The Power of a Strong Research Culture

My talk today is about the value of a strong research culture. What it meant for me and what it can mean for you. An effective culture can bridge theoretical frameworks, combine multiple methods, and span regional differences. It encourages scholars to be part of a vibrant research tradition with strong interpersonal bonds, constructive reviews, and effective collaborative processes. The ultimate goal is to foster sustained individual intellectual growth, and to support outstanding mentorship of students and colleagues.

The Power of a strong research culture

- What is a research culture?

- How did it help me?

- How research culture is changing

- Ways to improve culture

However, a strong research culture is rare and takes effort. That effort is the focus of my talk. Rather than promote my research victories, this talk will focus on the positive research practices that made such an impact on my life. In this talk the medium is the message; culture is the sea in which we swim. It enables us to flourish or drown. I will begin with a brief review of the research culture I experienced, and how it was critical for my own work. Throughout, I will provide suggestions for personal, university, and organizational strategies that have become increasingly important for all of us today.

Psychometrics in the early 70's
Can we apply physics to human preferences?

- How to measure values of objects?

- Choice vs. ratings?

- Metric values from choices .?

Duncan Luce   J B Kruskal

My first love was psychometrics, seeking ways to measure human judgments in mathematical terms. Beautiful minds, elegant ideas like those of L. L. Thurstone and S. S. Stevens. Ken Arrow defined the principal of irrelevant alternatives that was central to Duncan Luce's elegant model of individual choice. The psychometricians searched for ways to estimate ratio scales of value from simple preference

judgments. J. B. Kruskal developed a program called MONANOVA, which took rank orders of preferences on items and estimated the optimal rescaling of those orders that best predicted choices.

My thesis under Paul Green tested the ability of psychometric analysis to estimate stable values for a real product, Lipton iced tea, created with different amounts of tea and sugar. It was like a conjoint but instead of reacting to verbal descriptions of alternatives, subjects evaluated different samples of tea. In keeping with psychometric norms each respondent made over 250 different judgments on 23 tea samples. Thus, there was a great deal of data on each subject.

What did I find? First, Luce's binary choice model did not predict as well as 5-point preference differences. Indicating that there is predictive value in those 5-point ratings. Second, Kruskal's monotone rescaling of these differences increased internal fit, but consistently decreased prediction to holdout pairs. Finally, I found that the different predictive models, such as additive, ideal point, and spatial models, all predicted well but none performed consistently better than the others.

What did I learn? I gained from the thesis a sense of excitement from deep explorations into individual choice models. I also learned the benefits of using holdout choices to validate models. While I published a couple of articles from my dissertation, very few people read them. Psychometric theory, if it's any good, tends to be both simple and universal. By contrast, practical consumer prediction is contextual and noisy. Important insight comes from differences across consumers. From the elegant psychometricians I learned how to measure values, but quickly moved to marketing research that focused on individual differences using adaptive computer interviews and multivariate techniques.

Trail of Schools
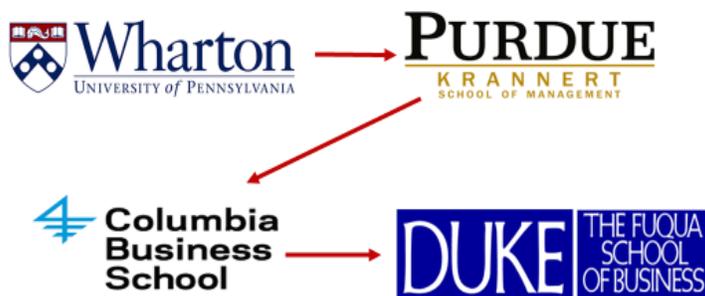
Graduating from Wharton, my first job was at the Krannert School at Purdue where I learned so much from Frank Bass, Mike Pessemier and Jack Jacoby. Krannert had resources that enabled it to attract a strong faculty and outstanding Ph.D. students. It distributed working papers and provided critical conference support. Frank Bass was the editor of the *Journal of Marketing Research* and involved us in reviewing manuscripts at an early stage of our careers.

For me, Purdue was ideal. It brought me close to innovative researchers and showed me how bright Ph.D. students can excel when challenged by emerging questions in the field. The culture simply buzzed with ideas, resulting in a number of papers with the Ph.D. students including John McCann, Dave Reibstein, Abel Jeuland, Dick Wittink, and Don Lehmann.

After three years at Purdue I was blessed by a transformative year at Columbia. There I saw the outstanding leadership of John Howard and Don Lehmann, and worked with Barbara Kahn and Morris Holbrook. A year later, John McCann and I joined the marketing group at Duke. Within three years we had successfully recruited two rookies: Julie Edell from Carnegie Mellon and Marion Moore from UCLA and soon thereafter recruited their thesis advisors, Rick Staelin and Jim Bettman, as chaired professors. I have remained at Duke for more than 40 years, with later sabbaticals at Columbia and Wharton.
Here is my favorite image of the Duke marketing group, taken nearly 20 years ago.

What a crew! Of the 17, four have left us: Wagner Kamakura, Kurt Carlson, and then to my right, Darryl Banks, and next to him the indomitable, John Lynch. Ours was a small group working together in both teaching and research. We also did administrative work that helped Fuqua grow. Bill Boulding is now Fuqua's dean. Wilfred Amaldoss is our current area coordinator, Rick Staelin, Mary Frances Luce, Jim Bettman, Debu Purohit, Preyas Desai and I served as associate deans. Many of us also served the field as journal editors: Jim Bettman and Mary Frances Luce at JCR; Rick Staelin and Preyas Desai, at *Marketing*

Science, Wagner Kamakura and I, at JMR, and recently Chris Moorman at *Journal of Marketing* and Carl Mela at QME.

Speaking of productivity, here is an image showing 28 Duke Ph.Ds. What a super Zoom call they would make!


Lisa Cavanaugh Chris Puto Carolyn Yoon, Baba Shiv, Keisha Cutright, Dan Ariely, Mary Frances Luce
Alex Chernev, Ajay Kalra, Amy Dalton, Gal Zauberman, Rose Ferraro, Itamar Simonson, Mitch Lovett
Jenny Escalis, Jonathan Levav Avni Shaw Scott Wallace Kathryn Sharpe Wessling Stephen Spiller Kristen Diehl
Tiffany White Steve Hoeffler Sarah Memmi Ronnie Goodstein, Kevin Keller Jen Cuttler Peggy Liu

The research in our area was leveraged by their presence. We worked hard to recruit the best Ph.Ds. to Duke, identifying a few of 100 applicants that applied each year, and inviting then to a weekend at Duke. The Ph.D. teaching was outstanding, led by master mentors, Rick Staelin and Jim Bettman. Gavin Fitsimmons and Tanya Chartrand ran a lab which encouraged students to work together. We expected much from them and did our best to instill in them a culture of cooperation. They work together in an open area to encourage joint efforts. They serve as hosts for outside speakers and provide summaries of audience reactions to their seminars. They set up a supportive internal monthly lunch to present research to each other. Finally, to focus their efforts, we altered the university rule replacing a comprehensive exam that tested many topics learned in classes with a deep review paper exploring a theoretical area that could form the focus of a thesis.

ACR's Research Culture.

Let's now shift to organizations, especially our own Association for Consumer Research.

ACR's Big Tent
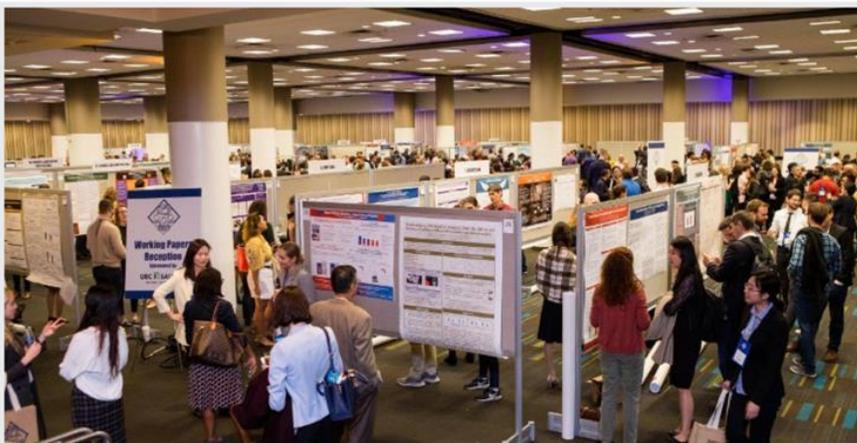
Here you see a poster presentation session at an ACR conference. You can sense the enthusiasm and positivity in the room. Much of reviewing for the conference is done by younger scholars reflecting the bottom-up nature of ACR's culture, one that is accepting of so many different ideas, methods and modes of presentations.

Conferences are fun, a chance to see friends, experience outstanding presentations, have spirited conversations, and enjoy enthusiastic parties. Of course, there is work; preparing as a reviewer, presenter or discussant, or being part of many task forces. I recall returning in a plane to Indianapolis from an early ACR. I was sitting next to Jack Jacoby, who was on the faculty in cognitive psychology at Purdue. Reading my novel, I noticed Jack making extensive notes on what he had seen and penning letters to people he had met. We spoke about what he had learned, and how he had prepared beforehand by setting up meetings. He was like a scout looking for talent at a baseball game, while I was at the same game feeling like a happy but clueless fan. I came to understand how important it is to prepare before, actively engage during, and follow up following each conference.

ACR's Research Culture

- Bottom up
- Open to different perspectives
- Enthusiasm, positivism
- Resources (time, money)
- Strategic, clear goals that evolve over time

Of course, organizing the ACR conferences is big job. It involves managing submissions, reviews, logistics, and proceedings, in addition to meals, parties, and events. The bonds formed through those activities has had much to do with cooperative culture that pervades us today. ACR does its job with relatively little money. Its primary resource is the willingness of all of us to pay back or pay forward with efforts to make everyone better. There are very few of us in this room who have not been asked to help

or have not asked others to do so. The best example of that cooperation is the Journal of the Association for Consumer Research.

A different kind of journal

- Focuses on four different topics per year
- Leading scholars edit each issue
- 2 years from announcement to publication
- Editor-in-chief has little power
- Issue editors know the topic

JACR was an important test of ACR's ability to grow and adapt to emerging needs of its members. While I am proud of being its first editor, I am prouder still of the research culture that propelled its success. From the start JACR was a different kind of journal. Eleven years ago, an ACR steering committee considered many possible new journals: ones focused on deep psychological theory, consumer welfare, creativity and aesthetics, as well as those resolving managerial or social problems. Our solution was to have one topic per issue generating four different ones each year. The schedule required publication for each issue two years from its announcement, the first year to recruit submissions and the second year to whip the submissions into publishable form.

Early challenges

- Recruiting editors
- Encouraging submissions
- Managing the review process
- Support bonding among authors
- Encouraging citations and growth

Our first problem was recruiting editors. No one knew whether JACR would work. The first editors were outstanding scholars willing to take the risk: Russ Belk, Linda Price, Angela Lee, David Stuart, and Norbert Schwarz. Their task was to pitch the topic at ACR meetings and on the JACR website. Each editor sent between 20 to 50 personalized emails to potential contributors asking for an abstract, a finished document, and a willingness to review. Because editors were established in their fields, they could shape the articles with support from fewer reviewers. The results for the first two years were

predicable. Timing was difficult for all involved. JACR published some articles that were up to the standards of JCR and JCP but not consistently so. However, the process did help authors bond to each other through their joint efforts creating and promoting each issue.

To succeed, JACR pushed innovations that encouraged citations and the emergence of new ideas. The most important motivator was a subscription to the journal along with ACR membership, so that each quarter 1,500 ACR members were mailed a new JACR. Additionally, Chicago Press helped develop creative cover and encouraged the use of colorful graphics. They also assisted in developing an effective website. Further, the press allowed editors to select one article that could be freely accessed in each issue, and provided press releases and free access for articles with unusually heavy downloads.

Journal of the Association for Consumer Research

Current success

Vicki Horwitz: Editor in Chief

James Ellis: Managing Editor

Rajiv Viadyanathan: Executive Director

JACR is now in its 8th year, with 32 completed issues, and 8 more in process. Angela Lee took over from me and now Vicki Morwitz is in charge. Numbers of citations, downloads, and request to generate issues have consistently increased. Major gains came when Scopus brought JACR into their system and when Clarivate included it in its Emerging Sources Citation Index.

It is important to give credit to Andy Seagram, Chicago Press Publishing Manager and particularly to James Ellis, JACR's managing editor. James keeps track of the size of each issue and the likelihood that the submissions would be revised on time. He is the one who smooths the paths for authors dealing with editors, reviewers or copy editors. He also utilizes his artistic side to negotiate the unique set of images.

 Finally, let's not forget the role of Rajiv Vaidyanathan who was critical for success of JACR. Rajiv does so many things for ACR, organizing its books and conferences, making sure that organizational meetings for upcoming JACR issues occur both at the main and local ACR conferences. From the start, he met with me and Angela Lee each year to discuss the journal and get reports from the support staff at Chicago Press. Simply put, JACR would not have been possible without the joint support of the Chicago Press and research culture at ACR, enabling it to expand into new areas of research and reach scholars from different regions with varying backgrounds.

JACR serves ACR in the same way as journal you might write to come to terms with new experiences or ways of thinking. The Journal of the Association for Consumer Research allows us to try out new ideas, train editors and form cohorts. It could not have been done without the support of the ACR board, Chicago Press and the supportive culture of ACR.

Four ways to improve your research culture

- Understand three cultural shifts
- Improve research interactions
- Form research cohorts
- Achieve personal balance

This next section asks what ACR's culture of research can do for you. I'll begin by noting three important evolutionary changes that I believe provide both challenges and opportunities for us.

Three cultural changes. The first change reflects the fact that the intellectual rate of change continues to accelerate. You can be sure that within 15 years the new research skills you develop will either be adopted by others, or worse, rendered obsolete. We are moving to a culture that accepts multiple theories, incompatible methods, and fractured goals. Put differently, we cannot let up on our need to continuously adapt and learn.

The second change is a shift in the role of the individual in scholarship. Hiring and promotion used to focus on the unique skills and achievements of the solitary scholar, with schools counting articles with sole authorship more than those with coauthors. That has changed for the better. Perhaps schools have come increasingly to realize that the most valuable colleague may not be the one with the best mind, but the one with broadest ability to help others prosper.

The third change is a disturbing rise in non-tenure track faculty in business schools, often replacing scholars with professors-of-the-practice who can provide valuable teaching at a lower cost. Recently, the status and pay of those non-tenure track positions has risen, particularly if they appear on TV, have active blogs or are published in the New York Times. Their greater status has been encouraged by students and the firms who recruit them that desire job related insights. If that trend continues, it suggests that talented individuals may be as satisfied and productive in an enhanced non-tenure track position as those in lifetime tenure.

These three changes define a scary world, one where what you know now will be less valuable in the future, where the individual is not the focus, and the prospect of lifetime tenure may become more scarce and less attractive for our brightest minds.

How do we prepare for those changes? Let's start by thinking about interactions in conferences like this one. Here, we interact joyfully with so many people. Many encounters are random, offering the exciting chance to learn about different ideas or research methods. Too often we are passive about those we meet, rather than setting up meetings and dinners with joint goals. I spoke earlier about the importance of preparation before, work during, and effort after a conference. The same principle goes for all interactions. If a visiting scholar comes to talk at your school, it is important to read the paper ahead so that you can understand and comment appropriately. Prepare for your personal visit, focusing first on the visitor before discussing your individual problems. Then follow-up with a brief email.

Not all meetings are part of a visit or a national conference. An unplanned Duke conference occurred during my second year at Duke had an outsized influence on my research. Chris Puto, John Payne and I had been testing the asymmetric dominance effect and were amazed and puzzled by early results. In 1981 dean Tom Keller allowed us to coordinate a 3-day off-campus meeting with 25 scholars to discuss the impact of item similarity on choice. Eight papers were presented, each taking an hour with 30 minutes of comment and discussion. Those attending included John Hauser, Amos Tversky, Steve Shugan, Glen Urban, and Bob Meyer. Amos really liked the asymmetric dominance effect, but said it should be called the attraction effect, to evoke the fact that greater similarity among alternatives takes share from the target, the opposite of attraction. John Hauser wrote an elaborate comment showing that the attraction effect is inconsistent with Tversky's Elimination by Aspects and with Luces' Choice Axiom. He also suggested satisficing and tournament explanations. The support these 25 scholars positioned what might have been a narrow theoretical result to one that has since encouraged many studies of competitive context in marketing decisions. The lesson is simple. Group think matters, and group think among smart and focused thinkers matters even more.

Cohorts. Cohorts are groups of researchers exploring a substantive topic, a developing theory, or a promising methodology. Newly emerging cohorts tend to have fewer members, but they are easily identified as groups of people who congregate at special sessions and cite each other's work. Cohorts generally lack formal alliances, and indeed there is an appropriate tension among researchers competing to resolve emerging issues.

Personally, I have been involved in various cohorts at different times. As examples, I have been part of substantive cohort applying survey methodology and economics to understand household recycling, a methodological cohort exploring eye tracking of decisions, and a theoretical cohort making sense of asymmetric dominance.

Why are cohorts important? They matter because they support the publication of articles on a topic, thus helping to establish the credibility of ideas and the authority of their members. Effective cohorts need at least 30 members, assuring sufficient numbers to review and cite the articles from the group.

Joining cohorts is an important component of a research strategy particularly for young scholars. Choose a cohort whose growth fits the skills you have or want to have. Being identified as part of a cohort increases the likelihood of being chosen as a reviewer that enables you to understand and guide the evolution of an emerging field. Perhaps more important, cohort members are likely to write credible letters supporting promotion.

Apart from JACR there are a number of ways to build ties to a cohort. Great value comes from ACR conferences, particularly being part of a special session or a round table. For me, my regular attendances at the Sawtooth Software conference put me in contact with marketing research firms, their corporate clients and a remarkable group of academics. It helped me develop internet-based marketing research skills and have a central role developing conjoint and choice models.

Personal Balance Strategies. So far, I have spoken about the power of interpersonal culture in fostering success. Next, consider personal strategies to develop balance between your career and your personal well-being. Within a career, one of the most difficult questions we all face is determining where we should put our efforts, determining which projects, which co-authors, which cohorts should consume our time and energy. Matching capability against need is difficult because ideas, methods and researchers go through life cycles that start slowly, then grow stronger, and then as we all do, mature. Coauthors can increase efficiency, giving jobs to those with best skills. The work slows considerably when a co-author or a student is running an elaborate study, and can become overwhelming when the results are not as predicted. It is helpful to have some slack to allow for focused attention when needed.

Now let's consider the even more difficult balance between your career and yourself. Teaching, research, and administrative demands of an academic career limit your ability to keep fit, be healthy, and emotionally refreshed. We all need time for exercise, greater control over what we consume, and the support of good friends. Good friends are critical for walks, sports, and delightful evenings. The benefit is even greater if your activities are with colleagues, co-authors or Ph.D. students. Having a walk or exercise buddy increases the likelihood of carrying it out. Having a group of friends who regularly go out to dinner together or go to a movie has the same positive effect. Both healthy behavior and friendships are virtuous habits that are fortified when they are a regular part of your schedule and your social network.

Finally, let's turn to families. Greater mobility has scattered many of us from our parents, siblings, and even our children who leave home. That splintering of families is especially common among academics. Occasional weddings and funerals are fine, but provide limited ways to really bring people together. Stay in touch with family with phone calls, holiday cards, Facebook or a personal website. Encourage your families to visit your home or travel with you. Part of the solution is to bring your families into the university fabric. Get to know their spouses, children and even parents, providing for them the same kind of accepting bonds that unite actual families.

Final thoughts. Preparing for this talk I examined my publications searching for the intellectual breakthroughs I could share. The more I thought about my achievements, the more I realized the critical value of the people and the culture around me, of being blessed by people who could see more clearly, those who had the skills I lacked, and those with the energy I needed. Finally, the cultures of the

marketing groups at Penn, Purdue, Columbia and Duke, and my associations of ACR, ACP and Sawtooth have made clear to me the value of getting together in open discussions that allow us to laugh with and learn from each other.

My final message is to urge you to support and treasure your interactions with each other. If there is a weakness in the people in our field today, it is a reluctance to build lasting interactions that support the research culture. Search out groups, meetings, and friends who share ideas with wisdom and joy. Go forth, my fellow researchers, work together, and prosper.