Are Environmental Attitudes Correlated with Materialistic Attitudes: A Cross-Cultural Study Among the United States, Australia, and Sweden

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Abstract

This article compares environmental attitudes with materialistic attitudes across the United States, Australia, and Sweden. Two scales were used in the study: the new environmental paradigm (NEP) and Richins and Dawson’s Materialistic Survey. The expected negative correlation between environmental and materialistic attitudes was found among all three countries; however, a higher negative correlation was found in Sweden and Australia than in the U.S. The U.S. also, as expected, rated higher on the materialistic scale and lower on the environmental scale than the other two countries. The results are discussed with a concern for more research dealing with the countries’ political realm with the environment.
Are Environmental Attitudes Correlated to Materialistic Attitudes: A Cross-Cultural Study Among the United States, Australia, and Sweden.

What is the relationship between environmental attitudes and materialistic attitudes, and does this relationship, if any, vary among countries with different amounts of waste production? Using data from the revised New Environmental Paradigm (NEP) (VanLiere & Dunlap, 2000) and Richins and Dawson’s materialistic survey (Richins & Dawson, 1992), this study focuses on this question. Data from three countries, the United States, Australia, and Sweden, were used to find the relationship between environmental attitudes and materialistic attitudes across countries that produce different amounts of waste each year. These three countries were chosen because all three are industrial, the U.S. and Australia produce a lot of waste per person, and Sweden does not produce nearly as much waste per person compared to the other countries (World Resources Institute [WRI], 1993). Past studies have shown both the United States and Sweden to rate high on the NEP (Gooch, 1995; VanLiere & Dunlap, 1984). However, little research has been conducted on how Australians rate on the NEP and how Swedes and Australians rate on the Richins and Dawson’s materialistic survey in comparison to the NEP.

Because Sweden does not produce as much waste per person than Australia and the United States it is hypothesized that Swedes will rate higher on environmental attitudes and lower on materialistic attitudes than the other two countries.

Consumption Statistics

Consumption of natural resources by modern industrial economies remains extremely high, in the range of 45 to 85 metric tons per person annually. It currently requires about 300 kg of natural resources to generate $100 of income in the world’s
most advanced economies. Global energy use has also increased by 70% in the last 30 years and is expected to increase another 30% in the next 15 years. The increase of energy services will raise greenhouse gas emissions about 50% higher than current levels, unless an effort takes place to increase energy efficiency and move away from today's heavy reliance on fossil fuels (WRI, 2002). Because fossil fuels are used for economic growth and material gain but at the same time hurt the environment, the current study assesses environmental attitudes and compares them to materialistic attitudes among three industrial countries—Australia, Sweden, and the United States.

Australia, Sweden, and the United States all have gross domestic product per capita that are approximately the same ($20,843, $26,766, $28,651 respectively), but the amount of waste produced per person in Sweden is much lower than in Australia and the United States (EarthTrends, 2002). While Australia is ranked in the top five consuming nations of the world, right behind the United States, consuming respectively 8.1 and 8.4 hectares per person annually, the amount of waste an Australian produces per year, while much higher than Sweden, is still quite lower than the United States (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2002). The United States, per capita, produces the highest amount of waste with 826 kg annually. Australia, per capita, produces roughly 70% of that amount with 581 kg annually, while Sweden produces roughly half of the amount of Australia with 304 kg per person annually (WRI, 1993). Because the United States produces nearly double and triple the amount of waste per person than in Australia and Sweden, environmental attitudes and materialistic attitudes of the U.S. are reviewed.

*Environmental Attitudes in the U.S.*
Public opinion polls in the U.S. show tremendous support for protection of the environment. In 1992, 54% of Americans reported reading labels to see if products were environmentally safe, 57% bought products and packaging made from recycled materials, and 34% said they had boycotted a company that was careless toward the environment. Other surveys have found that: 79% of Americans consider themselves environmentalists; 82% state they have recycled; 83% state they have changed their shopping habits to help protect the environment; and 67% said they would be willing to pay 5% to 10% more for environmentally compatible products (Roberts, 1997).

The above figures show that there has been a paradigmatic shift in the direction of Americans toward the environment. Until recently, American society shared a set of beliefs and values that had been labeled the Dominant Social Paradigm. This paradigm involved the beliefs that humans are apart from and above the rest of nature, material growth can progress indefinitely, and science and technology will find solutions to ecological problems such as resource scarcity (Doyle & McEachern, 2001).

Despite the strength with which Americans embraced the DSP in the past, continued growth in the environmental movement has given birth to an alternative and opposing set of beliefs and values labeled the New Environmental Paradigm (NEP) where the focus is towards restricting growth, protecting the reliability of ecosystems, and living in harmony with nature.

VanLiere and Dunlap (1978) designed the NEP scale when the American public’s concern for the environment began to appear. The NEP scale measures a spectrum of attitudes that represent the respondent’s adherence to the view that: (1) humans are a part of nature; (2) there are limits to the carrying capacity of the ecosystem
and (3) the ability of technological progress to solve environmental problems. High scores on the NEP scale indicate pro-environmental attitudes.

It has been suggested that individuals with a higher level of environmental concern should be more likely to engage in ecologically conscious consumer behavior than individuals with a lower level of environmental concern. Yet, the range of such behaviors is quite large, ranging from energy conservation to buying recyclable goods, suggesting that environmental concern may be more influential for some behaviors than others (Roberts, 1997). The current study looks at the relationship between environmental concern and consumer behavior, in particular materialism.

*Environmental Movement in Australia*

The environmental movement in Australia traditionally began as a movement that was concerned with protecting the wilderness and ending nuclear waste. When environmentalists began to attack businesses with issues of them hurting the wilderness, Australian businesses began to redefine environmental terms and provide a new corporate framework for their understanding. For example, certain multinational companies have sponsored the Kaurna Heritage Committee, an indigenous people’s committee that was formed to regain their land back. These companies appear to be friends of the indigenous peoples and environmentally sound; however, when the companies want the same resources as the natives, these same companies will be in direct conflict with these indigenous communities (Doyle & McEachern, 2001).

Another way that businesses have tried to reframe environmentalism in Australia has been to decrease waste in production and increase profits. Recycling and reduction in emissions are two examples in how businesses are claiming to ‘green’ society. However,
not all environmental issues are about efficiency maximization or increased profit margins. In fact until recently, very few environmentalists in Australia had been interested in this type of environmentalism. Instead they were interested in wilderness and anti-nuclear concerns. However, because of a coalition of business and state interests, environmentalism has been redefined (Doyle & McEachern, 2001).

Environmental Movement in the United States

While Australian businesses have redefined environmentalism to lean towards waste reduction and recycling, Americans have been concerned with recycling and purchasing “greener” products since the start of the environmental movement. In return, the public’s opinion has had a positive effect on the way businesses handle their waste. In 1989, 77% of Americans said that a company’s environmental reputation affected what they buy, 89% said they were concerned about the environmental impact of products purchased, and 78% said they would pay more for recyclable or biodegradable packaging (Sullivan, 1992). Because of public support for these issues, environmental organizations have been effective in using the legal system to ensure that businesses cut down on waste and use greener products. One of the most publicized examples of environmentalists having an effect on a large company is the joint effort between the Environmental Defense Fund (EDF) and McDonald’s.

Because of the EDF, McDonald’s began to phase out bleached paper, use reusable cups and coffee fillers, and buy recycled materials. They still continue to experiment with new ideas on how to reduce and recycle waste. The positive results of the merge between the EDF and McDonald’s demonstrated that through cooperation among interest groups ecological and economic benefits could be found. For example, by simply
reducing the weight of its drinking straws by 20%, McDonald's eliminated one million pounds of waste per year, saving both money and landfill space (Sullivan, 1992). The McDonald's case is a typical example of how the environmental movement in the United States works.

**Environmental Movement in Sweden**

While the environmental movement in both the United States and Australia has been focused on issues of waste control, the environmental movement in Sweden has been involved in a variety of environmental issues. The development of environmental policy in Sweden can be historically traced back to two separate fields: nature conservation and the development of technical and chemical control policies. During the 1950's, concern for the environment was focused on the need for natural reserves for recreational and aesthetic purposes in times of rapid industrialization and urbanization. Environmental concern expanded in the 1960's by noticing problems with pollution, particularly acid rain and trying to control it. With increasing industrialization, concern was directed in the 1980's toward a more production process-oriented environmentalism. Environmentalists worked to phase out products that harmed the environment such as aerosols and bleached paper products. This happened without legislative or economic instruments, but rather through consumer initiatives. The perception of environmental problems has changed considerably over the years. The variety of environmental factors that are being controlled, which span across the areas of nature conservation, chemical control, international co-operation, and an efficient use of energy, are part of what makes Sweden a pioneer in the environmental movement (Anderson & Liefferink, 1997).

**Materialism**
Materialism is defined in the *Oxford English Dictionary* as the “devotion to material needs and desires, to the neglect of spiritual matters; a way of life, opinion, or tendency based entirely upon material interests”. It has also been defined by Belk (1984) as “the importance a consumer attaches to worldly possessions” (p. 291) and Rassuli and Hollander (1986) as “an interest in getting and spending” (p. 10). The United States is a consumer society and consumption motives have dominated many Americans. Cushman (1990) describes U.S. citizens after WWII as “yearning to acquire and consume” (p. 600). Fox and Lears (1983) see Americans as engaged in “a ceaseless pursuit of the good life” (p. xii) through consumption.

While consumer goods play a major role in American culture, there are different levels of materialism among people. Richins and Dawson (1992) devised a scale that assessed materialism on the individual level. Their scale measures three components of materialism - centrality, happiness, and success. The centrality component measures how much a person places possessions at the center of his/her life. The happiness component measures how much a person views possessions as essential to her/his satisfaction and well-being in life. The success component measures how much a person judges his/her own and others’ success by the number and quality of possessions accumulated.

Relatively few comparative studies of environmental and materialistic attitudes have been conducted, and those have shown that the bases of environmental concern can differ in different countries. Gooch (1995) found that when comparing proenvironmental and materialistic attitudes among Sweden, Estonia, and Latvia, a negative correlation between proenvironmental attitudes and materialism was found only in Sweden and not in the other two countries. While Gooch compared attitudes among an industrial and two non-
industrial countries, no studies were found that compared environmental and materialistic attitudes in countries that were all industrial. The current study uses the New Environmental Paradigm and Richins and Dawson’s Materialism Scale to compare environmentalism and materialism among three industrial countries—the United States, Sweden, and Australia.

Research Questions

Past research using the NEP in the U.S. and Sweden has shown that both countries score rather well on the proenvironmental side. However, Sweden in the past has scored 10% higher than the U.S., with 81% of respondents agreeing with the proenvironmental statements of the NEP, compared to 71% of the U.S. respondents agreeing with the proenvironmental statements. The Richins and Dawson’s Materialism Scale has also been used on participants in the U.S., with scores in the middle for materialism: 48% agreed with the materialistic statements in the success subscale, 55% agreed with the materialistic statements in the centrality subscale, and 52% agreed with the materialistic statements in the happiness subscale. The NEP has not been used on participants from Australia and the Richins and Dawson’s Materialism Scale has not been used on participants from either Australia or Sweden.

Because there was only a 20% difference between the materialism and proenvironmental scores for the U.S. and because Sweden scored higher than the U.S. for environmentalism, I believe that Sweden will show higher results for environmentalism and lower results for materialism than the U.S. While no past studies have used Australian participants for either survey, because Australia is second only to the U.S. in
the top consuming nation of the world, I believe that Australia will rank closer to the U.S. for the two surveys.

The following hypotheses are addressed in the current study:

1. There will be a significant difference among the three countries in environmental and materialistic attitudes with Sweden having higher environmental attitudes and lower materialistic attitudes than the United States and Australia.

2. There will be an overall negative correlation between environmental and materialistic attitudes for each materialism subscale.

3. There will be a much larger negative correlation between environmental and materialistic attitudes in Sweden than in the United States or Australia.

Method

Participants

Participants were undergraduate students from three countries: Australia, Sweden, and the United States. From Australia there were 129 students (59 male, 68 female, 2 unknown) from Griffith University. From Sweden there were 88 students (16 male, 70 female, 2 unknown) from Linkoping University. From the United States there were 162 students (49 male, 112 female, 1 unknown) from a small midwestern liberal arts college. Approximately 90 of the American students took part in the study to complete a requirement for an introductory psychology class. The remaining students from the United States and all of the students from Sweden and Australia voluntarily completed the surveys. Two participants' data, one female and one unknown gender, from Sweden were removed due to incomplete data.
Materials

A packet consisting of a cover sheet and two surveys was used for the study. The cover sheet explained that completing the two surveys would take approximately 10 minutes and was voluntary. It also explained that the surveys were anonymous and refusal to participate would not result in any penalty. At the bottom of the cover sheet, the person’s age and gender were requested.

The first survey was the New Environmental Paradigm, which contained 15 statements about the earth’s environment where participants rated each statement on a 5-point Likert scale (Dunlap & Van Liere, 2000). The survey contained statements such as, “We are approaching the limit of the number of people the earth can support.”

The second survey was the Richens and Dawson’s Materialism Scale (Richens & Dawson, 1992), which included statements that were divided into three subscales where, once more, participants were instructed to rate each statement on a 5-point Likert scale (Richens & Dawson, 1992). The success subscale contained six statements such as, “I like to own things that impress people.” The centrality subscale contained seven statements, one of them being, “I usually buy only the things I need,” and the happiness subscale contained five statements, one example being, “I’d be happier if I could afford to buy more things.” The surveys that were given to the participants in Sweden were translated into Swedish and back translated into English for accuracy. The students in Australia and the United States received the surveys in their original English.

Procedure

All of the surveys were completed in group settings ranging from approximately 25 to 130 students. The surveys were handed out at the end of a class period in both
Sweden and Australia, with approximately 30 students in each of the three Swedish classrooms and 129 students in the one Australian classroom. Approximately 100 of the surveys in the United States were handed out at the beginning of several classes while approximately 60 were completed outside of class time in two sessions. The Swedish participants were asked by their professor, who was fluent in Swedish and English, if they would fill out two surveys that assessed environmental and materialistic attitudes. In Australia and the United States, either the professor of the class or the experimenter asked participants if they would fill out the two surveys dealing with environmental and materialistic attitudes. After everyone in the group handed in the completed surveys, the experimenter debriefed and thanked the participants for completing the surveys.

Results

Reliability

A reliability analysis on the environmental scale and the three materialistic subscales showed that all four scales were reliable. For the environmental scale an alpha of .81 was attained \((N=370)\). For the materialistic scale, the success subscale had an alpha = .74 \((N=375)\), the centrality subscale had an alpha= .72 \((N=372)\), and the happiness subscale had an alpha= .74 \((N= 374)\).

Country scale differences

Table 1 shows the means and standard deviations for each country with regards to the environmental and materialistic surveys. Recall that hypothesis one stated that the U.S. would differ significantly from Sweden with regards to environmentalism and the three materialism subscales. A significant difference was found between the U.S. and Sweden for the environmental survey, \(t(248) = 5.46, p <.05\), with Sweden scoring higher.
on the survey, and the success subscales of the materialistic survey, \( t(246) = -2.5, p < .05 \), with the U.S. scoring higher on the survey, which supported the hypothesis. No significant difference was found between the U.S. and Sweden for the centrality subscale, \( t(246) = .43, \text{n.s.} \) and the happiness subdivision, \( t(246) = -1.29, \text{n.s.} \) of the materialistic survey. A significant difference was also found between the U.S. and Australia for the environmental survey, \( t(289, N = 291) = 7.9, p < .001 \), with Australia scoring higher, the success subscale, \( t(289, N = 291) = -2.26, p < .05 \), with the U.S. scoring higher, and the centrality subscale, \( t(289, N = 291) = -2.08, p < .05 \) of the materialistic survey, with the U.S. scoring higher. No significant difference was found between the U.S. and Australia for the happiness subscale, \( t(289, N = 291) = .98, \text{n.s.} \) of the materialistic survey. Because Australia significantly differed from the U.S. on three of the four scales, the findings did not support the hypothesis.

Scale Correlations

Recall that hypothesis two claimed that overall, there would be a negative correlation between environmentalism and each of the three materialism subscales. The hypothesis was supported; across all countries significant negative correlations were found between environmental attitudes and the success, \( r = -.24, p < .05 \), and centrality, \( r = -.17, p = < .05 \), materialism subscales. A significant negative correlation was not found, however, between environmental attitudes and the happiness materialism subscale, \( r = -.08, \text{n.s.} \).

The correlation values of environmentalism with each materialism subscale, for each country, can be seen in Table 2. For the United States, there is no correlation between environmental attitudes and any of the materialistic attitudes- success, centrality,
and happiness. For Sweden, there is a significant negative correlation between environmental attitudes and the centrality subdivision of materialism, however, no correlations are found between environmental attitudes and the success and happiness subdivisions of materialism. For Australia, there is a significant negative correlation between environmental attitudes and the success and centrality subdivisions of materialism, but no correlation is found between environmental attitudes and the happiness subdivision of materialism.

**Relationship Between Environmentalism and Materialism**

Recall that hypothesis three claimed that the three countries would differ from each other with regards to environmental and materialistic attitudes. Three multiple regression analyses were conducted – one for each materialism subscale. Each analysis examined the relationship between environmentalism and the materialism subscale, contrasting the scores of the U.S. and Australia and the U.S. and Sweden on the materialism scale, and determined whether the relationship between materialism and environmentalism varied for each country comparison. The beta values for each analysis are provided in Table 3.

For material success, when controlling for the other variables in the model, there was a significant negative relationship with environmentalism, mirroring the correlational findings. Second, there was no significant difference between the U.S. and Sweden or between the U.S. and Australia on material success. Third, the relationship between environmentalism and material success was not different for the U.S. and Sweden; however, a significant difference was found in the relationship between environmentalism and material success in the U.S. and Australia. The relationship
between material success and environmentalism was more negative in Australia than in the U.S. For Australians, high scores for material success, were associated with lower environmentalism scores than for Americans.

For the second analysis with material centrality, overall as environmentalism increased material centrality decreased. Again, no significant difference was found between the U.S. and Sweden and the U.S. and Australia. There were also no significant interactions between environmentalism and the U.S. and Sweden and the U.S. and Australia.

For the third analysis with material happiness, overall as environmentalism increased material happiness decreased. However, as opposed to the first two subdivisions of materialism there was a significant difference between the U.S. and Sweden on material happiness and a borderline significant difference between the U.S. and Australia on material happiness. However, there were no significant interactions between environmentalism and material happiness with regards to the U.S. and Sweden and the U.S. and Australia.

Discussion

Recent surveys such as the “State of the Planet Survey” (Dunlap, Gallup & Gallup, 1993) have demonstrated widespread citizen concern for environmental issues in many countries, and the results of the current study have replicated this finding that overall, there is environmental concern in the U.S., Sweden and Australia. Seventy percent of the respondents from the U.S. in the current study scored a four or a five on the proenvironmental statements of the NEP. Seventy-nine percent of the Swedes scored either a three, four, or a five with 5 being the most pro-environmental and 81% of the
Australians scored a four or a five on the NEP. The results of the current study for the U.S. are also similar to past studies that have used the NEP. Scott and Willits (1994) found that an average of 71% of respondents agreed (scored a four or five) with the pro-environmental statements of the NEP. Few studies have used the NEP in Sweden, however, the results for those studies are similar to the results of the current study. Widegren (1998) found that 81% of respondents in Sweden either agreed or strongly agreed for pro-environmental statements. No publications that used the NEP to access environmental attitudes on an Australian sample was found.

The results of the study also showed relatively low materialistic attitudes among the three countries. Overall, a negative correlation was found between environmentalism and the success and centrality subdivisions of materialism. As environmental attitudes went up materialistic attitudes in these categories went down. However, looking within each country, in the U.S. there was no correlation between environmentalism and materialism, while in Sweden there was a negative correlation between environmentalism and the centrality subscale of materialism, and in Australia there was a negative correlation among environmentalism and the success and centrality subscales of materialism. The results also showed that the United States had significantly lower environmental attitudes than Sweden and Australia and significantly higher success materialism attitudes than Sweden and Australia. The U.S. also had significantly higher centrality materialism attitudes than Australia.

Richins and Dawson (1992) found that an average of 48% of respondents from the U.S. agreed with the materialistic statements for the success subdivision, 55% agreed with the materialistic statements for the centrality subdivision, and 52% agreed with the
materialistic statements for the happiness subdivision. The results of the current study had similar but slightly higher materialistic attitudes with respondents averaging a 2.53 (51%) out of 5, with five rating the most materialistic, for the success subdivision, 2.88 (58%) for the centrality subdivision, and a 2.64 (53%) for the happiness subdivision.

No publications that used the Richins and Dawson Materialistic Scale to access materialistic attitudes on a Swedish sample was found. Likewise, no publications that used the Richins and Dawson Materialistic Scale on an Australian sample was found. The current study has used both of the surveys in all three countries in order to compare results of the surveys among each other. Because no other publications that used the materialism scale was found, more studies using the Richins and Dawson Materialistic Scale in Sweden and Australia are needed to verify the current study’s findings.

**Attitudes vs. Behaviors**

Hines, Hungerford, and Tomera (1987) performed a meta-analytic review of 51 studies which compared environmental attitudes and behavior and found a moderate relationship between the two, $r = .37$, indicating that individuals who expressed higher levels of environmental concern were more likely to have reported engaging in such activities as recycling, petitioning, and energy conservation than those who expressed lower levels of concern for the environment. Vining and Ebreo (1992) also found that the difference between recyclers and nonrecyclers was a matter of the strength of the attitude held. These studies suggest that attitudes of environmental concern could be useful in predicting ecologically conscious consumer behavior.

However, Scott (1994) did not find a relationship between environmental attitudes and behavior. In his study, conducted in the U.S., of the 12 items measuring acceptance
of the NEP, only one fell short of receiving a pro-environmental choice by the majority of the respondents. Between 77% and 90% agreed that people must live in harmony with nature, that humans are severely abusing the environment, that when people interfere with nature it often produces disastrous results, and that the balance of nature is delicate and easily upset. More than 70% agreed that the earth has limited room and resources. With such favorable attitudes towards the environment, pro-environmental behaviors should be expected from the respondents.

However, results from a questionnaire that assessed environmental behavior showed that in only three of the 10 items did the majority of respondents indicate that they had engaged in the environmentally protective behavior. These three statements, which dealt with buying environmental friendly products, still had less than 60% of the respondents choosing the more pro-environmental statement. For the rest of the statements, which were statements addressing political behaviors in order to have a more pro-environmental community, less than half and in many cases less than a third of the respondents chose the more pro-environmental statement. Scott’s (1994) study showed no relationship at all between environmental attitudes and environmental behaviors, particularly political environmental behaviors, such as writing congressmen concerning pollution problems, in the U.S. Future research needs to be conducted that deals with the political aspects of the environment.

*Politics and the Environment*

Politics has had a major influence on environmental issues ever since environmental concern started to be expressed in the Unites States, Europe and Australia. Because there is a liberal-democratic representative political regime working in the three
continents, politics is important in trying to get bills and laws passed. In this type of 
regime, each citizen has a right to vote and a right to take part in politics. Periodic 
elections are held where the citizens vote for the candidate that they want to fill a 
particular office. Such a government is authorized to act on behalf of its citizens until the 
next election. Because the people of the country have a huge say in what actions the 
government partakes, people on different sides of an issue will try to persuade the 
government to take their side (Doyle & McEachern, 2001).

From the time that environmental concern started to be expressed in the United 
States, Europe, and Australia, those committed to economic growth were quick to deride 
its seriousness and relevance to politics. Others were eager to join in and mock the 
seriousness of both environmental issues and those who wanted to protect the 
environment. For example, John Maddox, editor of the journal Nature, used his faith in 
science to debunk claims about resource depletion, population growth, and the negative 

Environmental Politics in the United States

The case for environmental skepticism has not been without significant political 
consequences in the United States. Because environmentalism in the U.S. is not seen as a 
political dimension and because there is little critique of the existing political systems in 
the United States, the environmental movement is seen as apolitical. In the United States, 
Ronald Reagan campaigned to weaken environmental regulation in the name of free-
market, pro-business reform. As a result, his head of the Environmental Protection 
Agency was cited for contempt of Congress and the head of Superfund (a plan for
cleaning up contaminated waste sites) served a term in jail for trying to enact his vision of a regulation-free environmental policy. This influence continued with George Bush’s refusal to sign key protocols of the Rio Earth Summit and Clinton’s willingness to compromise a whole range of environmental measures only to help out the US economy in the name of economic efficiency (Doyle & McEachern, 2001). The environmental movement has fought many battles through the legal system; however, these are often single victories. There has not been an emergence of permanent administrative environmental response in the U.S. For example, the success of green parties in the United States is virtually non-existent, and there is no cabinet level portfolio in the national government. Still today with the election of George W. Bush to the presidency, the ‘greening’ of the U.S. is deteriorating. Through the U.S. government’s rejection of the Kyoto Protocol on climate change, it is now seen as returning to an opposed stance to environmental concern (Doyle & McEachern, 2001). The government’s involvement in the environment is much different, however in Sweden.

Environmental Politics in Sweden

A fairly high degree of environmental consciousness appears to be the rule rather than the exception in Sweden. Environmental questions are generally high on the agenda in the mass media, and the “Green Party” was recently voted back into parliament. Use of environmental taxes has remained a purely academic issue in Sweden until a few years ago. For about 20 years, Swedish economists had been proposing economic instruments as the basic approach for efficient environmental policy. Toward the end of the 1980’s this issue moved to the forefront of the political debate. Recently, it has significantly influenced practical policy in Sweden. Sweden’s government places taxes on beverage
Environmental Attitudes

Containers, fertilizers and pesticides, batteries, gasoline, kilometers driven, carbon dioxide, nitrogen oxide, among others. Deposit-refund systems have been employed to reclaim car hulks, beverage bottles, and aluminum cans (Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development [OECD], 1994).

Environmental Politics in Australia

Australia’s government seems to fit somewhere in the middle of the U.S. government and Sweden’s government when it comes to environmental issues. The environmental movement in Australia often operates alone as local action groups; however, sometimes they work in co-operation with state and national conservation organizations. These national environment organizations have forced governments to address certain environmental questions. For example, the environmental movement in South Australia was able to persuade the state government to introduce container deposit legislation in the early 1980s. Australian environmentalists also worked to rid the environment of harmful pesticides such as organochlorine. In 1989, both the state Labor government and the Liberal opposition gave commitments to banning organochlorines. This was due to environmental groups providing the government with information on the harmful effects of the pesticide. Environmental groups in Australia have often worked together with the government to stop harmful actions that are taken towards the environment (Hutton, 1999).

With the results of the current study finding both Australians and Swedes to be more environmental and less materialistic than Americans, more research needs to be done on explaining this finding. Future research on the political aspects of the environment in all three countries is needed to help explain the findings of this study.
Table 1

*Means and standard deviations for each country for each scale*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Environmentalism</th>
<th>Mat success</th>
<th>Mat centrality</th>
<th>Mat happiness</th>
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<td>SD</td>
<td>.44</td>
<td>.87</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td>.88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2.

Correlations between environmentalism and materialism subscales by country.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correlation with Environmentalism:</th>
<th>United States</th>
<th>Sweden</th>
<th>Australia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Materialism- Success</td>
<td>-.15</td>
<td>-.15</td>
<td>-.32***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materialism- Centrality</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>-.22*</td>
<td>-.27**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materialism- Happiness</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>-.17</td>
<td>-.17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* \( p < .05 \)

** \( p < .01 \)

*** \( p < .001 \)
Table 3

*Multiple Regression Analyses on Environmentalism and Country for Materialism*

**Subscales**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Betas for Material success</th>
<th>Betas for Material Centrality</th>
<th>Betas for Material Happiness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Environmental Orientation</td>
<td>-.24***</td>
<td>-.20***</td>
<td>-.13*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US vs. Sweden</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>-.09</td>
<td>.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US vs. Australia</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>-.15*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US Sweden x Environment</td>
<td>-.08</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US Australia x Environment</td>
<td>.16*</td>
<td>.116</td>
<td>.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F = 5.94***</td>
<td>F = 4.01**</td>
<td>F = 2.13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p < .05  
** p < .01  
*** p < .001
Bibliography


*Environment and Behavior, 30*, 75-100.