

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN TWO STREAMS OF EARLY MARKETING PHILOSOPHY AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO CONTEMPORARY THEORY

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ABSTRACT

This paper compares and contrasts the theories developed by researchers at Harvard and the University of Wisconsin—two fertile campuses for early marketing thought. Each school's contributions are traced to the present day, showing disparate results. Six of twelve current "schools of marketing thought" appear to be descended from work done by these pioneers.

Harvard University and the University of Wisconsin were the original centers of influence on the development of marketing thought in the first two decades of the twentieth century. Bartels noted that the majority of the earliest marketing theorists were associated, at one time, with these two schools (Bartels 1951, p. 2). Their resultant works form the philosophic origin of marketing (Jones and Monieson 1990). Though researchers at both schools initially embraced the same philosophy of science, they operationalized their early theories differently. The Harvard approach was focused on the scientific, pragmatic case investigation of firms. On the other hand, the Wisconsin economist/marketers were influenced by the progressive "Wisconsin Idea," which emphasized the social implications of marketing theory. The proposition offered here is that both school's approaches have had a significant impact on later theory development, even on some contemporary marketing literature. But each school's impact was different. The focus of this paper is on these two pioneering schools and not others that came later.

A COMMON PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE

Both the Harvard and Wisconsin theorists shared the German Historical school of economics philosophy of science (Jones and Monieson 1990). The German Historical school emphasized the solving of real economic problems using historical, statistical studies of institutions in the economy. The Historical school can be called an inductive-statistical form of positivism. It arose in the latter part of the nineteenth century in German social science as an alternative to classical economics. Converts were dissatisfied with the inability of classical economics to resolve real problems like poverty, monetary manipulation and unemployment. Because the classical economic concepts of the "economic man" and "strict determinism" were deemed obsolete, the Historical school eschewed theoretical concepts for ideals. The German Historical school was transferred to the United States in the late nineteenth century in the form of German-educated American economists. The most influential of these scholars took positions at Wisconsin and Harvard during the period of 1890 to 1920 and helped create the discipline we now call marketing.

As Bartels (1951) noted, other centers of early marketing thought—Universities of Michigan, California-Berkeley, Illinois as well as Northwestern and Ohio State University—were home to other economists steeped in the German Historical school tradition. Though the German Historical school was probably also embraced by early twentieth century sociologists, political scientists and psychologists, they did not impact marketing thought until later decades.

THE HARVARD APPROACH

In 1908, Harvard University founded its School of Business with much input from its Economics Department. It was intended to be "focused on the real world of business and at the same time [be] truly academic in nature" (Cruikshank 1987). The school's first dean, Edwin Francis Gay, was a German-trained economist. He fully embraced the Historical school's use of inductive research to derive workable explanations of the real economic world. This philosophy, also called the institutional approach, promoted the sifting through facts and observations to build new business theory. In addition to institutionalism, the new business school embraced the *scientific method* belonging to the natural sciences. This scientific method involved the empirical testing of hypotheses generated from theory. The theories were thus deductively justified using empirical testing. In Gay's words, the business school was intended to become a "simple scientific endeavor" (Redlich 1957, ch. 2). Among the first manifestations of this scientific orientation was Frederick W. Taylor's *scientific management*, which involved detailed "time and motion" studies of work activities in production. Another manifestation was the incorporation of the pragmatic case methodology for teaching and research. Dean Gay required that instruction should be conducted by discussion of problems rather than by lecturing so students could learn the art of applying principles to any given enterprise. This was another remnant of the laboratory methods employed by the natural sciences.

Harvard's new marketing researchers were also influenced by this combination of Historical economic and natural science philosophies of science. In establishing their Bureau of Business Research in 1911, they sought to study the marketing side of distribution using scientific, quantitative methods. Arch W. Shaw, an original faculty member, believed that there was a uniformity of business needs and functions and that the purpose of research was to discover "how to's" of marketing (Jones and Monieson 1990, p. 109). His method of discovery was the "laboratory method" which included observation, measurement, and historical study. The outcome of Shaw's work was his revolutionary concept of "the marketing functions" (Shaw 1912). This was an articulation of the tasks performed by middlemen, and represents one of the very first "law-like" generalizations in marketing theory. Soon after, Melvin T. Copeland published his landmark version of Parlin's consumer goods classification scheme (Copeland 1923). This taxonomy was created to aid retailers in the formation of their marketing strategies. A student of Copeland, Neil H. Borden, furthered the "how to" tradition with a "compilation of marketing problems, both general and specialized" (Bartels 1951). It is clear the Harvard scholars' mission was to understand this new thing called marketing and develop ways to improve its practice.

THE WISCONSIN APPROACH

As at Harvard, economists were responsible for the beginnings of marketing thought at the University of Wisconsin. Richard T. Ely, the first director of Wisconsin's School of Economics, was trained in Germany under the Historical school of thought. Like the Harvard economists, he embraced the pragmatic, seminar method of teaching which combined theory with experience. From the time of its inception in 1892, the School's researchers used the inductive method of historical observation, measurement and description to create theory. But unlike Harvard, there was little incorporation of the scientific method, scientific management or the case methodology. In contrast, it would appear that the school was swept up in the state's Progressive Movement from about 1890 to 1912. "Fighting Bob" La Follette and his followers brought Wisconsin into the national limelight by breaking up the existing political machine and giving power back to the people. The liberal Progressives promoted social justice, regulation of corporate wealth, and making higher education and its fruits available to all citizens of the state. This credo was captured in the "Wisconsin Idea," which was a pledge to "make the University available to every home in the state" (Bogue and Taylor 1975, p. 252). In the spirit of the Idea, University scholars "sought to identify public problems, to stimulate public awareness and concern, to interpret public educational needs, to focus skills and resources upon them, and thence to translate University insights into a wide range of formal and informal educational service activities throughout

Wisconsin and beyond" (Graham 1949, p. 119). This doctrine of "service to the state" was implemented by the School of Economics by sponsoring research that was of obvious economic benefit to Wisconsinites (Curti and Cartensen 1949).

Since the state was dominated by agriculture, it is natural that these early marketers studied the dairy and grain industries. But the purpose of their inquiry was quite different from their Harvard peers. Because of the Wisconsin Idea, they sought to find out why, for example, consumers had to pay high prices for dairy products when farmers received very low prices for the same products. Their mission, being responsive to the state legislature who held the purse strings, was to understand the function of middlemen and recommend ways to make the process more efficient. So with an eye on social needs, the University of Wisconsin economists began studying marketing. When Henry C. Taylor studied the prices of eggs, butter and cheese in 1910, he concluded that "middlemen serve an essential function for which a price must be paid" (Taylor, Schoenfeld and Wehrwein 1913). Taylor later wrote of public concerns over the high prices, called "the marketing problem": "While our findings tended to sober those persons who had been speaking excitedly about the marketing problem, they made it perfectly clear that, in certain stages in the marketing of Wisconsin cheese, the agencies were not functioning properly" (Taylor 1941, p. 16).

Theodore Macklin came to Wisconsin in 1917 to specialize in agricultural economics. He too focused on "the greater good" of marketing systems with his seminal *Efficient Marketing for Agriculture* (Macklin 1921). Another contemporary, Paul H. Nystrom, was concerned with large marketing systems. He wrote two books, *The Economics of Fashion* (Nystrom 1928) and *The Economics of Consumption* (Nystrom 1929) to show how these systems served society. Similarly, Benjamin H. Hibbard (1921) described how local farmers worked together for joint benefit with *Cooperative Marketing of Dairy Products*. So it is clear that the University of Wisconsin marketing scholars used a historical, inductive perspective and a concern for the application of knowledge and skills to serve social interests.

SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE TWO SCHOOLS

Both Harvard and Wisconsin embraced the German Historical schools of philosophic thought in their theorizing of the science of marketing. This philosophy combined the positivist use of inductive, statistical observations of current and past events in order to generate ideals. American-born economists who studied in Germany brought this philosophy to both schools. Marketing thought at both schools was inaugurated by economists because of the growing gap between the macro viewpoint of market behavior and trade practice and the scientific management viewpoint of private enterprise (Jones and Monieson 1990). Also, the distributive processes due to the increasing separation of suppliers and demanders went unexplained. Thus, economists gave "marketing" meaning not only as a term but as an activity.

Although they shared the same philosophical heritage, the two schools had other influences that made their foci quite different. Harvard marketers borrowed the scientific method from their natural science colleagues and applied it to their pragmatic case methodology. The objects of their studies were firms. The goal was to understand and improve upon current practices. On the other hand, Wisconsin marketers were influenced by the Progressive Movement in the state, making societal welfare a goal for understanding marketing systems. This influence can also be traced to the institution that financed the majority of that state school, the legislature.

SOME OF THEIR PIONEERING THEORIES SURVIVE TODAY

Some of the components of contemporary marketing theory can be traced back to their humble beginnings at Harvard and Wisconsin. Sheth, Gardner and Garrett's (1988) taxonomy of the 12 "schools"

of marketing thought can be used to demonstrate these enduring influences. Though the first few are the classic perspectives dating from marketing's embryonic days, all have been extended by contemporary scholars and still hold explanatory power. Table 1 shows the influence Harvard and Wisconsin had on these 12 schools of thought.

Table 1			
Influence of Early Approaches on Contemporary Theories*			
THEORETICAL SCHOOL OF THOUGHT Influenced by:	Harvard	Wisconsin	Neither
The Commodity School—the physical characteristics of products and their resultant consumer buying behaviors	X		
The Functional School—the activities which must be performed during the marketing process	X		
The Regional School—shopping patterns of consumers, where they are most likely to buy, "laws of gravitation"		X	
The Institutional School—the organizations that are involved in the entire marketing process		X	
The Functionalist School—Wroe Alderson's unique look into the exchange process: heterogeneity of demand and supply			X
The Managerial School—the famous, practically-oriented group of simple concepts: PLC, "Mix", segmentation, "myopia"	X		
The Buyer Behavior School—the consumer's actions and the study of reasons behind them: the fastest growing school			X
The Activist School—critique of the impact marketing has on the social and natural environment			X
The Macromarketing School—marketing is not conducted in a vacuum; environmental and societal forces important		X	
The Organizational Dynamics School—interorganizational behavior is the key to understanding marketing process			X
The Systems School—holistic belief that the total is more than the sum of the parts; societal and living systems perspective			X
The Social Exchange School—marketing is applicable to <i>all</i> social transactions, not just economic ones			X

* adapted from (Sheth, Gardner and Garrett 1988)

The Commodity School

This school was heavily influenced by the early Harvard approach to marketing theory, since Melvin Copeland, a Harvard pioneer, was the most influential early writer in this area. Copeland modified

Parlin's classification of products into the convenience, shopping, and specialty goods categories (Copeland 1923). He used this classification to show how the physical characteristics of these products were related to consumer buying habits. In keeping with the scientific method influence at Harvard, Copeland and other researchers believed that if the goods exchanged in the marketing process could be classified into a rational system, marketing could gain legitimacy as a genuine science. More recent theorists have extended and modified Copeland's theory. Aspinwall used colors to differentiate three types of products (red, orange and yellow) and chose five characteristics for classifying goods—replacement rate, gross margin, adjustment, time of consumption, and search time (Aspinwall 1958). At the same time, Holton emphasized the consumer's role in determining the shopping for each goods type (Holton 1958). This work ties to very recent work in the Buyer Behavior School regarding the benefits and costs of additional search information, called "search theory" (Newman 1977; Punj and Staelin 1983). The psychological theory of cognitive dissonance was incorporated into the Commodity School's definitions by Kaish (1967). Ramond and Assael showed how to incorporate the perspectives of both consumers and producers/distributors in the goods classifications scheme (Ramond and Assael 1974). Holbrook and Howard (1977) extended the Commodity School by adding a fourth classification, the preference good. Enis and Roering (1980) used this fourth good and Marketing Management School concepts to update the theory for current use.

In summary, the Commodity School has always retained its founding fathers' inclination to develop a "marketing management cookbook." For practitioners, it remains an elegant and useful set of concepts.

The Functional School

Another surviving Harvard influence is the Functional School, which focuses on the activities that must be performed during the marketing process. As covered earlier in the Harvard section, Arch Shaw was the founding father of this perspective. If the commodity school can be characterized with the "what" of marketing, then "how" applies to the functional school (Sheth, Gardner and Garrett 1988). In his seminal paper, Shaw (1912) listed five marketing functions of what we now call distribution: sharing risk, transporting goods, financing operations, selling & promoting, and assembling/assorting/ reshipping. A contemporary, L.D.H. Weld, broadened Shaw's functions to those not performed by middlemen (Weld 1916). Later, due to continued popularity of this school, Edmund McGarry (1950) offered yet another review of the functions. McCarthy popularized the four main functions proposed by the other researchers in the now-famous "Four P's" (McCarthy 1960). Little work has continued in this school, largely because of differences in opinion of the functional lists and concerns of "compartmentalizing" marketing into simplistic functions. However, the contribution of the early Harvard theorists endures today in the organization of both business schools and firms; they both are subdivided by function.

The Regional School

This school perceives marketing as a form of economic activity designed to bridge the geographic gaps between buyers and sellers. The first appearance of this conceptualization was William J. Reilly's book *Law of Retail Gravitation* in 1931. This was a mathematical model of where consumers were most likely to do their shopping. This modeling was especially useful for setting retail location strategy. E.T. Grether has "carried the torch" for this school, from his teachings in the 1930s to his most recent Journal of Marketing article (1983). He has focused on the flows of products among regions of the country based on the relative resource abundance. Finally, the most recent Regional Schools activity is heavily quantitative, but still applied to retail store location. Although not initiated until well after the University of Wisconsin marketers started their work, the Regional School could easily encompass some of their concepts. Specifically, two studies "The Marketing of Wisconsin Cheese" (Taylor, Schoenfeld and Wehrwein 1913) and "Seasonal and Geographic Distribution of Wisconsin Cheddar Cheese for the

Year 1911" (Schoenfeld 1914) included a geographic analysis of where cheese was produced and where it was consumed. The authors looked at middlemen who executed this spatial distribution and made assessments of the overall efficiency from both the farmer and consumer perspective. This work appears to be a close, and perhaps, *unrecognized* parent of the Regional School.

The Institutional School

This school bears a close resemblance to both the Commodity and Functional Schools. While the latter two accentuated the importance of the types of goods exchanged and the activities conducted in the course of exchange, the Institutionalists focused on the organizations that were involved in moving products from the producer to the consumer. Sheth, Gardner and Garrett provide an excellent perspective on the founding of this school:

The institutional school emerged in the 1910s largely because of a perception among consumers that prices they were paying at retail stores for agricultural products were unjustifiably high. Specifically, consumers could not understand the necessity for the size of the markup between the prices paid to the farmer and the retail prices in the stores. This feeling of mistrust and confusion is understandable when one realizes the rapid and extreme sociological transitions occurring during the early decades of the twentieth century. Many consumers were moving away from rural areas to booming urban areas. The new city dwellers were accustomed to very short and direct marketing channels, where they either produced their own food products or brought them directly from the producers. They were unprepared for the higher prices attendant with the more elaborate marketing channels needed to bring the same food products to their new homes in the cities of America (Sheth, Gardner and Garrett 1988).

This is the school most associated with the Wisconsin group of marketing creators. As shown above, the Progressive Movement compelled Taylor, Macklin, Hibbard, Nystrom and others to find out why those prices were changing. The definitive early book on Institutionalism was written by Ralph Starr Butler, a Wisconsinite. Called *Marketing and Merchandising* (Butler 1923), it emphasized the utilities (elementary, form, place and time) that middlemen created for producers, consumers and society in general. A contemporary of the Wisconsinites, L.D.H. Weld, also deserves much credit for his early work, *The Marketing of Farm Products* in 1916. The chief growth of this school occurred in the period from 1954 to 1973, with the emergence of marketing channels and their structure. Major contributions came from McCammon (1963), Bucklin (1965), and Mallen (1963). Theorists abandoned this school in the early seventies when the behavioral orientation was incorporated in the Organizational Dynamics school. A total reliance on economic principles without the human component doomed the Institutional School.

The Functionalist School

This school is primarily a result of a single scholar, Wroe Alderson. Unlike the Commodity, Functional, and Regional Schools which were applied extensions of the economics field, the Functionalist School was developed with a more broad and holistic approach. The two central concepts of this school are the "organized behavior system" and the "heterogeneous market." It built on the previous schools but "positioned them in a larger totality" (Alderson 1965). This school does not have a direct connection back to the Harvard or Wisconsin founders.

The Managerial School

This theory owes its beginnings to the Harvard pioneer economists, especially Neil Borden. It was a response to the gap in early economics between the dominant macro focus and the practical world of business. This was close to the early Harvard Business School goal to create "how to's" for business practice. These pioneers advocated a more managerially-based approach to marketing. The Managerial School concepts are well-known and used to this day: "marketing myopia," the "marketing mix," and "market segmentation."

- * Borden is credited with the marketing mix idea (Borden 1964).
- * The "marketing concept" is a result of Managerial School authors McKitterick (1957), Keith (1960), and more recently Houston (1986).
- * Harvard's Ted Levitt made a major contribution with his "marketing myopia" article (1960).
- * Market segmentation is attributed to Wendell Smith (1956), and has been recently extended to product differentiation (Dickson and Ginter 1987), industrial markets (Doyle and Saunders 1985), and finally quantitative applications (Grover and Srinivasan 1987).
- * The product decisions area is another fertile area for this school's researchers. The most significant are the product life cycle (Day 1981; Levitt 1965), pricing (Dean 1950; Oxenfeldt 1973), and distribution (Magee 1960).

The Managerial School has had the most influence of any school upon the marketing profession. Practitioners use its concepts and professors teach its concepts. The school's practical and uncomplicated focus on business practice can directly be traced to that nucleus of Harvard pioneers. Unfortunately, not everything about the Managerial School is favorable; its dominant focus on marketing practice has tended to crowd out interest in marketing theory.

The Buyer Behavior School

All of the previous schools focused almost exclusively on the firm which creates and sells products. The Buyer Behavior (or Consumer Behavior) School is distinctly different. The scholars who helped initiate this stream of research felt that the traditional economic concepts of "economic/rational man" were simply irrelevant. They helped incorporate sociological and psychological theories of human behavior to help explain consumer's actions and the reasons behind them. As a school of thought, it has created the most interest in the field over the last twenty years. Since it represents a total about-face from the early economics-based theories of marketing, neither the early Harvard nor the Wisconsin approaches carried through.

The Activist School

The Consumer Movement that began in the 1930s helped spawn the Activist School, focusing on the imbalance of power between buyers and sellers. It has taken a decidedly normative stance, attempting to describe and eliminate malpractices of marketing by individual firms. Product safety and consumer information are two enduring topics for this school. Since the Activist School began well after the Harvard and Wisconsin group genesis, their theorizing bears little relation to the Activist School.

The Macromarketing School

Similar to the Buyer Behavior School, the Macromarketing School took a large turn away from traditional theories. The theorists in this school showed that marketing processes were not conducted

in a void, and that uncontrollable environmental factors have a tremendous effect on marketing activities. The macromarketing school sought to analyze and understand societal needs and their impact on marketing. Marketing began to be viewed as a social institution, one that should be held accountable like all others for achieving social objectives. Fisk investigated "the social consequences of marketing activity" (Fisk 1967, p. xvii). More recently, Hunt and Burnett (1982) have shown that marketing studies' inclusion of effects on society separate them from the traditional "micro" studies. All of the above work sounds reminiscent of those early Wisconsin concerns about the societal impacts of the new comers, middlemen. It appears that at least some of the liberal viewpoint engendered by the Wisconsin marketing pioneers has filtered down to current macromarketing thought.

The Organizational Dynamics School

The Organizational Dynamics school is concerned with the inter organizational behavior in the marketing process. Though it is related to the Institutional School in that both involve the organizations that perform the marketing tasks, the Organizational Dynamics school uses social and psychological concepts rather than economic ones. Beginning in the 1950s and '60s with the writings of Ridgeway (1957), Mallen (1963), and Stern (1969), this school has become extremely active in recent years. Contemporary writers are concerned with the organizational dynamics of distribution channels: sources of power, uses of power, conflict resolution and cooperation. Recently, this school has begun to incorporate the political economy framework from organizational theory and political science (Stern and Reve 1980). To the extent that the discovery of the institutions preceded the discovery of their organizational dynamics, the Organizational Dynamics school can be traced back to the early Harvard researchers and their Institutional School. However, the bulk of this body of knowledge is separate from those foundations.

The Systems School

The Systems School is based on the belief that the total is more than the sum of the parts. A holistic approach to the study of marketing is held, utilizing social and living systems perspectives. Forrester's multidisciplinary view of this school included the blending of the behavioral and quantitative sciences as necessary for the solution of complex problems (Forrester 1958). Alderson's Functionalist School is closely related to Systems; he viewed marketing from a total systems perspective. Though this school seems to have large ambitions of connecting marketing to other systems, contemporary theorists have restricted themselves to the systems surrounding each function of marketing (like product, distribution and communication). Because General Systems Theory was developed in the 1950s, long after the original conceptions at Harvard and Wisconsin, this school can be viewed as unrelated.

The Social Exchange School

The last school is one of the newest. It is based on the notion that the core concept in marketing is the *transaction*. Kotler wrote "a transaction is the exchange of values between two parties. The things-of-value need not be limited to goods, services, and money; they include other resources such as time, energy and feelings" (Kotler 1972). Bagozzi defined this exchange system as "a set of social actors, their relationships to each other, and the endogenous and exogenous variables affecting the behavior of the social actors in those relationships" (Bagozzi 1974, p. 78). He later subdivided exchanges into three categories: *outcomes, experiences and actions* (Bagozzi 1979). Only the first of these covered the "old" exchanges in marketing; economic ones. This broadening of the concept of marketing enabled researchers to extend marketing techniques to politics and religion. Marketing's founding fathers dealt only with economic transactions, so they had little influence on this innovative school of thought.

CONCLUSION: A TRICKLING DOWN HAS OCCURRED

Some of the contemporary marketing theories can be traced back to the pioneers at Wisconsin and Harvard. Six of the twelve contemporary "schools of thought" appear to be descendants of early work—three from Wisconsin and three from Harvard. Harvard pioneered the Commodity and Functional Schools of thought, and was directly responsible for much of the popular Managerial School. Wisconsin was most influential in the eventual development of the Institutional School, but also had a minor impact on the development of the Regional and Macromarketing Schools. However, neither Harvard nor Wisconsin researchers seem to have formed the foundation for the most modern theories of Functionalism, Buyer Behavior, Activism, Organizational Dynamics, Systems, or Social Exchange. These differ because they incorporate *non-economic* concepts from sociology, psychology, political science and organizational theory. These concepts were brought to marketing after 1920.

Early marketing thought was carried out by economists interested in the gap between macro economics and practical business enterprise. Most of these economists embraced the German Historical School's philosophy of science which included a positivistic faith in the objectivity of facts and a concern for problem solving. The most influential of these early marketers carried out their work at Harvard University and the University of Wisconsin during the period 1900-1920. However, the differences in the major influences on both campuses significantly altered the development of their theories. The Harvard approach included a focus on the pragmatic, scientific study of business enterprise in the hopes of making it more profitable. The University of Wisconsin, being a state-supported institution, was influenced by the Progressive Movement and in particular, the Wisconsin Idea, which stressed "service to the state." Researchers there sought to understand marketing distribution systems in the hopes of making them more efficient for the state's citizens. So Harvard's practical, business-oriented approach can be contrasted with Wisconsin's holistic, social impacts approach. Both approaches survive today.

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