

---

UNIVERSITY  
OF DEBRECEN

FACULTY OF  
HEALTH  
NYÍREGYHÁZA



ACTA  
MEDSOC  
VOLUME 5.  
2014

---

# An International Comparison of the Career of Social Work by Students in Social Work

Gergely Fábián\*, Thomas R. Lawson\*\*, Mihály Fónai\*\*\*,  
János Kiss\*, Eric R. Soelter\*\*

\*Faculty of Health-University of Debrecen, \*\*Kent School of Social Work-  
University of Louisville, \*\*\*Faculty of Law-University of Debrecen

**Abstract.** Globalization and international interactions have launched investigations into cross national comparisons. The current research posed two fundamental questions (1) “Are their similar professional patterns and values in social work that are universal across national and cultural differences?” and (2) “Are their national or cultural dimensions that influence or shape differences even when there is a underlying professional similarity across cultures and nationalities?”

A sample of 356 social work students from Hungary, Germany, Finland, Italy and the United states was given a 2 part survey. The first part contained demographics and questions about social work for example, what influenced their choice, what are the values and characteristics of the profession and what professions are similar to social work. While some differences emerged there was much more similarity in values and perceptions than differences. The second part was a 36 item scale with four sub-scales specifically developed and validated to determine their perception of what is important in a social work job. The job scale successfully discriminated between different countries and additionally was able to show which countries were more similar, for example the Germans were most like Americans and Hungarians were more like the Finnish.

*Keywords:* social work students, cross national comparison, professional patterns and values, national and cultural dimensions, recruiting, job scale.

## Introduction

Over the past few years, given the significant changes in the international interactions and the effects of globalization, there have been investigations into the similarities and differences between countries concerning transfer of programs and knowledge and also education and professional training and identification. Extending the work of Mihály Fónai, Gergely Fábián and János Kiss in 1998 that compared German, Finish, Italian and Hungarian social work students, the present study refines the previous comparisons and presents additional comparisons to social work students from the United States. These comparisons raise the very interesting question of whether in different countries the same profession (social work) is shaped by the similarities within the profession to a more similar pattern and also if the differences between cultures in these countries can indeed create differential patterns even within a similar professional pattern. Thus, there are two fundamental questions to be addressed by this research: (1) Are there similar professional patterns and values in social work that are universal across national and cultural differences and (2) are there national or cultural dimensions that influence or shape differences even when there is an underlying professional similarity across the cultures and nationalities? One may view the countries included in the present study as representing diverse cultural and national as well as historical backgrounds irrespective but also including the profession of social work.

In addition to the overarching two questions stated above, there were many other questions that are addressed within the context of the present research. Are individuals who select the profession of social work drawn to the profession by a concern for others? Will the demographics of the profession (age, gender, education, family background) of the profession be consistent across nationalities and cultures? Will attitudes and perceptions of social work be consistent across cultures? If there is a consistent perception of social work across cultures will there be any relative differences in the amount of that particular belief? For example all students irrespective of country will view social work as having lower status compared to other professions but that a given country may differ significantly from another country in the amount of agreement with the statement. Can scales be developed that address the attributes of a social work professional job that would be applicable to all

students of social work regardless of country and but also discriminate between students from different countries?

## The sample

Of the total sample of 356 social work students there were 113 (31%) Hungarian students, 63 (18%) German students, 65 (18%) Finish students, 56 (16%) Italian students, and 59 (17%) American students. The Hungarian, German, Finish and Italian students were all in the last year of undergraduate social work education while the American students were in the first year of a Master of social work program. The American students however were selected as students without any prior social work education and therefore were not in advanced placement in a social work program and did not have an undergraduate degree in social work (BSW) at the time of the study so that they would be more similar to the European students. All students were administered a questionnaire consisting of 140 questions. The questions represent three major domains; (1) demographics (2) questions related to their attitudes about the profession of social work and social work education and (3) a 45 item scale intended to determine their feelings about a social work job.

Hungarian	German	Finish	American	Italian
113 (31%)	63 (18%)	65 (18%)	59 (17%)	56 (16%)

Table 1: Sample of students.

<b>COUNTRY</b>	<b>Age 18-20</b>	<b>Age 21-23</b>	<b>Age 24-26</b>	<b>Age 27-29</b>	<b>Over 30</b>
Hungary	21	60	11	2	6
Germany	10	14	25	19	32
Italy	20	53	18	7	2
Finland	15	34	36	6	9
USA	0	15	29	15	42

Table 2: Age of students by country.

The table above depicts the ages of the students. The average of the groups is as follows: Hungary 22.7, Germany 27.5, Italy, 23.7, Finland 24.1 and the USA 32.8. There is a significant difference between all the groups (Chi-Square =

127.50,  $df = 16$ ,  $p = .000$ ). The American students appear much older than all the other groups however a few outliers distort the American average. A better indicator of the age of the American group is the median (27) which is the same as the average of Germany. However, it is evident from the data that the United States has an older population of students in the sample which is to be expected given that they are first year graduate students. Germany also has older students than Hungarian and Italian students which are considerably younger both having about 80% of their students between the ages of 18 and 23.

Historically social work has been a profession heavily populated by females and this finding is still supported in the present sample of students from the five participating countries all of which have an overwhelming majority of female students.

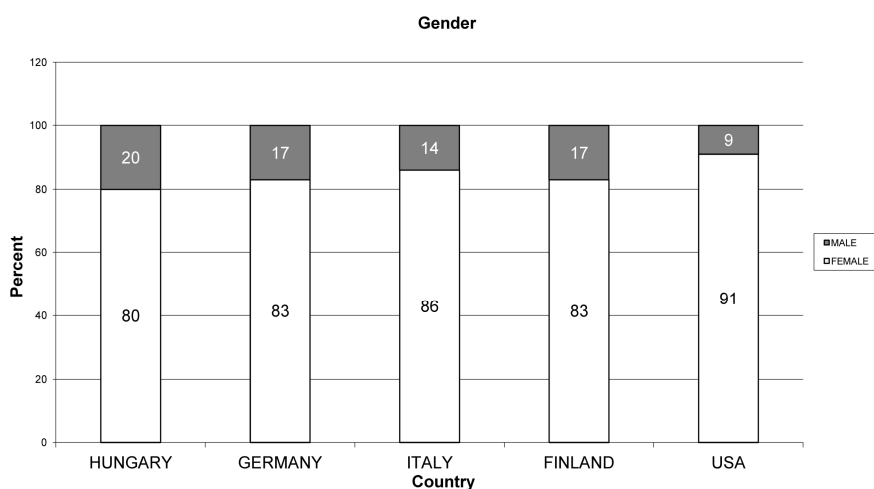


Chart 1: Gender of the students by country.

The United States had the lowest percentage of men (9%) followed by Italy (14%), Germany and Finland both with 18%, then Hungary with the highest percentage (20%). The overall percent of females in the 5 country sample was 83% with no significant differences between the countries ( $\chi^2 = 4.01$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $p = .39$ ) indicating that social work clearly had significantly more females than males a finding consistent with all previous studies whether within or across countries.

It was important to investigate the education level of the parents of social work students to determine if there were any differences between countries in the level of parental education. To assess if there was a difference, parental education was simply divided into whether the parent had a college education or

not. Given the major differences in the educational systems between countries and the difficulty in developing equal definitions of level of education the only possible differentiation that could be developed was whether their parent had completed a college education. As shown below, the German student fathers had completed significantly (Chi Square = 11.92, df = 4,  $p = .02$ ) more education (32%) than the students from other countries, Hungary 18%, Italy 11%, Finland 12% and the USA 18%.

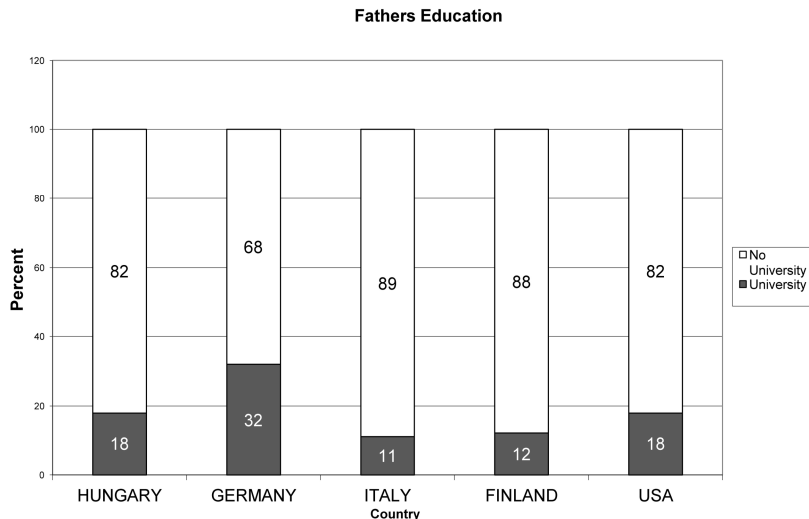


Chart 2: Fathers education.

The educational level of the mothers of the students was not significantly different between countries (Chi-Square = 3.00, df = 4,  $p = .59$ ). While Italy still had the lowest percent of mothers with a college education (9%), the other countries were very similar with the USA having the highest percent (20%) and Germany with 19%, Finland 16% and Hungary 16%. What is interesting is that across countries there was very little difference between the educational level of the mothers and fathers with the exception of Germany where 32% of the fathers had a college education and only 19 % of the mothers had a college education.

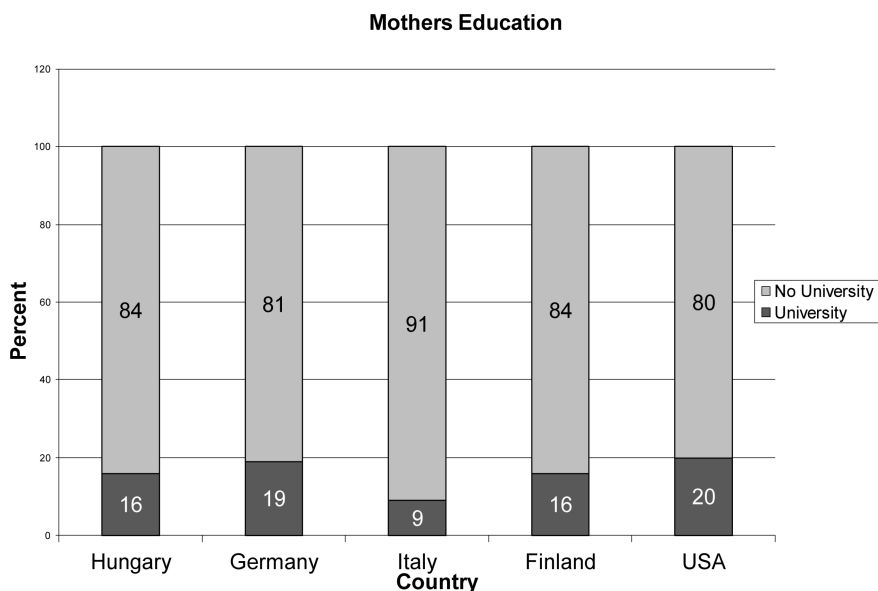


Chart 3: Mothers education.

One of the most important aspects of a person choosing a professional career is who or what influenced your choice of that particular career. The students were queried about this and the results are shown in the next table. The greatest reason for choosing social work as a profession is the student's interest in social problems with 87 percent of all students stating this as a reason. The second most important reason was that the student had already worked as a social worker. Given that none of these students had been trained professionally, the students who said that they worked as a social worker must have worked in a job that did not require advanced professional training. Possibly they worked in one that was aligned with social work and thus perceived by the student as a social work position such as child work in a community center or in a nursery or maybe as a nanny or working as an aide in an elder home. This answer was most frequently given by students from Finland and Germany, but also was frequent in the USA. It can be noted that in the USA a person with an undergraduate degree in a field related to social work may work in a position for the state that is called social work without professional training.

	Hungary	Germany	Italy	Finland	USA	Overall Percent	Significance Between Countries
Teacher	10%	8%	12%	2%	29%	12%	P = .00
Person with Sense of Vocation	34%	38%	38%	27%	40%	35%	P = .171 Not Sig.
Parent Example	14%	6	18%	20%	28%	17%	P = .02
Parent Advice	12%	6%	9%	15%	0%	8%	P = .05
Friend Suggestion	27%	18%	14%	31%	12%	20%	P = .00
My Interest In Social Problems	90%	91%	95%	88%	72%	<b>87%</b>	P = .01
University Information	39%	16%	34%	22%	10%	24%	P = .00
University Reputation	16%	10%	11%	14%	22%	15%	P = .192 Not Sig
Already Worked as Social Worker	22%	52%	34%	62%	43%	43%	P = .00
No Other Choice	12%	6%	9%	11%	2%	8%	P = .07 Not Sig
Easy to be Admitted	27%	10%	2%	19%	2%	12%	P = .000

Table 3: What influenced you to enter the social work profession?  
Chi Square Test Utilized for Each Analysis.

The sample was asked to identify the various sources from which they learned about social work and their answers were not mutually exclusive. While there was not a truly single source of information, materials from the university was rated the highest and media was rated the lowest. Italy was the highest in having no information (45%) and Finland the lowest (3%). As a source, teachers were rated the highest by the USA (43%) and lowest by Italy (2%) while Germany rated university material the highest (42%) and the USA the lowest (14%). Finding out about social work from friends was rated high by Germany (36%) and low by Italy and the USA (13%), while information from a social worker was high for the USA (29%) but low for Hungary (9%). Being a social worker

was where the Finish students learned about social work (51%) but low for Italy (7%), and studying social work before was again high for Finland (35%) and rated low by Germany (4%). Finally the media was placed highest by Germany (24%) and lowest by the USA (2%).

	Hungary	Germany	Italy	Finland	USA	Overall Percent	Significance Between Countries
No Information	26%	31%	<b>45%</b>	<b>3%</b>	21%	25%	P = .000
Teachers	12%	15%	<b>2%</b>	19%	<b>43%</b>	18%	P = .000
University Materials	24%	<b>42%</b>	27%	34%	<b>14%</b>	<b>28%</b>	P = .01
Friends at University	33%	<b>36%</b>	<b>13%</b>	32%	<b>13%</b>	25%	P = .02
Social Worker	<b>9%</b>	22%	23%	14%	<b>29%</b>	19%	P = .000
Was Social Worker Before	8%	44%	<b>7%</b>	<b>51%</b>	16%	25%	P = .000
Studied Social Work Before	19%	<b>4%</b>	13%	<b>35%</b>	28%	20%	P = .000
Media	12%	<b>24%</b>	2%	22%	<b>2%</b>	12%	P = .000

Table 4: How did you learn about social work?  
Chi Square Utilized for Each Test.

An important aspect to investigate is why a social work student wants to become a social worker. This was addressed by asking a series of 5 questions that were ranked from 1 to 5 with a one being low importance and 5 being high importance. All questions were mutually exclusive and represent independent judgments.



	Hungary	Germany	Italy	Finland	USA	Overall Mean Rank	Significance Between Countries
Help Others	4.59	3.83	4.02	4.40	4.79	<b>4.32</b>	P = .00
Feel Successful	3.50	2.95	3.91	3.85	4.12	3.66	P = .00
Earn a Lot of Money	2.62	2.25	1.95	2.05	2.10	2.19	P = .00
Concern Myself with People	4.70	4.44	3.96	4.77	4.57	<b>4.48</b>	P = .00
Gain Social Esteem	3.40	2.44	2.79	3.26	3.26	3.03	P = .00

Table 5: I want to be a social worker to  
Kruskal-Wallis Analysis of Ranks Test Utilized for Each Analysis.

Clearly all students irrespective of country want to be a social worker to (a) concern themselves with people (Mean Rank = 4.48) and (b) to help others (Mean Rank = 4.32). It is most interesting that none of the groups believe that they will earn a lot of money as a social worker although the Hungarian students feel that professional training in social work will be more lucrative in their country than students from the other countries. Individual countries are significantly different on each question indicating social-cultural differences but overall patterns within the profession are still strong.

A parallel question was asked about why the profession of social work was attractive. Again the ratings were on a 1 to 5 scale with mutually exclusive questions.

	Hungary	Germany	Italy	Finland	USA	Overall Mean Rank	Significance Between Countries
You Help People	4.59	3.93	4.02	4.49	4.79	<b>4.36</b>	P = .00
You Can Feel Successful	3.50	2.85	3.91	3.85	4.12	<b>3.67</b>	P = .00
Work with People	4.70	4.44	3.82	4.69	4.56	<b>4.44</b>	P = .00
Earn a Lot of Money	2.62	2.25	1.95	2.05	2.09	<b>2.19</b>	P = .00
Profession is Highly Regarded	3.40	2.44	2.79	2.83	3.26	<b>2.94</b>	P = .01

Table 6: The social work profession is attractive because  
Kruskal-Wallis Analysis of Ranks Test Utilized for Each Analysis.

There are two salient reasons for all social work students as to why social work is attractive even though there is some difference in the amount of importance between countries (a) you help people (Mean Rank of 4.36) and (b) you work with people (Mean rank 4.44). All students recognize that the profession does not earn a lot of money (Mean Rank = 2.19) while there is a perception that the profession is not highly regarded (Mean Rank = 2.94), however you can feel successful in social work (Mean Rank = 3.67).

The next table is a list of items that were presented to the students as things that a social worker needs to know to practice social work. Again, each item was rated independently on a scale from 1 to 5 with 1 being low and 5 being high.

	Hungary	Germany	Italy	Finland	USA	Mean Rank	Significance Between Countries
Tolerant	4.43	4.02	4.24	3.66	4.78	4.23	P = .01
Put Self in Others Position	4.36	4.62	4.07	4.62	4.66	<b>4.46</b>	P = .00
Communicate Well	4.80	4.38	4.67	4.69	4.86	<b>4.68</b>	P = .00
Make Best of Situation	4.34	3.49	3.38	3.98	4.62	3.96	P = .00
Know Legal Issues	4.35	4.23	4.13	4.25	4.53	4.30	P = .00
Keep Distance From Problems	4.09	4.39	4.20	3.66	4.76	4.22	P = .00
Know Sociological Issues	4.25	3.98	4.60	4.11	4.50	4.28	P = .00
Be Able to Start Over	4.40	3.83	4.11	4.05	4.64	4.20	P = .00
Socio-Politically Informed	4.21	3.93	4.04	4.26	4.55	4.20	P = .00

Table 7: A social worker has to learn  
Kruskal-Wallis Analysis of Ranks Test Utilized for Each Analysis.

All of the items presented about what a social worker needs to learn were very high for students from all countries. The ability to communicate well (Mean Rank = 4.68) and to be able to put yourself in another's position (Mean Rank = 4.46) were rated the most important. Also between all countries it was seen that

there are cultural/national differences for example tolerance rated low by the Finish students (Mean Rank = 3.66) compared to the others and making the best of the situation (Mean Rank 3.38) being rated lowest by the Italian students.

Characteristics important to a social worker were also rated. As shown in the next table all of the characteristics were viewed as important except being attractive. Some of the characteristics were seen as very critical to practice. Professional preparation (Mean Rank 4.60) was the most important characteristic indicating that irrespective of country to be a competent social worker one must have professional training in a program of social work. Numerous other personal characteristics, empathy (Mean Rank 4.41), resourcefulness (Mean Rank 4.10), creative (Mean Rank 4.13), and sensitive (Mean Rank 4.34) were all rated high as qualities social workers should possess. All countries rated attractiveness (Mean Rank = 2.52) as not being important with the exception of Finland (Mean Rank = 3.78) and it was not rated very high by them.

	Hungary	Germany	Italy	Finland	USA	Mean Rank	Significance Between Countries
Empathy	4.85	4.21	4.09	4.12	4.79	4.41	P = .00
Professional Preparation	4.82	4.35	4.52	4.60	4.71	<b>4.60</b>	P = .00
Sensitive	4.00	4.10	4.21	3.60	4.79	4.34	P = .00
Unselfish	3.58	1.92	3.61	3.09	3.70	3.22	P = .00
Resourceful	4.55	3.95	4.07	3.92	4.02	4.10	P = .00
Attractive	2.86	1.90	1.68	3.78	2.38	<b>2.52</b>	P = .00
Creative	4.16	3.87	4.11	4.05	4.36	4.13	P = .00
School Attendance	3.40	2.44	2.79	2.83	3.26	2.94	P = .01

Table 8: Characteristics important to a social worker  
Kruskal-Wallis Analysis of Ranks Test Utilized for Each Test.

Students were also asked why the profession of social work could be difficult. Again the question is somewhat parallel to why social work is attractive but asked the student to identify what are the most difficult parts of being a social worker. There was a lot of consistency in the answers with students identifying experiences wearing you out (Mean Rank of 3.69) and earning little money (Mean Rank of 3.58) as the most salient reasons for the profession being a difficult one. The other reasons were seen as contributing less to the profession being a difficult one. It needs to be stated that none of the reasons ranked very high or reached a Mean Rank of 4.0 compared to the reasons for the profession being attractive where many reached a Mean Rank value of 4.0.

	Hungary	Germany	Italy	Finland	USA	Overall Mean Rank	Significance Between Countries
Full of Failure	3.42	3.41	2.56	2.37	2.98	2.95	P = .00
People are Ungrateful	2.42	2.62	1.96	2.42	2.72	2.43	P = .000
Experiences Wear you Out	3.50	3.19	3.32	4.26	4.19	<b>3.69</b>	P = .00
Earn Little Money	3.56	3.51	2.91	3.58	4.32	<b>3.58</b>	P = .00
You are Disregarded	3.06	3.35	3.25	3.32	3.82	3.36	P = .01

Table 9: The profession of social work is difficult because  
Kruskal-Wallis Analysis of Ranks Test Utilized for Each Test.

It is important to determine what professions are seen by potential professional social workers as being like their chosen profession. A list of various professions was developed some that were deemed to be similar to social work and some that were not. Again the categories were ranked on a 1 to 5 scale. As shown in the table the Mean Ranks of psychologist (3.69) teacher (3.56) and supervisor (3.45) were rated as most closely resembling the work of a social worker. The Mean Ranks of those most different from social worker were engineer (1.61) and lawyer (2.76). There were some interesting differences between the countries in rankings. The Italian students had a Mean Rank for priest (1.84) and nurse (1.73) very different from compared to all the other countries. This disparity may be explained when a comparison is made between the view by the Roman Catholic Church in Italy toward divorce and abortion and the view held by most of the social work profession. All the other professions were rather similar from country to country.

	Hungary	Germany	Italy	Finland	USA	Mean Rank	Significance Between Countries
Psychologist	3.93	3.79	3.05	4.06	3.60	<b>3.69</b>	P = .00
Lawyer	2.90	3.21	2.18	2.69	2.82	<b>2.76</b>	P = .00
Priest	3.42	3.06	<b>1.84</b>	3.58	3.55	<b>3.09</b>	P = .00
Teacher	3.06	4.22	2.59	4.09	3.82	<b>3.56</b>	P = .00
Economist	1.83	2.68	1.57	1.92	2.40	<b>2.08</b>	P = .00
Engineer	1.50	1.81	1.25	1.62	1.85	<b>1.61</b>	P = .00
Supervisor	3.65	3.79	3.11	3.45	3.25	<b>3.45</b>	P = .04
Nurse	2.93	3.90	<b>1.73</b>	3.55	3.11	<b>3.04</b>	P = .00

Table 10: Professions most like social work  
Kruskal-Wallis Analysis of Ranks Test Utilized for Each Test.

It is interesting to note that the students did not see any of the professions being very similar to social work with the highest rating being given to psychologist (Mean Rank 3.69) as most closely resembling what social workers do. All other professions were in the average range of relationship to social work with an economist (Mean Rank 2.08) being the least like social work.

Another related question to what professions are like social work is the question what other professions are social workers most likely to collaborate with. As we have seen the psychologist is not only the most like social work, it is the profession that is seen as more likely to collaborate with (Mean Rank 4.25). The other professions rated by all countries as most likely to collaborate with social work are supervisors (Mean rank 3.98), sociologists (Mean Rank 3.83), teachers (Mean Rank 3.69) and doctors (Mean Rank 3.45). The professions least likely to collaborate with are engineers (Mean Rank 1.91), economists (Mean Rank 2.39), politician (2.50), and artists (Mean Rank 2.69). It is also consistent in that the same finding concerning the students from Italy with respect to their view about priests, and nuns being different from social work also is found in that the Italian students don't see much collaboration with these two professions. Also the Italian students rated nurses as unlikely to collaborate with compared to the other countries and this may be attributed to many nurses in Italy being nuns.

	Hungary	Germany	Italy	Finland	USA	Mean Rank	Significance Between Countries
Psychologist	5.43	3.87	3.55	4.48	3.91	<b>4.25</b>	P = .00
Lawyer	3.32	3.43	2.82	2.86	3.30	3.15	P = .00
Priest	3.39	2.92	2.20	3.93	3.95	3.28	P = .00
Teacher	3.62	3.44	3.05	4.23	4.11	<b>3.69</b>	P = .00
Economist	2.46	2.76	1.88	2.09	2.77	<b>2.39</b>	P = .00
Engineer	1.79	2.02	1.48	1.94	2.32	<b>1.91</b>	P = .00
Supervisor/ manager	4.27	3.81	3.63	4.05	4.12	<b>3.98</b>	P = .25
Doctor	3.50	3.44	2.98	3.80	3.51	<b>3.45</b>	P = .06
Police	3.36	2.89	2.29	3.92	3.67	3.23	P = .12
Artist	2.58	3.13	1.75	2.88	3.09	<b>2.69</b>	P = .00
Journalist	3.21	3.08	2.14	2.46	3.02	2.78	P = .00
Judge	3.12	3.14	3.13	2.77	3.58	3.15	P = .00
Nun	2.91	2.48	2.21	2.58	3.77	2.79	P = .00
Politician	2.84	2.62	2.29	2.29	2.48	<b>2.50</b>	P = .22
Sociologist	4.08	3.62	3.40	3.92	4.11	<b>3.83</b>	P = .04
Nurse	2.93	3.90	1.73	3.55	3.11	3.04	P = .00

Table 11: Professions that most collaborate with social work  
Kruskal-Wallis Analysis of Ranks Test Utilized for Each Test.

The final section of the survey was a group of 45 (revised from scale developed by Super) questions to which the student replied on a 5-point scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree. These questions were designed to elicit their viewpoint about characteristics that they consider important to a satisfying job. These questions were included in an effort to first find factors that could be developed into scales that could be used as job desirable job characteristics. The second question was to see if these scales could be used to discriminate between students from different countries.

The 45 questions were factor analyzed which resulted in 8 factors that were then forced into 4 factors. At this point one question was deleted from the 45 questions, as it did not fit into the four forced factors. Then 4 items in each of the 4 factors were identified with the highest loading into the “top 4”. These “top 4” in the four factors were then analyzed to see if there was an interpretative theme between and among the “top 4” in each factor. The themes were established as mutually exclusive and items were added to each factor that matched the theme of the “top 4” for each group. While making these groupings it was seen that three of the themes were really closely connected thus a second order analysis was conducted to determine if there was a “super factor” which was confirmed. Then

each of the 4 scales was tested for reliability. Item correlations within each scale were conducted and a few with low inter item correlations were deleted. The final result was four scales as shown in the appendix.

The theme of Scale 1 (Cronbach alpha = .94) was "I want a job that is creative, challenging, with a variety of tasks that allows me to see results" and consisted of 17 items. Scale 2's theme was "I want a job that provides a feeling of accomplishment" and consisted of 8 items (Cronbach alpha = .86). "I want a job that is secure" was the theme of Scale 3 with 6 items (Cronbach alpha = .79). The last, Scale 4, was made up of 5 items with the theme "I want to help others within the context of a job that offers professional advancement" (Cronbach alpha = .82).

The total score for each scale varied with the number of questions in the scale. For each question the range was from 1 not important to 5 very important so that a high score indicated that these items on the scale and therefore the theme was very important to the student. Scale 1's total possible score = 85, average ranking = 51; Scale 2's total possible score = 40, average ranking = 24; Scale 3's total possible score = 30, average ranking = 18; Scale 4's total possible score = 25, average ranking = 15. Some very interesting results occur when looking at the result of the differences between countries on preferences for job. As shown in Scale 1 "I want a job that is creative, challenging, has a variety of tasks and can see results", there are significant differences between the five countries ( $F = 21.27$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $p = .000$ ). Italian students have an average interest in having this kind of job (53), while Hungarian (71) and U.S. (69) students are the most desirous of a job having these qualities.

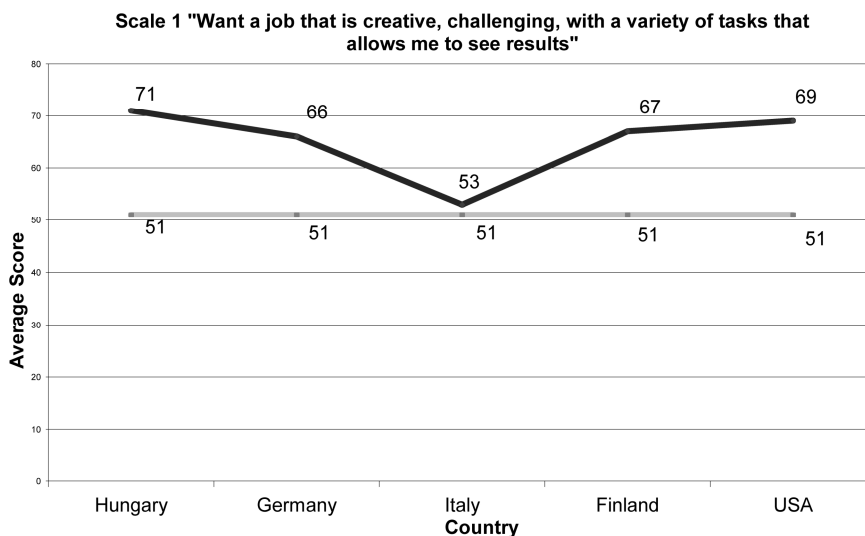


Chart 4: Scale 1 by country.

The data from Scale 2 “Want a job that provides a feeling of accomplishment” demonstrates the significant difference ( $F = 50.17$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $p = .000$ ) in that both the American (31) students and German (32) students are well above average interest in this aspect of a job compared to an average interest by the Italian (24) Hungarian (22) and Finish (21) students

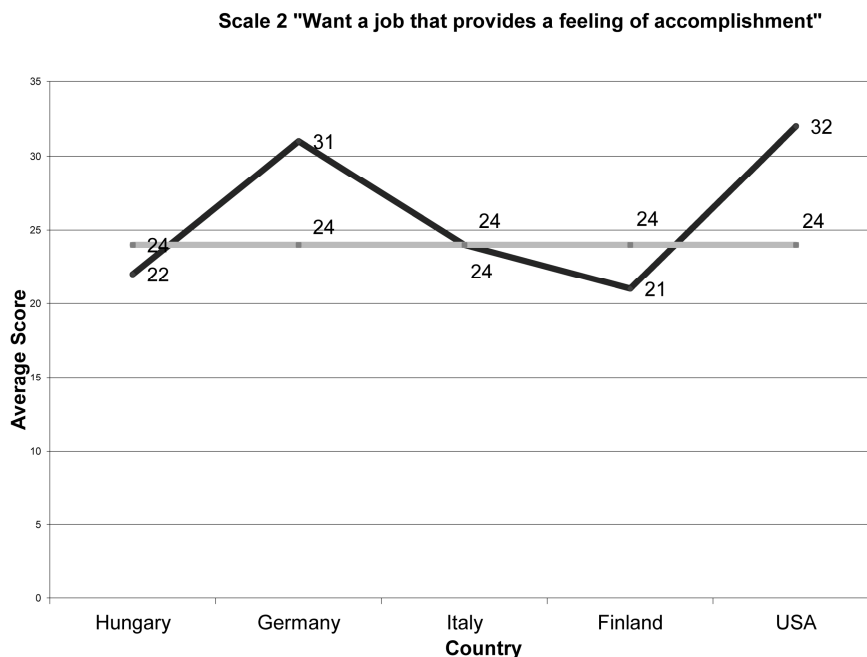


Chart 5: Scale 2 by country.

Scale 3 incorporates the theme that the student “Wants a job that is secure”. Once again we see the similarity and above average interest in this job aspect between the American (24) German (22) and this time also the Hungarian (21) students which is significantly different ( $F = 19.48$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $p = .000$ ) from the Italian and Finish students. The Italian (17) and Finish (18) students do not seem as concerned about job security as the students from the other three countries reflecting average concern about this aspect of the job.



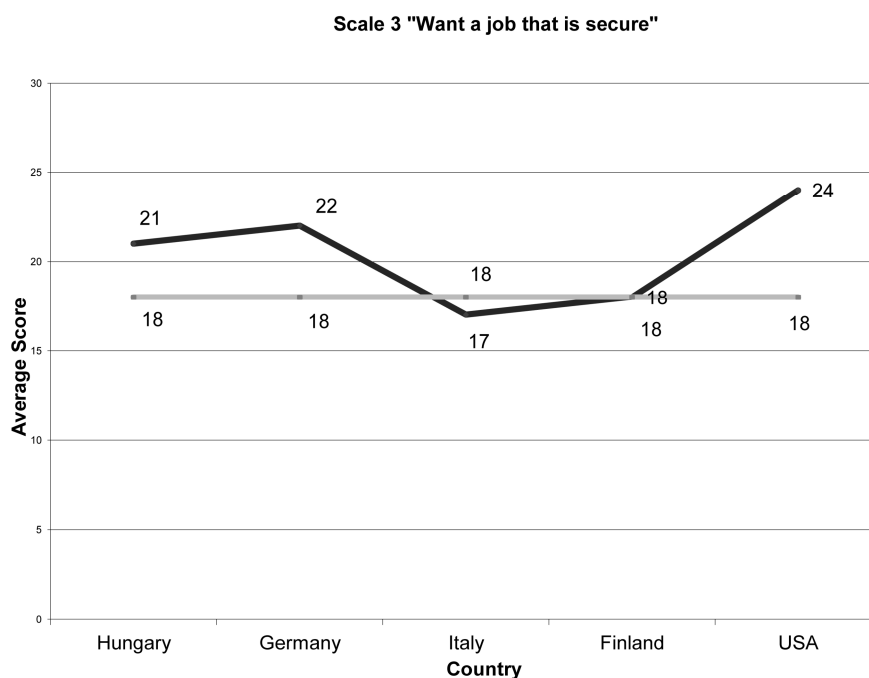


Chart 6: Scale 3 by country.

The last scale, Scale 4, measures the idea that the student “Wants a job to help others” and that provides professional advancement. What is interesting with this aspect of the job is that all students (Hungarian = 20, Germany = 17, Finish = 17, and American = 21) with the exception of the Italian students (14) valuing this characteristic very highly. The Hungarians and Americans in particular place high importance on this job characteristic. There were some significant differences ( $F = 37.30$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $p = .00$ ).

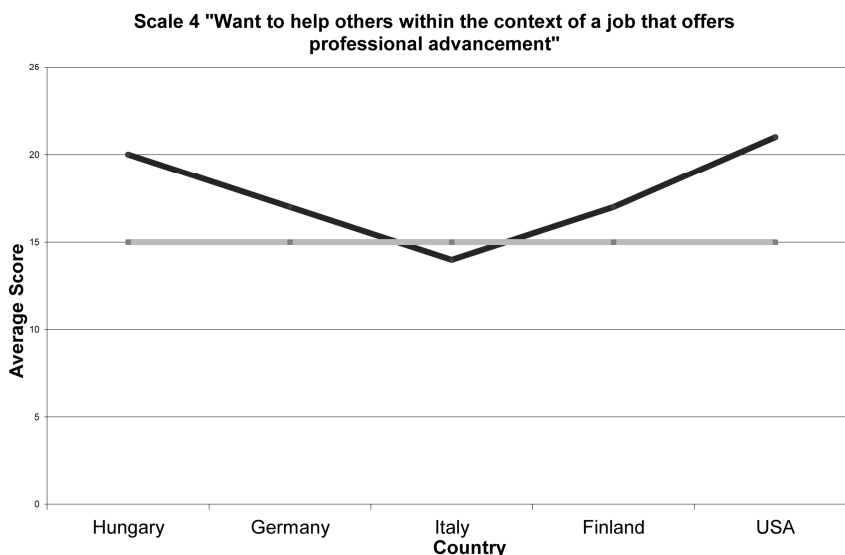


Chart 7: Scale 4 by country.

The overall results of the characteristics of the job most preferred by the students of each country can be summarized as follows:

**“Want a job that is creative, challenging, with a variety of tasks and can see results.”**

Hungary and the USA see these characteristics as very important  
 Germany and Finland see them as important  
 Italy has about an average concern for these characteristics in a job

**“Want a job that provides a feeling of accomplishment.”**

Germany and USA view the need for accomplishment as very important  
 Hungary, Finland and Italy see it as being of average importance

**“Want a job that is secure.”**

The USA sees a secure job as very important  
 Germany and Hungary see it as important  
 Finland and Italy view it as having average importance

**“Want a job that I can help others and provides professional advancement.”**

Hungary and the USA feel that this is highly important  
Germany and Finland see it as important  
Italy views it as having average importance.

Given that the scales were reliable and that there were significant differences between the various countries on the scales it was decided to attempt to utilize the scale scores for a given individual to predict country of origin. Utilizing discriminate analysis the following results were obtained:

**OVERALL:**

62% of all students were correctly classified into their home country using.  
Four scales compared to 20% by chance classification.

**HUNGARY**

79% Correctly Classified.  
Most like Finish students with 15% misclassified as Finish.  
Least like German students with 0% classified as German.

**GERMANY**

67% Correctly Classified.  
Most like American students with 19% misclassified as American.  
Least like Finish students with 3% classified as Finish.

**ITALY**

41% Correctly Classified.  
Most like German students with 37% classified as German.  
Least like Hungarian students with 4% classified as Hungarian.

**FINLAND**

38% Correctly Classified.  
Most like Hungarian students with 47% classified as Hungarian.  
Least like American, German, and Italian with 5% classified as  
Each country.

**AMERICAN**

69% Correctly Classified.  
Most like German students with 14% classified as German.  
Least like Italian students with 2% classified as Italian.

## Conclusions

The most striking finding is while there are differences between the countries with respect to all the variables, there is a very high degree of similarity or agreement between the countries. For example, one of the characteristics that is important to the profession of social work – empathy - was rated very important (between 4.09 and 4.85) by students from all countries even though there was a significant difference between the countries. Another example would be why the students wanted to be social workers - to help others - again rated very important by all students although statistically there were significant differences between countries. Cultural differences are in evidence when the social work students from Italy rated working with priests and nuns low compared to other countries. This difference appears to be the Italian student's perception of a difference between social work and the church on matters of abortion and divorce.

Finally, a series of four scales were developed that measure job characteristics which are highly reliable for social work students. These scales can be used to discriminate between students from different countries in that students from different countries have different preferences in their most desired job characteristics.

### APPENDIX

#### FINAL SCALES

##### SCALE 1 QUESITONS

**“Want a job that is creative, challenging, with a variety of tasks that allows me to see results.”**

Q4	Variety of changes within the job.
Q5	Freedom in your area of responsibility.
Q6	Gain prestige in your profession.
Q10	Can be true to yourself.
Q15	Try new ideas and suggestions.
Q 16	Create something new.
Q17	See positive results.
Q21	Make your own decisions.
Q23	Challenged mentally.
Q24	Use leadership abilities.
Q27	Friendship with fellow employees.

- Q29 Variety of tasks.
- Q32 Do many different things.
- Q35 Lead the kind of life you most enjoy.
- Q38 Need to be mentally alert.
- Q44 See the results of your efforts.
- Q45 Contribute new ideas.

## **SCALE 2**

### **“Want a job that provides a feeling of accomplishment.”**

- Q1 Opportunity to solve new problems.
- Q9 Know your job will last.
- Q11 Respectful boss.
- Q13 Daily feeling of accomplishment.
- Q19 Sure of always having a job.
- Q25 Adequate lounge, toilet and facilities.
- Q26 Have a satisfying life when not working.
- Q36 Have a good working space.

## **SCALE 3**

### **“Want a job that is secure.”**

- Q8 Sense of belonging.
- Q18 Reasonable boss.
- Q22 Pay that keeps up with the cost of living.
- Q33 Looked up to by others.
- Q34 Good contacts with fellow workers.
- Q39 Paid enough to live right.

## **SCALE 4**

### **“Want to help others within the context of a job that offers professional advancement.”**

- Q2 Help others.
- Q3 Opportunity for a raise.
- Q20 Add beauty to the world.
- Q30 Feeling that you have helped others.
- Q31 Add to the well being of other people.

## References

1. Fábíán G. - Fónai M. (1999): Szociális munkás szakos hallgatók pályaké-  
pének nemzetközi összehasonlítása. Peremvidék. Szociális kutatások Sza-  
bolcs-Szatmár-Bereg megyében. Szerk.: Lukácskó Zsolt-Fónai Mihály-  
Fábíán Gergely. DOTE Egészségügyi Főiskolai Kar, Nyíregyháza-Népjóléti  
Képzési Központ, Salgótarján. 219-251.
2. Fónai M. - Kiss J. - Fábíán G.(1999): Szociális munkás szakos hallgatók  
pályaképének néhány eleme. Esély 1. 114-134.
3. Fónai M. – Kiss J. - Fábíán G. (2001): A szociális munkás szakos hallgatók  
pályaképe: a professzió sztenderdjei és a nemzeti–kulturális változó. Mul-  
tikulturalizmus és oktatás (Szerk.: Kiss Gabriella), MTA DAB – DE Szoci-  
ológia Tanszék, Debrecen. 75-93.
4. Super D.E. (1957): The Psychology of Careers. Harper, New York.
5. Super D.E. (1995): Life Roles, Values and Careers. San Francisco, Jossey  
Bass.

**Gergely Fabian Ph.D.:** Professor and vice dean of Health Faculty of University  
of Debrecen

Department of Applied Social Sciences of Health Faculty, University of Debrecen  
Nyíregyháza, Hungary

**Thomas R. Lawson Ph.D.:** Hon Dr. Sci. Professor and Director of International  
Programs

Kent School of Social Work, University of Louisville  
Louisville, Kentucky USA

**Mihaly Fonai Ph.D.:** Associated professor and vice dean of Law Faculty of  
Debrecen

Department of Philosophy Sociology of Law  
University of Debrecen, Debrecen, Hungary

**Janos Kiss Ph.D.:** Associated professor

Department of Applied Psychology of Health Faculty  
University of Debrecen, Nyíregyháza, Hungary

**Eric. R. Soelter:** L.C.S.W., Ph.D. Healthcare Consultant

Kent School of Social Work  
University of Louisville, Louisville, Kentucky USA