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Better Marketing for a Better World

Rajesh K. Chandy, Gita Venkataramani Johar, Christine Moorman, and John H. Roberts¹

Consider the following quotes:

“The marketing discipline today constitutes a great paradox. The nation stands deeply troubled. It seeks solutions to grave problems both within and without its own society. Marketing and marketers are an integral part of this picture, either as a dimension of the problems or as a source of their solutions. Yet the emphasis of marketing study is not directed toward resolving issues of its social relevance, and there is strong and vocal sentiment in the field against being pulled in this direction... Relevancy is to be judged in the context of the true life and death issues which currently exist, such as war, poverty, racism, contamination of the environment, loss of self-identity, and the alienation of youth. Certainly, it is an appropriate time for marketers to reflect upon the relevancy of the marketing discipline in such a context.”

“Profits will continue to be essential and basic to corporate survival, but the major challenge to business today may be to meet the societal needs of a changing environment.”

The quotes above reflect concerns shared by many marketing academics and practitioners today about marketing’s role in creating a better world. Yet they also reflect opportunities lost. These quotes appeared almost exactly 50 years ago in the *Journal of Marketing* Special Issue on “Marketing’s Changing Social/Environmental Role,” published in July 1971. The first quote is from one of the articles included in that Special Issue, by Leslie Dawson (1971, p. 68) and the second is from the editorial by Eugene Kelley (1971, p. 1). Reading that Special Issue today, one is struck by the sense of hope represented in those scholars’ assessments of the gaps between the topics studied in contemporary research and the opportunities and obligations associated with contemporary society. An awareness of these gaps, the logic seemed to go, should yield interest and pressure on academics to fill them.

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How has the scholarly community of today fared in its pursuit of “better world” topics? How well have we lived up to the hopes of 50 years ago and the imperatives of today? Some answers to these questions are evident in the responses we received from a survey conducted in February 2021 among the Associate Editors and Advisory Board members of the *Journal of Marketing*. We asked these scholars for their views about research on “Better Marketing for a Better World” (BMBW). By BMBW, we mean the use of marketing activities and ideas to impact outcomes beyond just what is good for the financial performance of firms: BMBW emphasizes marketing’s role in enhancing the welfare of the world’s other stakeholders and institutions. To our first question, “How important is the topic of BMBW to the field of marketing?,” the mean response from these 44 scholars was 6.34 on a 7-point scale. More than 60% of these scholars gave the highest score (7) in response to this question. However, when asked “To what degree has the field addressed BMBW topics?” and “How effectively do you think the field has addressed BMBW topics?,” over 80% rated the current status of the field as 4 or below. While this is a select sample, our discussions with many other scholars point to the same conclusion.

This Special Issue on Better Marketing for a Better World is motivated by the gap that remains between what is studied in our field and what is possible. We believe that we still know too little about the role of marketing in improving—or harming—the world in which we live. Unless we broaden the set of outcomes we study and change the way we interpret marketing’s role, marketing scholars risk becoming detached from many of the most important challenges facing the world today—challenges to which marketing can contribute both positively and negatively (Kotler and Levy 1969). These challenges include persistent poverty, inequity, illiteracy, insecurity, disease, climate change, pollution, and human trafficking among many others. Even in wealthy nations such as the United States, large proportions of the population believe the world is getting worse and that the system is stacked against them (Rosling, Rosling, and Ronnlund 2018). Those perceptions are not necessarily wrong. The “American Dream,”

which many marketers helped shape, is an illusion for many (Chetty et al. 2014; Coskuner-Balli 2020). Discrimination based on gender, race, ethnicity, religion, and sexual orientation continue to keep millions from achieving their hopes and dreams (Crockett and Grier 2021; Bertrand and Mullainathan 2004). “Deaths of despair” caused by suicide, drug overdoses, and alcohol-related liver disease among non-college-educated white men and women have become so high that life expectancy for the U.S. population had begun to decline even before the COVID-19 pandemic hit (Case and Deaton 2020). Moreover, these issues are not confined to the United States. Social mobility has declined in many nations (Alesina et al. 2021). Extreme weather caused by climate change is uprooting lives and threatening livelihoods, while markets for green solutions are still largely nascent or poorly organized.

Surveying the challenges facing the world, a recent report commissioned by the CEOs of companies such as Alibaba, Mars, Merck, and Unilever (Business and Sustainable Development Commission 2017, p. 19) concludes: “Despite the economic and social gains of the past 30 years, the world’s current economic model is deeply flawed.” Marketing and marketplace exchanges are not peripheral to the world’s economic model; they are in fact central to it. The world has no shortage of consequential challenges that should interest marketing scholars.

Fifty years after authors and editors at the *Journal of Marketing* made the case for it, the need for the scholarly study of better marketing for a better world is even more intense. The research represented in this Special Issue demonstrates that our discipline has no shortage of talent nor tools with which to address these challenges. The record-setting number of 239 submissions that we received for this Special Issue suggests an intellectual ferment in our discipline that foreshadows new developments. Against this backdrop, we believe the time is ripe for BMBW research to occupy a more central position in the mainstream of marketing scholarship.

Towards the Center Stage: Rethinking Marketing for a Better World

During the past 50 years, the field has made noteworthy progress in its pursuit of BMBW research.² Many scholars—more than we can list—have drawn our field’s attention to research that is necessary and important in this domain. Indeed, some have devoted their lives to this cause. Insights from research have helped the push for change on a number of important issues, including tobacco advertising, deceptive advertising, labelling, recycling, and the application of marketing tools to non-profit and social marketing campaigns. Encouragingly, there has been a surge in empirical work in all the leading journals in the field. This work has covered topics as diverse as prosocial behavior, environmental sustainability, corporate political advocacy and fraud, consumer privacy, health, and education among others. Scholars have also begun to integrate empirical findings to develop conceptual frameworks and research agendas for specific BMBW topics (e.g., White et al. 2019).

Yet our survey results and discussions with members of the marketing scholarly community suggest that despite these important inroads, BMBW topics remain peripheral to the work of most scholars. Even today, rarely do doctoral dissertations focus on BMBW topics, rarely do sessions at our largest conferences feature BMBW discussions, and rarely do promotion and tenure committees find themselves assessing records of extensive publications on BMBW topics in leading journals. We have not yet fully realized the full scope of better marketing ideas. Neither have we fully realized the impact that better marketing can have on a better world. This section describes three ways in which BMBW work can achieve a more central role in our field.

First, we believe that many topics considered to be mainstream topics in marketing can be fruitfully viewed from a better world perspective. The authors featured in this Special Issue,

² BMBW topics have appeared in specialized journals (e.g., those at the intersection of marketing and public policy, ethics, and macro issues) and in articles and occasional special issues on topics such as this and the 1971 issues at *JM*, education at *JMR*, health at *Marketing Science*, transformative consumer research at *JCR*, and COVID-19 at *JPP&M*). Such topics are evident in discussions within special interest groups (e.g., the Marketing and Society SIG at the AMA) and in movements such as the Transformative Consumer Research initiative.

for example, cover a wide array of bread-and-butter marketing topics: salesforce management, price promotion, pricing, labelling, product design, product management, social media, the use of influencers, marketing education, marketing consulting, advertising, and targeting. They apply (or study the application of) these familiar marketing tools to better world outcomes. Consider the topic of salesforce management. Habel, Alavi, and Lisenmayer (2021, this issue) find that variable compensation incentive schemes have a negative effect on the mental and physical health of salespeople, increasing sick days and stress, especially among salespeople with fewer personal and social resources. These health outcomes detract from the sales gains achieved from this widely used salesforce management tool. Zhang, Chintagunta, and Kalwani (2021, this issue) examine the impact of social media and influencers on the adoption of an eco-friendly pesticide in rural China. And Kim, Gupta, and Lee (2021, this issue) showcase how CRM tools can improve fundraising approaches and outcomes for a non-profit scientific research center.

Second, we believe marketing scholars should take far more inspiration to find a role for marketing amidst better world challenges and opportunities. These are topics that might, at first glance, appear far from the domain of marketing. Take, for example, discrimination and inequity. Many in the field might view discrimination as the domain of sociologists and psychologists, not marketers. But consumer and consumption responses to stigmatization are surely squarely in the marketing domain (see Crockett 2017). Discrimination can be a by-product of mainstream marketing activities such as targeting and segmentation (Ukanwa and Rust 2020); it can be implicit in branding and marketing communications; it is often silently furthered by the algorithms used in marketing and, importantly, it can be mitigated by marketing training and sales initiatives (Chaney, Sanchez, and Maimon 2019).

Or take poverty, which remains a persistent problem around the world. Poverty is often studied by economists, demographers, sociologists, and the occasional consumer researcher (Andreasen 1975; Bryant and Hill 2019). But marketing can contribute to or help alleviate

poverty. Leading scholars have discussed the formative roles that building sales skills can have on the development of human capital and communities in many emerging markets (Ahearne 2019). How do other marketing practices such as franchise location decisions that limit access and opportunity, predatory financial services that prey on ill-informed consumers living paycheck-to-paycheck, or the targeting of fast foods in poor neighborhoods contribute to the challenges faced by poor consumers? What drives these practices and what can be done to mitigate and guard against them?

Third, we believe marketing scholars should consider how a better (or worse) world can and should influence marketing. As Jerry Zaltman—one of our interviewees for this editorial, who was also one of the authors published in the *JM* Special Issue fifty years ago—described it, “How can the internal world of a firm not be shaped by the external world?” Indeed, the environment around the firm—whether physical or otherwise—affects both what is done in marketing and how well it is done. How do (or how should) positive or negative changes in the environment change the way marketers think and behave? For example, climate change will likely affect nearly all aspects of marketing, including new product design, channels of distribution, and brand positions.

It is our belief that all three types of research questions belong in the mainstream of marketing scholarship. What gets in the way? Many things contribute, but we focus on a set of assumptions that drive thinking in the field as the most formidable barrier. We discuss these assumptions and issue a set of challenges to both scholars and gatekeepers. Following this, we announce a set of initiatives to the field.

Rethinking Assumptions

Who is the Primary Actor Appropriate for Study in Marketing?

Assumption: Marketing is what marketers do. At a superficial level, it may stand to reason that marketing scholars should focus solely on the activities of those with “marketing” in their job titles (e.g., marketing managers, CMOs). But, interestingly, many marketing activities

are actually done by individuals who would not consider themselves marketers first and foremost. Instead, they may be entrepreneurs, CEOs, general managers, data scientists, product developers, pricing strategists. Many are also working in non-commercial organizations as government officials, regulators, and societal critics of marketing. Fixating on the objectives of a narrow set of actors can prevent us from understanding the full impact and potential of marketing activities. For example, many social entrepreneurs see activities that we would regard as marketing, such as generating customer insights, as critical to their work. Conversely, many of those making pricing decisions would not call themselves marketers, yet their decisions profoundly affect who accesses their firms' offerings and who does not. For example, accessible pricing for important services such as mobile telephone services has a profound social impact on everything from education to health to poverty alleviation. These topics should serve as legitimate and valuable bases for marketing scholarship.

Recommendation: We should engage with the entire phenomenon of marketing rather than solely on the activities undertaken by actors who might define themselves as marketers. In addition to marketing managers, the protagonists in this Special Issue include marketing entrepreneurs, policy makers, social marketers, leaders of non-profit and NGOs, and consumers. For example, as summarized in Web Appendix 1, Garbinsky, Mead, and Gregg (2021, this issue) offer a marketing intervention that can be used by NGOs, policy makers, and financial institutions to increase consumer savings that works in both developed and third-world markets. As another example, Weihrauch and Huang (2021, this issue) offer guidelines for communications on healthy eating that can help policy makers fight the obesity epidemic.

Assumption: Marketing is what businesses—especially large businesses—do. Most marketing scholars hold their primary affiliation in business schools. Large corporations feature prominently in business school case study lists and recruiter rosters. For researchers, data on large companies are easier to come by. Nevertheless, there are good reasons why the problems of large corporations should not disproportionately preoccupy marketing scholars. Large

corporations employ a small fraction of those engaged in marketing activities in the world. Business school graduates increasingly pursue careers outside large corporations, including in the social and public sectors.

Further, even when they actively seek to do good, many (large) companies still define “better world” outcomes as peripheral to their strategic goals. Despite the efforts of some heroic CEOs and the pronouncements of groups such as the Business Roundtable (2019), the focus on BMBW in the context of large corporations too often seems to boil down to their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) ratings, and even those may be subject to spin and manipulation.

Recommendation: We should explore beyond the familiar large businesses most often studied in academic research in marketing. Anderson et al. (2021, this issue) focus on entrepreneurs and volunteer consultants and examine how marketing advice affects their growth and the survival of small firms in Uganda. Umashankar et al. (2021, this issue) focus on villagers in India and Tanzania and show how marketing education in the form of marketplace literacy training promotes well-being and entrepreneurship outcomes.

Even in contexts beyond large businesses, we see a related recommendation: we should consider the effect of marketing on more than just the *average* effect among consumers, firms, and markets. Averages can conceal variance that is critical to understanding better world outcomes. In a world of few winners and many losers, in a world of oligopolies and inequality, it is cold comfort to the many on the losing side if average outcomes improve. Analyses of heterogeneity in outcomes among consumers and firms offer the opportunity to explore asymmetries in gains and losses. For example, Wang, Lewis, and Singh (2021, this issue) show that cigarette excise taxes decrease smoking but result in stronger brands gaining share, while smoke-free restrictions result in stronger brands losing share. Mrkva et al. (2021) likewise observe that social marketing nudges work better for low knowledge consumers.

What Should be the Objectives of Marketing (and Research in Marketing)?

Assumption: The objective of marketing is to improve business profits and shareholder value. Of course, there are good reasons to adopt a focus on business profits. Many firms have a fiduciary obligation to do so. Profits offer a clear metric that imposes accountability on managers. Moreover, the financial logic of maximising shareholder value can be consistent with “Win-Win” outcomes for customers, employees, suppliers, communities, and the world at large (Table 1). However, even the field of finance is recognizing the pitfalls of a single-minded and too often myopic devotion to shareholder value (see Zingales 2020). As Rajan (2020) notes, “Ultimately, a corporation sinks or swims on whether it makes a desirable widget, but in order to do this sustainably, it has to weigh the interests of a broader set of stakeholders than just the shareholders.”

[Insert Table 1 here]

Looking beyond profits is important in part because evidence is piling up that too many contemporary markets are uncompetitive and that instead of earning profits by investing and innovating, powerful firms use political pressure to secure their advantages (Philippon 2019). In such contexts, markets fail to deliver. Rather than “Win-Win,” the outcome is “Win-Lose”—profits for firms and losses for the world at large (see Table 1).

Marketing scholars have the opportunity to document evidence on the consequences of bad actors and explain why and how marketing contributes to bad societal outcomes. A recent and potent example is the recommendation from McKinsey, the management consulting company, to use price rebates to promote opioids that we now know have devastated individuals, families, and entire communities (see McKinsey 2020). What can marketing learn from its societal critics? How should our research amplify these voices in the spirit of shaping better marketing practices for the world? Considering “Lose-Lose”—bad for the world and bad for the firm in the long run—research could seek to understand why these actions persist, with the goal of making them less common.

There are also many opportunities for researchers to examine the “Lose-Win” cell in Table 1. This scenario is manifested in the many situations in which it is unprofitable for firms to engage in a marketing action that benefits the world at large. How can they nevertheless be incentivized to apply their resources and capabilities and to engage in activities that lead to a “better world”? Many social enterprises, for example, rely on a combination of profits and grants to try to do good. Others collaborate with governments, NGOs, and grassroots entities to do so. What business models are appropriate in these contexts? What collaborations are most effective? What marketing activities offer the most leverage toward better world outcomes?

Recommendation: We should examine all four cells described in Table 1 to develop a full accounting of marketing’s impact on the world and the conditions under which each applies. For example, Bertini et al. (2021, this issue) show that win-win outcomes can be obtained by carbon offset programs, but increased climate concerns can paradoxically lead to an increased carbon footprint. Mookerjee et al. (2021, this issue) show how a lose-win situation of offering steep discounts for imperfect produce can be turned into a win-win situation by combining “ugly” labelling with moderate discounts to increase purchase of imperfect produce.

Assumption: Research in marketing should focus on customer or firm level outcomes. The outcomes we typically study in contemporary marketing research typically involve one of these two stakeholders. But what are the negative and positive spillovers of marketing activities beyond customers and firms? The impact of marketing travels much further than most of our research has acknowledged. As Wilkie and Moore (1999, p. 217) emphasize, “adopting the perspective of the aggregate marketing system helps a person ‘see’ the field of marketing in its true expanse and complexity. However, this perspective largely has disappeared from the marketing mainstream in recent years.” Over 20 years later, not much has changed.

Recommendation: We should place a greater emphasis on the spillovers—both positive and negative—of marketing. Sun, Bellezza, and Paharia (2021, this issue) observe a positive

spillover of spending more to purchase luxury goods—that the products last longer and are more likely to end up in secondary markets rather than in the landfill.

How can BMBW Topics be Studied?

Assumption: BW topics cannot be easily mapped into the marketing field. We believe that this assumption is not far removed from current reality. To illustrate this point, we conducted a text analysis³ of the words used in the manuscripts submitted to the BMBW Special Issue and compared these words to those used in a random sample of 184 reports that describe the UN Sustainable Development Goals.⁴ As a further contrast, we compared the words used in these two sets of documents to those used in *Marketing Management* by Kotler and Keller (2012, hereafter K&K). Results indicate very little overlap between the marketing documents and the UN documents.⁵

In terms of the nature of this disconnect, we observe differences in the three sets of documents in (1) the stakeholders addressed, (2) the activities and decisions those stakeholders undertake or are subject to, and (3) outcomes (see Web Appendix 2). In terms of stakeholders, the BMBW documents are similar to K&K with both documents focused on consumers, customers, and businesses. The UN documents, in contrast, address a larger set of stakeholder groupings (e.g., government, women, environment). Comparing the types of activities and actions, we find that both the BMBW submissions and K&K describe “doing” activities (e.g., decision, control, price), while the UN documents show a preponderance of advocacy and

³ We are grateful to Sanjana Rosario for undertaking this analysis on our behalf.

⁴ These documents were drawn from the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) in the Sustainable Development Goals Division and can be found at <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1Yje5pORDoLjfFG5ZolkIrDyEYQZm55k9l4GYxP-Bk3A/edit#gid=405080701>

⁵ We developed a natural language processing (word2vec) model to represent the 250 most frequently occurring words by a vector with 100 latent dimensions using cleaned and pre-processed text. Following this, we conducted a principal components factor analysis on these vectors. A k-means cluster analysis of a two-factor solution showed two clear and non-overlapping clusters, with only four of the BMBW and UN documents not falling within their own cluster. The average intra-cluster distance of BMBW and UN documents was 0.203 and 0.396 respectively, while the average inter-cluster distance between the documents was 0.869. As a further contrast, the average distance between the documents submitted to the BMBW Special Issue and K&K was 0.213, while that between the UN documents and K&K was 0.690.

evaluative words (e.g., enabling, encourage, and guidance). Finally, in terms of outcomes, many of the BMBW and K&K words relate to final outcomes (such as effect, value, and results), while the UN outcomes are more of an intermediate nature, describing enabling factors such as engagement, education, and growth.

Recommendation: For our field to reach research, practitioner, and beneficiary communities beyond our traditional ones, we should develop more diverse points of connection through which we can share ideas and insights. Indeed, the differences in language and areas of focus in our text analysis suggest that we have a large gap to bridge between the world of our scholarly community and that of many practitioners who are actively involved in the pursuit of better world outcomes. Doing so might require us to break out of familiar bubbles, and to immerse ourselves more fully in the contexts we seek to understand (van Heerde et al. 2021).

Another recommendation to bridge the gap is for authors to write “Marketing Implications” sections for their papers—a practice we encourage at the *Journal of Marketing*. We emphasize that marketing implications are not restricted to managers in firms: all actors who could engage in or influence better marketing are relevant here, including policymakers, educators, and societal stakeholders who challenge marketing activities. We ignore this fact at our own peril (Moorman et al. 2019). We are sure that journals have contributed to this narrowing of perspective, including the *Journal of Marketing*—a choice that cuts us off from the full implications of our ideas for the world. For those scholars worrying we will leave the firm behind, it is important to remember that the firm can and should learn from policy and societal implications if managers are to be effective.

Assumption: BMBW research is value-laden—not scientific. Although all research involves choices that reflect our values, getting involved in BMBW may make some scholars uncomfortable. It is indeed important that we remain scientific and objective, and our Call for Papers made it clear that there was no place for advocacy in the Special Issue. Yet we should also recognize that most research is value laden, with some values being more accepted or more

enduring than others. In fact, the very goal of maximizing business profits is value laden. We encourage scholars to remain truth tellers in their investigations and to not shy away from investigations that are social and political flashpoints.

Recommendation: We may sometimes have to acknowledge that controversy can be a byproduct of engaging with a better world, where evidence is often scarce and opinions polarized. At the same time, we should strive for independence and objectivity. For example, Robitalle et al. (2021, this issue) take on the challenge of organ donation. Strategies to increase donation rates are hotly debated in policy circles. These authors show that changing the design of the service encounter and the content of the appeal works to improve donation rates. Likewise, Gonzales et al. (2021, this issue) take on the highly politicized banning of plastic bags in Chile to understand where the policy design fell short.

Assumption: BMBW research comes at the expense of rigor. Milton Friedman (1970, p. 17) made this claim early: “The discussions of the ‘social responsibilities of business’ are notable for their analytical looseness and lack of rigor.” A more contemporary quote from one of our survey respondents reiterates this view: “I think prior work in this area sometimes gets coded as not ‘theoretical’ or sophisticated enough.” An assumption that also surfaces among academics discussing BMBW research is that it is difficult to undertake rigorously because of the lack of access to datasets and the difficulty of running field experiments to pin down the causal role of marketing actions in generating better world outcomes.

At the same time, if marketing academics believe that studying BMBW is critically important, as our survey results and numerous conversations indicate, then we need to determine how to bring rigor to this research. Big problems demand creative solutions. BMBW can actually provide an opportunity to apply new dimensions of rigor. Indeed, rigorous work is not unknown to the study of “better world” topics. Some scholars have even won Nobel Prizes for their work on topics such as poverty alleviation, externalities, and social justice. Crucially,

articles in this Special Issue provide a clear refutation of the idea that the study of BMBW comes at the expense of rigor (see Web Appendix 1).

Recommendation: We should strive to maintain rigor in our BMBW investigations. And we should do so within and across methods. Given the *Journal of Marketing*'s broad mission, it is particularly gratifying to see that the articles in this Special Issue apply a diverse set of methods including field experiments, quasi-experiments, lab and online studies, surveys, archival data, econometric models, analytical models, and qualitative interviews. We venture to guess that this is perhaps the most method-diverse Special Issue ever published in the field of marketing. As highlighted in Web Appendix 1, many papers utilize multiple methods, further enriching this diverse portrait. For example, Rifkin, Du, and Berger (2021, this issue) use a series of lab, online and field experiments to show that requests for small charitable donations can be broadly targeted, beyond prior donors and those who support the cause, simply by offering consumers an opportunity to express their identity.

Assumption: Doing research on BMBW topics is difficult, especially for junior colleagues. Research that can create impact at scale is not always easy or cheap to pursue. The timelines involved can be long. For those working in international contexts, distances—both geographic and cultural—can be challenging. Objectives may not be widely agreed upon, partly for reasons we have noted before. It follows that metrics for BMBW may also be contentious. Given all this, returns will appear uncertain relative to the risks involved. Well-meaning advisors might warn their students to “stay mainstream” and adopt dissertation topics that can be easily conquered in the time they have. The result is that many young scholars who care deeply about these issues do not pursue BMBW topics in their formative years, hoping instead to do so later in their careers. However, for many, this opportunity never materializes. We are reminded of the quote by Warren Buffet (Carricaburu 1996, p. D5), “You can transform yourself into the person you want to be, but you have to decide early. The chains of habit are too light to be felt until they’re too heavy to be broken.”

Recommendation: We should be bold in following our passions and ideals. Many marketers entered the profession in the belief that their thinking and their actions could help contribute to a better world. Applicants to PhD programs in marketing today frequently list this belief as a major rationale for their applications and conversations with them suggest that many are sincere in their desire to contribute to a better world through marketing scholarship. Though challenges do exist, so does an openness to fresh new ideas. Moreover, these challenges are not qualitatively different from those in any new area at the cusp of going mainstream. Risky ideas can be combined with less risky ideas in a portfolio of research. Further, risks and the efforts required to mitigate them are potentially more feasible in the early stages of one's career when teaching and service obligations may be fewer.

To our delight, this Special Issue involves papers in which Ph.D. students and recently hired junior faculty have played an important role, including Katherine Du (UW-Milwaukee), Ashley Goreczny (Iowa State University), Sungjin Kim (University of Hawai'i), Sid Mookerjee (University of British Columbia), Jacqueline Rifkin (University of Missouri-Kansas City), Zhengyu Shi (University of Hong Kong), and Jennifer Sun (Columbia University), Wanqing Zhang (City University of London).

Assumption: BMBW research can only be targeted at niche journals, not mainstream journals. One of our survey respondents framed this assumption thus: "The major journals typically emphasize theoretical advances, and BMBW work, by its very nature, tends to be more applied." In the last year alone, many leading marketing journals have published special issues focused on better world outcomes, so this assumption is also slowly being put to rest. Even so, this perception is widely prevalent, and the pace of change may need to pick up. Many survey respondents made comments such as: "There are many barriers, including journals being less open to this type of research;" "Greater appreciation for the topic [is needed] by editors/journals;" and "...journals/reviewers are usually rather rigid in their thinking/reviewing style."

Recommendation: We urge authors to retain their ambition to speak to the mainstream of marketing when addressing BMBW topics. To do so, we cannot only rely on the open-mindedness of reviewers. It is best to anticipate and pre-empt the question that confronts any scholar who seeks to introduce new topics to the field: “Why does this topic belong in marketing?” Sell your ideas as marketing relevant (MacInnis et al. 2020).

We also urge editors and reviewers of leading journals to adopt a forward-looking stance to determine what *could* (or indeed should) belong in our field. We should be prepared to champion and shepherd some papers through the process even if it means overruling reviewers. The editors of the *Journal of Marketing* are open to these papers and we hope this Special Issue sends a signal about our commitment to this area.

An Invitation

The authors in our Special Issue made the leap across the chasm imposed by the aforementioned assumptions. The Special Issue, to our delight, covers many important challenges facing the world, including sustainability and climate concerns, poverty and development, health, and increasing prosocial giving as a way of mitigating some of these challenges. Web Appendix 1 lists the papers by each topic and also catalogues the set of geographies covered, including developed markets such as the United States, Canada, and Germany and developing and emerging markets such as China, Brazil, Chile, India, Uganda, and Tanzania.

We invite you to make this leap as well--to look at pressing social issues and to ask some simple questions: Does this topic belong in marketing? How could you frame this topic as a marketing question? From these questions would emanate other questions: Why is the outcome important to marketing? Does marketing exacerbate the problem? Does marketing have the potential to provide a solution to or an explanation for the problem?

We asked marketing and consumer research scholars from across the field to reflect on these questions in sessions that we hosted at AMA and ACR conferences as part of the Call for

Papers for the Special Issue.⁶ They generated many interesting perspective and angles to connect better marketing to a better world and we urge you to take inspiration from their ideas as well as a set of topics we generated in our call.⁷ Our hope is that both will serve as inspiration long after this Special Issue.

Proposed BMBW Initiatives for the Discipline

As a coda to this Special Issue, we are announcing a set of initiatives to help address the barriers and to support the marketing community in this area.

1. ***BMBW Workshops*** to build a community of interdisciplinary scholars: We plan to conduct a monthly online workshop series that will be initially funded by the Wheeler Institute for Business and Development and the *Journal of Marketing*. This series will feature speakers addressing better marketing for better world topics within the marketing discipline. This team of editors will do the initial outreach for the series and in order to help develop the field, preference will be given to research that is in development and could benefit from input from other scholars. We see an opportunity for a field-wide annual conference on BMBW that could build more community and foster the interdisciplinary bonds that will likely unlock the best solutions to better world problems.
2. ***BMBW Training*** to impart knowledge and skills: Our doctoral training as well as socialization into research in the field of marketing too often ignores BMBW and does not offer relevant knowledge and skills to new members of the profession or to those seeking to make the transition to work on BMBW topics. To address this barrier, we commit to launching a research proseminar covering different topics for 12 weeks—in June and July—starting in 2021. The proseminar will pool expertise from the global community of scholars and will be open to all scholars interested in learning about topics, tools, and methods that can help illuminate the more complex research problems posed by a BMBW focus.
3. ***BMBW Data Initiative*** to provide a BMBW data repository: To address the availability of data, we will initiate a data collation exercise that draws researchers' attention to the possibilities for empirical research using new and existing datasets. We will work with the creators of these datasets to offer input and training on how to use these datasets effectively to study BMBW topics. We will maintain a BMBW website with a repository of these datasets and links to existing datasets. The training in point (2) above will also address how these different datasets can be leveraged to study BMBW.
4. ***BMBW Research Proposal Challenge*** to encourage further cutting edge, cross-disciplinary work: To seed ambitious BMBW research, we will host a competition that will encourage submissions of research proposals that address challenging BMBW topics. We envision the possibility of a pan-marketing award for the top BMBW paper published across journals.

Conclusion: A Call to the Marketing Discipline

⁶ <https://www.ama.org/rethinking-marketing-scholarship-from-a-better-marketing-for-a-better-world-perspective/>

⁷ <https://www.ama.org/2018/09/12/better-marketing-for-a-better-world-special-issue-journal-of-marketing/>

The winds of change in science, regulation, demographics, and the physical environment open up new opportunities for marketing to make an impact on the world at large. New technologies are connecting ideas, resources, individuals, firms, societies, and markets in unprecedented ways. Those who harness these changes can shape aspirations, identities, and notions of right and wrong, as well as identify opportunities to address them. Thanks in part to the activities of those who have already done so, in many ways the world has never been more prosperous, safe, educated, or equal (see Maddison 2001; Rosling, Rosling, and Ronnlund 2018). Yet the world has no shortage of challenges to address. The marketing discipline has no shortage of talent with which to tackle these challenges and these opportunities.

If we cannot transcend our own scholarly tribes and explore beyond the familiar, then it will be a failure of ambition on our part. If we cannot demonstrate to the next generation of scholars that better world outcomes are central to our field, then it would be our failure to inspire. If we cannot marshal the power of ideas and facts to speak with the powerless and to speak truth to power, it would not just be a failure of imagination. It would be a tragedy and a dereliction of our duty as scholars.

We can do more. We can do better...for a better world.

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Table 1: The Impact of Marketing

Good for society			
		No	Yes
Good for the marketer	No	<i>Lose-Lose</i> How to avoid myopic actions?	<i>Lose-Win</i> How to sustain marketing actions that are financially unviable, but can do good? (e.g., Public-Private Partnerships, grant funding, charity)
	Yes	<i>Win-Lose</i> How to expose and avoid the dark side?	<i>Win-Win</i> How to enable marketing actions that benefit multiple stakeholders?

Note: "Good" defined as long-term positive outcomes.