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Rohit Deshpande & Frederick E. Webster, Jr.

Organizational Culture and Marketing: Defining the Research Agenda

Contemporary work on marketing management is grounded implicitly in a structural functionalist or contingency perspective of organizational functioning. However, the field of organizational behavior from which such a perspective derives has recently developed a major thrust into theoretical modeling and empirical research on organizational culture. The authors survey this emerging literature on organizational culture, integrate it in a conceptual framework, and then develop a research agenda in marketing grounded in the five cultural paradigms of comparative management, contingency management, organizational cognition, organizational symbolism, and structural/psychodynamism.

WHEN Drucker (1954) first articulated the marketing concept, he noted that marketing was not really a separate management function but rather the whole business as seen from the customer's point of view. In other words, the marketing concept defines a distinct organizational culture, a fundamental shared set of beliefs and values that put the customer in the center of the firm's thinking about strategy and operations.

Despite this centrality of organizational culture to marketing management issues, there has been relatively little scholarly study of its impact in a marketing context. This lack of scrutiny perhaps reflects, as Ruekert and Walker (1987) suggest, the relatively greater attention given to consumer than to organizational issues in marketing in general. For example,

when marketing scholars turned to the behaviora¹ sciences for guidance beginning in the late 1950s and especially the 1960s, the study of culture focused exclusively on understanding consumer behavior, particularly the definition of cultures and subcultures as market segments, culture as communication, the diffusion of innovations, and cross-cultural comparisons of international markets (Engel, Kollat, and Blackwell 1968; Zaltman 1965). Subsequent treatments of culture in marketing also have been limited mostly to the consumer behavior area.

Several scholars recently have begun to recognize the importance of organizational culture in the management of the marketing function. Weitz, Sujan, and Sujan (1986) included organizational culture concepts in their development of a model of selling effectiveness. Parasuraman and Deshpande (1984) suggested that greater attention be paid to organizational culture along with structural explanations for managerial effectiveness. Additionally, heightened concern for issues of implementation in marketing strategy (Walker and Ruekert 1987) and the development of a customer orientation within organizations is also raising questions related specifically to organizational culture (Bonoma 1984; Deshpande and Parasuraman 1986; Webster 1981, 1988). In fact, Mahajan, Varadarajan, Kerin (1987) have gone so far as to suggest that the

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next phase of development of the field of strategic market planning must involve a formal integration of organizational culture issues.

In contrast to the scant attention given to organizational culture in marketing, a major thrust into theoretical modeling and empirical research on the topic has occurred in the field of organizational behavior (Hofstede 1986; Jelinek, Smircich, and Hirsch 1983; Kilmann, Saxton, and Serpa 1985; Sathe 1983; Schwartz and Davis 1981). As a result, within the past 10 years, organizational culture has become one of the most active research areas within the discipline (Alaïre and Firsirotu 1984; Frost et al. 1985; Ouchi and Wilkins 1985). In addition, practitioner interest in the topic is evident from the success of books emphasizing the cultural determinants of corporate performance (Deal and Kennedy 1982; Ouchi 1981; Peters and Waterman 1982), including the major theme of comparing the functioning of American and Japanese firms with culture as a principal explanatory variable (Pascale and Athos 1981).

Despite the growing interest in organizational culture among behavioral scientists and practitioners, no strong consensus has formed about a definition of the term. Hence some people have concluded erroneously that the concept itself is amorphous. The different definitions stem from different theoretical bases for the concept. To provide a basis for further discussion, we define organizational culture as *the pattern of shared values and beliefs that help individuals understand organizational functioning and thus provide them norms for behavior in the organization*. That is, organizational culture is related to the causality that members impute to organizational functioning. We subsequently note the range of alternative definitions of organizational culture available in the literature.

The chief objective of our article is to encourage the development of a stream of research on organizational culture in marketing. However, an inadequate understanding by marketing researchers of unresolved issues in the development of models of organizational culture could lead to some false starts, weak integration among various research programs, inappropriate application of concepts of culture, and inadequate attention to some of the basic issues of research methodology being confronted by researchers on organizational culture. We therefore begin by outlining the development of the field of organizational culture and discussing current controversies in definition and measurement in terms that should be useful to marketing researchers.

We first provide an historical perspective on the development of theory in organizational culture, drawing on work in anthropology, sociology, and organizational behavior. Then we describe a conceptual framework of organizational culture paradigms. Fi-

nally we discuss specific applications to marketing problems to provide research directions for programmatic work on the topic. Given the expanse of the literature, our purpose is to describe briefly each major theoretical perspective on organizational culture rather than to provide an exhaustive review.

Development of the Field of Organizational Culture: History and Definitional Issues

As Ouchi and Wilkins (1985) note in a major review, the development of interest in the concept of culture applied to organizational functioning was due to the realization by organizational sociologists in the mid-1970s that traditional models of organizations did not always help them to understand observed disparities between organizational goals and actual outcomes, between strategy and implementation. Most formal models of organizations incorporated, in one way or another, systems, structure, and people, but not culture (Schwartz and Davis 1981). For example, in Leavitt's (1964) model, organizations are seen as multivariate systems consisting of four sets of interacting variables: (1) tasks—the work to be performed to accomplish goals, (2) structure—systems of communication, authority, status, rewards, and workflow, (3) technology—problem-solving inventions used by the firm, and (4) people. Culture is a completely different component that also may contribute significantly to organizational functioning and may affect the other four subsystems as a mediating variable.

In recent studies of difficulties in strategic implementation and comparisons of the performance of American firms with that of European, Japanese, and other Asian competitors, researchers began to introduce concepts of culture as possible explanations for differences in competitive effectiveness when few differences in the structural characteristics of the organizations were evident (Pascale and Athos 1981). This line of reasoning began to suggest that models of organizations that did not include culture as a specific organizational variable were incomplete (Ouchi and Wilkins 1985).

Despite agreement about the importance of culture as an organizational variable, consensus about its definition and measurement is lacking. We define organizational culture as the pattern of shared values and beliefs that help members of an organization understand why things happen and thus teach them the behavioral norms in the organization. However, we also highlight the variety of culture definitions to show that different perspectives on culture may be highly relevant for different marketing management problems. These different definitions lead to several theoretical dilemmas in defining and measuring organizational

culture—for example, choosing between definitions of culture in both anthropology and organizational studies, the distinction between culture and climate, the appropriate level of analysis, whether to use survey or ethnographic measurement, and the distinction between culture and subcultures, including “clans” and “native views.”

Early Definitions

In a seminal paper by two anthropologists, 164 definitions of culture were analyzed in detail and the results were summarized as a consensus statement that culture “is a product; is historical; includes ideas, patterns, and values; is selective; is learned; is based upon symbols; and is an abstraction from behavior and the products of behavior” (Kroeber and Kluckhohn 1952, p. 157, quoted by Berelson and Steiner 1964, p. 644). They found that culture had been defined variously as the values and beliefs shared by the members of a society; the patterns of behaving, feeling, and reacting shared by a society, including the unstated premises underlying that behavior; learned responses that previously have met with success; habitual and traditional ways of thinking, feeling, and reacting that are characteristic of the ways a particular group of people meets its problems; and another word for social reality, the things people take for granted.

Specifically for the concept of *organizational* culture, definitions offered in recent studies include: “. . . some underlying structure of meaning, that persists over time, constraining people’s perception, interpretation, and behavior” (Jelinek, Smircich, and Hirsch 1983, p. 337), “a pattern of beliefs and expectations shared by organization members” (Schwartz and Davis 1981, p. 33), and “the system of . . . publicly and collectively accepted meanings operating for a given group at a given time. This system of terms, forms, categories, and images interprets a people’s own situation to themselves” (Pettigrew 1979, p. 574).

Culture and Climate

Distinguishing between the terms “culture” and “climate” as used in the organizational behavior literature is important because some theorists have confused the two. Culture is a set of shared assumptions and understandings about organizational functioning. Organization *climate* is a related but different concept. Climate relates to members’ perceptions about the extent to which the organization is currently fulfilling their expectations. Schneider and Rentsch (1987, p. 7) summarize the difference clearly by stating that “climate refers to the ways organizations operationalize the themes that pervade everyday behavior—the routines of organizations and the behaviors that get rewarded, supported and expected by organizations (the ‘what happens around here’). Culture refers to the his-

tory and norms and values that members believe underlie climate (the ‘why do things happen the way they do’) and the meanings organizational members share about the organization’s imperative.”

Level of Analysis

Some scholars view organizational culture as a property of the group or organization itself, like structure or technology. Others view it as something that resides within each individual as a function of cognitive and learning processes. As an individual property, culture is the evaluations people make of the social context of the organization that guide their behavior. It is their attempt to “make sense” of the organization. Some argue that culture is an exogenous environmental variable, one that cannot be managed but rather must be accommodated, whereas others see it as a variable endogenous to the organization (similar to organizational structure), mediating the way in which the organization responds to environmental stimuli and change. Still others argue that it is both process and outcome because it shapes human interactions and is also the outcome of those interactions (Jelinek, Smircich, and Hirsch 1983, p. 331). We believe that culture is all of these things but that the differences arise because of differences in theoretical approach to the concept. We subsequently discuss further whether marketing researchers should view culture as an exogenous or endogenous variable, a property of individuals or of organizations, because each perspective is appropriate depending on the marketing problem being addressed.

Survey Research Versus Ethnographic Research

There is also heated debate between scholars who would use ethnographic methods to study organizational culture and those who prefer to use techniques of statistical inference applied to data gathered through survey research methods (Ouchi and Wilkins 1985, p. 475–6). Ethnographic techniques often are used for the study of organizational culture, whereas surveys are most common for the study of organizational climate (cf. Joyce and Slocum 1984). Critics of the latter approach argue that the survey techniques themselves are a product of culture and thus are culturally biased and “culture-bound.” Hampton (1982) attempted to develop a survey questionnaire on culture based on the classic work of an anthropologist (Douglas 1982). Any marketing researcher who wants to study culture and remain sensitive to such methodological issues should examine Hirschman’s (1986) discussion of appropriate ethnographic methods for marketing research. Our own position is that culture topics in marketing can and should be studied by *both* traditional survey research and ethnographic methods. We more specifi-

cally relate research topics to methodological approaches in the marketing applications section.

Subcultures, Clans, and Native Views

Another issue is whether organizational culture is primarily and typically a characteristic of the total organization, such as a corporation, or whether it is primarily a characteristic of groups or "subcultures" within the organization. One dimension of this issue is the extent to which organizations have cultures that are distinct from the "background" cultures in which they exist. Such background cultures can take a variety of forms, including departmental subcultures such as marketing, finance, and manufacturing. Wilkins and Ouchi (1983, p. 468), for example, state: "Contrary to currently popular notions of organizational culture, we claim that the existence of local organizational cultures that are distinct from more generally shared background cultures occurs relatively infrequently at the level of the whole organization." Taking what they call a "utilitarian" view from a transaction costs perspective, they define three mechanisms—markets, bureaucracies, and clans—for regulating exchanges or transactions and achieving the criterion of "reciprocity," meaning that the transactions are perceived as equitable by the organization members. Markets use a price mechanism, bureaucratic relationships establish rights of evaluation and reward, and the clan mechanism socializes the parties in such a way that they see their objectives as being congruent with those of the firm. Such a clan mechanism is one way of thinking about organizational culture. A similar view has been developed by Lebas and Weigenstein (1986).

To illustrate the operation of the clan mechanism, Wilkins and Ouchi cite the practice of Japanese firms of hiring young recruits, socializing them, and basing pay on seniority, not performance. With a strong clan, members' inclination is to do what is best for the organization. Elaborate systems of performance evaluation and control are not necessary. Wilkins and Ouchi conclude that entire organizations are less likely to develop and maintain a clan mechanism (i.e., "culture") than are functional or professional groups within an organization. Therefore, they argue, organizations do not often have the richness of a unique culture that is characteristic of the paradigmatic cultures studied by anthropologists. For Ouchi and Wilkins, organizational culture generally is seen best as a characteristic of groups rather than of total organizations.

Gregory (1983), in a frequently cited article, likewise argues that any given organization is likely to comprise multiple cultures, which she refers to as "native views." She also argues that organizational culture is essentially a group-based phenomenon. Using an ethnographic approach, organized around a concept of culture as a system of meanings and "learned

ways of coping with experience," she studied technical professional company employees in the Silicon Valley of California. One of her principal conclusions is that multiple cultures are *not* simply subcultures such as departments of the organization, but may also be national, regional/geographic, or industry cultures that are background context for the organization, or may be occupational and ethnic cultures that cut across a given organization. Among the many interesting issues that marketing researchers might examine using this "native views" concept of culture are conflict between sales and marketing departments, cooperation between R&D and marketing departments in the development of new products, and assignment of sales representatives to customers on the basis of ethnic, regional, or professional background similarity.

A Conceptual Framework of Organizational Culture Paradigms

The different conceptions of culture lead to a bewildering complexity in interpretation. To provide theoretical guidance for researchers in marketing, we try to integrate the organizational behavior literature while retaining the important distinctions being made. We refer to Smircich's (1983a) insightful review of the various approaches to the study of organizational culture, which she summarizes into five different paradigms. In the first two, one can think of culture as a *variable* and in the others as a *metaphor* for the organization itself. Table 1 lists the key theoretical features of the five paradigms.

Culture as a Variable

In the *comparative management* approach, culture can be viewed as a variable *exogenous* to the firm, influencing the development and reinforcement of core beliefs and values within the organization (e.g., a national culture). Such cross-cultural studies of management typically are motivated by a search for explanations for differences in organizational outcomes such as job satisfaction in U.S. and Mexican firms (Slocum 1971) or effectiveness, as in the many studies of Japanese versus American management and their differences based on the differences in Japanese and U.S. national cultures (Pascale and Athos 1981).

In studies with a *contingency management* perspective, culture is seen as an independent variable *endogenous* to the firm, consisting of beliefs and values developed by and within the organization (Deal and Kennedy 1982; Peters and Waterman 1982). In contingency models, measures of corporate performance are influenced in significant and systematic ways by the shared values, beliefs, identities, and commitment of organizational members. The contingency management perspective on organizational culture is

TABLE 1
Theoretical Features of Organizational Culture Paradigms^a

Organizational Paradigm	Key Theoretical Features	Locus of Culture
1. Comparative management	Grounded in functionalism (Malinowski 1961) and classical management theory (Barnard 1938)	Exogenous, independent variable
2. Contingency management	Grounded in structural functionalism (Radcliffe-Brown 1952) and contingency theory (Thompson 1967)	Endogenous, independent variable
3. Organizational cognition	Grounded in ethnoscience (Goodenough 1971) and cognitive organization theory (Weick 1979)	Culture as metaphor for organizational knowledge systems
4. Organizational symbolism	Grounded in symbolic anthropology (Geertz 1973) and symbolic organization theory (Dandridge, Mitroff, and Joyce 1980)	Culture as metaphor for shared symbols and meanings
5. Structural/psychodynamic perspective	Grounded in structuralism (Levi-Strauss 1963) and transformational organizational theory (Turner 1983)	Culture as metaphor for unconscious mind

^aAdapted from Smircich (1983a)

complementary to traditional contingency frameworks used to investigate such variables as structure, size, and technology of an organization (Pugh and Hickson 1976), and which in turn are grounded in functionalist theory in sociology (Parsons 1956). Like the comparative management approach, contingency management research is explicitly interventionist. As Smircich (1983a, p. 345) notes, researchers believe that cultural artifacts “can be used to build organizational commitment, convey a philosophy of management, rationalize and legitimate activity, motivate personnel, and facilitate socialization.”

The comparative management and contingency management views of organizational culture reflect a motivation to understand culture as a lever or tool to be used by managers to implement strategy and to direct the course of their organizations more effectively, to make culture and strategy consistent with and supportive of one another. As Smircich (1983a, p. 346–7) notes about these approaches, they tend to be “optimistic” and “messianic” (perhaps as a reflection of their structural functionalist nature) and to overlook the likelihood that multiple cultures, subcultures, and especially countercultures are competing to define for their members the nature of situations within organizational boundaries.

Culture as a Metaphor

Three other provocative ways of thinking about organizational culture are theoretically grounded in anthropology rather than in sociology. They describe culture not as a variable but as a root metaphor for the organization itself; culture is not something an organization “has” but what it “is.” In these perspectives, organizations are to be understood not just in economic or material terms, but in terms of their ex-

pressive, ideational, and symbolic aspects. The three perspectives are called “cognitive,” “symbolic,” and “structural/psychodynamic.”

In the *organizational cognition* perspective on organizational culture, the task of the researcher is to understand what the “rules” are that guide behavior—the shared cognitions, systems of values and beliefs, the unique ways in which organization members perceive and organize their world (Weick 1985). For example, researchers following this tradition have identified common ideational patterns within American organizations which they label as “entrepreneurial,” “scientific,” and “humanistic” (Litterer and Young 1981). Shrivastava and Mitroff (1983) suggest a method for identifying the “frames of reference” managers use in assessing acceptability of new information. Analogous to the cognitive paradigm in much of consumer behavior research, this organizational culture perspective focuses on the mind of the manager and views organizations as knowledge systems.

In an *organizational symbolism* perspective, an organization, like a society, is a system of shared meanings and symbols, a pattern of symbolic discourse that provides a background against which organization members organize and interpret their experience, looking for clues as to what constitutes appropriate behavior (Pondy et al. 1985). Researchers using this approach characteristically search for ways in which organizations can and do “socialize” new members to achieve coordinated action and a sense of organizational identity and commitment. An example is the ethnographic study by Smircich (1983b) of the executive staff of an unnamed insurance company. Her work describes the corporate ethos (“if you’ve got anything that is controversial, you just don’t bring it up”), organizational slogans (“wheeling together”),

rituals (the “Monday morning staff meeting”), and other symbolic processes that help create shared organizational meanings.

From a *structural/psychodynamic* perspective, the research goal is to discover structural patterns that link the unconscious human mind with overt manifestations in social arrangements. Researchers see organizations as a form of human expression rather than as goal-oriented, problem-solving instruments. An illustration is the work of Mitroff (1982), who draws on Jungian archetypes to suggest a fourfold classification of managerial styles based on combinations of thinking, feeling, intuition, and sensing.

The more traditional structural/functionalist views of organizational culture, as embodied in the first two approaches of comparative management and contingency management, are more theoretically and methodologically consistent with the organizational sociology perspective in which much marketing management literature is implicitly grounded. (For an excellent recent example of this perspective, see Walker and Ruekert 1987). They are also consistent with the implicitly instrumental perspective of much of this literature. However, it is vitally important that marketing researchers, as they read the background literature from organizational behavior, recognize the diverse conceptual and theoretical perspectives guiding research in that field. For instance, in some specific investigations, such as those exploring the determinants of innovativeness in an organization or the processes by which new sales representatives are integrated into a salesforce, the cognitive or symbolic perspective on organizational culture may be much more relevant. To encourage marketing scholars to pursue such inquiry, we now turn to more specific applications of these theoretical perspectives to marketing management problems.

Concepts of Organizational Culture Applied to Marketing

Specific theoretical structures might be appropriate for specific marketing problems. In defining the research agenda for organizational culture in marketing, it makes sense to try to identify a set of research issues that might flow from the organizational culture paradigms. Though we cannot be exhaustive in such an endeavor, we hope to be provocative in suggesting research directions that will develop relatively unexplored intellectual territory in marketing.

Our specific objective in developing a research agenda on organizational culture topics for marketing scholars is to contribute to the study of marketing management. In this endeavor we are explicitly interventionist, but are committed to the premise that management practice, and the teaching of marketing

to future managers, is strengthened by the development and application of sound theory. We believe that improving marketing management serves to make companies more responsive to customer needs (and, as noted before, a customer orientation is a type of organizational culture). Hence, though we distinguish between the first two and the other three paradigms of organizational culture on the basis of an instrumental-metaphorical classification, we now examine all five paradigms in terms of their potential contributions to the study and improvement of marketing management. Table 2 summarizes the marketing research and methodological implications of the five paradigms.

Comparative Marketing Management

Relatively little research, especially empirical, has been done on cross-national marketing management issues. Even single-country studies of problems facing marketing managers are scarce and few attempts have been made to generalize knowledge about these problems (or examine the limits of such generalizability). We see an opportunity for the rigorous application of concepts of organizational culture to enhance significantly the research on basic issues of standardization versus customization of international marketing programs.

Improved communication technologies and distribution systems, as well as the development of global marketing strategies, have led to a greater need for knowledge about marketing management issues that traverse national boundaries (Davidson 1982). However, what little work has been reported in the comparative marketing literature can be classified primarily as cross-national consumer behavior, rather than comparative marketing management, research.

We can begin to rectify this omission if we take as one major avenue of inquiry the success or failure of multinational corporations (whether American, European, Japanese, or other) in “exporting” their marketing practices. This issue involves the very fundamentals of the globalization controversy. As Quelch and Hoff (1986) point out, the basic question in global marketing is not whether or not to “go global,” but rather to what degree. The issue addressed here is not how to tailor marketing programs (including products and communications) to customers, but rather how to adapt management policies, programs, and structures to local personnel, channel institutions, and organizations. A comparative management approach is needed to examine the specific aspects of a local culture that necessitate modification/adaptation of marketing strategy in order for the strategy to be successful. As Quelch and Hoff note, the Coca-Cola Company and Nestlé have very different approaches to global marketing—Coca-Cola being a greater adherent of stan-

TABLE 2
Implications of Organizational Culture Paradigms for Marketing Research and Methodology

Organizational Paradigm	Marketing Research Implications	Methodological Implications
1. Comparative marketing management	<p>Cross-cultural study of standardization vs. customization of international marketing programs</p> <p>Research on relative effectiveness of cost-based vs. culture-based marketing control mechanisms in different countries</p>	Cross-sectional survey research
2. Contingency marketing management	<p>Research on impact of customer needs satisfaction-oriented culture vs. stockholder wealth maximization-oriented culture on market performance</p> <p>Relative impact of organizational structure and culture on innovativeness</p> <p>Research on making marketing strategy consistent with culture and structure</p> <p>Role of CEO in creating and disseminating a customer orientation</p> <p>Extent of differentiation of marketing department in a firm and its impact on "marketing marketing" to top management</p> <p>Impact of environmental change on the nature and effectiveness of brand management structures</p>	Cross-sectional survey research or ethnographic methods
3. Marketing cognition	<p>Research on the creation, dissemination, and use of marketing knowledge in firms</p> <p>Study of impact of organizational restructuring on shared marketing cognitions</p> <p>Research on sources of organizational conflicts involving marketing and other departments (e.g., marketing/R&D conflicts in new product development process)</p>	Ethnographic or phenomenological research
4. Marketing symbolism	<p>Research on the socialization of new marketing recruits</p> <p>Impact of strong marketing socialization on creativity and innovativeness</p> <p>Study of importance of organizational symbols in sales transactions</p>	Ethnographic or phenomenological research
5. Structural/psychodynamic perspective in marketing	<p>Research on the historical development of "market-driven" firms as expression of founders' wills</p>	Ethnographic or historical research

standardization and Nestlé believing in local market adaptation—yet both are extremely successful consumer goods marketers.

Though several thoughtful conceptual articles have been written on the relevance of national culture to globalization (Levitt 1983), few empirical studies have examined the issue. An important exception is the recent work of Gatignon and Anderson (1987) who use transaction cost analysis to explain the extent of control exerted by multinational corporations over their foreign subsidiaries. They find that American multinationals generally take lower control levels in countries where a greater "sociocultural distance" is

perceived (i.e., where American executives feel uncomfortable with the values and operating methods in a host country).

Clearly the success of any international marketing strategy depends not only on the extent of its conformity to customer cultural norms but also on the conformity with the values and beliefs of employees in various host countries, as Hofstede's (1980) landmark survey of the work-related values of 116,000 respondents in 40 countries suggests in a broader management context. For example, are marketing managers in an East Asian subsidiary of a British parent company more or less likely than their East Af-

rican counterparts to adopt British marketing programs? An interesting topic in this context is the residual impact of colonial heritages on the relative rate of diffusion of European marketing strategies in Asian and African cultures.

Another related topic of interest is the relative effectiveness of various marketing control mechanisms for different national or regional cultures. Marketing control has been defined as a system of methods, procedures, and devices used by marketing managers to ensure compliance with marketing policies and strategies (Park and Zaltman 1987, p. 599–600). Discussions of such marketing control systems typically have been framed in traditional accounting theory involving cost and performance variance monitoring (Anthony, Dearden, and Bradford 1984; Hulbert and Toy 1977), yet a comparative marketing management perspective suggests an important alternative mechanism for implementing marketing control. Ouchi (1980, p. 132) provides the illustration of Japanese firms exercising a form of “clan control,” training their employees so they need not be monitored closely: “It is not necessary for these organizations to measure performance to control or direct their employees, since the employees’ natural (socialized) intention is to do what is best for the firm.” This approach allows simultaneous discretion and control, with people expressing autonomy within cultural limits. It is an important alternative to traditional mechanisms of control, which frequently have the counterproductive result of creating resistance among employees who see it as a corrective rather than a monitoring device (Jaworski 1988). Lebas and Weigenstein (1986) further suggest that culture control is gradually replacing rules-based control as organizations undergoing productivity declines search for new ways of managing employees.

An area of research inquiry for marketing scholars is the extent to which such alternative forms of marketing control can lead to equivalent or higher productivity in various customer contact functions. Three such functions are salesforce, distributor, and customer service management. Is clan control superior to cost/performance-oriented marketing control in these marketing functions in different countries in which a multinational firm operates (e.g., in monitoring salesforce performance in France and Germany)? Does this superiority vary not only by country but by region (e.g., are there southwestern and northeastern differences within the U.S. in terms of the relative effectiveness of accounting-based versus culture-based marketing control mechanisms in distribution channel management)?

Because each of the three research topics noted is grounded in the comparative management perspective, it seems sensible to at least begin the empirical inquiry by using survey research methods. Those

methods have been used successfully in several analogous studies on organizational culture such as that of Hofstede (1980) and could be adapted successfully to marketing inquiries. Further, the polling of managers in several nations about which marketing practices are successes and failures is well suited to survey methods.

Contingency Marketing Management

Survey research also might be appropriate (at least for the initial exploration) in the examination of marketing management problems from a contingency cultural viewpoint. This perspective is likely to be the most natural one for marketing scholars because much marketing management literature is grounded either explicitly or implicitly in a structural-functionalist paradigm that is the philosophical foundation of the organizational culture perspective. Such work has examined, for example, the impact of organizational structure (formalization, centralization, and complexity of the organization) on marketing plan utilization (John and Martin 1984) and the performance of organizational buying centers (Spekman and Stern 1979).

An important avenue for research in contingency marketing management is to examine the impact of an organization’s values and beliefs on market performance. For instance, one might compare an organizational culture emphasizing primarily the satisfaction of customer needs with one emphasizing primarily stockholder wealth maximization on such measures as long- and short-run sales growth, earnings per share, market share, and return on equity. The former type of organizational culture is the subject of growing attention among marketing scholars and practitioners. Webster (1988) points to evidence in the business press of companies that have made an intellectual commitment to being customer-oriented but are finding it difficult to achieve that reorientation. What are the cultural traits, the shared values and beliefs, that are characteristic of a customer-oriented, market-driven enterprise? Initial work has been reported by both academics and practitioners who are interested in the topic (Drumwright 1987; Kutner 1987; Ruckert and Naditch 1987; Sakach 1987). Part of the difficulty of conducting such research is in operationalizing measures of organizational culture. Examples of how it might be done are provided in the recent work of an organizational sociologist (Reynolds 1986) which, though preliminary, provides directions for scale development that are of interest to marketing researchers.

A related research study could examine the impact of both cultural and structural measures in explaining a dependent variable of interest (Davis 1984). For instance, one could examine the influence of organizational values and beliefs along with organizational

formalization and centralization on innovativeness (Cherian and Deshpande 1985). The premise would be that neither structure nor culture *per se* would encourage greater innovativeness as much as would the interaction between a particular set of cultural beliefs and a specific kind of organizational structure.

This last issue is important to scholars in both organizational behavior and strategic management. Schwartz and Davis (1981) argue that organization structure and culture must be balanced and internally consistent and also must fit strategy if that strategy is to be implemented. They point to the mismatch of strategy, structure, and culture as the reason for the failure of former President Walter Spencer's plan to change Sherwin-Williams Company from a production to a marketing orientation and as a major reason for the difficulties in integrating the merged Rockwell and North American companies. Further, Wheelwright (1984) notes in a perceptive article on the history of strategic planning that an overly analytical strategic approach that did not take into account managers' values and beliefs helps to explain both the failure of Texas Instruments in implementing its strategic plans and the success of Hewlett Packard, which took the opposite approach. Wheelwright describes such a value-based incremental approach to strategic planning as one in which the beliefs of managers and workers in a firm are the key to setting its long-term direction, taking precedence over the actions of competitors and the structure of its product markets. He cites the work of Quinn (1980) on logical incrementalism as being a good example of this approach in the strategic management literature.

Most literature on organizational culture treats it as a top-down phenomenon with a critical role being played by the CEO (frequently in conjunction with, or as a member of, a founding family) in both establishing cultural norms and overseeing their diffusion in the firm (Schein 1984). Hence, an interesting topic for research is the role of the CEO in developing and implementing a customer orientation in a firm. The arguments of Wilkins and Ouchi (1983) and our preliminary field research suggest, however, that it may be more productive to study culture at the SBU or divisional or even departmental level as it relates to the development of a customer-oriented view of the business.

A related topic in contingency marketing management is the role of the marketing department in an SBU. Is there an optimal degree of differentiation of "marketing" as a separate, distinct subculture within the business unit? We can think of the marketing department creating resistance if its role is perceived as being too great, but being unable to function as a change agent within an organization if its role is perceived as being too slight. The role of the marketing department

should be studied within an evolutionary perspective. The role might be seen as being more crucial for SBUs in mature, fragmented industries with greater competition in relatively undifferentiated commodities than in new, highly differentiated industries with patent protection and relatively little indirect competition.

Also relevant to contingency marketing management is the study of a particular organizational form as a cultural phenomenon—product/brand management. A focus on how environmental changes might affect the relative efficiency of product management as an expression of organizational culture might be the basis for such an inquiry. This research topic is especially salient for consumer goods firms currently faced with increased retailer control of the distribution channel, accelerated sales promotion activity, and consequently decreased brand loyalty.

Though survey research methods traditionally have been used to examine contingency management issues in marketing, combining them with ethnographic methods might be appropriate in investigating specific topics. For instance, an understanding of the role of a CEO in implementing a customer/marketing orientation in an organization might involve a field investigation with the extensive note taking, document collecting, and personal interviews that characterize the typical anthropological study. However, to generalize across firms and/or industries it might be appropriate subsequently to develop a survey research questionnaire to detect common patterns or themes. We should add that ethnographic methods are not single-firm restricted. Gregory's (1983) study of "native views" in Silicon Valley firms is an excellent example of the kind of research that can be done in this area.

Marketing Cognition

Among the metaphorical views of organizational culture, the organizational cognition perspective suggests several interesting research directions. In this paradigm, culture is seen as a metaphor for organizational knowledge systems with shared cognitions.

Myers, Massy, and Greyser (1980), in a major MSI/AMA report on marketing knowledge development, reported little diffusion of marketing concepts, models, and theories at the line manager level. Few researchers have taken up this issue for empirical investigation, but it is a topic for which an organizational cognition perspective might prove helpful. Recent work on the notion of an "organizational memory" (Walsch and Ungson 1988) suggests several reasons why scholars in any field including marketing might investigate this area. Beyond the obvious need to understand the impact of marketing theory and model development on practitioners, it is important to understand the process by which marketing knowledge resides in an organization where managers have great

task mobility. A firm that rotates managers through a series of positions and functions might want to ensure that core marketing knowledge is not lost in the rotation (a problem that is accentuated when a key manager leaves the firm). This area is of current concern because of the restructuring occurring in recently merged or acquired corporations. What constitutes “shared marketing cognitions” in such organizations? How are they affected during merger and acquisition activity?

Another interesting research area that could be examined from an organizational cognition perspective is organizational conflict involving marketing. One could explore, for instance, the “thought worlds” of managers as organizational behavior scholar Dougherty (1987) has done in her study of marketing/R&D conflicts in the new product development process. Such an inquiry would center on understanding how differences in the world views of different groups or departments would help or hinder the enactment of marketing decisions. This approach can be applied usefully to several of the other subfunctional divisions, including marketing versus sales.

Though not taking a cultural perspective, Deshpande and Zaltman (1984) suggest that differences in the perceived use of market research information can be explained by a “two-community theory” of differing backgrounds of marketing researchers and managers. Their work could be reexamined from a marketing cognition perspective. Similarly Zaltman (1987), using a theories-in-use approach with a repertory grid method, has attempted to describe the knowledge systems of retail buyers. The underlying theme in these studies is to uncover the “grammar” or epistemological basis for marketing decisions—what it is about the ways marketing managers and others interpret their world that explains why they take certain actions (which might frequently be in conflict with those taken by others). Zaltman’s approach is very much in the tradition of cognitive organizational behavior scholar Wacker (1981), who has suggested using the repertory grid for diagnosis and intervention.

As in the last example, researchers working on marketing cognition issues might find methods such as the repertory grid useful in mapping the cognitive rules being used by managers. Traditionally, however, the organizational cognition literature has been grounded in ethnographic anthropological method. The objective is to get as much depth as possible in understanding organizational knowledge from the organizational actors’ perspective, thereby sacrificing generalizability to some extent. Though marketing scholars may or may not choose to make the same methodological tradeoff, they should be aware of the most common research methods being used by organizational behavior researchers who have worked with this paradigm.

Marketing Symbolism

The fourth cultural paradigm, organizational symbolism, is rooted in both symbolic anthropology and symbolic organization theory. Marketing scholars working in this area would search for patterns of symbolic discourse where culture is a metaphor for shared symbols and meanings. The most common methodological approach has been ethnographic, though certain inquiries might be pursued by survey research methods.

A major topic for research in this area is marketing socialization. Both recruitment and training of new marketing and sales personnel are culture-related activities that might be interpreted in terms of the particular symbols attached to both formal and informal socialization. PepsiCo Inc., for example, is known for a corporate culture that encourages internal competitiveness among marketing managers as a simulation of the competitiveness in the industries in which it operates. Coca-Cola, in contrast, is known for a much more conservative, traditional corporate culture where internal consensus is deemed important in order to present a united front in the marketplace. These two packaged goods companies derive a substantial portion of their overall revenue from the same product categories, but their procedures for employee socialization would be extremely different.

In some respects, personnel selection is the single most crucial human resources decision in management and yet is almost never studied by marketing scholars. To work together as a team, marketing personnel need to understand not only their own jobs and their interrelationships to the jobs of others, but also the values, norms, and ideologies of the entire company and of the departmental subunit. The organizational symbolism perspective can be useful in interpreting the culture, especially for well-established firms. As Schein (1984, p. 10) notes: “Because culture serves the function of stabilizing the external and internal environment of an organization, it must be taught to new members. It would not serve its function if every generation of new members could introduce new perceptions, language, thinking patterns, and rules of interaction. For culture to serve its function, it must be perceived as correct and valid, and if it is perceived that way, it automatically follows that it must be taught to newcomers.”

An organizational symbolism perspective might be helpful in understanding the dilemma of how to socialize newcomers into the current organizational or marketing department culture without diminishing the creativity and innovativeness that different perspectives frequently bring. Does a strong program of marketing socialization dampen creativity of expression? Perhaps this is one of the major issues to be addressed in studying brand management systems in well-established

lished firms. It is an important issue to practitioners as well, because chief executive officers have commented on declining innovativeness and entrepreneurial thinking on the part of marketing managers (Webster 1981).

A final avenue for research on marketing symbolism is in the domain of personal selling. There is a literature on the importance of brand symbols to consumers (Levy 1959). It would be interesting to look at the importance of organizational symbols from a sales perspective. Most of the selling literature centers on formal terms of a transaction in evaluating value, but organizational culture and other less tangible aspects of a vendor firm are also critical for a potential buyer. For example, not only the technical capabilities of IBM's Personal System/2 but also the symbolic aspects of the IBM culture are transmitted to the buyer at the point of sale. How much of the variance in purchase decisions can be explained by such exchanges of organizational values?

Structural/Psychodynamic Perspective in Marketing

The fifth culture paradigm is grounded in both the structuralism of Levi-Strauss (1963) and transformational organization theory (Turner 1983). Here organizational culture is seen as a metaphor for the unconscious mind and the organization itself is a form of human expression.

Perhaps the most interesting research question is how a company develops as an expression of the will of its founders. Though little use has been made of historical research in marketing (Savitt 1980), this question would be excellent for application of a set of methods using archival data to interpret how an organization grows. Especially pertinent here would be the study of firms we think of as being "market-driven," companies such as Procter & Gamble in consumer packaged goods, General Electric in durable goods, IBM in industrial products, and American Express in services. What is it about the founders of these companies that was translated into specific organizational arrangements conducive to being market-driven? What is it that drives certain inventors and entrepreneurs to create organizations to market their products while others are content to have their ideas exploited?

The five organizational culture paradigms provide many directions for research on topics relevant to marketing management. Note that the levels of investigation differ among the paradigms. In the comparative marketing management perspective, culture is approached as a background variable and hence inquiry is at the level of the environment. In the contingency marketing management perspective, culture is seen as an independent variable and hence inquiry is at the level of the organization. In the three re-

maintaining paradigms (marketing cognition, marketing symbolism, and structural/psychodynamism), culture is examined at the individual-manager level.

Summary and Conclusion

Marketing scholars seeking to develop concepts of organizational culture and apply them to marketing problems face two challenges. First, they must delve into the rapidly developing literature on organizational culture and understand the various definitional, conceptual, and methodological issues (outlined briefly here). For their research to be credible, they must clarify, and defend, the choices they have made in addressing these issues. Their choices will include the theoretical approach preferred and the methodological approach used. Second, they must develop theoretical structures that relate carefully defined cultural variables to the marketing phenomena they are trying to understand.

The importance of understanding organizational culture issues in a marketing management context is undeniable. For instance, of the priority research topics listed in a recent Marketing Science Institute (1988) publication, the MSI cites an urgent need for research on "developing and maintaining a customer and market focus" (p. 7)—implying an understanding of both the role of marketing in an organization and how a company can become more customer-oriented. Additionally, the MSI report calls for more research on integrating a customer orientation with a focus on quality as a management process. We consider these and related issues in our discussion of how the five organizational culture paradigms affect marketing research.

The literature we review holds tremendous promise for marketing scholars who want to begin this exploration. It is time to move beyond structural explanations of marketing management, of "what happens around here," to an understanding of "why things happen the way they do." The potential is great for both building richer theories of marketing management and addressing significant problems of marketing practice.

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