

Development of lifestyle preferences in professional training

Introduction

Professional training includes more than learning skills. Values and attitudes are central parts of the professional knowledge and identity (Freidson 2001). The aim of this paper is to examine the influence of professional training on students' lifestyle preferences. The central question is whether lifestyle preferences are developed in early adulthood or become part of professionals' identity during the period of training.

In the literature there is an extensive debate on stability and change in preferences. To what extent lifestyle preferences are product of early socialisation and stable over time are disputed (Hakim 1998, 2000, Johnson 2001, 2002). It is assumed that choice of educational programs, are strongly related to individuals' job values and preferences. In the analysis the first step is to examine students' preferences shortly after entering professional education. Different profiles between students in different educational programs indicate selection processes in recruitment to professions. The next step is to compare preferences at the end of the educational program. The question is: do attitudes to work, leisure, family, friends, etc. change during the period of training?

The analysis includes students in nursing, teaching, social work, economics and journalism at Oslo University College. Three of the programs – nursing, teaching and social work - are strongly related to professionals in the working life. Nurses, teachers and social workers go through a specific professional program approved by the public authorities. This is not the case for economists and journalists. A variety of courses led to those positions. The central question in this paper is whether educational programs are arenas for developing lifestyle preferences. To what extent do students in different programs develop preferences during the period of education? Do training programs in nursing, education and social work socialise

students into a lifestyle to a greater degree than programs in economics and journalism? Do students' preferences become more similar during the training?

The analysis is based upon the Database for Studies of Recruitment and Qualification in the Professions in Norway (StudData). This is longitudinal survey data (panel data), which give information about lifestyle values among students in first and final year of educational training.

Lifestyle socialisation in professional training

Socialisation is a long and complicated process. Values and attitudes are transferred to individuals from different peers at different periods in a person's life. This is also true regarding lifestyle preferences, which cover persons' attitude to work, family, leisure, religion, politics, culture, etc. For a child, the family may be the most important arena for socialisation, but values and preferences are also shaped in kindergarten, in school, in college and university and among friends.

Students in nursing, teaching and social work go through a training program which lasts three years. Within each program students take the same courses and go through the same body of knowledge and skill. In his last book Freidson (2001) argues that it is reasonable to assume that professional training is likely to socialise the students into an occupational culture that is shared with fellow-students. Commitment to and identification with the occupation develops.

In this paper students' development of lifestyle preferences during professional training is examined. In previous empirical research different points of view are claimed. One hypothesis claims that lifestyle preferences are created in early periods of life and shaped before young persons enter professional training. Research done by Hakim (1998, 2000), on lifestyle preferences among women support this hypothesis. Hakim (2000) argues that lifestyle preferences are developed in early childhood and then seem to be stable. A young cohort of women was interviewed almost every year from 1968 up to 1983. At every interview they were asked about future job plans, raising family etc. The study shows that future work plans were stable and a significant predictor of future work behaviour. Similar results emerge from other longitudinal studies (Dumcan and Dunifon 1998, referred in Hakim (2002)).

If values are developed at an early stage in life, we may find different preferences between different groups of students. There may be a selection process where people with different attitudes to work, leisure, family, politics etc. apply different professional programs. A Norwegian study focusing on political values, support this hypothesis (Jacobsen 2001). The study includes students in nursing, social work and economics at Agder University College. The main conclusion is that political values vary between students in different programs when they enrolled, and that political values change only marginally during the education. Another Norwegian study carried out by Dæhlen (2004), give similar results. Students are selected by their preferences for work and these preferences mainly maintain during education.

A second hypothesis claims that specialised education which takes place in universities and in college, are arenas for developing attitudes and preferences in addition to training skills. Recent empirical research, which show a considerable development in job values from adolescence during transitions to adulthood, support this hypothesis (Johnson 2001, 2002). Young people seem to adjust their values and gain an understanding of the potential rewards available for them. Through socialisation students adopt values consistent with their future work lives. Type of education, however, seems to be important. Jenssen (1993) found that students taking courses within fields of health, social work, teaching or general social sciences, develop other political values than students in economics and technical disciplines.

Four outcomes seem possible. The first is that students have different preferences when they enter higher education, and that these values are stable during the period of education. This would be in line with the early socialisation hypothesis, and the selection model. Students select an education that suits their preferences. The second outcome is that students have identical preferences when studies begin, but differences in preferences at the end of the training period. This result supports the second hypothesis, that lifestyle preferences are formed in professional training. The third possible outcome is that students have different preferences when they enter the programs, and that these differences increase or decrease during the program. Such outcomes give partial support both to the notion of socialisation in the early years and that of socialisation during education. A fourth outcome is that there are no differences at the beginning of the program and still no differences after three years of study. If this is the case, it will support a hypothesis that lifestyle preferences are shaped after professional training, for instance in the workplace.

The empirical study

The students received an identical questionnaire at two points of time; in first semester, autumn 2000, and in last semester, spring 2003. The data is organised as panel data with two waves and contains individual attitudes and values at the beginning and at the end of the educational program. The questionnaire was distributed during lectures to all students in the course. The response rate in first wave was 74 percent. In the second wave the response rate was 72 percent. Totally the analyses in this paper include 762 students: 205 students in nursing, 278 students in teaching, 139 students in social work, 75 students in economics and 65 students in journalism.

Table 1. Gender and age. Students in nursing, teaching, social work, economics and journalism. Students' age in first semester(2000). Per cent and mean (standard deviation).

	Age (in 2000)		Gender	
	Mean (st.d.)		Female (%)	N
Nursing	24,6	(6,3)	94	205
Teaching	23,2	(5,2)	68	278
Social work	25,0	(6,9)	89	139
Economics	24,0	(5,5)	65	75
Journalism	24,2	(3,2)	66	65

The professional groups deviate significantly in gender composition (table 1). Nine of ten students in nursing and social work are women. In teaching, economics and journalism two of three students are female (65-68 percent). Students' age don't deviate significantly, but students in teaching are younger (mean age 23,2 in first semester) than students in social work (mean age 25,2) and in nursing (mean age 24,6). Some of the differences that may occur in the multivariate analyses may be a result of differences in age and gender, and not a result of socialisation in professional training. In the analyses I will control for age and gender.

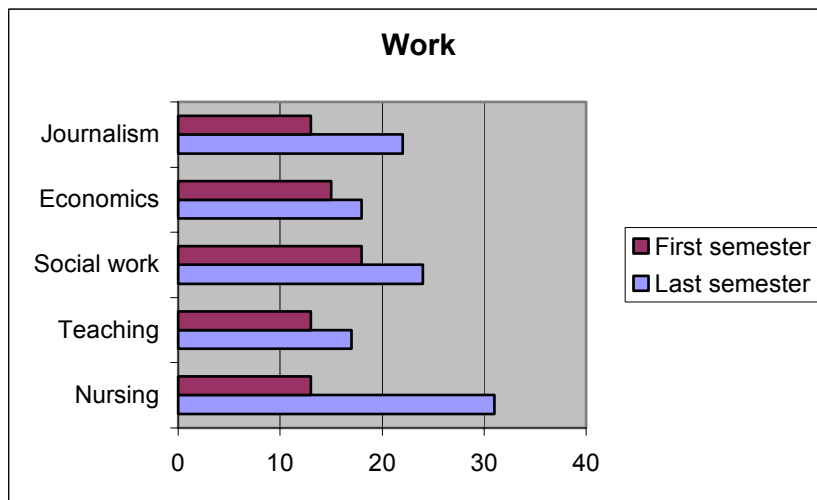
Measuring lifestyle preferences

The term lifestyle preference has no single agreed definition. The term is often used to describe women's attitudes to work, work commitment, or to the work-family balance (Hakim 1998, 2000, 2002). In this paper the definition is broader. A wide spectre of lifestyle attitudes is included, like students' attitude to work, family, friends, leisure, politics, religion and culture/art. Altogether this gives a broad picture of students' lifestyle preferences.

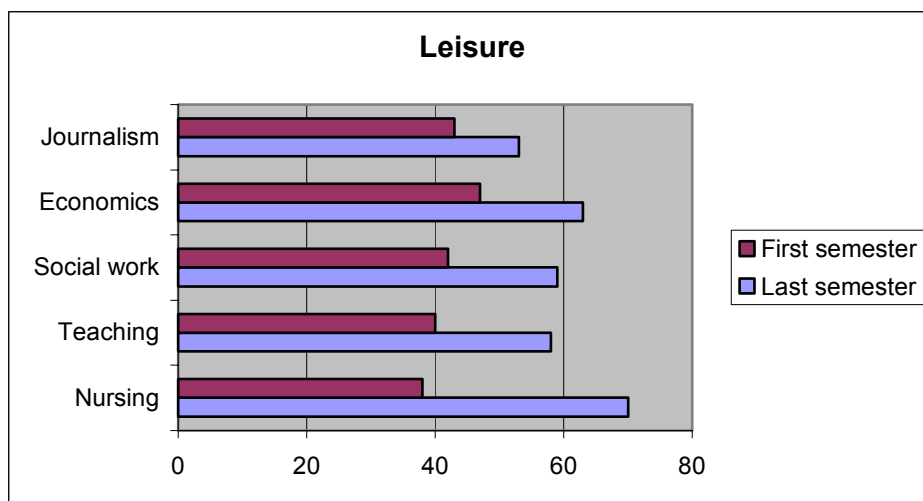
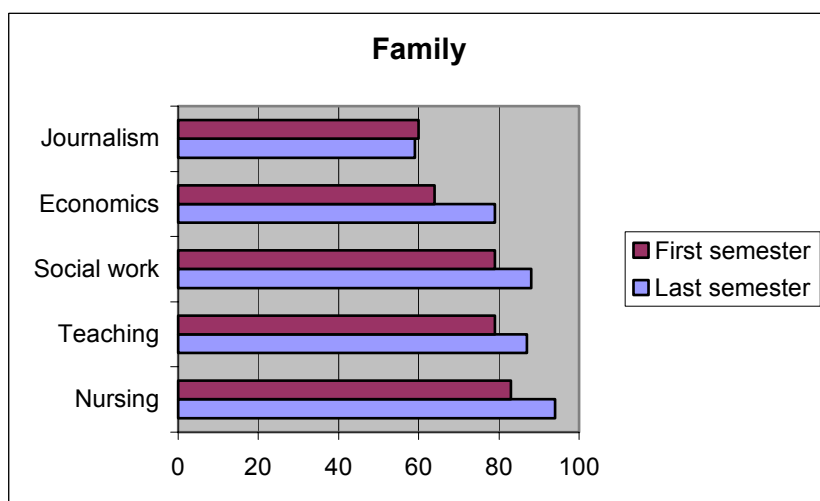
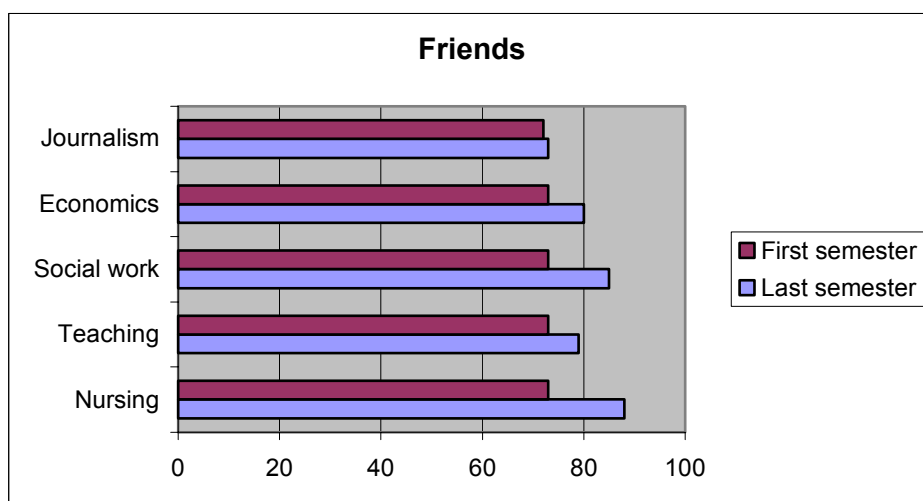
Empirical results

The first step in the analysis is to examine students' preferences shortly after entering professional education. One assumption in this study is that lifestyle preferences have consequences for individuals' choice of education. But do we find variations in preferences among students attending different programs regarding work and leisure as well as politics, religion, culture and art? To examine this assumption I investigate students' attitude to each topic.¹ The students answered the question: "How important in your life is each of these topics? Very important, relatively important, not very important, not important at all, don't know" The answers are ranged from 1 to 4 where very important are given 1 and not important at all are given 4. Students who answered "don't know" are not included in the analysis.

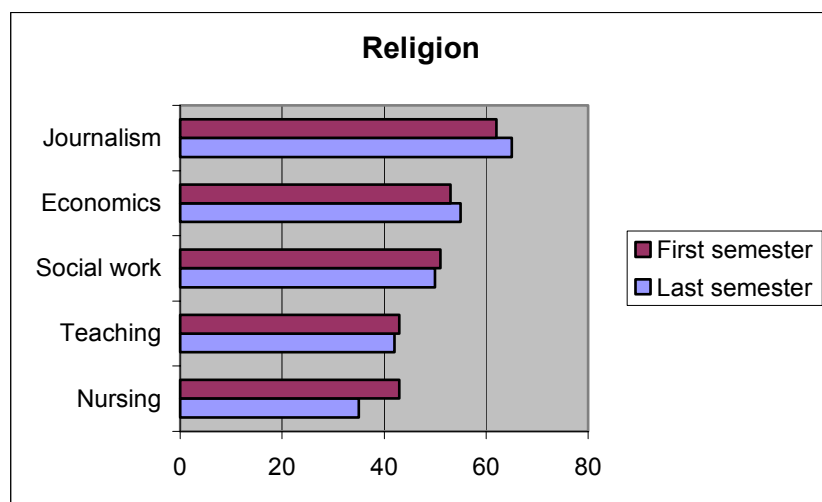
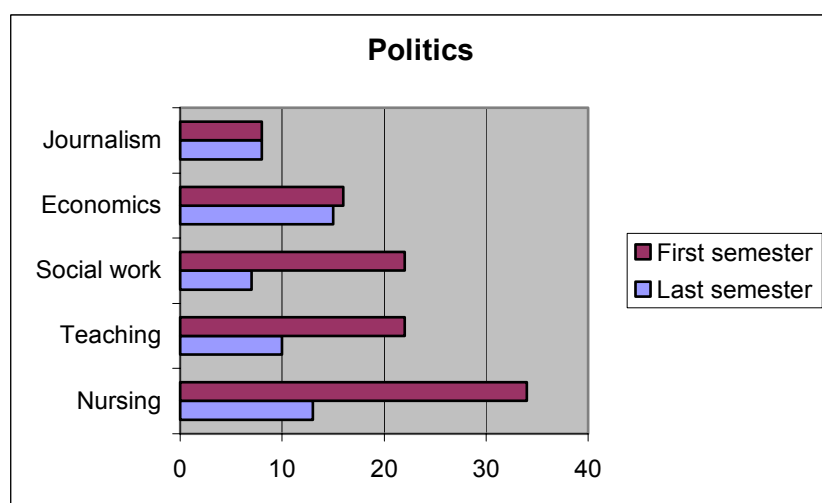
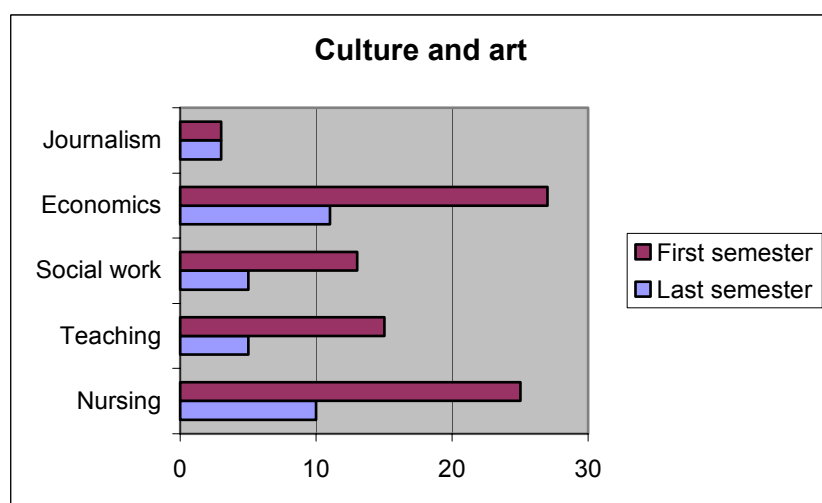
Figures 1-4. Lifestyle preferences among students. First semester in professional training. Students in nursing, teaching, social work, economics and journalism. About work, leisure, family and friends. Very important in life (%).



¹ Per cent who give it up to be very important (figures 1 - 4). Per cent who give it up not important/ not important at all (figures 5-7). In addition estimate means and standard deviations (enclose 1)



Figures 5-7. Lifestyle preferences among students in professional training. Students in nursing, teaching, social work, economics and journalism. About religion, politics and culture/art. First semester. Not very important in life /not important at all (%).



Figures 1-7 (and appendix 1) give us a broad picture of students' attitude to work, leisure, family, friends, religion, politics and culture/art. The results indicate how important each of the topics is for students in nursing, teaching, social work, economics and journalism. All groups of students give up family and friends as most important (figures 3-4). In first semester 70-80 percent of students in nursing, teaching, social work and economics give up family and friends as very important in life. Prospective journalists and economists seem to be exceptions regarding attitude to family. Only 60 percent of these students give up family as very important.

Work and leisure don't seem to be very important for the majority of students. Only 15 percent in all groups of students give up work as very important in life. About 40 percent of the students said the same about leisure. Common for all groups of students, work and leisure seem to develop in direction of being more important.

Very few students are interested in religion, politics and culture/art. Only 1-10 percent of the students find politics and religion very important. Students taking interest in these topics are so few that we have to estimate how many who find these topics *not* important (figures 5-7). Between 40 to 60 percent of the students gave up religion as not important or not important at all. The change during the period is minimal. The picture is different, however, when it comes to politics and culture/art. The attitude to culture/art and politics change significantly during the education, except for students in journalism. In contrast to other students, prospective journalists don't seem to change attitude to politics and culture/art. But as the figures 5 and 7 show, students in journalism are significantly more interested in politics and culture/art at both points of time than students attending other programs. The figures 5 and 7 show that prospective nurses differ from other students in lifestyle development during the period. They are taking big steps and their interest in culture/art and especially politics are heavily increased. Shortly after entering the nursing program, between 30 and 40 percent of the students didn't find politics important. In the last semester only 10 percent give up politics as not important.

The results indicate a selection process in recruitment to higher education. Systematic variations among students in different training programs occur. Largest differences seem to be between prospective nurses and journalists. Between these two groups we find significant differences in attitude to work, family, friends, politics and culture/art. Individuals, who chose

to study nursing, give more attention to work, family and culture/art, but less attention to politics than prospective journalists. This is true also when controlled for gender and age (regression analyses, appendix 2).

The next step is to compare lifestyle preferences among the five groups of students at the end of the educational program. Figures 1- 7 give a broad picture of the changes during the period, but multivariate analyses open up for investigating the impact of educational programs. Table 2 shows the results of the regression analyses which include controlling for age, gender and individuals' attitude in wave 1 (shortly after entering education). Students in nursing are reference group.

Table 2. Regression analyses. Development of students' attitudes to work, leisure, family, friends, religion, politics and culture/art during the period of education. Students in nursing, teaching, social work, economics and journalism.

	Work	Fam.	Leisure	Politics	Religion	Culture	Friends
Constant	0,32	0,57**	0,67*	0,62	0,67	0,36	1,17**
Teacher	-0,12*	-0,03	-0,12*	0,03	-0,04	0,01	-0,09*
Social work	-0,07*	-0,02	-0,05	0,05	-0,07	0,00	-0,01
Economist	-0,08*	-0,04	-0,05	0,00	-0,02	-0,03	-0,04
Journalist	-0,10*	-0,15**	-0,11**	-0,01	-0,06	-0,00	-0,07*
Men	-0,06	-0,04	-0,02	0,02	-0,01	-0,04	-0,05
Age	-0,07*	-0,00	-0,00	-0,09*	-0,01	0,06	+0,07*
Value wave1	0,65**	0,69**	0,61**	0,58**	0,34**	0,55**	0,67**
R2	0,42	0,46	0,39	0,33	0,12	0,30	0,45
N	651	670	669	652	646	652	670

A fascinating result in table 2 is the high R2-estimate. However, the R2-estimate varies from 12 percent (religion) up to 46 percent (family). More important, however, is that students' choice of educational program has significant effects on students' development in lifestyle preferences during the education. The development of attitude towards work, leisure, family and friends vary significant between different groups of students. Students, who choose nursing, have a significant different development in attitude to work than students in teaching, social work, economics and journalism. Regarding attitude to family, friends and leisure, prospective nurses are significant different from students in journalism, but not different from students in teaching, social work and economics.

The development in attitude to politics and culture/art, which is rather significant, can not be explained by professional training programs. Educational programs seem to have no impact.

Individuals' attitude when they enrolled is the only factor in the analyses which has explanatory effect. It is mainly students with low attention to politics and culture/art in first semester, which experience change during the period of education. Students' interest in politics and culture/art are more equal at the end of the education than in the beginning.

Discussion and conclusion

The results support both a selection process in choice of educational program, and a socialisation process during education. Lifestyle preferences seem to have consequences in selecting educational programs, and lifestyle preferences develop during professional training.

When entering training programs students' attitude to politics, culture/art, religion and family vary significantly between different groups of students. Prospective nurses and journalists have significantly different attitude to all these topics. This supports previous research which emphasise a relation between individuals' values and choice of education (Dæhlen 2004, Jacobsen 2001).

The variations in students' lifestyle preferences partly persist during the period of training. The attitudes to family, friends and religion are especially stable. Development is most common regarding politics and culture/art, but changes are also identified in students' attitude to leisure and work. While students' attitude to politics and culture/art seem to go in direction being more equal, the difference in attitude to work and leisure are increasing during the period.

The development in students' attitude to work and leisure may be caused by professional socialisation. Significant differences between groups of students support this interpretation. Prospective nurses seem to be more formed in professional training than other students and especially prospective journalists. However, development in attitude, seem not always to be influenced by professional training. Changes in attitudes may be a result of general socialisation processes among students. This is probably the fact when groups of students, especially nurses, experienced an extensive change in their attitude to politics and culture/art. Individuals' attitudes at the beginning of the education seem to be the most powerful factor. Only students, who don't find politics and culture/art important in the beginning of the training program, went through a significant development during the period of education.

Students who give up these topics as very important in their life at the beginning of the education don't change attitude.

The main conclusion is that professional training has impact on students' lifestyle preferences, but don't influence all topics included. The results indicate relatively strong socialisation processes in nursing, while such processes seem to be much weaker in journalism. The analyses don't support the assumption that students in programs strongly related to professional work, generally are more exposed to professional socialisation compared to other students.

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Appendix 1.

	2000	2003 Mean	Diff.	2000 Very important (%)	2003	Diff.	2000 Not important at all (%)	2003	Diff.
Work									
Nursing	1,97	1,71	0,26**	13	31	18			
Teaching	2,10	1,93	0,17**	13	17	4			
Social Work	2,02	1,81	0,21**	18	24	6			
Economics	2,08	1,91	0,17*	15	18	3			
Journalist	2,23	2,03	0,20	13	22	9			
Leisure									
Nursing	1,64	1,29	0,35**JEST	38	70	32			
Teaching	1,61	1,43	0,18**N	40	58	18			
Social Work	1,61	1,41	0,20**N	42	59	17			
Economics	1,53	1,37	0,16*N	47	63	16			
Journalist	1,65	1,53	0,12N	43	53	10			
Family									
Nursing	1,20	1,07	0,13**	83	94	11			
Teaching	1,22	1,13	0,09**	79	87	8			
Social Work	1,22	1,11	0,11*	79	88	9			
Economics	1,37	1,22	0,15*	64	79	15			
Journalist	1,49	1,43	0,06	60	59	19			
Friends									
Nursing	1,28	1,12	0,16**T	73	88	15			
Teaching	1,27	1,21	0,06*N	73	79	6			
Social Work	1,28	1,15	0,13**	73	85	12			
Economics	1,27	1,20	0,07	73	80	7			
Journalism	1,31	1,26	0,05	72	73	1			
Religion									
Nursing	3,17	2,98	0,19*	6	11	5	43	35	8
Teaching	3,13	3,07	0,06	10	10	0	43	42	1
Social Work	3,27	3,20	0,07	9	10	1	51	50	1
Economics	3,37	3,24	0,13	1	8	7	53	55	2
Journalist	3,45	3,41	0,04	3	7	4	62	65	3
Politics									
Nursing	3,13	2,81	0,32**JE	1	4	3	34	13	21
Teaching	2,94	2,65	0,29**EJ	1	3	2	22	10	12
Social Work	2,99	2,60	0,39**E J	2	4	2	22	7	15
Economics	2,73	2,62	0,11NTS	5	7	2	16	15	1
Journalist	2,58	2,59	0,01NTS	6	5	1	8	8	0
Culture/art									
Nursing	2,83	2,39	0,44**J	8	14	6	25	10	15
Teaching	2,53	2,,21	0,32**J	12	19	7	15	5	10
Social Work	2,52	2,21	0,31**J	9	15	6	13	5	8
Economics	2,62	2,37	0,25*	22	20	2	27	11	16
Journalist	1,97	1,92	0,05NTS	29	34	5	3	3	0

Appendix 2. Regression analyses. Lifestyle preferences among students in first semester. Students in nursing, teaching, social work, economics and journalism.

	Work	Family.	Leisure	Politics.	Religion.	Culture	Friends
Constant	0,92*	0,66*	0,29**	1,76**	2,21**	0,95	1,60**
Teacher	-0,05	0,05	0,02	0,07	0,04	0,21**	-0,00
Social work	-0,03	-0,00	0,05	0,05	-0,02	0,11*	-0,03
Economist	-0,02	-0,05	0,05	0,14**	-0,04	0,09*	0,00
Journalist	-0,09*	-0,12*	-0,01	0,19**	-0,06	0,30**	-0,02
Men	0,12*	0,27**	0,00	-0,11*	0,06	0,10*	0,09*
Age	0,10*	0,03	0,01	0,15**	-0,07	-0,22**	0,07
R2	0,04	0,10	0,01	0,09	0,02	0,11	0,02
N	660	671	671	660	659	659	671

