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**PSYCHOLOGICAL  
FACTORS IN  
MIGRATION  
AND PLACE  
ATTACHMENT  
IN SLOVENE  
STUDENTS**

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**::ABSTRACT**

THE LOSS OF HIGHLY educated young adults due to emigration after graduation has historically been a problem for Slovenia. In this study, we examine psychological predictors of wanting to stay or leave Ljubljana in a sample of students surveyed in 2010. Analyses focused on 119 women students from psychology and the social sciences. A new scale was developed to measure psychological place attachment to Ljubljana. This was found to be predictive of emigration desires. Other variables related to wanting to live in Ljubljana after graduation included having friends in Ljubljana, having parents living in Ljubljana or growing up there, and believing there are job opportunities.

Key words: migration, place attachment scale, Ljubljana, friendship, college students.

**POVZETEK****PSIHOLOŠKI DEJAVNIKI PRI MIGRACIJI IN NAVEZANOSTI NA KRAJ MED SLOVENSKIMI ŠTUDENTI**

*Izseljevanje visoko izobraženih mladih odraslih po diplomi, predstavlja za Slovenijo že od nekdaj problem. V tej raziskavi smo preučevali psihološke napovednike želje po ostajanju ali zapuščanju Ljubljane, na vzorcu študentov, ki smo ga pridobili leta 2010. V analizah smo se osredotočili na 119 študentk psihologije in študentk socialnih ved. Razvili smo novo lestvico za merjenje psihološke navezanosti na kraj in raziskavo izvedli v Ljubljani. Ugotovili smo, da psihološka navezanost na kraj napoveduje željo po izseljevanju. Ostale spremenljivke povezane z željo po bivanju v Ljubljani po diplomi so bile: imeti prijatelje v Ljubljani, imeti starše, ki živijo v Ljubljani ali odraščanje v Ljubljani in zaupanje v možnosti zaposlovanja.*

*Ključne besede: migracije, lestvica navezanosti na kraj, Ljubljana, prijateljstvo, študenti.*

One of the major reasons people chose to move from one world region to another is to improve their economic conditions (Massey, 1999; Rumbaut, 1994). As highly trained young adults emigrate from one country to another to find better job opportunities, the countries they leave suffer from their loss (Berglof, 2000; Schreiner, 2008). A study of Slovene students surveyed in 1993 indicated that 18% wanted to live in another country and 27%

were unsure where they wanted to live. Only 28% wanted to remain in the region of Ljubljana. In 1994, even more of the students were unsure where they wanted to live (36%) and the percentage wanting to remain in Ljubljana dropped to 23% (Boneva, Frieze, Ferligoj, Jarasova, Pauknerova, & Orgocka, 1998). A similar survey done in the late 1990's indicated that only 23% definitely wanted to live in Slovenia most of their adult lives, while 17% wanted to live in another country (Frieze, et al., 2004). Of course, where one wants to live does not always predict staying or leaving ones country. Economic necessities, political changes, and other factors affect emigration decisions, but understanding the underlying psychological factors that make one want to stay or leave can have important policy implications for the home country (Frieze & Li, 2010).

In this study, we examine psychological predictors of wanting to stay or leave Ljubljana in a sample of students surveyed in 2010. This study builds on the earlier studies of migration desires of Slovene students by examining some of the factors that might be associated with wanting to remain in Ljubljana after graduation. Earlier studies have shown that psychological variables such as motivation and attitudes about work and family were significant predictors of wanting to leave ones region and move to another country not only for Slovene students (Boneva et al, 1998; Frieze, et al., 2004), but also of students in other parts of Central Europe (Boneva et al, 1998; Frieze, et al., 2004). These same predictors were associated with wanting to move to another region after graduation in the Unites States (Frieze, Hansen, & Boneva, 2006).

As the Slovene economy has generally improved since independence, there are increasing employment opportunities for young adults, especially for those who are highly educated. This should lead to a decrease in those students wanting to leave the country after graduation, and this is our first hypothesis. Our major research question, though, is whether psychological factors predict migration desires. Our previous research has indicated that economic conditions are not the only explanation for wanting to stay or leave the region where one attends the university or grows up (Frieze & Li, 2010). When economic conditions were poor, many university graduates did leave, but now, with an improvement in the economy, we expect more will want to stay. Given this, we have changed the focus of our work away from psychological factors predicting wanting to leave, to the question of what psychological factors are importing in wanting to remain in Ljubljana. We include new variables not examined in previous studies. These include psychological feelings of attachment to Ljubljana as well as other psychological variables that might relate to wanting to stay in Ljubljana after graduation. Place attachment as a factor that keeps people from wanting to migrate has been receiving much

attention recently from researchers around the world (e.g., Gustafson, 2001; Scannell & Gifford, 2010) and has been found to predict migration desires in Croatian students (Li et al, submitted).

A number of measures have been developed to measure feelings of an emotional involvement with a particular region. For example, Hidalgo and Hernandez (2001) developed a Spanish language scale that focused on emotional relationships with people in a particular area. A scale including positive and negative feelings about people as well as other aspects of a region has been used by Lewicka (2005, 2010). There are many other scales or items, as well. Scannell and Gifford (2010), in reviewing this literature on place attachment, suggested that many of these measures were limited and that the concept should be broadened to include not only the feelings about a place, but also behaviors related to that place and thoughts and memories about a place. In this theoretical paper, Scannell and Gifford (2010) invited future researchers to use their more fully developed framework to guide development of quantitative measures for the concept.

In this study, we apply Scannell and Gifford's theories (2010) in developing a new scale to measure attachment to Ljubljana and include items to measure affective, behavioral and cognitive aspects of attachment. The affective items refer to happiness, love and other emotions. The behavioral items are behaviors that remind one of Ljubljana when one is away, such as reading news of a place or searching for friends coming from the same place or putting out photos of that place. Finally, cognitive aspects of place attachment were measured with items referring to having significant memories, knowledge, and special meaning associated with Ljubljana. Some items involve more than one of these aspects of place attachment. New items were written based on initial interviews with students about how they felt about Ljubljana, as well as including items developed previously by Li and Frieze (Li, Frieze, and Cheong, submitted). We hypothesize that higher levels of place attachment to Ljubljana will be associated with wanting to stay in Ljubljana, or in Slovenia rather than wanting to live in another country after graduation.

As mentioned earlier, Hidalgo and Hernandez (2001) associated social connections with the idea of place attachment. We see these as related, but as different variables. A number of studies have shown that having close feelings toward local family and were found to be a predictor for migration intentions (e.g., De Jong, 2000). Mincer (1978) also noted the important role of family in keeping people from migrating. He suggested that presence of family in the place of origin would deter people from migrating away from that place. Studies on family centrality also suggested that people who placed high value on family were less likely to want to migrate away from their place of origin

(e.g. Boneva & Frieze 2001; Frieze, Hansen & Boneva, 2006). We include items about having parents living in Ljubljana and having friends in Ljubljana as expected predictors of wanting to stay.

For many people, their religious affiliation is an important social connection. We have found that being a more regular participant in religious services predicted wanting to stay in the region of the university rather than moving to another part of the U.S. in a study of university students from Pittsburgh (Frieze, Hansen, & Boneva, 2006). In order to test the idea that attending services is important for our sample of students in Ljubljana, we include an item asking about this directly, as well as including another item about services generally, including those attended at other locations. We do not expect this additional question to be a predictor, but we do expect that local services will be.

Migration studies have found that the longer one lives in a region, the less likely they are to want to leave. Such data have been reported for a random sample of adults in the Netherlands (Morrison, 1967). Land (1969) studied data from Mexico and also found that in a general adult sample, those with longer residential length were less likely to move away from their place of origin. Other studies have shown an association of length of residence and place attachment (Lewicka, 2005, for a Polish sample; Tartaglia, 2006, for an Italian sample; and Rollero and Piccoli, 2010, also for an Italian sample). Note, though, that all of these studies used older adults, who are likely to have developed more ties to a region than university students might have. In order to test the effects of residence length on wanting to stay or leave Ljubljana, we included an item asking if the student had grown up in Ljubljana.

Finally, given the very common finding mentioned earlier that economic factors are a major factor in predicting actual migration from one region to another, we include a question about perceptions of job opportunities in Ljubljana to determine if such perceptions are important in wanting to stay or leave.

Summary of predictions:

1. The percentage of students wanting to remain in Slovenia after graduation will be higher in 2010 than in the early 1990's.
2. Higher levels of place attachment to Ljubljana will be associated with wanting to stay in Ljubljana, or in Slovenia, rather than wanting to live in another country after graduation.
3. Those agreeing more that they have more friends in Ljubljana than elsewhere and those parents live in Ljubljana will be more likely to want to remain in Ljubljana than to live in another country.

4. Those growing up in Ljubljana will be more likely to want to stay in Ljubljana than move to another country.
5. Those feeling there are good job opportunities in Ljubljana will be more likely to want to stay in Ljubljana than to leave.
6. Higher levels of attending religious services in Ljubljana will be associated with wanting to stay in Ljubljana.

## **::METHOD**

### **::Sample**

A total of 141 students completed surveys. Initial analyses indicated that there were only 21 men in the sample. This group was determined to be too small to allow any comparisons between women and men, so the men were dropped from the sample, leaving a sample of 120 women who were used to test the study hypotheses. Eighty-four of the final sample were Psychology students and 36 were social science students. Participants' age ranged from 20 to 26 years old. Only 28% regarded Ljubljana as hometown, but among those who reported length of residence in Ljubljana (70%), most of them have lived in Ljubljana for three years or more (73%).

### **::Procedures**

Undergraduate members of the research team solicited volunteers in undergraduate Psychology and Social Sciences classes at the University of Ljubljana in 2010. Participants filled out the survey containing all the questions in Slovene. Only students who were beyond the second year of study were included. The survey was completed in 15 minutes or less.

Questions were originally developed in English, and then translated to Slovene by two members of the research team. Two other members then back translated the items to English to ensure that the translation was done correctly.

### **::Measures**

The question about where students wanted to live was worded as "Where would you like to live for the majority of your adult years" with possible answers being "In this general location" [Ljubljana], "Your hometown, if not Ljubljana," and "In another part of the country." For purposes of understanding reasons for staying in Ljubljana, those answering as their hometown [not Ljubljana] and in another part of Slovenia were combined and classified as wanting to

live in another part of Slovenia. Table 1 indicates responses to this question, and indicates that men and women had quite similar responses. [Men were not included in additional analyses, because of their low numbers].

The Place Attachment Scale items are listed in Appendix 1. All items were answered on a scale from 1=Strongly disagree to 5=Strongly agree. Analysis of the scale indicated a Cronbach alpha of .93. Exploratory factor analysis yielded one strong factor, with an eigenvalue of 10.08, accounting for 33.6% of the variance. Based on this information, all items were maintained and averaged to create a scale score.

An additional item asked about friends in Ljubljana [“I have more friends in Ljubljana than elsewhere, answered from 1=Strongly disagree to 5=Strongly agree]. Parents living in Ljubljana were determined with an item asking “Are your parents in Ljubljana now?” Possible responses were 1=Yes, both of them; 2=Yes, mother; 3=Yes, father; and 4=No, neither of them. The item was recoded as 1=both parents living in Ljubljana; 2=only one parent living in Ljubljana and 3=neither parents living in Ljubljana. Therefore, higher number reflects less parents living in Ljubljana. Most of the participants did not have parents living in Ljubljana (72%). One item asked “Did you grow up in Ljubljana?” with possible answers of 1=Yes and 2=No. Most of our participants did not grow up in Ljubljana (76%). Finally, an item about job opportunities was “There are many opportunities now for good jobs for me in Ljubljana.” This item was answered on a scale from 5=Strongly agree to 1=Strongly disagree.

## **::RESULTS**

Looking first at general responses to the question about where the students wanted to live, Table 2 indicates that there was a marginal difference in the responses of the Social Science and Psychology students, although this was not statistically significant. There was a trend for Psychology students to be least likely to want to remain in Ljubljana and instead move to another part of the country after graduation. Social Science students were equally divided across the three groups. Because of the relatively small groups and the lack of significant differences, the two groups of students were combined for additional analyses.

Our first prediction was that more students would want to stay in 2010 than the 23% reporting this in 1994. As can be seen in Table 2, there was no difference in this percentage, so this prediction was not confirmed.

Additional hypotheses about differences in where students wanted to live after graduation were tested with a One Way MANOVA with all the other variables included as dependent variables. The multivariate F across groups

was significant (Wilk's Lambda=.75;  $F=2.40$ ,  $p<.01$ ). Looking at univariate effects, group differences were tested using a Scheffepost test. Means for the three groups are shown in Table 3. The second prediction of higher levels of place attachment for those wanting to stay in Ljubljana was confirmed. Results were mixed for the third prediction of those having more friends in Ljubljana being more likely to want to stay. Those most agreeing about having friends were the most likely to want to stay, but the post hoc test found that this was significantly higher than those wanting to move to another region of Slovenia, but the group wanting to move to another country was not significantly different from either group. A similar pattern was seen for the fourth prediction about growing up in Ljubljana being related to wanting to stay. This same pattern was also seen for the item about feeling there were good job opportunities in Ljubljana. Finally, service attendance was not a significant predictor of where students wanted to live.

## ::DISCUSSION

It appears that at least among the students surveyed, there was not a major change over the last 16 years in the percentages of students wanting to remain in Ljubljana, as compared to wanting to live in another region of the country or in another country. Overall, 30% of the women students wanted to move to and live in another country. Such data may indicate that students are not, as we expected, seeing more opportunities in Ljubljana than in previous years. The relatively low means for the question about their being good job opportunities for them in Ljubljana would support this interpretation. Even those who wanted to remain in Ljubljana averaged less than 4.0 for agreement with this item, measured from 1 to 5. However, there were marginal differences ( $p<.10$ ) between the social science and psychology students in desires to move to another country or a different part of Slovenia. Perhaps students in Psychology are most likely to come from other parts of Slovenia than students in the social sciences. Thus, they might be more attached to some other region of the country than Ljubljana. The marginally higher rate of social science students wanting to live in another country could relate to their more general curriculum, yielding more transferable skills in other countries than is true for the psychology students. Other studies have also found differences among students from different faculties in the University (Mihajlovic, Rus, & Lesnik, 2008). These data suggest that the loss of highly educated young adults will continue to be present a problem for Slovenia. Future research should examine the research questions here with larger samples, since it is clear that psychological factors



and personal desires are important predictors of emigration, independent of economic conditions (e.g., Boneva & Frieze, 2001; Frieze & Li, 2010).

This research did support the importance of place attachment in understanding why students want to remain in Ljubljana after graduation. The survey generated for this study can be found in the Appendix. We welcome other researchers using this scale. The data from this scale are at least partially validated by the results of this study, showing this to be the strongest predictor of migration desires. The scale also had good internal consistency.

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*Table 1. Men and women's reports of where they want to live.*

	Stay	Leave for another region in Slovenia	Leave for another country
Men	5 (24%)	9 (43%)	7 (33%)
Women	27 (23%)	56 (47%)	36 (30%)

*Table 2. Psychology and social science student reports of where they want to live (women only).*

	Stay	Leave for another region in Slovenia	Leave for another country
Psycho- logy	15 (18%)	44 (53%)	83 (29%)
Social Science	12 (33%)	12 (33%)	12 (33%)
Total	27 (23%)	56 (47%)	36 (30%)

Note:  $\chi^2(2) = 4.8$   $p < .10$

*Table 3. Means of factors relating to staying versus leaving Ljubljana.*

	Stay (N=27) Mean	Leave for another region (N=56) Mean	Leave for another country (N=36) Mean
Place Attachment to Ljubljana**	3.78 <sup>a</sup>	3.14 <sup>b</sup>	3.32 <sup>b</sup>
Friends in Ljubljana**	4.04 <sup>a</sup>	2.61 <sup>b</sup>	3.06 <sup>ab</sup>
Parents living in Ljubljana** (1=No, 2=1 parent; 3=Both)	2.07 <sup>a</sup>	2.68 <sup>b</sup>	2.42 <sup>ab</sup>
Growing up in Ljubljana* (1=Yes; 2=No)	1.56 <sup>a</sup>	1.84 <sup>b</sup>	1.78 <sup>ab</sup>
Perceived job opportunities in Ljubljana*	3.48 <sup>a</sup>	2.91 <sup>b</sup>	3.14 <sup>ab</sup>
Religious service participation	2.26 <sup>a</sup>	2.41 <sup>a</sup>	1.89 <sup>a</sup>
Local religious service participation	1.70 <sup>a</sup>	1.36 <sup>a</sup>	1.25 <sup>a</sup>

Univariate group differences, \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , based Scheffe Post-hoc. A different superscript indicates a significant difference in the groups. Unless noted, all items answered on a scale from 1=Strongly disagree to 5=Strongly agree.

Appendix  
Place Attachment Scale Items

English item wording	Slovene item wording
I feel happy when I am in Ljubljana.	Kadar sem v Ljubljani, se počutimsrečno.
I have significant memories of Ljubljana.	Na Ljubljano imam pomembnespomine.
I don't care about what happens in Ljubljana.	Vseeno mi je, kaj se dogaja v Ljubljani.
I feel secure when I am in Ljubljana.	V Ljubljani se počutimvarno.
Ljubljana has a special meaning for me.	Ljubljana imazameposebenpomen.
I keep up with the news about Ljubljana.	Spremljam novice o Ljubljani.
I would not feel sad if I had to leave Ljubljana.	Ne bi se počutil/a žalostno, če bi moral/a zapustiti Ljubljano.
I get involved in activities in Ljubljana.	Udeležujem se aktivnosti v Ljubljani.
I call my Ljubljana friends/family in order to know what is happening in Ljubljana when away.	Kadar me ni v Ljubljani, pokličem prijatelje/ družino, daizvem, kaj se tam dogaja.
I don't feel I belong in Ljubljana.	Do Ljubljane ne čutim pripadnosti.
I know all the best places to go in Ljubljana.	Poznam vse najboljše kraje v Ljubljani.
I have had bad experiences in Ljubljana.	V Ljubljani sem imel/a slabe izkušnje.
I suggest to others that they should visit Ljubljana.	Obisk Ljubljane predlagam tudi drugim.
I will forget about Ljubljana if I move away.	Če bi se preselil/a, bi na Ljubljano pozabil/a.
I feel bored in Ljubljana.	V Ljubljani se dolgočasim.
Ljubljana is not a comfortable place for me.	V Ljubljani se ne počutim udobno.
I don't enjoy showing people important places.	Ne uživam v razkazovanju znamenitosti v Ljubljani. in Ljubljana.
I put things around me to remind me of Ljubljana.	Obdam se stvarmi, ki me spominjajo na Ljubljano.
Ljubljana seems unfamiliar to me.	Ljubljana mi je nepoznana.
I know how to show people around in Ljubljana.	Vem, kako razkazati Ljubljano.
When I am not in Ljubljana, I lose track of things happening in Ljubljana	Kadar nisem v Ljubljani, izgubim sled o tem, kaj se v njej dogaja.
I tell people about things that happened to me in Ljubljana.	Ljudem govorim o stvareh, ki so se mi zgodile v Ljubljani.
I don't know much about Ljubljana.	O Ljubljani ne vem veliko.

I am proud of Ljubljana.	Na Ljubljano sem ponosen/a.
It feels good to come back to Ljubljana after I have been away.	Dobro se počutim, ko se podaljši odsotnosti ponovno vrnem nazaj v Ljubljano.
It is the people in Ljubljana that make me care about Ljubljana.	Ljudje so tisti, ki me vežejo na Ljubljano.
I feel supported by the people in Ljubljana.	Čutim, da me ljudje v Ljubljani podpirajo.
People in Ljubljana recognize my accomplishments.	Ljudje v Ljubljani prepoznajo moje dosežke.
I am always glad to meet people from Ljubljana if out of town.	Vedno sem vesel, če srečam Ljubljančana izven Ljubljane.
I feel relaxed in Ljubljana.	V Ljubljani se počutim sproščenega.