

A CROSS-CULTURAL LOOK AT CONSUMER VALUES: A NAVAJO VS. ANGLO COMPARISON

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Navajo and Anglo college students' scores from the List of Value (LOV) items were compared. Significant cultural differences were found for four of the eight items employed: sense of accomplishment, warm relationships with others, security, and self-respect. Significant differences were not observed in group values regarding sense of belonging, fun and enjoyment/excitement, being well-respected, nor self-fulfillment. Results are discussed and strategic marketing implications are offered.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, one of the basic tenets of our discipline has been that if marketers are to design, produce and deliver products and services that feature the attributes most valued by the consumer, marketers must first understand what consumers value in life. Such a consumer-oriented philosophy has not always been the prevailing approach to marketing. While Henry Ford undoubtedly recognized the consumer's desire for an inexpensive automobile, his attention to the details of customer needs may have been less well developed. Perhaps the following words, attributed to the pioneer of automobile assembly lines as he contemplated car buyers' choices when buying a Model T, best capture the essence of an era when the wants of the customer could be largely ignored: "You can have any color you want as long as it's black." It takes little creativity to imagine how such a marketing strategy would work in today's global marketplace featuring a dazzling array of comparable alternatives available to consumers in virtually every product or service category.

Indeed, from automobiles to soft drinks, marketers have embraced the concepts of customer orientation and market segmentation. For instance, to gain

advantage over the then market leading Ford Motor Company, General Motors offered five distinct products, each targeting a different segment of the car buying market: Chevrolet for the working class, Pontiac for the middle class, Buick for the affluent family-oriented buyer, Oldsmobile for the affluent seeking personal enjoyment, and Cadillac for the wealthy. In a similar fashion, in an attempt to gain even slight market share in the highly-profitable and extremely competitive soft drink market, Coca-Cola offers cola drinkers a wide variety of products: Coca-Cola Classic, Diet Coke, Caffeine-Free Coke, Caffeine Free Diet Coke, Cherry Coke, and so on.

Both marketing monoliths have recognized that different consumer segments value different product attributes or features. Subsequently, GM and Coca-Cola have developed versions of their products that offer specific benefits designed to appeal to and satisfy the needs of consumers in specific target markets. In short, by identifying the underlying values and needs of the various segments at which their marketing efforts are directed, GM and Coke have been able to develop very successful positioning strategies for each product in their product mixes.

In today's truly global marketplace, the effective identification of consumer values and the subsequent development of appropriate marketing strategies are of paramount importance. The dynamic nature of the demographic makeup of the United States aptly illustrates this point. As of 1990

some 25 percent of the U.S. population was of African, Asian, Hispanic, or American Indian descent (Rossman 1994). Impressive growth in the number of ethnic minorities in this country is expected in the coming years. It has been predicted that within the next fifty years, approximately 23 million Asian Americans, 87 million Hispanics, and nearly 5 million American Indians will live in the United States (i.e., Shumway and Jackson 1995; Postal 1996; Santoro 1996).

Along with increasing cultural diversity comes diversity in consumer values and needs. For instance, nearly twenty-five years ago researchers found evidence of cross-cultural differences in shopper orientations (Boone, Kurtz, Johnson, and Bonno 1974). More recently, it has been shown that for products and services ranging from automobiles to higher education differences in the product attributes that consumers value and/or need do indeed exist between cultural groups (i.e., Bristow and Asquith 1998, 1999; Bristow and Amyx 1998; Amyx and Bristow 1999).

Such findings are consistent with the observations of Shim and Gehrt (1996), who described the cultural makeup of the United States as an "ethnic mosaic," and of Panko (1997) who referred to this country's cultural diversity as "America's rainbow." Such demographic labels suggest that cultural groups in the United States, including Navajo Indians, actively seek to maintain their ethnic identity and to preserve their cultural traditions and values (French, Jordan and Tempest 1990). Further, as discussed in the Marketing Lens section of this manuscript, with those cultural traditions and values come the possibility and even the likelihood of very divergent consumer experiences, expectations, product expertise and knowledge, and, ultimately, consumer perceptions (Shim 1996; Muller 1996; Bristow and Asquith 1998). Those differences, in the final analysis, translate into cultural differences in consumer behavior.

When the concepts of cultural diversity, cultural differences in consumers' values and needs, and subsequent consumer differences in the marketplace are considered as a package, marketing managers striving to successfully compete in the global arena

are faced with a fundamental question: "What are the key values and needs of the consumers in the cultural groups included in our target markets?" The remainder of this manuscript presents a study designed to empirically investigate that question by using the List of Values (LOV), developed by Kahle and his associates (1983; 1985; 1986), to identify and compare the key values of two distinct cultural groups: Navajo Indian college students and Anglo college students.

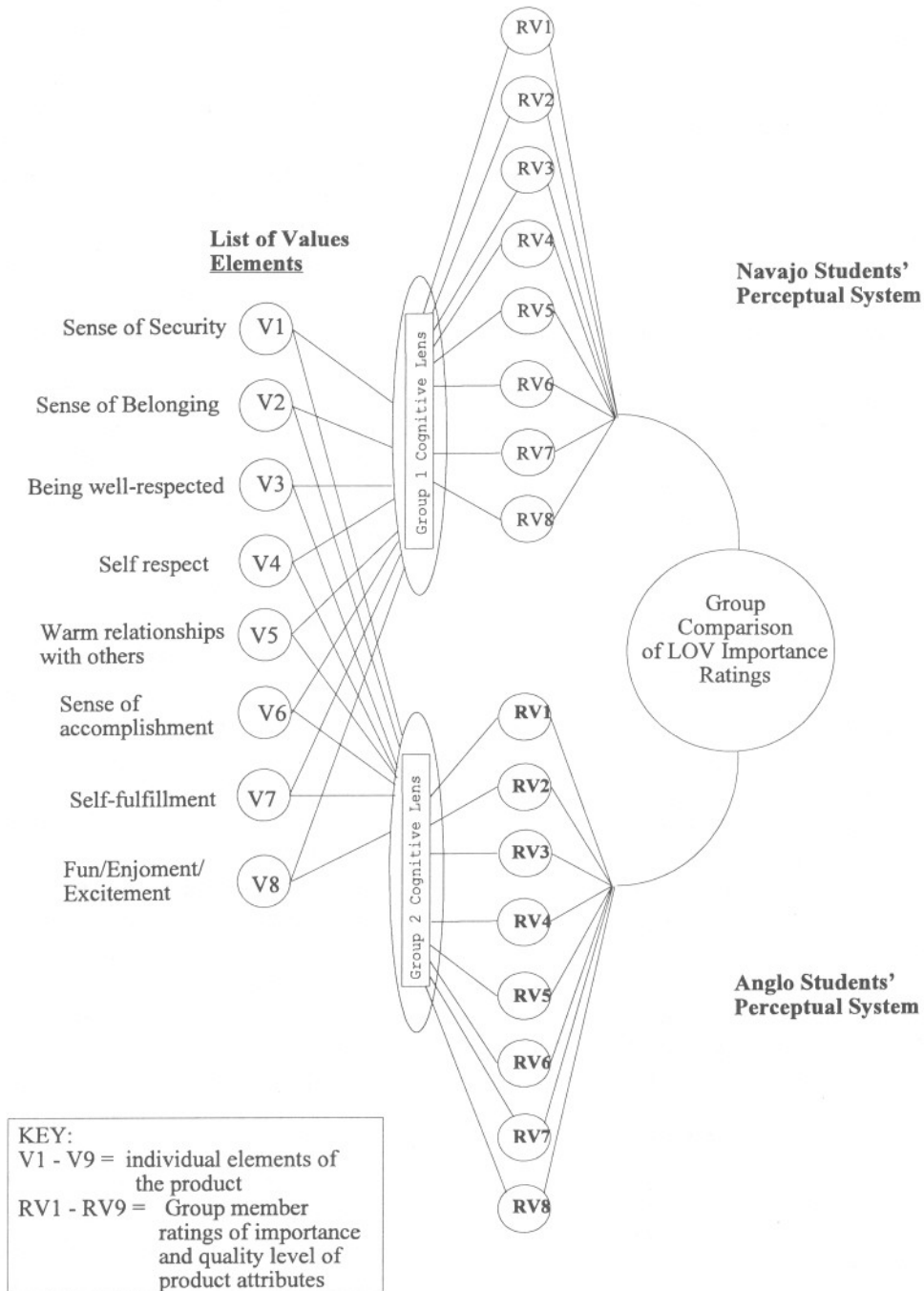
THE STUDY

The focal point of the research was the comparison of consumer group responses to the eight values comprising the List of Values (LOV). Those eight values are security, sense of belonging, being well respected, having self-respect, warm relationships with others, and a sense of accomplishment, self-fulfillment, and fun and enjoyment in life/excitement. As presented in the following section of this paper, one could reasonably predict that consumers from different cultures would place differing levels of value on the various elements of their environment due to divergent cultural experiences, expectations, and traditions.

THE MARKETING LENS MODEL

The Marketing Lens Model (MLM) is rooted in the work of Brunswik (1952) and has frequently been used as a theoretical base for the prediction of different perspectives between cultural groups (Bristow, Mowen, and Krieger 1994; Licatta, Mowen and Chakraborty (1995); Bristow and Amyx 1998). The MLM is based upon the idea that due to idiosyncratic experiences, different levels of knowledge, diversity of social or cultural values and/or expectations, it is likely that different groups of consumers would have predictably divergent perceptions of the world they share. In short, one's experiences serve as a unique cognitive lens through which a consumer's environment is viewed and interpreted. As depicted in Figure 1, the MLM consists of three distinct components. The left side of the model consists of environmental, quantified features or attributes of the product.

FIGURE 1
The Marketing Lens Model



The second component of the MLM consists of stakeholder groups' cognitive lenses (i.e., stakeholder experiences, cultural traditions, cultural values) that may account for discrepancies between stakeholder groups' perceptions. The third element of the model (the right side) includes stakeholder perceptions and evaluations of product attributes.

In the current research, the primary objective was to determine if significantly different cognitive lenses were being employed by the two culturally diverse consumer groups studied. That is, did the members of each consumer group value different elements from the List of Values?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In an effort to develop a diverse sample of participants in the study, the data collections were conducted on various days of the week and at various times of day over a period of several days. A total of 397 students (152 Navajo Indians and 245 Anglos) from two universities, one located in the upper Midwest and the other in the Southwest region of the United States, participated in the study. The student sample was drawn from a variety of academic disciplines within each university. The eight elements of the LOV (security, sense of belonging, being well respected, self-respect, warm relationships with others, sense of accomplishment, self-fulfillment, and fun and enjoyment in life/excitement) were included in a survey instrument that was administered to students during regularly scheduled class times at each of the two university campuses included in the study. As in previous research using the LOV, the eight elements were written into rating statements on a 9-point Likert scale with response categories ranging from very unimportant (1) to very important (9). Several demographic questions were included in the survey.

RESULTS

Descriptive statistics, Chi-square analyses, and univariate analysis of variance procedures were used to test the following hypothesis:

- H₁:** Cultural differences exist in the level of importance consumers attach to elements of the List of Values.

Results: Hypothesis Supported. Hypothesis H1 was based upon the predicted impact of cultural experiences, expectations, and knowledge upon consumer perceptions of the identified attributes of the educational product. Although the two cultures studied consisted of college students enrolled in universities in the U.S., there were some striking differences. Consider the following demographic comparisons between the two groups. The average annual per capita income for Navajos was \$3572 in 1995 and \$4100 in 1996 (Deyhle 1995; *The Economist* 1996), compared to \$19,621 in 1996 and \$20,425 in 1997 for Anglos (U.S. Department of Commerce Census Bureau). In the year 2000, statistics showed that average per capita income for Navajos was \$5,600 and that more than half of all Navajos on the reservation lived below the federal poverty level. Records also show that only about 22 percent of Navajo households on the reservation have telephone service and that fewer than half of the homes have complete kitchens (*The Independent* 2000).

Value differences between the Navajo people and Anglos have also been documented. For example, traditionally, Anglos have used school credentials, individual careers and economic prosperity as benchmarks of success. As reported by Deyhle (1995, 408), success on the Navajo reservation has been evaluated on the basis of "intact extended familial relations, where individual jobs and educational success are used to enhance the family and the community and aggressive individualism is suppressed for the cooperation of the group." Further, a central tenet of the Navajo culture emphasizes that an individual does his or her best but does not seek to "outshine" another (McWhirter and Ryan 1991). Many American Indians, including the Navajo, value humility, respect for elders, and concern for group harmony (Chiang 1993).

It is important to note that the cultural and economic differences cited above may also serve as a source of conflict within the Navajo culture and society. While the cultural traditions and values of the Navajo are important to both young and old, as many Navajo youth prepare for careers outside the reservation they struggle to blend the traditions of their culture with those of the Anglo world (Dawson

1994). Navajo elders may live in the traditional way, but young Navajos seek to assimilate and move into the mainstream of American society (McWhirter and Ryan 1991). In short, the youth of the Navajo nation might be expected to share many cultural values with their Anglo counterparts and might even place added importance on certain values as they seek balance between the two cultures in which they live.

Based upon such cultural and economic differences, the researchers expected to find significant value differences between the two cultural groups included in the study. As predicted in hypothesis H1, univariate analysis of variance procedures revealed that Navajo and Anglo college students differed significantly on the level of importance they attached to four of the eight LOV elements. As shown in Table 1, those four LOV elements included: (1) sense of accomplishment ($p < .007$); (2) warm relationships with others ($p < .039$); (3) security ($p < .031$); and (4) self-respect ($p < .05$). The group differences for each of the four LOV elements are discussed in more detail below.

Sense of Accomplishment. Interestingly, and quite surprisingly at first glance, Navajo students in the study placed more importance upon this LOV element ($\bar{x} = 8.58$) than did their Anglo counterparts ($\bar{x} = 7.27$). When one considers the Navajo culture's emphasis on communal well-being and not individual accomplishment, this finding seems somewhat counter-intuitive. However, further consideration reveals that such a finding may not be totally unexpected. The reader will recall that Navajo tradition encourages individual accomplishment for the good of the family. When this aspect of the Navajo culture is coupled with the fact that more and more Navajo youth are striving to find their place in mainstream American society (McWhirter and Ryan 1991; Dawson 1994), the finding that a sense of accomplishment was an important value for Navajo students is not so surprising. It may be that by attending college and preparing themselves to participate in careers outside of the reservation and the traditional Navajo ways, the participants in the study were actually supporting a basic Navajo value of better providing for their extended families and thus contributing to the good of the family as a whole.

Warm Relationships With Others. Of the four LOV elements where significant cultural differences were observed, warm relationships with others was the only one where Anglo students ($\bar{x} = 8.18$) scored higher than did Navajo students ($\bar{x} = 7.68$). Once again, the traditions and lifestyles of the two cultures may provide insight about this finding. Unlike the Navajo family, with an emphasis on a family circle that directly includes grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins, the "typical" Anglo family is much more likely to focus on the nuclear family consisting of parents and children. It may well be that Navajo students, while in college, might rely on relationships with members of their extended family. Conversely, during their college years, Anglo students, with their smaller family nucleus, might be forced to seek social relationships outside the family circle. Thus, during their college experience the Navajo participant might have a "built-in" social network, while the Anglo student might be faced with the task of developing new social connections and thus place added value on this element of the LOV.

Security. Navajo students placed significantly more importance on the value of security than did the Anglo students (Navajo $\bar{x} = 8.14$; Anglo $\bar{x} = 7.84$). When this result and the results regarding the LOV element of warm relationships with others are considered together, interesting interpretations arise. For example, the researchers suggest that during their college experience Anglo students might expect to develop new social relationships outside of their nuclear family, and Navajo students might be more likely to depend upon their extended family as a source of social relations. If such is the case, the extended family for the Navajo students might also serve to provide a sense of security and support.

Given such an interpretation, one might conclude that Navajo students could be predicted to place less importance on the value of security than might Anglo students. When faced with questions and concerns about college life, for example, the Navajo student could turn to his or her grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins, possibly living under the same roof as the student, for comfort, solace, guidance and reassurance. The Anglo student might not have the luxury of such a readily available network of

TABLE 1
Level of Importance Attached to List of Values Elements: Anova Results

List of Value Element	Source	SS	df	MS	F	p<
Sense of Accomplishment	between	8.521	1	8.521	7.314	.007
	within	460.179	395	1.165		
	total	468.700	396			
Sense of Belonging	between	1.046	1	1.046	.352	.553
	within	1173.845	395	2.972		
	total	1174.892	396			
Fun and Enjoyment/Excitement	between	.161	1	.161	.070	.791
	within	908.197	395	2.299		
	total	908.358	396			
Warm Relationships With Others	between	8.097	1	8.097	4.299	.039
	within	744.004	395	1.884		
	total	752.101	396			
Being Well-Respected	between	1.039	1	1.039	.540	.463
	within	760.316	395	1.925		
	total	761.355	396			
Security	between	8.523	1	8.523	4.691	.031
	within	717.568	395	1.817		
	total	726.091	396			
Self-Fulfillment	between	.208	1	.208	.115	.735
	within	714.799	395	1.810		
	total	715.008	396			
Self-Respect	between	5.544	1	5.544	3.840	.050
	within	570.260	395	1.444		
	total	575.804	396			

support. Thus, it might be argued that it should be the Anglo students, rather than the Navajo, who placed more importance upon the value of security.

However, two important facts must be considered in the interpretation of these findings. First, many of the Navajo participants were first-generation college students and as such had little direct family history or experience to help ease their qualms about attending college and, perhaps more importantly, about breaking with many of the traditions of their culture. Secondly, many of the Navajo students faced very different career decisions and related life situations than did many of the Anglo students. More specifically, the Anglo students once again *expected* to enter the job force in fields directly related to their area of study and did not *expect* to have to enter into a culture that was in many ways foreign to them in order to do so. It is likely that Navajo students, knowing that many of the jobs on the reservation were related to the petroleum, mining, and tourism

industries, expected upon graduation to move off the reservation, away from their extended families in order to obtain employment related to their college degrees. Accordingly, the Navajo students, acknowledging their imminent departure from a close-knit extended family, and an environment that focused upon the traditions and culture, might have been expected to attach greater importance to the LOV element of security.

Self-Respect. The Navajo students attached significantly more importance to the value of self-respect ($\bar{x} = 8.53$) than did the Anglo students in the study ($\bar{x} = 8.19$). While no specific reasons for this finding were evidenced in the current study, the works of Dawson (1994), Deyhle (1995), and others provide the foundation for interesting postulations. For example, it has been well documented in the disciplines of anthropology and social work that many Navajo youth are struggling to bridge the gap between the traditions of their native culture and

those of mainstream America. The young people on the Navajo reservation are often torn between a strong desire to preserve their traditional heritage and an increasingly strong urge to gain the knowledge, skills, insights and understanding necessary to adapt to and comfortably participate in mainstream society (Bristow and Amyx 1999; Cantrall, Pete, and Fields 1990).

It is also evident that in order to achieve their goal of creating new opportunities for themselves outside the boundaries of the reservation, many Navajo young people are taking two fundamental steps. First, more and more American Indians, some 100,000 as of 1990 and nearly 140,000 as of 1997 (Hodgkinson 1992; *Digest of Education Statistics* 1999), are attending college. Subsequently, in order to pursue careers related to their college degrees, more and more Navajo college graduates are forced to move away from their homes and extended families on the Navajo reservation (*The Economist* 1996).

It may well be that as they are faced with the challenges and rigors of college life, and as they strive to successfully enter and compete in jobs and careers in mainstream society, many Navajo students may view the educational experience as a way to further their self-respect. In sum, by showing themselves and others that they can be successful in their career endeavors, the Navajo student may be able to increase his or her self-respect.

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

This study provides several intriguing implications for marketing managers. As the cultural diversity of the United States grows, and as the marketing arena truly does become global, the diversity of consumer values and needs are of central importance to marketers. Each of the African American, Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Rim, and American Indian consumer groups in the United States offer marketers meaningful market segments with compelling size, significant income, and billions of dollars in consumer spending each year. However, in order to effectively satisfy the needs and desires of those culturally diverse consumer segments and to be better able to develop products, services, and marketing mixes designed to satisfy those needs and desires,

marketers must strive to identify the underlying values of each of those groups.

This study served as a starting point for the further development of marketers' knowledge and understanding of the values of the Navajo Indian consumer. Using the Marketing Lens Model as a theoretical base, the researchers investigated cultural differences in the importance Navajo and Anglo college students attached to each of the eight elements of the List of Values.

The study provided convincing evidence of distinct value differences between Navajo and Anglo participants. More specifically, Navajo students attached significantly more importance to the values of sense of accomplishment, security, and self-respect than did their Anglo counterparts. Conversely, Anglo students placed greater importance on the value of warm relationships with others than did Navajo students.

The implications for marketing managers are compelling and suggest that marketing managers targeting Navajo college students in the United States would be ill-advised to employ Anglo-directed marketing strategies. Based on the findings, some initial decision making ideas for marketing strategy are offered. With regards to promotion strategy, the results of the study suggest that different advertising strategies might be called for when targeting Navajo Indians rather than Anglo consumers. For instance, a clothing ad directed towards Anglo college students might portray students wearing the fashion items at parties and social gatherings, where the theme of the message might be building social connections and "fitting-in" with others. When targeting Navajo college students, the objectives of the advertiser might be better met by depicting students wearing the clothing in after-work, career related situations where the underlying theme might emphasize life and family success and a "be-all-you-can-be" theme.

The results of the research also provide interesting implications for personal selling activities directed at Navajo versus Anglo clients. For example, when creating a sales presentation for Anglo clients the sales professional might build his or her

presentation around key product features, advantages and benefits (FABs) to be realized by the client. While those same FABs might be emphasized in a sales presentation to the Navajo buyer, the astute salesperson could also tailor the presentation to emphasize how the product or service would help the consumer to provide for familial well-being. Further, the salesperson could use imagery to show the Navajo client how the product might enhance his or her sense of accomplishment and ability to achieve goals.

This study also has implications for store atmospherics. Retailers need to be sensitive to the unique circumstances facing many Navajo students who may have limited experience with buying consumer goods related to a career path outside the traditional Navajo community. Marketers should enhance the Navajo student's ability to efficiently move through the entire consumer decision making process by tailoring store atmospherics. Retailers may set an acceptable comfort level by blending traditional Navajo customs with modern Anglo-oriented merchandise through music, colors, lighting, and building decor. The creation of the right balance of traditional and non-traditional atmospherics will be a challenging task for managers, but neither aspect can realistically be ignored as the younger Navajo customers seek to bridge the gap between the old ways and the new while gaining respect in both "worlds."

Retailers targeting Navajo consumers may need to pay particular attention to the problem recognition stage of the consumer decision-making process by creating informative point of purchase displays that would compel customers to initiate the buying process where they otherwise might not. For example, purchasing the proper professional clothing and accessories for interviewing is an area where young Navajo students may need extra assistance given their lack of familiarity or minimal contact with more mainstream professional reference group members. During the search for alternatives phase, retailers may further assist Navajo customers by being strategically located for convenience. By being a one-stop-shopping outlet in a conspicuous location near concentrations of Navajo customers, marketers may offset otherwise limited alternatives for

shopping and bring the retailer to a top-of-mind awareness level in the Navajo's consideration set.

Marketers need to consider adapting the "product" element to the Navajo customers' unique value system. Levitt (1983) offered that most customers simply want good quality products at a fair price that offer superior benefits and value to everyone. While the Navajos would be no exception here, the product benefits should also reflect their desire to attain a sense of accomplishment, self respect, and security in both the Anglo and Navajo communities. For example, product benefits for automobiles would not focus on the sporty, sexy, or ostentatious aesthetics of the car design which are so commonly seen in the mainstream media. Product appeals to Navajo consumers' desire for styling should be somewhat understated while maintaining an air of acceptance in the Anglo community. For example, Ford Motor Company's claim that the Taurus is the most popular car in the U.S. may have an appropriate appeal, given its wide spread acceptance by a large audience while having features that would accommodate both immediate and extended family members with extra room and driving comfort. Ultimately, marketers probably should emphasize function over form where Navajo customers are concerned.

Similarly, services targeted to Navajo consumers need to emphasize the functional benefits that may accrue to their family members. That is, the need to be accepted in two very different "worlds" may translate to value added benefits that extend to additional family members. Good examples of past service offerings that would offer such benefits are MCI's "Friends and Family" promotion or more recently, the Southwest Airline's "Friends Fly Free" campaign.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY AND FUTURE RESEARCH

A major limitation of the current research was that only college students were used in the analysis. While college students represent a significant segment of the consumer market and impact marketers' efforts given students' current and future earnings capacity and susceptibility to persuasion,

future research should also include a more diverse sample within each culture for greater generalizability.

A further limitation of this study was that no specific measures were made with regard to the elements of the marketing and promotional mixes. All marketing implications were based solely on measurements using the LOV Scale items. Future researchers should consider combining the LOV Scale with specific measurements of attitudes and behavior with regard to media usage, advertising, product packaging and branding, use of services, pricing preferences, and retail issues. Finally, though the findings presented here may not apply to the other, larger ethnic minority groups in the United States, they are suggestive of marketers' needs to study and evaluate the differences between these and the "majority."

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