

The Priorities of Materialist and Post-Materialist Values in the Nordic Countries – a Five-Nation Comparison

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The present study takes the theory of post-materialism as a point of departure and compares the priorities of materialist and post-materialist values in the five Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden). The prevalence of political values in different countries is also examined, as is the relationship between materialist and post-materialist values and age, from the perspective of whether generational replacement will contribute to the spread of post-materialist values in the Nordic setting. Post-materialist values are given relatively strong emphasis in the Nordic countries because the mass publics are less concerned with economic security values than those in other Western democracies. The priorities of political values have remained relatively stable at the aggregate level from the late 1970s to 1987, although there has been a slight tendency for the mass publics to become more materialist. In all countries the post-war generations are more likely to support post-materialist values than the older generations. The correlations between age and political values have become somewhat smaller over the last 6–12 years.

Political values appear to be important to understanding political behaviour in post-industrial societies. As structural cleavages have become less important, many theorists have contended that deep-seated values may shape and reshape political attitudes and behaviour in significant ways. The unrest at the universities in the 1960s was associated with new political values, while the political resurgence of conservatism and economic liberalism in the 1970s and 1980s directed attention away from theories of value change. Without the continuous emergence of new radicalism among the younger generations, scholars failed to see the relationship between the earlier theories of value change and the existing political trends, especially the new political phenomena on the right side of the political spectrum.

Perhaps the most well-known theory of political value change based on the perspective from the 1960s is Ronald Inglehart's conceptualization of value change along the materialist/post-materialist dimension. Inglehart and other supporters of the theory of post-materialism contend that the value change process is still a very important phenomenon in most advanced industrial democracies. The spread of new values and issues is not a

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Perhaps the most well-known theory of political value change based on the perspective from the 1960s is Ronald Inglehart's conceptualization of value change along the materialist/post-materialist dimension. Inglehart and other supporters of the theory of post-materialism contend that the value change process is still a very important phenomenon in most advanced industrial democracies. The spread of new values and issues is not a

transient 'sunshine' occurrence, since the public's value priorities and concern for post-materialist issues has persisted and grown through the 1970s and 1980s (Inglehart 1981; Dalton 1988, ch. 5).

According to Inglehart, the 'Silent Revolution' is a gradual value change from materialist to post-materialist values; from giving top priority to values reflecting a preoccupation with physical sustenance and safety values, towards a greater emphasis on belonging, self-expression and quality of life values.

The explanations for the value change rest on two hypotheses which Inglehart labels the *scarcity hypothesis* and the *socialization hypothesis*.

The *scarcity hypothesis* is based on the assumption that an individual's values reflect the socioeconomic environment; people tend to place high priority on whatever needs are in short supply. The scarcity hypothesis is, as Inglehart remarks (1981, 881), very similar to the diminishing marginal utility theory in economics. As the basic economic and physical security needs of individuals are met, values reflecting these needs are given a lower priority in relation to other, conflicting values.¹

From this perspective we would expect that changes in economic conditions would almost immediately stimulate change in value priorities. A prolonged period of economic growth and high prosperity would lead to post-materialist values, whereas economic decline would lead to the opposite. According to the scarcity hypothesis, there should be strong period effects present with regard to different generations' value priorities.

To a certain degree, *the socialization hypothesis* contradicts the scarcity hypothesis. The relationship between socioeconomic factors and individual value priorities is not one of immediate adjustment. Early socialization tends to have an impact on adult social and political values. The socialization perspective is based on the notion of a fundamental human personality structure which tends to crystallize before the time an individual reaches adulthood. According to this hypothesis there will be a sizeable time-lag between changes in the socio-economic environment and changes in the political value profile. Ten to fifteen years after a change in economic conditions, the age cohorts that had spent their formative years in prosperity would enter the electorate.

Although Inglehart emphasizes that the theoretical framework behind the 'Silent Revolution' is based on both hypotheses (1981, 882), most of his theoretical discussion is based on the socialization perspective, which he more specifically relates to Abraham Maslow's well-known theory of a need hierarchy underlying human motivation. Maslow's theory is based on the assumption that people tend to fulfil needs in hierarchical order. Top priority is given to satisfying sustenance needs as long as these have not been met. The need for physical safety comes next, and once an individual has attained physical and economic security, he may begin to pursue other

non-material needs, such as the need for love, belongingness and esteem, and later a set of goals related to intellectual and aesthetic satisfaction. Maslow called this latter set 'self-actualization needs'.²

The theory of a need hierarchy explicitly assumes that basic need satisfaction takes place in childhood and youth, and that once established during an individual's formative years, value priorities tend to be retained throughout adult life. Political value priorities are deep-rooted phenomena that do not easily change in given individuals.

As Swedish sociologist Thorleif Pettersson states in a theoretical discussion of Inglehart's theory of political value change:

Individuals' values are captive in a 'double imprisonment'. On the one hand, they are prisoners of their own individual life history; in their formative experiences. On the other hand, they are prisoners of the social and economic history; of the level of economic development and welfare that prevailed during the formative years (Pettersson 1988: 51).

The values which are considered to reflect sustenance and physical safety needs are called *materialist values*, while those which are expected to reflect the needs for love, esteem and self-actualization are designated *post-materialist values*.

The term 'materialism' thus incorporates both *economic materialist* values such as 'economic growth' and 'economic stability' and *authoritarian and conformity* values, while the term 'post-materialism' incorporates typical 'green' or *non-material* values, such as 'environmental protection' and puts less emphasis on money and economic rewards, and *libertarian* values related to broader, more direct forms of participation, equal rights for all cultural and racial groups, openness to new forms of morality, and so on.

The 'Silent Revolution' then, is the process behind the transition from 'Old Politics' values of economic growth, public order, national security, and traditional lifestyle to 'New Politics' values of environmental concern, individual freedom, and social equality (Dalton, Beck & Flanagan 1984: 20).

The Priorities of Materialist and Post-Materialist Values. Hypotheses and Previous Findings

In this article we take the theory of post-materialism as our point of departure for studying political values in a comparative Nordic context. The main focus is on the aggregate priorities of materialist and post-materialist values, stability and change in value priorities over time, and the relationship between age and political values. The latter aspect is important because it may tell us whether post-materialist values can be expected to expand in these countries in the future.

In order to generate hypotheses for comparative purposes, we will first

review certain aspects of the theory of post-materialism, and present data concerning differences between the Nordic countries with regard to several relevant structural variables. We proceed by presenting a perspective of the Nordic welfare states which is relevant for the public's concern for materialist and post-materialist political values, and which we hypothesize will contribute to a high degree of post-materialism in all of the Nordic countries.

The need-satisfaction hypothesis implies two basic patterns with regard to the distribution of materialist and post-materialist types. The first is that the value priorities along the materialist/post-materialist dimension should be fairly stable over time since they reflect deep-rooted needs. Although there may be period effects present, the changes in economic conditions should not have immediate and predominant effects on aggregate value priorities.

The second hypothesis concerns value priorities in different generations. The generations which grew up after World War II will be less concerned with materialist needs; they have been socialized under conditions of affluence. They are therefore expected to emphasize post-materialist values more strongly than the pre-war generations.

These hypotheses are confirmed by a fascinating use of data from most advanced industrial democracies (Inglehart 1971, 1977, ch. 2 and 3, 1981; Abramson & Inglehart 1986, 1987). During the 1970s, common-sense expectations led us to believe that the mass publics would become more materialist as a consequence of the economic recession, higher inflation and unemployment, and physical insecurity caused by political terrorism and the new wave of Soviet expansionism. Longitudinal data from the European Community countries shows, however, that during the 1970s changes in value priorities were remarkably small, and in four of six countries there were more post-materialists than materialists at the end of its decade as compared to its start. Only the Italian mass public has become more materialist (Inglehart 1981, 887–888).³

The comparative analysis provides support for hypotheses which predict that the proportion of post-materialists will be higher in rich countries than in poor ones (Inglehart 1979, 329–334), and the age group differences will be larger in countries where the rate of change in economic conditions during respective generations' formative years has been the largest (Inglehart 1971, 998–1001, 1977, 29–34).

It is, however, not the present level of affluence but the level of affluence during the pre-adult years of the average member of the present adult population which is most in accordance with the hypothesis of pre-adult value socialization. This means that it is the economic conditions prevailing twenty-five years ago or more that are most important (Inglehart 1979, 332–334).

Comparatively speaking, it is expected that values will change most rapidly in countries which have the most dramatic change in socio-economic environment. Those countries where the rates of economic growth have been largest will have the greatest generational differences along the MPM-dimension, since different generations in these countries will have experienced the most different levels of economic security.

For our purposes it is interesting to note that the relationship between economic affluence and value priorities is not linear. Using comparative data from different advanced democracies, Russell Dalton (1977) finds that the differences in value priorities between generations are larger with rising prosperity at the lower economic levels, while they diminish at higher levels. As advanced industrial societies approach a given saturation level, generational factors explain value priorities to a diminishing extent. The same applies to aggregate priorities in nations with different levels of affluence (Inglehart 1979, 333–334). The linkage between economic growth and value change follows a curve of diminishing returns.

From these perspectives we should expect small differences between the Nordic countries with regard to priorities of materialist and post-materialist values, and with regard to age differences in value priorities. They all belong among the most affluent democracies, and their levels of economic growth have been relatively similar in the post-war period:

At the beginning of the 1980s, which is the most recent period for which we have data, all of the Nordic countries are found among the 12 Western democracies with the highest GNP per capita. According to the OECD statistics from 1981 the figures are (in US dollars): 13,937 for Norway, 13,505 for Sweden, 12,791 for Iceland, 11,350 for Denmark and 10,238 for Finland.⁴

If, however, the level of affluence during the pre-adult years of the average member of the adult population is most important, as post-materialist theory contends, we should expect affluence level in the late 1950s or beginning of the 1960s to be more decisive. In the late 1950s there were larger differences in affluence level between the Nordic countries, and the ranking is not the same: GNP per capita (in US dollars) was highest in Sweden (1,380), Norway (1,130) and Denmark (1,057), and considerably lower in Finland (794) and Iceland (572).⁵ The proportion of people with a predominantly post-materialist value orientation should therefore be higher in the former countries (Sweden, Norway and Denmark).

According to post-materialist theory the levels of economic growth should have an effect on the magnitude of the generation differences. However, for comparing the pre-war and post-war generations, it is not the growth rates in the 1970s and 1980s that are most important. It is the growth rates in the first post-war period that reflect the basic differences in socialization experiences of the pre-war and post-war generations as

regards economic conditions. Data from the period 1948–1960 shows that the average annual change in GNP per capita was highest in Finland (3.7 percent), followed by Denmark (3.1 percent) and Sweden (3.0 percent), while the growth rates in Norway (2.6 percent) and in particular Iceland (1.6 percent) were lower.⁶ We therefore expect generation differences in value priorities to be higher in the former countries.⁷

The main differences in *present* economic performance relate to the inflation rates and unemployment, which is expected to influence priorities of economic security values.⁸ With regard to inflation, Iceland is a deviant case in a comparative Nordic setting. While the other countries had an average increase in consumer price index of 6–14 percent in the 1980s, the figure for Iceland has been about 50 percent.⁹ We therefore expect economic security values to be of more concern for the Icelanders than for the other countries. With regard to unemployment, Denmark and Finland have larger unemployment rates in the 1980s than Iceland, Norway and Sweden (5–11 percent and 0–4 percent, respectively).¹⁰

Two other variables which are relevant to explaining materialist and post-materialist value priorities vary systematically between the Nordic countries: urbanization and religious values and activity. Urbanization should contribute to more modern, permissive and post-materialist values (Inglehart 1977: 45–50). Among the Nordic countries, Norway and Finland appear to have the largest proportion of the population living in rural areas, and the smallest proportion living in larger cities.¹¹

As regards religious orientations the Nordic countries are very similar with respect to the official role of religion in society and the organization of the churches (Gustafsson 1985). However, while the population in Denmark and Sweden are the most secularized in Europe, the population of Norway is ranked in a middle position compared to several other West-European countries along different measures of religious beliefs and activities (Pettersson 1988, 93–95). In a comparative Nordic setting, Norway is also the country in which religion plays the most central role in the socialization of young individuals through family and school (Gustafsson 1985, 251–264).

In Inglehart's more recent conceptualization of value change, the post-materialist value change is only one aspect of a broader cultural and religious change, and degree of religiosity and post-materialism are expected to be inversely related (Inglehart 1984). From this perspective we should expect the Danish and the Swedish mass publics to be more post-materialist compared to the Norwegians in particular.

The Scandinavian Model

Economic growth and prosperity are not the only factors which are expected

to favour the spread of post-materialist values in the Nordic countries. The advanced character of the welfare states in these countries also contributes to our expectation of a comparatively strong concern with post-materialist values. The welfare state represents an institutionalized guarantee against personal risks and loss. This takes the form of a variety of governmental guarantees against loss of jobs, old age, injury and other social problems. The welfare states have given rise to the 'no-risk society' (Aharoni 1981).

The Nordic countries are advanced *institutional* welfare states as distinguished from *residual* welfare states. The governmental guarantees against risks and losses have been stretched further than in other welfare states. According to Esping-Andersen & Korpi (1987), the main attributes of the institutional welfare model as they appear in the Nordic countries comprise three elements.

First, human material needs are being satisfied to a larger extent through political mechanisms than through the market, as is still the case according to the residual model. The traditional boundaries of the welfare state have been trespassed to a larger extent than is typical in other Western societies, and public responsibility has marginalized, and even superseded, private provisions and the market mechanism quite extensively.

Second, compared to most other welfare states, the Scandinavian model is more strongly committed to universalism and equality of status. The welfare state is meant to integrate and include the entire population rather than target its resources towards particular problem groups. The institutional model of welfare is expected to promote mechanisms of broad social solidarity because the clientele of social policy encompasses the entire population. This contrasts with the residual model, which limits public involvement to a narrow clientele, which tends to give the recipients of public welfare a stigmatizing status.

The third dimension refers to the range, or domain, of the human needs that are satisfied by social policy. In the Scandinavian countries social policy is *comprehensive* in its attempt to provide welfare, and the policy embraces an extensive range of human needs.

In addition, benefit levels and social service standards are high. However, this is hardly a unique attribute for the 'Scandinavian model', though it is commonly included as part of the international conception of this model.¹²

From the structural features of the Scandinavian countries, we expect that material needs would be satisfied for a larger part of the population. The advanced character of the Nordic welfare states protects the material well-being of many citizens from the effects which the business cycle and labour markets would have on their behaviour and aspirations by creating a 'safety net' and a subjective sense of security that is essential to the reorientation of people's political agenda. Such arrangements also encourage them to discount the negative impact of low economic growth on their

individual life, thus increasing their willingness to support post-materialist values.

The Distribution of Political Values

In the new politics approach, the materialist and post-materialist values are measured by three sets (batteries) of priorities in which the respondents are asked to *rank* four values in each battery. The batteries are presented in appendix 1.¹³ The three batteries were administered in surveys from each of the four Nordic countries in September/November 1987.¹⁴

The twelve options have been designed to provide a more complete exploration of Maslow's hierarchy. In each of the batteries there is one value intended to tap each of the four need levels discussed above.¹⁵

In table 1 we have presented the percentage of the samples in the four countries which have ranked different values as number 1 or 2 in each set. The values are ordered so that the three values that should reflect a given need level are placed one after the other. Not surprisingly, the values which tap *sustenance* or *economic security values* are emphasized more in Iceland, but also in Norway, than in the other countries. The values 'fighting rising prices' and 'maintaining a stable economy' are especially accentuated by the Icelandic general public. The Danish and the Norwegian publics are also more concerned about 'economic growth' and 'maintaining a stable economy' than the Finns and the Swedes. Compared to the other value sets, the economic security values are on the average less accentuated in Sweden, Finland and Denmark. In a broader comparative context, the Nordic publics place much less emphasis on the sustenance values than publics in most other Western democracies, which give these values the highest priority (Inglehart 1977, 49, Table 2-6; Dalton 1988, 83, Table 5.1). Our general hypothesis concerning the satisfaction of economic security in the Nordic welfare states is thus strongly confirmed by the analysis.

The hypothesis related to affluence level during the pre-adult years of the average member of the adult population implies that economic security values should be more strongly emphasized by the population which was socialized under less affluent conditions. The ranking of Sweden and Iceland as extremes in Table 1 is in accordance with the hypothesis, but the rankings of the other countries do not conform to the expected pattern.

With regard to the values intended to reflect *safety needs*, there are even larger differences between the Nordic general publics. Again it is the Norwegians who are most concerned with these materialist values, followed by the Danes. The Icelanders and the Finns, however, clearly seem to place less emphasis on these values than the publics in the other countries. First and foremost 'maintaining law and order' and second 'fighting crimes' are

Table 1. Distribution of the Materialist and Post-Materialist Items in the Nordic Countries. (Percentage which chose given values as first and second most important in each battery.)

	Denmark	Finland	Iceland	Norway	Sweden
Sustenance values					
Fighting rising prices	31 (5)	41 (3)	60 (1)	53 (2)	40 (4)
Economic growth	46 (1)	37 (5)	43 (2)	43 (2)	41 (4)
Maintaining a stable economy	52 (2)	48 (4)	60 (1)	50 (3)	40 (5)
Average	43 (3)	42 (4)	54 (1)	49 (2)	40 (5)
Safety values					
Maintaining law and order	82 (2)	75 (3)	61 (5)	83 (1)	73 (4)
Strong defence forces	17 (4)	17 (4)	20 (3)	33 (1)	23 (2)
Fighting crimes	73 (1)	51 (4)	48 (5)	72 (2)	67 (3)
Average	57 (2)	48 (4)	43 (5)	63 (1)	54 (3)
Belongingness and esteem values					
More to say in government	41 (4)	52 (1)	43 (3)	37 (5)	46 (2)
More to say at work and in community	63 (2)	72 (1)	60 (3)	54 (4)	52 (5)
Less impersonal society	46 (5)	68 (1)	63 (2)	56 (4)	59 (3)
Average	50 (4)	64 (1)	55 (2)	49 (5)	52 (3)
Aesthetic and intellectual values					
Protect free speech	56 (1)	32 (5)	41 (3)	33 (4)	45 (2)
Protect nature from pollution	85 (2)	80 (4)	81 (3)	78 (5)	88 (1)
Ideas count more than money	38 (1)	35 (3)	33 (4)	27 (5)	37 (2)
Average	60 (1)	49 (4)	52 (3)	46 (5)	57 (2)

strongly underscored in each country. The former value is given the highest priority in comparison with all other items in the batteries in Norway; it is number two in Denmark, Finland and Sweden, and number three in Iceland. The same applies to the average priority given to the safety values compared to the others: these are number one in Norway and number two in three of the other countries.¹⁶ The Icelanders, however, are clearly least concerned with safety or authoritarian values, compared to the other three sets, and have in fact a very different emphasis on the two types of materialist values.

The strong emphasis given to the safety values in the Nordic countries may be explained in a relative sense according to a need-hierarchy concept: Economic security values are not of strong concern for mass publics, and they therefore strongly emphasize the next level in the hierarchy. The cross-national differences in priority given to safety values however, are, difficult to explain. We should for example expect these values to be most

strongly emphasized in the countries where the physical security is most threatened. However, they do not correspond to differences in crime statistics in the Nordic countries.¹⁷

The post-materialist values intended to tap *belongingness and esteem needs (libertarian values)* are clearly valued more highly in Finland than in the other countries. The Finns appear to be more concerned about political influence and participation and a more humane society than publics found not only in the Nordic countries, but also in most Western countries;¹⁸ the libertarian values are also those which on the average are most emphasized compared to those reflecting the other need levels, which clearly contrasts with three of the other Nordic countries. In Iceland, the libertarian values are also highly accentuated, and are on average given about the same emphasis as the economic security values.

The values intended to tap the highest need level (*aesthetical and intellectual needs*) are of somewhat greater concern in Denmark and Sweden than in Finland, Norway and Iceland. In the former countries these values are on the average given the highest priority as compared with those values reflecting the other need levels. The reason for the high average score for these values is the tremendous concern for 'protecting nature from pollution', which is the value most frequently given the highest priority in each country except Norway, where it only ranks as number two (after 'law and order'). As seen from the table, 78–88 percent rank this value as number one or two, and, in fact, 46–65 percent rank 'protecting nature' as number one of the four items in the given battery in the four countries.

In terms of the discussion of the political issue of environmental protection versus economic growth, it is interesting to note that the former value is clearly of greater concern to mass publics in the Nordic countries. The proportion of the publics ranking 'economic growth', which was presented as an item in the same battery as 'protecting nature', is much lower (37–46 percent as number one or two).

It is interesting that the rankings of countries as regards the economic security values and the aesthetical values are, with some exceptions, reversed. The same applies to the safety values and the belongingness values. The rankings of the countries on the two materialist and post-materialist value types are quite different, however. Only the economic security and aesthetical values correlate with affluence level during pre-adult years of the average mass publics at the national level. Other analyses of these phenomena indicate that this also applies to the individual level, and that the MPM-items in fact tap two separate value dimensions (Knutson 1988, 16–21).

It is, of course, not formally correct to make inferences of value concerns by comparing value priorities that are based on rankings from different

Table 2. Average Distribution of the Materialist/Post-Materialist Items in the Five Nordic Countries. (Average percentage of those who chose given values as first or second most important in each battery. Highest and lowest percentages in parentheses).

Protect nature from pollution (Aest./intel.)	82 (78–88)
Maintaining law and order (Saf.)	75 (61–83)
Fighting crimes (Saf.)	62 (48–72)
More to say at work (Bel./est.)	60 (52–72)
Less impersonal society (Bel./est.)	58 (46–68)
Maintaining a stable economy (Sust.)	50 (40–60)
Fighting rising prices (Sust.)	45 (31–60)
More to say in government (Bel./est.)	44 (37–52)
Economic growth (Sust.)	42 (37–46)
Protect free speech (Aest./intel.)	41 (32–56)
Ideas count more than money (Aest./intel.)	34 (27–38)
Strong defence forces (Saf.)	22 (17–33)

The abbreviations in parentheses indicate category of the given value: Sust. = sustenance values; Saf. = safety values; Bel./est. = belongingness and esteem values; Aest./intel. = aesthetical and intellectual values.

sets. Each value is ranked only in relation to other values in the same battery.

If, however, we ignore this for a moment, we can get a rough impression of the values which are considered important in Scandinavian mass publics. This can be done by looking at Table 2, which displays the average proportion placing a given value as number one or two in each set. It is evident from the table that 'protect nature' is given the highest priority in mass publics in Scandinavia, followed by the safety values 'law and order' and 'fighting crimes'. The sustenance values and the other aesthetical/intellectual values (and 'strong defence forces') belong to those which are of least concern.

Changes in Prevalence of Materialist and Post-Materialist Values

It is also possible to study the development of value priorities in some of the Nordic countries from the late 1970s and beginning of the 1980s to 1987. The three value batteries were given to representative samples of the Danish and Norwegian population in 1979 and 1981, respectively.¹⁹ Table 3 displays the distribution of value priorities in these samples. The distributions from the 1987 surveys are also presented for comparative purposes.

There is no clear, consistent tendency in the Danish material for the materialist and post-materialist value types to be of greater or lesser concern when comparing the distributions in 1979 and 1987.²⁰ Three materialist values and three post-materialist values are more strongly emphasized, and

Table 3. Changes in Materialist and Post-Materialist Value Priorities in Denmark and Norway. First and Second Priority on Each Value Battery.

	Denmark			Norway		
	1979	1987	Difference	1981	1987	Difference
Fighting rising prices	46	31	-15	52	53	+1
Economic growth	59	46	-13	37	43	+6
Maintaining a stable economy	57	52	-5	53	50	-3
Average	54	43	-11	47	49	+2
	Safety values					
Maintaining law and order	61	82	+21	79	83	+4
Strong defence forces	9	17	+8	45	33	-12
Fighting crimes	59	73	+14	71	72	+1
Average	43	57	+14	65	63	-2
	Belongingness and esteem values					
More to say in government	43	41	-2	35	37	+2
More to say at work and in community	69	63	-6	58	54	-4
Less impersonal society	38	46	+8	54	56	+2
Average	50	50	0	49	49	0
	Aesthetic and intellectual values					
Protect free speech	51	56	+5	42	33	-9
Protect nature from pollution	62	85	+23	72	78	+6
Ideas count more than money	46	38	-8	27	27	0
Average	53	60	+7	47	46	-1

three of each value type are less emphasized in 1987 than in 1979. If we split the materialist and post-materialist values into two separate types according to the need level they are supposed to tap, there is a clear tendency for the Danish general public to be more concerned with safety values and with the aesthetic value 'protecting nature' and less concerned with economic security values. The main tendency for the Danish public is to be less concerned with economic security and more concerned with 'authoritarian' values, especially 'maintaining law and order' and 'fighting rising crime'. The better economic performance in the Danish economy in the late 1980s compared to the late 1970s, at least along some indicators, may explain why economic security values are not so strongly emphasized by the Danish mass public in 1987.

In the Norwegian case the aggregate changes are in general smaller. There is only one value where the shift is more than 10 percent ('strong defence forces') and there is no clear tendency for the four value types as

Table 4. Changes in Value Priorities in the Nordic Countries. The Four-Item Values Index.

	A. Denmark		B. Finland	
	1979	1987	1975	1987
Materialist	27	23	26	25
Mixed	52	62	63	67
Post-materialist	21	14	11	9
N	1465	886	1168	886
P-mat. - Mat.	-6	-9	-15	-16
	C. Iceland	D. Norway		E. Sweden
	1987	1981	1987	1987
Materialist	30	35	40	25
Mixed	59	56	53	62
Post-materialist	12	9	7	14
N	898	1037	1277	984
P-mat. - Mat.	-18	-26	-33	-11

in the Danish case. The aggregate stability in the Norwegian population is quite impressive.

A subset of the above items has been used to construct a single measure of materialist/post-materialist values. These priorities have been extensively used to study materialist and post-materialist values at different points in time and across nations. The measure is based on the first value battery in the appendix, and individuals are classified into one of three value-priority groups on the basis of choices made among these four items. Those who select 'maintaining law and order' and 'fighting rising prices' as their first and second priorities were classified as materialists, while those who selected 'more to say in government' and 'protect free speech' as their first and second choices were classified as post-materialist. Those who did not conform to these 'pure' value types were classified as an ambivalent or 'mixed' category (Inglehart 1971, 1977, 27-29). This four-item index is a very crude measure of the extensive, complex value system it is supposed to tap. Since most of the comparative analysis of the materialist/post-materialist phenomena have been based on this index, we will present the relevant distribution for the Nordic countries. This index will also be employed to study value concern in different generations.

In Table 4 we have presented the distribution for the 1987 surveys, the 1979 Danish survey and the 1981 Norwegian survey, and an additional survey from Finland from 1975.²¹ If we look first at the comparative data from 1987, it is evident that the percentage of post-materialists compared to materialists is largest in Sweden and Denmark (-11 and -9, respec-

tively), and definitely smallest in Norway (-33). The distributions for Finland and Iceland are more similar to the Swedish and Danish publics, but comparatively more materialist than observed above with regard to the extended value battery.

Compared to the data from 1970s and the early 1980s, the distributions are quite stable. However, all countries show a certain tendency for the Nordic general publics to become more materialist.²²

Comparing the distributions with other Western European countries (Abramson & Inglehart 1986, 5-8), the four-item battery indicates that the populations of Denmark and Sweden have about the same value profile as the West German, the British and the Dutch populations, which are the most post-materialist publics in Europe. The distribution from the Norwegian sample is more similar to that found in the French, Belgian and Italian samples in the 1980s. The Finns and the Icelanders are nearer to the former than to the latter group.

Materialist and Post-Materialist Values and Age

The 'Silent Revolution' is the gradual value change along the MPM-dimension caused by generational replacement. As older and more materialist generations die, they are continuously being replaced by younger, less materialist generations. The theory of value change is based on a strong and consistent relationship between age and MPM-values, and presupposes that life-cycle effects are not dominant when we analyse different age cohorts' priorities over time.

In Figure 1 we have presented the relationship between materialist and post-materialist value priorities and age for the 1987-88 data sets. It is based on the percentage with a 'pure' post-materialist minus the percentage with a 'pure' materialist value priority on the four-item battery which we outlined above. Figure 1 indicates that the form of the association is primarily in accordance with post-materialist theory. The post-war generations (18-39 years) are more post-materialist than the older generations in all countries. In all countries the three post-war generations are more post-materialist than the older generations with only one exception (the 40-49 age group in Finland).²³

Comparatively speaking the relationship with age is strongest in Sweden ($r = -0.21$)²⁴ and Denmark ($r = -0.15$) and somewhat weaker in the other countries ($r = -0.08$ to -0.11).²⁵ These findings do not confirm that growth level during formative years is important, since the rankings of countries are quite different from the ranking of growth level in the first post-war period. For example, Finland and Iceland, which had contrasting economic growth levels, have about the same generational differences.

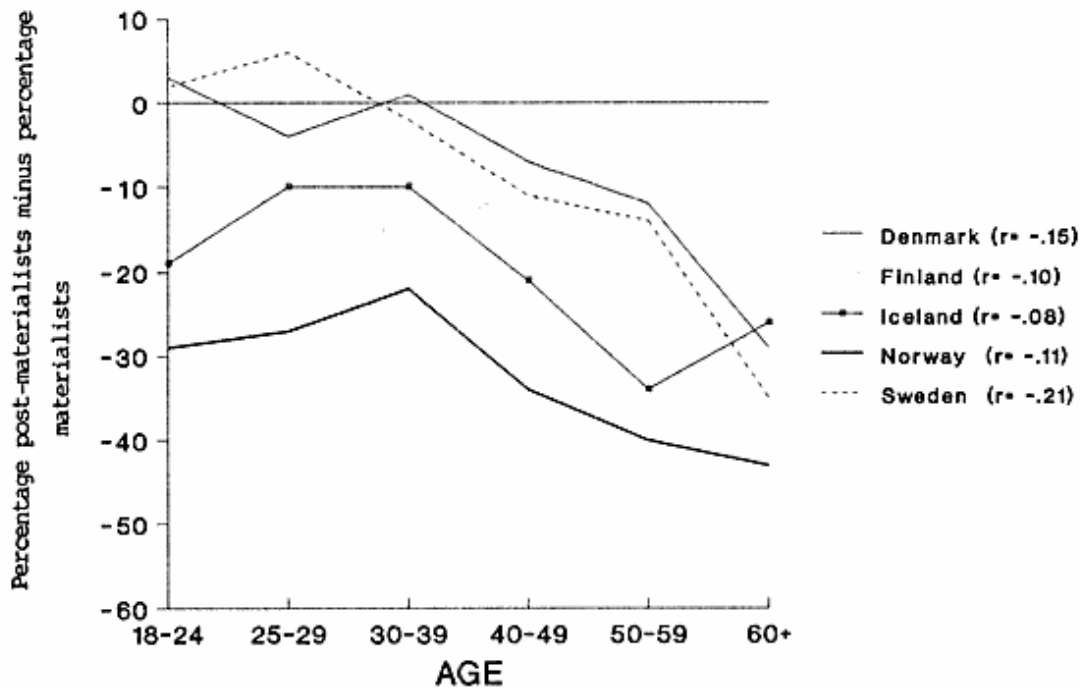


Fig. 1. Materialist and Post-Materialist Values and Age in the Nordic Countries (1987).

Compared to the European Community countries, the age differences in Sweden are at about the same level as in France, Belgium and Italy, which are the Community countries with the largest cohort effects in the 1980s after West Germany (Abramson & Inglehart 1988, 8-9). In the other Nordic countries the age differences are comparatively smaller, but somewhat higher than in the Netherlands and Britain, which have the lowest age differences in value concern of the Community countries.²⁶

There is, however, a tendency for the youngest age group to be less post-materialist than the older age cohorts born after the war in Iceland and Norway. The new emphasis on materialist concerns among the younger cohorts which has been observed in mass culture in the Scandinavian countries is then given some support from the data.

We have longitudinal data from three countries, allowing us to compare the association between age and MPM-values over time. The value priorities in different age cohorts at two points in time are presented in Figure 2, which shows quite clearly *that the association between age and political values has become consistently weaker in all countries from 1975-81 to 1987*. It is evident that clear period effects present in the three countries have induced all age groups to become more materialistic. This is most evident in Denmark and Finland. At the same time, the period effect appears to have the greatest impact on the younger cohorts, such that the association with age has become smaller. Whether or not we should call this a life-

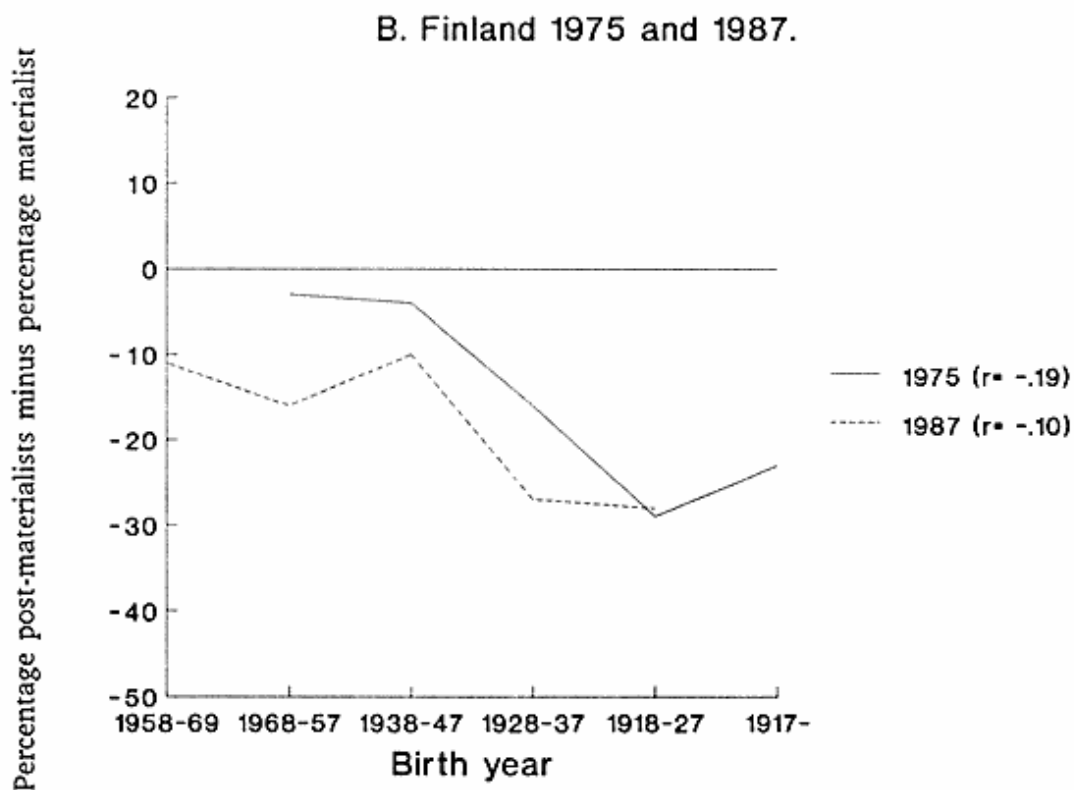
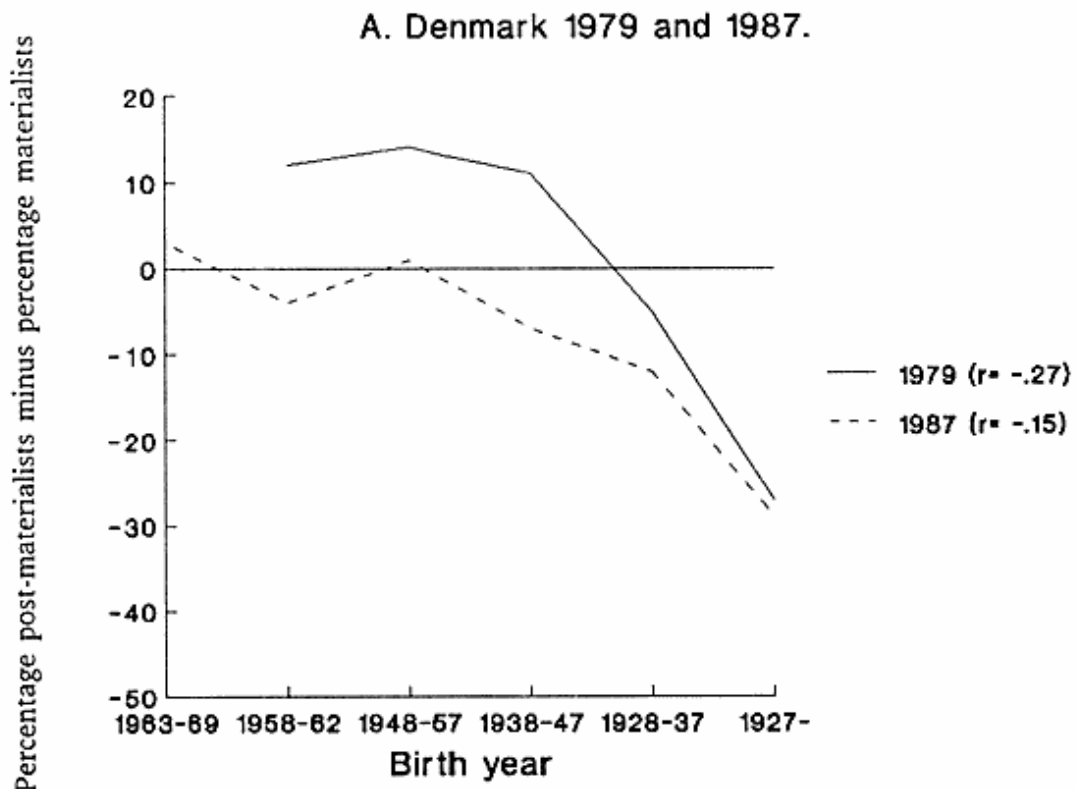
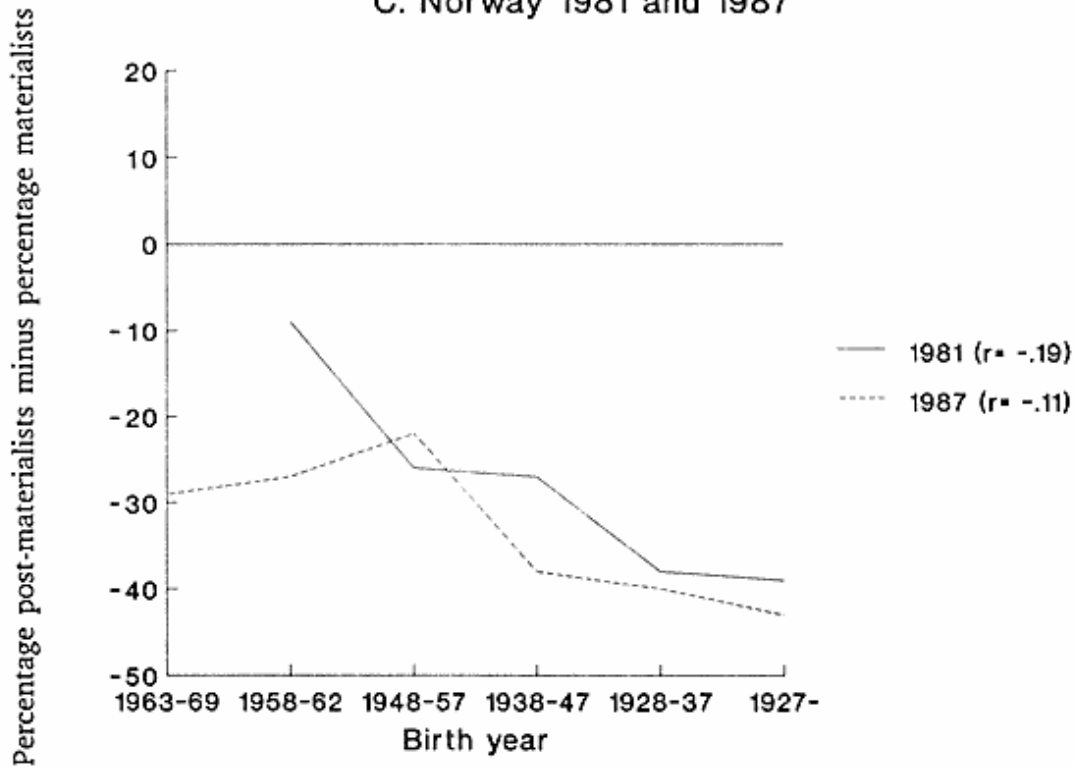


Fig. 2A-C. Materialist and Post-Materialist Values in Different Generations in Three Nordic Countries (1975-87).

C. Norway 1981 and 1987



cycle effect may be disputed. The cohort effects are at least weakened in the 1987 data for the three countries.²⁷

In Table 4 we saw that the distribution for the four-item battery was quite stable at two points in time, with a slight tendency for the Scandinavian population to become more materialistic. We can now identify two somewhat countervailing tendencies which can explain this. On the one hand, generational replacements contribute towards a more post-material orientation. On the other hand, the period effect which is most effective in the younger cohorts leads towards a more materialist outlook. *Generational replacement is preventing a clearer trend towards materialism in the three countries.*

This pattern is very similar to those observed in most European Community countries during the 1970s. In the 1980s, which is the most relevant period to use for comparison, most cohorts in West Germany, Britain and the Netherlands have become more post-materialistic, while generational replacement has not been able to prevent a materialist trend in Belgium and Italy. The French pattern appears to be very similar to the pattern found in Denmark, Finland and Norway (Inglehart 1985a, 505-528; Abramson & Inglehart 1986). It is evident that this pattern is very different from the trends found in West Germany, Britain and the Netherlands in the 1980s.

Conclusion

The purpose of this article has been to study materialist and post-materialist values in a comparative Nordic setting by focusing on the distribution of values in the general publics, and the relationship between political values and age.

Using a 'most similar design' as a comparative research strategy, we have – in accordance with the theory of post-materialism – focused on differences in the economic experiences of the Nordic countries as possible explanations for different value priorities between the mass publics in the Nordic countries. We have also emphasized additional differences related to religion and urbanization. Our perspective of the Scandinavian model led us, however, to expect a comparatively high level of post-materialism in each of the Nordic countries.

With regard to concern for different values in a comparative setting, we find it useful to split the 12 values in Inglehart's value batteries into four groups according to the need levels they are intended to tap. The comparative study has shown that the Norwegian population generally appears to be decisively more materialist than the populations of the other countries. The Swedish and the Danish general publics are most concerned with green values, while the Finns and the Icelanders are the most libertarian. Economic security values are more strongly emphasized by the Icelanders than by the mass publics in other Nordic countries.

These differences are difficult to explain using only a single model of explanation. The general materialist outlook of the Norwegian mass public can only be explained by the stronger influence of religion at the official and cultural levels and the less urban character of the population as compared to the other countries. For the other countries the level of affluence during the pre-adult years of the average member of the adult population corresponds to the rankings of countries with regard to aesthetic and intellectual, or 'green' political values, and opposite ranking as regards sustenance values. That the Icelanders and the Finns are more libertarian than the Swedes and the Danes, however, is difficult to explain according to any of the factors incorporated in our models of explanation.

The value priorities of the Danish, Finnish and Norwegian populations are impressively stable at the aggregate level, although there is a tendency towards greater materialist concern when we compare 1987 with 1975–81.

The principal findings concerning the relationship between MPM-values and age support post-materialist theory at a very general level. There are clear differences between the post-war and pre-war generations, and the age differences are largest in Sweden. However, the association with age is weaker in 1987 than in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The 'period' shift in most generations away from post-materialist values appears to be

strongest in the post-war generations, and there is a slight tendency for the youngest cohorts in the adult population to be more materialist than the older post-war generations. These findings indicate that the overall proportion of individuals with a post-materialist value orientation will not necessarily increase in the future.

However, the findings indicating that the generation differences are largest in Sweden and Denmark do not confirm post-materialist theory. These countries have clearly not had the highest growth rates in any of the post-war periods.

NOTES

1. In a recent contribution Inglehart elaborates the theory of diminishing marginal utility at the societal level. It is demonstrated that the higher a nation's GNP per capita is, the less priority is given to both reduced income inequality and to other classical economic values of the political left (Inglehart 1987, Table 1 and Figure 3, pp. 1293–1294). This argument, however, is somewhat different from the one related to the value change along the MPM-dimension.
2. Inglehart's use of Maslow's theory has been the object of severe criticism; see the works of Scott Flanagan (1979, 1982, 1987) in particular. In the Nordic setting, Eric Allardt (1975) presents an alternative conceptualization of the relationship between human needs and values in his now classic work on welfare and human needs. In Allardt's conceptualization, no need hierarchy is assumed. However, his three need dimensions – having, loving and being – are quite similar to the value types discussed by Inglehart. The having dimension corresponds to materialist concerns, while the others are similar to the post-materialist values.
3. When comparing the value priorities from the beginning of the 1970s to the middle of the 1980s, Abramson & Inglehart (1986, 3–8) find that this also applies to Belgium. In Germany, Britain and the Netherlands, the percentage of post-materialists has risen markedly, while there has been virtually no change in France.
4. *Source:* OECD (1983, 14–17, Table 1B).
5. *Source:* Russett et al. (1964, 155–157, Table 44).
6. *Source:* Russett et al. (1964, 160–161, Table 45).
7. It could be argued that growth rates from the 1960s should be included in the relevant figures for differences in socialization experiences, since some of the post-war generations had their formative years in that period. However, as regards ranking of the countries, these growth rates are quite similar to those for the period 1948–1960: Denmark (3.8 percent), Norway (3.6 percent), Finland and Sweden (both 3.3 percent), Iceland (2.4 percent). *Source:* OECD (1983, 44, Table 3.2).
8. This is evident from Inglehart's own work, where he tries to control for inflation which, according to his view, reflects period effects (Inglehart 1985a).
9. *Source:* Mjøset (1986, 333, 345–349).
10. *Source:* *Yearbook of Nordic Statistics 1987*, 84–85, Table 46, and Mjøset (1986, 340).
11. In the 1980s, 24 percent and 30 percent of the population of Finland and Norway, respectively, live in rural areas, while the corresponding figures for the other countries are 11–17 percent. The differences between the countries as regards proportion living in cities with more than 50,000 inhabitants are smaller, 30–31 percent and 33–38 percent, respectively. Iceland is a deviant case here because 55 percent of the population live in the metropolitan area of the capital Reykjavik. *Source:* *Yearbook of Nordic Statistics 1987*, 44, Table 16.
12. Both benefit levels and the level of welfare institutionalization vary among the Nordic countries, historically and at present. Total governmental outlays of GNP vary from over 60 percent in Denmark and Sweden, 40–50 percent in Finland and Norway, to

- 30–35 percent in Iceland in the 1980s. Similar differences exist with regard to public consumption of GNP. Furthermore, Finland was historically a latecomer as a welfare state, and by the 1970s its social insurance coverage had reached about the same level as the other Scandinavian countries, whereas the level of benefits and of social services is still lagging (Alestalo, Flora & Uusitalo 1985). On the other hand, in terms of degree of welfare state institutionalism, Denmark has come to constitute a substantially more marginal case (Esping-Andersen 1985, ch. 5).
13. We have kept to the 12-item list used by Inglehart in the European Community Surveys (Inglehart 1977, 40–41). We have, however, made slight changes in the value list itself and in the mode of administering the battery. Instead of the value ‘Trying to make our cities and countryside more beautiful’, we have used ‘Protecting nature from pollution’. The former was used in the European countries but did not load significantly on the MPM-dimension in any country. The latter was employed in the American survey and fits better into the post-materialist cluster (Inglehart 1977, 43–45). Furthermore, instead of asking our respondents to choose only two values from each four-item set and then asking them to choose the ‘most’, ‘next most’ and ‘least’ important values from the entire 12 value set, we have asked them to give a complete ranking of the four values in each four-item set.
 14. The data reported here are from a project on ‘Post-Materialism and Political Action in the Nordic Countries’ with Lise Togeby (Aarhus University in Denmark) and Oddbjørn Knutsen as collaborators. The surveys were financed by the Joint Committee of the Nordic Social Science Research Councils (NOS-S). The number of cases in the four surveys is 985 (Denmark), 931 (Finland), 1,004 (Iceland), 1,362 (Norway) and 1,021 (Sweden). The surveys were conducted by opinion institutes in each country.
 15. For a formal presentation of the values associated with each need level, see Inglehart (1977, 42, Fig. 2–1).
 16. In Finland the aesthetic and intellectual values are on average emphasized at about the same level.
 17. The number of murders and assaults per inhabitant is for example larger in Finland and Sweden than in the other Nordic countries, while the total number of offences registered by the police (per inhabitant) is higher in Denmark and Sweden than in Norway and Finland. *Source: Yearbook of Nordic Statistics 1987*, 331–333, Table 230.
 18. The three values which reflect the given need level comprise number three, four and five in Finland, while on the average they were number six, seven and eight in Western Europe at the beginning of the 1970s (Inglehart 1977, 48, Tables 2–6). These values are not of considerably greater concern in the late 1970s (Dalton 1988, 83, Table 5.1), which is the latest period from which we have comparable data.
 19. The Danish survey (N = 1478) was part of a project on ‘Political Values in Denmark’ which was led by Johannes Thestrup Pedersen, Palle Svensson and Hans Jørgen Nielsen. The Norwegian survey was part of the project ‘Democracy in Norway: Political Participation and Basic Values’, which was led by William Lafferty. There are several publications on political values and post-materialism based on the Norwegian data, see Lafferty & Knutsen (1984, 1985) and Knutsen (1985, 1986).
 20. It is important to emphasize that we focus on *aggregate stability/change*, not individual factors. For a discussion of the level of individual stability of materialist/post-materialist values, see van Deth (1983) and Inglehart (1983, 1985b).
 21. The Finnish data from 1975 are from the Eight-Nation Study on ‘Political Action’, in which Finland was included. The reason for not presenting the distribution for all values from this survey is that the other eight values in the Political Action Study were measured using a different procedure from the one employed in the 1987 surveys (for details, see Inglehart 1979, 312).
 22. The figures for Norway are not directly comparable because the 1981 sample had an upper age limit of 65. The distribution for the 1987 sample with the same age limit is 38 percent materialist and 8 percent post-materialist, and the percentage difference index is –30, instead of –33. We have no available Swedish data set, but in Inglehart’s own work (1979, 331, Table 11.12) a Swedish survey from 1976 is reported to show 31 percent materialists and 17 percent post-materialists, which gives a figure for the

- percent difference index of -14 compared to -11 for the 1987 survey. In a more recent analysis of post-materialism in Sweden, Pettersson (1988) uses the European Value System Study Group's data from the beginning of 1980s. He reports (123, Table 12) that the survey shows 24 percent materialists and 13 percent post-materialists, which gives exactly the same percentage on the index as in the 1987 survey. Reimer (1988, 352, Table 1) reports 25 percent materialists and 16 percent post-materialists (index score -9) in the Swedish 1985 National Election Study.
23. In the Norwegian setting, Henry Valen (Valen & Aardal 1983, 140–142; Valen & Urwin 1985, 89–90) has asserted the opposite view to post-materialist theory with regard to the correlation between age and materialist and post-materialist values. Valen examines the relationship between political issues and values measuring economic equality versus differentiation (which he names 'achievement-orientation'), and finds a moderate correlation with age, indicating that the younger age groups are more likely to support the latter position. These findings are in accordance with other findings which show that the younger age groups are more likely to support parties on the right flank (the Conservative and the Progress party) than older age groups. When Valen concludes that these findings disconfirm Inglehart's theory, it is evident that his conceptualization of the MPM-dimension is not in accordance with post-materialist theory. The question of economic differentiation versus equality belongs to the traditional left–right ideological value polarization, which is a value dimension that must be kept separate from the MPM-dimension. The comparative findings above significantly disconfirm the notion that the post-war generations are more materialist than older generations.
 24. In a recent study of materialist and post-materialist values in Sweden, Bo Reimer (1988) challenges the perspective that the younger generations are more post-materialist than the older generations. Reimer argues that a rating approach is more appropriate than a ranking approach for measuring political values. Using data from a Swedish survey from 1986, Reimer finds that two indices based on the materialist and post-materialist items, respectively, are both positively correlated with age, but the materialist index is much more strongly correlated ($r = 0.23$) than the post-materialist index ($r = 0.07$). Reimer's conclusion is that young people tend to find all political values incorporated in the materialist and post-materialist value dimension less relevant than older people. However, in another Swedish study from the beginning of the 1980s, Pettersson (1988, 123, Table 12) finds a strong relationship (based on the ranking technique) between Inglehart's original four-item index and age.
 25. In addition to using a linear measure like persons r , we have contrasted the average score for the three post-war generations (18–39 years) and the average for the two 'pure' pre-war generations (50–59 years and 60 years and more). The differences are 26.5 percentage points for Sweden, 20.5 percentage points for Denmark, 17 for Iceland, 15.5 for Norway and 14.5 for Finland.
 26. These conclusions are based on a comparison of differences between the post-war and pre-war generations as outlined in the previous footnote. For the European Community countries we have relied on the average differences between the cohorts born 1956–65 and 1946–55, and 1916–25 and 1926–35, respectively, in Abramson & Inglehart's Table 2 which is based on data from 1984 (Abramson & Inglehart 1986, 9). The differences in percentage points are 32 for West Germany, 24–26 for France, Belgium and Italy, 13.5 for the Netherlands and 7.5 for Britain.
 27. Although we do not have other data sets from Sweden, our findings (Fig. 1) can be compared with those reported by Pettersson (1988, 123, Table 12) from a data set from the beginning of the 1980s. The strength of the relationship is almost exactly of the same size as in the 1987 survey, and the scores on the percentage difference index are also very similar. There is subsequently no period effect in Sweden. It appears that the Swedish case does not fit the pattern found in the other three countries.

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APPENDIX 1

The Materialist/Post-Materialist Value Batteries

There is a lot of discussion about what the aims of this country should be for the next ten years. On this card are listed some of the goals which different people would prefer. (SHOW CARD 1). Would you please say which one of these you, yourself, consider most important? What is your second choice? And what is your third choice?

Maintaining law and order in the nation.
 Giving the people more to say in important governmental decisions.
 Fighting rising prices.
 Protecting freedom of speech.

If you had to choose, which one of the things on this card (SHOW CARD 2) would you say is most desirable? What is your second choice? And what is your third choice?

Maintaining a high rate of economic growth.
 Making sure that this country has a strong defence.
 Seeing that the people have more say in how things get decided at work and in their community.
 Protecting nature from pollution.

Here is another list (SHOW CARD 3). If you had to choose, which one of the things on this card would you say is most desirable? What is your second choice? And what is your third choice?

Maintain a stable economy.
 Progress towards a less impersonal, more humane society.
 The fight against crime.
 Progress towards a society where ideas are more important than money.