

Some Initial Steps toward Improving the Measurement of Ethical Evaluations of Marketing Activities

R. Eric Reidenbach
Donald P. Robin

ABSTRACT. This study reports on the development of scale items derived from the pluralistic moral philosophy literature. In addition, the manner in which individuals combine aspects of the different philosophies in making ethical evaluations was explored.

The study of marketing ethics is assuming a level of importance approaching the more traditional managerial and strategic concerns of marketing inquiry. The study of marketing ethics has evolved along three related, but differentially developed paths, which DeGeorge (1986, pp. 16–18) identifies as normative ethics, metaethics, and descriptive ethics.

Normative ethics in marketing consists of attempting to develop and justify a moral system of the discipline. Such a system would rely, most likely, on developed moral philosophies but would also

adapt them to the special needs and problems of marketers. Metaethics involves the analysis of moral reasoning. It is concerned with the formal language system of normative ethics and especially the meaning of terms. Relatively little published work in marketing addresses these two streams of marketing ethics.

Two approaches dominate descriptive ethics: model building (e.g., Ferrell and Gresham, 1985; Hunt and Vitell, 1986), and, the ethical evaluation of marketing practices and activities (e.g., Sturdivant and Cocanougher, 1973; Krugman and Ferrell, 1981; Browning and Zabriskie, 1983; Dubinsky and Rudelius, 1980; Shuptrine, 1979). Beauchamp and Bowie (1983, p. 5) refer to this second descriptive approach as the scientific study of ethics citing as an example studies reported in the *Harvard Business Review* that describe “what business executives think is morally acceptable and morally unacceptable.” Recognition of the value of this type of marketing ethics research is provided also by Donaldson and Werhane (1983, p. 2) who state: “Because business ethics involves relating business activities to some concept of human good, it is a study which has as one of its aspects the *evaluation* of business practices.” It is primarily but not exclusively toward this second evaluative or scientific approach to descriptive marketing ethics that the concerns expressed in this research are directed.

The weakness of “scientific studies” of marketing ethics

There are, we believe, two basic problems which reduce the utility of so-called scientific studies of marketing ethics and which must be addressed if we are to proceed to a higher level of study. These two

R. Eric Reidenbach holds a Ph.D. in Business Administration from Michigan State University. At present he is a Professor of Marketing and Director of the Center for Business Development and Research at the University of Southern Mississippi. He has published a number of articles in different marketing journals. In addition, he is the co-author of several books on bank marketing.

Dr. Donald P. Robin received his DBA degree from Louisiana State University in 1969 and is currently Professor of Marketing in the College of Business, Louisiana Tech University. His basic marketing textbook entitled, *Marketing: Basic Concepts for Decision Making* (Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc.), and his co-authored readings book, *Classics in Marketing* (Goodyear Press), were both published in 1978. He is the author of articles in a wide variety of topics that have appeared in such journals as the *Journal of Marketing*, *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, *Journal of Public Policy and Marketing*, *Business and Professional Ethics Journal*, *The Journal of Business Communications*, *Journal of Business Research*, and *Academy of Management Journal*.

problems have to do with the pluralistic nature of moral philosophy and the single global measures which marketers tend to use in obtaining evaluations of marketing activities.

The field of ethics contains a number of individual philosophies, many of which posit conflicting ideas, rules, and interpretations which in turn, can lead to conflicting evaluations of what is ethical/unethical, right/wrong, or moral/immoral. Both Beauchamp and Bowie (1983) and Donaldson and Werhane (1983) provide concise, yet thorough discussions of the different philosophies of ethics. These include relativism, egoism, theories of justice, deontology, and utilitarianism. Most marketing writers and researchers, if they even discuss the different moral philosophies, tend to limit their discussions to the philosophies of utilitarianism and/or deontology (e.g., Hunt and Vitell, 1986; Ferrel and Gresham, 1985; Robin and Reidenbach, 1987). These reductionistic approaches assume that individuals engage in some sort of "cognitive calculus" invoking the tenets of either deontology or utilitarianism or possibly some hybrid of the two philosophies in making an ethical evaluation. In fact, the assumption often made regarding the use of moral philosophy in marketing is that individuals "knowingly or unknowingly use a set of philosophical assumptions as a basis for making ethical decisions." (Ferrell and Gresham, 1985, p. 88). Little, if any consideration is given to the other competing strains of moral philosophy such as relativism, egoism, or justice. That individuals may use other moral philosophies is a distinct possibility that is addressed by James R. Rest (1979) who argues that individuals pass through a moral development process ranging from Obedience — "Do what you are told" to Nonarbitrary Social Cooperation wherein individuals rely on abstract principles much like those that dominate utilitarianism and deontological reasoning. Rest argues that the final state of moral development wherein individuals rely on the prescribed notions of moral philosophy (e.g., deontology and utilitarianism) is one which is sought but not yet attained. The issue then becomes: Should descriptive studies of marketing ethics rely solely on the normative philosophies of deontology and utilitarianism?

The second problem concerns the instrumentation used to assess the evaluations. Typically, marketers rely on a single global measure of the ethics of

a marketing situation. This measure is generally made using a seven point ethics scale anchored by such adjective phrases as "not at all unethical/very unethical" or "ethical/unethical". Single item measures may be relatively less reliable than multi-item measures (Kerlinger, 1986, p. 415; Nunnally, 1967, p. 192) and consequently more heavily error laden. Thus, the results of research using single item measures of the ethical evaluation of given marketing activities may be less than optimal.

A second aspect of the global measure problem is that it does not or cannot detail the dynamics of the evaluation. By this we mean it is impossible to understand the ethical perspective(s) that is or are invoked in making the evaluation. Is the individual using a relativist, deontological, utilitarian perspective or some other set of criteria in making the evaluation? A single global measure is incapable of revealing this information. If we are to improve our understanding of the evaluation process and to make positive reactions to situations which warrant a reaction, it is important to address the problems inherent in the pluralistic nature of ethical theory and its measurement.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses are offered which address the different concerns expressed in the previous section of this paper.

H₁: Individuals will invoke either a deontological, utilitarian, relativist, egoist, or justice perspective in evaluating the ethical content of a marketing activity.

This hypothesis addresses the emphasis that marketers place on what are often considered to be the two dominant streams of ethical philosophy (Hunt and Vitell, 1986; Robin and Reidenbach, 1987; Ferrel and Gresham, 1985), and is concerned with the first problem cited earlier. The work of Rest (1979) suggests that most individuals have not yet reached this level of moral development. Thus, to utilize deontology or utilitarianism exclusively as the basis for a growing body of descriptive marketing ethics knowledge may be premature at best and can only be defended on a normative basis. Moreover,

the hypothesis suggests that in making evaluations, individuals rely on a *specific* moral philosophy. That is, they rely on, in its entirety, one single philosophy and not a hybrid of two or more philosophies.

H₂: Individuals will use the same patterns of ethical evaluative criteria to assess different marketing activities which contain differing perceived levels of ethical consequence.

This hypothesis suggests that patterns of ethical evaluative criteria are developed and set within individuals. Further, this hypothesis suggests that these patterns are not situation specific. It is likely, as the work of Ferrell and Gresham (1985) suggests, that situational variables may impact the evaluation process. However, if these situational variables are held constant, the criteria employed by the individual should also be constant.

H₃: Individuals will use the same ethical evaluative criteria in assessing the ethical content of the marketing activity as they use in assessing their own probability of behavior under similar situations.

This hypothesis examines whether the pattern of criteria are task specific. In other words, do individuals organize the criteria differently in performing the evaluation task than they do when asked to assess the probability of their future behavior? Patterns of criteria have been shown to be task specific in other types of marketing evaluations (Reidenbach and Grimes, 1985).

Methodology

As suggested in the title, this study is offered as an initial step toward improving the measurement of ethical evaluations of marketing activities. Accordingly, one of the first steps involves the development of scales to measure the different strains of moral philosophy which an individual might invoke in the evaluation process. To this end, a search of the business ethics literature focusing on the discussions of Beauchamp and Bowie (1983), DeGeorge (1986), and Donaldson and Werhane (1983) was undertaken to identify the relevant concepts associated with the

different strains of moral philosophy. For example, the egoist school of ethical philosophy relies heavily on the ideas of prudence, self promotion, best self interests, selfishness, and personal satisfaction. These concepts were then translated into seven point semantic differential scales. This process was repeated for each of the following strains of ethical philosophy: deontology, utilitarianism, relativism, and justice. The resultant concepts for each ethical philosophy are shown in Figure 1.

Two hundred and eighteen basic marketing students at the University of Mississippi were exposed to three different scenarios designed to test the three hypotheses discussed earlier. The student sample was chosen principally for its convenience. However, the use of student respondents under controlled conditions should not mitigate the value of the outcome of this study. Previous research (Dubinsky and Rudelius, 1980) into student versus professional evaluations showed a high degree of congruence. About fifty percent of the evaluations were not significantly different. In those that did differ, students were generally more ethical than their professional counterparts. Differences between any respondent groups can be expected. However, since this is an initial effort at generating the proper measuring devices and at understanding the evaluative process, the student group was felt to be justified.

The three scenarios involved ethical issues situated within a retailing context and are shown in Figure 2 (Dornoff and Tankersley, 1975). These scenarios depict situations which are not unfamiliar to marketing students and scenarios which were judged that the respondents would be capable of evaluating from an ethical perspective. Scenarios were used to provide the contextual stimulus and to motivate the evaluation process (Alexander and Becker, 1978). For each scenario, respondents were asked to rate the action of the individual on each of the twenty-nine scales developed from the concepts shown in Figure 1. Seven point bipolar scales utilizing the following format were used:

Fair	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>7</u>	Unfair
Just	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>7</u>	Unjust
Efficient	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>7</u>	Inefficient

In addition, each respondent was asked to indicate

Justice Scales:

Just/Unjust
 Fair/Unfair
 Results/Does not result in an equal distribution of good and bad

Relativist Scales:

Culturally acceptable/Unacceptable
 Individually acceptable/Unacceptable
 Acceptable/Unacceptable to people I most admire
 Traditionally acceptable/Unacceptable
 Acceptable/Unacceptable to my family

Egoism Scales:

Self promoting/Not self promoting
 Selfish/Not selfish
 Self sacrificing/Not self sacrificing
 Prudent/Not prudent
 Under no moral obligation/Morally obligated to act otherwise
 Personally satisfying/Not personally satisfying
 In the best interests of the company/Not in the best interests of the company

Utilitarian Scales:

Efficient/Inefficient
 OK/Not OK if actions can be justified by their consequences
 Compromises/Does not compromise an important rule by which I live
 On balance, tends to be good/Bad
 Produces the greatest/Least utility
 Maximizes/Minimizes benefits while minimizes/maximizes harm
 Leads to the greatest/Least good for the greatest number
 Results in a positive/Negative cost-benefit ratio
 Maximizes/Minimizes pleasure

Deontology Scales:

Violates/Does not violate an unwritten contract
 Violates/Does not violate my ideas of fairness
 Morally right/Not morally right
 Obligated/Not obligated to act this way
 Violates/Does not violate an unspoken promise

Fig. 1. *A priori* normative philosophy scales.

the probability that (s)he would behave in the same manner as did the individual in the scenario. This rating was done on a seven point scale anchored by highly probable/highly improbable.

Scenario A:

A person bought a new car from a franchised automobile dealership in the local area. Eight months after the car was purchased, he began having problems with the transmission. He took the car back to the dealer, and some minor adjustments were made. During the next few months he continually had a similar problem with the transmission slipping. Each time the dealer made only minor adjustments on the car. Again, during the thirteenth month after the car had been bought, the man returned to the dealer because the transmission still was not functioning properly. At this time, the transmission was completely overhauled.

Action: Since the warranty was for only one year (12 months from the date of purchase), the dealer charged the full price for parts and labor.

Scenario B:

A young man, recently hired as a salesman for a local retail store, has been working very hard to favorably impress his boss with his selling ability. At times, this young man, anxious for an order, has been a little over-eager. To get the order, he exaggerates the value of the item or withholds relevant information concerning the product he is trying to sell. No fraud or deceit is intended by his actions, he is simply over-eager.

Action: His boss, the owner of the retail store, is aware of the salesman's actions but he has done nothing to stop such practice.

Scenario C:

A retail grocery chain operates several stores throughout the local area including one in the city's ghetto area. Independent studies have shown that prices do tend to be higher and there is less of a selection of products in this particular store than in the other locations.

Action: On the day welfare checks are received in the area of the city, the retailer increases prices on all of his merchandise.

Fig. 2. Scenarios used in the study.

The reliability and validity of the scales

The reliability and validity of the measuring instrument are crucial to the objectives of this research.

Consequently, the reliability of the instrument was examined using Cronbach's alpha to assess the internal consistency of the instrument. Because three different measures were taken (one for each of the scenarios), three different coefficient alphas were calculated. Coefficient alpha for each of the three scenarios ranged from 0.85 for Scenario A to 0.87 for Scenarios B and C. These are relatively high reliability measures indicating a high degree of internal consistency among the scale items further suggesting that they all belong to the same domain of content (Nunnally, 1967, p. 226). In addition, the reliability measures compare favorably to those reliability measures obtained in other marketing research efforts (Peter, 1979).

Several measures of validity were used. Scale items were broken down into the different philosophical strains which they purport to measure and which are shown in Figure 1. To the extent that they converge, operationalized by high intraclass correlations, the items can be said to measure a common ethical philosophy. The relativism scales evidenced the highest degree of convergence (average $r = 0.54$), followed by the justice scales (average $r = 0.53$), the utilitarian scales (average $r = 0.42$), the deontology scales (average $r = 0.31$), and finally the egoist scales (average $r = 0.20$). No measure of divergence was made. However, many of the individual scale items correlated highly with items in other classes indicating some lack of divergence, perhaps attributable to the high degree of internal consistency and/or possible conceptual overlap of the different moral philosophies.

A second validity measure involved the average correlations between the grouped item evaluations of the situations and a seven point univariate measure (ethical/unethical) of the evaluation of the situation. The correlations were relatively high. The relativism scales had the highest average correlation with the single ethics measure. The correlation for Scenario A was 0.41, for Scenarios B and C 0.57 and 0.62 respectively. The next highest average correlations were for the justice scales: 0.34, 0.56, and 0.49, while the utilitarian scales correlated 0.22, 0.38, and 0.38 for the three scenarios. Finally, the egoist scales correlated 0.19, 0.32, and 0.30. The relatively high and consistent correlations between the item pooled scales and the univariate measure of ethics compares favorably to other correlations between attitude

models and univariate measures of affect (see: Mazis, Ahtola, and Klippel, 1974) indicating a relatively strong degree of construct validity.

Results

The evaluations of the three different scenarios were subjected to a factor analysis using an orthogonal rotation. An orthogonal rotation was chosen to provide as maximally different structures as possible. Highly correlated factors, such as those obtained with an oblique rotation, are sometimes difficult to distinguish from one another (Tabachnick and Fidell, 1983, p. 401). It was felt that identification of the character of the factors was a key consideration to the study and thus an orthogonal rotation was performed.

The factor analysis produced ten factors for Scenario A which explained 62 percent of the variance in the individual items. Five factors, each explaining 60 percent of the variance were generated from Scenarios B and C. In all cases, only those factors with an eigenvalue greater than one were retained for subsequent analysis.

Substantial parallelism existed between the factors for Scenarios B and C, but the results for Scenario A were different in both the number of factors and their content. This difference might be accounted for by the following possible explanations. First, Scenario A was the first scenario presented to the respondents and personal decision criteria were not yet in place to make the evaluations. Thus the difference in factor patterns may be due to a "practice effect". This would suggest that the respondents needed to become more familiar and comfortable with the evaluative criteria. Second, the differences in the scenarios may have radically changed the decision criteria and their organization. Thus, a situation effect might have occurred. Finally, the personalized nature of Scenario A (i.e., a single individual was injured as opposed to the somewhat more generalized character or injury where several individuals were injured) may have elicited a different organization of response criteria from the respondents. Because of the radically different structure of Scenario A, the remaining analysis will concentrate on the results obtained from Scenarios B and C.

The results of the study will be presented by examination of each of the hypotheses. Because of the interrelatedness of hypothesis one and hypothesis two, they will be discussed together.

Hypothesis one and hypothesis two

Comparing the factor patterns of the evaluations

of Scenarios B and C with the expected patterns developed on an *a priori* basis argues for rejection of Hypothesis 1. The comparisons are shown in Table I. The factor patterns that emerged bear little resemblance to the hypothesized patterns, leading to the conclusion that individuals do not use either a purely deontological or utilitarian or any other philosophically based set of criteria in evaluating the ethical content of marketing activities. For example,

TABLE I
Factor relationships for thirty scale items on two scenarios

Scale items	Factor structures				<i>A priori</i> judgement of normative philosophy
	B ^a	C	B	C	
Just/Unjust	1 ^b	1	0.79	0.84	Justice
Fair/Unfair	1	1	0.78	0.81	Justice
On balance tends to be good/Bad	1	1	0.66	0.76	Utilitarianism
Individually acceptable/Unacceptable	1	1	0.65	0.68	Relativism
OK/Not OK if actions can be justified by their consequences	1	1	0.59	0.73	Utilitarianism
Culturally acceptable/Unacceptable	1	1	0.57	0.66	Relativism
Acceptable/Unacceptable to people I most desire	1	1	0.52	0.81	Relativism
Violates/Does not violate my ideas of fairness	1	1	-0.63	-0.62	Justice/Deontology
Selfish/Not selfish	1	5	-0.46	0.66	Egoism
Obligated/Not obligated to act this way	3	1	0.71	0.73	Deontology
Duty bound/Not duty bound to act this way	3	1	0.67	0.58	Deontology
Morally right/Not morally right	3	1	0.58	0.83	Deontology
Acceptable/Unacceptable to my family	3	1	0.58	0.71	Relativism
Self sacrificing/Not self sacrificing	3	1	0.57	0.36	Egoism
Results/Does not result in an equal distribution of good and bad	3	1	0.45	0.62	Justice
Leads to the greatest/Least good for the greatest number	3	1	0.60	0.62	Utilitarianism
Under no moral obligation/Morally obligated to act otherwise	3	2	0.41	0.44	Egoism
Results in a positive/Negative cost-benefit ratio	2	2	0.76	0.68	Utilitarianism
Produces the greatest/Least utility	2	2	0.71	0.72	Utilitarianism
Self promoting/Not self promoting	2	2	0.69	0.47	Egoism
Maximizes/Minimizes benefits while minimizes/maximizes harm	2	2	0.63	0.47	Utilitarianism
In the best interests/Not in the best interests of the company	2	2	0.62	0.69	Egoism
Efficient/Inefficient	2	2	0.59	0.66	Utilitarianism
Maximizes/Minimizes pleasure	2	2	0.58	0.49	Utilitarianism
Personally/Not personally satisfying	2	2	0.53	0.50	Egoism
Traditionally/Not traditionally acceptable	2	1	0.49	0.61	Relativism
Violates/Does not violate an unwritten contract	4	3	0.73	0.81	Deontology
Violates/Does not violate an unspoken promise	4	3	0.68	0.84	Deontology
Compromises/Does not compromise an important rule by which I live	3	4	0.67	-0.62	Utilitarianism
Prudent/Not prudent	5	4	0.70	0.76	Egoism

^a Refers to scenario (see Fig. 2).

^b Indicates on which factor an item loads most heavily.

in the results from Scenario B, the first and most significant factor contained three justice, two utilitarian, three relativist, one deontological, and one egoist item. The second factor contained five utilitarian, three egoist, and one relativist item. While it is possible to describe this factor (on a *post hoc* basis) as teleological in character, it must also be noted that respondents appeared to have combined two radically different teleological philosophies (egoism and utilitarianism). The third factor contained three deontological items, two egoist, one justice and one relativist item. Factor four was primarily deontological, with two of the three items being deontological and the third an ambiguous rule-based item that could be considered either deontological or rule utilitarian. The factors from the other scenarios produced similarly mixed results.

The results also argue in favor of rejecting hypothesis two. Individuals appear to organize and use the evaluative criteria differently from situation to situation. Table I indicates that respondents evaluated Scenario C (the least ethical situation) differently than they did Scenario B. The major difference appears to be the manner in which they combined factors one and three that emerged in evaluating Scenario B into one large factor in evaluating Scenario C. Thus, to the extent that the hypothesized items accurately measure the individual normative ethical philosophies, the evidence suggests that individuals do not use clearly defined normative ethical philosophies in evaluating the ethics of marketing activities.

Because of the similarity of the factor patterns that emerged from the evaluation of Scenarios B and C the attempt to name the underlying constructs focuses on the results from Scenario B. Factor one seems to identify learned, personalized values where ideas of justice and fairness are combined with ideas of individual and cultural acceptance. The construct seems to include those rules of society that the respondents have internalized but perhaps have not formalized in any specific manner. Alternatively, the construct identified by factor three seems to suggest a more formalized set of rules and duties, perhaps based on family and religious training since most of the respondents are indigenous to the so called "Bible Belt". A review of the text of Scenarios B and C is suggestive of why the two constructs might have been pulled together in the evaluation of Scenario C.

Scenario B was judged to be the least ethically offensive ($\bar{x} = 5.15$) and therefore was less influenced by formalized rules but rather was dominated by broader cultural taboos. However, Scenario C was judged the most ethically offensive ($\bar{x} = 6.42$) and consequently respondents may have invoked not only the cultural guidelines but also the formal rules of their upbringing. This influence may also be related to the level of involvement with the two scenarios. This cannot be determined since no check on involvement was made.

The underlying construct identified by factor two (Scenario B) might be labeled the psychologically removed, cognitive calculus factor. The construct seems to represent the rational side of the respondent. However, the construct does not seem to separate personal welfare from the welfare of society. The combination of egoism and utilitarianism descriptors that are part of the factor seem to support the lack of separation that occurred.

Factor four (Scenario B) seems to represent a construct that could be described as an internalized, situational commitment. If the situation is ego-involving arising from an implied personal commitment (e.g., if the individual perceives the action as a violation of an unspoken promise), the reaction to the situation will be different from those situations which do not evoke a personal commitment. This factor exactly paralleled factor three for Scenario C.

Hypothesis three

Hypothesis three suggests that individuals will organize the ethical evaluative criteria that they use in assessing the ethical content of marketing activities in the same manner that they do when they assess the probability of their own ethical behavior under similar circumstances. Table II shows the correlations and squared correlations between the factor scores for the two factor patterns (Scenarios B and C) with the seven point univariate measure of the ethical content of the scenarios and the seven point estimate of the respondent's probability of acting in a similar manner as the individuals in the scenarios.

The results suggest that individuals rely on similar patterns of criteria in evaluating the situation as they do in making an estimate of their own behavior. Factor one has the biggest impact on the evaluation

TABLE II
Correlations with dependent variables (significance)

Factors*	Scenario B (Least Unethical)		Scenario C (Most Unethical)	
	7 Point Ethical/Unethical	Probability of response	7 Point Ethical/Unethical	Probability of response
Factor #1	0.71**/0.50 (0.0001)	-0.54/0.29 (0.0001)	0.78/0.61 (0.0001)	-0.67/0.45 (0.0001)
Factor #2	0.22/0.05 (0.0001)	-0.34/0.12 (0.0001)	0.15/0.02 (0.03)	-0.23/0.05 (0.0005)
Factor #3	0.27/0.07 (0.0001)	-0.23/0.05 (0.0005)	-0.08/0.006 NS	0.18/0.03 (0.008)
Factor #4	-0.21/0.04 (0.001)	-0.18/0.03 (0.009)	0.25/0.06 (0.0002)	-0.11/0.01 NS
Factor #5	0.05/0.003 NS	-0.12/0.01 NS	0.009/0.01 NS	-0.09/0.008 NS

* Factor scores were used for these correlations, and since the factors were generated using an orthogonal rotation, they are virtually uncorrelated.

** r/r^2

as well as on their estimate of their own behavior under similar circumstances. Factor four (Scenario C) has a larger relative impact on the evaluation than it does on the assessment of the individual's behavior.

Overall, the results suggest that individuals tend to rely most heavily on one factor for making ethical evaluations of marketing activities ($r^2 = 0.50$ for Scenario B, and $r^2 = 0.61$ for Scenario C), and marginally so on the other factors. The same statement can be made for the probability estimate of the individual's behavior under similar circumstances.

Implications for ethics research

There are several implications that the results of this research have for the continued study of marketing ethics. First, this study has generated an initial set of scales which measure various dimensions of the different strains of moral philosophy. These scales evidence a high degree of reliability and a modest degree of convergent validity. In addition, the scales correlate relatively highly with a univariate measure of the ethical content of situations. This would

indicate that the scales embody a relatively high degree of construct validity. The value of these scales is to be realized in their application to other situations, respondent groups, under varying experimental conditions. Continued scale development is necessary.

Secondly, the results suggest that individuals do not use clearly delineated concepts of ethical philosophy in making ethical evaluations of marketing activities. This in turn suggests that models of the evaluation or decision making process should not rely solely on the philosophies of deontology or utilitarianism. The evidence presented in this study suggests that individuals typically evolve perspectives that can be measured using the concepts derived from the different ethical philosophies including relativism, egoism and justice theories. These derived perspectives may reflect, as Rest (1979) suggests, different stages in moral development, confusion in sorting out relatively descriptive elements of the cases, confusion in applying norms or maybe something else, for that matter a lack of awareness of the normative moral philosophies.

A third implication is that there appears to be no

single standard of evaluation. That is, the nature and organization of the ethical evaluative criteria appear to be situation specific. It will be recalled that individuals used different patterns of criteria in evaluating the two different scenarios which were notably distinct with respect to the degree of ethical consequence contained within them. This may be a function of factors other than the degree of ethical consequence. Other factors might include harm to individuals as opposed to harm to a general aggregate, the level of personal involvement in the situation depicted, and the level of the individual's moral development, to name but a few.

Fourth, there is a question as to whether these patterns of ethical evaluative criteria are to be found in different groups of individuals. This study used students and the results may be limited in that regard. Similar studies of different groups of individuals may produce generalizations regarding the way in which individuals organize their ethical reactions to the ethical content of marketing activities. This same concern should also be extended to examine the cultural and subcultural implications of the different ethical theories.

References

- Alexander, Cheryl S. and Henry Jay Becker: 1978, 'The Use of Vignettes in Survey Research', *Public Opinion Quarterly* **42**, 93–104.
- Beauchamp, Tom L. and Norman E. Bowie: 1983, *Ethical Theory and Business*, 2nd ed., Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc.
- Browning, John and Noel B. Zabriskie: 1983, 'How Ethical Are Industrial Buyers?', *Industrial Marketing Management* **12**, 219–224.
- DeGeorge, Richard R.: 1986, *Business Ethics*, 2nd. ed., New York: Macmillan Publishing.
- Donaldson, Thomas and Patricia H. Werhane: 1983, *Ethical Issues on Business*, 2nd ed., Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc.
- Dornoff, Ronald J. and Clint B. Tankersley: 1975, 'Perceptual Differences in Market Transactions: A Source of Consumer Frustration', *Journal of Consumer Affairs* (Summer), 97–103.
- Dubinsky, Alan J. and William Rudelius: 1980, 'Ethical Beliefs: How Students Compare with Industrial Salespeople', *Proceedings of the American Marketing Association Educators Conference*, Chicago: American Marketing Association, 73–76.
- Ferrell, O. C. and Larry G. Gresham: 1985, 'A Contingency Framework for Understanding Ethical Decision-Making in Marketing', *Journal of Marketing* (Summer), 87–96.
- Hunt, Shelby and Scott Vitell: 1986, 'A General Theory of Marketing Ethics', *Journal of Macromarketing* **6** (Spring), 5–16.
- Kerlinger, Fred N.: 1986, *Foundations of Behavioral Research*, 3rd. ed., New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston.
- Krugman, Dean M. and O. C. Ferrell: 1981, 'The Organizational Ethics of Advertising: Corporate and Agency Views', *Journal of Advertising* **10**, 21–30.
- Mazis, Michael B., Olli T. Ahtola, and R. Eugene Klippel: 1974, 'A Comparison of Four Multi-Attribute Models in the Prediction of Consumer Attitudes', *Journal of Consumer Research* **2** (June), 38–52.
- Nunnally, Jum C.: 1967, *Psychometric Theory*, New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company.
- Peter, J. Paul: 1979, 'Reliability: A Review of Psychometric Basics and Recent Marketing Practices', *Journal of Marketing Research* **XVI** (February), 6–17.
- Reidenbach, R. Eric and Sharon Grimes: 1985, 'How Concept Knowledge Affects Concept Evaluations', *Journal of Innovation Management* (Winter), 25–26.
- Rest, James R.: 1979, *Development in Judging Moral Issues*, Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Robin, Donald P. and R. Eric Reidenbach: 1987, 'Social Responsibility, Ethics, and Marketing Strategy: Closing the Gap Between Concept and Application', *Journal of Marketing* **51** (January), 44–58.
- Shuptrine, F. Kelly: 1979, 'Evaluating the Ethics of Marketing Practices: Student Perceptions', *Proceedings of the American Marketing Association Educators Conference*, Chicago: American Marketing Association, pp. 124–127.
- Sturdivant, Frederick D. and A. Benton Cocanougher: 1973, 'What Are Ethical Marketing Practices?', *Harvard Business Review* **51** (November–December), 10–12.
- Tabachnick, Barbara G. and Linda S. Fidell: 1983, *Using Multivariate Statistics*, New York: Harper & Row, Publishers.

Center for Business Development and Research,
University of Southern Mississippi,
Southern Station, Box 5094,
Hattiesburg, MS 39406,
U.S.A.