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# Macromarketing as a Pillar of Marketing Thought

William L. Wilkie and Elizabeth S. Moore

This article addresses the appropriate centrality of the macromarketing perspective for the larger field of marketing scholarship. Eight topics are explored: (1) the treatment of the societal domain across the “Four Eras” of marketing thought development, (2) the recent trend to research specialization and an ensuing fragmentation of the mainstream of marketing thought, (3) the loss of knowledge and today’s PhD education in marketing, (4) a current concern with the American Marketing Association’s 2004 definition of marketing, (5) the challenge posed by the fact that research on marketing and society is itself fragmented, (6) challenges for research from the Brinberg/McGrath framework, (7) the aggregate marketing system as a potential central organizing concept, and (8) a closing comment on the “pillar” status of macromarketing and the key role played by the *Journal of Macromarketing* in its first twenty-five years.

**Keywords:** macromarketing; marketing history; academic marketing; marketing and society; definition of marketing

We are pleased to have an opportunity to participate in recognizing the Silver Anniversary of the *Journal of Macromarketing* (*JMM*) and to pay our respects to its fundamental role within scholarship in marketing. Our comments here are based on an extended project during the last nine years, in which we have been inquiring into the nature and extent of marketing thought. We have learned a great deal while doing this work: one significant lesson involves the *appropriate centrality* of the macromarketing perspective for the larger field of marketing scholarship.

As macromarketers well know, this point is not appreciated by all sectors of marketing academia today. In this article, we explore eight distinct issues related to this matter. As shown in Table 1, these eight points range from the past to the future, cover deficits as well as contributions, and focus on the academic enterprise, with primary concern on the role for, and treatment of, the societal domain in marketing thought.

**TABLE 1**  
**EIGHT TOPICS RELATED TO MACROMARKETING**  
**AS A PILLAR OF MARKETING THOUGHT**

- I. A Brief Historical Reprise: Treatment of the Societal Domain across the Four Eras of Marketing Thought Development
- II. Era 4: Research Specialization and a Fragmentation of the Mainstream of Marketing Thought
- III. Fragmentation and Loss of Knowledge: Today’s PhD Education in Marketing
- IV. A Current Concern: The American Marketing Association’s New 2004 Definition of Marketing
- V. A Further Challenge: Research on Marketing and Society Is Itself Fragmented
- VI. Challenges for Research on Marketing and Society: Insights from the Brinberg/McGrath Framework
- VII. The “Aggregate Marketing System” as a Central Organizing Concept
- VIII. Closing Comment: The “Pillar” Status of Macromarketing

## I. A Brief Historical Reprise: Treatment of the Societal Domain across the Four Eras of Marketing Thought Development

Our basic perspectives here are captured in a Fall 2003 *Journal of Public Policy & Marketing* article entitled “Scholarly Research in Marketing: Exploring the ‘Four Eras’ of Thought Development” (Wilkie and Moore 2003).<sup>1</sup> In this effort, we examined the evolution of marketing thought and the knowledge infrastructure across the past one hundred years. We organized the timeline into four “eras” to represent fundamentally distinct periods for academic inquiry.<sup>2</sup> With respect to macromarketing considerations, in Eras 1 (1900-1920: “The Founding of the Field”) and 2 (1920-1950: “Formalizing the Field”) we found that writings on marketing and society were quite central to the thinking of the field. Chapters were devoted to macromarketing issues in most textbooks of the time and in many articles in the *Journal of Marketing*, which had begun to publish in 1936. Just after our demarcation line for Era 2, Vaile, Grether, and Cox’s (1952) notable text *Marketing in the American Economy* appeared, having marketing as an intrinsic part of

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the U.S. economic system, with assessment of marketing's performance of its social and economic tasks as an important issue for the authors.<sup>3</sup>

To illustrate the centrality of the "marketing as societal system" concept during these times, consider these quotes from three marketing thinkers who clearly viewed their scholarly and professional roles more broadly than many marketing academics do today:

(1) The accepted system of distribution was built up on the satisfying of staple needs . . . this sort of activity has . . . contributed to the progress of civilization; (2) Society can no more afford an ill-adjusted system of distribution than it can inefficient and wasteful methods of production; and (3) The middleman is a social necessity. (Shaw 1912, 708, 706, and 737)

It is the responsibility of the marketing profession, therefore, to provide a marketing view of competition in order to guide efforts at regulation and to revitalize certain aspects of the science of economics. . . . For surely no one is better qualified to play a leading part in the consideration of measures designed for the regulation of competition. (Alderson 1937, 189, 190)

Marketing is not primarily a means for garnering profits for individuals. It is, in the larger, more vital sense, an economic instrument used to accomplish indispensable social ends. . . . A marketing system designed solely for its social effectiveness would move goods with a minimum of time and effort to deficit points . . . [and] provide a fair compensation, and no more, for the efforts of those engaged in the activity. At the same time it would provide the incentive needed to stimulate constant improvements in its methods. These are the prime requisites of social effectiveness. (Breyer 1934, 192)

Then, about 1950, the world of marketing thought began to undergo a major academic shift in modes of thinking. Spurred by the postwar economic boom and societal and technological developments such as television and computers, Era 3 (1950-1980: "A Paradigm Shift . . .") had begun, now featuring (1) an overt *marketing-as-management* orientation and (2) an overt *reliance on the behavioral and quantitative sciences as means of knowing*. During this time the academic marketing field itself experienced huge growth, driven first by the U.S. baby boom, then by sharp increases in MBA enrollments. However, the proportion of research attention devoted to societal concerns dropped sharply, a decline that has persisted to the present (the decade from the late 1960s to late 1970s stands as exception, with great attention to societal issues at that time). This long-term decline does not, in our opinion, reflect a shift in basic position about societal issues themselves but instead a strong shift in the research priorities of marketing academics today. In effect, however, marketing and society consideration has lost standing within the larger field of marketing thought, and this is perturbing. Our current conceptions of marketing are no longer aggregate in nature—they are very much centered

on individual managers, firms, brands, and individual consumer behaviors.<sup>4</sup> In the following sections we address issues in this regard.

## II. Era 4: Research Specialization and a Fragmentation of the Mainstream of Marketing Thought

In addition to Era 3's shifts toward managerial assistance and scientific methods, the field also experienced a huge expansion in the ranks of marketing faculty members (our chart of PhD degrees in business across time shows a sharp inclination beginning in 1965 and continuing through the decade of the 1970s: we conservatively estimated that if only 10 percent of these new business PhD's were in marketing, this would mean that more than 1,100 new academics entered the marketing field in the United States during this era).

By 1980, three powerful forces were bearing on the academic infrastructure to create Era 4: (1) a growing globalization of business education, bringing new thinkers from around the world into marketing; (2) a substantial increase in persons pursuing "publish or perish" tracks in marketing academia; and (3) pressures for increasingly specialized outlets to reflect the technical languages, methods, and shared paradigms at work at the frontiers of marketing thought. In a sense, these pressures that had been building on the mainstream of marketing thought finally reached a stress level that demanded relief through the academic infrastructure, much as an overfull dam might burst in order that the pent-up waters can find their new courses and destinations.

In examining these developments, we were shocked to find a poignant illustration of infrastructure impacts of which we had previously been unaware (and the *Journal of Macromarketing* plays a part). We discovered that for just a brief period beginning in 1980, a burst of significant new marketing journals began to appear. The new entries, by year, were the following:

- (1980) *Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management*
- (1981) *Journal of Macromarketing*
- (1982) *Journal of Public Policy & Marketing*
- (1982) *Marketing Science*
- (1983) *Journal of Consumer Marketing*
- (1984) *Psychology and Marketing*
- (1984) *Journal of Product Innovation and Management*
- (1984) *International Journal of Research in Marketing*

In just five short years, from 1980 through 1984, the number of research-based marketing journal outlets more than doubled (from seven to fifteen).<sup>5</sup> The academic publication infrastructure that had slowly evolved over the previous forty-five years had now changed pace and direction. Furthermore, these new venues had been independently developed, suggesting the presence of some broader factors at work. For example, most of these new entries were directly aimed at narrower constituencies within the marketing field,

reflecting a decisive arrival of the era of research specialization in marketing (other changes in the academic infrastructure to favor specialization followed, notably the formation of the American Marketing Association's [AMA] "Special Interest Group" structure and a growth in single-topic workshops, symposia, and "research camps" at which specialists gather to pursue advanced developments).

The benefits of research specialization are hard to ignore: it can bring depth, rigor, and cumulative advances on the issues pursued. However, it can also bring about a fragmentation of the research enterprise, which is what we believe has happened within marketing during Era 4. In short, we have seen such a degree of splintering on the research front that the mainstream of marketing has come close to disappearing.

This recognition is not new to macromarketers, of course, who have long recognized that most academics were pursuing something other than this field of study. However, the wider phenomenon of fragmentation is worth considering, because it extends far beyond macromarketing itself. It may be realistic, in fact, to suggest that *virtually every research area* is now a stream running its own course and that there is coming to be no real "mainstream" of academic marketing thought any longer (consider that a recent publication analysis by Baumgartner and Pieters [2003] showed forty-nine marketing-related journals as of 1997).<sup>6</sup> We have come to believe that the apparent isolation of marketing and society research is actually a condition being shared by most other interest areas as well and that this does not indicate any overt, negative evaluation of the area itself. Beyond this observation, however, are some important intellectual implications for marketing scholarship. We raise these in the following three sections.

### III. Fragmentation and Loss of Knowledge: Today's PhD Education in Marketing

One serious danger of fragmentation lies in its subsequent impacts on effort, attention, and transmission of marketing knowledge. Consider two brief quotes:

It is troubling to realize that knowledge does not necessarily accumulate in a field—that knowledge can disappear over time if it is not actually transmitted. (Wilkie 1981, 3)

As research specialization has increased, this risk has increased—knowledge outside a person's specialty may first be viewed as non-instrumental, then as non-essential, then as non-important, and finally as non-existent in terms of meriting attention. (Wilkie 2002, 149)

In our exploration of the four eras, it became clear that many research insights and findings, including those generated by macromarketing's pioneers, did not get passed on but instead were "left behind" as researchers turned attention to new areas of interest. This prompted us to look more closely at whence academic marketing thought leaders of the future will come. How are scholarly training and predispositions

about the field of marketing being shaped? Specifically, for us, are they being educated in the societal domain of marketing issues?

The *Journal of Macromarketing*, because of a kind invitation from its Editor Robert Nason, published a short article reporting our findings from a survey of AMA–Sheth Doctoral Consortium participants (Wilkie and Moore 1997). The results were most interesting. Somewhat surprising to us, these people, near the end of their doctoral training, reported a *high level of personal interest in marketing and society topics: two-thirds of these doctoral candidates indicated that they were personally interested in learning about this area and also that they believed it should be covered in PhD education*. However, fewer than one in ten had ever taken even one course in the subject. They openly reported self-ratings of expertise as low and that regular readership of the marketing and society journals was very low, as was participation in this area's conferences. Finally, most of these respondents answered that they do not see this area as professionally relevant for them, at least at this stage of their careers.

This survey seemed to clarify that the root problem is not with the *people* who are entering study for a career in marketing academia but instead lies with the curricula of PhD programs. Doctoral programs sorely need to reconsider this issue, but this will not happen unless the marketing scholars who control them are willing to acknowledge that knowledge is being lost from this field. Our true concern in this regard is not for the aware scholar who opts to make an informed choice to avoid societal issues but instead is for later generations of scholars (today's and the future's doctoral students) who may not gain enough background to even realize that a choice is available to them.

### IV. A Current Concern: The AMA's New 2004 Definition of Marketing

A serious danger with fragmentation is that new thinkers will enter a field having no conception of certain elements of its history and ambit. This can lead to instability in shared views and perhaps an evolution away from some core concepts and issues, reflecting a loss for scholarship. The 2004 issuance of the AMA's new definition for marketing substantiates our concerns. In brief, the first AMA definition had been developed in 1935 and retained for fifty years until being modified in 1985, and modified again in 2004.<sup>7</sup> The three definitions are the following:

[Marketing is] the performance of business activities that direct the flow of goods and services from producers to consumers. (1935)

[Marketing is] the process of planning and executing the conception, pricing, promotion, and distribution of ideas, goods and services to create exchanges that satisfy individual and organizational objectives. (1985)



Marketing is an organizational function and a set of processes for creating, communicating and delivering value to customers and for managing customer relationships in ways that benefit the organization and its stakeholders. (2004)

Examining the direction of these definitions reveals a distinct narrowing of focus over time. Notice that until 1985 the field's definition was pluralistic, thereby easily translatable to more aggregated issues such as competition, system performance, and contributions to consumer welfare. The 1985 change then firmly turned focus toward the manager's tasks as embodied in the four P's.<sup>8</sup> Overall, these changes made it more difficult to adopt more aggregated perspectives on the field. The new 2004 definition is much in the same spirit, with a singular focus on the individual organization acting alone: "What we [now] have is more strategic. Now it says marketing is really something that makes the organization run" (Head of AMA's Academic Division, in Keefe 2004, 17). To be clear about our position, we quite agree that conceiving of marketing as a strategic and tactical activity undertaken within individual organizations is a most reasonable view for marketing managers to take and for academics to use when appropriate. However, we also see the sole focus on the firm to be *incomplete*, in that some broader questions go unaddressed precisely because the managerial perspective within a firm does not need to consider these questions in order to act in that firm's interest. For example,

1. *Dangers in adopting goals of all organizations engaged in marketing.* In our view, the greatest risk of equating all of marketing solely with how to make managerial decisions inside organizations is that these organizations' goals are being adopted by marketing thinkers without any external appraisal. *This leads to something akin to blanket approval of the reality of all of the marketing world's undertakings.*<sup>9</sup> When identifying ourselves with all goals and actions, whose perceived interests are being served, and does this matter? Brief consideration of egregious examples found in political campaigning, lobbying, fraud, bid rigging, energy gouging, channel stuffing, and so on alerts us that many organizations are highly imperfect entities with mixed motivations. In most firms, moreover, persons other than marketers are setting priorities. Organizational marketing is very important but does not represent all of marketing thought.
2. *Limitations in addressing the competitive nature of our marketing system.* A sole focus on the firm also does not provide constructs with which to assess marketing more broadly. For example, when five or fifteen firms are competing in a market, how do we assess the "marketing" that is occurring on all fronts? It appears that inefficiencies would be natural in such settings but are beyond the managerial purview itself. Extended to public policy, moreover, what does this conception of marketing have to offer to antitrust theory and enforcement? Is this why our field has not made more impact on the antitrust area?
3. *Limitations in addressing the marketing system's interactions with consumers.* One major task confronting every

consumer is allocating his or her budget for purchases. If we ask: "How well do marketers help consumers with their budget and effort allocation decisions?" the answer is: "Very poorly." In the aggregate, all marketers together simply propose too much consumption for any individual to come close to undertaking. The marketing system acts as if consumer resources and wants are infinite and insatiable: every product and service category is advocated as worthy of consumption for virtually everyone. Furthermore, within each category, marketers are offering consumers *highly conflicting advice* as to which alternative to select. To cope, consumers must ignore or resist most marketing programs, responding positively to only a relative few.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, as Redmond (2005) explores in his excellent recent article in the *Journal of Macromarketing*, the marketing system sometimes decreases consumers' quality of life by intruding on their privacy with unwanted promotional solicitations. These characteristics surely make it difficult to equate each marketer's best interest with each consumer's best interest (we stress that these are not criticisms but characteristics of our marketing system that are not enough evident from the managerial perspective on marketing).

4. *Limitations in addressing major societal and public policy issues.* The within-organization focus can clearly hinder the appreciation of larger issues and problems. For example, childhood obesity is a growing problem in our nation: would anyone seriously argue that a single firm focus for marketing is best for addressing this? As another example, direct-to-consumer (DTC) advertising of prescription drugs is actually a public policy experiment in the United States: New Zealand is the only other nation allowing this practice. How helpful have marketing academics been in devising or evaluating this policy?<sup>11</sup> Our point is simple: there are issues in our world that are larger than the problems of a single organization.
5. *Removing research opportunities from many marketing academics who would like to pursue these broader issues.* The results of our consortium survey discussed above confirm that ignoring broader marketing issues exerts a suppressive effect on scholarship in this area.

One responsibility of academia is to place a field of study into proper perspective. The impacts that marketing has on the world are a legitimate concern for scholarship in our field. It is important that the official definition for the field of marketing explicitly include the societal domain. We would (and have) suggested that the present definition be used for "marketing management" and that a more inclusive definition be developed for the field itself. Quite simply, we need a larger conception of marketing.

## V. A Further Challenge: Research on Marketing and Society Is Itself Fragmented

Another contributing factor to the perceived isolation of marketing and society research is that, rather than a single unified presence, there are at least *six subgroups* at work on research dealing with marketing and society issues, most

with their own journals and conferences. Prospects for a unified presence are actually hindered by significant differences in level of analysis, methods, and substantive focus. For example, among the six primary groups we today find persons who wish to focus on social change and help those managing these efforts (*social marketing*), while others wish to focus on helping corporate marketers make more ethical decisions (*marketing ethics*). Another set of researchers focuses either on helping government decision makers and marketers devise more efficient and effective regulatory policies or legislation, or on broader issues involving the roles for government, marketers, and the legal system (*public policy and marketing*). Furthermore, some persons are approaching problems within different cultural and political contexts (*international consumer policy*) and some with different aims and methods (*consumer interest economists*). Finally, there is *macromarketing*, which we characterize as dealing with the aggregate marketing system and its impacts on economic development, quality of life, and other related issues.

It is the case that during the 1990s, efforts were undertaken to integrate these groups into a larger area of focus, and more than two hundred marketing academics joined the Marketing and Society Special Interest Group (SIG) of the AMA. However, true integration did not really occur for at least half of the groups listed, and each of the previously specialized conferences and journals continues to operate today. Nevertheless, while not a cohesive entity, the fact that these various vehicles exist does present a significant set of outlets for scholars seeking to publish their societal domain research. Furthermore, for publication purposes, these specialized journals have been receptive to a variety of topics and approaches, while the *Journal of Marketing* has also generally been willing to publish work on marketing and society.

So in some senses, the picture is vibrant and welcoming for researchers wishing to work in this area. On the other hand, the area remains oddly splintered. If the fragmentation of the area is seen to be a serious problem (to be clear, we are not sure that it is), leaders in the area might want to further consider options for coalescing. Of the six subgroups, it seems (to us, at least) that macromarketing is at once the broadest in its innate characterization and also perhaps the most diffuse in focus. One possible option, therefore, might be for the leaders of this group to consider having the *Journal of Macromarketing* become the overt "mainstream" journal for the marketing and society academic area, serving to bring the various groups together.

## VI. Challenges for Research: Insights from the Brinberg/McGrath Framework

Underpinning issues of recognition of the importance of societal research is the fact that there are some essential research impediments also likely at work as well. These

challenges have been nicely captured in the research validity framework proposed by Brinberg and McGrath (1985; see also Brinberg and Hirschman 1986). This framework proposes that there are three domains inherent in any research study: the *theoretical domain* of conceptual causes and relationships; the *methodological domain* of rigorous approaches to empirical investigation, including research design, data generation, and analysis and inference; and the *substantive domain* of real-world phenomena and problems. The essence of the framework lies in its depiction of how the research process is governed by the priorities of the researcher. If we picture a triangle with each domain located at one of the three intersections, the framework asserts that a researcher must begin any particular study at only one of these points—and that this point will reflect that domain of his or her top priority for the study (i.e., that it be realistic, that it be theoretically clean, or that it reflect a rigorous use or refinement of a particular method). To further develop the research plan, the researcher then moves along one of the legs toward the domain of next highest priority concern for the research effort. Then, only after reaching many decisions and reconciliations on these two domains, can the researcher begin to consider issues of the third domain (by moving from the midpoint of the leg across the triangle to the third domain). *By this point, prospects for a strong representation from the third domain in the study are bleak, as its essential demands will have been sacrificed in order to achieve the demands of the first and second domains.*

Having experienced this very problem in some of our own work and observed it in reading and reviewing many other marketing studies, by now we are convinced that this is an excellent representation of the nature of the empirical research process and the associated difficulties that arise in it. The dominance of the quantitative and behavioral sciences that began in Era 3 has led to an academic research world in which limited and limiting theoretical and methodological domains are given priority (consider especially the article requirements for the *Journal of Marketing Research*, the *Journal of Consumer Research*, and *Marketing Science*), with the substantive domain typically arriving in third position, not to be well studied or represented.

It appears to us that the primary difficulty confronting the study of marketing and society is that theories seem to be inherently confounded in the complex real world. Thus, if we start our research process with the substantive domain, we will likely not find a clean mapping onto a single theory. Conversely, if we start with a single theory, we are likely to oversimplify the realities of the societal domain. Two lessons emerge from this analysis. First, it seems to us that much of the work in marketing and society *must* examine and reflect the substantive domain strongly. However, this virtually guarantees that either theory or methodology, whichever comes third in domain priority, will be weaker in these studies. Thus, it is a fair speculation that much research in marketing and society, while likely strong on

substance, is likely either weak in theory or weak in method. As just pointed out, this state of affairs is not looked on with favor by the marketing academic community running the premier journals, which is likely to label such undertakings as “not rigorous.”<sup>12</sup> Given the fundamental (and largely unrecognized) nature of this reaction, we have thus come to believe that part of the isolation of much societal research is actually not due to an antipathy toward the societal domain itself but instead springs from a learned antipathy toward less strong representations of either theory or method (in the Brinberg/McGrath framework sense).

What can be done about this real difficulty? Ideally, all three domains should be strongly represented in an empirical undertaking, but this is not possible according to Brinberg and McGrath. Thus, it seems that the only alternative is for programmatic research that, over time, ensures that different domains receive priority, thus repairing weaknesses from earlier efforts while adding to the accumulation of knowledge on the topic. The downside, of course, is that this approach requires more time (and research support) than many marketing academics may wish to invest.

### VII. The “Aggregate Marketing System” as a Central Organizing Concept

We include this section to raise the possibility that the concept of the “Aggregate Marketing System” might have potential to serve as a central organizing function for scholars of macromarketing who are interested in allied topics. Since we have not historically been identified as macromarketing academics, this may require a bit of explanation. We will therefore briefly describe the background, then the concept itself.

It is interesting for us now to recognize that we have always been interested in macromarketing phenomena, but because of our strong affiliations in consumer behavior and in public policy (as well as a minor inconvenience in the timing of the annual macromarketing meetings), we had simply not been participating in formal macromarketing activities. However, in the mid-1990s, we decided to team up to pursue some serious scholarship on important questions on the role of marketing in society. As we were evaluating options, the *Journal of Marketing* announced plans for a special millennium issue, to be sponsored by the Marketing Science Institute, published as a special fifth issue in late 1999, edited by George Day and David Montgomery, and for the consideration of only a few fundamental issues for marketing thinking, one of which was “what marketing contributes to the firm and to society,” which obviously represented a huge undertaking that should not be taken lightly. Fortunately, the special issue’s plan called for a proposal competition, followed by several review stages promised to be constructive in character. Our proposal was accepted, and we plunged into about two years of work. The article appeared in the *Journal of Marketing*’s special millennium

issue, under the title, “Marketing’s Contributions to Society” (Wilkie and Moore 1999).<sup>13</sup>

As readers here can imagine, one significant conceptual hurdle we faced involved how best to represent and think about “society.” As an aside, we found that the library at the University of Illinois possesses a wonderful collection of early marketing thought (befitting its central role in helping the academic field to develop), and we read widely and deeply in our quest. In the end, similarly to the ethos shared by the scholars who spawned the *Journal of Macromarketing*,<sup>14</sup> we resolved our attention to “society” by building on the systems concepts in the writings of the earlier eras and proposing a conception of an “aggregate marketing system.” We see the aggregate marketing system (AGMS) as a huge, powerful, yet intricate complex operating to serve the needs of its host society.<sup>15</sup> It differs for each society, in that it is an adaptive human and technological institution reflecting the idiosyncracies of the people and their culture, geography, sociopolitical decisions, and economic opportunities and constraints. Three primary sets of actors within the system are seen to be the following: (1) marketers; (2) consumers; and (3) governments, whose public policy decisions are meant to facilitate the maximal operations of the AGMS for the benefit of the host society.<sup>16</sup>

The “Marketing’s Contributions” article then explored the AGMS of the United States. Early in the process we realized that much of the marketing system operates “behind the scenes,” known only to those persons involved in pieces of the operation itself. This makes it challenging for outside observers to fully appreciate the scope and nuances of marketing (a useful reminder to us academics as well).<sup>17</sup> Three insights we also gained were that marketing’s contributions (1) accumulate over time, (2) diffuse through a society, and (3) occur within the context of everyday life, which makes them difficult to distinguish at any given point in time. We thus extended the time dimension and took a one hundred-year glimpse at what the U.S. AGMS is delivering to daily life (i.e., today versus one hundred years ago). In the text below, we share a little of what we found (Wilkie and Moore 1999):

At the turn of the century in 1900 (when the academic field of marketing was beginning to form), few homes had running water, so the average housewife had to carry 9000 gallons per year from the well source outside. Only 3% of homes had electricity: this meant reading with no electric lighting, and keeping house with no labor-saving household appliances, and of course no radio or television. Food purchasing and preparation took 42 hours per week, versus less than 10 hours today. Home heating was often limited to only the kitchen, versus central heating today, and of course there was no home air conditioning. Virtually no one had a gas powered vehicle: there are some 200,000,000 motor vehicles registered in the U.S. today, all having been delivered through the AGMS. Infant mortality was common at the time, about one in every ten births, and life expectancy in



1900 was only 47 years. Today's health and well-being has improved dramatically, with infant mortality much less than 1% and life expectancy at almost 80 years. Similar findings exist on many other fronts as well: it is clear that the U.S. Aggregate Marketing System has delivered a substantially better standard of living to its society across time. (P. 199)

But aren't we giving marketing too much credit for these advances—it is not responsible for discoveries, inventions, or production outputs. Our point is that today's marketing academics are not conceiving of marketing as a system in our world: if they were to do so, it would be easy to see that the AGMS is, in tandem with other systems such as R&D, finance, and production, clearly engaged in delivering a standard of living to society while supporting innovations to raise these standards in the future.

The article then began to examine marketing as a system by beginning with individual firms' activities. We started by learning directly from marketers about many details of their processes and illustrated this in the article with a vignette we called "Breakfast at Tiffany's."<sup>18</sup> Here we invited readers to join Tiffany Jones in having breakfast with her family in New York. Imagine Tiffany sitting in her apartment, picking up her cup of coffee, blowing across the top. . . . How did this cup of coffee get here?

In the article we traced the process, discussing the planting of coffee, where and why it is planted, how it is sold, harvested, graded, processed, bagged, warehoused, transported to the United States by sea, mixed, roasted, packaged, then shipped through the channels of distribution to retail, where Tiffany has purchased it. The article then moves to her breakfast pastry and repeats the system analysis, although this one is much more complex because there is new product development involved, plus fifteen ingredient sourcing systems similar to that for coffee. We then pointed to the variety of foods being consumed by all family members, plus a kitchen support system (appliances, cutlery, utilities,) also provided by the AGMS at prior points, and still delivering use benefits.

During this illustration we note the structured, practiced activities already acting as an infrastructure. This is a marketing system at work, with buying and selling occurring at all stages, and with temporal dimensions, planning, employment, investment, movement, production, risk taking, financing, and so on all taking place with the expectation of transactional exchanges occurring to fuel the system's continuing operation.

The article then points out that the AGMS is routinely providing these kinds of breakfasts for a hundred million households every day, and that *this is just a minuscule portion of its total activity*. It is very clear that the AGMS is huge, practiced, and powerful. The discussion then aggregates separate company systems into competitive markets, then again to industry levels, and so on up to the whole of the system. The article presents statistical estimates of sizes

and arrives at some thirty million Americans—about one in five workers—as being directly employed in the marketing operations of the U.S. AGMS. Note that this raises some very interesting challenges for us in conceptualizing the field of marketing.

This finding of the huge number of persons engaged in the U.S. AGMS also relates to our earlier discussion of limitations in the AMA's new definition for marketing (fourth section of this article, "A Current Concern"). In exploring the single-firm systems for coffee and breakfast rolls, we identified each marketing system activity represented in the two illustrations. Somewhat surprisingly, *there were seventy-five marketing-related activities embodied in those two little examples*. We assigned a score for each, asking whether a marketing manager in a firm would be (1) primarily responsible, (2) have an influence, or (3) not have any influence on that marketing system activity. Results were instructive: of the seventy-five marketing system activities, we observed that marketing managers control only about thirty, or less than half. They do have influence on most of the others (consumer usage and some aspects governmental operations were viewed as uncontrollable), but they are not in control, and this is not what we are calling "marketing" today. *Our personal lesson from this was that a system perspective on marketing reaches far beyond the controllable decision of someone called a marketing manager*. It requires an inclusive appreciation of business organizations and processes, plus attention to the roles that consumers play, plus an appreciation of roles that governments play in facilitating development of the system's infrastructure and operations. *In brief, it calls for a larger conception of marketing*.

Thus consideration of the AGMS can open a number of vistas for investigation, particularly by fostering recognition of natural relationships within the complexity of a society and its development.<sup>19</sup> This is very much in the spirit of macromarketing perspectives. It may be that macromarketing scholars could revisit the AGMS concept to further their own research undertakings given the right conditions.

### VIII. Closing Comment: The "Pillar" Status of Macromarketing

The *Journal of Macromarketing's* Silver Anniversary is appearing at a propitious time for marketing academia, as there seems to be a spreading concern with current paths and performance. Just recently, for example, we have witnessed the publication of two books, two sets of essays in leading journals, and a redirecting initiative in a major academic association. *Does Marketing Need Reform?* (Sheth and Sisodia 2006) and *Toward a Service-Dominated Logic of Marketing: Dialog, Debate and Directions* (Lusch and Vargo 2006) are books featuring numerous essays by marketing thought leaders addressing issues of the essence and direction of the field. The Spring 2005 special issue of the *Journal of Public Policy & Marketing* contained a section of



twelve essays on the state of the field today entitled “*The Sages Speak . . .*,” while the October 2005 issue of the *Journal of Marketing* provided eleven further essays by thought leaders in a section entitled “*Marketing Renaissance: Opportunities and Imperatives for Improving Marketing Thought, Practice, and Infrastructure*.” And the Association for Consumer Research has just announced its “Transformative Consumer Research” initiative, intended to redirect research activity toward improving consumers’ lives (these are just examples that come to mind: there may be others as well). Apropos of our earlier discussion in the second (Era 4) and third (“Fragmentation and Loss of Knowledge”) sections of this article, it appears that many thought leaders are concerned that fragmentation has now gone too far—that central tenets of the marketing field are being lost.

It is in this regard that we provided a somewhat detailed description of our own process for the “Marketing’s Contributions to Society” paper in the previous section, as it was here that we came to a clear realization that macromarketers have been pursuing a fundamental path for the field of marketing all along. Macromarketing is not, and should never be considered to be, a “sideline” or “specialty area.” Through our own work we came to view macromarketing, in symbolic terms, as one of the pillars for marketing thought development. Why is this so? *Macromarketing is involved in comprehending, explaining, and predicting the effects that the marketing system can have, and is having, on our world.* This should certainly be a central concern for marketing scholarship. It is notable that the *Journal of Macromarketing* has kept this focus alive while most other academics and journals were turning away, and today it continues to offer a supportive venue for knowledge development in this domain. In closing, we would like to offer our congratulations to those scholars who first conceived of, then developed, and who are now nurturing the *Journal of Macromarketing* as it moves toward the globalizing future.

NOTES

1. This article can be directly downloaded from <http://web2.business.nd.edu/Faculty/wilkie.html>.
2. As a personal aside, while we were in the midst of preparing the 4 Eras article, we heard that Stanley Hollander and colleagues had presented a blistering attack on periodicity approaches at a summer macromarketing meeting (this article has much later appeared in a recent issue of the *Journal of Macromarketing* (Hollander et al. 2005). This concerned us very much, and we made efforts to obtain a draft but were not successful. We decided to proceed with our “4 Eras” system, but to check with Professor Hollander before submitting it anywhere. When the draft of our article was complete, we sent it to him requesting a reaction (with considerable trepidation). However, we were pleased to receive a long and warm letter in which Stan reminisced and expanded on various elements of our coverage that were incomplete. It was clear that he approved of what we were doing (and we breathed a long sigh of relief that periodicity didn’t come up!).
3. In his letter, Professor Hollander related that he had been a research assistant for that book while a doctoral student at Wharton, and that, although a significant academic success, the book was intended to be a college textbook and was not a success in this role.
4. In a recent *Journal of Macromarketing* editorial on natural and human-induced disasters, Clifford Shultz (2005) proposed that the marketing academy should redirect itself “into the mainstream of humanity.”

5. Of course, there are many types of publication outlets, so definition may be an issue for this calculation. To be clear, the seven existing marketing-related journals we used in this assumption were the *Journal of Marketing*, the *Journal of Marketing Research*, the *Journal of Consumer Research*, the *Journal of Advertising Research*, the *Journal of Retailing*, the *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, and the *Journal of Consumer Affairs*. Generalized publications such as *Harvard Business Review* and *Management Science* were not included here.
6. There are scientifically based research conventions, of course, giving the appearance of a mainstream. However, notice that today’s prestigious centers for academic thought are organized around quantitative methods (Institute for Operations Research and the Management Sciences [INFORMS]) and behavioral studies (Association for Consumer Research [ACR]). Neither is intrinsically about marketing. The American Marketing Association’s conferences, which are about marketing, are now not considered as important thought development centers.
7. An informative *Marketing News* article (Keefe 2004) assists in pursuing this topic.
8. Interestingly, by focusing on the concept of mutually satisfactory exchanges, it also implicitly defined marketing to be in the best interests of consumers.
9. In an interesting recent paper on the direction of the marketing field, Berry and Mirabito (2006) suggest that marketing’s true mission is to improve people’s quality of life and that fulfillment of this mission strengthens a firm’s financial performance.
10. See Wilkie (1994, chap. 2), for extended discussion.
11. See Farris and Wilkie (2005) for an initiative in this area.
12. Alternatively, those whose priorities are strong for the substantive domain of marketing (and/or society) are quite familiar with the reaction that much research appearing in the top journals is “irrelevant,” “unrealistic,” or “overly simplistic.”
13. Interested readers may download a copy directly from <http://web2.business.nd.edu/Faculty/wilkie.html>.
14. It is also worthwhile to note that some of the cornerstone articles of the *Journal of Macromarketing* (e.g., Fisk 1981; Hunt 1981; Layton 1989; Meade and Nason 1991) have pursued and developed a systems orientation, building on the work of Alderson and other scholars of earlier generations.
15. Although it may appear, we did not find this concept in any earlier work. However, it clearly builds on both aggregate perspectives and system perspectives that were much studied. Our contribution is to attempt to aggregate all of a society’s marketing system activity, including consumption, together in a single sprawling system.
16. As pointed out by Vaile, Grether, and Cox (1952), marketing systems perform two distinct tasks for their societies: (1) delivering the standard of living for the citizens and (2) creating a marketplace dynamism to foster continual innovation to enhance the society’s standard of living over time.
17. Studies have shown that the less familiar a person is with the marketing field, the more likely to equate marketing with advertising or selling, the most visible portions of marketing to laypersons. As a person learns more, the view deepens, and he or she begins to appreciate the richness of the field (Kasper 1993).
18. This illustration was inspired by the work in Vaile, Grether, and Cox (1952).
19. Interested readers may wish to consult the Spring 2005 special issue of the *Journal of Public Policy & Marketing* for several articles that use the aggregate marketing system as a background framework.

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