

# A Responsibilities Framework for Marketing as a Professional Discipline

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*Many practitioners believe that marketing practice should be viewed as a profession. Similarly, many marketing academics argue that marketing should be taught and researched as a professional discipline. This article develops a “responsibilities framework” that can be used to explore how marketing should be defined if it is to be viewed as a profession.*

**H**ow should the concept of marketing be defined? At the outset of this discussion, it is important to note that definitions are “rules of replacement” (Hempel 1970, p. 654). That is, a definition means that a word or a group of words (the definiens) is proposed to be truth-functionally equivalent to the word being defined (the definiendum). Good definitions exhibit inclusivity, exclusivity, differentiability, clarity, communicability, consistency, and parsimony. That is, good definitions should (1) include all phenomena that should be “taken in,” (2) exclude all phenomena that should be left out, (3) differentiate the definiendum from other (often closely related) terms, (4) define the term clearly, (5) communicate well the term’s meaning to its intended audience, (6) be consistent with the meanings of other important terms, and (7) be no longer than necessary to accomplish Criteria 1–6.

In 1985, the American Marketing Association (AMA) adopted the following definition: “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.” In 2004, the AMA adopted a revised definition: “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.” In 2007, an AMA committee recommended a new definition to the AMA board of directors: “Marketing is the activity, conducted by organizations and individuals, that operates through a set of institutions and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging market offerings that have value for customers, clients, marketers, and society at large.”

Does the 2004 definition include/exclude appropriate phenomena? Does it clearly differentiate marketing from other concepts? Does it communicate well with its intended audience—for example, with marketing practitioners, mar-

keting academics, students, and the general public? Does the AMA committee-recommended revised 2007 definition (hereafter, the 2007 definition) address the problems of the 2004 definition? My purpose here is to attempt to develop a framework for approaching these questions and to offer some tentative answers. The framework can be referred to as the “responsibilities framework.”<sup>1</sup>

The foundational premise of the responsibilities framework is that people most closely associated with marketing, be they practitioners or academics, want (1) marketing practice to be viewed as a profession and (2) the marketing academic discipline to be viewed as a professional discipline. Thus, for Laczniak and Murphy (2006, p. 172, italics in original), “Marketing managers should perceive their job function as part of a larger vocation that positions marketing managers as practicing *professionals* and therefore, possessing duties to society ... as well as their company.” Accordingly, the AMA mission statement states that it is “a professional association for individuals and organizations involved in the practice, teaching, and study of marketing,” and the AMA launched its Professional Certified Marketer Program in 2000. Such efforts notwithstanding, it is probably true that none of the various and remarkably heterogeneous occupations associated with marketing (e.g., sales, advertising, brand/product management, marketing research, retail management, wholesale management, distribution management, marketing management) have reached—or been accorded by society—the status of “profession.”<sup>2</sup> Likewise, although numerous marketing academics advocate that marketing should be taught and researched as a profession, it is still unclear as to what the

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<sup>1</sup>The responsibilities framework was originally introduced in Hunt (1992). The framework was subsequently elaborated on and further developed in Hunt (2002). The discussion here follows closely the analyses in these prior works.

<sup>2</sup>Note that medicine and law have a single, dominant occupation associated with them, and even accounting has only two: the certified public accountant and the corporate accountant. The radical heterogeneity of marketing occupations poses a unique difficulty for people who want marketing, per se, to be a profession. Indeed, the “marketing manager,” as customarily described in marketing textbooks, constitutes a minority of people engaged in marketing occupations.

admonitions “teach marketing as a profession” and “research marketing as a profession” specifically imply.<sup>3</sup>

If one or more of the occupations considered a part of marketing became a profession, what characteristics would it have? Note that the words “professor” and “profession” have the same, Latin, etymological root—that is, *professio*. Just as professors profess, so do members of professions. What do members of professions claim when they profess? Foremost, they profess to have mastered a complex body of knowledge, based on systematic theory, that requires formal, advanced education. They further profess that their knowledge is useful for solving certain clients’ problems. By virtue of their professed superior knowledge, professionals can, if they choose to do so, take advantage of their clients. Consequently, the underlying values embodied in the organizational cultures of all professional associations—such values are customarily formalized in codes of ethics—emphasize the responsibility of professionals to avoid conflicts of interest in servicing the genuine needs of their clients. Lacking professionals’ knowledge, clients must be able to trust them. In exchange for status, authority, and autonomy (enforced by self-regulation), the implicit (and sometimes explicit) social contract between society and each profession requires that professionals act in a fiduciary manner toward their clients. It is unsurprising, then, that the AMA’s code of ethics indicates that the association is committed “to promoting the highest standard of professional norms and values for its members” (Lacznik and Murphy 2006, p. 174).

If members of professions have fiduciary responsibilities toward their clients, what do such responsibilities imply for academics’ teaching and research? Consider the nature of research in schools of law, medicine, and engineering. Just as consumer goods manufacturers view wholesalers and retailers as intermediate customers for their goods, schools of law, medicine, and engineering—all professional schools—view practicing lawyers, physicians, and engineers as intermediaries. They are intermediate clients for legal, medical, and engineering scholarship because the ultimate client for a truly professional discipline is always society and its needs. For law, it is society’s need for a just legal system. For medicine, it is society’s need for health care. For engineering, it is society’s need for buildings, bridges, highways, and machines that are safe, functional, efficient, and economical. What is this need for marketing? I suggest that it is society’s need for high-quality products and services that are reasonably priced, responsibly promoted, and conveniently available.

If marketing practice is to be (or become) a profession and if the marketing discipline is to be (or become) a professional discipline, what are the implications for teaching and researching marketing? The responsibilities framework implies that marketing academe has certain responsibilities to (at least) four stakeholders: the academy, society, students, and practice.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup>For different viewpoints on what it would mean for marketing to be a professional discipline see, for example, Enis (1986), Meyers, Massy, and Greyser (1979), Schifrowsky, Peltier, and Boyt (2002), Simon (1994), and Westing (1977, 1979).

<sup>4</sup>For a discussion of marketing’s stakeholders that is similar to, but not precisely the same thing as, the four stakeholders discussed here, see AMA Task Force on the Development of Marketing Thought (1988).

## The Responsibilities Framework

### To the Academy

What are the marketing discipline’s responsibilities to the academy? First, note that universities are in the knowledge “business.” Specifically, universities manufacture, warehouse, and retail knowledge. Universities produce or manufacture knowledge through research. They store or warehouse knowledge by means of libraries. They disseminate or retail knowledge through their teaching function.

Therefore, as members of the academy, marketing academics have a responsibility to respect, uphold, and abide by the university’s core mission of producing, warehousing, and retailing knowledge. Furthermore, note that universities—since the founding of the first “modern” university, the University of Berlin, in 1810—have an implied contract with society that in exchange for academic freedom, faculty must strive for producing objective knowledge (Brubacher and Rudy 1976). Therefore, when conducting research, marketing academe owes society its best efforts toward the goal of objectivity.

In addition, academics have a responsibility to keep in mind that society is the ultimate client for the knowledge they produce, and marketing practitioners are intermediate clients. More general, consistent with the admonitions of Wilkie and Moore (2003, 2006), marketing research on the questions “What kinds of marketing institutions and systems do we have?” and “What kinds of institutions and systems should we have?” must be emphasized to discharge our responsibilities as members of a professional discipline in the university. That is, referring to the three-dichotomies model (Hunt 1976, 2002), research on the macropositive and macronormative dimensions of marketing must be prominent.

### To Society

In addition to the responsibility of working toward producing objective knowledge, marketing academics have a duty to turn out graduates who are technically competent to take their places in one of the occupations in their chosen profession, namely, marketing. Marketing graduates should be technically competent in decision areas, such as pricing, promotion, product development, market segmentation, channels of distribution, marketing research, and managing relationships with marketing’s stakeholders. Technical competence in these areas produces productive citizens, and it is the productivity of a society’s citizens that determines its standard of living.

However, objective knowledge and technical competence are not enough. We owe society graduates who are ethically responsible. Graduates must realize that they have responsibilities not only to themselves and their companies but also to other important societal stakeholders. In addition, we owe society graduates whose education is such that, as citizens, they can identify, understand, reflectively evaluate, implement, and support the core cultural values of their countries. For Americans, these values are embodied most prominently in the principles underlying the founding documents of their nation. Thus, marketing graduates must be liberally educated, not just technically competent and socially responsible.

## To Students

What are the marketing discipline's responsibilities to students? Marketing academics owe students the kind of education that will prepare them for entry-, middle-, and upper-level positions in the marketing occupations of their choosing. To disadvantaged students, we have a special responsibility to assist them in gaining access to and then rising up the rungs of society's socioeconomic ladder. Business education, particularly undergraduate business education, is an important and effective mechanism for many disadvantaged young people to get on the socioeconomic ladder. Indeed, although undergraduate business programs service the entire spectrum of society, a much greater share of our students (compared with the liberal arts) comes from lower socioeconomic strata.

Furthermore, the marketing discipline owes students an understanding of their society and marketing's role in that society. Therefore, as marketing professionals, they should be capable of recognizing their own responsibilities to society and responding to them. Students' career responsibilities imply that we have the duty to construct programs of instruction that emphasize both the micro and the macro dimensions of marketing. In reference again to the three-dichotomies model (Hunt 1976, 2002), the scope of marketing programs should span all eight cells of the scope of marketing, not just the two micronormative ones (i.e., the profit-sector, micronormative cell and the nonprofit-sector, micronormative cell).

This kind of education places on marketing academics a continuing, derivative duty to learn. Staying abreast of the literature, both academic and trade, is obligatory. Translated to the specific courses we teach, the duty to learn implies a responsibility to revise. Sometimes old yellow notes contain timeless truths that bear repeating semester after semester. Regrettably often, however, such notes contain only analyses of yesterday's hot topics, yesterday's faddish issues, or yesterday's solutions to yesterday's problems.

Finally, the marketing discipline owes students an obligation to listen. That is, the expressed needs of our discipline's clients must serve as input for marketing programs and pedagogy. However, we also have a complementary duty: We must resist the temptation to obey. As professionals, just as physicians cannot allow patients to prescribe their own medicine, we—mindful of our fiduciary relationship with students—must also rely on our best professional judgment as to appropriate marketing programs, courses, and pedagogy. Students are our clients; they are not our customers—and there is a big difference between clients and customers.

## To Practice

What are the marketing discipline's responsibilities to marketing practice? Marketing academics owe marketing practice a continuing supply of technically competent, socially responsible graduates as new entrants to the marketing profession. In addition, a significant portion of our knowledge production efforts should be directed toward general classes of practical, practitioner problems; for example, how should prices be determined in highly turbulent markets? This is because such "problem-oriented" (Myers, Greyser, and

Massy 1979) research, in contrast to firm-specific, "applied" research, makes a legitimate and important kind of contribution to marketing knowledge. The results of problem-oriented research should be communicated to marketing practitioners by appropriate means and should also find their way into lectures, textbooks, and other instructional materials. Similar to our obligation to listen to students, we should seek the input of marketing practitioners as to the kinds of problems that research should address.

Doing research that educates the public about the social value of marketing activities and marketing institutions is also a responsibility we have to marketing practice. There has never been a book titled "Does Finance Cost Too Much?" or "Does Management Cost Too Much?" or "Does Accounting Cost Too Much?" As we know, however, there was a famous study that was financed by the 20th Century Fund, titled "Does Distribution Cost Too Much?" (Stewart, Dewhurst, and Field 1939). This should tell us something about our discipline and our role in helping the general public understand it.

Even people who usually evaluate issues in a thoughtful, logical, and rational manner seem incapable of approaching cognitively, logically, and rationally the subject of marketing, particularly the advertising component of marketing. People seem to put their minds "on hold" at the very mention of marketing. It is worth remembering that L.D.H. Weld (1882–1946), one of the founding fathers of the marketing discipline, was called before a special committee of the Minnesota legislature to explain why he taught what the legislature considered "dangerous doctrines" (Cowan 1960). As we know, he was only pointing out that marketing intermediaries have a positive role to play in the marketing of agricultural products; these intermediaries are not there to exploit anyone, let alone the farmer.

Furthermore, only recently (and by narrow margins in the U.S. Supreme Court) have the courts held that professional associations cannot forbid their members from advertising. For more than 100 years, the American Bar Association (ABA), the American Dental Association (ADA), and the American Medical Association were saying to us, their clients, "trust our members." At the same time, they were claiming that their members could not be trusted to advertise their services because the associations feared that their members would engage in advertising that was misleading and deceptive. Think of the incongruity here. If the ABA, ADA, and American Medical Association did not themselves trust their members to be honest communicators about their services, why should society trust the ABA, ADA, and American Medical Association members to be honest providers of legal, dental, and medical services?<sup>5</sup>

The preceding notwithstanding, the marketing discipline should not play the role of professional apologist for prod-

<sup>5</sup>As a reviewer of this essay noted, many members of the professional associations, particularly members of large, established law firms, probably wanted to prohibit advertising because they wanted to limit competition, but "limiting competition" was not how the prohibition of advertising was argued. Rather, the ABA, ADA, and American Medical Association argued for the prohibition of advertising on the grounds that their members, if permitted to advertise, would likely engage in misleading and deceptive advertising. It is the argument that I am focusing on here, not any alleged ulterior motives.

ucts of shoddy quality, for genuinely misleading or deceptive advertising, for collusive pricing, or for coercive practices in distribution channels. To good marketing practice, we have a responsibility to research, expose, and publicize bad marketing practice. We should be at the forefront of researching questionable marketing practices, not standing at the sidelines.

In summary, how does the responsibilities framework view marketing? Marketing is viewed as a university discipline that aspires to be a professional discipline and that, accordingly, has responsibilities (1) to society, for providing objective knowledge and technically competent, socially responsible, liberally educated graduates; (2) to students, for providing an education that will enable them to get on and move up the socioeconomic ladder and prepare them for their roles as competent, responsible marketers and citizens; (3) to marketing practice, for providing a continuing supply of competent, responsible entrants to marketing occupations and for providing new knowledge about both the micro and the macro dimensions of marketing; and (4) to the academy, for upholding its mission of retailing, warehousing, and producing knowledge; its contract with society of objective knowledge for academic freedom; and its core values of reason, evidence, openness, and civility.

## On Defining Marketing

If the aspiration of marketing is that marketing practice be viewed as a profession and the marketing discipline be considered a professional discipline, how does the 2004 AMA definition of marketing fare? That is, how does the definition stand up when evaluated on the criteria for good definitions? Here, because of space limitations, I focus on four criteria: inclusivity, exclusivity, clarity, and communicability.

### Inclusivity

Since the founding of the marketing discipline by scholars such as Arch Shaw, Ralph S. Butler, and L.D.H. Weld in the early 1900s, the study of marketing systems and institutions has been central to marketing thought. Indeed, the functional approach to marketing, which dominated the study and teaching of marketing until the 1960s, was primarily devoted to the study of marketing systems. In a similar vein, the 1985 AMA definition made exchange the focal construct of marketing.

Does the 2004 definition include the study of the exchanges involved in *any* marketing systems, even such systems as channels of distribution? Are institutions such as retailers, wholesalers, advertising agencies, marketing research companies, and other marketing institutions included? Is the cryptic expression “set of processes” in the definition meant to acknowledge the existence of marketing systems and institutions, or are the processes supposed to be limited to those that occur within organizations? Does “set of processes” imply, as the responsibilities framework maintains, that marketers have a responsibility to understand marketing systems in society (and societies) from both normative and positive perspectives? As I interpret the 2004 definition, the best answer to all these questions seems to be no. Therefore, the definition lacks inclusivity.

### Exclusivity

Note that the 1985 definition does not include the word “customers” but instead focuses on creating “exchanges” among parties. Now note that the focus of the 2004 version is specifically on “delivering value to customers.” In doing so, the definition appears to exclude the activities of all the organizations that do not have customers. These would include organizations such as charities, the military, and political parties. Was not the issue decided decades ago that all nonprofit organizations engage in marketing? Thus, I suggest that the definition excludes the wrong things because it seems to exclude nonprofit organizations, which do not have customers.

### Clarity

Note that the 1985 phrase “conception, pricing, promotion, and distribution of ideas, goods, and services” has been replaced with the 2004 expression “creating, communicating, and delivering value.” However, I argue that organizations do not create value; only entities can be created, and value is not an entity. That is, just as beauty cannot be created, only entities that have the attribute beautiful, so value cannot be created, only entities that have the attribute valuable.

What, then, if not value, do organizations create? Among other things, as the 1985 definition stated, organizations create ideas, goods, and services that are (or are not) perceived by others as having value. When the ideas, goods, and services are, indeed, perceived as valuable, this leads to the creation of exchanges. Specifically, as modern marketing theory puts it, organizations (attempt to) create market offerings (i.e., ideas, good, and services) that have value for particular market segments. This is because competition in market-based economies is not industrywide, but rather market segment by market segment by market segment (Hunt 2000; Hunt and Morgan 1995). Some market segments may view a firm’s market offerings as having no value, and others may perceive them as having great value. The 2004 definition suffers from a lack of clarity.

### Communicability

As for the general public, many lay people (and others who should know better) believe that marketing and advertising (and/or sales) are equated. The “marketing-is-advertising” and “marketing-is-sales” views are ones that both marketing practitioners and academics have attempted to dispel for many years. The 2004 definition, as did the 1985 definition, attempts to communicate, at least officially, that marketing is more than just its promotion component. This is salutary.

For marketing practitioners, note that the definition includes some recent developments in marketing strategy. That is, it specifically includes relationship marketing strategy when it highlights marketing as “managing customer relationships.” However, many marketing practitioners are involved in managing things other than customer relationships, for example, brands. Indeed, brand equity strategy is arguably as prominent as relationship marketing strategy. Why is it not included? Likewise, many practitioners are involved (or believe that they should be involved) in decisions such as pricing, which was specifically included in the

1985 definition but is now gone. Is the pricing of market offerings not as important as communicating the attributes of market offerings? If so, why is pricing not prominent in the definition of marketing?

As for students, the definition should communicate the general nature of at least some contemporary marketing management positions. My suspicion is that the 2004 substitution of “creating, communicating, and delivering value” for the 1985 “planning and executing the conception, pricing, promotion, and distribution of ideas, goods, and services” fails to communicate to students the content and organizational responsibilities of marketing management. No definition can communicate all the particular occupations that are considered to fall within the label “marketing,” but the 2004 definition seems particularly deficient.

As for academics, as I previously argued, the definition fails to incorporate explicitly the view that marketing is more than a managerial technology within organizations. That is, it fails to acknowledge the existence and roles of marketing institutions and marketing systems in society. How marketing is conducted and ought to be conducted within organizations in society is an important component of marketing. However, it is also important how marketing is conducted and ought to be conducted among organizations in society. That is, the study of marketing institutions and systems is also important. Furthermore, the consequences of marketing institutions and systems on society and the consequences of society on marketing institutions and systems are also important components of marketing.

In conclusion, if marketing practice is to be viewed as a profession, if marketing should be taught and researched in the manner of a professional discipline, and if the AMA is to be considered a professional association, the 2004 definition is sorely deficient. It should be revised; our responsibilities require no less than a definition that furthers our profession.<sup>6</sup>

## On the 2007 Definition

In 2007, the AMA appointed a committee to reexamine the issue of how marketing should be defined.<sup>7</sup> Over a period of several months, the committee sought input on the definition issue from a wide range of marketing practitioners and academics, conducted two e-mail surveys of AMA members, and discussed numerous options and suggestions for revising the current definition. These efforts led the committee to recommend the following definition to the AMA board of directors:

Marketing is the activity, conducted by organizations and individuals, that operates through a set of institutions and processes

<sup>6</sup>The preceding portion of this article, with the exception of the introduction, was written before the report of the committee appointed by the AMA in 2007 to study and make recommendations as to the appropriateness of the 2004 definition of marketing. The following sections were written after the committee’s recommended changes.

<sup>7</sup>The committee was chaired by Don Lehmann (Columbia University). Committee members were Wayne McCullough (Daimler–Chrysler), Jimmy Peltier (University of Wisconsin–Whitewater), Ric Sweeney (University of Cincinnati), Joan Treistman (M/A/R/C Research), William Wilkie (University of Notre Dame), Becky Youngberg (AMA), and George Zinkhan (University of Georgia). I also was on the committee.

for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging market offerings that have value for customers, clients, marketers, and society at large.

The final e-mail survey by the committee found that, of the 1000+ members responding, 71% favored the 2007 definition over the 2004 definition, 11% had no preference, and 18% favored the 2004 version.<sup>8</sup> I agree with the majority of AMA members. The committee-recommended 2007 definition is a positive step toward viewing marketing as a profession. It can contribute to the goal of practicing, teaching, and researching marketing in a professional manner. However, as are many definitions, the 2007 definition is compressed. Therefore, instructors in their classes and practitioners of marketing in their organizations will need to assist students and others in “unpacking” the definition’s words and phrases. I offer the following suggestions to those who decide to use the definition and who seek to assist others in understanding its import.<sup>9</sup>

First, the phrase “marketing is the activity, conducted by organizations and individuals” recognizes that marketing is an action word. Specifically, “marketing” is a gerund, a verbal form that ends in “ing” that is used as a noun but conveys the meaning of the verb, namely, “to market.” That is, marketing is something that organizations and individuals (e.g., entrepreneurs, consumers) engage in or do. Thus, the definition points out who (i.e., organizations and individuals) actually conducts (i.e., guides, directs, and engages in) the activity called “marketing.” It is important to point out to students and others that the responsibilities framework implies that the activity of marketing is to be conducted ethically and responsibly. It is also important to stress that marketing is not something that is done just by those in organizations’ formal marketing departments. Rather, modern marketing practice and theory views marketing as an orientation that is recommended as a guiding philosophy for the entire organization and all its employees.

Second, the phrase “a set of institutions and processes” uses “institutions” in two ways: (1) “Institutions” refers to types of organizations that engage in marketing, for example, manufacturers, wholesalers, retailers, advertising agencies, distributors, and marketing research firms, and (2) “institutions” refers to the formal and informal norms that guide, inform, and regulate ethical, responsible, and legal marketing. For example, “treat suppliers fairly,” “do not engage in deceptive advertising,” and “do not, on penalty of the law, conspire to fix prices” are all societal institutions. The phrase “institutions and processes” also implies that the marketing systems in a society (e.g., channels of distribu-

<sup>8</sup>On June 1, 2007, the committee to review the definition of marketing sent its report to the AMA board of directors. The report included a unanimous recommendation for the board to accept the revised definition reported in this article. The board considered the report at its meeting on June 13 and returned it to the committee with the recommendation that the definition be shortened. After considering the board’s suggestions, the committee, by unanimous vote, revised the definition to read, “Marketing is the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large.” The board has indicated that it will consider the committee’s recommended revision in the fall of 2007.

<sup>9</sup>Although these suggestions are drawn, in part, from the committee’s report to the AMA board, this does not imply that all members of the committee would endorse all the suggestions.

tion, networks, supply chains) are central to the practice and study of marketing. Understanding, developing, and maintaining marketing systems are important tasks for efficient/effective marketing practice; understanding, analyzing, and theorizing about marketing systems are important—but now often neglected (Wilkie and Moore 2003)—areas for marketing academic research.

Third, in the phrase “for creating ... market offerings,” it is important to point out to students and others that market offerings are being exchanged, not just tangible goods (Vargo and Lusch 2004). Drawing on resource-advantage theory, “a market offering is a distinct entity that (1) is composed of a bundle of attributes, which (2) may be tangible or intangible, objective or subjective, and which (3) may be viewed by some buyer(s) as a want satisfier” (Hunt 2000, p. 54).

Thus, the phrase “for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging market offerings” delineates four central components of marketing activity: (1) “Creating” means developing new (both radically new and incrementally new) market offerings, often as a result of marketing research that explores consumers’ needs, wants, tastes, and preferences. (2) “Communicating” implies the use of advertising, personal selling, sales promotion, and other vehicles to inform potential customers and clients about the availability and attributes of market offerings. (3) “Delivering” means the process of moving market offerings and their ownership from production to consumption, a process that often involves using intermediaries. (4) “Exchanging” market offerings captures the historical focus of the purpose of marketing and includes discrete, individual, or “transactional” exchanges and long-term, multiple, or “relational” exchanges. Note that exchanging implies that the parties find mutually agreed-on terms of exchange, including the prices of each of the components of the market offerings (e.g., the prices of the tangible goods, warranties, delivery).

Fourth, the phrase “market offerings that have value for customers, clients, marketers” identifies three key constituencies or stakeholders of marketing. (1) In the case of for-profit organizations, the constituency of customers is paramount. Indeed, customers’ perceptions of rivals’ market offerings determine their relative value. As resource-advantage theory puts it, for determining relative value, “consumer perceptions are dispositive” (Hunt 2000, p. 54). (2) In the case of nonprofit institutions (e.g., United Way, the Girl Scouts), although these organizations engage in marketing, they do not view themselves as having customers. Rather, they typically view themselves as having clients (or members and donors) for whom services are provided (and from whom donations are solicited). Again, nonprofit organizations’ client perceptions determine the relative value of the organizations’ market offerings. (3) The inclusion of “marketers” acknowledges that the objectives of the entities doing the marketing must be satisfied. Although for-profit organizations have many objectives, their primary objective is superior financial performance.<sup>10</sup> As to nonprofit organizations, each nonprofit organization’s primary objective is idiosyncratic.

<sup>10</sup>For an extensive discussion of why it is appropriate to refer to the firm’s primary objective as superior financial performance rather than, for example, profit maximization, see Hunt (2000, pp. 122–27).

Fifth, the phrase “market offerings that have value for ... society at large” acknowledges that, as I discussed previously, society is always the ultimate client for a truly professional discipline. The responsibilities framework for marketing maintains that marketing must be responsive to society’s need for high-quality products and services that are reasonably priced, responsibly promoted, and conveniently available. Therefore, the definition acknowledges that the ethical and responsible practice of marketing benefits society, and the normal, everyday practice of marketing, I argue, is ethical and responsible. That is, creating market offerings that have value to customers and clients benefits society. Communications about and the delivery of market offerings to customers and clients benefit society. Exchange benefits society. Therefore, marketing benefits society.<sup>11</sup>

However, the practice of marketing benefits society in a way that is seldom recognized within the marketing academic community: Marketing contributes to increases in productivity and economic growth. Over the past 50 years, there has been a revolutionary change in economics about the question of what causes economic growth. It is now universally acknowledged that the primary cause of economic growth is firm-produced, competition-prompted innovations that increase productivity (i.e., increase efficiency and effectiveness) (Grossman and Helpman 1994; Romer 1993, 1994; Solow 1994).<sup>12</sup> Therefore, the normal, everyday practice of marketing—creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging market offerings that have value to customers—promotes firm-level innovations that, in turn, increase firm-level productivity that, again in turn, increases industry-level productivity that, also in turn, increases societal-level productivity, which produces economic growth. Therefore, marketing benefits society by contributing to economic growth. Marketing practitioners do not start out with the objective of contributing to economic growth; it just works out that way. Q.E.D.

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<sup>11</sup>The literature in the “marketing and society” area focuses almost entirely on the alleged negative consequences of marketing on society. For a refreshing exception, see Ringold (2006).

<sup>12</sup>For an overview of the revolutionary changes taking place in growth economics, see Hunt (2000, pp. 179–204; 2007).

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