

Article

# The Influence of Marketing Scholarship's Legacy on Nonprofit Marketing

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**Abstract:** This inquiry contributes to the literature on the development of “nonprofit marketing thought” by describing how the field’s early period established a legacy effect on nonprofit marketing scholarship to the present day. This qualitative work uses a wide variety of sources from a protracted historical period in order to more fully inform a perspective on the relevant issues that have influenced the development of nonprofit marketing scholarship. The investigation suggests that, although the debate on whether or not marketing is a science was nominally resolved years ago, the origins of marketing scholarships as an applied business discipline remain influential. The effects on this influence is a body of research that is fragmented, conflicted, sometimes invalid, and has produced few general theories indicative of a social science. Recommendations are offered for improving the quality of nonprofit marketing scholarship.

**Keywords:** marketing history; marketing theory; nonprofit marketing; nonprofit marketing scholarship; nonprofit marketing research

**JEL Code:** M39; L39

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## 1. Introduction

The central thesis of this paper is that the need for more and better quality research in the area of nonprofit marketing is partly the consequence of historically poor quality marketing scholarship. It is also the consequence of a lack of acceptance of nontraditional topics by the marketing scholarly community, especially those in gatekeeping roles (such as journal editors, conference organizers, and so forth).

Whereas there are nonprofit marketing topics that are unique to these types of organizations; like donor behavior, volunteer behavior, or advocacy marketing; many core marketing concepts that should transcend contexts (marketing concept, marketing orientation, branding) have been poorly conceptualized and invalidly scaled. Poor scholarly work on core marketing concepts has influenced the quality of work in the nonprofit marketing field.

This article begins by describing the historical development of marketing scholarship and its influence on contemporary marketing research. Then the nature of bias created by early problematic marketing research will be discussed in more detail. The eventual broadening of marketing as an enabler for more nontraditional marketing scholarship will be presented as an important development, although one negatively affected by prior marketing scholarship. Finally, suggested reforms are offered to not only improve the quality of nonprofit marketing, but improve the quality of marketing research generally.

It is acknowledged that the issues discussed in this article may also be pertinent to other management fields that also research the nonprofit sector; the scope of this article is limited to the marketing discipline. This is the topic of the special issue on nonprofit marketing of this journal and, therefore, it is appropriate to limit the discussion to nonprofit marketing.

### *Current Problems Nonprofit Marketing Faces*

Nonprofit marketing is fragmented. Prior research is fragmented. Constructs with the same name are defined differently. There may be multiple scales for the same nominal construct. Constructs and scales are often contextually relevant for a specific research context. Findings in prior research are often inconsistent or contradictory.

Like other subfields of marketing, nonprofit marketing research is often applied research, design to address a contemporary or specific managerial issue. While this may seem practical, the result is that basic research in nonprofit marketing is lacking. There are limited advances in our general knowledge or theory construction. The emphasis on applied rather than basic research exacerbates the fragmentation in the field.

Nonprofit marketing research often fails to address or correct biased or invalid work in the prior literature. Instead of identifying problems and correcting them, researchers tend to either uncritically use prior work or use it with minor adjustments to their situational contexts.

Finally, nonprofit research is often weakened by weak social scientific methods. Focal constructs may be poorly defined or not defined. Nomological networks of focal constructs are often not described and their relationships explained. Poor analytical methods are often used.

Fortunately, these problems are correctable. Recommendations will be presented later in this article. However, it is now appropriate to present a historical account of marketing scholarship so that the genesis of these problems can be better understood. Without understanding how these problems were created, solving them is unlikely.

## **2. Marketing Scholarship's Earliest Context**

In the early part of the twentieth century, marketing was understood to be applicable to helping businesses to improve their competitiveness and profitability [1]. Marketing's purpose was to increase

sales [2]. Marketing activities helped businesses sell more of their products to their customers and they helped insulate businesses from competitive pressures [3].

In Bastos and Levy's [4] historical account of branding, it appears that branding was assumed to apply to exclusively to business organizations until the 1960s. In one of the earliest books on advertising, brand always referred to consumer products and advertising was always performed for the purpose of stimulating branded product sales [5]. The brand-related concepts were originally developed to help businesses acquire and retain customers.

Marketing professors' scholarly orientation was focused on the managerial implications of their topics [6]. From the earliest marketing texts, it is evident that marketing was understood to be a set of activities, primarily selling and advertising, used to increase customer demand for branded products or to increase shopper patronage at retail chains [7–9]. Early marketing texts also emphasized distribution and retailing, assuming that marketing organizations were businesses selling goods to consumers [10–12].

In some respects, early-period marketing professors were more similar to management consultants than to social scientists [10,13]. Fowler [14] authored one the first advertising textbooks. He was an executive in the Homer W. Hedge Advertising Agency. The earliest marketing texts were published from 1915 to 1917. Content for these books came from the authors' own business experience, from business trade periodicals (scholarly journals for the marketing discipline did not yet exist), from government reports, and from interviewing executives [3]. The emphasis of academic work was on improving consumer marketing effectiveness as evidenced by increased sales and resistance to price competition [15].

Business jargon was sometimes used by marketing professors to refer to practitioner topics instead of using theory construction methods to identify and define constructs in a manner more applicable to a social scientist. For example, in Butler [2], loyalty is used in two ways. First, loyalty is used to refer to employee's desire to remain with an employer. The context was a discussion of how independent retailers could compete with chain stores by emphasizing customer service since chain stores emphasized low wages which would affect employee retention. Second, loyalty was used to refer to customer preference for a specific store. Regular patronage was called loyalty in the business lexicon of the day. Butler notes that the managerial problem was that customers can be lured away from their regular store by discounted prices of the competing store. Marketing should attempt to influence loyal customers who are insulated from the marketing efforts of competitors. The purpose of academic endeavors was to help businesses overcome the competition problem, identifying ways to influence people to buy a brand and to become a regular buyer of that brand [4,16].

It is easy to understand why early marketing professors would adopt business jargon. They viewed their purpose as helping business managers increase sales. Many early-period marketing professors had prior business careers, were actively engaged in business, or were consultants for corporate clients. Much of the content for marketing books came from authors' business experiences or with interviewing executives. The perspective was not on developing marketing as a social science, but on learning how to increase marketing effectiveness for businesses.

Although, the perspective of early marketing professors is understandable, it is regrettable. Even though early-period marketing professors did not view their emerging discipline as a social science, as marketing scholarship gradually developed, weaknesses in the body of the early work affected (and

continue to affect) the quality of scholarship in the subsequent decades, including the quality of scholarship in the area of nonprofit marketing.

### 3. Marketing Scholarship's Development

As a consequence of this beginning, marketing was perceived to exist in a commercial context [17]. Marketing was performed in the business sector of society [18], primarily by corporations [19,20]. The main corporate sectors relying on marketing were consumer products manufacturers and retailers [1]. These corporate sectors primarily relied on mass media advertising to increase sales and decrease competitive pressures [2]. Marketing programs were based in school of *business*. An undergraduate degree was in *business* administration. A graduate degree was a master of *business* administration. It was simply understood that marketing was a specialized *business* function.

In the 1950s, the quality of marketing scholarship became more influenced by the social sciences. The field of psychology's influence on marketing research grew substantially in the 1950s [21,22]. Psychology topics like persuasion and motivation were relevant to brand management, retailing, and advertising [23]. The field of consumer behavior emerged and culminated in the 1960 founding of Division 23 (Consumer Psychology) of the American Psychological Association [24] and the founding of the Association of Consumer Research in 1969 [25].

Beginning in the 1950s marketing professors' began to adopt more scientific methods in their research [19]. This was influenced by psychologists' increasing research interest in advertising and consumer behavior [26], as well as the growing influence of scientific methods and statistical analysis in other management disciplines like operations management and human resource management [27]. A greater emphasis was placed on the validity of research [28]. A greater emphasis was placed on psychometrics and measurement issues [29].

During this period a debate emerged among marketing professors regarding whether or not marketing could be considered a social science. If the scope of marketing was limited to profitability dimensions of businesses rather than discovering general marketing concepts, theories, and inter-construct relationships; then marketing was not a social [11,30]. By the late 1970s this debate had largely been resolved. Marketing was considered to be a scientific discipline and it was no longer considered appropriate to limit marketing to the application of tactics, but to the resolution of problems relevant to all organizations, not just businesses [31]. Although a bias toward viewing marketing as an applied science (rather than a social science) whose purpose was to further business profitability interests continues to the present day, nonprofit marketing and other marketing sub-fields began to emerge.

Market scholars' research topics generally remained relevant to the business context. However, the increasing number of marketing professors and the increasing number of marketing journals led to a proliferation of research [19]. The disparate proliferation of research led to a number of definitions (often inconsistent) and measures for constructs of the same name [32]. As an advancing social science, this indicated that the marketing discipline was failing to produce a coherent body of knowledge that could be generalized. Rather, the body of marketing research appeared fragmented, inconsistent, and often conflated. Jacoby [33] noted, as one example, that 55 different and distinct measures for brand loyalty had been used in a body of 300 studies. Jacoby also noted that authors would define brand loyalty as a latent cognitive construct, then measure brand loyalty exclusively on

consumers' overt behavior. Although the quantity of scholarly marketing research had proliferated, the validity and value of the body of research were being criticized [26,32,33]. Ironically, while data analysis in marketing research studies was becoming more sophisticated and while conceptual models were becoming more complex, the general quality of scholarly output was often problematic [34].

#### **4. Broadening the Scope of Marketing**

While the social sciences were influencing marketing scholarship, the economic climate was changing, providing its own influence on the type and variety of topics marketing scholars investigated. Corporations shifted manufacturing offshore to lower labor costs, increasing the importance of the service sector in the domestic economy [35,36]. Marketing professors' perspectives gradually expanded beyond a marketer as a corporate seller of consumer products context dominated by topics dealing with advertising, branding, and retailing. Other topics relevant to marketing in commercial organizations became more popular, topics like business-to-business (B2B) marketing, industrial sales, services marketing, pharmaceutical marketing, corporate reputation management, among others [4].

While the range of topics expanded, in general, marketing phenomena were still viewed as relevant only for business organizations (rather than all types of organizations). The major theoretical basis for understanding marketing phenomena was the exchange relationship. Hence, behavioral topics were perceived as market exchanges, transactional in nature [37].

Eventually, a level of acceptance among marketing scholars for investigating marketing in nonbusiness contexts grew [18,38]. The emergent willingness by some in the marketing scholarly community to broaden the scope of relevant marketing research topics beyond traditional business contexts was a watershed period for marketing scholars interested in research in nontraditional areas. The broadening of marketing to all organizations helped to change the perception of the marketing concept to a "generic human activity, which may be studied simply because it is an intrinsically interesting social phenomenon" [39].

It is important to note that marketing scholars working in noncommercial areas typically viewed their marketing phenomena through frameworks developed in commercial marketing contexts. Social marketers used the 4P's in understanding social marketing problems and developing social marketing strategies [40]. The market exchange framework was used to understand phenomena relevant to nonprofit and public sector organizations [41,42]. Donors were viewed as customers [43]. Volunteering for a charity was construed as a type of consumption [44]. However, some marketing scholars discovered that marketing models and measures developed for the business context were inappropriate when applied outside the context of the original study. This stimulated a need for noncommercial marketing subfields to develop their own theories and measures [45–47].

Although noncommercial marketing topics were gaining some level of acceptance within the marketing scholarly community, this acceptance was not universal. Marketing scholars often experienced adversity when submitting their work to the major marketing journals [48–51]. Frustrated with these negative experiences, journals and associations dedicated to specialized marketing subfields were founded to provide scholars working in these areas fairer treatment [52,53]. Consequently, the number of marketing journals continued to grow and the research literature continued to fragment [54,55].

## 5. The Legacy Effects from the History of Marketing Scholarship

O'Driscoll and Murray argue that marketing theoretical scholarship has been stymied by a systemic biased perception among marketing scholars that marketing is a business functional practice "...as constructed by the great consumer goods companies of the fifties, sixties, and seventies" ([35], p. 412). Not only is this perception anachronistic, it only reflects a small proportion of marketing organizations. While one could argue that the economic impact of corporations is great (making them worthy of this exclusivity), the quality of theory development has suffered as a result.

The early comprehension of marketing's applicability being focused on stimulating demand through advertising for consumer products companies and retail corporations combined with an under-emphasis on scientific rigor lead to the inadequate or biased conceptualization of some core marketing concepts [18]. These affected core concepts include the nomological network of brand-related concepts [46] and market/marketing orientation [47]. For example, Jacoby [33] identified 55 different measures purporting to measure brand loyalty. With respect to branding, according to de Chernatony and Riley ([56], p. 417), there have been a "plethora" of brand definitions. Ironically, Bastos and Levy [4] criticize these definitions as undeveloped. When researchers define the same term differently, this leads to confusion and fragmentation in subsequent research [57].

The marketing research literature is characterized by a general inattention to antecedent-consequence and mediation/moderation relationships within nomological networks of investigated phenomena [46]. MacKenzie [58] argues that most marketing scholars fail to adequately define their focal constructs, producing a cascading effect that threatens the research's validity. If a construct is not properly defined, its measure cannot be developed with sufficient validity. Without precisely understanding the construct, the rationale for hypotheses is weakened.

In prior marketing research, there is often an embedded bias in conceptualizing constructs due to researchers' implicit and tacit perceptions of the construct's applicability to a business organization and the construct's existence mostly limited to large corporations. For example, Kohli and Jaworski [59] define the marketing concept (obviously a fundamental concept) as a *business* philosophy. Although this was perhaps an inadvertent bias, it is typical—despite a long-standing consensus among marketing scholars that marketing tactics are used by a spectrum of organizations and not limited to business organizations selling goods and services [60]. This bias reduces the validity of the research in two principal ways. First, the researchers perceive their constructs in a limited context, resulting in poorly defined constructs with misspecified conceptual domains. Second, scales are developed for the limited context and may be invalid if used in other contexts.

For example, market orientation has been developed with this bias. The complex hierarchical system models developed to explain the market orientation construct would only apply to a large corporation (see [61] as an example). Prior research portrayed market orientation as the manifestation of the marketing concept. Essentially, the idea was that an organization (assumed to be a commercial business organization) can achieve competitiveness and profitability by understanding and satisfying its customers' needs as discussed previously [62]. Unfortunately, early researchers did not describe a set of assumptions under which this theory would be valid. It would be speculative to believe that earlier researchers believed the theory was always valid, or if they simply did not perceive a context beyond their tacit understanding that marketing applied exclusively to a specific type of organization.

It is worth a cursory exploration of the idea that the pathway to profitability is by understanding and satisfying customer needs better than competitors. First, the idea is inapplicable in some types of competitive markets. For example, a monopoly corporation could be highly profitable without understanding and satisfying its customers better than competitors. It has no competitors and its customers have no alternative. Competitors in an atomistically competitive market (pure competition) are price takers. Their products are substitutable and customers choose the lowest priced product. In markets in which there is limited competition (oligopoly or near oligopoly), consumers often have limited choice and products have little differentiation. For, example the American health insurance industry is highly profitable, but cares little about customer satisfaction and its decisions are more influence by financial analysts’ forecasts than customer needs [63]. One could argue that the market concept would only apply in a monopolistically competitive market in which customers have alternative choices and perceive the alternatives to be differentiated.

Second, the marketing concept as conceived in the early literature assumes the organization (1) seeks profits and (2) has customers. These assumptions may generally apply to business organizations, but they do not generally apply to nonprofit organizations. When they do, the relationship is usually not a buyer-seller transactional relationship, in contrast to prior literature which portrays marketing relationships as seller-buyer dyads [64]. The objectives of nonprofit organizations are not derived from a desire to increase the wealth of the organization’s owners. Non-business organizations may desire financial sustainability, but this is quite different than desiring profits in general and maximum profits in particular. Non-business organizations do not always do not always provide a priced product to people. Non-business organizations may not want to charge any price for their service. They may charge a price that is less than the cost of providing the service. They may avoid rather than seek price increases.

Table 1 below provides a brief comparison between businesses and nonprofit organizations. A commercial enterprise is brought into existence to increase the wealth of its owners. A nonprofit organization is created to provide a benefit (its mission) to society. The founders of a nonprofit organization do not own the organization, society owns a nonprofit. The means through which a business attempts to increase ownership wealth by making (hopefully optimizing) profits. A nonprofit organization attempts to benefit society by endeavoring to fulfill its mission.

**Table 1.** Comparison of business to nonprofit organization.

	<b>Business</b>	<b>Nonprofit</b>
<b>Reason for existence (desired ends)</b>	To increase ownership wealth	To benefit society
<b>Modality</b>	Maximize profits	Fulfill mission
<b>Marketing directive</b>	Increase market power	Increase support
<b>Marketing objectives</b>	Reduce or eliminate competition. When in a competitive market, increase brand strength.	Increase brand strength.
<b>Increasing brand strength</b>	First, make sure that brand object is remarkable. Second, communicate brand remarkability to target audiences on a continual basis.	First, make sure that brand object is remarkable. Second, communicate brand remarkability to target audiences on a continual basis.

Marketing’s role (its directive) in supporting a business’s efforts to maximize profits are to increase its market power, referring to the business’s ability to raise prices without experience a loss of demand for its products/services. In a competitive market, business’s marketing tactics are aimed at increasing brand strength. Marketing’s function in a nonprofit organization is to increase its support. Support refers to inflows of resources (volunteers, donations, grants, etc.). A nonprofit’s marketing tactics are aimed at increasing its brand strength. Brand strength is achieved by ensuring that the brand object is perceived to be remarkable and then communicating the brand’s remarkability to target audiences.

To further examine the premise that the marketing concept and market orientation were develop with an organizational exemplar bias, it is instructive to consider the scales used to measure marketing orientation. The two most widely used scales are MKTOR [64,65] and MARKOR [66]. Their items are presented in Table 2. An examination of the scale items for bias that would limit the organizational context for which the scale would apply was conducted. Four types of bias were observed: the organization type is a business (BUS), the organization is large and structured into business functional areas (SIZE), the organization has competitors (COM), and the organization has customers (CUS). These biases are indicated in the table. It appears that the scales for marketing orientation, which the implementation of the marketing concept further indicate that the constructs (marketing concept and marketing orientation) and the marketing orientation scales were not conceived to apply across organizational types and structures.

**Table 2.** Market orientation scale comparison.

<b>MKTOR scale items</b>	<b>MARKOR scale items</b>
Our business objectives are driven by customer satisfaction. <b>BUS, CUS</b>	In this organization, we meet with customers at least once a year to find out what products or services they will need in the future. <b>CUS, SIZE, BUS</b>
We monitor our level of commitment and orientation to serving customers’ needs. <b>SIZE</b>	In this organization, we do a lot of in-house market research. <b>SIZE</b>
Our strategy for competitive advantage is based on our understanding of customer needs. <b>COM</b>	We are slow to detect changes in our customers' product references. <b>BUS, CUS</b>
Our business strategies are driven by our beliefs about how we can create greater value for customers. <b>CUS</b>	We survey end users at least once a year to assess the quality of our products and services. <b>BUS, CUS</b>
We measure customer satisfaction systematically and frequently. <b>CUS, SIZE</b>	We are slow to detect fundamental shifts in our industry (e.g., competition, technology, regulation). <b>BUS, SIZE</b>
We give close attention to after-sales service. <b>CUS, BUS</b>	We periodically review the likely effect of changes in our business environment (e.g., regulation) on customers. <b>BUS, CUS</b>
Our salespeople share information within our business concerning competitors’ strategies. <b>BUS, CUS, COM, SIZE</b>	We have interdepartmental meetings at least once a quarter to discuss market trends and developments. <b>SIZE, BUS</b>
We respond to competitive actions that threaten us. <b>COM</b>	Marketing personnel in our organization spend time discussing customers’ future needs with other functional departments. <b>CUS, SIZE</b>



Table 2. Cont.

MKTOR scale items	MARKOR scale items
We target customers and customer groups where we have, or can develop, a competitive advantage. <b>CUS, COM</b>	When something important happens to a major customer market, the whole department or organization knows about it within a short period. <b>CUS, SIZE</b>
The top management team regularly discusses competitors' strengths and strategies. <b>SIZE, COM</b>	Data on customer satisfaction are disseminated at all levels in this organization on a regular basis. <b>CUS, SIZE</b>
Our top managers from every function visit our current and prospective customers. <b>SIZE, CUS</b>	When one department finds out something important about competitors, it is slow to alert other departments. <b>COM, SIZE</b>
We communicate information about our successful and unsuccessful customer experiences across all business functions. <b>SIZE, BUS, CUS</b>	It takes us forever to decide how to respond to our competitor's price changes. <b>COM, BUS</b>
All of our business functions (e.g., marketing/sales, manufacturing, R&D, finance/accounting, etc.) are integrated in serving the needs of our target markets. <b>BUS, SIZE, CUS</b>	For one reason or another we tend to ignore changes in our customer's product or service needs. <b>CUS</b>
All of our managers understand how everyone in our company can contribute to creating customer value. <b>BUS, CUS</b>	We periodically review our product development efforts to ensure that they are in line with what customers want. <b>SIZE, CUS</b>
	Several departments get together periodically to plan a response to changes taking place in our business environment. <b>SIZE, BUS</b>
	If a major competitor were to launch an intensive campaign targeted at our customers, we would implement a response immediately. <b>COM, CUS</b>
	The activities of the different departments in this business are well coordinated. <b>SIZE, BUS</b>
	Customer complaints fall on deaf ears in this organization. <b>CUS</b>
	Even if we came up with a great marketing plan, we probably would not be able to implement it in a timely fashion. <b>SIZE</b>
	When we find that customers would like us to modify a product or service, the departments involved make concerted efforts to do so. <b>CUS, SIZE</b>

Notes: BUS: The target organization is a business; COM: The organization has competitors; CUS: The organization has customers; SIZE: The organization is large and structured into functional departments.

### 6. Reforming Marketing Scholarship for Relevancy across Organization Types

A series of ideas whose time has passed will be discussed as a means of organizing our discussion on some of the needed reformations in the marketing scholarly discipline.

- (1). The organization that uses marketing is a business.
- (2). The exemplar organization is a large corporation with specialized functional areas.

These tacit assumptions that are embedded in prior marketing scholarship create invalidity in marketing theory and in marketing measurement that we have discussed previously. It would be better to tacitly assume that marketing is relevant for all managerial contexts, across organizational types. Perhaps it would be more helpful to understand that all brands require marketing. Therefore, it is important to understand what objects or entities can be branded. Wymer ([46], p. 5) writes:

Entities that can be objects for branding include products (goods and services). However, brand objects can also be organizations such as corporations, nonprofits, or government institutions [18,67], places [68]; people [69]; ideas [70], or nations [71].

American presidential election campaigns represent some of the most sophisticated marketing campaigns imaginable, spending approximately \$2 billion on marketing [72]. Yet, if one were to review the marketing literature, it would become apparent that many marketing concepts and their measures would not apply to political campaigns. It is obvious, then, that these concepts and their measures have validity weaknesses and need to be corrected to apply across brand objects. If a marketing concept is only applicable to a specific class of brand objects, then the researcher should clearly describe these conceptual domain boundaries in the conceptualization of the construct.

- (1). The purpose of marketing is to help increase profits.
- (2). The relationship between the organization and society is transactional, buyer-seller, and explained by exchange theory.

As long as marketing professors view themselves as advocates of business profitability and view marketing as a business discipline [17,73], marketing is unlikely to fully transform from applied research into a social science. Perhaps it would be beneficial to comprehend marketing as a management discipline instead of a business subfield [74], then constructs and scales could be developed with all organizational contexts in mind [18]. Viewed in this way, articles that develop complex models appropriate only for large corporations could be considered applied research and more appropriate for practitioner journals. This would reduce the incentive for fragmentation of the field rather than unification.

Perhaps a new definition of marketing is needed that enables marketing to be relevant for all brand objects. For example, marketing is a managerial orientation that sees mission success as dependent upon attracting support. Prior researched biased marketing scholarship by viewing support as buying what the corporation was selling. Hence, supporters were customers. The relationship between brand object and potential supporter was buyer/seller, company/consumer, or business/customer. The primary theoretical framework for explaining phenomena within this constrained commercial dyadic perception was economic exchange theory.

The marketer of a brand object may not be seeking support in the form of a customer purchase, however. Support can come in many forms, depending on the needs of the marketing organization or brand object. For example, desired support can be blood/organ donations, charitable contributions, volunteers, members, voters, demonstrators, petitioners, and so forth. Furthermore, only a small subset of human behavior can be considered economically rationalistic in a buyer/seller dyad. People are emotional beings with enduring beliefs and values, holding less enduring attitudes and opinions. Much human behavior is motivated by emotions and value expression. An individual's decision to volunteer

for a charity, participate in civil disobedience, donate to a political candidate, or where to travel during holiday may not be well explained by viewing the individual as a consumer who is looking for maximum economic value through purchasing behavior.

## **7. Discussion**

There are several important lessons that can be learned from marketing scholarship's legacy to advance the development of nonprofit marketing. I will begin by discussing lessons researchers can learn. Then I will discuss lessons that journal editors can learn.

### *7.1. Lessons for Researchers*

Constructs should be defined without bias. Although this is what is taught to graduate students and seems obvious, the marketing scholarship culture has promoted poor theory construction. The reason is primarily the due to the researcher having a certain type of organization in mind when conducting research. In the past, this organization was usually a large corporation. However, nonprofit researchers might also have a specific type of nonprofit organization in mind when they are engaged in researcher, leading to poor quality research. The nonprofit sector is diverse. There are many types of organizations within the third sector. Researchers should, therefore, ensure that their construct definitions are applicable to all organizations. If, however, the construct (by its very nature) is not applicable to all organizations, the researchers should clearly specify the organizations for which the construct is conceptualized.

In instances in which the prior literature is flawed, researchers should clearly describe the flaws and provide corrections or revisions. If there are existing definitions or measures in the prior literature, researchers should acknowledge them and explain why they are or are not suitable. Then researchers should correct the prior work in question, or make the necessary adaptations or revisions. Future research that fails to account for prior work, leads to fragmentation of the discipline. Often, rather than correcting prior work, researchers simply add a new definition or measure, resulting in multiple definitions and measures for the same or nearly same construct. Rather than strengthening future research, this fragmentation weakens the body of accumulated knowledge in a discipline.

Measures should be developed without contextual bias. It is tempting to design measures that fit well with the research context of a specific investigation. If the construct for which the scale is being developed is intended to apply across organization types, then the researcher should ensure that the items and the item wording is appropriate across organization types. In cases in which it is desirable to have the organization's name in the scale item, the research can insert a pronoun or italicized place holder in the original scale item for researchers to use for their specific operationalized research studies.

Use second generation analytical methods. Structural equation modeling (SEM) allows for the quality of construct measures (measurement model) to be assessed as well as the quality of hypothesized inter-construct relationships (structural model). It is no longer sufficient to merely report incidences of statistical significance. Advances in user-friendly software and easily understood, non-mathematical books and articles make learning SEM methods, both covariance-based and partial least squares, an acquirable skill set for all research scholars. Thus, our measures can be evaluated and improved. Also, a more comprehensive understanding of construct relationships can be developed. The

practical importance of our constructs can be better understood by examining comparative effect sizes and total effects.

### *7.2. Lessons for Journal Editors*

Journal editors play an important role in any discipline. They are gate keepers, making decisions about what is published and not published. They are standard setters and enforcers. Unfortunately, journal editors' focus too much on rejection rates and the completion of reviews and too little on helping to ensure that the theoretical body of knowledge of the discipline is building upon prior work by extending prior work, correcting prior work that was weak, and by integrating rather than fragmenting the general body of knowledge.

Journal editors can do a service for their disciplines by ensuring that the recommendations for authors described previously are reinforced in the review process. This can be accomplished by author check lists, journal policy statements, and reviewer review forms. One legacy of the commercially-based history of marketing scholarship is that of managerial advocacy. Journal editors believe that a goal of their articles is to help managers solve problems or become more effective. Many journals require the articles to be managerially practical or include a managerial implications section. While this requirement of managerial advocacy seems reasonable, its effect on scholarship is insidious. Expecting researchers to direct their research to address contemporary organization problems leads to the contextual bias described in this article. These expectations guide scholars to produce applied research rather than theoretical or basic research. Journal editors could make major contributions to their disciplines if, instead of requiring research that is of operational interest to managers, they would require research that is of theoretical interest to social scientists. This issue was discussed previously. However, journal editors serve a key role. If the various managerial fields are to develop their bodies of knowledge in a meaningful way, the disciplines need to develop theoretically as a social science rather than as a fragmented applied science. Otherwise, research findings will continue to be inconsistent or contradictory. Multiple scales will continue to be developed for the same nominal construct applied to difference contexts. Constructs will continue to be defined in a multitude of ways, depending on the researcher's operational context. As Jacoby prophetically stated: "Unless we begin to take corrective measures soon, we stand to all drown in a mass of meaningless and potentially misleading junk!" ([33], p. 87).

## **8. Conclusions**

If marketing scholarship is intended to benefit all types of organizations (private, public, and nonprofit) and even individuals (actors, politicians, artists, for example), then the embedded context in management curricula becomes inappropriate. The context that is assumed in traditional management textbooks is that of marketing as a specialized functional area within a large corporation, whose role is to help the corporation maximize ownership wealth [75].

Were the perception of marketing to truly broaden, then it could place greater emphasis on communications and attracting support than on the 4P's. A body of knowledge that is not pinned to corporate advocacy and is more macromarketing oriented is less likely to support ethical frameworks that give societal welfare less importance than further enriching wealthy stockholders [76]. As the

marketing discipline emphasizes basic research instead of applied research a paradigm shift from corporate interests to societal interests is more likely, resulting from a greater emphasis on macromarketing and ethics. Macromarketing, because it does not emphasize the self-interests of a single business organization, is more congruent with societal interests, stimulating research topics like quality of life [77], social justice [78], and sustainability [79].

Calls for reforms in the marketing academy have been made previously [33,51]. There is little evidence that these calls have been heeded or have resulted in influencing change. Journal editors and reviewers are the gatekeepers of discipline, determining what is acceptable to be published for the marketing community to consume and assimilate [80]. It may be fanciful to hope opinion leaders who have advanced in the current system would desire to change it.

The willingness among marketing professors within in the subfield of consumer behavior to establish their own organization (Association for Consumer Research) in order to have a scholarly community that would accept and facilitate their research interests illustrates a pathway for reforming the marketing discipline and furthering the development of emergent subfields. The process has begun for some subfields like nonprofit marketing and social marketing.

Whereas previously, the marketing academic community viewed noncommercial marketing subfields like nonprofit marketing as *borrowing* traditional commercial marketing concepts for application in a nonprofit setting, this can no longer be acceptable. It helps nonprofit marketing researchers little to use misconceived constructs and invalid scales in their research. Nonprofit marketing researchers have a challenging, but enriching, path forward. They may have to redefine core marketing constructs, like the marketing concept, marketing orientation, and so forth before making them appropriate for use across brand object types. They may have to develop valid scales in instances where established but invalid scales are commonly used. Until this is done, however, the confidence in nonprofit marketing research, and its future development will be impeded.

### Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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