A Monolithic Culture: Multiple Voices Behind the Same Card

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Gold Coast, Inc. is a multinational company that sells products under brand names such as Gold Coast, Silver Border, and Brownstone. The founder created a culture; but, as the corporation grew over time, a number of smaller subcultures blossomed. No stronger subculture existed than the Silver Border brand, which at one time was the third largest category brand in the world. Much organizational literature exists today that takes exception to the assumption that monolithic cultures even exist within corporations. This research, however, not only clearly shows the existence of a monolithic culture in a corporation but also provides insight into its strength when its behaviors are threatened by a more efficient and effective subculture.

Since the 1950s, the term "culture" has flourished in the language of sociologists and anthropologists in the broad sense of civilizations, customs, and artistic achievements of people. Today, the term "corporate culture" flourishes in organizational literature, as well. From their concept of culture, many anthropologists have argued that a corporation's shared values and beliefs, the hows in the way people do business, and patterns of behaviors do not constitute a "culture." But those of us who have lived and studied corporations recognize that the factors that result from enculturation from the time of a person's employment do manifest themselves in a culture construct. No corporate culture is incidental to anyone who spends a great deal of time living in it. It impacts physical and mental health and may be tied to a person's sense of self-worth.

Culture is perhaps the most stable element in corporations because it is the product of past success. It defines the values, beliefs, and behaviors which people use to interpret the world in which they work. Its symbols, language, and dress help to identify its employees and serve to help them behave in ways to ensure the bottom line success of the company. Although corporate cultures may have subcultures that deviate from the espoused ways of the monolithic culture, it is the monolithic culture that defines the ways and calls "foul" when any of them are challenged. And if the company's bottom line begins to erode, a subculture may become a target. Sadly, depending on the strength of the monolithic culture, a subculture may even be destroyed under the disguise of a cultural transformation that senior management deems necessary to increase the bottom line.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Applying the term "culture" to organizations is not new. Arnold (1937) and Barnard (1938) moved below the conscious level of organizations to capture a deeper, more powerful force in everyday life. The aspects of organizational culture have been explored by Deal and Kennedy (1982) and Wilkins & Ouchi (1983); the levels of culture by Sackman (1992) and Kilmann & Saxton (1986); the impact of culture by Schein (1984) and Ouchi & Price (1978); culture and organizational effectiveness by Marcoulides & Heck (1993) and Galbraith & Kazanjian (1986); culture as related to strategic change by Burgelman (1991), and corporate culture and managerial action by Sathe (1983). Deal & Kennedy (1982) have created numerous culture models, and Wilkins (1983) developed a culture audit.

While some research exists that supports the notion of a monolithic culture, many others propose something different. Instead of the existence of a monolithic culture, Martin & Siehl (1983) believe organizational cultures are "composed of various interlocking nested, sometimes conflicting subcultures." Some support the notion that some organizations are not accurately described as having a "monolithic dominant culture but rather a web of interwoven and hierarchical cultures." Stoyko (2009) believes that organizations rarely have monolithic cultures that can be "aptly described with a tidy label." Martin, Sitkin, & Boehm (1985) refer to organizations as "umbrellas for, or arbitrary boundary lines around, collections of subcultures." Researchers have depicted subcultures as detracting from a strong organizational culture although "the very existence of a strong organizational culture, one whose members agree and care about their organization's values, seems to preclude subcultures" (O'Reilly, 1989). Some believe that large organizations often have many subcultures, which form over time as a result of "segmentation, importation, technological innovation, ideological differentiations, and career filters" (Van Maanen & Barley, 1985). Culture can take different forms within the same organization, often setting up potential conflicts between subcultures (Martin, Sitkin, & Boehm, 1985). Using the metaphor of a parent and child, Wolfgang and Ferracuti (1970) suggest that a "subculture, like a child, could never be entirely different from its 'parent' because it emerges from the parent culture's values. Therefore, some subculture values may conflict with the parents' cultures' values while others may not."

Studying a culture can reveal the richly textured fabric of meaning and attachment that persons associate with their work life. Stern (1988) scrutinized the Gold Coast brand in the form of an encyclopedia of graphic styles, a chronicle of the history of the brand, and a course in language, and [Founder] and Anderson (1992) delved into the life of the Gold Coast, Inc. founder. These books, however, give little attention to brands other than the Gold Coast brand and ignore the magnitude and importance of the subbrand, Silver Border, which at one time was the world's third largest brand in its industry.

Lampe and Givan (1995) conducted a cultural audit within Gold Coast, Inc. Lampe (1996) explored the culture of managerial women in the Operations Division of Gold Coast, Inc., which provides a context for the caste system which exists within the corporation; Lampe (1996) also explored the pay policies and practices toward Gold Coast, Inc. non-treasury employees; and Eschrich (1996) delved into the posting system of Gold Coast, Inc. non-treasury employees both of which additional give credence to the fact that some groups are treated differently. Finally, Lampe (2002) explored the pervasive impact the culture of an organization has on its financial performance and how people defend against knowing, emotionally and cognitively, precisely what they need to know in order to impact the bottom line.

For this research, culture is defined as "the way we do things around here" (Bower, 1966). Through the study of a large Midwest company, the paper will investigate whether a corporation can have a monolithic culture, whether its strength can be a detriment to the corporation, and how management can leverage these findings to ensure corporate health.

Data Collection and Methodology

As part of a corporate culture initiative, Gold Coast's, Inc. vice president of Human Resources brought together a team of individuals to create the Cultural Core Team: director of Organizational Development; director of Corporate Finance; vice-president of Public Affairs and Communications; director of Employee Relations; director of Corporate Education and Training; director of Compensation and Benefits; strategist for Marketing and Strategy; an outside consultant who supported the cultural change effort for another hundred year old company; and a Research Manager. The outcomes of the cultural renewal efforts of the Culture Core Team would be the basis for a multi-year initiative.

The first phase would create the compelling case for change and begin with understanding the company's financials, products, distribution, sales, and brands. Because employees learn to perceive their world through their own cultural glasses the first phase would also include seeing Gold Coast through the eyes of others: employees, retailers, suppliers, and subsidiaries. The Research Manager was charged with delivering a research plan and interviewing the stakeholders.

According to Guba and Lincoln (1989), using multiple data sources is advantageous because it allows anthropologists to deepen their understanding of the culture, as well as providing the material that contributes to credible interpretation (Eisner, 1991). This research included multiple data sources including participant observation (Burawoy, 1991); current public and confidential documents (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992); focus groups and small group discussions (Merton and Kendall, 1946; Calori & Sarnin, 1991); telephone focus groups (Collis, 1996); interviews (Calori & Sarnin, 1991; Bogdan & Biklen, 1992); conversations (Atkinson and Heritage, 1984), archival documents, artifacts (Eisner, 1991), questionnaires (Hofstede, 1980) and the 'intersubjective resonance of unconscious processes between anthropologist and client" (Ogden, 1989). The Research Manager also reviewed the results of the corporately administered morale survey questionnaires exploring the organizational climate of a stratified population (Gallup, 2006). Finally, the discovery process included empathic listening, interpreting, gently confronting, asking questions, and spending time in safe places with stakeholders inside and outside the corporation.

Early on in the process, it became apparent that many employees had a difficult time talking about the "Gold Coast" culture because the culture in which they worked (i.e., the Silver Border) was very different than the one we were asking them to describe. It also became apparent that most employees saw Gold Coast brand and Gold Coast, Inc. as one and the same. The Culture Core Team made the decision to initiate a separate cultural audit which would delve into both and ask questions about both cultures using the same interview guide.

The Research Manager conducted eight focus groups with a total of 59 participants (Merton and Kendall, 1946). Participants were invited from a stratified sample of corporate employees at the corporate facility: Silver Border brand managers; Silver Border brand treasury; Silver Border brand non-treasury; Gold Coast brand managers; Gold Coast brand treasury; and Gold Coast brand non-treasury. The Research Manager also conducted 20 one-on-one interviews (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992) that included an artist who had made the company a great deal of money; a man who had spent 30 years in the Research department; a manager from the Silver Border brand; a female manager in the Gold Coast brand; a manager in the operations division; a female executive from the Silver Border brand; a merchandising manager; a manager who had worked on both brands; an treasury employee who had worked on both

brand; a non-treasury employee who had worked on both brands; and someone who had a "reputation" for "telling it like it is." The Research Manager also had a number of formal and informal conversations (Atkinson & Heritage, 1984) with people throughout the corporation. Some of these took place over lunch, over the phone late at night, and even in the restrooms.

   The collected data was interpreted using narrative analysis. Once the recorded conversations were transcribed, descriptors that referenced Gold Coast or Silver Border were highlighted. These descriptors were entered into an excel spreadsheet into one of several buckets of culture elements that the Culture Core Team identified including teamwork, customer focus, communication, achieving results, management style, and organizational design. When approximately 75% of the people used similar descriptors, they were considered valid and entered into the final narrative analysis (See Figure 1). Later, these findings were triangulated with other stakeholders' data (i.e., suppliers, retailers, and subsidiaries).

Figure 1: Narrative Analysis

	Gold Coast Culture	Silver Border Culture
Organizational Behaviors	• Focal point is your neighbor • Neighbor is the competition • Arrogance • Dictates what a retailer needs • Must believe in the program	• Focal point is the other card companies • Other card companies are the competition • Partnering • Do anything to help the retailer • Can speak up against a program
Communication	• Have to have a meeting • Don't know top accounts • Never see the numbers • Can't lose temper • People must be same level at meetings • Nice people don't have conflicts	• Do business at water fountain • Always know top account • See numbers daily • Talks open and honestly • Everyone from secretary to VPs at meetings • Conflict handled at team level
Achieving Results	• Run like government • Focuses on system • Everything perfect • Complicated systems • Promoted without results • Tired: takes so much energy to get things done	• Run like business • Focus on getting job done • Doesn't have to be perfect • Just get it done • Promoted with results • Fun, energizing, lighter walk
Teamwork	• Managers own projects • Individual competition	• Team owns projects • Camaraderie
Management Style	• Arrogant • Cocky • Secretive • Self-promoting • Breeds face time	• Down to earth • All are equal • Candid and open • Team decisions • Done when done
Customer Focus	• Talks customer focus • Dictates what retailer needs • Talks innovation	• Walks customer focus • Do what will help retailer • Sometimes too eager to help
Organizational Design	• Lots of contacts for a few dollars • Internal focal point • Big and cumbersome • Silo-driven and compartmentalized • Linear • Lots of management layers	• One contact for lots of dollars • External focal point • Smaller • Self-contained • Team based • Fewer layers of management

Birthing a Monolithic Culture

   Gold Coast, Inc. is located in the Midwest and sells products to enrich people's lives and enhance their relationships. Products are written in several languages and distributed internationally under brands including Gold Coast, Silver Border, Evening Calls, and Spring Flowers. Its parent brand, Gold Coast, was one of the most recognizable brands in America.

   As this company's industry and population aged, consumers had less free time to shop; and they were reducing the number of the relationships they were sustaining. Distribution choices continued to increase. Furthermore, large retailers were able to get better wholesale terms, resulting in profit margin pressures for suppliers. The total industry

sales was declining by roughly ½% a year, and the price of Gold Coast products were increasing at a rate faster than many other consumers products.

As a result of these economic and market environment changes, Gold Coast, Inc. had failed to meet several of its performance targets over a seven-year period. In fact, one year it had failed to meet all but one. "Although our performance in the past has been good, in fact enviable by some measures, it has not matched the growth of some of America's best companies," stated Gold Coast's vice president - Finance. And to that, Gold Coast, Inc.'s CEO, added, "Either the company has set poor targets or we need to change the ways we do things around here." The corporate culture of Gold Coast Greetings had been reinforced over time by decades of market leadership. When the marketplace began to change, however, Gold Coast, Inc. experienced difficulty identifying where change needed to occur.

The literature told Gold Coast, Inc. management that organizations that had cultures with the ability to anticipate and respond effectively to changes in the business environment significantly out performed those that did not (Kotter & Heskett, 1992). If Gold Coast, Inc. was to be transformed into a culture that was able to adapt to changes in the business environment, it required understanding its culture. Shortly thereafter, the CEO formally announced a cultural initiative with the side note that Gold Coast needed to build into the culture a continuing ability to adapt behavior to changing business circumstances "without losing our timeless core values."

From the moment the founder envisioned Gold Coast, he birthed what would become a monolithic culture - the right way to do business. Making the very best products was reflected in the core value of quality and was evidenced in all areas of the corporation. Although never referred to as a monolithic culture, everyone understood that the Gold Coast brand's way of doing business was the right way to do business and the only one that senior management openly acknowledged. And although the Silver Border brand generated significant revenue for the company, its way of doing business was never officially acknowledged.

When first queried, all the employees interviewed described the culture of Gold Coast, Inc. with positive words such as "polite, caring, and full of bright and creative people." But when they talked about the individual brand cultures in which they worked, their cultures began to sound very different.

Creating a Subculture

In the mid-1950s, Gold Coast commissioned the Birger Widman Company to analyze the industry's growth potential and Gold Coast's current and future industry position (Managerial Leadership Course, 1992). The research showed that Gold Coast products were being sold in only one out of every ten stores selling a similar product. The other nine stores in most cases were drug stores, variety stores, and supermarkets. After careful analysis, the founder decided selling the Gold Coast brand in these other stores would not be a wise marketing decision. It could erode the carefully nurtured position Gold Coast had attained with its brand name recognition, customer preference, and quality image. Instead, the founder decided to create another brand, designed to sell to as many as possible of those nine out of ten stores in which the Gold Coast brand was not represented.

In 1959 the Silver Border brand was launched (Anniversary 25th). The creative artwork on the cards was comprised of designs that had appeared in the Gold Coast line three to four years earlier. Sales of the new brand increased substantially each year, and by 1969, the Silver Border brand was shipping 2 million products a week to 12,000 accounts (Anniversary 25th).

Selling the new unknown brand was not easy. At first, salesmen began selling to any business that would give them space, even beauty shops, flower shops, and gasoline stations. Eventually, these channels of distribution became the exclusive focus but selling to them was not the same as selling to Gold Coast accounts. Silver Border did not have the brand recognition of the Gold Coast brand. Therefore, new selling strategies had to be developed to help Silver Border compete with the other companies selling in these channels. Silver Border began offering sales incentives, "terms" consisting of free freight, free fixtures, returns on seasonal products, store planning, and merchandising assistance. These were all terms, which the Gold Coast brand would never have to offer. But no matter how well the Silver Border culture worked, as one long-tenured employee said, "We were always thought of as a 'step child'."

Experiencing the Card Shopping Cultures

As a young mother wheels her shopping cart through the supermarket in Des Moines, Iowa, a colorful display catches her eye. Positioning the cart beyond her toddler's reach, she scans the rows of greetings, selects one, opens it, and smiles. Her best friend will love it. She doesn't know or probably care whether it is a Silver Border or Gold Coast card because it's "just fine." Later, as she continues her shopping, she makes a mental note for next week's shopping

list: laundry detergent, a congratulatory card for her nephew who is graduating from college, a bottle of Chardonnay, a gift bag, and party goods for her three-year-old's birthday.

This is the convenience shopper, the person whose needs the Silver Border brand tries to anticipate and meet in drug stores, variety stores, and supermarkets. Silver Border's success in meeting those needs, and thus its growth, was phenomenal. At one time, the brand ranked third in sales, right behind the Gold Coast and Amnity brands, Silver Border's and Gold Coast's biggest competitor.

In a strip mall in Cleveland, Ohio a young woman dressed in a business suit makes visits the Gold Coast store over her lunch hour. Inside she sees neat orderly aisles of fixtures filled with cards for every occasion and for everyone from her son's soccer coach to her administrative assistant. She browses through the beautiful store enjoying the shopping experience that she doesn't get when she's buying a head of lettuce with her birthday card at the grocery store.

Today she's looking for a birthday card for her sister. She pulls a card from one of the display fixtures. It has a beautiful gold heart on the front of the card with the word "Caring" embossed into the heart. Inside it reads:

> True caring - the quality of being patient, gentle, and kind to another - is a virtue, which can change lives, mend hearts, and strengthen love. It only takes a moment to perform a caring act, but its impact can last a lifetime. Happy birthday to the most caring of sisters.

She's glad she made the special trip to the Gold Coast store.

Navigating the Gold Coast and Silver Border Cultures

Employees described the Gold Coast brand as "paternalistic," "ponderous," "tradition-bound," "singular in its pursuit of quality," and "eminently successful." One woman who had been at the Lake Louise corporate headquarters for over two decades reflected on what it was like to work for both the Silver Border and Gold Coast brands.

I knew so little of what went on outside my area of responsibility when I worked on the [Gold Coast] brand. In [Silver Border] I always know who to go to ask questions. On the [Gold Coast] side I always felt like I was in handcuffs. The ever-existing paternalism of the [Gold Coast] brand, coupled with its sheer size, stifles everyone's creativity. Many of my friends abandoned the [Gold Coast] ship early on for the [Silver Border] brand where innovation has always been welcomed and encouraged.

Randy Collins (1984), one of the early presidents of Silver Border known as Mr. Personality, was known for the energy and enthusiasm he brought to the company. He believed in taking an active part in the company's operations and frequently travelled around the country to meet the Silver Border sales force and many retailers face to face. He exemplified the style of management of the Silver Border brand, that of managing by walking around and making his information public information. In the Gold Coast corporate magazine, (Coastal Magazine, 1984), Collins talked about the "close-knit atmosphere of [Silver Border], the necessity of meeting consumers' and retailers' needs, and [Silver Border's] ability to meet and beat the competition based on the hard work and customer focus of the [Silver Border] people."

Jeff, a Silver Border product development manager, spoke with enthusiasm about the certain energy and special dynamics that went on inside Silver Border:

> [Silver Border] people work hard and we make every minute count. It's an exciting, competitive environment and we have no choice but to be very aware of the marketplace. We make sure we are constantly ready not only to react, but also to act.

Amy, a recent college graduate who worked on the Silver Border for only a short time, smiled enthusiastically as she talked,

It seemed like everyone enjoys working in [Silver Border]. We complained sometimes because we worked some long hours, but it was wonderful to be part of a still-growing brand with tremendous potential in channels of distribution with unlimited growth potential. And it was fun to be operating in such a dynamic and changing environment where we were continually challenged by the increased sophistication of our retailers and retail customers alike.

Tom, one of the salesmen who had been with the company for 30 years, described the challenges Silver Border had in the early days:

Our challenges were a lack of identity and acceptance. We were new in the marketplace and we couldn't always utilize the techniques that proved successful for [Gold Coast]. It took a lot of persistence and determination that

ultimately created a [Silver Border] culture very unlike our [Gold Coast] counterpart of today but very similar to the [Gold Coast] culture that the [Gold Coast] founder created.

Employees who had lived and breathed the Gold Coast brand throughout their careers used very different words to describe their brand and told very different stories. They talked about the "captive buyer mentality" with the "mom-and-pop retailers" who owned the stores where the Gold Coast brand was sold:

We could sell them anything. They would ask us all the time, "How much should we order?" It was a very long time before we were forced to focus on the retailer or the consumer.

Steve, a senior manager, who had been assigned a new job in the Gold Coast brand every two years, described his frustration:

I've had a new job every two years, and it seems to be like it took me six months to learn the system, six months to try to change the system, six months to try to beat the system, and six months to make the best of it. I use to get so frustrated.

That frustration was heard in the Silver Border organization. Ellen, a Silver Border manager, described empowerment in the Silver Border environment:

I was given the opportunity to take over an area that was performing poorly. I felt bad for the employees who were in the group because they were feeling pretty frustrated because they knew they weren't performing. One of the first things I did was bring the group together to ask them about the current level of performance and what they thought needed to be done. Many of the ideas they suggested turned out to be very simple things that could be implemented in a short time frame and which allowed for some early successes. Once people started to see the impact they could have on the operation, ideas to improve 'snowballed,' and it was hard to keep up with them. We didn't have to go through the many layers of [Gold Coast] management to make things happen and in less than nine months, our performance measures showed impressive results.

Mary, an employee who left Silver Border for what she referred to as the "real brand," described the frustration that she, like Steve, experienced first-hand working for the Gold Coast brand:

On the [Gold Coast] side, you work to please your manager and not necessarily the consumer. I begged my manager to let me put a stitched card into the line because I knew it would sell. My manager said, 'No. On the [Silver Border] side everyone had input into product decisions."

Leanne, a Gold Coast card planner, added:

On the [Gold Coast] side, managers told us what we could make. We couldn't even change basic signing on a Christmas boxed card display without a vice-president's approval. When I moved to [Gold Coast], we spent a day deciding what color a PID should be. That decision went on to the management team that ultimately decided on yet another color! That would never happen on the Silver Border side.

Operating Inside and Outside the Cultures

Ted, a researcher, came to Gold Coast in 1967. With an MBA from the University of Illinois, his professional choices were narrowed to becoming a sales rep for IBM; marching in line with the US army and ultimately visiting the rice paddies of Vietnam War; or taking a job with Gold Coast, Inc. He chose Gold Coast, Inc. Ted came into the company as a career development person. He had several rotations including product management, where he helped create the first Gold Coast calendars; research, where he did a major analysis of birthdays; and at the Town Hall Store, where he said, "I found lost pocketbooks."

I came back to work in research in 1968. We had a system called the Product Information System. It kept track of every single [Gold Coast] card. It was a great big monster of a system that could generate the value of a rose or orchid, flitter flock or foil, the editorial, and the number of layers of design. And it was driven by the [Gold Coast] brand.

Ted never questioned why no one did the same kind of research for the Silver Border brand. "The assumption was that if the cards sold in the Gold Coast channels, they'd sell in the Silver Border channels. Other things existed, as well, that neither he nor others questioned. One of those things was the tradition of the coffee break. The coffee break

process was a very interesting social phenomenon at Gold Coast and Ted likened the communication that transpired during these breaks to the unstructured communication of Silver Border today:

It was at the same time everyday. The… ladies would ring the bell and you'd line up and get your coffee. You would find out what was going on and sometimes a piece of information you needed to get your work done. It really helped us do business. [Silver Border] does business at the water fountain today. On the other hand [Gold Coast] is compelled to call a meeting to discuss every little decision. And there's never a room large enough for all the people who supposedly need to be there.

Similar to the coffee break, Ted talked about an informal mode of communication similar to one he enjoyed in college:

Research analysts had a tradition of breaking around 3 p.m. on Thursdays, going to a small bar on King Street, having a few brewskies, and talking about what was going on. It was a really good way to talk about what was going on with our projects. Today the people in [Silver Border] are still comfortable with doing business that way. The only difference is you can't have alcohol until after hours.

On the other extreme was the formal behavior of the [Gold Coast] brand management. Ted experienced it first hand as a fledgling researcher:

I can remember working on a presentation that needed some figures from a [Gold Coast] management report. It was confidential because it had sales volume by units and dollars for the brand. Anyway it was kept under lock and key, and I had to sign for the report when I took it out. And then because I really needed the information to do my assignment, I went to the copier to copy a few pages. About that time a [Gold Coast] vice-president from another area went by the copy machine and recognized the report. He demanded to know who I was, who my supervisor was, and what authority I had to be reading that report. I doubt that would have happened if I had been copying a [Silver Border] report.

Ted told me to talk to Jenny, a Silver Border strategist, who had a similar tale to tell:

I had been with [Silver Border] for a few years and had been assigned to an important and highly visible project. I forged ahead on it without a ton of meetings because I knew who to call and whose input to get. I wrapped it up by binding all the presentations myself, hopping on the corporate jet, flying to Indianapolis and presenting the project to the retailer's management team. On the [Gold Coast] side, it would have taken five levels of management to work and rework a project that a strategist began. Ultimately, a general manager would have flown on the jet and presented the project to the retailer.

Ted is one of the few "outsiders," who had close working relationships with both the Gold Coast and Silver Border brands without actually being on the organizational chart of either one. Having spent 25+ years in the Research department, Ted had an opportunity to watch both brands:

[Silver Border] was always smaller and relatively self-contained so communicating was easier. There was always a team spirit—a real camaraderie. [Gold Coast] became and still is big, cumbersome, and silo-driven. It is linear, compartmentalized, and burdened with a lot of layers of management.

Julie, a Gold Coast line designer, added with empathy,

The drive for quality and a very structured system of checks and balances made quick operational decisions the exception, not the rule, and innovation remained in the hands of designers, new product developers and executives, instead of being widespread. But on the [Silver Border] side, everyone from the secretaries to the president was held responsible for coming up with new ideas, ways to make things better for the customer and for the company.

Throughout the many interviews and focus groups done to explore the cultures of these two brands, no one described the reasons for the cultural differences as eloquently as Ted. He seemed to get at the heart of the issue, separating the organizational culture from the people. His description gives credence to the theory that an organizational culture comes first and that the people follow (Van Maanen & Barley, 1985).

Every social organization needs some target upon which to vent its frustration. In Orwell's 1984, no one saw the enemy that no one participated in the war. Every time you needed to get mad at someone you got mad at the war that

never touched anyone. It served, however, as a focal point for aggression and negativity. In [Silver Border], that focal point is [Amnity]. [Silver Border] has always known who the villain was and he was 'outside' the building. On the [Gold Coast] side, it's your neighbor. Because [Gold Coast] doesn't recognize the existence of competition, your need for competition is directed at the person in the next cubicle. And the whole idea that there could be anyone out there worth competing with whose decisions and opinions mattered was just an anathema to the [Gold Coast] side. Like I said, in that kind of culture, you have to focus your aggression and negativity on someone. If there is no recognizable competition, you have to find someone inside to win or lose against. [Silver Border] won or lost based on business outside the building. [Gold Coast] won or lost based on whether you can get your program through the guy in front of you.

Karen, who began her career on the Gold Coast side and went on to become one of the first female Silver Border executives, further describes the differences between the two brands:

On the [Gold Coast] side, we told, and still do to a certain extent, the retailers what to do. It is an arrogance thing. You'll hear that from a lot of people when they talk about the [Gold Coast] brand. And you can see the arrogance. It's big corporate [Gold Coast] against a little card shop. And so the whole culture is built around that kind of attitude. What we're all concerned about …I mean if this integration thing really happens, is losing touch with the outside world. Being in touch is what [Silver Border] has always been good at.

One of the Silver Border secretaries, who had worked on both brands, voiced it this way:

When someone gets a new account in [Silver Border], everyone knows about it within 24 hours. Everyone is pumped. The linkage is there. In [Gold Coast], people can't name their top accounts because they aren't in touch with them.

Ted goes on to proudly describe his participation in helping to "win" an account:

When one of the chains like the [Avondale] food stores visits corporate headquarters for a yearly visit or a contract renewal, we have always done 'dog and pony' shows to sell the [Silver Border] brand. The entire [Silver Border] brand rallies together and pulls every bit of research and information they have to win or keep the account. It doesn't matter whether you are an artist or a field rep or a marketing vice-president; everyone associated with the brand makes it happen for [Silver Border]. [Gold Coast] doesn't have to sell the brand to anyone.

Ted summarized the differences like this: At [Gold Coast], you need a license to fish. At [Silver Border], all you need is a worm". Karen summarized them with a little different twist: "At [Silver Border] you can ask executives why they are all tan and bald. You better not ask that of the [Gold Coast] executives!"

Integrating the Wrong Culture into the Right One

The results of the cultural audit of the Gold Coast brand and the Silver Border brand were presented to senior management. Less than two weeks later, senior management decided to integrate the brands. In the face of declining profits brought on by declining market share, senior management believed that restructuring efforts could delete organizational redundancies and reduce costs. The daily corporate newspaper quoted the CEO concerning what he referred to as the "transformation of the company." His personal vision for the company was that Gold Coast, Inc. could apply the principles of teamwork across divisions, creating a community of partnerships.

Analysis

One of the functions of any subculture is to create a sense of group cohesion to protest against the monolithic culture. It reflected what Alasuutari (1995) called "intergenerational conflict." Nowhere was there a greater sense of group cohesion than within the Silver Border culture. Its own ways of doing business both manifested and resolved the conflicts of the Gold Coast brand culture. The Silver Border brand took the initiative to create its own ways of working, its own set of meanings, demonstrate that the hierarchy and formality of the monolithic culture could be reworked so that a culture with fewer systems and rules could be just as profitable.

The new internal slogan, "One organization, one team, one greeting" suggested an integration of the two brands resulting in a culture of what the CEO believed offered limitless potential. But to the people inside the Silver Border brand, it became clear that all the goodness of their culture would be usurped by what people inherently knew to be

the culture of the Gold Coast brand, steeped in systems, structure, and what senior management believed was the only way of doing business.

Silver Border voices from all levels of the company feared what employees had always recognized as the monolithic culture. And despite all the goodness inherent in the ways the Silver Border brand did business, few ways of their "doing business" would survive in the integration. The culture of the Gold Coast brand totally usurped the Silver Border culture. To employees, it was devastating and a clear indication of just how powerful the monolithic culture was. Silver Border employees realized they would soon be working in a culture laced with arrogance, controlling systems, bureaucracy, and inflexibility while losing their open and honest ways of communicating, their definition of customer-focus, and their sense of true teamwork. The Gold Coast culture validated America's department store theory that "bigger is better."

Ironically, not too long after Silver Border's integration into the monolithic culture, Gold Coast, Inc. introduced the power of brand equity by launching Communications by Gold Coast. The new brand was created to leverage Gold Coast, Inc.'s high recognition brand name. The Silver Border brand, which sold in more than 20,000 stores, was positioned as getting a boost from new products including new cards and gift wrap. But Silver Border employees knew it was lip service and recognized all too well that their brand's culture was not only being integrated but was also being pushed to the back of the brand portfolio. Afterall, "Silver Border from Gold Coast" had never once been considered for the new brand.

CONCLUSION

An organization's founder creates a culture that reflects his or her beliefs and values, ways of knowing, and behaviors of how to do business. Over time, the characteristics which are collectively created through years of interaction and which unconsciously direct every activity performed by its employees add strength to the monolithic culture. Subcultures, on the other hand, are born when groups of people, who live vertically and horizontally within an organization, find better ways of doing business, albeit different from the monolithic culture, that ensure their own success.

This research not only clearly validates the existence of a monolithic culture in one corporation but also provides insight into Goliath behaviors that can rear their ugly heads. Identifying and understanding the differences between the Gold Coast brand and the Silver Border brand provided insight into the strength of the monolithic culture and the inherent oppressive power of a monolithic culture, as well. Given that corporate culture is crucial to organizational effectiveness, it follows, therefore, that a key task for the leadership of the company is to understand the dynamics between the monolithic culture and the subcultures. By giving employees permission to do what works and actively leveraging the strengths of both the monolithic and subcultures, everyone wins.

To accomplish this, senior managers must recognize that when they develop personal stakes in a monolithic culture, they may also unintentionally send messages that discount the subcultures. If these managers are heavily vested in the monolithic culture, they may conspire to protect everything in the culture no matter how outdated their ways of knowing and working may be. Because of their intense emphasis on their own future in management and the monolithic culture lenses through which they want to see themselves, these senior managers are often blind to the goodness inherent in the subcultures. It is this blindness that can create confusion and conflict and my result in an "us vs. them" mentality.

When a monolithic culture usurps a subculture that serves to create meaning and significance for groups of employees, all employees lose. Senior management must take responsibility for recognizing and validating all the subcultures, especially when they are generating revenue. If done judiciously, the corporation can adapt and thrive. If not the corporation will become filled with resentment and disappointment. This challenge is profound and personal, and its potential for impact on the company's performance is enormous.

Gold Coast, Inc. went on to endure declining sales and revenues. In 2008, revenues were off 2 % from 2007; in 2009 revenues were off 8% from 2008. In 2009, Gold Coast, Inc. - a company with a reputation of holding onto employees for decades - dropped 8 % of its work force. Gold Coast will never know for sure whether the revenue drops and layoffs were due to the recession, due to the generational shift to more immediate forms of communication, or due to its inability to recognize and leverage the strengths of the Silver Border subculture.

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