Jadranka Zlomislić
0000-0003-4007-1877
University of Osijek

Lívia Szélpál
0009-0001-8194-6118
University of Szeged

Breaking Stereotypes across Cultures: The Croatian and Hungarian Stereotypical Representations of American Culture[1]

Original research article
doi.org/10.17234/9789533791258.09

Abstract

This study reports the results of a joint research exploring identity and diversity across cultures by focusing on the Croatian, Hungarian, and American contexts. Its primary aim is to raise awareness of stereotypical preconceptions and cross-cultural similarities and differences between Americans and Hungarians and Americans and Croats in order to broaden understanding and help break the stereotypes that may lead to discrimination and bias. The study is divided into two parts. The first part of the analysis investigates stereotypical representations of American culture from the Hungarian perspective and vice versa. It provides the historical context to the topic, discusses

[1] The research presented in the second part of this chapter (subchapter 3.2) was funded by the project Sjevernoameričke književnosti i kulture u hrvatskom i europskom kontekstu [North American Literatures and Cultures in the Croatian and European Context] of the Center for North American Studies, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Osijek.

the Facebook blog and Internet diary *Hesna amerikai naplója* [Hesna's American Diary] by Hungarian journalist and writer Hesna Al Ghaoui and Jessica Keener's novel *Strangers in Budapest* (2018), summarizes an interview with Paul Kantor, former Fulbright scholar in Hungary, about his perception of Hungary and Hungarians, and presents the results of a qualitative analysis of Hungarian university students' stereotype response. The second part of the study takes a closer look at the Croatian perspective of America and Americans by analyzing the information obtained by student surveys conducted before and after an interactive lecture by Cody McClain Brown, an American expatriate in Croatia. In addition, it discusses the American perspective on Croatia and Croats, obtained by a qualitative analysis of Cody McClain Brown's blog, podcast, and two of his memoirs, *Chasing a Croatian Girl: A Survivor's Tale* (2015) and *Croatia Strikes Back: The Unnecessary Sequel* (2018). The results of this comparative study demonstrate that academic collaboration promoting intercultural dialogue and increasing self-awareness as well as other-awareness brings mutual benefits as we strive to break stereotypes and build bridges across cultural divides.

Keywords: Breaking stereotypes, cross-cultural, Americans, Hungarians, Croats

1. Introduction

The initial research reported in this chapter originated as a collaboration between two researchers, one from Hungary and the other from Croatia, who aimed to explore identity and diversity across cultures within the Croatian, Hungarian, and American contexts. As an international cross-comparative investigation into cultural stereotypes based on the varying perspectives among Hungarian and Croatian students and Americans who have been immersed in the Hungarian and Croatian cultures, this study aims to raise awareness of stereotypical preconceptions and cross-cultural similarities and differences between Americans, Hungarians, and Croats. It seeks to broaden cultural understanding and help break divisive attitudes and stereotypes, adhering to the premise that the identification of similarities and differences across cultures through a guided and critical

reading of literary texts, preferably in interaction with authors, will enhance students' comprehension of and knowledge about people from different cultural backgrounds. Both authors have observed that cultural generalizations expressed during classes tend to lead to the formation of cultural stereotypes that can influence a person's perception of others.

The study highlights different perspectives of individuals from a diversity of cultures and experiences with the aim of reaching new cultural knowledge and understanding. It is grounded on the concept of cultural diversity as defined by Article 1 of the UNESCO *Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity*, which states:

> Culture takes diverse forms across time and space. This diversity is embodied in the uniqueness and plurality of the identities of the groups and societies making up humankind. As a source of exchange, innovation and creativity, cultural diversity is as necessary for humankind as biodiversity is for nature. In this sense, it is the common heritage of humanity and should be recognized and affirmed for the benefit of present and future generations. (Stenou 4)

Professionals from diverse fields of social science and humanities have been interested in the topic of stereotypes since the 1920s, when the term "stereotype" initially came to be used in the modern psychological sense. In Walter Lippmann's *Public Opinion*, published in 1922, the term "stereotype" was canonized in the vocabulary of social science and explained by Lippmann as the picture individuals form "of the world outside from the unchallenged pictures in their heads" (273). Therefore, as Curtis explains, the stereotype is perceived as an imperfect impression and a mechanism by which "[o]ne's mental images, perceptions, beliefs, and expectations about a particular individual or group dominates [sic] one's outlook towards them" (qtd. in Lippmann xxvii). As an explanation for his argument, Lippmann refers to the Platonic "Fable of the Cave" by arguing that stereotypes are "distortions," "caricatures," and "institutionalized misinformation," in other words, "pictures in our heads" (qtd. in LaVio-

lette and Silvert 258). Similarly to Lippmann, Amossy and Heidingsfeld explain that "[a]s a cultural model through which we perceive, interpret and describe reality, the stereotype is necessarily linked with representation" and that simultaneously "[i]ts preconstructed forms provide representation with foundations; they guarantee its possibility and legibility" (Amossy and Heidingsfeld 689).

The pragmatic usage of stereotypes lies in forming "template-like cognitive representations" by categorizing human beings and social groups associated with specific attributes (Martin et al. 1777). These judgmental characteristic features can be related to particular social groups or even nations. Consequently, the function of stereotypes is to help the cognitive understanding of a culture, a nation, or a society by offering a mechanism of simplified, easily learnable associated attributes acting as mental shortcuts and delivering a system of signs and a swift and structured approach to knowledge stored in memory (Martin et al. 1777).

The present study deals with hetero-stereotypes, more precisely, with a comparative analysis of stereotypes in three different cultural contexts. According to Musek, on a basic level, stereotypes provide an easy access to information about others in a simplified, generalized, and categorically structured manner; therefore, stereotypes have crucial psychological functions that help people differentiate certain groups and foster a sense of belonging to the group (15). Nationality stereotypes are the most widely accepted personality stereotypes, and Musek highlights the following mechanisms as categories in creating stereotypes: (1) strengthening self-evaluation, (2) fostering national identity, (3) denial or projection of one's deficiencies, (3) canalizing aggression, (4) conventionalized thinking for fear of the unknown, (5) cognitive regulation, (6) social learning, and (7) enforcement of group power (17–20). The present study will employ Musek's methodological concept in order to scrutinize the (re)production of specific cultural and national stereotypes.

Many factors influence the formation of national stereotypes, which can be negative or positive. While negative stereotypes are harmful, posi-

tive ones can be both harmless and harmful as they challenge the uniqueness of people's identities. Cultural stereotypes are frequently closely associated with prejudices, which can be defined as evaluative judgments, created uncritically in advance, that are not based on logically and empirically researched assessments. Mcleod suggests that "[b]y consciously challenging our own biases, engaging in constructive conversations, and promoting inclusivity," we can overcome the negativity of stereotypes and "begin to break down stereotypes and work towards a more equitable society." In the same vein, explaining the use of stereotypes in education, Soule et al. make the following observation:

> Our goal as educators should be that students from every gender, race, national origin, age, or social status see themselves as leaders or learn about leaders who are not like them in authentic—not stereotypical—ways. This doesn't mean that case authors and instructors should pretend that stereotypes don't exist but they need to be aware of them and help their students develop that awareness as well. ("The Stereotypes in MBA Case Studies")

This study relies on the definition of a stereotype as "a relatively stable opinion of a generalizing and evaluative nature," set forth by Duijker and Frijda (115). According to Duijker and Frijda, a stereotype "refers to a category of people," suggesting that they are similar in some ways and offering generalizations and judgment (115). As evaluative forms, stereotypes commonly reflect the problems of (1) validity, (2) projection, (3) generality, (4) specificity, (5) differentiation, (6) retroaction, and (7) self-description (Duijker and Frijda 128–37). By focusing on hetero-stereotypes, there needs to be an awareness that generalizing judgments must not lead to distortions based on preconceived expectations and misconceptions.

2. Methodology

The research was based on the methodology of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to obtain qualitative data from a variety of sources, including

an interview, response papers, travel blogs, podcasts, memoirs, and a novel. The first part of the research, conducted in Hungary, included a critical discourse analysis of the American perception of Hungary, which was based on the following sources: travel diaries written by Hungarians about the American continent and the United States, an Interview with Paul Kantor, Professor Emeritus of Political Science at Fordham University, NYC, and Jessica Keener's novel *Strangers in Budapest* (2017). The second part of the research, conducted in Croatia, included the analysis of memoirs, blogs, and a lecture held by Cody McClain Brown, author, blogger, podcast host, and professor at the Faculty of Political Science of Zagreb. The empirical part of the research was conducted in both countries during the 2021–2022 academic year, and it included a qualitative analysis of student surveys and response papers on the representation of general stereotypes. The analysis also relied on qualitative data obtained from the Croatian students' interaction with Cody McClain Brown.

Upon completion of the research in the Hungarian and Croatian higher education settings, the results were compared to define cross-cultural similarities and differences between cultures, with a particular emphasis on exploring student perspectives regarding cultural stereotypes. The target group included university students in Pécs, Szeged, and Osijek (19–23 years) whose perceptions of Americans and of themselves and others have been shaped by knowledge acquired in American studies courses as well as through exposure to numerous forms of mass media.

This joint research is an asymmetrical comparison of the Croatian and Hungarian cases in the sense that, in line with Jürgen Kocka's approach, some points were investigated in detail while other parts of the analysis were limited to a mere outline, serving as comparative reference points (see Kocka 40). The primary purpose of this joint research was to determine a common methodological ground for further research into this topic.

3. Breaking Stereotypes across Cultures: The Hungarian and the Croatian Research

3.1. The Hungarian Perspectives on the Stereotypical Representations of American Culture

Based on the conceptual framework mentioned above, this section presents the Hungarian perspectives on the stereotypical representations of American culture. Since travel diaries of Hungarians about America have played a significant role in creating Hungarians' stereotypical perception of America, one of the starting points for this analysis was Hesna Al Ghaoui's *American Diary* (*Hesna amerikai naplója*, 2021), which offers an insight into the stereotypical representations of American everyday life and traditions so different from the Hungarian ones. The second case in point was Jessica Keener's second novel, *Strangers in Budapest* (2017), which, conversely, depicts Hungary and the perception of Hungarians from the American perspective and provides a perfect example of the hetero-stereotype. An interview with Paul Kantor, Professor Emeritus of Political Science at Fordham University, NYC, also served as an example of the perception of Hungary from the American perspective. This section concludes with an analysis of Hungarian university students' responses on stereotypes about America and Americans as referential points for the comparison with results obtained in the Croatian context.

3.1.1. The Historical Background to Stereotypical Representations of American Culture from the Hungarian Perspective

Travel diaries written by Hungarians about the American continent and the United States were one of the very first sources that established Hungarians' stereotypes about Americans. Stephanus Parmenius Budeius's[2] *Newfoundland Letter* (1583) is one of the most significant and authentic

[2] English: Stephen Parmenius of Buda, Hungarian: Budai Parmenius István

documents of the Gilbert expedition, a milestone in the development of the British Empire, made by an eyewitness. Addressed to Richard Hakluyt in Oxford, it describes the country's geographical location and attributes. Parmenius wrote his letter in Latin, and Hakluyt translated it into English and published it in his works on geographical discoveries (1589, 1600) (Balázs 78–79). Parmenius's description promotes the generalization that the American continent is a desolate place: "Now I ought to tell you about the customs, territories, and inhabitants: and yet what am I to say, my dear Hakluyt, when I see nothing but desolation?" (qtd. in Balázs 79).

The American identity as such evolved only after the American Revolution. In his *Letters from an American Farmer*, Hector St. Jean de Crèvecœur was among the first ones who articulated and asked the question: "What is an American" (Letter III). As he claimed, "The next wish of this traveler will be to know whence came all these people? They are a mixture of English, Scotch, Irish, French, Dutch, Germans, and Swedes. From this promiscuous breed, that race now called Americans have arisen . . ." (Crèvecœur, Letter III).[3]

After the establishment of the American identity in the eighteenth century, its image changed drastically during the nineteenth century with the accelerated rate of modernization, urbanization, technological advancements, and industrialization. Moreover, as Venkovits argues, the transfer of cultures, goods, people, and ideas across countries and continents also changed the traveling habits of people and the perception of the image of America (222). Such changes and developments also had an impact on the mentality of people, the way they gathered knowledge about and comprehended the world, and how they presented their experience to fellow citizens through travel reports, letters, and diaries (Ven-

[3] In his *Autobiography*, Benjamin Franklin mentioned the collective title of "American" people. However, his complete *Autobiography* was published after his death, in 1791. J. Hector St. John de Crèvecœur's *Letters from an American Farmer*, in which he also wrote about the forming of the American identity as such, was published in 1782.

kovits 222). It is arguable that these travel reports also included stereotypical descriptions of the United States.

3.1.2. The Images of the United States in Nineteenth-Century Hungarian Travelogues

What were these repeated images? America has always been a springboard for the European imagination, significantly and uniquely (Kadarkay 44). Hungarians experienced and described the transatlantic journey as a place of transformations, revelations, and an ideal space of freedom. Their reports and travelogues not only highlight technological advancements in travel and migration but also reflect the mentality of the travelers who were projecting their assumptions and insecurities into their stereotypical descriptions of America (Venkovits 223). For early travelers in the Reform Age, the stereotypical description of the United States was a site of study and a possible model to be followed by their country of origin. In the second half of the nineteenth century, the United States represented the American Dream, the land of possibilities and opportunities, compared to the home country (Venkovits 224). However, as Vári argues, "the model country of the Reform Era became the land of threats by 1890" (153). Therefore, the images of America were determined by the fears and expectations that the travelers brought from home (Vári 153). Unlike Vári, Glant argues that Hungarian nineteenth-century travel writing about the United States was more complicated and complex in the *fin-de-siècle* and that the predominant stereotypical description of America was not that of the land of disappointments and threats since America was still considered to be the country of opportunities (216). Therefore, as Lévai explains, Glant's interpretation of Hungarian travel literature about the United States is not a simple story about the decline of the American Dream but a representation following a cyclical fluctuation pattern (202).

Stereotypes that have been created through repeated patterns of travel diaries as forms of hetero-stereotypes still persist in the images of the

United States as perceived by Hungarians. For example, Sándor Bölöni Farkas (1795–1842) is known in Hungarian literature for his 1831 travel diary about the United States, published in 1834. In the first half of the nineteenth century, his travel-diary of his journey to the United States, *Utazás Észak-Amerikában* [*Journey in North America*] (1831), had a significant impact on Hungarian history and has become a cornerstone for depicting the United States as a free and model country. His travel-diary even publishes the full text of the Declaration of Independence (Gál 23). Bölöni Farkas contributed with this positive view of America, promoting the stereotype of a typical American character. He describes Americans as relaxed people of stable character who are more prone to religious conversion than Hungarians (130). Moreover, he highlights the importance of education for Americans: "The Americans are fully aware that education not only is the key to individual achievement, but it also leavens national welfare" (88).

Similarly, János Xántus (1825–1894), a well-known Hungarian traveler and explorer, wrote two works about his journeys—*Letters from North America* (1858) and *Travels in Southern California* (1860) (qtd. in Bollobás 88). Like Bölöni Farkas, Xántus also depicted the American character using positive stereotypes: "According to the American concept, honest work is worthy of respect; poverty is just a misfortune, but not a shame—as opposed to Europe" (Xántus 4, translation Lívia Szélpál).[4] Xántus also emphasizes the importance of traveling with Americans to understand the typical American character and way of life. As he argues, "It is difficult to understand the American way of life from any book or description. It can only be understood and appreciated if one lives there for years and wanders along with the Americans" (Xántus 134, translation Lívia Szélpál).

[4] There is an English translation of Xántus's work. However, the author of this part of the chapter had no access to it; she used her own translation. For further reference, see the published English translation: Xántus, John. *Letters from North America*, 1858. Translated by Theodore Schoenman and Helen Benedek Schoenman, Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1975.

Moreover, he emphasizes the pragmatic and business-oriented character of Americans: ". . . the American spirit knows no obstacle when the prospect of profit is connected with it" (136). Also, like Bölöni Farkas, in his travel diaries, Xántus associates Americans with the ideals of freedom and democracy. As the following analysis of Hesna Al Ghaoui's *American Diary* will show, the stereotypical descriptions of the American character in Hungarian travel diaries have continued to this day.

3.1.3. Hesna Al Ghaoui's *American Diary* [*Hesna amerikai naplója*] (2021) about the United States

Hesna Al Ghaoui (1978–) is a journalist, editor, reporter, and author. She was born in Hungary to a bicultural family background. She has been a correspondent of the Hungarian Television and has reported from several combat zones. As a war correspondent and reporter, she encountered the psychological and physical effects of fear that led her to focus on the issues of resilience, mental adaptability, surviving difficult situations, and even gaining strength from a crisis (Hesna Al Ghaoui, HESNA.HU).

In August 2021, she traveled to the United States with her family, as a Fulbright scholar to the University of California, Berkeley for the 2021–2022 academic year, to research post-traumatic growth/resilience. Her journey inspired her to launch a travel blog on her Facebook and Instagram official sites about the challenges of adjusting to the American lifestyle and education at Berkeley. Her adventures were published online in *Hesna's American Diary* in ten articles in *WMN Magazine*.

Hesna's American Diary also reflects the impact of the pandemic and the way the New Normal has changed the mentality of people, their world representation, and influenced their formation of stereotypes. Writing about the (post)pandemic situation on campus, she reveals: "I was shocked the first week when it turned out at the August departmental meeting that almost no professors planned to visit the campus beyond giving the required lectures and seminars" ("Amikor az ember," transla-

tion Lívia Szélpál). In the online *Hesna's American Diary*, Al Ghaoui also discusses the following topics: resilience during and after the Covid-19 pandemic, celebrating national holidays, expensive cost of living in the United States, lifestyle, mindset, the balance of work and family, no work on weekends, the trauma of the Pandemic, and the Ukrainian War. With humor and social responsibility, she writes about severe everyday issues in the United States from the Hungarian perspective. She also photo-documents her journey and frequently challenges Hungarian stereotypes about Americans, for example, in her ironic Facebook post about the "Inimitable Californian Flavors" with the Hungarian Lángos in California or the description of her American holiday celebration (Halloween, Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's Eve). She depicts vividly the stereotypical Christmas (over)decoration of houses, the Halloween costumes, and traditions so different from the Hungarian traditions ("Ünnepek," translation Lívia Szélpál). *Hesna's American Diary* is a key contribution to the contemporary discussion of stereotypical representations of the United States from the Hungarian perspective.

3.1.4. Jessica Keener's novel *Strangers in Budapest*: The American Perception of Hungary

Depicting Hungary and the perception of Hungarians from the American perspective, Jessica Keener's second novel, *Strangers in Budapest* (2018), is a perfect example of a hetero-stereotype. Her text is a combination of autobiography, historical novel, and thriller. The novel has received ample criticism but also much praise for its vivid portrayal of Budapest and post-communist Hungary, which is not lacking stereotypical generalizations. The setting is Budapest in the early 1990s. As the beginning foretells the end, the novel begins with the image of the Danube River symbolizing the flow of life and the bridge that connects the past and the present:

> She'd grown used to call the Danube by its Hungarian name—Duna. In fact, she preferred it over the American version. The whimsical sound—Duna—felt light on her tongue, fanciful and upbeat, a spirit rising. But, like all things in the city, the river that glittered at night concealed a darker surface under the day's harsh sun. (Keener, *Strangers in Budapest* 1)

The depiction of the river foreshadows the gloomy and dark past of Budapest and Hungary behind the surface and begs the complex question of whether Hungarians and their country can change after the trauma of the past:

> She knew that Hungarians supported Hitler, had decimated a million Jews. She knew the country had been taken over by Russia following the war and had only officially freed itself four years ago in 1991, when the last Russian troops finally vacated the country. It was a new day here, a new era. Communist statues had literally been toppled. Now Russian watches decorated with Communist symbols were sold as mementos on street corners to tourists. It was a new time of hope, wasn't it? Couldn't people and countries change? (Keener, *Strangers in Budapest* 10)

After the fall of the communist regime a young American couple, Annie and Will, move from Boston to Budapest with their recently adopted baby, Leo, to establish a new life. Keener gives the following depiction of Budapest:

> The streetcars reminded her of Boston, and in that way, Budapest felt familiar to her. Boulevards sectioned the city into twenty-three districts, rippling out in rings from the center of town to ancient ruins of former Roman settlements in the outskirts. All in all, Budapest was a lovely, walkable city, the newest darling of capitalism and the Western world. A city full of promise. Now, after fifty years of communist rule, the Russians had finally left. Hungary's cultural revival had begun. The country was striving to become modern after decades of war and long history of failures, reopening its rusty gates to Western businesses and entrepreneurs, like Will. (Keener, *Strangers in Budapest* 29)

Keener authentically portrays the post-communist Budapest, the cultural shock, and the inability to integrate into an unfamiliar culture. The city of Budapest symbolizes all of Hungary's contradictions and complicated past and struggles (Meinhart). Reading the city also entails understanding the complex set of stereotypes that represent a city that is at the same time charming as well as moody and gloomy as the dark history of Eastern Europe in the 1990s. The description of life for a foreigner in Hungary is dreary, full of bureaucratic problems, and depressing, as is the definition of its history and the behavior of its people, which is different from the more optimistic American mindset (Meinhart). Keener emphasizes the contrast between the American temperament and the stereotypical, pessimistic Hungarian attitude: "A Hungarian smiling? It was the only time Annie observed Hungarians acting effusively—toward children" (Keener, *Strangers in Budapest* 31).

Keener's portrayal of life in the post-communist Hungary—the description of urban life with Roma children selling flowers on the streets, the deep frustration of people, and the country's complicated bureaucracy—presents the Janus-faced Hungarian society, the shadow of the oppressive and traumatic past. Her explicit portrayal of racism in Hungary is thought-provoking:

> [T]hree skinheads—young men with shaved scalps, wearing black clothing and boots—emerged from the crowds and showed the little girl out of the way. "Gypsy steal American baby," one of the skinheads said, spitting on the sidewalk. . . . Gypsies steal American babies. That's just a racist lie. Plain and simple. (Keener, *Strangers in Budapest* 27)

Keener's essay, "Hidden Among Us," published in the fall 2017 edition of *The Algonquin Reader*, highlights that the novel *Strangers in Budapest* is based on Keener's authentic experience of moving to Budapest in 1993. She travelled with her husband and adopted son to (re)construct her identity with the overseas travel experience and be geographically and

emotionally close to her family's Jewish history (Hansen). As Keener argues in her essay "Hidden Among Us,"

> In the winter of 1993, I moved to Budapest with my husband, our six-month-old son, our dog, and seventeen overstuffed suitcases. We had been living in Atlanta for several years. I don't know if there is a best time for making a change in one's life, but I was in my late thirties and felt an urgency about time passing. I was especially fearful of having regrets at the end of my life. The arrival of our son, whom we adopted at four days old, intensified these feelings. ("Hidden Among Us" 45)

In both Keener's texts, one can identify a number of recurring stereotypes, highlighting the ways she sees the Hungarians from an American perspective. They can be classified into four categories, as follows:

1. the exotic post-communist city as a spectacle: "Budapest and Prague were 'it' cities and Americans were streaming over to have a look at countries long hidden behind Russia's Iron Curtain" ("Hidden Among Us" 43);
2. the city as a site of memory: "Budapest got under my skin in a different way. I was unnerved and haunted by its convoluted history. And my response felt more personal because of my own family history. I was Jewish" ("Hidden Among Us" 44);
3. the typical American mindset: "We had some savings and our American optimism" ("Hidden Among Us" 44); and
4. the Hungarian heritage: "This was a country that gave the world Liszt, produced chess and math wizards, designed distinctive porcelain and lace, and was saturated in Gypsy lore. But something had gone wrong, terribly wrong. I wanted to understand what and, most of all, why." ("Hidden Among Us" 45)

Keener concludes that what connects Americans, Hungarians, and people all over the world is the common heritage of the trauma of violence, that is, their intergenerational memory: "I began to see how we are all survivors of violence in some way or another—either personally or historical-

ly" ("Hidden Among Us" 45). In other words, she suggests not only that stereotypes are related to cultural and intergenerational memory but also that people could comprehend and interpret stereotypes as a common intercultural ground that taps into their shared collective histories and cultural experiences.

3.1.5. The Perception of Hungary from an American Perspective: Interview with Paul Kantor, Professor Emeritus of Political Science at Fordham University, NYC

The following email interview was conducted during the summer of 2022 with Paul Kantor, Professor Emeritus of Political Science at Fordham University in New York City. He was the Fulbright John Marshall Distinguished Chair in Political Science (Hungary) in 2005–2006 academic year.[5]

During his stay in Hungary as a Fulbright scholar in the 2005–2006 academic year, Paul Kantor generally experienced the overwhelming tendency of Hungarian students to rely on cultural stereotyping. Their dominant stereotype was to perceive the United States extremely positively by ignoring or not having enough knowledge about racial and class distinctions. Also, the suburban dream was a prominent recurring image in their stereotypical perception of the United States. Another stereotype that emerged during his teaching was the antisemitic view on the part of some students. However, it is important to note that although antisemitic comments were rare, they were more frequently encountered in Hungary than during his teaching years in the United States.

As for everyday encounters, Professor Kantor found Hungarians generally very friendly, warm, and thoughtful people. This image contrasted with his stereotypical impressions of other East Europeans. He grew up

[5] The whole interview with Paul Kantor is available in the Appendix. Only those questions and answers that are closely related to the topic of stereotypes are presented in the text as a summary and evaluation of the interview.

in a hybrid American family—part Italian, part Ukrainian, part Russian, and part Slovak. Many of his family members from the Eastern European side were often rather pessimistic and cautious—compared to Hungarians. Another thing that he experienced as a stereotype during his stay in Hungary was that many Hungarians seemed to be more nationalistic than he ever expected, which manifested itself in nostalgia for the historical Hungary. He also discerned substantial distrust of governmental processes and authority. All in all, during his stay in Hungary, Professor Kantor experienced a surprising degree of nationalistic and sometimes authoritarian intolerance on the part of Hungarians—something that contrasted strongly with the personal warmth he found among many Hungarians.

In line with the aforementioned Musek's view of stereotypes, Professor Kantor argues that stereotypes can also have a positive effect as they can simplify social encounters and serve as a useful tool for starting social interactions and dealing with people initially. As he argues, this can streamline the initiation of discourse and is a way of testing social encounters. According to Professor Kantor, one should differentiate stereotypes from prejudices, which involve rigid beliefs and a conclusive and often negative opinion about something or somebody. In contrast, a stereotype is a more helpful mental tool for testing or assisting in social encounters. In order to provide a complete comparative analysis of cross-cultural stereotypes between Americans and Hungarians, it is important to explore both sides of the coin. The next subchapter will, therefore, focus on the Hungarians' perception of the United States.

3.1.6. Analysis of Hungarian University Students' Responses on Stereotypes about America and Americans

The present joint research was also motivated to explore student perspectives regarding cultural stereotypes. The study's importance lies in outlining an international cross-comparative analysis of cultural stereotypes based on Hungarian and Croatian student perspectives of Americans. Ini-

tially, the target groups included university students from Pécs and Osijek (aged 19–23), but later students from Szeged were also involved in the project. The general hypothesis was that stereotypes help to simplify and ease the cognitive understanding of others by offering a system and a cultural register of easily learnable, simplified relations (Douglas 1077) that help the learning process and facilitate the comprehension of different cultures.

3.1.6.1. Qualitative Analysis Methodology and Findings

The initial research was conducted in the spring term of 2022 on a pilot group consisting of fifteen Hungarian-born English studies BA students at the University of Pécs who took part voluntarily in the spring term of 2022. As participants they were informed about the topic of the research and asked to write a two-page response paper in English on their perception of American stereotypes by answering the following questions:

1. What is your perception of the American people and culture?
2. Can you mention some basic stereotypes about American people, culture, and history?
3. Please mention some stereotypes based on your selection and choice from literature or website.

According to the findings, most of the students did not have any first-hand experience of the United States, since they never visited the country, so their perceptions were influenced solely by the media, movies, and the Internet. As for the second question, the answers varied with recurring stereotypes in the following order: (1) junk food, (2) freedom, (3) patriotism, (4) the impact of movies, (4) capitalism, (5) celebrations and holidays, (6) superficiality, and (7) lacking or not proper knowledge about Europe. Finally, for the third question, the dominant stereotypes were the decline and failure of the American Dream and the Americanization of other cultures, for which they gave examples mostly from movies.

As a continuation of the research at the University of Szeged, 48 students answered the same above-mentioned questions in the Spring term of 2023. They were also English studies BA students, some of whom were in the teacher training program. Their ages varied from 19 to 33. They participated voluntarily in the research and anonymously submitted their answers to the three questions on American stereotypes via the *slido.com* online platform. As for the first question about their perception of American people and culture, the dominant and recurring stereotypes were the following in this order: (1) hypocrisy, (2) friendly and noisy, (3) positive mindset and open-mindedness, (4) political correctness is often offensive and ironic, (5) multiculturalism and a melting pot of cultures, (6) patriotism, (7) too much individualism, (8) poor education system, (9) guns and fast food, (10) American Dream, (10) Americanization of Culture, (11) freedom, (12) consumerism, (13) corruption, (14) Hollywood, and (15) unhealthy food. The high occurrence of stereotypes related to the movies and Hollywood correlates with the fact that cinema in the contemporary era is a kind of representative act that serves as a bridge for various areas of American Studies, which has opened up "new ways in the interpretation and reinterpretation of America" (Cristian). Generally, the answers to the first question were that Americans are friendly but more extroverted than Hungarians.[6] Multiculturalism and the positive mindset were also prominent stereotypes. The issues of patriotism, guns, and gun laws were a recurring and controversial topic, along with the concepts of hypocrisy and political correctness.

As for the second question concerning the basic stereotypes about American people, culture, and history, the answers mostly overlapped with the students' inputs for the first question, highlighting the importance of (1) patriotism, (2) fast food, (3) lack of knowledge about Europe, (4) the issue of guns and mass shootings, (5) freedom, (6) consum-

[6] Some students based their opinion on their interaction with friends or pen-friends who live in the United States.

erism, (7) living in a "bubble," (8) poor health-care and education systems, (9) extrovert behavior and arrogance, (10) self-righteousness and open-mindedness, (11) the American Dream, (12) dynamic and business-oriented character, (13) movies, and (14) racism.

The recurring answers provided for the third question, which were based on the students' own selection of stereotypes from literature or websites, identified the following stereotypes, mentioned in the following order: (1) consumerism, (2) American football, (3) the American Dream, (4) guns and school shootings, and (5) the idea of freedom. The students' responses indicated the students' particular fondness for American sitcoms, series, movies, and comics, for example *Paul* (sci-fi comedy, 2011), *Parks and Recreation* (sitcom, 2009–2015), *The Office* (sitcom, 2005–2013), and Marvel comics. Their answers included stereotypical observations, for example, "Social media is full of videos and posts about entitled Americans," "Karens are everywhere," or "They [Americans] like to act as if Shakespeare were their favorite author, even though they don't even read his works." As for literary examples of stereotypes, they mentioned Jack Kerouac's *On the Road* (1957), Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind* (1936), African American literature about slavery, and literature about the Jazz Age, the Harlem Renaissance, the Lost Generation, and the Great Depression.

To sum up, the ideas of freedom, patriotism, and multiculturalism, open-mindedness, movies, the issue of guns, mass shootings, and the decline of the American Dream were dominant and recurring stereotypes about America and Americans in students' answers to the research questions both in Pécs and Szeged. The query of how we can break away from stereotypes via education could be the topic for further research.

3.1.7. Conclusion of the Hungarian Study

The analysis of the perception of national hetero-stereotypes—the way Hungarians perceive American people and culture and vice versa—was

conducted via individual and collective methods that included observations, factual interviews, response papers, student surveys**,** and written online questionnaires. The research focused on the qualitative analysis of cultural thought systems, literary artifacts, blogs, and travel reports in a historical time frame. Due to the limits of this paper, not every aspect could be covered in detail. Therefore, this research aimed to create a methodological outline for further research on the topic within the framework of American Studies. This research has shown that the working definition of a stereotype showed a variation from presenting the United States as the model country for Hungary in the nineteenth century, with the emphasis on the idea of freedom and democracy, to the decline of the American Dream and the representation of America in popular culture in the contemporary era. The dominant stereotype tested via individual and collective methods shows a cyclic feature, changing in different historical periods. The common characteristic feature of stereotypes is that they are helpful and useful tools in social interactions to ease and simplify the beginning of social encounters and foster cultural diversity.

3.2. Croats and Americans: Exploring Identity and Diversity across Cultures in the Croatian and American Contexts

The second part of this study takes a closer look at the Croatian and American cultural contexts. The purpose of the study was to embrace multiple perspectives and narrow the cultural gap by broadening the student's perspectives regarding their own culture as well as others. In line with Benjamin Disraeli's claim that "a university should be a place of learning, light and liberty" (Nicholson qtd. in Walton 196), this part of the research intended to ensure that Hungarian and Croatian students broaden their knowledge and increase their tolerance and cultural understanding by familiarizing themselves with worldviews that may differ from their own. Since "cultural stereotypes have this ability to shape social in-

teraction" (Beeghly 53), it is essential to familiarize oneself with the wider cultural context surrounding them in order to avoid stigmatization or bias. According to Osland et al., "[t]ime and experience are essential because culture is embedded in the context. Without context it makes little sense to talk about culture" (68).

The Croatian perspective of America and Americans was obtained by examining data from survey responses from first-year students of English who were taking the course American Culture and Civilization at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Osijek. The research was conducted prior to and following an online lecture by American professor and author Cody McClain Brown. Identifying, comparing, and interpreting the different perspectives of the Croatian students and the American author was expected to raise awareness of stereotypical preconceptions and the cross-cultural similarities and differences between the two cultures.

The procedure used for the survey and the qualitative analysis of the collected data was as follows: Six students' individual statements before and after the lecture and discussion with the American lecturer were recorded and reviewed several times. The positive and negative stereotypes were compared following an individual, in-depth qualitative analysis of the students' comments made before and after the lecture. Additionally, the survey findings of Croatian students' perspectives on America were compared to the American perspective of Croatia and Croats that was obtained by a qualitative analysis of Cody McClain Brown's lecture, blog, podcast, and his memoirs, *Chasing a Croatian Girl: A Survivor's Tale* (2015) and *Croatia Strikes Back: The Unnecessary Sequel* (2018). Since the lecture was at the very center of the research, first the analysis of Cody McClain Brown's work will be briefly presented, and then the results of the research will be described.

3.2.1. Examination of the American Perspective on Croatia: Analysis of Cody McClain Brown's Work

Cody McLain Brown is a blogger, podcast host, professor at the Faculty of Political Science of Zagreb, and the author of *Chasing a Croatian Girl*, *Croatia Strikes Back* (2014) and *A Hard Case in Holiday City* (2021). As an expatriate, McClain Brown illustrates Griswold's claim that "[a] specific literary culture is the product of historical and geographical circumstances" (462). His memoirs reveal as much about the foreigner adjusting to a very diverse environment as they do about the native population. As Skahill explains, "Literature is a credible tool in which geography can be understood in a different light; in combining the disciplines of geography and literature, the content can more aptly be put into context. The literature of these expatriates, ultimately, puts history and geography in perfect conjuncture" (50). In an insightful and frequently humorous way, McClain Brown expresses his unique perspective on Croatia and adjusting to Croatian culture to the point that it feels like home. Being immersed in a new culture is challenging, but it provides the opportunity to learn a new language, get to know different traditions, cuisines, and customs, and to leave one's own unique trace on the foreign culture one has embraced. This and much more is covered in the works of this American who is trying to fit in, while navigating between two completely different cultures. McClain Brown has had the advantage of experiencing the foreign setting firsthand and thereby developing a much better understanding of a foreign culture than the students who were either taught information in school or obtained information through various mass media forms that are not always reliable sources. To see the world from the perspective of others, before generalizing or stereotyping, we should make certain that our perspectives are based as much as possible on facts explained through cultural context.

Before writing his memoirs, McClain Brown started writing the *Zablogreb* blog, which became popular when he began giving his humor-

ous accounts of Croatia from the perspective of a foreigner. Croats recognized themselves in his representations, and Americans who are living or have lived in Croatia found his depictions of life across cultures not only enjoyable but also very relatable. His posts went viral, and he even got messages from Croats in America thanking him for explaining what they have been trying or wanting to explain to their friends and in-laws. Readers found his observations and experiences so amusing that the blog launched his writing career in Croatia and his transition from an Oklahoma native to a Zagreb native and Split's most well-known *zet* [son-in-law] of the famous Croatian *punica* [mother-in-law]. It is interesting to note that the favorite subject of his podcast listeners has more recently been attracting theater goers in Split, who are enjoying seeing Cody McClain Brown's humorous depiction of Croatia come to life in the theatrical performance of *Draft, Slippers, and the Mother-in-law* by the Split City Youth Theater.

After his many-year stay in Croatia, McClain Brown claims to no longer feel like a foreigner. With his Croatian wife and bilingual and bicultural daughter, he is living his life the Croatian way. Through his entertaining and humorous narration, McClain Brown reveals the American perspective of Croatia, based on generalizations and stereotypes that surfaced during his journey that began with falling in love with a Croatian woman in Oklahoma and continued in Croatia, where he has decided to live his Croatian dream. His journey becomes a cross-cultural learning experience both for the author and the readers. The author confirms that living across cultures can be a daunting experience as well as a great opportunity to learn to adjust and gain cultural experience, knowledge, and understanding, which is the best way not only to become aware of stereotypes but also to make the most of the positive ones and at least understand those that appear to be negative.

The author's story begins in his memoir *Chasing a Croatian Girl: A Survivor's Tale*, which, in the Croatian edition, is titled *Propuh, papuče i punica* and literally translates to "draft, slippers, and the mother-in-law." Alt-

hough the English title may make more sense to the English readers, the Croatian title already gives away the first stereotypes McClain Brown encountered in adjusting to life in this small, to most Americans unknown, country, whose beliefs and customs are at times, perhaps, seen as too quirky by Americans. The title covers three main stereotypes McClain Brown created about Croatians based on his interaction with them and his acquaintance with their beliefs and customs. These three stereotypes point to cultural differences between Croatians and Americans. Unlike Croatians, Americans, enjoy the breeze and air conditioning. In *Chasing a Croatian Girl,* McClain Brown states: "In the summer I would open a widow at one end of the apartment and then open another one at the other end, in order to take in the nice mountain breeze" . . . and "On the hottest nights I would sleep with an oscillating fan blowing on me" (*Chasing* 98). In contrast, Croats find *propuh* [draft] a deadly health hazard "associated with all sorts of ailments . . . in short, Propuh kills!" (*Chasing* 99).

The second cultural difference concerns the differing attitude on slippers, socks, and bare feet. While Americans are free to keep their shoes on inside and even "run around, not just inside, but OUTSIDE, barefoot!" (Chasing 94), Croats have a completely opposite indoor shoe policy. As the author explains, during his first visit to Split, he "was greeted at the door with a pair of women's slippers," which he kept on "out of politeness for about five minutes before kicking them off and strolling around in [his] socks" (*Chasing* 94). He admits that before his visit to Croatia he "had no idea that being barefoot can cause all kinds of illnesses" (*Chasing* 94).

The third stereotype involves Cody McClain Brown's having to get used to the fact that Croatian mothers-in-law are family members who lay down the law. Explaining the difference between Croatian and American culture, McClain Brown admits that the "apron clad, wooden spoon totting septuagenarian [the mother-in-law] was the stubborn rock of the family," who cared more about his eating habits than his "own mother" . . . since he "was 9 years old" (*Chasing* 41).

Similarly to the observations in his memoirs, in his talk to the students at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, McClain Brown mentioned numerous other misconceptions that led to misunderstandings and embarrassment. Misconception 1: Croatia is not in Russia. He admits that he thought Croatia was a part of Russia. It is interesting that both the author and the students pointed out the poor geographic literacy of Americans. Misconception 2: Croatian women are like mail order brides who are willing to do anything for a Green Card. The author illustrated this by using the example of an episode from The Big Bang Theory series, mentioning the "hundreds of Croatian girls waiting . . . "at 'anything-for-a-green-card.com'" (*Chasing* 20). Misconception 3: An invitation to visit is usually a sign of Croatian hospitality, not of romantic interest. McClain Brown was not aware that "[i]n Croatia, it's normal when talking about going somewhere to someone that you mention they should come visit you. It definitely doesn't mean this girl is into you" (*Chasing* 21). Misconception 4: "Gifts definitely do not mean a girl is into you" (*Chasing* 21). McClain Brown was disappointed to learn that "[i]n Croatia people give gifts to everyone for every possible reason, and more commonly for no reason at all. . . . Gifts definitely do not mean a girl is into you" (*Chasing* 21). As he explained, "Come back from trip: bring gifts. Go to someone's house: bring gifts! See someone you haven't seen in a while: bring a gift. See a doctor, minister, principle, mechanic, bus driver: gift, gift, gift, and gift" (*Chasing* 28).

Additional stereotypes about Croatians that McClain Brown mentions in the book are as follows: Croatians believe that *rakija* [strong plum brandy] cures everything, that it takes a village to raise a child, that everyone has the right to tell you how to raise your child, that lunch is the main meal of the day, not dinner/supper, that free riding of trams and buses is a part of life in Zagreb because the fine is worth it if you get away with enough free rides, that neighbors are free to come and go whenever they wish, and that small living spaces mean less impatience and irritation. In contrast to the latter, McClain Brown jokingly points out that "[i]n the

US, nothing brings the family closer than time apart (usually a TV) in a separate room" (*Chasing* 62). Croatia is also, unfortunately, known for corruption, so, as an additional cultural stereotype, McClain Brown mentions the importance of connections especially when it comes to getting a job: "The all-important *veze*. At its worst, this is just nepotism, at its least bad, it is just like a reference or recommendation" (*Chasing* 155).

In the second memoir, *Hrvatska uzvraća udarac*, in the English edition *Croatia Strikes Back*, the author continues to discuss this stereotype. It is interesting to note that the noticeable difference between Croatian pessimism and American optimism and can-do spirit proved to be key when McClain Brown decided to apply for an academic position at the Faculty of Political Science in Zagreb. The consensus of his friends and even his wife was that applying would be in vain since he had no connections, which illustrates the Croatian pessimism and reliance on the importance of connections. However, McClain Brown broke both of these stereotypes by landing the job to the surprise of all.

The stereotypes mentioned during the lecture and in the first memoir are also present in the second memoir, but they mostly turn into up sides to living in Croatia that McClain Brown embraces. *Croatia Strikes Back* brings to the forefront generalizations about Croatian interpersonal relationships, especially friendships and neighborhood communities, as McClain Brown continues his battle to make Croatia his home. At the beginning of the book, the author sums up his experiences in Croatia by saying: "Nearly a decade before I had no idea where Zagreb or Croatia was, I couldn't ever imagine living here. But then I met my wife on a cold winter's night in Oklahoma. And here we were, a binational, bilingual family living in a place I once thought was Russia" (*Croatia Strikes Back* 14). The author explains why he named the sequel *Croatia Strikes Back*. He mentions that he is a *Star Wars* fan, and the title of his book reminds of the second book of the *Star Wars* trilogy. He emphasizes that "[i]n the first book I decided to live in Croatia, and this book deals with the reality of that decision" (*Croatia Strikes Back* 16). McClain Brown states: "I'd

come a long way from being a foreigner in Croatia" (*Croatia Strikes Back* 16). In the book, he refers back to his blog, explaining: "Writing the blog was like a kind of therapy, a process of reconciling my culture and my mind with Croatian culture and our life here. But, posting the blog, getting all the audience feedback and comments, became like a group therapy session for foreigners and Croatians alike" (*Croatia Strikes Back* 21).

As he settles into Croatian life, he discovers additional differences between the two cultures. Firstly, parks are "a landscape of cross-cultural exchange" (*Croatia Strikes Back* 93) where he can interact with the natives in English or his broken Croatian. Unlike in America, in Croatia, parks are spaces where children play but also where parents interact with their children's friends and their parents, who soon become part of one's coffee circle. Secondly, the raising of children is different, as well. While American children are expected to sleep in their own beds and at a proper bedtime, in Croatia, McClain Brown finds that he is the one sleeping "in a child's bed with a poster of a Disney princess hung up over it" (*Croatia Strikes Back* 29). Fourth and most important, the mother-in-law stereotype continues, as he laments in his sequel:

> Each time *Punica* came to our apartment, which was monthly and usually for two weeks, she kind of took over. In my mind it was like a foreign occupation led by a septuagenarian dictator. What had been my "little America" was transformed overnight into the "REPUBLIC OF PUNICA." (*Croatia Strikes Back* 36)

McClain Brown describes that this is not what happened in his youth, when his grandmother visited, and although he loves his mother-in-law and has nothing against her visits, he would "want her to be a bit more like [his] American grandma and give him more space" (*Croatia Strikes Back* 38).

Croatia Strikes Back confronts the challenges of living in Croatia with a sense of humor, as McClain Brown asks himself: "What can I do? Culture is the sum of all our learned behavior. I can't just become someone else

as much as I'd like to. I can't just unlearn who I am and where I came from, and neither can *punica*" (42).

In addition to the above-mentioned cultural differences, McClain Brown observes a plethora of others to which he must adjust to survive and thrive in Croatia. After becoming fully employed, the family is ready to embark on apartment hunting, which becomes an enthralling battle against bureaucracy. He comments that "If Americans move like [they] change socks, that is frequently, then Croatians move like people buy suits, a few in a lifetime for most" (*Croatia Strikes Back* 117). McClain Brown contrasts the nomadic soul of Americans, who are proud of their mobility, to the Croats being tied to their place of residence. He even observes: "[o]nce [Croatians] lay down some roots in some plot of Croatian soil, it's hard to dig them out" (*Croatia Strikes Back* 123). McClain Brown adopts this Croatian cultural characteristic as he decides to buy an apartment in the same neighborhood, close to his friends and community, which is not typical for Americans. As he explains, The attachment I've witnessed among all the people attempting to sell their apartments, and the difficulty we ourselves had in letting go of where we lived, is evidence that a greater relationship to place and people exists in Croatia than anyplace I've lived in the US" (Croatia 125).

His American optimism is tested once again after the publisher of his bestselling book enters into a pre-bankruptcy procedure. Also, the lack of the publisher's surprise at this bad news confirms that "Croatians are overly pessimistic, and Americans may be overly optimistic" (*Croatia Strikes Back* 87). McClain Brown proudly exclaims that his optimism was once again proven correct: "since you're reading a new book published by the same people, you can see that in the end it all worked out. *Take that skeptics*!" (*Croatia Strikes Back* 88).

Cultural etiquette is another issue McClain Brown brings up by emphasizing that in Croatia, "[o]pening the refrigerator in someone else's home is considered an invasion of privacy and one of the rudest things you can do" (*Croatia Strikes Back* 92). In America, when the host tells you

to feel at home and help yourself to the food and the drinks, it basically means that they will not serve you, which Croats consider rude and incomprehensible. In America, Croatian guests feel uncomfortable serving themselves and often end up thirsty and hungry. On the other hand, Americans in Croatia are sometimes overwhelmed by the constant nudging to have more when they really do not want more.

McClain Brown also mentions how hard the Croatian language is and how appreciative Croats are if a foreigner attempts to learn it, especially Americans, who they usually think are only able to speak English. Unlike in America, foreign language learning is common in Croatia, and much of the Croatian population speaks English quite well and are very critical of themselves if they do not speak it well enough.

3.2.2. The Croatian Perspective of America and Americans Obtained through Student Surveys: American and Croatian Stereotypes

The initial student survey took place as a part of a course with first-year students of English language and literature studying American culture. Among the topics that came up in discussion during the course were stereotypes and prejudices as well as the perceptions that Americans and Croats have of one another. A list of positive and a list of negative preconceptions of Croats regarding Americans was created by students during those discussions and recorded for future comparison with the students' perceptions after attending McClain Brown's lecture. Students were given the chance to select the stereotypes that personally stood out to them, comment on them, add some additional ones that were not presented, and then discuss them. Additionally, they developed a list of positive thoughts and a list of prejudices about Croats that they thought were held by Americans.

Students were able to ask questions orally or through chat during and after the meeting with the author, which was broadcast via the *BigBlueBut-*

ton virtual classroom platform. Six students—three female and three male—whose responses to the qualitative survey questions (similar to the questions the Hungarian students answered) were the most in-depth were chosen for the present analysis, largely because many students did not respond fully to the follow-up survey. One weakness of the findings is that not all students responded adequately to the follow-up survey. Hence, the six complete follow-up responses were chosen for analysis.

In accordance with the ethical codex, each male and female student was given a code consisting of a number, such as male student 1, female student 2, etc., to ensure their anonymity as research participants. For each student, qualitatively analyzed data are presented so that they can be compared and contrasted before and after the author's lecture.

Before McClain Brown's lecture, the students shared some stereotypes, both positive and negative, about how Americans regard Croats and Croatia. These viewpoints will be referred to as "before the lecture" in the text that follows. "After the lecture" will be used in the following paragraphs to refer to the viewpoints shared by the students after interacting with the guest lecturer.

- Female student 1 (or FS1), age 20:

Before the lecture: She learned about American culture and people primarily from media, including music, movies, TV, and the Internet, but also from her education. American friendliness and open-mindedness are two very positive stereotypes about Americans that the participant noted. She believes that Americans respect independence and self-reliance highly and that they are interested in sports. Among the unfavorable preconceptions of America and Americans were those of capitalism and debt. According to her, Americans view Croatia and Croats as rude and out-of-date.

After the lecture: Following McClain Brown's talk, Female student 1 expressed a more positive opinion about Americans and claimed to have discovered new knowledge. She discovered that because of the differ-

ences in their upbringing, Croats see themselves differently than Americans see them. She had also been unaware that Americans valued generosity in Croats. Her preconceived notions were challenged by the interaction with McClain Brown. After speaking with the author, student 1 has developed a noticeably more favorable perception of Americans.

- Female student 2 (FS2), age 19:

Before the lecture: This participant acquired her knowledge of American culture and Americans through media, during her education, but also by reading books. She also emphasizes how Americans place a high importance on independence and self-reliance and how their love of sports is a positive stereotype from the Croatian perspective. For this student, the negative impression that Croats have of Americans is that they live in a dangerous country. She also noted: "They may think that Croatia is a country but look at it as though it were a small town."

After the lecture: FS2 stated that she learnt a lot about Americans in the discussion that was conducted in class following the author's presentation; however, she does not recall all the specifics. She is certain that some of her unfavorable perceptions of Americans have altered. She discovered that Americans view Croats as amusing, pleasant, and very hospitable. After speaking with the author, the student feels that her perception of America has improved significantly and that the author was a fantastic speaker.

- Female student 3 (FS3), age 20

Before the lecture: Media, including music, movies, television shows, and the Internet, were the main sources from which Student 3 learned about Americans and America. She emphasized some positive stereotypes: that Americans are hard workers, that they are pleasant and open-minded, and that they are optimistic and tend to dream big. She also thinks that America is still a nation of opportunity and states that Americans place high importance on freedom and self-reliance and that they

enjoy sports. FS3 listed numerous unfavorable assumptions she personally holds, including the following: Americans are racist and like using drugs and alcohol. Americans are self-centered and solely consider their own interests. They want to be superior to other countries. She views America as a place where people consume takeout food and occasionally cook. She thinks that the Croatian school system is superior to the one in the United States. She believes that Americans are materialistic and obsessed with social media. The belief that children in America do not respect their elders is also brought up by FS3. Additionally, FS3 emphasized some stereotypes regarding how Americans see Croatia and Croats. According to her opinion, Croatia is for Americans a cheap destination for a summer vacation and a land that they know as a movie location from *Game of Thrones*. Americans might see Croatia also as a poor, small country.

After the lecture: FS3 discovered that Americans tend to have fewer parties than Croats and that they do not feel awful about asking visitors to leave if they have other plans. She found it funny that Americans stereotype Croats as party animals. The Croats' preoccupation with avoiding sitting in a draft, or "propuh," is likewise absurd in their eyes. Additionally, she has become aware that Croats are prone to excessive gift-giving. After listening to Cody McClain's observations on the Croatian gift-giving customs, she realized that every Croat brings something to their friends or neighbors each time they visit and that for Croats it is a set tradition. Although the student's interaction with the American author broadened her knowledge, she still claims to have a neutral perception of America. "I wouldn't say either positive or negative," she replied. Simply put, the only impact is that now she notices more cultural differences.

- Male student 4 (MS4), age 19

Before the lecture: Male student 4 has acquired his knowledge of American culture and Americans through media, music, movies, TV, or the Internet, and during his education. Prior to the American author's lec-

ture, Male student 4 expressed more positive than negative stereotypes. He thinks that Americans are friendly, open-minded, and patriotic and that America is still a land of opportunity. He also believes that Americans place a high priority on freedom and self-reliance. Regarding negative stereotypes, MS4 stated that people in America are highly competitive, that their educational systems are inferior to those in Croatia, and that they are addicted to social media. He also thinks that people in America want to be superior to other countries. According to MS4, Americans perceive Croatia as a small, impoverished nation that has "mentally" stagnated since the 1990s.

After the lecture: MS4 discovered that Americans are indeed incredibly proud patriots but that they respect other countries, as well. According to his claims, he was already familiar with the majority of the stereotypes that are associated with Americans; thus, he did not acquire any new stereotypes. He discovered that Americans really know very little about Croatia. In the future, he wishes that Americans would discover more about Croats. He was unaware of the comparisons made between Croats and other Western Europeans in terms of routines, habits, and customs. He finds the lecture given by the American author to be of the utmost value because it improved his perception of Americans: "It gave me a more positive image of Americans definitely."

- Male student 5 (MS5), age 27

Before the lecture: Like most of the other students previously stated, MS5 learned about American culture and people through media like music, movies, television, and the Internet. He only highlighted patriotism as a favorable stereotype about Americans and then went on to mention numerous unfavorable stereotypes, such as the idea that Americans are obsessed with firearms and live in a dangerous country. He thinks that Americans do not travel, are ignorant about the world, and do not know geography. As for the Croatian perspective on how Americans see Croa-

tia and Croats, MS5 thinks that they see Croatia as an undeveloped country.

After the lecture: Male student number five discovered a new perspective on how Americans view themselves. McClain Brown's perspective on typical American life was incredibly enlightening, and he discovered several commonplace facts he had previously been unaware of. He did not pick up any new stereotypes; in fact, certain stereotypes, in his opinion, were even broken. Because of the guest lecturer's cheerful disposition and optimistic outlook, interacting with him has proven the positive assumption that Americans always have a smile on their face. This has allowed MS5 to break whatever misconceptions he may have had about Americans. After speaking with McClain Brown, he now views Americans more favorably.

- Male student 6 (MS6), age 19

Before the lecture: Male student 6 has learned about American culture and people through the aforementioned media, his studies, and conversations with Americans on *Discord*. His favorable perceptions of Americans included the idea that they are extremely diligent workers who are fixated on their work and careers. They love their country. Americans value and emphasize independence and self-reliance, and they like sports. The following are some unfavorable stereotypes cited by MS6: Americans are fiercely competitive and addicted to social media. They eat more takeout and cook less. They incorrectly pronounce foreign words. He believes that Americans stereotype Croats as being alcoholics.

After the lecture: The self-criticism and how casually Americans use other people's homes (such as the open fridge policy) surprised male student number 6. He appreciates the American lecturer for answering his question on the reasons behind Walmart and Best Buy's notoriety. He discovered that Americans enjoy shopping in places where they can get a good deal and save money. Because the American lecturer was essentially what the student believed an American to be—a normal person who is

slightly different in terms of his lifestyle and ideologies—the interaction with the lecturer did not alter any of the student's views. He was not expecting that Americans would not be familiar with the Croatian concept of not sitting in a draft. The time spent conversing with the American guest lecturer only served to further solidify his fascination with Americans, something he has always found intriguing.

3.2.3. Discussion and Findings of the Student Survey and Lecture Interaction

The findings of the student survey as well as the student interaction with the author have shown that Croatian students are interested in learning about the American culture and that they are aware of stereotypes regarding both Americans and Croats, with which they have become familiar mostly through their education and exposure to various forms of mass media.

According to the student survey, it could be concluded that all six of the students' negative stereotypes were replaced with positive ones following their interaction with the American guest lecturer. The students listened to the lecture and had the chance to put questions to the guest speaker, who was positive and optimistic and was extremely glad to answer questions about topics that interested the students. The positive interaction with the lecturer and his portrayal of himself as a typical American caused the students to question some of their previously held negative stereotypes. In addition, during the lecture and the discussion that followed, they also got the chance to learn something new about Americans' perception of Croatia.

Raising student awareness of the generalizations and stereotypes, both positive and negative, was aimed at broadening their knowledge and critical understanding of the self and of the beliefs, worldviews, and practices that may be similar or different to their own. According to the Council of

Europe's *Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture*, published in 2018,

> Engaging and understanding different perspectives requires certain knowledge, skills, attitudes and dispositions, such as respect towards others and interest in who they are, their emotions and their concept of reality. Individuals who are proficient in this dimension are able to express sensitivity towards cultural diversity and towards worldviews and values that are different from their own. (qtd. in OECD 92)

As Croatian students interacted with the American author, it is especially interesting to note that this interaction was a two-way learning experience. Both sides became aware of similarities and differences between the two cultures that they had not been previously aware of. The students strongly agree that America is a dangerous country; Americans are obsessed with guns, glorify war and the army, greatly stress and value independence and self-reliance, are very competitive, obsessed with social media and sports, and cook less and eat more take-out food. Although, for the most part, students agree that Americans are friendly, open-minded, patriotic, optimistic, hardworking, involved in volunteering, that they like to dream big and that America is still a land of opportunity, some expressed opposing views—that Americans are racist, opinionated, materialistic, uneducated, that they like to consume drugs and alcohol, can only speak English, and have no interest in learning other languages. The only stereotype students strongly disagree with is that all Americans are rich.

As can be seen from the stereotypes mentioned above, the students have formed generalizations about Americans. Furthermore, certain aspects of culture are not only different but also incomprehensible. However, when placed in the proper context, some of the stereotypes begin to be understandable and even acceptable or logical. One of the most frequent examples that is mentioned in the paper is the stereotype of Croats as coffee drinkers. Just by juxtaposing a picture of a Croatian coffee shop

and an American one leads to a discussion on cultural differences. The American scene depicts a coffee shop swarming with people of all ages who are busily working on their laptops while consuming their coffee. On the other hand, the Croatian coffee shop scene depicts people of all ages mostly involved in what appear to be lengthy visits consuming the same beverage. Obviously, in Croatia, it is understood that cafés are for relaxing and libraries are for studying. As McClain Brown observes, "coffee in Croatia is a social function. In the US, coffee is less about being social than it is about having a boost to work harder" (*Chasing a Croatian Girl* 33). He explains: "In the hands of a Croatian that little cup of coffee is magic. . . . A Croatian can make a single coffee last for maybe three hours. . . . Lilliputian-sized coffee that I drank in, oh say, 5 minutes" (*Chasing a Croatian Girl* 38). The Covid lockdown proved just how much these extended coffee breaks are part of the Croatian lifestyle, legacy, culture, community, and even possibly a national pastime. As soon as the lockdown was lifted, that tradition was the first to be reinstated in a very noticeable manner. Even before the shops opened, just being able to sit outside, even under the coldest weather conditions, was embraced with a sigh of relief. Although "coffee to go" is becoming a familiar English phrase understood by most Croats, it will never replace one of our nation's most well-known stereotypes that end up being appreciated even by the fiercest American advocates of "coffee to go."

4. Conclusion of the Joint Research

The purpose of this joint research was to emphasize the importance of cross-cultural awareness by exploring Hungarian and Croatian students' perspectives and stereotypes about American culture. The target groups were university students, initially in Pécs and Osijek, aged 19–23, but then Szeged was also involved in the project. The aims of the research were to outline a new methodological framework for a cross-cultural comparative study on cultural stereotypes in contemporary American Studies by map-

ping an uncharted field within the discipline and raise awareness of stereotypical preconceptions and cross-cultural similarities and differences between Americans, Hungarians, and Croats in order to broaden intercultural understanding and help break the stereotypes that may lead to discrimination and bias. By promoting intercultural dialogue and increasing self-awareness as well as other-awareness, this research seeks to show that academic collaboration with people from other countries brings multiple opportunities and mutual benefits as we strive to break, or at least question, stereotypes in order to counter divisiveness and build bridges across cultural divides and embrace the rich diversity of our world's cultures.

As for the expected outcome and pragmatic usage of this study, the analysis of the Croatian and the Hungarian student survey results has shown that both Croatian and Hungarian university students believe that America is still a land of opportunity and freedom and find that Americans are generally open-minded, patriotic, optimistic, hardworking, and very involved in volunteering and humanitarian causes. On the other hand, aspects of American life that students find problematic are the deficiencies in healthcare and education as well as the lack of gun control and the issue of racism. It is also explicit that the students' stereotypical depictions of American people and culture are primarily not from first-hand experience but from their education and various forms of the media, which impact their perception positively or negatively.

This study demonstrates the powerful influence of sociocultural stereotypes and the need to prevent misconceptions that can lead to misunderstandings and create a cultural divide. It is evident that in order to broaden their knowledge and understanding as well as develop an awareness of stereotypes and generalizations, students need the opportunities to engage in constructive conversations with persons from other cultures. In that respect, the interview with Professor Paul Kantor as well as the student interaction with the American author and professor Cody McClain Brown have provided valuable insight into the upsides and

downsides of diverse cultures, the similarities that bring us together, and the differences that set us apart.

Based on the results of our analysis, it can be concluded that education and fostering communication on the topic of cultural diversity can enhance students' intercultural competence and open up new dialogues to break away from the entrenched stereotypes and challenge the traditional cultural representations of America in the contemporary era. On the other hand, the analysis has also shown that stereotypes can be meaningful tools in social interactions that can ease and simplify the beginning of social encounters and foster cultural diversity. We hope that these initial results of our joint research will provide a methodological tool for future research and spur further inquiry into this subject.

Works Cited

Al Ghaoui, Hesna. "Hesna Al Ghaoui." *HESNA.HU*, hesna.hu/about. Accessed 12 Jan. 2023.

—. "Amikor az ember saját magán teszteli az elméletét (egy világhírű pszichológus segítségével) – Hesna amerikai naplója [When a Person Tests Her Theory on Herself (with the Help of a World-Famous Psychologist) – Hesna's American Diary]." *WMN*, wmn.hu/wmn-life/57612-al-ghaoui-hesna-amikor-az-ember-sajat-magan-teszteli-az-elmeletet-egy-vilaghiru-pszichologus-segitsegevel---hesna-amerikai-naploja. Accessed 2 Feb. 2023.

—. "Ünnepek a világ másik felén; az eddigi legnagyobb kihívás – Hesna amerikai naplója [Holidays on the Other Side of the World; the Biggest Challenge So Far – Hesna's American Diary]." *WMN*, wmn.hu/wmn-life/56664-al-ghaoui-hesna-unnepek-a-vilag-masik-felen-az-eddigi-legnagyobb-kihivas--hesna-amerikai-naploja. Accessed 2 Mar. 2023.

Amossy, Ruth, and Therese Heidingsfeld. "Stereotypes and Representation in Fiction." *Poetics Today*, vol. 5, no. 4, 1984, pp. 689–700. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/1772256. Accessed 8 Sep. 2022.

Balázs, Dénes. "Budai Parmenius István levele Új-Fundlandról Richard Hakluytnak Oxfordba. 1583. augusztus 6. (Latin olvasat, angol-magyar fordítás) [István Budai Parmenius' Letter from New Foundland to Richard Hakuyt in Oxford from August 6, 1583 (in Latin with English and Hungarian translations)]." *Földrajzi Múzeumi Tanulmányok*, vol. 7, 1989, pp. 78–80.

Beeghly, Erin. "What's Wrong with Stereotypes? The Falsity Hypothesis." *Social Theory and Practice*, vol. 47, no. 1, 2021, pp. 33–61. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/45378051. Accessed 23 Mar. 2023.

Bollobás, Enikő. "Hungarian in America – American in Hungary. János Xántus, the 19th Century Naturalist." *Hungarian Review*, vol. 3, no.2, 2012, 88–101.

Bölöni Farkas, Sándor. *Journey in North America*, 1831. Translated and edited by Arpad Kadarkay, ABC-Clio, 1978, archive.org/details/journeyinnortham0000bolo_e5y5. Accessed 15 Jan. 2023.

Crèvecœur, Hector St. John de. "*Letters from an American Farmer*. Commented by Warren Barton Blake." *The Project Gutenberg eBook*, 2003, [1782], www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/4666/pg4666.html. Accessed 10 Jan. 2023.

Cristian, Réka M. "American Studies and Film: From Blind Spot to Symbiosis." *Americana: E-Journal of American Studies in Hungary*, vol. 10, no. 1, 2014, americanaejournal.hu/vol10no1/cristian. Accessed 1 Feb. 2023.

Duijker, Hubertus Carl Johannes, and Nico H. Frijda. *National Character and National Stereotypes: A Trend Report Prepared for the International Union of Scientific Psychology*. North-Holland Publishing Company, 1960.

Gál, István. "The British Travel-Diary of Sándor Bölöni Farkas, 1831." *Angol Filológiai Tanulmányok / Hungarian Studies in English*, vol. 3, 1967, pp. 23–47. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/41273656. Accessed 13 Jan. 2023.

Glant, Tibor. *Amerika, a csodák és csalódások földje – Az Amerikai Egyesült Államok képe a hosszú XIX. század Magyar utazási irodalmában* [*America, the Land of Wonders and Disappointments – the Picture of the United States of America in the Hungarian Travel Literature of the Long Nineteenth Century*]. U of Debrecen P, 2013.

Griswold, Wendy. "Recent Moves in the Sociology of Literature." *Annual Review of Sociology*, vol. 19, 1993, pp. 455–67. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/2083396. Accessed 10 Feb. 2023.

Hansen, Dana. "An American Writer in Budapest." Review of "Hidden Among Us" by Jessica Keener. *Chicago Review of Books*, 16 Nov. 2017, chireviewofbooks.com/2017/11/16/strangers-in-budapest-review/. Accessed 12 Mar. 2023.

Kadarkay, Arpad. "Introduction." *Journey in North America*, 1831. Translated and edited by Arpad Kadarkay, ABC-Clio, 1978, pp. 5–71.

Keener, Jessica. "Hidden Among Us." *The Algonquin Reader*. Algonquin Books, Fall 2017, pp. 43–46.

—. *Strangers in Budapest*. Algonquin Books, 2017.

Kocka, Jürgen. "Asymmetrical Historical Comparison: The Case of the German Sonderweg." *History and Theory*, vol. 38, no. 1, 1999, pp. 40–50. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/2505315. Accessed 18 Feb. 2023.

LaViolette, Forrest, and Kalman H. Silvert. "A Theory of Stereotypes." *Social Forces*, vol. 29, no. 3, 1951, pp. 257–62.

Lévai, Csaba. "Glant Tibor: Amerika, csodák és csalódások földje. Az Amerikai Egyesült Államok képe a hosszú XIX. század Magyar utazási irodalmában [Tibor Glant: America, the Land of Wonders and Disappointments – the Picture of the United States of America in the Hungarian Travel Literature of the Long Nineteenth Century]." *Korall*, vol. 58, 2014, pp. 201–206.

Lippmann, Walter, *Public Opinion*. Transaction Publishers, 1998.

Martin, Douglas, et al. "The Spontaneous Formation of Stereotypes via Cumulative Cultural Evolution." *Psychological Science*, vol. 25, no. 9, 2014, pp. 1777–86. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/24543913. Accessed 8 Sep. 2022.

McClain Brown, Cody. *Chasing a Croatian Girl: A Survivor's Tale*. Vorto Palabra, 2015.

—. *Croatia Strikes Back: The Unnecessary Sequel*. Vorto Palabra, 2017.

Mcleod, Saul. *Stereotypes in Psychology: Definition & Examples*. June 16, 2023. www.simplypsychology.org/katz-braly.html. Accessed 14 Feb. 2023.

Meinhart, Ren. "A Somewhat Meandering Character Study of Post-Communist Hungary." *Washington Independent Review of Books*, 1 Feb. 2018, www.washingtonindependentreviewofbooks.com/index.php/bookreview/strangers-in-budapest-a-novel. Accessed 1 Mar. 2023.

Musek, Janek. "Personality Stereotypes: Psychological Comprehension of Stereotypes." Translated by Darja Hoenigman. *Prejudices and Stereotypes in the Social Sciences and Humanities: Didactic Experiences in the Introducing of Novelties in the Ethnological Curricula*, edited by Božidar Jezernik and Rajko Muršič. Znanstveni inštitut Filozofske fakultete, 1997, pp. 15–26.

OECD. "Understanding and Appreciating the Perspectives and Worldviews of Others." *PISA 2018 Results (Volume VI): Are Students Ready to Thrive in an Interconnected World?* OECD Publishing, 2020, doi.org/10.1787/48138b98-en. Accessed 23 Feb. 2023.

Osland, Joyce S., et al. "Beyond Sophisticated Stereotyping: Cultural Sensemaking in Context [and Executive Commentaries]." *The Academy of Management Executive* (1993–2005), vol. 14, no. 1, 2000, pp. 65–79. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/4165609. Accessed 23 Feb. 2023.

Skahill, Hannah, Expatriate Literature and American Culture: The Influence of Place in Literature. 2012. Hofstra Univeristy, MA thesis, www.hofstra.edu/pdf/academics/colleges/hclas/geog/geog_skahill_honors_thesis.pdf. Accessed 16 Mar. 2023.

Soule, Sarah A., et al. "The Stereotypes in MBA Case Studies." *Harvard Business Review*, hbr.org/2019/06/the-stereotypes-in-mba-case-studies. Accessed 16 Mar. 2023.

Stenou, Katérina, editor. UNESCO *Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity*: A Vision, a Conceptual Platform, a Pool of Ideas for Implementation, a New Paradigm. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2002, orcp.hustoj.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/127162e.pdf. Accessed 9 Mar. 2023.

Vári, András. "Fenyegetések földje. Amerika a 19. század második felében – Magyar szemmel [*A Land of Threats. America in the Second Half of the 19th Century – through Hungarian Eyes*]." *Korall*, vol. 7, no. 26, 2006, pp. 153–84.

Venkovits, Balázs. "A Changing Experience of Transport, Travel, and Mobility: The Transatlantic Crossing to the United States in 19th-century Hungarian Travel Writing." *Történeti Tanulmányok*, vol. 22, 2014, pp. 222–39.

Walton, Andrea. "'Scholar,' 'Lady,' 'Best Man in the English Department'? Recalling the Career of Marjorie Hope Nicolson." *History of Education Quarterly*, vol. 40, no. 2, 2000, pp. 169–200. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/369535. Accessed 9 Feb. 2023.

Xántus, János. *Xantus János levelei Éjszakamerikából* [*John Xantus's Letters from North America*], edited by István Prépost. Lauffer and Stolp, 1858. mek.oszk.hu/06900/06919/index.phtml#. Accessed 10 Mar. 2023.

Appendix
Interview with Professor Paul Kantor

- Question: Based on your experience, how was your country stereotyped in Hungary?

Paul Kantor: The faculty members with whom I worked seemed to undertake relatively little stereotyping, perhaps because they all visited or lived in the USA at one time or another as American Studies students, professors, or instructors. *The Hungarian students* were far more likely to rely extensively on cultural stereotyping in and outside of classes I taught. *Their dominant stereotype was perceiving the USA in an excessively positive way.* They were inclined to view the USA as a wealthy country where everyday life was easier than in Hungary, jobs were good and plentiful, and where middle-class prosperity in housing, dining, and travel were the norm. *Students more rarely seemed to know about the racial and class divisions in the USA,* or the struggling conditions often experienced in big cities with large poor populations. *The "suburban dream" was very prominent as a stereotype among students.* I recall in one lecture about describing the long and difficult travel commutes undertaken by many suburban workers due to the sprawling low-density housing and development in most metropolitan areas. *Yet a number of students did not see suburban sprawl as a problem;* in their views, workers were spending time in nice automobiles listening to music on radios, thinking about the lovely homes to which they would return! This response really surprised me. *They believed American suburban sprawl was great compared to travel on public transport in congested cities in Hungary.*

- Question: Did you experience any stereotyping by Hungarians that you had to challenge?

Paul Kantor: Of course, *I did have to try to correct the unbalanced positive views of society and politics in the USA, especially by directing attention to the unequal wealth*

and racial inequalities in the nation. Another stereotype that emerged in the course of teaching were antisemitic views on the part of some students. Some viewed politics in the USA as heavily influenced by Jews in elite positions in government and business. At times, I found these students making antisemitic assumptions with little sense of embarrassment. I also thought that students using these stereotypes would have avoided articulating this in my presence because I thought some of them would think I was a Jew (due to my name). *I hasten to say that antisemitic comments were very uncommon, but more than I ever encountered in teaching in the USA.*

- Question: How did your perception of Hungarians change during your stay in Hungary? Did it change at all?

Paul Kantor: I had very little sense of Hungarians prior to my visit. But I found *Hungarians generally very friendly, warm, and thoughtful people.* From shopkeepers to students, I always felt comfortable with Hungarians in conversations, seeking directions, and in all sorts of social activities. *This contrasted with my stereotypical impressions of other Eastern Europeans. I grew up in a hybrid American family*—part Italian, part Ukrainian, part Russian, and part Slovak in family background (all migrated to the USA 100 years ago). Many of *my family members from the Eastern European side were often rather dark in outlook—that is pessimistic and cautious—compared to Hungarians*. I met Hungarians who always seemed more Western (which they are, of course). Yet, many Hungarians I met felt that *Hungarians too often looked at life darkly.* I did not pick that up during my year as a visitor. The one change I perceived during my visit was a recognition that *many Hungarians are more nationalistic than I ever expected.* The wartime defeats, the dismemberment of the Hungarian empire, etc. seemed too often creep into conversations and become a subject of official holidays. There seemed to be *a sense of nostalgia for the historical Hungary*, a greater power, among people with whom I became friendly. I also discerned *substantial distrust of governmental processes and authority,* especially in respect to trusting the police or

governmental workers. I would say that my observation was that some Hungarian students regarded antisemitism as a normal discourse in expressing their political views – *something that contrasted vividly with the personal warmth I found among so many Hungarians*.

- Question: Do you stereotype people?

Paul Kantor: I do not do so consciously. However, it is inevitable *as a means of simplifying social encounters. But I think it is a tool for starting social encounters,* not for pursuing them in depth.

- Question: Does stereotyping help you in some way?

Paul Kantor: Yes, as mentioned above—it is a useful starting point in dealing with people initially. It *simplifies the initiation of discourse, provides a means of avoiding friction, and is a way of testing assumptions about people one encounters.*

- Question: What is the difference between stereotypes and prejudices?

Paul Kantor: I think *prejudice involves a rigid belief in who or what another person represents—it is conclusive and often negative. In contrast, a stereotype is more a mental tool for testing* or assisting in social encounters.