



International Social Work Studies in Nyiregyhaza, Hungary & Munich, Germany

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A Dignitary to be Recognized: Relationship & Reputation, by Crystal Settles

I have had the privilege of going on the international social work trip two years in a row. The trips have offered me an opportunity to see social work in a different culture and to see just how important good relations are no matter where you are. A good reputation in the social work field can be worth more than any amount of money that a social worker may ever make....that is a good thing considering most social workers salaries leave a lot to be desired. This year Dr. Tom Lawson was recognized for his outstanding reputation in international social work.

Nyiregyhaza, Hungary was our home for the first seven days of our trip this year. The people that we worked with there were among the nicest, most welcoming group of people I have ever encountered. They were also accepting of the input that we, as social work students, had to offer. It became more and more apparent to our group of how appreciative they were of our professor. We had been at the University for a week, and on the last day of the week we were told that there was a surprise for our group.

On Friday we walked into a room that was set up for a celebration, the media was there, the tables were set with delicious food, wine and champagne were ready to flow. The celebration, we soon realized, was to honor

Dr. Lawson. The event resembled a graduation as the faculty of the University filed in wearing long gowns; it was evident that this was a very special event. The president of the university and several other faculty members spoke about the reputation of Dr. Tom Lawson. He was called not only a great social worker, but also a great friend. Dr. Lawson was then presented with an award of great honor.

The name of the award presented to Dr. Lawson is Pro Faculty. According to Geregly Fabian, a professor at the university, this is the highest honor that the school gives out. Dr. Lawson is the eighth person in the last fifteen years to receive the award. Geregly stated that a recipient of the award is someone who works very closely with the university and faculty in Hungary, and has a long-standing relationship with them. This honor made Dr. Lawson a member of the Faculty of their university.

On behalf of the 2005 international social work class we would like to say never underestimate the impact you are making on someone's life. Dr. Lawson, Congratulations and thank you for continuing to make it possible for trips like this at the University of Louisville.

Cross Cultural Friendships. by Karen Huetzel

Throughout the trip, we experienced so many new and interesting things. I think that the most incredible thing about this trip was the magnificent people that we met and became more acquainted with. Our first International friend we met along the way was Ferenc Bodi ("Bodi"). He met us at the train stop in Budapest, on our way to Nyiregyhaza, Hungary. He rushed to our aid to ensure us that our reserved seats on the train were still reserved. He helped us load our entire luggage on the train, and we were off. Later, we caught up with Bodi in Budapest. He and his 5 children toured the city with us. His oldest daughter was able to translate Hungarian to English for us.

After 15 hours of travel time, and approximately 26 hours total with no sleep, we finally arrived in Nyiregyhaza! English-speaking friends greeted us at that train stop! Among them were: an English professor at the school and our translator, Elona; a dear friend of Dr. Lawson's and also one who had helped arrange our trip, Gergely Fabian ("Gergely"); and the (equivalent to our) Practice professor at the school, Laszlo ("Laci"); and many more.

Elona was simply amazing. She was so loving and kind to each of us, as if we were her own. She became a "Mommy" to us throughout the several days we stayed in Nyiregyhaza. We became her "Sweet Ladies". Laci spoke English, as well, and had told us that he was married and had an 8 month old daughter at home. Laci was very accommodating, allowing students to use his computer at times; showing us around town; giving us more history of Hungary and also going out at night with us to celebrate a birthday at the Colorado Saloon. We met Kati a few days after arriving. She introduced us to the Gypsy district and also spoke to us about Periferia, an outreach program for homeless persons and prostitution.

Kati lives in Nyiregyhaza, and works as a teacher assistant at the Social Work Department of Health College at the University of Debrecen, Hungary. She is the president of Periferia and works as a volunteer. She also joined us to celebrate, two nights before we left Nyiregyhaza.

Agnes accompanied us to Debrecen University, both of the elderly homes, and took us out to the Colorado Saloon. She attends school on the weekends because she's a correspondence student. She teaches the social worker students and seems to be a field liaison for students at the 2nd elderly home we visited (where we drank the Lemonade!). Her nickname is Agi. She spoke English and was very friendly to all of us.

Lukacsko Zsolt was the president of the University of Nyiregyhaza. He was very friendly and helped us understand the differences between the education in Hungary and the United States.

Zoltan Balough ("Zolli") was the head of the START agency. He allowed us into his agency and arranged for English-speaking social workers to be our tour guides. This agency was a remarkable place!

Gergely was a Sociologist and Professor and clearly a dear friend of Dr. Lawson's. He went out with us each day and ate lunch with us. He was very kind and even helped us learn some Hungarian words.

Overall, this trip was an extraordinary experience. I don't think the trip would have been the same if it weren't for all of the people we met and shared our time with. They truly made us feel very welcomed and "at home" in such a distant country! I hope that they never forget us, as I will never forget them. All of their time away from home, work, and school; all of their time spent with us will not go unappreciated. They truly made this trip even more unforgettable!



Among many of the agency experiences the 2005 international trip had was that of visiting two nursing homes. One of these homes was private and the other was run by Hungary's governmental funds. Of course just as the case is in the US oftentimes, the private one had much more money, had a newer facility, and had the extras like nice windows and a garden. Nonetheless, it was the public run nursing home that left a lasting impression on me.

Upon entering the building, we were greeted with fresh homemade rolls special to the area and some hand-squeezed lemonade. Though the hospitality of snacks were at this point the usual at the various places we had gone, this struck me. They were willing to share their best with complete strangers and never in the US would this expenditure be allowed in a public funded nursing home. After we got situated, the top social worker shared statistics and other information with us about the elderly population she worked with. Though translation was necessary, the social worker's dedication and caring was easily apparent.

The social worker then opened up the floor to questions and shared with us some of the crafts the residents had made. Most were intricate crafts made from straw into flowers, baskets, and people. As well, there were hand-embroidered napkins, tablecloths and other such things. I could not imagine my hands trying to make these crafts and could only envision the labor of love the less steady elderly hand had to put into each of the items. We were all saddened that this place in need of extra money was not allowed as a public agency to sell these lovely items. As in the US and other places, the answer to money troubles is always very difficult and involved.

Hungarian "Love Homes," by Katie Vogelsang

We then took a tour of the building, where the residents were either sitting in their small rooms or sitting in the hallway. A television was always blaring in one part or the other of the building. In general the lights were off to save on electricity, but this did not hide the curiosity and surprise of the residents upon seeing 17 Americans roaming their halls. Just a small wave and smile from afar lit up their faces. This small human connection warmed my heart and will stick with me for a long time. Though language was a barrier, many of the residents did not want to let us leave. Even without verbal language, we had all been able to catch a small bit of each other's spirit and did not want the moment to pass us by.

Though the facility was nothing special, the social worker showed it and its residents off with great pride and joy. To her from the dining room, to the art room, to the fish tank, each was a special part that helped her residents live their life. Though learning that only one sporadic volunteer visited this place weighed heavily on my heart, the social worker's and other's intense sense of pride, caring, and love for the agency and its population soothed the sadness.

In retrospect much of the nursing home was not any different than many of the US ones: under visited elderly, not enough money, that strange nursing home smell, a waiting list to get in, poverty stricken elderly etc.: However, to me there was an extra spirit of caring, love, respect, and kindness hidden in the building that I had not seen in other nursing homes. Perhaps, it is my romanticized view of a European agency. I will choose to believe that it is not and that this nursing home was truly to the best of its ability, what the Hungarian word for nursing home literally translates as, a "love home."

Can you imagine having a disability and not being able to provide for yourself?



The START Company located in Nyiregyhaza, Hungary, has made great strides in reaching out and giving meaning to the lives of people with reduced capacities. What seemed impossible at one time is now a reality as the Szabolcs-Szatmar-Berg County Organization of the Disabled established the Start Rehabilitation Company and its Institutions. The company was founded in 1988 with the intent of encouraging disabled people who wanted to do something for themselves. The four branches of disabilities are physical, mental, hard of hearing, and the blind with the possibility to include other disabilities.

A vocational school was started in 1992 and now enrolls 200 students. It provides training for fancy leather goods, manufacturing of women's dresses, plastic production, bookbinding (10% of Hungary's school books are produced here), plain printing, shoemaking (production of medical shoes for people who suffer from locomotor disease), cookery (catering and restaurant), bakery, and paper products to name a few. This training gives young disabled students the professional experience needed. After graduation, 70% of the students are placed in employment with 60% placed at the Start Company.

Products produced meet international standards and quality is very important. Out of 175 companies who qualified for "best Company" in Hungary, Start was number six! They were also awarded the "Best Quality of Hungarian Food" for their vinegar. They were awarded twice for having a healthy work place. The Start label can be found in twenty-five retail units in the surrounding area. These retail units are supplied partly from the Start wholesale warehouse.

The company also is involved in improving housing and social conditions. A rehabilitation center was founded in 1992 which employs those adults who are not or just partly able to independently care for themselves. The institution can carry 25 persons with 4-5 beds per room. Accommodations for couples are also provided. In addition to rehabilitating by employment, specialists (who are hired by the company) perform social-mental rehabilitation as well.

Today, the Start Company employs over 4,000 people. The results of their accomplishments are becoming well known. Shoes made by the START Company can be found at the Seibel shoe store in Louisville.

START Rehabilitation Company and Intuitions, by Debbie DeAndrejco



Gypsy Community, by Joy Harlen

She was able to tell us her name and was excited about having her photo taken.

In 1958, a school started there with eight grades. Student attendance is low, usually about fifteen per grade. The school day lasts from 8:00-4:00 and the children are offered three meals a day. The families are so poor that many children are able to eat free while the others only have to pay a small price per month.

In Hungary, you may choose your child's school but many people outside of the gypsy community do not send their children to this school. Unfortunately, the gypsy children are not welcome at the other schools. Last year, 50% went to secondary school after the eighth grade while the other half went to professional school. The school is trying to use new methods and recently adopted the American program "Step By Step". Programs in the school try to strengthen children's identity through cultural dancing and the study of the gypsy heritage. The children in the school put on a great performance with dancing and music dressed in ethnic clothing. The smiles on their faces showed me that they enjoyed sharing a small part of their heritage with us.

The gypsy community, now considered the 'slum' of Nyiregyhaza, Hungary was once home to Hungarian soldiers and their families. Today the community consists of 270 flats (homes), and 250 of these are inhabitable. There are numerous families with eight to nine people living in one room. The majority of the population is unemployed. On our recent trip to Hungary, we had the opportunity to see some of the rooms. We were invited into a room where a man and his girlfriend lived.

The room was decorated with paintings created by this man, who was obviously a talented individual. As I stood in the hall, I wondered if American families would be allowed to stay in this type of environment. We also had the opportunity to visit a room where a family of eight lived. While we were waiting to go into the rooms, a young girl walked up to us. The girl could not be older than seven years old and had a smile that captured all of our hearts.

Gypsy Community Continued...



An alternative program was implemented in 1999. The program consists of three steps: 1-Find children, 2-Detect problem, 3-Offer help. The problems for the children vary from behavioral, social, communication, and undeveloped skills. The program activities focus on the free time for children once a week for two hours. This program provides several different opportunities including a one-week camp during the summer that allows the children to interact with children from different areas. A community group develops skills that will provide children with the ability to integrate and stay in secondary schools. Another type of group is a career-oriented group for the seventh and eighth grade students, which helps with the decision about which school to attend after the eighth grade.

After the children's performance we toured a classroom and library. Drawings created by the children aligned the walls, along with a picture of Santa. Even in two different countries, children believe in the same fantasies. As we were walking through the building, kids were standing in the hallways waving at us and that is how I want to remember this experience.

Perriferia Egyesulet- The "Outskirts" of Nyiregyhaza, by Jocelyn FetaIver

The Periferia Association is an agency that provides social services to the community of Nyiregyhaza, Hungary. Periferia translated in English means outskirts. The Periferia Association serves those who are considered to be living on the "outskirts" of society. Founded in 1995, The Periferia Association's goals are to provide equal opportunities for those who are disadvantaged. It is the only social service agency in the city that provides street outreach. Periferia Association receives financial support from national funding, local government and donations from the community.

The Periferia Association has three areas of services Social Information Office, Regional Dispatcher Service and Street-Care Service with homeless, runaway children, prostitutes and gypsy children.

The Social Information Office serves to break down barriers for those that are disadvantaged. Two social agents are available to counsel clients with personal and social issues; make referrals to other social service agency; provide assistance to replace personal documents, housing and employment; and allow clients to use the office address as their own. Services are free of charge.

The Regional Dispatcher provides a 24-hour service for Nyiregyhaza and the Szabolcs-Szatmar-Bereg County. The Dispatch is for those in crisis situation such as victims of domestic violence and those who are homeless. The services include information about all Periferia Association programs; solutions and preventions for crisis; donation of

clothes, food and blankets; and referrals and transportation to health care agencies and homeless shelters.

The Street Care Services provides support to those who are homeless, lack support from family, and do not want institutional type services. There are two shelters in Nyiregyhaza that provide free services to the homeless. At the shelters, the homeless are offered food, clothing, and hygiene materials that were donated to The Street Care Services. In the cold Hungary winters, a 24-hour Car Crisis Service is provided for the homeless in crisis situations. Continuous contact is maintained with homeless clients through two social workers who perform case management through street outreach.

Shawndra Pickett, Kimberle Scruggs and I were given the opportunity to tour one of The Street Care Services shelters with Katalin Szoboszlai, the director of Periferia. The shelter we toured was not open 24 hours to provide lodging, but provides the opportunity for the homeless to take showers, wash clothes and have a warm meal. The other shelter provided lodging during the winter months. Social services workers are available on site for first aid and counseling, and also to inform clients of all services provided by The Periferia Association. Clients that come to the shelter learn about the services from other clients or through street outreach. The tour of The Periferia Associations Street Care Service shelter gave us the opportunity to recognize the similarities between homeless providers in Hungary and America.

Assessing Feasibility & Cost Effectiveness of Universal Healthcare: Excerpts of a Policy Evaluation & Implementation Proposal, by Jenessa J. Bryan

The following essay consists of excerpts taken from a social work policy analysis and proposal for universal health care in the United States. This topic was inspired by cross-cultural comparisons of the health care system in Hungary and Germany as compared to the United States. The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) advocates for “universal health and mental health coverage for all and supports efforts to enlarge health care coverage to the uninsured and underinsured.” International models of universal health care coverage provide direction as to how a universal health care system in the United States can improve accessibility and equality of health care services. Regarding patient care, NASW “supports mandatory assessment and follow-up services by a social worker for high-risk patients, including those experiencing a life-threatening disease or with a chronic or acute diagnosis (NASW, 2005).” The NASW promotes social work responsibilities in health care systems of nations like Hungary. Health care is a basic right, not a privilege:

Understanding better the moral ingredients of liberty and equitable distribution as well as the complexity of how liberty and equality actually intersect in a health care system opens the door to seeing the possibility of significant reconciliation. Even semi-libertarian views of distributive justice should strongly embrace compulsory, universal coverage of health care for some significant level of care, and that egalitarian views ought not to regard different levels of coverage for people of different income (Menzel, 2003, p.284)

The US Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) identified in 2003 over 43 million uninsured or underinsured Americans, roughly 15% of the population, that “reported financial problems related to paying medical bills.” As long as health insurance in the United States is tied directly to employment or retirement, the social problems of the uninsured and underinsured will continue to grow.

Hungary and Germany both use public authority and planning to control the number and distribution of hospitals and physicians. In fact, Hungary, with a GDP in 2000 of about \$44, 845 million dollars, reports 1995-2000 public expenditure on health was only 6.8% of the GDP. Health care services qualitatively and quantitatively have not been shown to suffer under national health insurance programs (Brown, 2003). This is due to the two countries “caps” on medical spending in the federal budget. Germany too has recently reduced services covered under the federal system, but in areas like taxi vouchers and health spas. The reality is that the American fear of “rationed” health care is unfounded based upon current models (Boscheck, 2004).

Health care services under the new system would continue to be expert services provided by skilled and knowledgeable accredited professionals. The German health care system, for example, requires that consumers pay a small fee for health services, treatments and prescriptions, similar to a co-pay, but without deductibles or maximum allowances. In Germany, payments are made to a third party that serves as a mediator between consumers and providers. This third party serves to alleviate tensions between the two, maintain that physicians are fully compensated and adequately paid for services, and ensure that consumers are not taken advantage of or asked to pay additional “fees.”

Further research is needed to assess the implementation and cost of changing our federal *sick* care system into a universal *health* care system, and for designing a universal health care model that is needs-based. Implementing a universal health care system adapted to meet the needs and environment of the United States populace would finally bring the United States up to par with the developed world in health care system delivery and coverage.

The Dachau Experience, by Elizabeth Winterkorn

Dachau was Germany’s first concentration camp, started in 1933 because the prisons were overflowing with the government’s frequent arrests. The government did not have enough money to just build more prisons, so the Nazis built work camps. Dachau is distinctive because it was here that the personnel trained for work in newer camps such as Auschwitz, and it was here that all other concentration camps were born. Approximately 30,000 prisoners were living there upon the camps liberation in 1945. The original barracks had to be torn down in 1965 when the camp was made into a memorial; they were too badly decayed. The camp headquarters is now a museum.

One of the most familiar figures of Dachau is Dr. Siegmund Rascher. He did gruesome medical experiments involving freezing people in cold water or air, then trying to warm them up with hot water (this would allegedly help the German air force). He also subjected people to high altitude simulations until they died, to see what the human body could handle.

In late April 1945 two scouts from the 522nd Field Artillery Battalion were among the first Allied troops to release prisoners from Dachau. A tank destroyer rammed through one gate and another gate was shot open by carbines. There were no German guards in the camps. They fled after finding out Allied Troopers were coming. The exact number of deaths at Dachau will never be known. The Nazis destroyed many incriminating documents. It is believed that prisoners from 27 countries were held at Dachau.

The grounds are now silent, but history is never forgotten. The grounds of Dachau are an empowering figure in the world’s history. Just one of the monuments now found in Dachau reads,
“To the honorable memory of the victims, for the atonement of the crimes, as lesson for all visitors to the camp, for the peace of all nations.”



House of Terror Museum, by Chasity Kent

During our visit in Budapest we were able to witness first hand the brutalities committed first by the terror of the Hungarian Nazi and then the communist regime at the famous House of Terror Museum. The Museum was opened in 2002 in an effort to not only educate people about the atrocities that were carried out during the occupation of both regimes but of the sacrifices made for freedom. However, the museum contains more than just archives of past events, the building itself is the actual building in which the horrible acts of terror were carried out!

The building's history began when the Nazis first occupied Hungary in 1944. It was used as the center of operations for the deportation of the Hungarian Jews to concentration camps in Poland and Germany. But their reign lasted less than a year. In 1945 the Soviet army occupied Hungary and used the building in the same manner the Nazi had used it -- to torture, kill and instill fear and terror in all who might oppose the regime.

The most powerful exhibit contained within the museum was the actual jail cells where prisoners were kept, interrogated and executed. On the elevator ride down to the basement a T.V. monitor played interviews of those who witnessed the executions and torture of the prisoners. The cells, which were preserved in their original form, gave a chilling glimpse into the types of torture the prisoners had to endure. One cell was filled with water in which a prisoner had no choice but to stay cold and wet. Another cell was so small it was impossible to stand upright in, forcing the prisoner to stay in a slumped position. An additional cell had a light that shined on your face in an effort to cause sleep deprivation. Of course there were standard cells where prisoners were beaten, burned and shocked.

It's a very powerful history lesson that's insurmountable when you realize it all happened just 60 years ago!

The Hungarian Celebration on March 15: A Day of Remembrance, by Angie Caine



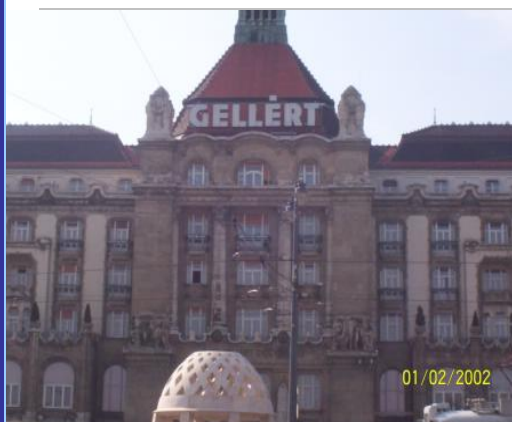
I originally thought the March 15 celebration was officially called Independence Day. However, I later learned a little about what the day represents from a student I met in Nyiregyhaza, Hungary. The day is somewhat comparable to Memorial Day in the United States. The celebration on March 15 is the day the Hungarian people remember the victims of the war for freedom and independence from the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1848 and 1849. After losing the war, some of the intellectual leaders immigrated to the United States. One example is the liberal Member of Parliament, Lajos Kossuth. Absolutism and Despotism occurred for a long time after the war was over. Finally, in 1867, accordance or a compromise was made between the Hungarian politicians and the Austrian monarch.

Our group had the opportunity, thanks to the generosity of the family that showed us around, to be a part of the celebration held at Buda Castle in Budapest, Hungary. When we arrived at Buda Castle, the streets were filled with people carrying flags or wearing fabric pins made of the colors of the country of Hungary. A band played Hungarian music on a stage at one end of the street for the listener's pleasure. Food stands lined the sides of the streets so people could buy traditional Hungarian foods. Vendors selling hand-made items such as purses, jewelry, clothing, and other items that were made out of wood, leather, porcelain, and glass made up the rest of the stands that lined the streets.

We were fortunate to spend several hours strolling down the streets, buying food and mementoes, taking in the view of the Danube River, the city, and the various parts of Buda Castle, and experiencing the March 15 celebration with the people of Hungary.



Bathing In Budapest, by Angela Kruessal



Cultural Differences, by Kimberle Scruggs

Visiting Hungary for ten days certainly brought a new outlook to the way I view many aspects about the way our country operates. The first thing I noticed in Hungary was that the people were not as interpersonal as in the United States. I noticed the manner in which people would hand or take items out of your hands, the lack of expressions on their faces, and the lack of lay conversations. Later during the visit this notion was explained which assisted us in gaining greater knowledge about how the country operated. It was explained that Americans smile a lot although they are not necessarily happy on the inside. They state that we are not authentic especially when greeting one another. This culture appeared to be more straightforward with their interactions. After having been explained this notion, I can accept and understand the ideology behind their thinking. However, having explained this, we did not experience this with those whom we visited with for the ten days. These people showed great love and hospitality for us during our stay and even afterwards.

Another cultural difference that stuck out was the manner in which they preceded with daily meals. As Americans, our biggest meal of the day is dinner, which is typically provided during evening hours. In Hungary, lunch is usually their heaviest and most important meal of the day. Lunch there is often a bit later than our typical lunch times. While we strive in America to make breakfast an important meal, I can see why lunch can be as important. In our country we also shy away from starches, such as breads and potatoes. In Hungary these items are very important and are usually a part of every meal. I found this to be very unusual as I noticed that there did not appear to be a problem with obesity. I am not for sure if their yeast is different from the yeast that we use in the United States but it certainly is not having an adverse affect on their people. Even their sweets had a different taste; they were less sweet than sweets in the US. What is their secret?

Each student on the international trip this year was surrounded by the rich culture of Hungary. Every place we visited was filled with a pleasant atmosphere full of new experiences, including one, which forced each student to let go of their American ideology and embrace a new tradition. The bathhouse has a long-standing tradition in Hungary; many have been around since the 16th century. The Gellert spa hotel is located right on the Danube River and is Budapest's most spectacular bathhouse.

Upon entering the remarkable building I could not help but notice the amazing architecture of the high ceilings, the artwork, and the beautiful sculptures, which lined the hallways. At first I was concerned about communicating what activities I wanted to participate in at the bathhouse without having a translator, but as for each encounter I had in Hungary the people working at the facility were very helpful and together with my few spoken words in Hungarian and their broken English we figured everything out. I wanted a day of total relaxation and I got it. I received a thirty-minute massage, spent about two hours in the baths and steam room, and then finished the day with a pedicure. Furthermore, the bathhouse also offered facials, manicures, various types of massages, and other services.

The tradition at the bathhouse that forced several students out of their comfort zone was the custom of nude bathing. However, at this bathhouse nude bathing was optional. The bathing areas were separated by sexes and there was also a thermal unisex pool. We were each provided with a changing cabin and a sheet to wrap around ourselves as we traveled to the different areas. It was a remarkable occurrence to be surrounded by women of all ages, shapes, and sizes that were confident within themselves. Some students received shorter massages, facials, and manicures, but each had a truly unique rich experience in a relaxing atmosphere.

Many of the students visited a well-known bathhouse while in Hungary. I was shocked that in their culture, body image and privacy was not something that they valued. This bathhouse was filled with women of all sizes, shapes, and ages whom walked around and got into the pool naked. These women were not ashamed to expose their bodies in front of dozens of other women. I cannot say that in America this would happen and people still feel comfortable. Women in our culture are far more self-conscious and seek great privacy regarding personal aspects of our body. We are somewhat taught that if we do not look a certain way or maintain a certain weight, then we are not beautiful or have something to be ashamed of regarding our outer appearance. Many of the young ladies within the group found it easy to adapt to the culture while at the bathhouse. I am very interested in exploring how girls are brought up in Hungary vs. United States.

This exposure to two countries in Europe was certainly a cultural experience. This experience will most definitely have a lasting affect. I gained so much knowledge, new ways of thinking, great ideas to explore, and further research studies. I became aware of many professional as well as personal biases while on the trip. In my opinion everyone need to be exposed to other cultures outside of one's own country. We become ethnocentric in our way of thinking until we have explored other avenues. I learned more from this trip than all the years of my schooling. I say this because I was able to look at my country from another view, explore two other countries, having this experience with others and I was able to learn more about myself.

Social Workers strive to make a difference!

I would like everyone to take this moment to imagine your worst nightmare. What would it be for you? Maybe it is something basic such as a walk in some dark woods alone, hearing footsteps behind you or maybe it would be something deeper. How about to wake up one morning and find that the place you feel most comfortable is a distant memory and you have no option but to continue alone. What would you do if this became a reality?

My worst fear came true for me when I traveled to Munich, Germany with the Kent school. We had been in Germany for a day and a half. It was the last leg of our trip and we were all tired. I had spent the day shopping with a fellow student and was extremely tired. After getting basic directions on how to get back to the Youth Hostel I set forth on what was to be a nightmare of a journey.

My bags were heavy and so were my feet, it was rainy and wet and not to mention cold. As I got to where I thought was closer to the hostel I came to realize that I was not where I needed to be and so doing what is natural I stopped to ask for directions. I came to a large department store and asked the saleswoman where to go, she looked at me and shrugged her shoulders, a universal sign I would soon find out, that they do not speak English. So I traveled on. I went to the train station information desk and asked for directions and the man told me that the Youth Hostel was in England. I traveled on. I stopped many people on my journey and asked how to get back to the hostel and the answer I got was a shoulder shrug. I soon realized that I had no idea where I was, how I got there, or how to get back. I did what any person lost would do...I sat down and cried. This journey lasted for two hours. I got the same answer, the shoulder shrug, and I had the same response each time, a hard cry.

Journey Across the Cross Cultural Continental Divide, by Leslea Townsend

Soon it began to get dark and I started to panic. My bags were heavy, my shoulders hurt, and I was wet and extremely dirty and hungry and I still could not find anyone who could speak English. At this point

I am sure you are asking, "why not call anyone?"

The simple answer is who am I going to call? If I did get a hold of someone how are they going to tell me where to go if they don't even know where they are at due to it being a foreign country? I did eventually find a young woman who spoke English fluently and she told me how to get back to the Youth Hostel...by subway. So I did make it back safe and sound but with some additional knowledge to go home with.

This story applies to social work because we never think about how being in a foreign country can be scary. We all read the Hmong book about how people did not understand their language or culture and we all think "How sad for them" but do

we ever really think about the frustration, sadness, and feeling of loneliness that outsiders can feel?

What about the people from other countries who travel to the U.S. alone in order to make a better life for their families. What happens to them if they get lost? They wake up every morning to a strange place with the realization that what they once knew is no longer. I benefited from speaking a language that is taught and spoken in most schools but most cultures do not have this benefit. It is our job as social workers to make sure that these people do not get overlooked or taken advantage of. So, the next time you are helping someone who does not speak your language, whether it is serving them at a restaurant, helping them fill out forms, or helping them attain basic human rights, think twice before getting frustrated because one day it could be you.

Normative Lifestyles, by Claudia Peralta-Mudd

Having lived in the US for a while now, I have become accustomed to smoking regulations and smoking area restrictions. In fact, I believe the opportunity to spend so much time in smoke-free areas has led me to develop an allergy to smoke. I cannot tolerate people smoking around me or even walk by a smoking area. This became a very interesting dilemma during our Hungary-Germany trip.

I am aware that due to new regulations in the US, cigarette companies heavily target other countries. I am a foreigner; therefore, this is a fact I know very well. Even knowing this, however, I was surprised by prevalence of cigarettes in countries such as Hungary and Germany, in regards to both use and advertising. People smoke heavily as it is, but they also receive a lot of encouragement from ads on TV and billboards. It seems that in these countries, there are not regulations on tobacco use. I did not see any signs in stores that mentioned age restrictions or any other regulations. Furthermore, there are not many non-smoking areas in restaurants even in the big cities.

At the beginning of the trip, I always tried to sit far from smokers; however, it became a challenge because everywhere I went people were smoking! I thought that maybe in Munich the situation would get better. Big mistake! In Munich people smoke like chimneys. I quickly realized that I did not have a lot of hope of finding a place to sit and enjoy my coffee without people smoking around me. Certainly, everything revolves around your personal preferences, but I **thought** countries as developed as Germany would have some regulations against tobacco use in order to protect their citizens. Again, big mistake! Searching the Internet, I found numerous articles on tobacco use (possibly even abuse?). I learned through the reading that companies such as Philip Morris (PM) and British American Tobacco (BAT) that have big monetary interests promote their businesses every chance they get. In fact, they even publicly downplay the negative consequences of their product. British American Tobacco/BAT (Kampagne. Hamburg, 2000) went on the record with this comment "Today they want



Formula 1 motor racing
champion Michael
Schumacher — the definitive
German Marlboro man

to ban cigarette advertising, tomorrow it might be sweets advertising or automobile advertising..." (<http://tc.bmjournals.com/cgi/content/full/10/4/300>). Hopefully the European Union will develop some regulations so that people who do not smoke will not have to be exposed to second hand smoke.

Reflections: What We Brought, What We Took Away, by Ericka Engelsman

We all came together; seventeen students and one professor, to travel across the world, to learn about the way other people do what we do. To learn about social work, human services, and education in a country that most of us would have never thought to travel to. We all brought with us certain assumptions of what the trip, the country, or the people would be like. And we all brought back experiences that will influence our lives and our practices.

What did we bring? We brought open hearts, a readiness to learn about what we were there to learn, and a desire to take that information and transform our social work practice. We brought feelings and emotions: excitement, curiosity, anticipation, and nervousness. Some of us had never traveled out of the country before, and some of us were seasoned world travelers. We brought a passion and love for learning; learning about new cultures, new foods, and the other men and women in our group and those we met abroad. And we learned that those assumptions that we brought could be wrong; Budapest is a modern, cosmopolitan city, and Hungarians don't live in hobbit villages.

So, what did we take away? We took away a greater understanding of a culture and an environment very new to us. We realized that what we learn at Kent School about people being made up of their culture and environment and the people around them, could be true. We learned the frustration of not knowing how to communicate and we realized how people must feel when they come here and cannot speak English. We brought lifetimes of memories about people and countries, and beautiful friendships with those we traveled with and those we met for a short time. We brought back pictures, pictures, and more pictures, but then realized that what will remain with us longer than pictures is the change in our minds, our hearts and our souls. Our commitments to not forget what we learned in Hungary, what the people there taught us. To be amazed at what they could accomplish in 15 years at their school, to be patient and kind to those around you, and to remember that you are always learning. We all have so much to learn from each other. And we took away a respect and admiration for the man who took the time to take us, and help us learn all of these other things. From him we learned a passion for the world that many of us did not know we had.

We now know that we have experienced something together that will be with us forever. We are searching for the words to tell others what we have seen, what we have felt. We are trying to remember, so that we will not forget that this experience changed us. And we want other people to see that change in our relationships, in our coursework, and in our practice. We are forever grateful for whatever it was that brought us all together for 15 days to learn, change, and grow...together.

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