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**SWP 4/93 THE ROLE OF VALUES IN THE DESIGN AND CONDUCT
OF MANAGEMENT RESEARCH: PERSPECTIVES ON
MANAGERIAL AND CONSUMER COGNITION**

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**THE ROLE OF PERSONAL VALUES IN THE DESIGN AND CONDUCT OF
MANAGEMENT RESEARCH: PERSPECTIVES ON MANAGERIAL AND
CONSUMER COGNITION.**

SUMMARY

This paper explores the role of the value concept in the design and conduct of management research by focussing on two distinct areas: the definition of values and the operationalisation of this concept. To the researcher this is, quite simply, the issues of epistemology - "what" we know - and methodology - "how" we are able to explore it. The authors illustrate their discussion with examples from two areas of application: the study of managerial values and their impact on managerial behaviour, and the study of consumer values and their impact on purchasing behaviour. Both draw from a common stream of literature, notably the work of Rokeach, which is critically examined. It is argued that the macro - or nomothetic - methods of values measurement are largely driven by the notion of preference and that the alternative micro methods of elicitation are largely driven by the notion of abstraction.

Various issues relating to the design and conduct of extant values research are highlighted as needing further clarification, among these are concerns about the focus on a linear model of values, the paucity of longitudinal research, and the issue of negative values.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE VALUES CONCEPT

The value concept is often used to identify unknown or underlying variables in individual actions. It is this ostensible uncovering of the cognitive path between personal values and behaviour which gives values research its significance to management researchers. In trying to understand the concept of "human values", researchers have tended to look to psychology rather than economics to provide a definition. Even so, attempts at definition are numerous as researchers grapple with the intangible nature of the concept (Grunert, 1990).

DEFINING VALUES

Most researchers recognise the need for a working definition which determines the parameters of their work. The role of personal values in understanding behaviour was given impetus by Milton Rokeach (1973) who defines value as *"an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of conduct"*. A value system, he argues, is *"an enduring organisation of beliefs concerning preferable modes of conduct or end-states of existence along a continuum of relative importance"*. Rokeach differentiates between means and ends, and classifies 36 values into two types or groupings of 18: terminal values and instrumental values.

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- This a *a priori* classification of values into two groups

- constitutes a key assumption in using the Rokeach Value

- Survey (RVS) and is a view of the values concept which is

- not always upheld. Gutman (1982), for example, does not

- draw a distinction in this way. The subdivision made by

- Rokeach is criticised by Kitwood and Smithers (1975) for

- not distinguishing between values derived from a sense of

- obligation (ought) and those derived from a desire for

- satisfaction (want). A further subdivision has been

- developed by Hambrick and Brandon (1988) in the context

- of a general model of executive values and action, where

- values are considered, firstly, to influence a manager's

- perception of stimuli and thereby shape information

- gathering, and secondly, to guide behaviour in order to

- uphold established terminal values. Connor and Becker

- (1977) also subdivide values, in their case into

- individual and collective values.

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- In these attempts at definition and organisation of the

- values concept, a number of elements can be identified

- within the literature, namely **preferences** - values are

- concerned with choices or alternatives (Jacob et al,

- 1962), with ordering alternatives according to preference

- (Cyert and March, 1963), preferences for courses of

- action and outcomes (Beyer, 1981); **endurance** - values are

- enduring beliefs (Rokeach, 1973), or, combining with the

- former dimension, "*enduring preferences*" (Hambrick and

- Brandon, 1988); **guides** - values are determined as guides

- to behaviour or action (Lewin, 1944; Rokeach, 1968;

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Sikula, 1973) or modes of conduct (Becker and Connor, 1986); **centrality** - values are centrally held beliefs (Rokeach, 1968; Lessig, 1976; Vinson, Scott and Lamont, 1977) or desired end states (Rokeach, 1973; Becker and Connor, 1986); **abstractness** - values are abstract or ambiguous concepts (Lessig, 1976; Eden et al, 1979), this particular element differentiates values from attitudes which are generally seen as being object-specific (Becker and Connor, 1986). Whilst none of these key elements individually provides a sufficient definition, together they constitute a broad understanding of the nature of values, i.e. they represent an epistemology of values.

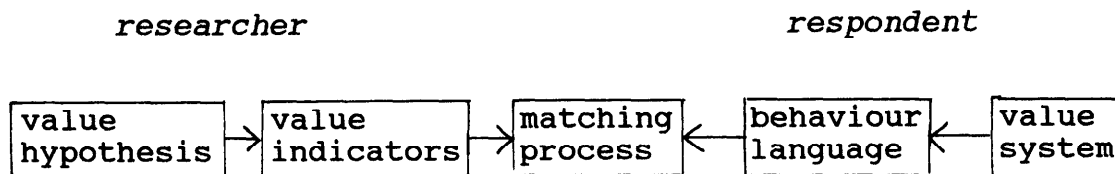
CONDUCTING VALUES RESEARCH

As a guide to understanding the process of eliciting values, Grunert et al (1989) present a useful, general model (see Figure 1) in which one side is made up of respondents whose values are to be identified and measured. On the other side is the researcher who is supposed to start with some theoretical basis which forms a value hypothesis. Through the operationalisation of this hypothesis, a set of value indicators is developed. The core of the measurement process is an attempt to match the respondent's behaviour with the researcher's value indicators.

A review of the literature reveals that the classification of these values indicators has followed

two tracks - the macro and the micro perspectives, also termed nomothetic and idiographic (Eden et al, 1979).

Figure 1 - The Elicitation of Values



Adapted from Grunert et al, 1989.

VALUES RESEARCH - THE MACRO PERSPECTIVE: THE RVS AND OTHER INVENTORIES

The macro perspective uses values to profile respondents using some pre-existing inventory or list of general human values. The methodological advantage of this is that it enables researchers to describe in a quantitative fashion the values of virtually any group and to compare and contrast these with the values of any other group. The main underlying assumption is, however, that respondents can deal with *a priori* value orientations and are satisfied with using the statements given to reflect their own personal orientations. This implicitly assumes that respondents are in touch with their personal feelings and that they choose to respond accurately. Examples of this approach include the Rokeach Value Survey (RVS) (Rokeach, 1973), Personal Values Questionnaire (PVQ) (England, 1975), Values and Life

Styles (VALS) (Holman, 1984), and List of Values (LOV) (Kahle et al, 1986; Kahle and Kennedy, 1988).

In the area of managerial research, there has been an unsurprising focus on inventories such as the RVS and England's PVQ which have provided the main frameworks for eliciting and evaluating values. These have been used to delineate between groups such as managers and non-managers (Munson and Posner, 1980), American and Japanese managers (Howard et al, 1983), and Egyptian and American graduate business students (Badr et al, 1982). These research instruments are notably dominant in work undertaken into human values; Becker and Connor (1986) identified citations for Rokeach in 30, and England in 12, out of the 60 papers they cited in their paper.

In the realm of consumer research, two inventories have received much greater attention: Values and Lifestyles (VALS) and List of Values (LOV). VALS was first presented as part of a proprietary programme offered by SRI International in 1978. Its roots lie largely in Maslow's hierarchy of needs (1954) and in the concept of social character. A comprehensive overview of the typology is presented by Holman (1984). LOV was culled from Rokeach's list of 18 terminal values, Maslow's hierarchy of needs *"and various other contemporaries in value research"* (Kahle and Kennedy, 1988). It remains unclear from the literature which of the three value surveys - the RVS, VALS or LOV - provides the most

effective means of measuring consumer values; VALS does appear to have been operationalised least frequently.

Despite the seminal nature of Rokeach's writings on the subject, few researchers have used the RVS in the way originally intended. Many have adopted a scaling (or rating) approach as opposed to Rokeach's prescribed ranking method (1973) and this issue has become a topic of considerable debate (Munson and McIntyre, 1979; Reynolds and Jolly, 1980; Krosnick and Alwin, 1989).

Further limitations in RVS have been noted and in particular, the restrictive nature of the inventory offered to respondents, i.e. the issue of ipsativity. Kitwood and Smithers raise a number of specific concerns which concur with those of Eden et al (1979): *"To use an ipsative method is to assume that all people have the same structure and dynamics in their value system."* (Kitwood and Smithers, 1975). Munson and McIntyre (1979), Munson (1984), Munson and McQuarrie (1987) argue that forced ranking is an inherently more complex task, where ties are not allowed and that *"not all of its 36 value items would seem equally relevant to consumption"* (Munson and McQuarrie, 1987). This view is echoed in later research by Kahle and Kennedy (1988) who also point out that in using ordinal analyses the RVS *"violates a major requirement of the most powerful and advanced techniques of causal analyses - that variables be measured at least at the interval level"*.

Mattsson (1990) identifies further weaknesses in Rokeach's conceptual approach to values stating that the distinction between terminal and instrumental values is not clear and that a *"serious shortcoming of the paradigm is the lack of negative values"*. It is indeed an underlying assumption of the RVS that all values are positive.

A further issue highlighted by researchers of both disciplines is that of labels, or semantics. In the area of cognitive mapping of managers' belief systems, Bougon (1992) states that *"people tag private inner concepts with public outer labels for writing or communication purposes. Concepts are private, idiosyncratic and subjective, labels are public, verbatim and objective."* The importance of this is that although we are responding to common values statements (labels), our underlying interpretation of the values statement may be highly variable. If this exists within a cultural group, which Bougon asserts is the case, the implication for cross-cultural research (which has provided a popular basis for many of studies e.g. England, 1975) is particularly concerning. A similar discussion on issues relating to semantics in cross-cultural values research was presented by Grunert and Scherhorn (1990).

These issues all lead to a concern with the widespread application of the macro - or nomothetic - approach to values research. Kitwood and Smithers (1975) propose a

rethink in terms of methodological approaches: *"There is a need for the development of an idiographic approach to value study, which makes minimal assumptions about the values elements and the ways in which they are organised and used by the person."*

VALUES RESEARCH - THE MICRO PERSPECTIVE

As the alternative approach to values elicitation, the micro perspective obviates the need for using pre-established lists of values by utilising in-depth qualitative methods to understand respondent motivations. The focus is on identifying those values which can be linked to particular attributes. These values will be described in the respondent's own language and may be less general, less abstract and perhaps more behaviour oriented.

This approach has been developed largely in the field of consumer behaviour as researchers have sought to understand buyer behaviour through personal values. One such approach is means-end theory which enables the researcher to describe how three levels of knowledge - products as bundles of attributes, as bundles of benefits and as value satisfiers - can be organised to form a simple, associative network. A means-end chain is a simple knowledge structure containing inter-connected meanings through which product attributes are seen as the means to an end, as satisfiers of personal values.

Figure 2 - The Means-End Chain

(product) ATTRIBUTES -> CONSEQUENCES -> (personal) VALUES

It is important to note that embodied in this model is the concept of levels of abstraction: lower-level attributes (concrete) link with higher-level consequences which, in turn, link with still higher-level values (abstract). The attributes, consequences and values become nodes in the network and the linkages between the three levels are the associations or arcs of the network (Jolly, Reynolds and Slocum, 1988; Valette-Florence and Rapacchi, 1991), demonstrating a use of vocabulary "borrowed" from causal theory as applied to management cognition where the cognitive process is considered to behave as a semantic network (Stubbart, 1989).

Means-end theory is closely associated with Gutman and in his seminal paper (1982) he presents his version of the means-end model based on two assumptions about consumer behaviour. Firstly, values play a dominant role in guiding choice; consumers choose actions that produce desired consequences and minimise undesired consequences. Secondly, consumers reduce the complexity of choice by grouping products into sets or classes. It is this categorisation process which explains how consumers organise their thinking about specific product alternatives, enabling them to treat non-identical stimuli as equivalent. To attain values, consumers group

products into different categories depending on which features they emphasise and which they ignore, an assumption which has its roots in categorisation theory.

In order to elicit higher-level responses, as well as to understand the linkages between the lower-level descriptors and higher-level consequences and values, Reynolds and Gutman (1984, 1988) use an in-depth probing technique called "laddering" which - by means of a dominance matrix (Jolly *et al*, 1988) - can be graphically represented in a tree diagram or hierarchical value map.

The issue of labels and semantics highlighted earlier gains greater relevance with means-end theory where respondents' own language is used at all stages and it is the task of the researcher to interpret this.

Unlike macro methods, the issue of negative values has been accommodated by the laddering technique and this is known as "negative laddering" (Reynolds and Gutman, 1984). The laddering technique is not, however, without its drawbacks: the aggregation process means that much richness is lost and researchers can end up with an aggregated chain which may not be representative of any one individual respondent's ladder (Kennedy, 1990).

In a later paper, Gutman (1991) raises a number of critical issues relating to the nature of the linkages between consequences and personal values. He poses a

number of challenging questions, e.g. in what direction should linkages run? How many elements should be represented in a chain? He also questions whether values are ends or guides, "*Do values select consequences or are values implied by consequences?*". All of which highlights the need for further research in this area.

Eden et al (1979) focus on the issue of representing value systems providing a useful response (although made over ten years earlier) to Gutman's questions. Using a similar framework to the means-end chain they refer to the link between goals, objectives and ideals (1979, p.47). Whilst remaining linear in concept this model does acknowledge greater interaction across value links. In developing their mapping techniques, based on interlinking constructs (Kelly 1955), Eden et al have sought to provide a micro approach to understanding value systems.

Whilst criticism has tended to focus on the macro methodologies, this is more of a function of their ubiquity than their inherent weaknesses. Micro methods, whilst providing a more effective approach for elicitation, suffer from a lack of parsimony from the perspective of analysis. Analysis is by definition complex and interpretive, whereas the macro approaches facilitate conventional statistical analysis and provide for greater reliability.

ISSUES

In exploring the role of the value concept in the design and conduct of management research we have focussed on two distinct areas: the definition of values and the operationalisation of the concept. Table 1 illustrates the implication of different elements of the values definition in terms of the responses required by the methodology. The macro approaches focus heavily on judgements and are, therefore, concerned with the preferential nature of values whereas the micro approaches tend to focus on centrality and abstraction; their methods tend to lead to terminal and indefinite responses. The means-end chain framework also focuses on the "guide" element by attempting to construct linkages between values and behaviour although no research was identified which incorporated actual behavioural responses, e.g. observation. Notable by its absence is research exploring the enduring nature of values, with little evidence of studies focusing on establishing consistency over time.

Table 1 - Values Definition and the Nature of Response

Values Definition	Nature of Response
Preference	Judgement
Endurance	Consistency over time
Guide	Linkage to action/behaviour
Centrality	Terminal (no further responses)
Abstract	Ambiguity, indefinite

A further issue of concern is the assumption that a linear relationship between attitudes, behaviours and values exists (as exemplified by means-end theory). *"While it is easy to demonstrate that generalized value propositions are logically prior to attitudinal propositions, this does not imply psychological causation."* (Kitwood and Smithers, 1975). Munson (1984) points out the danger in taking a one-sided approach to values research and echoes Rokeach (1973) in stating that values play a role as both antecedents and consequences of human behaviour and that to focus exclusively on using values only as independent, or predictor, variables and not as dependent, or criterion, variables, is *"unfortunate and perhaps even dangerous"*.

This linear approach has often created problems in the interpretation of research data. Cossette and Audet (1992) indicate that a cause and effect relationship is not the same as a means-end relationship e.g. the drive for profit may cause growth (cause/effect) but growth is not the terminal value; it is the output of achieving a particular goal (profit). Perhaps more importantly they note that the same individual may see different interpretations in different situations. It is therefore important that any operationalisation of the values concept includes an appreciation of the wider context in which concepts are used. In other words, the study of values can only be contextually meaningful if we are

considering a value system as opposed to a value inventory.

Gutman (1990) seeks to bring together the micro and the macro perspective by utilising both laddering and the List of Values. The underlying assumption for this approach is that "because personal values are relatively few in number in comparison with the wide variety of benefits consumers seek in consuming products, the same values will be linked to a variety of different benefits. This suggests that these same values take on different meanings depending on the benefits to which they are linked." The significance of combining both perspectives is not, however, accorded any great debate and one must question whether the distinction between the two should be so rigidly maintained.

Similarly, the issue of negative values has also to be seriously explored; it is currently only the micro approach which makes any assumption about the existence of negative values.

Values research focusing on managers and consumers appears to require greater account be taken of the contextual/situational effects on values. Values are moderating variables and how they combine with these other moderating issues is unclear and in need of further clarification. Questions relating to semantics must also be answered - particularly in the light of cross-cultural

values research. And finally, the macro - or nomothetic - research methodologies which, whilst providing highly practical benefits to the researcher, raise very real questions on validity, particularly as the subject is one at the very centre of our psychological being.

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