

Postmaterialist Values and the Shift from Survival to Self-Expression Values

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
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Abstract and Keywords

This article discusses the postmaterialist values, as well as the shift from survival to self-expression. It looks at controversies over the value change thesis and discusses changing political arguments. One section covers intergenerational value change in economically advanced and low-income societies. This article concludes that intergenerational value changes actually reflect historic changes in a society's existential conditions. Although these changes are far from universal, they can be found only in societies where the younger generations have experienced rather different formative conditions from those that had shaped the older generations.

Keywords: postmaterialist values, value change thesis controversies, changing political arguments, intergenerational value change, existential conditions, formative conditions

THROUGHOUT most of history, survival has been uncertain for the vast majority of the population. But the remarkable economic growth of the era after the Second World War, together with the rise of the welfare state, brought fundamentally new conditions in advanced industrial societies. The post-war birth cohorts spent their formative years under levels of prosperity that were unprecedented in human history, and the welfare state reinforced the feeling that survival was secure, producing an intergenerational value change that is gradually transforming the politics and cultural norms of advanced industrial societies.

The best-documented evidence of value change is the shift from materialist to postmaterialist priorities (Inglehart 1977, 1990). Postmaterialist values emerge as people shift from giving top priority to “materialist” values such as economic and physical security, toward increasing emphasis on “postmaterialist” priorities such as autonomy, self-expression and the quality of life. This shift is linked with changing  existential conditions—above all, the change from growing up with the feeling that survival is precarious, to growing up with the feeling that survival can be taken for granted. A massive body of evidence gathered from 1970 to the present demonstrates that an intergenerational shift from material-

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ist to postmaterialist priorities has been occurring (Inglehart and Welzel 2005). But this is only one aspect of a broader cultural shift from survival values to self-expression values, which is bringing new political issues to the center of the stage and motivating new political movements.

This theory of intergenerational value change is based on two key hypotheses (Inglehart 1981):

(1) A Scarcity Hypothesis. Virtually everyone aspires to freedom and autonomy, but people's priorities reflect their socioeconomic conditions: they tend to place the highest value on the most pressing needs. Material sustenance and physical security are immediately linked with survival, and when they are scarce people give top priority to these "materialistic" goals; but under conditions of prosperity, people become more likely to emphasize "postmaterialist" goals such as belonging, esteem, and esthetic and intellectual satisfaction.

(2) A Socialization Hypothesis. The relationship between material scarcity and value priorities is not one of immediate adjustment: to a large extent, one's basic values reflect the conditions that prevailed during one's pre-adult years and these values change mainly through intergenerational population replacement. Although older generations tend to transmit their values to their children, if one's first-hand experience is inconsistent with one's cultural heritage, it can gradually erode.

The scarcity hypothesis is similar to the principle of diminishing marginal utility. It reflects the basic distinction between the material needs for physical survival and safety, and non-material needs such as those for self-expression and esthetic satisfaction.

During the past several decades, advanced industrial societies have diverged strikingly from the prevailing historical pattern: most of their population has *not* grown up under conditions of hunger and economic insecurity. This has led to a gradual shift in which needs for belonging, esteem and intellectual and self-expression have become more prominent. The scarcity hypothesis implies that prolonged periods of high prosperity will tend to encourage the spread of postmaterialist values—and enduring economic decline will have the opposite effect.

But there is no one-to-one relationship between socioeconomic development and the prevalence of postmaterialist values, for these values reflect one's subjective sense of security, and not simply one's objective economic level. One's subjective sense of security is shaped by a society's social welfare institutions as well as its mean level of income, and is also influenced by the general sense of security prevailing in one's society. Furthermore, people's basic value priorities do not change over night: the scarcity hypothesis must be interpreted in connection with the socialization hypothesis.

One of the most pervasive concepts in social science is that one's basic personality structure crystallizes by the time one reaches adulthood: early socialization carries greater weight than later socialization. A large body of evidence indicates that people's basic values are largely fixed when they reach adulthood, and change relatively little thereafter (Rokeach 1968, 1973; Inglehart 1977, 1997; also see chapter on socialization

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by Jennings in this Handbook). If so, we would expect to find substantial differences between the values of the young and the old in societies that have experienced a rising sense of security. People are most likely to adopt those values that are consistent with what they have experienced first-hand during their formative years. This implies that intergenerational value change will occur if younger generations grow up under different conditions from those that shaped earlier generations—so that the values of the entire society will gradually change through intergenerational replacement.

These two hypotheses generate several predictions concerning value change. First, while the scarcity hypothesis implies that prosperity is conducive to the spread of postmaterialist values, the socialization hypothesis implies that fundamental value change takes place gradually; to a large extent, it occurs as younger generations replace older ones in the adult population. After an extended period of rising economic and physical security, one would expect to find substantial differences between the value priorities of older and younger groups, since they would have been shaped by different experiences in their formative years. But a sizeable time lag would occur between economic changes and their political effects. Ten or fifteen years after an era of prosperity began, the birth cohorts that had spent their formative years in prosperity would begin to enter the electorate.

Per capita income and educational levels are among the best readily available indicators of the conditions leading to the shift from materialist to postmaterialist goals, but the theoretically crucial factor is not per capita income itself, but one's sense of existential security—which means that the impact of economic and physical security is mediated by the given society's social security system. Thus, we would not expect to find particularly high levels of postmaterialism in Kuwait: it should rank higher than Yemen or other low-income countries, but income equality and governmental effectiveness are low in the oil-exporting Gulf states, which means that many of their people didn't grow up taking survival for granted.

Several decades ago, Inglehart (1971) found dramatic age differences in the proportions of people emphasizing materialist and postmaterialist values, respectively, among the publics of six western countries. To measure these values, he asked people to say which goals they considered most important for their country to seek, choosing between such things as economic growth, fighting rising prices, maintaining order, and the fight against crime (which tap materialist priorities); and freedom of speech, giving people more say in important government decisions, more say on the job, and a society where ideas count (which tap postmaterialist priorities). Representative national surveys revealed huge differences between the values of young and old in all of these societies. Among those aged 65 and older, people with materialist value priorities outnumbered those with postmaterialist value priorities by more than 12:1. But as one moved from older to younger cohorts, the balance gradually shifted toward a diminishing proportion of materialists and a growing proportion of people with postmaterialist values. Among the youngest cohort (those from 18 to 25 years old in 1970) postmaterialists outnumbered the materialists.

(p. 226)

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But do these age differences reflect life-cycle effects or birth cohort effects? With data from just one time point, there is no way of knowing—and the two interpretations have very different implications. The life-cycle reading implies that the young will become increasingly materialist as they age, so that by the time they are 65 years old they will have become just as materialist as the 65 year olds were in 1970—which means that the society as a whole won't change at all. The cohort-effects interpretation implies that the younger cohorts will remain relatively postmaterialist over time—and that as they replace the older, more materialist cohorts, the prevailing values of the society *will* change, becoming increasingly postmaterialist.

Cohort analysis provides the only conclusive way to determine whether age differences reflect life cycle effects or intergenerational change based on cohort effects. In order to do so, one needs (1) survey data covering a sizeable time period; (2) surveys carried out at numerous time points, enabling one to distinguish period effects from life-cycle and cohort effects; and (3) large numbers of respondents in each survey—because breaking the sample down into six or seven birth cohorts, the sampling error margin rises to the point where noise starts to drown out the signal.

Building on earlier cohort analyses, Inglehart and Welzel (2005, chapter 4) present a cohort analysis that follows given birth cohorts over three decades, taking advantage of the fact that the Euro-barometer surveys asked the materialist/postmaterialist battery of questions almost every year, from 1970 to 2000, in all six of the countries first surveyed in 1970. Figure 12.1 shows the results, using the pooled data from Britain, France, West Germany, Italy, Belgium, and the Netherlands. Each cohort's position at a given time is calculated by subtracting the percentage of materialists in that cohort from the percentage of postmaterialists. Thus, at the zero point on the vertical axis, the two groups are equally numerous. The proportion of postmaterialists increases as one moves up; the proportion of materialists increases as one moves down. If the age differences reflected a life-cycle effect, then each of the cohort lines would gradually move downward, toward the materialist pole, as one moves from left to right across Figure 12.1, tracing the years from 1970 to 2000. The vertical scale of this figure shows the percentage of postmaterialists, minus the percentage of materialists—with zero indicating the point where the two types are equally numerous. If cohort effects are present, the pattern will not be diagonal but horizontal, with each birth cohort remaining about as postmaterialist at the end of the time series as it was at the start.

But we also need to take period effects into account. Our theory implies that short-term effects such as a major recession will tend to push all cohorts downward in response to current conditions; but with recovery, they will return to their former level, so that in the long run they will remain about as postmaterialist as they were at the start. Over short periods, a short-term fluctuation or period effect that pushed all the cohorts downward could give the mistaken impression that the age differences merely reflected life-cycle effects. The causes and implications of period effects have been debated extensively. The

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main arguments are summed up in Clarke and Dutt (1991), Duch and Taylor (1993), Clarke et al. (1999), Abramson and Inglehart (1994), and Inglehart and Abramson (1999).

(p. 227)

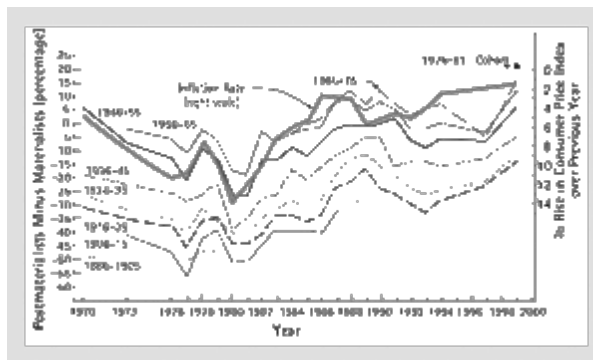


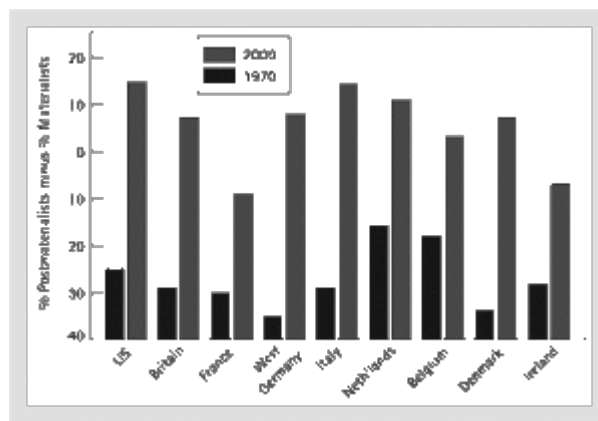
Fig. 12.1 Cohort analysis with inflation rate superimposed (using inverted scale on right): % Postmaterialists minus % materialists in six West European societies, 1970-1999

Source:
Inglehart
and
Welzel
2005:
101.
Based on
combined
weighted
sample of
European
Communi-
ty surveys
carried

out in West Germany, France, Britain, Italy, the Netherlands, and Belgium, in given years, using the 4-item Materialist/Postmaterialist values index.

Because we have data from numerous time points, we can see that period effects clearly *are* present in the years from 1970 to 2000 (they reflect current economic conditions, particularly inflation levels: note how closely the period effects in Figure 12.1 track inflation rates). But these period effects have no lasting impact: the younger cohorts remain relatively postmaterialist at every time point, despite short-term fluctuations, and at the end of three decades, each cohort is no more materialist than it was at the start (in fact, most of them are *less* so). There is no evidence whatever of life-cycle effects—by 2000, it has become apparent that the age-related differences that were found in 1970 reflect lasting cohort differences.

This implies that as the younger, less materialist cohorts, replace the older ones in the adult population, each society should shift from materialist toward postmaterialist values. This is precisely what happened. Figure 12.2 shows the net shift from 1970 to 2000 among the six publics we have just analyzed, plus three societies that were first surveyed in 1972 and 1973. In every country, we find a substantial net shift toward postmaterialist values—so much so that they now have more postmaterialists than materialists.



Source:
Inglehart
and
Welzel
2005:
103.

Fig. 12.2 The shift toward postmaterialist values among the publics of Nine Western societies, 1970-2000

The vertical scale of this figure again shows the percentage of postmaterialists, minus the percentage of materialists—with the zero point indicating the point at which materialists and postmaterialists are equally numerous. In the early 1970s, materialists heavily outnumbered postmaterialists in all nine of these countries, all of which fell well below the zero point. For example, in the earliest US survey, materialists outnumbered postmaterialists by 24 percentage points; in West Germany, they outnumbered postmaterialists by 34 points. During the three decades following 1970, (p. 228) a major shift occurred: by the 1999-2001 surveys, postmaterialists had become more numerous than materialists in all nine countries. The American public shifted from having about three times as many materialists as postmaterialists, to having 2.5 times as many postmaterialists as materialists. Despite substantial short-term fluctuations, the predicted shift toward postmaterialist values took place.

The intergenerational value change thesis predicts a shift from materialist toward postmaterialist values among the populations of these societies. Empirical evidence gathered over a period of three decades supports this prediction: the large and persistent differences that we find between older and younger birth cohorts seem to reflect a process of intergenerational value change.

1 Controversies over the Value Change Thesis

During the years since the thesis of a postmaterialist shift was first published, scores of critiques have appeared. The early ones argued that the age differences found in 1970 simply reflected life-cycle effects: each cohort would grow more materialistic as it aged, (p. 229) so we should expect no net shift in prevailing values (Boeltken and Jagodzinski 1985). In the light of the evidence gathered during the next three decades, these claims have disappeared: the predicted erosion of postmaterialism that should have resulted from life-cycle effects, didn't happen: people did not become more materialist as they aged.

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Other critics have claimed that materialism/postmaterialism is a one-dimensional model of human values—implying that this dimension is the *only* dimension that exists (e.g. Flanagan 1982, 1987; Braithwaite, Makkai, and Pittelkow 1996, etc). This sets up a straw man that is easily refuted, since human values are obviously multidimensional. The materialist/postmaterialist dimension clearly isn't the only dimension that exists—as is evident from my early work (Inglehart 1977), which examined the relationship between the materialist/postmaterialist dimension and other values dimensions. In *Political Action* I examined its relationship to ten other dimensions based on the Rokeach terminal values (Inglehart 1979, 314–18). And numerous publications have analyzed the relationships between the materialist/postmaterialist values dimension and various other value dimensions involving religion, politics, work motivations, gender equality, sexual norms, attitudes toward authority, and other orientations (e.g. Inglehart 1990; Inglehart and Abramson 1999; Inglehart and Norris 2003; Norris and Inglehart 2004; Dalton 2006; Nevitte 1996).

I *do* claim that a conceptually coherent and empirically demonstrable materialist/postmaterialist values dimension exists, with materialist values at one pole, postmaterialist values at the opposite pole, and the various mixed types at intermediate points on this dimension. Although this dimension can be broken down into its components, reflecting relative emphasis on economic and physical security, it does constitute a coherent single dimension: The underlying theory holds that those who experienced relatively high levels of economic and physical insecurity during their formative years tend to give top priority to materialist values; but that the economic miracles of the post-war era, combined with the welfare state, have given rise to increasing numbers of people who take economic and physical security for granted and tend to give top priority to self-expression and the quality of life. The central point is that, by focusing on one clearly defined dimension, it is possible to generate theoretical explanations and predictions that can be empirically tested.

Because the variables that tap this dimension are not correlated at the 1.0 level, it is possible to break it down into its subcomponents: using principal components factor analysis, one obtains a clear materialist/postmaterialist dimension in almost every society that has been tested (Abramson and Inglehart 1995, 101–14); but using varimax rotation, one can break this dimension down into two component dimensions. It is perfectly legitimate to do so: the approach one uses depends on one's theoretical perspective. In this case, our theory implies that those who give top priority to economic security (tapped by such items as “fight rising prices,” and “economic growth”) will also tend to give top priority to physical security (tapped by such items as “maintain order” and “the fight against crime”); and will give relatively low priority to the various postmaterialist goals. Empirically, they do—as is reflected in the fact that all of the materialist items show negative polarity on the materialist/postmaterialist principal component dimension. Nevertheless, the items designed to (p. 230) tap material security are less strongly correlated with the items designed to tap physical security than they are with each other, and by using varimax rotation one can split them into two distinct factors (Flanagan 1982, 1987; Inglehart, 1987).

If one is specifically concerned with people's emphasis on physical security, it makes sense to do so. Or, moving in the opposite direction, if one's theoretical concerns deal with the much broader concept of modern versus traditional values, one can use the materialist/postmaterialist values battery as an indicator of this dimension: for empirically, these values prove to be a strong indicator of one's orientations concerning gender equality, tolerance of outgroups, political activism, environmental activism, interpersonal trust, and a number of additional orientations that have been labeled "self-expression values."

2 Postmaterialist Values: One Component of a Broader Dimension of Cultural Change

Postmaterialism itself is only one aspect of a still broader process of cultural change that is reshaping the political outlook, religious orientations, gender roles, and sexual mores of advanced industrial society (Inglehart 1990, 1997; Inglehart and Welzel 2005; Welzel chapter in this volume). The emerging orientations place less emphasis on traditional cultural norms, especially those that limit individual self-expression.

In order to identify the main dimensions of cross-cultural variance, Inglehart and Welzel carried out a factor analysis of each society's mean level on scores of variables, replicating the analysis in Inglehart and Baker (2000).¹ The two most significant dimensions that emerged reflected, first, a polarization between *traditional* and *secular-rational* values and, second, a polarization between *survival* and *self-expression* values.

Traditional values place strong emphasis on religion, respect for authority, and have relatively low levels of tolerance for abortion and divorce and have relatively high levels of national pride. *Secular-rational* values have the opposite characteristics. Agrarian societies tend to emphasize traditional values; industrializing societies tend to emphasize secular-rational values.

The second major dimension of cross-cultural variation is linked with the transition from industrial society to post-industrial societies—which brings a polarization between *survival* and *self-expression* values. The polarization between materialist and postmaterialist values is a sensitive indicator of this dimension—showing an extremely high loading on the broader dimension, as Table 12.1 demonstrates. For the same conditions that give rise to postmaterialist values, are also conducive to self-expression values. But self-expression (p. 231) values encompass a number of issues that go well beyond the items tapped by postmaterialist values. For example, self-expression values reflect mass polarization over such issues as whether "When jobs are scarce, men have more right to a job than women;" or whether "Men make better political leaders than women" (which is almost (p. 232) as sensitive an indicator of self-expression values as postmaterialist values). This emphasis on gender equality is part of a broader syndrome of tolerance of outgroups, including foreigners, gays, and lesbians. Self-expression values give high priority to envi-

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ronmental protection, tolerance of diversity, and rising demands for participation in decision making in economic and political life.

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Table 12.1 Orientations linked with survival vs. self-expression values

Item	Correlation
SURVIVAL VALUES emphasize the following:	
Materialist/Postmaterialist Values	.87
Men make better political leaders than women	.86
R. is not highly satisfied with life	.84
A woman has to have children to be fulfilled	.83
R. rejects foreigners, homosexuals, and people with AIDS as neighbors	.81
R. has not and would not sign a petition	.80
R. is not very happy	.79
R. favors more emphasis on the development of technology	.78
Homosexuality is never justifiable	.78
R. has not recycled something to protect the environment	.76
R. has not attended a meeting or signed a petition to protect the environment	.75
A good income and safe job are more important than a feeling of accomplishment and working with people you like	.74
R. does not rate own health as very good	.73
A child needs a home with both a father and a mother in order to grow up happily	.73

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When jobs are scarce, a man has more right to a job than a woman	.69
A university education is more important for a boy than for a girl	.67
Government should ensure that everyone is provided for	.69
Hard work is one of the most important things to teach a child	.65
Imagination is not of the most important things to teach a child	.62
Tolerance is not of the most important things to teach a child	.62
Leisure is not very important in life	.61
Scientific discoveries will help, rather than harm, humanity	.60
Friends are not very important in life	.56
You have to be very careful about trusting people	.56
R. has not and would not join a boycott	.56
R. is relatively favorable to state ownership of business and industry	.54
SELF-EXPRESSION VALUES take opposite position on all of above	

Note: The original polarities vary; the above statements show how each item relates to this values index.

The shift from survival values to self-expression values also includes a shift in child-rearing values, from emphasis on hard work toward emphasis on imagination and tolerance as important values to teach a child. Societies that rank high on self-expression values also tend to rank high on interpersonal trust and have relatively high levels of subjective well-being. This produces an environment of trust and tolerance, in which people place a relatively high value on individual freedom and self-expression, and have activist political

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orientations—the attributes that the political culture literature defines as crucial to democracy.

A major component of rise of self-expression values is a shift away from deference to all forms of external authority. Submission to authority has high costs: the individual's personal goals must be subordinated to those of an external entity. Under conditions of insecurity, people are generally willing to do so. Under threat of invasion, internal disorder, or economic collapse, people eagerly seek strong authority figures that can protect them from danger.

Conversely, conditions of prosperity and security are conducive to tolerance of diversity in general and democracy in particular. This helps explain a long-established finding: rich societies are much likelier to be democratic than poor ones. One contributing factor is that the authoritarian reaction is strongest under conditions of insecurity.

Since humans values are multidimensional, it is easy to find attitudes that are unrelated to the materialist/postmaterialist dimension. Davis and Davenport (1999) did so, arguing that this invalidated this measure. In reply, Inglehart and Abramson (1999) pointed out that the value change thesis predicts that postmaterialist values will predict other attitudes insofar as they are shaped by the degree to which one perceives survival as secure or insecure—but there is no theoretical reason to expect that postmaterialist values would predict *all* other attitudes. They then demonstrated that these values do predict a large number of orientations, reflecting the fact that whether one takes survival for granted or views it as precarious, does indeed shape a major component of one's world-view—as Table 12.1 also illustrates.

Originally skeptical of the postmaterialist value change thesis, Lafferty (1975) had published an article questioning whether the materialist/postmaterialist dimension tapped any deep-rooted orientation. He then carried out a survey designed to test this dimension's validity in the Norwegian context. After analyzing the findings, Lafferty and Knutsen (1985) concluded that postmaterialism tapped a highly constrained ideological dimension that occupies a central position in the world-view of the Norwegian public.

The rise of self-expression values reflects an intergenerational change in a wide variety of basic social norms, from cultural norms linked with ensuring survival of the species, to norms linked with the pursuit of individual well-being. For example, postmaterialists and the young are markedly more tolerant of homosexuality than are materialists and the old. And they are far more permissive than materialists in (p. 233) their attitudes toward abortion, divorce, extramarital affairs, prostitution, and euthanasia. Economic accumulation for the sake of economic security was the central goal of industrial society. Ironically, their attainment set in motion a process of gradual cultural change that has made these goals less central—and is now bringing a rejection of the hierarchical institutions that helped attain them.

3 Intergenerational Value Change in Economically Advanced and Low-Income Societies

Inglehart and Welzel (2005) analyze the shift from survival to self-expression values observed across four waves of the Values Surveys. They find that rich post-industrial societies show large intergenerational differences, with the younger cohorts generally placing much stronger emphasis on self-expression values than do the older cohorts. By contrast, low-income societies that have not experienced substantial economic growth during the past five decades do not display intergenerational differences—younger and older cohorts are about equally likely to display traditional values. This suggests that these intergenerational differences reflect historical changes, rather than anything inherent in the human life cycle. This interpretation is reinforced by the fact that, when we follow a given birth cohort's value orientations over time, they do *not* become more traditional or survival oriented as they age, as the life-cycle interpretation implies. Instead, the generational differences are an enduring attribute of given cohorts, which seem to reflect the different formative conditions they experienced as each cohort grew up under increasingly secure conditions.

Under some circumstances, one might argue that these age-linked differences simply reflect life-cycle effects, not intergenerational change—claiming that people have an inherent tendency to place increasing emphasis on survival values as they age. If such a life-cycle effect existed, the younger cohorts would place more emphasis on self-expression values than the older cohorts in *any* society. But this claim is untenable in the present case—for these intergenerational differences are found in developed societies, but not in low-income societies. There is no inherent tendency for people to emphasize survival values more strongly as they age. Likewise, there is no universal tendency for the young to emphasize self-expression values more strongly than the old. Such intergenerational differences emerge when a society has attained high levels of socioeconomic development. The generational differences found in developed societies seem to reflect long-term socioeconomic changes, rather than life-cycle effects.

The evidence suggests that a process of intergenerational value change has been taking place during the past six decades—though it is only indirect evidence. In order to demonstrate directly that long-term cultural changes are occurring, we would need (p. 234) evidence from surveys that had measured these values in both rich and poor countries throughout the past sixty or seventy years. Such data are not available and will not be available for several decades. Nevertheless, the time-series data that are now available show changes toward self-expression values in virtually all high-income societies—but not in low-income societies. We do not find a universal shift toward secular-rational and self-expression values, such as might result from some universal process of cultural diffusion or the internet. These cultural changes are linked with socioeconomic development, and are *not* occurring where it is absent.

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The evidence suggests that major cultural changes are occurring through an intergenerational value shift linked with the fact that the younger birth cohorts have grown up under higher levels of existential security than those that shaped the formative years of the older cohorts.

4 Changing Political Alignments

Decades ago (Inglehart 1977, 5 and chapter 7) I argued that the shift from materialist to postmaterialist values would bring a decline of social class voting and the rise of political conflict based on quality of life issues. The value change hypothesis implies that as intergenerational shift takes place, we should witness a shift from social class-based politics, centered on distribution of property and private or state ownership of the means of production, toward increasing emphasis on the physical and social quality of life and on self-expression. This value shift implies the rise of new political movements and parties, and the emergence of an increasingly elite-challenging public. As it happened, in subsequent decades class conflict ceased to dominate politics, as the women's movement, the environmentalist movement, the gay liberation movement, and other movements based on lifestyle rather than class, became increasingly prominent.

An oversimplified reading of this theory claims that it predicts the disappearance of economic issues—a straw man that is easily refuted by pointing out that economic issues still matter. The argument that postmaterialist issues would totally replace materialist ones never appears in any of my writings and is explicitly denied in several places. For example, a methodological debate about the use of rankings vs. ratings to measure value priorities (Bean and Papadakis 1994; Inglehart 1994; cf. Inglehart 1990) showed that because almost everyone likes economic security *and* physical security *and* freedom of speech *and* having more say in decisions, unless one uses forced-choice rankings, people will tend to give high ratings to *all* of these goals. But, although almost everyone places a positive value on all twelve of the items used to measure materialist vs. postmaterialist goals, materialists and postmaterialists consistently give them different *priorities*—a fact that emerges clearly when they are ranked.

(p. 235)

I never claimed that postmaterialists do not need to eat: they obviously do. On the contrary, I pointed out that they have higher levels of consumption than materialists and (like virtually everyone) they like having high incomes. What I did claim, however, is that postmaterialists give a lower *priority* to high incomes than do materialists—and that is true, as is demonstrated by the fact that job motivations show a dramatic shift from emphasis on a high income and safe jobs, to emphasis on interesting work and working with people you like, as one moves from materialist to postmaterialist values (Inglehart 1977, 56).

An emerging emphasis on quality of life issues has been superimposed on the older, class-based cleavages of industrial society. From the mid-nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth century, politics was dominated by class conflict over the distribution of income and

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the ownership of industry. In recent decades, social class voting has declined and now shares the stage with newer postmaterialist issues that emphasize lifestyle issues and environmental protection.

The rise of postmaterialism does not mean that materialistic issues and concerns will vanish. Conflicts about how to secure prosperity and sustainable economic development will always be important political issues. Moreover, the publics in post-industrial societies have developed more sophisticated forms of consumerism, materialism, and hedonism. But these new forms of materialism have been shaped by the rise of postmaterialist values. New forms of consumption no longer function mainly to indicate people's economic class. Increasingly, they are used to express people's personal taste and lifestyle. This emphasis on self-expression is an inherent feature of postmaterialism, which is the central component of self-expression values.

The evidence makes it clear that the intergenerational value differences found in post-industrial societies do *not* reflect life-cycle effects. As Figure 12.1 demonstrated, given birth cohorts did not become more materialistic as they aged. Inglehart and Welzel (2005) demonstrate that this also holds true of the shift from survival to self-expression values. Analyzing data from all of the post-industrial societies that were surveyed in both the first (1981) and the fourth (2000) waves of the Values Surveys,² they find that from the start of this time series, younger birth cohorts placed more emphasis on self-expression values than older cohorts did, and given birth cohorts did not move away from self-expression values toward survival values as they aged from 1980 to 2000. Throughout this period, younger birth cohorts continued to place more emphasis on self-expression values than older ones. And although each of the birth cohorts aged by twenty years during the period covered by the Values surveys, none of them placed less emphasis on self-expression in 2000 than it did in 1981—as would have happened if these age differences reflected life-cycle effects.

If people's values are indeed shifting from materialist to postmaterialist priorities, the implications are far-reaching. The main axis of political conflict should gradually shift from class-based issues such as income redistribution and state ownership of industry, toward increasing emphasis on quality of life issues. New types of political movements (p. 236) and parties should emerge to champion these issues. And social class voting should erode, as the constituency supporting change shifts from its traditional working base to include postmaterialists from relatively secure middle-class backgrounds.

As predicted, social class voting has declined in most advanced industrial societies; in the last two US presidential elections, for example, the vote polarized much more strongly on lifestyle issues such as abortion and same-sex marriage than on social class, which had declined to the point where it had very little impact on voting.

The impact of changing values goes far beyond these changes in electoral behavior. The central issues of political conflict have shifted, with the rise of environmentalist movements, the women's movement, gay liberation, and other lifestyle movements. As Berry (1999) argues, postmaterialist values are motivating consumer, environmental, civil

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rights, and civil liberties groups to mount an increasingly effective challenge to corporate power. As Nevitte (1996) demonstrates, the rise of postmaterialist values is producing less deferential, increasingly elite-challenging publics. And as Gibson and Duch (1994) show, emerging postmaterialist values played a key role in the emergence and survival of democracy in the Soviet Union. Materialist/postmaterialist values are just one indicator of a much broader cultural shift from survival values to self-expression values that is bringing changing values concerning gender roles, sexual orientation, work, religion, and child-rearing.

One particularly important and non-obvious aspect of these values is their close linkage with the rise of gender equality. In the post-industrial phase of development, a trend towards gender equality becomes a central aspect of modernization (Inglehart and Norris 2003, 29-48). This transformation of established gender roles is linked with rising self-expression values, bringing increasing tolerance of human diversity and anti-discrimination movements on many fronts. This shift reflects the degree to which societal conditions allow people to develop their potential for choice (Anand and Sen 2000). Even today, women are confronted with societal disadvantages that make it more difficult for them than for men to develop their talents in careers outside the household. They have been socialized to accept these role limitations until very recently in history.

But history has recently taken a fundamentally new direction. In post-industrial societies, women no longer accept their traditional role limitations, and female empowerment has moved to a high place on the political agenda. Gender equality has become a central element in the definition of human development, for it is an essential aspect of human equality, like civil and political liberties and human rights. Never before in the history of civilization have women enjoyed more equality and more freedom in choosing their education, their careers, their partners, and their lifestyles than in contemporary post-industrial societies. This change is recent. Although it can be traced back to the introduction of female suffrage in some countries after the First World War, female empowerment only recently became a pervasive trend. It is reflected in a massive tendency toward increasing female representation in national parliaments and in a shift towards gender equality that is closely linked with the rising emphasis on self-expression values.

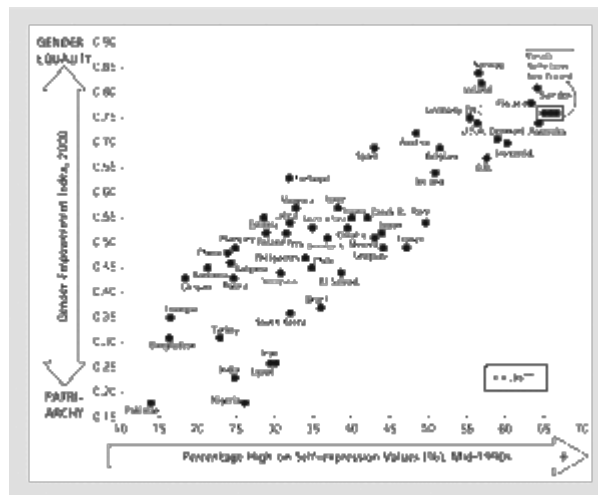


Fig. 12.3 Emphasis on self-expression values and the scope of gender empowerment

The United Nations Development Program has developed a “gender empowerment measure” that taps female representation in parliaments, in management positions and (p. 237) in administrative functions as well as gender equality in salaries. As Figure 12.3 demonstrates, emphasis on self-expression values (correlated at the $r = .82$ level with postmaterialist values) is strongly linked with the extent to which a given society actually approaches gender equality in political and social life.

As Inglehart and Welzel (2005) demonstrate, another major consequence of the shift toward postmaterialist values, and the broader shift toward self-expression values is conducive to good governance and the spread and flourishing of democratic institutions.

5 Conclusion

Intergenerational value changes reflect historic changes in a society's existential conditions. Far from being universal, these changes are found only in societies in which the younger generations have experienced substantially different formative conditions from those that shaped older generations.

(p. 238)

Cohort analysis and intergenerational comparisons indicate that we are witnessing a gradual process of intergenerational value change linked with socioeconomic development, reflecting the fact that increasingly favorable existential conditions tend to make people less dependent on religion, and lead them to place increasing emphasis on self-expression. These findings reinforce the evidence that demonstrated that the publics of rich societies are much more likely to emphasize secular-rational values and self-expression values, than are the publics of low-income societies. A huge body of evidence, analyzed by three different approaches— (1) comparisons of rich and poor countries; (2) generational comparisons; and (3) time-series evidence from the past two decades—all points to the

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conclusion that major cultural changes are occurring, and they reflect a process of inter-generational change, linked with rising levels of existential security.

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