Pauline Arnold’s Contributions to Market Research

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Purpose
This study examines the contributions to early 20th century market research by Pauline Arnold. Arnold has been cited for her pioneering work in marketing (Zuckerman and Carsky 1990), especially for her emphasis on the need for marketers to understand the consumers’ perspective. However, Zuckerman and Carsky (1990) admitted that their study offered a “mere glimpse” of the contributions of women such as Arnold to early marketing thought and practice and suggested that more detailed studies of such individuals were in order. This study addresses that call by examining the career of Pauline Arnold. Her early work on radio audience measurement was path-breaking (Beville 1988) and her Arnold Research Service firm, founded in 1926, was one of the first market research companies to feature a nation-wide, resident field staff (Converse 2009). In 1931 she co-founded the Market Research Corporation of America (MRCA) which was, during the 1930s and 1940s, one of the largest and best known market research firms in America. Pauline Arnold is listed in American Women: The Official Who’s Who Among the Women of the Nation (Howes, 1936).

Figure 1. Pauline Arnold circa 1930

Background: Market Research in the Early 20th Century
The first market research in America was probably conducted by advertising agencies during the 1890s (Converse, 2009; Lockley, 1950). Some companies not specifically in the research business formed market research departments during the period 1910 to 1920. An early and notable example occurred in 1911 when Charles Coolidge Parlin was made director of a research department for the Curtis Publishing Company (Ward, 2009). Important institutional support developed in the academic community through the formation of the Harvard Business School’s Bureau of Business Research in
1911 and the founding of the National Association of Teachers of Advertising (NATA) in 1915 which in 1926 broadened its membership under the new name, National Association of Teachers of Marketing and Advertising (NATMA) and again in 1933 as the National Association of Teachers of Marketing (NATM). The NATM published the *National Marketing Review* (NMR) in 1935 and 1936. In 1931 a second association, the American Marketing Society (AMS), was founded and published *The American Marketing Journal* (TAMJ) from 1934 through 1936. Pauline Arnold was a founding member of the AMS and served on their New York Committee on Marketing Research Technique from 1934 through 1937. In 1936 the NATM and AMS had merged to form the American Marketing Association and their respective publications were replaced with the *Journal of Marketing* in 1937. A content analysis of the first 137 articles published during the early 1930s in *NMR* and *TAMJ* indicates that market research was a relatively popular topic, the subject of twenty of those 137 articles, and the *NMR* included a regular feature titled ‘Progress in Marketing Research’ (Witkowski, 2010, p.380) that continued to appear in the *Journal of Marketing* for some years. While there were few women among the membership of these primarily academic organizations and fewer still among the authors contributing to their publications, those organizations and publications nonetheless provided an important forum through which women could participate in marketing and market research.

Source Material

Because of limited archival source material relevant to Pauline Arnold’s life and no published accounts of her life, this sketch focuses primarily on her professional career and intellectual contributions. The *Lucy Sallick Papers* include some relevant primary source material such as correspondence, unpublished documents relating to the Market Research Corporation of America (MRCA), and the transcript of a 1995 oral history interview with Matilda White Riley who was Pauline Arnold’s step-daughter. The *Pauline Arnold Collection* at the University of Minnesota contains only notes and correspondence relating directly to the research and writing of one specific book, *Clothes and Cloth: America’s Apparel Business*, which was published in 1961.

An important primary, published source for this study is the periodical, *Market Research*, to which Arnold contributed numerous times under the auspices of the MRCA from 1934 through 1938. *Market Research* was a hybrid trade-academic journal published monthly by MRCA from April 1934 through to July 1938. The content ranged from academically-oriented feature articles by well-known authors including Paul Lazarsfeld, Paul Cherington, Daniel Starch, Rensis Likert, George Gallup, Edward Bernays, Ernest Elmo Calkins, and Roy O. Eastman, to association news and a help wanted section titled “The Research Man Market”. Arnold’s husband and MRCA co-founder, Percival White, wrote most of the editorials, but only one other article that identified him as the author. MRCA executives Pauline Arnold and Raymond Franzen occasionally wrote feature articles. Summaries and partial reports of survey work undertaken by MRCA were also sometimes published in *Market Research* and from March 1937 through to the final issue in July 1938, *Market Research* included a series of articles about the regulation of marketing. Thus, for five years *Market Research* provided an interesting and useful window into the operations of MRCA and was a convenient outlet for Pauline Arnold’s ideas about market research.

Numerous other published works by Arnold also provided insights into her interests and achievements. Themes running throughout that work include radio audience measurement (1933; 1934a; 1934b; 1935a; 1935b), women in market research (1947), industry studies (1935c; 1935f; 1959; 1960; 1961; 1968), history (1936; 1965; 1967), and the marketing concept – the notion that understanding and meeting consumers’ needs was essential to successful marketing (1935e; 1937; 1938).

References

Arnold, P. (n.d.), *Pauline Arnold Collection*, CLRC-1181, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN.


