

# What Drives Socially Conscious Behaviors?

## VALUES-BASED MAPPING OF THE HUMAN PSYCHE

**T**RYING TO UNDERSTAND someone's behavior by looking at their surrounding environment is like trying to understand the ocean by looking at a boat. You may find a few chaotic patterns among bobs and ripples perhaps, but that's about it. To get a deeper understanding of the causes of consumer choice-making, we must be willing to dive to the very bottom of the vast ocean of the human mind and become familiar with the hidden anchors that underlie human perception itself.

Fortunately, you can leave your scuba gear on the shore. Psychologists and political strategists have spent decades doing this for us. And what they've found is both simple and startling. Although inherently dynamic and nonlinear in nature, a person's daily behavioral choices are patterned by their core values—those fundamental beliefs, assumptions, and aspirations that they use to make sense of the world around them.

Imagine spinning a marble around a bathroom sink. At any given point it would be difficult to predict the marble's exact location, because its movements are somewhat chaotic and random, fluctuating wildly based upon even the most minute textural gradients in the sink surface. In fact, even the most learned physicist would have a terrible time devising an equation that would predict this marble's exact path. Yet, anyone with an ounce of common sense can easily predict where the marble will end up eventually—right down the drain.

### INTRODUCING DR. CLARE W. GRAVES (The Albert Einstein of adult value development)

The most thorough and pragmatic values-based framework available to envi-

ronmentally conscious marketers was discovered by a now-deceased research psychologist with arguably poor marketing skills. Through more than 40 years of data collection and experimental observation, Dr. Clare W. Graves (1914-1986) outlined a fundamentally unique and practical values-based map of the always-unfolding human psyche. For decades this map has been used behind the scenes to help world leaders such as Nelson Mandela, Tony Blair, and Bill Clinton solve problems ranging from apartheid to free trade, but only now—with the mass emergence of the sustainability movement—does it finally seem to be getting the mainstream traction it deserves.

Graves viewed the psychology of the mature human being as “an unfolding, emergent, oscillating, spiraling process marked by progressive subordination of older, lower-order behavior systems to newer, higher-order behavior systems as man's existential problems change.” Driven by disciplined data collection and observation rather than top-down ideology, Graves discovered exactly eight different levels of thinking (or value-systems) operating in the world today, with existential roots tracing back to the origin of human culture itself.

These eight levels of thinking are:

#### **Level 1:**

##### **Autistic Thinking**

(originated before 40,000 B.C.)

#### **Level 2:**

##### **Magical/Tribal Thinking**

(originated en masse after 40,000 B.C.)

#### **Level 3:**

##### **Heroic Thinking**

(originated en masse approx. 8000 B.C.)

#### **Level 4:**

##### **Absolutistic Thinking**

(originated en masse approx. 4000–2000 B.C.)

#### **Level 5:**

##### **Individualist Thinking**

(originated en masse approx. 1300–1400 A.D.)

#### **Level 6:**

##### **Humanistic Thinking**

(originated en masse approx. 1900 A.D.)

#### **Level 7:**

##### **Systemic Thinking**

(originated approx. 1950 A.D.)

#### **Level 8:**

##### **Holistic Thinking**

(currently emerging)

Although all eight thinking levels still exist around the globe today, research and experience suggests that about 90 percent of today's 'mainstream' American audiences organize sensory information within the general thinking parameters set by level 4 (Absolutistic Thinking) through level 7 (Systemic Thinking). In other words, the vast majority of Americans

seem to make sense of the world according to these four thinking/value types.

**Existential Level 4:**

**Absolutistic Thinking**

**Date of Origin:** Approx. 4000–2000 B.C.

**Life Theme:** “Sacrifice self now to receive future reward.”

**Core Values:** Discipline, authority, purpose

**Goal:** To find peace and meaning in this world by denying impulses and upholding moral laws

**Found In:** Organized religions, the “moral majority,” deep south of United States (the “Bible Belt”), Sarah Palin, monks, rabbis, accountants, fundamentalists of any stripe

**Brief Description:** Absolutistic Thinking is marked by a strong belief in absolute authority, clear moral principles, and an unyielding need for ideological certainty. Absolutistic thinkers are security minded, resistant to change and family oriented. In the U.S., these thinkers make up about 20 percent of the population, and are most commonly found in rural areas, away from bustling cultural centers.

**Existential Level 5:**

**Individualistic Thinking**

**Date of Origin:** Approx. 1300–1400 A.D.

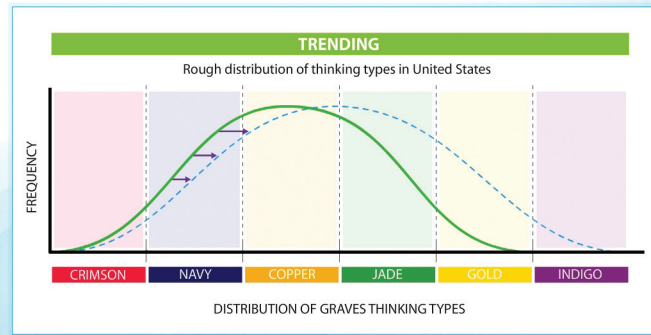
**Life Theme:** “Express self for what self desires, but in a calculated fashion so as to avoid bringing down the wrath of important others.”

**Core Values:** Accomplishing, power, profit  
**Goal:** To achieve success and affluence in this life by strategically manipulating desired outcomes

**Found In:** Business professional stereotype, scientists, Wall Street, China’s economic boom, free-market economics, engineers, politician archetype, lobbyists and lawyers, Donald Trump

**Brief Description:** Individualistic Thinking is typically marked by a strong desire to achieve and a pronounced sensitivity to social power dynamics. Individualistic thinkers are often clever, industrious ‘realists’ with little patience for the more ‘touchy-feely’ realm of human emotions. In the U.S., Individualistic thinkers make up about 30 percent of the population and can be found almost everywhere (especially in business districts of large metropolitan centers).

Psychologically speaking, the rise of the LOHAS movement has resulted from the mass emergence of the ‘gold’ systemic worldview.



**Existential Level 6:**

**Humanistic Thinking**

**Date of Origin:** Approx. 1900 A.D.

**Life Theme:** “Sacrifice self now in order to gain acceptance now.”

**Core Values:** Equality, honesty, relatedness

**Goal:** To find happiness in this life—in this moment—by relating deeply to other humans

**Found In:** Humanistic therapy, civil rights legislation, sensitivity training, socialistic societies, ‘liberal media bias,’ ACLU, progressive politics, 1960s U.S. hippie era

**Brief Description:** Humanistic Thinking is marked by a strong belief in the inherent value (and equality) of all human beings. Fierce advocates for equality, Humanistic thinkers are often community oriented and idealistic, with a notable capacity to see the world from many different perspectives. In the U.S., Humanistic thinkers make up about 30 percent of the population. They can be

found everywhere, but tend to populate most densely in so called ‘blue’ states near large cities.

**Existential Level 7:**

**Systemic Thinking**

**Date of Origin:** Approx. 1950 A.D. (now emerging en masse)

**Life Theme:** “Express self for what self desires and others need, but never at the expense of others, and in a manner that all life can continue to exist.”

**Core Values:** Integrity, competence, sustainability

**Goal:** To restore vitality and balance to a world torn asunder

**Found In:** Sustainability movement leaders, Richard Branson, President Barack Obama, rise of the ‘cultural creatives,’ quantum theory, innovative technologies, integral psychology

**Brief Description:** Systemic Thinking is marked by strong creative problem-solving skills and an impressive ability to

Four predominant worldview systems in the US				
	NAVY	COPPER	JADE	GOLD
<b>Existential Level</b>	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6	Level 7
<b>Thinking System</b>	Absolutistic Thinking	Individualistic Thinking	Humanistic Thinking	Systemic Thinking
<b>% of US Pop</b>	20%	30%	25%	10-15%
<b>Life Theme (core values)</b>	Sacrifice self now to receive future reward (discipline, authority, purpose)	Express self for what self desires, but in a calculated fashion so as to avoid bringing down the wrath of important others (success, power, affluence)	Sacrifice self now in order to gain acceptance now (empathy, honesty, relatedness)	Express self for what self desires and others need, but never at expense of others, and in a manner that all life can continue to exist (integrity, competence, sustainability)
<b>Guiding Metaphor</b>	Life is a test	Life is a game	One human family	Life is a system
<b>Best tactic</b>	Call to duty	Call to action	Call to imagine	Call to service

think from an interdisciplinary perspective. Systemic thinkers are essentially open minded, nonideological, pragmatists. In the U.S., Systemic thinkers make up about 10 to 15 percent of the population and can be found everywhere (although a majority may prefer culturally diverse cities areas with ample business and cultural opportunities).

These four profiles, properly grasped, allow communicators to see the critical meaning-making leverage points in the psychology of their various target audiences. Messaging campaigns that derive from this values-based framework generate extraordinary results compared to those of traditional 'one-size-fits-all' campaigns.

### Take-home strategies for marketers in the LOHAS space


After years of hands-on experience applying this framework to real world communication challenges, I offer the following tactical and strategic messaging advice:

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## LOHAS CONSUMERS...

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market basis.

In the ever-increasingly global marketplace, where one country's business is literally becoming every country's business, so is the accountability we collectively share in sustaining our planet—it's also everyone's business. While this presents seemingly endless opportunities for marketers of consumer goods and services to leverage their capabilities in a global arena, it is not without its challenges. By recognizing the similarities and many distinct differences between and within subsets of this global market, marketers can connect the dots (as well as develop entirely new ones) to maximize their potential opportunities. 

\*The following are sample sizes by country: U.S.=4,041; Canada=1,000; Japan=2,193; Europe=12,062; Europe includes: France=2,005; Germany=2,008; Spain=1,026; U.K.=2,004; Belgium=2,002; Netherlands=2,016; Portugal=1,001; While this definition of Europe is not all-inclusive, this article uses the label loosely to simplify language.

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*Natural Marketing Institute is a strategic consulting, market research, and business development company.*

### Suggestion 1: Frame offerings to suit the perceived needs of specific value segments.

One size doesn't fit all. Customers can only perceive your offerings through the lens of their preexisting mental filters, colored by their preferred thinking styles. Unless you frame your messages to suit their perceived needs, your messages will fall upon deaf ears. Don't lump everybody into the same basket.

### Suggestion 2: Whenever possible, build trust by engaging and overcoming cynicism.

Trust is absolutely essential. Unless your customers trust you, they will not feel inspired by your call to action and nothing will change. Understand the preferred species of cynicism that exist in your various consumer segments, and create marketing messages that strategically address toxic issues upfront, setting the stage for a deeper trust and rapport to unfold.

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## SRI: GROWING...

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community investing to three to five percent, up from one percent or less a decade ago, partly due to the availability of funds that invest in CDFIs and the fact that several community investing products are now listed at Schwab. Green America's "Break Up With Your (Mega) Bank" campaign, which began on Valentine's Day 2009, and which was joined by similar campaigns throughout the year, received a strong response from investors nationwide who are concerned that their banking deposits at large institutions are actually harming communities and are seeking community investments as a safe, socially responsible option.

Community investing institutions in the U.S. also are playing a growing role in helping impoverished communities internationally. Microlending increased substantially over the past several years, and with the advent of Kiva and Microplace, two web-based microfinance sites that allow anyone to make small loans worldwide, more and more people are taking part. Most recently, CDFIs are on the forefront of the rebuilding effort in


### Suggestion 3: Shift from demographics to psychographics.

Demographic thinking is quickly becoming outdated. Demographic variables are only important insofar as they give us insight into the hidden hopes, fears, and aspirations of our audiences. Why not avoid the middle-man and cut right to the chase? Shift your thinking from demographics to values. 



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Haiti, following the recent tragic earthquake there. After emergency disaster-relief efforts help people to simply survive, the country will need to rebuild. Community investing institutions are already playing a leading role. Within days of the earthquake, Fonkoze, which provides microfinance and banking services throughout Haiti, re-established 34 of its branches across the country and brought in \$2 million in cash (largely from families in the U.S.) to help Haitians rebuild businesses and meet their daily needs.

Socially responsible investing increasingly demonstrates the potential for financial systems and the economy to help build sustainable communities worldwide and to protect the environment. As SRI approaches continue to prove themselves and are adopted by a wider pool of investors, there is the potential in the next decade to make significant inroads in creating a greener economy that works for all people and the planet. 



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