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# 4

## Marketing ethics

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### Introduction

The field of marketing ethics has matured in recent years. If one were to apply the product life-cycle concept to it, the introductory stage would be the 1960s and 1970s, while the growth period occurred during the 1980s and 1990s (as will be noted later, the most articles on this topic were published in the 1990s), and the time since the turn of the century could be labelled as the maturity stage. The earliest work appeared in the 1960s and was mostly published in the *Journal of Marketing*. The 1970s and 1980s saw marketing ethics topics beginning to be published with some regularity in other academic journals. According to Murphy (2002: 166), 'marketing ethics came of age in the 1990s. At that time, substantial attention was devoted to it in the academic and business press. Marketing ethics, then, moved from being called an 'oxymoron' to a subject of academic legitimacy. Since the turn of the century, more scholarship has been devoted to this topic but most of it is now being published in specialty journals rather than ones that most marketing academics would consider as top tier.

At the outset, it is important to characterize the field of marketing ethics and its theoretical underpinnings. The definition that will be used here is: 'Marketing ethics is the systematic study of how moral standards are applied to marketing decisions, behaviors and institutions' (Laczniak and Murphy, 1993: x). Many observers view marketing ethics as a subfield within business ethics, much like ethics in finance, accounting, human resources and quantitative analysis. Business

ethics is also considered to be an 'applied' area similar to legal or medical ethics. The theoretical foundation is often viewed as coming primarily from moral philosophy, but other disciplines associated with ethics are law, psychology and theology.

One barometer that a field is maturing and gaining a substantial literature base is the publication of review articles on the topic. During approximately the last 30 years, a number of such articles have been written on marketing ethics. The first was Murphy and Laczniak's review piece (1981) where they characterized this area at that time as being mostly comprised of philosophical essays. Another review article focusing on marketing ethics was published in the *Journal of Business Ethics* a few years later (Tsalkis and Fritzsche, 1989). Since 2000, three such efforts have been undertaken, with Whysall (2000) focusing primarily on work undertaken in Europe, and Nill and Schibrowsky (2007) emphasizing some of the more recent work in the field. An extensive literature review that traces marketing ethics back to its roots in the 1960s has just been published (Schlegelmilch and Oberseder, 2009). They categorize almost 550 articles on marketing ethics according to 18 areas and draw several conclusions about the state of the field.

Another indicator that any subfield has standing within the overall discipline is articles appearing in major research anthologies on a topic. In recent years, marketing ethics, societal marketing and corporate social responsibility have chapters devoted to them in several important handbooks including Bloom and Gundlach (2001), Gundlach et al. (2007) and Kotabe and Helsen (2009). This chapter's inclusion in the second edition of *Marketing Theory* is another testament to the fact that marketing ethics is seen to be a legitimate subfield in marketing.

Still another factor is the publication of textbooks on a particular subject. Six texts (excluding anthologies or casebooks) have been published to date on marketing ethics. The first two appeared in 1993 (Laczniak and Murphy; Smith and Quelch). Two followed in that decade (Chonko, 1995; Schlegelmilch, 1998). (For a brief description of these four books, see Murphy (2002).) Since 2000, only two new books have been published. Murphy et al. (2005) introduced an updated version of the Laczniak and Murphy book and changed the title to *Ethical Marketing* to reflect a more positive approach to the subject. Most recently, Brenkert (2008) wrote a new text on marketing ethics from a more philosophical perspective. The fact that most of the books have not been revised is a signal that few courses on marketing ethics are offered in business curricula throughout North America and Europe.

Although 58 journals (Schlegelmilch and Oberseder, 2009) have been identified as publishing articles in marketing ethics, the vast majority of the work in this area appears in a handful of them. The dominant outlet is the *Journal of Business Ethics* which has featured nearly 30 per cent of all articles over the years and has a dedicated section editor for marketing ethics. Marketing ethics has been the focus of several special issues of *JBE* (for a synopsis, see Murphy (2002)). Other academic journals that have published several marketing ethics articles in the last two decades include *European Journal of Marketing*, *International Marketing Review*, *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, *Journal of Advertising*, *Journal of Public Policy & Marketing* and *Marketing Education Review*. Two other major business ethics journals, *Business Ethics Quarterly* and *Business Ethics: A European Review*, have only included marketing ethics articles on a sporadic basis.

## Theoretical focus in marketing ethics

As noted above, the theoretical foundation of all ethics is moral philosophy and several other disciplines. Marketing ethics too draws from these areas. However, substantial efforts have been made by a number of scholars to build a theoretical basis for the field that extends its social science roots. Table 4.1 summarizes 19 different articles that have contributed to the growing theoretical basis for marketing ethics. In this section several of them will be discussed in detail.

The first article that could be considered a major theoretical contribution was Laczniak (1983) on frameworks for normative ethics in marketing which he presented as a series of questions based on nonteleological works by leading twentieth-century philosophers. Ferrell and Gresham's (1985) *Journal of Marketing* article

Table 4.1 Frameworks for ethical decisions-making in marketing

Article approach(es)	Level/focus	Orientation	Normative approach(es)	Use of detailed examples
Abela and Murphy (2008)	Individual and corporate managers	Normative	Service-dominant logic and the separation thesis	Multiple success metrics and cash flow
Dunfee, Smith and Ross (1999)	Individual marketers and society	Normative	Integrative social contracts	Bribery
Enderle and Murphy (2009)	International marketers	Normative	Rawls, human rights, Golden Rule	American Marketing Association norms & values
Ferrell and Gresham (1985)	Individual marketers	Descriptive (framework)	Dependent on decision maker	None
Hunt and Vitell (1986)	Individual marketers	Descriptive (model of decision-making)	Deontological/teleological	Two short scenarios (gifts, auto safety)
Laczniak (1983)	Marketing decision makers	Normative	Nonteleological (Ross, Rawls and Garrett)	Six short scenarios
Laczniak (1999)	Individual and corporate managers	Normative	Catholic social thought	Vulnerable consumers
Laczniak and Murphy (2006)	Individual, corporate and societal responsibility of managers	Normative	Duty- and virtue-based ethics	American Marketing Association norms & values
Laczniak and Murphy (2008)	Marketing managers	Normative	Rawls	Vulnerable consumers

(Cont d)

Table 4.1

Article approach(es)	Level/focus	Orientation	Normative approach(es)	Use of detailed examples
Mascarenhas (1995)	Marketing decision makers	Instrumental/ diagnostic	Pluralistic	Breast implants, consumer use profiles
Murphy, Laczniak and Wood (2007)	Individual and corporate marketers	Normative	Virtue ethics	Lego, UPS, Harley Davidson
Nantel and Weeks (1996)	Individual marketers	Normative	Deontology	None
Nill (2003)	Individual marketers	Normative	Communicative ethics	AIDS drugs, WTO
Nill and Shultz (1997)	Individual marketers	Normative	Dialogic ethics	None
Robin and Reidenbach (1987)	Multilevel (societal/ organizational/ individual)	Normative	Descriptive (contextual, bounded relativism)	None
Santos and Laczniak (2009)	Multinational Marketing managers	Normative	Integrative justice model	Marketing to the poor
Smith (2001)	Individual marketer	Normative		
Thompson (1995)	Individual marketer	Instrumental/ normative	Ethics of care/ ethical relativism	None
Williams and Murphy (1990)	Multilevel (individual, organization)	Normative	Ethics of virtue	Johnson & Johnson, Nestlé

Source: Partially adapted from Dunfee et al., 1999: 15.

was the second contribution of this type to appear in the literature. They examined a contingency framework for ethical decision-making in marketing and drew from several different literatures in developing their model. While they did not explicitly apply the usual background theories in the article, they stated: 'marketers develop guidelines and rules for ethical behavior based on moral philosophy' (1985: 88). Probably the most widely cited and applied theory in marketing ethics was published a year later by Hunt and Vitell (1986). They called theirs a 'general theory' of marketing ethics and, as indicated in Table 4.1, both deontological and teleological arguments were used to ground their theory. As will be noted in the next section, many articles have subsequently appeared testing aspects of this model. Robin and Reidenbach (1987) posited a framework for integrating social responsibility and ethics into the strategic marketing planning process.

As shown in Table 4.1, the decade of the 1990s was a fruitful time for the scholarly efforts on ethical theory in marketing. It seems noteworthy that the

authors of these works are all different with one exception from those discussed above. A conclusion that can be drawn was that theory development in marketing ethics was not at this time the province of just a few marketing scholars. Williams and Murphy (1990) introduced the ethics of virtue into the discussion as a foundation for marketing ethics and this article was partially in response to Robin and Reidenbach (1987) who did not utilize this theory in their analysis. Three articles appeared in 1995 and all were published in different journals. Smith (1995) formulated a test of consumer sovereignty that requires marketers to establish that consumers can exercise informed choice. Mascarenhas (1995) proposed a diagnostic framework for assessing the individual responsibilities of marketing executives for the consequences of their unethical actions. Thompson (1995) used a contextualist, rather than a normative, approach to conceptualizing and studying marketing ethics. Nantel and Weeks (1996) argued for the superiority of duty-based thinking over utilitarian guidelines for making ethical marketing decisions. Drawing on the European tradition of dialogic idealism, Nill and Schultz (1997) contend that solving ethical issues in marketing is related not so much to opportunity as will. Dunfee et al. (1999) proposed that integrative social contracts theory (ISCT) was a useful theory to apply to ethical questions in marketing. They advanced the ISCT decision process (1999: 21) which is predicated on multiple communities and multiple competing norms. Laczniaik (1999) introduced the notion of Catholic social thought as another important foundation for marketing ethics. He noted that principles such as the dignity of the person, stewardship and the importance of treating vulnerable markets fairly can be applied to many issues facing marketing ethics.

Table 4.1 depicts a different picture for the early years of the twenty-first century. Most of the theoretical work that has been undertaken in marketing ethics during this decade can be attributed to Laczniaik and Murphy and their co-authors. Seven articles have appeared since 2000 and they have been involved in all but two of them. Smith (2001) proposed that normative ideas are central to the development and application of marketing ethics in a response to an article that called into question the field of marketing ethics (Gaski, 1999). The Abela and Murphy (2008) article shows how marketing ethics and integrity are integral to the application of the service-dominant logic paradigm. They identify seven tensions that exist between current marketing theory and ethics. In their groundbreaking work on a new dominant logic for marketing, Vargo and Lusch (2004) have challenged the marketing profession to look at marketing as having services, not tangible goods, as the central organizing framework for the field. These services are co-created by the marketer and consumer. Enderle and Murphy (2009) explored the relevance of ethics and corporate responsibility for marketing in the global marketplace. Several theoretical underpinnings for ethics and corporate social responsibility (CSR) in marketing were advanced: an overlapping consensus from John Rawls (1996); the Golden Rule; human rights; and human capabilities (Enderle and Murphy, 2009: 515–17). Nill (2003) examined normative concepts in international marketing ethics and proposed that a dialogic approach was superior to other conceptualizations.

Laczniak and Murphy (2008), in an introduction to a special issue of the *Journal of Macromarketing*, stated that one of the overarching issues with regard to assessing distributive justice in marketing are the questions: what is fair? Or, whose conception of fairness should be used to settle competing marketing claims? They too invoked Rawls' (1999) notion of fairness and his powerful notions of the original position, veil of ignorance and difference principle (Laczniak and Murphy, 2008: 8). In their most recent work Santos and Laczniak (2009) develop a new normative framework for marketing to the poor. It is called the 'integrative justice model' and is built on seven important elements. This marketing to impoverished segments integrated several concepts that are widely used in the ethics and CSR literature: a stakeholder perspective; the triple bottom line approach; socially responsible investing; and the sustainability perspective (Santos and Laczniak, 2009: 10–11).

The final two articles discussed here have both been recognized with 'best paper' awards from the journals that published them and have had an impact on marketing scholarship since these works were selected from a competitive set that included articles on many other marketing topics. The Laczniak and Murphy (2006) article was entitled: 'Normative perspectives for ethical and socially responsible marketing'. Thus, the focus was decidedly normative and seven 'Basic Perspectives' (BPs) were advanced. Figure 4.1 shows the seven essential BPs and how they fit together. Each builds on the next and BP1 notes that ethical marketing puts people (e.g. customers, employees, managers, etc.) first or at the centre, as is shown in Figure 4.1. BP2 focuses on legal and ethical questions and basically says that ethics creates a higher standard for managers than the law does. There are three central elements (intent, means and ends) to BP3, and four types of managers (i.e. egoist, legalist, moral strivers and principled) in BP4. There are five points related to BP5, six stakeholders are identified in BP6 and a seven-step model for making ethical decisions in BP7. In addition to extensive discussion of each of the seven BPs, Laczniak and Murphy draw ethical lessons from this set and provide implications for researchers, managers and educators. The authors conclude with the following synopsis:

**This article presents a comprehensive, normative examination of ethical marketing practice. Our approach is firmly grounded in the centrality of exchange to marketing and the inherent role of societal outcomes attributable to the marketing system. Seven BPs are advanced, and each builds on the preceding ones. Furthermore, the sophistication of ethical analysis that is required by the marketing manager escalates as one internalizes these perspectives because they are integrative. (Laczniak and Murphy, 2006: 173, emphasis in original)**

The Murphy et al. (2007) article appeared in the *European Journal of Marketing*. It presented a normative approach to relationship marketing. The ethical theory that served as the foundation for this work was virtue ethics. Figure 4.2 shows the model that was formulated in the paper. The middle of the diagram depicts the three stages of relationship marketing: establishing, sustaining and reinforcing. Paired with these three stages are three central virtues that should be associated with the stages. In other words, trust is essential if one is to establish a relationship with another person or organization. Commitment is necessary if one wants to maintain such a

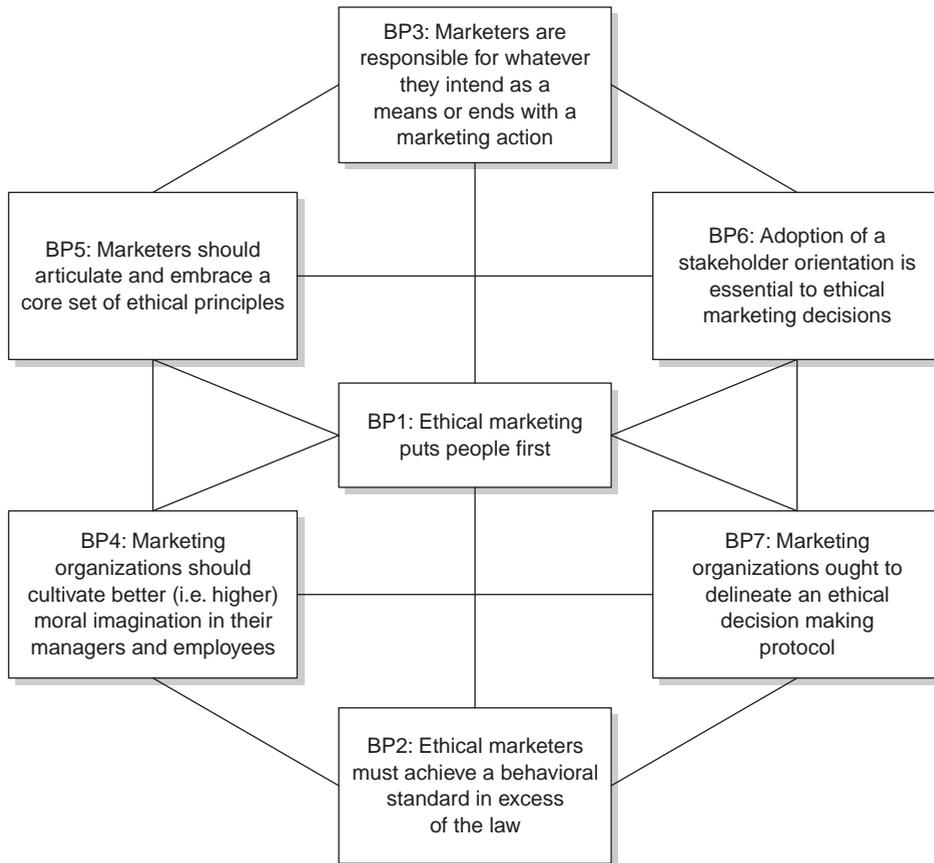


Figure 4.1 A summary of the essential basic perspectives (BPS) for evaluation and improving marketing ethics (Laczniak and Murphy, 2006: 157)

relationship. Finally, diligence is needed if the relationship is to be maintained or reinforced. Surrounding these stages are four facilitating or supporting virtues. Integrity is a hallmark virtue of all professions, including marketing. It has been labelled a 'supervirtue' by the late Robert Solomon (1992). The second critical virtue to enhancing relationship marketing is fairness. This notion of fairness ties in with the recent work of Santos and Laczniak (2009). Respect is another virtue that is increasingly important in the multi-cultural world of this century. It has been recognized that one can 'respectfully disagree' with the point of others in a marketing context (Murphy, 1999). Empathy is the final facilitating variable and has resonance with the Golden Rule and the ethic of care. Marketers who are successful in a relationship setting seem to know the importance of and practice this virtue. Transparency surrounds the other virtues and is needed in communication and action. This writer spent a year in Ireland in the early 1990s and found that transparency was a regularly used word, especially in business settings. Since the Enron and

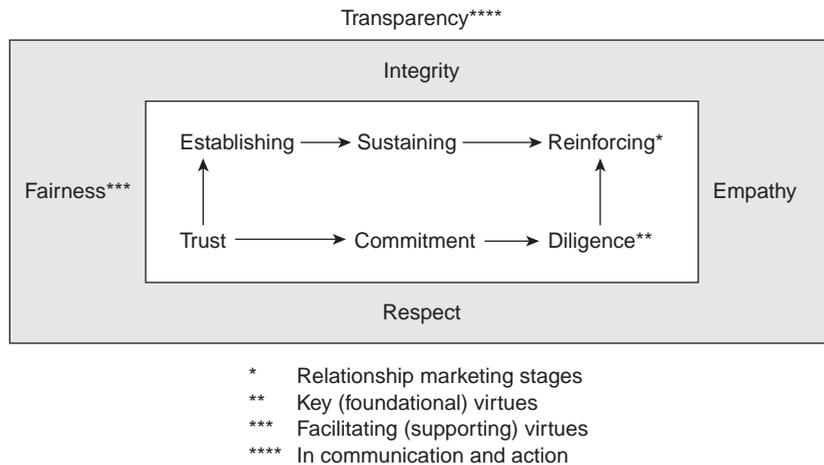


Figure 4.2 Ethical bases of relationship marketing (Murphy et al., 2007: 44).

Andersen debacle a few years ago, transparency is invoked on a much more frequent basis by both executives and business critics in the United States.

### Empirical research in marketing ethics theory

In addition to the substantial theoretical literature in marketing ethics examined above, a number of empirical studies have been conducted which are theory based. While the list is long, only those projects which have been undertaken as tests of theories are reviewed here. Goolsby and Hunt (1992) undertook a study of cognitive moral development in marketing and found this theory helps to explain the ethical views of consumers. Another of Hunt's graduate students, John Sparks (Sparks and Hunt, 1998), examined the concept of ethical sensitivity in the context of the marketing research profession and found that awareness of norms is an influence on ethical sensitivity. Smith and Cooper-Martin (1997) also undertook an empirical study and developed a typology based on product harm and consumer vulnerability.

As noted above, the most extensive theory testing has occurred with the Hunt-Vitell theory of marketing ethics. Scott Vitell, Anusorn Singhapakdi and various coauthors have undertaken numerous tests of some aspects of the Hunt-Vitell model. Some of the applications have focused on sales professionals (Singhapakdi and Vitell, 1991), marketing managers (Singhapakdi et al., 1996), international managers (Singhapakdi et al., 1994) and organizational culture (Vitell et al., 1993). Furthermore, Vitell has also used the Hunt-Vitell theory to evaluate the ethics of consumers (Vitell and Muncy, 1992). The topic of consumer ethics is receiving more attention, especially by European scholars (see Brunk, 2010). A more extensive discussion of the empirical work in marketing ethics is contained in Schlegelmilch and Oberseder (2009).

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## Future research directions

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Marketing ethics is not a static field. The conception of ethical marketing practice has taken on greater meaning in the wake of the global financial meltdown. Subprime mortgages, which were at least partially responsible for the collapse of financial institutions throughout the globe, have long been understood in the context of marketing ethics as unfair to many consumers and irresponsibly utilized by some financial institutions. This issue was folded into the indictment of finance but it is very much a marketing ethics problem since over-selling and marketing contributed to this dire situation.

It is hard to predict which issues within marketing will be hot topics in the future. (This writer identified several areas in an earlier work (Murphy, 2002) and they will not be repeated here.) It seems safe to say that sustainable marketing, health and safety issues and base of the pyramid topics are ones that will be investigated using marketing theories for the foreseeable future.

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## Sustainable marketing

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Environmental issues in marketing were studied in some depth during the 1970s and 1980s. However, until the last few years, the attention devoted to these issues has been minimal. Although the Brundtland Commission (1987) developed the most commonly used definition of sustainability – meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs – some time ago, efforts to examine sustainable marketing did not ‘take off’ until some time this decade. Terms such as green marketing and environmental marketing have been supplanted with the new terminology of sustainability.

Global issues such as climate change, energy use, and water shortages have brought renewed attention to this area. In response, marketing scholars have redoubled their efforts in focusing on overall environmental issues (Belz and Peattie, 2009; Grant, 2007), as well as specific ones like energy (Press and Arnould, 2009). One more general evaluation of sustainable marketing (Murphy, 2005) proposed several ethical bases for sustainable marketing including the precautionary principle, ethic of the mean/balance, power and responsibility equilibrium, the environment as a stakeholder and planetary ethics. In addition to these, the notion of stewardship proposed earlier by Laczniak (1999) provides some needed theoretical foundation for future work in this area.

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## Health and safety issues

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The recent selling of toys tainted with lead-based paint was a major blemish on toy makers, retailers and, of course, the Chinese production facilities that produced them. This incident has caused all members of the supply chain for these products to be more vigilant. While not reaching international proportions, problems with tainted meat, produce that causes illness and sometimes death, have also focused

attention on food marketing in a new way. Marketing ethics scholarship is needed to 'sort out' some of these emerging safety issues and get beyond the rhetoric in the media and blogs on these topics. Both conceptual and empirical work is necessary to gain a more complete understanding of how product safety is understood by consumers and marketers in the twenty-first century.

A major health issue that has also emerged in recent years is obesity, both of the population in general and in children especially. More academic study of this topic has occurred and is serving as one input to regulatory bodies in their assessment of how best to move forward in mitigating these serious health issues. Unfortunately, obesity leads to a host of medical maladies that plague some consumers throughout their lives.

In an introduction to a special issue of the *Journal of Public Policy & Marketing*, Moore (2007) detailed the magnitude of the problem by stating that childhood obesity has become an increasingly serious health problem in the United States, and around the world. Obesity among pre-school and school-aged children in the US has increased almost three-fold since the late 1970s, with 14 per cent of 2–5 year-olds and 19 per cent of 6–11 year-olds now characterized as overweight. The role of marketing in contributing to this issue is receiving attention. Serious questions are being asked about the impacts of food marketing in both public and private sectors. Two comprehensive research reviews have been published, one by the Food Standards Agency in the UK (Hastings et al., 2003) and the other in response to a Congressional Directive by the Institute of Medicine (2006). Moore concludes her essay by stating that childhood obesity has become an epidemic in our nation and around the world (World Health Organization, 2003); the associated risks to children's health and well-being are substantial. Marketing's role as both a contributor to the problem and as a force in its alleviation is a complex one; many significant questions are yet to be addressed. This appears to be the challenge for researchers in the future.

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#### Base of the pyramid

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A topic that is likely to receive more attention in the coming decades is the ethical treatment of consumers at the 'base of the pyramid' – those individuals at the lowest socio-economic level of the financial pyramid (Prahalad, 2005). As noted above, Santos and Laczniak (2009) have outlined a new conceptual approach to dealing with the impoverished market. Vachani and Smith (2008) have identified several precepts that should exist in 'socially responsible distribution' by studying an innovative company, an education-based NGO and the government-run postal service in India. The lessons they identify focus both on improving the financial and educational position of those at the base of the pyramid as well as the ways socially responsible distribution can enhance the workings of the market.

In Prahalad's (2005) influential book, he identifies a number of organizations that he sees as succeeding in serving this market. One firm profiled is Casas Bahia, based in Brazil. It is a large retailer selling mostly clothing and household and durable goods to the middle and lower classes, usually on an extended payment plan.

Although Prahalad shows the impressive growth the company has experienced, he does not discuss the fact that the firm forces consumers to make their payment in the store and they tend to buy other products (sometimes unneeded ones) on these trips to the store. This situation was explained in an article in the *Wall Street Journal* (Jordan, 2002) and was reprinted in a marketing ethics casebook (Murphy and Lacznia, 2006). The point in raising this example is that academics in marketing ethics should be alert to seemingly successful strategies aimed at this vulnerable market and discuss them with students and colleagues to raise awareness of the quality of the products they are offered, the level of fairness in pricing these products, and the most viable distribution channels that need to exist in these emerging markets.

The Santos and Lacznia (2009) article helps marketers better understand impoverished markets. If companies are going to be successful in marketing in an ethical manner to these underserved markets, much more intensive investigation needs to be undertaken. To that end, Santos (2009) has also completed the most thorough analysis of this area to date and the title of his dissertation shows the way for future research in this emerging field: 'Marketing to the impoverished: developing a model for markets that justly and fairly serve the poor'. It is up to other researchers to help further illuminate this challenging issue.

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### **Suggestions for conducting research on marketing ethics**

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In examining this significant literature base in marketing ethics theory, several suggestions come to mind on how best to undertake research in this field. Before moving to the positive developments, a number of trends that this writer has identified earlier (Murphy, 2002) as being 'not so positive' should be addressed. One troubling trend in empirical research on marketing ethics is the continued and even growing use of student samples. Ethical decisions are made in companies and in the transaction situation (whether online or in the store). Thus, use of inexperienced students as surrogate consumers or managers seems misguided. The only exception is executive MBA students who are usually practising managers during the time of their programme. A related area is cross-cultural research where the same instrument is given to respondents in multiple countries. Unless there is a theoretical reason for the selection of the samples, such exercises seem too often to confirm obvious cultural differences. Of course, the situation is compounded if student samples are used in multiple countries. Some ethics-based research uses short scenarios. The criticism here is not with the technique, but that the scenarios are too many (one study had 20 scenarios) or too few (one or two) or too old (scenarios developed 10 or 20 years ago). If the researcher uses scenarios in an experimental fashion, valuable and generalizable information can be gained. Such experimentation might study recent ethical issues like, online selling, privacy on the web and online surveys. A final area of concern is the testing of narrow theoretical propositions. In the 1990s, much empirical research was undertaken to test various aspects of the Hunt and Vitell

(1986) model. Some of this research seemed to focus too narrowly on one aspect of that or other models. The assessment made several years ago bears repeating here:

**While it is quite difficult to operationalize generalized theories and models, some marketing scholars have been content to investigate such narrow propositions and theories that the outcome of their work is marginalized. The field of marketing ethics seems increasingly to be using the same narrow lens that has characterized much of the consumer behavior research over a prolonged period ... The work of marketing ethics can impact the practice of marketing if researchers keep in mind that they are not engaged in just a narrow academic exercise. (Murphy, 2002: 171)**

The quote above leads to the type of research that this individual believes is most effective. First, the impressive list of articles shown in Table 4.1 confirms that it is possible to publish important theoretical and conceptual articles on marketing ethics. Future researchers are encouraged to not be intimidated by this somewhat daunting task of contributing to the theoretical base of this field. Second, theory testing is needed especially for the new more global theories of marketing ethics depicted in Figures 4.1 and 4.2. As noted in the quote above, the task of operationalizing the BPs or virtues will likely take a significant investment in scale construction and validation. Furthermore, a sample of managers would most likely need to be studied in order to draw conclusions about which aspects of these models are most applicable to marketing practice. Third, depth interviews of managers are one (but certainly not the only) method to study marketing practitioners. Some of the insights gained by the consumer culture theory (CCT) researchers may be valuable for those interested in studying marketer behaviour. This writer has been involved with two projects in marketing ethics where depth interviews were conducted (Drumwright and Murphy, 2004, 2009) and though the process of interviewing executives is arduous, the insights gained are very valuable. Fourth, a thrust of current ethics research, especially in Europe, appears to be on consumer ethics and responsible consumption (Brinkmann, 2004; Ozcaglar-Toulouse, 2007). Several of the caveats mentioned above regarding avoiding student samples and narrow cross cultural studies should be heeded here as well. The notion of responsible consumption is important from a marketing, sustainability and societal perspective, but the projects that will make the most contribution will likely be those that are the hardest to carry out. Another fruitful area is to examine marketing ethics from the standpoint of another foundational discipline. The highly cited Gundlach and Murphy (1993) article is an illustration of this type of endeavour. Certainly, dissertations are not meant to be a life work, but slicing the project 'too thin' means that the future impact of the work will be affected.

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## Conclusion

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This chapter has provided an historical discussion of theoretical research in marketing ethics. A brief analysis of some of the empirical work in this field was also covered. The emerging areas for future research in marketing ethics, of sustainable marketing,

health and safety issues and base of the pyramid, were proposed as potential areas for future research. A number of challenges and opportunities for conducting research on marketing ethics were outlined. It is hoped that at least some future scholars build on this substantial body of knowledge in marketing ethics.

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