Measuring Post-materialism in Post-Socialist Societies

Ioannis Kyvelidis

European Integration online Papers (EIoP) Vol. 5 (2001) N° 2;
http://eiop.or.at/eiop/texte/2001-002a.htm

Date of publication in the EIoP: 30.3.2001

| Full text | Back to homepage | PDF |
| This paper's comments page | Send your comment! to this paper |

Keywords

political culture, East-Central Europe, socialization, political science

Abstract

According to Ronald Inglehart, countries move towards more post-materialist values as their GDP per capita increases. There are some problems with his measurement. First of all, it is hard to say whether one country is objectively more or less materialist than another. Originally, Inglehart included in his 1970 analysis only seven OECD countries, which could be said to have a common value dimension. However, when the same indicators are applied within a different culture (Eastern Europe), they could be interpreted differently by the public. Second, Inglehart admits, referring to the 1973 oil crisis, that his indicators are sensitive to short-term economic fluctuations. I argue that by Inglehart's own logic the indicators are too sensitive within the post-Socialist context right now. This sensitivity undermines the validity of his measurement. Both these difficulties pose a question whether it is at all possible to compare Western and Eastern Europe on the materialist/post-materialist continuum.

Kurzfassung

Ronald Inglehart zufolge, bewegen sich Länder stärker in Richtung post-materialistischer Werte, wenn ihr BIP pro Kopf ansteigt. Diese Form der Messung wirft jedoch eine Reihe von Problemen auf. Zuallererst ist es schwierig zu sagen, ob ein Land objektiv mehr oder weniger materialistisch ist als ein anderes. Ursprünglich umfasste Ingleharts Analyse aus dem Jahre 1970 auch bloß sieben OECD-Länder, von denen man eine gemeinsame Wertedimension behaupten könnte. Legt man jedoch dieselben Indikatoren innerhalb einer anderen Kultur (Osteuropa) an, könnten sie durch die Öffentlichkeit verschieden interpretiert werden. Zweitens, wie Inglehart mit Verweis auf die Ölkrise von 1979 zugibt, reagieren diese Indikatoren sensibel auf ökonomische Kurzzeit-Schwankungen. Ich behaupte, dass durch Ingleharts eigene Logik diese Indikatoren innerhalb des post-sozialistischen Kontextes augenblicklich zu sensibel sind. Diese Sensibilität untergräbt die Gültigkeit seiner Messung. Diese beiden Schwierigkeiten werfen die Frage auf, ob es überhaupt möglich ist, West- und Osteuropa am materialistisch / post-materialistischen Kontinuum zu vergleichen.

The author

Ioannis Kyvelidis is Ph.D. student at the Government Department of Cornell University; email: ik33@cornell.edu

Measuring Post-materialism in Post-Socialist Societies(*)

Ioannis Kyvelidis

European Integration online Papers (EIoP) Vol. 5 (2001) N° 2;
http://eiop.or.at/eiop/texte/2001-002a.htm

Date of Publication in EIoP: 30.3.2000

| Abstract | Back to homepage | PDF |
| This paper's comments page | Send your comment! to this paper |

Contents

---

1. Introduction

Political culture is a very important subfield in comparative politics. The largest and longest project regularly measuring the levels of materialism and post/materialism was undertaken by Ronald Inglehart since 1970, and a number of surveys, such as the World Values Survey and Euro-Barometer, and later ISSP included Inglehart's original battery of four indicators of materialism/post-materialism. Originally, the World Values Survey was conducted in only eight West European countries: West Germany, France, Belgium, Netherlands, Denmark, Italy, Britain, and Ireland. However, from the countries of the former Socialist bloc before and immediately after the collapse of the Soviet Union extensive data measuring political opinion were not available. At least for the last ten to fifteen years some data have been collected on the countries that once constituted the Soviet bloc.

The subject of political culture was to some extent ignored by the scholars of post-Socialism. This paper tries to illuminate (by no means to solve) some difficulties in measuring differences in materialism (and postmaterialism) between the countries of Western Europe and the former Soviet bloc. The paper also empirically tests differences across the post-Socialist countries and measures how differences in some variables (other than the GDP per capita) could affect and explain the level and variations of post-Soviet materialism. In particular, the paper shows that although there are some interesting and significant differences in materialism between Western and Eastern Europe, explaining these differences is no simple task.

A number of questions with regard to materialism in the post-Soviet bloc arise: Considering high inflation and economic collapse, is it due to the scarcity effect that the bloc scores higher on materialism now compared to the West? If not short-term period effects, could the bloc be less materialist compared to the West? Is generational effect of materialism in the bloc largely due to the scarcity or socialization hypothesis? Is the region moving towards materialism or post-materialism? Is the original battery of indicators too sensitive to post-Socialist development?

The paper argues that, perhaps, the original battery of indicators is not enough to test those questions conclusively.

First, let us begin with a simple comparison of Western European and East European countries on the materialist/postmaterialist continuum. The level of materialism will be replicated anew by using Inglehart's methodology and his original battery of questions.

According to Inglehart, societies embrace post-materialist values as they move towards more economic security and affluence. Inglehart proposed two hypotheses: the socialization and the scarcity hypotheses. According to the scarcity hypothesis, "individual priorities reflect the socioeconomic environment."(1) The scarcity hypothesis implies short-term changes of period effects: "periods of prosperity lead to increase in post-materialism." The socialization hypothesis implies that one's values reflect the conditions of preadult years. In other words, core value formation takes place in one's preadult years and is influenced by the predominant values of the time. According to Inglehart, because older Western generations experienced economic and social insecurity during their preadult years, they tend to be closer to the materialist end of the continuum compared to the younger cohorts. Younger post-war generations tend to be less materialist due to relatively high levels of economic and social security.

Let us measure the level of materialism in the post-Socialist countries and compare the difference between age cohorts within the post-socialist states themselves and between the East and West regions. However, before measuring the level of materialism in the bloc, I would like to draw our attention to two possible results.

---

1. Because older Socialist generations did not enjoy high level of material prosperity during the time of their value formation, we might expect them to score *higher* on materialism compared to younger cohorts. That pattern would correspond to the one observed in Western Europe and agree with the socialization hypotheses. In addition, older post-Socialist cohorts of Eastern Europe and the former USSR currently constitute the "truly disadvantaged" of the post-Socialist transition. In that case, higher materialist scores among the older groups can be simply explained as a period effect (the scarcity hypothesis). At the same time, younger post-Socialist cohorts are currently better-off compared to the older cohorts, they could be expected to score *lower* on materialism. Also, they grew up under relative economic security during the last decades of Socialism and internalized more post-materialist values.
2. However, a second and totally opposite expectation can be observed. One can argue that older Socialist cohorts may score higher on post-materialism. First of all, although older generations did not enjoy high economic prosperity, they were living under considerable *social* protection and security. Things such as medical care, education, housing, and utilities were free or mostly free (unlike now). The workload and the general "pace of life" under Socialism were considerably less stressful. In other words, although the older cohorts did not enjoy excessive material wealth, nevertheless they had no need to care about everyday survival. In short, a sense of security and economic well-being did not correlate perfectly in the socialist context. Second, the "indoctrination factor" also must not be forgotten. For example, the regime undoubtedly was committed to economic prosperity on the national level. At the individual level, however, the picture was more complex. Socialist ideology by default cannot give a substantial support to and praise materialist values on the individual level. The best support to it was the negative portrayal of the capitalist West, its ideology and lifestyles that featured social injustice, interpersonal competition and strife towards material accumulation. (Of course I did not forget that a lot of this kind of portrayal was a part of the cold war.)

Thomas Weisskopf, for example, in a very good way describes Socialist values: "Collective and/or non-material gains incentives predominated. Work was motivated primarily by a) the prospects for material

gain for the whole community rather then for oneself alone; and b) the prospects for non-material gains for oneself (satisfaction from work activity, esteem from peers, honor, etc.)" Thus, for the older cohorts internalized socialist values could be associated with post-materialism.(2) Richard Rose and Ellen Carnaghan showed in their study that generational difference in political attitudes are similar from one former communist country to another. From the study we can infer that "Sovietization," or indoctrination (propaganda), could be an important factor in value formation.(3)

4

Social scientists are seriously constrained in their research on the post-Socialist region due to the consistent lack of good, reliable time series data. Because the World Values Survey was administered in many post-Socialist countries only once (1995-1997), a time-series analysis is not possible if we consider the WVS alone. Therefore, several surveys are pooled together in this study. First, the 1993 ISSP Environment Survey (International Social Study Program, ZA study 2458) was used to test differences on the materialist/postmaterialist continuum between Western democracies and post-Socialist states. The survey includes the original four-value battery from the World Values Survey. Participating countries are Australia, Bulgaria, Canada, Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Philippines, Poland, Russia, Slovenia, Spain, UK, and the US. SPSS 10 for Windows was used for this analysis. First, the variable "country" was recoded as 1 and 2, with 1 indicating countries which did not belong to the former Soviet bloc. When analyzing either Western or Eastern Europe, the other variable was filtered. Next, the variable "age" was recoded as "lowest through 24=1, 25-34=2, 35-44=3, 45-54=4, 55-64=5, 65 through highest=6." (No cases were missing).

The respondents were asked two rank-type questions (not to be confused with scale-type questions) to choose the highest and next-to-the-highest priority indicator out of a choice among four values (two materialist and two postmaterialist).(4) The values are 1) maintaining order in the nation, 2) giving the people more say in government decisions, 3) fighting rising prices, 4) protecting freedom of speech.

According to Inglehart's original methodology, people fall into the materialist category if they choose materialist indicators both first and second times in either order. Similarly, one is coded as a post-materialist when choosing two postmaterialist indicators. Respondents who choose one materialist and the other postmaterialist (or vice versa) indicators are coded as "mixed."

Running simple crosstabulation by cohort with one layer (next highest priority) gives us the number of highest priority responses according to the second priority. That way it is possible to calculate individuals who chose materialist values as second and first priorities combined (the same is possible for post-materialists). The number of cases in each cohort is calculated, and "Can't choose" and "Refused" are deducted as missing responses. Percentages of "pure" materialist/post-materialist responses are calculated by dividing the corresponding number in each cohort against the total number of respondents in the cohort.

5

Table I (5)

Table II

The trends of the analysis of Western democracies support Inglehart's predictions. As the age of the respondents increases, support for materialist values rises. For example, the first and youngest cohort in the West there are 16% materialists and 15% postmaterialists, while the oldest cohort has 27% and 11% respectively. Overall, Western democracies are 21% materialist and 8% postmaterialist.

The analysis of Eastern Europe shows similar trends. The level of materialism increases with age. The

youngest cohort is 40% materialist and only 7% post-materialist, while the older cohort is 58% materialist and only 1% post-materialist. On average, Eastern Europe is 47% materialist and 5% post-materialist. The conclusion can be drawn that the second expectation did not hold true: older cohorts are not more post-materialist compared to the young.

What is also striking about these results is that 1) post-Socialist countries score much higher on materialism compared to the West, and 2) the gap between materialists and post-materialists in the East is huge and widening with age. Compared to the West, post-Socialist countries score less on post-materialism and more on materialism in any given age group. The gap between materialists and post-materialists in East European countries is 47-5=42, and 21-8=13 in the West.

What explains such high level of materialism in Eastern Europe, especially among the older public? Let us try to explain the phenomenon by applying the two original hypotheses.

2. Measuring Crossregional Materialism: A Snapshot Analysis

According to Inglehart, post-materialism over the long run positively correlates with economic prosperity of a nation. Indeed, as Figure 1 shows, there is a strong relationship between GDP per capita and the level of materialism:

6

Figure 1

The Y-axis indicates %materialism minus %postmaterialism. (6) According to the ISSP 1993 Environment Survey the most materialist country is Russia (62%-1%=61%) just a little bit above Bulgaria (58%). Overall, the East European nations are concentrated in the upper-left corner, with lower GDP per capita and higher materialist scores. Also, we can see that the East European nations are arranged diagonally from the upper left to lower right according to their GDP per capita and materialist scores. As Figure 2 shows, even with only a handful of post-Socialist nations included in the ISSP 1993 Environment Survey the relationship between income per capita and materialism is clearly observable. Here GDP per capita values were taken from the 1993 World Fact Book.

Figure 2

But at this point some of the abovementioned questions begin to arise. In particular, why do the post-Socialist countries score so high on materialism? What are the generational differences?

A closer examination of the data reveals some interesting details. For example, nowhere did Inglehart test the relationship between materialism and *cohort income* within countries. Do old people in general and post-Socialist cohorts in particular “vote” materialist just because of their considerably low incomes relative to the young (scarcity hypothesis)? Or do the older post-Socialist cohorts vote materialist because of early childhood shortages?

Indeed, a simple regression analysis of two arbitrarily pulled out countries (Bulgaria and Russia) shows that personal income is dropping with age at perfect 0.000 significance. A simple comparison of means shows that Russia’s and Bulgaria’s population earnings significantly decrease with age:

Table III

Table IV

Figure 3 illustrates the relationship between income and age in Eastern Europe as a whole:

7

Figure 3

In the US, income seems to drop down slightly in the oldest cohort, but overall personal income increases with age.

Table V

Income appears to increase with age for all Western democracies included in the 1993 ISSP survey (Figure 4):

Figure 4

A conclusion can be made that if in the West the elderly tend to be more materialist, that indeed could be due to experienced shortages during one's early socialization years (the socialization hypothesis).(7) However, in the post-Socialist region the elderly may score high on materialism due to early life shortages *and* current shortages of basic needs. A sharp income drop with age in post-Socialist societies can be best explained by one major factors: pensioners are living well below the poverty level due to inadequate pensions plus arrears in pension payments. Besides, the chances of finding employment for the elderly in, for example, Russia, are very limited, so that the elderly have no means for improving their financial situation.

The fact that post-materialism drops with decreasing GDP could speak in favor of Inglehart's original findings. So far we have seen that the relatively low GDP per capita is responsible for high levels of materialism in the post-Socialist region. Also, the elderly are susceptible to period effects (inflation, very low income, collapsed social services, little social protection).

However, the level of materialism can be artificially boosted by the fact that the original battery of questions is too sensitive to the post-Socialist development during the 1990s. To put it in a different way, the two materialist indicators - "maintaining order in the nation" and "fighting rising prices" - are too sensitive to the post-socialist context, which makes period effects very powerful. Both the young and old get affected.

8

For example, considering Russia's development from 1990 to the present, without even looking at the analysis it is just natural to expect Russians to score high on both indicators. First of all, in the first 8 years after the USSR collapsed, Russian authorities were compelled to reprint and change Russian currency twice just to keep up with skyrocketing inflation of 2500% in selected years (1993). Recently, Russia again changed its currency, this time canceling out the unnecessary zeroes. Thus, "fighting rising prices" is a painful subject to Russian citizens. Of course, post-Socialist inflation was not unique to Russia; it was a phenomenon in the former Soviet bloc and applies to virtually all post-Socialist societies.

Considering the second materialist indicator (order in the nation), rising crime and corruption, the collapse of the USSR, general instability and lawlessness in Russia, post-Soviet republics, and Eastern Europe make the indicator way too sensitive. With two wars in Chechnya (1994-1996 and the current war) it would be silly to assume that Russia would score low on "keeping order in the nation," especially after 1994 on.

The problem is a methodological one: between the indicators and the context. For example, Harold Clarke at al. argue that although Inglehart recognized the sensitivity of the battery to high rates of inflation, he has not appreciated that the measure is also affected when the overall economic context is changing. Thus, when

inflation is not a problem, respondents avoid the "rising prices" and are forced to choose one of the other three, none of which deals with, say, inflation or other economic concerns they may have(8) In our cases, however, the battery is too sensitive to the context. The problem stays, but its polarity reversed: the battery is registering too much materialism.

This fact is important for the next reason. The original battery of questions was at first administered across 8 different countries, but, arguably, within *a similar economic and cultural context*, including recessions. The materialist measurement is subjective across countries since the battery measures not the *objective* level of materialism, but the level of materialism *as it relates to the level of postmaterialism.* However, due to the similar cultural and economic context, it was possible to assume that perhaps the 8 original countries were either 1) objectively similar according to their level of materialism, or 2) had no major social or economic disruptions.

The picture changes when the battery is administered cross-culturally, i.e., Eastern and Western Europe. It would be too hasty to assume that since the post-Socialist region scored higher on materialism, it is more materialist compared to the West. First of all, cultural interpretation of the same indicators could be different, or a set of concrete short-term circumstances may drastically affect people's responses.

9

Inglehart himself confessed that the first battery of four indicators might be too sensitive to short-term inflation fluctuations. He writes that "when formulating the questions in 1969, [he] did not anticipate the explosive worldwide inflation that would later take place" [in 1973 and 1979]. During those times, the level of materialism rose sharply and rapidly (as much as 25%) among the Western public. However, the Western public did not have to worry much about order in their nations. Considering that the inflation rates in Russia and Eastern Europe were significantly higher during the transition than in the West, plus the second indicator of materialism (national order) kicks in, it is no wonder that today the East leads on those materialist issues. A conclusion can be made that any cross-cultural comparison of materialism can only be valid if the indicators are not so much susceptible to short-term fluctuation of the measured factors (i.e. prices and social stability). Otherwise, other indicators should be used.

Apart from the original four-value battery of indicators, Inglehart introduced two more batteries, which were administered less frequently in the surveys. The wording of the second battery of indicators seems to be less sensitive to inflation and national order. However, post-Socialist public again scored much higher on materialism compared to the West. Two post-materialist indicators (*Progress towards a less impersonal and humane society*, and *Progress towards society where ideas count more than money*) can be more reflective of truly socialist values which the older cohorts may have grown up with and internalized (unlike freedom of speech and more say to the people). Maybe older generations would score higher on postmaterialism when using the second battery? However, the materialist indicators are still quite sensitive to the post-Socialist economic and social conditions (*Stable economy*, and *Fight against crime*).

Unfortunately, the 1993 ISSP Environment survey does not include the second battery of materialist indicators. The 1995 wave of the World Values Survey (1995) is used instead. In the 1995 WVS includes more Eastern European countries than the 1993 ISSP: Hungary, Tambov region (Russia), Belarus, Czech Republic, Slovenia, Bulgaria, Romania, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Ukraine, Russia, Moldova, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and all former Yugoslavia republics. There seems to be no trend difference in the post-Socialist responses to the second battery in 1995 compared to the first battery 1993 ISSP survey. Materialism increases with age and postmaterialism decreases. The neighborhood of the numbers is roughly the same compared to the results from the first battery of 1993 ISSP: the region scores very high on materialism.

Table VI

The fact that postmaterialism drops with increasing age (or decreasing income) for post-Socialist countries speaks strongly in favor of the scarcity hypothesis. Still, later we shall consider some other cross-regional indicators of materialism.

3. Time-Series Analysis

Is the post-Socialist region moving towards materialism or post-materialism? Is it possible to trace changes in post-Socialist materialism through time and its relationship to the change in GDP per capita for Eastern Europe? Unfortunately, the WVS was not taken in most Socialist countries in 1990-1991, and only in Hungary in 1981. Almost the entire post-Socialist region (with few exceptions) was covered in the 1995 wave of WVS. The table below represents the calculated difference between materialism-postmaterialism (first battery) collected from the 1990 and 1995 waves of WVS with ISSP 1993 Environment Survey (here materialism minus postmaterialism):

Table VII (9)

Given the previously mentioned relationship between GDP per capita from 1993 ISSP Survey, it is possible to say that the relationship holds in Eastern Europe throughout time. For example, there is a relationship between the 1995 level of materialism and GDP per capita at 0.1 significance, although the R-square is rather small, reflecting a scattered relationship:

Figure 5

However, as we see, with so many missing values for 1990 and 1993, it is impossible to do a good time series analysis and to accurately measure either a change in materialism by age cohorts or the difference in materialism through time in Eastern Europe. The survey was not conducted in the former USSR republics in 1990 or 1993, and GDP are not available as well since in 1990 they still constituted a whole country: the USSR. For example, it is impossible to correlate the level of materialism and GDP per capita in 1990 for the Soviet bloc, for the data are available for four countries only (see the table).

However, looking carefully at the filled cells in Table I, we can see that Inglehart's scarcity hypothesis holds true and materialism is responsive to the fluctuations in GDP per capita. As GDP per capita dropped in most of the countries from 1990 to 1995 (except for Poland), the level of materialism rose in all of them but Poland! Poland scored 0.46 on materialism with GDP of $4,400, and then 0.35 in 1995 with GDP of $4,920. In Slovenia materialism was falling from 0.23 in 1990 to 0.17 in 1993 and to 0.5 in 1995, while GDP per capita dropped from $10,700 in 1993 to 8,110 in 1995. However, in 1999 GDP was already $11,800 dollars.

3.1. Different indicators: different results!

Is the post-Socialist region indeed more materialist compared to the West? Are there better indicators for materialism? Which directions is the region moving?

What should not be ignored by analysts is that there are also other indicators which, arguably, could be used to measure the levels of materialism and post-materialism. For example, it is quite interesting why Inglehart has just two hypotheses, the one reflecting past experiences and the other reflecting present economic experiences. Just to complete the set, I suggest a "looking-into-the-future" hypothesis: materialism does not depend on the current economic conditions, but subjectively expected future economic predictions of the population.

I test this hypothesis and find that indeed, economic expectations were a better indicator for predicting materialism in 1995. *Central and Eastern Eurobarometer 6 November* 1995 was used for that purpose. The question was "Do you think in the next 12 month your financial situation will be

---

1. a lot better,
2. better,
3. the same,
4. worse, and
5. a lot worse."

I recoded expectations percentages by using the next formula:

Expectations 1995 = = (worse + a lot worse – better – a lot better) / total – the same

A simple linear regression model with the 1995 GDP per capita and the 1995 expectations variable as the independent variables and the level of materialism as the dependent variable showed that people's expectations are perhaps a better predictor of materialism (N = 14):

materialism 95 = 0.544 - ***0.000040*** *gdp95 +* ***0.217*** *expectations*					
Predictor	Coef	StDev	T	P	VIF
Constant	0.54369	0.07171	7.58	0.000	
gdp95	-0.00003964	0.00001579	-2.51	**0.029**	1.2
expectat95	0.21726	0.07600	2.86	**0.016**	1.2

Figure 6

As we can see, the P-value is smaller (0.016) for the expectations compared to 0.029 of 1995 GDP. It means that the relationship is more significant for the former.

The Pearson correlation also favors expectations rather than GDP:

Correlations (Pearson)		
	material95	expectat
expectat	0.441	
gdp95	-0.431	0.336

Thus, materialism is positively related to the percentage of "worse" expectations, while it is negatively related to the GDP level. *In absolute values, the relationship is stronger between materialism and expectations.* Further research is needed to show if the relationship holds true for other time snapshots as well.

Is the post-Socialist region moving towards materialism according to the original four-value battery? Is it more materialist compared to the West? One begins to have second thoughts on the issue after having looked at indicators other than the original battery.(10) Looking at other indicators that could quite possibly measure materialism, the issue becomes at most inconclusive. For example, the World Values Survey allows people to choose job aspects that people consider important. The aspects include good pay, not too much pressure, respect by people, job security, initiative, good hours, holidays, self realization, responsibility, interesting job, matching one's abilities. The respondents choose which aspects they think are important.

I did a simple crosstabulation of those responses by region (Western Europe and the post-Socialist region) and found the next results:

Table VIII

14

As we can see, the post-Socialist public are more willing to appreciate initiative on the job, self realization, more willing to accept responsibility, and less appreciative of either pay or security.

Let us consider the most blunt materialist job aspect: pay. Could it be a good indicator of materialism? The indicator also shows the generational trend in Western and the post-Socialist region: for older respondents "pay" is more important. Here is the generational effect for the West:

Table IX

A similar generational effect is observed for the post-Socialist region: older groups favor "pay" as an important job aspect. However, the most interesting fact is that in 1995 Western Europe scored higher on the indicator compared to the 1990, but the post-Socialist region scored lower in 1995. Thus, *contrary* to the original Inglehart finding, the West had moved towards materialism, and the post-Soviet societies had moved towards more post-materialism (Table X):

Table X

In the post-Socialist region only Belarus fell out of the pattern with an increase in choosing "pay." Among the Western democracies Spain and Japan deviate from the pattern.

The idea that economic hardship actually pushes people into choosing post-materialist values is not a new one. (11) Thus, Clarke and Dutt argued that rising levels of unemployment are conducive to post-materialist values. It could be the case that unemployment in the post-Socialist region pushes people towards less materialism when different indicators are used. Considering a rise in choosing "pay" among the Western public actually agrees with Inglehart's recent findings. Looking at the picture we can see that the level of post-materialism is dropping since 1990 on for the Western societies:

Figure 7

15

3.2. Testing Materialism in the 1970s

Is it possible to determine which out of the two hypotheses takes predominance in explaining high levels of materialism among the post-Socialist elderly? Unfortunately, it is possible to do this with time-series data. For example, Inglehart concluded that during dramatic recessions in Western Europe period effects (scarcity

hypothesis) actually outweighed cohort effects (socialization hypothesis).(12) Undoubtedly, contemporary period effects are responsible for high levels of materialism among the old post-Socialist groups. However, we should know whether *older people were more materialist during the Soviet era. If it could only be determined that the elderly were more materialist already during the Socialist era, then the cohort effects can be conclusively ruled in and added to the evident period effects! If the data show that the elderly were less materialist during Socialism, it means that today they changed their values dramatically.*

With some approximation, it is possible to suggest that even as early as in the late-70s young people in the bloc gravitated towards post-materialist values, such as freedom of speech. The Soviet Interview Project was conducted beginning in 1979.(13) Although the original battery of questions was not administered to the respondents, there are some indicators that allow us to place age cohorts towards either materialist or post materialist end. For example, on the question "Does the respondent read Samizdat (underground reactionary publishing) material?" (1=yes, 2=no) we observe the next relationship among age cohorts:

Figure 8

The conclusion can be made that because younger cohorts were interested in Samizdat much more compared to the older cohorts, the young were more likely to value freedom of speech more.

Possibly, the level of materialism for the Socialist period could also be inferred from its possible relationship with other variables. If we trust Inglehart's 1990s relationship between economic well-being, materialism, and life satisfaction, then we could assume that in 1979 older cohorts were more materialist than the young since their life satisfaction was lower. For example, here is life satisfaction by age in Eastern Europe from the 1995 World Value Survey:

Figure 9

A similar trend is roughly observable among the Russian-Jewish immigrants in 1979:

Figure 10

The older cohorts in 1979 also reported decreasing standards of living in comparison with the young:

Figure 11

However, we did not observe the same social stratification between cohorts in the 1970s as in the 1990s. In particular, in a simple comparison of means we can see that the net income in 1979 did not vary a lot throughout cohorts:

Table XI

The income ranged from 118 to 182 rubles a month.

There were also rank-type of questions administered in the 1979 survey. The results could be said misleading. For example, the respondents were asked what they would like to keep from the old system if there had been an opportunity to change it. "Free public education," "Free health care," "Cheap public housing," were the leading choices among the younger respondents, which would indicate their anti-market attitudes at the time. However, the young were inclined to allow private enterprise and change the existing political system.

Table XII

Although there is no strong evidence that younger cohorts were less materialistic in 1979 than the old, they were definitely inclined towards more liberalism. It means that they might have scored higher on postmaterialist issues, such as freedom of speech, and on materialist issues, such as allowing private enterprises. These findings suggests that by the time the USSR collapsed the older cohorts were not materialist compared to the young, so that by the 1990s we expect no polarity change across age cohorts. In this sense, they could be said to have the period effects, which magnified the already existing level of high materialism among the elderly. (14)

17

4. Conclusion

With regard to the post-Socialist bloc, the importance of measuring political culture cannot be overemphasized. The region is facing social and economic transformations, and the relative success of adopting market oriented reforms, democratic reforms, or any other policies will ultimately depend on the values predominant within the post-Socialist societies. For example, according to Inglehart, post-materialism correlates positively with environmental awareness. Therefore, if we observe a high level of materialism in the post-Socialist bloc, then we will not see the triumph of Russia's Green parties any time soon.

At the same time, it is known that there is acute environmental awareness in Russia and Eastern Europe, and, as this paper shows, there is a very high level of materialism. This would contradict Inglehart's findings. However, in a context different from the OECD countries, it could also mean two things: 1) either people's concerns reflect the relative scarcity of a phenomenon (thus, both the environment and inflation represent a concern); or 2) the vales space (or value dimension) between Western Europe and Eastern Europe is not the same. Eastern Europe could be, in fact, objectively less materialist compared to Western Europe, but this fact is not captured by currently used indicators.

This analysis reveals a number of important methodological points. First, the original Inglehart's battery of questions could be too sensitive to the post-Socialist development. It is important to keep in mind that Inglehart's battery is meant to measure a subjective level of materialism - that is, the level of materialism with respect to post-materialist values within a country. This means that if Eastern Europe scores higher on materialist indicators compared to the West, it does not mean that objectively East Europeans value materialism more than the West. That can be shown by comparing the responses to scale type of questions instead of rank type of questions on possible materialist and post-materialist indicators.

Second, it was suggested that perhaps the generational effect existed as far back as in the 1970 in the region. Also, the elderly are currently experiencing economic hardship compared to the young in the region. Thus, today the elderly score higher on materialism due to generational as well as period effects.

Third, perhaps further research is needed to answer two questions conclusively: whether the region is objectively more materialist compared to the Western-type democracies; which direction is the region moving: materialist or postmaterialist. Considering that the original battery is taken out of the West European context, we should look at some indicators which would not be susceptible to short-term fluctuation in economic conditions.

Data Sets Used

Central and Eastern Eurobarometer. ZA STUDY NUMBER 2802 November 1995, carried out by GFK and the participating Eastern European institutes for the European Commission.

The Index of Economic Freedom. The Heritage Foundation, c2000.

ISSP (International Social Survey Program) *Environment 1993*. ZA # 2450.

The Political Handbook of the World, 1993 and 1995. New York, McGraw-Hill Book Co.

World Values Study Group. 1994. *World Values Survey*, 1981-1984, 1990-1993, and 1995-1997 waves. 1ST ICPSR Version, February, 2000, Computer file: 04FEB00

Endnotes

(*) Many thanks to two referees and Professors Valerie Bunce, Matthew Evangelista, Peter Katzenstein, Walter Mebane and Christopher Way for their comments on the earlier drafts of this manuscript. This study will be presented at the Midwest Political Science Conference, April 2001.

(1) Inglehart, Ronald. "The Silent Revolution in Europe: Intergenerational Change in Post-Industrial Societies." APSR, 1971. 65: 991-1017. *Changing Values and Political Styles among Western Publics.* Princeton University Press, 1977. *Culture Shift in Advanced Industrial Societies.* Princeton University Press, 1990.

(2) Bowles, Samuel and Thomas E. Weisskopf. *Economics and Social Justice: Essays on Power, Labor, and Institutional Change*. Cheltenham, UK; Northampton, MA, USA : Edward Elgar Pub., c1998.

(3) Rose, Richard, and Ellen Carnaghan. "Generational Effects on Attitudes in the Communist Regimes: A Comparative Analysis." Post-Soviet Affairs, 1995, 11: 28-56.

(4) In a rank-type question the respondent are asked to rank several indicators in importance with regard to each other. Example: "What is more important: freedom of speech or material welfare?"
A scale-type of question is asking the respondent to scale his/her attitude towards a single indicator (variable). Example: "Do you agree that freedom of speech is important? (Strongly agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly disagree). Some argue that the use of rank-type of questions involves some methodological problems: the choice of one or another indicator depends on its place within the battery: Davis, Darren and Christian Davenport. " Assessing the Validity of the Post-Materialist Index." APSR, 1999. 93: 649-664.

(5) Russia, Bulgaria, Poland, Czech Republic, Hungary, and Slovenia were included in the survey.

(6) Originally, Inglehart recorded his materialist indicator subtracting percentage of materialists from post-materialists. For the purpose of comparison or correlation it makes no difference, however.

(7) But even in the West we could observe a decline in the elderly's income, which could suggest that they may score higher on materialism due to this factor along with cohort effects.

(8) Clarke, Harold, Allan Kornberg, Chris McIntyre, Petra Bauer-Kaase and Max Kaase. "The Effect of Economic Priorities on the Measurement of Value Change: New Experimental Evidence." APSR, 1999. 93: 637-647.

(9) GDP for 1990 and 1993 years were taken from *The Political Handbook of the World,* New York, McGraw-Hill Book Co. GDP for 1995 and 1999 years were taken from *The Index of Economic Freedom.* The Heritage Foundation, c2000.

(10) Some research is suggestive that the post-Socialist public, if not materialist, is at least torn between materialist and post-materialist values. It is far from certain that only material conditions, either past or

present, are responsible for the rise or fall of materialism. A lot may have to do with identities and other subjective values. For example, David Mason and Svetlana Sidorenko argue that the Russian public is torn between nostalgia for the past and gravitating towards new economic values. “Public Opinion and the 1996 Elections in Russia: Nostalgic and Statist, Yet Pro-Market and Pro-Yel’tsin.” Slavic Review, Winter 1997.

(11) Clark, Harold, and Nitish Dutt. “Measuring Value Change in Western Industrialized Societies: The Impact of Unemployment.” APSR, 1991. 85: 905-920.

(12) Inglehart, Ronald, and Paul R. Abramson. “Economic Security and Value Change.” APSR, 1994. Vol. 88: 336-353.

(13) The project was among new arriving Russian Jews to the US, so the sample is not representative of the Soviet population at the time. However, for the purpose of measuring differences between cohorts the survey can be used.

(14) Although there was definitely a lack of social data in the USSR, there were some surveys conducted in Central and Eastern Europe prior to 1989. Scholars found strong generational effects in political attitudes among the Eastern European public. (Shlapentokh, Vladimir. *The Politics and Sociology of the Soviet Russia.* Boulder, Colorado. Westview Press, 1987.) The same conclusion was made by the US scholars interviewing immigrants from the region after the WWII on. (Millar, James. *Politics, Work, and Daily Life in the USSR.* New York, Cambridge University Press, 1987.)

Table I

Materialism by age groups in Eastern Europe and the former USSR, selected countries, ISSP 1993 (Environment)

ages	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-high	average
material	40	41	44	44	57	58	47
posmaterial	7	6	5	5	3	1,5	5

Table II

Materialism by age groups in Western Europe, selected countries, ISSP 1993 Environment

ages	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-high	average
material	16	18	19	23	27	29	21
postmaterial	15	15	14	14	11	10	8

Figure 1

Materialism and GDP per capita in Western and Eastern Europe, 1993

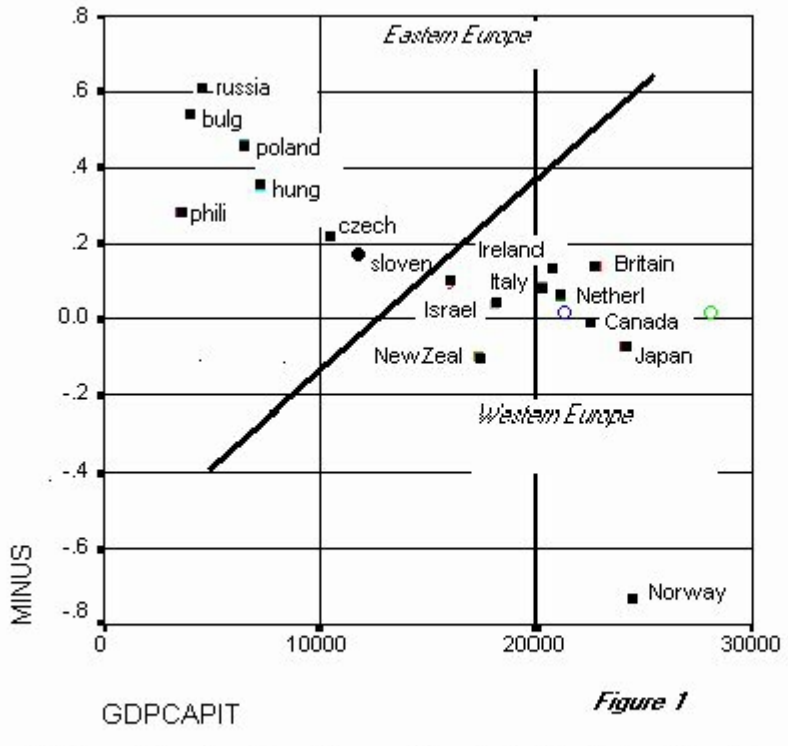


Figure 1

GDP were taken from Index of Economic Freedom by The Heritage Foundation
Notice that E.European countries are stretched in the upper left corner according to their GDP per capita and the level of materialism The line is a dividing line between the two regions.

Figure 2

Materialism by GDP per capita in Eastern Europe, 1993 (R=0.752)

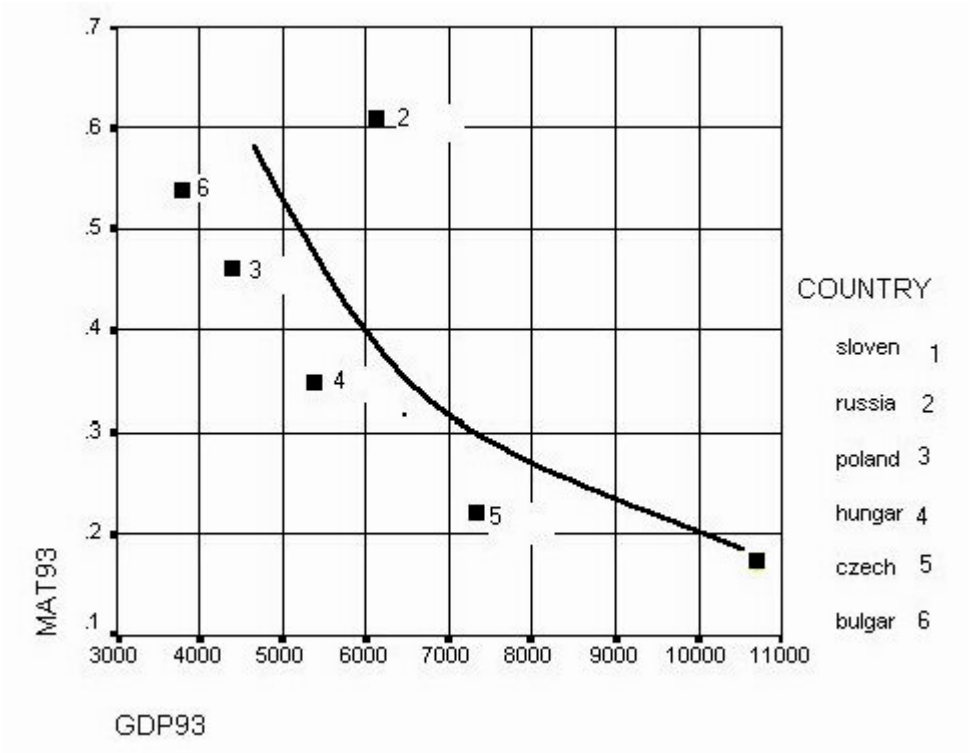


Table III

Russia: mean earnings by age group, 1993

Ages	Mean	N
1	301862	249
2	223089	400
3	207413	483
4	168934	290
5	104470	270
6	128126	166

Table IV

Bulgaria: mean earnings by age group, 1993

Ages	Mean	N
1	123625	66
2	130186	119
3	115595	178
4	93903	154
5	49035	213
6	13307	257

Figure 3

Relationship between age groups and earnings in Eastern Europe

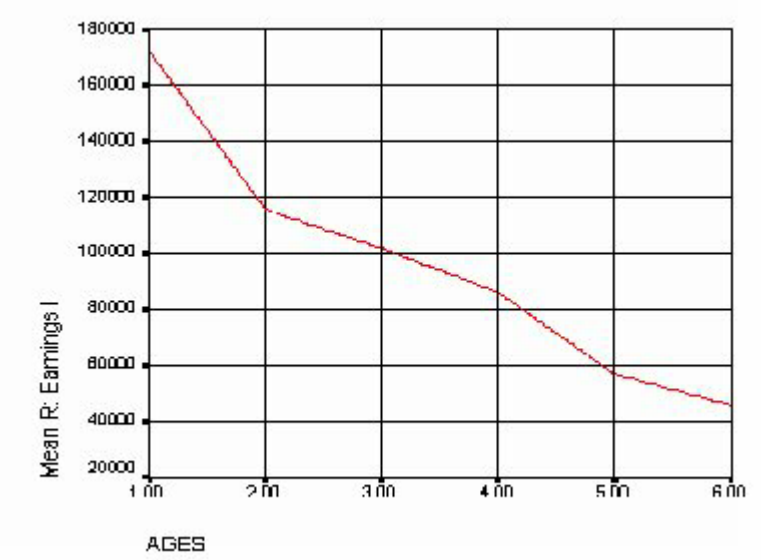


Table V

The US: mean earnings by age groups, 1993

Ages	Mean	N
1	7203	82
2	18328	261
3	24147	313
4	29231	188
5	29532	106
6	24560	46

Figure 4

Relationship between age groups and earnings in Western democracies

Table VI

Materialism by age group in Eastern Europe and former USSR: Second Battery of indicators from WVS 1995

	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-high	average
material	42	47	50	54	59	62	52
postmaterial	6	5	4	3	3	2	4

Table VII

Materialism and GDP in Eastern Europe: 1990, 1993, and 1995

	mat90	mat93	mat95	GDP90	GDP93	GDP95	GDP99
tambov	na	na	0,63	na	na	na	na
azerbaijan	na	na	0,58	na	na	1790	1550
russia	0,36	0,61	0,54	9211	6120	4820	4370
moldova	na	na	0,54	na	na	2670	1500
ukraine	na	na	0,51	na	na	3650	2190
georgia	na	na	0,44	na	na	1060	1960
montenegro	na	na	0,47	na	na	na	na
serbia	na	na	0,45	5464	na	1000	na
hungary	0,49	0,35	0,43	6108	5380	5700	7200
belarus	0,27	na	0,43	na	na	5130	4850
armenia	na	na	0,41	na	na	2290	2360
lithania	0,15	na	0,4	na	na	3500	4220
macedonia	na	na	0,37	na	na	900	na
poland	na	0,46	0,35	4565	4400	4920	6520
estonia	0,26	na	0,35	na	na	6460	5240
latvia	0,18	na	0,31	na	na	4480	1300
bosnia	na	na	0,29	na	na	na	na
croatia	na	na	0,14	na	na	2640	4780
slovena	0,23	0,17	0,05	na	10700	8110	11800
czech	0,13	0,22	na	na	7300	7450	10510
moscow	0,14	na	na	na	na	na	na
romania	0,37	na	na	3445	2700	2790	na
bulgaria	0,2	0,54	0,49	5710	3800	3830	4010
slovakia	0,21	na	na	na	6100	6070	na

Figure 5

Materialism by GDP per capita in Eastern Europe, 1995

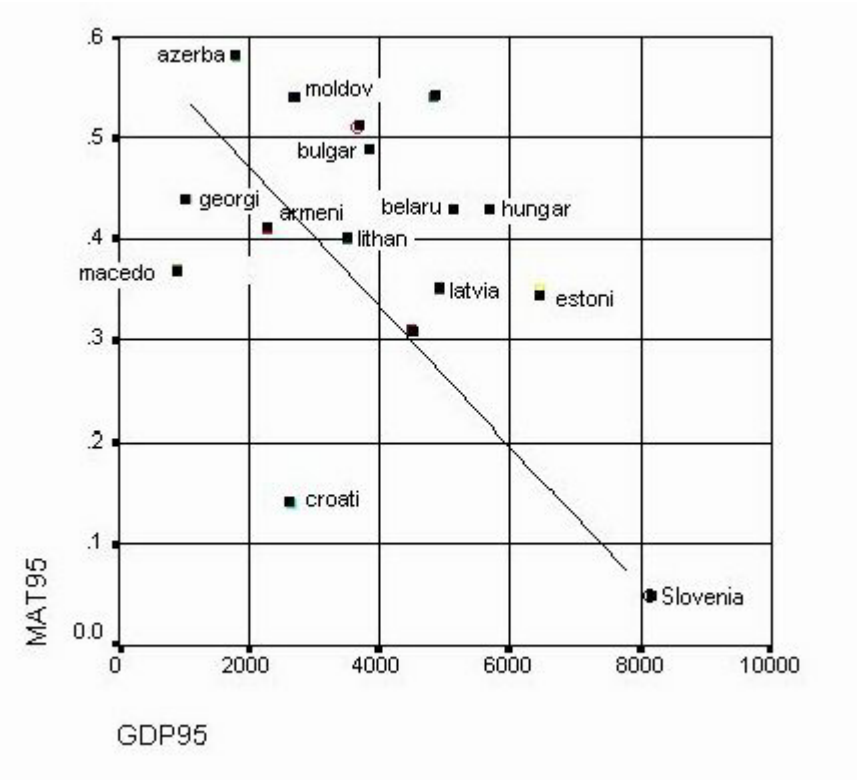


Figure 6

GDP per capita and future expectation in Eastern Europe, 1995

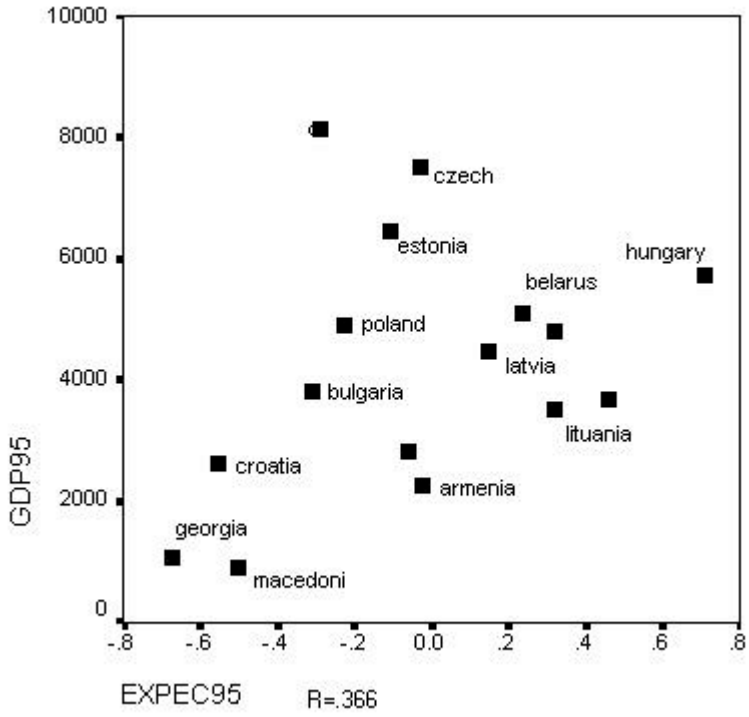


Table VIII

Mean percentage of job aspects by importance for Western and Eastern Europe, WVS, 1990 and 1995

	pay	pressure	secu	respe	initiat	holiday	realizat	responsib	abilit	interest
West	31	70	66	66	54	72	46	57	41	45
East	13	64	35	52	63	67	48	66	31	40

Table IX

Importance of “pay” for the West by age group, 1990 and 1995

cohorts	1	2	3	4	5	6
West %	25	24,5	25,5	27	33	35,5

1 represents the youngest age group

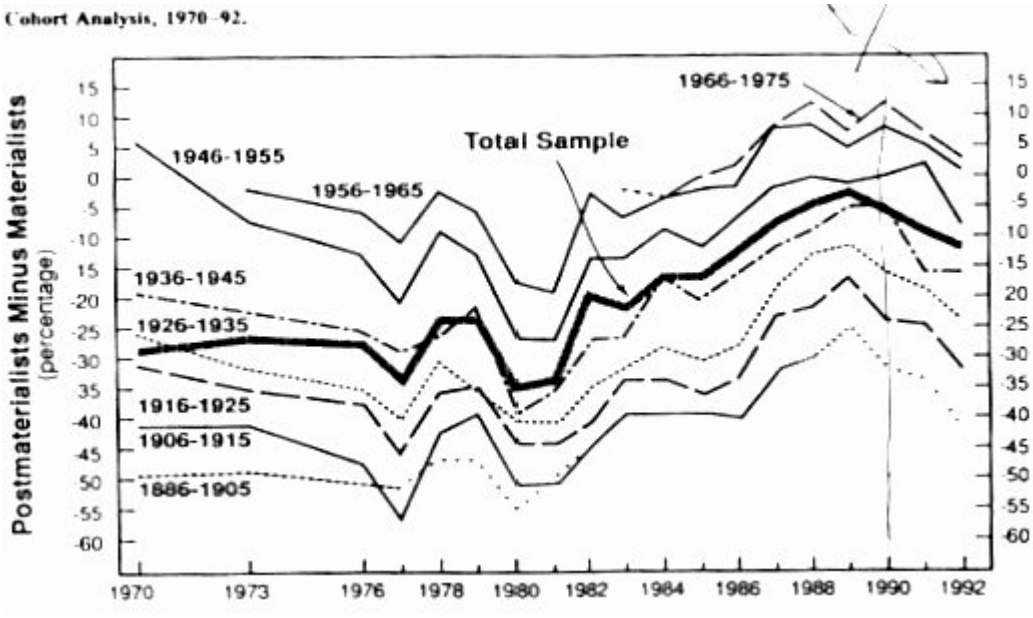
Table X

Mean percentage of choosing “pay” (WVS, 1990 and 1995 waves)

	1990	1995
Poland	53	10
Belarus	13	18
Slovenia	18	11
Bulgaria	9	6
Lithuania	21	5
Latvia	31	10
Estonia	14	10
Russia	17	9
West Germany	26	35
Spain	23	24
USA	14	17
Finland	34	40
Japan	21	12
Norway	40	41
Sweden	27	40

Figure 7

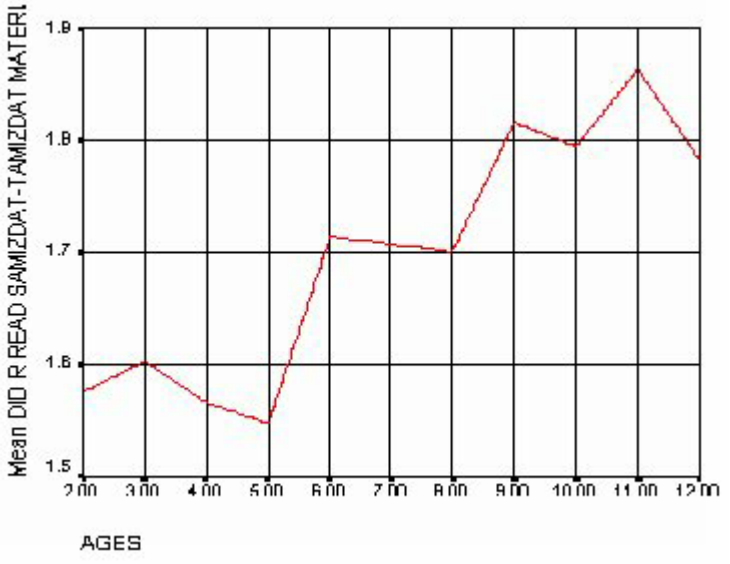
Materialism minus post-materialism for Western Europe



Taken from Inglehart, 1994.

Figure 8

NOT Reading Samizdat by age groups among Soviet immigrants, 1979

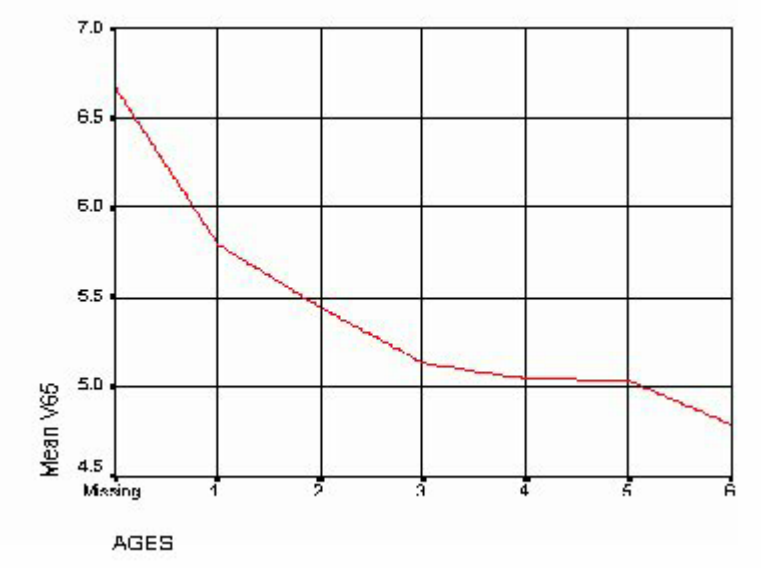


1 indicating "read very often"

Here age increases from 2 to 12

Figure 9

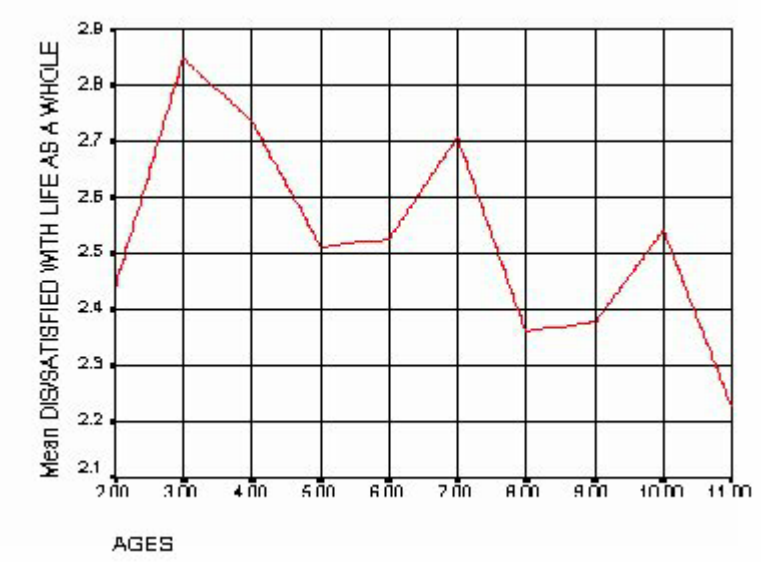
Life satisfaction in Easter Europe by age groups



10 indicating "very satisfied" and 1 indicating "very dissatisfied"

Figure 10

Life satisfaction among Soviet immigrants, 1979



1 indicating "very dissatisfied"

Figure 11

Reported standard of living by age groups, 1979

1 indicating "high standards" and 5 indicating "low standards"

Table XI

Monthly salary at last job, USSR, 1979

ages	mean	N
2	118	169
3	137	356
4	156	543
5	172	295
6	182	464
7	180	259
8	171	280
9	169	296
10	158	202
11	139	260
12	159	55

Age increases from 2 to 12

Table XII

Favoring private enterprise by age groups (1 is the youngest among Soviet immigrants, 1979

ages	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
change political system	24	33	58	34	44	25	25	24	14	19
allow private enterprise	14	10	10	10	10	8	12	8	8	1