

Shelby D. Hunt

The Nature and Scope of Marketing

Can a new model of the scope of marketing help resolve the "nature of marketing" and "marketing science" controversies?

DURING the past three decades, two controversies have overshadowed all others in the marketing literature. The first is the "Is marketing a science?" controversy sparked by an early JOURNAL OF MARKETING article by Converse entitled "The Development of a Science of Marketing."¹ Other prominent writers who fueled the debate included Bartels, Hutchinson, Baumol, Buzzell, Taylor, and Halbert.² After raging throughout most of the '50s and '60s, the controversy has since waned. The waning may be more apparent than real, however, because many of the substantive issues underlying the marketing science controversy overlap with the more recent "nature of marketing" (broadening the concept of marketing) debate. Fundamental to both controversies are some radically different perspectives on the essential characteristics of both *marketing* and *science*.

The purpose of this article is to develop a conceptual model of the scope of marketing and to use that model to analyze (1) the approaches to the study of marketing, (2) the "nature of marketing" controversy, and (3) the marketing science debate. Before developing the model, some preliminary observations on the controversy concerning the nature of marketing are appropriate.

1. Paul D. Converse, "The Development of a Science of Marketing," JOURNAL OF MARKETING, Vol. 10 (July 1945), pp. 14-23.

2. Robert Bartels, "Can Marketing Be a Science?" JOURNAL OF MARKETING, Vol. 15 (January 1951), pp. 319-328; Kenneth D. Hutchinson, "Marketing as a Science: An Appraisal," JOURNAL OF MARKETING, Vol. 16 (January 1952), pp. 286-293; W. J. Baumol, "On the Role of Marketing Theory," JOURNAL OF MARKETING, Vol. 21 (April 1957), pp. 413-419; Robert D. Buzzell, "Is Marketing a Science?" *Harvard Business Review*, Vol. 41 (January-February 1963), pp. 32-48; Weldon J. Taylor, "Is Marketing a Science? Revisited," JOURNAL OF MARKETING, Vol. 29 (July 1965), pp. 49-53; and M.

Journal of Marketing, Vol. 40 (July 1976), pp. 17-28.

The Nature of Marketing

What is marketing? What kinds of phenomena are appropriately termed *marketing phenomena*? How do marketing activities differ from nonmarketing activities? What is a marketing system? How can marketing processes be distinguished from other social processes? Which institutions should one refer to as marketing institutions? *In short, what is the proper conceptual domain of the construct labeled "marketing"?*

The American Marketing Association defines marketing as "the performance of business activities that direct the flow of goods and services from producer to consumer or user."³ This position has come under attack from various quarters as being too restrictive and has prompted one textbook on marketing to note: "Marketing is not easy to define. No one has yet been able to formulate a clear, concise definition that finds universal acceptance."⁴

Although vigorous debate concerning the basic nature of marketing has alternately waxed and waned since the early 1900s, the most recent controversy probably traces back to a position paper by the marketing staff of the Ohio State University in 1965. They suggested that marketing be considered "the process in a society by which the demand structure for economic goods and services is anticipated or enlarged and satisfied through the conception, promotion, exchange, and physical distribution of goods and services."⁵

Halbert, *The Meaning and Sources of Marketing Theory* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1965).

3. Committee on Terms, *Marketing Definitions: A Glossary of Marketing Terms* (Chicago: American Marketing Assn., 1960).

4. Stewart H. Rewoldt, James D. Scott, and Martin R. Warshaw, *Introduction to Marketing Management* (Homewood, Ill.: Richard D. Irwin, 1973), p. 3.

5. Marketing Staff of the Ohio State University, "State-

Note the conspicuous absence of the notion that marketing consists of a set of *business activities* (as in the AMA definition). Rather, they considered marketing to be a *social process*.

Next to plunge into the semantical battle were Kotler and Levy. Although they did not specifically propose a new definition of marketing, Kotler and Levy in 1969 suggested that the concept of marketing be broadened to include nonbusiness organizations. They observed that churches, police departments, and public schools have products and customers, and that they use the normal tools of the marketing mix. Therefore, Kotler and Levy conclude that these organizations perform marketing, or at least marketing-like, activities. Thus,

the choice facing those who manage nonbusiness organizations is not whether to market or not to market, for no organization can avoid marketing. The choice is whether to do it well or poorly, and on this necessity the case for organizational marketing is basically founded.⁶

In the same issue of the JOURNAL OF MARKETING, Lazer discussed the changing boundaries of marketing. He pleaded that: "What is required is a broader perception and definition of marketing than has hitherto been the case—one that recognizes marketing's societal dimensions and perceives of marketing as more than just a technology of the firm."⁷ Thus, Kotler and Levy desired to broaden the notion of marketing by including not-for-profit organizations, and Lazer called for a definition of marketing that recognized the discipline's expanding societal dimensions.

Luck took sharp issue with Kotler and Levy by insisting that marketing be limited to those business processes and activities that ultimately result in a *market* transaction.⁸ Luck noted that even thus bounded, marketing would still be a field of enormous scope and that marketing specialists could still render their services to nonmarketing causes. Kotler and Levy then accused Luck of a

ment of Marketing Philosophy," JOURNAL OF MARKETING, Vol. 29 (January 1965), pp. 43-44.

6. Philip Kotler and Sidney J. Levy, "Broadening the Concept of Marketing," JOURNAL OF MARKETING, Vol. 33 (January 1969), p. 15.

7. William Lazer, "Marketing's Changing Social Relationships," JOURNAL OF MARKETING, Vol. 33 (January 1969), p. 9.

8. David Luck, "Broadening the Concept of Marketing—Too Far," JOURNAL OF MARKETING, Vol. 33 (July 1969), p. 54.

* ABOUT THE AUTHOR.

Shelby D. Hunt is professor of business and chairman, Marketing Department, University of Wisconsin—Madison.

new form of myopia and suggested that, "The crux of marketing lies in a *general idea of exchange* rather than the narrower thesis of market transactions."⁹ They further contended that defining marketing "too narrowly" would inhibit students of marketing from applying their expertise to the most rapidly growing sectors of the society.

Other marketing commentators began to espouse the dual theses that (1) marketing be broadened to include nonbusiness organizations, and (2) marketing's societal dimensions deserve scrutiny. Thus, Ferber prophesied that marketing would diversify into the social and public policy fields.¹⁰ And Lavidge sounded a similar call to arms by admonishing marketers to cease evaluating new products solely on the basis of whether they *can* be sold. Rather, he suggested, they should evaluate new products from a societal perspective, that is, *should* the product be sold?

The areas in which marketing people can, and must, be of service to society have broadened. In addition, marketing's functions have been broadened. Marketing no longer can be defined adequately in terms of the activities involved in buying, selling, and transporting goods and services.¹¹

The movement to expand the concept of marketing probably became irreversible when the JOURNAL OF MARKETING devoted an entire issue to marketing's changing social/environmental role. At that time, Kotler and Zaltman coined the term *social marketing*, which they defined as "the design, implementation and control of programs calculated to influence the acceptability of social ideas and involving considerations of product planning, pricing, communication, distribution, and marketing research."¹² In the same issue, marketing technology was applied to fund raising for the March of Dimes, health services, population problems, and the recycling of solid waste.¹³

9. Philip Kotler and Sidney Levy, "A New Form of Marketing Myopia: Rejoinder to Professor Luck," JOURNAL OF MARKETING, Vol. 33 (July 1969), p. 57.

10. Robert Ferber, "The Expanding Role of Marketing in the 1970's," JOURNAL OF MARKETING, Vol. 34 (January 1970), pp. 29-30.

11. Robert J. Lavidge, "The Growing Responsibilities of Marketing," JOURNAL OF MARKETING, Vol. 34 (January 1970), p. 27.

12. Philip Kotler and Gerald Zaltman, "Social Marketing: An Approach to Planned Social Change," JOURNAL OF MARKETING, Vol. 35 (July 1971), p. 5.

13. JOURNAL OF MARKETING, Vol. 35 (July 1971): William A. Mindak and H. Malcolm Bybee, "Marketing's Application to Fund Raising," pp. 13-18; Gerald Zaltman and Ilan Vertinsky, "Health Services Marketing: A Suggested Model," pp. 19-27; John U. Farley and Harold J. Leavitt, "Marketing and Population Problems," pp. 28-33; and William G. Zikmund and William J. Stanton, "Recycling Solid Wastes: A Channels-of-Distribution Problem," pp. 34-39.

Further, Dawson chastised marketers for ignoring many fundamental issues pertaining to the social relevance of marketing activities:

Surely, in these troubled times, an appraisal of marketing's actual and potential role in relation to such [societal] problems is at least of equal importance to the technical aspects of the field. Yet, the emphasis upon practical problem-solving within the discipline far outweighs the attention paid to social ramifications of marketing activity.¹⁴

Kotler has since reevaluated his earlier positions concerning broadening the concept of marketing and has articulated a "generic" concept of marketing. He proposes that the essence of marketing is the *transaction*, defined as the exchange of values between two parties. Kotler's generic concept of marketing states: "Marketing is specifically concerned with how transactions are created, stimulated, facilitated and valued."¹⁵ Empirical evidence indicates that, at least among marketing educators, the broadened concept of marketing represents a *fait accompli*. A recent study by Nichols showed that 95% of marketing educators believed that the scope of marketing should be broadened to include nonbusiness organizations. Similarly, 93% agreed that marketing goes beyond just economic goods and services, and 83% favored including in the domain of marketing many activities whose ultimate result is not a market transaction.¹⁶

Although the advocates of extending the notion of marketing appear to have won the semantical battle, their efforts may not have been victimless. Carman notes that the definition of marketing plays a significant role in directing the research efforts of marketers. He believes that many processes (e.g., political processes) do not involve an exchange of values and that marketing should not take such processes under its "disciplinary wing."¹⁷ Bartels has also explored the so-called identity crises in marketing and has pointed out numerous potential disadvantages to broadening the concept of marketing. These *potential* disadvantages include: (1) turning the attention of marketing researchers away from important problems in the area of physical distribution, (2)

emphasizing methodology rather than substance as the content of marketing knowledge, and (3) an increasingly esoteric and abstract marketing literature. Bartels concluded: "If 'marketing' is to be regarded as so broad as to include both economic and noneconomic fields of application, perhaps marketing as originally conceived will ultimately reappear under another name."¹⁸

Similarly, Luck decries the "semantic jungle" that appears to be growing in marketing.¹⁹ Citing conflicting definitions of *marketing* and *social marketing* in the current literature, Luck suggests that this semantic jungle has been impeding the efforts of marketers to think clearly about their discipline. He has challenged the American Marketing Association to create a special commission to clear up the definitional problems in marketing. Finally, a recent president of the American Marketing Association set the development of a consistent standard definition of marketing as a primary goal of the association.²⁰

Three questions appear to be central to the "nature [broadening the concept] of marketing" controversy. First, what kinds of phenomena and issues *do* the various marketing writers perceive to be included in the scope of marketing? Second, what kinds of phenomena and issues *should* be included in the scope of marketing? Third, how can marketing be defined to both systematically encompass all the phenomena and issues that should be included and, at the same time, systematically exclude all other phenomena and issues? That is, a good definition of marketing must be both properly inclusive and exclusive. To rigorously evaluate these questions requires a conceptual model of the scope of marketing.

The Scope of Marketing

No matter which definition of marketing one prefers, the scope of marketing is unquestionably broad. Often included are such diverse subject areas as consumer behavior, pricing, purchasing, sales management, product management, marketing communications, comparative marketing, social marketing, the efficiency/productivity of marketing systems, the role of marketing in economic development, packaging, channels of distribution, marketing research, societal issues in marketing, retailing, wholesaling, the social responsibility of

14. Leslie Dawson, "Marketing Science in the Age of Aquarius," *JOURNAL OF MARKETING*, Vol. 35 (July 1971), p. 71.

15. Philip Kotler, "A Generic Concept of Marketing," *JOURNAL OF MARKETING*, Vol. 36 (April 1972), p. 49.

16. William G. Nichols, "Conceptual Conflicts in Marketing," *Journal of Economics and Business*, Vol. 26 (Winter 1974), p. 142.

17. James M. Carman, "On the Universality of Marketing," *Journal of Contemporary Business*, Vol. 2 (Autumn 1973), p. 14.

18. Robert Bartels, "The Identity Crisis in Marketing," *JOURNAL OF MARKETING*, Vol. 38 (October 1974), p. 76.

19. David J. Luck, "Social Marketing: Confusion Compounded," *JOURNAL OF MARKETING*, Vol. 38 (October 1974), pp. 2-7.

20. Robert J. Eggert, "Eggert Discusses Additional Goals for His Administration, Seeks Help in Defining Marketing," *Marketing News*, September 15, 1974.

marketing, international marketing, commodity marketing, and physical distribution. Though lengthy, this list of topics and issues does not exhaust the possibilities. Not all writers would include all the topics under the general rubric of marketing. The point deserving emphasis here, however, is that different commentators on marketing would *disagree* as to which topics should be excluded. The disagreement stems from fundamentally different perspectives and can best be analyzed by attempting to develop some common ground for classifying the diverse topics and issues in marketing.

The most widely used conceptual model of the scope of marketing is the familiar "4 Ps" model popularized by McCarthy in the early '60s.²¹ The model is usually represented by three concentric circles. The inner circle contains the consumer, since this is the focal point of marketing effort. The second circle contains the marketing mix ("controllable factors") of price, place, promotion, and product. Finally, the third circle contains the uncontrollable factors of political and legal environment, economic environment, cultural and social environment, resources and objectives of the firm, and the existing business situation. As is readily apparent, many of the subject areas previously mentioned have no "home" in the 4 Ps model. For example, where does social marketing or efficiency of marketing systems or comparative marketing belong?

During a presentation at the 1972 Fall Conference of the American Marketing Association, Kotler made some observations concerning the desirability of classifying marketing phenomena using the concepts of *micro*, *macro*, *normative*, and *positive*.²² These observations spurred the development of the conceptual model detailed in Table 1. The schema proposes that all marketing phenomena, issues, problems, models, theories, and research can be categorized using the three categorical dichotomies of (1) profit sector/nonprofit sector, (2) micro/macro, and (3) positive/normative. The three categorical dichotomies yield $2 \times 2 \times 2 = 8$ classes or cells in the schema. Thus, the first class includes all marketing topics that are micro-positive and in the profit sector. Similarly, the second class includes all marketing activities that are micro-normative

and in the profit sector, and so on throughout the table.

Some definitions are required to properly interpret the schema presented in Table 1. *Profit sector* encompasses the study and activities of organizations or other entities whose stated objectives include the realization of profit. Also applicable are studies that adopt the *perspective* of profit-oriented organizations. Conversely, *non-profit sector* encompasses the study and perspective of all organizations and entities whose stated objectives do not include the realization of profit.

The *micro/macro* dichotomy suggests a classification based on the level of aggregation. *Micro* refers to the marketing activities of individual units, normally individual organizations (firms) and consumers or households. *Macro* suggests a higher level of aggregation, usually marketing systems or groups of consumers.

The *positive/normative* dichotomy provides categories based on whether the focus of the analysis is primarily descriptive or prescriptive. *Positive* marketing adopts the perspective of attempting to describe, explain, predict, and understand the marketing activities, processes, and phenomena that actually exist. This perspective examines *what is*. In contrast, *normative* marketing adopts the perspective of attempting to prescribe what marketing organizations and individuals ought to do or what kinds of marketing systems a society ought to have. That is, this perspective examines *what ought to be* and what organizations and individuals *ought to do*.

Analyzing Approaches to Marketing

An examination of Table 1 reveals that most of the early (circa 1920) approaches to the study of marketing reside in cell 3: profit sector/macro/positive. The institutional, commodity, and functional approaches analyzed existing (positive) business activities (profit sector) from a marketing systems (macro) perspective. However, not all the early marketing studies were profit/macro/positive. Weld's 1920 classic *The Marketing of Farm Products* not only examined existing distribution systems for farm commodities, but also attempted to evaluate such normative issues as: "Are there too many middlemen in food marketing?"²³ Thus, Weld's signally important work was both profit/macro/positive and profit/macro/normative. Similarly, the Twentieth Century Fund study *Does Distribution Cost Too Much?* took an

21. E. J. McCarthy, *Basic Marketing* (Homewood, Ill.: Richard D. Irwin, 1960).

22. These observations were apparently extemporaneous since they were not included in his published paper: Philip Kotler, "Defining the Limits of Marketing," in *Marketing Education and the Real World*, Boris W. Becker and Helmut Becker, eds. (Chicago: American Marketing Assn., 1972).

23. L. D. H. Weld, *The Marketing of Farm Products* (New York: Macmillan, 1920).

TABLE 1
THE SCOPE OF MARKETING

	Positive	Normative
Micro	(1) Problems, issues, theories, and research concerning: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Individual consumer buyer behavior b. How firms determine prices c. How firms determine products d. How firms determine promotion e. How firms determine channels of distribution f. Case studies of marketing practices 	(2) Problems, issues, normative models, and research concerning how firms <i>should</i> : <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Determine the marketing mix b. Make pricing decisions c. Make product decisions d. Make promotion decisions e. Make packaging decisions f. Make purchasing decisions g. Make international marketing decisions h. Organize their marketing departments i. Control their marketing efforts j. Plan their marketing strategy k. Apply systems theory to marketing problems l. Manage retail establishments m. Manage wholesale establishments n. Implement the marketing concept
Profit Sector	(3) Problems, issues, theories, and research concerning: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Aggregate consumption patterns b. Institutional approach to marketing c. Commodity approach to marketing d. Legal aspects of marketing e. Comparative marketing f. The efficiency of marketing systems g. Whether the poor pay more h. Whether marketing spurs or retards economic development i. Power and conflict relationships in channels of distribution j. Whether marketing functions are universal k. Whether the marketing concept is consistent with consumers' interests 	(4) Problems, issues, normative models, and research concerning: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. How marketing can be made more efficient b. Whether distribution costs too much c. Whether advertising is socially desirable d. Whether consumer sovereignty is desirable e. Whether stimulating demand is desirable f. Whether the poor should pay more g. What kinds of laws regulating marketing are optimal h. Whether vertical marketing systems are socially desirable i. Whether marketing should have special social responsibilities
Macro	(5) Problems, issues, theories, and research concerning: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Consumers' purchasing of public goods b. How nonprofit organizations determine prices c. How nonprofit organizations determine products d. How nonprofit organizations determine promotion e. How nonprofit organizations determine channels of distribution f. Case studies of public goods marketing 	(6) Problems, issues, normative models, and research concerning how nonprofit organizations <i>should</i> : <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Determine the marketing mix (social marketing) b. Make pricing decisions c. Make product decisions d. Make promotion decisions e. Make packaging decisions f. Make purchasing decisions g. Make international marketing decisions (e.g., CARE) h. Organize their marketing efforts i. Control their marketing efforts j. Plan their marketing strategy k. Apply systems theory to marketing problems
Micro	(7) Problems, issues, theories, and research concerning: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. The institutional framework for public goods b. Whether television advertising influences elections c. Whether public service advertising influences behavior (e.g., "Smokey the Bear") d. Whether existing distribution systems for public goods are efficient e. How public goods are recycled 	(8) Problems, issues, normative models, and research concerning: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Whether society should allow politicians to be "sold" like toothpaste b. Whether the demand for public goods should be stimulated c. Whether "low informational content" political advertising is socially desirable (e.g., ten-second "spot" commercials) d. Whether the U.S. Army should be allowed to advertise for recruits
Nonprofit Sector	Macro	

essentially profit/macro/normative perspective.²⁴ Other important works that have combined the profit/macro/positive and the profit/macro/normative perspectives include those of Barger, Cox, and Borden.²⁵

Although the profit/micro/normative (cell 2) orientation to marketing can be traced at least back to the 1920s and the works of such notables as Reed and White,²⁶ the movement reached full bloom in the early 1960s under proponents of the managerial approach to marketing, such as McCarthy.²⁷ The managerial approach adopts the perspective of the marketing manager, usually the marketing manager in a large manufacturing corporation. Therefore, the emphasis is micro and in the profit sector. The basic question underlying the managerial approach is: "What is the optimal marketing mix?" Consequently, the approach is unquestionably normative.

During the middle 1960s, writers such as Lazer, Kelley, Adler, and Fisk began advocating a systems approach to marketing.²⁸ Sometimes the systems approach used a profit/micro/normative perspective and simply attempted to apply to marketing certain sophisticated optimizing models (like linear and dynamic programming) developed by the operations researchers. Other writers used the systems approach in a profit/macro/positive fashion to analyze the complex interactions among marketing institutions. Finally, some used the systems approach in a profit/macro/normative fashion:

The method used in this book is called the general systems approach. In this approach the goals, organization, inputs, and outputs of marketing are examined to determine how efficient and how effective marketing is. Constraints, including competition and government, are also studied because they affect both the level of efficiency and the kinds of effects obtained.²⁹

24. Paul W. Stewart, *Does Distribution Cost Too Much?* (New York: Twentieth Century Fund, 1939).

25. Harold Barger, *Distribution's Place in the Economy Since 1869* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1955); Reavis Cox, *Distribution in a High Level Economy* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1965); and Neil Borden, *The Economic Effects of Advertising* (Chicago: Richard D. Irwin, 1942).

26. Virgil Reed, *Planned Marketing* (New York: Ronald Press, 1930); and P. White and W. S. Hayward, *Marketing Practice* (New York: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1924).

27. Same reference as footnote 21.

28. William Lazer and Eugene Kelley, "Systems Perspective of Marketing Activity," in *Managerial Marketing: Perspectives and Viewpoints*, rev. ed. (Homewood, Ill.: Richard D. Irwin, 1962); Lee Adler, "Systems Approach to Marketing," *Harvard Business Review*, Vol. 45 (May-June, 1967); and George Fisk, *Marketing Systems: An Introductory Analysis* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967).

29. Fisk, same reference as footnote 28, p. 3.

During the late 1960s, the environmental approach to marketing was promulgated by writers such as Holloway, Hancock, Scott, and Marks.³⁰ This approach emphasized an essentially descriptive analysis of the environmental constraints on marketing activities. These environments included consumer behavior, culture, competition, the legal framework, technology, and the institutional framework. Consequently, this approach may be classified as profit/macro/positive.

Two trends are evident in contemporary marketing thought. The first is the trend toward social marketing as proposed by Kotler, Levy, and Zaltman³¹ and as promulgated by others.³² Social marketing, with its emphasis on the marketing problems of nonprofit organizations, is nonprofit/micro/normative. The second trend can be termed societal issues. It concerns such diverse topics as consumerism, marketing and ecology, the desirability of political advertising, social responsibility, and whether the demand for public goods should be stimulated.³³ All these works share the common element of evaluation. They attempt to evaluate the desirability or propriety of certain marketing activities or systems and, therefore, should be viewed as either profit/macro/normative or nonprofit/macro/normative.

In conclusion, it is possible to classify all the approaches to the study of marketing and all the problems, issues, theories, models, and research usually considered within the scope of marketing using the three categorical dichotomies of profit

30. Robert J. Holloway and Robert S. Hancock, *The Environment of Marketing Behavior* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1964); Robert J. Holloway and Robert S. Hancock, *Marketing in a Changing Environment* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1968); and Richard A. Scott and Norton E. Marks, *Marketing and Its Environment* (Belmont: Wadsworth, 1968).

31. Kotler and Levy, same reference as footnote 6; Kotler and Zaltman, same reference as footnote 12; and Kotler, same reference as footnote 15.

32. Mindak and Bybee, same reference as footnote 13; Farley and Leavitt, same reference as footnote 13; Zikmund and Stanton, same reference as footnote 13; Carman, same reference as footnote 17; and Donald P. Robin, "Success in Social Marketing," *Journal of Business Research*, Vol. 3 (July 1974), pp. 303-310.

33. Lazer, same reference as footnote 7; Dawson, same reference as footnote 14; David S. Aaker and George Day, *Consumerism* (New York: Free Press, 1971); Norman Kangun, *Society and Marketing* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972); Frederick E. Webster, Jr., *Social Aspects of Marketing* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1974); Reed Moyer, *Macro-Marketing* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1972); John R. Wish and Stephen H. Gamble, *Marketing and Social Issues* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1971); Ross L. Goble and Roy Shaw, *Controversy and Dialogue in Marketing* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1975); Ronald R. Gist, *Marketing and Society* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1971); and William Lazer and Eugene Kelley, *Social Marketing* (Homewood, Ill.: Richard D. Irwin, 1973).

sector/nonprofit sector, positive/normative, and micro/macro. This is not meant to imply that reasonable people cannot disagree as to which topics should fall within the scope of marketing. Nor does it even imply that reasonable people cannot disagree as to which cell in Table 1 is most appropriate for each issue or particular piece of research. For example, a study of the efficiency of marketing systems may have *both* positive and normative aspects; it may both *describe* existing marketing practices and *prescribe* more appropriate practices. Rather, the conceptual model of the scope of marketing presented in Table 1 provides a useful framework for analyzing fundamental differences among the various approaches to marketing and, as shall be demonstrated, the nature of marketing and marketing science controversies.

Analyzing the Nature of Marketing and Marketing Science

The previous discussion on the scope of marketing now enables us to clarify some of the issues with respect to the "nature [broadening the concept] of marketing" controversy and the "Is marketing a science?" debate. Most marketing practitioners and some marketing academicians perceive the entire scope of marketing to be profit/micro/normative (cell 2 of Table 1). That is, practitioners often perceive the entire domain of marketing to be the analysis of how to improve the decision-making processes of marketers. This perspective is exemplified by the definition of marketing Canton has suggested³⁴ and, somewhat surprisingly, by the definition proffered by Kotler in the first edition of *Marketing Management*: "Marketing is the analyzing, organizing, planning, and controlling of the firm's customer-impinging resources, policies, and activities with a view to satisfying the needs and wants of chosen customer groups at a profit."³⁵

Most marketing academicians would chafe at delimiting the entire subject matter of marketing to simply the profit/micro/normative dimensions. Most would, at the very least, include all the phenomena, topics, and issues indicated in the top half of Table 1 (that is, cells 1 through 4). Kotler and others now wish to include in the definition of marketing *all* eight cells in Table 1.

Other fields have experienced similar discipline-definitional problems. Several decades

ago, a debate raged in philosophy concerning the definition of philosophy and philosophy of science. Some philosophers chose a very narrow definition of their discipline. Popper's classic rejoinder should serve to alert marketers to the danger that narrowly circumscribing the marketing discipline may trammel marketing inquiry:

... the theory of knowledge was inspired by the hope that it would enable us not only to know more about knowledge, but also to contribute to the advance of knowledge—of scientific knowledge, that is. . . . Most of the philosophers who believe that the characteristic method of philosophy is the analysis of ordinary language seem to have lost this admirable optimism which once inspired the rationalist tradition. Their attitude, it seems, has become one of resignation, if not despair. They not only leave the advancement of knowledge to the scientists: they even define philosophy in such a way that it becomes, by definition, incapable of making any contribution to our knowledge of the world. The self-mutilation which this so surprisingly persuasive definition requires does not appeal to me. There is no such thing as an essence of philosophy, to be distilled and condensed into a definition. *A definition of the word "philosophy" can only have the character of a convention, of an agreement; and I, at any rate, see no merit in the arbitrary proposal to define the word "philosophy" in a way that may well prevent a student of philosophy from trying to contribute, qua philosopher, to the advancement of our knowledge of the world.*³⁶

Four conclusions seem warranted. First, definitions of the nature of marketing differ in large part because their authors perceive the total scope of marketing to be different portions of Table 1. Second, there is a growing consensus that the total scope of marketing should appropriately include all eight cells of Table 1. Third, it may be very difficult to devise a definition of marketing that would both systematically *include* all eight cells of Table 1 and, at the same time, systematically *exclude* all other phenomena. Especially difficult will be the task of including in a single definition both the normative dimensions of the *practice* of marketing and the positive dimensions of the *discipline* or *study* of marketing.

The fourth conclusion deserves special emphasis and elaboration. There is now a consensus among marketers that most nonprofit organizations, such as museums, zoos, and churches, engage in numerous activities (pricing, promoting, and so forth) that are very similar to the marketing activities of their profit-oriented cousins.

34. Irving D. Canton, "A Functional Definition of Marketing," *Marketing News*, July 15, 1973.

35. Philip Kotler, *Marketing Management* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1967), p. 12.

36. Karl R. Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* (New York: Harper & Row, 1959), p. 19. [Emphasis added.]

There is also consensus that the marketing procedures that have been developed for profit-oriented organizations are equally applicable to nonprofit concerns. These are the two major, substantive issues involved in the debate over the nature (broadening the concept) of marketing. On these two issues there now exists substantial agreement.

The remaining two points of *disagreement* among marketers concerning the nature of marketing are minor when compared to the points of agreement. Issue one is essentially whether the activities of nonprofit organizations should be referred to as *marketing* activities or *marketing-like* activities. Given the agreement among marketers concerning the two previously cited substantive issues, the problem of distinguishing between marketing activities and marketing-like activities must be considered trivial to the extreme. The second issue on which disagreement exists concerns developing a definition of marketing. Although certainly nontrivial in nature, on this issue marketers would be well advised to take a cue from the discipline of philosophy, which has been around much longer and has yet to develop a consensus definition. That is, the discipline of marketing should not be overly alarmed about the difficulty of generating a consensus *definition* of marketing as long as there appears to be a developing consensus concerning its total *scope*.

The preceding analysis notwithstanding, there does remain a major, unresolved, substantive issue concerning the nature of marketing. Although *marketers* now recognize that nonprofit organizations (1) have marketing or marketing-like problems, (2) engage in marketing or marketing-like activities to solve these problems, and (3) can use the marketing policies, practices, and procedures that profit-oriented organizations have developed to solve marketing problems, we must candidly admit that most *nonmarketers* have yet to perceive this reality. Sadly, most administrators of nonprofit organizations and many academicians in other areas still do not perceive that many problems of nonprofit organizations are basically marketing in nature, and that there is an extant body of knowledge in marketing academia and a group of trained marketing practitioners that can help resolve these problems. Until administrators of nonprofit organizations perceive that they have marketing problems, their marketing decision making will inevitably suffer. Thus, the major *substantive* problem concerning broadening the concept of marketing lies in the area of *marketing* marketing to nonmarketers.

Is Marketing a Science?

Returning to the "Is marketing a science?" controversy, the preceding analysis suggests that a primary factor explaining the nature of the controversy is the widely disparate notions of marketing held by the participants. The common element shared by those who hold that marketing is not (and cannot) be a science is the belief that the entire conceptual domain of marketing is cell 2: profit/micro/normative. Hutchinson clearly exemplifies this position:

There is a real reason, however, why the field of marketing has been slow to develop an unique body of theory. It is a simple one: marketing is not a science. It is rather an art or a practice, and as such much more closely resembles engineering, medicine and architecture than it does physics, chemistry or biology. The medical profession sets us an excellent example, if we would but follow it; its members are called "practitioners" and not scientists. It is the work of physicians, as it is of any practitioner, to apply the findings of many sciences to the solution of problems. . . . It is the drollest travesty to relate the scientist's search for knowledge to the market research man's seeking after customers.³⁷

If, as Hutchinson implies, the entire conceptual domain of marketing is profit/micro/normative, then marketing is not and (more importantly) probably *cannot* be a science. If, however, the conceptual domain of marketing includes both micro/positive and macro/positive phenomena, then marketing *could* be a science. That is, if phenomena such as consumer behavior, marketing institutions, marketing channels, and the efficiency of systems of distribution are included in the conceptual domain of marketing (and there appears to be a consensus to so include them), there is no reason why the study of these phenomena could not be deserving of the designation *science*.

Is marketing a science? Differing perceptions of the scope of marketing have been shown to be a primary factor underlying the debate on this question. The second factor contributing to the controversy is differing perceptions concerning the basic nature of science, a subject that will now occupy our attention.

The Nature of Science

The question of whether marketing is a science cannot be adequately answered without a clear understanding of the basic nature of science. So,

³⁷ Hutchinson, same reference as footnote 2.

what is a science? Most marketing writers cite the perspective proposed by Buzzell. A science is:

... a classified and systematized body of knowledge, ... organized around one or more central theories and a number of general principles, ... usually expressed in quantitative terms, ... knowledge which permits the prediction and, under some circumstances, the control of future events.³⁸

Buzzell then proceeded to note that marketing lacks the requisite central theories to be termed a science.

Although the Buzzell perspective on science has much to recommend it, the requirement "organized around one or more central theories" seems overly restrictive. This requirement confuses the *successful culmination* of scientific efforts with *science itself*. Was the study of chemistry not a science before discoveries like the periodic table of elements? Analogously, would not a pole vaulter still be a pole vaulter even if he could not vault fifteen feet? As Homans notes, "What makes a science are its aims, not its results."³⁹ The major purpose of science is to discover (create? invent?) laws and theories to explain, predict, understand, and control phenomena. Withholding the label *science* until a discipline has "central theories" would not seem reasonable.

The previous comments notwithstanding, requiring a science to be organized around one or more central theories is not completely without merit. There are strong *honorific* overtones in labeling a discipline a science.⁴⁰ These semantical overtones are so positive that, as Wartofsky has observed, even areas that are nothing more than systematized superstition attempt to usurp the term.⁴¹ Thus, there are treatises on such subjects as the "Science of Numerology" and the "Science of Astrology." In part, the label *science* is conferred upon a discipline to signify that it has "arrived" in the eyes of other scientists, and this confirmation usually occurs only when a discipline has matured to the extent that it contains several "central theories."⁴² Thus, chronologically, physics achieved the status of science before psychology, and psychology before sociology. However, the total conceptual content of the term *science* is decidedly not just honorific. Marketing

does not, and should not, have to wait to be knighted by others to be a science. How, then, do sciences differ from other disciplines, if not by virtue of having central theories?

Consider the discipline of chemistry—unquestionably a science. Chemistry can be defined as "the science of substances—their structure, their properties, and the reactions that change them into other substances."⁴³ Using chemistry as an illustration, three observations will enable us to clarify the distinguishing characteristics of sciences. First, a science must have a distinct subject matter, a set of real-world phenomena that serve as a focal point for investigation. The subject matter of chemistry is *substances*, and chemistry attempts to understand, explain, predict, and control phenomena related to substances. Other disciplines, such as physics, are also interested in substances. However, chemistry can meaningfully lay claim to being a separate science because physics does not *focus on* substances and their reactions.

What is the basic subject matter of marketing? Most marketers now perceive the ultimate subject matter to be the *transaction*. Some subscribe to the *narrower thesis of marketing* and wish to delimit the basic subject matter to the *market transaction*. Others propose the *liberalized thesis of marketing* and wish to include within the subject matter of marketing all transactions that involve any form of *exchange of values* between parties.

Harking back to the chemistry analogue, marketing can be viewed as the *science of transactions*—their structure, their properties, and their relationships with other phenomena. Given this perspective, the subject matter of marketing would certainly overlap with other disciplines, notably economics, psychology, and sociology. The analysis of transactions is considered in each of these disciplines. Yet, only in marketing is the transaction the focal point. For example, transactions remain a tangential issue in economics, where the primary focus is on the allocation of scarce resources.⁴⁴ Therefore, the first distinguishing characteristic is that any science must have a distinct subject matter. Given that the *transaction* is the basic subject matter of marketing, marketing would seem to fulfill this requirement. Note that this conclusion is *independent* of whether one subscribes to the narrower or more liberal thesis of marketing.

38. Buzzell, same reference as footnote 2, p. 37.

39. George C. Homans, *The Nature of Social Science* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1967), p. 4.

40. Ernest Nagel, *The Structure of Science* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1961), p. 2.

41. Marx W. Wartofsky, *Conceptual Foundations of Scientific Thought* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1968), p. 44.

42. Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), p. 161.

43. Linus Pauling, *College Chemistry* (San Francisco: W. H. Freeman & Co., 1956), p. 15.

44. Richard H. Leftwich, *The Price System and Resource Allocation* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1966), p. 2.

A distinct subject matter alone is not sufficient to distinguish sciences from other disciplines, because all disciplines have a subject matter (some less distinct than others). The previously cited perspective of chemistry provides a second insight into the basic nature of science. Note the phrase, "their structure, their properties, and their reactions." Every science seeks to describe and classify the structure and properties of its basic subject matter. Likewise, the term *reactions* suggests that the phenomena comprising the basic subject matter of chemistry are presumed to be systematically interrelated. Thus, another distinguishing characteristic: *Every science presupposes the existence of underlying uniformities or regularities among the phenomena that comprise its subject matter. The discovery of these underlying uniformities yields empirical regularities, lawlike generalizations (propositions), and laws.*

Underlying uniformities and regularities are necessary for science because (1) a primary goal of science is to provide responsibly supported explanations of phenomena,⁴⁵ and (2) the scientific explanation of phenomena requires the existence of laws or lawlike generalizations.⁴⁶ Uniformities and regularities are also a requisite for theory development since theories are systematically related sets of statements, *including some lawlike generalizations*, that are empirically testable.⁴⁷

The basic question for marketing is not whether there presently exist several "central theories" that serve to unify, explain, and predict marketing phenomena, as Buzzell suggests. Rather, the following should be asked: "Are there underlying uniformities and regularities among the phenomena comprising the subject matter of marketing?" This question can be answered affirmatively on two grounds—one *a priori* and one empirical. Marketing is a discipline that investigates human behavior. Since numerous uniformities and regularities have been observed in other behavioral sciences,⁴⁸ there is no *a priori* reason for believing that the subject matter of marketing will be devoid of uniformities and regularities. The second ground for believing that the uniformities exist is empirical. The quantity of scholarly research conducted on marketing

phenomena during the past three decades probably exceeds the total of *all* prior research in marketing. Substantial research has been conducted in the area of channels of distribution. Also, efforts in the consumer behavior dimension of marketing have been particularly prolific. Granted, some of the research has been less than profound, and the total achievements may not be commensurate with the efforts expended. Nevertheless, who can deny that *some* progress has been made or that *some* uniformities have been identified? In short, who can deny that there exist uniformities and regularities interrelating the subject matter of marketing? I, for one, cannot.

The task of delineating the basic nature of science is not yet complete. Up to this point we have used chemistry to illustrate that all sciences involve (1) a distinct subject matter and the description and classification of that subject matter, and (2) the presumption that underlying the subject matter are uniformities and regularities that science seeks to discover. The chemistry example provides a final observation. Note that "chemistry is the *science of* . . ." This suggests that sciences can be differentiated from other disciplines by the method of analysis. At the risk of being somewhat tautologous: sciences employ a set of procedures commonly referred to as the scientific method. As Bunge suggests, "No scientific method, no science."⁴⁹ The historical significance of the development and acceptance of the method of science cannot be overstated. It has been called "the most significant intellectual contribution of Western civilization."⁵⁰ Is the method of science applicable to marketing?

Detailed explication of the scientific method is beyond the scope of this article and is discussed elsewhere.⁵¹ Nevertheless, the cornerstone requirement of the method of science must be mentioned. The word *science* has its origins in the Latin verb *scire*, meaning "to know." Now, there are many ways to *know* things. The methods of tenacity, authority, faith, intuition, and science are often cited.⁵² The characteristic that separates scientific knowledge from other ways to "know" things is the notion of *intersubjective certification*.

45. Same reference as footnote 40, p. 15.

46. Carl G. Hempel, *Aspects of Scientific Explanation* (New York: Free Press, 1965), pp. 354-364.

47. Richard S. Rudner, *The Philosophy of Social Science* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1966), p. 10; and Shelby D. Hunt, "The Morphology of Theory and the General Theory of Marketing," *JOURNAL OF MARKETING*, Vol. 35 (April 1971), pp. 65-68.

48. Bernard Berelson and Gary Steiner, *Human Behavior: An Inventory of Scientific Findings* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1964).

49. Mario Bunge, *Scientific Research I: The Search for System* (New York: Springer-Verlag, 1967), p. 12.

50. Charles W. Morris, "Scientific Empiricism," in *Foundations of the Unity of Science*, Vol. 1, Otto Neurath, Rudolf Carnap and Charles Morris, eds. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955), p. 63.

51. Shelby D. Hunt, *Marketing Theory: Conceptual Foundation of Research in Marketing* (Columbus, Ohio: Grid Publishing Co., 1976).

52. Morris R. Cohen and Ernest Nagel, *Logic and the Scientific Method* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1934), p. 193.

Scientific knowledge, in which theories, laws, and explanations are primal, must be *objective* in the sense that its truth content must be *intersubjectively certifiable*.⁵³ Requiring that theories, laws, and explanations be empirically testable ensures that they will be intersubjectively certifiable since different (but reasonably competent) investigators with differing attitudes, opinions, and beliefs will be able to make observations and conduct experiments to ascertain their truth content. "Science strives for objectivity in the sense that its statements are to be capable of public tests with results that do not vary essentially with the tester."⁵⁴ Scientific knowledge thus rests on the bedrock of empirical testability.

There is no reason whatsoever to presume that the scientific method of analysis is any less appropriate to marketing phenomena than to other disciplines. Similarly, scholarly researchers in marketing, although sometimes holding rather distorted notions concerning such topics as the role of laws and theories in research, seem to be at least as technically proficient as researchers in other areas. Finally, although some marketing researchers continue to cite "proprietary studies" as evidentiary support for their positions, the extent of this practice is now extremely small.

In summary, sciences (1) have a distinct subject matter drawn from the real world which is described and classified, (2) presume underlying uniformities and regularities interrelating the subject matter, and (3) adopt intersubjectively certifiable procedures for studying the subject-matter. This perspective can be appropriately described as a consensus composite of philosophy of science views on science.⁵⁵ For example, Wartofsky suggests that a science is

... an organized or systematic body of knowledge, using general laws or principles; that it is knowledge about the world; and that it is that kind of knowledge concerning which universal agreement can be reached by scientists sharing a common

language (or languages) and common criteria for the justification of knowledge claims and beliefs.⁵⁶

Is Marketing a Science? A Conclusion

The scope of the area called marketing has been shown to be exceptionally broad. Marketing has micro/macro dimensions, profit sector/nonprofit sector dimensions, and positive/normative dimensions. Reasonable people may disagree as to which combination of these dimensions represents the *appropriate* total scope of marketing, although a consensus seems to be developing to include all eight cells in Table 1. If marketing is to be restricted to *only* the profit/micro/normative dimension (as many practitioners would view it), then marketing is not a science and could not become one. All sciences involve the explanation, prediction, and understanding of phenomena.⁵⁷ These explanations and predictions frequently serve as useful guides for developing normative decision rules and normative models. Such rules and models are then *grounded* in science.⁵⁸ Nevertheless, any discipline that is *purely* evaluative or prescriptive (normative) is not a science. At least for marketing academe, restricting the scope of marketing to its profit/micro/normative dimension is unrealistic, unnecessary, and, without question, undesirable.

Once the appropriate scope of marketing has been expanded to include at least some *positive* dimensions (cells 1, 3, 5, and 7 in Table 1), the explanation, prediction, and understanding of these phenomena could be a science. The question then becomes whether the study of the positive dimensions of marketing has the requisite characteristics of a science. Aside from the strictly honorific overtones of *nonmarketers* accepting marketing as a science, the substantive characteristics differentiating sciences from other disciplines have been shown to be (1) a distinct subject matter drawn from the real world and the description and classification of that subject matter, (2) the presumption of underlying uniformities and regularities interrelating the subject matter, and (3) the adoption of the method of science for studying the subject matter.

The *positive* dimensions of marketing have been shown to have a subject matter properly distinct

53. Same reference as footnote 36, p. 44.

54. Carl G. Hempel, "Fundamentals of Concept Formation in Empirical Science," in *Foundations of the Unity of Science*, Vol. 2, Otto Neurath, ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), p. 695.

55. See, for example: Nagel, same reference as footnote 40, p. 4; May Brodbeck, *Readings in the Philosophy of the Social Sciences* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1968), pp. 1-11; Richard B. Braithwaite, *Scientific Explanation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1951), pp. 1-21; B. F. Skinner, *Science and Human Behavior* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1953), pp. 14-22; Rudner, same reference as footnote 47, pp. 7-9; Abraham Kaplan, *The Conduct of Inquiry* (Scranton, Pa.: Chandler Publishing Co., 1964), p. 32; Popper, same reference as footnote 36, pp. 44-48; and Hempel, same reference as footnote 54, p. 672.

56. Same reference as footnote 41, p. 23.

57. Nagel, same reference as footnote 40, p. 15; Henry E. Kyburg, Jr., *Philosophy of Science* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1968), p. 3; Carl G. Hempel, "The Theoretician's Dilemma," in *Aspects of Scientific Explanation* (New York: Free Press, 1965), p. 173; and Nicholas Rescher, *Scientific Explanation* (New York: Free Press, 1970), p. 4.

58. Mario Bunge, *Scientific Research II: The Search for Truth* (New York: Springer-Verlag, 1967), p. 132.

from other sciences. The marketing literature is replete with description and classification. There have been discoveries (however tentative) of uniformities and regularities among marketing phenomena. Finally, although Longman deplors "the rather remarkable lack of scientific method employed by scientists of marketing,"⁵⁹ research-

ers in marketing are at least as committed to the method of science as are researchers in other disciplines. Therefore, the study of the *positive* dimensions of marketing can be appropriately referred to as *marketing science*.

59. Kenneth A. Longman, "The Management Challenge to Marketing Theory," in *New Essays in Marketing Theory*, George Fisk, ed. (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1971), p. 10.

The author wishes to gratefully acknowledge the constructive criticisms of earlier drafts of this article by Professors George W. Brooker and John R. Nevin, both of the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

MARKETING MEMO

America, Free Trade, and the U.N. . . .

The U.N. is an upside-down institution, in which the nations that are dominant in the world—by wealth, power, even population—are a tiny minority, and where the nations that are weak and unimportant are in a position of unassailable superiority. The unreality of the place is summed up in the phenomenon of the Third World, which exists as a political entity only within the context of the U.N. The real world is not a place where militant poor nations bludgeon complaisant wealthy ones into submission. The ultimate danger of the U.N. is that, by the force of its imagery, it will coax the real world into acting out the sordid and destructive fantasy that flourishes on the East River and that has already given the world OPEC, Black September, and Idi Amin, the Ugandan President who is a self-confessed admirer of Hitler for exterminating Jews.

There are many throughout the West, of course, who think the U.N. is no kind of a mistake, who in fact see in it a large hope for a radically different and better future.

Not a few persons in the U.S. State Department advocate this posture. Their attitude can be traced partly to the fact that American diplomats often seem to identify more with the interests of the country to which they're posted than with those of the U.S. Partly they dislike opposing and disputing other diplomats. . . . And Ambassador Robert O. Blake, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for International Organization Affairs, observes: "If ever there was a place without a market system, it's the U.S. That's the imagery of what we have. The reality is that they don't have the socialist system they say they do, and we don't have the capitalist system we project. Americans don't want free markets. They want an assured source of raw materials and will pay an awful lot for it."

— Paul H. Weaver, "Making the U.N. Safe for Democracy," *FORTUNE*, Vol. 92 (November 1975), pp. 114-119, 192-196, at pp. 194 and 196.