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Abstract

Social values and consumption values, although intricately linked, are not exactly the same. Nonetheless, marketers contend that the central premise of social value monitoring is that, if one understands people's values, one can better predict how they will behave in the marketplace. This paper challenges this assumption because policy analysts and industries are relying on both the consumer and social value profiles at a time when society and the marketplace are undergoing a profound transition. Using Canada as a case study, the general societal values of consumers identified by pollsters are discussed relative to nine consumer values espoused by marketers. This comparative analysis suggests that many of Canadians' alleged consumer values seem to be in direct conflict with their espoused social values. This conclusion implies that the validity of using social values as a proxy variable or predictor for consumer values needs to be examined by researchers and policy analysts. Also, future dialogue needs to occur about adhering to the convention of monitoring social and consumer values using public opinion polls while not marrying this process with public judgement dialogues. Finally, other countries are urged to examine the situation in their marketplace so as to facilitate cross-cultural comparative analysis of consumer marketplace values.

Introduction

A country's national character and cultural values have much to do with the values that will develop among consumers in that culture. Indeed, marketers contend that the central premise of social value monitoring is that, if one understands people's values, one can better predict how they will behave in the marketplace.¹ Consider that the popular Yankelovich Monitor© provides a *social values perspective* to help American marketers develop tactics and strategies for their *consumer* products and services. Although some argue that understanding underlying social value shifts contributes to understanding current and future consumer behaviour,² the practice of using social values as a proxy for consumer behaviour needs to be questioned.

Values are mental pictures of important needs and goals and affect how one thinks about and sees oneself, what one wants out of life and what one is willing to trade off to get something in return. Some values reflect preferred states of being or feeling while other values reflect preferred ways of behaving. Consumer values relate to *individual or cohort* behaviour before, during and after market transactions. Social values reflect the core of an *entire culture's* mindset shared by a society. They are related in that social or cultural values are seen to act as justification for acquiring goods and services and to stimulate interest in, desire for, acceptance of, patronage of or the actual purchase of goods and services.^{2,3} The two value systems are related but not mutually inclusive - one relates to individuals or cohorts in their consumption role while the other pertains to the collective behaviour and character of an entire culture or society.

This paper tenders a case study of general societal values relative to consumer values in the Canadian context and illustrates that a value shift is occurring in the marketplace and in Canadian society in general. Despite many parallels, this analysis reveals paradoxes or contradictions between espoused Canadian social and Canadian consumer values. This discrepancy suggests that relying on social values to predict consumer behaviour may not be inherently valid. Furthermore, neither of these value systems remain static; they evolve over time,² as was evidenced in this analysis. The paper concludes that researchers must carefully analyze these value shifts before developing strategies based on assumed changes and assumed parallels between social and consumer values. The approach used in this paper can serve as a template by which other researchers can conduct comparative analyses of social and consumer values in their own countries and between countries.

Social value system of Canadians

Drawing from a series of representative, national studies between 1975 and 1995, Bibby⁴ maintains that three quarters of Canadians feel that social values in Canada are changing for the worse. He determined that Canadians value, in descending order: honesty, reliability, kindness, friendliness, a concern for others (compassion), politeness (civility), forgiveness and generosity. The weight placed on most of these values has remained constant from 1985 except for honesty, reliability, politeness (civility) and forgiveness which declined in value in 1995. Canadians are now characterized by an increasing emphasis on the individual and the idea that truth is relative. He blames the decline of forgiveness on the emphasis on zero tolerance (see Table 1).

Gregg⁵, on the other hand, found evidence of a growing optimism in Canada across all generations. Citing the 1998 Macleans's/CBC News Poll, he maintains that Canadians across all generations are committed to liberal social values meaning they are more accepting of diversity in lifestyles, mores and social behaviour. They value: honesty; universality in education, health care, and welfare; voluntarism; charity; entrepreneurship; civility; tolerance; and concern for the welfare of the less fortunate. What is different is that Canadians are being nudged towards considering alternative means to realize these values given the trauma of recessions, the loss of physical, material and spiritual well-being, the growing loss of ethical and moral standards, and the loss of deference to and faith in traditional authority (see also Peters⁶).

Reid⁷ maintains that Canadians still value mutual trust, civility and community responsibility, sharing, inclusiveness, voluntarism, fairness and equality but that these values are being threatened by the dynamics and mean-spiritedness of the new economy. "Self-interest is replacing collective responsibility, mistrust is unseating confidence in public institutions [and authority] and optimism about our collective future is declining" (323-324).

Chidley⁸, citing the 1998 Macleans's/CBC News Poll, which polled a representative national sample of Canadians, notes that Canadians value, in descending order: being a good parent, having a fulfilling job, being in a good relationship, being physically fit, having a healthy sex life, living according to a strict moral code, developing a spiritual side and making lots of money (with percentages ranging in descending order, from 98% for parenting to 58% for making money). He holds that Canadians have a deep concern for family life, value social tolerance but are sceptical and cynical about government's ability to operate within its means. Younger Canadians are confident in today's youth and respectful of elders. However, older Canadians feel they have nothing they can teach youth and feel blamed for today's situation.

Citing the results of the 1986 Maclean's/Decima Poll, Johnson⁹ notes that Canadians consider social class barriers surmountable. An incredible 90% of Canadians placed themselves in the middle class (41% in the upper middle and 48% in the lower middle class). There is still a strong value and desire for upward mobility and people feel that individual hard work and enterprise should be rewarded with a change in social status. Unfortunately, only half of the 43% of Canadians who said they wanted to change their status believed they would be able to, blaming this on the government and the economy (lack of faith in authority). Canadians are redefining the traditional middle class which implies that middle class consumers are a group in transition. The emerging middle class is comprised of achievers who like to experiment with life. They live fragmented life styles and have a weaker collective spirit.¹⁰ The rest are slipping into the lower social classes. Reid⁷ concurs that the middle class is shrinking due to the loss of jobs in the new economy. The gap between rich and poor is getting larger due to cutbacks to social programs and downsizing strategies in the public and private sectors leaving fewer consumers in the middle class. As he eloquently puts it, "job anxiety [in the form of declining take home income and increased job insecurity] is poking at the lives of Canada's disillusioned middle class" (232). "The middle class is desperately trying to cling to the middle of the ladder, despite all the broken rungs. Its members... spend a lot of time trying to determine who is responsible for doing them in" (265). A recent report by Health Canada¹¹ also flags heightened insecurity in the Canadian population due to accelerating frequency of transitions and the fears over employment stability and threats to public health and public security.

Table 1 profiles the collection of broader social values captured by the five pollsters, values that sustain the social order, social capital, and family and community strength of the Canadian population. Table 1 illustrates a lack of consensus on the ranking of these values which depict the character of Canadian society and the narration showed that each pollster has different explanations for, what appears to be, a subtle social value shift. There is a well documented decline in social capital in Canada¹¹ defined as the features of communities which make them more productive: trust, communication, teamwork and reciprocity.¹² The concurrent shift in the consumer value system is discussed in the next section. **Insert Table 1 about here**

Consumer value system of Canadians

Canadian consumers, as a whole, are described as being less materialistic, more in control, less respectful of authority, still committed to a strong (if somewhat changing) work ethic, and are more socially conscious than in the past. Canadian consumers still resist change, have a moderate aversion to technology, prefer quality and durability, and value health and fitness. They value education, a rational and conservative approach to problem solving, and still do not like to take risks.^{4,13,14} In their effort to target specific consumer markets, marketers draw heavily on their interpretations of demographic data as well as their own market research to determine the values of consumer of the 1990's. Most popular Canadian marketers tendered very similar messages, with some discrepancies.^{13,14,15} Their collective ideas were used to shape the profile of the Canadian consumer values system presented in the following

discussion. When relevant, their views were augmented with data from the recent social value polls cited earlier in the paper. Nine consumer values are profiled, in no particular order.

Streamlining

First, consumers value streamlining, meaning consumers feel they can do anything they want to do but they cannot do everything. They feel they have to set priorities and let go of some of the non-essentials. They recognize that there are scarce resources and a need for convenience.¹⁴ The 1990's consumer still values consumption as a process but avoids comparison shopping and extensive search activities. They want a simple decision making process. They will eventually reject conspicuous consumption and move towards responsible materialism. Consumers are still spending but more conscientiously. They demand more from the shopping experience in the form of qualified, enjoyable, memorable service with a smile.¹³ Quality will be redefined, based on past, personal experience rather than someone else's norms¹⁶; the new mantra will be "what makes sense to me".^{17,18} Reid⁷ concurs that consumers are moving away from the material quest and are now valuing thriftiness and frugality, are much more price conscious, value conscious and better informed than in the past. "Materialism, which for many Canadians had replaced religion as the guiding light, had begun to flicker - out of necessity more than anything else" (95). Consumers no longer perceive bargain bins, dollar shops and second hand speciality stores with disdain but are proud of deals they get at these establishments. Reid⁷ also suggests that consumers want to buy things that have personal meaning and add to their quality of life.

In an ironic twist, Adams¹⁵ suggests that consumers will strive for enlightened hedonism. This translates to pleasure as the chief goal of life tempered with a full comprehension of the problems involved in achieving this goal. Branswell,¹⁹ citing the Maclean's/CBC News Poll, suggests that Canadians are not "allergic to enjoying life" with Quebec showing the most "signs of hedonism" (35). The Vita Health Company¹⁸ feels that consumers will find ways to indulge and spend on themselves while respecting the value of streamlining and setting new priorities. "The 1990's will be the decade of responsible materialism and enlightened hedonism. Whoever said 'you can't have your cake and eat it too', didn't know the baby boomers"¹⁵ (5).

Self-control

Second, consumers value self-control. Compared to self-denial and self-indulgence of the past,^{14,15} the consumer of the 1990's wants general guidelines that facilitate self-control. They want anchors in their lives. They want trustworthiness, satisfaction, relaxation and rewards from taking control of their lives.¹³ They want to eliminate drawbacks without any penalties; that is, they want to enjoy themselves without getting into trouble. In contrast to Gregg⁵ and Reid⁷, who report that Canadians feel they are somewhat-to-very liberal (56%) and are losing their respect for authority, Philip¹³ feels there is a predominance of conservative ideals and a respect for authority. Philip also feels that consumers value self-discipline and rediscovering their roots. Indeed, three quarters of Canadians value developing their spiritual side⁸ and, although predisposed to seek medical attention from doctors (85%) first, consumers are now more receptive to the idea of holistic alternative medicine (47%) which is a reflection of the value of being in control of themselves.

Substance and quality

Third, consumers value substance. 1990's consumers want products and services that are straightforward, reliable and have staying power. Consumers are placing increased importance on quality and functional product differences. People want things to last and to work. Consumers are redefining quality. Whereas quality was perceived as price, durability, fit, safety and the like, the trend is to perceive quality along the dimensions of product origin including social, ethical and environmental issues and impact on originating country. Further, consumers are emphasizing quality of life versus quantity of life and want real, intrinsic value rather than artificiality.^{13,14,15} They value functionality rather than fashion. Reid⁷ suggests that Canadian consumers are striving for emotional growth rather than material well-being. They are striving for ownership of physical contentment to replace ownership of commodities, to replace material reality with virtual reality. Kelman²⁰ agrees consumers are moving to symbolic rather than material transactions but that the transition is slow. Adams¹⁵ concurs, stating that consumers may feel they have to put on the brakes, but he does not believe they will substantially change directions any time soon.

Risk management

Fourth, consumers are beginning to value risk management. Historically consumers either avoided risk or avoided the penalties of risk in the marketplace.¹⁴ People are now responding to involuntary risk which they now confront in perils beyond their control. They are beginning to ask themselves if the pursuit of material possessions has led to this accumulation of risk.²¹ Reid⁷ notes that Canadian consumers want safety and security leading to lower risk especially with finances. This desire for safety is compromised by reality. To illustrate, Canadian boomers grew up with a general sense of affluence believing someone else would always be there to bail them out. This has created a false sense of security to the point that only 50% of working Canadians have some kind of pension plan with non-working Canadians facing a bleak retirement indeed.²² Consumers are just now beginning to value risk management. Marketers suggest that consumers are willing to accept risk but want to minimize exposure and penalties. They dislike surprises and want familiar things but in new combinations. When it comes to consumer decisions while assessing possible purchase risk, the new choice rules are "wait and see" and "it's good enough."¹³ Consumers, who have become so isolated due to the phenomena of cocooning (staying at home), are looking to live out a fantasy or adventure with some controlled risk. They are taking exotic trips or buying Jeeps.^{17,18}

Accountability and responsibility

Fifth, consumers value accountability. It is suggested that the consumer and the marketer are obliged (responsible) to display both competence and responsibility in the marketplace. No longer can consumers fall back on assuming that a poor purchase decision is the marketer's fault and the government's responsibility to fix it. Marketers suggest that consumers are developing a new critical awareness of their contributory role in the marketplace rather than taking things for granted. This is balanced by the increase in business ethics as a new choice criteria. Philip¹³ and Sandler¹⁴ both note that consumers want business to have substance as well in the form of honesty, roots, good reputations, fair dealings and good craftsmanship. They want business to be caring as well as knowledgeable, honest, genuine and enduring. However, Reid⁷ found that 60% of Canadians feel that corporations are becoming more irresponsible even though there is still a perception that corporations have special responsibilities to protect and enlarge Canada's store of social capital (community strength and endurance). Philip¹³ suggests that good corporate citizenship will sell since industry would be seen as taking the role and being accountable, "it pays [for industry] to be altruistic" (4). Business is coming to the realization that it has an economic stake in the welfare of the community²¹ although McKay²³ suggests that most of the activity related to business ethics is driven by marketing departments rather than a fundamental understanding of the need for social change. This is reflected in consumers' perceptions that business leaders are unprincipled (49%) and more concerned with money than with people (100%).²⁴

Altruism and charity

Sixth, consumers also value altruism and charity.¹³ There is a projected growth in giving, charity and community work both by consumer and by business. This altruism ranges from good cause payroll deductions and monetary contributions to active membership in charitable organizations. Eisler²⁵ notes that 75% of Canadians agree with the statement that "no matter what your income, I believe that we have a larger responsibility to donate to charitable organizations" (42). He suggests that this altruistic urge is common to all regions and age-groups with the average Canadian donating 1.6% of their income to charity, depending on government to use their taxes to fill the gap with social programs. The total amount of charitable donations claimed by Canadians in 1996 was nearly \$4 billion, a 13% increase from the year before despite declining incomes. Over one quarter of Canadians (26.9%) donated monies to charities in 1996 with the average donation being \$726.00Cdn.²⁶

But Adams¹⁵ feels there is an alleged selfish motive to this charity called selfish pragmatism. He argues that, while consumers used to be concerned for the well-being of others due to pure altruism, consumers are now more concerned for what the impact the plight of others will have on their personal situation and life (e.g., impact of homelessness, addictions, depleting rain forest, greenhouse effect, war). Indeed, Eisler²⁵ notes that not everyone is motivated by altruism citing the example of workplaces that place pressure on employees to give something back to the community so the business looks good. Adams¹⁵ noticed the trend for consumers to be motivated to change the world so they can get personal gratification, share their skills and stretch themselves not so others are better off. Conversely, Abramson²⁷ claims that investing in companies who behave responsibly and ethically allows consumers to resort to charity that results in changes to the fundamental structure of the world.

Even more recently, Susan Moeller (as cited in Orwin²⁸) recognizes the human condition of "compassion fatigue" claiming that people have a limited capacity to view suffering. It is not possible for one human being to be sorry for all the sadness that meets him/her on the face of the earth. The reality that there is not enough compassion

to go around is impacting consumers' propensity to make charitable donations and to care for the welfare of others. She claims that the media's enforced diet of other peoples' troubles may induce lassitude, despair or, worse, indifference and hypocrisy; it will not elicit a humanitarian response.

Balance and moderation

Seventh, consumers value balance and moderation. These are new values in the lives of 90's consumers. They are said to be looking for stability and harmony in a stressful and unbalanced existence in contrast with the previous work ethic where family and home were sacrificed for career advancement.¹⁵ Now consumers are trying to balance work, family and leisure. They want things to be easier for them in this stressed world. Consumers value convenience due to time poverty; they crave time. Mitchell²⁹ confirms that 95% of the stress in most people's lives is a result of time poverty, a condition whose major symptom is the feeling of not possibly being able to accomplish all that has to be done. This condition has reached epidemic proportions because modern time is in the throes of linear time where the rush of the past clashes with the pressure of the future... people feel crunched in the present. Fisher¹⁷ holds that this time crunch will become even more widespread and acute. Rechtschaffen³⁰ suggests that people need to return to circular time where change takes place against a backdrop of consistency leading to balance, harmony and moderation. Rather than perceiving time as a commodity, people are challenged to see themselves in a respectful relationship with time thereby honouring and valuing themselves. The result is balance and moderation. The challenge to this idea is that circular time is from the agrarian model. Proposing that consumers strive for this ideal in a period of post industrialization, computerization, the information age and globalization may not be realistic and may not be achievable leading to more acute time poverty (Dr. Nancy Chesworth, personal communication, May 13, 1998).

Environment

Eighth, consumers have a concern for the environment. There is a growing awareness of the impact of personal and business decisions on personal and environmental health. Consumers are becoming more future oriented and are placing more emphasis on the temporal and intergenerational impact of current purchase decisions. They are starting to appreciate the interrelatedness of events.¹³ Reid⁷ argues that consumers are moving away from the "throw away" mentality and are trying to make things last longer or are more prone to buy used and second hand items. Yet, Canadians have the third largest ecological footprint in the world. According to the Ecumenical Coalition for Economic Justice, an ecological footprint is the amount of land and water required to support indefinitely the material standard of living of a human population using prevailing technology. For each habitant on earth, there exists about 4.2 acres (1.7 hectares). Canadians use over 17 acres (7 hectares) per person,³¹ yet, marketers claim consumers value the environment. Canadians use more energy per person than any other industrialized nation in the world. The Ecumenical Coalition for Economic Justice suggests that, if Canadians truly value their environment, they need to change attitudes about cars, increase the energy efficiency of buildings, switch to alternative forms of heat, plant trees, buy locally, encourage communities to proclaim clear air days more regularly, and reduce, reuse and recycle.³¹

There is hope that Canadians will act on their value of the environment since a growing number (40% in 1989) feel that individual Canadians are responsible for the environment relative to business and government.²¹ Barrett³² is also convinced that a growing number of Canadians are beginning to appreciate that actions of individuals can have a powerful collective effect on the world, if only people were willing to sacrifice personal convenience to register their beliefs. The concept of sustainable consumption is inherent in valuing the environment. It refers to the moral responsibility of society to only consume at a level that is sustainable over a long period of time. Preservation of the environment is increasingly seen as not only preferable but essential for a continued existence on this planet.³³ This necessity is complicated by the reality that a clean environment would cost each Canadian household \$1,500.00 per year in greater taxes or more expensive products.²⁴

Health and fitness

Finally, consumers value health and fitness. They are preoccupied with well-being, healthy lifestyles, and fitness while aging. By 2021, about 40% of Canadians will be over 50 years old.¹³ An overwhelming 93% of Canadians say it is important to be physically fit yet only 19% had exercised in the last month.⁵ An aging population is accompanied by an upswing in the number of health problems exacerbated by longevity in stressful, time-crunched lives. While some marketers claim that consumers will do anything to stay young and healthy, Fisher¹⁷ suggests that

consumers will soon concede that it is all right to soften around the edges and will give up on fighting aging. She also admits that this change in values will take time since consumers are so preoccupied with health and fitness right now.

A large majority of Canadians (85%) still turn to a medical doctor if they are not feeling well but alternative health therapy is becoming more attractive. Although 43% have not consulted an alternative health care professional, almost half (47%) claim they are somewhat or a lot more receptive to the *idea* of seeking such treatment.⁵ Most alternative health therapy is self-directed health that links mind and body, diet and health, life and death, spirit and chemistry.³⁴ Interestingly, the Canada Health Monitor Study found that consumers aged 55 and older are much more likely (63%) to use complimentary remedies because it gave them a sense of general well-being (76%).³⁵ This result suggests that aging Canadians may realize the value of health and fitness by moving towards a mix of traditional medicine and alternative therapy. This trend corresponds to the values of self-control, risk management and balance in daily life. Consumers are no longer leaving the matter of their health and well-being to health professionals but are beginning to take charge personally.³³

Comparative analysis and discussion

Consumer studies professionals appreciate that values are supposed to change but they also tend to assume that monitoring social values can help them better predict how consumers will behave in the marketplace.¹ The following comparative analysis will illustrate that, even though most Canadians still hold basically the same social values,^{4,5,7,8} their consumer values do not totally match the overall social values of the nation, as identified by pollsters. Furthermore, many of the consumer values touted by marketers seem to be in direct conflict with the actual practices of consumers in the marketplace and with many of the social values allegedly held by Canadians. The marketers do not always agree with each other, the pollsters do not always agree with each other and marketers and pollsters definitely do not seem to concur on many values (and perhaps did not intend to but there is an implicit assumption that they *should* if knowing about social values is assumed to be a good predictor of consumer behaviour in the marketplace). The following comparative analysis illustrates many of these contradictions.

Consider that Canadian consumers are supposed to value the environment yet leave one of the largest ecological footprints in the world; that consumers are supposed to value health and fitness yet less than 20% have exercised in the last month and many are obese; that consumers are supposed to value risk management yet most Canadians have not managed the risk of living 20 plus years in retirement; that consumers are supposed to value balance and moderation yet still live a life style conducive to unmanageable stress and pressure. Consider that consumers are supposed to value lack of materialism yet manage to spend their way into excessive and unmanageable debt; that consumers are supposed to value charity and sharing yet donate or get involved so they get a personal boost or a tax write off; that consumers value civility and community yet act in such a way that there is an irreversible decline in social capital; that consumers value self-control yet still turn to conventional medicine when ill instead of a holistic approach. Consumers' actions do not necessarily match marketers' perceptions of consumers' values nor those of society at large as determined by polls; many paradoxes exist in the midst of the analogous values.

Also, as pointed out by Alberta Consumer and Corporate Affairs,³³ many consumers in the declining middle class may not operate using the consumer value profiles suggested by marketers but may operate on the fringes of the marketplace. They do not have the level of affluence to donate to charity. They can no longer rely on universal health care, social welfare or on funding for secondary education. Their incomes have been stalled since the 1970s despite low inflation (0.7%) and low interest rates on most consumer loans and mortgages. They are deeply in debt with most Canadians owing more than 100 cents of every dollar on consumer loans, mortgages and/or credit cards.^{22,36}

Consumer studies professionals also have to compare the value systems of the vulnerable consumer relative to the subtle social value shift identified at the beginning of the discussion: a decreasing value of honesty, reliability, politeness (civility) and forgiveness; a growing loss of ethical and moral standards; a loss of deference to and faith in traditional authority; a scepticism and cynicism about government's ability to operate within its means and represent their interests; an interest in self replacing collective responsibility; and a decline in optimism about our collective future.^{4,5,7,8} The question arises about whether this social value profile is most conducive to the declining middle class (growing low income) sector of Canadian society or does it reflect all Canadians?

Conclusions and recommendations

This paper raised many other questions that can be extrapolated to any country in which similar research is conducted. Do only a select few Canadians embrace the nine consumer values shared in this paper and, if yes, what is the value system of the remaining collection of consumers? Canada is a collection of heterogeneous consumers. Have marketing polls painted a realistic profile of consumer values that others can depend on as society moves to the next century? Do others agree with the picture painted by marketers and pollsters? These are valid questions since marketers are suggesting that these values reflect the evolution of a "new" consumer in the marketplace and because policy analysts and industries are relying on both the consumer and social value profiles at a time when society and the marketplace are undergoing a profound transition. Other countries are urged to examine the situation in their marketplace so as to facilitate cross-cultural comparative analysis of consumer marketplace values.

An increasingly complex and rapidly changing marketplace, driven by globalization, information, demographics and technology,⁷ obligates consumer studies professionals to examine the values of consumers and the social values of citizens to determine their compatibility and diversity, especially since we are nearing the end of the 21st century. The closing of a century tends to be marked with confusion and conflicting hopes of the new century and the looming sense of loss, insecurity, fear and resentment of change. This insecurity is exacerbated by the fact that society has programmed people to be overwhelmed by temporal milestones with a change in millennium being the paramount milestone.³⁷ People are longing for some permanent, transcendent set of values¹⁷ but this analysis illustrates that there are paradoxes between social and consumer values in Canada and that both value sets are in transition.

It is important that a value clarification process occur so that a sound foundation can be generated from which to develop theory, research agendas, policy recommendations, curricula and marketing practices. Clarifying values can pave the way for future dialogue between cultures. Just as an example, the discourse shared in this particular paper provides a benchmark for future comparative analysis between Canadian and American consumer and social values, an exercise that is recommended given that these two countries have bilateral trading agreements with each other and support each other's markets for goods and services. To illustrate, it can no longer be assumed that American and Canadian consumer and social values are interchangeable. Canada does have distinct core cultural values even though there is some overlap with the United States.² Consider that Rokeach³⁸ reveals that, out of 18 values of preferred states of being or feeling and 18 values of preferred ways of behaving, Canadian and American male students only agreed one third of the time. Even though they all valued the 36 items in the value scale to some extent, they only agreed on the ranking of 12 values. In 1999, the Yankelovich Monitor© again confirmed that, despite a shared language and physical proximity, there are key differences between Canadian and American cultures which warrant a different approach for American marketers communicating with Canadian consumers. Other countries are encouraged to examine their own social and consumer value systems either to determine their congruency and/or to compare them against trading partners. Results could enlighten information provided in research, textbooks, policy analysis, curricula and marketing initiatives in the global marketplace.

Value clarification can be further facilitated if consumer studies professionals move beyond their reliance on polls and choose complementary analytical and information gathering tools, including public dialogues. Polls tend to elicit 'top of the mind' answers from the public when what is also needed are considered judgements that occur when citizens have worked through the issues with others in a dialogue.⁶ Citing Daniel Yankelovich, Peters⁶ compares public opinion and public judgement noting that public judgement exhibits thoughtfulness, weighing of alternatives, accounting for a wide variety of factors other than ordinary public opinion and places more emphasis on the normative, valuing, ethical side of questions rather than on the factual, information side. During public dialogues, people are offered the opportunity to redefine and elaborate on their opinions such that they acquire a better understanding of their role as consumer in society. The values that would surface may well be different than opinion polls that entail quick, isolated opinions lacking considered judgements developed in concert with others. A reiteration of a few examples illustrates this point. On what basis do marketers claim that consumers value the environment when Canadians leave the largest ecological foot print in the world? How can pollsters claim that Canadians value risk when they do not plan for their retirement?

The tradition of monitoring social and consumer values will continue but this analysis suggests that findings from public opinion polls need to be merged with insights gained from public judgement dialogues. Even if the paradox implied in this paper is more apparent than real, the threat to the validity of using social values as a proxy or predictor for consumer values needs to be taken seriously. Indeed, there is an ongoing concern that sweeping predictions of consumer and citizen behaviour and values are often: (a) based on random scrapes of information or sketchy evidence, (b) badly timed, (c) self-promotions of the pollsters, (d) interpretations of population statistics (also fed by spurious methodologies), (e) wishful thinking and, (f) often, wrong or very misleading.³⁹

Given these factors, consumer studies professionals are urged to extend their research methodologies and

analytical tools to incorporate public dialogue to augment the traditional public opinion polling strategy such that more confidence is imbued in using social values to predict marketplace behaviour. They are encouraged to undertake a comparative analysis of social and consumer values in their respective countries and then contrast this with other countries. They are further challenged to share this information with other researchers, marketers, pollsters and bureaucrats thereby ensuring that decisions taken regarding consumers in the marketplace are based on current, valid and reliable information.

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Table 1 - Profile of Canadian social value systems as suggested by pollsters (listed in descending order for each pollster)

Social Value	Bibby ⁴	Gregg ⁵	Reid ⁷	Chidley ⁸
honesty	*			
reliability	*			
friendliness	*			
compassion (concern for others less fortunate)	*	*		
civility	*	*	*	
forgiveness	*			
generosity	*			
universality	*			
voluntarism		*	*	
charity		*		
entrepreneurship		*		
tolerance		*		
mutual trust			*	
community			*	
sharing			*	
inclusiveness			*	
fairness (equity)			*	
equality			*	
good parenting				*
fulfilling job				*
being in a good relationship				*
fitness and health				*
healthy sex life				*
strict moral code				*
spirituality				*

money				*
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