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AN INTEGRATED MODEL OF ETHICAL DECISION-MAKING: A
PROPOSED PEDAGOGICAL FRAMEWORK FOR A MARKETING
ETHICS CURRICULUM

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ABSTRACT. This paper presents an integrated model of ethical decision-making in marketing that incorporates teleological, deontological and existential theory. First, this framework provides a descriptive model, which enables the decision-maker to evaluate each step of the decision-making process from three disparate perspectives in order to ensure a more comprehensive ethical decision – that is, one which is good, right, and authentic. A set of moderating factors that influence the process and the outcome of the ethical decision-making process is also identified. Second, we propose a pedagogical framework in developing a set of modules for a course curriculum on ethical decision-making in marketing. It has been argued that the approaches to teaching marketing ethics have traditionally been based upon normative theories and that students of marketing ethics have been deprived of the opportunity to personalize their value systems in ethical situations. Our proposed integrated framework allows for the student to apply personal values to bear on the decision context since existentialism, at the core foundation, is really a theory of choice.

There is, without question, a growing awareness for the need to incorporate ethics into the curriculum of post-secondary and graduate level business and marketing degree programs (Castro, 1995; Cowton and Dunfee, 1995; Kerr and Smith, 1995; Pizzolatto and Bevill, 1996). Today, US business schools have an imperative to contain a business ethics course or an ethics component in the overall program as a result of a mandate by the American Assembly of Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB, 1994). This need is a function, not only of societal pressure to conduct business morally, but also the realization by the corporate community of the costs of unethical behavior (e.g., litigation, sabotage, reputation) and benefits of ethical behavior (e.g., trust, employee turnover, productivity), both real and perceived (Davis, 1994; Nelson, 1994).

Past neglect of ethics may well have been a function of business schools' traditional approach to the teaching of *technical* skills while "ethical values seem to be left to chance" (Kerr and Smith, 1995, p. 987). This omission or commission of ethics in the contemporary curriculum appears to have been resolved, as a variety of studies have shown that ethics (in a variety of forms) has been integrated into business educational



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contexts (e.g., Pizzolatto and Bevill, 1996; Singh, 1989). However, because ethics appears in the curriculum does not necessarily mean that effective teaching methods or approaches are applied to ethics in the classroom.

The approaches to teaching marketing ethics have traditionally been based upon normative ethical theories, such as, deontology and utilitarianism (cf., Beauchamp and Bowie, 1997; Hosmer, 1996; Hunt and Vitell, 1986; Kavathatzopoulos, 1993). More recently, the utility of cognitive moral development has captured much of the attention of business ethics curriculum (e.g., Hildebeitel and Jones, 1992; Johnson et al., 1993; Kavathatzopoulos, 1993; Nelson and Obremski, 1990; Penn and Collier, 1985; Trevino, 1986, 1990). It has been argued that the impact of teaching the content such as theories of ethics (as opposed to the process of critical ethical decision making) has not resulted in significant changes in student perception (Kavathatzopoulos, 1993). Few curriculum models have incorporated both to provide the student with the tools of ethical content and process (Malloy and Zakus, 1995). By tools, we are referring to conceptual perspectives (e.g., knowledge of existential, teleological, and deontological approaches to case analysis) that will enable the decision-maker to perceive dilemmas and their resolutions in a holistic manner. While not every situation will require the use of each of these conceptual tools, we argue that it is necessary for the decision-maker to be equipped comprehensively in order to make better ethical choices in the many and varied ethical dilemmas that will undoubtedly be faced.

The purpose of this paper is to present a more holistic approach to teaching marketing ethics that will enable the business student to appreciate the inter-relatedness and multi-dimensionality of ethical behavior in organizations. More specifically, it will enable the student to (a) appreciate the various ethical schools of thought available to them, (b) develop and use a critical decision making process, and (c) integrate other theories and concepts from outside the realm of ethics and moral development.

ETHICAL THEORIES

Existing frameworks, with the exception of Hitt (1990), rely upon teleology and deontological approaches to ethics. The teleological approach encompasses a number of ethical theories all of which converge on a similar theme – what is ethically good is what achieves the “best” end. The nature of this “best” end differs, however, among teleological approaches. For example, hedonists argue that the individual’s goal ought to be that which involves the least pain and most pleasure (physical and/or intellectual) for him or her. Utilitarians, in contrast, insist that the end to be

sought is the greatest pleasure or good and least pain or bad for the greatest number. Utilitarianism, the dominant teleological perspective, suggests that one should take the action that results in the maximization of good for all concerned – even if the goodness is not equally distributed (Shaw and Barry, 1992). Among its weaknesses, it ignores wrongfulness in an action as the end justifies the means. Additionally, the principle of utility may come into conflict with the principle of justice. Relativism suggests that the determination of the best end is contingent entirely upon the situation (e.g., cultural relativism).

On the other hand, the deontological approach focuses on the behavior (rather than the consequences). What makes a decision ethical is that the decision-maker would be willing to be so treated were the positions of the parties reversed (Shaw and Barry, 1992). The deontological approach also subsumes a number of different perspectives that share a common theme. This theme is one's duty to abide by principles (Beauchamp and Bowie, 1997; Rapheal 1989; Weiss, 1998). For example, the social contract theory argues that members of society collectively agree upon certain norms of behavior (Dunfee et al., 1999). If someone steps outside the acceptable societal standard, he or she is then acting unethically according to the pre-established agreement. A professional code of ethics is an example of a social contract. A second example of deontology is divine deontology (Brody, 1983). Here divine authority in the form of religious texts and its accompanying doctrine (e.g., the Bible) gives rules, commandments, or principles to us to abide by. We can know what is ethical by following the rules of God. A third type of deontology is Kantian deontology (Racheals, 1986; Raphael, 1989). This perspective views universal ethical principles and duty as that which any rational person could determine using his or her intuitive ability to reason ethically (e.g., Kant's [1788/1977] categorical imperative). A major limitation of the deontology is that it excludes the consideration of the consequences.

Generally speaking then, this Janus-headed approach has more or less defined the "theoretical universe" for business and marketing ethics implicitly and in recent years explicitly, for the practitioner and scholar (Brady, 1985; Beauchamp and Bowie, 1997; Hunt and Vitell, 1986; Hosmer, 1996; Kavathatzopoulos, 1993; Weiss, 1998). It has been widely accepted in the literature that what marketing decision-makers really need is a more descriptive approach that will enable them to understand and apply the ethical decision-making process.

We argue in support of an additional teleological view, which fits in a descriptive framework and calls into account the notion of virtue ethics. This camp, articulated in Aristotle's *Nichomachean Ethics*, suggests that

the *good* involves the pursuit of excellence in one's virtues (e.g., honesty, benevolence, integrity) as opposed to the quantitative calculus of pleasures over pains (Macdonald and Beck Dudley, 1994). Both of these teleological views needs to be presented to the student in order to provide them with a broader scope of ethical tools. In addition, we propose, as do Hitt (1990) and Hodgkinson (1991) that the possibility of ethical behavior extends beyond the ends and means dichotomy of teleology and deontology, respectively. We argue not for the exclusion of the traditional deontological and teleological approaches, but for the inclusion and functional awareness of a third dimension (i.e., a three-faced Janus head). This third ethical face or dimension is existentialism.

Existentialism

Existentialism is an eclectic school of thought (Kaufmann, 1975). Though existential writers differ dramatically in many ways, two common conceptual threads exist which tie together their ideas regarding the nature of ethical conduct. The first is the belief in the freedom of the individual to create his or her "essence." Sartre (1957) stated that the individual's "existence precedes essence" (p. 15). This implies that we first exist as humans and we then become whom we decide to be through our free will or choice. Existentialists argue that as a function of our capacity to exercise free will we are the sum of our decisions. The bottom line is that the business professional is a person first, and then he or she chooses to assume any one of the many roles that may constitute his or her essence (Werhane, 1999).

The second component of existentialism is the notion of responsibility for one's actions. What has been labeled the "terrible freedom," the "agony of thinking," "anguish", or the "torment of choice," points to the anxiety one experiences as a result of acknowledging the responsibility one has for personal behavior. Kierkegaard (1975) speaks at length regarding the tendency for individuals to hide behind the group (or the policy) when making a "decision" in order to avoid accountability. For example, he states "a crowd in its very concept is the untruth, by reason of the fact that it renders the individual completely impenitent and irresponsible, or at least weakens his sense of responsibility by reducing it to a fraction" (p. 95).

Existentialism in the organization would be manifested as an organizational culture and climate that fosters opportunity for individual choice, creativity, and accountability (Agarwal and Malloy, 2000). It would perhaps function optimally when individual authentic goals and values are congruent with organizational goals and values (Liedtka, 1989). Exist-

entialism, it may be argued, is essentially a personal decision-making philosophy, because it is based upon individual choice and the anxiety surrounding the recognition of the freedom and accountability of that choice.

Kierkegaard (1988) provides one of the most poignant examples of choice and the accompanying angst in his description of the Biblical story of Abraham and Isaac. In this story, God asks Abraham to sacrifice his only son as an indication of his faith. Kierkegaard describes the mental anguish of Abraham as he travels to the appointed location of his son's sacrifice and prepares for the child's death. From the perspective of hedonism, Abraham certainly feels that his son's death will cause great pain; from the perspective of utilitarianism and social contract deontology, the community will certainly agree that this act would be nothing short of brutal murder; from the perspective of Kantian deontology, such an act could not coincide with the categorical imperative. Therefore, Abraham finds himself in the "existential position" having to choose and act with the assistance or in spite of the guidance from external sources. The decision – he chooses to sacrifice his son (and accept the potential wrath of the community and his own emotional suffering). God intervenes, and Abraham's faith in God is secure and his son lives. Abraham's commitment is trans rational (Hodgkinson, 1996) – it represents an existential "leap of faith".

The point to be taken from this metaphor is that the individual can gather a great deal of information regarding the resolution of a particular dilemma. However, there remains a chasm between conceptual resolution and behavior. Negotiating this chasm is the source of the existentialist "fear and trembling". The "existentialist position" is a hesitation and not a paralysis. Once behavior is initiated, the existentialist is now prepared to accept responsibility for all teleological and deontological outcomes. This is authentic choice. Unlike Brady's (1985) Janus-head with faces looking forward to the dynamic future (teleology) and backward to static past (deontology), our proposed framework contains an additional existential "face" looking inward to the essence of individual being.

In the proposed ethical decision-making process, teleology, deontology, and existentialism have fundamental and explicit roles. The following section provides a framework that will enable the individual decision-maker to make ethical decisions by understanding the significant role that each of the three ethical approaches play and by considering a comprehensive set of moderating variables.

PROPOSED ETHICAL DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

The essence of this decision-making process is based upon the traditional rational decision-making process (Nutt, 1984) and the process developed by Rest (1984). The rational decision making process generally incorporates five stages which include problem identification, creating alternatives, selection of the best decision based upon a cost-benefit ratio, the implementation, and evaluation of the decision. From the perspective of moral decision-making, Rest (1984) contends the process includes four stages. These are as follows: recognition of the dilemma, judgment, intention, and behavior. While the rational decision-making process is detailed, it does not provide the decision-maker with an overt prescription to consider ethical aspects of the resolution. In contrast, Rest's process does encourage the decision-maker to consider the resolution from an ethical/moral perspective. Its weakness, however, is that it lacks comprehensiveness. In the decision-making process to follow, these two processes have been synthesized. In addition, teleological, deontological and existential theory has been incorporated into the stages to allow for more complex and ethically oriented means of choice.

In order to illustrate the proposed decision-making process, Negative Option Marketing (NOM) was chosen as a running case study. All negative option selling relies on the premise of "silence as acceptance," although there are at least three different types being used today. A NOM plan combines traditional positive choice exchange with negative option plan, where there is an ongoing relationship between the buyer and the seller in a series of positive exchanges. From time to time, however, the seller also makes negative option offers without the buyer's consent. NOM has generated most controversies and complaints (e.g., in telecommunications, cable, and financial services) since it is difficult to determine intent based on exchange partner's silence (Spriggs and Nevin, 1996).

Stages 1-4

In the first four stages, teleological and deontological perspectives guide the individual's information gathering and the selection of an ideal alternative. The questions raised in these initial stages may include some of the following: Is this an issue of means or ends? What alternatives would result in the best end for the firm? What is the greatest good for the clients and public? What policy is at stake? Does a new policy or procedure have to be developed in order to resolve this particular dilemma? The intent at this stage is to arrive at the alternative that best satisfies teleological and deontological criteria. That is, a decision that satisfies ends and means – a "good" and "right" decision (cf., Hitt, 1990).

The first stage of the decision-making process is the recognition of an ethical dilemma. The ethical issue of the case can be perceived from each of the two criteria – teleology and deontology. Yet, if an issue is not recognized as being an ethical one or as being ethically charged, one's ethical-cognitive scheme may not be activated. Therefore, this first stage of recognition is essential in order for the individual to proceed with conscious ethical intent. One's consciousness of personal philosophical orientation as well as background knowledge of a variety of schools of philosophical/ethical thought will enhance one's ability to recognize the ethical nature of dilemmas (Hodgkinson, 1983, 1991).

In the context of NOM, the problems could be defined in the following questions. Does a NOM plan amount to infringement of consumers' rights namely, the right to safety, the right to be informed, the right to choose, and the right to be heard? Similarly, does the buyer's silence amount to product acceptance and purchase intention? The problem may be viewed from each of the two philosophical perspectives. From the teleological perspective, a utilitarian would analyze the maximum good caused to maximum people such as production and transaction related efficiencies to the seller. For example, one transaction related efficiency for the seller accrues if the acceptance rate of the product is greater than 50 percent. Similarly the buyer enjoys transaction related efficiencies such as paying lower price due to lower search cost since the seller performs the search process for the buyer. From the deontological perspective, the problem may involve the policies and procedures of the firm, industry standards, and state and federal regulations. For example, in the absence of explicit acceptance, the common rule is that no contract exists if the buyer remains silent except in a limited set of characteristics. Similarly, the right to be informed and the right to choose are two important and relevant consumer rights in most NOM complaints.

The second stage of the process is the generation of alternatives. It is unlikely that the individual will recognize the complete set of alternatives. Cognitive complexity will play a dominant role in this stage in terms of one's ability to create a variety of potential solutions to the perceived issue or problem. Teleological alternative would consider how the best end result could be achieved. In the NOM context, how does the marketer at the very least maintain organizational and transactional efficiencies and thus customer retention? For example, one way may be for marketers to focus on high volume buyers with a history of 'silent' acceptance pattern. (According to contract law, a buyer's silence or inaction is valid acceptance if, among others, previous dealings indicate that silence or inaction is acceptable). The deontologist may explore total (or restricted) ban of NOM

on one extreme to self-regulation (a market driven system that punishes deceptive practices and rewards pro-efficiency uses of NOM) on the other extreme and all possible options in-between.

Evaluating alternatives is the third stage of the process. Once alternatives have been generated, the marketer must evaluate each option to determine which alternative best meets the teleological and deontological criteria. For example, consider the option of charging an exit fee to retain customers into the NOM plan. The teleologist would argue that such an option protects the sellers especially when the seller's cost savings are dependent on predictable volume and the buyer's early termination raises the seller's cost. The deontologist would argue that exit barriers have the potential for anti-competitive behavior that may lead to monopolistic or oligopolistic type of competition and would, therefore, be a violation of federal trade regulations. Moreover, it has the potential to raise the capital cost for the new seller who would want to absorb the buyer's exit penalty.

The fourth stage identifies the ideal alternative, based upon the two criteria, to solve the problem. Presumably, the alternative that most closely satisfies the two ethical criteria would be selected as the ideal decision. Whether this ideal decision is acted upon or remains conceptual is determined by the subsequent stage in the process. Consider the decision that the buyer must be made aware of the NOM plan bundled with other positive exchange relationships. According to the teleological criteria, education and awareness helps foster positive exchange relationships that are beneficial to both the seller and the buyer. Whether or not the buyer holds on to the NOM plan is a matter of buyer's choice. According to the deontological criteria, education and awareness is a self-regulation mechanism that fits in well with the broad market-based system as well as other regulatory systems. The deontologist would have to address whether or not buyer indifference amounts to lack of responsibility. Therefore, on the basis of the two criteria, buyer education and awareness qualifies as the best decision which later needs to be refined to address issues related to awareness.

Stage 5

At this point in the decision-making process, the decision-maker is faced with the "existential position" – to act upon the data gathered (i.e., the facts gleaned from deontological and/or teleological analysis) independent of free will or to incorporate further the path of free will. Hodgkinson (1996) states the decision making "is the most ordinary, familiar, and human of activities. It is also the most philosophical because it raises at once the imponderable issue of free will" (p. 50). The "existential position" (Jasper,

1975) is presented as a stage at which the data gathered and the ideal choice must be mediated through an existential “filter” (Agarwal and Malloy, 2000).

We argue that the existential position provides deeper understanding of this pre-action stage than does the traditional use of intent (e.g., Hunt and Vitell, 1986; Rest, 1984). It is here that the decision-maker accepts or rejects the information gathered from teleological and deontological perspectives as an individual responsible for all of humanity as opposed to an exclusive agent of an external authority (e.g., an employee of Company X). Guignon (1986) suggests that:

The existential notion of authenticity embodies certain ideal character traits – such as courage, integrity, clear-sightedness, steadfastness, responsibility, and communal solidarity – which can contribute to the formation of a character capable of making meaningful choices in concrete situations. The authentic agent might be better equipped to evaluate different ethical standpoints and their applicability to specific contexts of action than the slavish rule-follower [i.e., deontologist] or the cool cost/benefit calculator [i.e., utilitarian] (p. 88).

From the NOM perspective, the problem may involve the freedom and responsibility of the consumer to make informed choices. For example, is the consumer aware and knowledgeable of the implications and consequences of NOM? Does the consumer have the option of leaving a negative exchange relationship at any time? The existentialist may argue that both the buyer and the seller need to exercise free will and responsibility. Free will is engendered when the buyer faces a competitive market with multiple sellers. The buyer is free to exit the relationship with the current seller and enter another relationship with a different seller if not satisfied with negative option concept. However, in a monopoly situation, buyers are often left with no choice and therefore a lack of free will. Similarly, while the seller is responsible for anti-competitive actions and restriction of consumer choice, the buyer is also responsible for being aware of the negative option selling methods so that the positive exchange relationship (on which the negative option exchange is predicated) does not end as a result. In other words, high volume buyers who have historically availed of negative option exchanges (and thus enjoyed transaction efficiencies) have a responsibility and obligation to continue the exchange relationship with the seller so as to maintain the seller’s projected future stream of revenues. Based on the existentialist criteria, education and awareness would ensure free will and responsibility of the buyer and the seller. This may mean clear and conspicuous disclosure of the material terms of the NOM plan.

Stages 6–7

Stage six is the result of the decision-maker's activity in stages one through four as mediated by the "existential position". The decision-maker, now knowing what is the ideal decision, may or may not choose to implement it based upon his/her intention. As with each stage of the ethical decision making process, a variety of factors may influence the intent, such as locus of control, ego strength, and zone of acceptance (Trevino, 1986). For example, until such time regulations are updated to reflect current market practices, the decision to continue a NOM plan may be characterized as being primarily teleological rather than existential and/or deontological. This is because the decision is claimed to bring substantial production and transaction related efficiencies to both the buyer and the seller, thus maximizing the good to the greatest number of people.

The final stage evaluates the overt action in terms of each ethical approach. Was it authentic (existential)? Was it right (deontological)? Was it good (teleological)? A decision that satisfies each criterion is obviously preferred as it represents effectiveness as well as personal commitment and accountability. In the context of NOM, the resulting decision may be described as deontologically right if one accepts the premise that existing policies and procedures are sufficient. The decision may not be teleologically good, as 'the greatest good for the greatest number' principle may not be served if the number of buyer complaint grows. Finally the decision does not meet the existential criteria.

Summary

Regardless of the outcome, for this individual, the experience of decision-making and the subsequent existential, deontological, and teleological analysis of behavior contributes to the sum of experience that makes up an individual's essence. Table I contains a summary of the seven stages of ethical decision-making process. The decision will have changed the individual. From the existential perspective, it is of utmost importance that the individual is aware of this change, however subtle, because it will contribute to the way in which future ethical choices are approached. For example, suppose a person has made a decision that meets organizational demands and yet is inauthentic. If this person is guilt ridden as a consequence of his or her own "bad faith", then in the future, there may be a heightened awareness of the significance of authentic choice.

For the organization, this process encourages each decision-maker to consider a wider array of perspectives than the traditional cost-benefit analysis when making ethical decisions. It encourages the individual to exercise personal free will that is typically submerged in organizational

TABLE I
The Stages of the Process of Ethical Decision Making

Stages	Content
STAGE 1 Recognition of The Problem	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Does it involve the ends or consequences? 2. Does it involve the means or duty?
STAGE 2 Generation of Alternatives	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Alternatives to maximize ends? 2. Alternatives to maximize means/duty?
STAGE 3 Evaluation of Alternatives	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The process of critiquing alternatives to determine a comprehensive alternative-good and right.
STAGE 4 Ideal Decision	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The proposed choice of the best alternative 2. The synthesis of alternatives to establish the good and right choice.
STAGE 5 Existential Position	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To choose the best end. 2. To choose the best means. 3. To choose the most freedom and responsibility.
STAGE 6 Overt Behavior	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Was the ethical decision comprehensively followed? 2. If not, why?
STAGE 7 Evaluation of Behavior	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Evaluate behavior based upon the teleological, deontological, and existential criteria – was the behavior comprehensively ethical?

agentic states. Such freedom and responsibility may result in personal growth (i.e., essence) and enhanced organizational commitment (Barnard, 1968; Hodgkinson, 1996).

While the process itself provides considerable direction for the decision-maker, in order to make comprehensive ethical decisions, more information is required. Such information includes the numerous variables that may influence the decision-maker to make authentic choices. In the next section, we propose a pedagogical framework for teaching ethical decision-making that is good, right, and authentic and that employs the influences of several layers of moderating factors.

PROPOSED PEDAGOGICAL FRAMEWORK FOR A MARKETING ETHICS CURRICULUM

The method for the proposed pedagogical approach consists of seven modules. In each module, students participate in lectures, discussion, and debates on each aspect of the model. Analysis and resolution of case studies involving an array of ethical dilemmas confronting the marketer is also recommended as an essential feature of this methodology. The instructor may generate case studies or it may be part of the class requirement for students to develop their own hypothetical (or actual) dilemmas and offer these to their peers. Ideally, cases will be based upon current issues in the field. The analyses must incorporate and build upon the theoretical material presented in preceding class discussions/lectures, that is, praxis – putting reflected theory into practice.

Module I–II: The Process and Elements of Ethical Decision Making

Module I

In Module I students are exposed to the seven-stage process (discussed earlier) presented in Table I. It may be helpful if students work through this process without incorporating the ethical aspects initially. Once students are comfortable with each stage, they are to incorporate the teleological, deontological, and existential theories (i.e., ends, means, and freedom/responsibility) into the analysis and critique of the case. Lectures describing, discussing, and evaluating the work of such philosophers as Mill (teleology), Kant (deontology), Kierkegaard (existentialism), and others provide the student with the theoretical background needed to complete the second module.

Module II

In this module, students should become familiar with different ethical theories and content (discussed earlier). The teleological approach encompasses a number of ethical theories all of which converge on a similar theme – what is ethically good is what achieves the “best” end. The deontological approach also subsumes a number of different perspectives that share a common theme. This theme is one’s duty to abide by principles. Existentialists believe in the freedom of the individual to create his or her “essence,” and the responsibility for one’s action. It is about authentic choice.

Module III–VII: The Moderators of Ethical Decision Making

The framework consists of five layers of moderators (see Figure 1), which may influence the process of ethical decision-making behavior as described in the previous section. Moderators may influence ethical decision making in three fundamental ways. First, these moderators may affect the extent to which an ethical issue is recognized (Jones, 1991; Rest, 1984). Second, the moderators may affect the content and form of the individual's ethical orientation (e.g., Sinclair, 1993). Third, the moderators may affect the ethical decision-making process itself (e.g., Ferrell et al., 1989).

The arrangement of the layers is indicative of the perceived force of influence of each layer to the decision behavior. This implies that, in general, layers proximal to the core of the model such as individual moderators will determine to a greater extent an individual's decision behavior than will more distal layers such as situational moderators. It is however probable those moderators will have an impact upon one another and occasionally the more distal layers may have a stronger impact than proximal ones. For example, newly developed social legislation in favor of affirmative action may have a greater impact upon individual behavior than the influence of one's significant others who wish to maintain employment practice status quo.

The moderators are also influenced by the result of the decision making process. Existentialists will argue that each decision we make becomes part of our essence – it adds to what we are as human beings. Therefore each decision will contribute to the first layer of moderators termed "individual nature". Similarly, other layers of the model will be influenced by individual decisions. For example, decisions at the individual level can profoundly influence corporate performance, organizational culture and climate as well as influence societal norms and perceptions. Therefore the framework represents a reciprocal relationship between the decision-making process and moderators.

The framework contains five general categories of moderators, which are presented as layers surrounding the 'core' ethical decision-making process. These layers identify the individual's nature, the characteristics of the issue, and the influence of significant others, the organization, and the external macro-factors. Table II contains a summarized list of the moderating factors.

Module III (Individual Moderators)

Module III incorporates the first layer of moderators, which is presented in Figure 1. How the philosophical, psychological, and demographic profile

TABLE II
Summary of the Content of the Moderators of Ethical Decision Making

Moderators	Content
INDIVIDUAL	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Philosophical profile 2. Psychological profile (moral development) 3. Demographic profile
ISSUE SPECIFIC	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Proximity to the issue (psychological/physical) 2. Societal consensus 3. Responsibility for results 4. Magnitude of evil/good 5. Concentration of effect 6. Tactical – procedural 7. Strategic – policy
SIGNIFICANT OTHERS	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Personal 2. Intra-organizational 3. Extra-organizational
SITUATIONAL	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Organizational Ideology 2. Organizational Culture 3. Organizational Climate
EXTERNAL	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Political 2. Societal 3. Economic 4. Technology

of the decision-maker may influence the decision process is the essence of this aspect of the course. Lectures include not only further investigations into ethical theory but also ontological positions, such as, the nature of the leaders, followers, and organization's existence. Various theories of moral development, for example, the theories of Kohlberg (1984), Gilligan (1984), and Kegan (1982), and the influence of demographic factors should be considered relevant.

The decision maker's philosophical orientation and accompanying value structure affects, in a profound manner, the way in which the individual views the ethical decision making phenomenon as a whole – from the recognition of the problem to the evaluation of the overt behavior. Of particular concern is the ethical orientation of the decision-maker. Does this individual function from the teleological good (best ends), the deontological right (best means/duty), or from the existentially authentic

(freedom and responsibility). For example, the post-conventional existentialist will take seriously the “existential position” and though armed with teleological calculations and deontological guidance may still experience the tremendous angst prior to initiating a truly authentic decision.

From a psychological perspective, we argue that a curriculum model should present the individual’s cognitive level of moral reasoning as a fundamental component of ethical decision making. The decision-maker’s relative level of moral development will determine to what extent the individual accepts and/or internalizes the various exogenous moderators. For example, an individual who is in Kohlberg’s conventional stage in the capacity to reason and who is generally utilitarian in ethical and political orientation (i.e., democratic) may not realize at all the enormity of the “existential position.” Once the cost-benefit analysis is complete or the vote is counted, the decision is made – there will be no “leap of faith” for this individual (i.e., the numbers don’t lie and the majority is never wrong). Further we suggest that the model contain both masculine and feminine orientations to cognitive moral development, which represent the underlying themes of justice and non-violence or caring, respectively. For example, the individual functioning from either a ‘feminine’ (Gilligan, 1977) or ‘masculine’ (Kohlberg, 1969, 1981) conventional level of moral development will be more open to external influence than the individual functioning from a post-conventional level of non-violence (Gilligan, 1977) or justice (Kohlberg, 1969, 1984).

The level of moral development will influence other psychological factors, such as, the individual’s locus of control, field dependence, motivation mechanisms, obedience to others, self-concept, ego strength, and machiavellianism, which will, in a profound way, influence ethical decision-making behavior (Stead et al., 1990; Trevino, 1986). Goolsby and Hunt (1992) conclude that the higher the level of cognitive moral development, the greater the ethical sensitivity and behavior exhibited in business environment. Proper training in cognitive moral development, they argue, is necessary to develop skills in dealing with ethical issues. The demographic profile of the decision-maker plays a significant role in one’s ethical behavior. Factors such as age, gender, and education are intimately related to one’s ability to reason morally from the behavioral and from the cognitive structural perspective.

Module IV (Issue-Specific Moderators)

Module IV introduces the nature of the issue as an important moderating component. The model presents factors relating to the relative intensity (e.g., the proximity, magnitude, consensus, concentration, probability, and

immediacy) (Jones, 1991; Morris and McDonald, 1995) and the strategic and tactical significance (Fritzsche, 1991) of the issue. These factors influence the decision-maker to attend more closely to the issue or to modify his/her behavior to suit the perceived demands of the ethical dilemma. A decision deemed by the individual to be ethically intensive and organizationally strategic may result in behavior significantly different in method and content than one perceived to be ethically neutral and organizationally moot. In addition, it will also result in a heightened level of existential introspection.

In the case of NOM, the magnitude of the consequence of the decision can be potentially enormous – lawsuit damages and jeopardy of the firm’s reputation. The proximity of the decision-maker to the issue is perhaps personally or emotionally distant unless a strategic relationship exists with the key affected buyer groups. The social consensus regarding this issue may probably lean towards extreme caution in favor of the buyer population since there may be growing pressure from consumer rights group for tighter regulations.

Module V (Significant Other Moderators)

Module V extends the student’s appreciation of the potential impacts of significant others upon the decision-maker’s behavior. “Significant others” comprise the third layer of the model. Research suggests that personal (e.g., Bommer et al., 1987; Dubinsky and Loken, 1989), intra-organizational (e.g., Cote and Goodstein, 1999; Dunfee et al., 1999; Fritzsche, 1991; Jensen and Wygant, 1990; Schminke and Wells, 1999; Weaver and Trevino, 1999), and extra-organizational (e.g., Stead et al., 1990) significant others can influence individual behavior. Much of this research is premised upon behavioral theory, which points to social modeling (e.g., Bandura, 1986) and reward and punishment structures as key variables. First, significant others may play a role in developing the individual’s general philosophical orientation and level of cognitive moral reasoning. Second, ethical conduct may be the result of the decision-maker’s modeling the behavior of significant others (Jensen and Wygant, 1990). Third, significant others may be a source of implicit and/or explicit reward and punishment for the decision-maker (Bommer et al., 1987; Jensen and Wygant, 1990). The support or censure from one’s family, friends, co-workers, peers, and a wide variety of extraneous stakeholders may provide significant incentive to behave in a prescribed ethical or unethical manner.

It is however a function of the ethical and cognitive structural orientation of the individual that will moderate the extent to which significant

others influence behavior. For example, a post-conventional existentialist is less likely to be influenced by the behavior of peers than would a conventional teleologist. For the latter, the support or censure of family, friends, co-workers, peers, and/or a wide variety of extraneous stakeholders may provide significant incentive to behave in a prescribed ethical or unethical manner.

Within the organization, there may be those who favor slow cautious movement toward addressing the possibility of the unethical content involving NOM plan. These individuals also may lack the definitive information they perceive is necessary to require action. Extra organizational significant others would include the various consumer-protection lobby groups that may attempt to pressure the firm to take action.

Module VI (Organizational Moderators)

Module VI includes the application of the many situational moderators of ethical decision-making. Lectures and discussions cover aspects of organizational ideology, culture, and climate in which the individual makes ethical decisions as an agent or member qua member of the organization. Several factors may influence the individual to make decisions in an organizationally prescribed manner within an organizationally prescribed range of outcomes. Some of these factors are: the organization's stated or unstated philosophy, the basic assumptions which implicitly guide organizational behavior (Hitt, 1990), the organizational code of ethics (Bommer et al., 1990; Hitt, 1990; Stead et al., 1990), the organizational socialization process (Jones, 1991), the decision maker's immediate job context (Trevino, 1986), and the reward and punishment structure of the organization (Ferrell and Gresham, 1985; Fritzsche, 1991).

For example, the cable industry has traditionally been a regional monopoly (although it is changing now) without much scope for competition. The organizational culture would therefore have a tendency to adopt practices that capitalize on buyers' restricted choice. In the past, the cable industry has used bundling and unbundling of services along with NOM plans (often erratically) without giving choice to buyers. In addition, a consensual method of decision-making was advocated to insure industry-wide harmony.

Module VII (External Moderators)

The final module of this course is concerned with the moderators, which may influence the decision process from a macro perspective, such as the economy, politics, technology, and societal values (Stead et al., 1990). These external variables may influence the decision-maker directly or may

be mediated through the organization, through interpersonal relationships, and through the social consensus of moral intensity of ethical dilemmas (e.g., Bommer et al., 1987; Ferrell and Gresham, 1985; Hunt and Vitell, 1986; Malhotra and Miller, 1998; Stead et al., 1990). Legally, NOM practice is under examination and regulations in some key sectors such as banking and telecommunications are being tightened. Technology can also impact the nature of the decision process. For example, satellite transmitted direct TVs are posing as an alternate technology to cable transmission. The presence of new substitute technology is generating increased competition, which strengthens consumer choices and weakens NOM plans.

Summary

By following through these modules, the student's case analysis includes not only how the decision maker "ought" to move through the seven-stage process, but also, how each layer of moderators may influence decision behavior. As a result, the student has analyzed and explored the complexity of the ethical dilemma in a comprehensive fashion. The consequence is that students are armed with, what Hodgkinson (1983) so aptly suggested as the *raison d'être* of philosophy, the power of comprehension and informed praxis. Table III contains a summarized list of the modules. In each module, any ethical issue in marketing can be used as a case study to demonstrate the application of this model.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this paper was to present a theoretical pedagogical framework for ethical decision making in marketing. We believe that the proposed model extends current perceptions of marketing in a number of ways. First, this framework provides a descriptive model, which enables the decision-maker to evaluate each step of the process from three disparate perspectives in order to ensure a more comprehensive ethical decision – that is one, which is authentic, right, and good. The authors argue that traditional approaches to ethical decision-making have employed teleological and deontological theories at the expense of the existential perspective. This, they suggest, has been a curious omission as all business decisions eventually are reduced to an individual taking action. In terms of existential metaphor, the individual stands at the edge of the decision abyss armed with the available knowledge of the best ends and the best means and with this information must make a leap of faith – he or she must choose. This leap cannot be prescriptive. Only the individual decision-maker can choose

TABLE III
A Summary of the Modules of the Course Methodology

Stages	Content
MODULE 1 (Week 1)	ETHICAL DECISION-MAKING PROCESS 1. Students become familiar with the process of ethical decision-making without the ethical component. 2. Analyze case study # 1* (e.g., H.B. Fuller Company and glue sniffing in Honduras).
MODULE 2 (Week 2–4)	ETHICAL THEORETICAL CONTENT 1. Incorporate ethical theory into the decision-making process – good, right, and authentic. 2. Analyze case study # 2 (e.g., Wal-Mart and marketing competition).
MODULE 3 (Week 5–6)	INDIVIDUAL MODERATORS 1. Incorporate the individual moderators into the case study analysis – philosophical, psychological, and demographic. 2. Analyze case study # 3 (e.g., Nike Corporation & marketing).
MODULE 4 (Week 7)	ISSUE SPECIFIC MODERATORS 1. Incorporate the issue specific moderators into the case study analysis – moral intensity, tactical, and strategic. 2. Analyze case study # 4 (e.g., Monsanto and Bio-technology food products).
MODULE 5 (Week 8)	SIGNIFICANT OTHER MODERATORS 1. Incorporate the significant other moderators into the case study analysis – personal, intra-organizational, and extra-organizational. 2. Analyze case study # 5 (e.g., Nestlé & baby formula).
MODULE 6 (Week 9–11)	SITUATIONAL MODERATORS 1. Incorporate the situational moderators into the case study analysis – organizational ideology, culture, and climate. 2. Analyze case study # 6 (Phillip Morris tobacco sales and marketing).
MODULE 7 (Week 12–13)	EXTERNAL MODERATORS 1. Incorporate the external moderators into the case study analysis – economic, political, social, and technological. 2. Analyze case study # 7 (e.g., Tylenol and Johnson & Johnson).

*These cases are presented for illustrative purposes only. Any ethical dilemma in a marketing context would be appropriate for use with this model. Details of these cases can be found in most texts dealing with ethical issues in marketing or they can be found in the popular press.

authentically. This model may open the possibility of authentic awareness that would, as Guignon (1986) argued, make the individual a better decision-maker. The individual would presumably take seriously personal and organizational actions and understand to a greater extent the responsibility for all outcomes of behavior. This authentic relationship between the individual and his or her role as a marketing decision-maker will foster a greater sense of commitment and awareness to the missions and goals of the firm.

Second, a host of factors that may potentially influence ethical decisions are presented. These moderators are schematically arranged to reveal the reality of the multiplicity of idiographic and nomothetic interaction effects. Unlike earlier approaches (e.g., Fritzsche, 1991; Hunt and Vitell, 1992; Strong and Meyer, 1992; Trevino, 1986), we suggest that there exists an interaction effect between all layers of the proposed model. While proximal layers may generally influence the actual decision making process to a greater extent than distal layers, it is conceivable that distal layers may occasionally have a direct impact upon decision behavior. For example, in so far as "cosmopolitan" or "local" orientations operate in the organization, a member may be more or less predisposed to global concerns that transcend corporate culture and ideology, respectively.

The proposed model incorporated into a pedagogical framework allows for marketing students to understand and explain ethical behavior from a holistic perspective. This is accomplished in three ways. First the decision-maker is encouraged to view each ethical dilemma from three disparate perspectives (i.e., teleological, deontological, and existential) in order to more fully gauge the complexity of the problem and its resolution. Second, the decision-maker is given five dimensions that can be assessed to explain ethical conduct (i.e., related to the individual, the issue, the significant others, the organization, and the external moderators). Finally, a decision-making process is recommended that will guide the individual through seven logical steps to reach a comprehensive solution to the dilemma at hand. This approach to applied ethics in marketing provides the student and practitioner with comprehensive conceptual perspectives of ethical critique that may enhance the ability to decide ethically. Ultimately, once prepared to act ethically, that is, armed with this knowledge, it is the individual's intent to employ this knowledge in the organizational setting that will result in ethical practices in marketing contexts. A comprehensive real life case analysis in each module in the curriculum allows students to be exposed to the impact of an array of moderating factors in an ethical decision-making situation. Case method combined with lectures offers an effective and practical pedagogical tool for teaching marketing ethics (Feldman and

Thompson, 1990). It adds to the richness, complexity, and subtlety of ethical situations as opposed to the standard cases involving macro ethical issues found in textbooks that often present glaring examples of corporate misconduct. Students must learn to recognize ethical dilemmas when they are embedded in the complexity of real-life situations (Adams et al., 1998).

It is believed that toward the end of the course, students will have achieved a heightened sensitivity toward ethical dilemmas and that their personal value systems will enhance and influence the decision. It has been argued that students of business and marketing ethics are deprived of the opportunity to personalize ethical situations and that they do not achieve personal ethical development (McDonald and Donleavy, 1995; Oddo, 1997; Polonsky, 1998). Current business cases rarely deal with decisions at the individual level, focusing instead on corporate decision-making (Adams, 1998). Our proposed integrated framework allows the student to apply personal values to bear on the decision context since existentialism, at the core foundation, is really a theory of choice. This framework, while prescribing the process of ethical decision-making, does not attempt to prescribe what behavior ought to be actualized. It does, however, give the student and practitioner a set of conceptual perspectives, with which to assess the ethical comprehensiveness of decision-making behavior. This approach to a course in marketing ethics may assist the lecturer and the student to dissect complex ethical dilemmas and resolve them effectively.

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