd, Outline for the Method of Biography Analysis (transcript), pp. 4-5.

⁴⁰ Please see Appendix for the detailed description of transcription's notation used in the autobiographical narrative interviews gathered for this study.

- 1) **Formal textual investigation. The text sort differentiation** is aimed to distinguish and separate different text sorts, i.e., narrative, descriptive, argumentative and evaluative sequences. It is also designed to recognise their representational and communicative function in the reality (re)construction. It is important to eliminate all non-narrative passages.⁴¹ Then, one must also find out why a textual change takes place (e.g. from narrative to argumentation) and what is the function and character of the non-narrative parts of the autobiographical text (theoretical and argumentative commentaries). They may, thus, either supplement the unfolding narrative line (explain the narrator's orientation, legitimate his or her activities, opinion, etc.) or, to the contrary, blur the experienced events and the informant's attitude towards them.⁴² As Schütze emphasises:

They could have supported the working and dynamics of the narrative scheme of communication - e.g. by drawing pictures of social situations or by 'self-theoretical activities stating the outcomes of (chains of) sociobiographical events. But unfortunately they also could have helped the informant to circumvent extempore narration of personal experiences proper by fleeing into thin abstract descriptions of social frames and into empty general statements of 'world principles' allegedly connected with semibiographical processes. (Schütze, npd: 8).

- 2) **Structural description.** The data are broken down analytically according to the presentational order of events. The researcher separates the text into independent and autonomous narrative units⁴³ (segments), their compounds (suprasegmental parts) and establishes their relation to each other. The narrative units are identified and distinguished by means of both defining their content and formal text indicators: markers of the story's beginning including introducing or summarizing sentences (codas) and time changes (*From now on...*, *Since then...*); frame-shifting (introducing new episodes or commentaries: *By the way I must tell...*, *The other story is...*); changes of perspectives (for instance changing the subject of the events from 'I' to 'we', or replacing impersonal with personal forms); and changes of the theme and mode of presentation. The narrative suprasegmental passages are

⁴¹ See: Schütze F., 1983, 'Biographieforschung...', op. cit., p. 286.

⁴² Riemann G., Schütze F., 1987, 'Some Notes on...', op. cit., p. 0062.

⁴³ Autonomous narrative units may be independent narratives themselves. Cf. Schütze F., npd, Outline for the Method..., p. 8.

marked out with accounts of introductory or summarizing character. They usually refer to broader biographical experiences that might be expressed in the narrative text in symptomatic, semantic or theoretical propositional form (Schütze, 1997). The procedure enables one to recognise and delineate the narrator's course of life in terms of structural processes.

The structural description reveals, through the narration formal features, the correlation between the recollected course of events and the informant's way of experiencing them. Consequently, one can gain access to biographical and social phenomena (collective trajectories or micro-historical changes).⁴⁴ One can also determine the significance of social processes, social worlds, milieus, social universes as well as the role of certain crucial persons and relationships for the unfolding life history of the informant.

The autobiographical text is analysed by referring to both the informant's own categories (*emic* analysis) and the sociological categories (*etic* analysis).⁴⁵ The later enable us to compare two or more autobiographies and generalise findings.

- 3) **Analytical abstraction.** The next step of the research process involves recognizing both specific and general features of the text under scrutiny. The specific features indicate the uniqueness and distinctiveness of the individual's experience. The general features are to point at its overall and common character. This enables the researcher to theoretically separate their different variants. The text has already been divided into narrative segments and suprasegments that allows one to reconstruct the overall organization of the individual's biography [Gesamtformung] (i.e., the whole of process structures, their hierarchy, the specific character of their dynamic relationship and their linkage with social processes). It is also important to take into consideration the informant's own theories, perspectives and evaluations dealing with the narrated sequence of events and their function within the

⁴⁴ Riemann G., Schütze F., 1987, 'Some Notes on...', op. cit., p. 0062.

⁴⁵ The *emic/etic* concept which was introduced by the linguist Kenneth L. Pike is a major advance for the social sciences. The '*emic*' approach analyses human actions from the perspective of the subjects under study. Their own categories, meanings and interpretations are scrutinized. The '*etic*' approach describes human actions from the outside by means of the researcher's theoretical categories and concepts. See: Pike K.L., 1967, *Language in the Relation to the Unified Theory of the Structure of Human Behaviour*, The Hague, Mouton; and Headland T.N., Pike K.L., Harris M., (eds.), 1990, *Emics and Etics: The Insider/ Outsider Debate*, Sage Publications, London.

autobiographical text (rationalization, justification, making sense of the reported events, etc.).

Finally, after taking these three analytical steps concerning the single case analysis, one may start writing **the portrait chapter**. It may crown the work on the biography which is considered as typical, or, to the contrary, is believed to be unique and outstanding. When the analysed autobiographical text is one of many other cases belonging to the corpus of the study - the first portrait chapters are the base for the contrastive analysis. Furthermore, this meticulous analysis enables the researcher to specify the research problem through casting light on the complexities of sociobiographical processes. Additionally, it indicates the basic analytical categories, and points to the initial dimensions of the further analysis within the scope of the research.

2.6.2. The analysis of the autobiographical narrative interviews' corpus.

The following research step concerns at least two autobiographical narrative interviews collected within the scope of the research field. They must be selected according to the principle of maximizing differences of theoretical sampling.⁴⁶ It means that both cases should be as much differentiated as it is possible to encompass the widest spectrum of theoretical variations. This is order to increase the diversity of data in a useful way.⁴⁷ Schütze explains that:

the selected cases should present social processes which can be expected to occur again and again and take over important functions within the unfolding of the identity formations of empirical cases of the substantive field under study (...)

and:

⁴⁶ B. Glaser and A. Straus clarifies: 'Theoretical sampling is he process of data collection for generating theory whereby the analyst jointly collect, codes, and analyses his data and decides what data to collect next and where to find them, in order to develop his theory as it emerges. This process of data collection is controlled by the emerging theory, whether substantive or formal.' Glaser B.G., Strauss A.L, 1997, The Discovery..., op. cit., p. 45.

⁴⁷ I would like to pay our attention to the fact that both the first analysed single case and the 'alternative' case chosen for the contrastive comparison are not selected at random, but must be **corner stone cases**. i.e., we must search for such autobiographical narrative interviews which in the most transparent way reflect social and biographical processes and their concatenations within the topical field under study. Furthermore, they give us insights into theoretically meaningful phenomena, their variations and dimensions.

should clearly draw the distinct contours and the lines of unfolding of the theoretically interesting biographical and social processes. And preferably they should cover thick nets of biographical and social processes, if that doesn't blur the picture. (Schütze, npd: 14).

The two (or more) chosen in this way autobiographical texts - in the form elaborated during their structural description and analytical abstraction analysis - are subjected to **the contrastive comparison**.⁴⁸ Thus, along with the emergence of certain categories and concepts common to a number of 'alternative cases' one can delineate features of appearing sociobiographical processes and their mutual relationship. One can also identify conditions under which their different variations occur, and recognise features or phenomena that may impinge on their development. Moreover, the conditional relevance⁴⁹ between the distinct phases of the social or biographical processes and their alternative concatenations should be established.⁵⁰ In the process of the contrastive comparison certain theoretical categories become to emerge. We should, then, resort to the minimal differences strategy in order to thicken the elaborated dimensions and categories, namely to look for cases that bear a strong resemblance to each other. This leads to a greater diversity within a category.

The data (autobiographical narrative interviews), as the rules laid down by the grounded theory suggest, should be accumulated up to the point when the theoretical saturation has been arrived at. This means that no further relevant categories, their possible variations and no new ways of their correlation can occur.⁵¹ It means that we must push data collection far enough to reach theoretical saturation.

⁴⁸ It should be noted that the constant comparison of data is the heart of the analytical process both in the grounded theory method and (deeply rooted in the previous approach) the autobiographical narrative method.

⁴⁹ The term conditional relevance derives from Conversation Analysis. Jonathan Potter explains that conversation analysts observed that: 'many actions come linked together in pairs; that is when one specific action is done it is likely to lead to a second specific action. For example, a greeting is likely to lead to a return greeting, a question is likely to lead to an answer, an accusation is likely to lead to a denial.' See: Potter J., 1996, *Representing Reality, Discourse, Rhetoric and Social Construction*, Sage Publications, London, p. 58. It means that a first pair cannot be followed by any second pair part (adjacency pairs). See also Benson D., Hughes J.A., 1983, *The Perspective of Ethnomethodology*, Longman, London, pp. 173-187. See also original sources: Sacks H., 1969, *An initial investigation of the usability of conversational data for doing sociology*, in Sudnow D. (ed.), *Studies in Interaction*, Free Press, New York.

⁵⁰ Schütze F., npd, *Outline for the Method...*, p. 3.

⁵¹ See: Glaser B.G., Straus A.L., 1967, *The Discovering...*, op. cit., p. 61-62, Corbin J., Strauss A.L., 1990, *Basics of Qualitative Research: grounded theory procedures and techniques*, Sage Publications, London, p. 188, compare also: Riemann G., Schütze F., 1987, *Some Notes on...*, op. cit., p. 0063.

In conclusion, contrastive analysis of the collected data result in establishing the most fundamental categories (features and ways of development) common to all scrutinised cases through working out certain alternative structures of the sociobiographical processes via comparison of the most extreme cases.

2.6.3. The theoretical model generation (the building of theoretical models).

The theory systematically emerges in the course of the contrastive comparison both categories to categories and categories to the preliminary theory. After collecting and scrutinising a sufficient number of cases with their diverse variables the building up of a theoretical model can be carried out. The model displays all possible properties and relations of the sociobiographical processes taking place within the substantive area under study. The attempt is made to explain: (1) how the course of certain social processes and phenomena are conditioned by specific biographical features and properties; and/ or (2) in what way biographical processes and their development is determined by the course of particular social processes. The aim of our efforts here should be achieving a theoretical relevance, i.e., showing that the established categories represents certain phenomena, processes, their complexities, mechanisms and possible alternative ways of conduct. Their significance is determined by their repeated occurrence under certain conditions, or their notable absence when theses conditions are not fulfilled.⁵² It is necessary to check if the theory fits with 'reality' (namely, if the elaborated concepts are adequately grounded in the data) and can be useful in practical and theoretical terms. In this way, we may judge the overall adequacy of the research. We must always remember that the developing hypothesis concerning relationships among established concepts and processes must be constantly verified.

The next final research step named **the respecification and demonstration of logical and empirical consistency** is fundamental for confirmation the theory validity. For this reason, the generated categories, relations and incipient theoretical model(s) are confronted with

⁵² Cf. Corbin J., Strauss A.L., 1990, Basics..., op. cit., p. 176-177.

fresh incoming data empirical data (usually new single cases).⁵³ Riemann and Schütze write:

There is an ongoing process of confronting abstract categories (which are already the outcome of lengthy case and comparative analyses) with new pieces of data, i.e., the categories are being empirically controlled, differentiated, backed up or put in doubt; new categories emerge, and the whole model is constantly being respecified, is becoming denser and moving towards 'theoretical saturation' (to use the term of Glaser and Strauss again). (Riemann, Schütze, 1987: 0064).

The elaborated hypotheses and theories are open to modifications and supplementing up to the point when any new single case does *not change the architecture and decisive content of the theoretical model anymore*. (Schütze, npd: 4).

2.6.4. The basic research directions: strategies for constructing theoretical models.

Theoretical models generated during the research process may concentrate on certain basic theoretical – thematic blocks:

- 1) **Career models.** These are connected with the educational careers, professional socialization, learning processes, different courses or paths of professional occupation development and the process of the professional identifications formation. The main task of the researcher is to identify institutional expectations patterns and an individual's ways of coping with or reacting to them and their influence on the individual's life course. There are certain questions that may be answered when generating this theoretical model. For instance: What stages a person must undergo to achieve certain position in his or her biography; What career schemes or patterns are characteristic of certain professions; What are the decisive points an individual has to confront in the course of his or her professional path; What are the typical patterns of its unfolding, etc.⁵⁴

⁵³ See: Strauss A.L., Corbin J., 1991, Criteria for Evaluating a Grounded Theory, in Strauss A.L., Creating..., pp. 451-452.

⁵⁴ For more details see: Riemann G., Schütze F., 1987, Some Notes on..., op. cit., p. 0065, and Schütze F., npd, Outline for the Method..., pp. 17-18.

- 2) **Models on structural processes of the life course.** These focus on investigating the dynamics of unfolding biographical processes: their hierarchy within the life course of a biographical incumbent, their sequential organization (successive stages) and consequences for the narrator's relationships to his or her significant others and for his or her self-image. It is of great importance here to establish the function of turning points for the individual's biography development, and recognise biographical process structures (trajectory, metamorphosis, biographical action scheme) that affect and shape the life course of the narrator describing their combination and mutual interplay. Such analysis enables us to define under which social conditions structural processes escalate or, to the contrary, decrease
- 3) **Relational models on the attitudes of the biographical incumbent towards her or his life course.** These aim at explicating such life situations of a biographical incumbent that are constrained by social structures and force narrators to establish

(...) a systematic relationship towards her or his biography which organizes the retrospective sedimentation of her or his life experiences and controls the outlook at her/ his own biographical future. (Riemann, Schütze, 1987: 0065).

These established and fixed attitudes towards one's biography sometimes become autonomous resources to deal with certain (usually problematic) life situations of the narrator. When constantly employed in order to explain and justify the course of the everyday affairs, they may lead to some 'abuses' or 'fading out of awareness'. It means that, in spite of repeatedly occurring counter evidences, the individual systematically deceives him- or herself by virtue of the predominating (although false) attitudes, what finally puts him or her into a trap. This situation cannot be normalised without a help of significant others, e.g. in cases of old people, prisoners, 'chronically' unemployed etc.

- 4) **Models on the development and changes of social worlds, social milieus, and social movements:** These are related to examining certain forms of social activities that unfold both within the confines of such public form of institutional
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organizations such as social worlds (artists, leaders of social movements), collective movements, or social milieus, and in social worlds of outsiders (drug addicts, the homeless). The main focus is directed at following their developments and changes and their influence on individuals' identity transformations.

In this study an attempt will be made to reconstruct – according to the principles of natural history proposed by R.E. Park - sequential organization of events typical for the immigration process, their conditionally relevant after-effects and alternative lines of their development as well as the dynamics and dominance of biographical processes that occur within them. Thus, I will combine the career model, the model on structural processes of the life course as well as other approaches in my analysis.

2.7. The general characteristics of the study presented.

In ‘The Biographies and Identities of the Young Polish Immigrants in Germany after 1989’ I focus on the Polish immigration⁵⁵ to Germany that covered the period of ten years (i.e., 1989 – 1999) and concerns people who were not older than 30 before leaving for Germany. Thus, the term ‘young’ has a double meaning. On the one hand, it means that individuals taken into account in this study are on the early stages of the process of immigration and belong to a new group of newcomers. The term ‘young immigration’ is used here to distinguish it from the ‘old immigration’ of Poles in Germany, i.e. those who came here before 1989 as re-settles, asylum-seekers or refugees that had no possibility to return. On the other hand, the term denotes that the narrators decided to come to Germany while still relatively young (21 to 30-year-old). At the time of the interview they had not do not exceed 36 years.

In this study I concentrate on the immigration that is not primarily political and enforced, for this reason the events of 1989 are the most meaningful and the collapse of Eastern block constitutes a crucial moment in Europe and in Polish-German relations.⁵⁶ The opening up of state borders has been one of the most relevant events for my work. Since that time people leaving Poland have been able to easily return to their country of origin without any sanctions. The research, thus, deals with the young immigration, which is voluntary and not political, permanent, either documented or illegal.

For the purposes of this work I have collected 15 autobiographical narrative texts of young Poles living in Germany at least for two years. Before specifying the subject matter of my study I had also collected 4 additional interviews with Poles (mainly of Silesian origin) who left Poland in the 80’s and were in their forties or fifties at the time of the interview.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ I decided to use the term ‘immigration’ adopting the point of view of the country which is entered.

⁵⁶ In short, since 1989 Poland has been recognised as a “safe” and independent country, where all fundamental political and social rights are protected. For that reason refugees and asylum-seekers of Polish descent no longer constitute the valid category of immigrants.

⁵⁷ Although I never explicitly refer to these narratives they are of great importance to my comprehension of the issues of the Polish immigration in Germany in general. I would like to mention the very dramatic immigration history of the narrator (masked as) Basia. She left her home Silesia in the middle of the 80’s and went through so called ‘Lager’, i.e., a camp where all refugees from communist countries were placed and held up to the moment where their situation was cleared up (they were granted German citizenship) and they could find their own place and job (it happened often that members of one family had to live with other people in one room for a long time). Basia experienced enormous suffering caused by her alienation, marginalization, exclusion and her ‘imprisonment’ in an institution of totalitarian character. We must here remember that in those times a person who decided to leave Poland had no way out. The narrator, thus, paralysed and subjected to the influence of outer forces was not able to organize her life. In this connection, her stay in the campus constantly protracted and took more than 3 years. As a result, Basia landed in psychiatric hospital, probably because of her problems connected with extensive drinking. Up to the time on our meeting that took place more than 15

In the next step, I have chosen 13 interviews of the Polish immigrants who had not spoke German before immigrating. They were transcribed and then subjected to meticulous analysis. Two remaining text serves here only as a frame of reference.

The narrators were found in the Internet and owing to the snow ball effect, as well as with the help of my friends and contact with Polish associations in Germany. The interviewing atmosphere was usually pleasant and the informants eagerly told the stories of their lives.⁵⁸ As a matter of convenience, the most autobiographical narrative interviews were conducted at narrators' homes (often very remote German cities) or cafés nearby their flats. Two of them were conducted not by me, but instead by the trained sociologist Beata Barańska-Grosch.

The introductory question was designed to elicit the recollection of events from the earliest memories of the narrators. Its aim was to gain an insight not only into the very immigration process, but also into the informants' life in the country of origin. It was important to see how the individuals' original culture influenced their biography and shaped their immigration process. The narrators were informed about the topic of this study before our meeting and then in the warming phase, the initial question was very short. Its basic – modified in specific situations – form was as such:

I would like you to tell me – with your own words, and as precisely as it is possible – about your life, starting from your childhood until now. What are, thus, your earliest memories?

years after her coming to Germany, she was still an alcoholic. I believe that only in the context of Basia's story and other immigrants-refugees renderings I could understand such declaration of my 'proper' narrators like: '*I was lucky to avoid Lager*'.

⁵⁸ The only narrator who was initially very reluctant to talk about his life, after a while became very involved in his storytelling and, as a result, gave one of the 'core' interviews I deal with in this study.

Chapter 3

The Generalised Concept of Trajectory with Special Attention to the Immigrant Trajectory.

3.1. The origin of the concept.

The concept of trajectory as used in this study finds its origin in the works of Anselm Strauss and his co-workers. It was introduced in Barney G. Glaser's and Anselm L. Strauss' research on dying patients (Glaser, Strauss, 1968) and systematically developed later (Strauss, Fagerhaugh, Suczek, Wiener, 1985; Strauss 1987, Corbin, Strauss, 1988, 1991). Drawing the distinction between a course of illness and illness trajectory, they take the view that although the illness course proper is a central feature of a trajectory it is only one of innumerable aspects of it.¹ They write:

(...) trajectory is a term coined (...) to refer not only to the physiological unfolding of a patient's disease but to the total organization of work done over that course, plus the impact on those involved with that work and its organization. (Strauss, et al., 1985: 8).

Strauss concentrates his attention on an increasing lack of control over one's life situation and a loss of capacity to act autonomously caused by outer strange forces. He shows how the constantly deteriorating conditions finally disorganise one's everyday activities and questions personal identity. As a result the person afflicted with illness uncovers a fateful aspect of his or her life and passively conforms to the effects of some external powerful factors. He or she stops to act consciously and intentionally, but begins to react passively. J. Corbin and A.L. Strauss point out:

The term trajectory captures implicated aspects of the temporal phases, the work, the interplay of workers, and the nonmedical features of management along with relevant medical ones. In that last regard it captures aspects of the experiences of everyone involved in the management drama, experiences that are anxious, puzzled, and painful, as well as those that are brighter. In some sense, illness is (through sometimes very much less) fateful. The trajectory concept adds the aspect of fatefulness, of 'undergoing and

¹ Strauss A.L, Corbin J., 1988, *Unending Work and Care*, Jossey-Bass Publishers, San Francisco, p. 34.

experiencing` (Dewey, 1934), to what sociologists ordinary call action schemes and medical people call treatment and plans or programs. (Corbin, Strauss, 1988: 34).

The problem of suffering almost totally neglected within the classical sociological theories, was perceived and thoroughly explored in the field of symbolic interactionism (Thomas, Znaniecki, 1918; Park, 1928; Goffman 1991[1961], 1990[1963], Backer, 1973). But only Strauss and his co-workers depart from the fundamental assumption of the interpretative line of thought saying that human beings always intentionally, reflexively and creatively construct their actions and identities in the sense developed in the Weberian tradition.² They argue that there are such periods (often long) in the life course of many individuals that are characterised of total subordination to the outer forces and uncontrolled reactions to some unexpected and usually painful turn of events. Fritz Schütze adopts this approach, but makes it more universal through transplanting these ideas from merely medical field of interest to the broadest, more general context.³ The detailed analysis of numerous autobiographical narrative interviews displaying the mechanism and development of the trajectory process show that its inner dynamics is the same for various sources and sorts of suffering: e.g. for illness, alcoholism, drug addiction, immigration, war or any other predicament.⁴ Schütze also strongly emphasises that when trajectory imposes itself upon the individual's life, he or she is not able to deliberately and intentionally act, but is forced to surrender to overwhelming external circumstances. He especially highlights the fundamental change of the suffering individual's orientation towards his or her life biography and identity. Entrapped in the situation from which, as the sufferer believes, there is no way out, she or he loses contact ("active molding") with the reality of the life world. Instead he or she starts to endure it, and, thus, crosses the line between the intentional and the conditional state of mind.⁵ Schütze's concept of trajectory is the basis

² See: Weber M., 1978 [1921], *Economy and Society*, University of California Press, Berkeley, pp. 23-25. This supposition maintained in George H. Mead philosophy (later synthesised by Herbert Blumer) laid the foundations of symbolic interactionism. See: Cf. Collins R., 1988, *Theoretical Sociology*, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Publishers, London, pp. 266-267. See also: Czyżewski M., 1985, 'Problem podmiotowości we współczesnej socjologii interakcji. Jaźń i jej zniesienie', Part 1, *Kultura i Społeczeństwo*, No. 3, pp. 33-37.

³ Cf. Prawda M., 1989, 'Biograficzne odtwarzanie rzeczywistości (o koncepcji badań biograficznych Fritz'a Schütze)', *Studia Socjologiczne*, No. 4, p. 85. Let me add that while using the concept of trajectory in relation to other fields of research Fritz Schütze acts in accordance with the guidelines of grounded theory, i.e., he uses concepts and categories generated in the particular substantive area as a formal theory that can be employed in many others fields of interest.

⁴ See also: Rokuszewska-Pawełek A., 2002, *Chaos i przymus. Trajektorie wojenne Polaków*, Wyd. Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, Łódź, p. 77.

⁵ See: Schütze F., 1981, *Prozessstrukturen des Lebensablaufs*, in Matthes J., Pfeifenberger A., Stosberg M. (eds.), *Biographic in handlungswissenschaftlicher Perspektive*, Verlag der Numberger Forschungsvereinigung, Nürnberg, p. 98; Schütze F., 1983, *Biographieforschung und narratives Interview*, *Neue Praxis*, Jg. 13, p. 288.

of analysing and explicating the immigration process and is the main frame of reference in this study.

Biographical trajectory has its own characteristic features, distinct order of appearances, and peculiar format of presentation. For this reason, we may say that also these phases of life course in which afflicted persons are steered by incomprehensible overwhelming external forces and in which they are filled with painful feelings and suffering have their own sequential order and inner logic. Schütze claims:

Fate is of process character (...) in terms of ordered mechanisms of the process development, which – paradoxically – produce what is chaotic in the social reality.
(Schütze, 1996: 124-125).

3.2. The basic features of trajectory.

Schütze points out that the social and biographical processes of trajectory are characterised by more and more painful suffering and growing incapacity of the afflicted persons (*Betroffene*) for getting out of their predicament. Their ability to act rationally weakens gradually, because they feel as if driven by overwhelming events which make them to act in a reactive way.⁶ Riemann and Schütze in their inspiring paper: *‘Trajectory’ as a Basic Concept for Analyzing Suffering and Disorderly Social Processes.* (Riemann, Schütze, 1991) enumerate basic features of trajectory.⁷

- 1) The social order continuously generated through coexistence of the normative principle of institutional patterns of the life course and the intentional principle of biographical action plans⁸ in the individual’s biography is distorted. The afflicted person cannot organise his or her everyday affairs, fulfill their mundane duties or carry out their biographical projects in an unproblematic way any more. The influence of some unidentified outer forces makes the person believe her or his daily life is no longer ordered and predictable (mainly because of breaking off home ties);
- 2) The individual has the impression that he or she is overwhelmed by powerful outer forces that are beyond his or her control. He or she believes that some strange events conspired to produce multiplying difficulties in his or her life situation. They are shocked, disoriented and engulfed by panic. *The mood and logic of suffering become the dominant state of mind.* (Riemann, Schütze, 1991: 342).
- 3) The more unknown and incomprehensible the forces affecting the life of the individual are, the more is he or she terrified and disoriented. Ineffectively attempting to find the origin and understand the mechanism of his or her

⁶ See: Schütze F., 1996, Verlaufskurven des Erleidens als Forschungsgegenstand der interpretativen Soziologie, in Krüger H.H., Marotzki W. (eds.), *Erziehungswissenschaftliche Biographieforschung* (pp. 116-157), Leske & Budrich, Opladen, p. 126. In Polish see: Schütze F., 1997, ‘Trajektorie cierpienia jako przedmiot badań socjologii interpretatywnej’ (translated by: M. Czyżewski), *Studia Socjologiczne*, No. 1 (114), p. 21.

⁷ Riemann G., Schütze F., 1991, ‘Trajectory’ as a Basic Concept for Analyzing Suffering and Disorderly Social Processes, in Maines D.R., *Social Organization and Social Structure; Essays in Honour of Anselm Strauss*, Aldine de Gruyter, New York.

⁸ Cf. Schütze F., 1981, *Prozessstrukturen...*, op.cit., p. 145.

suffering the person falls into despair. It initially disrupts and finally destroys completely the biographical incumbent sense of security. His or her future seems to be dark and gloomy. Living a life of uncertainty discourages the individual from taking any activities and planning his or her future. As E.V. Stonequist claims any crisis experience may be

(...) the event that throws the individual back upon himself and produces a disengagement and temporary withdrawal. (Stonequist, 1941: 220-221).

- 4) The chain of unexpected powerful events brings about that the afflicted person cannot control and adequately adjust his or her activities. This deepens the process of disorientation. The individual has a vague impression that he or she gets lost in a labyrinth through which it is impossible to find a way out. The suffering person finds him- or herself caught in a trap and becomes more and more disconnected with the commonsense reality. His or her moods change very quickly and radically. The person may at once experience diametrically opposed feelings: initial enthusiasm may rapidly change into apathy and dejection. This nagging instability of emotions holds potential for irritation and frustration. Moreover, all taken for granted and tested methods for dealing with problematical situations fail in the long run. This makes the biography incumbent convinced that his or her confused and strange state of mind will last forever. When seeing that there is no point in attempting to cope with one's predicament, the afflicted person is paralysed by fear and feels numb.

- 5) The growing feeling of despair and devastating powerlessness deepen the person's separation both from the reality of the daily life and from his- or herself. The suffering individual being more and more unrecognizable to him- or herself feels hostile and forlorn. His or her identity is notoriously questioned; therefore they are no longer able to answer the essential question: *who I really am?* without hesitation. It results in self-alienation and a permanent spoilage of identity. The afflicted individual is aghast at the idea that he or she will never be the same any more. As Strauss explains:

Under certain social conditions a man may undergo so many or such critical experiences for which conventional explanations seem to be inadequate that he

begins to question large segments of the explanatory terminology that has been taught to him (...). If in large measure he rejects the explanations he ones believed, then he has been alienated and has lost a world, he has been spiritually dispossessed. (Strauss, 1969: 38).

- 6) Suddenly the suffering person notices that his or her unsuccessful interactions cannot be repaired in a routine way (i.e., according to what is habitually done). It suggests that something really strange and unusual have abruptly and violently burst into one's life and destroyed the basis of one's daily world. The person not only does not trust him- or herself any longer, but also cannot trust others – even his or her best friends. The individual's capacity for establishing and maintaining crucial social relationships is deeply weaken. The person's irritation grows as, since being more and more dependent on his or her significant others, they are *unable to keep the balance of social reciprocity*, (Riemann, Schütze, 1991: 343). As Ursula Apitzsch and Lena Inowlocki stress in their analysis of Schütze's concept of trajectory and disorderly social process:

(...) the deepest suffering within such disorder arises from the removal of the basis of co-operation, solidarity and reciprocity in interaction. (Apitzsch, Inowlocki, 2000: 60).

Withdrawal of trust from the course of interaction may result in introducing awareness contexts in which the real identity of one or both interactants is either hidden or falsified (e.g. closed, suspicious or mutual pretence).⁹ The afflicted individual finds him- or herself as if set aside from the main course of the everyday reality. Riemann and Schütze write:

Quite often certain biographical experiences of the afflicted person and his or her fellow interactants have caused systematic barriers to presenting and understanding in ongoing communication that do not allow kin, neighbours, acquaintances, and professionals to reach the person and to help her or him to bridge the communication gap. (Riemann, Schütze, 1996: 352).

⁹ Cf. Glaser B.G., Strauss A.L., 1964, Awareness Contexts and Social Interactions, American Sociological Review, Vol. 29, No. 5; Glaser B.G., Strauss A.L., 1968, Time for Dying, Aldine, Chicago, and also Glaser B.G., Strauss A.L., 1980, Awareness of Dying, Aldine, New York.

- 7) Being more and more marginalised and left with a sense of total hopelessness the afflicted person has a feeling that the world is squeezing him or her. Even if the trajectory dynamics slows down and stabilises for a while, the individual is still incapable to organise and manage his or her activities within diverse areas of his or her life. For this reason he or she becomes lost even in formerly well-known social worlds. Since the individual cannot refer to the previous schemes of interpretation and reference to make his or her life world more comprehensible, he or she feels more and more alienated. This feature of biographical trajectory is clearly seen when we scrutinise the situation of many immigrants who deprived of language skills and cultural competence and without familiar and predicable context of actions in an approached country suffer from extreme disorientation, loneliness, alienation and marginalization. Eva Hoffman - a polish immigrant to the United States - writes in her book concerning her experiences as a foreigner: *Immigration results in falling out of the net of meaning into the weightlessness of chaos.* (Hoffman, 1989: 151).
- 8) People tend to overreact when they enter the trajectory process. The individual afflicted with trajectory usually is incapable to bring under control his or her violent reactions and overcome unexpected emotions. The person's awkward behaviours usually arouse fear and alienation, since he or she cannot recognise themselves there. Their attempts to cope with such unpredictable reactions or to understand the unknown emotions usually result in apathy and stupefaction, because their common strategies of making their life 'normal' and accountable fail again and again exhausting their energy. His or her knowledge at hand¹⁰ cannot deal with the predicament and fail to cope with increasing contradictions and difficulties. It creates a 'cumulative mess' in the afflicted individual's daily life (Strauss et al., 1985: 160-181). In the course of time the immigrant becomes aware of accumulating disappointments and it seems that nothing is going according to the way he or she has planned it.

¹⁰ Stock of knowledge at hand – as the author of the concept: A. Schütz claims – is one of the fundamental aspects of the commonsense world. He explains that people in everyday life use a stock of symbols (e.g. worlds in language, and other cultural knowledge) which is socially based and assumed to be obvious to everyone. Garfinkel names it: 'What Anyone Knows'.

- 9) If we pass over the enormous mental and social costs that the human being must bear while living under the long-lasting conditions of trajectory, we should notice that the individual's suffering enable a deep and careful reflection on the reality of the life world, and his or her attitude towards themselves and others. This reflection may be threefold. After reconsidering and reaffirming his or her sense of living with trajectory the individual may: develop new biographical action schemes and regain the ability to act intentionally and restore control over one's life circumstances; discover new layers of creativity, or unseen so far talents that can be put into effect despite the trajectory process, or only when under its influence, which then results in the process of metamorphosis. Sometimes, however, very meticulous thinking over one's life situation may lead to proceeding isolation, growing degradation and consequent 'amoralization' (*Entmoralisierung*).¹¹

¹¹ Harold Garfinkel, following Alfred Schütz, proves in his works that social order has its moral foundations, which are embedded in 'background expectations' usually manifesting themselves in social reciprocity. Not complying with them produces amoralization (*Entmoralisierung*), i.e., lack of moral order in social interaction. See: Garfinkel H., 2002 [1967], *Studies in Ethnomethodology*, Polity Press, Cambridge, pp. 35-38.

3.3. The dynamics and the sequential organization of trajectory.

*Crumbling is not an
instant's act
A fundamental pause
Dilapidation's processes
Are organized decays.
Emily Dickinson¹²*

Intrusion of trajectory in the life world brings about that the afflicted person cannot restore a normal course of daily affairs and has a feeling that nothing can be done in a routine manner any longer. Despite repeated attempts to re-normalise the reality of everyday life, something constantly fails. There are some meaningful and serious cracks in one's world life, which inevitably confirm incomprehension and distinctness of the surrounding reality. Often enough, the suffering person receives from his or her interactional partners definitions of their identity and situation, which strengthen their conviction that there is something wrong and that she or he does not belong to the 'normal' world of daily life anymore. There are more and more areas in the everyday life of the afflicted person that are out of his or her control and, thus, develop in complete and thorough disorder. The suffering human is totally plunged into chaos and subordinated to the overwhelming power of his or her personal fate guided by its own logic and specific course of events. The cumulative mess grows gradually and has its own dynamics and sequential order. It usually proceeds as follows¹³:

The individual slowly sees that he or she is trapped in the very difficult situation one cannot escape. There is a series of unfortunate events in the life history of the person that contribute to **building-up of trajectory potential**. Unprepared for recognizing signs of forthcoming disaster the person usually disregards them or attempt to fade them out of his or her awareness. In the beginning of the trajectory process, disturbing symptoms of personal misfortune can be quite easily removed from the individual's field of vision by means of his or her commonsense knowledge and referring to well-known categories which do not upset the reality of daily world.¹⁴ Belittling and underestimating certain

¹² Available at: <http://www.poemhunter.com/p/m/poem.asp?poet=3053&poem=160772>

¹³ The course of the trajectory development may be transformed: some phases may be passed over, some may be repeated, or appear in different order. Nevertheless, its crucial features and main scenario remain essentially the same. See: Schütze F., 1996, *Verlauskurven...*, op. cit., p. 131.

¹⁴ The trajectory potential may be ignored, at least initially, because it is one of the basic features of the everyday life world that the individual while coming to terms with the arising incoherencies in his or her situation attempts to look for such explanations that can sufficiently account for inconsistencies to save some coherent picture of the life world. See:

looming symptoms of the trajectory process, in turn, delays counteractions and enhances the trajectory potential out of the individual's control. Thus, in its initial phases trajectory develops as if beyond the reach of the afflicted person. We must remember here that the normative order of the world taken for granted exists until something really unexceptional happens or some growing contradictions within the frame of one's current situation appear. A. Schütz argues:

This will be the case, for example, if there occurs in the individual or social life an event or situation which cannot be met by applying the traditional and habitual pattern of behaviour or interpretation. We call such a situation a crisis – a partial one if it makes only some elements of the world taken for granted questionable, a total one if it invalidates the whole system of reference, the scheme of interpretation itself. (Schütz, 1976: 231).

This kind of 'reality falsification' may be maintained up to the point in which certain irritating indicators of fate could not be ignored and denied any more, and the elaborated 'normalizing' explanations seem to be insufficient. Schütze points out that the very set of key contradictions within the frame of one's current situation and the afflicted person's dispositions for getting hurt determine the unfolding trajectory process.

This study as well as a vast literature on the subject confirms that the social process of immigration is often based on falsified expectations. Leaving his or her homeland the person rarely has detailed and trustworthy knowledge of the country of destination.¹⁵ Mostly by virtue of information conveyed by other immigrants and common-sense image of the approached country it is generally believed that it is a place of prosperity and better

Czyżewski M., Rokuszewska-Pawelek A., 1989/90, 'Analiza autobiografii Rudolpha Hössa', *Kultura i Społeczeństwo*, Vol. 33, No. 2, p. 180; and Pollner M., 1987, *Mundane Reason: Reality in Everyday and Sociological Discourse*, Cambridge University Press, New York, pp. 55-57. Melvin Pollner attempts to show how despite many counter examples mundane reasoning is still the main device for accounting for problematical matters. Cf. Potter J., 1996, *Representing Reality, Discourse, Rhetoric and Social Construction*, Sage Publications, London, pp. 53-57. To clarify the issue a little more, let us consider a case of a person who suddenly notices some disturbing symptoms in her or his body. Initially the individual rather looks for some sort of 'normal' routine explanations of his or her current condition than is prone to accept that he or she is seriously ill. For instance – a young woman who lost enormous amount of blood during a delivery and suffered from deepening weakness and anaemia supposed (supported by the medical staff) that it was connected with her very complex situation just before giving birth to her daughter (passing final exams at university etc.). But, with time this elucidation seemed to be insufficient and more and more clashed with the reality of everyday life. Lack of any improvement and accumulating doubts made the women to modify her definition of the situation. After consulting a neurologist, it turned out that she suffers from SM. Celia L. Orona deals with the same issue while discussing Alzheimer's disease symptoms. She shows that friends and family members seeing some alarming behaviours of a suffering person, usually try to normalize the situation themselves ('He's just having trouble adjusting to being retired'), or rely on the afflicted individual 'normalising' explanations ('There's a lot going on at work'), both fitting the conditions at that time. See: Orona C.J., 1997, *Temporality and Identity Loss Due to Alzheimer's Disease*, in Corbin J., Strauss A.L. (eds.), 1997, *Grounded Theory in Practice*, Sage Publications, London., p.185.

¹⁵ Cf. Schütze F., npd, *Outline for the Method of Biography Analysis* (transcript), p. 18.

social security. Moreover, some individuals' immigration plans are idealised and do not work in practice, what makes them deeply disappointed. There is a set of increasing contradictions within their life situation. For example they are not able to learn the language of the host country as fast as they have hoped. Subsequently, they cannot find a satisfying job for a long time. For many immigrants separation from their family and friends (and surprisingly for a majority of them also from their home country) is much harder than they supposed and the money they earn does not weigh over emotional losses they suffer. Since usually not one, but many of these factors appear simultaneously they have intensifying effect on each other.

Incessantly bothered by irremovable signs of disastrous fate that first and foremost manifest themselves in repeated breaks of shared rules of interpersonal conduct in face-to-face interactions¹⁶ the afflicted person must finally admit that some overwhelming forces have intruded into his or her course of everyday life. When seeing that cumulating critical experiences and painful feelings prevent the individual from realisation of certain meaningful biographical action plans and fulfilling institutional action schemes, he or she becomes finally aware of its power. The developing trajectory process completely overwhelms the person's everyday affairs and, therefore: *disturb or even destroy existing structures of social order in biographies* (Riemann, Schütze, 1991: 339). The world seems to be turned upside down. The habitual and routine recipes to cope with problematical situations cannot be applied any more. This unrelentingly creates complete and thorough chaos within the person's life situation. The suffering individual sees that some incomprehensible external pressures foil his or her continuous attempts to bestow the accent of reality on their life world. The person lacks ability to organise his or her current matters and to plan his or her future. Paralysed and downcast he or she sinks into despair. In this connection their biographical carrier slowly **crosses the border from an intentional to a conditional state of mind**. As Schütze states:

A conditional state of mind in experiencing events and organizing personal activities becomes the dominant orientational principle for the person's life organization. (Schütze, 1991: 349).

¹⁶ The issue of interactional anomie is widely discussed by Fritz Schütze in his analysis of Franz Kafka's 'The Trial' and Josef's K. conversations with Mrs. Grubach. See: Schütze F., 1996, Verlauskurven..., op. cit., pp. 118-125.

He or she feels like a child being pushed in the crowd. The inner logic of trajectory disorganises or disturbs the person's life and identity in all its dimensions and layers. The reality of everyday life is, thus, passively endured and not consciously experienced. The suffering person's feeling of standing on the edge of the precipice is now replaced with the feeling of actually falling into its immeasurable abyss.

Since the biography incumbent cannot explain and account for the world of common sense, a feeling of alienation and loosing the sense of life grow.¹⁷ To the afflicted person his or her self-concept seems to be hazy, vague and unreliable. The individual becomes more unpredictable to him- or herself. The growing disorientation constantly confirmed by a series of strange events finally results in total loss of trust and confidence. The suffering human-being does not believe anymore that anything can be changed. One comes to the conclusion that he or she is alone, lost, and filled with painful bitter feelings.

Here, I would like to pause for a moment to consider the situation of an immigrant. If we take into account that an individual's ready-made ways of dealing with predicaments are component parts of symbolic universe¹⁸, leaving one's country of origin, puts the person in a very difficult position. Being immersed in a totally strange milieu the person may very quickly lose his or her capacity for planning and organizing his or her everyday activities and understanding the life world. Moreover, the individual no longer appears to respond in a meaningful way to his or her new surroundings. This causes that he or she feels confused and frightened. But, that may be even more demoralising; dealing with another symbolic universe can seriously undermine the legitimacy of the original one and, thus, can make the whole reality of the life world questionable and uncertain. Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann claim:

The appearance of an alternative symbolic universe poses a threat because its very existence demonstrates empirically that one's own universe is less than inevitable. (Berger, Luckmann, 1991: 126).

¹⁷ See: Strauss A.L., 1969, *Mirrors and Masks. The Search for Identity*, Sociology Press, Mill Valley, s. 38.

¹⁸ Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann explain that symbolic universes: provide ultimate and integrated meaning for a person's collective life and biography. They are not simply available like ready-made collective systems of knowledge. Instead, they have to be permanently produced within all-embracing context of communicative discourse. Cf. Berger P., Luckmann T., 1991, *The Social Construction of Reality. A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*, Penguin Books, London, pp. 113-116.

It may result in an orientational breakdown and feeling of total alienation or, to the contrary, may provoke irresponsible and reckless activities.¹⁹

Having discussed the individual's strenuous efforts to overcome the powerful influence of outer forces and attempts to get over a shock may lead to creating **precarious new balance of everyday life**. For the time being the afflicted individual's efforts are directed at regaining control over his or her life and maintaining the state of equilibrium. It seems that the world of daily life becomes again 'recognizable' and, at least to some extent, predictable. However, this temporary state of balance is extremely fragile and essentially unstable. To the despair of the suffering person, it may collapse at any moment of the life course. This is because the person is still not competent and strong enough to deal with the unfolding trajectory process and work it through successfully. Fragility of this period is poetically described by a young man who as a result of a serious car accident suffers from a spinal cord injury. He said: *One may trip over a rose's petal.*²⁰

Undertaking attempts to maintain the normal course of events in the life situation requires a huge effort of the suffering individual. Since it usually shows no or derisory results, he or she feels very discouraged and disappointed. Seeing the pointlessness of his or her activities, the individual is not able to act deliberately and plan reasonably his or her future. Taking into account the situation of immigrants, we may observe that any crisis may cause an immediate longing to be back at home. They are desperate to give up all their plans and escape. To illustrate the issue, I would like to put it into the words of one of my narrators who recollects the first year of his stay in Germany in the following way:

Bartek (9/42-46)p²¹

But that first year it was... it was/ it was so, you know, that... when something really pissed me off (2) perhaps totally/ if/ if my job wasn't so/ hadn't suited me so much, I suppose that I would take, you know.... yyy any lousy day or something, I would pack my stuff and would say: 'thanks a lot' and I would have returned to Poland and ().

For the suffering individual preserving the precarious balance of everyday life usually absorbs a lot of energy and requires some sort of simplified version of the world of common sense. Thus, sustaining the new shaky routine of everyday life becomes more and

¹⁹ I discuss the problem carefully when dealing with 'the Polish caffone' in the next chapter.

²⁰ This quotation comes from one of the autobiographical narrative interviews carried out within the scope of my master's thesis concerning chronically ill and physically disabled people.

²¹ Please see Appendix for the detailed description of transcription's notation.

more difficult. Consequently, from day to day, the person gets weaker and weaker and finally he or she is totally unable to control their actions and emotions. Riemann and Schütze claim that in this situation:

The person may become alienated from self and lose capacities for trust, self-respect, and self-reliance. (Riemann, Schütze, 1991: 349).

The suffering human is overtaken by paralysing tiredness²², thus feeling him- or herself burned out, hollowed and empty. It inevitably leads to **destabilisation of the created new balance of everyday life**. He or she loses the ability to adequately define the situation and interpret his or her partners' actions. The suffering person is mysterious to him- or herself and unpredictable to his or her fellow interactants (including their close friends and family members). For this reason, both sides of encounter devoid of basic rules governing mundane interactions in everyday life get lost and get into a panic. As a result cumulative mess increases and the individual enters the downward spin. The phenomenon of a cumulative mess is characterised of: (1) the individual tends to focus on one set of problems receding into the background others problematical matters, which, faded out of the awareness, may develop without any restraints and control; (2) his or her ardent attempts to remove one aspect of the complex predicament may damagingly affect others, and – in some cases trigger new unexpected problems; (3) the suffering person's scrappy and inexplicable reactions and multiplying problems influence each other and enhance the dynamics of the trajectory process.²³ There is a state of permanent instability. As Riemann and Schütze point out:

Even for one who does not want to face it, the principle of trajectory shows the potential for destroying the newly won order in the life structures by the biographical action scheme. (Riemann, Schütze, 1991: 340).

An all-embracing sense of one's weakness, uncertainty of one's own reactions, odd and incomprehensible emotions and the puzzling and terrifying reality of the world of daily life unavoidably result in **a breakdown of one's self-orientation**. An accumulation of serious difficulties in everyday life, chaos of the life world, disorder of schemes of relevance, notorious breaks in interactions and unending falsifying attempts to re-

²² Cf. Schütze F., 1996, Verlauskurven..., op. cit., p. 124.

²³ Reimann G., Schütze F., 1991, 'Trajectory'..., op. cit., pp. 349-350, Schütze F., 1996, Verlauskurven..., op. cit., pp. 129-130.

normalise arising difficulties and subsequent loss of power and energy, finally lead to the suffering person's total subordination to the dynamics of the trajectory process. Then, the individual usually poses the fundamental question: *if anything within the world of usual everyday affairs still functions in the normal, hitherto known way*. (See: Riemann, Schütze, 1991: 350). This harmful doubt concerns both one's world of common sense and his or her personal identity. The individual finds him- or herself incapable to act rationally and predictably (let me remind that his or her reactions may change from one extreme to the other – from very sluggish to extremely rough and furious) and to maintain his or her crucial relationships. The cruelty and paradox of the situation is that when the suffering person desperately needs help and support of significant others and caretakers, simultaneously his or her actions disgust and repel them. Both the afflicted person and his or her relatives and friends initially can only surmise how much the developing trajectory process has changed their lives, relationships and personal identities. The suffering individual cannot control his or her reactions and adequately define situations, and, thus, his or her interactions become incoherent and incomprehensible, what usually results in misunderstandings and many painful disappointments. It disrupts the suffering person's self-image, spoils his or her relationships with significant others and impinges on their capacity to establish social contacts in general. Riemann and Schütze write:

(...) the person's orientational and emotional relationship to her or his identity is lost, at least for the time of the peak crisis. The person feels totally strange to her- or himself, knows that she or he cannot trust her or his capacities anymore, and does not understand her or his own strange reactions to the unexpected events. (Riemann, Schütze, 1991: 350).

The afflicted individual views him- or herself with growing distrust, deepening alienation, lack of respect and contempt. The authors claim:

Quite often certain biographical experiences of the afflicted person and his or her fellow interactant have caused systematic barriers to presenting and understanding in ongoing communication that do not allow kin, neighbours, acquaintances, and professionals to reach the person and to help her or him to bridge the communication gap. (Riemann, Schütze, 1992: 352).

The afflicted individual tends to destroy the course of routine face-to-face communication, because he or she – not being able to understand their own reactions and emotions as well

as properly judge motives of their fellow interactants – continuously infringes upon the rights governing interactions and, thus, disturbs the normative order of events and creates social disorder.²⁴ And since, the trajectory process afflicts – as it was mentioned - not only the suffering person, but also his or her close friends and relatives, thus both sides of interaction, being immersed in trajectory and devoid of mutual trust, enhance its dynamics and, as if automatically, propel its development.

With time, and usually after the peak phases of the trajectory process, the afflicted person endeavours to deal with, account for and understand his or her suffering. The individual has to retrospectively reconstruct his or her idea of past identity and project his or her picture of self-image in the future in terms of current understandings of the life situation. He or she, thus, attempts to theoretically come to terms with the trajectory process through:

- 1) Establishing the cause of his or her disaster, finding its sources, and accounting for its mechanisms and nature. The sufferer usually looks for reliable explanations of his or her trajectory. Analyzing the illness trajectories Corbin and Strauss point out: *A failed body often leads the ill person to wonder what he or she did to cause the situation.* (Corbin, Strauss, 1988: 50). Any person afflicted with trajectory asks him- or herself this fundamental question: *How could this happen to me?*
- 2) Understanding why it is actually he or she who is afflicted with trajectory and with twofold consequences of this deliberation: i.e., either acceptance of trajectory and its integration into the reality of everyday life or its rejection and denying (usually taking a form of exhausting attempts to pretend that everything is all right).

²⁴ Harold Garfinkel argues that: 'The ability [to act rationally – KW] depends upon the person being able to take for granted, to take under trust, a vast array of features of the social order.' Garfinkel, 2002, *Studies in Ethnomethodology*, Polity Press, Cambridge, p. 173. People usually use certain rules that are taken for granted, 'seen but unnoticed' to cooperatively conduct their interactions. It is inseparably connected with 'trust' meaning here: 'a person's compliance with the expectancies of the attitude of daily life as a morality.' Op. cit., p. 50, footnote. Garfinkel proves in his 'breaching experiments' that: 'The member of the society uses background expectancies as a scheme of interpretation. With their use actual appearances are for him recognizable and intelligible as the appearance-of-familiar-events. Demonstrable he is responsive to this background, while at the same time he is at a loss to tell us specifically of what consist. When we ask him about them he has little or nothing to say.' Op. cit., pp. 36-37.

- 3) Defining the place of the trajectory process in one's daily life and its impact on one's identity. He or she stubbornly tries to define anew the reality of everyday life and their place within it. It means one has to deeply reconsider and rejudge his or her current life situation, as well as past and future. The individual also attempts to morally judge his or her suffering. The afflicted person, by virtue of thorough and deep deliberation of his or her biographical situation, may arouse his or her will to enter new or return to neglected biographical action schemes or, to the contrary, may totally destroy their sense of living. The individual comes to the point where he or she must at least attempt to theoretically work through the trajectory dynamics. These theoretical activities would occur in the format of argumentation.

Finally, the afflicted person may **practically work upon or escape from the trajectory potential**. As numerous autobiographical narrative interviews with suffering individuals show the trajectory process in its sequential organization may be brought under control and chaos, disarray and fragility of everyday life may be overcome. Depending on the sources and nature of the trajectory process the afflicted individual attempts to free him- or herself from its influence. This may take different forms. It may happen that the trajectory potential just disappears (e.g., the war would be over, a person would be acquitted of false accusations etc.). One may also try to disentangle or extricate him- or herself from the powerful potential of the trajectory process (it is often the case of alcoholics and drug addicts). The person may also start a systematic action scheme of escaping from the trajectory dynamics (like for instance immigrants who after great disappointment abroad and through lack of capacity to cope with the strange reality come back home, or students who cannot be up to the many requirements of the higher education system and quit). There is also a possibility that the suffering individual (e.g. a chronically ill person) may systematically integrate and harmonise certain effects of the trajectory process into the course of his or her life and continue previous or create new biographical action schemes to the best of their possibilities.²⁵ In brief, many individuals while subjected to the biographical process of trajectory and dealing with the mechanics of one's suffering come to different, often very complex, evaluations and attitudes towards central periods in their biography and identity. Completely new ordering categories may be imposed on the afflicted person's past, current and future situations.

²⁵ Riemann G., Schütze F., 1991, 'Trajectory'..., op. cit., pp. 351-352; Schütze F., 1996, Verlauskurven..., op. cit., pp. 130-131.

It is important to mention that the experience of trajectory may be so traumatic and painful and so deeply rooted in the afflicted person's biography that even if its potential would be removed, it may still profoundly affects his or her life. It seems, then, that the only way to curb the trajectory process' influence is through a systematic putting together his or her life situation with trajectory.

A particularly exceptional possibility to deal successfully with the trajectory process is metamorphosis. It usually takes place when the afflicted person meets some unexpected and creative opportunities. It results in re-definition of one's self-concept, life situation and system of relevance. Thus, the individual restores control over his or her life circumstances and regains calmness of mind and temper. In such a case, it is remarkable that if the trajectory process had not intruded in the life course of the individual, he or she could have never showed certain capacities or skills.²⁶

²⁶ This may be the case of people who start painting with their mouths or legs after losing their hands and suddenly notice that they have great artistic talent. There are also many individuals who become fantastic athletes although they have to spend the rest of their lives in wheelchairs.

3.4. The social process of suffering and its linguistic realisation.

There are both intentional and symptomatic formal textual indicators and peculiar contents of an autobiographical narrative interview that indicate the unfolding trajectory process. Dealing with the biographical experience of suffering is characterised by a disorder of expectation, orientation, and relationship to one's world and identity. It is reflected in the text by means of a great deal of hesitation phenomena like numerous and often long pauses producing meaningful periods of silence, unfinished or interrupted sentences, multiple attempts to start utterances, repeated statements, reformulations, para-linguistic signs of emotion, narrative self-corrections and sudden changes of the mode of presentation. Moreover, the narrative rendering of events taking place while under the influence of the external overwhelming forces *is marked by a logic of conditional relevance*. (Schütze, 1992a: 191).²⁷ To illustrate the phenomena I would like to cite one of the immigrants who during the first of his stay in Germany suffered from cultural strangeness and social isolation enhanced by his inability to speak German. The narrator (Robert) recapitulates:

Robert (3/ 20-27)

Well and pfff I was made to learn the language, because I was there [in Germany] alone. It was necessary at work... so every evening... I had no Polish television... I was writing letters to my parents... as never before. I don't know, if it's going to happen again one day... because never mmm nobody couldn't make me, and when I was here so/ the circumstances made me to do it, because... because it's hard. It was great and super at work, it's been until today... but after my work, when/ when such days come, that... a breakdown, so, there is no one you can go to, because... because there is differently.

For the narrator not knowing German means having no relationship with other people and being totally alone. Robert claims that he was made to learn German: *I was made to learn the language* because he needed the language at work, but also because he had no one to talk to after work. He says: *the circumstances made me to do it*. The format of these two statements shows that the narrator was driven by external conditions determining his actions. It was not his individual intentional activity, but the overwhelming complexity of his life situation what forced him to learn German.

Although narrators often attempt to deny or gloss over the appearance of painful feelings in the life course, ensuing chaos and enormous suffering are reflected in the

²⁷ Please see: Charter 2, footnote 49 for the explication of the term 'conditional relevance'.

storytelling dynamics. While attempting to pass them over in the flow of narration – often through extended and developed argumentational commentaries and out-of-order evaluative commentary the afflicted individuals must face the discontinuity of their presentation. This occurs when during the extempore recollection the narrator sees that his or her autobiography becomes more and more vague and inconsistent when certain crucial parts of the life history are not discussed. To repair this growing ambiguity he or she must introduce a background construction, i.e., include and reconstruct painful phases of his or her biography in the flow of storytelling up to the moment when they converge with the main story line.

Launching into ‘the other’s stories’ in the dynamics of the autobiographical rendering may also reveal the trajectory process. By means of telling the story of other’s experiences, the narrator can supplement the picture of his or her suffering (caused for instance by immigration), and may work on his or her own trajectory. By the latter I mean the situation in which the informant shifts the focus by presenting somebody else’s lot in life, because he or she finds his or her own experiences as insufficient to show a state of great difficulties, discomfort and suffering.²⁸

These are only the most important indicators of the trajectory of suffering that may be found in autobiographical narrative interviews. I deal with them in detail while analysing step by step the collected immigrants’ biographies.

²⁸ Cf. Kaźmierska K., 1996, Konstruowanie narracji o doświadczeniu wojennej biografii. Na przykładzie analizy narracji kresowych, in Czyżewski M., Piotrowski A., Rokuszewska-Pawełek A. (eds.), *Biografia a tożsamość narodowa*, Wyd. Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, Katedra Socjologii Kultury, Łódź, pp. 94-95.

3.5. The immigration trajectory as a biographical entrapment.

The immigration process is usually connected with cultural alienation and social isolation, being void of basic language skills and with the incapacity of establishing social contacts. This puts the individual into a systematic trap. One of the most pivotal experiences in the life course of many immigrants is the realisation that their intentional far-reaching biographical action schemes unexpectedly have been transformed into passive reactions to powerful external forces and emotional injuries caused by deeply disturbing experiences. Confronted with the fateful unknown they realise that the routine of everyday life is suddenly ruined. Not only their dreams of better life have turned out to be false, but their status and prestige gained in their home country seems to be worthless abroad. While constantly struggling with new ways of conduct, schemes of interpretation, systems of relevance, and structures of common-sense knowledge, the immigrant usually loses his or her energy, thus jeopardising not only physical but also mental stability.

It is one of the most puzzling questions in relation to the immigration career to consider, why the person who willingly, voluntarily and consciously leaves his or her country of origin to have a better and affluent live abroad unpredictably enters the trajectory process. I am concerned here to find out how it comes about that one's autonomous and independent biographical action scheme surprisingly converts into the biographical process of personal suffering and disorganization. Or, to put it another way, why instead of fulfilling his or her desires and needs, the individual feels him- or herself to be caught in a trap?

Let us focus on some frame conditions making the life situation of the immigrants fundamentally complex. Most of them must face the following dilemma: on the one hand they cannot admit before their 'significant Germans'²⁹ (spouses, family members or friends) that they feel strange, alone and alienated for fear of hurting, disappointing or irritating them. On the other hand they cannot share their problems of living abroad with their significant others in Poland who believe that immigration undisputedly means well-being and success. It is a situation described by Harvey Sacks as: *no one to turn to* (Sacks, 1967).

²⁹ I refer here to the well-known and commonly used in symbolic interactionism term: 'significant other'. Since nationalities of individuals play a considerable role in my study I decided to put them instead of 'other'.

The immigrant's 'significant German' – in the most transparent example a German husband of a Polish wife – is the most proper person to turn to for help and support by virtue of common-sense reasoning that in need people should support each other.³⁰ Moreover, family members and friends are supposed to be the first to provide assistance, chiefly because they usually have the most detailed knowledge of the suffering individual. According to Sacks they are the:

(...) '*standardized*' relational pair which constitutes a locus for a set of rights and obligations concerning the activity of giving help. (Sacks, 1967: 203).

The situation of a young Polish woman, who after graduating from university comes to Germany to stay with her German husband is a case in point.³¹ Nina (it is the narrator's name used in the transcription) recalls her first months abroad as very lonely and depressive. In that time, she used to call her mother in Poland very often which usually costs a large amount of her salary. Thus, as we can see, although she was living at his dearly loved husband side, there was still something missing. But Nina was aware that she could not show her misery and sadness in the presence of her spouse. She explains:

Nina (23/24-36)

At the beginning it's the same/ at the beginning, when I just moved here and I thought to myself: ah, rubbish, I can also manage here, you know, I would set about and I would learn something and I would get a great/ [a small break – the narrator takes care of her child's business] (...) what I've been talking about? (2)

I: About that, that also here you have to pull yourself together.

N: () So, believe me, because/ because I knew myself, that I myself can ruin our relationship [with her husband], if I'm so... gloomy, depressive, because you know... it's not only that, we are together, one should have his own life, you know...

I: mhm

In many respects the narrator's situation seems to be very similar to that described in Harvey Sacks' analysis of phone conversations of suicidal persons with the Suicide Prevention Center. He discusses a very dramatic situation of a woman who wants to commit suicide, because she has been unfaithful to her husband and the very husband is the most proper person to turn to for help and to restrain her from taking away her life. Simultaneously, the woman is aware that explaining the motives of her intention to her

³⁰ Cf. Schütze F., 1996, *Verlauskurven...*, op. cit., p. 144.

³¹ I find it sufficient to mention here only basic features of the narrator's life history. Nina's biography is in detail discussed in the next chapters of this work.

husband would put her on the spot and may trigger off unexpected and unwanted reactions in him. As a result there is no one she can turn to in her search for help.³² In the narrator's situation it is also her spouse who seems to be the most relevant and proper person to give assistance and provide support in her predicament (i.e., extremely alienating conditions of living abroad, because of cutting off from immediate contacts with her Polish family and friends), but, at the same time, confessing her suffering before her husband may cause his discontent and annoyance. He may feel hurt and disappointed because of using *totum pro parte*³³ reasoning (if my wife is deeply dissatisfied with her live situation in Germany, so she must be also disappointed with me - a German, a part of this whole). For this reason, the narrator does not share her doubts and problems with the person who is the most significant biographical caretaker in her immigration career. On the other hand, concealing her loneliness and sadness from his husband Nina establishes a suspicious awareness context³⁴, namely she makes her husband guess or suppose that she is unhappy. Both courses of action (disclosing or hiding Nina's feelings), however, seems to question the moral basis of interactive reciprocity and undermines the mutual trust in the couple's relationship and present a potential for the sudden destabilization of their life situation. It is one of the characteristics of trajectory that the afflicted person is in a dilemma that cannot be solved without high costs mainly marked by a severe communication breakdown.³⁵ Since the narrator is capable to see a stalemate character of her life situation, she makes unceasing efforts to find a satisfying area of activity in her German milieu that would let her get out of social isolation and depression.

By the same token immigrants often cannot reach out for help of their significant others in Poland, who are convinced that they are doing well and are happy (after all they decided to go abroad of their own free will and, at least potentially, may return whenever they want). While significant others involved in the trajectory process of being chronically ill tend to show sympathy and compassion, family and close friends of immigrants are rather filled with great surprise and disbelief in their disaster. The reason for this is that

³² See: Sacks H., 1967, The Search for Help: No One to Turn To, in Schneidman E. (ed.), *Essays in Self Destruction*, Aronson, New York, pp. 213-214. See also: Pomeranz A., Fehr B.J., 1997, *Conversation Analysis: An Approach to the Study of Social Action as Sense Making Practices*, in van Dijk T.A. (ed.), *Discourse as Social Interaction*, *Discourse Studies: A Multidisciplinary Introduction*, Vol. 2, Sage Publications, London, p. 68.

³³ *Totum pro parte* or whole for part is one of the most important synecdoche's kinds of generalizing expressions, i.e., a semantically narrower expression is replaced with a semantically wider one. In my example 'Germany' takes the place of 'a German'. To be more precise, a person in his or her commonsense thinking may ascribe the general characteristics of the national group he or she belongs to him- or herself.

³⁴ See: Glaser B.G., Strauss A.L., 1964, *Awareness Contexts...*, op. cit., p. 670.

³⁵ See: Riemann G., Schütze F., 1991, 'Trajectory'..., op. cit., p. 337 and p. 349.

immigration is commonly believed to be associated with a great deal of socio-economical success. Therefore, quite unexpectedly, the immigrants have to wrestle with their predicament alone. This makes their suffering even more nagging and enhances the power of the trajectory potential.

In the next chapters the immigration process and the consequent trajectory dynamics will be illustrated and discussed in detail. Then the process of winning back sufficient confidence in the ability of managing one's everyday activities in order to begin reconstructing biographical continuity will be dealt with.

Chapter 4

A description of some framing conditions that disturb the immigration process and/or enhance the trajectory development.

The collected in this study autobiographical narrative interviews show that the immigration process usually entails experiences of alienation and suffering which either temporarily influence individuals' life situation or permanently change their life-world. In this chapter, an attempt will be made to spell out conditions deriving from both the narrators' dispositions and specific biographical situations as well as from the broader social context (e.g. economic conditions, cultural values, and collective memory) that may cause a building-up of trajectory potential or enhance the trajectory process.

Serious and continuing disturbances of the immigration career often leading to a biographical trajectory of suffering are the most important experiences shaping most of the autobiographies gathered for the purposes of this study. The reasons for the predominance of biographical process structures connected with suffering, strangeness and alienation within the autobiographical texts are: relatively short time of the narrators' immigration biography and the characteristic of the Polish culture way of moulding and affecting its members' national identity. Since the focus of my interest concentrates on young immigrants (i.e. people who have lived in Germany for at least two years but no longer than 10) the course of their career abroad is still in its early stages and is generally the most difficult and painful phase. As a consequence of immigration their world of daily life which was previously comprehended as rational, routine, lasting and predictable¹, may become disordered and destabilised. Although people who intentionally plan to leave their homeland are usually prepared for significant changes and hard times, they do not consider that it would be necessary to face dramatic and overwhelming transformations, not only in their surroundings but also in their self-concepts. Accumulating unexpected experiences

¹ If a man sees his world of everyday-life in this way, the past makes up one of the integral parts of his identity. As A.L. Strauss puts it in his famous book: 'Mirrors and Masks': 'The sense that you make of your own life rests upon what concepts, what interpretations, you bring to bear upon the multitudinous and disorderly crowd of past acts. If your interpretations are convincing to yourself, if you trust your own terminology, then there is some kind of continuous meaning assigned to your life as-a-whole. Different motives may be seen to have driven you at different periods, but the overriding purpose of your life may be yet seen to retain a certain unity and coherence.' See: Strauss A.L., 1969, *Mirrors and Masks. The Search for Identity*, Sociology Press, Mill Valley, p. 145.

finally result in a vague impression that their life gets out of control. R.E. Park and E.W. Burgess aptly express this point in their classical book: 'Introduction to the Science of Sociology' where the initial phases of immigrant's life are described:

In general, a period of unrest represents the stage in which a new definition of the situation is being prepared. Emotion and unrest are connected with situations where there is a loss of control. Control is secured on the basis of habits and habits are built up on the basis of the definition of the situation. Habit represents a situation where the definition is working. When control is lost it means that the habits are no longer adequate, that the situation has changed and demands a redefinition. This is the point at which we have unrest - a heightened emotional state, random movements, unregulated behaviour- and this continues until the situation is redefined. The unrest is associated with conditions in which the individual or society feels unable to act. It represents energy, and the problem is to use it constructively. (Burgess, Park, 1972: 766).²

On the basis of the rigid empirical analysis of data five general phenomena that deeply affect the immigrants' biographies and self-concepts have been recognised.

At the beginning, situations in which the Polish immigrants must face up to their problematical *looking-glass* identity while talking to Germans will be discussed.³ The autobiographical narratives display two basic trouble spots in the Polish-German relations resulting in interactional anomie, both involving defining one another in terms of national identity. The first concerns the wartime events and their disparate interpretations in the collective memories of both nations. The second refers to a certain stigma in Goffman's (Goffman, 1990a) understanding that Poles bears in their interactions with Germans. Here, situations in which the narrators feel inferior due to their stereotypical picture in the eyes of their German interactional partners and mainly on the basis of their poor language competencies (this takes place at the outset of the immigration process) will be illustrated and scrutinised. Furthermore, the analysis will focus on the informants' common-sense explanations of the origin of the prejudices concerning Poles that suggests that a certain type of a Pole namely 'simpleton' – or as I call it following Park and Miller 'caffone' – has

² The authors quote here "Memorandum on Americanization, prepared by the Division of Immigrant Heritages, of the study of Methods of Americanization, of the Carnegie Corporation", New York City, 1919.

³ As we learn from the symbolic interactionism approach, identity is 'not something "given"', but is bestowed in acts of social recognition. We become that as which we are addressed. See: Berger P., 1963, Invitation to Sociology. A Humanistic Perspective, Penguin, Harmondsworth, p. 117.

predominated the image construction of a Pole in Germany. I find these interactional dimensions of the immigration process especially interesting, because following the symbolic interactionism approach I believe, that through continual interaction and communication with others an individual experiences the reality of everyday life is an intersubjective fact.⁴ Consequently, I argue that some serious disorders in interaction and communication occur in the immigration process which may lead to a loss of confidence in the realm of the world taken for granted.

Secondly, situations in which immigrants come to realise that due to leaving their homeland they have lost some very significant and valuable relationships (e.g. their beloved fiends) or they become aware that their crucial biographical plans (mainly concerning their professional career) cannot be fulfilled abroad will be described and examined. What makes their immigrant life especially complex and difficult is the fact that, although they voluntarily and willingly decided to settle in Germany, when their life there does not come up to the expectations, it turns out that their way back is limited or impossible. This 'trap' situation increases their feeling of disappointment and alienation and enhances the immigrants' passivity, resignation as well as reluctance to establish new social contacts. It is also connected with experiences of severe pressure and senselessness.

Thirdly, the general concern will be with the clash of expectations with reality. The disillusionment that immigrants experience results in the perception that their hopes, dreams and plans are difficult to realise or fall short of expectations. This occurs when they are confronted with the 'reality' abroad. To understand the related phenomena one must recognise the social conditions in which the immigrant's images of the foreign country are created while still in the homeland. In the analysis that follow, it will be argued that the picture of the approached country is based on false and unreal premises. These result chiefly from an impression conveyed by emigrants visiting their homeland that they live in happiness and prosperity. Thus, people who plan to immigrate have no reliable information about the real conditions of living abroad.

Fourthly, the process of constructing national identity by the Polish immigrants in the face of the foreign (German) culture will be carefully studied. Here, the main aim will be to

⁴ Cf. Berger P., Luckmann T., 1991, *The Social Construction of Reality. A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*, Penguin Books, London, p. 37.

explicate how common-sense thinking theories of being 'a nation' are constructed mainly through employing the argumentation that 'we are different' (i.e., what is common to 'us' as Poles, which makes 'us' different from them - Germans etc). Furthermore, it will be shown how the immigrants' suffering is based on the alienation from the various symbolic universes in the sense of Berger and Luckmann (Berger, Luckmann, 1991) as well as the ensuing struggle with the growing feeling of despair that is the result of having to cope with unpredictable and unfamiliar social environments.

Finally, the homecoming experience that usually makes the immigrants aware of their marginal position will be considered. It needs to be clarified, then, how it happens that the individuals come to realise that they will never be fully assimilated with the country of immigration and will no longer feel at home in the country of origin. Here, an endeavor will be made, not only to display the nagging feeling of being a stranger and of exclusion from the daily life world of one's family and friends in the homeland, but also to show how these experiences are then used to account for the narrators' residence abroad.

At this point, it should be stressed again that the biographical phenomena (i.e., conditions that disrupt the immigration career and/ or strengthen the trajectory process) which are discussed in this chapter are the results of a strict analytical procedure. The findings here presented are not confirmations of a pre-established set of hypotheses, but have emerged from the detailed comparative analysis of the collected cases.

4.1. Anomic interaction situations.

The main aim of the discussion below is to describe and thoroughly analyse interactional episodes sedimented in the biographies of the young Poles who came to Germany to establish a new life. It is their attitude towards themselves and their interaction partners that makes their biography different. There are two crucial points for our further considerations. Firstly, I think that interactions are of deciding importance for an individual's biography. I follow here G. Riemann and F. Schütze's view that:

Biographical processes consist of the life history experiences of the person and these experiences are produced by social interaction or at least are interpreted and sedimentated in the course of interaction. They impinge on the attitudes towards fellow interactants and shape social relationships with others, groups, social worlds and oneself. (Riemann, Schütze, 1991: 338).

Secondly, I claim that trajectory is a process, which is set in petty, fleeting and, it would appear, inconspicuous interactions.⁵ These inevitably confirm one's belief that there is no possibility of 'coming back' to one's normality (Cf. Corbin, Strauss, 1988) and certain, developed conceptions of self.⁶ Adhering to A.L. Strauss' considerations based on the foundation of symbolic interactionism, I view interaction as a process, in which individuals define the meaning of the situation for each other. At the same time they take into account their partner's definition, which becomes an integral part of their interpretation.⁷ Alfred Schütz, however, makes it clear that successful interaction is possible only if:

(...) in spite of all individual variations the same objects are experienced by our fellow-men in substantially the same way as by ourselves and vice versa, and also that our and their schemes of interpretation show the same typical structure of relevances. (Schütz, 1976: 143).

⁵ Strauss claims: 'Even when interaction is fleeting, occasional, it is likely to have a cumulative and developmental character.' Strauss A.L., 1969, *Mirrors...*, op. cit., p. 62.

⁶ We must also remember that: 'The changes of personal identity caused by severe suffering and the biographical impact of the trajectory of suffering have severe consequences for the interaction, communication, and work processes between the sufferer and the persons dealing with her or him.' Riemann G., Schütze F., 1991, 'Trajectory' as a Basic Concept for Analyzing Suffering and Disorderly Social Processes, in Maines D.R., *Social Organization and Social Structure; Essays in Honour of Anselm Strauss*, Aldine de Gruyter, New York..., p. 338.

⁷ Strauss A.L., 1969, *Mirrors...*, op. cit., pp. 55-56.

Moreover, he emphasises that:

If this belief in the substantial identity of the intersubjective experience of the world breaks down, then the very possibility of establishing communication with our fellow-men is destroyed. In such a crisis situation we become convinced that each of us lives in the impenetrable shell of his solipsistic prison, the Others becoming mere mirages to us, we to the Others, and we to ourselves. (op. cit.)

People bring their basic expectations⁸ into every face-to-face situation and use them as a scheme of interpretation. These are ‘seen but unnoticed’ (Cf. Garfinkel, 2002) standardised, ‘nomic’ features which govern the ongoing interaction.⁹ If interaction proceeds contrary to the participants’ expectations or there is some considerable discrepancy between their schemes of interpretation we are presented with an anomic interactional situation.¹⁰ In other words, when interaction deviates from its ‘nomic’ order and the stock of previous experiences (knowledge at hand) which usually helps to cope with problematic situations fails, not only does the very interaction reach an impasse, but also one’s identity is brought into question. Consequently, problematic interactions not only involve ‘thought’ and discussion between participants, but also may

(...) bring about a process of identity change that entails some degree of suffering and strangeness toward the selves of individuals or collectivities. (Strauss, 1993: 43-44).

As the analysis of the autobiographical narrative interviews shows, anomic interactions emerge (1) from situations in which either expectations of one of the partners are fundamentally violated by the other participant of the interaction, or (2) in which an individual’s ‘undesirable identity’ (in the form of a negative stereotype) is persistently bestowed as irremovable part of one’s daily life.

⁸ The term: ‘basic expectations’ introduced by Harold Garfinkel, but closely related to the concept of ‘natural attitude of daily life’ elaborated by A. Schütz refers to the assumptions of every member of society of how their daily affairs should look like and how they should be conducted. People usually do not pay attention to them as long as they are not broken.

⁹ Cf. Garfinkel H., 2002, *Studies in Ethnomethodology*, Polity Press, Cambridge, pp. 36-37.

¹⁰ The term ‘anomic’ was introduced by E. Durkheim who studied different rates of suicides in different European groups and correlated it with different types of social integration. He distinguished three types of suicide: altruistic, egoistic, and anomic. He found anomic suicide as a result of the weakening of social bonds, loosening certain sets of rules, norms and standards which provide people a sense of security in the group. See: Durkheim E., 1951, *Suicide*, The Free Press, New York.

Schütze maintains that in such situations individual's expectations related to the basis of interactional cooperation and integrity of self-conception are systematically weakened, undermined, or even violated.¹¹ The individual is out of her or his depth. One observes deepening cracks and scratches in one's everyday life. In the following passages, I will analyse how anomy in interaction destabilises an individual's identity and, by implication, affects one's biography.

4.1.1. Breaching of the common-sense thinking rule concerning the reciprocity of perspectives. The disparate schemes of interpretations of the wartime events.

In the immigrant's daily life his or her 'knowledge at hand' which functions as a scheme of reference¹², often fails. The common-sense knowledge concerning her or his current situation is usually incomplete, defective, or even false. As Riemann and Schütze put it:

The person realizes that she or he is driven by powerful outer forces and that the uses of familiar strategies for social and biographical action are no longer possible. (Riemann, Schütze, 1991: 349).

The immigrant has difficulties with conducting actions in a meaningful and reasonable way since:

(...) the usual biographical resources for managing one's life do not work anymore. (op. cit.: 350-351).

The person becomes unpredictable and strange not only to him- or herself, but also to his or her interaction partners. Additionally, face-to-face interactions of the immigrant with the approached group's members may be difficult owing to different ways of conduct, but also because of distinct sets of shared values, symbols, attitudes and history. As Schütz points

¹¹ Schütze F., 1997, 'Trajektorja cierpienia jako przedmiot badań socjologii interpretatywnej', *Studia Socjologiczne*, No. 1 (114), p. 19.

¹² Cf. Schütz A., 1990a, *Common-sense and Scientific Interpretation of Human Action*, in *Collected Papers I: The Problem of the Social Reality*, Martinus Nijhoff, The Hague, p. 7.

out, when these discrepancies become pivotal issues in the interactional process, the main rule of common-sense thinking (that is the reciprocity of perspectives) may be broken:

Our relationship with the social world is based upon the assumption that in spite of all individual variations the same objects are experienced by our fellow-men in substantially the same way as by ourselves and vice versa, and also that our and their schemes of interpretation show the same typical structure of relevances. (Schütz, 1990b: 143).¹³

In our everyday life, this general thesis of reciprocity of perspectives manifests itself in: (1) the idealization of the interchangeability of the standpoints, and (2) the idealization of the congruency of the system of relevances.¹⁴ Schütz explains the former in the following way:

I take it for granted, and I assume my fellow-man does the same, that I and my fellow-man would have typically the same experiences of the common world if we changed places, thus transforming my Here into his, and his – now to me a There – into mine. (op. cit.: 316).

Furthermore he says:

I take it for granted until counterevidence is offered – and assume my fellow-man does the same – that the differences originating in our private system of relevances can be disregarded for the purpose at hand and that I and he, that ‘We’ interpret the actually or potentially common objects, facts, and events in an ‘empirically identical’ manner. i.e. sufficient for all practical purposes. (op. cit.).

Detachment of or serious undermining of the common-sense thinking attitude may lead to disruptions in communication and to some sort of mistrust between both sides of the interactional process. It may also cause the pragmatic and cooperative motives of action to be squandered.¹⁵ Since the rule is treated as some sort of a normative pattern, individuals are prone to see it in invariable and lasting terms. Any violation of this rule may entail continual unrest and annoyance, arouse anger and finally disorganise interaction. Conflicting and contradicting systems of relevances upset the course of interaction and

¹³ In Polish see: Schütz A., 1985, ‘Don Kichot i problem rzeczywistości’, *Literatura na Świecie*, No. 2, p. 253.

¹⁴ Schütz A., 1990a, *Common...*, op. cit., pp. 11-12, See also: Kallmeyer W., Schütze F., 1976, ‘Konversationsanalyse’, *Studium der Linguistik*, Jg.1, H.1, p. 9-10.

¹⁵ Cf. Czyżewski M., 1997, *W stronę teorii dyskursu publicznego*, in Czyżewski M., Kowalski S., Piotrowski A., (eds.), 1997, *Rytualny chaos. Studium dyskursu publicznego*, Wyd. Aureus, Kraków, p. 87.

make coming to an understanding impossible.¹⁶ Following Schütz, Harold Garfinkel indicates that destruction of the moral basis of interactive reciprocity and cooperation disturbs apprehending the reality of everyday life as an ordered reality.

The most vivid instances of the phenomena described above can be found in recapitulations of the narrators' encounters with Germans of their grandparents' generation. There are situations in which elderly Germans who either were participants in the war or were witnesses of it come face-to-face with young Poles who know it merely from history books, films and family stories. There are also situations where people living in two different symbolic universes meet. Therefore, we must take into account here that - as Berger and Luckmann maintain:

The symbolic universe also orders history. It locates all collective events in a cohesive unity that includes past, present and future. With regard to the past, it establishes a 'memory' that is shared by all the individuals socialized within the collectivity. (Berger, Luckmann, 1991: 120).

It is important to note that the Second World War is one of the most significant occurrences in the collective memory of the Polish people thus shaping their national identity.¹⁷ Accordingly, whether accidentally or intentionally the wartime events are evoked in conversations between (young) Poles and (elderly) Germans, their symbolic universes clash. Their fundamentally different interpretations of the past result in destroying mutual understanding thus threatening the ongoing interaction. I will show at a later stage in the analysis of the autobiographical renderings of the young Poles how their talks with Germans about the war may lead to disclosing their national identity by referring to argumentations typical for the Polish war discourse. I find this crucial for understanding the Polish national identity, because as Stuart Hall argues:

¹⁶ Cf. Schütz A., 1990a, Equality and the Social Meaning Structure, op. cit., p. 237.

¹⁷ I refer here to Paul Ricoeur's explanation of collective memory. He claims that there is a set of memories shared by all members of a certain group or community. Through this collective memory the individuals have access to past events and deeds that have been reconstructed and recounted to them. The world they live in is replete with accounts of their common past. An individual's memory takes shape against the backdrop of this collective memory, or, in a certain sense, is preceded by it. For the discussion of the place of the World War II in the Polish collective memory and its impact on the Polish national identity see: Rokuszewska-Pawełek A., 2002, Chaos i przymus. Trajektorie wojenne Polaków – analiza biograficzna, Wyd. Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, Łódź, pp. 104-106.

National cultures construct identities by producing meanings about 'the nation' with which we can identify; these are contained in the stories which are told about it, memories which connect its present with its past, and imagines which are constructed of it. (Hall, 1996: 613).

In the following scrutiny the particular importance will be given to different and often mutually exclusive systems of relevance and moral values, which may obstruct the course of interaction. Józef Tischner - a well-known Polish phenomenologist - writes:

Taking up a dialog with the other, I come to him from the inside of some hierarchy [of values – K.W.]; and the other taking the dialog with me comes to me from the inside of his hierarchy [of values]. Our dialog will be fruitful only if our hierarchies are alike, or if they are able to make them alike (to each other). (Tischner, 1990: 19; translated from Polish by the author).

In order to show what the consequences of divergent hierarchies, different memories of the past and schemes of interpretations are, I will analyse excerpts from three autobiographical narrative interviews in which the informants discuss the wartime events with their German interactional partners. These partners are respectively: a wife's grandfather, a woman met from time to time in a laundry, or a man in an old people's home in which one of the narrators works.

4.1.1.1. The violation of the family taboo (Piotr and his wife's grandfather).

There are many passages in the corpus of the collected autobiographical interviews in which problematical encounters with Germans of the war generation are recapitulated and taken into consideration. The text segment taken from the interview with Piotr is one of the most intriguing in this respect. The narrator came to Germany as a seasonal worker (he worked as a carpenter) when he was 23-year-old (at the time of the interview he has been to Germany for 8 years). During his stay, which was twice prolonged, he met his future wife, who is half German and half Spanish. In the flow of his storytelling, he introduces argumentative passage to draw a comparison between the German and the

Spanish family (which has been living in Germany for a long time)¹⁸ and to discuss his relations with them. The narrator finds the Spanish relatives of his wife very friendly, cheerful and open, and her German family closed and not eager to talk. To illustrate the point Piotr refers to the situation he encountered while looking at a family album with some wartime photos of his wife's grandfather – a German. The narrator seems to be astonished by the standpoint of the German family treating the Second World War as a taboo issue. In comparison to his own grandparents' attitude towards the wartime events, who proudly shared their experiences of those times with their grandchildren, he finds evasive actions of the Germans strange.

Piotr (34/36 – 35/19)pl¹⁹

N: So these German families are totally (2) different, as you can see, they rather/ they rather/ they don't talk/ grandfather doesn't say: 'Listen... I was fighting here or there'... *Egal* He was in the arm/ yyyy in the army, wasn't he?, he was in Poland, he was a soldier, wasn't he?, So let him talk, you know? Well, that's life, politics, isn't it? And it happened and if he killed someone or something... *Egal*, Poles also killed people. It was politics,

I: Yes.

N: they had to go, that's all, you know? (2) It's a great taboo. It is not talked about. Once ((laughing till*)) I took a photo album, you know?...

I: mhm

N: well... and I started looking at it/ grandfather came/ something like that* there was the album lying there, so I took it and I look at it: mmm here grandfather in the army, you know?, a uniform and so on and (2) ((modulating his voice)) 'Oh, you don't have to look at it/ you don't have too look at it.' And I say: 'Why not?', you know? And I just wanted (2) He wanted to take it away, but I say: 'No, I'll look at it', you know, and that's all', you know?... So he has this problem. Well, maybe he also has a problem (2) but... he wasn't some (3) They ordered to do so, so they were doing, you know?, because... that's the way it goes. There were so many Germans who perished because... they opposed... Hitler, this/ that party, you know? It was one party that took over/ took over (2) power, you know?, and they just... did it and if someone opposed it he was found riddled with bullets, wasn't he?, SMS [I believe the informant mean SS here] came, you know? And...

I: mhm

N: It was like that, wasn't it? Not only (2) Jews... Poles () others, perished too... their own... if someone opposed, don't they?...

I: mhm

N: That's the way life goes. I see it this way and what/ what/ what I know and all these things... But, you know, he/ he has this problem, just to talk about his life and say: 'Listen'/ like my grandfather used to tell me in Poland: he was going there, that there was this guerrilla welfare/ although I knew my grandfather little, because/ because/ because he died, you know? I was 10-year-old, when he died... 10 years/ well, 9, you know? But he always... he used to talk about it, when they came there, I was here, I was there, or/ or my grandma, she used to tell us: well, when Germans came, when the Russians came they took our cow away, but/ but Germans left some cow's head, she says, because there were a lot of children, so they left it. When Russians came, they took everything away, you know?... ((laughing)) Well... and they were talking about such different things, you know, they were talking about the war, occupation, how it was that my grandfather had to hide, how he

¹⁸ It is probably his wife's mother who married a German and moved to Germany.

¹⁹ Please see Appendix for the detailed description of transcription's notation.

was coming at night he was playing with children, he kissed them and... ran away, you know?, about his life, you know? (2) And/ and/ and/ you know, when grandpa was telling it, I think, it's very/ and he was telling it to the children (). There's rather so (2) there is no issue/ there's no family issue (2)

Let us carefully examine what is going on in the situation in which the young man of Polish origin wants to look at a family album with photos showing his wife's grandfather of Germany origin as a *Wehrmacht's* soldier (the informant does not say it explicitly, but suggests that the grandfather 'served in the army'). They could probably discredit and embarrass the old man in the eyes of the young Pole who, in addition, is a new member of the German family. The interaction between the narrator and the old German comes to a confused halt. Whereas the grandfather makes desperate efforts at saving his face in the sense of Goffman and defending the ongoing interaction²⁰, Piotr stubbornly attempts to unearth problematical threads of the past. It is apparent that the old man wants to leave unsaid or, using Schütze's terminology, fade out of his awareness²¹ those stages in his biography that could cause him to be ashamed. Trying to avoid the uncomfortable issues, he uses one of the basic strategies of face-work that is to defend his positive picture in the eyes of his interaction partner, i.e., he

(...) keeps off topics and away from activities which would lead to the expression of information that is inconsistent with the line he is maintaining. (Goffman, 1972a: 326).

It is very intriguing that Piotr does not withdraw from his 'offensive' action and does not neutralise this difficult situation through employing protective practices.²² Thereby, he destroys the moral order of interaction that obliges him to take care of his interaction partner's face.²³ In this connection, the informant's response may be seen (and we may assume that this is the old German's interpretation of Piotr's conduct) as provocative or teasing (i.e., aiming at putting the old German in a position in which he would have to confess to the young Pole and to himself that he was involved in the war machinery). Thus, the differences in perspectives originating in their unique biographical situations become

²⁰ See: Goffman E., 1972a, On Face-Work: An Analysis of Ritual Elements in Social Interaction, in Hutcheson S., Laver J. (eds.), *Communication in Face to Face Interaction*, Penguin Books, London. See also Chapter 1 in this study.

²¹ For the discussion of fading out war's experiences in the case of soldiers see: Schütze F., 1992a, 'Pressure and Guilt: War Experiences of a Young German Soldier and their Biographical Implications (Part 1)', *International Sociology*, Vol. 7, No. 2, pp. 187-208. I will return to this issue later.

²² Protective practices are to help one's interactional partners to save their face. See: Goffman E., 1972a, On Face..., op. cit., and Goffman E., 1990b, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday life*, Penguin Books, London, pp. 222-227.

²³ It is clear here that Piotr upsets the basis of cooperative interaction: when one of the participants in encounter declares an issue as a taboo subject, his or her partner should respect it and not touch this topic anymore.

relevant – the idealization of the congruency of the system of relevances is upset.²⁴ Consequently, mutual understanding cannot be reached and disorder and consternation ensue. In his rendering, however, Piotr attempts to account for his understanding of the situation. For him (and for many Poles of his generation) World War II is associated with dangerous, exiting and strange ‘adventures’ of their grandparents who bravely fought against Germans. In the narrator’s family stories concerning the wartime experiences were eagerly told by his grandfather and his grandmother. Hence, the old German who is very reluctant to share his recollections of that time surprises him. On the one hand, Piotr suspects that the grandfather of German nationality may be ashamed of his past, but, on the other hand, he is not able to understand his standpoint. The informant joins in his narration some sort of argumentative structure that is to show why the old generation of Germans who became embroiled in World War II should not be embarrassed. His common-sense explanation is based on a conviction that Germans were forced to serve in the army, perished like others and all these terrible things were connected with politics – and therefore were not the conscious choice of individuals. His justification puts the old German on a par with his grandparents and may suggest that the narrator’s intention was not to degrade the old man, but just to hear another ‘wartime story’. Piotr’s position that war is a matter of politics and ordinary soldiers cannot be blamed for it probably corresponds with the old German’s view, but this opinion of the young Pole is unknown to him. For this reason, the old man still acts toward Piotr as if the latter wants to put him in a difficult, uncomfortable position. This situation clearly shows that the old German identifies his interaction partner in terms of his national identity – his actions are directed not toward his granddaughter’s husband, but toward a Pole – someone who is a member of the country “we” (the Germans) were fighting with thus making the situation very inconvenient for both of them.

The narrator’s own clarification of his interaction partner’s action is not sufficient here. The puzzling behaviour of the old German (i.e., tabooing and leaving unsaid the war time events) should be seen in the wider context of the collective trajectory of the German war generation. Schütze explains that:

Collective trajectories are social phenomena marked by a massive breakdown of world and life expectations, a dramatic decline and loss of one's planning capacities and a severe

²⁴ Cf. Schütz A., 1990a, Common..., op. cit., p. 12.

deterioration of social relationships for many members of a social 'we-community'. Normally it provokes individual biographical trajectories of prolonged suffering and a breakdown of planning capacities. (Schütze, 1992a: 192).

Further he adds:

In a collective trajectory (...) any orderly state of affairs, social expectations as well as cultural norms lose their orientational power and go awry. (Schütze, op.cit.: 196).

Although it is hard to establish whether the narrator's wife's grandfather was an ideologically involved follower of the Nazi movement or a passive observer of the war crimes²⁵, it is sure that he was entangled in the collective trajectory of Nazi Germany and he was trapped in the collective moral deterioration. The subsequent feeling of collective guilt and responsibility could result in his unbearable suffering. Consequently, the old German had to make strenuous attempts to fade crimes against humanity and immoral behaviours (including acts of refraining from giving help to the unfairly suffering victims of the Nazi terror) out of his consciousness. This might bring about his inability to repent and mourn²⁶ and impedes his courage to work his dishonourable past through. Or, although he is aware and reflective of the collective guilt of the German army and his personal involvement in it, he would not like to talk about this difficult with his Polish 'grandson in law'. He might keep drifting from this sensitive topic for fear of upsetting the relationship of the young couple. Consequently he is incapable of articulating the wartime events not only in the presence of the Polish young man but and in general if the former assumption is true. Piotr does not understand it, because the majority of Poles (the narrator's grandparents are the best example here) can look back with pride on their war experiences. This does not imply that they did not suffer or experience severe personal trajectories. This means that they were not snared by collective moral deterioration. To the contrary, the spirit of the Polish nation was raised by the Polish Government in London and its underground agencies in occupied Poland. Their efforts were focused not only on saving the Polish culture, but also on maintaining a proper standard of moral values.²⁷

²⁵ We may only conjecture that the old German served in the Wehrmacht. The narrator suggests that he saw pictures of his wife's grandfather in the army and in a uniform. This does not determine the old German's involvement in the Nazi crimes.

²⁶ See: Schütze F., 1992a, 'Pressure and Guilt'..., op. cit., pp. 189-190 and further.

²⁷ See: Bartoszewski W., 2005, *Oblicze kultury polskiej w konspiracji*, in *Warto być przyzwoitym. Teksty osobiste i nieosobiste*, W drodze, Poznań, pp. 199-246.

Therefore, many Poles of the wartime generation may treat their war biography as an adventurous part of their life and may be proud of their actions.

It is obvious here that both participants of the interaction have different interpretations of the past (if World War II is considered), or only suspect that their interpretations differ radically. As a function of this, their national identities and typical ways of dealing with collective memory are at stake and they are – at least in the repeated situations – unable to cooperate. The general thesis of reciprocal perspectives is skewed and the moral order is interrupted.²⁸ To gain an understanding of why the old German makes an effort to avoid the topic of the war we must however remember that the collective trajectory of Nazi Germany probably marked his biography for life. Piotr's narrative proves beyond all doubt that he is not aware that while trying to force his interaction partner to discuss the content of his family photo album, he touches on very painful and problematical phases of the old German's past. In all probability, these are connected with severe distress and misery and therefore continuously faded out of his consciousness. This makes the possibility of communication between the young Pole and his German interlocutor even more difficult.

4.1.1.2. Accidental problematical encounters (Monika and the accidentally met old German lady).

At this point, I wish to focus on the interview with Monika. The informant is a 28-year-old woman who has been living in Germany for 2 years at the time of the interview. She graduated in political sciences in Poland and worked approximately 12 months as a civil servant in her country of origin. In this time she met a Silesian with German citizenship living in one of cities in South Germany. She subsequently decided to marry him and to take up residence with her husband in Germany.

In response to a direct question of the interviewer about the way in which Poles are seen in Germany Monika admitted firstly that she was rather surprised when she realised that Germans (she has shop assistants, registrars, or civil servants in mind) do not jeer at

²⁸ In the narration of Piotr the discrepancy in interpretations of the war and its consequences occurs also in the discussion with his peer. The young German – the narrator's fellow worker, suggests that if Hitler had won the war, Piotr might have worked not with him, but for him and he would have held sway over him. The narrator endeavours to persuade his interaction partner that if Hitler had really won the war, they both (meaning the Poles and the Germans) must have served him.

foreigners who do not speak their language very well. She has probably mentioned this because at that time Monika had many difficulties in speaking fluent German. The narrator, then, expected that as a stranger with very poor language skills, she would be treated impolitely. It turned out, however, Monika's lack of the language competencies as well as her national identity seemed to be irrelevant for all practical purposes.²⁹ There is one exception to this rule in her immigration experience. Monika introduces here the presentational format of a background construction and reconstructs her several encounters with an old German lady in a public laundry. While the narrator learns very quickly that during her everyday interactions with Germans her identity (and her national identity in particular) is not threatened, during her meetings with the old German she perceives that her national self is seriously questioned and derogated. The full text concerning Monika's face-to-face interactions with the old German lady will now be presented in the context of these considerations.

Monika (8/20-9/7)pl

I: And tell me, when you came to/ to Germany...

N: mhm

I: have you come across any... any opinions about Poles?... Do you know how Germans view Poles?

N: Well, one/ It means I know that/ much to my surprise, in fact... ffff even in shops they were quite nice, considering/ if foreigners are considered... That also, because I rather expected that they must frown if someone twists something, or says it wrong, but it was quite... quite OK. In practice the only (2) woman, I've met and I meet her quite regularly... in a laundrette... she's a woman who was born before the war in Mazuria ... She is, I suspect, a little bit mad. At the beginning she used to tell me her own theories and I, because of the language matters ((laughing till*)), couldn't argue with her, because (2) although I wanted, and now I can, but I don't want to... She yyy... she was such/ she was probably raised yyy when there was still this *Hitlerjugend*, or something, because she's saturated with these ideals and/ and... she says something... about some/ strange things, that/ that Germans used to help Poles before the war, that Russians are nasty, that Jews used to take everything away, some/ she says very odd things. That in camps [the informant has concentration camps in mind] in fact yyy fff there were no camps in practice, it's an invention and-and-and after the war Germans were in camps, you know. So she presents me with such stories each time I meet her, but well, at present I don't argue... It means I just listen to her, but I don't ((laughing till*)) respond to it if I'm of different opinion.* I decided to leave this lady alo/ It means I just... I think highly of her, because she's the only person I can speak German, so... so ((laughing till*)) she's got a lot of pluses for that reason* in my mind...

I: mhm

N: In fact, it's the only so/ but if some negatives are considered...

Even though the informant discusses here only a few interactions with the old Germany woman, we have the impression that they all are meshed into one 'basic' experience. In all

²⁹ See: Garfinkel H., 2002, *Studies...*, op. cit., p. 56.

probability, we can say that the narrator has already developed the generalised conception of the interaction with the lady. It may mean that Monika had been carefully considering and working out the matter. Moreover, it seems to imply that these interactions are of crucial meaning for Monika's identity and her immigrant's biography. The situation is not in itself typical. It is unusual that encounters between people in a laundry leads to discussions about wartime matters. We can presume that the topic emerges because the old lady apprehends Monika as a member of the Polish nation. Even if the narrator does not introduce herself as a Pole, her accent gives her away. The old German lady's associations with Poland, in turn, concerns the war and, probably, also the post war events (I will discuss this matter later). As Berger and Luckmann emphasise:

The reality of everyday life contains typificatory schemes in terms of which others are apprehended and 'dealt with' in face-to-face encounters. (Berger, Luckmann, 1991: 45).

Therefore, a young Pole as a certain 'type' of person (or a member of the Polish nation) awakes old memories and induces the German woman to make some judgments about wartime events or facts directly connected with it. She maintains that: (1) Germans used to help Poles before the war; (2) Russians were nasty (which Monika probably reads as a suggestion that Germans were not so bad in that case); (3) Jews used to take everything away from other people (presumably Germans); and finally (4) After the war Germans were imprisoned in camps.³⁰

Interpretations and meanings imposed on the wartime events by the old lady fundamentally contradict Monika's conception of the historical past. The young Pole cannot accept her point of view and believes she was saying *strange things*. It boggles the narrator's mind that one could see the past in this way. In Monika's understanding, there are two plausible explanations for this surprising standpoint: either the old German lady was a member of the *Hitlerjugend*, and still remains under the influence of its ideology or she is out of her

³⁰ I would like to refer briefly to Branscombe, Doosje and McGarthy's hypothesis. Their experiments show that members of the perpetrator group use a variety of discursive strategies to avoid collective guilt. These are for instance: claiming that one's own group was more victimized than the group of the other's; including other groups who have committed similar moral violations in the frame of reference and endeavours to legitimize the harm done by the in-group. See: Branscombe N.R., Doosje B., McGarthy C., 2003, Antecedents and Consequences of Collective Guilt, in D.M. Mackie & E.R. Smith (Eds.), *From Prejudice to Intergroup Emotions: Differentiated Reactions to Social Groups*, Psychology Press, New York, pp. 56-57.

mind.³¹ Consequently, she becomes convinced that they do not share a common world of everyday life and, because of this, there is no common ground between them.³² The mode of the presentation of this passage shows that whenever the old lady tries to force her line of argumentation, Monika's indignation and anger grow.

To make her reaction clear some remarks on the shared Polish perspectives bearing upon the past (and World War II in particular) are indispensable. This, I believe, is supported by Strauss suggestion that:

(...) personal identity is meshed with group identity, which itself rests upon on historical past. (Strauss, 1969: 173).

At this point, I would like to show that there is a peculiar way of remembering, recreating and rewriting the past in accordance to the Polish collective memory. To get the point I quote the Polish sociologist Alicja Rokuszewska-Pawełek who, by means of the biographical method, deals with the wartime experiences of the Polish people and their influence on Polish national identity.³³ She says:

Up to current times the war-time experiences determine crucial frames of interpretation, which are applied to fill the content of the Polish national identity. (Rokuszewska-Pawełek, 2002: 206, translated from Polish by the author).

In offering this conclusion she goes on to explain that they are used not only to show basic threats to the national identity, but also to provide some common-sense categories, which describe 'polishness' and distinguish it from 'typical' features of other groups.³⁴ The commonly agreed-upon meanings concerning the history of Poland shows that it is still comprehended in terms of martyrdom and heroic resistance to enemies.³⁵ It results not only

³¹ The justification (considering a person as mad) is very significant from the point of view of phenomenology. Someone who has taken leave of his senses does not belong to the same common-sense world and cannot be treated seriously. As A. Schütz explains: '(...) only mutual faith in the Other's terms of reality guarantees intercommunication.' See: Schütz A., 1990b, *Don Quixote and the Problem of Reality*, *Collected Papers II. Studies in Social Theory*, Martinus Nijhoff/ The Hague, p. 156.

³² Cf. Berger P., Luckmann T., 1991, *The Social...*, pp. 38-39.

³³ Rokuszewska-Pawełek A., 2002, *Chaos i przymus. Trajektorie wojenne Polaków – analiza biograficzna*, Wyd. Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, Łódź.

³⁴ Cf. op. cit., pp. 205 -207.

³⁵ It fits into Ernest Renan's conception of a nation when he notes that common suffering unites individuals more than joys and defeats and grievances are of much greater importance for the nation formation and solidarity than triumphs.

in celebrating the value of victims of the war and occupation, steadfast resistance and faith in humanity, but also in one-sided moral judgements. These are evident in the unambiguous division between the executor and the victim with clear-cut definitions of right and wrong, ‘us’ and ‘they’.³⁶ Moreover, as Florian Znaniecki explains:

After the partition of Poland, some Polish mystics developed a semi-religious conception of a Polish mission. The partition was conceived as analogous to the crucifixion of Jesus. After the resurrection, which was bound to come, Poland would assume a mission like that of Christ; it would spread throughout the world the principle of mutual love between nationalities. (Znaniecki, 1973: 41).

To put it succinctly, the Poles see themselves as victims, who are continuously wronged by fate, treated badly and deceived by other nations – especially Germans.³⁷ The Polish national memory is full of the flawless Polish heroes of romantic fashion who were fighting to gain their freedom from foreign control.

Having in mind this general conception of the Polish national identity, let us return to the interaction between the old German lady and the young Polish girl. Although Monika mentions that her interaction partner *was born before the war in Mazuria* or later in the interview she categorises her as: *that woman from Mazuria*, in her interpretation the old lady is seen as a German who had lived in East Prussia. Yet, the lady’s place of origin (i.e., Mazuria) may put a different complexion on things and shed new light on her conducts. As we know, a great number of Mazurian’s women were held in contempt, raped and abused after the war (mainly by the Soviet soldiers). This may explain her dislike of Russians. We must also remember that according to the Potsdam Treaty Germans were expelled from the terrains of Mazuria, where instead Polish repatriates (from these parts of Poland that were seized by the Soviet Union) were settled. It resulted in many conflicts and strengthening mutual stereotypes and prejudices. Thus, the Poles were perceived as people who had

Renan claims: ‘A nation is therefore a large-scale solidarity – constituted of the feeling of sacrifices that one has made in the past and of those one is prepared to make in the future.’ See: Renan E., 1993, *What is a Nation?*, in Bhabha H. K. (ed.), *Nation and Narration*, Routledge, London, p. 19

³⁶ Cf. Rokuszevska-Pawełek A., 2002, *Chaos...*, op. cit. p. 205.

³⁷ We must remember that during the communist time in Poland (the time in which the informant was brought up and educated) the official propaganda said that Germany was the only country with which Poland was at war and the Soviet Union was the Polish ally from the very beginning.

taken their homeland away.³⁸ For many Mazurian-Germans the Polish repatriates were guilty of their suffering and the painful separation from their material properties and cultural heritage. From this point of view, the old lady's hostile attitude towards the young Pole seems to be more 'justified' or 'accountable' in ethnomethodological terms.³⁹ It may reasonably be supposed that Monika does not know these historical conditions at all and presumably because of this she is not able to adopt the perspective of the old lady. It is clear now why the informant is completely disgusted with the way her interaction partner views the past. It seems probable, at least in the narrator's judgment that the old lady attempts to present the Germans and their actions during World War II in a favourable light.⁴⁰ Her impertinence irritates the young Pole, since she uses the strategy of relativisation and shifts responsibility for Nazi crimes onto the Soviets. The old woman believes that Germans were good and used to help Poles before the war. She claims that the Germans were not so bad because in comparison there were Russians who were considerably worse. What is more, she insinuates that there were Jews who did harm to Germans by stealing their possessions. Finally, she suggests that Poles kept Germans in prison. Of course, we may argue whether the old lady's point of view results from her own experience (if she was, for instance an eyewitness to taking someone else's properties by Jews or she knew Germans who supported Poles before the war, or maybe she experienced it herself) or, in fact, it is an effect of the Nazi ideology inculcated into her (as the narrator suggests). There is no doubt, however, that in many cases Russians were cruel, violent, wild and unpredictable. Kaja Kaźmierska shows in her study that the Soviet occupation described in the autobiographies of Poles who experienced the war on the East borderland is seen as the world without culture and a state of complete disorder which was impossible

³⁸ See: Czyżewski M., 1996, Repatrianci i wypędzeni: wzajemne uprzedzenia w relacjach biograficznych, in Czyżewski M., Piotrowski A., Rokuszewska-Pawełek A. (eds.), *Biografia a tożsamość narodowa*, Wyd. Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, Katedra Socjologii Kultury, Łódź, p. 162.

³⁹ This means that while discovering this information Monika could restore the sense of normality and understand her interactional partner's way of conduct. Consequently, the narrator would not treat the old lady as a 'mad' person, but as someone who also deserves compassion and sympathy.

⁴⁰ Marek Czyżewski, according to works of R. Wodak and T. Van Dijk, explains that presenting one's own group in a favorable light and distinguishing it from other groups by showing only its virtues is one of the basic features of the language of prejudices. See: Czyżewski M., 1996, *Repatrianci...*, op. cit., p. 167. This is what van Dijk describes as the 'ideological square'; i.e., the strategy of positive self-presentation and negative other presentation. It involves emphasis on positive representation of the in-group and negative representation of the out-group; and deemphasis, denial and mitigation of the negative properties of the in-group and deemphasis, denial and mitigation of the positive properties of the out-group. Van Dijk claims that 'biased discourses tend to be very detailed about Their bad acts and Our good acts, and quite abstract and general about Their good acts and Our bad ones.' See: Van Dijk T.A., 1998, *Ideology. A Multidisciplinary Approach*, Sage Publications, London, pp. 267-268.

to accustom one's self to. It entailed an incessant feeling of being in peril. On the contrary, the German occupation is characterised as better and often more humane, where rules of conduct were clear and intelligible.⁴¹ Furthermore, it is also true that there were many Germans who were imprisoned just after the war (some of them unfairly). However, from the point of view of a victim (and the informant finds herself a victim by virtue of being a member of the nation which suffered great harm and destruction during the war) it is unthinkable that one can treat this fact as some sort of excuse or accusation against the Poles.⁴² It is not my point here to establish the objective truth concerning the war, but to show how two subjective standpoints and one-sided versions of history being, to a large degree, mutually exclusive cannot be overcome by the reciprocity of perspectives. I find it very important to emphasise here that it may be not essential that historical memory as the fundamental component of national identity to be true, coherent and objective. On the contrary, it may be mostly legendary, mythicised and subjective.⁴³ Unfortunately, as we can see in this case, the ambiguous and vague knowledge of historical events may obstruct the course of communication and mutual understanding.

There is another facet of these accidental encounters with the old German lady, which should be considered. Monika mentions that while talking to the old lady for the first time she was not able to argue with her, because her German was very poor. For this reason, the German woman had the advantage over her and was in position to steer the course of their interaction. With time, the informant became more and more fluent in German, and, in the aftermath of it, she could take up the discussion on (almost) equal terms. However, when Monika was able to cope with the situation in terms of the language, thereby levelling the asymmetry⁴⁴, she did not want to do it. An important

⁴¹ Kaźmierska K., 1999, 'Dramatyzacja obrazu doświadczeń czasu wojny w opowiadaniu biograficznym. Analiza przypadku', *Kultura i Społeczeństwo*, No. 1, p. 103-104. See also: Kłoskowska A., 2001a, *National Cultures at the Grass-Root Level*, Central European University Press, Budapest, p. 355. G. Rosenthal discussing two autobiographical interviews with Jewish women points to the statement of one of the narrators: Mrs. Zweig who, first, was made to practice of prostitution in Theresienstadt (Jewish ghetto in Prague established by the Germans during the war), and then was raped by the Red Army soldiers: 'The Russians were even worse than the Germans.' See: Rosenthal G., Rosenthal G., 1997, *National Identity or Multicultural Autobiography. Theoretical Concepts of Biographical Construction in Case Reconstructions*, in *The Narrative Study of Lives*, Sage Publications, p. 28.

⁴² It is interesting that Monika - holding an M.A. in political science - does not refer to her professional knowledge and does not adopt the attitude of an impartial commentator, but she seems to be deeply emotionally involved in the situation.

⁴³ Cf. Kołakowski L., 1995, 'Über kollektive Identität', in Michalski K. (ed.), *Identität in Wandel: Castelgandolfo – Gespräche 1995*, Institut für die Wissenschaften vom Menschen, Stuttgart, p. 33.

⁴⁴ 'Symmetrical interaction, then, is characterised by equality and the minimization of difference, while complementary (asymmetric –KW) interaction is based on the maximization of difference.' See: Walzlawick P., Beavin J., Jackson D., 1967, *Pragmatics of Human Communication*, W.W. Norton, New York.

question presents itself: why did the narrator give the topic up? The change of Monika's attitude towards the lady's *strange theories* is expressed in her rendering in this way: *I, because of the language matters ((laughing till*)), couldn't argue with her, because (2) although I wanted, and now I can, but I don't want to...* Now, I will attempt to provide the most probable and valid explanation of this issue. We have already agreed that the collective memory of the past and, what follows, the concept of the Polish national identity profoundly influences Monika's identity (in particular in the face of the German interaction partner). The narrator is strongly convinced that she is right and her interpretation of the past is the only legitimate way of seeing it, and rejecting explanations she once regarded as valid and reliable, she could feel alienated and 'spiritually dispossessed' (Cf. Strauss, 1969: 38). In my opinion the most probable interpretation is: when the informant realises that further conversations with the German woman do not result in adopting her point of view, because it would be difficult for the old lady to change her historio-biographical belief, Monika gives further discussion up. It is not only because Monika sees that there is no point in arguing with the old lady, but also because their disputes spoil Monika's sense of identity or put her sense of identity at risk. In other words, the narrator abandons the touchy and inconvenient topic concerning the war experiences, because it is a serious threat to her own self-concept and national identification already undermined while abroad. Their discussions cause difficulty, annoyance, and ultimately result in interactional anomie. As Marek Czyżewski emphasises, one of the most inconvenient features of anomie is the lack of the mechanism of getting out of the situation or, at least, both participants' conviction that there is no way out.⁴⁵ Monika, then, decides not to work out the contentious issues, but instead to avoid them – at least in her encounters with the old lady.

As we can see Monika's interactions with the old lady seem to threaten her identity and her national identity in particular. In this light, it seems surprising that the narrator still wants to sustain this relationship. An interesting question presents itself: why - instead of avoiding contacts with the old lady – does Monika prefer protecting her opponent's and defending her own face via desisting from discussing touchy issues?⁴⁶ We must remember

⁴⁵ Cf. Czyżewski M., 1997, W stronę teorii dyskursu publicznego, op. cit., p. 113.

⁴⁶ Goffman says that during any encounter: 'the person will have two points of view – a defensive orientation toward saving his own face and a protective orientation toward saving the other's face.' Goffman E., 1972, On Face-Work: An Analysis of Ritual Elements in Social Interaction, in Hutcheson S., Laver J. (eds.), Communication in Face to Face Interaction, Penguin Books, London, p. 325.

that Monika's encounters with the old German lady in a laundry are the only chance to have private contacts with Germans, and thereby to develop considerable linguistic competencies. She probably refers to her husband's experiences connected with acquiring the German language competencies. We know it both from Monika's allusions in her narration and from Tomek's (her husband) life history⁴⁷ that there was also an old German woman (his mother's friend) who was patient and stubborn enough to motivate, correct and support his learning process at every opportunity. Thus, his acquisition of the German language was connected with spontaneous, naturally occurring interactions with a native speaker who voluntarily took over the role of his teacher. Accordingly, Monika becomes convinced that maybe she can also take advantage of her acquaintance with the German woman and increase her language skills.⁴⁸ It also implies that Monika finds learning the language in face-to-face interactions with native speakers the most effective and successful way. That is why she does not attempt to evade these identity threatening interactions, but rather tends to keep off 'dangerous' topics within it.⁴⁹

To sum up, in order to prevent her taken-for-granted world from disintegration and to maintain her self-conception (and national identity in particular) as well as in order to save the old lady's and her own face in order to profit from their encounters in terms of language Monika does not touch upon the war-time issues any more.

4.1.1.3. The prevention of conflicts at work (Ela and a veteran of the war).

Finally, I would like to discuss briefly the case of Ela. The narrator is of Silesian origin and for this reason she owns double citizenship (i.e., Polish and German). At the time of the interview she was 25-year-old and has been living in Germany for 4 years. Ela works in an old people's home as some sort of kitchen help. She lives and works in a city in South Germany (Bavaria). The below presented passage is the narrator's answer to the interviewer's question concerning Ela's relations with old Germans she deals with by virtue of her job:

⁴⁷ Her husband's autobiographical narrative interview (Tomek) is included in the data corpus of my study. Both interviews were carried out simultaneously but separately by two interviewers.

⁴⁸ I deal with the matter of difficulties in acquiring the German language by young Polish well-educated women later.

⁴⁹ Cf. Goffman E., 1972, *On Face-Work...*, op. cit., pp. 325-326.

Ela (6/14-25)pl

I: You've said that you work in an old people's home, have you? It's so interesting. What do these old people think of you? How do they treat you... you are a young Pole, you didn't/ didn't experience wartime and so on.

N: Frankly speaking, they generally don't/ there was only one... old man, but he stayed here for a short time, who really hated Poles... because during the war they shot his leg off or they did something to him, I don't know. Anyway, he had bad experiences in captivity, you know... and/ and he used to say very bad things, you know? I was lucky that he's never asked where I come from, because people rather/ they rather (because of my complexion)/ they rather place me in countries like Italy or Spain, they rather push me in this direction .hh It means, these who know me, they know that I come from Poland. It means, now the majority of them know/ almost all of them know that I come from Poland, you know?... But then he was shouting at Poles loudly and he was calling their names, you know?... Well, and at that moment you could tell him nothing, because he experienced it badly and he has the right to be irritated, hasn't he?...

Yet again, we can see a situation in which a young Pole (this categorization is used by the narrator despite her Silesian origin) encounters an old German, who took part in World War II. In addition, it turns out that the man becomes irritated at a mere mention of Poles. His reaction, however, seems to be justified. He lost his leg and suffered a lot of harm during the war and he finds Poles responsible for his misfortune. The narrator realises quickly that as a Pole she belongs to a 'stigmatized category' (Goffman, 1990a). In this connection she becomes aware that confessing to her nationality could expose her to many difficulties. For this reason, she decides not to disclose it. Although her German is not perfect and she is recognised as a foreigner at ones, most people take her for an Italian or a Spaniard, because of her dark complexion.⁵⁰ Hence, she can easily conceal her relationships with Poland. The old German does not know her real national identity thus entering a closed awareness context.⁵¹ It should be mentioned here that introducing this restricted awareness context usually damages a trust relationship between partners and creates a continued uncertainty about the course of the ongoing interaction. Glaser and Strauss claim that:

Inherently, this closed awareness context tends toward instability (...) (Glaser, Strauss, 1980: 39).

⁵⁰ Goffman writes in his essay on stigma that: 'Another strategy of those who pass is to present the stigma of their stigmatised failings as signs of another attribute, one that is less significantly a stigma.' See: Goffman E., 1990a, Stigma, Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity, Penguin Books, London, p. 117. In all probability, Ela assumes that in the context of her interactional partner's war experiences being a foreigner (an Italian or a Spaniard) is less stigmatizing than being a Pole.

⁵¹ I wish to remind you here that a **closed awareness context** occurs when one interactant does not know either the other's identity or the other's view of his identity. See: Glaser B.G., Strauss A.L., 1964, Awareness Contexts and Social Interactions, American Sociological Review, Vol. 29, No. 5, p. 670.

In other words, Ela seems to understand the point of view of her interaction partner, who is prejudiced against Poles, because she knows that his experiences with the Polish people are very traumatic and cannot be passed over for all practical purposes. Although concealing her national identity involves a certain amount of insecurity (it may be potentially disclosed at any moment of her encounter with the old German and thus undermining his trust and mutual commitment), the narrator chooses not to inform him about her origin. Most probably, Ela believes that withholding her nationality helps her to reduce possible tensions and inconveniences in her interactions with the old German.⁵² The narrator realises that both lack of similarities in their system of relevances and the differences in their schemes of interpretations may ruin potential interaction and therefore she does not confess to her Polish origin at all.

As we can see, in many encounters between Poles and Germans the matter of the Second World War is still a frame of reference. The above quoted portions of interviews depict very specific situations in which the young Poles who did not fight in the war but nevertheless have fixed ideas and interpretations of it particularly when coming face-to-face with Germans who experienced the war themselves. The subjective meanings and social knowledge brought into the interaction by both participants differ over the issue so essentially that they are not able to overcome it by introducing the reciprocity of perspectives. Schütz stresses:

Complete disparity of the system of relevances makes the establishment of a universe of discourse entirely impossible. (Schütz, 1990: 323).

By virtue of the method used during the analysis, we can gain an insight only into the way the Polish participants see the situation. And, as it was illustrated earlier, they regard it as a serious danger to their taken-for-granted common-sense knowledge of the world of everyday life and, their experience strengthen their feeling of frustration and confusion. The situations under scrutiny show how a potential reciprocity of perspectives turns into the clash of two subjective worlds, and they also show how a presumption that the main rule of common-sense thinking may not be applied keep an individual from entering the

⁵² Goffman emphasises: 'Because of the great rewards in being considered normal, almost all persons who are in position to pass will do so on some occasion by intent.' See: Goffman E., 1990a, *Stigma...*, op. cit., p. 95. See also the following section for further information about stigmatization.

interaction. It may also contribute to deepening the immigrant's experience of being culturally and socially strange and strengthen her or his disorientation.

There is another very crucial dimension of these three passages. Struggling with the extremely difficult topic of the Second World War, the narrators clearly display their national self-concept. Since, according to Ruth Wodak and her co-workers:

Historical or mythicised recollections which are stored in the collective memory of social groups are of particular importance for the construction of national identity. (Wodak, et al., 1999: 157)

Their mobilization during the critical face-to-face interactions implies its vital (although unnoticed and so far underestimated) importance.

4.1.2. Stigmatization. The predomination of the negative picture of a Pole.

As it was discussed in the first chapter – interpretative sociology primarily focuses on the concerns of identity. The self-concept emerges from the social interaction process in which – as Charles H. Cooley depicts:

Each to each a looking glass. Reflects the other that doth pass;

and in which certain elements play the crucial role:

(...) the imagination of our appearance to the other person, the imagination of his judgment of that appearance; and some sort of self-feeling, such as pride or mortification. (Cooley, 1902/1922: 184).

The following discussion will concern not only interactional episodes in which the informants are faced with situations in which they directly experience a negative looking-glass effect (i.e., in which they are addressed or treated in an insulting manner), but also situations in which they only suspect that due to their Polish origin they may be perceived

by their German interaction partners as bearers of a certain stigma. In order to make the following analysis transparent, I will explicate the notion of 'stigma' first.

The concept of stigma derives from ancient Greece where bodily signs like marks or tattoos were characteristic of people who did something wrong and thereby should be avoided. As Erving Goffman describes (and his study of stigma serves as a main frame of reference here) the bearer of stigma possesses an attribute that makes him or her morally inferior, disqualifies him from certain community (because she or he is thoroughly evil, dangerous or bad) and also from human race proper.⁵³ Among the three types of stigma identified by him are: abominations of the body, blemishes of individual character, and tribal stigma. The last one is the subject of my interest in this study. It refers to race, nation and religion as carriers of negative moral connotations, which incriminate all members of the given group to the same degree.⁵⁴ In this respect Georg Simmel's observation seems to be relevant:

In the case of strangers according to country, city, or race, the individual characteristics of the person are not perceived; but attention is directed to his alien extraction which he has in common with all the members of his group. Therefore, the strangers are perceived, not indeed as individuals, but chiefly as strangers of a certain type. Their remoteness is no less general than their nearness. (Simmel, 1972: 327).

It may reasonably be supposed that Poles during their face-to-face interactions with Germans take into account that they may be treated as drinkers, thieves or wangles⁵⁵ by virtue of the general image of a Pole widespread in Germany. Moreover, Czyżewski referring to reports of Germans who were 'driven out' from the east part of the Oder-Neisse border claims that prejudice structures in Polish-German relations take the following shape:

⁵³ See: Goffman E., 1990a, Stigma..., op. cit., pp. 11-13. It should be added here that in Goffman's understanding stigma is a result of discrepancy produced between *virtual* and *actual* social identity. The former meaning: the social categories and attributes ascribed to our interactional partners; our 'normative expectation' what he or she ought to be, and the latter denoting our fellow interactant characterizations he or she actually possesses. Cf. op. cit., and Cf. Williams S., 2000, Goffman, Interactionism, and the Management of Stigma in Everyday Life, in Fine G.A., Smith G.W.H. (eds.), Erving Goffman. SAGE Masters of Modern Social Thought, Vol. III, pp. 216.

⁵⁴ Goffman E., 1990a, op. cit., p. 14. The term stereotype is used in my work only with reference to its tribal type.

⁵⁵ This category is used to describe a person who obtains things by cleverness or a trick, often deceives, dupe or cheats people, a trickster.

Poles come empty-handed, are lower civilised, they take our farms away from us (...), they vandalize the results of our work.

In offering this example he goes on to suggest that:

One could not resist the impression that the image is similar to the contemporary image of so called asylum seekers in Germany and by virtue of that presumably constituted – to some extent – it's historical archetype. (Czyżewski, 1996: 162, translated from Polish by the author).

The autobiographical narrative interviews with the young Polish immigrants seem to confirm this image. The perception shared by Poles who interact with Germans is that their interaction partners' assumptions about their identity are highly stereotypical and stigmatizing. It precludes any possibility of trust relation. Their stigma (i.e. Polish origin), however, is not immediately apparent and known about before entering the interaction, since Poles do not fundamentally differ from Germans in terms of their outward appearance. According to Goffman, those whose stigma is not visible are considered as 'discreditable', since the possibility of revealing their negative (although not true) attributions is always immanent.⁵⁶ The Polish people encountering Germans may experience a high level of anxiety, since they can constantly expect that their 'contaminated' national identity would be revealed mainly through his or her Slavic accent. 'Others' alleged definition of their identity becomes the central information for guiding their interaction and influences it in a negative fashion. For this reason, the immigrants often attempt to change the initial undesirable definition of the situation and convey an impression which denies this stereotypical view. Only then, can Poles display that they do not fit this stereotypical image (they treat it as a matter of honour) and attempt to restore confidence in the eyes of their interaction partners. A great deal of effort, thus, goes into the establishing of trust. Strauss and his co-workers name it: 'trust work'.⁵⁷ They write:

⁵⁶ To specify the issue let me add that individuals whose stigma is visible from the very beginning of interaction are called 'discredited'. Cf. Williams S., 2000, Goffman..., op. cit., pp. 218-219.

⁵⁷ Strauss A.L., Fagerhaugh S., Suczek B., Wiener C., 1985, Social Organization of Medical Work, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, pp. 135-136.

In whatever social setting it occurs, trust work essentially consist of doing whatever is necessary to demonstrate that one possesses three basic qualities: reliability, competence, and authenticity, which together constitute what is generally perceived as trustworthiness. (Suczek, Fagerhaugh, 1991: 168.).

Before discussing examples of a few interactions between a Pole and a German reported in the collected autobiographical interviews, we must bear in mind two things. Firstly, every interaction takes place in social situations. And as W.I. Thomas suggested in his famous theorem:

If people define situations as real they are real in their consequences (Thomas and Thomas, 1928: 527).⁵⁸

It means that particular importance is given to the subjective view of interactants. Secondly, during the course of interaction an individual takes into account his or her image in the eyes of the other. As Blumer argue:

In my judgment, the most important feature of human association is that the participants take each other into account. . . . Taking another person into account means being aware of him, identifying him in some way, making some judgment or appraisal of him, identifying the meaning of his action, trying to find out what he has on his mind or trying to figure out what he intends to do. Such awareness of another person in this sense taking him and his acts into consideration becomes the occasion for orienting oneself and for the direction of one's own conduct. (Blumer, 1953: 194).

Therefore, even if German participants of the interaction have no idea about bad reputation of Poles in Germany, the Pole may act toward them (i.e. Germans) as if they share this insulting opinion. In other words, knowing the common knowledge concerning Poles in Germany the immigrant may allege that she or he is seen as a sort of a criminal, a drunker,

⁵⁸ Elsewhere W.I. Thomas argues: 'Preliminary to any self-determined act of behaviour there is always a stage of examination and deliberation which we may call the definition of the situation. And actually not only concrete acts are dependent on the definition of the situation, but gradually the whole life policy and the personality of the individual himself follow from the series of such definitions.' See: Thomas W.I., 1969, *The Unjusted Girl: With Cases and Standpoints for Behaviour Analysis*, Patterson Smith, Montclair, N.J., p. 42.

or a wangler.⁵⁹ Hence, he or she may suspect that the usual patterns of action or routine procedures of acting cannot be applied (Cf. Goffman, 1990a: 14 - 15) in his or her case, and even then a German fellow interactant has no clear image of Poles.

According to the concept of ‘awareness contexts’ already mentioned earlier, we may say that ‘suspicion awareness context’ occurs here, i.e. such a situation in which the interactant does not know, but only suspects what is her or his real identification in the eyes of other.⁶⁰ Schütz puts forward this operates in such a way that:

(...) to the natural aspect the world has for group A belong not only a certain stereotyped idea of the natural aspect the world has for group B, but included in it also is a stereotype of the way in which group B supposedly looks at A. This is, on a major scale –i.e., in the relationship between groups – the same phenomenon which, in respect to relation between individuals, Cooley has called the ‘looking-glass effect’. (Schütz, 1990b: 247).

Nevertheless, having their stereotypical picture in mind, many immigrants have troubles with establishing new social relationships, because, according to Goffman, the person bearing a stigma:

(...) can never be sure what the attitude of a new acquaintance will be, whether it will be rejective or accepting, until the contact has been made. (Goffman, 1990a: 25).

In the light of these considerations, the narrators’ biographical experiences of stigmatization will be described and explicated.

4.1.2.1. Struggling with a negative picture of a Pole.

In many cases, the immigrants’ looking-glass self that consist of other’s imagined judgement of the individual suggests that they have to deal with the other’s stereotypical definition of their identity. Accordingly, he or she is made to act on the basis of this false picture and work out strategies for dealing with such problematic – anomic interactions. In

⁵⁹ These three characteristics are mentioned in the gathered material frequently. The opinion, however, is also popular in the classical German literature. Heinrich Heine writes: ‘Since, indeed, the Poles have driven their drinking to the superhuman perfection.’ See: Tygodnik Powszechny, 2 listopada 2003, Bartek Dobroch: ‘Utrupianie Heinricha Heinego’

⁶⁰ Cf. Glaser B.G., Strauss A.L., 1980, Awareness of Dying, Adline, New York, p. 47.

other words, during the course of face-to-face encounters with Germans the Polish immigrants recognise the image of their own nation popular among Germans, thus creating some sort of meta-conception of their national identity in the eyes of others. This is, unfortunately, an unfair and unfavourable picture. It is relevant to mention here that as Robert Park maintains in his book: 'Race and Culture' people from minority are often seen by 'legal people' not as individuals with their biographies but as instances of specific 'general type'.⁶¹

I would like to consider the issue concerning the creation of damaging representations of the Polish people ('general type' of a Pole) by Germans with reference to Harvey Sacks' concept of 'membership categorization device' and 'category-bound activities' (Sacks, 1974). Sacks came to the conclusion that in everyday conversation categories describing people are organised in certain collections which are referred to by him as membership categorization devices (MCD). He realised this after considering the phenomenon in which, out of the manifold valid categories that characterise a person in a particular situation, only one, or alternatively a set of them is/are selected by people in an actual conversation. They are not only collections of commonsense categories that may be applied to characterise and identify people, but also collections of rules of their application in conversation.⁶² Sacks argued that MCD are governed by two basic rules 'the economy rule' which says that:

(...) any single category from any of these categorization devices is adequate to refer to a person (Sacks, 1974: 219).

and the consistency rule which states that:

(...) if some population of persons is being categorized, and if a category from some device's collection has been used to categorize a first member of the population, than the

⁶¹ It is interesting to take note of Robert Park's reflections on racial attitudes. He draws on Nathaniel Shaler's book 'The Neighbour' and following his considerations points out that: 'when strangers meet it is not the individual that they see in one another first, but the type. Knowledge proceeds by classification, and this is as of persons as of material objects. It is the strange, and in human beings, the outlandish, that first fixes and fascinates our attention. Where racial differences are great, the individual is often quite unseen.' See: Park R.E., 1950, Race and Culture, The Free Press, New York, p. 246.

⁶² See: Czyżewski M., 1985, 'Problem podmiotowości we współczesnej socjologii interakcji. Jaźń i jej zniesienie', Part 1, Kultura i Społeczeństwo, No. 3, p. 41.

category or other categories of the same collection may be used to categorize further. (op. cit.).

Furthermore, he noticed that certain actions are performed by persons belonging to a particular category or set of categories. He claimed, therefore, that there are actions which can be ascribed to certain category of people. He named them: “category bound activities”.⁶³

Applying the above discussed rules to our analysis of the Polish identity in the eyes of Germans, it is possible to say that the narrators (the young Poles) either implicitly assume or directly sense in their face-to-face interactions with their German partners, that as members of a specific group (Poles) they are seen in a characteristic – usually stereotypical - way. This most probably occurs because the Germans have often already had negative experiences with the Polish people or have learned something deprecating about Poles from their fellow citizens or from the media. Consequently, the narrators in their practical reasoning believe that if a German’s assumed knowledge includes a Pole who was categorised in an unfavorable manner (the informants by virtue of being Polish also belong to the same collection) then at least some of these inauspicious characteristics will, in all probability, be ascribed to them. Moreover, as the Poles they are not only described as people having particular features, but also as doing specific things (like: stealing, drinking, messing things up etc.).

The following analysis of the selected segments of the autobiographical narrative interviews attempt to explore how the informants describe, experience and account for the stereotypical picture of their nation (and also of themselves).

⁶³ For more information concerning both membership categorization devices and category bound activities please see: Sacks H., 1974, On the Analyzability of Stories of Children, in Turner R. (ed.), *Ethnomethodology*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, pp. 216-232; and Sacks H., 1996, ‘We’: Category-bound activities, ‘Stereotypes’, in Sacks H., *Lectures on Conversation*, Lecture 11, pp. 568-578. Benson D., Hughes J.A., 1983, *The Perspective of Ethnomethodology*, Longman, London, pp. 132-134. See also: Czyżewski M., 1985, ‘Problem podmiotowości...’, op. cit., pp. 39-42, Czyżewski M., Drescher M., Gülich E., Hausendorf H., 1995, Selbst- und Fremdbilder im Gäsprach. Theoretische und methodologische Aspekte, in Czyżewski M., Gülich E., Hausendorf H., Kastner M. (eds.), *Nationale Selbst- und Fremdbilder im Gäsprach. Kommunikative Prozesse nach der Wiedervereinigung Deutschlands und dem Systemwandel in Osteuropa*, Westdeutscher Verlag, Opladen, pp. 35-41.

A) Robert's case.

Firstly, the phenomenon will be discussed with reference to Robert's autobiography. The narrator was born and brought up in a city in north western Poland (named B in the transcription). At the time of the interview he was a 26-year-old man. Robert finished his secondary education with 'matura' (a secondary school examination comparable with 'Abitur' in Germany, of great meaning and importance in Poland). His leaving for Germany interrupted his studies at the School of Physical Education. At the time of the interview he has been in Germany for 6 years. In this time he also returned to Poland for one year. For these 6 years in Germany he has worked illegally a sort of 'majordomo'⁶⁴ for a German family.

In the main story line, the narrator mentions times when he was sitting alone in his room watching TV and reading some books. In the second part of the interview the listener asked him how it happened that he stopped these activities and begun meeting and talking to people. Robert answers:

Robert (14/39-43)

N: At the beginning () I didn't know these/ people were/ every single person was for me/ They also were looking at me: what's that?, another Pole, who... surely either would drink, or would steal, y'know? As it's our reputation here, y'know, drinkers and thieves, well (2) I haven't formed it here, but it's just like that, y'know? It's been formed (here) by our ((taking a deep breath)) well, yes... people from our country...

For Germans (presenting here the approached group) Robert exemplifies *a man without history* (Schütz, 1990b: 97), and as the stranger he is seen as a general, ready-made picture of 'a Pole'.⁶⁵ It entails negative images that Germans hold toward Poles. As it was mentioned earlier, the common knowledge concerning Poles is that they are drinkers, thieves and that they wangle. We must remember here that it is not important whether his interaction partners really have in their minds such an image, but that his presumptions

⁶⁴ I own this observation to Andrzej Piotrowski. The term 'majordomo' comes from Latin and denotes 'a master of the house', namely a person who is in control and charge of the domestic affairs, makes arrangements and takes care of domestic businesses.

⁶⁵ Here, we may point to the work of Erving Goffman and compare an immigrant to a stigmatised person. He says: 'By definition, of course, we believe the person with a stigma is not quite human. On this assumption, we exercise varieties of discrimination, through which we effectively, if often unthinkingly, reduce his life chances' See: Goffman E., 1990a, *Stigma...*, op. cit., pp. 14-15. Robert Park takes the position that: 'The stranger, though he may be accepted as a utility, is rejected as a citizen, a neighbour, and a "social equal". A social equal, as ordinarily defined in America, is one that you will be willing to have your daughter marry.' See: Park R., 1950, *Race and Culture*, op. cit., p. 366.

concerning their knowledge about him are as such. In this connection, the narrator has to wrestle with these stereotypical opinions and an unreal image of his identity in the eyes of the others (i.e., Germans). Proving that he is not *that type of Pole* seems to be pivotal to him.⁶⁶ Robert is conscious of his distinctness.⁶⁷ Creating a positive image of a Pole is of deciding importance here, since Robert's national identification is one of the most relevant factors for him. He believes his behaviour may help him to prevail over prejudices and stereotypes and become a reliable and dependable person. Later, he presents himself as someone who has managed to overcome these stereotypical pictures and who is perceived as *a funny guy*. In order to prove his point, he says he can take part in private lives of his German friends, i.e.: he is invited to birthdays, weddings etc. Because of these prejudice-loaded opinions about Poles he had to constantly work very hard in order to enjoy a good reputation:

Robert (15/2-23)

So I think, that also, that/ that they do not consider me as someone who, damn, came fff from nowhere f/ f (2) from the east bo-... rder, here outside the wall... when it was fff standing... that... nobody knows, because, damn, if he's going to steal something, or/ or something, what's that?, who's that?, so... They were going/ they were going on holidays after a year, I was staying alone with the keys to the house, to three Mercedes' here/ here/ here everything, so complete confidence... up to the end, never stained... it wouldn't be so then... to the end... And it's also a very important matter for me... that, to... because it makes me sick, when I've to listen/ because it pisses me off... very much, it hurts me, when I've to listen: "Hey you, one Pole, somewhere, who was working for a Seliger and he... he was going on holidays, and he stole a lawn mower from him or... a grinder, y'know?..."

I: mhm

N: Or, that Poles robbed 15 cars oooo- of radios in X, y'know? Two months ago, y'know? It gets my goats at once, y' know?, that I've to listen to it about... about/ Because I feel a Pole and and I identify with them, y'know?... It's not of no importance to me, that there some people from Gorzów [a city in north-west Poland] or with someone, from somewhere/ I'm from B and I don't steal, y'know?... I know, I don't steal, but in spite of that I share the responsibility for that .hh... that this... from... from the same country and mmmmm and I'm ashamed of it, y'know?, that/ that one should listen to such things, y'know? So that/ that's/ that's that dark side. That's what pisses me off, what/ what I'd like

⁶⁶ Stigmatised persons of all kinds (and it pertains to Robert's activities, too) direct their efforts towards diverting others' attention from these features of their identity which are seen as stigmatizing. Strauss discusses the issue with reference to the disabled persons. He writes that: 'The disabled persons who do not want to interact on the basis of the other's stereotypical definitions of themselves are presenting themselves as something much more or quite different than disabled, correcting too the misattribution by the others of a 'merely disabled' status, and gradually getting across their subtle claims to be normal just like the other- artist, baseball enthusiasts, brilliant scientists- a person much like you, and perhaps with similar interest; so your original definition of me was a false one, which I have had to rectify, and you are really not so wedded to stereotypes as to recognise the true person in me.' See: Strauss A.L., 1993, *Continual Permutations of Action*, Aldine de Gruyter, New York, p. 188.

⁶⁷ Stonequist calls it 'race consciousnesses and defines it as 'one form of self-consciousness – a consciousness which arises in the person when he becomes aware that other regard him in a certain way because he belongs to a particular racial group.' See: Stonequist E.V., 1961, *The Marginal Man. A Study in Personality and Culture Conflict*, Russell & Russell, New York, p. 122

to change. We've got such an opinion and that's pissing me off... But pfff I've told myself: no... here... I'd form a different image...

The informant expresses here his hope that he is not seen any longer as a general type of a man coming from the east (what means 'nowhere' for many citizens of western countries), but as an individual. It seems to be very important for him to be seen as a reliable and dependable person. Robert's main task is to develop a trust relationship with Olaf – his employer. As a proof, he gives such an example, when his employer with his family went on holidays and the whole house (and three Mercedes) was in his care. Unfortunately, cutting himself off from these stereotyping suspicions and preserving his image of a respectable and honest person is very difficult, since some pieces of information about Poles who steal reach him continuously. This makes him anxious and uncomfortable because as a Pole he feels responsible for his fellow citizens. It seems, however, that although some members of his national community constantly disappoint him and undermine his position abroad, Robert still demonstrates his loyalty to the group based on 'we-feeling' and 'we-consciousness'. Being ashamed of their punishable offences, the narrator endeavours to change it. Robert sees himself as a member of the certain national group and identifies himself with the members of this national community which, in his justification, implies sharing the status of the group, even if it is inferior.⁶⁸ Immediately following this passage, the narrator attempts to account for the origin of the negative stereotype. He claims that the root cause of it is the arrogant behaviour of seasonal workers from Poland. I will discuss this in further detail below.⁶⁹

B) Jacek's case.

Another interesting example which typifies the way certain negative stereotypes operate in one's life abroad is presented in the life history of Jacek – a goalkeeper. Jacek Dolski, as the narrator is camouflaged, is not a household name on the Polish soccer stage, but keen supporters of the sport certainly know who he is. Before embarking on a long career in Germany, he had been playing for a few Polish top teams for many seasons, and had been a member of the Polish national team. A number of times he was voted as the

⁶⁸ Stonequist maintains: 'In the marginal person such race-consciousness is a constantly recurring experience. It means not merely a consciousness of race as such but also an associated consciousness of uncertain, usually inferior status: the individual is under a certain stigma in the eyes of the dominant group.' See: Stonequist E.V., 1961, *The Marginal Man...*, op. cit., p. 122

⁶⁹ See section 4.1.2.3. in this chapter.

league's top keeper. Then, however, he suffered from many minor injuries what definitely weakened his position among Polish soccer players. Thus, Jacek decided to go abroad to improve his financial status. He took into account many European countries, but Germany turned out to be the most favourable (the distance and the possibilities of finding a job prevailed).⁷⁰ In 1991 at the age of 26 years he came to Germany for the first time. For almost two seasons he was playing for a club in North Germany. Unfortunately, the team was unsuccessful. This had an impact on the players' earnings. Due to the reduction in his wages and constant disagreements with his new coach, he decided to return to Poland. After returning to his homeland, he was unemployed for a year, but then he played for two very good Polish clubs. When he was offered the chance to play for one of East Germany teams, he accepted because he could not come to an understanding with his Polish coach. During the interview, Jacek Dolski has been a keeper there for 5 years. Although soccer is the main topic in his narration, his wife and two sons are also of great importance. Whenever he gets into trouble (he cannot find a job, he has no place to live or during long periods of convalescence), he can always count on his family (also his parents and parents-in-law).

The narrator suggested during his rendering that there is a possibility that one day he would return to Poland. When the interviewer asks him later how he plans his future in Poland, Jacek considers all the pros and cons of his possible decision. On the one hand, they (the narrator and his wife) feel obliged to support their parents in Poland, on the other hand, they believe that their children's future would be better in Germany. In this context, the following passage suggesting additional factors taken into account while analysing their stay in Germany occurs:

Jacek (33/48- 34/30)pl

N: Although for us [the narrator and his wife]... I don't know, I always/ I claim that it doesn't matter/ even if we stayed in mmm... in Germany (2) we would always... be second-rate... We are... no matter how/ even if I spoke perfect German...

I: mhm

N: I would be always this second-rate... and it always bothers me...

I: But wh/ Why?

N: It is so/ It is so here in Germany. A German is a German, and... a Pole would be a Pole...

I: mhm

N: whatever happens...

I: mhm

⁷⁰ Playing for an average club in Germany is much more profitable than playing for second-league teams in Poland.

N: Now, it's obvious, that yyyy .hh I can say that I'm at the top, because/ because I play for Dresden/ I play well for Dresden. I play... the fourth season since I've started playing for Dresden. Everybody is happy, OK... However, as I've told you, life is/ you have your ups and downs. You slip up or something and in a half a year nobody will remember you...

I: mhm

N: That's life... and I know it (2) and it's simply the same... the same is yyy... at your work or wherever, well... you/ or whatever... you may work as... A German, you can even work better, but you are always a Pole... and you would never be a German...

I: mhm

N: That's the way it goes, well and... it is so and/ and... it will be like in/ in... we can do nothing about it... Always, because/ sometimes when you go to an office, or something, you .hh feel that... mc... mmm maybe not dislike, but you feel some sort of distance... It happened several times that I and my wife when we were taking care of our things in some offices, or something, that (2) it was not dislike, but such... it's some sort of distance. One may say, it's about us, it concerns the Poles, or *Ausländer*...

I: mhm

N: And it's/ (2) (You allegedly) are this second-rate... I know it (2) Even yyy (2) yyy there was such an incident in Maciek's school [the narrator's son] (2) although he... has no problems there with/ and Dawid, either [the narrator's second son]... They both, luckily, attend school where there are no *Ausländer*... And they speak German well and so on and .hh Once he [Maciek] had a qua/ quarrel with a girl (2) and out of the blue, she addressed him 'you Polish pig'... And Maciek, we didn't know about it, he had come back to school/ he had come back from school and he didn't tell a word. Only in two days .hh my wife is going to school with him (2) and a guy approaches her and... starts to apologise her, you know?, for his daughter, that (). 'But what is it about?', 'Well, she/ she told him: a Polish pig.', and he told her something: you (*Tussi*), or... I even don't know what (*Tussi*) is...

I: mhm

N: but it was this word/ this word (2) And I (talk to)/ I ask him in two days what was it all about?, Well, because she quarrelled with him, and she told him: you Polish pig (2) And I say: 'But why?', but he doesn't know...

I: mhm

N: It was the only incident, you know?... Well, rather (2) well, even among children it happens, you know?...

I: mhm

N: so later it may also happen (2) among adults...

I: mhm

N: () on it (2) I don't even/ well, I do not care about it, or whatever, but, as I've said, well... we would like to stay here... but, on the other hand we would like to go to Poland yet...

In this part of Jacek's argumentation he maintains that being a second-rate human-being is the additional factor dissuading him from staying permanently in Germany. As the narrator emphasises: *A German is a German, and... a Pole would be a Pole...* and later he suggests that: *you may work as... a German, you can even work better, but you are always a Pole... and you would never be a German....* Remarkably he is a person whose position in Germany is definitely favourable expresses this opinion.⁷¹ There are, however, certain

⁷¹ This issue is often picked up and discussed in the literature concerned with the problem of immigration. For instance U. Melotti describes the situation of immigrants in Germany in the following way: 'In Germany, in fact, immigrants fundamentally remain 'foreigners' (*Ausländer*). Their economic contribution may be appreciated, but their permanent

biographical conditions which influence his standpoint. These are included in a type of background explanation which is inserted between these two statements. Firstly, he is quite an old player. Secondly, he is continuously plagued with minor injuries. What is notable is that at the time of the interview he was seriously injured. It is no wonder that the narrator presumes with some anxiety, that as long as he is an active player, he is highly valued by the team and its managers, but he realises that his indisposition may bring about sending him off for a longer time, or force him to give up his sport career. It may, in turn, put his stay in Germany in question. The narrator, thus, knows that only his highly regarded position in the social world⁷² of soccer players guarantees him respectable social status among Germans. Jacek takes into account that when his goalkeeper career would draw to an end, he would be treated again like an average Pole which could possibly make his life situation in Germany difficult. In this argumentation (and also in other parts of his rendering) there is an implicit assumption that his nationality does not matter as long as he plays soccer well. Whenever he fails (is not good enough or suffers from minor injuries) and his role in the team diminishes, he feels that he would not be treated on equal terms with Germans. This would be the case even if he was as good as a German or even better, and no matter how well he would speak German. To confirm his general standpoint Jacek attempts to show two situations from his immigration career that exemplifies rather hard experiences of a 'normal' Pole in Germany. First, he displays his feelings of being an unwanted stranger in certain German offices (not a form of dislike – as Jacek says - but some sort of distance concerning not only Poles, but all foreigners in general).⁷³ While dealing with the German office workers, he usually gets labelled as an outsider and is treated with hostility. Then, the informant refers to an incident that happened to his 10 years old son Maciek in his German school. One of schoolgirls hurled abuse at him and called him *you Polish pig*, and he responded with *you Tussi* (you turkey).⁷⁴ It is not my aim here to get to the core of this situation and to appraise which of them (the girl or the

settlement is in no way encouraged. They are allowed to live in the country for lengthy periods, even generations, but this fact, at least in principle, does not entail any change in their status.' Melotti U., 1997, *International Migration in Europe; Social Projects and Political Cultures*, in Modood T., Werbner P. (eds.), *The Politics of Multiculturalism in the New Europe. Racism, Identity and Community*, Zed Books, London.

⁷² I refer here to the conception of social worlds in terms of Anselm Strauss. Please see point 5.2. in the following chapter for detailed information.

⁷³ German offices (especially *Auslandäramt*) are mentioned in a couple of interviews as examples of negative attitudes towards Poles and foreigners in general. Most of the narrators report some sort of fear and humiliation experienced there.

⁷⁴ In informal talk 'turkey' depicts a useless and silly person and in this meaning 'Tussi/e' is used in Germany, too. For explanation of the term and its usage I am grateful to Heidi Gode-Luerßen and her son Michael.

narrator's son) was at fault in this school row⁷⁵, however, I find it very interesting what the girl said. The expression *You Polish pig (Du polnische Schweine)* is one of the most popular abuses in relation to Poles in Germany. Even if the girl was not quite aware of its meaning and its offensive connotation, by virtue of applying it, she confirmed its functioning within the German discourse about the Poles. Although the situation is isolated in Jacek's immigration process, he considers it as one of possible obstacles in his future life abroad (and especially concerning for his sons – for whom Germany offers better prospects).

To put it briefly, the narrator is aware that as long as the German soccer team holds him in high regard and find him an effective and valuable player, he would be treated as a 'domesticated' stranger (in that sense that he is useful and important part of the group). He also realises that due to his age and the increase in minor injuries his soccer career approaches its end and his position in the team (and thereby in the German society) would be more and more marginalised. For this reason, Jacek guesses that becoming an anonymous foreigner (one of many others) would seriously complicate his immigration process. His supposition is based on two examples (hostile attitude in national institutions, and his son's argument in school) taken from his knowledge at hand⁷⁶, display difficult or reluctant attitude towards foreigners in Germany. I would like to depict this alleged future situation of the narrator in Germany as a 'forsaken' stranger. This refers to a type of the immigration career in which the approached community initially favors the newcomers and simultaneously exploits them, and then – when they stop bringing profits or advantages – they are unwelcome, discarded and deprived of former privileges (e.g., high wages, respect, recognition etc.).

⁷⁵ I can only guess that the quarrel was rather the girl's guilt, since her father apologised for her misbehavior.

⁷⁶ Alfred Schütz explains that: 'man in everyday life interprets his past, present and future in terms of the reorganised stock of knowledge he has at hand at any moment of his experience.' Schütz A., 1990b, Tiresias, in *Collected Papers II: Studies in Social Theories*, Martinus Nijhoff, The Hague., 281. Further, he argues that the individual's stock of knowledge at hand does not consist exclusively of experiences lived through directly and originally by him, but to a large extent it is socially derived and comes for instance from experiences of his fellow-men who communicated it to him. It is the case of Jacek whose interpretation is based partly on his own experiences and partly on his son's experience reported to him by his wife. See: *op. cit.*, p. 282.

C) The case of Tomek and Piotr.

Two argumentative passages coming from the interview with Tomek and Piotr will now be analysed. In either case, the narrators are asked – as specialists who have already been long enough in Germany - to describe the attitude of Germans towards the Polish people. Their commonsense reasoning is very similar and discloses that although their initial contacts with Germans (Tomek's distant acquaintance and Piotr's master) were based on very stereotypical attitudes of their interactional partners, in the course of time they usually change their negative view. There are good reasons for supposing that both narrators adopt a theoretical perspective of stereotypes maintaining that they come from lack of direct experience, and under the influence of face-to-face interactions they are modified in favour of the stigma bearers.⁷⁷ However, I will try to prove here that some changes in the narrators' picture in the eyes of their German acquaintances, not necessarily entails changes in their general negative attitude toward Poles.

Tomek - a Silesian who has been living in Germany for 11 years at the time of the interview - when asked about his opinion suggests that the image of Poles in the mass media is unfavourable and they are constantly negatively named *Polaken*. Then, he displays his belief that personal contacts with Poles often correct the German's negative attitude. His assertion is based on his own experience with a German who told him – after his earlier bad experiences with Poles – that he is the first Pole he feels he could trust. As we learn later from Tomek's narration their first encounter was very unpleasant (see Tomek 21/41-22/1) because his interactional partner's view of Poles was very negative. During their first face-to-face conversation, the informant was addressed: *Du arschloch, Du Scheiß Polake*. In time, however, the man learns that Tomek is a respectable man and his derogatory attitude toward Tomek changes:

Tomek (20/1-8)pl

N: Aaaa... It means what Germans think about Poles, it is so (2) What one can hear on the radio and and on TV and generally and so on, there are *Polaken, Polaken, Polaken*, ja?... If a German, however gets to know a Pole (2) yyyy.... I know (2) two (2) no, I know one German, who told me: 'You are the first Pole, who/ who/ whom I can trust.'... who was just so... friendly to me, who... was disappointed with/ with Poles. He was/ he was, you know,

⁷⁷ See: M. McDonald's analysis of Lippman's approach in McDonald M., An anthropological Approach to Stereotypes, in Macdonlad S. (ed), 1993, Inside European Identities: ethnography in Western Europe, Berg, Providence, pp. 220-221.

steal/ he was't robbed, but he was/ He was in great trouble... What Germans think about Poles, so/ so... until they know them (2) they think bad of them, I suppose.

Subsequently, the interviewer asks Tomek if he has ever encountered any unpleasant situation in Germany and the narrator answers:

Tomek (21/41-22/1)pl

N: yyyy... YES, but these are in fact... .hh I encountered such situations... ((lightening a cigarette)) It's just that first of all/ first/ one can hear the accent first, I can hear it and and/ with this guy till today... we... meet from time to time somewhere... He came/ he came to me straight away... 'Du Arschloch, Du Scheiß Polake' (2) (I was) OK., you know?, However, how that he got to know me and now he says: 'Ja (alles) ist gut. Das hab' ich ni geglaubt.'... you know? He had never believed that so/ so...

I: Is this the same German y who told you that he has met the first... respectable Pole, is he?

N: Yes. It's/ It's the same German... .hh... yyy

In analysing these units, which to a large extent are concerning one experience (the narrators encounters with the German man), I wish to refer to the attribution to prejudice theory.⁷⁸ It provides us with valid explanation of the German's way of acting while talking to the narrator. The man's negative picture of Tomek comes from his earlier vague (the narrator is not really sure what kind of occurrence it was) bad personal experiences with Poles. Thus, we may guess, that when he meets another Pole (Tomek) he, as if automatically, assigns to him derogatory characteristics.⁷⁹ If all Poles, thus, share the same features, it would suggest that their bad conduct – in the German man's understanding – is the outcome of their dispositions or internal components typical for all members of the Polish community. In contrast, his undeniably offensive attitude towards Tomek (hurling abuse at him) may be accounted for in terms of certain outer conditions resulting from his own biographical experiences.⁸⁰ For the narrator it is clear that if his German interaction partner had some troubles with Poles, it surely must have some negative effects on their mutual relationship. Therefore, in the informant's view the German's hostile way of seeing him seems to be explicable. Interestingly, the longer the man knows the, the more positive is his attitude towards him. Finally the German comes to believe that Tomek is worthy of trust. This is very significant statement, because the man does not claim that his attitude

⁷⁸ See for instance: Mummendey A., Kessler, T., Klink, A., & Mielke, R., 1999, 'Strategies to cope with negative social identity: Predictions by social identity theory and relative deprivation theory', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* No. 76, pp. 229-245.

⁷⁹ The German's negative attitude towards Tomek may be also explained within the scope of conversational analysis and the concept of membership categorization device proposed by Sacks and discussed earlier in this chapter.

⁸⁰ Cf. Hewstone M., Klink A., 1994, *Intergruppenattribution*, in Försterling F., Stiensmeier-Pelster J., (eds.), *Attributionstheorie. Grundlagen und Anwendungen*, Hogrefe, Göttingen.

toward Poles has changed – it is rather constant, but there is one exception to the rule, namely Tomek. I put in question, thus, Tomek’s general statement that until Germans became acquainted with any Pole, their image of the group would be negative (what implies that their opinion becomes positive as a result of knowing Poles). I will hazard a guess that in the German’s words: *You are the first Pole who/ who/ whom I can trust* there is no fundamental change of his prejudices against Poles, but rather a subtle acceptance of only one of them (the narrator). This reflects an attitude in the sense of the exception which proves the rule.

Piotr in his very enigmatic argumentation attempts to show the same process. As long the Germans do not know Poles, they hold their negative view of the nation. In this respect the narrator displays his relationship with his master who was initially strongly prejudiced against Poles (and Piotr). According to Piotr’s commonsense reasoning, it results from the fact that he does not travel abroad at all and his lack of experience with other nations (Poles).

Piotr (37/26–38/15)pl

N: I have a master, for instance... and he rather/ he is just such... typical German. He is, however, a very good man/ a very good man, but he, you know, he has never gone any where (2) like others/ on holiday/ always when holiday is, you know?, he travels with his family/ he has his wife and two daughters... he travels only around Germany, you know?...

I: mhm

N: mostly to the seaside (2) he doesn’t go to foreign co/ countries, you know?, somewhere to Spain where a lot of Germans go, somewhere to Greece, or somewhere to... Italy (3) and he always so much (2) when some sometimes say: ‘Aaa, in Poland... it must take time, because people have such *Mentalität* and and such *Mentalität*.’... you know?, (...) (2) I think/ he is... and he in fact/ he/ he doesn’t know these situations, you know, so with him... I know what his attitude is/ although he is a very good man, you know?... Always... with me when we go for the installation, he: ‘Piotr, here and’/ and even... probably when (2) He has probably never dealt with Poles before, you know?, he has never worked with someone, or something. And when he started working with me, he was so cold for me. He always ((imitating his master’s voice)): ‘Piotr this, Piotr that, Piotr this’/ you know, when I had come to this company... I had been humble, I had been doing everything and that’s all, you know?... but then I put my foot down a little, you know... Well, and/ and... and now he is really super... When he want to go for installation, he always wants to do with me, you know?... And he wishes... wants y... me to work with me, what/ and that’s all, you know? However, at the beginning his attitude was just as such, you know’ ... ‘Well, a Pole it’s this and that’, you know?...

I: mhm

N: you know, he... he was controlling me much if I take something with me and that’s all. He was/ he was, I don’t know, a little bit... different, you know? (...)

Piotr illustrates here how his chief's (or master) attitude changes in the course of time. The longer the narrator works for him, the more positive his attitude is. The informant says that when he started his work – he was checked if he had taken something with him. This implicitly points at the stereotypical picture of Poles as thieves. Because the narrator was a very hard-working and obedient employee the chief was slowly changing his mind and finally perceives him as the best worker (he always wanted to work with him).

Then, the narrator suggests that this stereotypical view may be typical for older people like his master and some of his older co-workers. He claims that the attitude of young Germans is a little bit different.

However, these young people [Piotr's co-workers] (2) are more... they understand pfyyy foreigners and that's all, I don't know/ When they laugh, when one of them says: 'Look there was a Polish... lorry, it was falling apart' and that's all, you know?...

I: mhm

N: So they, you know... they were making fun of me: 'Well... there were yyy your mates were going.', you know?, or with trailers so you know, they were constantly making fun of me. And I used to say: 'Well, yes – I say – they earn, because there are their... money.' I used to (2) analyze: why do they transport broken cars?, you know. Because they could compare and see: 'If there is any scrap, it goes to Poland.' And I say: 'If/ if you had such situation, what would you do?... Wouldn't you go to Holland?'

I: mhm

The informant reports here that his young German co-workers associate Poles with people who bring old cars which are wrecks to Poland. What I find especially worth paying attention to is the fact that not only the young Germans perceive Piotr in stereotypical categories (in the sense that regardless of actual differences they assign the same characteristics or activities to all members of the Polish nation⁸¹ by suggesting that these people who are busy with transporting old cars to Poland are Piotr's mates) and thus make fun of Piotr, but also that the narrator in his attempt to explain why Poles occupy themselves with such activities presents himself as a member of this community.

⁸¹ I deal with the introduced earlier Sacks' notion of category bound activities, i.e. actions which are ascribed and performed by individuals belonging to a certain category. For Piotr's interactional partners buying and bringing old cars to one's country is a type of activity characteristic of Poles.

4.1.2.2. Lack of sufficient language competencies as the cause of inferiority feelings.

For the purposes of my study, I have chosen the life histories of young Poles who did not speak German when they initially moved to Germany. Thus, the incapacity of speaking the language of the country they are going to live in seems to be one of the fundamental barriers. Many narrators address the language matter in their autobiographical narratives as the main cause of their social isolation, difficulties, suffering and feelings of inferiority. There are cases when the narrators' poor (or even absent) language skills may be easily justified – like in the case of the horsemen Robert and Bartek, whose immigration career starts quite unexpectedly. There are, however, some immigration biographies in which the narrators' ignorance of the German language is very intriguing. It is puzzling, for instance, why the young Silesians pushed by the migration chain and living from their early childhood in conviction that one day they leave for Germany make no efforts to develop linguistic competencies. It is also remarkable that acquisition of the German language causes the most difficulties for young Polish educated women. Since I deal with these issues elsewhere, I will only shortly explain them here. In the case of young Silesians, their reluctant attitude towards the German language results from the following sociobiographical conditions: the national ghetto situation typical for Silesians in which newcomers are supported by their fellow-citizens also in language matters which implies that, at least initially, some competencies in German are not required. The potential emigrants assume that sooner or later they spontaneously acquire the language. The young educated Poles, in turn, often experience some sort of emotional barrier in acquiring the German language. In this part of my study, however, I would like to analyze such cases in which the narrators point at certain difficulties in their immigration process caused by insufficient communicative competencies in German. The informants often describe their interactions with Germans where due to their poor language skills they felt worse or even stupid. It is important here to remember that – as Berger and Luckmann maintain:

Everyday life is, above all, life with and by means of the language I share with my fellowmen. An understanding of language is thus essential for any understanding of the reality of everyday life. (Berger, Luckmann, 1991: 51-52).

To illustrate this point I will refer to the narration of Bartek first. The informant is a professional horse-rider, who decided to try his chances in Germany. At the same time, he was still very involved in and emotionally committed to the stable of stallions in B. (a city in Poland, in Wielkopolska) where his father has worked for his whole life and where the narrator spent his happy childhood and youth. For this reason, Bartek could not initially decide whether to stay in Germany and deal with horses at the highest level (this is the common opinion about the horse riding in Germany) or to come back to Poland to his beloved milieu of the stable of stallions.⁸² Finally, after immersing into the German social world of horse riding and finding a German biographical caretaker (one who provided him with some essential knowledge and understanding of the unfamiliar cultural world), he decided to stay in Germany.⁸³ At the time of the interview Bartek was 30 year old and has been living in Germany for 8 years. 6 years before he illegally worked for a famous German breeder of horses. The narrator remembers his first year in Germany as follows:

Bartek (11/31-49)pl

After... let's say, after that year [the first year of his stay in Germany] I could/ could/ could make people understand... I wouldn't lose my way anywhere, but it was some sort of, you know, all... yyy (2) it was all like, you know: 'Kali want to eat', because/ because y the guy I was working for here, he ((clearing his throat)) mc he is a demon for work... he himself. So he does everything hurried, so when/ when yyy when he was speaking German to us, it was the same kind of German we were using, just we could understand him. He wasn't interested in the correctness of our/ all right, because he has to (but) there was no time at work when he could teach us, or correct us...

I: mhm

N: as I see it... So he used to speak/ he used to speak the German language with infinitives only, you see? Only: do this or do that... just do understand, because he knew that we can understand it... He has never toiled over saying something in the whole sentence to let us re/ remember it... Then, there was another boy, a... Pole, who was working as some sort of help... He wasn't riding, he was just working in the stable as a help by some farm working...

I: mhm

N: And he/ he just... (), till today he speaks that kind of German language that (2) every German could be offended with him...

I: ((laughing))

In this passage of Bartek's rendering, I would like to point our attention to the fact that his employer uses the simplified version of the German language while talking to his foreigner workers. This phenomenon was described in the 1970's as the foreigner talk by Charles A. Ferguson who takes the position that:

⁸² Please see also the next chapter point 5.2.1.

⁸³ I deal with these issues in Chapter 5.

Many, perhaps all, speech communities have registers of a special kind for use with people who are regarded for one reason or another as unable to readily understand the normal speech of the community (e.g. babies, foreigners, deaf people). These forms of speech are generally felt by their users to be simplified versions of the language, hence easier to understand, and they are often regarded as imitation of the way the person addressed uses the language himself. (Ferguson, 1996: 117).

This kind of register has the following features: restricted lexicon, shorter sentence length, sentences lacking certain expected elements, uninflected forms (simple nominative for the noun; infinitive, imperative, third person singular for the verb), phonological simplification, omission of the copula, slower pace, repetition, etc.⁸⁴ Some of them (mainly verbs without flexion) are enumerated by Bartek in his description of the employer language. Moreover, Ferguson claims that the foreign talk reveals the negative attitude associated with its use, as both condescending and a presumed impediment to learning.⁸⁵ He writes that it

(...) is used by speakers of the language to outsiders who are felt to have very limited command of the language or no knowledge of it at all (Ferguson, 1996: 117)

The narrator can only guess that by virtue of using the simplified version of German his employer insults and ridicules people (including Bartek) who have not yet adequate command of the language. In the main – as the autobiographical narrative interviews show – the narrators’ awareness of their insufficient language competencies make them feel inferior in the course of interaction with Germans. Let us stay with Bartek’s example:

Bartek (28/8 – 29/6)pl
and even yyy (2) the fact that I wasn’t able to commu/ to express myself as I’d like to, or/
or just say something .hh

⁸⁴ See also: Ochs E., 1995, Indexing Gender, in Duranti A., Goodwin Ch. (eds.), Rethinking Context. Language as an interactive phenomenon, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 348-350; Franceschini R., 2003, Unfocused Language Acquisition? The Presentation of Linguistic Situations in Biographical Narration, Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/ Forum: Qualitative Research [On-line Journal], 4(3), Art. 19. Available at: <http://www.qualitative-research.net/fqs-texte/3-03/3-03hrsg-e.htm> [04.05.04], § 3.2.

⁸⁵ To be clear at this point: there are two hypotheses concerning the social function of foreign talk: (1) it is used by the natives to facilitate understanding by the foreigners; (2) through foreigner talk the natives disdain and degrade the foreigners. In my view, the situation of Bartek is clear, because his employer communicates with him exclusively by giving directives, carrying messages and scolds. It would suggest that he only wishes Bartek to do his work well, and do not care about advances in his language competencies. See: Dittmar N., von Stutterheim Ch., 1988, On the Discourse of Immigrant Workers: Interethnic Communication and Communication Strategies, in Van Dijk T.A. (ed.), Handbook of Discourse Analysis, Vol. 4, Discourse Analysis in Society, Academic Press, London, pp. 133-135.

I: mhm

N: it's seemed to me that (4) it means, that they've always/ always/ always/ at least I've thought so/ I was under the impression that, you know, that yyy... I'm probably stupid, because... if I cannot make me understood, I cannot/ I cannot... even if I say... something/ I don't know if they thought like this, but, you know, this/ you have the impression that they treat you as/ as a blockhead, because... if/ if/ if they ask you a question and you answer, you never could/ I couldn't then yyy (2) present it, as I wanted to say or explain it, but I had to say that very moment/ with words I knew that very moment...

I: mhm. I understand

N: (So you/) it seems to you/ you just know that you are very limited at the moment...

I: mhm

N: and it was probably so depressing, wasn't it?, that you .hh... if you mmm you think that if you in Polish, you and and and (2) I was already able to... understand the language, that... I could, let's say, somebody y y y (2) I don't like judge people, but... mmmm I could say that he is a cool/ cool guy at least... I would talk a little... or I would say that he is a regular arsehole, well...

I: mhm

N: Even if he is a German it's nothing... It's never impressed me... (First of all) he is a regular asshole and .hh and generally I cannot communicate with you anyway and... or if we discussed I could tell you that you are just an asshole... I would show you, but I couldn't, because/ because I couldn't say so much...

I: mhm... mhm

N: And it was probably the most depressing...

This unit appears in the second part of Bartek's storytelling after the interviewer's question concerning the suggestion which was mentioned in the main story line. This implies that his first year in Germany was a complete disaster. The informant's additional explanations deal with feelings of loss and alienation in that time. The focus is, however, on the language matters.

In the same context, i.e., after a theoretical commentary connected with painful feelings of being separated from his family and friends and living in a strange milieu abroad, the matter of language is also relevant in the interview with Piotr. The narrator suggests his limited language competencies as the main reason for his *closed* (that is, devoid of social contacts) life in Germany.

Piotr (22/36-23/2)pl

So, at the beginning, when I came to Germany, I missed it very much... just my family... just/ generally I was brought up there/ mates, all these things, you know? (2) But my life there... parties... of different kinds. Here, all these things are... for me... all these things are... () just closed... Because: firstly – the language...

I: mmm

N: and second/ you don't know this language, so... you've no... you've no possibilities just like that/ to talk freely, haven't you?...

I: mhm

N: You've to think everything over. And, you know, you miss a word and yyy your sentence yy is already smashed, isn't it?...

I: mhm

N: Or, as it is said, you started from the opposite direction, or something, you've got it? It was so... it was just... you weren't so confident... were you? When I went for a party, I started talking here and there... something, you know something, but I think, that I'm like an idiot, because... because I don't know this and this, because I couldn't/ couldn't explain it to him, or something like that... It's all/

[The end of side B, cassette I]

For illustrative purposes, I will quote another narrative interview taking up this train. This time a young Silesian Max, who - as we will learn later – lives where one can make money, talks about his first experiences in his work in Germany:

Max (12/48- 13/2)pl

Well, at the beginning when the [German] language wasn't so/ so trained, so... di/ you didn't know how to introduce yourself, they were treating you like yy some sort of... ja (2) clean it... sweep it...

The above quoted passages display how - owing to the narrators' initial incapacity of speaking German - the situation of asymmetry in interaction is produced and maintained. The informants' impression of being treated like a stupid person (Bartek), an idiot (Piotr), or a man doing dirty work (Max) in their encounters with Germans causes their feeling of humiliation and inferiority. Their limited language competencies not only disrupt their autonomy and freedom of action, but also make their defence when they are insulted difficult or impossible. Thus, the immigrants who still are not fluent users of the approached country's language bear certain stigma in Goffman's understanding (Goffman, 1990a). This entails the consequent belief of being not quite human. The same issue is discussed by Christine K. Alsop who refers to the memories of Gerda Lerner, an émigré from Nazi Austria to America. She says:

Living in translation and lacking both an adequate vocabulary and the sense for the rhythm of the language, it was like as though my adult knowledge had to be transposed into the vocabulary of a six-year old (...). To come (...) to the imbecile stammering of an immigrant American was the fall (...). (Alsop, 2002).

I will argue that the immigrants' limited language competencies at the beginning of their stay abroad fundamentally strengthen already asymmetrical relations between the Polish

immigrants and their German interaction partners.⁸⁶ By ‘asymmetry’ I understand here interactions and relationships in which:

(...) one party is capable of disproportionately imposing her/his will on the other and setting conditions, making decisions, taking actions, and exercising control which are determinative of the relationship. (Hall, 1985: 310).

The autobiographical narrative interviews prove that as long as the narrators’ language skills are limited they cannot fully control their life circumstance, often must passively respond to outer forces (like for instance unquestioningly obeying orders of one’s employer), and lose their temper when they cannot defend themselves while being insulted. For this reason, I treat the narrators’ incapacity of speaking German as the condition enhancing the trajectory dynamics. To put it briefly, while still having insufficient communicative competencies, the immigrants experience the overpowering sense of helplessness and degradation.⁸⁷

In the end, I would like to refer to the book written by E. Hoffman - a Polish immigrant to Canada – ‘Lost in Translation: A Life in a New Language’ also quoted by A. Strauss.⁸⁸ In her story a symbolic dimension of the loss of one’s language and consequent feelings of alienation are addressed. The author who left Poland as a thirteen-year-old girl describes her inner turmoil associated with the process of changing her symbolic universes manifesting themselves in the languages she uses:

⁸⁶ In the main the situation of the Polish immigrants is originally unfavorable because from the very beginning they find themselves in asymmetrical relations like: an immigrant – a native; an immigrant worker – an employer, a poor Pole (often implying less civilised) – a rich German etc.

⁸⁷ Another interesting example comes from the interview with Anna. She is married to an East German whom she had met as a very young girl (about 13-year-old) in a holiday camp in East Germany. For many years, they had been corresponding with each other and her German friend had been constantly improving his Polish. After many years, when the narrator gained her MA in mathematics and had a few other boy-friends, their friendship became important again. They got married. They live in Germany and have two children. The situation I would like to discuss shortly here took place when Anna and her four year old daughter were going by a tram. They were talking to each other – the narrator was speaking with noticeable Polish/ foreigner accent and her daughter was speaking fluent German. Two old German ladies who were listening to their conversation asked the narrator’s daughter: ‘Little girl, how is it possible that you speak so good German?’ Anna, hearing this question got very angry. This story illustrates the phenomenon of prejudices that are created through commenting on things which should not be taken into account or noticed if they are perceived as obvious and ‘normal’. However, when they are pointed out and discussed, their ‘normality’ is questioned. To put it simply: the ladies would probably never ask this question to a German child talking to his or her German parent because it goes without saying that the child is able to speak the language. When asking it to the narrator’s daughter, they presupposed that there is something ‘abnormal’ in a situation in which a mother speaks German with a strong foreigner accent and her child speaks the language fluently.

⁸⁸ Strauss A.L., 1991, *Creating Sociological Awareness, Collective Images and Symbolic Representation*, Transaction Books, New Brunswick, p. 158.

[The] problem is that the signifier has become severed from the signified. The worlds I have learned now don't stand for things in the same unquestioned way they did in my native tongue. 'River' in Polish was a vital sound, energized with the essence of the riverhood of my rivers. 'River' in English is cold – a word without an aura. It has no accumulated associations with me, and it does not give off the radiating haze of connotations... [T]his radical disjoining between word and thing [drains] the world not only of significance but of its colours, striations, nuances- its very existence.... I have no interior language, and without it, interior images – those images through which we assimilate the external world, through which we take it in, love it, make it our own – become blurred too... [Later]I discovered something odd. It seems that when I write (or, for that matter, think) in English, I am unable to use the word "I." [When writing my diary] I do not go as far as the schizophrenic "she" – but I am driven, as by compulsion, to the double, the Siamese-twin "you". (Hoffman, 1989: 106-107, and 121).

4.1.2.3. The common-sense thinking explanation of the stereotypical image of a Pole in Germany: the Polish *caffone*.

Here, I shall focus my attention on the narrators' common-sense theories explaining the origin of the negative stigmatising picture of their nation in the approached country. Attempts to find out and account for Germans' unfavourable attitude towards Poles are made in almost every collected narrative interview. This raises a question: why do the informants attach so much importance to the issue? I would like to refer to the findings of ethnomethodology in answering it. Encountering stereotypical images of the Poles (and we must remember that identification with one's own nation becomes one of the most important components of many young Poles' identity) seriously disturbs the orderliness of the immigrants everyday life. They employ, thus, practical reasoning to make sense of and explain to themselves (and also to their listener in the ongoing story telling) the reasons why this unfavourable image has been created. In doing so, not only do they account for the world they live in, but also set up the basis of the way they act it out.⁸⁹ Garfinkel emphasises that all members of a society constantly look for patterns that may bring order and account for events and actions in their everyday lives to create 'taken for granted' world. Once the pattern has been established, people use it as a frame of their interpretations

⁸⁹ See: Collins R., 1988, *Theoretical Sociology*, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Publishers, London, p. 274.

and in coping with new situations, things or actions they search for facts that confirm this pattern. On the one hand, this pattern helps them to make sense of the current occurrences, and on the other its validity for past actions is being legitimised. This interpretative procedure is called by Garfinkel (following Karl Mannheim in this respect): the documentary method of interpretation.⁹⁰

Then, for many young Poles the prejudices that Germans hold towards the Polish people seem to be accountable in the light of a very bad opinion created mainly by Polish seasonal workers who visited Germany at the beginning of the 90's. The narrators' common-sense and intuitive justifications of certain process going on among the Poles living in Germany (mostly temporarily) seems to be very similar to what Thomas and Znaniecki described as personal disorganization in their well-known book: 'The Polish Peasant in Europe and America'. The authors studied Polish peasants who immigrated to the United States in the beginning of the 20th century. They noticed that while entering a world very different from the rural world from which the peasants had come, they became demoralised. It resulted from the lack of conventional goals, schemes of actions and systems of relevances (while the old ones proved to be useless), and the weakening or total disappearance of their primary group opinion.⁹¹ Thomas and Znaniecki define it as a

(...) decrease of the influence of existing social rules of behaviour upon individual members of the group. (Thomas, Znaniecki, Vol. II, 1927: 1128).

In their attempts to explain the negative attitude of Germans towards Poles the narrators say that it is obviously influenced by irresponsible conduct of many Polish seasonal workers who neither care about their outward appearance nor pay attention to what is socially acceptable and correct in their new surroundings. In all probability, they deal here with the contemporary Polish peasants, who live without socially sanctioned rules while abroad do not strive for social recognition or social appreciation.⁹²

⁹⁰ Garfinkel H., 2002, *Studies...*, op. cit., pp. 77-79.

⁹¹ Cf. Blumer H., 1979, *Critiques of Research in the Social Sciences. An Appraisal of Thomas and Znaniecki's The Polish Peasant in Europe and America*, Transaction Book, New Jersey, p. 67.

⁹² See: W.I. Thomas argues: 'The human wishes have a great variety of different forms but we are capable of the following classification: (1) the desire for new experiences; (2) the desire for security; (3) the desire for response; and (4) the desire for recognition. See: Thomas W.I., 1951, *The Four Wishes*, in Volkart E.H. (ed.), *Social Behaviour and Personality. Contributions of W.I. Thomas to Theory and Social Research*, Social Science Research Council, New York, p. 121. See also: Thomas W.I., Znaniecki F., 1927, *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America*, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 21.

In many respects, their description corresponds also to one of Park's and Miller's types of immigrants in America, i.e., *a caffone*. They call the *caffone* (literary, a 'simpleton') a man who

(...) has the least possible association with any group, has no regard for opinion, wears, for example, the same clothes during his whole stay in America, avoids all conversations, ignores his surroundings, and accumulates the sum of money he has in mind as rapidly as possible. (Park, Miller, 1969: 103-104).

The term is taken from Italians living in America. The authors quote Gaspare Cusumano's description of the group:

The caffoni, who were in Sicily mostly villani [serfs] are looked down upon by their own people and especially by that class of Italians who want to stay here and who feel injured whenever the Italian name is hurt. To this superior class a good name for the Italians is requisite of their process. The caffoni don't care. All they want is to make money and come back. So we often see the superior class preaching and speaking to the caffoni in meetings, in groups and individually, persuading them to uphold the Italian name. The caffoni listen, but then they shrug their shoulders and it is all over. "It does not give me any bread whether Italians have a good name in America or not. I am going back soon." (op. cit.).

Referring to Thomas and Znaniecki's characteristics of the Polish peasant in America and Park and Miller's definition of the Italian *caffone* I suggest to name this type of a Pole (usually a seasonal worker) who spoils the opinion of the whole nation – the Polish *caffone*.

These Poles who combine certain features of the Polish peasants in America with the Italian simpleton are vividly depicted in many autobiographical narrative interviews collected for the purposes of this study. I quote below four examples of the Polish *caffone*'s descriptions and I wonder why actually the narrators discuss this issue.

Bartek and Robert's descriptions of the Polish *caffone* will be discussed first. They resident and work in the same place, and probably both describe the same group of people. We must know that the part of Germany where the narrators live is very reach and attracts many illegal workers. Seasonal workers, mainly from Poland and Turkey, are willingly

employed for fruit picking or in the building industry there. It is interesting that the narrators - while dealing with the image of Poles in Germany - form some sort of meta-conception of a potential situation in which they would cope with the problematic national identity.

A) Robert's example:

The text passage under consideration comes from the interview with Robert. As we already know the narrator is aware that for many people he is one of many Polish residents in Germany and it happens that if some Poles commit a crime, he usually learns about it very quickly. The situation makes him sad and angry, because on the base of some sort of 'we'- feeling, he finds himself responsible. Robert does his very best to convince his German friends and employers that he is trustworthy. He suggests that many Germans' opinion is based on their contact with Polish seasonal workers. Roberts says:

Robert (15/23-34)

a lot of people had some experiences with other Poles, such, who didn't attach importance/ attach importance to the... y importance. They were wearing the same clothes, in which/ in which they were working, they were wearing these dirty things on Sundays and... they didn't shave, because: what for?, they are at work here, not at home. They'll shave, while in Poland, they'll go to the church and their neighbours will see them, so they'll shave, and they don't have to here, y'know?... Because they are here to work, and they earn money, and they drink beer for 50 pfennig, for it's cheap, so they can drink, and they buy it in palettes, and the cheapest bread, because they economise on it, and beer is free, so one can drink, y'know?...

I: mhm

N: They wear moccasins and tracksuits⁹³...

Please note that in his common-sense reasoning the informant points to the breakdown of effective social control – this at home (family) and in church (neighbours) - among the Polish seasonal workers. In consequence, they neglect and score basic norms and habits (connected here with hygiene) obeyed meticulously while in their primary groups. They disregard their surroundings. As typical *caffones* they do not care, since their only aim is to work, earn and save up a lot of money (probably that is why they buy only the cheapest food). Referring to the most crucial findings of Thomas and Znaniecki in 'The Polish Peasant in Europe and America' Park and Miller write:

⁹³ This type of clothing is considered as being in very poor taste in Poland.

men, removed from the restraining influence of an organized community, tend to follow their immediate impulses and behave in monstrous ways. (Park, Miller, 1969: 288).

Robert seems to confirm this thesis and formulates his common-sense explanation of the issue of the demoralization of the Poles in Germany.

B) Bartek's example:

Now, I would like to shift our attention to Bartek's rendering. When the second part of the autobiographical narrative interview is started and additional questions are asked, the narrator is given the 'thankless' task of describing a picture of Poles in the eyes of Germans. In a long commentary, he tries to deal with this matter:

Bartek (35/25-42)

but... the worst is, these places where there are lots of them, like building sites for instance... yyy... they work there, or such large... where there are only Poles between themselves... There's no/ no/ no/ no... yyy... ffff... yyy... then, you know, there's... one big (2) boozing, if it's possible... if they make a good match... It's this kind of life, you know, nobody knows us here, so we can/ can go very far, can't we?...

I: mhm

N: It happens very often. I met some people of this kind... through a guy who was working in my friend's stable... It was a guy who owned... a building company and he used to hire Poles... I went there only once and (2) I saw what they were performing there... I wouldn't like to meet these people in Poland... So I went and I told him that I don't have to go there anymore. Well, if he wants, so let him take/ take a bottle and came to me and we'll drink it at leisure... and and and/ but I don't want, you know, to... have something in common with these people. Well, in Poland I wouldn't/ I wouldn't like to know these/ I've never had such friends and I wouldn't like to have...

I: mhm

N: I don't need them...

I: I understand.

Bartek finds seasonal workers who pick apples in the area he lives (and all seasonal workers from Poland in general) the most representative group. He believes that most opinions concerning his nation come from the image of these people. The narrator portrays them as individuals who do things that they would never do in Poland, since they cannot be recognised, *because nobody knows me here*. They establish their own republic and they move only within their own circle. Owing to fierce competition, they are made to lower their rates. If they want to save something, then, they have to live far below the usual standards (they cannot afford to hire a flat, so they live in caravans or barracks). Bartek sometimes feels ashamed when others see him as a member of this group. He asserts that

he would never have such friends in Poland, but being abroad, he is associated with them, because they speak the same language. The narrator claims, however, that his German acquaintances, who either visited Poland or employ only one Pole, mostly speak highly of the Polish people.

C) Marek's example:

The same picture of Polish workers, however observed in different parts of Germany, can be found in a very long argumentative commentary in Marek's autobiographical rendering. It is sufficient to mention here that making use of his German origin the narrator came to Germany in 1990. Although he was an engineer, initially he worked on an assembly line to earn his living in Germany. It was a lucky coincidence that he could prove his professional skills and was promoted to the position of a foreman. Finally, because he could speak Russian and was learning German very quickly, and the East market was opened he was offered a position of a commercial manager in one of very famous German companies. In the following passage, the narrator attempts to create a positive picture of himself in the eyes of the listener and presents himself in comparison with others immigrants' groups. When he emphasises that he feels like a Pole (although he has German citizenship) and is very proud of his descent, suddenly some sort of 'but' construction is given, and the Polish immigrants of the *caffone* type are described:

Marek (11/ 22-39)

I introduce myself that I come from Poland... I'm, I must tell you, proud of it in a way, but... there were situations... in last ten years I've lived in Germany, that I was ashamed of the Polish yyy language. As I've seen my compatriots in yyy especially yyy in the Ruhr Area there are huge masses of yyy yy I would call it people... from working-class... who yyy who behave... just awfully mmm I don't mention all/ all/ all these cars' thieves and so on, for there are/ that/ that kind of people you can meet everywhere. That is because after these borders had been opened masses of these scum came to Germany y from Poland, which was just meaningless there and here they were trying to make some... shady deals... And I must say that yyy that their Polish vocabulary, especially all yyy these swearwords there are so many of them in the Polish language, they were irritating me when... I was still living in Poland... and when/ they are incredibly irritating me at the moment when... when I've been living for/ as I say, for ten years here, when I can hear in the street... Poles... and unfortunately the only things I can hear these are "ucks" and and and "ucks"⁹⁴ and once again "ucks" so in accordance with it I must say that at times it happened that I was turning away and I was going in the completely other direction to/ speaking Polish not to go in the same... group or/ or/ not to be classified by others to the same group, because I've never belonged to it because I... it irritates me considerably.

⁹⁴ The narrator cites here a popular Polish curse omitting its first letter. I follow this procedure in the translation.

Although Marek says that he introduces himself as a Pole, there is no doubt that he struggles with his national identity. This constantly provokes uneasiness and apprehension in his immigration career. On the one hand, the narrator claims that he always openly declares his Polish origin, because his accent betrays him in any case. On the other hand, he desperately wants to conceal it and keep it from being discovered, when he presumes that he can be recognised as one of ‘them’ – the Polish *caffone* i.e., a person who makes shady deals, steals cars and swears.

D) Piotr’s example.

Let me now bring another example. This time it is a part of the interview with a worker who is viewed by his German employer as an honest and respectable man – Piotr.

Piotr (36/ 13-29)

N: mmm... Listen... it depends. They have such associations (2) Poles a lot (2) I don’t know... here when they open up these borders and these things, a lot of/ earned a bad name, didn’t they?...

I: mhm

N: And it is now/ later... in fact we as Poles who would like to live here normally and all these things a little bit... Sometimes (2) we just have this *Problem* now, you know, because... some they have stolen something, and they were Poles, or something, or/ simply as one can also say (2) all/ these Germans lost their trust, you understand? For instance, I come: a Pole to do something for someone, either illegally or somewhere... he would stare at me: well, he’s a Pole, I don’t want him to pinch something, you know?...

I: mhm

N: Something like that and (2) But as/ as you can see it now, it was the opinion 10 years ago, or something. You know like it is... that’s the way it was. But as it looks nowadays/ for instance, it’s quite... I travel and meet a lot of people who/ they are really rich (2) so they always praise... that from Poland/ from Poland, From Cracow, you know? Or that they know someone there, they have friends mostly somewhere/ somewhere at universities, or something like that

There are still very fundamental questions to be posed here. What is the function of giving such descriptions? Why do the narrators talk about the Polish *caffone*? What is the role of the argumentative strategy employed in their renderings? First of all, I wish to agree with Antonina Kłoskowska who says that:

For a long time, Germany has attracted Polish tourists, seasonal workers and smugglers. Yet, on the whole, the past rest heavily on Polish relation toward Germans. Negative

attitudes and stereotypes dominate, but they are accompanied by an approval of economic cooperation. (Kłoskowska, 1992: 64).

It is true that some Polish seasonal workers' and tourists' actions bring discredit onto the whole nation.⁹⁵ The narrators are aware of this fact. In this light, it is interesting to see the way they construct the concept of national identity and confirm its existence. In the above quoted fragments, we can see that the informants deal with the very problematic and unfavourable picture of their nation. They claim that 'we' - the Polish people are seen in a very discrediting way, because there are some members of the national community who – due to their bad behaviour - spoil the image of Poles in general. Moreover, by virtue of speaking the same language and belonging to the same culture, the informants believe that they may be perceived as the Polish *caffones*, what brings their national identity into question. There is, however, a very crucial implicit assumption in their reasoning, namely: that there is a certain national community to which they belong, and the 'bad' Poles (unfortunately clustered in Germany) are a shameful exception to the rule. The most pivotal thing in their accounts is, then, to show that they themselves and their rules of conducts are 'normal' and representative to the Polish people. By means of excluding the Polish *caffones* from the moral community and distancing themselves from their irresponsible actions, the narrators still display their collective identity in the form of 'we' consciousness accentuating their homogeneity and uniqueness.⁹⁶ In other words, the informants' national identity is constructed on the basis of a distinction between 'who we are' and 'who we are not'. In the latter case, however, they not only endeavour to show that they are not like Germans, but also try to prove that they are not like a type of a Pole who dominated the perception of their nation in Germany – named the Polish *caffone* in this study.

⁹⁵ See also: Garsztecki S., 1998, The Concept of Nation in German – Polish Relations, in Balla B., Sterbling A. (eds.), Ethnicity, Nation, Culture; Central and East European Perspectives, Krämer, Hamburg.

⁹⁶ Cf. Kłoskowska A., 1992b, 'Tożsamość i identyfikacja narodowa w perspektywie historycznej i psychologicznej', *Kultura i Społeczeństwo*, No. 1, p. 134, and Hall S., 1996, The Question of Cultural Identity, in Hall S., Hubert D., Thompson K. (eds.), *Modernity: An Introduction to Modern Societies*, Cambridge, pp. 595-634.

4.2. The impossibility of continuing relevant biographical plans.

Establishing one's own long-term goals and carefully planning ways of achieving them as well as capability of making one's independent decisions and bearing their possible consequences is of decisive importance in every individual biography. There are, thus, such plans and expectations to which an individual attaches great weight and, while reporting them to others he or she displays intentional relation to them. This kind of approach to one's life Schütze calls: 'a biographical action scheme'. He stresses that it is *based on intentional principle of long-term planning* (Schütze, 1983: 288).⁹⁷

Any departure from individual's ideas of his or her own life may be the cause of dissatisfaction, disappointment and suffering. Compelled to give up some relevant biographical plans the individual may feel more or less embittered, depressed, hurt and even angry.⁹⁸ Since these plans and expectations concerning personal biography are integral parts of the person's self-conception and his or her way of experiencing the surrounding reality, any incapacity for implementing them may destroy his or her identity. This then weakens this ability to organise daily life creatively. In a certain point of time, the individual's system of relevances and his current biographical situation determines what is salient and meaningful for his or her life. For example, for a person who passionately or professionally plays tennis the news that he has sustained serious injuries to the arm would be probably more depressing than for a person who has no connections with any kind of sport.⁹⁹

Two different sorts of biographical plans, which have to be abandoned or suspended while immigrating, will be discussed below. The first case is that of well-educated women married to Germans who must give up their occupational career abroad. Although they enjoy (at least formally) full social and economic rights in Germany, they encounter many difficulties in finding satisfying employment. The main reasons are: their

⁹⁷ See: Chapter 2 for more details.

⁹⁸ Cf. Schütze F., 1996, *Verlaufskurven des Erleidens als Forschungsgegenstand der interpretativen Soziologie*, in Krieger H.H., Marotzki W. (eds.), *Erziehungswissenschaftliche Biographieforschung*, Leske & Budrich, Opladen, p. 121.

⁹⁹ Anselm Strauss and Juliet Corbin in their analysis of body failure and consequent loss of self (trajectory of suffering in Schütze's understanding) emphasise that: 'The biographical consequences of body failure are determined in part by the degree of importance placed on the lost physical or mental functions. A pianist with arthritis (...) would be more affected in his work than a writer with heart disease.' Corbin J., Strauss A., 1991, *Experiencing Body Failure and a Disrupted Self Image*, in Strauss A.L., *Creating...*, op. cit., p. 356.

poor language skills and differences in the recognition of professional licensing.¹⁰⁰ Since the Polish women usually have put a lot of effort into graduating from the university (which causes an upward movement in their social positions), they are irritated and disappointed when their education turns out to be useless in Germany. Furthermore, through lack of satisfying work they suffer from deprivation of an autonomous life-space. These contingencies are described here as the necessity of suspending one's occupational career plans. The second case concerns plans of more emotional character; namely in situations in which people go abroad leaving their beloved persons behind them in their homeland. The distance between the two countries makes their relationship more and more complicated. They often cannot see each other as often as they wish and, thus, they cannot share a common vivid present together any longer.¹⁰¹ With time, they find that re-establishing their 'we-relation' is very difficult, if at all possible. Both their common and individual biographical plans are put to the test and unfortunately usually fail. If the relationship is of great importance to the immigrant, its breaking down may be an additional potential for suffering and disorder in his or her biography. This process is named here the incapacity of maintaining crucial relationships.

4.2.1. The necessity of suspending one's occupational career plans.

Some of the narrators and particularly Poles married to German husbands describe situations when moving to Germany foils their attempt for career making. We must bear in mind that setting up home nearly always limits woman's possibilities of professional development, but their permanent residence status (meaning here not being a native member of a society) is even more serious obstacle to them. In support of this thesis, I deal here with two passages taken from the autobiographical narrative interviews with Monika and Nina. Both informants decided to move to Germany and live here at their husbands' side postponing their own biographical action schemes and plans for the future. Initially, their energy and creativity is consumed to a large degree by arranging their life abroad and building a comfortable nest for a young couple. This phase of their biography corresponds

¹⁰⁰ Mainly for these reasons, according to 'Migration News' from June 2001, only 2 percent of people from the EU countries work in the other EU country. But the situation is just a little bit different in the case of my narrators – they are, in a way, made to live in a country where their education is disregarded and treated as unworthy.

¹⁰¹ Cf. Schütz A., 1990b, *The Homecomer*. Collected Papers II: Studies in Social Theory, Martinus Nijhoff, The Hague, pp. 110-113.

to Ralph H. Turner's conception of task-directed self.¹⁰² It happens that, as Turner puts forward, individuals are so concentrated on achieving certain goals that they have no time for considering their self-image (i.e., they do not wonder who they are in the situation and how they are perceived by others). However, when the purposes are accomplished (which in the case of the Polish wives means that they have settled down and managed to put together their family life), the process of conscious reflection on their identity and current situation may become more dominant. This, according to Turner, results in an identity-directed self.¹⁰³ With time they notice that their everyday life is restricted to fulfilling normative norms resulting from their institutional expectation patterns and implicated by them action schemes (being wives and mothers). They realise that their former ambitious plans of being independent and autonomous, at least as far as their occupational life is concerned, have come to nothing. This conclusion is usually very upsetting and painful, because the Polish women I deal with here have put a lot of effort in becoming self-dependent and in gaining a higher education. It is not only their sacrifices they made to be autonomous, but also their earlier experiences of being independent. This makes their current situation especially difficult. Under the conditions of their immigration, the Polish women must often take a step back and be dependent on others again. They cannot live on their own any longer, but they are housewives that are provided for by their husbands. Reconstructing such stories, we can find very critical moments (turning points) regarding the decision to leave Poland. On the one hand, the women are deeply emotionally involved in their German friends or husbands and, on the other hand, they are aware that their higher education (the salient achievement in their life course) is unlikely to be recognised in Germany. The consequent lowering of their status brings about growing discontent and restless unhappiness. In this context, it has significant implications for their identities and biographies.

A) The case of Nina.

The case of Nina, who is a 32-year-old woman and who has been living for 7 years in Germany, seems to illustrate the above discussed situation in a very interesting way. Her biographical action scheme (i.e., her dream as a young girl) was to get into university. She

¹⁰² Cf. Turner R.H., 1968, *The Self-Conception in Social Interaction*, in Gordon Ch., Gergen K.J., *The Self in Social Interaction*, John Wiley & Sons, London, pp. 100-102.

¹⁰³ Cf. *Op. cit.*, p. 101.

knew, however, that the financial situation of her family was very bad (her mother was the only working person, and she realised that she could not afford it. Working for a year in one of the Polish large cities, and being among friends who were students, she noticed that although their families were not rich, they could study. She scrutinised her chances to find out some financial means. It turned out that because of her mother's low salary she could be awarded a scholarship. Her dream came true. She was able to carry out her biographical plans. When Nina was a student, she had to moonlight.¹⁰⁴ During her holidays, she and her friend decided to go to Denmark to earn some money. This plan failed, but the narrator had already incurred some debts in accordance with her travel to Denmark. She was disappointed and angry. When the narrator called her mother to grumble, she suggested going to Germany where Nina's stepfather was working. Thus, the informant went to Germany and on the very next day she met her future husband and fell in love with him. At the beginning, she saw no point in attempting to live together:

Nina (9/27-37)

I thought to myself, that/ that all in all, it's a pity that it's really so far away, because I couldn't see any future for it. It was such a job, I thought that single... and I say: well, there is no sense in, I'm coming back for my studies, he is here, there is such a distance, I don't know, if it has any future at all. But (2) after... yyy... especially, that my husband is much older than me... because 12 years... and I thought to myself/ I really didn't know/ because I was already in love, but... I thought to myself, that/ that there is no sense in it, because it has no future at all. I go to university in Poland, he won't move to Poland, I won't move to Germany for sure, because it generally... mmm... it's out of the question... Then I thought really like that, because I couldn't imagine myself here. All the more, I wanted to study, I wanted to work, I wanted to make a career and all this stuff...

The passage reflects all Nina's doubts, her biographical work and her current attitude towards the described part of her biography. It is now clear that the informant's choice was very difficult for her. Many factors were involved here, for example, the distance between Poland and Germany, the age of her future husband, and her unfavourable picture of Germany. It also shows how much importance she attached to her professional career: *All the more I wanted to study, I wanted to work, I wanted to make a career and all this stuff...* Then, Nina graduated from the university and started working. Since her husband-to-be showed no readiness to move to Poland, and she really wanted to be with him, and simultaneously her contacts at work turned out to be very difficult, she decided to leave for Germany. Nina was well aware of the consequences she had to take. One of them was the necessity of giving up her plans of career making as a well-educated person. Thus, she had

¹⁰⁴ 'To moonlight' denotes having an additional job.

to modify her need of being independent. The narrator presents her general orientation in life *I've always wanted to work absolutely. I've never wanted to... God forbid, depend financially on somebody, you know how it is.* (Nina, 13/6-7). Even when she unexpectedly got pregnant, she stubbornly had been looking for a job, and finally she was working on some sort of assembly line for some time.

At the later phase of the interview in which additional questions are asked, the interviewer wants the informant to clarify her attitude presented in the main story line, when she has stated, that she could not imagine moving to Germany. Nina answers:

Nina (22/48-23/12)

N: mmm (3) Because... hm hm (3) because then I was working as a cleaning lady... and yyy (2) and I couldn't imagine/ it means, you know what, I never say never, that all in all everything is possible, one can/ but I... you know what, maybe because, that these studies I've made, it was/ they were yyy my ideal studies. All in all I thought, that I'd never study, and I always wanted. And you know, I always had some ambitions yet, that/ to do something, that I really like and I thought: if I move here, from that moment I've no education, you know, because I realise, that my studies... you know, it sounds nice here and, as I'm saying, it's recognised here in that sense, that I was attending such studies and that I can use this title here, that it's graduated in Poland, but it gives me nothing here, you know... And/ and it was for me just a little bit/ little bit/ such resignation from that part of my life, which I liked so much and you know, which I valued so much, that/ that I could cope with it somehow and that I graduated from it and, you know, that it gives you something yet and you can find an interesting job. And at that moment I thought: you start from scratch again, you know. You know... mc... because/ because I don't know, but (2) well, I don't know how to tell you it (3)

The mode of presentation of the quoted passage (and all passages connected with Nina's higher education) shows the great significance of the narrator's studies for her conception of self. It is not only the content of her narration, but also its formal features which allow us to state that her higher education is one of the most crucial biographical plans. The narrator has struggled with the problem of finding a satisfactory job for six years. But, as long as her new life circumstances required much time and involvement (setting up home, taking care of children), her biographical action scheme concerning her own independency and autonomy (like for instance her own paid work) could be eclipsed. Performing her duties as a wife and mother is still fundamental part of her everyday life, but it tends to transform into an institutional action scheme that is ironically characterised as *sitting at home and cooking dinners*. As we have already seen, Nina desperately wants to be financially independent and she is not ashamed of working as an unskilled worker, but it is surely not something she dreams of. There is, however, another very interesting part of her

narration displaying her irresistible desire to develop her own action schemes. Nina talks about her single and short cooperation with the criminal department of the local police, where she was working as an interpreter substituting for her Polish friend.¹⁰⁵ The narrator deals with this springboard to her routine activities in adventure terms. She describes this work as ‘fantastic’. I believe that it is not only the very work that is so thrilling, but also the possibility to escape from the stultifying effects of her usual housework. Although the problem may concern all women who are tired of their daily domestic chores, it is particularly severe in the case of the immigrant women who are still socially isolated.

The analysis of Nina’s rendering clearly shows that her choice to live in Germany is coupled with great biographical losses and the collapse of crucial biographical actions schemes. In this connection, her life situation abroad consequently leads to serious identity disturbances that evoke the process of identity changes. This process is usually preceded by the individual’s elaborated biographical work. In this connection, he or she is made to arrange their life anew taking into account their current possibilities and present system of relevances. The individual has to understand his or her former life in the light of new experiences and blend it well into his or her personal identity. The concept of biographical work and Nina’s successful attempt to develop her own biographical plans and establish an autonomous existence in Germany is discussed at length in the next chapter.

B) The case of Monika.

Another example comes from the interview with Monika. Let me remind you that she is a young woman who is married to a Silesian of German origin and has been living in Germany for two years. She is a political scientist (she has completed a university degree in Poland). Unfortunately, her professional knowledge turns out to be useless in Germany. Furthermore, contrary to the narrator’s and her spouse’s expectations, she has a lot of difficulties in the German language acquisition.¹⁰⁶ These hitches prevent her from finding a job satisfying her ambitions.

¹⁰⁵ The police were tapping the phone calls of some Polish criminals in Germany and she was translating their conversations from Polish into German.

¹⁰⁶ I discuss this problem later. It is very puzzling why for many young Polish intellectuals who potentially should learn very quickly (are trained to do it) acquiring German presents such a great problem.

The below presented unit is a theoretical explanation of the narrator's feeling connected with her permanent move to Germany. When Monika talks about her husband's family members who envy them, because they are doing well in Germany, and although they also *have papers*¹⁰⁷, they are afraid to emigrate, the interviewer asks if there was some uncertainty about her leaving Poland, too? The narrator says:

Monika (24/20-25/10)pl

N: I've never thought that yyy there is here... that it's true that you move to another country and you are like a new-born person, that practically the whole output of your life... It means, it was the last moment, because later .hh it would be probably/ the later the worst... Because y because my studies/ well, OK., I've completed political sciences, so what? It doesn't matter here. They give a shit for it generally. I was working in Poland... I was a civil servant, but here [in Germany] they'll never admit me as a civil servant... why? how?... Here, I've to begin everything again... you know? But (2) Tomek [the informant's husband] didn't/ I don't know, maybe he mentioned it, but... you know, he used to say: 'Oh, Monika, damn, with your education, it would be quick, very quickly language, one year, super.', you know...

I: mhm

N: ((laughing)) It wasn't so (2) that y... I wonder, if I for instance had known (2) then... how difficult and hard it would have been... if I... if I had decided to leave at all... I don't know. Well, I, as I have already said 'A', I have to say 'B', 'C' and 'D' and so on, you know?... I cannot now, OK., I've got a problem with a job, I've to learn the language, I've to do something new, with my profession to learn something new, so I don't give a shit for it and I go back Poland and I work for/ for/ for 600 zloty and I've got my berth, you know? .hh And here it isn't so, you know? If I've moved here, so... I have to think over what I can do here, you know?... with all these things I know....

I: mhm... mhm (2) So, in a way, you were not aware of these difficulties, which/

N: Some things I didn't/ of some things I wasn't, because, if I had, let's say, you know, if I were a baker, a hair-dresser, it's easy, you know? But this is my profession, I've studied it and I'm not going to pack something, or do any physical work, it is OK., you know?... But I've been studying for so many years in Poland not to do this kind of work... you know?... Because.... one studies to let others do these jobs, and I could work with my head.

As we learn from the previous part of Monika's rendering, just after her wedding and coming to Germany for good, she flung herself into organizing her family life and arranging her new flat with great enthusiasm. For the time being the narrator's dream of *working with her head* receded into the background. When she finally had enough time to consider her situation she found it very complicated and complex. This is where her biographical work and the discussed passage start. Both Monika and her husband Tomek believed that her knowledge and education would facilitate the assimilation process and the possibility of finding a job. The problems, however, continue to multiply. Monika cannot learn German as quickly as she wants, and she realises that under these circumstances her

¹⁰⁷ In informal terminology popular among the Silesians *having papers* denotes owning necessary documents to prove one's German origin and, thus, attain German citizenship.

higher education is worthless (it concerns both her poor language skills and differences between Polish and German education of political scientists). It is a vicious circle, since without having certain language skills Monika cannot get a job, yet without a job her contacts with Germans are radically limited (she is immersed in the Polish-speaking Silesian milieu). Therefore, she can neither spontaneously acquire the language, nor is her motivation strong enough to learn it. The informant stresses that if she had been aware of so many complications before coming to Germany, she probably would have never come. She has not been aware that the whole output of her life would be questioned. It is a very harmful experience, for she has put her heart and soul into her education. Now, in Germany, she feels like a newborn individual, whose skills and achievements are of no worth. The narrator, however, is very determined, because she has already made the first move, she has to go further. Monika does not want to be a housewife relying and supported by his husband, and she does not want to be an assembly-line worker, either. Unfortunately, her social surroundings do not favour her gritty nature.¹⁰⁸ Monika lives in Germany among the Silesians from lower class, for whom – as she illustrates it – there is no difference if they work on an assembly line in Poland or in Germany (as far as their skills are considered). Of course, she also can get this type of work, because there are no special skills required and there is no need to speak German fluently. For her doing this kind of work would be probably some sort of very serious degradation and even humiliation: *I've been studying for so many years in Poland not to do this kind of work... you know?... Because... one studies to let others do these jobs, and I could work with my head.* In short, Monika feels disappointed and frustrated finding that her higher education attained in Poland (and resulting from it higher and more prestigious status in society) is not fully recognised in Germany. She is disoriented and bewildered when she apprehends how much her expectations deviates from 'the German realities'. To circumvent this 'demeaning' situation, she is learning how to use the internet and design websites, for she believes it may be a realistic alternative. This is a kind of occupation that requires more elaborated and professional knowledge and therefore may satisfy the narrator. To put it simply, Monika wants to do something that not everybody can do (everyone can work on an assembly line, but not everybody can design web sites). Although Monika is supported by her husband in her efforts to keep the status of a well-educated person, it still remains a

¹⁰⁸ 'Gritty' is used here in the sense of perseverance.

question if her Silesian milieu would be also conducive to her development. It is possible on the contrary that it may demoralise her.¹⁰⁹

Park and Miller in their analysis of the immigration process point at the loss of status and the consequent diminished sense of personality when an individual settles in a foreign country (like America). The empirical analysis of Nina and Monika's narrative interviews displays how their status (of a well-educated person) achieved in Poland through a great effort and many sacrifices is thwarted by their immigration.¹¹⁰ In consequence, the basis of their self-respect is seriously undermined. When they come to realise that their life situation while abroad may be reduced to being a housewife only and their possibilities of involvement in other activities (that could be some sort of the springboard to their institutional action schemes of being a wife and a mother) is seriously restricted because of the language difficulties and unfamiliarity with their new milieus. Because of this, they feel deeply dissatisfied and depressed. I find these social conditions of immigration (especially in the case of women who immigrated for the sake of their husbands) favourable for the building up of trajectory potential. While Nina (with a considerably longer immigration career) finally finds a new field of interest that satisfy her need of being independent (see subunit 5.2.2), Monika's integrity and identity abroad is still seriously threatened.

4.2.2. The incapacity of maintaining crucial relationships.

I wish to turn now to a consideration of a situation in which an individual cannot continue some important relationships while immigrating and, therefore, is made to make dramatic sacrifices. I would like to discuss the autobiography of Robert and Bartek to exemplify the phenomenon.

¹⁰⁹ By the term 'demoralization' I understand here a continuously decrease, reduction or even disappearance of one's system of relevance when one enters a milieu that does not support one's aspirations, desires and needs. In the case of Monika it would mean giving up her biographical action scheme connected with her higher education and conforming to values and expectations of her Silesian surrounding. Starting up a trajectory mechanism is the most likely outcome of this process. Cf. Thomas W.I., Znaniecki F., 1918-1920, *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America*, Vol. II, Richard G. Badger, Boston; Vol. II originally published by the University of Chicago Press.

¹¹⁰ See: Park R.E., Miller H.A., 1969, *Old World Traits Transplanted*, Arno Press, New York, pp. 47-48. The authors show that things like habits, language, dress, interests etc., which display an individual's status at home are left behind while immigrating. For Nina and Monika, however, their occupational status seems to play the most decisive role.

A) The case of Robert

When the narrator's rendering is over the interviewer asks questions about two things, which are of decisive importance in his life history and which have been just mentioned, but have been not explored and sufficiently worked on in the main story line, i.e., his studies (the informant mentioned earlier that he was studying at the School of Physical Education) and his beloved girlfriend (named Marta in the transcription).¹¹¹ Both of them arise out of an additional narrative potential.¹¹² This implies that these areas of his biography could be problematic. At this point, he is then forced to deal with these issues. He comments on his higher education and his girlfriend in this way: *Ah, well. That SPE [the School of Physical Education] I just... left....* And then an argumentative structure follows. It ends with a coda: *So I gave up the school (3) yyyy.* The 3 minute pause and nonlexical phrase 'yyyy' which directly precedes the unit quoted below suggest that the narrator is not able to take up another topic he should elaborate i.e., the matter of his girlfriend. Finally, he says:

Robert (8/33-27)

With my girlfriend... the girlfriend gave up me... For two years when I was here/ for two years I managed to... prolong it. I wanted her to come to me here, but she started studying, she was younger than I was... I'm in touch with her until today... Well it was also/ that mmm... that was important/ important matter... generally... in my life, too... the girlfriend/ her name was Marta/ is... still... yyy ffffff... Well, all in all, well mc (3) I had been to come back in a half-a-year, I'd been deluding her for 2 years... and what is more, after these 2 years I didn't come back, in spite of that. So she came to a conclusion after these two years that... there is no point in waiting for me... Well and she found a boyfriend, y'know? I don't know if it was earlier or later... mmmm I don't/ it never to me/ I didn't investigate it. I just know that/ it happened because of that, I'm not at home, for only visits, letters and phones it's not enough... because one cannot be with another person, if they are not together, y'know?...

I: mhm

N: When we/ what's more we had... pfff we'd been together for a year, before I left, so it's also almost no ground...

I: mhm

N: But, in spite of that, we understand each other very well. We understand each other very well till today. We know each other, we are in touch (2) We were meeting in such a time

¹¹¹ In the main story line Robert mentions three things which made his decision of leaving Poland very difficult: i.e., his girlfriend, his studies and his work in a Danish veterinary medicines company. While the narrator refers to the first two issues evasively and laconically, the last matter is explained in a clear and understandable manner for a listener. A relatively long fragment is devoted to Robert's relation with his employer, because he was probably the only person who accepted his decision of going to Germany without reservation. We must also take into account that although Robert really liked his work his attitude toward it was rather of institutional character, while his studies and first of all his girlfriend were connected with very profound emotional involvements.

¹¹² The second phase of the narrative interview is started here, i.e. questions regarding additional narrative potentials of the just completed main story are asked. Cf. Schütze F., 1992a, 'Pressure and Guilt...', op. cit., p. 190.

mmm... in the meantime... when she met a boy, and it doesn't work with him... It turned out that he wasn't like me... Wojtek [it is probably Marta's new boyfriend's name]... she told me, so well/ well everything, damn, would have been different, if I had stayed, because she was great and she is a valuable girl... well and that/ that was/ it's one of these minuses, which/ of my staying here/ leaving Poland, y'know?...

I: mhm

N: My SCHOOL also a minus, because... I would be after mmmm I would have higher education... so I have to number it among minuses yyy Well and the girlfriend who... well it broke down... because of me/ because I just/ I wasn't in the right place, y'know?...

I: mhm

N: Well, and she had some new company, school, some evenings, parties, I'm not there, so... how long one can be alone, y'know? She was holding on for a long time, I think, so yyyyy I don't hold a grudge against her on the one hand, but on the other, well I would like her to wait for me and to be together with her, because... because, I really cared deeply about her, because... that was something (2) Well ffff... It looks like this... Well and we meet sometimes and so on, but that's not that. A little bit/ a little bit of anger, a little bit of envy in all these things... all the same. She to me, that I left her, I... to her, that she wasn't waiting for me... Well and so on... and then, actually [his mobile phone is calling, 3 minutes break]. Where have I finished?

I: The parting with your girlfriend... and such problems a little bit/

N: Aha, well... so that/ that/ there was a problem, I don't avoid it, well, damn... (so again) I have to cope with it... because... Well, because she was important for me, o!, that's why. If she hadn't been important, I would have not give a shit for her, and there would have been no problem and... and... It's a pity a little bit...

Juxtaposing the statements concerning Robert's studies (Ah, well. That SPE I just... left... and So I gave up the school) with the sentence dealing with breaking up with his girlfriend (With my girlfriend... the girlfriend gave up me...) and comparing their formal structure, give us an insight into the narrator's way of experiencing both occurrences in his biography. Whereas in the case of his education (we should remember that his studies were connected with horses, too) he is the subject of the action, he makes the decision and takes into account its consequences, in the case of his girlfriend's leaving he is rather a passive individual who only experiences and does not consciously organise his life. Although Robert finds interrupting his studies a minus, the horse-riding possibilities and conditions in Germany compensate for this to a large degree. This may also sufficiently account for his choice to stay abroad not only for himself but for the listener, as well. However, when the narrator reports the failure of his relationship with a beloved person¹¹³ he is no longer capable of managing different contingencies in the course of his life, but he becomes

¹¹³ Although the interview was carried out 5 years after Robert's parting with his girlfriend he still had vivid memories of her. Only from his current point of view was he able to see how much the girl meant to him and how precious their relationship was. In the presented passage, the narrator three times stresses the value of this relationship, and Marta appears always as his significant other. Robert claims that he does not hold a grudge against her and they are on good terms with each other, but he is still disappointed that she did not want to wait for him and found another boyfriend. Even now, he wishes they had never parted. Taking all these circumstances into account, we have sufficient grounds for claiming that this relationship has been of a great biographical relevance.

subordinated to strange outer forces. Although it was his girlfriend who made the decision to leave him (which is a fact of great biographical relevance for him), Robert bears the responsibility for their partition. He is aware that he did not care about their relationship sufficiently and was deluding her for 2 years, always promising that he would return in a half-a-year. He, however, never kept his word. Robert says it in an argumentative passage: *I just know that/ it happened because of that, I'm not at home, for only visits, letters and phones it's not enough... because one cannot be with another person, if they are not together, y'know?...* (8/42-48). The narrator attempts to explain disintegration of his relationship with his beloved girlfriend by means of the homecoming experience described by Schütz. He knows that, because of their remoteness, they did not share a common vivid present any more and that they were no longer elements of their personal history and their own autobiographies.¹¹⁴ There is the matter that needs to be dealt with: why the informant can not deal with this topic during the main line of his narration. To answer this question we must point our attention to the fact that people usually attempt to fade out from their awareness situations connected with pain, suffering, deep emotional breakdowns and disappointments. Recapitulating these difficult and hard to endure emotions in the course of interviews exposes narrators to experiencing them anew. Since they usually try to avoid telling them, these items of story-telling where they should be retold and discussed become implausible. This incomprehension may force informants to adhere to the constraint to go into details and, thus, recalling and explaining these problematical areas. If they still do not want to make their biographies more transparent, it is the interviewer's task to elicit more information about these hazy parts of their life history.¹¹⁵ Therefore, when Robert is asked in the second part of the interview about his girlfriend, he realises that he must explain the situation in detail in order to satisfy the listener. There is no doubt that breaking off with the woman he loves is one of the most painful and bitter experiences in his life, and therefore he would most likely consciously evade tackling with the matter. There is, however, one more reason why the narrator does not want to deal with this topic. He took (almost) no steps to save this relationship and just let the girl go. It means that Robert sacrificed his great love for the sake of his personal development and profit (also financial), because it does not square with his successful professional career biography. Elaborating this issue seems to be a serious threat to his personal identity, because while discussing it he would have to admit that his behaviour was not quite moral and

¹¹⁴ Cf. Schütz A., 1990b, *The Homecomer*, op. cit., pp. 110 -111.

¹¹⁵ See: Schütze F., 1992b, 'Pressure and Guilt...', op. cit., p. 352.

responsible.¹¹⁶ To save his face (Goffman, 1972a) in the eyes of the listener and in his own eyes Robert attempts to circumvent the problematical issue in the narrative part of the interview. Consequently, passing over the nagging matter of his girlfriend in the main story line constitutes an empirical proof of denying it from his consciousness for two reasons: Firstly, because the experience has been very painful. Secondly, because his attitude towards the girlfriend and their relationship is to a large extent reprehensible and impinges on his identity. Robert ends the passage: *It's a pity a little bit*. Then, he suddenly changes the topic (it is another cue that the matter of his girlfriend is connected with suffering and identity questioning)¹¹⁷ and he starts talking about his relation with parents who miss him very much and wait for him at home.

In the end, I would like to add that since parting with his Polish girlfriend Marta, Robert has never established any firm relationship with any woman. Still living in Germany he was involved in a few fleeting affairs with German girls, but he always made them aware that he does not treat their relationship very seriously. It is because the narrator wants to return to Poland, and he is not going to expose any person (for instance his wife-to-be) to the suffering from loneliness in a foreign country, he himself experienced. We must, however, remember that as Riemann and Schütze point out it is one of the basic features of trajectory that:

(...) *the person's ability to start, establish, and organize social relationships is weakened.*
(Riemann, Schütze, 1991: 343).

Thus, I would suggest that the biographical situation of the narrative during his rendering was still very unstable and complicated and he must still face many difficulties concerning his self-identification and national belonging.

¹¹⁶ It should be explicated that it is not my personal opinion that the narrator's behaviors were immoral and irresponsible. My judgment is based on careful consideration of the phenomenon of 'reflexivity' in the ethnomethodological sense. This means that the narrator's understanding of the interviewer's question is included and accounted for in his answer. In all probability, we may assume that Robert identifies the interviewer's question about his girlfriend as an accusation which must be clarified. In this context, he defines his actions as not quite moral and responsible. M. Czyżewski explains: 'The accounting practices are 'reflexive' because the accounts which members provide are displayed in members' actions. It is through their own actions that members display how they understand their own actions as well as the actions of their interactional partners. Hence, the ethnomethodological concept of 'reflexivity' relates to the self-explicating, self-organizing character of members' actions.' Czyżewski M., 1994, 'Reflexivity of Actors versus Reflexivity of Accounts', *Theory, Culture & Society*, Vol. 11, Sage Publications, London, p. 163; See also: Czyżewski M., 1985, 'Problem podmiotowości...', *op. cit.*, p. 37.

¹¹⁷ The change of the topic or the mode of presentation in the recapitulation of events indicates problematic phases of one's biography.

Robert's narration displays that the immigrant's assumption that one day he will return home entails his belief that abroad everything is of transitional character and nothing is fixed and firm. This obstructs the possibility of establishing deep emotional bonds with people living in the approached country, building stable 'home', and developing new biographical action schemes while abroad. Robert is constantly in limbo, unceasingly balancing the precarious equilibrium of everyday life.¹¹⁸ Later, I discuss how he attempts to get out of this predicament through returning to Poland and how he again comes to Germany.

B) The case of Bartek.

There are three elements in Bartek's autobiographical narrative interview that are reported as sources of the narrator's suffering in the early stages of his immigration process: 1) the loss of significant beloved person, 2) alienation from his former milieu and 3) the loss of status. These issues are plainly displayed in the passage following the additional question of the interviewer. It is designed to elicit additional narrative potential and persuade the narrator to recollect what happened between this moment in his biography depicted as a disaster¹¹⁹ and parting with his girlfriend (there was nothing in Poland he could return to). The obvious change in the narrator's attitude is here the subject matter of the interviewer's concern:

Bartek (27/42 – 28/8)pl

I: There was... such a moment in your story, in which you told me that when you were here... for a year, it was a disaster... and then there was a moment, when you split up with your girlfriend, if .hh it/ it... if you could tell me if you really had nothing to come back to Poland, then, or... how was it?

[]

N: mhm Soemthing/
something/ something like that .hh... yyy On the one hand it looked like this... yyy (2)
Generally, you know, when I was going home [to Poland] I was with her [Bartek's girlfriend] all the time... I wasn't/ to my mum or my dad, although I'm... we are very... mmmm mc... we are close together. It means, we live... y we understand each other very well (2) yyy with my siblings... with my parents. I still live at my parents when I'm

¹¹⁸ See: Riemann G., Schütze F., 1991, 'Trajectory'..., op. cit., p. 349.

¹¹⁹ Bartek recollects those times as living from one return trip (on his leave) to another, i.e., unceasing waiting for the time he could spend away from his work and go to Poland. This way of depicting his position in Germany is very interesting. The narrator describes his life situation as divided into two parts, into two diverse realities. On the one hand there is 'the German world of daily life' meaning work, earning money, but simultaneously loneliness and emptiness, and on the other hand, there is 'the Polish/ home reality' connected with emotional involvement, feelings and close relationships. The sharp contrast between alienation and familiarity, emotional emptiness and involvement seems to illustrate the narrator's inner turmoil typical for a marginal man.

mmm... Generally, we use to live as a family yyy (3) But in principle, I spent more/ more time with my girlfriend, when I was coming... mc... yy... and and It was probably connected with her personality a little bit (2) but on the other hand... (I think it was), you know, I was still/ I wasn't introduced/ I didn't/ I didn't enter the whole... circulation here and and/ I was differently thought how to live in Poland...

I: mhm

N: and differently/ I came here and everything was a little bit (2) mmm... Friends next to nothing (2)

I: mhm

N: and it was ((sighting)) There was nothing going on, you know?...

I: mhm

N: Such, you know, suddenly it all broke off, for in Poland I was living (2) there was something going on all the time (2) Here/ it turned out here, that, you know, only home and work and it... It was probably so... The worst thing was/ because sss/ with my girlfriend, OK., it was the reason for sure... i/ it was attracting me, but actually these last our (2) Then she came here after/ after (2) after two years she came for three months (2) and she was here and actually later it started to get worse and then it was improving/ rather deteriorating, and finally we split up... mmmmm... So mmmmm... I don't know, I rather think it was the way y I was living yyy here. That it was so... pffff the same kind of life actually as/ as/ as one can imagine Poles being illegally...

I: mhm

N: yyy in Germany, that it is only work and it... it/ it was the most depressing... that f f yyy ff at home, or... f f in W, in work I had my status, it was quite high an and and (3) I established a good name , so/ Here I was/ I had to begin everything anew/ build everything anew .hh

As we can see, the narrator focuses only on this part of the question that concerns his first misfortune year in Germany. Here we get to know that Bartek's relation with his girlfriend was of very intensive character and he used to spend all the time with her while in Poland. Thus, his visits to his home country were full of feelings and emotions concentrating on his partner. At the same time in Germany – as the informant says – he *didn't enter the whole... circulation* yet, that means that he had no relations with people and yet did not enter the social world of horse-riding in Germany which later supports his process of assimilation. This issue requires further clarification. Bartek comes to Germany to train horses. This ensures his passion and sense of life. In spite of this, his attitude towards his job in Germany is initially very restrained, if not cold. It is so, because for the narrator horse-riding is not only connected with the very horses, but also with specific relations, rituals, ways of being and atmosphere shared by a group of people interested in horses. Bartek describes his membership in the group of people working in the stable of horses in Poland in terms of social world described by Anselm Strauss.¹²⁰ The narrator initially sees the social world of horse-riding in Germany as deprived of its crucial part, i.e., emotional bonds among its members, joint activities apart from riding horses like parties, meetings

¹²⁰ Please see Chapter 5.2 for more details and 5.2.1.1 especially.

etc (he explains: *Friends next to nothing*, and later: *There was nothing going on*). This seems to create an additional potential of his suffering abroad. Thus, at the very beginning of the narrator's stay abroad, the social world of horse-riding in Germany is the fundamental contrast to his life in Poland (the dry, impersonal social world of horse-riding in Germany¹²¹ is juxtaposed with his intensive relationship with the girlfriend and the social world of horse-riding in Poland based on friendly relations, where the stable was his home). It seems that in the course of time, Bartek's relation with his girlfriend loses its significance. It seems to be certain that it was not such a strong and emotionally loaded connection as in the abovementioned case of Robert. From the narrator's current perspective the loss of his previous social world and a consequent diminishing of his professional status come to the fore. The last issue needs some more attention here. As we know, Bartek was very early introduced to the life of the stable of stallions in B. by his father. Since the narrator started his riding career as a child and he was very devoted to this passion, he gained quickly a high and firm status among the members of this social world. Coming to Germany, it turned out that he was treated not as one of the best and respected riders, but that he was one of many regular workers. Thus, the social conditions of his immigration process were very difficult at the outset and stimulated the trajectory development.

The analysed autobiographical narrative interviews show that the cause of suffering of many immigrants results from the impossibility of continuing two biographically important plans or 'enterprises'. One can only be executed in Poland and the other in Germany. There are some structural conditions of the immigration process, which make the possibility of a reconciliation of certain biographical plans particularly difficult. These are: the distance between both countries (although they share the same boarder), the incompatibility of one's professional education, the lack of indispensable language skills, etc. Initially, the individuals are usually so absorbed and immersed in putting their plans directly associated with the immigration process into action, that these which can be realised only while in Poland tend to be pushed aside and at least forgotten for the time being. However, when organizing their life abroad gets more stabilised, and therefore does not require so much time, energy and emotional involvement, the 'neglected' biographical action schemes are usually recalled and reconsidered. Sometimes – and only from the –

¹²¹ Bartek compares his life situation then to a typical day of illegal workers who come to Germany only to earn money. Please see his description of the way of life of the Polish seasonal workers in subchapter 4.1.2.1.

later perspective - the narrators can appreciate their value and importance. Moreover, the unfeasibility of fulfilling these temporarily eclipsed plans and expectations in Germany turns out to be a serious biographical problem that may show the potential for disorganisation and impairment of an only recently achieved equilibrium. I believe that in any case when two biographical action schemes are in opposition and/or cannot be implemented simultaneously, and for this reason one of them has to be postponed or abandoned some sort of bitterness and disappointment occur. As the cited passages of the autobiographies of the Polish immigrants bear out, resulting from living abroad social isolation and insufficient cultural (language) competencies may strengthen their trajectory process.

4.3. Disillusionment – the clash of expectations with reality.

Planning and organising immigration and sometimes during the initial period following arrival, the individuals who left their home country lured by the promise of affluent and peaceful life experience some sense of euphoria and excitement (characteristic of peak phases of biographical action schemes). Unfortunately, this feeling diminishes along with repeated situations of a hostile reception, and stereotypical treatment coupled with disappointed hopes and disillusioned reality. Schütze explains:

The first biographical action scheme conceived before leaving the home country is naturally quite unrealistic, because the immigrant-to-be doesn't have reliable information about his future life situation. (Schütze, npd: 18).

An important question presents itself: why the knowledge about the country of destination and the conditions of living there (especially concerning newcomers) is so vague or fuzzy? On the basis of the collected autobiographical narrative interviews, I would characterise it as treacherous, deceptive and disappointing. This situation will be considered in more detail below.

For the majority of potential immigrants the country of destination appears as a sort of paradise and is generally believed to be a place of almost perfect happiness or some sort of “Promised Land” (regardless of the harmful historical past). Because of an uncertain and unsteady economic situation in Poland, Germany is perceived as an affluent country giving better chances and perspectives. This is true for young people who want better and well-paid jobs and for young Polish-German couples alike. For the first group, however, the myth of wealthy and rich west neighbour is the main force initiating their immigration process.

To illustrate this issue I will quote here the autobiographical narrative interview with a 27-year-old Silesian Max. His immigration is coupled with a strongly held belief that firstly *money makes the world go round*, and, secondly, that abroad (no matter where, however his immigration to Germany seems to be a natural consequence of his German origin) this economic success may be easily achieved. After a serious accident in Poland (a firecracker exploded in his hand and damaged it seriously on New Year's Eve. This made his work as

a cars' salesman impossible) and after being cheated by his friend in their cars' business (it is not clear what kind of business the narrator means here) and left with huge debts, Max decided to 'use' his German origin and to come to Germany. In his persistent wish to earn a lot of money, he has to do boring, but lucrative jobs with no level of satisfaction in the approached country. The informant is also in an illegal businesses consisting in fleecing insurance companies (with his friends they buy old cars, insure them against traffic accidents for a lot of money and then provoke fender-benders). I believe that Max's biography perfectly illustrates a marginal man's personality type described by Stonequist as **the *déraciné cosmopolitan***, that is, an unstable personality of an individual who:

(...) has broken away from his traditional moorings and is culturally adrift. He lives on the surface of life, becomes blasé and easily bored, and restlessly moves about looking for new thrills. (Stonequist, 1961: 179).¹²²

Max asked about his image of Germany before leaving Poland says:

Max (7/8-21)pl

N: yyy... Here people have/ their standards of living are different... If money is considered, isn't it?... yyy It's usual here that they've got a car, they've got a flat (2) that they even have got a phone/ now it's better with telephones in Poland, isn't it?... that they've got a phone, that they can go somewhere on islands on their holidays, you know?...

I: mhm

N: They live... most of Germans are laid-back. There are Germans who also live/ they have no work, or something like that... or... they have some problems... which... but generally most of the people live on a different standard... Not so/ not so/ not under such stress like in Poland... We've been to Poland recently [i.e.: the narrator and his wife]... mc and I go there twice a year...

I: mhm

N: so people live there from one payment to another and... they have to borrow some money in the meantime... meantime, because they earn ridiculously little money, you know?...

Giving the circumstances that Max exemplifies the type of a person who is money-oriented and for whom other values do not count, we may assume that he is happy anywhere he can earn a lot of money in a relatively easy way. In this respect, Poland compares unfavourably with Germany. Undoubtedly, for the narrator Germany is his Promised Land.

¹²² Stonequist's definition of the *déraciné cosmopolitan* is in many respects similar to A. Kloskowska's concept of univalence, i.e., an individual's attitude towards his or her own national culture that may lead to 'the loss of all ties with national cultures.' See: Kloskowska A., 2001a, National Cultures..., op. cit., pp. 150-152. Please, see the introduction to the next chapter for more detailed information.

Contrary to Max, in many cases people coming to a new country in the belief that they could improve their standards of living or have better changes of development experience disappointment and frustration. They learn the unpleasant truth about the real conditions very quickly. Seeing that their expectations and images are not realistic, they feel bitter and unhappy. Some are very frustrated for they cannot earn so much money they wish or they get no sense of fulfilment from their work. Some of them, however, even if satisfied with their wages and standards of living, discover – to their surprise – that nothing can sufficiently compensate for losing their homeland. Park and Miller maintain that the expectancy, disillusionment as well as the consequent nostalgia and homesickness are the first experiences of any immigrant.¹²³ In their famous book: ‘Old World Traits Transplanted’ the authors tend to show how the immigration process is experienced by individuals coming to America. First, they indicate that:

Nearly all immigrants have idealized America. They have usually had glowing pictures of it, and are disillusioned by the conditions they find here. (Park, Miller, 1969: 46).

Next, they illustrate their observation referring to the life history of Allesandro Deluca:

All the time I hear about the grand city of New York. They say it is something to surprise everyone. I learn New York is twice, three, four, ten times bigger than Italian city. Maybe it is better than Milano. Maybe it is better than Naples. "The land of the free and the home of the brave" —I am young and I think that is beautiful land. I hear such fine words like "liberty," "democracy," "equality," "fraternity," and I like this high principles. The people say it is the country where you are your own boss, where you may receive money on your word, where there is trust and confidence, so that America look like a blessed country, and I think I am going to great city, to grand country, to better world, and my heart develop big admiration and a great, noble sentiment for America and the Americano. I arrive in New York. You think I find here my idea? (Park, Miller, 1969: 46-47).

Having in mind Park and Miller’s observations, I would like to refer to the collected autobiographical narrative interviews in order to point out certain biographical conditions which make the immigration process difficult and/ or unbearable in its initial phases.

¹²³ Park R.E., Miller H.A., 1969, Old World Traits..., op. cit., pp. 46-47..

4.3.1. The deceptive character of the process of the chain migration.

As it was already mentioned Park and Miller in their analysis of personal documents of immigrants in America put forward the hypothesis that almost all of them have idealised the approached country. In this study, the overwhelming majority of the narrators emphasise that Germany has failed to fulfil their hopes. I believe that a disappointment is common to almost all potential emigrants. They create their biographical plans concerning their lives in a foreign country on the basis of its idealised picture, and then feel deeply disappointed. There is, thus, a very intriguing question here: where does it come from, and what social conditions favouring its construction are? To answer these questions I will refer to my own data as well to different narrative interviews with immigrants and literature. These three sources seem to point at the actual or old immigrants who through their actions during their visits in home countries create and transmit some sort of an ‘embellished’ image of the country of destination. Even if their life situation abroad is dissatisfying or hard, in the face of their fellow citizens, family members or friends they are not eager to admit that they are doing bad or are even ashamed of it. It is also common that although immigrants sometimes cannot avoid complaining bitterly about their lives in a foreign country, their carping criticism is treated as preposterous. Thus, as if unintentionally, they build an attractive picture of the country they currently live in. This consequently encourages potential emigrants to leave. This process is denoted here as the chain migration. It is the case of many young Poles (especially Silesians) who - under an illusion that Germany is the Promised Land - leave their homeland. There is no one who could dissuade them from doing it or destroy their faith in a better future abroad.

This phenomenon will be considered from three different angles. Firstly, I will deal with the most typical point of view of an individual who ‘was seduced’ by the positive picture of Germany popular and ‘mythicised’ among Silesians (the interview with Tomek). Secondly, I will discuss the point of view of a person who (as the immigrant visiting his home country) is very aware of the impression he gives off and its - so to say – ‘seductive’ or ‘enticing’ consequences (the interview with Robert). Finally, I will examine the case of a man (actually two men: a son and a father) who in the very specific social and biographical situation decided to move to Germany (the interview with Marek). To do so

he must convince his wife to go with him. This is quite difficult. Since they have already started their family and professional life in Poland, both showing signs of future success, she is very reluctant to go. For this reason, the narrator initially coaxes her to move to Germany and finally has to revert to conning (i.e., to persuasion by means of deceptions) to force his wife to leave Poland. Marek believes that their live abroad would be better, and not taking into account his wife's opinion, organises their emigration. Hiding his real intentions, the narrator takes her wife to Germany.

4.3.1.1. The perspective of a 'seduced' person.

To illustrate the process of the chain migration and the social conditions of 'seducing' I wish to discuss Tomek's biography. The narrator is a Silesian, and his parents are of German origin.¹²⁴ Before coming to Germany in 1989, he was living his life in the conviction that one day he also would leave Poland like most of his family members and friends. Tomek knows that he has the chance to obtain German citizenship trouble-free. All the more, his sister has already been granted it. At the age of 21 he came to Germany with his mother. At the time of the interview, the informant had been married to a Pole for two years. When the informant is asked about his picture of Germans before his arrival, he answers: *prosperity... (one) thought prosperity, prosperity, goods, goods, goods, and-and-and so on, you know.* (Tomek, 22/47-48). Next, he describes a situation when one of his wife's cousins has borrowed an amount of money from them and he is not eager to give it back. The story leads him to a theoretical commentary:

Tomek (23/10-18)pl

Maybe they in Poland still think, that... it means... well, it's the same what we're thinking then (2) It's the same what/ it/ it/ it (otherwise I'll contradict myself)/ it's the same what we're thinking/ what I was thinking then:.. you are in Germany, you are in prosperity. You've got everything... I don't know... money is manna from heaven... crazy... And they/ the same/ they... they think the same now .hh And it's/ it's completely different. (3) It's/ it's/ it's for sure (3) mm... there's a better starting point here. I cannot say how it looks like in Poland right now, but fff compared to times when I left then and here/ and... here, this starting point was better here for sure ()
(6)

¹²⁴ It is of great importance to explain in detail what the German origin of his parents means. In his narrative interview Tomek explains that although his mothers lives in Germany she feels like a Pole and she was granted German citizenship, because before the war the part of Poland she comes from was within the German borders. The only thing we learn about his father's origin is that he served in the German army.

The narrator's attempt to understand the dishonest behaviour of his relative leads him to consider his point of view. Tomek guesses that the cousin (all Poles in general) still think that all people in Germany are doing well and *money is manna from heaven*. Saying that it is *still* believed that living in Germany imply as a matter of course material wealth and financial capacity, the informant implicitly suggest that earlier this conviction was the same. Subsequently, Tomek considers his knowledge about the country of destination before his departure:

Tomek (23/42-24/8)pl

You know, our neighbour's husband was there y y... Her husband was in Germany, or some others were in Germany, or something, they were receiving parcels, good things, and so on, wow, cool, you know?... Some other friends had left... after two years they came with their New Mercedes... uuu, wow, you know?... Maybe/ maybe it was... Right now I know for instance, that those who were coming then (2) they are these... There are such people now, too... they also drive their... Mercedes or any other super car .hh after a year or two... they are up to their... ears in debts. () pay off it for next 5, 6 years. Maybe those then were paying it off, too... I don't know... It was/ it was simply like/ it was (2) e e 'Germany, *ja, Reich*'¹²⁵ pfff you go (3) you know? And with no/ there was nothing standing in the way, there wasn't such a person... who could say: 'Hey'... who could rain down your head and say: 'Think it over, the situation there is such and such, *ja?*'... There was no one, because... Even if someone went there and that/ and he could experience it and he became convinced of it, he didn't/ di/ if he went to Poland in two days, he didn't say that, he said: 'Well, I'm a lord', you know? (2) So... I came/ I came here, and it also let/ let me down these/ these/ these pfff... unpleasant surprises, or un/ unexpected surprises, *ja-aa*. But no one in Poland could tell me about it (2) There was no such an honest person, who would come back and say: 'Listen, the situation is such and such.', you know?

I find Tomek's experiences representative of most Silesians who left Poland in the 80's and in the beginning of the 90's. To understand their (as well as Tomek's) motives for emigration certain social conditions in which they acted must be explained. First of all, we must take into account that in those times a huge numbers of Silesians decided to escape from still communistic, poor Poland and stay in Germany while proving their German descent. In most cases, although they gave political matters as reasons for leaving Poland, their real intentions were quite different. As M. Smolorz¹²⁶ who interviewed many Silesians explains: these who decided to came to Germany disappointed with Poland and Silesia and filled with painful and bitter feelings, constitute a very small and imperceptible group, and

¹²⁵ The German word 'Reich' sounds very similar to the Polish 'raj' – paradise. For this reason, Silesians often denotes Germany as 'Reich', i.e., 'wealth, affluence, richness and happiness'.

¹²⁶ Michał Smolorz is a journalist of Gazeta Wyborcza – a widely read newspaper in Poland. Between 1987 – 1989 he spent about 300 hours in buses running between Silesia and Köln talking to more than 1000 people who decided to leave Poland.

(...) eventually almost everyone owned up to dreams about the German prosperity, and ideological motives and arguments are receded into the background, if ever existed. Finally glittering Mercedes, goods in abundance, and trips while retired surfaced.
(Smolorz, 2001, translated from Polish by the author).

It is also important to note that the German origin (and then citizenship) allowed Silesians to enter the labour market legally and, thus, gave them a big advantage over other Polish immigrants. This situation was the most characteristic of the 90's when the former were still relatively easily granted German citizenship, and the latter had been not yet treated on the equal terms with EU members.

In this context, the image of Germany created in the 80' and in the beginning of the 90's has certainly a fundamental influence on the narrator's biographical plans. In those times – as Tomek mentions - the Silesians living in Germany used to send parcels of clothes, sweets, fruits and many other 'colourful' things to their families in Poland, making them believe that Germany is a very rich country where life is easier and happier. When these Silesians could finally visit Poland (which was possible when they became German citizens), they usually came to visit Poland with beautiful cars unattainable in that time for an average Pole. These effects were strengthened in comparison to the very poor and gloomy reality of communistic Poland or later to the unstable conditions of the post-communistic country.

It is only when the narrator moves to Germany that he learns his knowledge of Germany was illusive, and that a person must work very hard to be well off. Now he realises that 'Mercedes' (symbolizing affluence in his scheme of relevance) he admires so much are the result of very hard work, debt and sacrifice. From his current perspective involving his own biographical experience abroad, Tomek admits that the picture of Germany based on the image the Silesian immigrants fostered was to a large degree false and spurious. They were presenting themselves as 'lords' in Poland, at the same time hiding their hard life-situation in Germany.

me when I go/ go to Poland, I've got a car... I ride horses, I've got a surfboard/ I surf, I go there, for two weeks I do nothing, y'know?, when I'm on my holidays. And I work my butt off here and I wrestle with these problems. They cannot see it. They see me, when I'm already in the country, on the spot and... I go with my sunglasses, tanned and and I do nothing, once... for three months, y'know? And they see me only as such, because, when I go to Poland, I rest then. I'm just on my holidays, y'know?... They think, that's how it looks like, and they want to come here. And they come here. And as that boy, who was substituting for me... after 9 months he wasn't able to keep a cool head here/ he went mad, y'know? He was standing in the middle of the yard, and looking around, if there is somebody, if not, he was going then... because it overwhelmed him. A lot of people, all of them are talking, he doesn't know what and why, so how? He is here, but he can't talk to anybody, why? He couldn't cope with it, in spite of that, he brought his girlfriend here, y'know. They were sitting, with the girlfriend, locked in their room... and/ and they were overwhelmed by all these things. They... they couldn't/ couldn't cope with it, y'know? [the mobile phone is ringing, the narrator is turning it off] It was, well, fine. I helped them, I brought them here, explained. The guy knew, he doesn't know the language, that he would learn it, everything. I was coming here, explaining, helping. I was working with him for two weeks/ I was alone, when I came/ and when he came, for two weeks we were working together. (I taught him) everything from/ from such small things, to the biggest, y'know? I left him alone and... and I come, and I say: "What's going on, Marcin?"... "I'm going home, I cannot cope with it.", y' know?...

I: mhm

I would like to focus on the place of Robert's argumentation concerning the impression he conveys while in Poland within a larger context of his biography. We learn from the cited segment, that although he would not like anybody to face predicaments typical for the immigration process, he has already 'seduced' two boys to come and work in Germany.¹³⁰ Thus, the narrator's analysis of the impression management in Goffman's understanding is intertwined between a description of the new boy's attitude towards his new environment and a very dramatically immigration story of the other boy (Marcin).¹³¹ It seems that Robert plays in either case the role of a significant other who guides the boys through the complexities of living in a foreign country.¹³² Seeing the enthusiasms and carelessness of the newcomer and his idealised picture of life conditions in Germany Robert seems to be

¹³⁰ Robert is a much respected horse rider in Germany and he can recommend some other Polish horse riders either to substitute for him or work in other stables. He usually searches them out among his friends in his home town.

¹³¹ It is remarkable that Robert introduces the story of Marcin earlier in his narration to stress the power of his own trajectory. The narrator says: *And the boy I brought here actually couldn't manage here with that/ that/ this/ this/ this/ these problems, which here/ here () in that stay here, that/ that longing, that sorrow/ that/ that being alone, outside your home, besi/ besi/ without your friends, your acquaintances, without/ without all these people you know, that is/ He couldn't manage it and after a year/ after 9 months he said, that he's going home, because he can't cope with it, y'know'*(6/26-31). A methodological note is necessary here. 'The others' stories' may play different roles in the dynamics of the storytelling. On the one hand, they can supplement the picture of sociobiographical processes when the informant finds his own experiences as insufficient and demonstrate what could have happened additionally to his life (in Robert's narrative it stresses his own extraordinary strength); on the other, they can serve as a means to work on the narrator's own trajectory, when his or her experiences are too painful or too difficult to work them out on the basis of their own cases. Cf. Kaźmierska K., 1996, *Konstruowanie narracji o doświadczeniu wojennej biografii. Na przykładzie analizy narracji kresowych*, In Czyżewski M., Piotrowski A., Rokuszewska-Pawełek A. (eds.), *Biografia a tożsamość narodowa*, Wyd. Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, Katedra Socjologii Kultury, Łódź, pp. 94-95.

¹³² Cf. Schütze F., npd, *Outline for the Method of Biography Analysis* (transcript), p. 19.

anxious. The narrator realises that the boy's image is to a large degree based on the idealised version of immigration he presents to his friends in their home town.¹³³ His appearance¹³⁴ e.g. a car, a surfboard, clothes (also sunglasses), and his suntan are stimuli showing that he is better off, successful and happy.¹³⁵ As G.P. Stone suggest:

Identifications of another are facilitated by appearance and are often accomplished silently or unverbally. (Stone, 1962: 90).

Although Robert in the presence of his Polish friends acts in a more or less deliberate manner to make them think highly of him¹³⁶, he does not suppose, at least initially, that such behaviour contributes to serious distortion of the definition of the situation. Thus, Robert unintentionally provides the others with information that is the cause of their will of emigrate.

I believe that we can easily imagine the narrator strolling in the streets of the average Polish town and being admired by his friends and young boys dreaming of better future. In many respects his behaviour may be compared to that of Preedy – a vacationing Englishman analysed in Goffman's 'The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life'.¹³⁷ The hero creates his image in the eyes of others (people on the beach) through his body

¹³³ It might suggest that the interpretations of the boys in town are created within the scope of a closed awareness context, because Robert keeps them from realizing or even suspending (whether intentionally or not it is another matter) what his real living and working conditions in Germany are. See: Glaser B.G., Strauss A.L., 1980, Awareness of Dying, op. cit., p. 29.

¹³⁴ Goffman E., 1990b, The Presentation..., op. cit., p. 54.

¹³⁵ The phenomenon is illustrated in one of the interviews conducted by Prof. F. Schütze with a French immigrants' couple (Monique and Jean) in America. Monique says:

N:Jean has an uncle here, in San Francisco...

L: /yes/

N: ... and that uncle came back to France

L: /uhm/

N: and he said to Jean—Jean at this time was young, and he didn't have any money, and his uncle used to give him twenty dollars quite often, so Jean thought that he was (5.sec) from that Jean believed that—and from what the uncle said, Jean believe that in America everything was much easier, that the money was more... how shall I say that?... easier, you could earn.

See also: Riemann, G., Schütze F., 1991, 'Trajectory'..., op. cit. and Schütze F., 2004, Hülya's Migration to Germany as Self-Sacrifice Undergone and Suffered in Love for Her Parents, and Her Later Biographical Individualization. Biographical Problems and Biographical Work of Marginalisation and Individualisation of a Young Turkish Woman in Germany, Part I., Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/ Forum: Qualitative Research [On-line Journal], 4(3), Art. 23. Available at: <http://www.qualitative-research.net/fqs-texte/3-03/3-03hrsg-e.htm> [04.05.04], § 2.2.

Robert plays the same role as the uncle in the Monique and Jean's story. He may create an impression to others that he is quite rich and happy while abroad. Cf. Goffman E., 1990b, The Presentation..., op. cit., p. 16 (impressions given off).

¹³⁶ Of course Robert does not openly declare that this is an intended action, and mitigates his involvement in the impression management, claiming that it happens just in passing. But he is not aware – what Goffman stresses – that the impressions given off as if in passing are of great importance for our image in the eyes of others.

¹³⁷ Goffman cites William Sansom's novel: 'A Contest of Ladies'. See: Goffman E., op. cit., pp.16-17.

movements, clever actions and the book he carries with him in the way intentionally exposing its title. Robert does the same in a different context. He presents himself as a man of success, but gives no information of the reality of his life in Germany. Only Robert knows that it is very different and has nothing to do with the idyllic picture people build while looking at him. As the narrator claims, they usually do not take into account that there is more to it than meets the eye: i.e., hard, overtime work, isolation, alienation and loneliness. Still, seeing only positive effects of the immigration process they want to try and leave their homeland. This seductive perspective of Robert is illustrated by means of Marcins's story – the boy whose biographical plan of immigration based on 'unrealistic' premises transformed into very severe trajectory processes.

This very tricky mechanism of the chain migration as illustrated both by Tomek and Robert is also convincingly depicted in D.L. Zinn's analysis of life of Senegalese immigrants in Bari. The author wonders:

Why, with the extremely restricted economic possibilities in southern Italy, the immigrants continued to arrive. That is, why didn't the 'senior' immigrants discourage new arrivals if conditions were so disappointing? (Zinn, 1994: 56).

Referring to their life-stories Zinn suggests the following:

Many Senegalese ambulanti¹³⁸, scratching out a living from day to day, originally had very little understanding of precisely what they would find at the end of their journey. Because of the elements of social stigma involved, the immigrants do not report home what their conditions are really like. Still others then leave Senegal, seeking the 'bella Italia' which they have heard about, only to arrive and face disillusionment. The immigrants hang on in Bari, often in the hope of reaching another, more fruitful destination, or until they can make a face-saving return to Senegal. Thus, the perpetuation of Senegalese migration is due in part to misinformation circulating through the migration network, supplemented by attractive conceptions of life in the industrialized West. (op. cit.)

In the end I wish to quote Park and Miller again. They describe the immigrants' experience in a new country as follows:

¹³⁸ 'Ambulanti' is the kind of work they do abroad – they carry people on from one place to another.

(...) [the] arrival reveals the Promised Land as a delusion; the symbol of new life turns into the symbol of discrepancy between dream and reality. (Miller, Park, 1969: 117).

The discussed above interviews showed two sides of the process in which commonsense knowledge concerning the immigration conditions in Germany is socially transmitted. Both suggest that there is some sort of more or less intended deceit that contributes to the perpetuation of migration flow. It is so, because those who already live abroad create an idealized and unrealistic picture of the country of settlement. Another deceitful tactic, however, is directed towards people who, on their own, have no intentions of emigrating. They leave their homelands under false pretences and are conned into staying abroad. This is the focal point of the following analysis.

4.3.1.3. The conning practice.

Another interesting way of entering the immigration process is showed in Marek's storytelling. The narrator - who emigrates willingly - describes how he 'conned' his wife and coursed her into settling in Germany. It is likely that for fear of his wife's strong resistance Marek gave a false and dishonest picture of their stay abroad. He implied that it would be a short-term trip. In order to explicate the deceptive character of the narrator's conduct and its moral implications I will compare the appropriate part of Marek's interview with Goffman's description of the prepatient phase in his analysis of the moral career of mental patients (Goffman, 1991).¹³⁹

Marek's immigration career starts just after the Polish elections of 4 June 1989¹⁴⁰ and the collapse of the Berlin Wall. It was stimulated by his father – a Silesian of German origin, who along with historical changes in Eastern Europe that happened a little bit later, decided to leave for Germany. As Marek mentions: *The older he [Marek's father] was the stronger... the stronger his will to go to Germany was awakened...* (Marek, 8/15-16). The narrator enumerates a few reasons why his father wanted to do so: He saw his son who after eight months of working in Norway was able to buy a car and started to built a house

¹³⁹ I owe this association to Fritz Schütze. I am grateful to Marek Czyżewski for many critical remarks.

¹⁴⁰ The first free voting in Poland since 1939 in which the Communists have been voted out of power. In the summer of 1989 the first non-communist prime minister was appointed by the Assembly.

(these things were almost unachievable in the communistic Poland). His sister had been in Germany for more than fifteen years, and he had lost his contact with her. His children (i.e., the narrator and his sister) had already established their own families, and he and his wife were retired. Marek stresses that his father's need to go to Germany was primarily connected with his will to see his sister, and to live comfortably without worries. He was just an old tired man who finally wanted to live his life trouble free and to see his sister. In these times, even though the Polish–German border was open, entry visas were still required. For this reason, Marek's father decided to go to Germany to look around first and to get a so called 'PA number'¹⁴¹ which would allow him to travel without visa back and forth while working legally in Germany. While explaining why his father left Poland, Marek had to introduce a background construction to present his mother's view. This is of great importance here. The narrator recapitulates:

Marek (9/8-15)

my mother was very much against it. My mother is a Pole... and she never wanted to hear about it and the whole their life mmm... was in fact about that he wanted and he didn't want... and somewhere someday she told him: 'If I am retired ee ee so... if you want I can go with you'. So heeee/ that time came, my mother was of personable age after eight/ after ninety... in the end of 89 precisely and (3) and at one moment, my father made the decision: he's leaving. So my mother asked me: 'Listen, your father has gone mad with age so go and take care of him he wouldn't make stupid things'.

Consequently, at the request of his mother and taking into account his life situation in Poland (very low salary after graduating from the Polytechnics, and not seeing many prospects for his recently established family) Marek decided to accompany his father to Germany. First they went to his father's sister (Marek's aunt), where her husband refers them to a refugee's camp.¹⁴² Although they have only their passports with them they were made to stay there just for four days. In November 1989 they managed to organise all the necessary documents and came back to Poland, already knowing that in a short time they would move permanently to Germany. The narrator continues his story:

Marek (10/6-30)

it was/ it was November in eighty nine... We return home then... and fff in February in 90 with the documents again yyy we came back to Germany to take care of that PA... I had enormous problems, because my wife didn't want to hear about leaving/ leaving for

¹⁴¹ PA-Nummer, i.e., Personalausweis Nummer. The narrator refers to a national identification number. After a resettler had been issued this number, he became a German citizen.

¹⁴² In those times every displaced person applying for German citizenship had to go through so called 'Lager'. I believe that Marek is lucky, because he spends there only four days, while people who came to Germany in the 80's were forced to live there for 9 months or even 3 years.

Germany (3) So unfortunately I and my father lied to he to his wife and I my wife (3) and we said, that we are going just to take care of all these documents, but the truth was that... that we just wanted to try yyy to stay here...

I: mhm

N: Though I more/ I was treating it, really in that way that I am only going with my father... and not/ I didn't plan that I would stay here for so long, but he/ but my father planned... And that is how, as I say, after obtaining this citizenship, there is a so-called (*Vertriebenenausweis*), marked with A letter so... it gives in fact all yyy rights and privileges of a native German... There were three categories A, B and C that in those/ some time ago saying that during the war... Germans took my cow away from me was enough and one could be a German, but it was in the or... when the Iron Curtain still existed. But yyy there was that condition in our case that either we obtain yyy the A category or we return and and-and-and we just go on living in Poland () But we obtained that A category and in accordance with all... perspectives were opened that my father after working so many years yyy in Poland, all his years of working were recognised and his pension and so on... So (3) and he... convinced my mother sold my mother on that they would leave yyy In February 90 my mother was just retired... and my father brought documents yyy that they are Germans and in accordance with it she yyy got/ within the confine/ within the confines of that or/ or on the base of these documents she was also entitled to the pension in Germany... And that is how began our... their... and then my yyy my life in Germany... [the narrator makes a break here and drink coffee]

Later, when the informant was asked by the interviewer to come back to the moment of leaving for Germany Marek recapitulates:

Marek (14/13-31)

N: It was a very difficult moment hy hy because my wife was... yyy the end of the... so November December yyy it was 3rd month yyy when my wife was pregnant with my first/ my first daughter... for that reason I didn't want to irritate her... so there was the matter that I didn't/ didn't/ didn't tell/ maybe I wasn't lying, but wasn't telling everything ((laughing)) about the subject of my plans but later... it was such the matter that/ that was brought to/ to... to a head, because I y made the decision that I would eventually try my hand at something here... y in the hope of course that my wife let me convince her that actually this is a country yyy for our prospective child yyy... as good if not better... as Poland and at that/ in this si/ in this situation helped me very much my, the late unfortunately yyy father in law who... who... who... with whom generally I was carrying on conversation on this issue, which whom I was fishing... and we were talking about this matter and, I suppose/ generally my parents in law my... mother in law also a very wise person yyy probably they could understand in some way... understand my intention which at that time was. I wanted to secure... us... because I was convinced/ at this point I was convinced that I could manage here [in Germany]... Because horizons were being opened here... for me as for the citizen, because I would have never came her/ on/on the status of a yyyyy refugee or yyy someone who ask for asylum...

I: mhm

N: I've been here since the first day since I came after taking care of all these formality ca/ the citizen of this country with all privileges... and/ and/ and also and/ and/ and duties resulting from it...

It is apparent that the narrator and his father want to emigrate for slightly different reasons. For both leaving for Germany is a very important biographical plan – they

considered the possible consequences (if they received an A category which assured them of all rights of a German citizen they would leave Poland, if not they would stay in Poland), discussed their decision with their significant others (Marek asks his parents-in-law about his stance) and took suitable steps to carry out their intentions. However, in so doing, they passed over their spouses, who were very reluctant to go, and finally presented them with a 'fait accompli'. Knowing that their real intentions would confront them with their wives' attitude towards leaving Poland, they consciously lied to them about going only temporarily to Germany. They also believed that they were doing it for their wives' and families' goods. Marek's father thoughtfully took into consideration that since his wife had already retired there was nothing to keep her in Poland, especially when her beloved son had decided to move to Germany as well. He decided that one day he would declare to his wife that from now on she is a German. Marek, in turn, claimed that he did not want to annoy his pregnant wife and that for this reason he concealed his real intentions from her.

The uncertain political and economical situation in Poland as well as Marek's conviction that he could secure stable financial conditions for his family (this turns out later to be justified) were favorable for his decision. But his plans met with the opposition of his wife. Despite all of his efforts to persuade her into leaving for Germany by reasoning, arguing and repeatedly nailing her down, she still did not want to go. The narrator then reverted to a tricky plan meant to con his wife into emigrating. Finally, the narrator's wife (as well as his mother) was not unwilling to go to Germany because she believed it would not be good for her, but because her husband had dishonestly persuaded her to leave her country of origin. It is as if she is compelled to emigrate. The strategy employed by Marek (and his father) seems to be similar to the conduct of relatives of mentally ill patients or professionals described by Goffman in his brilliant book 'Asylums'.¹⁴³ Goffman notes that the entering the mental hospital (unless it is voluntary) takes three basic forms:

(...) they¹⁴⁴ come because they have been implored by their family or threatened with the abrogation of family ties unless they go 'willingly'; they come by force under police escort; they come under misapprehension purposely induced by others. (Goffman, 1991: 124-125).

¹⁴³ Goffman E., 1991, *Asylums, Essays on Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates*, Penguin Books, London.

¹⁴⁴ This refers to the mentally ill people.

I believe that the situation of Marek's wife (and probably the narrator's mother) is an example of the latter case, i.e., a situation in which an individual moves to a place that he or she does not want to come under misapprehension purposely induced by others. The two women are induced to leave Poland in the mistaken belief that sooner or later their husbands are going to return. They are unaware of their real situation and possible consequences of their alleged 'trip' to Germany. When they realised the real motives of their husbands conduct it was too late to prevent it from happening. It is important to note here that the relatives of a prospective mental patient are usually convinced that they distort the truth only in their best interest.¹⁴⁵ Marek also believed that he acted for his wife's sake. Further, Goffman suggests that the moral career¹⁴⁶ of a person who involuntary enters the mental hospital is always connected with 'the experience of abandonment, disloyalty, and embitterment' (op. cit). From now on his or her life will be painfully marked by this betrayal. One of its aspects – Goffman argues – is that:¹⁴⁷

(...) those who suggest the possibility of another's entering a mental hospital are not likely to provide a realistic picture of how in fact it may strike him when he arrives. Often he is told that he will get required treatment and a rest, and may well be out in a few months or so (...) When the prepatient finally arrives he is likely to learn quite quickly, quite differently. He then finds that the information given him about life in the hospital has had the effect of his having put up less resistance to entering than he now sees he would have put up he had known the facts. Whatever the intentions of those who participated in his transition from person to patient, he may sense they have in effect 'conned' him into his present predicament. (op. cit.: 130)

There is little doubt that the imposed entering of the immigration path initiates some radical shifts in Marek's wife's moral career. This brings about a sequence of changes in her conception of 'who she really is' and how she views and judges others and herself. Any predicament in her life in Germany may evoke the feeling that maybe she

¹⁴⁵ This is also possible that family members want to get rid of a person who is a burden on them, but this is not the case here.

¹⁴⁶ For Goffman the term 'career' denotes 'any social strand of any person's course through life.' Goffman E., 1991, *Asylum...*, op. cit., p. 119). In his analysis of mental patients' histories he points particular attention to its moral aspects, that is: 'the regular sequence of changes that career entails in the person's self and in his framework of imaginary for judging himself and others.' Op. cit.

¹⁴⁷ Goffman describes the sequence of steps in the moral career of individuals which eventually leads to their separation from the outer world in mental hospitals. Over the course of this process they pass through the 'betrayal funnel' as people they trust (usually family members and friends) collude with professionals and report their 'abnormal' behaviours. Moreover, they are never fully informed on probable consequences of their entering the mental hospitals and ensuing practices which are meant to deprive them of their 'old' identities. Cf. op. cit., pp. 128-132.

could put up stronger resistance to leaving Poland. Besides, this may seriously undermine her trust in her husband. Consequently, we may wonder whether this enforced emigration of Marek's wife – taking into account moral aspects of such a situation - as suggested by Goffman - contributes to the disintegration of their marriage later. They are both successful in Germany. He occupies a prominent position in one of German's well-known companies. She is a paediatrician and works in her profession (this seems to be quite exceptional situation for Polish women in Germany). The narrator explains that owing to being absorbed in their work in two remote cities, they have little time for each other (they meet only during weekends). They live together only for the sake of their children. In my judgement, based on the detailed analysis of Marek's narrative rendering, his persuasion based on deceit that finally brought his wife to Germany has seriously undermined her trust. Of course, on the one hand, this feeling may be initially eclipsed by the attractions of living abroad (I have discussed this above) and the involvement in arranging family life in totally new circumstances (new country, baby etc.), but on the other hand, it may come to the fore whenever they encounter problems in their mutual relations. It is likely that the narrator's abuse of trust results in his wife's estrangement from their relationship.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁸ It is reasonable to refer to the Glaser's and Strauss' concept of awareness contexts in support of this hypothesis. The narrator's wife's emigration takes place within a closed awareness context, i.e., Marek tries to hide the truth about his real intentions and his wife is unaware of his will to stay abroad. Consequently, they have no chance to plan their future together and cannot share their anxieties and fears usually accompanying the immigration process. The closed awareness context, thus, brings about a serious breach of trust, which challenges the relationship between the person who introduces the closed awareness context and the person who is the victim of this context. Cf. Glaser B.G., Strauss A.L., 1964, *Awareness Contexts...*, op. cit., p. 670 and Glaser B.G, Strauss A.L., *Closed Awareness*, w: Strauss A.L., 1991, *Creating...*, op. cit., p. 34.

4.4. Becoming a cultural hybrid. From being different to the marginal position.

In his essay 'Mentality of Racial Hybrids' Robert E. Park claims that:

Racial hybrids seem to be one of the invariable accompaniments and consequences of human migration. Hybridization is probably, therefore, a mathematical function of the geographic mobility of peoples. At any rate, miscegenation seems to take place, other things being equal, more rapidly than elsewhere on the frontiers of an advancing civilization; in seaport cities, and in commercial centres, where people of diverse cultures meet and mingle with more than ordinary freedom; and where, under the influence of a mobile, changing, and cosmopolitan population, custom is relaxed and the traditional distinctions of class and caste not rigorously enforced. (Park, 1950: 377).

Park suggests that hybrid identities are characteristic of the modern world and are usually connected with an individual's freedom, creativity, mental agility and objectivity. In the discussion that follows, I will show the dark side of the process of becoming a cultural hybrid. I will argue that it may engender painful feelings of anxiety and hopelessness. The reason for this is destabilization and a serious undermining of one's symbolic universe (Berger, Luckmann, 1991) which no longer functions as an effective system of meanings that legitimize the reality of everyday world. This, in turn, causes more and more cracks in one's daily life. Consequently, chaos and suffering are likely to emerge.

The immigration career, as the collected data show, is often associated with a growing vagueness and ambiguity of meaning systems provided by symbolic universes. Symbolic universe, as A.L Strauss explains referring to E. Cassirer and P. Berger and T. Luckmann is:

Consistent network of meaning' that 'profoundly affects our interactions and provides justification for our interpretations. It provides the very motivational and evaluative terms for interaction and interpretation. So the assumptions embedded in a symbolic universe function as fundamental conditions for interaction, opening up opportunities and challenges as well as marking off boundaries to action. (Strauss, 1993: 155-156).

The nomic (i.e., ordering) function of one's symbolic universe is of great relevance to our discussion. It provides order for the subjective apprehension of one's biographical experience and 'puts everything in its right place' (Berger, Luckmann, 1991: 98). It allows one to integrate different spheres of experience (also dreams and fantasies) into one overarching universe of meaning. It creates a symbolic totality that is comprehensible and explicable.

Thus, while individuals dispute their symbolic universes¹⁴⁹ (in our consideration represented by the Polish and the German culture) some breakdown in their symbolic systems (caused by the incompatibility of the frames of relevance, and struggling with the cultural pattern of the approached group) may occur. This is because people usually lack knowledge and experience concerning the usual course of action as well as the ways of thinking and normal practices while abroad. The common-sense view shared with others in the normal, self-evident routines of everyday life seems to be considerably different in the host country. This usually results in uncertainty, unpredictability and ambiguity and consequently leads to some confusion, suffering, anxiety or even loss.

At this juncture, it is interesting to compare briefly Berger and Luckmann's concept of the symbolic universe to Kłoskowska's idea of 'cultural valence'. Berger and Luckmann depict symbolic universe as follow:

I live in the common-sense world of everyday life equipped with specific bodies of knowledge. What is more, I know that others share at least part of this knowledge, and they know that I know this. My interaction with others in everyday life is, therefore, constantly affected by our common participation in the available social stock of knowledge. (Berger, Luckman, 199: 56).

I find the concept of 'cultural valence' by Antonina Kłoskowska similar in many respects. She understands it as the way of absorbing one's national culture meaning not only acquiring certain knowledge and competence concerning the culture, but also its mastering. Mastering one's own culture is connected with a sense of intimacy and a positive emotional attitude towards it, treating it as one's own and being a part of the collective

¹⁴⁹ It is worth mentioning here that Berger and Luckmann emphasize that: 'The appearance of an alternative symbolic universe poses a threat because its very existence demonstrates empirically that one's own universe is less than inevitable.' Berger P., Luckmann T., 1991, *The Social...*, op. cit., p. 125.

heritage that has to be known and cultivated and that equips people sharing the same culture with the most natural means of free expression.¹⁵⁰ She explains:

An ethnic group or nation appropriates a set of symbols and values selected from various cultural systems, created by itself according to patterns and models recognized as specific to this particular community. This symbolic universe constitutes a sphere of expression and communication, which is generally experienced by the group members as more natural and more intimate than most relations with out-groups. (Kłoskowska, 1992a :59).

Immigration, at least at the beginning, throws individuals into unfamiliar symbolic universe in which the social stock of knowledge differs radically. There are no taken-for-granted rules and recipes to cope with everyday activities. Without clear definitions, the immigrants wander lonely within a strange world. Alfred Schütz in his inspiring essay 'The Stranger' writes:

(...) the cultural pattern of the approached group is to the stranger not a shelter but a field of adventure, not a matter of course but a questionable topic of investigation, not an instrument for disentangling problematic situations but a problematic situation itself and one hard to master. (Schütz,1990b: 104).

To put the matter bluntly, any estrangement from an individual's symbolic universe may cause, as Strauss suggests:

(...) perplexity, uncertainty, loss of ideas, disarray, despair, and intense feelings of being adrift in a senseless and profoundly insecure world. (Strauss, 1991: 157).

Under these biographical circumstances, i.e. the continuous invalidation of one's symbolic universe (that follows as a consequence of the appearance of an unfamiliar, often conflicting, symbolic universe) the trajectory potential intensifies its dynamics. Accordingly, an individual may imperceptibly cross the border from an intentional to a conditional state of mind. Feelings of being estranged from oneself as well as feelings of being emotionally and morally disoriented exert a guiding influence on the individual'

¹⁵⁰ Kłoskowska A., 2001a, National Cultures..., op. cit., p. 150, and Kłoskowska A., 2001b, Stereotypy a rzeczywistość narodowej identyfikacji i przyswojenia kultury, in Kofta M., Jasińska-Kania A. (eds.), Stereotypy i uprzedzenia, uwarunkowania psychologiczne i kulturowe, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar, Warszawa, p. 95.

course of life. He or she is brought under domination of incomprehensible external forces. This usually entails passive resignation and anomie.

There is every reason to believe that the more a person believes that her or his 'primary' symbolic universe is the only legitimate way of understanding and experiencing the reality of everyday life, the more she or he may be predisposed to getting hurt when facing its disintegration.

In this context, it is interesting to apply Kłoskowska's concept of 'cultural valence' to situations of living at the cross-points of cultures. She claims that there are several possibilities of cultural valence when two (or more) cultures meet and interplay in the mind of an individual: one's cultural competence and a sense of belonging may be restricted to only one culture; one may remain in the state of ambiguity and vagueness concerning two (or more) cultures he or she lives in, not fully rooted in any of them; one may be competent in and may attach positive values to both cultures; or finally one may consequently disown any national belonging and sentiments.¹⁵¹

4.4.1. Being different. Alienation from symbolic universes.

Most of the narrators assumed the existence of differences between the Poles and the Germans, which – in their view - manifest themselves in mentality, culture, modes of behaviour, upbringing (socialization), manners, customs, etc. While dealing with certain distinctions between the two nations, the informants employ the discourse of difference through which their own national identity is constructed. Thus, the narrators use argumentation strategies to show the differences between Poland and Germany, simultaneously highlighting their uniqueness, similarity and sameness within their in-group. It is usually done by utilizing the deictic personal pronoun 'we' as the main linguistic device allowing the construction of the national identity.¹⁵²

¹⁵¹ Please see the beginning of chapter Chapter 5 for a thorough discussion of this concept.

¹⁵² See: Wodak R., de Cillia R., Reisigl M., Liebhart K., 1999, *The Discursive Construction of National Identity*, Edinburgh University Press, pp. 45-47, 119 and 141.

A) The case of Robert.

I will refer to the autobiographical interview with Robert in order to clarify this phenomenon. In the informant's main story line such a theoretical commentary appears:

Robert (3/27-36)

Here all these people are really great, it's nice. I know the language, so everything is also OK. One can understand each other, one can talk, nevertheless... we are... wss brought up differently. Different/ different society, different people, different tradition yyy Well, there are some things one couldn't/ couldn't... here juuu/ skip...

I: mhm

N: Even though, all in all, it's so close, 7 hours driving and so on... Similar... mmm things in our country in the Poznań area... words, a lot of traces, a lot of common features, in spite of that hm... we differ very much, if such zones just... closer are considered (3) Well, so that is/ that is the problem.

I would like to draw our attention to Robert's argumentation patterns employed in the construction of his national identity, because it is representative for many other narrators. The cited above passage has a form of 'but' construction. At the beginning, the informant describes his life in Germany in a favourable light (people are great), and uses the 'I' form to show that his relations with Germans are good, because he knows the language and they can understand each other.¹⁵³ However, along with introducing the 'but' form he shifts to the 'we' pronoun and starts to define his national identity through stressing differences between 'we' (the Poles) and 'they' (the Germans'). Different upbringing, and living in dissimilar societies and traditions creates – in Robert's understanding – impediments that cannot be easily overcome. Although the elements the Polish national identity consists of vary in other interviews, they are always displayed as considerably different from the German ones. Remarkably, Robert perceives that the Polish and German culture correspond to some degree with each other and they do not differ profoundly: *it's so close, 7 hours driving and so on... Similar... mmm things in our country in the Poznań area... worlds, a lot of traces, a lot of common features, in spite of that hm....*¹⁵⁴ I think that the narrator's mode of argumentation confirms the hypothesis put forward by R. Wodak, R. de

¹⁵³ We must take into account here that when Robert came to Germany he did not speak German at all and that this was the cause of his suffering and alienation. In this connection, he invested a considerable amount of effort in learning the language. This helped him to establish friendships with Germans.

¹⁵⁴ It is worth mentioning that the degree of cultural difference (among age, the frequency and quality of the prejudice he encounters, and the opportunities for participation that he enjoys), is mentioned by Stonequist as one of factors which let the individual to become assimilated with the foreign culture. Cf. Stonequist E.V., 1961, *The Marginal Man...*, op. cit., p. 184.

Cillia, M. Reisigl, K. Liebhart in their book: 'The Discursive Construction of National Identity' which says that:

The discursive constructs of national identities emphasise foremost national uniqueness and intra-national uniformity, and largely tend to ignore intra-national difference (...). Above all, however, the greatest possible differences from other nations are frequently simultaneously constructed through discourses of difference, and especially difference from those foreign nations that seems to exhibit the most striking similarities. (Wodak, de Cillia, Reisigl, Liebhart, 1999: 186).

The interviewer returns to this passage of Robert's storytelling in the third stage of the narrative interview in which the narrator's own theories may be discussed.¹⁵⁵ The informant is, thus, asked to explain what did he mean while saying that people in Germany are brought up differently and share different traditions. Robert attempts to account for the issue in a very long argumentation. Only a part of it is quoted here:

Robert (11/45-12/20)

N: mmmmmmm well... That such, damn, some behaviours... so pffff such basic ones, so fff in different sss are/ in different situations. In our country yyyy when one gets on the bus, or yyyy... in the doors for instance fff one gives/ gives up his place to a woman: "please, come in", y' know? Here/ here sss they look at me and laugh: 'Why are you doing it?', y'know? 'One shouldn't do it.', y'know? I don't mention kissing a woman's hand, because it's totally incomprehensible here, y'know? What for? Why?, y'know? Everybody is equal here, everybody has to take care of his own/ everybody looks at himself and so on. In our country my parents... brought me this way, that one should respect older people, one should respect women, one should so/ so/ so/ such (or big) there are, in sum, probably big... such issues/ differences, because/ well in our country it was important, They admonish you at once: please, thank you, so and so, that is appropriate, one's all/ allowed to do this, that's not allowed. Here it's just a little bit loose, just a little bit... they do not pay/ they don't attach importance to that... Besides... aaa somewhere here, all these things, that desire for/ for money... here, for showing oneself: lawns mowed, cars, all these things. They work for it, all these things are on credits yyy and they have it, but... they are not delighted with it to the end, for they know, that they have to pay it off for 4 or 5 years and it doesn't belong to them, but to the bank and so on. But it's important how, what their neighbour things of it and... and that we've got better than/ than the neighbour there, y'know?, yyyy... our image, y'know?, our own... In our country one doesn't attach it... so/ attach so much importance. One can go to a guy, to your neighbour at 10 p.m.: 'Listen, please lend me, damn, one kilo of salt, because I've run of it.' 'All right, take it.' Here, it's unthinkable. Well, how one can go, what do they think, that damn, I can't afford buying salt and so on? We'd better eat without salt today, y'know?... and tomorrow one will buy it, y'know? It's not about the money, but ab/ about such... mc a competition, y' know? In our country that's/ that's all together.

¹⁵⁵ Cf. Schütze F., 1992a, 'Pressure and Guilt...', op. cit., p. 190.

As we can see again the assumed differences between Germans and Poles are of great meaning to the narrator. He notices that people in both countries have different ways of behaving and are governed by different sets of attitudes and values, have different schemes of references and are obedient to different rules. For the narrator these dissimilarities are the matter of different socialization processes. Germans and Poles, in his judgment, share a different perspective and different understanding of reality. For Robert, standards of these two cultures manifesting themselves in ways of living come into contrast. Referring to situations taken from his everyday-life experiences or knowledge the narrator juxtaposes Polish etiquette such as kissing a woman's hand (typical for the Polish culture) or respecting older people with the aspiration of Germans for equality and women's rights, their desire for money and material goods as well as their goal of being better than their neighbours. Further, Robert illustrates relations among neighbours in Poland as based on cooperation, reciprocal social relation and assistance rather than on competition or jealousy. We may, thus, clearly notice that the narrator's 'imagined' national self-identification is constructed on the basis of comparison with 'foreign' culture.

The narrator goes back to the topic of differences when he is asked to describe Germans he knows. Robert characterises Germans as great and friendly people, who are eager to help without expecting anything in return. Just after this statement, however, he says that he wants 'us' (the word is stressed) – it means Poles – to improve themselves. He speculates that Poles should equal Germans in standards of living and not envy them all the time. Right after it, he adds, that he is referring only to those Germans who *have something in common with horses*. He could say nothing about bricklayers, plasterers or lorry drivers.¹⁵⁶ The narrator emphasises that his acquaintances involved in the social world of horse riding are all pleasant. He usually spends his spare time with them (the occasions referred to here are for example: fires, barbecues, volleyball's matches etc.). If one takes into account his earlier statement when he declared that his exclusion from these sorts of free time activities

¹⁵⁶ It is interesting to look at Robert's argumentation in the light of Teodor W. Adorno's concept of the "two kinds" stereotypy. He argues that: '(...) due to the desire to maintain an air of objectivity while expressing one's hostilities, and perhaps even to a mental reservation of the prejudiced person who does not want to deliver himself too completely to ways of thinking which he still regards as "forbidden" an individual divide the outgroup members into 'two kinds'. These serve as 'a makeshift for bridging the gap between general stereotypy and personal experience.' Consequently, he emphasises: '(...) the "good" outgroup members would be those whom the subject personally knows, whereas the "bad" ones would be those at a greater social distance – a distinction obviously related to the differences between assimilated and nonassimilated sectors of the outgroup.' Adorno T. W., 1964, *The Authoritarian Personality*, Wiley & Sons Inc., New York, p. 633. In Robert's line of reasoning a dichotomy between known and unknown Germans is clearly illustrated by drawing a distinction between his acquaintances (i.e. the Germans who ride horses) and others (e.g. bricklayers, plasterers or lorry drivers).

made him feel extremely lonely during the first period of his stay in Germany it is possible to recognise an essential change in his life. He is now no longer excluded, keeping himself in the background and lonely. Robert shows that he is one of them. His German friends consider him a mate or even as a friend. He is involved in their *social life* as he calls it. Some features of assimilation may be seen here. Robert, however, reports further a very interesting situation I would like to focus at this point. The informant says:

Robert (16/7-13)

And they, knowing me for such a long time... yyy don't/ at all don't/ don't... mc mm they don't give me to und/ to feel that/ that/ that I'm a foreigner, or something like that (and so on). They even/ even make fun of... some foreigners sometimes, y'know? But/ but, y'know, these not like you, but/ but y'know of what kind, don't you? They did something again, y'know?... Some Turks, or someone there, y'know?... It/ it pisses me off all the same, but... they, for the sake of me, that/ that they don't see in me a person, damn, who... only...

Although the narrator seems to believe that his German friends telling jokes about foreigners in his presence treat him as one of them (they do not see him as a stranger any longer), I view this episode differently. I wish to start with Robert's interpretation of the situation. We can say, with some justification, that the narrator speculates, by virtue of the fact that they (his German friends) tell jokes in his presence, that he is not seen as an outsider. It may be so, because common knowledge implies that jokes about foreigners are told to amuse people and cause laughter only when these who they concern are absent.¹⁵⁷ We may hypothesise that on this basis the informant may suspect that he is seen as 'one of them' because jokes concerning foreigners are told in his presence. To be more precise, Robert thinks that as a recipient-listener of this 'anti-foreigner' joke he cannot be its victim or target (i.e., one who is being made fun of) simultaneously. In my opinion, however, the very fact that his German interaction partners attempt to explain that he is not numbered among these people who their joke concerns, makes Robert's interpretation doubtful.¹⁵⁸ By virtue of offering clarification of their behaviour (excluding Robert from the category of people the joke is about) and thus denying their own prejudices¹⁵⁹ the Germans suggest that there was some sort of breach in this interaction and that some sort of unintentional display of distrust might occur. It goes without saying that obvious matters do not require

¹⁵⁷ Generally, I would say, jokes about certain groups of people (for instance doctors or Jews) are not told in the presence of a member of the group. Unless they are told in order to hurt somebody intentionally.

¹⁵⁸ It is also noticeable that the very situation is told in his rendering. I believe that it is another proof that it has introduced some disorder in the very fragile everyday reality of Robert's life abroad.

¹⁵⁹ Cf. Billig M., 1991, *Ideology and Opinions*, Studies in Rhetorical Psychology, Sage Publications, London, pp. 123-128.

additional explanation. Any sort of repair work to restore the moral order of the interaction suggests a break in the reality of everyday life. For this reason, we may suppose that in this interaction Robert's identity is not taken for granted by his fellow interactants, but is called into question. They quickly move to rectify the sense of his disturbed identity, and via offering accounts, they put his sense of reality back into order. As Michael Billig notices:

If justifications are offered for potentially offensive joke-telling, then analysts can examine what the justifications are seeking to accomplish. In particular, one might point to the contrastive nature of such justifications. 'I was just joking' is both a claim to be doing something permissible (i.e. joking) and denial for doing something criticisable, which is contrasted to the joking. (Billig, 2001: 271).

It might be even more complicated: normally they do not think of him as a foreigner, since he participates in many of their everyday situations. But if they give offence to foreigners they become aware of him as being a stranger a little bit too late.

The essential aspect for our consideration is, however, the narrator's definition of the situation. It seems that Robert feels that his German friends at least attempt not to treat him as a different 'alien' person. The cited above passage is suddenly interrupted and the informant introduces an argumentation that exemplifies his relations with his German friends. Robert repeats here that he has many acquaintances among Germans and they join in many parties together and talk about important matters (his German friends confide to him and ask about his opinion). This phase of Robert's biography seems to be similar to the situation of the Jew described by Robert Park who after leaving the walls of a medieval ghetto was admitted to participation in the cultural life of the peoples among whom he lived. Similarly, the narrator is finally permitted to enter the cultural life of his new community. However, there is still something that restrains him from immersing into it completely. There are still some ambiguous attitudes (not quite free from prejudices), which qualify as obstacles to his full assimilation.¹⁶⁰ Immediately following this episode, the narrator says:

Robert (16/17-18)

Almost normally/ almost normally, like in our country, but not/ not... not to the end, yet, y' know?...

¹⁶⁰ See: Park R.E., 1950, Race and Culture, op. cit., p. 354.

He presents himself here as a typical stranger. Things are *almost normally* (the expression is stressed in the narration) in Germany. At the request of the interviewer he explains the issue in detail:

Robert (16/23-30)

N: Ww-well that's/ that's it that ttt that/ that/ that (3) (that) they're Germans and I'm a Pole... I was brought up in a different country, in different surroundings... and-and-and... differently... differently. They, here, damn, () is out of order, so one should buy a new one, or a TV-set... screwed up, so one have to go shopping and buy a new one. In our country it/ it was different, then. Today it may also happen this way slowly, but mmm different/ different...

I: mm

N: So (4) it looks just a little bit different, doesn't it?...

The narrator refers here not only to differences mentioned earlier for example: upbringing (the question how individual is socialised) and surroundings and also to things connected with the common life. This includes situations such as one's conduct in case of a breakdown of home electronics etc. Robert notices that in Poland and Germany people apply different patterns of behaviour to the certain situations in their daily life.

The meticulous analysis of Robert's immigration biography and the passages discussed above confirm that he is a cultural hybrid. In R. Park's understanding of the term he is:

(...) a man living and sharing intimately in the cultural life and traditions of two distinct peoples, never quite willing to break, even if he were permitted to do so, with his past and his traditions, and not quite accepted, because of racial prejudice, in the new society in which he now sought to find a place. He was a man on the margin of two cultures and two societies, which never completely interpenetrated and fused. (Park R.E., 1950: 354).

B) The case of Marta.

The autobiographical narrative interview with Marta provides an interesting illustration of the experience of the new social milieu as strange and incomprehensible as well as recognizing one's symbolic universe as meaningful and important while abroad. At the time of the interview, Marta had been living in Germany for two years. When she was 28-year-old, she decided to marry a German. Five months after their first meeting they then moved to Germany. The decision was made very quickly mainly for the sake of her

daughter from her previous marriage, who was to start her primary school education and Marta wanted her to do it in Germany.¹⁶¹ The informant's rendering is very characteristic of people who live abroad for a relatively short time and still have not developed clear opinions and attitudes towards the host country. They are still disoriented and lost because they are devoid of their former system of relevance abroad. Frequent hesitation phenomena like numerous pauses, repetitions, broken sentences and self-corrections regarding the approached country's mores, values, and ways of life descriptions are typical textual features in their narrations. To illustrate this issue a passage from Marta's rendering in which she deals with differences between North and South Germany will be presented:¹⁶²

Marta (17/43-18/20)pl

What is more, what more I do like here [in Germany] for instance (3) or I do not like it, I don't know, for/ for instance... that Lukas' [the narrator's husband's] family is also so yyy very distanced, you know?... However/ as I say, I do not/ I don't know where does it come from, because it may come from it for instance, that they do not like me (2) And it may result from the fact, that they are just like that and so on. I don't know/ I really don't know. As I say, that... in any case, they would never tell me that...

I: mhm

N: because one doesn't say such things, I don't know, you know? That/ that it goes like/ that hm hm... that they for instance do know nothing about me... They have never asked me/ generally if we go there... they are very nice and generally it's great, but... there's something that... no one there never asked me... about anything... I don't know, if you can image it?... Because me yyy... Well, as I say, on the one hand it's great, because it's convenient for me...

I: mhm

N: Really, on the one hand/well... my parents-in-law and so on... First, we go there seldom/ it means (2) normally... well/ and on the other han/ as I say, on the one hand the do/ they do not mix/ I mean, in Poland/ in Poland there is/ at least at my place/ there is something that my mum, or generally my famil/ she must know everything, almost, damn, every T-shirt I buy, she must know that I've bough/ or, well/ well... well, you know, what it is about, well that everybody KNOWS... who are friends with whom and where and here NOTHING at all. There are no such questions here. As I say, on the one hand it's (2) great, convenient and so on, you don't have to justify yourself, you don't have to especially, I don't know.... But, on the other hand, sometimes... I don't know, well, they have never asked me/ they know nothing about me/ I don't mention that what I generally yyy yyy mmmm well, about nothing/ they know nothing about/ they even don't know what kind of

¹⁶¹ The narrator's choice of the German schooling system was not motivated by possible differences in the Polish and German educational standards, but by personal reasons. Marta realised that when her daughter would start going to school in Poland, her possibilities to meet her German friend/ husband would be seriously limited. Moreover, the narrator found the very process of beginning school very difficult and did not want to expose her daughter to additional stress caused by changing schools. Of course, as in the most cases of Polish-German marriages (and many other mixed couples) where the man is a German – the woman is expected to join him in his country of origin. The economic conditions are also of great importance here.

¹⁶² The narrator mentioned earlier that she cannot characterise Germany as a whole, because she knows that there are certain differences between its South and North part. Marta lives in the North and, as her narration shows, her attitude toward the South Germany is much influenced by her husband. Generally speaking she believes that the real Germany is the North Germany where people speak 'understandable' German and do not attach too much importance to such funny (implying unnecessary) things like carnivals etc.

school I finished... where I was working. They are not interes/ I don'tknow... It's so strange for me, isn't it?... Either they are not interested, or something, I don't know...

Marta's rendering lucidly displays the role of symbolic universe in an individual's life and how its loss effectuates his or her life situation and biography. This passage portrays two fundamentally diverse realities of daily life: the Polish one that performs its nomic function, where everything is in its right place¹⁶³, where schemes of reference and rules of conducts are matters of course, and the strange, very different German world with its characteristic disorder, unintelligible stock of knowledge bringing about chaos of feelings and experiences. In the very first sentences of the narrator's considerations, we encounter her unclear attitude towards her new symbolic universe. Marta has already noticed while dealing with her husband's family that people in Germany are distanced. However, she still does not know if she likes this feature in their behaviour or not. As the narrator, she feels obliged to account for the issue for the listener further, but the task seems to be very complicated. Her incapacity of presenting her point of view in a plain way discloses that she still has not worked this matter out properly because of its very problematical character. Marta's narration shows that she cannot say if certain features, behaviours and values are characteristic of all Germans, or if they are different in the North and South part of the country, or if they are typical only for her husband's family.¹⁶⁴ It proves that the narrator's knowledge concerning her new symbolic universe is meagre; otherwise she would be able to perceive what is representative of the German society and what characterises just her German family. The disorder in Marta's narration not only results from the fact that she does not know what the source of the very distanced or cold attitude of her parents-in-law is (if it is culturally conditioned or only this family's trait), but also comes from her own mixed position towards it. On the one hand, their total ignorance of her past biography seems to be convenient. As Marta explains, she does not have to account for things, which were difficult in her life.¹⁶⁵ On the other, it is strange that they do

¹⁶³ See: Berger P., Luckmann T., 1991, *The Social...*, op. cit., p. 116.

¹⁶⁴ I think there is another justified explication of this very odd behavior of her parents-in-law. They live together (at least come together at Christmas and other holidays) and pretend to be a good, loving family, but they both have lovers. I believe it may be the source of their own trajectory and being embroiled in a pretence awareness context. This influences not only their relations with each other, but also with others (especially with a foreigner newcomer in their family). They may for instance believe that the fewer questions they ask, the less questions Marta could ask, and in this connection they would be able to keep their dark secret and avoid embarrassment in the eyes of their new daughter-in-law. Although Marta reports the issue in her narration as an example of a different sense of a moral worth in Germany and suggests that this situation could have never happened in Poland, it seems that she does not connect it with her parents-in-law reluctant attitude towards her.

¹⁶⁵ The narrator probably means here her prior marriage with an artistic tramp: a handsome, very cleaver and intelligent man, who was having fun all the time, was very creative, but did not care of his wife and a newborn daughter and often left them without any financial means.

not want to know what her profession is¹⁶⁶, or what she was doing before coming to Germany. To support her experience of being involved in a completely strange and odd reality, the narrator juxtaposes it with her home. Marta emphasises the clash of the two worlds: a world in which the astonishing behaviour of her parents-in-law (representing here the German side) where nobody wants to know anything about her and a world in which her mother (representing the Polish side) wish to know everything, even the smallest detail in the narrator's life. In so doing, the narrator not only points our attention to the differences between the two families in their way of treating certain things, but also to the difference in her understanding of both realities. When her Polish world of everyday life seems to perform the functions characteristic of the symbolic universe: namely it is nomic, ordered, clear, reasonable, familiar, explicable and predictable; the German reality is, to the contrary, anomic, disordered, vague, implausible, unfamiliar, incomprehensible, and unforeseeable. Putting it another way, the symbolic universe provides people living within its scope with the common body of background expectations. It is clear in Marta's description of her relation with her German parents-in-law that no basis of mutual trust and moral order can be created, since her interactional partners refuse to make an effort to get to know her.¹⁶⁷ For the informant it seems to be obvious that while establishing significant relations¹⁶⁸ some basic information by means of which she could create an image in the eyes of her parent-in-law should be delivered, yet they are completely uninterested in her biography.¹⁶⁹ Thus, the narrator finds herself in a predicament seriously affecting her identity. Her experience of disorder is strengthened by the fact that while interpreting the bewildering conduct of her husband's parents she is not quite sure if their reluctance is only indicative of this family or if it is a specifically German characteristic.

I find Kłoskowska's idea of treating an individual attitude towards one's own culture as *knowledge of acquaintance* and the attitude towards foreign cultures as *knowledge about*¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁶ To qualify, Marta gained a BA after divorcing her Polish husband and moving to her parents again who helped her to take care of her daughter.

¹⁶⁷ See: section 4.1 in this chapter for explications of the terms: background expectations, mutual trust and moral order.

¹⁶⁸ I find it important to mention that parents/ parents-in-law – children/children-in-law relations are of great importance in Poland, and the narrator, still referring to Poland as frame of reference treats her husband's parents as significant others and probably assumes that they should treat her in the same manner.

¹⁶⁹ Interestingly enough, this way of interacting is rather characteristic of fleeting interactions with strangers in the contemporary world, than of people who, on one way or another, are the family.

¹⁷⁰ The author refers to the distinction formulated by William James and adopted by Alfred Schütz. See also: Gottfried G., 1998, *Erkenntnistheorie*, in Pieper A., *Philosophische Disziplinen*, Reclam Verlag, Leipzig, p. 61. She discusses the difference between *knowledge by description* (Latin: *cognitio circa rem*, German: *Erkennen*) and *knowledge by acquaintance* (Latin: *cognitio rei*, German: *Kennen*).

very helpful for understanding Marta's and other immigrant's sociobiographical situation. She explains:

The individual knows the culture of his community "first hand", as it were, at least in part from early childhood and often from sentiment and a feeling of certainty and familiarity resulting therefrom. To these expressions could be added a comparison that follows the same line of argumentation. A person knows the culture of his own community like the works of authors that he has read by himself, but he often knows the foreign culture in the same way as someone is acquainted with works described in a textbook, critical studies or an encyclopaedia. Sometimes it is really a "knowledge about" a given phenomenon without actual familiarity with it, without having any experience of it that leaves a trace of emotion and the feeling of authenticity of contact. However, even if the elements of a foreign culture provide the most moving experiences and feeling of closeness, they function as though they had been removed from the context of their origin. Wide and intimate knowledge of the entire national culture constituting their source does not accompany their/ reception. This limitation extends to many fields of a foreign culture, to the sphere of customs even more than to literature, art and music. (Kłoskowska, 2001: 99-100).¹⁷¹

It has been already mentioned that Marta's immigration career during the interview was in its initial stages. These stages are usually connected with very nagging experiences of alienation and being lost resulting from the fact that the new world of everyday living cannot be easily comprehended and the stock of knowledge at hand seems to be inappropriate. We may assume, however, and the analysis of many immigrant biographies seem to confirm this assumption, that the longer an individual lives abroad, the more he or she becomes involved in the culture of the approached country and the more its strange and incomprehensible symbolic universe becomes familiar and/or explicable. However, there is still a question if – providing that an individual is not brought up in two cultures simultaneously – a complete absorption of any foreign culture: having *knowledge of it* (understood here as foreigner symbolic universe) is at all possible? I personally believe that it is an extremely difficult process if feasible at all. My conviction is based on Berger and Luckmann's claim that:

¹⁷¹ Kłoskowska's observation seems to be consistent with Berger and Luckmann's thesis that: 'The 'sub-words' internalized in secondary socialization are generally partial realities in contrast to the 'base-world' acquired in primary socialization'. Berger P., Luckmann T., 1991, *The Social...*, op. cit., p. 158.

The crystallization of symbolic universe follows the (...) processes of objectivation, sedimentation and accumulation of knowledge. That is, symbolic universes are social products with its history. If one is to understand their meaning, one has to understand the history of their production. This is all the more important because these products of human consciousness, by their very nature, present themselves as full-blown and inevitable totalities. (Berger, Luckmann, 1991: 115).

Hence, without being born in a culture, without growing up within it, without accumulating one's knowledge and experience within it, without having one's biography embroiled in it, it would always be for an individual some sort of *knowledge about*.

Remaining with the case of Marta, I would like to discuss the emotional bond and the feeling of belonging to a certain collectivity that creates a sense of national identity. The segment I will cite comes from the additional questions asked after the main story line has been finished. The interviewer attempts to investigate if there is something the narrator misses in Poland. The narrator answers:

Marta (23/14-45)pl

N: Yes. Yes, I do miss, I miss, In any case, as I've said I miss everything, you know?... even some sort of Polish atmosphere, you know, this sort of thing... THAT'S JUST... I just wanted also/ it's also important that... Once I used to laugh at it/ it does not mean that I was laughing, but it was some bit ((laughing)) I couldn't understand it, but you know, you cannot understand it, as far as you experience it yourself, that there is a sort of... some sort of... such strange... such/ such, you know?, it switches some sort of... something like... patriotism so/ so funny generally, that when I'm here [in Germany] and if someone could say something bad about Poland... I right away... you know, it's just... Well, there is something like this, damn, funny that... you are so/ so inquisitive to get a piece of a Polish newspaper, whatever... () or watching a Polish movie, or something or generally... It's/ I have got here only yyy TV Polonia¹⁷², but I turn it on sometimes, too... mc to hear some news at least, what is going on in my country, or generally... Well, there's something like this, there's such... some sort of such daft patriotism switches that generally has nothing in common in fact with... I don't know... There's something like this, however. Or when you meet some Poles in the street... maybe not on the street, maybe not... but if you meet these Poles... accidentally and it turns out that they are Poles, because in the beginning we speak German and then... it turns out that they're Poles ((modifying her voice)) 'OO- h. Where are you from?' Well, absolutely, well just your friends ((laughing)) () isn't it funny? 'And where are you from? And we are from this place and we are from another place' you know ()... So there is really something like this (2) Yes... well... and that's just what I miss... this mmm... It's hard to say what really. This/ this polishness, you know? Whatever it yyy means for anyone, you know? For instance when we cross the border, when I turn on the Polish radio/ Polish channel, I'm already happy...

I: mhm

¹⁷² TV Polonia is the national TV station broadcasting to all parts of the world for the Poles living abroad.

N: And it's stupid, but well... but it is... this, you know? (2) I do not mention, as I've said, my friends and generally... to normally go to the movie with someone... To... I don't know (2) I miss it/ I miss it... well these normal contacts with anybody...

I: mhm

N: For here, you know, you have to make appointments/ it means... about one week before... to call, arrange if you want for instance... if you can... let's say visit someone or something (3)

In the previous part of Marta's rendering, we have seen how her new symbolic universe manifests itself in the relations between the narrator and her parents-in-law relations. These seem to be cold, distanced and aloof. This passage, however, depicts the narrator's original symbolic universe in terms of being familiar, recognizable, and – first of all highly emotional. Let us analyse the quoted unit step by step. The first spontaneous reaction of the informant in which she declares that of course, there are things she misses in Poland. It is especially the very specific atmosphere of polishness that she quotes in direct response to the interviewer's question. Then, Marta introduces a history of her immigrant's moral career in Goffman's understanding¹⁷³ that, I believe, was thought over earlier due to the expected interview.¹⁷⁴ Generally speaking, for the narrator – while still in Poland - her national self-concept was insignificant and trivial. However, in the course of her immigration process it has become the most crucial identification. The definitely loudly uttered marker: *THAT'S JUST* that opened the background construction format and the following statement that there is something which she wanted to say suggest that the narrator has already worked out on the issue and now is going to present it. In spite of the fact that the passage has no narrative character, and that it seems to be prepared earlier, I find it crucial for her biography as a whole when pragmatically embedded in her narration (Cf. Schütze, 1987). This is obvious in comparison to different parts of her storytelling and especially to the previously analysed passage. Marta, thus, deals here with a very fundamental and meaningful biographical discovery that is a turning point (Strauss, 1969) in her life history. She has realised that she has a national identity, and that it is not something 'funny', but something to be taken seriously. To her astonishment, the informant notices that while being abroad she became very sensitive about the Polish matters and if anyone said anything bad about her home country, she was always ready to rise in defence of it. Moreover, as she is *inquisitive* to all things associated with Poland (she enumerates here polish newspapers, movies, TV station). Interestingly enough, Marta

¹⁷³ See: Goffman E., 1991, *Asylums...*, op. cit., p. 119.

¹⁷⁴ The narrator knew the topic of the interview vaguely a few days earlier (I had to inform the informant why I find her as a suitable person for my research) and could consider some issue she supposed would be asked.

describes here the situations of encountering country-fellowmen as though she was meeting her own good acquaintances. It bears out that the narrator's national identity construction is based not only on feelings of loss of her symbolic universe (only when deprived of it, she realises that it is of great importance to her), but also on a sense of solidarity and a spirit of sympathy with her national community implying (discussed earlier in this subunit) an ignorance of intra-national differences and the feeling of 'we-ness'. I mean here that while abroad people tend to recognise and approach their fellow citizens by virtue of treating them as 'one of us' among strangers. In other words, being of the same nationality or having the same collective identity (usually indicated by the language) is – at least for a while – a sufficient condition for entering the interaction with compatriots abroad. The narrator depicts her unexpected emotional attitude towards Poland as patriotism activated while in Germany. Although Marta mitigates the meaning of the term, which is probably caused by the very lofty ideas connected with it in the Polish symbolic universe¹⁷⁵, her experiences are definitely patriotic, i.e., denoting her sense of belonging and loyalty to Poland.

Both quoted interviews cover the most important issues related with the loss of a symbolic universe. This is addressed not only in Robert's and Marta's narration, but also in many other collected autobiographical texts. Through their discussion of a variety of phenomena associated with alienation from their former meaning systems, the immigrants simultaneously construct their national identity. Being deprived of one's symbolic universe, thus, often constitutes a crisis, a situation in which, as Stonequist points out, a person becomes marginal and must find him- or herself again, reconstruct his or her self-conception and find his or her place and role in society.¹⁷⁶ This is most probably because in the immigrant's life-situation habitual patterns of conduct, interpretations and dealing with problematical events (reassured earlier by symbolic universe) are seriously questioned or damaged. Moreover, the immigrant usually suffers from spiritual impoverishment and a loss of emotional basis, resulting in a discontinuous identity. There is an increasing number of critical incidents in his or her everyday life that force them to recognise that they are not the same persons as they used to be. The question 'Who I really am?' becomes pivotal.¹⁷⁷ According to Strauss:

¹⁷⁵ See: the discussion of the influence of the war-time events on the Polish identity in section 4.1.1.2.

¹⁷⁶ Cf. Stonequist, 1961, *The Marginal Man...*, op. cit., p. 122-123.

¹⁷⁷ Strauss A.L., 1969, *Mirrors...*, op. cit., 93.

These critical incidents constitute turning points in the onward movement of personal careers. (Strauss, 1969. 93).

They make the immigrants think over, consider, and validate their identity, namely to do biographical work. This is however, the subject matter of the next chapter.

4.4.2. Suffering from the process of marginalization – a cultural hybrid.

The concept of marginal man as introduced by Robert Park in his essay ‘Human Migration and Marginal Man’ (1950 [1928]) and developed by Everett V. Stonequist in his book ‘The Marginal Man’ (1961 [1937])¹⁷⁸ as well as Alfred Schütz’s idea of ‘The Stranger’ (1990b [1976]) provide here the framework of the following data analysis. Stonequist explains that the

(...) marginal man (...) is one who is poised in psychological uncertainty between two (or more) social worlds; reflecting in his soul the discords and harmonies, repulsions and attractions of these worlds, one of each is always ‘dominant’ over the other; within which membership is implicitly if not explicitly based upon birth or ancestry (race or nationality); and where exclusion removes the individual from a system of group relations. (Stonequist, 1961: 8).

This definition especially concerns immigrants who through their membership of two cultural worlds (their country of origin and the approached country) participate in two historic traditions, languages, moral codes, modes of behaviour, political loyalties and religions. Their life at the edges of two cultures where they must balance the tensions between their influences usually results in serious identity crises. It is connected with recognising the inevitable inconsistencies and serious contradictions between two everyday worlds the immigrant’s life which brings about experiences of inner unrest or even shock. In the process of marginalization some new identities emerge because, as Simmel

¹⁷⁸ It is noticeable that Park considers the effects of a marginal position as positive. The culturally marginal individuals are characterised by the keener intelligence, the wider horizon and more detached and rational viewpoint. To the contrary, Stonequist emphasises negative aspects of marginality. He views marginal persons as individuals constantly struggling with their doubtful identities, conflicting emotions and mutually exclusive interests.

maintains, when elements of two or more cultures merge in an individual biography, they do not yield to assimilation or homogenization, but form something new.¹⁷⁹

I wish to consider now two narrative interviews (Marek and Tomek) in which the processes of marginalization (or becoming a cultural hybrid) are fundamental for the narrator's life situation. Both informants have been living in Germany about 11 years before the interview. Both narrators are the oldest (37 and 32-year-old respectively) as well as the longest living in Germany informants in the data corpus. Their modes of dealing with their problematical identity are of my particular concern.

To explain the issue I will discuss first the narrative interview with Marek, who left Poland in 1989. He is 37-year-old and has come to Germany 11 years earlier. The narrator represents the last wave of emigration, which made use of replacement procedures (his father is of German origin) to evade immigration restrictions, being, in fact, a typical 'economic' emigrant. He and his father obtained German citizenship in a very short time. They deceived their wives into coming to Germany (both are Poles without any German descent and were reluctant to go).¹⁸⁰ Although the narrator graduated from Polytechnics in Poland, he was climbing the promotion ladder from the bottom. He started his career as an unqualified worker on an assembly line. When, by chance, he was able to prove his technical skills, he was given a foreman position. Managing a group of people from the former Soviet Union, he quickly recalled his Russian and, at the same time was constantly proving his language competencies in German. Finally, his employer also appreciated his higher education and offered him a commercial manager post. Now, Marek is responsible for the eastern market in a very famous German company.

In order to show the informant's struggle with his problematical identity I focus on an argumental unit of the text resulting from the direct question of the listener. It concerns a state of biographical crisis the narrator went through in Germany several years earlier that is mentioned in the main story line. These extended argumentational sequences in which Marek works on his identity and biography pointing to the trajectory process are to display the process of marginalization and his becoming a cultural hybrid. The informant declares

¹⁷⁹ H.K. Bhabha seems to share this opinion. He treats hybridity as the *third space* from which other positions may emerge. See: Bhabha H.K. (ed.), 1993, *Nation and Narration*, Routledge, London, p. 211.

¹⁸⁰ See: section 4.3.1.3 in this chapter.

that after five or six years of residence in Germany he was considering the possibility of returning to Poland. The quoted below passage discloses very difficult biographical work Marek was doing then, and has to do now:

Marek (20/34-22/31)

I: Please tell me about such a think. You have told me some time ago, that-tt... yy you've had a crisis after 5, 6 years... What was it about? Could you return to the moment for a while?

(11)

N: ((lightening a cigarette)) pfff You know that/ one should simply experience it. I've been... y for a while, wondering how to put it into words to try to explain it to you yyy... So I've emphasised and I emphasise... that I feel like... living in Germany continuously a Pole/ due to the principle a Pole ... There are my roots there. I came/ I was born there and there I spent my... childhood... m This is my country, which I see that develops... Here I've succeed as much that/ that I feel really here... a 100 per cent citizen of the country ww with all his rights and duties resulting from it... but there is something in a human being that/ no... what/ what bring about that you would like to go back to... to your roots. Some does it... just before their death, some does it very quickly yyy others after some years and in my case the problem has arose... of building my house. It was as a matter of fact

I: mhm

N: such a problem, but I... have achieved... yyy the financial yy status which let me without y any greater problems y... build a house. By the way I bought the house in Germany which... in the meantime I sold, because of another move... But... and actually we had got this house in Germany and I came to a conclusion/ because there was such an issue that I would like to build... once again a house... And right now I've asked myself a question/ but it would be such a house... in which I would have lived probably by the end of my life.

I: mhm

N: Then I've asked myself the question: 'Where do you want to build it?' ... and-and-and... and I must tell you, that... this dream place mm where I would like to build my house in the Mazuria Lake District... And there attract me/ because my hobby is sailing... yyy... I am also partly sick and tired of that... that/ that commercial... ubiquitous here mc yyy

I: mhm

N: It would sound foolish, but I must tell you that I/ I miss just a little bit such/ such the wilderness to be so/ no so everything in order to/ so as I do not have to fence off... my neighbour and mind my tree doesn't fall the shadow on him, because he'll go and sue for/ or I mm leaves from my backyard or from my tree do not fall by chance on/ on his yyy part, because it yet again becomes a problem. As I/ and my neighbour doesn't watch... what my wife is wearing on today or what I/ what car do I drive. So, simply, I would like you live just a little bit anonymous... just a little bit laid back...

I: mhm

N: And it was such a moment... afterwards my father died... My mother feels here completely alienated... my mother feels here complet/ only/ she is here only for that reason, that I, precisely mm my daughters, I and my wife, because als/ they yyy also understand each other well, they are here, because if not the fact... my mother would go back to Poland... And I think, that she for sure will be buried/ if sometime so also/ she is 65 years old today... and I know that such a moment will come unfortunately, that and-and-and also she'll yy pass away and then yyy I know that for sure she would like to be buried yy in Poland (6) And I think that (3) that I probably also I would have such a wish... Because I'm not an emigrant... so/ or I haven't emigrated because of some political reasons; it was really/ in my case/ and it hasn't been also economical emigration; I haven't had financial problems let's say.

I: mhm

N: I haven't had... I've had a group of friends, I've had my environment which I keep in touch till today, we visit each other if at all possible. And I... miss it here, because, let's say meeting my friends well bring about that we have to either get in a car or a plane... and/ and fly. There are some expenses too which are connected... besides, you know, it's nagging me just a little bit, partly in this s/ systematised life in Germany actually that everything has its *Ordnung*, that is its order. Here everything... must be as someone somewhere... has said and-and and This street here is nice... I like watching shop windows when I'm walking along T... but these faces yyy As for these people here life is easy y... so it seems to these people unfortunately that they from no one need nothing... (you know)

I: mhm

N: that is a problem, because there are here really/ some of them made for themselves so-called gold cages. They have really beautiful houses, nice cars, they have no financial problems and feel terribly lonely. Children left homes, set up their own homes or generally yy these people often haven't got children because of financial reasons for it is expensive, for... you can't travel, because you can't yyy use all these what/ what/ what you are offered here every day... and if one can/ because I really can say today that/ that I have no yy any financial dreams...

I: mhm

N: great ones because/ it still makes me happy when... I buy something yyy what I like... but unfortunately I treat it as/ as something obvious. This is nothing... you know, it isn't/ I no longer know that feeling as/ as I got my first Levis jeans which my father bought for goods' cou/ coupons/ there were such dollars

I: mhm

N: he bought me sometime... And that is actually which/ what I miss... I would like to, simply actually ee here as it is/ I've got a yacht... or/ not my own, but I am in the club, so this/ these all things, you know, all these things here are so terribly organised... This is... this is comfortable but stupefying... However/ so actually in the Mazuria, where we go for/for/for holidays... because of the reasons (unfortunately)/ I like the place but st/ there is/ is in Poland also either the Lubuskie District is beautiful or/ or/ or yyy you know yyy the Bieszczady Mountains... there are actually/ I'm 38-year-old and maybe I've already aged but/ but actually that/ this recollections from that Bieszczady and from that/ from that Mazuria yy (from that) make me/ me wondering: 'What are you going to do in your lif-ffe some day?' do actually I would like to have oh that/ a house/ house/ every man supposedly needs yy to have a house and to plant a tree..

I: mhm

N: and-and-and/ and-and-and... and I have such a desire too; but I have it actually... today probably no longer... today mmm I've dealt with it probably, such a strange... and I think very seriously yet again of/ about/ of the subject of building a house here or buying a house here, because I have no time for building... but yyy... but yet again it would be only an investment...

I: mhm

N: or/ or simply an attempt yyy to evade or not/ or/ or not paying to the Inland Revenue these money which, de facto, I could allocate for... for/ for/ for repayment a house. However, it is not my dream of some kind. I don't know if you understand me?

I: I understand mhm

(.)

Carefully analysing some formal features of the first lines of the narrator's account we can see the formulation of his answer presents a problem to him. First, he starts talking after an 11 second break, meanwhile lightening his cigarette. Second, he suggests that he is struggling very hard to put the issue into words. One must have had to experience this to understand it. The long silence and the additional explanations indicate that something

difficult is about to be referred to.¹⁸¹ Initially Marek tries to define his national identity. He firmly stresses that he is Polish. His roots are in Poland (he was born and spent his childhood there). The mode of presentation reveals his emotional and sentimental attitude towards his country of origin. This statement is very reliable, since in prior parts of his rendering the informant described his family as agreeable and his youth as full of exciting adventures, positive feelings and high ideals, even though the financial status of his parents was very low. His attitude towards Germany, however, is expressed in highly formal categories. Marek appreciates his success achieved in Germany and he claims that because of it: *I feel really here... a 100 per cent citizen of the country with all his rights and duties resulting from it...* What may attract our attention here is the fact that the informant does not declare: 'I am a German', but refers to a very official description of his belonging to the German nation. He is not a German; he is 'a German citizen'. A little bit earlier he asserts: *I've never kept in secret... the fact where I come from/ that is, de facto, impossible to hide it, even / it's enough if I answer/ I open my mouth and say two words so yyy every German will be aware that I'm not a German and it's much easier for me/ would be/ would yyy would for me to find acceptance, also in this society yyy because I... have been saying where I am from and I've never/ although I've a German passport, I've a German ID and I vote for chancellor as they do... but yyy I introduce myself that I come from Poland...*¹⁸² (Marek, 11/16-23). Distancing himself from 'being a German' by means of accounts which do not disclose any emotional involvement is the salient feature of the narrator's identity work. After revealing his restrained attitude towards 'germanness' the narrator introduces a contrast conjunction 'but', which amplifies a discrepancy between his professional career and a strong desire to go back to his roots. Thus, Marek shows two conflicting worlds: on the one hand, Germany – the world of success, professional career and financial prosperity, and, on the other hand, Poland – the world of his childhood and positive emotions.¹⁸³ Up till now, the narrator presents his everyday life abroad as some sort of balance between

¹⁸¹ The phenomenon of dispreferred organization of turn-taking (reversed preferences) was developed within the field of conversation analysis. Its representatives noticed that verbal interactions reveal a preference organization especially when adjacency pairs like question-answer; greetings-greetings or offer-its acceptance are considered. Whenever their second parts (or any other second action) are prefaced with a silent, delaying, hesitations, additional explanations or are performed indirectly we deal with dispreferred (or nonpreferred) responses. See for instance: Sacks H., 1987b, 'On the Preferences for Agreement and Continuity in Sequences in Conversation', in Button G., Lee J.R.E. (eds.), *Talk and Social Organisation, Multilingual Matters*, Clevedon; or Pomeranz A., 1996, 'Agreeing and disagreeing with assessments: some features of preferred/ dispreferred turn shapes', in Atkinson J.M., Heritage J. (eds.), *Structures of Social Action; Studies in Conversation Analysis*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

¹⁸² A great number of the narrators who tackle with the issue define themselves as Poles, but in relation to their status in Germany they declare that they have (mainly Silesians) or probably will apply for (wives of Germans) 'German passports'.

¹⁸³ Cf. Stonequist E.V., 1961, *The Marginal Man...*, op. cit, p. 8.

opposing forces, needs and feelings. But his father's death puts an end to the existence of this equilibrium and destroys his equanimity. As we learn from Riemann and Schütze: *The constant work of balancing the precarious equilibrium of everyday life exhausts one's energy* (Riemann, Schütze, 1991: 349). In this situation any additional predicament (the death of the narrator's father – in this case) intensifies a moral disorder and suffering.¹⁸⁴ It makes him ponder over his biographical situation and his future. The narrator is no longer able to deceive himself that everything is all right and that his possessions can make up for his emotional losses. Some serious falsifications of his expectations come to light and keep nagging him. We must remember here that his father was the one who originated their immigration and was the driving force behind it. His mother, however, has never adjusted to the German milieu. The only reason why she still lives in Germany is that her family (i.e. the narrator, his wife and daughters) is still here. In the later part of the interview, we get to know that his marriage is disintegrating (both Marek and his wife focus on their work). Consequently, his father's death and aforementioned circumstances bring about the situation in which he is compelled to face the decision in which of these two worlds he should build his house (but this time, in contrast to temporary houses he bought in Germany, it should be a real home). It turns out that the choice is extremely complicated. Marek finds himself torn between the powerful and conflicting images of two societies he is connected with. The idea of building a house makes him to decide where his real 'home' is. However, the narrator seems to be incapable of making the choice, thus preventing him from any activity and putting him on the spot. Stonequist says:

When the standards of two or more social groups come into active contrast and conflict, the individual who is identified with both groups experiences the conflict as an acute personal difficulty or mental tension. (Stonequist, 1961: 4).¹⁸⁵

If we look closer at the unfolding of the argumentation, we see how the narrator struggles with the problem. It is clear that he carries on a conversation with himself concerning the matter: *I've asked myself the question: Where do you want to build it?* This question discloses serious biographical problem concerning his identity. He compares the rather fabulous, ideal and wild image of Mazuria with the order of Germany where even a leaf

¹⁸⁴ Cf. Schütze F., npd, *Outline for the Method...*, p. 19.

¹⁸⁵ Summner in his study of folkways writes in turn: 'Each group thinks its own folkways the only right ones, and if it observes that other groups have other folkways, this excites its scorn.' Summner W.G., 1906, *Folkways: A Study of the Sociological Importance of Manners, Customs, Mores and Morals*, New York, p. 13.

has its proper place and social control goes too far. The informant claims that people in Germany live in 'golden cages'. They can afford whatever they want, but they are lonely. The juxtaposition of this idyllic image of Poland and the narrator's picture of his country of origin in previous passages shows striking incompatibility. Marek described Poland as a very dangerous country, where people swear constantly, cars are stolen and people are killed in the streets just for money. These two apparently contradictory ways of presenting Poland and Germany have their inner logic. Whenever the narrator mentions things like: public order, living standards, affluence etc., Germany is presented in a favourable light, and Poland, by means of 'but' construction, in an unfavourable one. On the contrary, when the informant refers to emotions and sentiments, he unquestionably idealises Poland and refuses to acknowledge Germans any human feelings.¹⁸⁶

The quoted passage displays the disorder of the narrator's expectations, lack of ability to organise his life and the serious problems he has with his self-identification. These are dilemmas typical for a marginal man who is suspended between two cultural realities with their different and (sometimes) hostile attitudes to each other.¹⁸⁷ His inner conflicts and dissonances inevitably result in difficulties in establishing his identity. Marek's rendering illustrates, as Park suggests, the period of transition in which one's old habits are being discarded and new ones are not yet formed. The sense of moral dichotomy and conflicts as well as inner turmoil and intense self-consciousness are most characteristic of the ongoing immigration process.¹⁸⁸

Let us now move on to the case of Tomek. The narrator who is a Silesian of German origin presents a very interesting argumentation while attempting to define who he really is. The text passage taken from his interview shows the difficulties he has with dealing with his vague and problematical identity resulting from his marginal position. To understand Tomek's line of reasoning it is important to put it in a wider context. When in

¹⁸⁶ This confirms the fundamental difference between primary and secondary socialization. While the former *'takes place under circumstances that are highly charged emotionally'*, the latter is rather formal and anonymous. Poland is the place of the narrator's childhood, youth, first love and adventures in his peer-groups which entails strong emotional involvement. Becoming a member of the German society, however, is connected with more rational acquiring of knowledge. This means that his attitude toward Germany is based on common sense and reason. See: Berger P., Luckmann T., 1991, *The Social...*, op. cit., pp. 151-162.

¹⁸⁷ Cf. Stonequist E.V., 1961, *The Marginal Man...*, op. cit., New York, pp. 3-4.

¹⁸⁸ Cf. Park R.E., 1950, *Race and Culture*, op. cit., p. 355. Please note that Park emphasises that in the case of immigrants the period of crisis may be permanent.

his storytelling is closed with a coda of summarizing character in which he says that *I don't regret that I've come here [Germany]... hm hm* (3) (Tomek 7/27-28), the interviewer by means of 'why' question asks for more clarification. The informant explains that he abandoned Poland because of his very bad situation in terms of his material status and, because many of his close family members already had been in Germany (for the influence of the process of the migration chain on Tomek's biography see point 4.3.1.1). As the narrator's rendering shows there was nothing keeping him in Poland and leaving for Germany was a matter of course: *a man/ a man wasn't nnn was/ wasn't/ wasn't wondering whether... whether ... to go, or not.* (Tomek 7/42-43). This is because aspects like patriotism (this is the place where the cited below passage starts) are of no importance for the narrator. There is, however, an implicit assumption in Tomek's considerations that if anything – it is only patriotism that could make him stay in Poland.

Tomek (7/43 – 8/2)pl

Some sort of patriotism, or something it (3) it doesn't matter for me... It's the same here. I/ I-I do not feel like a German at all (2) (T/t)/ some topics, too/ in any case, I've got a friend/ oh, how/ how many times we got into arguments and so on... I feel like a human being. I do not feel like a Pole, I do not feel like a German, I do feel like a human being... I work here, I pay my taxes here and and-and-and pffff (2) Maybe it's strange, because/ because one goes

when it's easier, but (2) I cannot choose between Poland and Germany, so/ so why am I to choose... when I can be... just a human being... And if I have two passports right now, so I/ it's my luck... Well (3) ((lowering his voice)) What else? Are there any questions?...

Trying to reconstruct the logic of Tomek's argumentation we must take into account that he is a Silesian. He declares openly that he is of Silesian descent and the formal features of the text confirm the fact: he speaks with a very strong Silesian accent and constantly uses words and grammar forms typical for a Silesian dialect. This puts a different complexion on the situation. In the above quoted short commentary the narrator gives us the following pieces of information: (1) Issues concerning patriotism are of no meaning for him; (2) He does not feel like a German and probably this topic is taken up among his friends very often (mainly Silesians – this is obvious from his narration); (3) He does not feel like a Pole; (4) He feels just like a human being; (5) In economical terms he 'belongs' to Germany, because he works and pay his taxes here; (6) He decided to stay in a country where he finds his life easier, but he describes it as 'strange'. The narrator realises probably that for the listener his argumentation is not plausible enough, and his action may be seen as following the line of least resistance. That is why he wants to justify his conduct. Consequently, we get to know that his idea of presenting himself as person who

identifies himself rather with human beings than with any national group is not the matter of his, so to say, 'cosmopolitan ideology', but a way of escaping from making crucial decisions. Tomek says: *I cannot choose between* [it is possible to conceive the conjecture that the choice concerns being a Pole or being a German], *so/ so why am I to choose... when I can be... just a human being*. The narrator's comment is an empirical proof to confirm that he is a marginal man. Not being able to decide which national group he really belongs to, Tomek tries to define himself in wider categories.

In a similar vain, Tomek utters at a later stage.

Tomek (11/5-13)pl

There are/ there are few/ there are a few such people, who just like me would say: OK., I'm a human being, I fee/ I feel like a German and like a Pole... It means/ neither I go to war for the Germans nor I go to war for the Poles (2) pffff... If yyy it has something in common with materialism... I don't know, because with my yyyy let's say skills, what I have accomplished here [In Germany], maybe I could accomplish it in Poland nowadays, too, because there are also/ there are also these... these/ these/ these/ these y y y y these means to/ to accomplish it, you know? It's not like it used to be in/ in the communism that/ that a person was just... limited (2) Well mmm here [in Germany]/ here/ here one is accustomed to living here/ and one lives here (3)

This time in order to manifest his indifference concerning his national belonging, the narrator claims that he is not going to carry out his civic responsibilities neither with reference to Poland nor to Germany. At the same time he stresses that this has nothing in common with the level of social and economic development of both countries. The informant, thus, believes that with his skills his chances of success in Poland and Germany are equal nowadays and he stays in Germany only because he got used to living here.

The above analysed passages of the autobiographical narrative interviews allow us to gain an understanding of the process of the national identity creation. As Gabriele Rosenthal points out:

Apart from the numerous senses of belonging in modern societies, living conditions alter during the course of one's life. Furthermore, the sense of belonging takes on a different relevance, moving between the background and foreground, depending on social and biographical processes. The question 'who I am' becomes increasingly difficult to answer. (Rosenthal, 1997: 22).

To conclude, the experience of marginality understood as cultural hybridity resulting from living simultaneously in two different – often conflicting – cultural worlds brings about painful experiences of inner emotional turmoil, ambiguity and anxiety. The most critical phases are marked by uncertainty of one's sense of belonging and mistrust of both symbolic universes. The 'old', 'primary' system of meaning is brought into question, the 'new' one still raises doubts concerning its legitimacy, trustworthiness as well as its ordering, 'nomic' function.

4.5. The biographical implications of the homecoming experience.

*And he thought: if only to return home, [...]
And I must, I must return.
For I lied when I said that the fatherland is the world.
Julian Tuwim, Worlds in Blood (1927)¹⁸⁹*

I wish to give particular importance to the experience of homecoming as described by Alfred Schütz in his inspiring article ‘The Homecomer’.¹⁹⁰ The essay’s main message is that the homecomer (i.e., a person who after a long absence returns home and intends to remain there)

(...) expects to return to an environment of which he always had and – so he thinks – still has intimate knowledge and which he has just to take for granted in order to find his bearings within it. (Schütz, 1990b: 106-107).

The individual finds, however, everything totally changed and strange. Schütz writes:

(...) the home to which he returns is by no means the home he left or the home which he recalled and longed for during his absence. And, for the same reason, the homecomer is not the same man who left. He is neither the same for himself nor for those who await his return. (op. cit.: 115-116).

Although the author excluded from his considerations individuals who temporary return their homes,¹⁹¹ I still believe there are distinct traces of the homecoming experience in the sense of Schütz’s famous article in the autobiographies of many Polish immigrants and of immigrants in general. Of course, their descriptions are not so poetic or spectacular like in the examples of Odysseus or the returning veteran given by A. Schütz, but surely, they depict the narrators’ struggle with their disappointment and alienation while at home. This refers to not only one’s relatives, friends, social relations, surroundings, but also one’s city or country.¹⁹²

¹⁸⁹ Cited from Antonina Kloskowska’s book: ‘National Cultures at the Grass-Root Level’.

¹⁹⁰ Schütz A., 1990b, The Homecomer, op. cit., pp. 106-119.

¹⁹¹ I would suggest that it is rather about how long one has been absent, not about how long one stays at home (if it is for good or it is a short visit). As some time must go by before one would be able to recognise some relevant changes.

¹⁹² Sara Ahmed writes: ‘Home is implicitly constructed as a purified space of belonging in which the subject is too comfortable to question the limits or borders of her or his experience, indeed, where the subject is so at ease that she or

Many immigrants believe that while going home they are able to forget, at least for a while, about their painful feelings inseparably connected with their stay in a foreign country. They want to feel secure and calm again.¹⁹³ They wish to be action-competent and able to manage their daily affairs adequately. They hope that they can regain their self-orientation as well as trust in themselves and others. Finally, they need to confirm that they are still the same persons as they used to be. Unexpectedly, they discover that not only their home has changed, but also that they themselves have changed. It makes them realise that this way of controlling or escaping the dynamics of trajectory¹⁹⁴ does and can not work. Instead of bringing some relief their visits at home may intensify their suffering and deepen their self-alienation. Therefore, following Anselm Strauss, I treat the homecoming experience as a turning point; i.e., the critical, often astonishing or sudden realization of certain changes in one's situation and/ or a way of feeling and thinking about his or her life that may also deeply transform their relations with others.¹⁹⁵ I believe that even a short visit at home after a long stay abroad may turn into one of these critical incidents in the immigration process when a person starts questioning his or her identity while noticing some relevant shifts in his or her self-concepts and the reality of everyday life.¹⁹⁶ At this point, an individual: *becomes ambiguous*. He or she finds himself:

Neither here or there, betwixt and between all fixed points of classification; he passes through the symbolic domain that has few or none of the attributes of his past and coming state. (Turner, 1990: 232).¹⁹⁷

he does not think.' Ahmed S., 2000, *Strange Encounters. Embodied Others in Post-Coloniality*, London, Routledge, p. 87.

¹⁹³ Brigitte Rauschenbach implies that: 'Homesickness is the nostalgic longing for a home that symbolizes the happiness that home could no longer provide.' Translated by Christiane Kraft Aslop in 'Home and Away: Self-Reflexive Auto/Ethnography', *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research* [On-line Journal], 3(3). Available at: <http://www.qualitative-research.net/fqs-texte/3-02/3-02alsop-e.htm> [08.17.03]. Originally written in German in Rauschenbach B., 2001, *Heimat im Übergang*, in Alsop Ch.K. (ed.), *Grenzgängerin. Bridges between disciplines. Eine Festschrift fuer Imringard Staeuble, Asanger, Kröning*, p. 237f.

¹⁹⁴ Cf. Riemann G., Schütze F., 1991, 'Trajectory'..., op. cit., pp. 351-352.

¹⁹⁵ Cf. Strauss A.L., 1969, *Mirrors...*, op .cit., p. 93.

¹⁹⁶ Cf. op. cit.

¹⁹⁷ The liminal period is preceded by the separation phase, i.e., 'symbolic behaviour signifying the detachment of the individual or the group from either an earlier fixed point in the social structure or from an established set of cultural conditions.' Turner V., 1990, *Drams, Fields and Metaphors. Symbolic Action in Human Society*, Cornell University Press, London, p. 232. This is comparable to the experience of a stranger described by Schütz. The last step in the rite of passage is the inclusion phase when an individual reenters the social structure. Op. cit.

Consequently, an immigrant must review and reinterpret the concepts of his or her life world, i.e., focus on biographical work *to take stock, re-evaluate, revise, resee, and rejudge* (Strauss, 1969:100) his or her past and future. It is done to *yield a sense of seamless continuity of identity*. (Strauss, 1993: 99).

An individual has to project his or her future in the light of these new, often surprising, experiences. This usually involves making crucial decisions and changing one's attitude towards both the country of origin and the approached community. The problem is that immigrants being on a margin:

(...) like liminals are also betwixt and between, but unlike ritual liminals they have no cultural assurance of a final resolution of their ambiguity. (Turner, 1990: 233).

The homecoming experience marks a biographical change, thus alternating one's life course and causing relevant transformations of personal identity. For these reasons, I believe that the biographical function of the homecoming experience is enormous and can on no account be passed over. In many cases – as the autobiographical narrative interviews show – individuals who are intending to immigrate cannot anticipate the biographical consequences they have to take while abroad. Firstly, as it was discussed earlier, their image of the country of destination is, to their great disappointment, inconsistent with the reality. Secondly, people living abroad often assume that if their immigration's plans fail, they can always return home. But, the immigrants usually do not take into account that in their absence life has continued and, in this connection, the 'home' they long for does not exist any more. Contrary to their expectations it is not the same place as it used to be.¹⁹⁸ They often feel deeply disappointed about losing their emotional relationships with their family and friends. Most of the immigrants have to learn the unpleasant truth about their homeland and themselves. As strangers described by Simmel, they not only must adopt an attitude of detachment towards the host society, but they must also become more and more distant and 'objective' towards their country of origin.¹⁹⁹ Therefore, living in two societies

¹⁹⁸ It may concern mundane and banal things like rearranging one's room or changing some home practices because he or she does not live here any more. It also may refer to more existential considerations dealing with being a guest at home rather than a household member, having less and less in common with one's family, incapacity for finding common topics with one's friends or speaking 'the same language', etc.

¹⁹⁹ See: Simmel G., 2001 (1908), *The Stranger*, in Sollors W. (ed.), *Theories of Ethnicity. A Classical Reader*, Palgrave, London. See also: Simmel G., 1972, *The Sociological Significance of the 'Stranger'*, in Burgess E.W., Park R.E. (eds.), *Introduction to the Science of Sociology*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago & London, pp. 322-327,

may broaden an individual's horizons and enrich his or her knowledge as well as may make their opinions more balanced and impartial.²⁰⁰ Suddenly, many immigrants realise that they still do not share the world of daily life with the members of the approached community and they do not share it with the members of their country of origin any longer. This pushes them towards a marginal position²⁰¹ that then causes discomfort and annoyance.

The subjective meaning attached to the narrators' visits at home and their biographical relevance is the core issue here. As the autobiographical narrative interviews show, there are at least three possible implications of the homecoming experience. The social conditions, the background of individual experiences, and an individual's reference to the immigration process which creates the unique biographical situation of every immigrant and, thus, makes their career specific. In the following analysis, I would like to show how this experience is employed in biographical work to account for and justify their stay abroad, sustain continuity in one's self-conception, and – in some cases – to reduce one's sense of guilt. I will depict and discuss three the most prominent cases here:

- 1) The situation when the homecoming experience forces an individual to return to the country of origin, because on the one hand, he or she believes that they cannot reach successful adjustment abroad, and on the other hand, they find themselves excluded from the Polish society. In the light of many autobiographical interviews with Poles living in Germany we can say that this is one of the most painful experiences, since the awareness of being a stranger at home often accompanies or appears just after the period in one's immigrant's career in which, according to Stonequist, he or she becomes conscious of the racial or national conflicts inherent in the situation.²⁰² Recognising some crucial changes in one's original milieu is very dramatic when people go abroad, particularly when they plan to return one day. Many

²⁰⁰ Cf. Park R.E., 1961, Introduction, in Stonequist E.V., *The Marginal Man...*, op. cit., pp. xvii-xviii

²⁰¹ See: Park R.E., 1950, *Race and Culture*, op. cit., p. 354; See also: Stonequist E.V., op. cit., pp. 2-3.

²⁰² These conflicts have their roots in the clash of cultural values, social attitudes, social standards, as well as in different (often divergent) interpretational frameworks and incompatible expectations typical of both social worlds (nation or race) in which one participates. The individual experiences these conflicts as an acute internal and personal dilemma. Stonequist claims that the life-cycle of the marginal man (and an immigrant is one of the most transparent type of him) has at least three phases: (1) a stage when an individual is not conscious that the racial or national conflict may concern him or her personally; (2) a phase when the conflict comes to the fore and deeply affects one's life; (3) a period when an immigrant attempts to adjust to his or her situation more or less successfully. See: Stonequist E.V., op. cit., pp. 121-122.

of them are able to endure hardships, dissatisfactions, humiliations, homesickness, strangeness and much more in the belief that one day they can return home. It is an ironic twist of fate that they do not suspect that the home they wish to see de facto does not exist any more. And when they become aware of the problem, they often attempt to solve it immediately, for they notice certain inversely proportional regularity: the longer I am abroad, the less recognisable and familiar is my home. That is why I name this effect of the homecoming experience **the need to return to the country of origin**. I will illustrate this process by referring to the case of Robert. I will also point out that this conduct is characteristic of many narrators who treat their immigration as temporary and therefore they usually have great difficulties in assimilating.

- 2) The homecoming experience may also result in **a legitimization of the immigration's career** that usually facilitates considerably the adjustment process or leads up to it directly. As the gathered data show this way of coping with the immigration process after some significant visits at home is characteristic of many Silesians of a lower or lower-middle class. We must remember that the situation of Silesians is in many respects very different from the situation of other Polish immigrants. There are numerous social conditions, however, favouring this kind of conduct in their case. Let me mention some of the most relevant conditions. Firstly, their coming to Germany is nearly always connected with the migration chain (at least one member of their family is already in Germany). Secondly, they can generally count on some support from their ethnic group²⁰³ (since Silesians tend to form national ghettos). Thirdly, due to their origin they are usually granted German citizenship, and thus are allowed to work legally. Without going into details, we may say that they find a more or less stable basis in the approached country and are not only thrown back on their own resources. Still it is not easy for many of them to deny or refuse their Polish heritage (all of the narrators of Silesian descent speak Polish and on moving to Germany were not able to speak German). Nevertheless, in the case of

²⁰³ Although the Polish state has always refused to recognise the Silesians (the largest ethnic group in Poland) as national group (minority), many Silesians believe themselves to be a separate nation.

Silesians the homecoming experience is more likely to cause a tendency towards assimilation. Having a relatively good position in Germany and noticing some inconveniences or changes for the worse in Poland while at home they can easily become convinced that staying in Germany is a good solution. The autobiographical narrative interview with a young Silesian woman Ela is an interesting example of this situation. It exemplifies the strategies that are used to justify one's choice of staying abroad as well as the methods that are undertaken in an attempt to distance oneself from the country of origin.

- 3) Finally, the homecoming experience can perform a very important function in the narrators' common-sense argumentation. Referring to the interview with Monika and Marek I will discuss how their observations during their visits to Poland serve as some sort of rationalisations.²⁰⁴ Their immigration, thus, puts different perspective on their perception of the homeland. On the one hand, the immigrants as strangers in a foreign country develop, as Simmel claims, an attitude of objectivity. He explains that it is:

(...) a particular structure composed of distance and nearness, indifference and involvement' and 'may also be defined as freedom: the objective individual is bound by no commitments which could prejudice his perception, understanding, and evaluation of the given. (Simmel, 1996 [1908]: 39).

On the other hand, when the narrators look at their 'we-group' from the outside, they usually form unfavourable and strongly critical opinions of Poland. I will argue that they often refer to denying and disowning the value and worth of their country of origin to explain and justify their decision to stay abroad both in their own eyes and in the eyes of the listener, while recapitulating their life story. In this connection the objective attitude turns into the negative attitude towards the homeland. Furthermore, I will suggest that this way of dealing with a problematical identity and biography may be very deceptive, for it often leads to undermining the meaning of one's

²⁰⁴ The term rationalisation is used here to depict the narrators' common-sense practices of reasoning and procedures by means of which they make sense of and account for their world of everyday life. This is the core subject matter of ethnomethodology. See: Turner R. (ed.), 1974, , *Ethnomethodology*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, pp. 5-11.

biography as a whole. ‘Arresting’ the trajectory process by means of this strategy usually leaves some potential for starting it up again. For these reasons, this way of ‘using’ the homecoming experience is denoted as **the rationalisation for creating a potential for sudden destabilization**. I find it very intriguing, since it is typical for these narrators who also show great attachment and loyalty to Poland. I hold the view that the case perfectly reflects the liminal phase in the immigrant’s career with its struggles, obscurities, errors, tests and negations of all values, schemes of interpretation and patterns of relevance being formerly in force.

4.5.1. The need to return to the country of origin.

Nowadays many people leave their homelands in order to earn some money or improve their skills in another country. They usually plan to move for some time and later to return home. They, hardly ever realise that their temporary stay abroad will change their life permanently and that it will affect their biography so profoundly. Focusing on their inconveniences and sufferings associated with their life in a foreign country, they often forget that at home life continues as well. The realisation that there are deep and significant changes in their former milieu has an immediate impact on their conduct. Worried and frightened they believe that if they wait a little bit longer they may never return to the home they wish to see, to which they desperately want to come back. This process is beautifully described by A. Strauss who observed it in the biographies of many immigrants to America. He says that when they come to visit their homelands they unexpectedly notice:

(...) how little affinity they have retained, how identified they had become with America and Americans. Any return home, insofar as have really left it, will signalise some sort of movement in identity. Some people literally go back home in an effort both to deny how far they have strayed and to prevent further defection. (Strauss, 1969: 93-94).

To illustrate this issue I will quote another passage from the interview with the horseman Robert, who – as we remember – came to Germany for a while and then he has prolonged his stay several times:

Robert (4/22-38)

I say: damn... one should do something at least, settle down in Poland to have something to return to, because... here [in Germany]/ as I was approaching here and and-and/ and-and all these things became not so rem/ not so distant from me, only I was getting to know these sss that life here, these people, these customs... all the country, so sss yyyy my relations in Poland those one week long, or two weeks long, or sometimes only at weekends in Poland... yyy were not enough for me to... to the normal functioning, because mmmmm I wasn't here [in Poland] for three months. I came for two weeks, or for one week and... and well, I wasn't able to visit all, to talk to everybody again, well I was outside, because/ because I/ I life's been going on and I...

I: mhm

N: I'm of course not there [in Poland], y'know? And it's great, I know all these people further, but .hh when we sit together, they are talking about something, and I don't know what they are talking about, because, damn, I don't know that last year someone did something, fell from his bike or... something happened to him, y'know?... So, that is unfortunately that/ that/ that problem, that/ that... mc... it's already like, damn, a split personality, similarly, because... or/ or/ Either here to the end, or there to the end.

We deal here with the argumentative commentary, which is given just after the narrator's statement that he has to do something and settle down in Poland *to have something to return to*. This short sentence implies that Robert is well aware that as a person living abroad who only sporadically visits his country of origin loses his home and has to save a place (or any foothold) where he can always return to. Explaining this he enters a biographical commentary in the form of a very careful analysis of his situation. Robert knows that he does not share the same community of space and time²⁰⁵ with his family and friends in Poland anymore. He also becomes aware that the world of everyday life is not accessible to him and his fellow-men at home in the same way. Their biographical experiences and schemes of interpretations often become divergent. Robert illustrates it saying: *I know all these people further, but .hh when we sit together, they are talking about something, and I don't know what they are talking about, because, damn, I don't know that last year someone did something, fell from his bike or... something happened to him, y'know?....* Finally, the narrator comes to a conclusion that he is not able to share the reality of everyday life with his fellow-men in two remote (in the physical, mental and cultural sense) worlds. He knows that a simultaneous involvement in the Polish and the German milieu, in the same intensive and committed way, is impossible. The narrator concludes in his biographical commentary: *So, that is unfortunately that/ that/ that*

²⁰⁵ Schütz writes: '(...) community of space means that a certain sector of the outer world is equally accessible to all the partners in the face-to-face relationship. The same things are within reach, within sight, within hearing, and so on. Within this common horizon there are objects of common interest and common relevance; things to work with or upon, actually or potentially.' and he points out that a 'community of time does not refer so much to the extend of outer (objective) time shared by the partners but to the fact that each of them participates in the ongoing inner life of the other.' Schütz A., 1990b, *The Homecomer*, op. cit., pp. 109-110.

problem, that/ that... mc... it's already like, damn, a split personality, similarly, because... or/ or/ Either here to the end, or there to the end. He provides us here with the evidence of being 'a marginal man' who lives on the verge of two worlds and who unceasingly hesitates because he is not sure whether his choice is right. Robert categorises it as: a '*split identity*'. It means that the narrator is no longer able to gain the sense of personal continuity while at home and he discovers his sudden need to revise his identity and (re)interpret his sense of belonging. This happens because the feeling of loss and confusion which occurs *when things usually taken for grounded become problematic* (Schütz, 1990a: 231) is associated with life in Poland. Being aware of manifold changes, which have been taking place in his former milieu during his stay abroad Robert realises that he has been transforming into a stranger:

He believes himself to be in a strange country, a stranger among strangers (...) (Schütz, 1990b: 106).

The narrator is completely baffled while recognizing that in Poland he does not feel at home. Schütz illustrates the issue:

His leaving home has replaced these vivid experiences²⁰⁶ with memories, and these memories preserve merely what home life meant up to the moment he left it behind. The ongoing development has come to a standstill. (Schütz, 1990b: 111-112).

This nagging experience of loosing his intimate bounds with his home is a turning point in his biography. He decides, therefore, to return to Poland and in order to regain and rebuild his undermined relations as well as to have something to return to. Robert not only wants to have his own place in Poland, but also some sort of firm emotional basis. It is founded in the wish for security and the need of having some sort of stable position in the world. At this juncture, his emotions are so strong that nothing can stop him. Although Robert's employee makes him tempting offers to make him stay, he persistently sticks to his decision to return to Poland for good. The situation at home fills him with fear since staying abroad he runs the risk of losing one of the most crucial and valued parts of his

²⁰⁶ I.e., typical for the partners in pure 'we-relation' in the primary group as described by Cooley.

self, namely – his national identity. He feels as though he is shattered into fragments and thus is disoriented and confuse. On the one hand, he finds it extremely difficult to accommodate to the German society and, on the other hand, he feels more and more uprooted in Poland.

We may say that Robert's desire to return to his homeland results from both his growing discontent and dissatisfaction with his life abroad (this has been analysed earlier) and his need to confirm that he still belongs to the Polish nation. Only after coming to a foreign country does the narrator realise his very deep symbiosis with Poland. For this reason, he attempts to save his relations with his country of origin at all costs. When Robert's visits at home make him aware of the very deep changes that have occurred within himself as well as his world of daily life there (including his family and friends), he insists on returning to Poland for good.

Most of the other narrators deal also with this very serious biographical dilemma: whether to stay in a foreign country or return home. This usually occurs when individuals become aware that they cannot live in two places at the same time. They perceive their immigration process as a serious threat to their psychological integrity. They find themselves forced to choose where his or her 'home' really is. In the case of Robert who clearly suggest: *Either here to the end, or there to the end* this state of inner conflict is settled in favour of his country of origin.²⁰⁷

The same critical experience under different social conditions may be solved in favour of the country of immigration. I will consider this option below on the basis of the interview with Ela. She says: *I cannot be absorbed in two countries, it doesn't work... to live as if in two countries, it's... hard. In the long run it/ it doesn't work, you know?... I have/ I live here now [in Germany] and I live the life that is here, you know?*

²⁰⁷ Robert's return home had taken only one year. Then, he came to Germany again claiming that he is going to stay here only for another year. When I got in touch with him almost three years after the interview, he was still in Germany and still sure that one day he would come back to Poland for good.

4.5.2. The legitimisation of the immigrant's career.

The narrative interview with Ela illustrates another way of dealing with the homecoming experience and its effect on the course of the narrator's life. It is of great importance here to show the social conditions of the immigration process. First and foremost, we must remember that the narrator and her family comes from Silesia. We learn from Ela's storytelling that her father had moved to Germany when she was one year old. Her mother, she herself and her brother, however, had stayed. When Ela was 6 or 7-year-old her mother changed her mind, for the standards of living in Poland had plummeted. They then moved to Germany. It was probably in 1982 or 1983 when, as a famous historian Norman Davies writes: *Poland (...) sank into a state of abject poverty*. (Davies, 2001: 23). Their attempt to live abroad failed. Ela's mother was not able to accommodate to the new surroundings, and after one year she took her children and returned to Poland. The narrator's parents then parted irreversibly. A few years later the narrator's brother married a Silesian woman of German descent. Subsequently, they moved to Germany with the intention of remaining there.²⁰⁸ Ela used to visit them often (mainly in summer) over a period of 10 years. She worked in Germany to earn some money. When she graduated from secondary school, she decided to stay in Germany for a longer time. At this point her immigrant biography starts. The narrator came to Germany four years before the date of the interview. For half a year, she lived at her brother's place. Then, he decided that finding a flat for her was necessary. She had to settle conclusively and decide whether to take this chance or give it up. This situation seems to have been a very important (i.e., strongly affecting the course of her immigration career) biographical choice. Ela realised that having her own place obliged her to stay in Germany. She says: *You cannot just take it, stand up, and... and quit it all and leave, you know?*. Finally, she moved into her new flat. The informant claims that it has put an end to all her doubts. Ela's narrative account, however, shows that she was not yet completely certain about her decision. It is only when she went to visit Poland that 'a milestone' incident occurred.²⁰⁹ When the interviewer asks her what she thinks about her choice now, she says:

²⁰⁸ The story is very complicated. Ela, her brother and 10 years younger twins have different fathers. Only her father is of German origin. For this reason, her brother could move to Germany and obtain the German citizenship only because he married a German woman (or more precisely – a Silesian of German origin).

²⁰⁹ Strauss A.L., 1969, *Mirrors...*, op. cit., pp. 93-94.

Ela (17/13 – 18/48)pl

I: What do you think now? How/how/

N: mmm I don't regret...

I: mhm

N: Seriously, I don't regret.... Now/ as a matter of fact now... these last two years/ now I've just started recovering myself... I've just been... entering this life, I've started using all the plusses here, you know? At the beginning they're still so new... all these things... new, one had to (work it through)/ one had to know one's way around in it, you know? And now I've slowly begun to mmm reach the point where... I can save up something, I can... go out somewhere mm I can go somewhere. I'm independent, let's say this way in this case, you know? mc I've begun to use my life... slowly/ slowly... I think, every year it's getting better ((laughing till*)) hy hy hy* .hh I don't regret/ no, I really don't regret...

THE END OF THE FIRST CASSETTE

I: It's recording... I hope.

N: ((laughing)) Well, it would be ((laughing)). It means/ in any case, I don't regret... I don't, because actually when I came to visit Poland two years ago/ if I'm not mistaken; I was two years ago, during holiday, during... Easter in Poland, I actually saw these contrasts, this/ this live that is really hard. I visited my friends (2) what was for me/ if you are here for a longer time, you are not in touch with Poland so often, you know?, so it vanishes somehow/ I can remember how it was in Poland, I know it's hard, I know one earns little .hh but you already have this distance as/ and it deepens/ and then you yyy... you'd rather live this life here. I say it sometimes 'there', 'here' or 'at my place', 'at your place', because it's...

I: hm hm

N: for me/ Some people are angry if I say: well, at my place eee... here... they: 'you come from Poland, you should say here 'at my place', or/ but I live here, I have to... focus on here, cause I live here. I cannot be absorbed in two countries, it doesn't work... to live as if in two countries, it's... hard. In the long run it/ it doesn't work, you know?... I have/ I live here now and I live the life that is here, you know? And I adapt to it. If I am to leave it unsaid... and think, it would be there so and so aa... it doesn't/ it simply doesn't work, you know? This is when I... visited Poland, I met my friends... Generally... these people are totally... they're different/ different than/ than I can remember them. They're so nervous, they're so... uptight. It's all about such trifles that wouldn't matter here, they'd be a small thing here, and there it takes on the proportion of... something really big, you know?... And there were... I actually caught myself doing it all the time, when I visited my friend... mc... She lives with her mother, her sister, she's now married... she's pregnant, and there are only two rooms they live in, you know?, all together. She has a small one, 38 m² the whole flat, you know? (2) And I came to her, you know?, and she was with her husband in this room and she was saying how she'd bought a furniture set, you know?, here/ and there's a fitted carpet and she was describing the room, as if she would live in this room till the end of her life, as if/ as if I'd been furnishing my flat, she was describing this room in this way, you know? And I sit there and I say: 'Well... and I've to change my place, you know, because.. I have no bed/ bedroom, because I can't/ I have a pain in the spine and always there is only one thing, a large bed. And because there's only one room in my flat, there is only an unfolding sofa there, you know. And you cannot sleep well on the sofa, can you? And I sit there and I talk, you know?: 'Oh, I would find it very useful to have, you know, a bedroom.' This husband looks and me and says:... 'You live alone?' ... And I say: 'Well'. And he says: 'And you have this flat for your own, with all these things?', you know? And I say: 'Well'. (I say): 'The flat is thirty square meters large.', you know? And he: 'And you've got no bedroom? You need a bedroom?', you know?... And I say: 'Well... because on a bed it's'/ and I explain it to him normally, you know?, I ache all over and this one/ this one room it's not enough .hh And they both sit ((laughing till*)) on their couch* and look at me as if I came from another planet, you know? .hh Only then I realised, that they coop up in this one room ((laughing till*)) and I just came... and I just tell them that I need a

bedroom, because 30m² it's not enough for me hm hm* In that moment I felt awful, and awkward, you know?... It means, on the one hand I was ashamed, that I could say something like that, but on the other hand... well, I'd never thought about it (2) you know? There're flats here... In Poland there have been always problems with flats, you know? .hh And here unfortunately there is not. You can have even 100m² and no one would say a word, you know?... In that moment it was... it was totally meaningless for me, what I'd said, you know? And they took it... I really don't know ((laughing))... And then I wasn't talking lot, because I was thinking that I had put my foot into it...

I: Aha

N: and it would be ((laughing)) a complete flop .hh... you know. It's sad/ it's really sad, when she told me how they use to live to the first day of every month, that it's hard... and at work... and... (it/ it) I thought to myself, I can really live here... These problems they have there, it's-s... well, there's/ it's better by far. And on the one hand, I'm not surprised that all these people are so neurotic and so nervous there mmm... because they have to, they have to fight to live all in all... exactly this way, you know?, especially young people. Older usually have their places... from my mother's generation, let's say, they're somehow situated, you know?, but young people just after college... mmm they have little future... I don't know how it looks like now... mc Well, almost all my friends have children and they're at home and they cry that from the first to the first and it's hard and so on .hh... And I, for instance, have nothing to talk about with people from Poland now... It's hard for me to talk to them, because... well, I/ I always feel as some sort of... a criminal and if I say that I'm satisfied... I feel/ I think I have to find myself guilty/ still... find myself guilty, that everything is going well, you know?... I just don't want to yyy fo/ force it upon them, and it's hard when they keep on asking: 'How is it, how do you live and... and'/ Again, on the second hand, they all think that here... you do nothing, in fact, and all things...one can find in the street... you just pick up the money just like that, you know?... They cannot/ for instance, if I say that I work, that I work a lot, or that I/ they look at me-e... in disbelief. They really think that/ that one can do nothing, and one gets money. I have to work here, too. It's not easy here. I can't say I just go and and and... I get up for fun to go to work sometimes and and and... I've got a lot of money, because I have to live, I have to pay and... But, for sure, it's not as hard as in Poland, you know?

We may wonder why this – seemingly banal - experience in Ela's life was sedimented in her memory and reconstructed during the narration. I claim that it is the meeting with her friend that causes the beginning of Ela's biographical work and initiates her biographical change. The passage not only allows us to follow the course of the factual events but also the development of Ela's inner state. We can sense what she was thinking then and what her current attitude towards her situation is.

She maintains here that she has already built a stable platform of everyday life in Germany. She is doing well. She is independent and free.²¹⁰ As we learn from Ela's rendering, the decision to have her own flat is a very important step in her ongoing 'settlement' process. Still she is uncertain about it. Even if the narrator still had many doubts about the

²¹⁰ In her biography, this process of becoming self-dependent is very significant. She was saddled with many difficult duties and responsibilities as a very young girl. She had to take care of her siblings and support her mother.

legitimacy of her choice before visiting Poland, she is now sure that her decision has been right. The mundane and banal situation at her friend's place regarding the very poor conditions in which they live provokes crucial existential reflections. The informant realises in comparison with her friend - who is cooped up with her family in a very small flat in which she will probably stay for the rest of her life – that she is successful and happy. Ela becomes conscious of the fact that her standard of living is much higher. She is independent and can afford many things that would not be possible in Poland. After describing the situation of her friend as very difficult, hopeless and unbearable, she finds it also characteristic of her other friends and, by association, of the whole of the Polish society. By means of her personal experience and through its generalization the narrator can fully justify her decision both from her own perspective and from the perspective of the listener. It is a point in her biography when she: *has to take stock, to reevaluate, resee, and rejudge* (Strauss, 1991: 322). She finds certain phases of her life to be over and believes that something new should be started. Ela distances herself (which is not equivalent to disowning!) from her home country without dwelling on her losses, for she firmly believes that living in two countries is impossible. She has to choose.²¹¹ This experience marks a certain point in her biography. Finally, nothing stands in her way to realise her ideas (even if it is only her 'down-to-earth' wish to buy a new bed.) The narrator gets settled. Her plans, hopes and dreams are centered in Germany. Only after confirming her choice by means of the homecoming experience does the informant decide to find her father. He is a Silesian of German descent who was granted German citizenship some years earlier. She must find him²¹² in order to obtain certain documents confirming her German origin. She would then have the right to apply for German citizenship.²¹³

In Ela's narration the apparent simplification in the form of the 'mundane' example about her friend's life situation (theoretical generalization) shows that the homecoming experience allows her to free herself from her past. This enables her to redefine her biographical situation and legitimize her immigration. Consequently, she can establish a new biographical action scheme for organizing her life abroad. This is undoubtedly a

²¹¹ The narrator illustrates here a very interesting language matter connected with the immigration process. She claims that she was often accused of mixing up such phrases like: 'here', 'there', 'at my place'. Such disorder of indexical expressions is characteristic of many immigrants. Their uncertainty about the context to which they refer by introducing such adverbs like 'here' and 'there' may confirm their marginal position – the uncertainty about their location.

²¹² It is very difficult for her, since her father abandoned his family and they have not been in touch for many years.

²¹³ Ela has a double citizenship at the time of the interview.

turning point that let her 'close the door' and leave her doubts behind. It is disputable whether this sort of homecoming experience alone may initiate or support the process of assimilation and help regaining orientation in one's life. Ela's biography confirms that there are complex sociobiographical conditions involved in this process. There are: emotional and financial support as well as practical help of her brother (significant other) and protection provided by her cultural 'ghetto' (the Silesian enclave).

4.5.3. The rationalization for creating a potential for sudden destabilization.

Taking into account the course of the immigration biographies of many young Poles, we can see their affords to overcome the ongoing trajectory process. While doing this they sometimes put a lot of effort into diminishing the value and importance of the home country and try to damage its positive picture. Thus, they create an oversimplified worldview that is symptomatic of a precarious new balance in their everyday life.²¹⁴ In time, the strategy turns out to be wrong and useless, for it brings no relief and causes confusion. Moreover, this falsified reality brings about the loss of capacity for trust and radical shifts in self-concepts. An individual cannot rely on his or her own interpretations anymore, questions his or her identity and doubts others' goodwill. The rationalization (usually in the form of trifling accusations against the home country) is introduced to keep an active relationship to one's world and identity, to avoid moral and emotional disorder. Unfortunately, usually these attempts come to nothing, for they are based on deceiving oneself. Consequently they constitute possible threats to one's biographical stability. In the following discussion, I wish to show not only what is the content of such argumentations, but also how they are presented. For this reason I will also examine the structural unfolding of the interview.

In the main, the narrators try to deny and disown their previous experiences and feelings concerning their country of origin. Things that formerly escaped their attention, now seem to be important and negate their idealistic picture of the home country (people swear, cars are stolen, waiters are not polite etc.). The immigrants go to the opposite extreme. What seemed to be flawless and almost impeccable now turns out to be irritating.

²¹⁴ See: Riemann G., Schütze F., 1991, 'Trajectory' ..., op. cit., pp. 349-350.

They discredit their former symbolic universe (moral order) to ‘anaesthetise’ their inner turmoil and pain, and thus legitimate their stay abroad. If the perfect view of the homeland is questioned, the immigrant’s loyalty and respect for it seem to be worthless. An essential problem presents itself: Why should she or he be faithful to their homeland, as it failed to fulfil their hopes and expectations? Disappointed and angry they are able to hold to their conviction that there is no need to dive into the depths of despair. In many respects, the strategies they employ (i.e., the commonsense reasoning used in order to explain the sense of circumstances in which they find themselves and to account for their actions)²¹⁵ are similar to a phenomenon referred to in psychology – namely the sour-grapes; sweet-lemons mechanism. The former (sour grapes) is a rationalisation process introduced when one cannot do what she or he wants, or when something one desires is not obtainable. One then reduces its value or importance and claims it is not worth obtaining or achieving. The latter (sweet lemons) is used when a person wants to justify his or her decisions that cannot satisfy one’s needs or dreams, but seems to be the more ‘rational’ choice.²¹⁶

This ‘strategy’ comes out explicitly in two autobiographical narrative interviews: Marek and Monika. Although their ‘path to Germany’ is very different, they both attempt to transform their homecoming experience into convincing reasons for staying abroad. Their argumentations provide us with ‘acceptable’ (i.e., explicable within their current biographical situation) motives of their choice. I will try to show that inserting the narrator’s own theories devised to justify their actions into the flow of the extempore storytelling may be very difficult, because these fabricated²¹⁷ argumentations usually contradict certain important events and feelings in the life course of the immigrants. This consequently causes some disorder of presentation.

A) The case of Marek.

Here, the case of Marek will be discussed. The argumentative structure I would like to analyse here comes directly after his description of a *caffone* type (workers in

²¹⁵ It should be noticed that according to Garfinkel and his followers the way in which people account for their world is the same thing as the way in which they act it out. Cf. Czyżewski M., 1994, ‘Reflexivity of Actors...’, op. cit., p. 163.

²¹⁶ See: Corsini R.J., 1999, *The Dictionary of Psychology*, Brunner & Mazel, London, p. 927 and p. 967.

²¹⁷ I utilise here Goffman’s term and transform it to denote the individuals’ attempts to induce themselves to have a false belief about what is going on. See: Goffman E., 1974, *Frame Analysis. An Essay on the Organization of Experience*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, p. 83.

Germany).²¹⁸ The narrator says that they swear all the time and he is ashamed of it. Unfortunately, they speak Polish and when there is a danger that someone can associate him with the group, he always tries to avoid them. Here he introduces the argumentation line connected with his experiences (mainly concerning the Polish language) while coming back to Poland after his one-year stay in Norway many years ago:

Marek (11/39-13/17)

And mm I must tell you, that I've realised that how much the Polish language yyy... is... yyy dominated by these swearwords it is seen when you are behind Polish borders for a longer time. When I was in Norway/ after eight months... of staying there I retur/ I was going by ferry from Oslo yyy from Ystad/ I was going from Oslo to/ to Ystad. This is a port city yyyy in Sweden and on the ferry or by the entrance on the ferry... I could hear Poles speaking yyy that our unfortunately terribly injured Polish language. And that is what... I don't know... how you yy yy consider it but I've attached great importance to it that I... I cannot thes/ these swearwords hear in the street here... There are also some swearwords and vulgarities in the German language, which one can hear, but in comparison with... with these Polish yyy they are really very soft... And that's the yyy thing, which irritates me in Poland very much. That's the thing that partly caused my decision to stay in Germany.

I: mhm

N: As I... the more often I was here then... or I was visiting/ or I was visiting/ I started generally visiting the whole world, for... except Norway I was in Sweden and I was in Irland yyy I was in London and I've se/ I've seen that/ that/ that it might be without these 'urws'... () nicer... I must tell you that the boorishness in the streets which sss was yyy ubiquitous... in Poland was very disturbing to me... and it disturbs me today; although it has been changed... but... there when I was trying to go to yyy just to have a beer, although today one can have a beer in very cultured pubs and so on. at that time yy when I was still, let's say yyy I started drinking beer yyy... I had to drink it just in such a box yyy yyy or in such beer's rooms out of mugs so I was meeting there yyy different yyy environments and I must tell you that yyy I've had different stages... of longing for Poland. I've had/ it was such/ the worst was perhaps 6th year or 5th year of residence here...

I: mhm

N: I've had really serious yyy... yyyy... I've been really seriously thinking over, let's say, making a decision of coming back to Poland. Especially as I've had professionally such an opportunity but, among other things... just the fact... that in Poland these streets are so extremely dangerous still... that this/ this cri/ that crime in Poland is still so high and as I've my family and/ and two/ two daughters... that I must say that... that I've been starting thinking over if I should do it, because if not this I might have decided to come back but yyy this country... changes for I... everyday I can see how far it changes but yyy... one has not changed... that/ that such boorishness yyy in the street there is still a lot of. Especially in large centres. You come from Łódź, the city of Łódź yyyy I don't know, it seems to me that there is also there yyy but there is no need to go to/ to Łódź but it is enough if one goes to any single town in Poland, walks along the street in the evening and see/ sees just guys wearing y tracksuits yyy running in their training shoes and/ and governing that/ that/ their territories... mmm I often visit Poland by car... and, I must say, that so much concentrated and? so uptight when I drive around Poland today so... so no/ nowhere else I drive so ss/ that is because, I actually c/ at every step yyy... perhaps not/ I'm not afraid but... I'm aware that it may happen something to me... something bad. Especially as... I drive a car... which

²¹⁸ This issue is dealt with in the section 3.1.2.1 titled: 'The common-thinking explanation of the negative stereotype of a Pole. The Polish 'caffone' is discussed in this chapter.

I've ... so/ I'm constantly exposed that one will want to that car from me in any way yyy I don't know either steal or break or destroy yy I must tell you, that I've no pleasure in it and I drive to Poland often as professionally and privately... so my... I begin to breath when I'm either, let's say, at my mother in law, when I put the car somewhere away either in the garage or... in an attended car park because there is constantly this fear that something just may in that street happen. When we walk... around Opole or around Gliwice or around Katowice sp... I haven't (2) I really try not to be distinguished by I don't/ I don't/ I don't provoke, I do not dress in the way that one could see in advance that I just have..... maybe a little bit more money yyy I wear fff as/ as everyone else jeans and T-shirt but... I do not feel continuously in Poland utterly secure and there seems to be one... of many yyy reasons but one of crucial problems that/ that a man/ that I... have made the decision and it seems to me after talking to others that... it also has disturbed that in Poland there is as it is and that the state... not completely yy takes care of the safety of these citizens. The subject is much talked about in recent time that something is to change, that it improves. Surely a lot of has been changed, for instance border checkpoints today yyy yyy look totally different as/ as/ as still mmm 5,6 or 8 years ago... but... mmm... I must tell you that this country Germany is... the country very... safe in this respect that a man may simply feel/ not only financial... but yyy in the aspect, let's say, o/of the public security

I: mhm

N: more comfortable tha/ tha/ than in Poland. That is because I'm aware of it that as a citizen of this country I've ... really a lot of possibilities and rights which, let's say, a man who would like to harm me in any way I can very quickly yyy eliminate or... cry for help and I'll yyy receive the help. But yyy I'm afraid that/ that in Poland unfortunately one could still be attacked in/ in the street and/ and some will be watching it and/ and nothing more will happen... So there are surely these things which, which in Poland unfortunately mmm change very slowly...

I: mhm

N: very slowly... And having, as I say, children yyy because I'm not worried about me for all in all mm one may mm... You know, the fact that someone yyy will take my jacket away or yyy will steal my car these are all things which one may... still buy later or purchased or even if someone will give me a black eye. If only it came to an end in this way so one is welcome but... but actually I'm afraid of this/ this/ this/ that/ that/ that/ this banditry...

We may discover from Marek's encounters with the Polish *caffones* and his first impressions after coming back to Poland from Norway that swearing gets on his nerves. We also learn that while in Germany he does not hear so many and so vulgar swearwords. This makes him more comfortable. He states: *And that's the thing, which irritates me in Poland very much. That's the thing that partly caused my decision to stay in Germany.* This strong declaration is of great relevance to the dynamics of his argumentation. This reason given to support and justify his immigration seems to be preposterous and ridiculous both in his own eyes and in the eyes of the listening person. Only when the narrator utters his argument does he realise he has failed to convince his interaction partner that the fact that people swear in Poland is the only and sufficient cause of staying in

Germany.²¹⁹ Moreover, the overall significance of his biography contradicts this thesis. It seems to be unlikely that someone who so warmly recalls his home country, his childhood and youth there could justify his stay abroad by virtue of such a vague and “shallow” argument. In this context ‘the swearing motive’ is not trustworthy. Thus, in the flow of his argumentation Marek is forced to provide the listener (and himself) with more reliable arguments against returning to the homeland. He falls, however, into the trap of his own argumentation. He has to refer to more and more shocking situations that occur while visiting Poland. Finally, in his efforts to make his accusations against his country of origin plausible he comes to a dead end. Let us systematically look at his argumentation. When swearing in the Polish language turns out not to explain his immigration, he uses a broadened category and claims that it is the boorishness in the Polish streets and public places that really annoys him. The narrator’s cosmopolitan perspective (Marek mentions here a few countries he has been to – probably on business) is intended to strengthen the accuracy of his account. The meaning of his statement is that nowhere in the world is there such boorishness as in Poland. When he gives an example of a pub where one may meet with arrogance²²⁰, the informant suddenly realises in the flow of his reasoning that the situation in Poland has changed and pubs are very nice there nowadays. Then, within the background construction, the narrator returns to the chain of events in his immigration biography. Marek recapitulates the very hard times when he was wondering whether to stay abroad or return to Poland. Again, he uses his negative attitude toward his country of origin (this time concerning boorishness) to support his decision to stay in Germany even when he could easily return to Poland: *and I must tell you that yyy I’ve had different stages... of longing for Poland. I’ve had/ it was such/ the worst was perhaps 6th year or 5th year of residence here... [I: mhm] I’ve had really serious yyy... yyyy... I’ve been really seriously thinking over, let’s say, making a decision of coming back to Poland. Especially as I’ve had professionally such an opportunity.* Marek refers here to the phase of his professional career when he was offered the very good and profitable post of a commercial manager in one of representative offices of a famous German company in Poland. The narrator does not take this opportunity. Neither his argument concerning swearing, nor his argument dealing with boorishness in Poland satisfactorily explains his decision to reject

²¹⁹ This is one of the most relevant virtues of the autobiographical narrative interview method. A listener (often the researcher him- or herself) guarantees that a narrator not only will attempt to adhere to narrative constraints, but also that his or her recapitulation of events or mode of argumentation is plausible and reasonable.

²²⁰ Marek probably talks about pubs before 1989. Then, many places where people could drink beer were dilapidated and unpleasant and only members of the lower class used to meet there.

this offer. Consequently, Marek must further degrade the country of his origin in order to convince himself and the listening person of the validity of his choice. By means of the 'but' construction he forcefully debases his home country. He depicts Poland as a place where cars are stolen, people are robbed and killed in the streets if they wear expensive clothes, and where one cannot feel secure. The narrator emphasises that he is not so much afraid of all these crimes as far as he himself is concerned - and he refers here to superior values - but rather because his daughters may also be afflicted. There is, then, no doubt that he is a caring and loving father who has chosen Germany for the sake of his children. In his opinion, the German state can guarantee him and his family a higher level of security than is possible in Poland. Ultimately, it is an argument that cannot be questioned (from the point of view of a principle of higher order).

Another crucial feature of Marek's account should be pointed out here. The narrator honestly admits that there are many changes for the better in Poland (i.e., when he talks about possibilities of drinking beer or when he discusses his safety in Poland he mentions that the conditions have changed recently). The awareness of the constantly improving situation in his homeland, its development aiming at reaching the same standards of living as in other European countries makes his situation more complicated. The better the conditions in Poland are, the less reasons the narrator may find for staying abroad. Evening out the changes (especially when he is offered a post in Poland) in both countries causes him to be torn and disorientated. His future appears uncertain and his mind still remains divided. For this reason, Marek continues to struggle and fight with himself. The problem of identity work is of crucial issue in this case. As Strauss emphasises:

Thus at the point where any man is questioning certain important "me's" and finds that he does not know quite how to characterize them, he is "alone" with his experience, wrestling with something that is as yet quite uncommunicable. (Strauss, 1969: 38).

In his attempts to control the trajectory process, Marek tries to invalidate his old bounds and feelings concerning his home country. He must resort to very serious accusations against Poland to make his justifications valid and reliable.

This argumentative passage proves that the narrator is not able to deal with his problematical identity successfully. It shows that Marek is in a constant state of uncertainty

and 'in-betweenness'. The narrator's tactic of showing his homeland in a bad light by means of his common sense theories based on the homecoming experience is very deceiving. Disorder of this argumentative commentary is marked by the narrator's continuous search for new stronger justifications of abandoning Poland. It also suggests that he has not yet worked through this problematical matter in his life and is trying to fade it out from his consciousness. It is a serious and constant threat to his self-continuity and self-respect. In his everyday life affairs, he can easily push this inner conflict aside. There are situations, however, in which it may suddenly come to the fore. Firstly, some critical events in the life course of an individual may induce him or her to reflect on certain difficult issues in their biography (in Marek's case it is caused by his father's death. I will discuss this part of his narration later). Secondly, the narrator may be forced by the dynamics of the storytelling to focus on these aspects. Thus, the narrator is made to deal with his incomplete (if at all initiated) biographical work. This throws his account into disarray and makes it vague.

I find it very interesting to compare his biography with Ela's life history. While Marek is very sensitive to changes and considerable improvements in Poland, Ela does not pay attention to them at all. Ela still sees Poland as a poor country (via her friend's situation) with mediocre chances of the financial security and limited possibilities of personal development. Thus, when she is to choose where to live she has no doubts and stays in Germany. Marek, on the contrary, perceives Poland as a transforming and developing country where he could continue his career successfully. That is why he is not able to decide where his place is. He must also take into account the situation of his wife successfully continuing her occupational career as a paediatrician in Germany and his daughters going to a German school. He is a typical 'marginal man' – one who lives on the border of two cultures and experiences a painful feeling of ambivalence towards them. Both narrators deal in their rendering with the problem of having their own firm place in Germany. After visiting Poland several times, Ela is sure that buying a flat in Germany that will commit her to stay in the host country forever, is the right choice. After living eleven years in Germany, Marek cannot yet decide where to build his house. According to these two interviews, we may wonder what the 'objective' situation in Poland is. Having in mind the Thomas' theorem, we may say that it is bad or unfavourable if we refer to its consequences for Ela's life and its good or at least promising if we look at its results in Marek's biography. It is dependent on the individual case and therefore has different consequences for the two life histories.

B) The case of Monika.

I have already referred to the autobiographical narrative interview with Monika twice. First, while discussing the disparate schemes of interpretations in her interactions with an old German lady Monika's biography was addressed.²²¹ In the face of unjustified and ridiculous accusations against the Poles²²², the narrator sides with her nation in the argument by means of the discursive constructs typical for the Polish collective identity. In the second occurrence I dealt with her biography while considering the consequences of the immigration process on her life course and her professional career. Both of the earlier analysed parts of the interview with Monika seem to confirm her emotional-ideological as well as practical (e.g. fixed life situation, established plans for the future) attachment to her country of origin. Both experiences are of biographical importance in her narration. There are, however, some additional dimensions of Monika's life history to be mentioned before analysing the passage displaying her homecoming experience. We must take into account that in Germany she (through her husband) joins the Silesian (or resettlers) ghetto milieu.²²³ The narrator's situation there is implicitly very complicated. Monika is not a Silesian and she has no German roots. As she humorously states: *There has been even no German Shepherd in my family*. She is, thus, not only a stranger among Germans, but also an alien among the Silesians. Besides, the narrator is the only educated person there. This paradoxically reduces her possibilities of getting a satisfactory job. She says: *Among these friends, I have here, there are many/ They've already in Poland done usual, simply occupations and they continue this way here. They see no reasons to supplement their education for instance, or something. As they used to do it in Poland, they do it here...* (Monika, 7/49-8/2). Monika cannot continue her professional career in Germany like most of her Silesian friends. Among them, she is the only person to whom not only money matters, but also the intellectual development. Unfortunately, owing to her poor language skills and lack of possibilities to use her professional knowledge abroad she can only work on an assembly line. This would be probably very harmful to her.

²²¹ Please see the section 3.1.1.2 'Accidental problematical encounters' for a detailed explanation.

²²² I take into account the narrator's interpretation of the situation, not to the so-called 'historical truth' or objective explanation.

²²³ See: Schütze F., npd, Outline for the Method..., p. 14-15. It is very significant in her rendering that she constantly addresses to the Silesian milieu while abroad. Let me remind you that Silesians usually use their descent to get German citizenship and leave Poland. But, probably because of her professional involvement, she takes a stand of an ethnographer who rather attempts to analyze and understand the situation of the group, than becomes a fully-fledged member of it.

We must also keep in the back of our minds that Monika's decision to leave the homeland was made with great anxiety and difficulty. At the beginning, she doubted if her relationship with a man living in Germany was possible at all. The distance was the main obstacle here. Moreover, she was very unwilling to move to the strange country. Monika expresses it this way: *Well/ It means, generally for me... the f.f fact that I am to move here, I didn't like it at all* (2/29-30). Although the narrator and her future husband-to-be (Tomek) were considering the option of living in Poland together too, his financial status and his housing situation in Germany prevailed. Under these circumstances, she resigned her job in Poland and left. I look at her homecoming experience consisting of certain conducts, impressions, feelings and their interpretations in the context of certain biographical events, which structurally and factually precede her first relevant and meaningful visits at home. Both serve as orientations for her further action and its interpretation in the following way: (1) Monika's picture of Germany created during her business trip long before meeting Tomek; (2) first months of her stay in Germany. This unit starts with an interviewer question concerning Monika's dislike to Germany indicated earlier in the interview:

Monika (3/14-5/2)pl

I: (...) And tell me, you've said such a thing, that... yyy when you started going out together, and/ and you knew that you don't want to come and live in Germany, why...

N:

(very much)

I: why did you think this way?

N: It means I was in Germany for the first time in nine/ in ninety-five during professional training for new journalists, in such a German hole... typical German hole in Rheinland Pfalz, somewhere near Mainz (2) It means, it was such an old age pensioners' village, for me. It was really terrifying (2) how one can... live at all in such a place. Only old people, one joint. Even one Pole was a waitress there... and everything seemed to me so arran/ ordered. I landed there on Thursday, or Wednesday, and the very moment there was a day of cutting down/ that's/ that's what I've remembered, it was unbelievable for me, a day... of cutting down... probably yyy bushes in yyy in gardens. In front of every house there were exactly arranged twigs... I remember it up to this day... mended with such yellow sellotape... It was all exactly ordered (), somewhat strange to me. I was looking out, then, for some/ for a bumpy pavement, or somewhere some plaster... any/ which had yyyo felt off somewhere from/ from/ from the wall. Everything was just so artificial, ordered, rigid... and very strange to me...

I: mhm

N: I didn't like the place... (And if I were) to live in such a strange place, I/ It means I didn't like the language, either, because it is somewhat hard and generally... I don't know? Well, I didn't like the place...

I: mhm

N: generally...

I: mhm

N: I could see there nothing attracting me there... in the country, absolutely.... () I very/ I suffered very much, I did like nothing at all/ It means the thought on this/ the thought that I am to move here, it... wow, it was very (). I had to convince myself of it for a very long time and only for the sake of Tomek in practice (2) Because if I were to move alone, I would never in my life come here...

I: mhm... In that case hm hm what were your first... mmm months here like?... if you came with this negative attitude, so/ so how did you manage?

N: It means these first (3) it means, it was/ at the beginning I thought/ it means... we moved here/ because he had been living in a city/ a flat. He had just moved into it, so at the beginning it was: well, you know, I put a plant somewhere, just settling down, something like building a nest, some sort of that, so it passed by somehow... I enrolled at a scho/ It means, I was still illegally here in fact, because legally one may stay, in accordance with the rules for three months once a year...

I: mhm...

N: Well, and besides I used to go to Poland quite often, because I had to pay my Social Security and so on (2) It means, it was hard, because of the language matters... terribly... Terribly, because we speak Polish at home, we've got only Polish friends. My only contact with German, it was that school 3 times a week, three hours. Well, it gives you as much it gives, unfortunately (2) Well, but pfff well, I somehow started to... it means to/ I got used to it. It's just the country, where very strange for me rules are in force .hh Well, I as I live here, so... pff I had to adjust somehow... In any case, in the beginning, it was still/ I was in Poland very often...

I: mhm

N: I was circling, so mmm... so/ I was getting accustomed slowly to being here... Only when/ I remember there was a longer break, maybe three, or even four months... last time I was in the end of May, or the beginning of June, and then I wasn't there until September, or October, something like that... Then, after that visit in Poland I stated I would rather be here (2)

I: mhm (2) Why did you... ((laughing till*))

[]

N: More or less/

I: state it?*

N: yyyy Because as far as you go to Poland often, you cannot see differences... existing... in both these countries... I went to Poland and I suddenly saw that... in restaurants... and joints that staff is just... in most cases... statistically serves reluctantly/ it means here there're impolite waitresses either, but, let's say... here there are impolite sometimes and in Poland there are polite sometimes, well, I would describe it this way. It's the same with check-outs. Well, I know that these women don't earn a lot, you know, because I know how much one earns, but in spite of this yyy but here you just feel better if your service is concerned, for sure... People, too/ suddenly my friends have become so... terribly... overwhelmed... by all their worries and life, these earnings... somehow, I don't know, all these things wre/ it means... so/ so/ people were so overwhelmed and sad in Poland so much...

I: mhm

N: Plus yyy I started seeing that there is just dirtyier in Poland... It was also for me/ it was a shock to me (2) What is more I/ I bought/ when I was in Poland some sort/

there were certain trifles I was gathering somehow... some/ for instance some deceptions on coffee, or cosmetics, which y I don't know y y supposedly there is the same 'Schauma' here and in Poland and/ but when I bought it, well, I could see that it's not the same... And such/ I was gathering and gathering and collecting such small things and in Autumn... I had to take care of my eeee mmm... some formalities connected with my wedding. I had that comparison, let's say, a civil servant here and a civil servant in Poland. And it was also for me so/ so too contrastive and I've stated that eee well... pff ((laughing till*)) I'd rather/ rather here*, in spite/ in spite of my certain language problems, or what, I'd rather/ it's probably better here...

I: mhm

N: And now/ today I can say, that (2) if young people are considered, such normal, usual/ because we are really usual people, we don't earn miracles/ I even do not work right now, we have, in spite of that our starting point is better... here...

I: mhm...

N: in this country...

The narrator begins her account with a strong declaration that she did not want to live in Germany. Then, the interviewer persuades Monika to go into details and explain the reason for her opinion. In a detailing activity the narrator recalls visiting Germany for the first time (it was about 4 years before meeting her future husband and settling down in Germany). She was a very young student of political sciences who wanted to become a journalist one day. For this reason, she joined a professional training course for adepts at this occupation that took place in a very small village in Germany. She was astonished that the village was very clean, everything was carefully arranged in its proper place and if the inhabitants were to cut down bushes on a given day, all of them just did it. It was something unprecedented in Poland. This perfectly organised and obedient cooperation of all members of the community was something new and riled her.

It is interesting to mention in passing that a comparable description of the German society we may find in the autobiographical narrative interview with Marek. He is also some bit tired of constantly putting in order his garden not to irritate his neighbour: *It would sound foolishly, but I must tell you that I/ I miss just a little bit such/ such the wilderness to be so/ no so everything in order to/ so as I do not have to fence off... my neighbour and mind my tree doesn't fall the shadow on him, because he'll go and sue for/ or I mm leaves from my backyard or from my tree do not fall by chance on/ on his yyy part, because it yet again becomes a problem.* (Marek, 21/ 15-19). Monika's and Marek's observation concern very similar dimensions of human behaviour like these discussed in Edward T. Hall's book: 'The Hidden Dimension.' He puts forward that a passion for slight disorder characteristic

of Polish people arouses the German's anxiety. For Poles, thus, queues and rows are synonymous with discipline and blind obedience. The author himself remembers seeing a Pole who broke a queue of people in a cafeteria to 'make this flock of sheep move'.²²⁴ Thus, we may assume that Monika's initial picture of Germany is quite typical for many Poles.

At this point, I wish to turn to the interview with Monika again. By means of the evaluative description cited below the narrator can explain the source of her suffering and unwillingness while already knowing that she is to move to Germany. She says: *I very/ I suffered very much, I did like nothing at all/ It means the thought on this/ the thought that I am to move here, it... wow, it was very (). I had to convince myself of it for a very long time and only for the sake of Tomek in practice (2) Because if I were to move alone, I would never in my life come here....* The item of the narration and the format of its presentation provide us with very relevant issues. Monika makes clear that the process of decision-making was very painful and that it created some emotional tensions as well as complete chaos in her life. It is seen on the level of the text production via false starts reformulations and numerous pauses. We learn that the actual immigration was not her own decision, or in other words, a voluntary biographical plan, but it was in a way 'forced' by particular circumstances. The narrator's intention was to be with the man she loves and not to leave Poland. Because his situation in Germany was in many respects better than her situation in Poland, they chose the former country. Since the narrator stops her rendering here, the interviewer asks how, in this case, her first months abroad looked like. The answer implies that Monika's initial stage of living in Germany was oriented towards acting, arranging her new life, furnishing her new place etc. It diverted her attention away from her identity problems.²²⁵ The narrator's mundane activities resulting from her duties (fulfilling her institutional action scheme) as a young married woman were so time-consuming and absorbing that she was not able to focus on her inner identity dilemmas. Concentrating on other less problematical stretches of her life helped her to preserve a precarious new balance of everyday life.²²⁶ This is very typical situation for many

²²⁴ Hall E.T., 1978, *Ukryty Wymiar* (The Hidden Dimension), PIW, Warszawa, pp. 185-186.

²²⁵ See: Turner R.H., 1968, *The Self-Conception in Social Interaction*, in Gordon Ch., Gergen K.J. (red.), *The Self in Social Interaction*, John Wiley and Sons, New York, p. 20 and 24. Turner distinguishes task-oriented- and identity-oriented self. The former focuses on carrying on certain work or plan and thus an active individual does not pay much attention to his/her identity or his/ her interaction partner's identity. The later refers to interactions when establishing identities of both acting persons is the main aim of their action.

²²⁶ Cf. Riemann G., Schütze F., 'Trajectory'..., op. cit., pp. 349-350.

immigrating women. Thomas and Znainiecki, for instance, commenting on one of the peasant's letters of a woman who recently came to the United States, write:

In the beginning the relative novelty of the practical situation in which she found herself and the necessity of adapting herself to the new conditions left no place for remembrance and sentiment. The more settled the situation becomes, the more normal life and the greater the margin left for representation of the past and dreams of the future. (Zaretsky E. (ed), 1996: 61).

Moreover, Monika stresses that during the first period of her stay in Germany she used to go to Poland very often (she was going there once a month to pay her Social Security), and therefore she was able to retain some sort of continuity and sameness.²²⁷ The narrator says: *I was circling*, what suggests that she would get about and had no time for very careful and deep consideration of her situation. Always occupied with current events and arranging her new life abroad, the narrator takes no notice of any changes. Only when she stays in Germany for a longer time (about four months) and then she visits her homeland does she experience a turning point that *signalize some sort of movement in identity*. (Strauss, 1969: 93-94). Monika implied that something decisive must have happened in Poland, because it had completely changed her attitude. After this visit the narrator came to a conclusion that she would rather live in Germany. The issue is very intriguing for the listener who forces Monika to explain her different standpoint. The informant recapitulates here some of her disadvantages experienced in Poland during her visits at home. These were for example (1) The staff in restaurants, joints and shops are impolite and cheat (it happens in Poland often, while in Germany rarely); (2) The narrator's Polish friends are sad and overwhelmed; (3) Poland is dirtier; (4) Groceries and cosmetics are worse in Poland even if they have the same trade mark. The point here is not to discuss if her observations are valid – I assume that they are (still having in mind the Thomas' theorem true) – because their consequences are real, but rather to find out if they are sufficient to deal with her trajectory successfully. I think that the narrator's argumentation resulting from her homecoming experience that clearly favour Germany is not only too weak to balance her losses connected with leaving the home country, but first and foremost it refers to two different orders of relevance, and thus is deceptive. To explain this issue I will cite one more part of Monika's narration: *Because here religious holidays are nasty... Really. One can survive Easter somehow, but*

²²⁷ Cf. Strauss A.L., 1969, *Mirrors...*, op. cit, pp. 144-145.

Christmas is so awful... that`s why a man is really pleased when it`s over... (Monika, 12/8-10)pl. In order to explicate this passage I would like to refer to Emile Durkheim`s attempt to answer the most fundamental question for sociology: ‘What holds society together?’. He pointed at religion as one of the most salient mechanisms in maintaining any society. The informant`s argumentative commentary disclosing and accounting for her attitude towards her own biographical experiences seems to confirm Durkheim`s thesis that religious events – having a great influence on individuals – uphold and strengthen collective sentiments and create feelings of solidarity among the members of a society.²²⁸ If we additionally take into account Monika`s stance while interacting with an old German lady (described in the chapter dealing with the reciprocity of perspectives) when she unintentionally discloses her strong Polish national identification (manifesting itself in adhering to the Polish collective memory and discourse) it becomes clear that the narrator has not yet made an attempt to do her biographical work. Her rough-and-ready argumentations (probably thought up off the cuff) are not strong enough to overcome a possible crisis in her immigrant life. In short, I believe that the somewhat simplified juxtaposition of the bad quality of ‘Schauma’ shampoo in Poland with nasty religious holidays in Germany shows the weakness of the narrator`s argumentation through lack of (or improper) biographical work. It is very dangerous, since there are several biographical conditions that, in certain crisis situations, may activate Monika`s suffering and suddenly destroy the balance of her life abroad. (1) The narrator lives in Germany in a strange milieu (surrounded by the Silesians in the foreground and the Germans in the background). (2) She cannot continue her relevant biographical plans while abroad. (3) She has unexpected difficulties in learning the German language. Finally (4) She is the only educated person among her friends and family (including her husband) in Germany.

Summing up, Monika endeavours to create the picture of Germany as a better country. She refers to very mundane or down-to-earth things which cannot substitute for her deeply rooted national identification and emotional basis formed and developed in the Polish culture. The narrator, however, is still not able to see (or does not want to see) the

²²⁸ See: Durkheim E., 1954, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, Free Press, New York, pp. 474-475. In his analysis of the Durkheimian ritual model Randall Collins explains: ‘Rituals are special forms of social action which periodically recreate the feelings of membership and which revitalise the sacred objects that symbolise this membership. Participating in a ritual influences the individual in an unconscious, nonutilitarian dimension: it provides a heightened sense of energy and emotional direction. The experience of reaffirming one`s membership in the group gives one emotional support; one feels renewed confidence and a greater sense of one`s own capacities.’ Collins R., 1988, *Theoretical...*, op. cit., p.192.

discontinuity in her life (displaying in the formal structure of her presentation) and therefore she expends no efforts to work on it. The discrepancy of her presentation could be avoided if the narrator worked this problem out earlier and included it in her life plan. Disorder and inconsistency of her rendering suggest that Monika attempts to gloss over certain annoying and problematical issues in her immigrant experience. Deceiving herself and not allowing certain problems to impinge on her consciousness she is continuously subjected to serious biographical traps which upset her biographical continuity and thus question her identity. Although the dynamic of her immigrant trajectory may be brushed aside temporarily, its potential has not been removed yet. It still poses a threat to her biography and identity.

When Monika argumentatively reflects on her attitude towards Poland it turns out that what irritated her in Germany, now transforms into accusations against Poland. While order and obedience are seen negatively in Germany, the lack of them in Poland serves an unfavourable condition.

There is no doubt that the process of immigration changes an individual's world of daily life. Her or his *socially approved set of rules and recipes for coming to terms with typical problems by applying typical means for achieving typical ends* (Schütz, 1990a: 27) seem to be improper. Individuals have to modify their way of judging things and their system of relevances in the light of new experiences. This puts one in a very difficult position and causes great discomfort. It also entails biographical work that has to be done in order to control the course of trajectory and, then, attempt to introduce a new biographical action scheme. In the following chapter an attempt will be made to identify and describe these sociobiographical conditions which support immigration career and facilitate the assimilation process and help bridging social, cultural and linguistic differences.

Chapter 5

Heading for successful adjustment and assimilation.

The process of immigration in its initial phases may be painful and severe. Ironically, these who decide to live abroad believe that their life would be better, also get into trouble, which often causes severe suffering and deepening isolation. This paradoxical situation induces individuals to very intensive and profound reflections on their biographies (their past, present and future) in the light of their current, immigrant experiences. I focus on the matter in detail in this chapter referring to the concept of ‘biographical work’ elaborated by Anselm Strauss and his co-workers.¹ This type of work is of the greatest importance to the process of adjustment, i.e. mastering the trajectory process, and giving meaning and shape to life again. It corresponds with the term ‘comeback’ as described by Corbin and Strauss in their research on chronically ill patients² and is a frame of reference for my considerations here.

Only sincere and honest biographical work (practical working on trajectory as Riemann and Schütze call it)³ can enable immigrants to disentangle from their difficult position. It usually entails difficult and often repeated efforts to reconcile both cultures and attempts to find a creative and satisfying way of life. Since the corpus of my work contains the immigrant’s biographies which are relatively short, and the very process of assimilation and adaptation is often long-lasting, very hard and arduous (which sometimes cannot be accomplished at all) I call it: ‘heading for adjustment’.

I discuss the problem in reference to the concept of cultural valence by Antonina Kłoskowska. Valence in her understanding can be defined as

(...) not only the appropriation of a certain essential, including canonical, part of national culture, but, above all, as the acknowledging of this culture as one’s one, as familiar, as

¹ See: Glaser B.G., Strauss A.L., 1968, *Time for Dying*, Aldine, Chicago; Strauss A.L., Fagerhaugh S., Suczek B., Wiener C., 1985, *Social Organization of Medical Work*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago; Corbin J., Strauss A.L., 1988, *Unending Work and Care. Managing Chronic Illness at Home*, Jossey-Bass Publishers, San Francisco.

² Strauss A.L., 1991, *Creating Sociological Awareness, Collective Images and Symbolic Representation*, Transaction Books, New Brunswick.

³ See: op. cit., pp. 351-352.

satisfying hubristic needs (that is, the need for self-worth, personal dignity, and a feeling of participation in the community. (Kłoskowska, 2001: 117).

She distinguishes four types of assimilation of national culture (cultural valance). In many respects – I believe – her concept is similar to Stonequist’s description of types of multi-cultural personalities.⁴ For this reason I will juxtapose and compare these two ideas – firstly, presenting Kłoskowska’s conception and secondly, referring to Stonequist’s typology.

- 1) **Ambivalence** - in Kłoskowska’s understanding - *denotes the vagueness of the national situation and the uncertainty of the tie* (Kłoskowska, 2001: 151), which (...) *results from uncertainty stemming from rejection by both groups and is felt as a negative state* (op. cit.: 405). It may be comparable to the situation of the **‘marginal man’** as described by Stonequist, i.e., an individual who stands on the verge of two different patterns of group life and does not know to which he or she really belongs.⁵
- 2) **Polyvalence** that is associated with *the feeling of a tie superimposed on a person’s own national culture (but not dislodging this feeling from his inner experiences)* (Kłoskowska, 2001: 151); The concept of **the touchy nationalist** by Stonequist seems to be analogous. It is an individual who *fears the foreigner in the same breath that he vaunts his country.* (Stonequist, 1961: 179)
- 3) **Univalence** that may lead to *the loss of all ties with national cultures, which are reduced to the level of traditional ethnic “small fatherlands”, or even forgotten cultures* (Kłoskowska, 2001: 152). In many respects this kind of assimilation to national cultures is similar to the described by Stonequist type of a marginal personality that is to **the déraciné cosmopolitan** *who has broken away from his traditional moorings and is culturally adrift. He lives on the surface of life, becomes blasé and easily bored, and restlessly moves about looking for new thrills.* (Stonequist, 1961: 179).

⁴ Stonequist E.V., 1961, *The Marginal Man. A Study in Personality and Culture Conflict*, Russell & Russell, New York, pp. 178-179.

⁵ See: op. cit.

- 4) **Bivalence** – means the integration of both cultures in one’s mind.⁶ It may be related to Stonequist’s **true internationalist**, i.e., a person who has penetrated into a foreigner culture deeply enough *to look at problems from more than one viewpoint, and to see the essential ethnocentrism of each. He has consciously grasped the distinctive meaning and values of each of the rounded cultures in which he moves. What is very important he has not become a ‘citizen of the world’ through renouncing his own nationality and the values which it carries. Quite the contrary. He is able to understand the values in other national cultures, because he understands and is basically in harmony with those of his own. Self-understanding promotes the understanding of others.* (Stonequist, 1961: 179).

I propose to view bivalence in this study as some sort of the ideal type of absorbing a foreign culture in Max Weber’s sense⁷, which is at the same time the most required and desirable way in which immigrants adjust to a culture of an approached country. This entails not only their cultural knowledge and competence but also positive sentiments and affinity for their new homeland. According to Kłoskowska:

Bivalence may be regarded as a response to the challenges of the end of the twentieth century – a socially and individually positive response. It liberates individuals and societies from the particularism that is inconsistent with the tendencies of the epoch. It is a step in the direction of universalization, but not total utopian, abstract universalism; it solves many individual human problems. It does not mean severing the bond with the nation, but – contrary – it affords the possibility of expanding such ties. (Kłoskowska, 2001: 405).

Essentially, it seems to be necessary to direct any process of assimilation to the host society at establishing some symmetry between the country of origin- and the host country culture to attain some sort of balance and harmony while abroad. The highest degree of assimilation would be a state when in an individual’s biography both cultures are evenly matched and given equal importance. This is, however, an ideal type that, by its very nature, cannot be realised in its pure form. Pragmatically we may say that it is desirable

⁶ Cf. Kłoskowska, 2001a, *National Cultures as the Grass-root Level*, Central European University Press, Budapest, pp. 150-152.

⁷ Weber, M., 1949, *The Methodology of Social Sciences*, The Free Press, Glencoe, p. 90.

and sufficient if an immigrant is ‘*action competent*’ without losing his or her “*self-historical*” identity.’ (Schütze, npd: 21). In the following chapter I attempt to analyse the sociobiographical conditions (like joining social worlds in Strauss’ sense, having a biographical career, living in subcultural ‘ghetto’ or believing in one’s intermediary mission) that support the immigration process and that direct it towards assimilation.

5.1. The comeback and biographical work of an immigrant.

The definition of comeback derives from the substantive theory⁸ dealing with chronically ill people. Its authors - Juliet Corbin and Anselm Strauss explain:

A comeback represents an uphill journey back to a satisfying, workable life within the boundaries imposed by physical and possibly mental limitations. It involves the attempt to regain salient aspects of oneself that have been lost because of illness or injury.(Corbin, Strauss, 1988: 174).

They emphasise that ‘comeback’ is rather a biographical phenomenon than a physiological one. Generalizing the concept⁹ we may say that ‘adjustment’ (which I call ‘comeback’ in this work) is a process of returning to a meaningful way of life, giving purpose to one’s activities and acceding to the limitations that follow the immigration process. It begins when a person does not pity him- or herself any longer but instead tries to explore what can make his or her life abroad more satisfying and attempts to (re)construct his or her identity in coming to terms with certain losses suffered at the same time.¹⁰ According to Corbin and Strauss there are five stages of the process:

- 1) discovery (finding out limitations);
- 2) embarking upon the comeback trial (starting biographical projections and goals under current circumstances);
- 3) finding new pathways (testing new ways of living);
- 4) scaling the peaks (assessing how far one can move forward in one’s performances);
- 5) validation (confirming one’s identity and efficiency of action in her or his eyes and in the eyes of others).

The process of assimilation and adjustment is inseparable from an individual’s biographical work that is

⁸ See: Chapter 2 for more details concerning substantive theory.

⁹ See: Corbin J., Strauss A.L., 1994, Grounded Theory Methodology. An Overview, in Denzin N.K., Lincoln Y. S. (eds.), Handbook of Qualitative Research, Sage Publications, London, p. 281.

¹⁰ See: Corbin J., Strauss A.L., 1991, The Process of Overcoming Disability, in Strauss A.L., Creating..., op. cit., p. 363; Strauss A.L., 1987, Qualitative Analysis for Social Sciences, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 224-230.

(...) carried out in the service of an actor's biography, including its review, maintenance, repair, and alternation. (Strauss, 1993: 98).

Since living abroad in most cases interrupts the routine of everyday life and *overthrows precipitously the actual system of relevances* (Schütz, 1990b: 96) it challenges and undermines one's sense of identity. Moreover, in coming back home (which logically should remove the trajectory potential) one's self-concept and life world is questioned. Uncertainty of one's way of conduct and typologies used so far and doubts about oneself evoke manifold crisis situations and predicaments.¹¹ The world of everyday life is no longer experienced as unquestioned, coherent and taken-for-granted, but becomes an object of an individual's thinking. Robert Park puts forward that:

Something of the same sense of moral dichotomy and conflicts is probably characteristic of every immigrant during the period of transition, when old habits are being discarded and new ones are not yet formed. It is inevitably a period of inner turmoil and intense self-consciousness. (Park, 1950: 355).

Therefore, some fundamental questions arise: 'Where do I really belong?', 'Who I really am?', 'Where is my place?' and so on. In the light of new experiences and the piling up doubts an individual has to work on his or her biography (i.e., he or she must think over and reshape his or her past, mould his or her present identity and organise his or her future in a new way). Corbin and Strauss emphasize that the nature of biographical work is such that: *it must be done by those who are affected.* (Corbin, Strauss, 1988: 69) and, thus, it can be traced in the renderings of people affected with trajectory.¹² Trying to understand what happened to their lives and shattered their biography, they have to modify or change completely their definitions of the everyday world, themselves, their activities, as well as systems of relevances.¹³ It is an arduous and tiring work. The authors claim that depending on the trajectory phase and biographical context in which it occurs, as well as the meaning of losses one has suffered as well as the ability to manage new circumstances, we deal with biographical work of differencing intensity and differencing character.¹⁴

¹¹ Cf. Stonequist E.V., 1961, *The Marginal Man...*, op. cit., pp. 122-123.

¹² Obviously others are too important to be dispensed with, but they can only support the biographical work of an afflicted person.

¹³ Cf. Corbin J., Strauss A.L., 1988, *Unending...*, op. cit., p. 68. See also: Strauss A.L., Fagerhaugh S., Suczek B., Wiener C., 1985, op. cit. pp. 137-139.

¹⁴ Cf. Corbin J., Straus A.L., 1988, *Unednding...*, op. cit., p. 69.

The aim of biographical work is to: *reknit the past with the present and future, in order to achieve a sense of biographical continuity and wholeness about one's identity* (Corbin, Strauss, 1991: 366-367). This occurs whenever there is some dissonance and incompatibility of experiences and one's conception of self. If so, a person starts questioning his or her identity and via backward and forward reviews¹⁵ and thus tries to find out who he or she really is. The individual not only thinks back over his or her past, but also projects into the future in the light of their present knowledge. There are various forms that biographical reviews may take: *accounting reviews* (assessing one's failures and successes, what was right and what was wrong in one's past, as well as estimating one's abilities and resources that are needed in order to be up to the future performances); *flashbacks* (sudden and short going back in time); *biographical replays* (recollecting or detailed reconstructing of the important past events); and *future forecast* (thinking about a possible course of action in the future while taking current conditions into account).¹⁶

Strauss and Corbin point out that biographical work involves four analytically separated, but partly covering, closely connected, occurring simultaneously and evolving over time biographical processes, i.e.: contextualizing, coming to terms, reconstituting identity and recasting biography. I discuss them below with reference to the immigration process.

- 1) *Contextualizing* – denotes considering one's own immigration process as a meaningful part of his or her biography and including it in the course of life; which entails assessing suffered losses, recognizing consequent limitations, thinking over one's past and projecting one's future under present conditions in a foreign country. Contextualizing also involves discovering, that is finding out (...) *what aspects of the self remain and can be carried forward to provide biographical continuity*. (Corbin, Strauss, 1988: 74).
- 2) *Coming to terms* – involves fostering an understanding and accepting, at least to some degree, one's fragile identity (and often undesirable picture in

¹⁵ Strauss refers here to the Mead's term 'ideational processes' and claims that it can be easily converted into the idea of biography. See: Strauss A.L., *Continual Permutations of Action*, Aldine de Gruyter, New York, pp. 97-98.

¹⁶ See: Corbin J., Strauss A.L., 1988, *Unending...*, op. cit., pp. 70-72.

the eyes of others) and its biographical consequences through self-confrontations and reviews. Unfortunately whenever biographical conditions change or when limitations increase one's inner equilibrium can be disturbed and the work must be intensified or in the worst possible case even started again.¹⁷

- 3) *Reconstituting identity* – refers to seeing oneself as a complete identity ('wholeness') again within the limited scope of autonomous actions and restricted language and cultural competences. Although in many situations of long-term suffering (being chronically ill or living abroad) one may feel that he or she has lost some important aspects of their identities, there are still some that remain and link them with the past. Thereby, the feeling of continuity is kept and, on this basis, an individual can try to reconstruct his or her feeling of wholeness. There are three steps that must be taken in the process of reconstructing identity. Firstly, an afflicted person has to identify changes in one's self-conception, recognition of the current situation and possible future identifications, which finally leads to establishing a new order of relevances (Corbin and Strauss name it: *defining and redefining identity*). Secondly, an individual must decide and choose which old, new or modified activities, performances and identities she or he should concentrate on, which are important and can be done easily in these new circumstances (in the authors' nomenclature it is: *refocusing direction*). When they are validated, done successfully and as such recognised by others, we deal with the third and last step in the process of renewed identity integration (according to Corbin and Strauss it is: *reintegrating identity*).¹⁸
- 4) *Recasting biography* – means forming plans according to one's new self-concept.¹⁹ It implies arriving at a biographical scheme according to which one's future can be thought about and organised. There are two conditional processes indispensable to it: crystallization and having control over the trajectory. The former means that a person must realise who he or she is

¹⁷ Cf. Corbin J., Strauss A.L., 1988, *Unending...*, op. cit., p. 76.

¹⁸ Cf. Op. cit., pp. 79-84.

¹⁹ See also: Strauss A.L., 1993, *Continual...*, op. cit., pp. 98-99.

now. It is a two-phase process in which an individual has to make it clear which performances cannot be done anymore and, then, she or he must plan the future in the light of these limitations. The latter refers to the ability of anticipating and giving the desired direction to the trajectory.

Immigrants are suspended between two symbolic universes - cultural realities. Their existence in two meaning systems forces them to ask crucial questions dealing with their own identity. They have to learn how to see things according to the scheme of interpretation being in force in the group they approach and how to handle situations using solutions typical for their new community. While gaining this knowledge and abilities they not only have to use it in current situations, but also verify their past and reorganise their future.

5.2. The meaning of social worlds for the process of assimilation.

The concept of social worlds was introduced by T. Shibutani and developed by A.L. Strauss. To clarify the notion I refer to A. Clarke's definition that depicts social worlds as

(...) groups with shared commitments to certain activities, sharing resources of many kinds to achieve their goals, and building shared ideologies about how to go about their business. (Clarke, 1991: 131).²⁰

Any social world is characterised by communication and activity²¹, and it is based on common experience, mutual interest, shared symbolizations, shared perspectives on 'reality' and, what follows, constitutes its own universe of discourse.²² It neither has its formal boundaries nor is connected with formal membership and authority relations among participants, but is bounded '*by the limits of effective communication*' (Shibutani, 1955: 566).²³ Clarke stresses that:

Through extended communication, participants in social worlds characteristically generate, adopt, or adapt ideologies about how their work should be done and debate about both their own activities and other's actions that may affect them. (Clarke, 1991: 131-132).

Strauss distinguishes five features of social worlds, namely:

- 1) distinctive 'core' activity and related clusters of activity;
- 2) sites – not only geographic, but also social spaces where activities occur;

²⁰ Strauss accedes to this definition. See: Strauss A.L., 1993, *Continual...*, op. cit., p. 212.

²¹ Cf. Strauss A.L., 1982, 'Social Worlds and Legitimation Process', *Studies in Symbolic Interaction*, Vol. 4, p. 171, and Strauss A.L., 1984, 'Social Worlds and Their Segmentation Processes', *Studies in Symbolic Interaction*, Vol. 5, pp. 123-124.

²² Cf. Lindesmith A.R., Strauss A.L., Denzin N.K. (eds.), 1988, *Social Psychology*, Prentice Hall, New Jersey, p. 272.

²³ See also: Gilmore S., 1990, *Art Worlds*, in Becker H.S., McCall M.M. (eds.), 1990, *Symbolic Interaction and Cultural Studies*, The University of Chicago Press, London, pp. 150-151.

- 3) technology – *inherited or innovative modes of carrying out the social world's activities;*
- 4) organization – a long-term or temporary arrangement of social world's activities having varying complexity;
- 5) membership – every social world has its members who are more central or more peripheral to its functioning, more or less dedicated to and engaged into its activities, and more or less formally connected with it.²⁴

Furthermore, Strauss points out two processes pivotal for social worlds: i.e., intersection and segmentation (subdividing). The former relates to the process in which social worlds meet and influence each other, and the latter pertains to the continuous process of differentiation into subworlds. The author writes that their emergence may be connected with admitting new members, introducing modified or modernised technologies or different experiences within the world. Referring to the well-known book of H.S. Becker: 'Art Worlds' he explains that differentiation into subworlds may result from distinct needs, wishes and expectations of members in relation to their activity, space, time, means, etc.²⁵ There are at least three possible routes of new subworlds' development: budding off (either members of the given social world specialise or they use different, often more modern techniques); splitting off (it may happen that members' conception of what they do and how they should do it differs so much that they cannot act together any longer and, thus, they divide into competitive parts); coming out from two or more intersecting social worlds (if certain activities of different social worlds can be joined and practiced together).²⁶

I would like to draw our attention to the fact that membership of social worlds, at least in the case of autobiographical narrative interviews analysed in this chapter, is voluntary and intentional. Whereas the inner dynamics of the trajectory process is strictly connected with passivity and domination of external foreign forces that have controlling

²⁴ Strauss A.L., 1978, 'A Social World Perspective', *Studies in Symbolic Interaction*, Vol. 1, p. 122. In Polish compare: Rokuszewska-Pawełek A., 2002, *Chaos i przymus. Trajektorie wojenne Polaków – analiza biograficzna*, Wyd. Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, Łódź, p. 25.

²⁵ Cf. Strauss A.L., 1978, *op. cit.*, pp. 122-123 and Strauss A.L., 1982, *op. cit.*, p. 177; See also: Becker H., 1982, *Art Worlds*, California University Press, Berkley.

²⁶ Cf. Strauss A.L., 1982, *op. cit.*, p. 174.

and deciding effects on an individual's course of daily life²⁷, participation in social worlds is based on the ability and will to plan and organise one's affairs that exemplifies a biographical action scheme. Joining social worlds may also release one's capacity for developing a new creative way of life and, thus, put the process of biographical metamorphosis in motion. Due to the immigrants' biographies Schütze claims that:

Undergoing such a metamorphosis process would make the immigrant 'action competent' in her/his new society without losing her/his 'self-historical' identity by over-adjustment. It would help her or him to organize her/his occupational, civil and private life situation according to her/his own distinctive standards. Having accomplished this, she/he could then regain an active working relationship towards her/his own biographical unfolding and life situation relatively soon. She/he would start to embark on a biographical action scheme of hammering out or following up an occupational path or career and of becoming an active and orientationally open member of her/his new society. (Schütze, npd: 21-22).

Two different types of interplay between the trajectory process and participation in social worlds (either depicted as a biographical action scheme or as a biographical metamorphosis) can be traced in the autobiographical narrative interviews of Polish immigrants. There are autobiographies focused on the narrators' membership of certain social worlds. The narratives of horse-riders (Robert and Bartek) provide the best example. The course of their life is totally subordinated to the requirements of the social world to which they are committed, since it is both their passion and occupation. Improving skills (technologies) typical for their social worlds and familiarizing themselves with the way they are organised in another country is the main reason for leaving Poland. Although it happens that they fall into the trap of the immigrant's trajectory process, it can be quite easily eliminated if they return home. Thus, speaking in the most general terms, all advantages which can be gained from participating in the social world keep them from returning to Poland. For the purposes of my further investigation we can distinguish the social world of horse-riding and its subworlds (the German and the Polish horse-riding having their own organization, different stages of technical development, division of labour, geographic location etc.). Participation in social worlds/subworlds in Germany

²⁷ Riemann G., Schütze F., 1991, 'Trajectory' as a Basic Concept for Analyzing Suffering and Disorderly Social Processes, in Maines D.R., Social Organization and Social Structure; Essays in Honour of Anselm Strauss, Aldine de Gruyter, New York, p. 342.

serves as facilitation in curbing a trajectory potential that results either from the loss of one's social milieu or 'ideological' homeland in Stanisław Ossowski's understanding.²⁸

There are also autobiographical interviews that show how and why finding a satisfactory social world enables an immigrant to deal with the trajectory process successfully. This is the case of Nina who finds an exciting new field of activity as a member of a playgroup, or the case of Anna who helping children with learning difficulties realises her ambitions which exemplifies this process. Immersing into given social worlds allows them to free themselves from isolation, restore their confidence in the possibility of independent and autonomous action, and consequently, overcome a conditional state of mind.²⁹ Drawing on Thomas and Znaniecki's concept of the four basic wishes³⁰ we can say, that at least their desire for face-to-face response and their will for recognition in the eyes of their new community are satisfied. The active relationship to one's world and identity is essential for a creative, inventive, and therefore, satisfying life. For this reason, I treat social worlds as a way of getting out of the trajectory process.

5.2.1. Social worlds as facilitations in curbing a trajectory potential.

The role and power of social worlds in the process of struggling with trajectory and assimilation will be described and analysed here. Two autobiographical narrative interviews of Robert and Bartek (horse-riders) who have participated in certain social worlds since their early childhood (or, like Bartek, are born into it) will be discussed. Although, we have dealt with the issue in the previous chapter, there are still some things to be explained or remembered. From the very beginning courses of their lives are

²⁸ Stanisław Ossowski – a distinguished Polish sociologist – suggested that 'patrio' (national identity) has its 'private' and 'ideological' dimension. The former relates to an individual's (or group's) identifications with local, regional territory and heritage, the latter concerns one's feeling of belonging to a nation understood as an ideal, conceptual category – meaning its broad tradition, unique history, a certain system of values and attitudes. Ossowski S. 1984 (1946), *Analiza socjologiczna pojęcia ojczyzny*, in Ossowski S. (ed.), *O ojczyźnie i narodzie*, PWN, Warszawa, p. 26.

²⁹ In fact, we deal here with the reversed process to this phase of the unfolding trajectory which is described by Riemann and Schütze as: crossing the border from an intentional to a conditional state of mind. See: Riemann G., Schütze F., 1991, 'Trajectory'..., op. cit., p. 349; Schütze F., 1996, *Verlaufskurven des Erioidens als Forschungsgegenstand der interpretativen Soziologie*, in Kriiger H.H., Marotzki W. (eds.), *Erziehungswissenschaftliche Biographieforschung* (pp. 116-157), Leske&Budrich, Opladen, p. 129; in Polish see: Schütze F., 1997, 'Trajektorie cierpienia jako przedmiot badań socjologii interpretatywnej', *Studia Socjologiczne*, No. 1 (114), p. 25.

³⁰ Thomas W.I., Znaniecki F., 1918, *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America*, Vol. I, University of Chicago Press, p. 73 and Thomas W.I., 1969 [1923], *The Unjusted Girl: With Cases and Standpoints for Behaviour Analysis*, Patterson Smith, Montclair N.J., pp. 18-40.

determined by participation in the given social worlds. It has a direct and important effect on the way their narrations are organised and constructed. Affairs connected with their social worlds always come to the fore. Their far-reaching biographical action schemes are always deeply rooted in these social worlds in which they can realise their passion. It is also characteristic that professions of this nature demand many personal sacrifices and the narrators are always ready to make them. All of them decide to leave Poland – their homeland – because they believe that in Germany (or many other countries where the development of their social worlds is far more advanced) they can perfect their skills and improve certain techniques. A financial reason seems to be secondary here. Another issue that should be mentioned is that neither Robert nor Bartek has ever planned to stay in Germany for good. According to A. Strauss: when one of many various identities – either selected or irremovable - is exploited intensively in the course of interactions (here: a horse-rider), we deal with a phenomenon of ‘identity spread’.³¹ The other identities are marginalised and perceived via the dominating one.

There is another very interesting facet to this matter. There are two somewhat different argumentations while dealing with the problem whether to stay abroad or not. Bartek and Robert introduce their social worlds in Germany always by means of a ‘but’ construction as the predominant orientation lines in their biographies. They are contrasted either with the narrators’ former social milieu or their ideological homeland. Here, I combine the concept of ‘private’ and ‘ideological’ homeland by Ossowski with the concept of being rooted in one’s milieu or in history taken from the book ‘Biography and National Identity’.³² Both distinctions seem to be very similar (thus: ‘private’ homeland corresponds to being rooted in one’s social milieu; ‘ideological’ homeland is consistent with being rooted in history). However, I find it more transparent to use the category of ‘social milieu’ and ‘ideological homeland’ while describing what kind of attitudes toward Poland social worlds are to substitute for. The former illustrates situations in which the

³¹ See: Strauss A.L., 1975, *Chronic Illness and the Quality of Life*, The C.V. Mosby Co., St. Louis, p. 60; in Polish see: Bokszański Z., 1986, ‘Koncepcja tożsamości jednostki A.L. Straussa’, *Studia Socjologiczne*, No. 2 (101), p. 99.

³² Making use of the biographical method the authors discuss the war-time experiences of Poles. They identify two attitudes (vectors) of the informants towards the course of events and their feelings during the war (what and how is told and interpreted): being rooted in one’s milieu and being rooted in history. The first means that a narrator has a tendency to place her or his own biographical processes within her or his local, micro-surrounding. The second depicts a narrator’s tendency to place her or his own biographical processes within historical and social macro – processes, which often implies referring to some theoretical categories or various ideologies/ historiographies. See: Czyżewski M. 1996, *Generalne kierunki opracowania, wymiary analityczne*, in Czyżewski M., Piotrowski A., Rokuszewska-Pawełek A., (eds.), *Biografia a tożsamość narodowa*, Wyd. Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, Katedra Socjologii Kultury, Łódź, p. 46, and Piotrowski A., *Zakorzenie w historii (teorii) – zakorzenie w milieu: analiza dwu odmian narracji*, in op. cit, p. 174.

narrators' social surrounding is the main force still attracting them to the country of origin. The latter depicts cases in which informants refer to their common sense conception of the Polish nation in general, entailing some sort of devotion and allegiances, clashing, at least to some extent, with their wish to develop their professional skills abroad. This issue will be discussed by referring to the two minimally contrasting autobiographical narrative interviews with Robert and Bartek.

5.2.1.1. Social world versus social milieu.

When considering the state of commitment to one's social world Bartek is surely one of the most devoted persons. This is most probably the case, because in the course of his primary socialization - mainly via his father who is in charge of this process as a significant other - he was not only inducted into the mundane life of a society, but also into the higher-symbolic social world of horse-riding.³³ Horses are introduced as a main topic of his personal experience in the very first sentence of his rendering and shape the whole of Bartek's biography. It makes his life history fascinating. The informant's narration has been quoted and discussed several times earlier. Nevertheless I would like to recall briefly the most crucial matters in his recapitulation preceding the passage I will cite and focus on below.

Bartek was born and brought up in a city (named B in the transcription) famous for a large, state-owned³⁴ herd of stallions, where his father was an employee. Although the narrator and his brothers were too young to take care of stallions, they used to help his father eagerly and often. When Bartek was 16-year-old and he could start riding officially, horses absorbed him completely. In his case the social milieu and the social world of the herd of stallions in B overlap almost completely. In this connection, I use the two expressions interchangeably. New Year's Eves, Christmas, birthdays, holidays and parties took place within the social world/social milieu. His school education and also those interests typical for his peers (like soccer, cars etc.) were dull and uninteresting to Batek. The narrator perceived any institutional career (first and foremost schooling) as a sort of a compulsion that disrupted his passion. Consequently, he did not finish any secondary

³³ See: Berger P.L., Luckmann T., 1991, *The Social Construction of Reality. A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*, Penguin Books, London, pp. 150-152.

³⁴ Please remember that the narrator's childhood and youth are during the communist period in Poland.

school, for he had neither time for going there, nor for learning. It was only a coincidence that he could serve his time in the army all the while pursuing his passion and working in the herd (thanks to his connections with significant horse-riders he managed to place a daughter of an officer who was responsible for his service in the army in a well-known and 'closed' riding club and the officer payed him back for it. He let the narrator stay in his herd and do his military service there). Similar to his father, Bartek remained a devoted employee of the herd for several years. One day his manager offered him the chance to go to Germany in order to see how horse-riding was performed there, to perfect his skills and try new methods. For three months he was working in a stable in Germany as a horse-rider. Bartek was not very impressed, because his skills were much better and within three days he learnt everything. The informant noticed immediately that the general level of horse-riding and its conditions were much better in Germany, but he decided to return to Poland. The main reason was still his attachment to the herd in B. But during his three-month stay in Germany, he was given a contact number of a man, who could be interested in employing him. Seeing that the herd in B was declining (reasons of this process are presented by the narrator in a biographical commentary: it was connected with political changes in Poland – after 1989 the herd no longer received money from the treasury) the narrator decided to take an opportunity and go to Germany again.³⁵ Bartek was going to earn some money because his sister was getting married and he wanted to support his family. His new employer became aware very quickly that he was dealing with a highly skilled professional and at once offered to employ him permanently. The narrator was satisfied with his everyday work, too. Bartek tells: (8/5-11) *And, generally, it has appealed to me .hh Not mentioning that this work/ in very/ the very work was being done very professionally... This/ this niveau was... three times better, or ten times better. It had seemed to me in Poland that I can ride .hh... and that I do it/ when I came here, it seemed to me that, damn, I have to change my profession, because generally... because I'm still a very small one (2) I still don't know many things (2) mc... And... generally I liked this/ this month.* Bartek understood immediately that the social world of horse-riding in Germany is said to be one of the best in Europe. Nevertheless, this time he did not stay longer, since his herd of stallions in B still mattered and finally prevailed. Consequently, he returned to Poland. Soon afterwards Bartek's Polish friend, who also worked for the same employer in

³⁵ One cannot deny that the situation of the herd of stallions in B was very critical and worsened steadily, but probably after his three-month stay in Germany, Bartek took the perspective of a homecomer in Schütz's term and his frame of reference changed. It entailed that his assessments became more acute and severe.

Germany, called him and asked if he could come for a year, because he wanted to go to Poland to finish his studies. Then, they would change every three months. Still counting on an improvement of the situation in the herd, Bartek found this possibility of working in Germany very profitable. If it failed, he could also give private riding lessons to support his livelihood in Poland. As this solution left room for manoeuvre and Bartek could keep his options open, his decision was much easier. In sum, the narrator decided to come to Germany again, since this arrangement did not obstruct his way back.

We can see clearly here that both social worlds/ subworlds compete with each other in Bartek's mind. There is no doubt that the social world of horse-riding is the most important thing in the narrator's life. The problem arises when he is to choose which of the two subworlds is more important. On the one hand, there is the herd of stallions in B (named later also the Polish subworld), the place of Bartek's descent, his social milieu associated with his earliest memories, family, friends, work, fun, traditions etc., but also the situation of constantly wrestling with financial problems and declining possibilities. On the other hand, there is the very professional, fully developed, well-organised, rich and recognised as one of the best subworld of horse-riding in Germany (later referred to as the German subworld). Now, let us look how the narrator deals with this dilemma in his storytelling:

Bartek (9/12-10/9)pl

You know, then... I've never thought/ never thought how long one can continue it and so on... ((lowering his voice till*)) So () I was twenty three or twenty four years old even/ twenty three (2) it's OK.* So I came here for a year (3) and/ and/ and (3) this first year (2) generally this first year... seven, eight months it was... a disaster... [door bell ringing, the narrator does not respond]. So the first year one could live (2) from one leave to another... Then, I was going on leaves... almost every two months I was going somewhere for a week (2) on leave... and that was my life. You know, I was coming back here... and I was wai/ wai/ waiting for my leave (2) Although the very job yyy (2) suited me very well, because (4) I've learned a lot and I knew it that (2) I learn a lot. There was one thing missing/ actually I was brought up... differently in Poland... if social life is concerned (2) Because in Poland it looked, you know, like this, if there were horses somewhere there were a lot of people all around... yyy because all around the world 70 per cent of riders (2) in general there are girls...

I: mhm

(2)

N: So there were hordes of girls there... so there was an atmosphere, there were people to talk to and/ and/ and (3) and/ and/ and parties overlap. And it was something, you know, something more... this was so normal. And it turned out that everything is just a little bit dry here... yyy I landed so, I landed in the stable/ the stable was mmm quite professional so... we were not living on these people... mc these who come to ride a little or something like that, because there were a few such people there... And those who were coming, I don't know... such... they were a little but odd... and (2) and.... my language was very poor then. And they just came, were doing what they wanted and so on... and/ and were

escaping home... And that made me/ that made me the most/ I was missing it most of all. My job, everything was OK. I would never change it (3) But I was missing something, you know... mmm (2) there was no place/ there was no place to go (2) in the evening. When we were/ later a few new boys came... so we were here as a quite united... yyy group... of people. We were... really we were constantly in touch, because all of them were working in stab/ in stables somewhere here... near here and we all knew each other (2) We met here generally... (). But that first year it was... it was/ it was so, you know, that... when something really pissed me off (2) perhaps totally/ if/ if my job wasn't so/ hadn't suited me so much, I suppose that I would have took, you know.... yyy any lousy day or something, I would have packed my stuff and would have said: 'thanks a lot' and I would have returned to Poland and (). The only thing keeping me here was... yyy finally it was the job I was dreaming of this/ this job (3) emmmm because the guy was really very businesslike... and/ and/ and... he appreciated for instance that/ that... that I want something... I want something more... want something/ I want to learn something (4) that/ that after my work... I don't go home and go to bed, because in fact what I was to do?... I wasn't so tired, although I was... riding the whole day and I was working really (4) It's not/ it's not so/ so easy. I wasn't prepared for that and I was doing it on a smaller scale (2) but after my work... ooo- out of boredom I was going there (2) just to look how others ride... Or/ or others there/ to help somebody, something/ something like that. And the guy noticed it and... aft/ later, he let me... earn some money after my work... But money was concerned here. It was about... mmm I was appreciated/ I was appreciated in this way, that he saw that (2) 'OK., if he still wants after these eight hours in the saddle to shake his ass, it's... OK., let him do it for money at least'

As we know, an individual's biography is rooted in a milieu when he or she recapitulates and interprets his or her life in terms of the course of events and social relations occurring in the micro-scale of their direct life environment.³⁶ As the above quoted part of the rendering displays – Bartek does not long for some sort of generalised and abstract idea of the country/ nation, but for the real and true world within reach of his own direct experience. This does not mean that the narrator makes no references to Poland in more general terms, but they are of second-rate importance to his biography as a whole.³⁷ There are many places in this rendering that confirm that for the narrator the social world/ milieu of the herd of stallions in B is a highly meaningful one. It has constituted the world of his everyday life, shaped his way of thinking and laid his system of relevance. Therefore, if Bartek was to give it up or leave it completely, he would be in a serious dilemma. The comparison between the worsening situation of the stable in Poland and the excellent conditions of horse-riding in Germany makes his choice easier. To simplify the matter, we may say that he changes subworlds (as far as their national location is concerned) within the same social world – which, in his case, entails some facilitations in the process of assimilation. For many reasons the narrator is able to 'easily' penetrate into the subworld of horse-riding in Germany. First of all, his skills are good enough to convince other

³⁶ Cf. Piotrowski A., 1996, *Wstęp*, op. cit., p. 10.

³⁷ Cf. Piotrowski A., 1996, *Zakorzenie*..., op. cit., pp. 174-175.

members of the German subworld that he deserves recognition and respect. According to Pierre Bourdieu, we may say that Bartek is admitted to the field of horse-riding when the capital he possesses (his skills, gained experience, and knowledge concerning horses) is identified as useful and valuable. Thereby, the network of social contacts may be established and constantly broadened. It is also no wonder that Bartek acquires the German language - *referring to events, objects, and activities that “matter”* (Lindesmith, Strauss and Denzin, 1988: 273) in horse-riding - the ‘lingo’ peculiar to his social world - very quickly. All these factors favour establishing the universe of discourse within the narrator’s new surroundings. At the moments of crisis and breakdowns occurring over the first year of his stay abroad he still considers his actual situation from different points of view, i.e., he constantly balances the advantages of staying abroad against coming back home. In order to manage the trajectory process the narrator has to carry out biographical work to find out what makes his suffering reasonable. In his case the subworld of horse-riding in Germany seems to justify his decision, since he is aware that certain activities typical for his social world are more advanced here. While his social milieu (the subworld of horse-riding in B) is dying, the social world/ subworld of horse-riding in Germany is flourishing.

5.2.1.2. Social world versus ideological homeland.

The autobiographical interview with Robert - analysed carefully in reference to the trajectory process in the previous chapter – also here serves as a very good illustration. Robert’s system of relevance and values is obvious: from his early youth horses take first place for him. The informant’s membership of the social world of horse-riding is a recurrent leitmotiv of his story and the main organizational line of his biography. However, in coming to Germany to perfect his riding skills Robert discloses another crucial (seen but unnoticed so far, in the language of H. Garfinkel) self-conception, namely his national identity. His narration (as well as stories of many other immigrants) shows that being a Pole comes into prominence while abroad and for many reasons (see the chapter above) becomes one of the most meaningful identifications. What is more, being one of the main sources of the narrator’s suffering it exerts a great influence on the course of his life. Thus, along with immigration Robert’s national identification starts to be recognised as important and becomes comparable to his identification as a horse-rider in terms of its value. The problem is that the narrator cannot reconcile these conflicting identities. As a horse-rider

he is bent on staying in Germany, as a Pole he wants to return to his country of origin. And, what is most important for our inquiry, while the informant's national identification is closely related to his trajectory process, his 'horse-rider-self' is some sort of antidote alleviating his pain and discomfort. Orienting towards horses (the social world) enables Robert to endure the majority of his difficulties and hardships. Thanks to horses the narrator is able to create a balance between the opposing forces (identities) and, to some extent, curb the effects of his national identity and ipso facto to restrain the trajectory process. Whenever the narrator intends to escape, horses keep him from doing it. Again, thanks to horses, Robert gets to know his new German community, simultaneously lessening the influence of his identification as a Pole. Consequently, the narrator is able to control the trajectory potential, inhibit its development and gradually eliminate it by a systematic organization of his life abroad.³⁸ On the other hand, other members of the social world to which Robert undeniably belongs focus rather on his professional identity (and treat him as a very good, committed and zealous horse-rider) than on his national identity (as far as this one is concerned he presupposes and believes that others perceive him in a stereotypical manner).

The detailed analysis of the following part of Robert's biography is conducted here with the aim of proving that in the narrator's case the social world of horse-riding in Germany compensates for all crucial biographical losses resulting from living abroad. Among them, leaving his ideological homeland appears to be one of the most important. In Robert's narration his Polish national identity is described in terms of distinction from Germans (mainly via '*we are different*' argumentations).³⁹ First, I would like to look at one of the units where Robert declares with great force that he has never wanted to stay in Germany permanently:

Robert (4/44–5/4)

Since my first day here, when... I came I've said, that... I would never stay here permanently anyway...

I: mhm

³⁸ Cf. Riemann G., Schütze F., 1991, 'Trajectory'..., op. cit., p. 351.

³⁹ The authors of the book 'Biography and National Identity' following the concept of Antonina Kłosowska, define national identity as: 'some sort of distinction from others and a sense of relationship with one's own in-group, and an awareness of continuity, historical persistence of the group and its collective filiation.' Kłosowska A., 1992b, 'Tożsamość i identyfikacja narodowa w perspektywie historycznej i psychologicznej', *Kultura i Społeczeństwo*, No. 1, p. 134. In many respects, the narrator's conception of his national identity seems to be consistent with the definition just cited.

N: I said: “certainly not”, y’know? They were trying to find some girls for me here/ you would get married here, you would have a flat there, because they have one more house, or you could rent from us and extremely cheap, but, you have to be here and you’ll find a girlfriend, so you’ll stay and everything’s be fine. I say: no, everything is fine, my work, but I say: to stay, I say...it’s another story and I say: don’t/ don’t move it, because I say... it certainly wouldn’t/ wouldn’t win. And until today I think so. But all the time theses horses keep attracting me here... tha-at horse-riding. [Someone’s knocking on the door; a friend of the narrator is asking about the car keys, 3 minutes break].

Robert vows that he is not going to stay in Germany, although his friends want him to stay. They advise him to rent a house at a bargain price or suggest that finding a girlfriend would probably help him to assimilate. In spite of this, the narrator states that nothing can keep him from returning to Poland, even today. We must remember here that Robert had already come back to Poland for good, but because of horses and his homecoming experience he was not able to remain faithful to his decision and after a year he returned to Germany. He explains: *But... pffff these horses, I’ve realised that I still have known too little on the topic. I need some more experience... on the riding... I decided again... for a year to come here.* (Robert 6/18-20). When the narrator recapitulates his stay in Poland and his feelings and emotions accompanying him at that time he also realises how much he owes to the social world of horse-riding in Germany. It is not only that he could learn a lot, but also that he could endure a lot. ‘Horses’ justify everything: dropping out of studies (described earlier in the interview in the categories characteristic of a metamorphosis process) and his girlfriend’s leaving (still tormenting Robert five years after their partition). These problems are particularly visible in the following passage:

Robert (9/38-10/4)

I was wrestling with great problems because of my work, that decision: to stay or not, great, developmental, having the future; the school, studies/ the dream, damn, of my life, when one guy has infected me already, damn, in the sixth form of my primary school and/ and/ Since then I’ve known, that I would go into that SPE, that I want to do it... And suddenly, damn, unexpectedly, and I got into it. So many years... of thinking and and and the decision, that I’m going to do it, and suddenly I give it up. So it wasn’t so easy, either... The girlfriend, too... Well, but these/ these horses here/ that stay, these possibilities of development here... I’ve seen a lot, I’ve met a lot of interesting people, a lot/ a lot inters/ I’ve been to interesting places, such places I know, I’d never, I know, if I were in Poland... well, visited...

I: mhm

N: I both didn’t/ didn’t/ couldn’t afford it and there was no/ no possibility to do it... to go... somewhere, damn, for a canoeing trip, or to fly with a guy by his private plane to vvvv-visit the whole coast, or to be in Majorca... or/ or and so on, so these thing a little bit also. Less/ less the financial domination, and more... mmmm the money also do matter here of course, but... actually that being, discovering the world, wide relationships, greater... it’s also... also a great plus of all these things here

It is interesting that he has this afterthought just after his commentary on other young boys who are presently coming to Germany. He finds their behaviour very irresponsible, unlike his own struggling with the surrounding reality. By the power of his story-telling Robert is made to show the importance of certain losses he suffered. But, in turn, he has to explain why he sticks so tightly to his decision of staying in Germany (he could easily end the immigration process and return to Poland). The narrator is in a situation where he has to explain to the listener and to himself what is so precious and attractive that finally made him stay. The main argument is, of course, horse-riding (marked with grey in the passage below), but there are some more advantages (probably more convincing to the listener who has nothing to do with horses) of being in Germany and, to a certain degree, connected with his social world that prevail. He enumerates here: a canoe trip, flying a private plane, visiting Majorca. He neither had any possibility to do all these things, nor could he afford them while living and working in Poland.

The narrator's very long theoretical commentary concerning fundamental differences between Poles and Germans that cause great discomfort and suffering (Robert, 11/45-12/32)⁴⁰ provides a stimulus to further inquiry of the interviewer.

Robert (12/35-13/8)

I: And what made you get out of trouble actually, that you decided to... stay here for a longer time?

N: Baaaaa... All the time these/ these/ these horses. That it's/ that the work, that one day I would be able to use it, that's an investment in myself, that I learn, that... that nobody will take it away from me... that knowledge here. Because I've known from the very beginning, that I learn here from good ones, from...

I: mhm

N: from real experts, y' know? So I'm not able to pull that whole knowledge from them out anyway, because they were born in it here and they are in it. They are an element of the whole yyy of that machine here. But being here... just a little bit aside, learning... a lot... if I want to... I'll learn a lot, y'know? And that's why I was attaching importance to draw into it, to learn, to get to know yyy and-and-and... Well, when I had such, as I've said, hard days, something was/ something was going bad at work, it was raining, I hit myself, something was wrong, they're to call and they didn't, something wrong again, so generally... a flop... There are such days from time to time... so I (to myself): nothing... it would be better, one should cope with it, because the decision is probably good... So... one should wait for the end of it... don't make any bad, rash decisions, because these are the worst/ rash ones, just wait, do what is to do, and... your life will show, what's going to be further...

I: mhm

⁴⁰ Please see also point 4.4.1. in the previous chapter.

N: And... such a principle, damn, I've been supporting it until today, and it's good. Nothing... like/ like/ like/ like helter-skelter, but consequently wait. And I must say, such decisions, which I made... they... they are long-term, but finally it turns out anyway ()

One could have the impression that during the flow of the narration Robert works on his biography and identity. He tries to convince himself and persuade the listener that his decision of staying in Germany, connected with his dedication to horses, has been worth so many harmful sacrifices (suffering from being abroad and parting with his girlfriend). The very condition of being convinced of the legitimacy of his decision lets him endure the hard times of his immigration. It goes to show that his predispositions of being hurt are not large. As we learn from Fritz Schütze's conception of trajectory the level of this predisposition is the main factor, which may make the process of suffering unbearable.⁴¹

5.2.2. Social worlds as a way of getting out of the trajectory process.

The metamorphosis.

In order to understand how social worlds may facilitate the process of getting out of trajectory and subsequently initiate the metamorphosis process Nina's rendering will be carefully analysed. In the preceding narrative unit of her interview, she reports the course of events which occur very fast. She graduates from the university, comes to Germany to live with her friend, unexpectedly becomes pregnant and gets married. Regardless of her pregnancy Nina takes up a job as an unskilled worker, since she strenuously tries to be (financially) independent. Then, she unexpectedly introduces the topic of her sister-in-law who is to help her. But here she has to meet discontinuity in her storytelling and is obliged to explain why she mentioned the person at all and why she was to support her. Thus, Nina is forced by the dynamics of the storytelling to reveal and work on her emotions and feelings associated with events already narrated. She starts talking about her loneliness and alienation in a small village (marked with R in the narration) where she lives with her husband. She takes it for granted that people - due to her strange accent - look at her differently and keep their distance because she is a foreigner. Nina also complains that all persons she meets are her husband's friends and acquaintances and not her own. The narrator also shows that she is immersed in her institutional expectations pattern as a wife and a mother thus constraining her possibility of focusing on her own plans and

⁴¹ See: Riemann G., Schütze F., 1991, 'Trajectory'... op. cit., pp. 333-357.

development. It seems that she is unable to make an effort to act autonomously, and living in a strange place makes it additionally difficult for her. Consequently, she feels isolated and unhappy. Nina describes herself as a ‘mit’ [Eng. ‘with’] person. It means that however she sees a lot of people, she is always a woman who comes with [mit] her husband - *the wife one takes with* (Nina, 13/33). This implies that she has no friends of her own. To put it succinctly, her trajectory experiences results from very rapid and partly surprising events in her life which take place in a totally strange milieu. She cannot bring them under control and cannot carefully consider her life situation being simultaneously embroiled in many fundamental biographical changes (moving to a strange country, marriage, pregnancy etc.). After describing these traumatic experiences she introduces a suprasegmenting framing device (she begins with: *but...yyy... when I’ve really started feeling good here*) announcing that there is a thorough shift in the mode of experiencing her life, and thereby, in the mode of her storytelling. It happens quite by chance that she meets a woman who, seeing Nina and her husband walking with a baby. She strikes up a conversation and asks about a playgroup (Krabbelgruppe).⁴² The encounter takes place when the narrator has been living in Germany for a year and a half. Reporting this situations, she tries to deal with one of the most crucial stages of her immigrant’s biography, namely with the metamorphosis process. Nina recapitulates:

Nina (13/40-15/34)

but yyy... when I’ve really started feeling good here/ it means good in that sense, that actually since yyy (2) more or less when my/ my/ my Little was one-year-old, because then I met incredibly lot of mothers with children, *Krabbelgruppe*

I: mhm

N: and so on and so on. But, to tell you the truth, because at the beginning/

THE END OF SIDE A TAPE I

I: () with mums

N: Well, with these mums it was like that emmmm... Aha well, and it’s just abot/ I just wanted to say, that (2) it seems to me, that people here yyy keep their distance from foreigners, because they think, that there are such people, who are totally different, there is nothing to talk about with them, because... It seemed to me this way at least, you know, and (2) well, in any case emmmm The first mum, my best friend now, I met in winter... so Little wasn’t even one-year-old then, because it was in winter, Little was born/ Big was born in eeee... in August and I met her in February, something like this hm hm... We were going for a walk with Kurt, we had a sledge/Little was in that sledge, and she also moved here/ Lucky me!, that R has been extending. There is a lot of/ a lot of new housing estates

⁴² The narrator uses the German name of a playgroup – ‘Krabbelgruppe’ in her narration. It is usually a small group of mothers and their (crawling) babies who get together on a regular basis to share experiences, give support and reassurance, talk about children and so on. It may be organised by the local church, formal institutions supporting families, or mothers themselves.

and new houses and... there are just a lot of new people, who also do not know here anybody. It's the only/ it was the only chance/ I even didn't think about it then and/ and/ and I just didn't think about establishing relationships with these people, but it's also not easy. All the more, Germans keep their distance very much. Maybe in South Germany, what I've heard it's just a little bit different, but... those/ those Germans n/ Northern really keep their distance. It means, they are not unpleasant... but in their place, so to say, at the threshold and... not farther. It's not like in our place, when you are invited for a cup of coffee, because you just meet somebody... but hm hm Well, in any case (2) then she accosted us in the street, that she moved here and that... "If I know probably, if there is something like *Krabbelgruppe*, here in R?". I didn't know at all, that something like that exists so far... You know, what *Krabbelgruppe* is, don't you?

I: Not so much.

N: Well, *krabbeln* it means y to crawl. When children crawl/ *Krabbelgruppe* there are such... groups in Germany very popular and everywhere generally, in every/ in large cities there are plenty of them of course, but it's arranged at the church very often, but not by priests or someone but... yyyy there is here *Gemeindehaus* by the church, so something like at us a reve/ yyyy

I: I understand...

N: a parish house and yyyy... and there is a room available. And mothers arrange it. They meet together and these children and coffee is drunk and... well, and such, you know? hm hm And she was asking me then: "If there is something like this?" And I say, that/ I told her, that: "I've no idea, but if there isn't, we can ourselves arrange such a group", because she had actually... her... yyyy son Uwe is one month younger than my Adam, so I stated, that if so, we had to stay in touch, because if so, we can just meet just like that at least, because she didn't know here completely anybody [2 minutes break – narrator's mother and her younger son came] Well, and hm hm and we were seeing each other very often with ssss strollers, somewhere on the way/ she lives near here, nearby. Although at the beginning it wasn't so, well, it seemed to me, that she was looking just for relationships here and eeee [again narrator's mother disturbs us, saying, that she is going for a walk with the baby] Well and (4) what I was talking about? Aha, about that *Krabbelgruppe*...

I: mhm

N: Well, and it turned out, that there is such a group here... but it was then/ we didn't like it at all/ it was a very mixed group, there were children (2) just like this [addressing her younger son] because were just at that age more or less, and mmm 12-year-old children, because they were taken/ all these families were taken, one knows, older children, little... and these/ these very little... they had no possibility to walk somewhere there, because they were terrified of these giants... and there was no sense in it. And we stated, that / Aha and the group was disintegrating almost, because no one wanted to go there, so to say and... we stated, that we would arrange a new group, we would just ask people, so we were accosting people in the street and we were asking, if they want to... And... mmm (2) well, and we gathered a very great group. And because Anette's neighbour all in all also a new one, for it's such a new housing estate... e hm she is a kindergarten teacher and she was on her parental leave, as a matter of fact. She hadn't a baby at that age, because her children were just a little bit older... but emmm... she decided, that she would lead the group for us, so it was something fantastic. I recall the group up till now. It was really made for children, with many things. She was arranging amazing things, different holidays, summer holiday, and/ and Christmas and generally for these children, wee/ such really, you know, don't you? So the group was acting very intensively. The whole families were getting together and generally. It was very great. So... in the group I met the first persons. And, you know, it was probably that I and Annette made friends. We were visiting each other incredibly often, we were dropping our children round, because it was also her first child, so was mine...

I: mhm

N: so, one knows. All the more, at that time actually one needs to have a rest sometimes and-and-and... so we were dropping round these children, so to say, , we were taking care

of them yyy... Very often with our children we were going to the swimming pool, or we were doing/ we were going al/ alone for some gymnastic/ for gymnastics, something, some yoga, then we were still doing a lot of things... at the beginning... And ee... you know what, it was probably that/ I/ I/ I was later... yyyy I thought about it later, that these women/ they keep their distance to everyone at the beginning. Surely, that because of the group we got to know each other very well, but first of all... they got to like me when I had just found here a German friend, do you know, what I mean? That... they knew that I'm in contact with someone like her, so probably I'm not so wild and... a Pole... nobody knows who... that/ that if they just made friends, so probably one can trust her... you know?

I: mhm

N: Believe me, I had such/ such impression. It means, nobody/ nobody said that. Maybe I just add different things, because one can see sometimes different things, which are not at all, you know? But, it seemed to me like that... Well, in any case, I met there... very different mmmm women and we meet each other and we see each other so far... Well, and now I've arranged a group for my little boy by myself. By myself... I was accosting everyone and I've arranged such a group for... for little ones. I've already 15 women and there are still more now, so shortly we have to divide it, because there are too much of us... well...

I: mhm

N: I don't know what else...

Analysing this text passage we must direct our attention to the integral relationship between 'what' the informant says (i.e., what is the content of her account, what information and facts are given) and 'how' it is told (i.e., what is the formal structure of the narrator's rendering, how her account is organised).⁴³ Only then, can we fully and correctly understand Nina's common-sense interpretation of the biographical change she has been undergoing. The text passage represents two contrasting worlds: the social world of mothers with crawling children and the narrator's current milieu (Germany or Germans seen in more general or local terms). The former is depicted within the communicative scheme of storytelling; the latter appears within the communicative scheme of argumentation⁴⁴ and is inserted three times into the flow of narration. Her narration shows that she is devoted, committed and full of enthusiasm for her new activity. In contrast, three argumental commentaries display the tension between Nina and her new German milieu. She feels as though she is not recognised or accepted in Germany. While in the social world the narrator sees and presents herself as an active human being (joining, participating and developing the social world); in her German surrounding Nina finds herself a passive object, being carefully observed, judged and assessed. Furthermore, as a member of the social world Nina forms her identity by virtue of being similar (sharing the same system of relevances and schemes of interpretation), while taking the perspective of

⁴³ See: Helling I. K., 1990, Metoda badań biograficznych, in Włodarek J., Ziolkowski M. (eds.), Metoda biograficzna w socjologii, PWN, Warszawa-Poznań, p. 26; see also Czyżewski M., Rokuszewska-Pawełek A., 1989/90, 'Analiza autobiografii Rudolpha Hössa', Kultura i Społeczeństwo, Vol. 33, No. 2, p. 41.

⁴⁴ Argumental units are marked with grey.

her local German milieu (neighbours) she believes to be seen as a different and strange individual. In her commentary of evaluative nature the informant uses generalizations and characterises Germans as people who keep their distance, who cannot take the liberty of having a cup of coffee without previous arrangements, who see others as untrustworthy interlopers. This opinion, I believe, is formed on the basis of very general, 'sweeping' observations of the German society and/or some sort of common-sense knowledge concerning Germans which are widespread among Poles.⁴⁵ From this standpoint it seems incredible that a German woman spontaneously initiates the conversation and treats Nina as someone who is an informed member of the local community and not a stranger. The narrator finds the situation so unbelievable that she feels obligated to explain to herself and to the listener the discrepancy between the closed, unfriendly and organised German society and a spontaneous, open and friendly German woman. There is one reliable and convincing explanation: the woman (the narrator's future best friend) is also a stranger (a newcomer) here. Due to the cassette changing the very beginning of the first commentary

⁴⁵ Let us look closer at the informant's picture of Germans. She stubbornly holds her negative or to some extent ironic view, even though her husband (whom she certainly loves and for whom, as we know from the previous chapter, she has abandoned some of her important biographical plans) is a German. In addition, she emphasised that because of the help of her sister-in-law (a German, too) she could endure the hardest times in Germany. Furthermore, she considers Anette (the German woman who enquired if there was any playgroup nearby) to be her best friend with whom she shares the same feelings and understanding (which is no longer possible with her Polish friends). Thus all of them can be considered Nina's significant others. Nevertheless, the narrator's attitude toward Germans is unalterably fixed. To conclude: these individual cases of close and extremely emotional relationships with Germans do not change her prejudices. It seems to confirm that prejudices are not susceptible to modifications, and that persons protect their stereotypes by admitting exceptions. Allport claimed that 'pre-judgements become prejudices only if they are not reversible when exposed to new knowledge.' This statement seems to be especially true in reference to Nina's attitude. Enquired after her view of Germans, Nina says: *It means generally they seemed to be very distanced, well, as I'm saying, I don't know, if it's here/ I've heard that it's typical for North Germans generally, that they are rather cool... and maybe Germans in general (2) Secondly yyy you see, you don't know my husband/ my husband is totally different. It means he isn't so... wanting to have fun all the time and, he doesn't speak too much, or generally, but he is very warm, he is so... so, that one cannot help liking him, you know... so mc he is not such a typical German in that sense, actually, that/ that such/ because such a typical German I can represent... always, that he's such a/ such a/ such a boor, you know, what I mean?... So gloomy... so... hmm hmm [suggesting lack of the Polish word].* (Nina, 25/15-23). To strengthen my position, I would like to cite a sentence from the unrecorded part of my conversation with the narrator. During our meeting Nina's husband was absent. She regretted that I could not get to know him by saying: *You should meet my husband; he is not like a German.* Her husband (according to Nina's words: a gentle and loving man) does not fit her deeply rooted stereotyped picture of Germans and she is prone to categorize him as not quite German, rather than admits that there are good and sensitive Germans, too. We may find the same kind of argumentation in another interview with a Polish woman (Marta) married to a German. During the course of her rendering she describes her husband: *He is generally not/ he is not very German... Maybe that's why we really understand each other, you know?* (Marta, 13/38-39)pl. Both quotations seem to confirm Adorno's observation that: 'There is no simple gap between experience and stereotypy. Stereotypy is a device for looking at things comfortably; since, however, it feeds on deep-lying unconscious sources, the distortions which occur are not to be corrected merely by taking a *real* look. Rather, experience itself is predetermined by stereotypy.' He claims accordingly that: 'Optimism with regard to the hygienic effects of personal contacts should be discarded. One cannot "correct" stereotypy by experience; he has to reconstitute the capacity for *having* experiences in order to prevent the growth of ideas which are malignant in the most literal, clinical sense.' See: Adorno T. W., 1964, *The Authoritarian Personality*, Wiley & Sons Inc., New York, p. 617.

is interrupted. After a very short break the interviewer tries to come back to the story of becoming a member of a playgroup, but still the informant forces the argumental line. It seems that these additional explanations within commentaries perform a very important function. They form a background to her experiences of metamorphosis, and thus greatly strengthen and emphasise its meaning and value. Nina also shows that as a result of her participation in the social world and winning German friends who have confidence in her, respect and like her, people in the local milieu (vaguely embodied by old ladies living in her village) withdraw their definition (in Nina's imaginary view they believe that she is a wild Pole, *nobody knows who* – see the third commentary in the above quoted passage) and recognise her as a legitimate member of their society.

At this juncture, a very crucial problem that needs attention and discussion presents itself. This part of Nina's interview reveals one of the biggest obstacles which can restrain or even foil an immigrant's attempt to assimilate. For this reason, great emphasis should be placed on the fact that while living abroad, people not only have to deal with the stereotypical picture of their nation in the eyes of Germans (or any other society they dwell), but also have to struggle with their own stereotypes concerning the people of their new country. In this short passage we can clearly see that Nina's opinions about Germans are expressed in non-narrative parts of her rendering, since it is impossible to narrate things that have never happened. In other words, there are probably no situations in her life in which her German interaction partner addressed her as a Pole and would not recognise her as a normal human being. If such situations never took place, they cannot therefore be reported. As we learn from the methodological strategy of a narrative interview, whenever a narrator wants to share his or her opinions based on personal judgements rather than on actual facts they must resort to argumental commentaries. It is extremely meaningful in the case of Nina that her imagined or 'presupposed' identity is, to paraphrase the Thomas' theorem, real in its consequences and keeps her from establishing new contacts as well as limiting her freedom to act. As a result she has restricted possibilities to acquire typical habits, modes of behaviour, characteristic attitudes and systems of relevances, etc. And, as it was discussed earlier, even her husband's and sister-in-law's friendly attitude toward her is not enough to change her generalised unfavourable picture of Germans. Only when she enters the social world her negative way of thinking about Germans and toward herself in the eyes of Germans undergoes changes. It has already been stated that Nina also believes that she has finally won the approval of her immediate environment.

In the light of Nina's rendering, assimilation through joining social worlds may be described in Schütz words as:

Jumping from the stalls to the stage (...), the former onlooker becomes a member of the cast, enters as a partner into social relations with his co-actors, and participates henceforth in the action in progress (Schütz, 1976b: 97-98).⁴⁶

There is considerable evidence that the immigration because of a marriage to a German makes many Polish women move downwards in their achieved status. This is especially painful for well-educated individuals who cannot pursue their careers (mainly owing to lack of German language skills) and must embrace the role of housewives. Therefore, their life is often restricted to carrying for children, cooking and cleaning. In consequence of this situation their contact with native members of the approached community may be also limited. Social worlds, as described above, help the women (and newcomers in general) meet the need for the respect of and the recognition by the new community and stimulate their second language acquisition.

To conclude, the collected and meticulously analysed narrative interviews with the young Polish immigrants confirm that social worlds' membership is particularly advantageous and helpful to the assimilation process. Park and Miller in their discussion of immigrants' careers in America cite an autobiography of a German who only after joining certain social worlds could again find himself abroad. He recollects:

The first period was characterized by a loss in emotional life. There was: (1) a fading of emotional tones [Gefühlsbetonung] and a gradual reappearance. I forgot for some years that birds sing, flowers have odours, stars shine. I lost interest in theatre, concert, fiction; (2) a replacement of emotional standards by opportunistic notions. I did not think of what I liked or disliked, but of what was advantageous or disadvantageous. There was a decided shifting from emotional to rational motives. I found it very difficult to adopt a new code of conduct because of entirely foreign emotional basis... After some years of life in America a

⁴⁶ John Shotter points out that a reality in which one 'feels at home' and has a 'sense of belonging' means that: 'one is more just a reproducer of it, but one plays a real part in its constitution. Indeed, to go further, it is to feel that an 'invitation' to do so already exists in virtue of who one is, so that one's attempts, whether successful or not, will be treated seriously, and welcomed; one will not feel, so that one's has to struggle to have one's voice heard.' Shotter J., 1993, *Psychology and Citizenship: Identity and Belonging*, in Turner B.S., *Citizenship and Social Theory* (ed.), Sage Publications, London, pp. 125-126.

reconstruction of my emotional life took place. I was building up another emotional basis. Some of the means to it were: (1) a groping for new interest (literature, bibliography, history, world politics, science); (2) participation in public interests and activities (Vereinigung alter Deutschen Studenten in America, Bibliographical Society, Rifle Club, Military Work); new social contacts (clubs, society); (3) my family interest. (...) Now all my plans and hopes [are] centred in America and the desire for a permanent return to Europe ceased. Also the fear of isolation in America ceased and a sentiment of coherence with the new country and identification developed and has probably completely established itself... (Park, Miller, 1969: 54-55).

This is a marvellous illustration of the issue discussed in this section. In either case (the Poles in Germany and the German in America) participation in social worlds in which people are united in at least one primary activity (along with related activities) and are bonded by a common goal and symbolisation facilitates assimilation into their host communities. I take the position that immigrants' participation in social worlds is a great encouragement to adapt to German society without requiring them to abandon their culture.

5.3. The role of biographical caretakers in the process of assimilation.

The present section intends to study the importance of significant others⁴⁷ in the process of assimilation who, as Berger and Luckmann claim

(...) occupy a central position in the economy of reality-maintenance and are particularly important for the ongoing confirmation of that crucial element of reality we call identity.
(Berger, Luckmann, 1991: 170).

As it was comprehensively scrutinized earlier, the immigration process often becomes embroiled in trajectory. Thus, the afflicted individuals usually consider themselves (and/ or their acts) as strange and sometimes frightening. They are under the impression that things they do are not under their control and in their interpretations it can be taken for granted that they will fail. It entails doubting their own identity and the weakening of their faith in the reality of their life world in general.⁴⁸ To bestow the accent of reality on their everyday life abroad, there must be someone who, first of all, is familiar with the reality of daily life of the approached society (a native member of this group would be probably the best guide), and, secondly, with whom the immigrant feels a very strong emotional attachment (and vice versa).⁴⁹ I call them, following Schütze, biographical carers. I find the emotional dimension of the adjusting process by virtue of which the immigrant familiarises him- or herself with the German culture⁵⁰ very significant. As the narrative interviews show, on the one hand the immigrants often make an effort to acquire the foreign culture only as a result of their positive feelings towards native members of the host culture and on the other hand their biographical carers also have to be deeply emotionally involved in their relationship, because it requires a lot of patience, understanding, and sympathy. Thus, for Poles married to Germans (of course we talk about love-matches, not about transactions) – their spouses

⁴⁷ In this study the role of significant others – here also named caretakers - who are indigenous members of the host society and guide newcomers through the complexities of their life abroad is discussed.

⁴⁸ This is not only the reality of the life world experienced abroad that is unbalanced or even destroyed, but, what has been showed earlier, the reality of the immigrant's life at home, too. See: section 'The biographical implications of the homecoming experience' in this study.

⁴⁹ Although Berger and Luckmann claim that only primary socialization requires relationships which are highly charged emotionally, they believe that secondary socialization (that I also consider the process of becoming a member of a new society in the case of immigrants) is more effective when it is based on deep emotional involvement. Cf. Berger P.L., Luckmann T., 1991, *The Social...*, op. cit., pp. 151-161.

⁵⁰ Please remember that we do not deal here with so called higher culture, but some sort of social stock of knowledge characteristic of the German society, or more precisely: the German society within the immigrant's immediate reach.

are usually guides and entrepreneurs. Berger and Luckmann emphasise any successful transformation of identity is possible only if mediated by means of significant others with whom the individual identifies affectively.⁵¹ Thus, according to the authors:

(...) these significant others are the guides into the new reality. They represent the plausibility structure in the roles they play vis-à-vis the individual (...), and they mediate the new world to the individual. (Berger, Luckmann, 1991: 177).

To illustrate the phenomena I will refer to the autobiographical narrative interviews with immigrants in which family members support their immigration process and in which the narrator's friend is a central figure. In either case the role of significant others in building the sense of acceptance and belonging to German society will be examined.

5.3.1. The family member.

In the ongoing process of assimilation that entails coping with everyday life situations and carrying out salient performances the immigrant often depends on the assistance, support or actions of others,⁵² mainly

(...) those persons who deal with him intimately and whose attitudes are decisive for the formation of his conception of self. (Berger, 1963: 116-117).

The role of a significant other who is a family member is addressed mainly in the interviews with Poles married to Germans as in the case of Piotr and his half German half Spanish wife Karin, or in the narrations of the Polish women and their German husbands (for instance Nina, Anna or Marta).⁵³ In all these situations help, encouragement and emotional involvement of their spouses seem to constitute the fundamental condition for reaching a successful adjustment and the feeling of being at ease with the approached country's culture. As the result of their assistance, the immigrants are capable of reconstructing normality, re-gaining stability of their life-course and, as Schütze argues, stepping onto a stable platform of everyday life, on which

⁵¹ Berger P.L., Luckmann T., 1991, *The Social...*, op. cit., p. 177.

⁵² Cf. Strauss A.L., 1991, *Creating...*, op. cit., p. 366.

⁵³ I will discuss here only the case of Nina and her husband who is the guide into the new reality. Her life history is representative of other Polish women married to Germans.

(...) *the immigrant will be able to plan and start to establish a new biographical action scheme for organizing her/his occupational career and her/his private life. This will become a promising, but possibly quite narrow avenue into the 'life cycles' of the host society.* (Schütze, npd: 19).

A) The case of Piotr and his wife.

First, the interview with Piotr will be discussed. Initially the narrator came to Germany to work for some time, earn some money and return to Poland. In the meantime, however, he fell in love with a half German half Spanish girl (named Karin in the transcription) and decided to stay in Germany a little bit longer. As a gifted skilled worker (Piotr is a carpenter) he never had problems with finding a job. When he set up home with Karin, they rented a flat from a Turk. The flat turned out to be mouldy and damp and the owner did not care about its disastrous condition. The narrator, who was living there with his pregnant wife, was surprised and angry that the owner did not do his duties. Piotr believed that because he and the leaser shared a very similar biographical situation (i.e., both were foreigners in Germany), they could understand each other easily. There is a background construction inserted in this argumentation that explains the narrator's lack of certain knowledge essential for managing problematical situations in Germany. Piotr explains:

Piotr (5/21-34) pl

Because earlier, when I was working here for a year... three months, I... I used to live only with... Poles, among Poles, and we had our own (3) I was never, nothing at all... I used to work here in Germany... almost... let's say one year and a half, but I had no contacts with the Germans, you know?...

I: mhm

N: only the whole time with Poles. They even... we didn't speak German/ only with Poles, among Po/ We were here 11 Poles... mainly students (2) and it was like this... you know? We used to organise some evening parties, or something like this... among us. So I didn't know this/ this life, how one... can live here...

I: mhm...

N: Yes/ it was only when I started going out with my wife, all of these/ then... we were going to her family, to her friends, you know?, and that's all, or her mates... so I already () / started knowing this life (2) here/ how one lives here, you know?... From the inside, let's say () So, well yyy...

Piotr points to a very crucial biographical condition supporting the assimilation process. It is not how long one has been living abroad, but how intensively he or she involves him- or

herself in the approached country's life. When initially the narrator regarded his stay in Germany as temporary and connected only with his work, after falling in love with his wife-to-be (a native of Germany)⁵⁴ his attitude towards the host society changed. The developing relationship with Karin made Piotr to re-evaluate his orientation in every-day life abroad. His emotional involvement and the consequent placing his future plans⁵⁵ in Germany stimulated the informant's interest in Germany. As the informant reports, because of his wife the process of transformation had been initiated. With her help he managed to get away from his Polish community (i.e., Polish fellow-workers in the same house and spending their after-work time together), that in a sense separated him from the approached country's life-world⁵⁶, and was able to enter successfully the German culture. By virtue of his emotional attachment to the German significant other Piotr began to acquire the stock of knowledge (including the German language) that assisted him in entering the new society. The narrator's wife is, thus, a principal agent in introducing Piotr to the world of everyday life in Germany.⁵⁷ She acquaints the informant with the rudimentary features of German culture and provides him with all the information necessary to understand and interpret everyday life situations properly.

It is interesting, that the narrator discusses this process of transformation in the context of a problematical situation he encountered while renting a flat from a Turkish man. It seems that Piotr supposes that if he had been aware of the Germans' (presumably negative) attitude towards Turks earlier, he would not have probably involved himself in doing businesses with him. As we can see, the narrator is able to judge his situation from two points of view: his perspective then (i.e., his assumption that a man who is in a biographically similar situation of being a stranger in Germany, will understand him and their cooperation will be successful); and his current perspective (i.e., after adopting the German way of seeing Turks). It is very sad to learn that in the case of Piotr, the

⁵⁴ Although the narrator's wife is half German half Spanish, I believe that we may treat her as an indigenous member of the German society, because she was born and brought up in it.

⁵⁵ Piotr and his wife took into account moving to Poland, too. Even if it had come into effect, he would be attached to Germany via his wife this way or another.

⁵⁶ This is a situation characteristic of many Poles who work abroad. To save on costs of living, they usually live together and, thus, set up some sort of a 'self-sufficient' national community. If their immigration is motivated by economic needs they usually do not care about establishing contacts with native members of the approached country and concentrate on earning money and satisfying their materialistic needs. It is one of these biographical conditions of the immigration process that – as F. Schütze emphasises – catches individuals in a trap. See: Schütze F., npd, *Outline for the Method of Biography Analysis* (transcript), pp. 19-20.

⁵⁷ Cf. Berger P.L., Luckmann T., 1991, *The Social...*, op. cit., p. 170.

assimilation process has also been connected with ‘taking over’ prejudices against the Turkish people.

B) The case of Nina and her husband.

The interview with Nina plainly displays her change of attitudes towards her country of origin and her ‘new homeland’ (i.e., Germany). As we remember her immigration was caused by her love of a German man. There is a relevant shift in her attitudes to Poland and Germany in her biography, which will be discussed in detail now. The argumentative passage below results from the interview’s question about the narrator’s national identification. She says:

Nina (31/2-23)

I: (...) Do you describe yourself as a Pole, or as a German, as whom?

N: As a Pole... But I’m not saying it now so patriotic, just... well, I’m a Pole...

I: mhm... mhm And what does it mean?

N: It would be difficult for me to say, that I’m a German about myself, you know?...

I: mhm

N: I think, that... first of all, that is/ but it isn’t even/ no/ it’s not the matter or some patriotism but/ I just don’t know. For me it’s, you know what, the thing is that... ymmmm it’s easier to speak, write, do everything in Polish. I feel as... as a Pole, you know, and for instance I’m very happy right now, that I’m going to Poland [the interview was conducted just before the narrator’s visit to Poland]... But it isn’t now/ at the beginning, I was so extremely happy, and if only we were going back towards the border, my face was falling. And it is differently now, because I’m very happy, when I come back home. I feel really here like at home and I’ve got my friends here now, here my acquaintances are. I’ve more relations here even these lively, you know?... with people, who know more about me, than for instance my old friends, so to say...

I: mhm

N: But... but I’m happy, that I’m going, because my sister is there, my grandma. These/ these people I’d like to visit, you know, or these old th/ corners and so on. Yes... I’m really happy. But on the other hand I really eagerly come back here, you know? It isn’t already that... that/ that... mmm well, as at the beginning, I felt so/ so... so... I don’t know, well... I haven’t felt here yet/ I’ve felt, as/ when I was saying, that I’m going home, I thought still of my mum’s, you know?...

The first lines of Nina’s argumentations seem to confirm Berger and Luckmann’s thesis that the symbolic universe internalised in the process of primary socialization has a tendency to persist.⁵⁸ The narrator refers here to the language and the sense of being a Pole as the main components of her national identity. Thus, despite her successful adjustment to the new environment (thanks to her participation in the social world and the support of

⁵⁸ See: Berger P.L., Luckmann T., 1991, *The Social...*, op. cit., p. 160.

significant others: her husband and initially also her sister-in-law) her Polish identification is still very strong and probably will never cease to have great influence. Then, however, Nina reports a very crucial biographical change. In the initial stages of her immigration process, just after starting her family in Germany she still used to call ‘home’ her mother’s place in Poland. She remembers the state of being extremely happy going to Poland and sadness associated with the necessity of coming back to Germany.⁵⁹ From the narrator’s current perspective, however, the situation looks very different. Nina names ‘home’ her small house in Germany. It is not only the place, but also the people, her friends with whom she shares her world of everyday life. Although there are still persons the narrator looks forward to visit in Poland (her grandmother or sister), she stresses that now she has many friends in Germany who know her, her life situation and problems better than her former Polish acquaintances. This passage of Nina’s rendering shows the process of the identity change from being a stranger in a foreign country, to becoming a stranger in one’s homeland, i.e., a homecomer in Schütz’s sense. The informant’s biography depicts how owing to the support of the significant other (Nina’s husband, who, as I showed earlier, is seen by her as ‘not quite German’) and her participation in the social world, she collects (applying Schütz’s terms again) a sufficient knowledge and recipes to deal with the cultural pattern of the approached community. This gives her more and more security and assurance and facilitates the adjusting process.⁶⁰ Nina, thus, learns *not only how to act like, but to feel like and in a deep sense to ‘be’ natives*. (Strauss, 1991: 157).

Both, in the case of Piotr and in the case of Nina their spouses played the crucial role in supporting their adjusting process. Of course, family members not only denote husbands or wives. A little bit later I will discuss the case of Ela where the narrator’s brother is the significant other who facilitates the informant’s life abroad. Since her immigration career is inseparably associated with the process of immersing into the

⁵⁹ I find it very interesting to compare this part of Nina’s narration to Marta’s recollection (please see section 4.4.1 for more details). They both report feelings of happiness accompanying their way to Poland. To Nina it is past, the experience occurring no longer, replaced with the sense of belonging to her German community. Contrary to Marta, who has lived in Germany for a considerably shorter period of time (about two years in comparison to Nina’s more than 7 years) and, what is more important there are still no experiences of assimilation and familiarisation with Germany in her life history, it is still a vital feeling. Thus, when in the autobiographical narrative interview with Nina we may observe how the narrator has undergone some significant changes of her biographical orientation in the immigration process, Marta is still in its initial stages marked by home-sickness and alienation.

⁶⁰ See: Schütz A., 1990b, *The Stranger, and The Homecomer*, in *Collected Papers II. Studies in Social Theory*, Martinus Nijhoff, The Hague.

Silesian 'ghetto' and his brother is a member of this group – his role will be analysed in connection to it.⁶¹

5.3.2. The friend.

At this point, I will examine the importance of friendship⁶² for the process of assimilation by considering Bartek's case. In many respects the narrator's biographical situation in Germany is similar to Nina's immigration experiences. He also becomes gradually absorbed in the German milieu as a result of his participation in the social world. There is also a significant other – an indigenous member of the in-group - who introduces him into the approached country's everyday life reality. The meaning of the social world of horse-riding for Bartek's assimilation process has been already carefully discussed, the role of a significant other will be considered now. Although both these biographical conditions of the narrator's adjustment are closely related to each other, for analytical purposes I consider them separately.

In Bartek's narration he mentions a very young German girl friend who is also connected with horse riding. She helps the narrator to overcome his strangeness and alienation. This is effective because of her deep emotional involvement with him. There is no explicit information about the character of their relationship. I assume that the girl could even be in love with Bartek, because in their social world he is considered to be an excellent and very handsome horse-rider, and he could have impress her with his skills. It is of no account for our further analysis whether it was love or friendship. It is relevant, however, that their bond is based definitely on warmth and immediacy of feelings as well as mutual emotional attachment. This enhanced the acquisition of the new cultural reality – mainly the German language.

As we can remember Bartek was very much involved in his social world of horse riding in Poland and for this reason his immigration process was initially extremely difficult. He was going back and forth between Poland and Germany and could not decide whether to come back to his country of origin or stay abroad permanently. There are, however, certain

⁶¹ Please see point 5.4 in this chapter.

⁶² Friendship, as understood here, is a relationship which involves mutual trust, loyalty, sympathy, understanding and carrying as well as shared interests and activities.

biographical contingencies that facilitate his choice of making his life in Germany. When after a year of his work for a famous German horse-breeder, Bartek wanted to return home, the person who was to change for him did not come. His employer insisted on his staying and praised him highly for his work. The narrator reports what happened then:

Bartek (11/28-31)pl

And in that time I met a girl, who was serving her apprenticeship by us (2) yyy such a German. This apprenticeship was connected with her school... She was a squirt, then. She was, I don't know, seventeen, or sixteen-year-old... But very intelligent and... mmmm (3) And actually from her I caught... the German language better.

Next, in the background construction the narrator explains at what level his language skills were before meeting the girl were. He stresses that he spoke in broken German and had problems to manage everyday situations in the language. The narrator suggests that his boss was responsible for it, since he used only infinitives while talking to his workers.⁶³

For this reason the role of the young girl seems to be invaluable. Bartek continues:

Bartek (12/1-33)pl

N: And it was a girl, who... mmmm... She was serving her apprenticeship here for three weeks. And I made friends with her. And generally she .hh... every time when we had we had such apprentices, and when I asked them to correct my German, they didn't know how to come up to it. I'm not surprised, I also couldn't... teach... Polish anybody. Surely not... And/ and/ and/ yyy and they, for instance, they couldn't say that, couldn't/ when they said something, some sort of... a longer, more complicated sentence, or something like that and I couldn't understand it I used to say: 'Ask me another way.' or 'Tell it differently, because I cannot understand some words.', they asserted: 'How? There is no other way, one can do it only like this.' And this girl could... every word (3) she could explain it me. She could () the most difficult... word in German and .hh she knew of course my/ she got to know very quickly my vocabulary... my/ my/ my German vocabulary...

I: mhm

N: and using these words and stories and so on... somehow... from totally different side... under/ she could explain every word... and she supervised me to speak as correctly as I can... so she was correcting me hundreds of times. When she was speaking something to me for instance... she was telling me... aaaa... so clearly that I could understand/ I could understand almost everything... even if there... were some words in the story I didn't know... so, of course, I wouldn't know them from the context, normally and/ I didn't know, what it was, but when she was telling me these stories/ what she was telling me, I knew exactly what she wanted and what she asked me about and what she told me .hh although there were five words or some more in the meantime... I couldn't understand, but... the whole... (I could). She was so/ she knew my/ you know she was telling something and she was speaking to me (2) mc she was telling something and asked me yyy 'And what does the word mean?' And I say ((laughing) till*): 'I don't know, but () .'
You have to tell me at once if you don't understand some words. I did it especially... to catch you.* So... that was actually how our live here started/ how my life here as a some sort of... laid-back... yyy... in Germany {started}. She... (was beginning)/ in the evenings

⁶³ I deal with the issue in point 4.1.2.2.

we were going out together somewhere to the town... She was a super frie/ a super girl, I could... talk all the time. She was a super friend... andandand... well, and I started speaking German a lot and it was not only/ not only things... yyy what/ what mmmm... what was happening in the stable... but... yyy you know, I started talking about everything in general....

I: mhm

N: not only about professional things .hh

Bartek interrupts the main story line again to show that from the very beginning he was able to use very good German in relation to horses. He underlines that he could beat many Germanists at speaking the language used in his social world of horse-riding. This actually happened once in Poland. His everyday German, however, was still very poor. After this additional commentary, he takes up the narration again that, in a coda form, sums up this passage:

Bartek (12/42-13/19)pl

And since that time in generally my normal life has started... that I've begun to meet people (2) mc and in that time I also started giving.... yyy *Unterrichts* here in Ger/ yyy (2) yyy for people (2) And because of that I me/ met... within... a few weeks hundreds of people, because I was giving these *Unterrichts* in other/ in other stables, some stables typically... yyy (2) mmm... where there are only private persons, where it's not so connected with... professional riding as it is in our stable, only training, because it's for money only .hh These people buy a horse, they leave him in the stable... There are 40 people there together (2) Everyone has its own horse, and they there/ I was riding horses for them... twice or three times a week... I was giving these/ these riding lessons and... trainings... so automatically... I met lots of people. And since that time my... generally my normal life here has started...

I: mhm

N: that I could function normally, without suffering any loss (2) and... you know, there were some... parties every weekend, we were going somewhere or we were meeting together... at least two or three times we were going out... to eat something with these people... Such/ such a... such a normal life, that... no/ not only, you know, as it is/

THE END OF SIDE A, CASSETTE I

N: (life), as... I know here: work... home... and moonlighting...

I: mhm

N: and... I go to Poland .hh And then generally/ since that time I was going to Poland more and more rarely. I was going to Poland... about four times a year. And I was going on my leave for a longer time twice... in summer... for a week or a week and a half... Christmas and New Years Eve one was coming home... And then I was going... in spring, or autumn, but only for... for a weekend generally. With Monday, or I used to take a weekend with Friday...

I: mhm

N: And generally... I didn't/ there was no need to (2)

Many times in his life history Bartek highlights that since he met the girl, who was patient and stubborn enough to correct his German constantly, he has started a 'normal' life in Germany. 'Normal' according to the narrator, means not only restricted to his work, but

also encompassing his private life and *without suffering any losses*. As we remember from the previous chapter, although Bartek was really involved in his work in Germany, he suffered from lack of social contacts typical for the social world of horse-riding in the stable in Poland. The narrator was deeply disappointed seeing that his situation abroad resembled a life of an average illegal seasonal worker (i.e., it focused only on work and earning money). He used to run away from this predicament and go home (Poland) at every opportunity. He described this period as *living from one leave to the other*. Then, with other Polish horse-riders (and Poles working there) he established a small Polish community that in fact separated him from contacts with the native people. They preferred spending their free time in their own circle to dealing with Germans. Fortunately, in the narrator's immigration career the girl – a young trainee – appears. She guides him through the complexities of the German language and, thus, the German world of everyday life. Simultaneously, the stable of stallions in Poland declines, his Polish community in Germany disintegrates, because some of its members return home, some focus on their German relationships, and finally, Bartek splits up with his Polish girlfriend. Thus, it seems that his way to enter the German society with the help of the young German girl as his significant other is open. Undoubtedly, she gives him impetus for assimilation by familiarising him with the German culture as a whole and by helping him acquire the German language. These two background constructions inserted into his main narration are of great importance. In both constructions the narrator addresses the issues of his language abilities before meeting the young German girl who works in the stable as an apprentice. Either imply that although Bartek could easily use 'the lingo', i.e., the language characteristic of the social world, he could hardly speak German to cope with everyday life situations. For this reason, at the beginning the narrator was limited to his work with horses. Since it is the most significant thing in Bartek's life he could survive the first period of his stay in Germany. He was, however, dissatisfied with it, because due to its different organization, it was not so much based on social contacts, common parties and mutual help as it had been in Poland. Encountering the German girl marks the turning point in Bartek's narration. It clearly divides his immigration career into two periods: before and after getting to know her. Only after the narrator makes friends with the girl, does his immigration process start heading for successful assimilation. Because of her role as a significant other, and through intensive German learning the narrator manages to enter the culture of the approached country and to intentionally organise his life in the foreign society. Interestingly enough, Bartek not only meets new people, but also his contact with

already known individuals from his social world seems to become more intensive and satisfying. The narrator states, that there is no need to come often to Poland anymore, because his German world is satisfying enough. He can deal with horses in this country, and also participate in a 'normal' life of Germans.

In the case of Nina and Bartek we deal with the biographical metamorphosis process that changes the narrator's identity and their attitude towards their life.⁶⁴ As a result of the existence of their significant others, they not only may absorb the German culture, and are finally able to act competently, but also – after meticulous biographical work – start to recognise that their life abroad can be satisfying as well as fulfil their needs within the boundaries imposed by the immigration process.⁶⁵ These two autobiographies also show clearly that although the help of their significant others is of essential importance to the assimilation process, it is often not sufficient. I believe that Bartek and Nina could organise their life in Germany successfully because on the one hand, they were deeply involved in their social worlds (horse-riding and mothers with crawling children respectively), and on the other hand, they were supported and encouraged in their attempts to learn about the German culture by their significant others. Thus, there are usually several conditions that converge to help the immigrant adjust to his or her new country.

⁶⁴ Cf. Schütze F., npd, *Outline for the Method...*, op. cit., p. 21.

⁶⁵ See: Corbin J., Strauss A.L., 1988, *Unending...*, op. cit., p. 174.

5.4. Immersing into the national ‘ghetto’.

One of the main objectives of this work is to show how the social process of immigration develops under different biographical conditions and life situations of the informants. For this reason, I would like to discuss now the very peculiar circumstances of the Silesian immigration to Germany.⁶⁶ As it was suggested and discussed in the previous chapter, the crucial problems the immigrants must wrestle with abroad are: the lack of a certain frame of reference and interpretation to deal with their immigration situation and its difficulties as such, and the lack of cultural competence (including their language skills) in their new place of residence. The structural conditions of the immigration process of young Silesians are in many respects different. First of all, in contrast to the young generation of other Polish citizens leaving their country of origin, they not only have seen their relatives and friends emigrating, but also live among members of their national group while abroad.⁶⁷ It means that they usually have some sort of knowledge concerning both: patterns of the immigration process to Germany (what, when and how things should be done – a tested system of recipes on how to handle certain problems occurring in the immigration process), and certain knowledge dealing with cultural differences and ways of living one may encounter in Germany.⁶⁸

A) The case of Ela

Referring to the life history of Ela, I would like to explore how being familiar with the German milieu by virtue of earlier regular contacts with the country of destination smoothed the progress of the narrator’s assimilation. We have already learned that Ela’s father is of German origin. In this connection, in the early 80’s the narrator and her mother were granted German citizenship. On the basis of this they lived for a year in Germany.

⁶⁶ One may have reservations about Silesians being treated as Poles here. I decided to include their narratives in the corpus of my work for two reasons: (1) Although they often treat themselves as Silesians, they can speak fluent Polish (and coming to Germany they hardly ever speak German); (2) Although they are usually able to prove their German origin they are treated as Poles both by the German authorities as well as by their German acquaintances and friends.

⁶⁷ Cf. Schütze F., npd, Outline for the Method..., op. cit., p. 19.

⁶⁸ Alfred Schütz emphasizes many times that only a small part of our stock of knowledge at hand is based on our own direct lived through experiences. To a large degree it is socially derived and comes from our fellow-men who communicate it to us. See: Schütz A., 1990b, Tiresias, in *Collected Papers II: Studies in Social Theory*, Martinus Nijhoff, The Hague, p. 282.

Due to very serious problems of adaptation⁶⁹ Ela's mother decided to return to Poland. A few years later, the narrator's elder brother moved to Germany with his wife who is of German origin.⁷⁰ Ela used to visit them every holiday in order to work and earn some money. Thus, before moving to the country for good, the narrator's attitude towards Germany was as follows:

Ela (4/39-47)pl

N: I mean/ I mean my situation/ I had this plus, that I am for instance/ I used to be very often in Germany. I used to come yyy for/ for my holidays and I lived in my father's place for a year, too... so I rather had... so to say/ I had no... like others had/ have y fear of a new country, new people, I don't know, you know? I rather came here, and I knew I'm on firm ground...

I: mhm

N: in this way that I did not go into the unknown, without having the foggiest idea of it, let me name it this way (2)

When Ela graduated from a hotel industry and tourism college she wanted to come to visit her brother and work in Germany, but she came to a conclusion that there was no point in returning to Poland, because there are poor chances to get any flat, wages are very low, and life in Germany is better, easier and more comfortable. The conditions of her immigration were very favourable. Firstly, Ela new the milieu she would live in. Secondly, her brother, who played the role of the significant other in her life, supported her very much. Moreover, while in Germany she lived among her fellow-citizens (mostly Silesians and Poles living in Germany) and friends of her brother who had established a national 'ghetto' that still absorbs newcomers. At the outset, however, the narrator participated in it without great pleasure and satisfaction. Entering it, she was a 21 year-old-girl, still wanting to have fun and enjoy life, whereas other members of the Silesian 'ghetto' had been living in Germany – as the narrator's says – for more than 10 years, were much older and had already set up their families and had children. Only when some people of her age and in the similar life situation (without families, obligations and fun-minded) came flooding in, her immersion in the national 'ghetto' of the 'younger generation' transformed from the institutional pattern of her immigration process (i.e., transmitted from the older immigrants' 'tested' ways of carrying out and directing one's immigration career) into a more intentional

⁶⁹ They were made to go through so called a 'Lager' (a refugee camp), which may explain Ela's mother's decision. On the basis of a few interviews with the Silesians who left Poland in those times, I would risk the hypothesis that for a great number of them the stay in Lager - that in fact was a total institution in Goffman's terms - (Goffman, 1991) was connected with their trajectory process. Please see also Chapter 2, footnote 57.

⁷⁰ The narrator's brother could not apply for Germany citizenship by virtue of having a German father. He and Ela have different fathers.

attitude towards it (i.e., based on the individual's own ideas concerning the course of his or her immigration process). The narrator willingly spends all her free time with them and she cannot wait to see them again.

We must always remember that only with the help of her brother was Ela capable of organising her life abroad. He offered her to stay at his place when she decided to stay in Germany permanently; he found a job and hired a flat for her. He also advised her in decisions of biographical significance. For example; when Ela wanted to go to Sylt where she was offered a job, he advised her against this decision. His main argument was the distance between Sylt and the place he lived in (it is a city in Bavaria) that could prevent him from helping Ela. In this context, it is obvious that the role of the narrator's brother as her significant other providing care and support in the process of assimilation is significant. Because of him Ela immersed herself in the national 'ghetto' situation which was initially not very favourable, but after some time and along with influx of new members it became one of the most important conditions facilitating her life in Germany.

B) The case of Tomek

Here, one of the most characteristic examples of young Silesians living in the national 'ghetto' will be discussed. For many of them the political-economic situation in Poland was still uncertain and unsteady while leaving for Germany. For this reason, they often preferred dirty, but better paid jobs in Germany to their skilled trades in Poland.⁷¹ In the majority of cases they joined groups of immigrants coming from Silesia (and Poland) since the 80's. The informant is a 32-year-old man of Silesian origin (named Tomek in the transcription, and mentioned already several times in the previous chapter) with a vocational education. He has been living in Germany since 1990 (for 11 years at the time of the interview). The short text passage cited below clearly depicts particular social conditions in which he acted when he decided to emigrate.

Tomek (2/8-25)pl

Well, already/ already/ already before serving in the army, because in 87 I joined the army, and... my brother-in-law's parents were already here (2) And there was already/ already this first foothold/ there was already such a though/ there was already such a thought to/ to

⁷¹ It is intriguing that for many of them moving to Germany is much easier than, for instance, changing their profession or raising their qualifications.

leave simply, because there... it means in Poland there was no/ some-ee kind of... either one couldn't see his starting point, I don't know. You were just so... y y y... in your surrounding you were so... I'm sorry/ you were so simply-minded, that/ that... some universities or schools it wasn't/ wasn't...

I: mhm

N: for us. Well, and as a worker, as one working in a coalmine/ I didn't want to work in a coalmine...

I: mhm...

N: hm hm My father was a steelworker... It wasn't interesting for me in fact, well... a carpenter well mmm I don't know, well somehow/ it was somehow program/ programmed... siut siut [preverbal expression indicating helter-skelter acting] *weg*, you know?, to Germany, to Germany, well... There had already been such thoughts before the army. Then, I joined the army... I was in the army, so my sister's husband went at once... After/ after half a year my sister went. They mad/ they made it, and, well, my mother was waiting... It was still/ till I am back from the army, well, and... There was already/ already in the army such a thought, when I was on my two leaves... the last and only during these two years (5) When I came everything was ready to... just sell it, exchange for marks and leave (4)

Tomek's storytelling discloses the deceptive character of the process of the chain migration, that is, the mechanism which makes new individuals emigrate, on the basis of an extremely good picture of the country of destination transmitted by 'real emigrants'. I have already dealt with this aspect in the previous chapter.⁷² It is relevant for our further investigation to take into account that in the country of his destination there are already people (his family members) who would help him to organise his life abroad. These family members usually did not arrive into an unknown situation either and they were supported by the 'older' immigrants. Thus the national circle of mutual help constantly grows. As the narrator reports later, from the very beginning of his stay in Germany he used to spend his spare time among other Silesians and asylum seekers from Poland. Similarly to Ela, he initially joins the immigrants' group with whom on the one hand he shares his identity (a Silesian in Germany) and emotional understanding⁷³, and on the other hand from whom he differs considerably (when their age and marital status are considered). As in the case of Ela, getting to know other young Silesians seems to enhance his adjustment process.

There is, however, still a puzzling question. Does joining the group of national 'ghetto' character support the assimilation process or does it only make the possible influence of the trajectory dynamics ineffective for a period of time? As Schütze notices, this form of 'assimilation' may lead to a qualified success:

⁷² See point 4.3.1. in the previous chapter.

⁷³ Cf. Denzin N.K., 1984, *On Understanding Emotion*, Jasssey-Bass Publishers, San Francisco, p. 145 and 282.

Social net with ghetto character could 'arrest' the trajectory process for approximately fifteen years, because the new immigrant can live under the sub-cultural shelter of some sort of restricted home world which tightens the social relationships within the immigrants' colony and separates her/him from the outlooks and ways of the broader host society she/he now has to live in. (Schütze, npd: 22).

It is hard to answer the question reliably just on the basis of the autobiographies of the young Silesians, because their immigrant careers are not long enough. The analysed texts show, however, that the immigrants coming from Silesia who live among their fellow-citizens usually do not establish significant contacts with native members of German society and only sporadically spend their free time with Germans. Here, I would risk a hypothesis that, even if it is of a smaller degree, Silesians also in Poland live in some sort of national 'ghetto'. They acquire the knowledge necessary to successfully organise their lives in Germany (among all the interviewed people the Silesians have little problems learning everyday German) and establish relationships with Germans, but still they would rather live among the members of their national group. I believe that one of the most convincing explanations for this phenomenon is that the Silesian community assures them the sense of continuity over time. Strauss finds this aspect very crucial for an individual's identity construction.⁷⁴ We may say, with some justification, that by virtue of joining the Silesian community in Germany they attempt to avoid painful feelings of loss, dispossession and being poised between two cultures.⁷⁵ Moreover, the immersion in the national 'ghetto' facilitates organising the immigrants' experiences in a foreign country. Their orientation towards their identity and its continuity may be described as such: they are no longer Poles, they are not Germans yet, but – wherever they are - they are still Silesians. In other words, wherever they live the base of their identification is their Silesian nationality, and although they attempt to establish a symbiotic relation with a dominant culture, they still treat others (whether Poles or Germans) as a more distant part of their physical and/or 'emotional' landscape.⁷⁶

In general we may say that among Poles coming to Germany the Silesians tend to create national 'ghettos'. The character of such colonies of Poles in America is depicted in Thomas and Znaniecki's 'Polish Peasant in America'. In their opinion, they grow very fast

⁷⁴ See: Strauss A.L., 1969, *Mirrors and Masks. The Search for Identity*, Sociology Press, Mill Valley, pp. 144-147.

⁷⁵ Cf. Stonequist E.V., 1961, *The Marginal Man...*, op. cit., p. 8.

⁷⁶ Cf. Park R.E., 1961, Introduction, in op. cit., p. xiii.

and develop continuously. Poles tend to attract their countrymen, as they believe that only among them can they find social response, recognition and preserve their cultural coherence.⁷⁷ The colony is primarily established as the mutual help and support community. At the same time, however, its main purpose is to sustain the sense of continuity whenever their inner integrity is threatened. The community ensures the feeling of safety and acceptance and thus often prevents its members from demoralization. In return, it requires some sort of faithfulness and loyalty. Newcomers can penetrate into the host society whenever and however they want and they are even supported by their fellow-citizens in doing so, provided that they keep their emotional distance, admit their descent openly and reserve their emotional involvement exclusively for the members of their national group. I believe that in this respect the immigration of Polish peasants to America as described by Thomas and Znaniecki bears a strong resemblance to the group of the Silesians living in Germany nowadays.

C) The case of Monika.

Monika, who, as we have learned in the previous chapter, has no German roots, but because of her husband Tomek, she also lives among the Silesians '*having red passports*'⁷⁸ in the national 'ghetto' described it as follows:

Monika (11/31-12/2)pl

I: Is there any organization... something, what is somehow organised, let's say this way/

N: It means it is mmmmm if you mean... something, what/ y/ something...

I: Yes, yes...

N: It's by the church... We've got/ well, they've got here some... there/ I mean I know that there are masses in Polish/ I go... and there are... parties and meetings there and a lot of people join them...

I: mhm

⁷⁷ A brief note of the historical background of this situation should be portrayed here. Poland was partitioned by neighbouring powers of Russia, Austria and Prussia in 1795. This ended Polish independence for more than a century. The country ceased to exist and the Partitioning Powers strived to eradicate Polish national identity. The Polish nation, however, managed to survive. The rebirth of independent Poland after World War I in 1918 was possible because of the progressive awakening of national consciousness among different classes of the Polish people (from the Polish *Szlachta*, through burghers to peasants). Norman Davies, noted for his publications on the history of Poland, claims that Polish nationalism has its origins in times prior to the French Revolution (which is believed to be the cradle of modern nationalism). He argues that: 'Poland's long subjection to Russian tutelage throughout the eighteenth century aroused precocious feelings of national resentment at a time when France itself was still in the grip of the *ancient régime*.' See: Davies N., 1986, *Heart of Europe, A Short History of Poland*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, pp. 219-220.

⁷⁸ For a long time People with 'red passports' denoted Silesians of German origin having German passports, sometimes also foreigners from western countries. They were distinguished from those having 'blue passports', i.e., people whose free movement was still somehow limited. This expression is no longer valid (although still used), because nowadays also in Poland passports are issued with red covers.

N: trips... We [the narrator and her husband] go there for instance. There are parties twice a year and we always take part. It is always so/ I mean it's nice to see that... there are some many people in the surrounding, who... speak the mmmm.... Polish language, because I don't know if there are people with the passport I have, the Polish one, I suppose there are ((laughing till*)) no on the party*/ not so many, but (2) It means, it's very characteristic of people who left Poland, they speak Polish, but their children, for instance do not...

I: mhm

N: In spite of that, these people go for these parties, so the/ these people do not feel mmm Germans completely, if they take part in the Polish parties. I think/ I think so... It is so puzzling, generally speaking...

I: mhm

N: since the children already yyy their children are already/ are already... germanised, so to say... So... I don't believe that their children will take part in the Polish parties, for instance.

Analysing Monika's life history we may describe her attitude towards Silesians as ambivalent. She remembers that as a young girl living in Silesia she found them very Germany-oriented people, who believed that all 'German' things are better than the 'Polish'. We must remember that at that time Poland was still a communist country. Many Silesians left the country sneakily by proving their German origin and became German citizens. They used to send parcels to their families still 'trapped' in Poland which, in comparison to the communist reality, were colourful and 'marvellous'. The narrator recollects an event when she visited one of such families and they treated her to instant tea just received from Germany. When Monika said that it was tasteless, the family was seriously angry and surprised: *How is it possible that you don't like it? It's German!*. However, when she studied the history of Silesia at the university, her attitude changed fundamentally. When before starting political sciences she had been indignant with old Silesians who had taken part in the Silesian Risings (against Germany),⁷⁹ and then applied for German citizenship, in the course of her studies she understood that:

Monika (20/8-17)pl

Both the Polish side and the German side made use of the Silesians for their own goals (2) what caused that now a Silesian feels neither like a Pole nor like a German, but first of all he feels like a Silesian who lives in Zabrze .hh... or something like yyy Karłowice, or where/ where/ wherever... It is for them/ for them the place of their birth is the most important, and if it was actually in Germany or in Poland... it was just/ they are not interested in it...

I: mhm

N: And it looks as follows: for the Poles (2) this Silesian is not Polish enough, and for the Germans he is not German enough...

⁷⁹ By virtue of the Treaty of Versailles in June 1919 the people of Upper Silesia were to choose in a plebiscite whether to join a newly reborn Poland or Germany. Since there were justified suspicions that the voting results had been falsified to Germany's advantage, within the space of three years (1919-1921) three risings against Germany broke out. For this reason, Silesians manifested their will to stay within the borders of Poland.

In this context, I would like to discuss Monika's description of the Silesian community in Germany. Again, we may find certain similarities between the Silesians and the Polish colonies in America described by Thomas and Znaniecki. They showed that for the Polish immigrants in America the parish was the centre of community life, and as Monika depicts it is the same for Silesians in Germany. The church, thus, sustains the feeling of social cohesion and unites the immigrants.⁸⁰ Although they all meet during masses or at parties Monika's status among Silesians was different. She was the only person who did not have 'a red passport'. It meant that she could not enjoy the same political rights as her Silesian friends, and her access to the labor market was restricted. What is more, the Silesians that the narrator lives among in Germany are usually low-educated and focused only on their economic success. In this connection, Monika regarded them with some restraint and distanced herself from their frame of reference. When she thought of herself in relation to Silesians she usually negated or even rejected their way of life. In contrast to them she was not devoid of professional aspirations (they usually work on an assembly line or do dirty jobs)⁸¹ she would also like to teach her prospective children both languages unlike many Silesians.⁸²

Interestingly enough, although Monika describes the Silesian national 'ghetto' as a group of mutual help, in which its members' desires for recognition, response and security (Thomas, Znaniecki, 1918; Thomas 1969 [1923]) are satisfied, as well as a group that binds people together, for the narrator herself it is rather some sort of a reference group that helps her to define who she is not, who she is not going to be and how she does not want her life to look like.⁸³ She constructs herself outside the group of the Silesians from her neighbourhood through setting up a contrast between herself and 'Them'. On the one hand, the narration of Monika enriches the image of the Silesians living in the national community, but, on the other hand, also shows that it plays a 'supportive function' only if certain sociobiographical conditions are fulfilled. When immigrants have no Silesian background, and have higher professional aspirations, they may be disappointed and even demotivated while in the community. This is confirmed in the case of Monika. This issue

⁸⁰ In their study of immigrants in America Park and Miller suggest that a very strong attachment to the church that not only maintains their religious sentiments, but also fosters their national feelings is the most powerful source of resistance to Americanization. See: Park R.E., Miller H.A., 1969, *Old World Traits Transplanted*, Arno Press, New York, p. 98.

⁸¹ The issue has been discussed in the previous chapter. Some possible threats resulting from her immersion into the national 'ghetto' has been pointed out.

⁸² Monika focuses on this issue in her rendering. She cannot understand why Polish-speaking parents do not want to teach their children Polish and sometimes punish them for speaking it.

⁸³ See: Lindesmith A.R., Strauss A.L., Denzin N.K., 1988, *Social Psychology*, op. cit., p. 278.

was also borne out by the interview with Marek (discussed many times in the previous chapter), who in spite of his Silesian origin, avoids the community because of being afraid that he may get stuck there forever. Although he starts his occupational career in Germany as an assembly line worker (putting his engineer degree in his pocket), his ambitions are much greater. He knows, however, that while joining the Silesian ‘ghetto’ nothing would motivate him to climb higher.

There are also other biographies of the young Silesians (e.g., Max or Ewa⁸⁴) who have come to Germany and lived in an enclave of other (predominantly older) Silesian resettlers.⁸⁵ This enclave is like a shelter that provides them with protection, help and support. It provides a familiar social milieu for any newly arrived Silesian, thus mitigating many potential problems. When we look at the overall structure of the biographies of the young Silesians analysed within the scope of this study, it becomes clear that immersing into the national ‘ghetto’ organises their immigration process in terms of an institutional expectation pattern. By virtue of joining the community they learn quickly how to cope with the world of everyday life in Germany (e.g. what, where and how to apply for German citizenship) and what steps must be taken and the recipes used to deal with the new, foreign reality successfully. In contrast to the biographies of the immigrants who through joining or participating in social worlds could develop their individual creativity, the Silesians relation to their identity and world seems to be relatively unchangeable and stabilised.

The questions remain whether and to what extent may the ‘national ghetto’ with which one is entangled hinder the process of assimilation. Is the reverse also possible? Can a national/ethnic enclave support one’s endeavours to adapt to the new environment? Robert E. Park suggests, contrary to what is commonly conjectured, that the many immigrant institutions, like for instance, many family clans and associations in Chinatowns of North America and Europe do not form self-isolated entities resistant to assimilation, but they are collective attempts to adapt to the milieu in which they find themselves.⁸⁶ Is

⁸⁴ Ewa is a very young Silesian woman who gave up her job as a hair-dresser in Poland and went to Germany to earn money on an assembly line. After two months she met a man (a German of Silesian origin), got pregnant and married him.

⁸⁵ It is noticeable, that they still cluster together around places where in the 80’s camps (Lager) for refugees and resettlers were established.

⁸⁶ Cf. Chan Kwok Bun., 2005, *Both Sides, Now: A Sociologist Meditates on Culture Contact, Hybridization, and Cosmopolitanism*. Available at: <http://www.toda.org/Default.aspx?PageID=137> [20.10.2005].

the same true for the Silesians minority in Germany? Considering that the Silesians are able to gain a high level of fluency in German in a relatively short period of time, which is an important factor in the process of assimilation, we may allege that their 'national ghetto' play a supportive role in this process. This issue, however, does not lend itself to simple explanations and must remain unresolved here.

5.5. Being an entrepreneur.

The general concern of this study is with immigrants, i.e., people who live on the boarder of two cultures and therefore have to deal with double culturally specific sets of meanings, frames of references and loyalties. Their role as entrepreneurs (cultural mediators or intermediates) – people who willingly and intentionally make a great effort to improve understanding between the two cultures they are attached to - will be discussed here in detail. The focus will be on a peripheral person (as opposed to core figures in cultural or political elites) who encourages reciprocal knowledge and comprehension as well as endeavours to overcome conflicts and estrangement between individuals of different cultural backgrounds.

Robert E. Park puts forward while describing some characteristic features of the ‘marginal man’ that his life situation which is shaped by living in two different cultural worlds simultaneously - compels him to play both the role of a cosmopolitan and a stranger. He writes, then:

Inevitably he becomes, relatively to his cultural milieu, the individual with the wider horizon, the keener intelligence, the more detached and rational viewpoint. The marginal man is always relatively the more civilized human being. (Park, 1961: xvii-xviii)⁸⁷

Referring to Simmel’s analysis of ‘the stranger’ Stonequist argues that he:

unites in his person the qualities of ‘nearness and remoteness, concern and indifference’. This in turn gives him an attitude of objectivity, a freedom from local prejudices and values, and so renders his social relations more abstract and generalized; and objectivity in combination with nearness (sympathy) facilitates the relationship of the confidant. (Stonequist, 1961: 177-178).⁸⁸

⁸⁷ Cf. Riemann G., Schütze F., 1991, ‘Trajectory’..., op. cit., p. 335.

⁸⁸ Simmel claims that the stranger is not committed to the unique ingredients and peculiar tendencies of the group, and therefore approaches them with the specific attitude of ‘objectivity’. But objectivity does not simply involve passivity and detachments; it is a particular structure composed of distance and nearness, indifference and involvement.’ Cf. Simmel G., 2001 (1908), The Stranger, in Sollors W. (ed.), Theories of Ethnicity. A Classical Reader, Palgrave, London.

And finally Stephen Greenblatt in his book 'Marvellous Possessions. The Wonder of the New World' claims that:

Travel enables one to collect information, to verify rumours, to witness marvels, to distinguish between fables and truth. It represents the willingness to escape from the cultural narrowness that attends knowing only one's own people. It enables one to place familiar customs in relation to the customs of others and hence to view the ordinary and everyday in a revealing new light. (Greenblatt, 1991: 123).

All the authors lay emphasis on the very peculiar role of a person who enters and penetrates a new culture. Immigrants, as typical marginal persons gain not only an insight into a foreign culture by virtue of living in two countries, but also are capable of looking at their original culture from a more detached and objective viewpoint. Some of them, like Jacek, whose biography will be discussed now, find themselves representatives of their homeland in another country. Owing to their special position abroad (i.e., not an average individual, but someone who is distinguished, well-known) they create and sustain a positive picture of Poland. The most prominent example was a famous Polish writer, the Nobel Prize winner Czesław Miłosz in the United States. There are many such cases around the world. It is, however, very difficult to find among the generation of the Poles I deal with in my work, people (especially intellectuals) who are famous for their achievements in Germany. There are, I think, two fundamental explanations of this matter. Firstly, individuals that are the subject matter of my study are often too young to have established a special and respected position (wherever in Poland or abroad), secondly, young Polish intellectuals still prefer going to England or the United States to develop their professional careers and to pursuing their hopes in Germany. Still, Germany is an ideal place for many soccer-players, who hope that their career in the Bundesliga opens the door to fame and wealth. This is also the case of Jacek Dolski – a goal keeper. He plays for one not very successful team in East Germany and is known only in the local community, thus, his influence on the host society can be examined only in the micro-scale. The narrator's rendering, however, reveals that his adjustment process is, on the one hand, facilitated by his involvements in the social world of soccer-playing⁸⁹ and, on the other hand, is due to his strong belief that he has a very special duty to do while abroad. The narrator, thus, sees

⁸⁹ In the case of Jacek the social world of soccer-playing performs the same role as the social world of horse-riding for Robert and Bartek. See: points 5.2 and especially 5.2.1 in this chapter.

himself as ‘an ambassador’ who represents his country in the field of sport. He plays a role of an intermediary in his everyday life, one who – as Stonequist shows:

(...) transforms the relations of the races or nationalities from within outwards. He is an unconscious “boring form within” by which the underlying conditions are slowly changed so that new attitudes and accommodations become inevitable. His work belongs in the category of the slow, silent changes of history, not the spectacular and cataclysmic mutations. He may appear timid, compromising, or opportunistic to impatient temperaments; yet his persistent and steady pressure is an essential part in the progress of the subordinate group.’ (Stonequist, 1961: 182-183).

Asked about the picture of Poles in the eyes of Germans, the narrator initially talks about his meeting with a German who once a year comes to the city where he lives with his merry-go-rounds. The German who employs many Poles grumbles considerably about them. He claims that although they are very good workers, they drink a lot of vodka and thus lose all their money. The narrator juxtaposes this very stereotypical picture of a Pole with the positive image that has been created by other Polish soccer-players who have played for his current team and which is sustained by him recently (Jacek repeats the success story of his Polish predecessors in the team to other players).

Jacek (32/33-33/22)pl

In any case, when I talk to people here, they rather... treat Poles well, too (2) Well mmm... whatever we say... I... or... all these soccer players who played here earlier (2) Darek Bielski... played also very well here... Rej played here, Wawelski also played very well here. I play now (2) I’m... mm I don’t/ I don’t want to brag, but I’m/ I’m one of the best players here .hh Fans really esteem me here. I’m, whatever/ whatever we say I’m also an ambassador of Poland also, because... through my presentation, for instance yyy... people also... look at me differently, don’t they?, as at a Pole... it means like at a German...

I: mhm

N: It’s obvious, since I have to .hh... like recently... I’ve been chosen... by/ playing here for three years and a half, I’ve been chosen the best player of the year (2) by yy fans and all these activist the best player of/ of/ of C. Since I came here, I’ve been chosen the best goalkeeper every year/ the most... of these votes (3) This year I’ve been also chosen the best player (2) what makes me happy, it’s nice (2) And further, as I’ve told at the beginning, it’s some sort of/ I’m also an ambassador of Poland, because... everyone who/ who yyy has talked to () to my fans or to anyone, they always speak highly/ always speak highly/ always speak highly of me/ of me. So if they speak of me, so I as a Pole, so they should always speak highly of Poles...

I: mhm

N: So a Pole doesn’t/ doesn’t sho/ doesn’t/ is not only .hh associated with the fact tha-at he stirs things up and drinks, or... he... gets into trouble while pinching one’s money, no, but (2) they can also say, that... a Pole is a good employee, because, whatever we say, it’s my profession here, isn’t it?..

I: mm

N: and... I try to do it well...

I: mhm

N: And/ and/ and/ and mmm it doesn't matter... talkin/ talk/ talkin/ talkin/ talking with no master who... sss/ here from the club, or.... f... somewhere yyy f-f-f/ even while in the downtown... everybody recognizes me: 'Good afternoon', what's up, and 'Hallo', and so/ Now, I'm injured, so .hh 'So .hh mmm a quick recovery and so on, you know? (2) So everybody asks when I'm coming back and so on. Well... it's nice...

I: mhm

N: Because whatever we say, as I've said mmm playing in Bremen for half a year I also had nice fans by my side... They all were pleased with me. Just as I've said, well, at the beginning, if I attend to do something I try to do it professionally. And everyone/ everyone can see if you treat your/ your duties seriously, so everyone notices it...

I: mhm

N: So I attempt to do the same here and... up till now everything/ everything has been right...

Ignoring the question as to whether he tends to exaggerate his role or not, we may wonder how the feelings of personal importance, of being recognised and popular (even in a small circle of the indigenous members of the host country) support the assimilation process. The autobiographical narrative interview with Jacek proves that an individual's adaptation to the approached country is largely dependent on his or her conception of self in the new circumstances. Thus, when the narrator constructs his identity on the basis of a very positive response of his fans, recognition of his coach and the team (i.e., in the eyes of people whose attitude towards him does matter), he may neglect other unfavourable and antagonistic opinions usually expressed by people whose role in the narrator's biography is marginal. Even if he encounters difficult or unpleasant situations his immigration process always stays within the limits of structural processes letting him maintain an active relationship to his self-concept and biography.

Thus, the case of Jacek whose conviction of his intermediary role in Germany supports his immigration career closes the analysis of sociobiographical conditions and sets of circumstances that facilitate the process of adaptation to the new culture/ country. I believe that there are still other possibilities of directing the immigration process towards adjustment and assimilation that are not described here. In the gathered autobiographies, the narrators depict mostly the incipient stages of their life in Germany and most of them are still in some sort of limbo situation. However, by the example of the more 'advanced' careers of certain young Poles in Germany, I have attempted to show in this chapter how immersing into certain social worlds, support of biographical caretakers, immersing into a national 'ghetto' or treating one's role abroad as some sort of mission may make their

adaptation to the new country easier. These enumerated factors never occur separately (although for the sake of analytical purposes they have been discussed as separate processes), but usually are interlinked with one another in various ways. I would risk here a hypothesis that the conditions that support the assimilation process must be multifarious and connected to each other in order to predominate (this usually takes place when more than one area of the immigrant's life is concerned) and consequently to dislodge the trajectory potential or overcome the trajectory dynamics. Thus, in the course of Nina's immigration career the help of the significant other (her husband) and joining the social world (of mothers with crawling children) intertwine and release the metamorphosis process. In the case of Bartek it is the social world of horse-riding and the support of the German girl that changes his attitude towards Germany. In Jacek's immigration career the social world of soccer-playing and his representative role within it influence each other and organise his immigration biography on an intentional and motivational ground.

Summing up, the trajectory process – described and explicated in the previous chapter - usually has the main influence over the immigrants' career in its initial phases. Very new, unknown and strange life situation disorganises, at least for a while, the immigrants' biography and deeply effects their identity. Acute feelings of ambivalence and anxiety are often the result. The afflicted individuals are culturally and socially isolated, tentative and insecure in their everyday conducts often due to discriminatory treatment they experience. Subsequently, the immigrants lose their capacity to interact and plan their future in a competent way. It usually takes some time to overcome the manifold difficulties typical for the immigrants' life. There are, however, some biographical and social conditions which may facilitate the assimilation into the host country. According to the above discussed narrative interviews these conditions includes:

- 1) acquiring the language and cultural pattern of the approached group;
- 2) understanding and utilizing its symbolic values and ways of conduct as well as enlarging one's stock of knowledge about the host society;
- 3) establishing contacts with its native members which may be successfully supported by the immigrants involvement in social worlds;

- 4) getting the help of one's significant others who play the role of the biographical carer;
- 5) coming up with the very particular definition of one's position abroad as intermediately and representative for one's national culture;

and finally – under very specific conditions:

- 6) of one's immersing into a national ghetto.

There is no doubt that along with the developing process of assimilation as described in this chapter, the narrators restore their control over their life circumstances and re-build their biographical action schemes and mark out their life orientation principles again. While embarking on their path to incorporate the new culture into their scheme of reference, the immigrants become more and more objective (their very strong national identification may receive a great deal of criticism from themselves) and develop – what Riemann and Schütze following Park would call - a cosmopolitan perspective.⁹⁰ Kłoskowska denotes it: bi-valence. She ends her book 'National Cultures at the Grass Root Level' with the seminal words:

When it is treated autotelically, national culture is a support for the feeling of familiarity that goes back to the dawn of human history and individual biography. The fact of early appropriation bestows on this culture the capacity to implant the fondness that usually accompanies memories of childhood. It constitutes a strong foundation of primary cultural valence. However, it is not an absolute barrier to later bivalence and polyvalence, or to national conversion, which open nations allow. (Kłoskowska, 2001: 406).

⁹⁰ See: Reimann G., Schütze F., 1991, 'Trajectory'....., op. cit., p. 335.

Conclusions

It is believed that the problem of national identity to a large extent has lost its meaning and importance. The widening of globalization processes, the integration of the European community with the consequent internalization of the economy, the high degree of mobility, and the fading away of national borders are seen as having led to this situation. In this study I have strongly opposed this contention. In relation to the experience of young Poles who live in Germany and their life histories it has been shown that at the beginning of the immigration process they treat their national belonging as an insignificant or trifling matter. However, it appears that there are situations such as immigration, that make the issue of major relevance. Many immigrants initially presuppose that the host country is very similar, known and predictable. They believe, then, that they will be treated on equal terms with its indigenous members. These assumptions cannot coincide with the real circumstances. With time, immigrants begin to notice and recognise differences in theirs and the others (Germans) interpretations of certain past historical events, shared symbols, schemes of reference, rules of conduct etc, and start to distinguish between 'us' (Poles) and 'them' (Germans). This is often a source of disturbing ambivalence and individual suffering. Thus, through outlining boundaries and demarcating realms, they construct, re-construct or strengthen their national identity.¹ For this reason, I think it is still necessary to take account of the issue of national identity in the discussions of the unification of Europe.

Following the argument made above, I believe that the detailed analysis of the collected autobiographical narrative interviews has given us an insight into the process of national identity construction as well as in the biographies of the young Polish people in Germany. Following the course of the narrators' immigration careers, it was indicated that the immigrant's trajectory in its initial stages is similar to the description of the stranger developed by Simmel and Schütz.² Entering the approached country, recognizing and learning the real conditions of living there, they often suffer from deepening isolation and growing disorder in their life situation. They must constantly balance the tension between

¹ Cf. Eisenstadt S.N., Giesen B., 1995, 'The Construction of Collective Identity', *Archives Européennes de Sociologie* XXXVI (1), pp. 75-76.

² Simmel G., 1972, *The Sociological Significance of the 'Stranger'*, in Burgess E.W., Park R.E. (eds.), *Introduction to the Science of Sociology*, pp. 322-327, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago & London, and Schütz A., 1990b, *The Stranger. An Essay in Social Psychology*, in A. Schütz, *Collected Papers II: Studies in Social Theory*, Martinus Nijhoff, The Hague, pp. 91-105, and: *The Homecomer*, in *op. cit.*, pp.106-119.

loyalties and affinities to their country of origin and the host society. This results in an increased sense of alienation and isolation recognizable in their attendant tormenting anxiety. Being marginalised, kept apart, at a distance and forced to cope with some negative effects of their stigma (i.e., a widespread damaging picture of a Pole in Germany) the young Poles not only experience strangeness in their new surrounding, but also feel estranged from themselves. This often leads to serious breakdowns and life-crises and feelings of ambivalence. Tired, weak and disappointed, the immigrants gradually lose control over the course of their life. They are no longer able to organize their actions intentionally and actively.³ It usually results in profound experiences of extended suffering. In the analysis of the immigrants' biographies certain critical events were put forward that result in serious difficulties or may enhance the trajectory development. The collected data showed that entering the immigration process (i.e., making the decision to leave Poland) the immigrants usually act on the basis of false and idealistic images of the approached country. Even if they are aware of certain difficulties connected with living in the foreign culture, they usually believe that a considerable improvement in their life situation in financial terms⁴ would compensate for possible losses, inconveniences and difficulties. Furthermore, in their pre-immigration biography as well as in the initial stages of their immigration career they underestimate or disregard the power of their national identity and are – according to E.V. Stonequist – not sensitive enough about their national self.⁵ These periods are usually characterised by a lack of awareness of their cultural heritage including tested recipes to cope with problematical situations, sets of meanings, interpretations of history, collective memory, moral codes, ways of conducting everyday activities etc. The immigrants became 'race-conscious'⁶ only when in the flow of their face-to-face interactions with the indigenous members of the host country they notice that because of their belonging to a certain collectivity (the Polish nation) they are regarded, treated, responded or addressed in a particular – often disrespectful or demeaning - way. This makes their national identity a subject of reflection and strenuous biographical work. There

³ Cf. Riemann G., Schütze F., 1991, 'Trajectory' as a Basic Theoretical Concept for Analyzing Suffering and Disorderly Social Processes, in Maines D.R., *Social Organization and Disorderly Social Processes*, Aldine de Gruyter, New York. p. 341.

⁴ It does not matter if they are the Silesians who use their German origin to enter the German labour market legally or the young Polish women who have moved to their German husbands, or the professionals who hope to perfect their skills and techniques – initially they all are under the illusion that the material wealth that can be gained easily in Germany would balance their potential suffering.

⁵ Stonequist E.V., 1961, *The Marginal Man. The Study in Personality and Culture Conflict*, New York, Russell & Russell. INC, p. 122.

⁶ Op. cit.

are many situations described in the narrators' renderings in which they report how their German interactional partners identified them first of all on the basis of their national belonging (as Poles). This cause, for many of them, that national identity previously lurking, neglected, considered as unimportant, unworthy of notice or treated without seriousness took on a different relevance and turned out to be a subject of importance. It becomes, therefore, one of the most crucial dimensions of their self-consciousness and identification. As the collected materials display, the immigrants' national identity is created not only through showing dissimilarities in schemes of interpretations, ways of everyday conduct and values (i.e., between the Polish and the German symbolic universe), but also through separating and differentiating themselves from the *caffone* type of a Pole (a simpleton) who has contributed significantly to the process of creation of negative image of Poles and to the fixing of this image among Germans. In other words, when the narrators become aware that the way they are seen by their German interactional partners may be deeply 'contaminated' by the *caffone* type of a Pole (i.e., a thief, a wangler or a heavy drunkard) their Polish national identity – formerly downplayed - becomes very problematical and confusing.

An attempt was made in this study to examine an individuals' progress through the successive stages⁷ of their immigration career as well as to scrutinize what happens to their identities as a consequence of immigration. Consequently some frame conditions, which contribute to the deepening cracks in the immigrants' life situation and therefore may enhance the trajectory dynamics were pointed out. Those frame conditions emerged from very scrupulous investigation of the personal narratives of the young Poles living in Germany.

1. Interactional situations reported and analysed by the narrators are of decisive importance for our discussion. As we learn from the autobiographical narrative interview method in the flow of interaction one's identity is constituted, negotiated, transformed, questioned or confirmed. In the recapitulation of events the narrators pointed out two particular sources of interactional anomy: divergent definitions of the common past of Poland and Germany and the predominance of the negative picture of a Pole.

⁷ It is important to note that these stages are not necessarily sequential and may appear in reversed order or do not appear. There is also the possibility of regression.

The collected data showed that the disparate schemes of interpretation of the war time events become a focal concern in many interactions between young Poles and mostly old Germans. This results in interactional anomy and introduces unbearable discord in their reciprocal relationships. Subsequently, it was determined that the past history of one's country deems to be particularly crucial for his or her national consciousness and *is an indispensable prerequisite for national identity*. (Wodak et al., 1999: 25).

Then, the issue of stigmatization was discussed. It was analysed how the stereotypical image and negative picture of a Pole widespread in Germany is associated with painful experiences of disapproval, rejection and feelings of inferiority. The negative impact of the immigrants' lower status resulting from not being fully recognised and accepted by the receiving country turned out to be one of the most influential conditions in disturbing the immigration process. Due to their poor language skills the immigrants often become the object of scoffing. Interestingly, the narrators in their renderings search for plausible explanations of this unfavourable image of their nation and construct common-sense accounts for the origin of the negative picture of a Pole in the eyes of Germans Thus, the category of a *Polish caffone* was introduced. It denotes a person, a simpleton, usually a Polish migrant worker, who - through lack of effective social bonds and social control – misbehaves and does not care.⁸ As a consequence, he ruins the reputation of Poles abroad.

2. Certain biographical losses have also a decisive bearing on the course of the immigration process. These are usually: a discernible decline of one's arduously gained relatively high social position and consequent recognition and respect by others and breaking off biographically relevant relationships.

The first situation concerns mainly Polish well-educated women, for whom entering the path of immigration because of their marriages to Germans means suspending or even giving up their occupational careers. Their strenuous efforts to

⁸ *Caffone* is the term used by Park and Miller in their description of Italian immigration to the United States. In my analysis of a *Polish caffone* I refer to the concept of social disorganization widely discussed by Thomas and Znaniecki.

move upward in status through their university studies in Poland are often completely spoiled when they come to Germany. It is very painful to see their intellectual potential wasted. Their situation becomes more complicated by the fact that they have difficulties in acquiring the German language.⁹ They usually bear great expenses of their decision to leave their country of origin and have to start from scratch.

Another salient biographical condition which makes the immigration process difficult and may contribute to the trajectory development is one's impossibility of maintaining important relationships. Initially, many young Poles treat their immigration as a short-term adventure and a possibility of quick sums of money. Attracted by better wages and prospects of professional development they prolong their stay abroad 'ad infinitum' preferring affluence to beloved persons back home. Lengthy separation of the narrators from persons with whom they are emotionally involved put their intimate relations to the test. In most cases they disintegrate. This has very strong, usually devastating influence on their biographies and, thus, their immigration process.

3. A deceptive mechanism inherent to immigration which results in disillusionment and great disappointment was identified as one of the framing conditions for activating the trajectory dynamics. This mechanism functions as some sort of propulsive force or *perpetum mobile* behind migration processes. This works in the following way: immigrants of many years' standing often hide dark sides of their lives abroad and conceal their misfortunes. This has a number of reasons, but two prevailing are: their concern for relatives back home – they do not want to worry them and bother with their own problems; their need for sustaining their positive image in the eyes of their families and friends – confessing to one's hard luck may threaten it. It stands to reason that people who plan to emigrate have false and distorted pictures of the country of destination and conditions of living there.

⁹ For a deeper understanding of this problematical issue we have to take into account their very complicated pre-immigrant career in which they struggled to graduate from university and to achieve better status than their parents. It is plausible to assume that in Germany where their diplomas and titles are of no use they still want to prove that they are not just housewives but well-educated, intelligent women. It is usually accompanied by their fear of failed performances which may result in negative self-assessment and may finally threaten their identity (cf. Riesman, 1989). It is my contention that their difficulties in developing language skills result from face-saving practices, i.e., their desire to win approval in the eyes of their interactional partners. If they are not able to speak perfect German they choose not to speak it at all. I claim that this attitude seriously disrupts the process of successful learning.

Unfortunately, under these conditions they often decide to go. Thus, the chain reaction is released. In this study the position of a person who was 'seduced' in this way and a person who is a 'seducer' was described and analyzed. Moreover, the conning practice was scrutinized. This helps voluntary emigrants induce unwilling members of their families to go abroad. Since its moral aspects are questionable, I argue that it may cause irreparable cracks in their relations.

4. Ironically, the immigrants cannot escape the dynamics of the trajectory process and return home (either because of potential embarrassment of being not successful abroad, or having no place or friends to return to, or because one's obligations in Germany do not allow him or her to leave the country) and accordingly they are trapped. Thus, paradoxically, the immigrant's biographical action scheme initiates the biographical process of trajectory. It brings about suffering that disturbs the life course of the individual. One may wrongly suspect that there is a very easy solution to the immigrant's entrapment and the trajectory dynamics, i.e., returning to one's homeland. The collected autobiographical narrative interviews showed, however, that the return to the country of origin does not guarantee at all that the trajectory process would end. The immigrants returning home no longer find themselves comfortable there, because their departure interrupts and gradually damages the community of time and space. Surprisingly, it turns out that a nagging feeling of being the stranger appears also at home. This phenomenon was brilliantly described in Alfred Schütz's paper 'Homecomer'.¹⁰ The author showed that encountering situations of alienation and even exclusion from the daily life world of one's family and friends in the homeland makes the person aware of her or his special position. Feelings of familiarity and intimacy typical for 'being at home' blur and with time disappear. This adds to the continued drama of the stranger. It is also the case of the immigrants who unexpectedly notice that during their long awaited visits at home they feel strange, confused and unfamiliar. They come to realise that they have fallen into a trap – they do not feel at home neither here nor there - and can see no way out. They also come to the conclusion they will probably never thoroughly embrace the culture of the host society, and simultaneously become conscious of the fact that they have lost their ties with the country they have abandoned. The

¹⁰ Schütz A., 1990b, *The Homecomer*, op. cit., pp. 106-119.

process, in which the individual grasps that she or he will never fully assimilate with the country of immigration, cannot understand and no longer feel at ease with the culture of the country of origin, has crucial implications for her or his identity. He or she becomes a marginal person (Park, 1950; Stonequist, 1961).

5. The immigrants - due to their interactions in a foreign world that make her or him aware of conflicts and differences between the two cultures - become painfully self-conscious (Cf. Stonequist, 1961). In this ongoing sociobiographical process a marginal man emerges – one who must continuously balance the tensions between loyalties and affinities to his or her country of origin and the host society. With time, however, she or he learns how to successfully shift cultural frames of reference and incorporates into her or his knowledge new moral codes and attitudes. The adaptation process is initiated. The immigrants, however, do not want to admit that Germany becomes more and more important in their biographical plans. Owing to very strong and recently discovered bonds with their country of origin a tricky sense of loyalty develops. As a result, the narrators either take radical steps to leave Germany as soon as possible or look for trifling justifications of their stay in Germany and, thus, deceive themselves. This line of managing one's difficulties may prove very dangerous, because it impedes one's assimilation process and prevents biographical work which must be done in order to create some 'self-confident' or 'self-assertive' identity.

Furthermore, some possibilities of overcoming the immigrant trajectory and unanticipated negative consequences of the immigration process were outlined. Consequently, it was shown under which biographical conditions the process of assimilation may be initiated. It was suggested that the most desirable attitude of an immigrant is some sort of a double identification (bivalence in Kłoskowska's term) associated with attaching the same value and meaning to both cultures one lives in. Because it is an idealised (constructed in theoretical, abstract terms) orientation, which is hardly ever attainable, I proposed treating it as a process of heading for assimilation or adjustment or as a certain tendency in one's immigration career. My aim here was to delineate certain paths the immigrants follow in their efforts to get out of their predicaments and the unfolding trajectory processes. The focus was put on conditions

under which their life situation in a foreign country becomes happy, creative and satisfying.

Accordingly the following circumstances that facilitate the process of adapting to the foreign culture and assimilating into the approached community were identified:

1. Participation in social worlds in Strauss' terms helping the immigrant to develop the web of meaningful relationships with the native members of the approached group for whom the immigrants' involvement and allegiance to the social world take precedence over the stereotypical picture of the Poles.
2. Emotional support and aid of the biographical caretaker – usually the narrator's spouse or friend who is an indigenous member of the approached community; in the immigration biographies they usually play the role of gatekeepers e.g., people who are in charge to introduce a newcomer to an unfamiliar world. The emotional involvement of both sides (a foreigner and a native member of the approached society) is of decisive importance. It facilitates guiding, instructing, familiarising and counselling processes which result in better understanding and acceptance of the host culture. This, in turn, gradually eliminates one's sense of alienation and isolation.
3. Coming to and living within the scope of one's national 'ghetto' situation, which serves as a shelter for the newcomer and leads him or her through the complexities of life abroad. It is debatable whether in the assimilation process 'national ghettos' give only protection and therefore makes the experience of living in a foreign country less painful. It is plausible that it may also delay or even prevent integration into the host society;

and finally:

4. The immigrants' conviction of their special role to fulfil in the foreign country. This is to present their original culture in a favourable light, to disprove false beliefs pertaining to their nation and to mediate between the two cultures to establish some degree of mutual understanding and trust. As the immigration career proceeds individuals gain a greater awareness of their own and host culture. They

become marginal men who – R.E. Park claims – are by definition more civilized, more intelligent and more objective.¹¹

The latter issue requires more detailed clarification. The collected autobiographical narrative interviews show the immigration process only partly and usually focus on trajectory in its own sequential order. In many cases the narrators hardly enter the assimilation process. There is every reason to believe that this process will go on in the future. Still, it is impossible to analyze it without some theoretical conjectures. However, in identifying the ideal type of assimilation¹² biographies of famous Poles like Miłosz, Czapski, Giedroyc or Bartoszewski – cultural elite persons - seem to be very helpful. The latter figure is of special importance for my study. Władysław Bartoszewski – publicist, politician and historian - the former prisoner of the Nazi concentration camp in Auschwitz was the initiator and moving force behind Polish-German reconciliation and Polish-Jewish dialog. He sets a marvelous example of duty and sacrifice. His academic work is primarily focused on the German occupation in Poland. Yet Bartoszewski's aim is to gain a mutual understanding between the two nations. His outstanding biography and work as conciliator and academic teacher (lecturing also in Germany) proves that the role of intellectuals and thinkers who unceasingly participate in the contact of cultures in creating and supporting friendly relations among nations is invaluable. Contrary to the narrators' subjective view of the common past described in subchapter 4.1.1 on disparate schemes of interpretations of the wartime events, Bartoszewski - due to his marginal position in the sense of Park and Stonequist – is equipped with a more objective perspective, more rational viewpoint and wider horizon.¹³ The guiding principle of the Auschwitz inmate, participant in the Warsaw Uprising and prisoner of the communist regime in Poland then wrongly convicted of spying is: *It is better to store in our memory good things and to forget inflicted harms. Otherwise it is hard to live.* (Bartoszewski, 2005: 21; translated from Polish by the author).

The detailed analysis of the autobiographical narrative interviews with the young Polish immigrants bears out that the problem of national identity should on no account be neglected or disregarded. In-depth attention was devoted to this issue in this study. The experiences of strangeness and alienation in a foreign country rise and gradually deepen

¹¹ Park R.E., 1961, Introduction, in Stonequist E.V., *The Marginal Man...*, op. cit., pp. xvii-xviii.

¹² Bivalence, i.e., double cultural competence and proficiency – as this study suggests - is the best direction of the assimilatin process.

¹³ Park R.E., 1961, op. cit.

one's capacity for reflection and insight into one's national/ cultural self. As it was indicated in this study, its existence and importance are displayed not only in what the narrators recapitulate (i.e., which situations, experiences, characters and feelings they recollect), but also in how they report them (i.e., what are the formal features of their biographical experiences - their modes of narration, as well as their ways of argumentation). It is my contention that identity issues, and especially matters of national identity, are highly salient in the age of globalization and the subsequent intensification of intercultural contacts. .

I hope that this study will contribute to better understanding of the social and biographical processes connected with the immigration of young Poles in Germany including their specific position and the very particular way of constructing their Polish national identity. I think it may be a very good starting point for further inquiries into immigration and national or collective identity as seen from the lances of lay people.

In the end, the pivotal question should be asked whether the emergent explanations are generalized enough to establish a theory which is valid and therefore may be useful in different contexts. There are two issues which I would like to address shortly:

1. Whether and how the enlargement of the European Union on 1 May 2004 (Poland joined the European Union) has changed the situation of Polish immigrants in Germany?
2. Whether the findings of this study also hold for immigration processes in other countries (i.e., in the UK and Ireland which have allowed the ten new members of the European Union to enter and work there and therefore attract many Polish people)?

I claim that the phenomena described in this study have not disappeared along with the enlargement of the European Union. The reason for this is that lifting internal borders to allow free movement of people and goods within European Union has not eliminated the most influential sources of and conditions for disrupting the flow of the immigration process. Let me mention just a few: existing prejudices, powerful stereotypes, difficulties in maintaining one's professional status, false

image of the approached country etc. Moreover, Germany has not opened its labour market for Poles and other new members of the EU. Allowing freedom of movement is still considered unlikely.

The above discussed processes of suffering appear to be typical of every immigration career. Therefore, I believe, the findings of this study may turn out to be credible and useful in other contexts. Still, a crucial problem remains: how and to what extent an individual's cultural background and national identity influence her or his immigration career in its trajectory and assimilation processes and how these are effected by different social conditions and cultural differences in the host country. These issues may prove rather tricky and therefore invite further investigation.

There is no doubt that sociologists should not prefer glorious guidelines and idealised assumptions of the European Committee to the reality of ordinary daily life of people and their common-sense understanding of the world they live in. We must be very careful about ongoing debates on the making of a European identity which enthusiastically advocate the disappearance or decline of national identities. This study has shown that issues of national identity, collective memory and cultural marginality are of great concern not only on the level of cultural and political elites and professional liaison workers but also on the level on ordinary persons who live their mundane life on the borders of two (or more) cultures.

Appendix

Transcription notation system adopted from Gail Jefferson and additional symbols used in this study in the transcription of the autobiographical narrative interviews.

The transcription symbols as used in the transcriptions of the autobiographical narrative interviews are to show the informant's talk as it was originally spoken and take paraverbal and nonverbal language phenomenon into consideration. All symbols derive from those developed by Gail Jefferson (see Atkinson and Heritage, 1984, ix-xvi).

...	The shortest healable pause, less than 1 second.
(2), (3)	Timed pauses, two and three seconds respectively
.hh	Speaker's audible in-breath.
hh.	Speaker's audible out-breath.
It was/ it was my choice	Slashes mark a cut off of prior word or utterance; several times repeated words or utterances, corrections of prior word or utterance.
()	Unclear speech or noise to which no approximation is made; utterance produced, but its sense could not be discerned.
(word)	Material within brackets represents the transcriber's guess at an unclear part of the tape; word(s) unclear but "retrieved" as far as possible by transcriber
((laughing))	Transcriber's comments on various speech sounds or other details of conversational scene, or characteristic of talk;
((((ironically)))	Transcriber's judgements and interpretations.
Word	Underlining marks emphasis on the word or utterance.
CAPITALS	Capital letters indicate speech noticeably louder than that surrounding it.
Italics	Italics indicate words used in the foreign (German) language, or polonised versions of German words
[opening the door]	Transcriber's comments on things which are not connected with characteristic of talk;

It was not my fault [] What do	Square brackets between adjacent lines of concurrent speech denote the space of overlapping talk.
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Additional symbols and remarks:

I: Interviewer

N: Narrator

I do not translate or even replace with English equivalents all nonlexical phrases typical for the Polish language like for instance: ‘yyy’, ‘mmm’, ‘mc’.

When citing an autobiographical narrative interview I give the name of the narrator changed for masking purposes first and then in brackets: page and after a slash mark lines of the passage. For instance: ‘Robert (16/23-30)’ means that the quotation comes from the interview with Robert and takes place on the page 16 between lines 23 and 30, and ‘Marta (17/43-18/20)pl’ denotes that the passage is taken from the interview with Marta, starts on the page 17, line 43 and ends on the page 18, line 20. Moreover, when only cited in the study parts of the interview have been translated into English and the whole interview has been transcribed and analysed in Polish I put ‘pl’ abbreviation after the bracket. Thus, the interview with Robert has been completely translated into English and all numbers like page or line relate to the English text, and only portions of the interview with Marta used for the purposes of this study has been translated into English, and all numbers indicate their place in the Polish text.

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Kurzfassung

Die Ausweitung von Globalisierungsprozessen, die Vereinigung der Europäischen Gemeinschaft mit der einhergehenden Internalisierung der Wirtschaft, das hohe Maß an Mobilität und das Verschwinden von Landesgrenzen stattet Menschen mit der Möglichkeit aus, sich in der Welt zu bewegen und Kontakt zu anderen ethnischen und kulturellen Gruppen aufzunehmen. Folglich werden sie Teil zweier (oder mehrerer) geschichtlicher Traditionen, kultureller Muster, Sprachen, moralischer Codes und politischer Loyalität und treffen wiederholt auf Situationen, in denen ihre nationale (ethische) Identität als ein Thema aufgezeigt wird, welches definiert, verhandelt und interpretiert werden muss.

In dieser Arbeit wird der Versuch unternommen, zu zeigen, dass die weit verbreitete Annahme in der Diskussion der Europäischen Integration, die nationale Identität verlöre ihre Bedeutung und die Bedeutung der Europäischen Identität sei unaufhörlich ansteigend, zu enthusiastisch und unreif ist. Es wird argumentiert, dass Belange der nationalen Identität, kollektives Gedächtnis und kulturelle Grenzen für einfache Menschen, die ihr weltliches Leben an der Schwelle zweier (oder mehrerer) Kulturen leben, immer noch von großer Bedeutung sind. Erfahrungen junger Polen, die in Deutschland leben, sind in diesem Zusammenhang ein sehr interessantes Beispiel. Ihre Biographien bilden die Grundlage für die Analyse.

Die Tradition des Symbolischen Interaktionismus (Symbolischer Interaktionismus von George H. Mead und Herbert Blumer, die Phänomenologie von Alfred Schütz, die Chicagoer Schule und Anselm L. Strauss, die Dramaturgie von Erving Goffman, die Ethnomethodologie von Harold Garfinkel, und die Konversationsanalyse von Harvey Sacks) und das autobiographische narrative Interview entwickelt, von Fritz Schütze, schaffen den theoretischen und methodischen Rahmen dieser Arbeit. Die Anhänger des Symbolischen Interaktionismus glauben, dass Identität im Zuge von Interaktionsprozessen gebildet wird. Bedeutende Interaktionen werden im Gedächtnis gesammelt und bilden schließlich die individuellen Biographien.

Durch ihre einzigartige Methode der Akquirierung von Daten (das ex tempore Zurückrufen des Lebenslaufs) und den sorgfältigen Arbeitsablauf, ermöglicht die biographische

Methode die detaillierte Rekonstruktion des faktischen Laufs der Kette der Ereignisse im Leben eines Erzählers und die Analyse soziologischer Merkmale, Voraussetzungen und Konsequenzen dieses Verlaufs. Deshalb ist dies der beste Weg, Einsichten über den Prozess der Bildung der Veränderungen und der Entwicklungen von Identitäten (einschließlich nationaler Identitäten) zu erhalten. Nationale Identität wird als eine besondere Dimension der Selbstidentifikation verstanden. Diese Dimension betrifft die individuellen Wege der Konstruktion nationaler Zugehörigkeit, sowie die Arten, diese gegenüber anderen auszudrücken und die Interpretation ihrer Haltung zu ihrem nationalem Selbst, welche im Inhalt sowie in der Form der Präsentation des autobiographischen narrativen Interviews offenbart werden (Vgl. Eisenstadt, Giesen, 1995; Czyżewski, 1996; Potrowski, 1996).

Die ausführliche Analyse der aufeinander folgenden Phasen in der Karriere der jungen polnischen Einwanderer in Deutschland gibt uns einen Einblick in zwei vorherrschende biographische Prozesse und soziobiographische Bedingungen, die ihre Dynamik unterstützen. Diese sind: der Verlaufskurve-Prozess (d. h. ungeordnete soziale Prozesse und Leidensprozesse (Riemann, Schütze, 1991) und der auf erfolgreiche Anpassung und Assimilation gerichtete Prozess.

Die anfänglichen Phasen der von den Erzählern berichteten Immigrationsprozesse werden bezüglich des Verlaufskurvenkonzepts des Leidens von Fritz Schütze und Gerhard Riemann (Riemann, Schütze, 1991; Schütze 1996) als auch der von Robert E. Park (Park, 1950) eingeführten und später von Everett V. Stonequist (Stonequist, 1961) erweiterten klassischen Diskussion der Marginalität und Georg Simmels (Simmel, 1972) und Alfred Schütz' Konzept „des Fremden“ (Schütz, 1990b) untersucht.

Beim Eintritt ins Gastgeberland und während des Erfahrens und Erlernens der dortigen Lebensbedingungen leiden Immigranten oft an einer sich vertiefenden Isolation und wachsender Unordnung ihrer Lebenssituationen. Sie müssen fortwährend die Spannung zwischen der Loyalität und Affinität zu ihrem Herkunftsland und ihrem Gastgeberland ausbalancieren. Dies führt zu einem gesteigerten Gefühl der Entfremdung und Isolation, das sich in der begleitenden quälenden Beunruhigung zeigt.

Durch die kulturelle Marginalisierung, das auf Distanz gehalten werden, und den Zwang sich mit den negativen Auswirkungen der Stigmatisierung (d. h. das weit verbreitete schlechte Bild der Polen in Deutschland) auseinanderzusetzen, erfahren die jungen Polen nicht nur die Fremdartigkeit ihrer neuen Umgebung, sondern auch ein Gefühl der Selbstentfremdung. Diese führt oft zu ernststen Zusammenbrüchen und Gefühlen der Ambivalenz. Müde, schwach und enttäuscht, verlieren die Immigranten schrittweise die Kontrolle über ihren Lebenslauf und sind gezwungen sich den überwältigenden äußeren Umständen zu ergeben. Sie sind nicht mehr fähig, ihre Handlungen bewusst und aktiv durchzuführen. Es endet üblicherweise mit vertiefter Erfahrung von erweitertem Leiden.

Es gibt ein paar Rahmenbedingungen, die zu den vertiefenden Anrissen in der Lebenssituation der Einwanderer beisteuern und welche deshalb die Verlaufskurvendynamik erhöhen können:

1. Wie wir aus der Methode des autobiographischen narrativen Interviews wissen, wird die Identität im Interaktionsablauf konstituiert, verhandelt, umgewandelt, bezweifelt oder bestätigt. In der Zusammenfassung von der Ereignissen betonen die Erzähler zwei besondere Ursprünge der Interaktionsanomie: divergente Definitionen von der gemeinsamen Vergangenheit Polens und Deutschlands und die vorherrschende negative Darstellung der Polen.

Die unvereinbaren Interpretationen der Kriegsgeschehnisse werden zum Hauptaugenmerk in vielen Interaktionen zwischen jungen Polen und hauptsächlich älteren Deutschen. Dies sorgt für Interaktionsanomie und bringt unerträgliche Missstimmung in ihre gegenseitigen Beziehungen. Dies bestätigt, dass die Vergangenheit des Heimatlandes als besonders entscheidend für das nationale Bewusstsein seiner Bürger angesehen werden kann (Wodak et al., 1999).

Das beschädigende stereotype Bild eines Polen (eine Person, die bettelt, mogelt und stiehlt), welches in Deutschland weit verbreitet ist, ist verbunden mit schmerzhaften Erfahrungen von Ablehnung, Zurückweisung und Gefühlen der Minderwertigkeit. Die negative Auswirkung des niedrigeren Status des Immigranten, der daraus hervorgeht, dass sie im Gastgeberland nicht richtig wahrgenommen und akzeptiert

werden, stellt sich als einer der massgeblichen Störfaktoren im Immigrationprozess dar.

Durch ihre mangelnden Sprachkenntnisse werden die Immigranten oft zur Zielscheibe des Spotts. Interessanterweise versuchen die Erzähler plausible Erklärungen für dieses unvorteilhafte Bild ihrer Nation zu finden und konstruieren vernünftige Erklärungen für die Entstehung des negativen Bildes eines Polen in den Augen eines Deutschen. Dadurch wird der Typ eines polnischen *Caffone* geschaffen. Er beschreibt eine Person, einen Einfaltspinsel, normalerweise einen polnischen Wanderarbeiter, der sich – durch den Mangel sozialer Bindungen und Kontrolle – schlecht benimmt und sich gleichgültig verhält (Miller, Park, 1969).

2. Bestimmte biographische Verluste haben auch einen entscheidenden Einfluss auf den Verlauf des Immigrationsprozesses. Gewöhnlich sind das: die erkennbare Verminderung der mühsam erworbenen, relativ hohen gesellschaftlichen Stellung und daraus folgenden Anerkennung und Hochachtung durch andere und der Abbruch der biographisch wichtigen Beziehungen.

Die erste Situation betrifft hauptsächlich gebildete Polinnen, die durch ihre Ehe mit Deutschen ihren Immigrationweg aufnehmen und deshalb ihre berufliche Karriere unterbrechen oder sogar aufgeben müssen. Ihre eifrigen Bemühungen ihren Status in Polen durch ein Studium zu verbessern werden zunichte gemacht, wenn sie nach Deutschland kommen. Ihre Situation wird noch komplizierter, weil sie Schwierigkeiten haben, die deutsche Sprache zu lernen. Meistens tragen sie einen großen Kostenaufwand, den die Entscheidung ihre Heimat zu verlassen und ganz von vorn anfangen zu müssen, verursacht.

Eine andere bedeutende biographische Bedingung, die den Immigrationprozess erschwert, ist die Aussichtslosigkeit wichtige Beziehungen zu erhalten. Zunächst betrachten viele junge Polen ihre Immigration als ein kurzfristiges Abenteuer und eine Möglichkeit schnell Geld zu verdienen. Angezogen von besseren Löhnen und Aussichten auf berufliche Verwirklichung, verlängern sie ihr Aufenthalt im Ausland bis ins Unendliche, ziehen den Wohlstand den in der Heimat gebliebenen geliebten Personen vor. Lange Trennungen der Erzähler von den Leuten mit denen

sie emotional verbunden sind, stellen ihre innigen Beziehungen auf die Probe. Meistens lösen sie sich auf. Dies hat einen sehr starken, meistens verheerend Einfluss auf ihre Biographien und dadurch auf ihren Immigrationsprozess.

3. Ein trügerischer Mechanismus, der der Immigration innewohnt und zu einer Desillusionierung und Enttäuschung führt, ist eine weitere Rahmenbedingung für die Aktivierung der Verlaufskurvendynamik. Dieser Mechanismus wirkt als treibende Kraft oder Perpetuum Mobile der Immigrationsprozesse. Einwanderer, die schon lange Zeit im Gastgeberland wohnen, versuchen oft, die Nachteile ihres Lebens und ihre Misserfolge zu verbergen. Es ist verständlich, dass Menschen, die planen zu emigrieren, falsche und verzerrte Bilder vom Ausland und den Lebensbedingungen dort haben. Unglücklicherweise entscheiden sie sich oft auf Grund dieser Einbildung, ins Ausland zu gehen. Dadurch wird eine Kettenreaktion ausgelöst. In den gesammelten autobiographischen narrativen Interviews werden drei Standpunkte offenbar: die Perspektive einer Person, die durch das verschönerte Bild der Gastbergesellschaft verleitet wird, die Sichtweise eines „Verleiters“, d. h. einer Person (Immigrant), die sich des verführerischen Eindrucks, welchen sie auf ihre Landsleute macht, während sie ihr Heimatland besucht, bewusst ist, und schließlich die Sichtweise eines Menschen, der durch Verschleierung der wahren Umstände ein Familienmitglied zur Immigration zwingt.
4. Ironischerweise können die Immigranten den Verlaufskurvenprozess nicht durchbrechen und nach Hause zurückkehren (entweder, wegen der potenziellen Beschämung, im Ausland nicht erfolgreich gewesen zu sein oder weil sie keine Freunde oder keinen Ort haben, zu dem sie zurückkehren könnten, oder weil die Verpflichtungen in Deutschland sie oder ihn daran hindern, das Land zu verlassen) und deshalb sind sie gefangen. Paradoxerweise initiiert die biographische Handlung des Immigranten so den biographischen Prozess der Verlaufskurve. Man kann fälschlicherweise annehmen, dass es eine sehr einfache Lösung für die Befreiung aus dieser Zwickmühle gäbe, nämlich die des Zurückkehrens ins Heimatland. Interessanterweise garantiert dies jedoch nicht die Durchbrechung des Verlaufskurvenprozesses. Der Grund hierfür ist, dass sich die heimkehrenden Immigranten dort nicht mehr wohl fühlen, weil ihre Abreise ihre sozialen Netzwerke beschädigt und schrittweise zerstört. Das bohrende Gefühl, ein Fremder

zu sein, tritt auch zu Hause auf. Dieses Phänomen wurde brilliant im Artikel „Homecomer“ (Schütz, 199b) von Alfred Schütz beschrieben. Auch die hier beschriebenen Immigranten kannten das Phänomen, während ihres langerwarteten Heimatbesuchs unerwartet zu bemerken, dass sie sich dort fremd und verwirrt vorkamen. Ihnen fällt auf, dass sie in die Falle gegangen sind – sie fühlen sich nun weder hier noch dort zu Hause – und sie können keinen Ausweg finden. Sie kommen zu dem Schluss, dass sie die Kultur des Gastgeberlandes wahrscheinlich niemals durch und durch verinnerlichen werden, sie sich aber gleichzeitig bewusst werden, dass sie die Bindungen mit dem Land welches sie verlassen haben, verloren haben. Dies hat entscheidende Implikationen für ihre Identität. Sie werden zu „marginal men“ (Park, 1950; Stonequist, 1961).

5. Durch ihre Interaktionen in der fremden Welt, durch die ihnen die Konflikte und Unterschiede zwischen den zwei Welten bewusst werden, werden sie sich auf schmerzhaft Weise selbst bewusst (Cf. Stonequist, 1961). Sie müssen ständig Spannungen zwischen den Loyalitäten zu ihrem Heimat- und Gastgeberland ausgleichen. Mit der Zeit lernen sie ihre kulturellen Bezugsrahmen zu verschieben und neue moralische Codes und Haltungen erfolgreich in ihr Wissen zu integrieren. Der Anpassungsprozess beginnt. Die Immigranten wollen oft nicht zugeben, das Deutschland mehr und mehr an Wichtigkeit in Bezug auf ihre biographischen Pläne zunimmt. Infolge sehr starker, erst kürzlich entdeckter Bindungen mit ihrem Heimatland entwickelt sich ein komplizierter Sinn für Loyalität. Deshalb gehen die Erzähler entweder radikale Schritte, um Deutschland so schnell wie möglich zu verlassen, oder sie suchen nach unbedeutenden Rechtfertigungen für ihren Aufenthalt in Deutschland und betrügen sich hiermit selbst. Diese Art des Umgangs mit seinen eigenen Schwierigkeiten kann sehr gefährlich werden, weil es den Assimilationsprozess und die biographische Arbeit verhindert, die zur Entwicklung einer „selbstbewussten“ oder „selbstsicheren“ Identität notwendig sind.

Die aufgenommenen autobiographischen narrativen Interviews zeigen den Immigrationsprozess nur teilweise und sind normalerweise auf die Verlaufskurve in ihrer sequentiellen Folge fokussiert. In vielen Fällen treten die Erzähler kaum in den Assimilationsprozess ein. Dennoch hat man allen Grund zu glauben, dass dieser Prozess in der Zukunft von ihnen vollführt werden wird. Auch ist es unmöglich ihn ohne theoretische

Aus diesem Grund werden einige biographische Bedingungen unter denen der Vermutungen zu analysieren. Assimilationsprozess angestossen werden kann, als eine bestimmte Tendenz in der Biographie auf dem Weg zur stark erwünschten Haltung und eine idealisierte Orientierung (Weber, 1949) angesehen. Dies ist eine Art der doppelten Identifikation (Bivalenz mit dem Wort von Kłoskowska), die beiden Kulturen im Leben der Person die gleiche Bedeutung, den gleichen Wert zumisst (Kłoskowska, 2001). Die folgenden Umstände unterstützen den Prozess der Anpassung an die fremde Kultur:

1. Die Anteilnahme in sozialen Welten im Sinne von Strauss (Strauss, 1978; Clarke, 1991), hilft dem Einwanderer ein Netzwerk von wichtigen Beziehungen mit den Einheimischen aufzubauen. Für diese lösen die Einbeziehung und die Zugehörigkeit der Immigranten zu ihrer sozialen Welt stereotypische Bilder der Polen ab.
2. Emotionale Unterstützung und Hilfe des Biographiebeteuers (Ehepartner oder Freunde der Erzähler – die Einheimischen des Gastgeberlandes). Sie spielen meistens die Rolle von Wegweiseren, z.B. führen sie den Neuankömmling in die unbekannte Welt ein. Ihre emotionale Verbindung (zwischen einem Ausländer und einem Einheimischen) hat eine entscheidende Bedeutung. Sie ermöglicht die Führungs-, Einweisungs-, Bekanntmachungs- und Beratungsprozesse, die auf besseres Verständnis und Anerkennung für die Gastgebekultur hinwirken. Dies wiederum beseitigt schrittweise das Gefühl von Entfremdung und Isolation.
3. Leben innerhalb einer Ghettosituation, die als ein Schutz für die Neuankömmlinge dient und sie durch die Schwierigkeiten des Lebens in einem fremden Land leitet. Es ist jedoch umstritten, ob die Nationalghettos nur Schutz bieten und das Leben im Ausland weniger mühsam werden lassen. Es ist nachvollziehbar, dass sie auch zu einer Verzögerung oder sogar Verhinderung der Integration in die Gastgebergesellschaft führen können.

Und schließlich:

4. Die Überzeugung der Einwanderer von ihrer besonderen Aufgabe, welche sie im Ausland zu erfüllen haben. Sie stellen ihre ursprüngliche Kultur in positivem Licht dar, um Vorurteile über ihr Land zu entkräften und vermitteln zwischen den zwei Kulturen um einen gewissen Grad an gegenseitigem Verständnis und Vertrauen aufzubauen. Im Verlauf der Immigrationskarriere werden den Einzelpersonen die eigene Kultur und auch die des Gastgeberlandes immer bewusster. Sie werden „marginal men“, die – wie R.E. Park behauptet – definitionsgemäß kultivierter, intelligenter und objektiver sind (Park, 1961).

Die ausführliche Analyse der autobiographischen narrativen Interviews der jungen polnischen Einwanderer bestätigt, dass das Problem der nationalen Identität unter keinen Umständen vernachlässigt oder missachtet werden sollte. Die Erfahrungen von Fremdheit und Entfremdung im Ausland nehmen zu und vertiefen das Potential für das Nachdenken und den Einblick in das eigene nationale/kulturelle Selbst schrittweise. Dessen Existenz und wie wichtig es ist, wird nicht nur in den Berichten der Erzähler offenbar (d. h. an welche Situationen, Erfahrungen, Personen und Gefühle sie sich erinnern), sondern auch darin wie sie es berichten (d. h. in den formalen Eigenschaften ihrer biographischen Erfahrungen - ihrer Art der Erzählung so wie ihrer Argumentationsweise). Ich bin der Überzeugung, dass Fragen der Identität und besonders der nationalen Identität besonders im Globalisierungszeitalter und durch die folgende Intensivierung von interkulturellen Kontakten an Bedeutung gewinnen.

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