

## A NOVEL ADVANCE TO SEGREGATING THE UNIVERSAL TEENAGER

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Vistas

In this article a new and different approach to segmentation has been put forth one based upon mindset rather than on gender, age or lifestyle. While looking for key differences, the paper starts with a simple truth about children around the world. The model used can be applied across categories and has significant implications for new product development, communications and market prioritisation.

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There can be no doubt that children around the world have different attitudes, values and behaviours based upon their unique history, culture and lifestyle. However, one thing unites all children from Texas to Timbuktu – their desire and love of play. No matter where you are, whatever age or gender, play is everything. And, to a child, everything is play. This includes all the traditional play activities, such as toys, games, sports and the like, but also some more unexpected ones, like shopping, school and visiting relatives.

Not only is playing a fun and integral part of childhood, it is also extremely important and necessary activity for ongoing development. Children learn from play. In fact, in his pioneering work, Swiss developmental psychologist Jean Piaget demonstrated that in the service of play, children are able to seamlessly and effortlessly explore experiment, learn, apply and develop a wide range of cognitive and creative skills. Furthermore, adherents of the modern 'constructionism' school have demonstrated convincingly that play is the 'built-in motor' that drives intellectual development. This leads to our hypothesis – if play is so linked to cognitive development, then by understanding how and what kids chose to play, you can learn a lot about who they are.

With this theory in mind, we conducted a number of friendship groups in different countries and ethnographic interviews with children age 5–12 around the world through internet. We used internet facilities to spoke to their parents and to their siblings through internet. And, we went to their homes and watched them play.

Without set rules or restrictions, we found that some kids approached play in a predominantly inner-directed fashion. That is, given a choice, they would rather play alone – 'It's not always fun playing with other people because I prefer to do things my own way.' On the other hand, some kids preferred a more other-directed approach to play. Again, given the opportunity, these children prefer to play with others-its fun doing stuff with other people because they can help you and you can all play together and have fun.

We also found that some children are most comfortable playing within a more realistic context, emulating things they know from the real world. 'I like to play football and follow the rules.' Others are happier using their imagination, playing in a fantasy world of their own creation. 'I like to make up stories and use my imagination.' Of course, children may engage in any combination of these play behaviors, resulting in four primary play dimensions (**Figure One**). These four dimensions also line-up very well with the classical Jungian dimensions of adult personality and thought (**Figure Two**). In our interviews through internet, children told us that they enjoy and engage in all types of creative play, but by the time they reach about five years old, they will have a natural tendency, and preference, towards one type over the others. Their parents and siblings confirmed this as well. These four primary play dimensions corresponds four discrete child mindsets (**Figure Three**).

- **The Achiever.** The Achiever child is motivated by individual ability and is driven to succeed. He or she is quite focused, methodical and detail oriented. 'I built an amazing model house and my parents were really proud.'
- **The Dreamer.** The Dreamer child is driven by his or her imagination. They enjoy unstructured, open-ended play with no rules. They tend to be quite spontaneous. 'I like to create something that hasn't been made before.'
- **The Leader.** The Leader child is goal-oriented and competitive. Like the Collaborator, he or she is social, but in a more influential, managerial manner. 'I like playing with friends, but like winning even more.'
- **The Collaborator.** The Collaborator child is very interaction-oriented, outgoing and social. They love to play, enjoy being part of a group and can be quite cooperative.

Understandably, play 'materials' differs according to mindset.

- Achievers like playing with tangible things that deliver results. Favorites include:

Models, building sets, coloring books, paint by number sets, etc.

- Dreamers can make a game out of anything, often using something traditional in a totally unique and original way. Favorites include: paper, clay, books, drawing, action figures, cars, train sets, household objects, music, TV, etc.
- Collaborators enjoy playing more social, inclusive games. Their favorites include: board games, action figures, cars, train sets, dolls, video games, dress-up, mobile phones, chat rooms, etc.
- Leaders enjoy games with a competitive context. Favorites include: games consoles, cricket, football, board games, trading cards, models, etc.

The four different mindsets become even more apparent when we consider play motivations:

- Achievers are motivated by accomplishment and recognition. They are most interested in the end product of play.
- Dreamers are motivated by imagination and newness. Unlike Achievers, they do not care about the end product as they're more motivated by the process.
- Collaborators are motivated by friends and fun. They are in it for the play factor first and foremost.
- Leaders are motivated by competition and winning. Whilst they want to have fun, they are looking for the result.

We also found that different markets have different play tendencies/mindsets, which can be put down to, nuances in history, culture and the overall zeitgeist.

Consider these Achiever dominant countries:

- 'The one-child policy in China has made kids bossy, alone and eager to be praised. They don't like to gather and play with others.'
- 'India is a very competitive society – there is a real need to perform and excel, and children are driven by their parents.'

- 'Russia is a collective society, so we try to find ways to stand out from others. In addition, Russian kids grow up faster and leave the fantasy world behind earlier.'
- 'In Germany, kids are raised with an interest in all things technique. Sport is less important.'

## And, these Dreamer dominant countries:

- 'It is very common for Thai kids to create something that hasn't been made before. Give them a pencil or colour and they can bring to life all their imagination and fantasies.'
- 'In Italy, it is their natural inclination to dream more than to do.'
- 'In France, their children are less competitively inclined. They enjoy creating things and using their imagination.'

## Compare that with Collaborator dominant countries:

- 'Spanish children love playing together. They tend to be very outgoing and socially integrated. Like other Latin countries, social relationships are very important.'
- 'In Brazil, children are definitely collective, less structured, and there is lots of interaction and emphasis on play. Children here hate to be alone and they don't like too many rules.'
- 'In Denmark, parents strive to raise their offspring to become social individuals who can and will interact with others in a positive manner. Parents want nice, happy and intelligent kids – but not at the expense of childhood.'
- 'Belgium is by nature a country of collaborators. They have to get along with each other and teach their children the importance of teamwork.' Finally, consider the Leader dominant countries.
- 'Leaders get the most support and reinforcement in the USA because society rewards leadership and seek public attention pretty freely.'

- 'Kids in the UK are very into group sport and competition. They like to play, but they want to see results as well.'
- 'The Japanese are group-oriented people and their children enjoy playing with others more than playing alone. But, they also want them to succeed.'

## Research Methodology

This model, which was developed through qualitative research, was then subjected to quantitative validation. A total of 450 one-on-one intercept interviews were conducted in New York, Tokyo and Frankfurt with the help of respective resident research scholars and university students. In each market, they spoke to 50 five to six year olds, 50 seven to eight year olds and 50 nine to ten year olds. They developed a three-part questionnaire incorporating the following:

- Selection of favorite play activities
- Identification with attitudinal statements
- Self-identification with overall mindset description.

Scoring was done by pre-set algorithm, assigning points to each mindset based upon typical attitudes and behavior.

The study confirmed the existence and validity of all four mindsets (**Figure Four**). The proportion allocated to each dimension was also roughly in line with our initial qualitative study; however, the Leader segment was even stronger than originally hypothesized. Data indicated that this is driven by two key activities, team sports and video games.

When comparing the three countries, we found that, whilst similar in the absolute, on a relative basis key differences emerge (**Figure Five**).

As we saw in the qualitative portion of the research, children in Germany tend to be more inner-directed, with the highest proportion of Achievers and Dreamers. On the other hand, Japanese children are the least inner-directed and the least likely to dream. They score highest on the Leader dimension, reflecting their love of competitive social activities like video games.

Finally, the USA, which on an absolute basis is a Leader market, scores highest of the three countries on the Collaborator dimension, indicating a strong inclination for teamwork and partnership.

The research also showed that children have multiple mindsets – none exists in isolation (**Figure Six**). However, it is clear that Achievers and Leaders are much more comfortable in the world of reality. They are driven by a need for mastery, either over people (Leaders) or things (Achievers). Collaborators are most comfortable in a collective setting, so their secondary mindset matched that of Leaders. Children's primary mindset evolves over time (**Figure Seven**). Not surprisingly, as a child gets older, the reality aspect increases while fantasy dimension decreases. The exception to this is the Dreamer mindset, which remains fairly consistent through the years.

## How can this model be applied to the marketing of children's brands?

First, marketers must ask themselves, where do their brands and their products sit today? Are they appealing to Achievers, Dreamers, Collaborators or Leaders?

- Achievers are attracted by functional performance related to features and benefits. They like things that are bigger, better and more challenging. They appreciate recognition and rewards at various levels of achievement.
- Dreamers like things more open-ended and flexible, with room for personal interpretation, exploration and the chance for customization. They enjoy new and unusual formats.
- Collaborators are most interested in story/fantasy-based products with lots of room for socialization. The play factor must be strong and motivating.
- Leaders require multiple tasks and responsibilities. They respond to a strong competitive element and public recognition of their success.

In addition to tighter targeting for current products, this model is also helpful when considering new product development.

Once you know where your brand sits, ask yourself, are those products promoted in the right markets, or are you trying to sell an Achiever product to a Dreamer- dominant market? It's not impossible, but you will need to tailor your communications message.

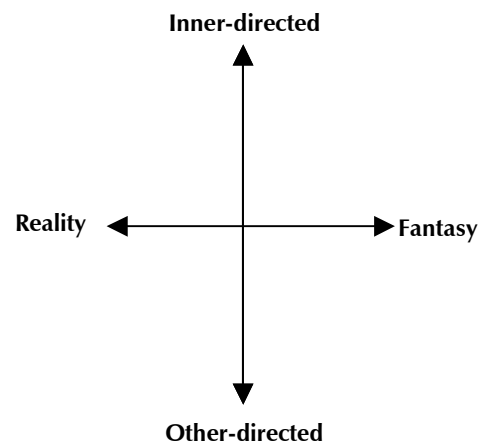
Each mindset will respond to different types of marketing messages. For example:

- Achievers respond to communications with a more thoughtful, rational tone. It is best to communicate challenge and potential for personal success/ acknowledgement. Leverage their desire to achieve – to get it right.
- Dreamers respond to more emotional, evocative communications. Leave stories open-ended, letting Dreamers close the loop. It is best to communicate possibilities and stimulate their imagination.
- Collaborators respond to simple, feel-good appeals. Communicate social aspects and emphasize interaction. Consider 'strength in numbers' – it's what everyone else is doing.
- Leaders respond best to simple dichotomies – good/bad, win/lose. Use social settings and situations. Demonstrate the competitive advantage for the user, and how it feels to win.

## Conclusion

The goal, obviously, is to match the right product to the right mindset, promote it in the right market with the right message. But this does not have to be as difficult as it sounds; it does not require massive changes. Usually small and simple tweak to your product, or even more likely, to your communications messages, will be enough to increase your chances for success.

**FIGURE ONE : FOUR PRIMARY PLAY DIMENSIONS**



**FIGURE TWO : JUNGIAN DIMENSIONS OF ADULT PERSONALITY AND THOUGHT**

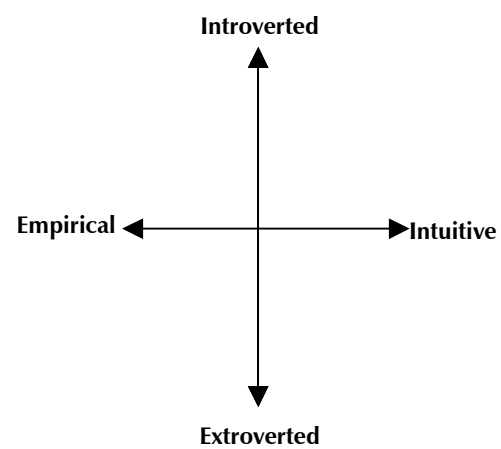
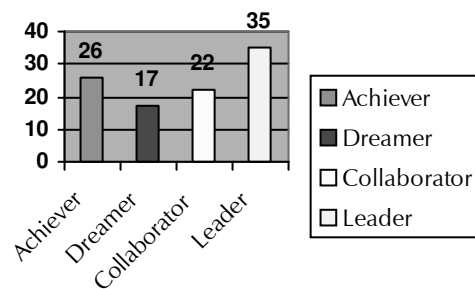


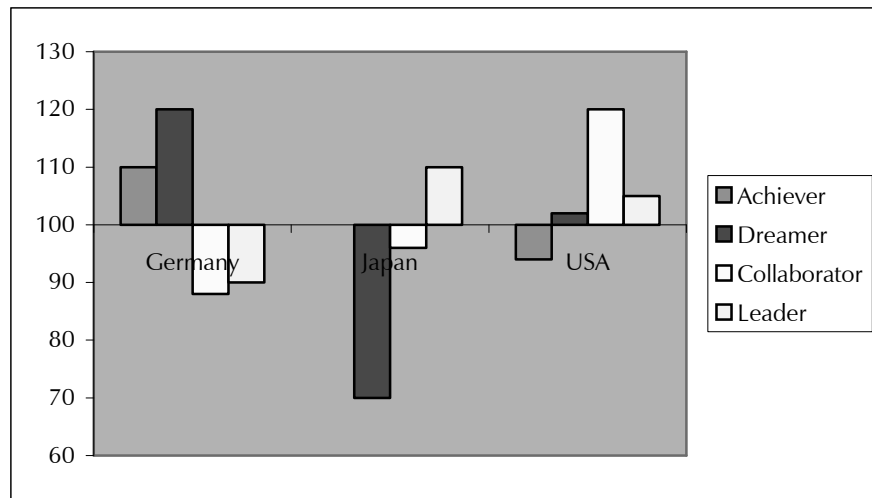
FIGURE THREE : FOUR DOMINANT PLAY PATTERNS/ FOUR CHILD MINDSETS



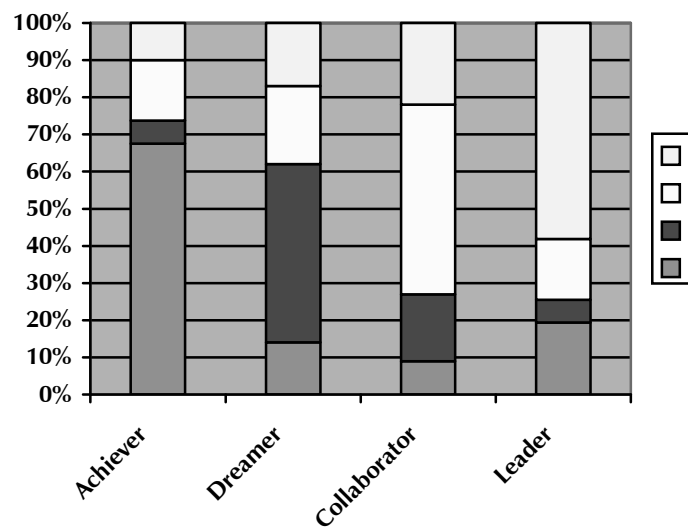
FIGURE FOUR : THE FOUR PRIMARY MINDSETS QUANTIFIED



**FIGURE FIVE : MINDSET INDEX BY COUNTRY**



**FIGURE SIX : CHILDREN'S MULTIPLE MINDSETS**



**FIGURE SEVEN : EVOLUTION OF CHILDREN'S PRIMARY MINDSET OVER TIME**

