

Nordic Moral Climates: Value Continuities and Discontinuities in Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden

Ulla V. Bondeson



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Morality was a dominant theme in the 1990s, but concerns about morality seem omnipresent in the first years of the third millennium. The year 2002 witnessed the greatest corporate scandals ever seen in the United States, with immense impact financially and in human terms. Sex scandals were pervasive among Catholic priests in the United States, disrupting the lives of thousands of abused children. In Scandinavia, moral debates and scandals are of a smaller magnitude, and more often related to questions about the handling of money by politicians.

This volume takes an overarching look at the impact of such moral questions in the Nordic countries. Its approach is multi-disciplinarian, embracing philosophy, history, sociology, and political science. Based mainly upon a survey of representative samples in Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden, this unique study combines interview questions on crime and justice with moral questions concerning equality, confidence, tolerance, and also personal, social, religious, political, and national values. Bondeson first discusses the Nordic countries from a historical perspective and in statistical terms. She then presents interview data on the general sense of justice in Nordic countries, in particular exploring how much social and legal equality the Scandinavians have achieved in their welfare states. She touches upon criminal behavior and victimization, and discusses crime prevention and punishment. Bondeson also reviews the problems and methods of the study. Finally, she adds depth to the statistical analysis by using a number of indexes of morality. A trend analysis illustrates the stability of these attitudes over time.

Nordic Moral Climates is an original empirical study of moral values in Scandinavia. It is one of the few comprehensive studies on this subject conducted in any nation or group of nations. The book will be of great interest to criminologists, sociologists, and social theorists.

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