


Materialism and Environmental Concern

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[This presentation]

- RESOLVE 
 - Research on Lifestyles, Values and the Environment

- Explore relationship between values and lifestyles
 - Define concepts: values, lifestyles
 - Research questions
 - Present findings from 5 correlational survey studies
 - Draw tentative conclusions

[Values]

- Materialism vs environmental concern?
 - Materialism - Post materialism (Inglehart)
 - Lower order and higher order needs (Maslow)
 - Self-enhancement – self transcendence (Schwartz)

- Materialism
 - Less pro-environmental and less happy, less agreeable personality (e.g., Kasser et al., 2004, Hirsh et al., 2007)

- Environmental concern
 - More pro-environmental, more social, more agreeable (e.g., Stern et al., 1993; Schultz, et al. 1999; De Groot, et al., 2008; Hirsh, 2007, etc.)

[Sustainable lifestyles]

We cannot hope to achieve a low carbon economy if we are not living low carbon lifestyles (Malcolm Wicks, 2006)

Making the shift to a more sustainable lifestyle is one of the most important challenges for the 21st century (Tony Blair, 2006)

- **What is a sustainable lifestyle?**
- Involves more than intentional pro-environmental behaviour

[Research questions]

- How are environmental concern and materialism related?
- To what extent are environmental concern and materialism related to lifestyle variables?

[Data]

- Surveys: correlational data
- **Adults**
 - **21st Century living project (EDEN project)**
 - One year longitudinal study among 100 UK households. Survey among all householders 16 and over (198)
 - **Values and lifestyles**
 - Survey among 266 randomly selected households in Richmond and Shropshire
- **Young people**
 - Surveys among 16-25 year olds in the UK (338), Spain (478) and China (961)

[Measures]

- **Values** (shortened modified versions for young people)
 - Materialism (MVS, Richins, 2004)
 - Environmental concern (NEP, Dunlap and Van Liere, 2000)

- **Lifestyles**
 - Intentional pro-environmental behaviour
 - e.g., reduce energy in home, reduce car use, eat less meat, more organic.
 - Time spent on activities
 - Desired and important goods and products

Relationship between values

- Environmental concern is negatively related to materialism, but not for all

- **UK adults**

- ($r \approx -.20$)

- **Young people**

- UK and Spain ($r \approx -.20$), China ($r \approx 0$)

		Materialism	
		Low	High
Env. concern	Low	21%	29%
	High	28%	23%

[Values and lifestyles]

- Intentions to adopt pro-environmental behaviour are negatively related to materialism and positively related to environmental concern
- **Adults**
 - Environmental concern and materialism opposite effects
- **Young people**
 - Stronger effects particularly for environmental concern (UK)

	Adults 16%	Young people (UK) 39%
Materialism	-.26	-.18
Environmental Concern	.26	.57

[Values and lifestyles]

- Materialists spend more time on activities which use energy and materials
- **Adults**
 - E.g., more fun shopping and playing computer games
- **Young people**
 - E.g., more computer games, less book reading (but weak in China)
- Note. effects are controlled for age and gender

Values and lifestyles

Materialists attach greater importance to luxury products and modern technologies. Few relationships for environmental concern.

■ **Adult materialists**

- Attach more importance to modern technology products
- More likely to mention a fancy car
 - If you could drive any car for a day?
- More likely to report a far destination
 - If you could take holiday anywhere?

■ **Young people**

- More likely to buy a house and car and less likely to donate and give to friends/family
 - If you won £100,000 in a lottery how would you spend the money?

[Conclusions]

- Materialism and environmental concern not necessarily inversely related
- Materialism and environmental concern have opposite impacts on behaviours but they are mostly related to different variables
- So how to promote sustainable lifestyles?
 - Further awareness raising – linking environmentalism and materialism?
 - Addressing materialistic values (social marketing)?

[Survey studies]

- Some advantages
 - Large samples
 - Quantifiable findings
 - Allows comparisons between groups
 - Relative low costs and easy to administer

- Some disadvantages
 - Causality
 - Response issues
 - Limited insight
 - Operationalisation of concepts by researcher
 - Limitations due to time and space