Economic Influences on Ideals About Future Jobs in Young Adults in Formerly Socialist Countries and the United States

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University students today in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) confront a world in which old ideals learned under state socialism are being questioned. Despite initial difficulties after the end of socialism, most of these countries now have more stable market economies. This article investigates how macroeconomic variables relate to ideals for future work in samples of students from eight CEE countries and the United States. Results indicate there are some significant relationships between macroeconomic factors and job values. Wanting a job that pays well is associated with poorer economic conditions, whereas wanting a career is associated with better economic conditions. Results for wanting a job that allowed time for family are mixed, with higher GDP per capita a positive predictor but economic growth a negative predictor. Economic predictors of

wanting a job helping others are weak, with a significant effect of growth found only when U.S. data are added.

Keywords: *postsocialist society; work values; career plans; Central and Eastern Europe; macroeconomic performance measures*

As young adults enter the university, they begin to think about their future jobs and what type of job they would ideally like to have. They may value some characteristics of jobs more than others. These ideas about desirable jobs are called "work values" (MOW International Research Team, 1987). Such job values affect the field students select and the ultimate jobs they obtain after graduation. Prior research has shown that certain work values also affect one's behavior in the workplace and predict salaries and career success (e.g., England & Lee, 1974; Frieze, Olson, Murrell, & Selvan, 2006). Work values may also affect decisions to emigrate in educated young adults (Frieze et al., 2004).

In this research, we look at the types of job values held by university students in formerly state socialist countries of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) to see how these are predicted by economic factors. In many ways, the changes in CEE provide a natural experiment to see how the movement away from state socialism relates to changes in the attitudes of the people living in those countries. This research asks the question: As economic conditions change, do we see associated changes in the ways in which young university-educated adults view the workplace? Answers to this question may help researchers and policy makers to better understand how work values change and to make better predictions about the job preferences and work behavior of these future professionals.

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To study this question, the research draws on samples of university students from a variety of disciplines in eight different countries in CEE, with a comparison sample of university students from one institution in the United States. Data were collected during the period from 1991 through 2004. These were years of transition in CEE as these countries developed market economies. By having a diverse sample within the CEE region, we are more able to assess the general relationship of work values to economic factors and can generalize beyond one particular country. Our decision to use students from many different fields was made to further add to the generalizability of the data.

ECONOMIC CHANGES IN CEE

Countries in CEE have undergone rapid social and economic change since the late 1980s as they attempted to transform from "command economies" (centrally planned economies) to market economies. Economic changes included liberalization of prices and other market activities, privatization of production, restructuring of inefficient factories, and reform of the banking and legal systems. Some countries made reforms quickly, whereas others moved slowly. Progress was not easy (Svejnar, 2002).

In evaluating the overall performance of economies, economists often look at macroeconomic variables such as real gross domestic product (GDP) per capita, growth in real GDP per capita, the unemployment rate, and the inflation rate. Real GDP per capita is a measure of a country's total economic output divided by its population size after adjusting for price changes; it is considered a rough proxy for a country's overall standard of living or material wealth (Kemmelmeier, Krol, & Kim, 2002). To compare countries, their real GDPs must be converted to a common currency, often the U.S. dollar. Economists generally recommend converting at a purchasing power parity (PPP) exchange rate rather than the actual market exchange rate. The PPP exchange rate is one that equalizes the costs of buying a set of goods and services in the two countries. This rate is preferred because actual exchange rates fluctuate substantially from year to year and because the outputs of low-income countries tend to be understated when converted at the actual exchange rates (Samuelson & Nordhaus, 2005).

Given a country's current real GDP per capita, the growth rate in this variable is perhaps the most important measure of performance

because it is a measure of recent improvements in economic conditions (Kemmelmeier et al., 2002). The growth rate determines how rapidly a country's material wealth is increasing. A high growth rate means rapid improvement, whereas a slow growth rate means slow improvement. A negative growth rate means a declining standard of living (Samuelson & Nordhaus, 2005). The unemployment rate measures the percentage of the labor force without jobs. The higher the unemployment rate, the more difficult it is for people to find jobs. Studies have shown that when the unemployment rate is high, crimes, family violence, mental illness, and suicide also increase (Gordon, 2006; Leana & Feldman, 1992). High unemployment is often negatively correlated with the GDP per capita growth rate because low growth may indicate an inability to absorb new workers; however, this may not be the case in transition economies where restructuring may simultaneously increase growth and unemployment (Chadha, Coricelli, & Krajnyak, 1993).

Inflation is the fourth variable commonly used as a measure of performance. Inflation measures the percentage change in the general level of prices during a given period. Inflation has mixed effects on an economy. An unexpected increase in prices can be beneficial to debtors as they can pay back their loans in a discounted currency. Lenders and those on fixed incomes generally lose from unexpected inflation as they are paid with money that buys less than expected. In general, though, a high rate of inflation has an overall negative impact on an economy because it creates greater uncertainty and makes rational decision making more difficult (Gordon, 2006).

Clearly, other economic variables are also important. For example, measures of income distribution can indicate what groups of people in the economy are benefiting and losing, but income distribution is not measured on a regular, annual basis. This study focuses on the four performance measures discussed above. Ideally, a country would want a high GDP per capita, a high growth rate, a low unemployment rate, and a low inflation rate.

Using these measures, one can see that the economic performance of former command economies has varied considerably during the past 15 years. Almost all of them initially suffered drops in output and increasing unemployment during their transition. Many also initially experienced rapid inflation and a worsening distribution of income (Samuelson & Nordhaus, 2005;

Vecernik, 2003). However, progress since then has varied. Some countries, such as the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Slovenia, have relatively high GDPs per capita and have become members of the European Union. Others, such as Albania, Croatia, and Russia, are still struggling to raise income and to become successful market economies.

These economic changes have had both positive and negative effects on the lives of the people in these countries. Increasing opportunities in the private sector have meant higher salaries and greater possibilities for job advancement. But these same forces have also resulted in the closing of factories and the downsizing of many organizations, resulting in high levels of unemployment. Inflation has eroded the values of people's incomes, especially those on fixed incomes. A few people have become very wealthy (Svejnar, 2002).

This article investigates how young adults, university students, have responded to these economic changes in terms of their desires for future careers. The work values of students from Albania, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Russia, and Slovenia are examined. We also compare their work ideals with the work ideals of students from a wealthy, long-standing market economy, the United States. We examine whether the macroeconomic performance of a country influences job ideals and, if so, which performance variable has the most impact.

JOB VALUES IN YOUNG ADULTS AND ECONOMIC FACTORS

For the CEE students, this is a time of opportunity and of challenge as they complete their education and plan to enter the labor force. Many of the students surveyed in this research were educated for at least some of their lives under a state socialist system. One of the basic principles of state socialism was the widespread belief that everyone should have a job and be employed outside the home (Deacon, 1992). As a result of this philosophy and the commitment to this belief in political leaders, university students under state socialism were able to quickly find jobs and were guaranteed that they would be able to remain in their jobs (or some other job) for the rest of their working lives. However, in many cases, they had little choice about the type of job they would obtain. Thus, individual work values, such as a

desire to obtain high pay or to help others or obtain recognition, could not always be satisfied through work (Frieze, Miluska, Ferligoj, Mitina, & Wall, 1998).

When this state socialism system ended, students were faced with a situation where they might not be able to find a job. But at the same time, there were increasing opportunities for different types of jobs. The CEE young adults of today have more choices about their futures than has been true for at least a generation. We expect that students are now better able to select the types of jobs they want and that they will be better able to express their personal work values in making such choices. Because there is little research linking economic changes to values, we see this study as partially exploratory. How do values change as an economy is changing rapidly? Which economic variables best predict the values?

JOB VALUES

Extensive research on job values in the United States and other countries has identified a number of job characteristics sought by individuals as they consider their ideal job (Erez, Kleinbeck, & Thierry, 2001; Roe & Ester, 1999; Super & Šverko, 1995). Researchers of career plans have generally examined future career aspirations in terms of several different dimensions (e.g., Bridges, 1989; Frieze & Olson, 1994; Šverko & Vizek-Vidovic, 1995). Do students aspire to have a job with high pay? Is a sense of personal achievement in their work important to them? Do they care about being able to help others in their future work? Do they value jobs with time for their family? It is these types of questions we examine in this research.

In this research, we first consider one of the job values that has been most extensively studied—the desire for high pay. This is often found to be one of the job values rated as most important. For example, having a job with high pay was one of the most highly rated work goals in a large study of adults in wealthy, industrialized countries (Belgium, Germany, Israel, Japan, the Netherlands, and the United States; Harpaz, 1990). Wanting a good salary has also been shown to be important to employees in former command economies. In a survey of Russian workers done in 2000, Linz (2003) found that having higher pay was one of the more important concerns for workers of both sexes. Those who

felt they would receive more pay for doing so were most motivated to work hard and most satisfied with their jobs. Other research suggests that people in countries in more difficult economic situations place a higher value on tangible work rewards (Vecernik, 2003). We examine the relationship between economic factors and wanting high pay, but with the inconsistencies in the literature, we treat this analysis as exploratory rather than making a formal prediction.

Other job values that may be especially important in comparing formerly state socialist countries with more industrialized and wealthy countries are those relating to personal achievement (wanting a career, not just a job). Such values are typically associated with highly individualistic and wealthy countries such as the United States (Kashima & Kashima, 2003). There is some evidence that periods of worsening economic conditions are associated with a lessened interest in such personal values (Vecernik, 2003). This suggests that these individualistic values should be higher in the United States than in the CEE countries. It also suggests that, for the CEE countries, higher achievement values should be related to positive macroeconomic performance measures.

Another job value that may be important in our comparison across countries is the desire to help others in one's job. Socialist idealism taught that it was important for people to help other people by working for the state. By contrast, personal fulfillment as the highest goal is associated with Western, materialistic societies (Deacon, 1992; Heidmets, 1995). Such thinking would suggest that wanting to help others would be higher in the formerly socialist countries than in the United States. But it has also been argued that materialist goals (wanting good jobs and a low cost of living) are most important to those living in societies that are less affluent, whereas other values, such as an enhanced quality of life and helping others, become more important in societies that are relatively wealthy (Inglehart, 1990). Thus, there are theoretical arguments to support an opposite hypothesis.

Empirical research does not provide clear support for either prediction in terms of the importance of having a job involving helping others. In one empirical test of these ideas, using the case of attitudes about environmental protection (one form of helping others), Kemmelmeier et al. (2002) found some support for the point of view that helping others was seen as more important in socialist countries, using national-level data from several countries.

Tests of attitude relationships on the individual level were also statistically significant, but quite small. But other empirical research suggests an opposite pattern. In a survey done comparing Western European with Central European countries in 1994, more value was placed on wealth by Western Europeans than by those from Central Europe (Markova et al., 1998). However, this variable of wealth was associated with the term *welfare* and with wealth and money, and it may have a different meaning than in other studies using a more direct question about valuing personal income. It does appear that the most consistent finding is that there will be a higher value placed on having a job that involves helping others in our formerly state socialist countries than in the United States. Personal fulfillment is associated with Western materialistic societies (Deacon, 1992; Heidmets, 1995). We hypothesize that this type of socialization would lead to the CEE students initially being higher in the desires to help others in their work. But as countries in CEE move away from socialism, this desire to have a job that allows one to help others should also decrease over time.

Another question about future careers asks about the desire to have a job that allows plenty of time with one's family. Research suggests that valuing leisure time and quality of life is more associated with Western Europe than with the United States (Stiles, Gibbons, & Peters, 1993). It is not clear how these job values would be expressed in the formerly socialist countries. But we again predict that the better the economic conditions, the more important such job values become.

RESEARCH DESIGN

In this study, we examine mean levels of student aspirations for future jobs. Similar groups of students are compared across countries, with years ranging from 1991 to 2004 (see Table 1). Multiple regression analysis is then used to test for the effect of macroeconomic performance variables on various work values.

Beliefs about the ideal job have been shown to be affected by the gender of the respondents. Research done largely in the United States has shown a strong effect for women to be more desirous than men of jobs that allow them to help. Men have rated pay, independence, and recognition higher than have women in these

same studies (Bridges, 1989; Fiorentine, 1988; Mottaz, 1986). We control for gender as a variable within our analysis, although one might argue that the gender differences found in the United States would not be as pronounced in formerly state socialist countries. Within these command economies, women, as well as men, worked full-time and expected to have full-time careers (e.g., Frieze & Ferligoj, 1995; Funk & Mueller, 1993). Studies done in the United States show few differences in work values among women and men in similar high-status professions (Konrad, Ritchie, Lieb, & Corrigall, 2000), although it does appear that even women in management value helping others more than do men (e.g., Frieze & Olson, 1994). If it is true that both sexes continue to be interested in full-time careers in CEE, we would anticipate relatively few differences between women and men in their thoughts about future jobs.

In addition to gender, we control for whether the data come from students in the capital city or in some other region of the country. Other studies have shown that people often immigrate to regions of more economic promise, especially those who are highly motivated to succeed in their careers (e.g., Boneva & Frieze, 2001; Boneva et al., 1997, 1998; Frieze et al., 2004). In all of the countries being studied in CEE, there are more opportunities in the capital city than in other regions, and overall economic indicators for any individual country probably are more favorable in the capital than in other regions of the country (Boeri & Terrell, 2002; Ferragina & Pastore, 2005). Although the capital city hypothesis would not apply for a large country such as the United States where there are multiple growth centers, we note that our sample for the United States is from Pittsburgh, a region of declining population where students often must leave to find jobs (Hansen, Ban, & Huggins, 2003).

We add a control for the subject area of the students being assessed. In general, students aspiring to careers in the helping professions, such as education, psychology, or medicine, may have different work goals than those in other fields such as business and economics. Such jobs tend to pay less and are often female dominated (Blau, Ferber, & Winkler, 2002; Frieze & Olson, 1994). We also add a trend variable to allow for changes in values over time that may be independent of the other control and the macroeconomic variables. The economic variables used are the four

macroeconomic performance variables discussed earlier for each country and for the year of each survey.

METHOD

Data were collected from 1991 through 2004, but not in every year for every country. Surveys for each country varied slightly, but all included a series of items assessing thoughts about future jobs. For all countries, items were translated by native speakers in the respective countries from English into the language of the country. A second person translated the surveys back to English to check the translations. All surveys were administered anonymously. Details about the individual samples are shown in Table 1.

COMPARISONS OF SAMPLES

Within each country group, the proportion of students within age groups was compared by year. There were only minor variations across years for average ages, with the modal age for all groups being between 18 and 20. Samples in Albania, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Lithuania, and Poland were somewhat older than were those in other countries.

The large majority of the students had never married. The lowest percentages of never married students were 71% in the 2000 Russian sample and 86% in Lithuania. Most students were in their first year of the university, although those countries with somewhat older students were also less likely to have sampled first-year students.

MEASURES

Students were asked what type of job they wanted when they graduated. A series of items were provided, each of which was rated on a 1 to 5 scale, anchored by 1 (*strongly disagree*) and 5 (*strongly agree*).

The economic data are GDP per capita in 2000 prices (converted to dollars using the 2000 PPP exchange rate), percentage growth in real GDP per capita, the overall unemployment rate, and the inflation rate for consumer prices. These data come from the World Bank's (2005) online *World Development Indicators*.

TABLE 1
Data Sets Used in Analysis

Year	*# Men*	*# Women*	*Sample*	*City*
United States				
1991	47	108	Psychology[a]	Pittsburgh
1993	81	119	Psychology[a]	Pittsburgh
1994	87	209	Psychology[a]	Pittsburgh
1996	119	194	Psychology[a]	Pittsburgh
1997	102	250	Psychology[a]	Pittsburgh
1998	158	352	Psychology[a]	Pittsburgh
1999	78	150	Psychology[a]	Pittsburgh
2001	129	289	Psychology[a]	Pittsburgh
2003	66	133	Psychology[a]	Pittsburgh
2004	131	233	Psychology[a]	Pittsburgh
Albania				
1996	52	77	Mixed	Tirana[b]
1998	39	62	Mixed	Tirana[b]
Croatia				
1995	59	89	Business or economics	Osijek
1997	99	182	Business or economics	Zagreb[b]
1997	63	70	Business or economics	Osijek
1998	78	122	Business or economics	Osijek
1999	80	136	Business or economics	Osijek
2000	143	156	Business or economics	Osijek
Czech Republic				
1994	64	68	Business or economics	Prague[b]
1998	67	85	Business or economics	Prague[b]
2001	60	95	Business or economics	Prague[b]
Hungary				
1999	245	298	Mixed	Budapest[b]
2003	223	259	Mixed	Budapest[b]
Lithuania				
1996	26	102	Mixed	Kaunas
Poland				
1994	130	129	Mixed	Poznan
1996	34	53	Other	Poznan
1998	31	89	Mixed	Poznan
Russia				
1996	2	87	Education[a]	Moscow[b]
1997	74	80	Mixed	Vladivostok
1998	54	20	Education[a]	Moscow[b]
1998	50	79	Psychology[a]	Irkutsk

(continued)

TABLE 1 (continued)

Year	*# Men*	*# Women*	*Sample*	*City*
1999	91	150	Education [super][a]	Saransk
2000	81	86	Psychology[a]	Moscow[b]
2001	103	195	Mixed	Vladivostok
Slovenia				
1993	96	118	Social science	Ljubljana[b]
1994	42	112	Social science	Ljubljana[b]
1996	173	216	Economics	Ljubljana[b]
1997	119	268	Social science	Ljubljana[b]
1997	168	181	Economics	Ljubljana[b]
1999	66	188	Social science	Ljubljana[b]
2002	108	220	Social science	Ljubljana[b]
2002	88	147	Medicine[a]	Ljubljana[b]

a. Helping major.
b. Capital city.

RESULTS

ECONOMIC DATA

Table 2 shows the economic indicators for each country by year of a survey. As can be seen, the United States has a superior performance, except for its relatively low growth rate. (An average growth rate of 2% to 3% is typical of advanced industrial countries—Weil, 2005.) Slovenia, the Czech Republic, and Hungary have high per capita GDPs for the CEE countries, but they are still less than half of those of the United States. Albania has the lowest GDP per capita. Growth rates for CEE countries vary by country and year. Russia had both the largest drop in GDP per capita (–5.04% in 1998) and one of the highest growth rates in real GDP per capita (10.57% in 2000). Unemployment rates range from less than 5% to more than 15%. Inflation rates have also varied from less than 5% (Croatia, most years) to more than 85% (Russia, 1999).

JOB VALUES

Country means for the four job values are shown in Table 3. The overall mean for all CEE countries is also shown. Analysis of variance was used to test for significant differences between the

TABLE 2
Economic Performance Measures for Countries and Survey Years

Year	*Real GDP per Capita (PPP 2000)*	*% Change in Real GDP per Capita*	*Unemployment Rate*	*Inflation in Consumer Prices*
United States				
1991	$28,109	–1.52	6.8	4.23
1993	$29,303	1.35	6.9	2.95
1994	$30,131	2.79	6.1	2.61
1996	$31,022	2.55	5.4	2.93
1997	$31,949	3.30	4.9	2.34
1998	$32,626	3.01	4.5	1.55
1999	$33,587	3.30	4.2	2.19
2001	$33,997	–0.57	4.7	2.83
2003	$35,666	2.23	6.0	2.27
2004	$36,883	3.41	5.5	2.66
Albania				
1996	$3,068	10.55	12.3	12.73
1998	$3,134	13.22	17.7	20.64
Croatia				
1995	$7,054	6.38	14.5	3.95
1997	$8,150	4.93	9.9	4.17
1998	$8,541	4.12	11.4	6.40
1999	$8,462	–1.95	13.5	3.46
2000	$9,081	6.85	16.1	5.27
Czech Republic				
1994	$11,898	2.17	4.3	9.96
1998	$13,165	–1.06	6.5	10.63
2001	$14,574	3.13	8.1	4.71
Hungary				
1999	$12,010	4.63	7.0	10.00
2003	$13,777	3.36	5.9	4.64
Lithuania				
1996	$7,184	5.46	16.4	24.62
Poland				
1994	$7,380	4.97	14.4	33.25
1996	$8,194	5.92	12.4	19.82
1998	$9,159	4.76	10.7	11.73
Russia				
1997	$6,427	1.70	11.8	14.77
1998	$6,244	–5.04	13.3	27.67

(continued)

TABLE 2 (continued)

Year	*Real GDP per Capita (PPP 2000)*	*% Change in Real GDP per Capita*	*Unemployment Rate*	*Inflation in Consumer Prices*
1999	$6,642	6.83	12.6	85.74
2000	$7,242	10.57	9.8	20.78
2001	$7,559	5.67	8.9	21.46
Slovenia				
1993	$12,544	4.40	9.1	32.86
1994	$12,859	4.16	9.0	20.99
1996	$13,897	3.48	7.3	9.79
1997	$14,626	4.82	7.1	8.38
1999	$15,993	5.05	7.4	6.11
2002	$17,736	3.22	5.9	7.48

SOURCE: World Bank (2005).
NOTE: PPP = purchasing power parity.

TABLE 3
Mean Scores by Country

Country	*Job That Pays Well*	*Career, Not a Job*	*Job Helping Others*	*Job With Time for Family*
United States	4.35	4.41	4.18	4.15
Overall CEE	4.32	3.98**	3.76**	3.76**
Albania	4.25	3.81	4.02	3.60
Croatia	4.52	4.24	3.83	3.37
Czech Republic	4.18	3.45	3.46	3.98
Hungary	4.04	4.22	3.80	4.08
Lithuania	4.32	3.75	3.64	3.57
Poland	4.27	4.06	3.96	3.95
Russia	4.51	3.72	3.68	3.60
Slovenia	4.19	4.13	3.77	3.72

NOTE: CEE = Central and East European Countries
**Statistically significant differences at the .001 confidence level between United States and CEE countries.

U.S. and the overall CEE means. Although the U.S. mean for "a job that pays well" is higher than for the CEE, the difference is not significant. We hypothesized that values relating to personal achievement ("career, not a job") would be higher in countries with positive economic conditions, and thus we expected this

mean to be higher for the United States, which it is, $F(1, 81) = 36.813$, $p < .001$. We predicted that a "job helping others" would be more important for those in CEE countries than in the United States, but, in fact, we find the opposite. The "helping others" value is significantly higher for American students, $F(1, 83) = 37.485$, $p < .001$. We also hypothesized that better economic conditions would lead respondents to place more emphasis on family, and, as predicted, the mean score for the United States is significantly higher, $F(1, 83) = 51.102$, $p < .001$. Table 3 also shows the mean scores for work values for the eight individual CEE countries in our study.

To test the impact of specific macroeconomic factors on work values, multiple regression analysis was used. The dependent variables are the mean scores by country, year, and gender for each of the nine work values. (As shown in Table 1, in four cases there were two sets of data for a given country and year.) The independent variables include the four macroeconomic performance variables for each country for each year of the surveys. These are real GDP per capita (using PPP exchange rates), real GDP per capita growth rate, the unemployment rate, and the inflation rate for consumer prices (Table 2). As discussed above, control variables include dichotomous variables for gender (1 = men, 2 = women), city (1 = capital, 2 = other city), and helping profession (1 = helping profession, 2 = other profession). A trend variable is also included to look at changes across the years of the study.

Regressions were run with and without U.S. data. Simple correlations showed a high negative correlation between GDP per capita and unemployment (–.75 with the U.S. data and –.79 without), indicating a potential problem with multicollinearity. Because of this multicollinearity problem, regressions were run removing either GDP per capita or unemployment. Results indicated that coefficients for GDP and unemployment were generally of the same magnitude, although in opposite directions, with GDP generally yielding higher betas. For this reason, we report only the GDP data in the tables but mention the unemployment data in the text. Full results are available from the corresponding author.

JOB VALUES AS PREDICTED BY ECONOMIC INDICATORS

As mentioned above, a series of regressions were done, using each of the four job values as dependent variables and gender,

capital (vs. non-capital city), helping (vs. non-helping major area of study), and trend in years as control variables. The regression results without and with U.S. data are shown in Table 4. All regressions had statistically significant overall R^2 values. Control factors are shown at the top of the tables. As expected the capital city variable did affect many of the ratings, although not generally in the expected direction of those in the capital having higher ratings.

We had not been able to make a clear prediction about the economic variables predicting wanting a job that pays well because previous results have sometimes shown that good economic conditions are predictive, whereas other data indicate the opposite. However, our results for ratings of wanting a job that pays well suggest that good economic performance reduces the importance of a job that pays well. For the CEE countries alone, the coefficients for GDP per capita and for growth in GDP per capita are negative and statistically significant. The coefficient for inflation has a negative sign, but it is not statistically significant. When GDP per capita is replaced with unemployment, the coefficient for unemployment is positive and statistically significant, indicating that higher unemployment increases the importance of a job that pays well. When U.S. data are added to the regression, the regression equation has fewer significant coefficients and a smaller adjusted R^2. But coefficients are quite similar.

The next equation deals with a job value relating to personal achievement ("career, not a job"). This was expected to increase with positive economic indicators. For CEE students alone, better economic conditions mean more interest in a career, as predicted. The coefficient for GDP per capita is positive and significant. The coefficient for growth is also positive and significant. The coefficient for inflation rate is negative and significant, indicating that the uncertainty created by high inflation reduces the emphasis on wanting a career rather than just a job. When GDP per capita is left out of the regression and unemployment is added, unemployment has a statistically significant negative coefficient, indicating that higher unemployment also reduces the emphasis on this value. When U.S. data are added to the regression, the GDP per capita coefficient is statistically insignificant, although in the expected direction. Having a high growth rate continues to be a positive predictor and inflation a negative predictor. When unemployment replaces GDP per capita in the regression, it is a significant negative predictor, as expected.

TABLE 4
Economic Predictors of Job Values

	Job Values							
	Job Pays Well		*Career, Not Job*		*Helping Others*		*Time for Family*	
	CEE	*+U.S.*	*CEE*	*+U.S.*	*CEE*	*+U.S.*	*CEE*	*+U.S.*
Control variables								
Gender	–.10	–.08	.05	.08	.51***	.49***	.10	.12
Not capital	.44***	.52***	.60***	.38***	.22	.31***	–.05	–.04
Not helping major	–.17	.09	–.16	–.15	–.26*	–.25**	.55***	.46***
Year	.15	.09	–.11	–.10	.02	–.13	.14	.06
Economic factors								
GDP per capita	–.48***	–.60***	.43***	.22	–.12	.25*	.45***	.96***
Growth	–.23**	–.15	.32***	.21***	.22*	.19**	–.31***	–.23***
Inflation	–.18	–.17	–.51***	–.49***	–.14	–.12	.22	.15
Equation data								
Observations	63	83	61	81	63	83	63	83
Adj. R^2	.44***	.36***	.45***	.56***	.26***	.54***	.27***	.55***

NOTE: Beta coefficients are reported. GDP per capita is in thousands of 2000 purchasing power parity dollars. Growth is the percentage change in real GDP per capita.
*$p < .10$. **$p < .05$. ***$p < .01$.

The job value of wanting to help others was expected to be higher in the CEE countries, but we were not able to formulate a clear prediction about the effects of the economic variables on this measure. The regression equations for helping others for CEE students only show one economic variable as statistically significant—the unemployment rate. This coefficient is positive, indicating that higher unemployment leads CEE students to be more interested in jobs helping people. Among the control variables, the gender coefficient is positive and statistically significant, indicating that women are more likely to want to help others than are men. The coefficient for the helping profession is negative, suggesting that those not in helping professions are less likely to want to help others; however, the coefficient is not statistically significant. The trend coefficient is not statistically significant. When U.S. data are added to the regression, the coefficient for GDP per capita is positive and marginally significant, and the coefficient for growth is positive and significant. When GDP per capita is replaced by the unemployment rate in a regression, the coefficient for unemployment is positive but close to zero.

We expected that there would be more emphasis on time with family under more positive economic conditions. There was some support for this prediction. The regression for time for family for CEE students alone indicates that the coefficient for GDP per capita is positive and statistically significant, suggesting that CEE students in higher income countries value a job with time for family more than those in low income countries. However, the coefficient for growth in GDP per capita is negative and statistically significant, suggesting that when growth is rapid, CEE students have less interest in a job with time for family. The coefficient for inflation is positive but statistically insignificant. When unemployment replaces GDP per capita in the regression, it has the expected significant negative coefficient, but the growth coefficient is also still negative and marginally significant. Among the control variables, the coefficient for the helping profession is positive and statistically significant, indicating that those not in helping professions value time with family more. Adding the U.S. data increases the size of the coefficient for GDP per capita. Even with the American data added the coefficient for growth in GDP per capita remains negative and statistically significant.

DISCUSSION

Data indicate that, as expected, there are some significant relationships between the job values or views of ideal future jobs of university students and the macroeconomic conditions of their country. In testing how job values, averaged across groups of male and female students within a country during a particular year, were predicted by economic variables, we did the regressions first only for the eight CEE countries and then redid them after adding the data from the United States. Generally, very similar patterns existed in the two sets of equations, indicating that similar relationships exist for the United States and other countries.

This replication in two very different parts of the world suggests that our findings may be generalizable to other regions of the world as well, although future research is needed to confirm this. Another issue that should be further addressed is whether the relationships we found for university students contemplating their future jobs would also apply to older adults already in the workplace. As noted earlier, other research has shown an association between work values and work behavior (e.g., England & Lee, 1974; Frieze et al., 2006), so better understanding of work values is of practical and theoretical interest.

One of the goals of our research was to determine if our findings would be generalizable in different countries and to different regions within individual countries. The regression analyses included controls for whether the students being assessed lived in the capital city of their country or not. We expected that students in the capital cities would be more concerned than those in other cities with high pay and having a career, not just a job, but we found that the opposite was true. These data may indicate that students in outlying regions are equally motivated. Students not in the capital city were also more concerned with having a job that allowed them to help others, but the coefficient is significant only when the data from the United States were included. These results probably result from the high level of wanting to help others in the U.S. sample, all of which came from Pittsburgh, a non-capital city.

Because those seeking helping profession careers may be less concerned with high pay and wanting a career rather than a job, we also included the type of major or class from which data were collected as a control in the regressions. This control appeared to

have little effect, except for the job value of wanting a job that allowed time for family. The positive coefficient found for this control for wanting a job allowing time for family indicates that those seeking helping professions were less likely to want this type of job, contrary to what we expected. It does appear that our expectation that wanting to help others cannot be readily associated only with helping professions and may even be higher for those in other fields. It should be noted though that, overall, students in the CEE countries were most concerned with wanting a job with high pay (see Table 3). Wanting a career, not just a job, was of next highest importance overall to these students, with helping others and having time for family of least importance overall to CEE students. These students do appear to be motivated to be successful professionals after graduation. As expected, gender did not predict job values, except that women were more interested than were men in having a job that allowed them to help others. This gender difference is consistent with research cited earlier that has also noted this gender difference. Interest in helping people among CEE students has apparently not declined over time, in contrast to our hypothesis.

Looking at the economic predictors overall, economic growth was the most consistent predictor, although not always in the same direction. Low growth rates were associated with wanting a job that pays well and wanting a job that allows time for family, whereas high growth rates predicted wanting a career, not just a job, and wanting a job that allowed one to help others. Per capita GDP, a measure of the material wealth of a country, generally predicted in the same direction as growth. Higher GDP per capita was associated with lower desires for a job that pays well but positively predicted wanting a career, not just a job. Higher GDP per capita was also predictive of wanting a job that allows time with family. Finally, inflation negatively predicted wanting a career, not just a job, but was not a significant predictor of other job values.

Overall, one might interpret these findings as saying that, as expected, wanting a job that pays well was associated with poorer economic conditions, whereas wanting a career was associated with better economic conditions. Results for wanting a job that allowed time for family were mixed, with higher GDP per capita a positive predictor but economic growth a negative predictor. Perhaps students in higher GDP situations felt more able to forego high paying jobs but did want to take advantage of situations

of high growth by spending less time with family. Economic predictors of wanting a job helping others were weak (except for unemployment), with a significant effect of growth found only when the U.S. data were added. This may reflect our use of the helping major as a control. In an additional analysis removing this control, we did find that both higher GDP per capita and growth were predictors of having a job that allowed one to help others, but only when the U.S. data were included. These findings do suggest that this type of job value is less affected by economic factors than are other job values we included in the study.

These results were promising and suggest that future research is needed to better assess the importance of various economic factors, not only on job values of young adults but also on other types of attitudes and personality factors. It would also be interesting to determine if similar effects to those we report here can be seen in other regions of economic change. This study uses four very general macroeconomic measures of the overall economic performance of a country in a given year. It would be interesting to see whether economic variables that are more specific to the sample would be better predictors of work values. Would results have been stronger if we had used the unemployment rates for those with tertiary education or income per capita in the regions where our participants were studying? A problem with these more-specific variables is they are less widely available and may be more difficult to compare across countries. The advantage of the four macro variables used in this study is that they are available for most countries and are widely understood.

More investigation is needed, too, of exactly how the economic factors come to influence the attitudes of young adults. There may well be regional variations or other psychological factors such as individualism versus collectivism that mediate these processes (Miluska, 2005). Work values are believed to develop slowly in older children and young adults as they learn about the workplace and come to understand their own values (MOW International Research Team, 1987). Economic conditions are only one of many factors that may influence work values, and we suspect that their influence is very gradual. Other important influences might include parental values, formal education, and the media. Other research is needed to better determine the relative importance of economic changes in affecting work values. We suspect that young adults may be most affected by this as they are planning on entering the job market after graduation.

Our data are correlational and are based on large, anonymous surveys. Such data do not allow one to know the causal direction of the relationships we report. Qualitative research relying on in-depth interviews with university students may provide greater insight about how work values develop and how they are affected by economic conditions in the workplace.

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