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A review of consensus analysis methods in consumer culture, organizational culture and national culture research

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The cultural consensus model is a method that is used by anthropologists to study intracultural variance, intercultural differences and cultural consonance across a variety of contexts. In order to provide academic scholars who study consumer, organizational and national culture with an additional tool that could be used to triangulate on ethnographic conclusions, this paper reviews the conceptual and methodological foundations of the cultural consensus model. In addition, this paper identifies important considerations a researcher should bear in mind when using the cultural consensus model and discusses how the cultural consensus model both has been and could be used to study consumer culture, organizational culture and national culture research.

Keywords: consensus analysis; cultural consensus model; cultural research methods; culture conceptualization; culture operationalization

> Consensus analysis answers what may be the single most important question of ethnography: Who agrees with whom about what and to what degree.
>
> (Handwerker and Borgatti 1998, 569)

In recent years anthropologists have developed and adopted various consensus analysis methods to study shared knowledge (Borgatti 1994; D'Andrade 1995; Dressler et al. 2005; Handwerker 2002; Romney, Batchelder, and Weller 1987; Romney, Weller, and Batchelder 1986; Ross 2004; Weller 1987, 1998; Weller and Romney 1988). These consensus analysis methods enable a researcher to study fundamental ethnographic questions in a systematic manner. Marketing scholars have recognized the importance of conducting ethnographic research in a systematic manner. For example, Arnould and Wallendorf state: "Ethnography gives primacy to systematic data collection" (1994, 485). Likewise, Spiggle states: "Systematic processes minimize potential distortion from selective use of the data" (1994, 496).

Consensus analysis methods offer marketing scholars a systematic method that could be used to triangulate on their research conclusions (Handwerker and Borgatti 1998; Holt 2002; Kozinets 2002; McAlexander, Schouten, and Koenig 2002; Sirsi, Ward and Reingen 1996). Consensus analysis methods are not superior to other ethnographic research methods, they are simply another method that an academic scholar can use to study consumer culture, organizational culture and national culture. While consensus analysis has been used hundreds of times in the anthropology literature, it

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has never been used formally in the marketing literature (Sirsi, Ward, and Reingen 1996, 350). Incorporating new cognitive science research tools into marketing research is an MSI research priority (Marketing Science Institute).

While the majority of the anthropological studies that use consensus analysis have focused on studying the shared knowledge structures of people in traditional societies in areas such as folk biology (Atran et al. 1999; Boster 1991) and folk medicine (Baer et al. 1999, 2003, 2004; Weller et al. 1999), anthropologists have also used consensus analysis to study the shared knowledge of modern societies in areas that are more relevant to marketing. For example, anthropologists have used consensus analysis to study shared knowledge about brands (Furlow 2003), organizational culture (Jaskyte and Dressler 2004) and materialism (Dressler, Dos Santos, and Balieiro 1996).

Culture's Consequences' (Hofstede 1980) huge social science citation index of over 3,000 demonstrates the popularity of cultural research methods that can statistically estimate aspects of culture. While the social science citation indices of the cultural consensus model (Romney, Weller, and Batchelder 1986) and Weller and Romney's book *Systematic Data Collection* (1988) pale in comparison to Hofstede's work (only approximately 250 citations), the cultural consensus model offers cultural researchers the ability to conduct systematic cultural research in a more idiographic manner (Holt 1994, 1997; Thompson and Troester 2002) than Hofstede's (1980) and Deshpande and Webster's (1989) nomothetic operationalizations of national cultural values and organizational culture types.

The purpose of this research is to (1) examine the relationship between marketing and the field of cognitive anthropology, (2) explain the manner in which anthropologists conceptualize and operationalize cultural knowledge using consensus analysis methods, (3) discuss limitations of consensus analysis and important issues a researcher should consider when conducting a consensus analysis study, and (4) discuss how consensus analysis methods could benefit the areas of consumer culture, organizational culture and national culture research.

Marketing research and cognitive anthropology

The marketing literature contains very few examples of studies that draw upon the cognitive anthropology literature in order to evaluate phenomena such as folk models or theories regarding the shared knowledge of groups of people. Handwerker (2002) emphasizes the distinction between ethnology and ethnography to make the point that cultural research has a great deal of potential to move beyond cultural research that is descriptive to evaluate cultural theories about intracultural and intercultural variance (Handwerker and Borgatti 1998). Other cognitive anthropologists have called for more systematic studies that examine cultural theories, or the life experiences and background variables of people that influence the cultural knowledge structures of a group (Ross 2004; Strauss and Quinn 1997). One marketing study that does draw upon the cognitive anthropology literature in order to examine cultural variance in a systematic manner is a study by Sirsi, Ward and Reingen (1996).

Sirsi, Ward and Reingen state: "Variation in cognitions…suggests the importance of understanding culture as a distribution of knowledge" (1996, 346). These authors use social networks to measure cultural knowledge. However, social network analysis is not the only method that anthropologists have developed to study shared knowledge.

In their study, Sirsi, Ward and Reingen (1996) refer to a study by the anthropologist named Susan Weller (1983). Weller's study received a great deal of attention

recently in an article by Romney (1999) that discusses the cultural consensus model and how it can be used to statistically estimate various aspects of shared knowledge. In contrast to social network analysis, the cultural consensus model uses factor analysis and Bayes' Theorem to produce statistical estimates of shared knowledge. This distinction between consensus analysis and social network analysis can also be seen if we look at the software packages that have been developed to support these two different methods.

The Analytic Technologies home page contains both social network analysis (UCINET) and cultural domain analysis software (ANTHROPAC). Sirsi, Ward and Reingen (1996) use UCINET software (Borgatti, Everett, and Freeman 1992) in their study. Consensus analysis is a method that is part of the broader cultural domain analysis methodology. ANTHROPAC has been developed to assist a researcher in following the cultural domain analysis methodology (Borgatti 1994, 1996a, 1996b). Finally, it is important to note, as Borgatti does, that many of the methods and basic ideas used in cultural domain analysis are not new: "They are derived from cognitive-anthropology-ethnoscience and marketing research" (1994, 261). However, as Borgatti also notes, the cultural consensus model is a new method recently developed by anthropologists. Now, let us turn our attention to how anthropologists conceptualize cultural knowledge and operationalize cultural knowledge using the cultural consensus model.

Conceptualizing and operationalizing cultural knowledge with consensus analysis

MacKenzie (2003) states it is important for the operational definition of a construct to match the construct's conceptual definition. Therefore, we begin this section by discussing how anthropologists conceptualize cultural knowledge. Then, we describe the methodology and algorithms that consensus analysis uses to statistically estimate three aspects of shared knowledge and identify the assumptions upon which these algorithms are based. Furthermore, the manner in which these consensus analysis estimates have been used to study intracultural variance, intercultural variance and cultural consonance is discussed.

Conceptualizing culture and cultural knowledge

In 1973, Clifford Geertz wrote: "Between what our body tells us and what we have to know in order to function, there is a vacuum we must fill ourselves, and we fill it with information (or misinformation) provided by our culture" (50). Here we see that knowledge (cognitive thoughts) and culture are closely related. Marketing scholars have also discussed the relationship between culture and cognition (Deshpande and Webster 1989; Sirsi, Ward, and Reingen 1996). For example, major research studies on organizational culture (Deshpande and Farley 2004; Deshpande, Farley, and Webster 1993, 2000; Deshpande and Webster 1989; Webster and Deshpande 1990) are based on the theoretical foundation of Smircich's (1983) work. Part of Smircich's work, in turn, is based on Goodenough's (1981, 50) cognitive, or knowledge-based, conceptualization of culture as the knowledge that one must know or believe in order to behave and operate in a society in an acceptable manner. However, it is important to note that Goodenough's view of culture is just one of many.

Anthropologists have proposed a variety of definitions of culture. For example, Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952) review more than 200 definitions of culture in their

book. The lack of agreement about a definition of culture has led some anthropologists to call for the abandonment of the culture concept, yet it remains a central concept to the discipline of anthropology (Brumann 1999). Instead of attempting to define and operationalize culture, some anthropologists have focused on the narrower concept of cultural knowledge. Anthropologists have developed a definition of cultural knowledge that serves as a common theoretical foundation for many of the studies that have studied cultural knowledge. In order to review how anthropologists conceptualize cultural knowledge, let us examine a definition of culture offered by Sherry.

Sherry states that culture "is composed of, and in turn, composes two significant human phenomena: meaning systems and material flows" (1986, 574). Sherry's definition of culture references the work of the anthropologist D'Andrade (1984). More recently, D'Andrade describes his conceptualization of cultural knowledge in his book *The Development of Cognitive Anthropology*:

> Most of what any human ever thinks has been thought before, and most of what any human ever thinks has been learned from other humans. Or, to put it another way, most of what anyone knows is *cultural* knowledge. Cognitive anthropology investigates cultural knowledge, knowledge which is embedded in words, in stories, and artifacts, and which is learned from and shared with other humans. (1995, xiv)

Two important aspects of cultural knowledge that D'Andrade (1995) emphasizes are that cultural knowledge is (1) learned from and (2) shared with people. Looking back to Geertz's (1973) quote at the beginning of this section, we see that some knowledge is biological, or innate. Therefore, cultural knowledge is not the innate knowledge our body tells us (like that we are hungry, tired or thirsty). Rather, cultural knowledge is knowledge that is socially transmitted or learned from other humans. The second aspect about cultural knowledge that D'Andrade (1987b) emphasizes is that cultural knowledge is shared by a group of people. In many instances, shared knowledge is very powerful because when enough people share a set of beliefs, people behave as though these beliefs were obvious facts (D'Andrade 1987a). Finally, D'Andrade (2004) also recently stated that A.K. Romney is the anthropologist who has contributed most to the development of anthropological methods in the twentieth century. In the next section, one of Romney's major methodological contributions, the cultural consensus model is discussed.

The starting point of a study that uses consensus analysis: identifying a cultural domain

The cultural consensus model and other consensus analysis methods are part of a broader methodology. This broader methodology has been referred to as cultural domain analysis (Borgatti 1994; Weller and Romney 1988). Therefore, in order to understand how anthropologists use consensus analysis, we must first review the initial steps of a cultural domain analysis study. Before the cultural consensus model can be used, a list of items that will serve as the cultural domain of the study has to be generated. A cultural domain is the "coherently defined subject matter" (Weller and Romney 1988, 11) that will be used to measure the shared knowledge of informants. It is important that the "domain…be defined by the informants, in their language, and not by the investigator" (10). This makes the study more idiographic. Anthropologists have used a variety of methods to identify a cultural domain, but the use of free lists to identify a cultural domain seems to be the most preferable method (Borgatti 1994;

Weller and Romney 1988). Because the use of free lists to identify a cultural domain is the most systematic (in terms of quantifiability), the rest of this section is devoted to discussing how free lists can be used to identify a cultural domain. However, depth interviews or combination of free lists and depth interviews are also used to identify cultural domain items.

The free list method has a long history in anthropology (Romney 1989; Romney et al. 1979). A more recent assessment of how to use free lists to identify cultural domains is offered by Quinlan (2005). To obtain free list data on a cultural domain, a researcher asks informants to "'name all of the x's that you know' or 'what kinds of x's are there'" (Weller and Romney 1988, 10). For example, in a study on cultural beliefs of Guatemalan women regarding disease contagiousness, 20 women "were asked to name all the illnesses they could think of and to describe each," resulting in a cultural domain of 27 diseases (Romney 1999, S108). There is a variety of information that can be obtained from free list results (Romney, Brewer, and Batchelder 1993, 1996). The most commonly used information from free list results in a consensus analysis study are item salience, or position of an item in a free list (J. Smith 1993), and item frequency, or proportion of free lists in which an item occurs. A high correlation between the salience and frequency measures of the free list items suggests a coherent cultural domain in the free list data (Romney, Brewer, and Batchelder 1996). Once a list of cultural domain items has been identified, consensus analysis can be used to analyze the structure of informant agreement that a group of informants exhibits toward the list of cultural domain items.

The cultural consensus model: estimates, algorithms and assumptions

In this section we review the original consensus analysis method developed by cognitive anthropologists – the cultural consensus model (Romney, Weller, and Batchelder 1986). After the cultural consensus model was developed to accommodate the two-category nominal (e.g. contagious/noncontagious), its algorithm was adapted to accommodate ordinal data (Romney, Batchelder, and Weller 1987) and interval (Weller 1987) data. We will now review the estimates, algorithms and assumptions of the cultural consensus model.

Estimates

The cultural consensus model uses factor analysis and Bayes' Theorem to produce statistical estimates that address the following questions:

(1) To what extent does a group of informants share a single cultural model? Instead of assuming that informants share a set of beliefs, consensus analysis estimates the level of agreement exhibited by a group of informants (Ross 2004).
(2) To what extent does each respondent agree with the group's cultural beliefs? This estimate offers the researcher a measure of intracultural variance and is referred to as cultural competence. More specifically, cultural competence is defined as "the probability that informant *i* 'knows' the correct answer to any item" (Romney, Weller, and Batchelder 1986, 318).
(3) What are the culturally appropriate answers to each item exhibited by the group of informants? This estimate is referred to as the answer key (Romney, Weller, and Batchelder 1986).

Algorithms

Consensus analysis allows researchers to examine the structure of the shared knowledge that a group of people exhibits towards a list of attributes, or a culture, by factor analyzing an informant-by-informant similarity matrix. The cultural consensus model estimates the structure of informant agreement by performing a principle components factor analysis on the proportion of matches between each informant, which has been corrected for guessing (Borgatti 1996b; Romney, Weller, and Batchelder 1986).

The answer to the first question, as to whether or not the group of informants shares a single cultural model, is estimated in the following manner. If the first factor's eigenvalue is greater than three times the second factor's eigenvalue, and all of the respondent loadings on the first factor are positive with a high mean, then the group of respondents is said to be sharing a single cultural model. If these conditions are met, then the cultural competence estimates are simply the first factor loadings. Finally, the culturally appropriate answers to each item (the answer key) are calculated using Bayes' Theorem wherein the cultural competence estimates and informants' responses to each question are used as inputs.

Assumptions

The cultural consensus model contains three basic assumptions that allow the factor analysis estimates to be valid. These three assumptions are:

(1) *Common truth*. There is a single answer key that applies to each and every informant. It is assumed that the same cultural reality exists across each informant.
(2) *Local independence*. Informant responses are not conditional upon the responses of other informants.
(3) *Homogeneity of items*. The cultural competence of each informant is the same for all questions. Every informant has a fixed level of cultural competence across all items.

Consensus analysis extensions

Since the development of the cultural consensus, cognitive anthropologists have used consensus analysis methods to (1) examine intracultural variation (Romney 1999), (2) identify intercultural variation among two or more cultures (Handwerker 2001, 2002), and (3) measure cultural consonance (Dressler et al. 2005). For example, to examine intracultural variation Romney (1999) uses ANOVA to show that there is a significant relationship between the number of children that informants have and the cultural competence of each informant. In a different study, Handwerker (2002) uses consensus analysis to examine intercultural differences between two subculture groups. Finally, Dressler and others have coined the term cultural consonance as "the degree to which an individual approximates in his or her own behavior or belief the shared cultural model in some domain" (2005, 331). Since the development of the cultural consonance construct, Dressler and colleagues have studied cultural consonance in a variety of cultural contexts, such as Brazil, Jamaica and Alabama, and in a variety of domains, such as lifestyle, social support, family life and national characteristics (Dressler et al. 2005; Dressler and Bindon 2000; Dressler, Grell, and Viteri 1995).

Issues to consider when using consensus analysis

The use of consensus analysis in ethnographic research has been debated in the anthropology literature (Aunger 1999; Romney 1999). The extent to which cultural competence estimates estimate cultural belief systems has been brought into question (Aunger 1999). Much of this debate centers on the actual portion of culture that consensus analysis estimates reflect. This debate reminds us that consensus analysis estimates are only measuring the shared knowledge portion of culture. Therefore, a researcher should not think that consensus analysis estimates provide a comprehensive summary of a group's culture. Consensus analysis provides statistical estimates of shared knowledge.

While this paper does not attempt to resolve all of the issues being debated regarding consensus analysis, there are several key issues that the researcher should consider at the beginning of a consensus analysis study in order to make his or her study as systematic as possible. One of the main benefits of consensus analysis is that consensus analysis provides "precise, testable, and replicable knowledge [that] is simply not obtainable without systematic data collection and the statistical model of cultural consensus" (Romney 1999, S112). In order to help make a consensus analysis study systematic, section recommends that the researcher avoid idiosyncratic cultural domains, identify clear cultural boundaries, sample across background and life experience variables, and evaluate beliefs about external attributes as opposed to internal opinions on two-category nominal scales. These recommendations are based on the cognitive anthropology literature and the findings from previous consensus analysis studies that the authors have performed (Horowitz, Brady, and Gravlee 2006).

Avoid idiosyncratic cultural domains

While Weller and Romney define a cultural domain as "an organized set of words, concepts, or sentences, all on the same level of contrast, that jointly refer to a single conceptual sphere" (1988, 9), this is not the only definition of a cultural domain. More recently, Romney and Moore define a *semantic* domain as "an organized set of words, all on the same level of contrast, that refer to a single conceptual sphere" (1998, 315). Perhaps this shift from the notion of a cultural domain to the notion of a semantic domain tacitly implies that the authors have come to the realization that consensus analysis is better suited to study domains that consist of single words as opposed to idiosyncratic phrases. Borgatti (1994) also discusses the differences between cultural domains that consist of one-word names as opposed to multiple-word phrases.

Borgatti (1994) distinguishes between cultural domains as consisting either of names or phrases. Names are specific, one-word descriptions of a possible cultural domain item. On the other hand, a phrase is a general, multiple-word description of a possible cultural domain item. After making this distinction, Borgatti (1994) tells us that the practice of using free listing to identify a cultural domain works best when a cultural domain is composed of one-word names. Cultural domains consisting of names produce fewer unique items in a free list, making the process of selecting a set of cultural domain items less complex and arbitrary. Since one of the goals of ethnographic studies that use consensus analysis is to be systematic, it is important that the first phase of an ethnographic study that uses consensus analysis – the domain identification phase – be as sound as possible. Perhaps this is why ethnographic studies that use consensus analysis are most commonly performed in the areas of folk medicine and folk biology. These areas study cultural domains that are semantic (one-word

name) domains (Romney and Moore 1998) that consist of specific diseases (i.e., diabetes, cancer, smallpox) or specific animal species (i.e., dolphin, bluefish, striped mullet).

Identify clear cultural boundaries

By definition, cultural knowledge is knowledge that is learned and shared among a *group* of people (D'Andrade 1995). Because of this definition of cultural knowledge, identifying a specific cultural group is a critical part of an ethnographic study that uses consensus analysis. Furthermore, as Ross (2004) states, ethnographic research cannot hide behind a student sample. While psychological studies can make the argument that a student sample can control the level of error introduced to a study, an ethnographic study must sample directly from the informants who are part of a cultural group. Based on this information, it becomes apparent how important it is to clearly understand the boundaries of the cultural group that is under investigation. Many of the ethnographic studies that use consensus analysis tend to focus on microcultures that have specific boundaries and can be sampled easily (or possibly even a census of the entire microculture could be obtained). For example, ethnographic studies that use consensus analysis have studied very small native groups such as Ojubway Indians of Canada (Garro 2000), Tzeltal Mayans (Casagrande 2004) or Lacandon Mayans (Ross 2002).

Sample across life experience and background variables

In addition to defining clear cultural boundaries, it is important that purposeful sampling (Thompson and Troester 2002) be used to capture how cultural meaning differs across differences in life experiences or sociological categories such as gender, ethnicity and age. Similarly, Handwerker (2005) tells us that because cultural data by definition lacks independent error terms and is autocorrelated, cultural samples do not require random selection (Handwerker 2001, 2005; Handwerker, Hatcherson, and Herbert 1997). Because cultural data reflect the social interactions in which knowledge is transmitted, what one person knows is a function of other people's knowledge, and this knowledge pool changes over time. Handwerker tells us that because cultural variation emanates from variation in life experiences, it is important to design a sample around similar or different life experiences. A random sample would not yield a group of people who shared specific life experiences. Therefore, Handwerker recommends that judgmental quota samples be used to establish cultural boundaries based on people's contrasting life experiences. This sampling method ensures that either a very specific group is sampled or that a large amount of heterogeneity is included in a sample (Handwerker 2005).

Evaluate beliefs about external attributes as opposed to internal opinions with nominal scales

The first assumption of consensus analysis presented by Romney, Weller and Batchelder (1986) is the common truth assumption. This assumption states that there is a single fixed answer key that applies to each informant. The question then becomes, are attitudes that are measured on interval scales anchored by "strongly agree" and "strongly disagree" able to measure a common truth? When we think of cultural

knowledge as a common truth that a group of people share, it does not seem as though individual attitudes are part of this common truth. On the other hand, cultural knowledge is focused on the external common truth that a group of people shares.

It seems as though it is more appropriate to measure cultural knowledge across specific attributes, such as "contagious" or "noncontagious" (Romney 1999), as opposed to more attitudinal "agree" and "disagree" scales. It is also important to note here that the use of two-category nominal attributes allows the researcher to use the original cultural consensus model (Romney, Weller, and Batchelder 1986), as opposed to the consensus analysis algorithms that were adapted to accommodate ordinal (Romney, Batchelder, and Weller 1987) or interval data (Weller 1987).

Consensus analysis and consumer culture, organizational culture and national culture research

In order to discuss how consensus analysis could be used by marketing scholars, the consumer culture, organizational culture and national culture research streams are examined. In each of these sections, we first review the most common methods used to study culture in each area, and then examine how consensus analysis could be used to provide additional insight in each area. At the end of each section, we provide an example of how consensus analysis has been used by anthropologists to study consumer culture (Dressler, Dos Santos, and Balieiro 1996), organizational culture (Jaskyte and Dressler 2005) and national culture (Baer et al. 2003; Weller et al. 2002). In consumer culture research, consensus analysis could be used in conjunction with interpretive methods to help a researcher triangulate on their conclusions. Most interpretive consumer culture studies do not use statistical methods to make research conclusions. On the other hand, most organizational and national culture studies use nomothetic scales and measure culture as a psychological construct (at the individual level as opposed to the group level). Consensus analysis methods could offer organizational and national culture researchers a method to make their studies more ideographic and to measure cultural knowledge as a group-level construct (Ross 2004).

Consumer culture

In their recent review of the consumer culture literature, Arnould and Thompson state that consumer culture studies do not "aspire to [be] nomotheic," and that research in this area examines consumption phenomena in local consumption contexts (2005, 868). While consumer culture research is said to accept methodological pluralism, consumer culture research remains synonymous with interpretive research among many scholars. Interpretive research methods have been criticized for not objectively estimating their findings with statistics (Calder and Tybout 1989; Hunt 1989). While complete objectivity in social science research may be impossible, scholars accustomed to nomothetic research believe that the statistical estimation constructs reduce the role of a researcher's subjective judgment or interpretation.

Consumer culture researchers offer a variety of guidelines to make interpretive research methods more systematic, but most of them lack the statistical rigor that many social scientists are accustomed to. Numerous interpretive researchers offer guidelines to follow for conducting interpretive research and drawing conclusions (e.g., Applbaum and Jordt 1996; Arnould and Wallendorf 1994; Belk, Wallendorf,

and Sherry 1989; Hirschman 1986; Spiggle 1994). Hirschman (1986), for example, identifies the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability for evaluating humanistic inquiry. In a similar manner, Spiggle (1994) outlines systematic analytic operations for controlling the quality of interpretive research, which may include categorization, abstraction, comparison, dimensionalization, integration, iteration and refutation. Arnould and Wallendorf describe how to evaluate the effectiveness of how data was collected and to evaluate the extent to which an interpretation is "credible" (1994, 494). Applebaum and Jordt (1996) discuss how cultural categories can be applied to products and services in order to make a more systematized culture construct. Finally, Belk, Wallendorf and Sherry (1989) outline a seven-step method that minimizes discrepancies in both the recording and the interpretation of data.

Consensus analysis uses statistics to estimate how meaning is distributed among a group of people. These statistical estimates could be used to provide justification for conclusions drawn in a study that otherwise might rely solely on interpretive research methods. These statistical estimates could be used in conjunction with interpretive research methods to triangulate on research conclusions.

Dressler, Dos Santos and Balieiro provide an example of how consensus analysis has been used to study consumer culture among Brazilians. One of the key variables included in this study is lifestyle, defined by Dressler, Dos Santos and Balieiro as "choices made with respect to material culture (especially consumer culture) and related behaviors that partially define one's place in the system of social status or prestige" (1996, 332). In this study, the authors first identify 39 lifestyle cultural domain items (e.g. motor scooter, color television, washing machine) using structured and unstructured ethnographic interviews. After the lifestyle cultural domain items were identified, the authors asked informants to rate whether the lifestyle items were "not very important," "somewhat important," or "very important" to be considered a success in life. Finally, ANTHROPAC was used to compute the estimates of the cultural consensus model. These estimates were used to conclude: "Cultural models of lifestyle are highly structured and widely shared across socioeconomic groups" (331). After this study, Dressler and others have continued to study how lifestyle cultural knowledge relates to blood pressure (2005) and eating, drinking and depression (2004) among Brazilians.

Organizational culture

The mainstream of organizational culture literature in marketing stems from the work of Deshpande and Webster (1989), who have contributed a great deal to organizational culture research (Deshpande and Farley 2004; Deshpande, Farley, and Webster 1993, 2000; Deshpande and Webster 1989; Webster and Deshpande 1990). Organizational culture research in marketing adopts a view of culture as shared values and beliefs (Deshpande and Webster 1989). To measure organizational culture, Deshpande, Farley and Webster (1993) use a constant sum scale and have employees of an organization divide 100 points among four statements wherein each statement is either associated with a clan, adhocracy, hierarchy or market organization type. This division of 100 points into four categories is done across four organizational characteristics: kind of organization, leadership, what holds the organization together and what is important (Deshpande, Farley, and Webster 1993, 34). This organizational culture measure is based on the work of management academics (Cameron and Freeman 1991; Quinn 1988).

Although Deshpande and Webster's (1993) methodology for studying organizational culture continues to be used by marketing researchers (Deshpande, Farley, and Webster 2000; Hewett, Money, and Sharma 2006), organizational behavior and management researchers have recognized the need for new organizational culture measures (Deshpande and Farley 2004; Webster 2005). The management literature is focusing on measuring organizations at the group (versus individual) level, which offers potential for organizational culture research. Walsh's review of organizational cognition studies offers interesting insight into where studies on organizations are headed. In his review of organizational studies, Walsh (1995) concludes that a fundamental empirical challenge facing management researchers is to identify content and structure of individual and supra-individual levels of analysis. This distinction between individual and supra-individual levels of analysis is not mentioned by Deshpande and Webster (1989), but is addressed in Jaskyte and Dressler's (2004) organizational culture study that distinguishes between individual and aggregate variables. In order to measure organizational culture as a group-level construct and to examine the intracultural heterogeneity of the people within an organization, consensus analysis could be used in a similar manner to how Jaskyte and Dressler (2004) use consensus analysis to study organizational culture.

In addition to providing a group-level measure, consensus analysis would allow organizational culture researchers to examine cultural domains outside of the nomothetic framework developed by Deshpande and Webster (1989). Although values continue to be popular shared beliefs in organizations (Gebhardt, Carpenter and Sherry 2006), organizational culture research should not remain limited to shared values (Denison 1996). Other cultural domains could be developed using free lists and studied with consensus analysis.

While Jaskyte and Dressler (2005) do not develop a new cultural domain to study organizational culture, their study does offer a good demonstration of how consensus analysis has been used to study organizational culture among nonprofit organizations. The authors use 23 items from O'Reilly, Chatman and Caldwell's (1991) Organizational Culture Profile. Employees in 19 nonprofit organizations were asked to rate whether each value was "extremely uncharacteristic" to "extremely characteristic" of their organization on a five-point scale. ANTHROPAC was used to compute the consensus analysis estimates for the level of agreement among each of the 19 nonprofit organizations, and the cultural competence of each employee within the 19 nonprofit organizations. These measures were then correlated with measures such as each nonprofit organization's level of innovation and size.

National culture

National culture research, also referred to as cross-cultural research, is dominated by the nomothetic (Holt 1994, 1997) use of the national cultural values identified by Hofstede (1980, 1991, 2001). Most of the recent marketing research that involves national cultural values is based on Hofstede's work (e.g., Erdem, Swait, and Valenzuela 2006; Hewett and Bearden 2001; Nakata and Sivukamar 1996). Recently, new national cultural values measures have been developed (e.g., Bearden, Money, and Nevins 2006; Schwartz and Bardi 2001; Schwartz et al. 2001).

National culture research is similar to organizational culture research in the sense that the field strives to identify nomothetic measure of culture. The strengths of the national cultural values conceptualization and measurement of culture lie in its ability

to provide researchers with a parsimonious means to perform cultural research in a manner that allows future researchers to validate and replicate the findings of other researchers (Bond 2002; Miller 2002; Oyserman, Kemmelmeir, and Coon 2002; Steenkamp 2001; Williamson 2002). National culture research is dominated by studies that use statistical methods that treat culture as an independent or moderating variable and examine how its variance influences other variables.

The main limitations associated with current national culture research methods stem from (1) the assumption that differences in value scores are the consequence of cultural differences (Holden 2004), (2) the use of political boundaries to delineate cultural boundaries (Nakata and Sivukamar 1996; Wolf 1982) and (3) the notion that national cultural values were developed by Westerners and therefore may not be sensitive to local contexts (Holt 1994, 1997). Let us examine how consensus analysis could be used to address this criticism.

If a comparison is made between two cultures on an attribute, the mean scores reveal nothing about the variability within each culture or whether a particular individual who is sampled is typical or atypical with respect the values that a cultural group shares (P. Smith 2002). Consensus analysis is able to statistically estimate the extent to which a group shares a set of beliefs. Therefore, instead of making the assumption that value scores are cultural, consensus analysis could be used to estimate the extent to which a group shares a set of values.

In his book *Europe and the People Without History*, Wolf reviews how political boundaries contain many types of diverse people. Wolf's global pool hall metaphor (1982, 6–7) describes how it is often inappropriate to make the assumption that cultural boundaries are tantamount to political boundaries. Political boundaries have always been porous, and some authors make the assertion that with today's technological advancements, our world is becoming borderless (Holden 2004; Webster and Deshpande 1990). Thus, the assumption that political boundaries are cultural boundaries may attenuate national cultural values research and risk over-ethnicizing cultural research (Brumann 1999).

Instead of assuming that national borders determine whether or not a person participates in a certain culture, consensus analysis could be used to test the extent to which national borders equate to cultural borders. Schwartz and Bardi (2001) use consensus analysis, but instead of examining inter-informant correlations as is done by cognitive anthropologists, they examine the correlation of each national sample with the average national cultural value ratings of the entire sample, adding an extra level of complexity that makes their study difficult to follow (from a cultural consensus model perspective).

Finally, consensus analysis could be used to investigate cultural domains other than values. Although the assertion can be made that differences among the values that people hold may reflect cultural programming, this may leave people wondering if culture is influenced by domains other than values. Oyserman, Kemmelmeir and Coon (2002) recognize that the study of individualism and collectivism does not substitute for the study of culture. Some authors recognize the existence of levels of culture (Steenkamp 2001). Consensus analysis could be used to explore how people from different nations share knowledge by exploring cultural domains other than values.

Baer, Weller and others offer two good examples of how consensus analysis has been used in cross-cultural research. In their studies, the authors discuss how they used open-ended interviews and free-listing techniques with Guatemalans, Mexicans and Texans (and Connecticut people in the 2003 study) to identify folk knowledge

regarding causes, symptoms and treatments of *nervios* (Baer et al. 2003) and *susto* (Weller et al. 2002). The cultural consensus model is used to estimate the level of agreement in each group, the cultural competence of the group members and the culturally appropriate answers to each question regarding *nervios* and *susto*. These estimates are used to assess the consistency in beliefs about *nervios* and *susto* across the different groups, to examine regional differences and overlap between aspects of *nervios* and *susto*.

Concluding remarks

One of the founders of American anthropology, Franz Boas stated: "The purpose of science is accomplished when the laws which govern its phenomena are discovered" (1940, 640–1). Boas made this statement in order to make the point that science involves *both* the discovery of general laws and the discovery of new phenomena. Philosophical camps emerged when "one party claims that the ideal aim of science ought to be the discovery of general laws [and] the other maintains that it is the investigation of phenomena themselves" (641). While consumer culture researchers seem to be more concerned about the discovery of new phenomena using an ideographic approach, organizational culture and national culture researchers seem more concerned about the discovery of general laws regarding their nomothetic measures of culture. We hope that consensus analysis can be used to help marketing scholars identify new phenomena and to discover general laws about cultural knowledge. The consensus analysis estimates can be used in consumer culture, organizational culture and national culture research to study (1) intracultural variance, (2) intercultural variance and (3) cultural consonance.

While this research paper has made distinctions between anthropology, psychology and marketing, it is important to remember that no one discipline owns a method (Bernard 1998). Methods are tools that a researcher from any discipline can use to investigate the answer to different types of questions (Bernard 1998). Each method provides a different perspective on what is going on inside the minds of people in order to better understand the complex nature of man.

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