



Ethical Problems of Marketing Researchers

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Almost all studies on ethics in marketing research have focused on either delineating the responsibilities and obligations of researchers to respondents and clients or exploring whether various groups perceive certain marketing research practices to be ethical or unethical. The authors empirically examine four research questions: What are the major ethical problems of marketing researchers? To what extent do our professional codes of conduct address the major ethical problems of marketing researchers? How extensive are the ethical problems of marketing researchers? How effective are the actions of top management in reducing ethical problems of marketing researchers?

Ethical Problems of Marketing Researchers

Marketing activities often pose significant ethical problems in business. In a classic study of business ethics, Baumhart (1961) identified the major ethical problems that business people wanted to eliminate: (1) gifts, gratuities, bribes, and "call girls," (2) price discrimination and unfair pricing, (3) dishonest advertising, (4) miscellaneous unfair competitive practices, (5) cheating customers, unfair credit practices, and overselling, (6) price collusion by competitors, (7) dishonesty in making or keeping a contract, and (8) unfairness to employees and prejudice in hiring. Note that five of the eight most important ethical problems pertain to marketing activities. Brenner and Molander (1977) conducted a followup study and found the same set of undesirable practices, though the order of importance changed for several items. Findings such as these led Murphy and Laczniak (1981) to conclude that "the function within business firms most often charged with ethical abuse is marketing" (p. 251), and prompted us to explore empirically the nature of the ethical problems of marketing researchers.

Murphy and Laczniak (1981) comprehensively reviewed ethics research and found that research "related to marketing ethics has been less than innovative and

systematic" (p. 262). They identify several areas where more research is critically needed, including "ranking (in terms of importance) the various areas of ethical abuse in marketing" and "finding out whether the behavior of the chief marketing officer is *the* crucial variable in setting the moral tone of the marketing organization" (p. 262). The purpose of our research project was to examine these issues. Specifically, the study addressed four research questions.

1. What are the major ethical problems of marketing researchers?
2. To what extent do our professional codes of conduct address the major ethical problems of marketing researchers?
3. How extensive are the ethical problems of marketing researchers?
4. How effective are the actions of top management in reducing the ethical problems of marketing researchers?

We explored these questions using a sample of more than 450 practicing marketing research professionals. Before we examine the results of the study, a discussion of the nature of ethical problems in marketing research is appropriate.

THE NATURE OF ETHICAL PROBLEMS OF MARKETING RESEARCHERS

Ethical problems are relationship kinds of problems. That is, ethical problems occur only when an individual interacts with other people. The ethical philosopher Baier (1958, p. 215) points out that "a world of Robinson Crusoes has no need for morality." Part of the value system of each individual is a perceived set of obligations, duties, and responsibilities toward other groups of people.

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For example, a researcher has the responsibility to treat respondents fairly in a research study. At the same time, a researcher has a responsibility to the client to gather accurate, reliable information.

Ethical *conflict* occurs when an individual perceives that his/her duties and responsibilities toward one group are inconsistent with his/her duties and responsibilities toward some other group (including one's self). The individual then must attempt to resolve these opposing obligations. For example, a researcher might resolve an ethical conflict as follows: "In order to gather accurate and reliable data (satisfying my duty to my client), I shall deceive the respondents in my study about the true nature of the study, but shall 'debrief' the respondents about the true purpose of the study upon its completion (thus satisfying my obligation of fairness to my respondents)." Other researchers might choose a different solution to the ethical conflict, such as sacrificing the interests of the client by gathering less reliable data. Bartels (1967, p. 24) succinctly states the nature of ethical conflict.

In a pluralistic society not one but many expectations must be met. Therefore, resolution of what is right to do produces a balance of obligations and satisfactions. Ideally, full satisfaction of the expectations of all parties would constitute the most ethical behavior. This is impossible, for expectations are often contradictory and sometimes exceed social sanction. Therefore, skill and judgment must be used to guide one in determining the point at which his own integrity can be best maintained.

As Murphy and Laczniak (1981) point out, the "most longstanding thrust within marketing research ethics is the delineation of the rights of all parties involved in the research process" (p. 253). Most of the ethics research pertains to the duties of researchers toward respondents and clients. For example, Tybout and Zaltman (1974) set forth a "bill of rights" for respondents: the right to choose, the right to safety, and the right to be informed. Similarly, Schneider (1977) examined ways in which respondents' rights can be abused, including deceptive practices by researchers, invasion of privacy, and lack of consideration for respondents. Crawford (1970) examined the responsibilities of researchers toward both respondents and society in general. Using primarily "scenario" techniques, Coney and Murphy (1976) and McGown (1979) also examined responsibilities of researchers toward respondents and clients.

Almost all studies on ethics in marketing research have focused on either delineating the responsibilities and obligations of researchers toward respondents and clients or exploring whether various groups perceive certain marketing research practices to be ethical or unethical. No research has been done to determine empirically the major issues that practicing researchers perceive to result in ethical conflict. Furthermore, though it is well established that ethical conflict results from balancing the interests of various groups, no research has addressed the frequency with which different groups are involved in

the relationships producing ethical conflict for marketing researchers. Though Murphy and Laczniak (1981) conclude that "there appears to be a general dissatisfaction with the ethical performance of marketing researchers," (p. 255), no research has documented empirically the extent of ethical problems of marketing researchers. The preceding discussion emphasizes the importance of two of the research questions addressed in this study: "What are the major ethical problems of marketing researchers?" and "How extensive are the ethical problems of marketing researchers?"

Previous studies have suggested three things that top management can do to help resolve employees' ethical conflict: (1) serve as role models by conducting their own activities impeccably, (2) encourage ethical behaviors by promptly reprimanding unethical conduct, and (3) draft and promote both corporate and industry codes of conduct. Ferrell and Weaver (1978) examined the ethical beliefs of marketing managers and concluded that "these findings suggest that top management must assume at least part of the responsibility for the ethical conduct of marketers within their organization. By establishing and enforcing policy, the frame of reference for ethical behavior could be improved" (p. 73). Similarly, Kaikati and Label (1980) examined American bribery legislation and concluded that "no code of ethical behavior is likely to be observed unless the chief executive officer declares that violators will be punished. When a company fails to take strict disciplinary actions, many employees may assume that their unethical acts are accepted standards of corporate behavior" (p. 42).

Corporate codes of conduct are very common. A study conducted by the Ethics Resource Center (1979) found that approximately three-fourths of corporations had a written code of ethics. Similarly, the American Marketing Association has both a general code of ethics for marketers and a specific code for marketing research (Twedt 1963). Apparently believing the national association's code of conduct to be deficient, the New York Chapter of the American Marketing Association has endorsed its own code of ethics for marketing research (*Marketing News* 1980, p. 24). Despite the existence of many corporate, industry, and professional codes, empirical evidence that these codes effectively help resolve ethical conflict is lacking. Murphy and Laczniak (1981) examined the evidence and concluded that "corporate codes are somewhat controversial" (p. 259). Therefore we investigated the effectiveness of top management actions and corporate ethical codes in reducing ethical conflict, as well as the extent to which our professional ethical codes address the major ethical problems.

METHOD

The data we report are from a larger study examining marketing ethics, Machiavellianism, and attitudes toward the job by means of a self-administered questionnaire sent to 4282 marketing practitioners. These individuals represented a systematic sample of one of every

four marketing practitioners in the American Marketing Association. As our focus was on the ethical problems of researchers employed either by market research agencies or by business organizations as "in-house" researchers, educators and students were excluded from the sample frame. The questionnaire was pretested with a convenience sample of 200 marketers (also obtained from the AMA directory). The final set of mailings, sent in the summer of 1982, consisted of the questionnaire itself, a cover letter, a stamped, pre-addressed reply envelope, a prenotification postcard sent one week before the questionnaire, and a followup postcard sent one week after the questionnaire.

A total of 1076 usable questionnaires were returned, for a response rate of 25.1%. Response rates at this level are not uncommon when marketing practitioners are used as a sample. For example, Myers, Massy, and Greyser (1980) obtained a response rate of 28.5% in their survey of the American Marketing Association membership, and a straightforward membership survey of AMA practitioners conducted by the Association produced only a 41% response rate (American Marketing Association 1982). These studies had the sponsorship of either or both the American Marketing Association and the Marketing Science Institute whereas our study had no sponsorship other than our university affiliation. This difference probably accounts for our lower response rate.

From the total of 1076 usable questionnaires, the responses of the 460 individuals who identified themselves (in the questionnaire) as marketing researchers constitute the data base for our analysis. The characteristics of the sample (Table 1) indicate that respondents have varied educational backgrounds but, as expected, almost all have college degrees. The sample includes both in-house and market research agency researchers employed by firms ranging in size from one to more than 1000 employees. Advertising agency researchers are not in the sample. Also, the respondents span a wide range of ages, incomes, and job titles.

RESULTS

Ethical Problems

Our first research question is, "What are the major ethical problems of marketing researchers?" The absence of previous research on this question necessitated an exploratory research procedure. Marketing researchers were asked to respond in an open-ended manner to the following question.

In all professions (e.g., law, medicine, education, accounting, marketing, etc.), managers are exposed to at least some situations that pose a moral or ethical problem. Would you please briefly describe the job situation that poses the *most difficult* ethical or moral problem for you?

The subject of ethics is always a sensitive research topic. Pretests indicated that many respondents believed (mistakenly) that the purpose of the research was to single

Table 1
CHARACTERISTICS OF SAMPLE^a

Characteristic	%
<i>Type of organization</i>	
1. In-house researchers	75
2. Agency researchers	25
<i>Job title</i>	
1. Junior analyst	6
2. Analyst	29
3. Assistant manager/director	12
4. Manager/director	33
5. Vice president	13
6. President, owner	7
<i>Size of firm</i>	
1. 1	1
2. 2 to 9	5
3. 10 to 19	5
4. 20 to 49	7
5. 50 to 99	4
6. 100 to 249	10
7. 250 to 499	9
8. 500 to 999	10
9. 1000 or more	49
<i>Education level</i>	
1. No college degree	4
2. Bachelor's	34
3. Master's	58
4. Doctorate	4
<i>Sex</i>	
1. Male	59
2. Female	41
<i>Marital status</i>	
1. Married	65
2. Single	35
<i>Income</i>	
1. Less than \$10,000	1
2. \$10,000 to \$19,999	9
3. \$20,000 to \$29,999	28
4. \$30,000 to \$39,999	25
5. \$40,000 to \$49,999	17
6. \$50,000 to \$59,999	9
7. \$60,000 to \$69,999	4
8. \$70,000 to \$79,999	3
9. \$80,000 to \$89,999	1
10. \$90,000 to \$99,999	1
11. \$100,000 or more	3
<i>Age</i>	
1. 20-29	24
2. 30-39	38
3. 40-49	19
4. 50-59	15
5. 60 or more	4
<i>Major field of study</i>	
1. General business	19 ^b
2. Business—marketing	23
3. Business—accounting	1
4. Business—management	1
5. Business—statistics	3
6. Business—finance	1
7. Engineering	4
8. Other technical (e.g. physics)	10
9. Social studies	21
10. Humanities	9
11. Other (e.g., education)	8

^aN = 460.

^bMany of these are probably marketing majors who simply specified "Bachelor's degree in business."

out marketing as unique in having ethical problems. Respondents seemed much more willing to answer the ethics question when it was preceded by the "desensitizing" first statement. The response rate was 55% on the open-ended question.

As is consistent with ethical theory, the ethical problems identified by respondents were coded according to the different *issues* and *conflicts* involved. Two independent judges coded all 254 responses and, though the coding of open-ended questions inherently involves subjectivity, the interjudge reliability was 95% for issues and 94% for conflicts. Categories were developed to be as consistent as possible with the American Marketing Association code of ethics.

Tables 2, 3, and 4 display the results for ethical issues and conflicts. The ethical issue most often indicated by both marketing research agency and in-house researchers involves problems with research integrity (Table 2). Note that the question posed to respondents did *not* restrict them exclusively to ethical problems in the *practice* of marketing research. Therefore, though the first four ethical issues relate directly to respondents' activities *qua* researchers, several others could be ethical problems for

any manager. Issues such as personnel problems, gifts, bribes, and entertainment, and the misuse of funds are not uniquely marketing research ethical issues.

The most often reported ethical conflict of in-house researchers is attempting to balance the researcher's self-interest against the researcher's responsibilities to clients within one's own company (Table 3). Similarly, the ethical conflict most often indicated by marketing research agency respondents is attempting to balance one's responsibilities to a client outside the company against one's company responsibilities (Table 4). We discuss each of the major ethical issues in turn.

Research integrity. The first category accounts for 33% of all responses and includes such items as deliberately withholding information, falsifying figures, altering research results, misusing statistics, ignoring pertinent data, compromising the design of a research project, and misinterpreting the results of a research project with the objective of supporting a predetermined personal or corporate point of view. All of these practices have the common theme of deliberate production of dishonest or less-than-completely-honest research. We label the category "research integrity," because any dishonesty in re-

Table 2
ETHICAL ISSUES IN MARKETING RESEARCH^a

Issue	In-house researchers' frequency ^b		Agency researchers' frequency ^b		Total frequency ^{b,c}		AMA code ^d	New York AMA code ^e
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%		
1. Research integrity	62	31	37	37	99	33	A1,B1,C1	A1,2,3,4 B1,2,3,4
2. Treating outside clients fairly	15	8	16	16	31	11	—	A5,6 C1,3
3. Research confidentiality	15	8	12	12	27	9	B2,3	C2
4. Marketing mix social issues	17	9	6	6	23	8	—	D4,E
5. Personnel issues	14	7	6	6	20	7	—	—
6. Treating respondents fairly	17	9	2	2	19	6	A2	D1,2,3
7. Treating others in company fairly	11	6	1	1	12	4	—	A5,6 C1,3
8. Interviewer dishonesty	1	1	9	9	10	3	D1,2,3,4	B3
9. Gifts, bribes, and entertainment	6	3	2	2	8	3	—	—
10. Treating suppliers fairly	8	4	—	—	8	3	—	C4
11. Legal issues	8	4	—	—	8	3	—	—
12. Misuse of funds	5	3	1	1	6	2	—	—
13. Other	17	9	7	7	24	8	—	—
	<i>n</i> = 196	102	<i>n</i> = 99	99	<i>n</i> = 295	100		

^aResponse to open-ended question: "In all professions (e.g., law, medicine, education, accounting, marketing, etc.), managers are exposed to at least some situations that pose a moral or ethical problem. Would you please briefly describe the job situation that poses the *most difficult* ethical or moral problem for you?"

^bThough respondents were asked to describe only one ethical problem, 38 respondents described two coequal problems and one respondent described three coequal problems. Therefore, *n* is the number of problems described by all valid responses, i.e., 254 respondents described 295 problems (*n* = 295).

^cIssues are ranked by total frequency. Spearman rank order correlation = .09 n.s.

^dSection of AMA (national) code addressing this issue (See Appendix A for key).

^eSection of AMA (New York Chapter) code addressing this issue (See Appendix B for key).

Table 3
ETHICAL CONFLICTS REPORTED BY IN-HOUSE RESEARCHERS^a

Rank	Party one	Party two	No.	%
1	Self	Client within	24	12
2	Self	Company	18	9
3	Company	Society	13	7
4	Self	Management	13	7
5	Company	Management	12	6
6	Company	Competitors	12	6
7	Company	Suppliers	11	6
8	Company	Outside clients	10	5
9	Self	Co-workers	10	5
	Other conflicts ^b		73	37
			196	100

^aRead: "The number one ethical conflict reported by in-house researchers was attempting to balance one's self-interests with the interests of clients within one's own company."

^bOf these other conflicts, eight accounted for 43 reported instances (22%): company-customer (8 instances), company-respondent (7), company-co-worker (6), self-outside client (5), self-respondent (5), company-subordinate (4), management-outside client (4), and co-worker-outside client (4). Eighteen other conflict relationships made up the remaining 30 instances (15%).

search compromises its fundamental integrity. This interpretation is consistent with Blankenship's (1964) description of integrity (p. 26).

Integrity is a voluntary, spontaneous, positive form of honesty, where one takes initiative in being honest, being almost aggressive about it. The person with integrity says or stands up for what he thinks is right without waiting for anyone to ask him how he feels.

For example, a consumer goods marketing services director reported a conflict between his own self-interests for honest research and pressures from management for research that would support a particular decision.

Market research is a treacherous business—one that puts you in a position to second-guess top management. You

Table 4
ETHICAL CONFLICTS REPORTED BY AGENCY RESEARCHERS^a

Rank	Party one	Party two	No.	%
1	Outside client	Company	35	35
2	Outside client	Self	24	24
3	Outside client	Society	8	8
4	Outside client	Outside client	7	7
5	Outside client	Competitor	6	6
6	Company	Subordinate	5	5
	Other conflicts ^b		14	14
			99	99

^aRead: "The number one ethical conflict reported by researchers working at a marketing research agency was attempting to balance the interests of the client with the interests of one's agency."

^bThese other conflict relationships included self-company (2), outside client-management (2), self-management (2), outside client-supplier (2), and six other conflicts noted only once each.

must be very tactful and diplomatic—use finesse. Successful marketing researchers within a company are usually extensions of management. Firms should always use independent research facilities if they want the straight story. I could write a book on this subject. When a bad decision is made by management, it becomes very difficult for the marketing personnel. You either support the decision halfheartedly, support the decision and offer alternatives, or look for another job. It is tough to be in a position where you criticize management. Much marketing research is only "eye wash" for the wholesale buyers to convince them that the product is indeed needed and will sell in volume—almost a "fraudulent" situation.

Another in-house researcher reported, "[I] refused to alter research results and as a result I was eventually fired for failure to think strategically." A sporting goods marketing research manager described passing off "soft data" as "hard."

Managers, wishing to provide backup for their proposals and/or analyses of some situation, ask me to "estimate" the dollars, percentage, etc. They then put these gross estimates, guesses and sometimes completely fake figures into their reports with two decimal accuracy! They do this rather than defend their opinions as "my best business judgment" and admit we can't afford or haven't had the time to do an actual study. I generally comply [with these requests] making clear how later reliance on these numbers may cause poor decisions and warn that if it ever comes to it, I will freely admit how the numbers were derived! If the president of the company had any backbone and a better understanding of all the "guessing" that goes into our reports to our corporate parent. But who is going to tell him? The issue can easily be positioned as just a matter of opinion as to these being educated estimates or a snow job to avoid having to put one's neck on the line when there's little to go on but "seat-of-the-pants" judgment.

As an example of a research integrity issue for an agency researcher, one respondent reported a conflict between self-interest for an honest project and the desires of the client: "when a client requests a methodology or procedure that will guarantee the results he wants." Finally, an agency executive vice president described a research integrity problem involving errors in study design.

The most difficult moral problem is how to handle a situation in which our company has made a mistake in study design (or in study execution) which results in obtaining results that are unreliable or invalid. We try to bury the mistake and concentrate on the valid parts of the study in those results.

Treating outside clients fairly. The second-ranked ethical issue involves clients outside one's own company and is labeled "treating outside clients fairly." One researcher reported that "hidden charges are often passed on to the customer and reversed only if the customer complains." An agency researcher reported a conflict between company interests and outside client interests

when “requiring subcontractors to follow all specifications demanded by our clients, especially when costs are running higher than estimated. Must decide to overlook validation problems or require questionnaire replacement.” Many of the conflicts involve pricing in some way, as illustrated by the problem of an agency senior consultant.

Our firm encourages us to sell clients retainer-type services, rather than fixed-price contracts. Under the “retainer-type” situation, clients are charged however many hours it takes to complete a study and more often than not this turns out to be more expensive (than contracts). What to do? Recommend the “retainer” or act in the best interests of the client and recommend the contract approach?

Confidentiality. Marketing researchers often have access to data that are in some sense confidential. The protection of these data sources is the third most often identified ethical issue. Sometimes a researcher must balance what is fair to a competitor with what is best for one’s own company.

Competitive intelligence; what is an ethical versus unethical source of information. For example if I receive a confidential document from a competitor regarding their pricing and exception schedules. It is information given by an unethical employee of another bank. Should one suppress the information or “publish” it to field management?

Other in-house researchers discussed balancing the interests of different clients in the same corporation. For example, a research manager for an insurance company reported, “Since the corporation has several related subsidiaries, occasionally the research I do for one subsidiary may be beneficial to another subsidiary or to the field sales force. The proprietary nature of the findings must be respected in most cases in spite of pressures placed on us by the field or other subsidiaries.”

Most of the confidentiality issues for agency researchers arise when they try to balance their obligations toward different outside clients. As one researcher put it, “Where does ‘background knowledge’ stop and conflicts exist [as a result of work with a previous client]?” Another agency researcher discussed the issue in more detail.

I get involved in a number of proprietary studies. The problem that often arises is that some studies end up covering similar subject matter as previous studies. Our code of ethics states that you cannot use data from one project in a related project for a competitor. However, since I often know some information about an area, I end up compromising my original client. Even though upper management formally states that it should not be done, they also expect it to be done to cut down on expenses. This conflict of interest situation is difficult to deal with. At least in my firm, I don’t see a resolution to the issue. It is not a one time situation, but rather a *process* that perpetuates itself. To make individuals redo portions of studies which have recently been done, is ludicrous, and

to forgo potential new business is almost impossible from a financial perspective.

Social issues and marketing mix. The fourth ethical issue pertains to social issues related to various components of the marketing mix. Conflict most often involves balancing the interests of society with the interests of the company in the context of either product decisions or advertising decisions. Several respondents mentioned “advertising to children” as being the number one ethical issue. Others simply responded “advertising products I don’t believe in.” An agency account executive mentioned “conducting research for companies that produce products which are hazardous to one’s health—for instance, certain chemicals, cigarettes, etc.” One agency director criticized trivial products in general: “My company must aid the manufacturers who are flooding the nation with useless (or worse) products, so my company can survive to perform our other more socially beneficial work (which is also profitable but not of great volume).”

Personnel decisions form the fifth set of ethical issues. Ethical issues in hiring and firing employees are most troublesome. Researchers experienced conflict in their attempts to balance their responsibilities to both employees and potential employees against their company responsibilities. For example, one agency branch manager reported “telling a person who is over-qualified but received improper training and can’t be hired. The individual is usually an older person with set ideas and ways.” Another agency president reported that his most difficult ethical problem is “firing/releasing older employees who have become very poor workers.”

Treating respondents fairly is the sixth most important ethical issue. It often stems from temptations to conceal from the respondent the purpose or the sponsor of the research. Protecting the anonymity of the respondent also poses problems. The ethical conflict usually centers on the researcher’s attempts to balance the interests of the respondent against the interests of the company. For example, a research manager for a publishing company indicated her major problem as “concealing my firm’s identity and involvement when doing research.” Another reported having “been asked to misrepresent myself for the sake of unbiased information—which I have refused.” Finally, an analyst for an industrial goods company reported:

Often in getting competitive data, such as unit sales, product characteristics, etc., it is tempting to call the competitor’s functional people under false pretenses (engineers, sales-marketing people, plant management, etc.). I have called for existing product information (not upcoming introductions) using my own identity. I have also called without giving my name (if the other party demanded to know who he was talking to I’ve hung up or somehow side-stepped the question).

Other issues. The final six sets of issues, in order, are: treating others in the company fairly, interviewer dis-

honesty, gifts, bribes, and entertainment, treating suppliers fairly, legal issues, and the misuse of funds. The "others in the company" category includes issues related to peer relationships and conducting research to make others in the firm look bad. Interviewer dishonesty involves such issues as falsifying data and interviewer bias. Respondents indicated pressures from customers to give gifts to secure business and pressures from suppliers to accept gifts for additional business. Treating suppliers fairly often centers on the problem of personal friends wanting to be given special treatment. Legal issues usually involve problems of talking with competitors about pricing. The misuse of funds includes "padding" expense accounts and questionable "slush" funds.

Professional Codes of Ethics

Our second research question is, "To what extent do our professional codes of conduct address the major ethical problems of marketing researchers?" Appendices A and B reproduce the American Marketing Association national code of conduct for marketing research and the code of conduct proposed by the New York Chapter of the American Marketing Association. The last two columns in Table 2 indicate the sections of each code that apply to each of the major ethical issues of marketing researchers.

The national code of the AMA has sections which in some way address the issues of research integrity, confidentiality, treating respondents fairly, and interviewer dishonesty. However, it does not have sections governing the treatment of outside clients, marketing mix social issues, personnel issues, the treatment of others in the company, gifts, bribes, and entertainment, the treatment of suppliers, legal issues, and the misuse of funds. Reasonable arguments can be advanced that personnel issues and the misuse of funds are topics that belong in corporate codes of conduct, but not professional codes of conduct. Nevertheless, there seems to be ample opportunity and justification for addressing some of the other issues in our professional code of conduct.

The code of ethics proposed by the New York Chapter of the AMA is much longer and consequently covers many more of the major issues delineated in Table 2. The treatment of two issues is conspicuously absent: gifts, bribes, and entertainment and legal issues. These two issues might warrant inclusion in the code proposed by the New York Chapter. Note that Brennar and Molander (1977, p. 62) found "gifts, gratuities, 'call girls,' and bribes" to be the number one ethical problem in business.

Extent of Ethical Problems

The preceding discussion focuses on the most difficult ethical problems facing marketing researchers in terms of issues and conflicts. Though many different ethical issues are identified, maintaining research integrity is by far the most often reported. Our third research question is, "How extensive are the ethical problems of marketing

researchers?" Table 5 shows the results of 10 items specifically directed at assessing the extent of ethical problems perceived by marketing researchers. The items are grouped in terms of respondents' perceptions of (1) the frequency of unethical behaviors (A1 and A2), (2) the opportunities for unethical behaviors (B1 and B2), (3) the relationship between success and generally unethical behavior (C1 and C2), and (4) the relationship between success and specific unethical behaviors (D1 through D4). Items D3 and D4 are comparable with two items found to be unethical by Ferrell and Weaver (1978). Items D1 and D2 were generated in the exploratory phase of the project.

The descriptive statistics in Table 5 reveal that a large proportion (almost half) of our respondents believe managers in their respective companies have ample opportunities to engage in unethical behaviors. Nevertheless, only a small percentage (18% of in-house researchers and 15% of agency researchers) believe that managers in their companies frequently engage in such behaviors. The comparable figures are much higher when researchers refer to industry behavior rather than company behavior. Seventy-one percent of our agency researchers believe managers in their industry have many opportunities to engage in unethical behaviors and 44% believe that researchers in their industry often engage in such behaviors. Similarly, 58% of in-house researchers believe managers in their industry have many opportunities to engage in unethical behaviors and 27% believe that managers in their industry often engage in such behaviors.

Though the opportunity for and the frequency of unethical behaviors are important, the relationship between success and unethical behaviors is probably crucial. If researchers believe unethical behaviors are necessary for success in marketing research, such perceptions would be powerful motivators for unethical behavior. Items C1 and C2 show only a small percentage of researchers (either in-house or agency) believe it is necessary to compromise one's ethics to succeed or believe successful managers in their companies are less ethical than unsuccessful managers. However, the findings are somewhat different when specific unethical behaviors are the stimuli. Items D1 through D4 examine the relationship between success and the specific unethical behaviors of (1) withholding information detrimental to self-interests, (2) making rivals look bad in the eyes of others, (3) looking for "scapegoats" for a failure, and (4) taking credit for the ideas and accomplishments of others. In comparison with the general success items, each of these items shows a larger percentage of researchers believe successful managers engage in these behaviors.

In-house researchers differ significantly from agency researchers on each of the specific unethical behaviors. Higher proportions of in-house researchers believe that successful managers in their companies engage in such behaviors. Almost half of all in-house researchers believe that successful managers in their companies (1)

Table 5
EXTENT OF ETHICAL PROBLEMS IN MARKETING RESEARCH

	In-house researchers ^a			Agency researchers ^b			Total ^c		
	% agree ^d	Mean ^e	S.D.	% agree	Mean	S.D.	% agree	Mean	S.D.
A. Frequency of unethical behaviors									
1. Marketing managers in my COMPANY often engage in behaviors that I consider to be unethical	18	5.1	1.6	15	5.3	1.6	17	5.1	1.6
2. Marketing managers in my INDUSTRY often engage in behaviors that I consider to be unethical	27	4.4 ^g	1.5	44	3.7 ^g	1.5	31	4.2	1.5
B. Opportunities for unethical behaviors									
1. There are many opportunities for marketing managers in my COMPANY to engage in unethical behaviors	43	3.9	1.7	44	3.8	1.7	43	3.9	1.7
2. There are many opportunities for marketing managers in my INDUSTRY to engage in unethical behaviors	58	3.4 ^g	1.5	71	2.9 ^g	1.6	61	3.3	1.5
C. Success and unethical behaviors									
1. Successful marketing managers in my COMPANY are generally more unethical than unsuccessful managers	14	4.7	1.4	13	5.0	1.7	13	4.8	1.5
2. In order to succeed in my COMPANY it is often necessary to compromise one's ethics	15	5.3 ^g	1.5	12	5.8 ^g	1.6	15	5.5	1.6
D. Success and specific unethical behaviors									
1. Successful managers in my company withhold information that is detrimental to their self-interests	47	3.6 ^g	1.5	21	4.7 ^g	1.6	40	3.9	1.6
2. Successful managers in my company make rivals look bad in the eyes of important people in my company	26	4.3 ^g	1.5	15	5.4 ^g	1.6	23	4.6	1.6
3. Successful managers in my company look for a "scapegoat" when they feel they may be associated with failure	37	4.2 ^g	1.7	16	4.9 ^g	1.7	32	4.3	1.7
4. Successful managers in my company take credit for the ideas and accomplishments of others	50	3.6 ^g	1.5	26	4.6 ^g	1.6	44	3.8	1.6
E. Top management actions and unethical behaviors									
1. Top management in my company has let it be known in no uncertain terms that unethical behaviors will not be tolerated	58	3.2	1.8	64	3.2	2.2	60	3.2	1.9
2. If a manager in my company is discovered to have engaged in unethical behavior that results primarily in <i>personal gain</i> (rather than corporate gain) he will be promptly reprimanded	66	2.8	1.4	72	2.7	1.7	68	2.8	1.5
3. If a manager in my company is discovered to have engaged in unethical behavior that results in primarily <i>corporate gain</i> (rather than personal gain) he will be promptly reprimanded	49	3.3	1.5	65	3.1	1.9	53	3.3	1.6

^aN = 343.

^bN = 117.

^cN = 460.

^dPercent responding "slightly agree," "agree," or "strongly agree."

^eOn a 7-point scale with 1 = "strongly agree" and 7 = "strongly disagree."

^fThis item was reverse-phrased in the questionnaire, i.e., "more ethical."

^gDifferences significant at .01 level by *t*-tests.

withhold information that would be detrimental to their self-interests and (2) take credit for the ideas and accomplishments of others.

Top Management Actions

The fourth research question is, "How effective are the actions of top management in reducing the ethical

problems of marketing researchers?" To examine this question we needed measures of (1) the extent of ethical problems and (2) the extent of top management actions. As no scale existed for measuring the extent of ethical problems of marketing researchers, a scale was developed. Table 6 shows the factor analysis of Items A1, B1, C1, C2, D1, D2, D3, and D4 from Table 5, all of

which relate to perceived ethical problems in the respondent's company. The factor analysis shows a one-factor solution with all eight items loading in excess of 0.3 on the single factor. Coefficient alpha for the eight items is 0.82. Therefore, for exploratory purposes these items can be treated as a single scale measuring the latent construct "ethical problems of marketing researchers."

Measuring the actions of top management also necessitated scale development. Items E1, E2, and E3 in Table 5 address the kinds of behaviors that writers previously have suggested should be undertaken by top management. That is, "unethical behaviors will not be tolerated" and unethical behaviors will be "promptly reprimanded." The factor analysis in Table 7 shows all three items loading on a single factor in a one-factor solution. Coefficient alpha for the three items is 0.74, suggesting that the three items can be appropriately considered a scale measuring the latent construct "top management actions."

Writers have suggested that top management also should establish corporate codes of conduct to curb unethical actions. Therefore, we asked whether the respondents' companies and industries had established formal codes of conduct. Twenty-four percent of in-house researchers and 61% of agency researchers reported industry codes of ethics. Similarly, 46% and 21%, respectively, indicated company codes of ethics. The smaller figure for agency codes probably reflects the fact that most research agencies are smaller than the corporations that employ in-house researchers and thus are less likely to have company codes.

Table 8 shows the regression results with the factor

Table 6
FACTOR ANALYSIS OF ETHICAL PROBLEMS SCALE^a

<i>Item</i>	<i>Factor 1 loading</i>
1. Marketing managers in my company often engage in behaviors that I consider to be unethical	0.58
2. There are many opportunities for marketing managers in my company to engage in unethical behaviors	0.33
3. Successful marketing managers in my company are generally more ethical than unsuccessful managers ^b	0.41
4. In order to succeed in my company it is often necessary to compromise one's ethics	0.64
5. Successful managers in my company withhold information that is detrimental to their self-interests	0.68
6. Successful managers in my company make rivals look bad in the eyes of important people in my company	0.82
7. Successful managers in my company look for a "scapegoat" when they feel they may be associated with failure	0.77
8. Successful managers in my company take credit for the ideas and accomplishments of others	0.65
Eigenvalue 3.2	
% variance explained 40%	
Coefficient alpha = 0.82	

^aPrincipal axis.

^bItem was reverse-scored.

Table 7
FACTOR ANALYSIS OF TOP MANAGEMENT ACTIONS SCALE^a

<i>Item</i>	<i>Factor 1 loading</i>
1. Top management in my company has let it be known in no uncertain terms that unethical behaviors will not be tolerated	0.49
2. If a manager in my company is discovered to have engaged in unethical behavior that results primarily in <i>personal gain</i> (rather than corporate gain) he will be promptly reprimanded	0.70
3. If a manager in my company is discovered to have engaged in unethical behavior that results in primarily <i>corporate gain</i> (rather than personal gain) he will be promptly reprimanded	0.99
Eigenvalue 1.71	
% variance explained 57%	
Coefficient alpha = 0.74	

^aPrincipal axis.

scores on the ethical problems scale as the dependent variable. Preliminary analyses indicated that both the respondent's title and industry were related significantly to the extent of ethical problems. That is, presidents and vice-presidents were less likely to see problems than analysts and junior analysts. Similarly, the agency researchers perceived fewer problems than in-house researchers. Therefore, both "title" and "industry" were entered as control variables in the regression.

On the basis of other researchers' suggestions, we expected that specific actions by top management to encourage ethical behavior and discourage unethical behavior would decrease the extent of ethical problems perceived by marketing researchers. The results show that, of the variables we examined, the actions of top management are the single best predictor of perceived ethical problems of marketing researchers, explaining 15% of the total variance. (Obviously, with 75% unexplained variance, there may be other factors which taken individually explain more than 15% of the variance.)

A corporate code of ethics made no difference in the respondents' perceptions of ethical problems. The simple correlation between ethical problems and a corporate code of ethics is not significant, nor is the beta coefficient in the regression. Similarly, though there is a significant negative simple correlation between an industry code of ethics and the extent of ethical problems, the fact that the relationship is nonsignificant in the regression equation suggests a spurious correlation.

DISCUSSION AND LIMITATIONS

Readers should be mindful that our research involved an "insiders" rather than an "outsiders" research design. Actual researchers were the respondents instead of other potentially interested parties (e.g., consumers, consumer advocates, corporate managers, interviewing agency personnel, academic marketing researchers). Such outside parties might view the major problems differently.

Table 8
REGRESSION: DETERMINANTS OF ETHICAL PROBLEMS^a

Independent variable	Simple correlation	Increment to R ²	Standardized beta coefficient	t
Title ^b	-.25 [§]	.06	-.10	2.2 ^h
Industry ^c	-.24 [§]	.03	-.16	3.4 [§]
Top management actions ^d	-.42 [§]	.15	-.39	9.2 [§]
Industry code of ethics ^e	-.17 [§]	.00	-.07	1.6
Corporate code of ethics ^f	+.06	.00	+.05	1.0
Constant = 7.22				
R ² = .25				
F = 28.1 [§]				

^aDependent variable is factor score on ethical problems scale (see Table 6). Higher numbers indicate more problems.

^bHigh numbers are higher titles than low numbers (see Table 1 for categories).

^cResearchers working for a marketing research agency are 1, others are 0.

^dFactor scores on top management actions scale (see Table 7). Higher numbers indicate more actions by top management.

^eDummy variable with 1 as presence of an industry code of ethics.

^fDummy variable with 1 as presence of a corporate code of ethics.

[§]Significant at .01 level.

^hSignificant at .05 level.

The finding that *maintaining research integrity* is by far the most difficult ethical issue of marketing researchers should be interpreted carefully. Recall that the question was to "describe the job situation that poses the *most difficult* ethical or moral problem for you." The most difficult ethical problem is not the same as the problem that occurs *most frequently*. Nor does "most difficult" necessarily imply that the problem occurs regularly or with great frequency. Nevertheless, given the tone of the respondents' comments, the results suggest that marketing researchers perceive significant problems in maintaining the integrity of their marketing research.

Agency researchers cited "treating outside clients" as a difficult ethical issue more frequently (16% vs. 8%) than in-house researchers. In our classification, when an in-house researcher did a project for a separate division of the company the work was classified as though it were done for an outside client. As most agency research involves a transfer of services from one firm to another, our result is not surprising. Similarly, in-house researchers seem more concerned about treating respondents and others in the company fairly. These researchers engage in research in which organization peers are respondents. Questions of anonymity, fairness, and the like are more important to them because their respondents are people they are likely to know through their work experience.

The substantive import of the findings on ethical conflicts (Tables 3 and 4) lies as much in what we did *not* find as what we did. Many writers on ethical problems in marketing research have focused almost exclusively on conflicts involving respondents. For example, Tybout and Zaltman (1975) devote all their attention to the rights of subjects in the research process and call for additional research on the "conflicts between client rights and subject rights with respect to ethical issues and their resolution" (p. 236). We did *not* find many researchers indicating fundamental conflicts involving the rights of

respondents or subjects used in marketing research. Only 12 in-house researchers and one agency researcher reported these kinds of conflicts (see footnotes, Tables 3 and 4).

Our findings at least partially support the position of Day (1975), who questioned the usefulness of restricting discussions of research ethics to conflicts involving respondents. He called for broader studies (along the lines of our research project) by pointing out, "What is perhaps more interesting, and possibly of greater significance to the value of marketing research, is the ethics or morality of the researcher with respect to the interpretation of data from survey work" (p. 233). He continued by suggesting, "There are few fields of scientific activity that are as susceptible to fraud as some aspects of consumer research" (p. 233). Day's references to the problems of "interpretation of data" and "fraud" are consistent with our finding that maintaining research integrity is the most difficult ethical problem facing researchers.

The results in Table 5, comparing company behavior with industry behavior, are consistent with research on marketers' perceptions of the ethics of their peers in the same company. Ferrell and Weaver (1978) investigated the ethical beliefs of 280 marketing managers belonging to the American Marketing Association. They concluded that "respondents *believe* that they make decisions in an organizational environment where peers and top management have lower ethical standards than their own" (p. 72). Similarly, we find that marketing researchers believe they make decisions in an environment where their peers in other firms have lower ethical standards.

In comparison with agency researchers, why do more in-house researchers consistently report (Table 5) that successful managers in their companies engage in specific unethical practices? The explanation may lie in the nature of the practices and the size of the organization.

These specific practices may be more prevalent in bureaucracies with many organizational levels. Marketing research agencies are likely to be smaller and have fewer organizational levels than the corporations where the in-house researchers work. Thus, the specific unethical practices are less likely to lead to success in the less bureaucratically oriented agencies.

Several factors may explain the findings in Table 5 that researchers perceive success and unethical behavior in general to be unrelated but perceive a relationship between success and specific unethical behaviors. Researchers may perceive that success and unethical behavior are related, but are unwilling to admit the relationship (even to themselves). Another possible explanation is that the specific unethical behaviors selected for our research were perceived to be only moderately unethical. That is, when researchers were responding to items C1 and C2, they were thinking of more serious breaches of ethics than the kinds of unethical behaviors specifically identified in items D1 through D4. Therefore, if the unethical behaviors had spanned a wider range of severity, the results might have been different. Finally, the findings may be an artifact of the way the questions were constructed. Items C1 and C2 had, respectively, the qualifiers "generally" and "often." Because items D1 through D4 had no such qualifiers, respondents may have interpreted them differently. Nevertheless, the factor analysis showed all six items loading on the same factor (Table 6) and therefore the evidence *suggests* that respondents viewed all six items similarly.

Why did corporate codes of ethics seem to make no difference in the extent of ethical problems? Fulmer (1969) reviewed problem areas in corporate codes of ethics and identified several consistent weaknesses. Prominent among these weaknesses were (1) vagueness, (2) the assumption of automatic acceptance of provisions, (3) the assumption that codes, once drafted, need never be revised, and (4) incorrect assumptions about what are the important ethical problems. Though corporate research codes may have any or all of these problems, the last weakness may be particularly relevant to marketing research. Perhaps corporate codes for research are simply not addressing the salient issues.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Our findings suggest nine conclusions. The first three relate to our first research question. Conclusions four through six pertain to our third question, conclusions seven and eight to our fourth question, and conclusion nine to our second question.

1. The most difficult ethical problem facing marketing researchers is maintaining the integrity of their research efforts. Many other ethical problems are involved in marketing research, but the issue of maintaining fundamental research integrity dominates.
2. The primary ethical conflicts for *in-house* researchers are two: balancing the interests of self against the interests

of other parties and balancing the interests of the company against the interests of other parties.

3. All of the primary ethical conflicts of *agency* researchers involve balancing the interests of their outside clients against the interests of various other parties, including company, self, society, competitors, and other clients.
4. Though marketing researchers perceive many opportunities for engaging in unethical behavior, they perceive a relatively low frequency of unethical behavior.
5. Marketing researchers do not believe that unethical behaviors in general lead to success in marketing research.
6. A relatively large proportion of marketing researchers believes that successful managers engage in certain specific forms of unethical behavior.
7. The actions of top management in reprimanding unethical behavior can significantly reduce the ethical problems of marketing researchers.
8. The presence of either corporate or industry codes of conduct seems to be unrelated to the extent of ethical problems in marketing research.
9. In comparison with the official American Marketing Association code of conduct for marketing research, the code proposed by the New York Chapter covers many more of the most difficult ethical issues facing marketing researchers.

Managerial Issues

Marketing researchers have long sought recognition of their professional status. Coe and Coe (1976, p. 257) identify "governance through a code of ethics and disciplinary procedures for violation of the code of ethics" as one of the four criteria distinguishing professions from other occupations. Our findings imply significant deficiencies in the present official marketing research code of conduct of the American Marketing Association. The code does not address many of the important ethical issues confronting marketing researchers. In contrast, the code proposed by the New York Chapter of the AMA is much more comprehensive. We recommend that the Marketing Research Division of the AMA revise the official code so that it addresses the major issues facing marketing researchers. The code proposed by the New York Chapter can serve as a useful starting point for analysis.

Our findings suggest that top management actions do make a difference. When top management lets it be known that unethical behavior will not be tolerated, marketing researchers experience fewer ethical problems. However, the absence of a relationship between corporate codes of conduct and ethical problems does not imply that corporate codes are useless. If members of top management are going to reprimand unethical behavior, they have an obligation to other members of their organization to state clearly the guidelines for acceptable and unacceptable behavior. Therefore, though corporate codes of conduct *alone* do not appear effective, we believe they are useful starting points for other actions by top management to encourage ethical behavior.

The preceding discussion must be tempered with the realization that many marketing research executives do

not realize the extent of ethical problems in their organizations. Recall our finding (Table 8) that top research executives perceived fewer ethical problems than persons of lower rank. This finding is consistent with the conclusions of Carroll (1975), who examined the ethical problems of a sample of business executives from a broad spectrum of industries and occupations. He found that middle and lower managers experience more pressure than top managers to compromise personal ethical beliefs. Carroll concludes that "top management can be inadvertently insulated from organizational reality with respect to particular [ethical] issues" (p. 79). Top marketing research executives seem to be similarly isolated.

We recommend that those in-house research departments and agency companies having codes of ethics review and update them. Departments and agencies lacking codes should initiate their development. Fulmer (1969) gives several excellent recommendations on developing codes. First, he suggests avoiding the "temptation to borrow sections from existing codes on the assumption that these provisions have worked before" (p. 56). With such a procedure, he points out, one assumes identical problems across organizations. Second, he suggests that drafters of codes seek outside professional assistance, though "the drafting of a code should not be left completely to outsiders" (p. 56). Third, internal participation in the drafting of the code should be encouraged because "those who are to be governed by the code are much more likely to support the provisions it contains if they have a choice in its formulation" (p. 56). Finally, as is consistent with our findings, he suggests that there must be "provision for enforcement" (p. 56).

Research Issues

Our findings also suggest potentially fruitful avenues for additional research on ethical problems in marketing research. Further inquiry into the relationship between success and specific unethical behaviors in marketing research seems important. Such research might start with the specific ethical problems we identify and examine the relationship, if any, between these specific behaviors and success in marketing research. Success might be defined by an individual's income, position in the organization, job performance, or various kinds of satisfactions (e.g. job, career, life). Decision processes in situations involving ethical problems also warrant systematic investigation. How do marketing researchers "solve" their ethical problems? Are these decision processes fundamentally deontological (focusing on the intrinsic rightness or wrongness of specific behaviors), teleological (focusing on the goodness or the badness of the consequences of behaviors), or both?

Further research on corporate codes of conduct is needed. Such research should analyze the actual provisions of such codes. To what extent do they address salient issues? Are they vague? Are they often revised? How are they formulated? Comparing the specific provisions of codes with the extent of specific problems within firms would be useful.

The lack of empirical work on ethical problems in marketing research stems in part from the lack of theoretical efforts. Most of the theorizing in ethics is normative. Such work is an attempt to provide normative guidelines for ethical behavior. Notably lacking are positive theories that purport to explain and predict ethical behavior and, thus, could guide empirical research. What is needed is a general theory focusing on the determinants and consequences of ethical beliefs and behaviors, with specific emphasis on the role of organizational, personal, and cultural variables in the formation of ethical beliefs.

We agree with Murphy and Laczniak (1981) that the use of scenarios to explore research ethics has been unimaginative. Simply asking various kinds of people to judge the degree to which they believe certain behaviors are unethical is raw empiricism in the extreme. At the very least, the scenarios should be manipulated systematically to explore why different groups hold different views. The work of Kohlberg (1981) provides a good model. He developed a series of moral dilemmas (scenarios) that are manipulated systematically to explore what he calls "stage of moral development." His primary conclusion is that people seem to go through six distinct stages of moral development and that these six stages are not culture-bound. Though Kohlberg's moral dilemmas are not directly applicable to ethical issues in marketing research, his methodology is. Kohlberg identifies "six stages of moral judgment," ranging from a completely egocentric point of view to a state that assumes guidance by universal principles. It would be interesting to classify researchers by these categories and then relate these perceptions to the researchers' assessments of a troublesome ethical issue.

We were dismayed to learn that so many of our marketing research colleagues experience great pressures to compromise the fundamental integrity of their work. Sometimes the very exposure of an important problem in a profession is a significant first step toward its solution. We sincerely hope that our study provides that "first step."

APPENDIX A

CODE OF MARKETING RESEARCH ETHICS FOR THE AMERICAN MARKETING ASSOCIATION

A For Research Users, Practitioners and Interviewers

1. No individual or organization will undertake any activity which is directly or indirectly represented to be marketing research, but which has as its real purpose the attempted sale of merchandise or services to some or all of the respondents interviewed in the course of the research.
2. If a respondent has been led to believe, directly or indirectly, that he is participating in a marketing research survey and that his anonymity will be protected, his name shall not be made known to

anyone outside the research organization or research department, or used for other than research purposes.

B For Research Practitioners

1. There will be no intentional or deliberate misrepresentation of research methods or results. An adequate description of methods employed will be made available upon request to the sponsor of the research. Evidence that field work has been completed according to specifications will, upon request, be made available to buyers of research.
2. The identity of the survey sponsor and/or the ultimate client for whom a survey is being done will be held in confidence at all times, unless this identity is to be revealed as part of the research design. Research information shall be held in confidence by the research organization or department and not used for personal gain or made available to any outside party unless the client specifically authorizes such release.
3. A research organization shall not undertake marketing studies for competitive clients when such studies would jeopardize the confidential nature of client-agency relationships.

C For Users of Marketing Research

1. A user of research shall not knowingly disseminate conclusions from a given research project or service that are inconsistent with or not warranted by the data.
2. To the extent that there is involved in a research project a unique design involving techniques, approaches or concepts not commonly available to research practitioners, the prospective user of research shall not solicit such a design from one practitioner and deliver it to another for execution without the approval of the design originator.

D For Field Interviewers

1. Research assignments and materials received, as well as information obtained from respondents, shall be held in confidence by the interviewer and revealed to no one except the research organization conducting the marketing study.
2. No information gained through a marketing research activity shall be used directly or indirectly for the personal gain or advantage of the interviewer.
3. Interviews shall be conducted in strict accordance with specifications and instructions received.
4. An interviewer shall not carry out two or more interviewing assignments simultaneously unless authorized by all contractors or employers concerned.

Members of the American Marketing Association will be expected to conduct themselves in accordance with the provisions of this Code in all of their marketing research activities.

Source: American Marketing Association.

APPENDIX B

"A PERSONAL CODE FOR PRACTICING MARKET AND OPINION RESEARCH" BY THE NEW YORK CHAPTER OF THE AMA

A My commitment to scientific practice

1. **I WILL** follow the principles and use the methods of scientific investigation in the research I do. Research, as I define it, means seeking knowledge through scientific study. It can be practiced at many levels of complexity and precision and through many approaches, but to fit my definition it must have a serious purpose, use orderly and objective thinking, and show a respect for data. Whatever research I do will reflect, in these qualities, its scientific orientation.
2. **I will do research in the framework of the scientific method**
—Serious research is a process that follows the scientific method. It starts with defining the problem and ends with challenging the results through testing and reanalysis.
3. **I will use scientific techniques that fit the individual problem.**
—In the collection and analysis of information, research may use procedures from a variety of scientific disciplines. I cannot master all of the available approaches, but I will understand and use a range of techniques. I will put the best tools I can against the problem at hand.
4. **I will present each research study for what it is and claim for it the precision and significance it deserves to have.**
—In the field of market and opinion research, even the best designs are imperfect and the best results approximations. The data are estimates, the methods are affordable compromises; there usually are none of the external checks or the critical discussion that might come with open publication.
—In these circumstances the burden of objectivity is on the researcher to provide a professional explanation appropriate to the way the research was done and the way it will be used.
—I will put each study I do into perspective, assess its reliability and application, and say how its technical aspects affect its meaning.
5. **I will encourage users to make independent evaluations of my research.**
—I will question and check and challenge the work that others do for me and hope that those I work

- for will follow the same practice.
- I will urge users to go beyond checking for consistency and plausibility, since regularity over time or between small samples can result from insensitive measurements or undisclosed smoothing of the data and may say little or nothing about how well the research was done.
 - I see rigorous examination and ventilation as the best tests of good research and the best incentives for doing it.

6. I will give the users of my research the information they need to understand it.

- I respect the rights of those who pay for my research and, if the research is published, of all who use it, to be told how the research was conducted, in such detail that a good researcher could redo the study without further information.
- Additionally, I will provide such information as the rates of sample completion, the results of field validations, the statistical error limits, and possible sources of other errors, when this is relevant and would help users understand the research.
- I will conceal or misrepresent nothing with a serious bearing on how the research was done, how good it is, or what it means.

My commitment to scientific practice gives me the approach, the tools, the point of view, and the challenge I need for productive study. It is what identifies me, at least to myself, as a professional in the practice of research.

B My commitment to honest research

- 1. I AM** committed to honest research and to honest research information. I see simple honesty as basic to the research concept and honest counts and honest meaning as fundamental to research practice. Most of the research I do is used to make money, or support a point of view, or strengthen an argument. I believe that honest research can be done toward such objectives, but only if the research is objectively designed, impartially conducted, and delivered free of cosmetic alteration or biased interpretation.
- 2. I will base research on honest plans, set up to get germane and honest answers.**
 - Honest research is not designed to mislead or misrepresent, or to use measurements made under abnormal or manipulated conditions as representations of the public's normal behavior.
- 3. I will work insistently for sound field operations, for the collection, in the field, of honest information.**
 - Whether or not a good design translates into honest data depends on how the data are gathered.

- I have seen how easily research can be corrupted by failures to follow instructions, by invented responses, or by misrepresentation of how or from whom the data were collected. I know how often such problems are linked to unworkable questionnaires, and unfair time and productivity demands from those conducting the survey.
- I will not exert or permit the kind of pressures that force such abuses.
- I will instead make a conscious effort to understand the realities of field operations. I will insist on the careful selection of field people. I will provide positive incentives for quality work, and check the work I get with an objective and rigorous system of validations.

4. I will resist temptations to shade results, to overstate their significance, and to reach conclusions that go beyond the findings.

- I will not alter the findings of research to protect my income or my reputation.
- I believe it is my duty, as a researcher, to draw as much meaning as I can from collected information. But I will not go beyond honest analysis in an effort to give sponsors what they want to hear or what they think they have paid for.

I will personally guarantee the integrity of whatever data I report. I will accept responsibility for the conclusions I draw. If I cannot do research honestly, I will not do it at all.

C My commitment to fair business dealings

- 1. I WILL** protect the interests of those I serve and deal fairly with people and organizations who do research or perform research functions. Those who pay for research, and those who do it, have a right to seek a profit from their research operations. But this has to be accomplished through businesslike and responsible conduct. If the findings of my research are to be above suspicion, the business practices involved in the research must also be above suspicion.
- 2. I will treat all of the information involved in my research as privileged.**
 - I will protect the confidentiality of unpublished proprietary research and of anything I learn from a sponsor about the sponsor's business.
 - I will expect that a research plan or proposal submitted in confidence will be treated as proprietary and not used or disclosed without approval outside the company to which it was submitted.
- 3. I will keep my relations with those I work for professional and responsible.**
 - I will make it a point to discuss with sponsors

any problems in conducting research as the problems are encountered.

- I will not add unrelated questions to a study without the sponsor's consent.
 - I will fit the scope of any research I do to the importance of the insights and the need for precision in the information the research is designed to provide.
- 4. I will compete fairly against others who do research and deal fairly with those who do or sell research services.**
- I support active competition for research assignments and believe researchers should compete on terms or conditions as well as the quality of their skills and the excellence of their thinking. But I will not buy or sell research at terms or conditions or with specifications that make honest work impossible or with commitments to do work or to produce results that cannot be honored.
 - I will keep the agreements I make with interviewers and other research workers and pay them promptly when their work is completed. I will not contract for research work unless I can pay for that work.
 - I consider kickbacks and other illicit favors given in return for research business to be incompatible with research and below the minimum levels of research ethics.
 - I will get and give full value for the money spent through me for research or research services.
- In the practice of research, I will hold to the highest standards of legality and business ethics, and beyond that, I will do whatever is necessary to insure the confidence of those I work for, and those who provide me with help or information.

D My commitment to the public interest

- 1. I WILL** protect the rights of respondents and the general public to fair treatment from the research I do. I recognize that my research may intrude on the time and privacy of those who give me information. But I will make every effort to minimize their discomfort, protect their identity, and make sure their views are heard and reported.
- 2. I will do research without harming, embarrassing, or taking unfair advantage of respondents.**
- I believe that, with care and imagination, participation in an honest and productive survey can be made a positive experience for most respondents, and I believe this can be accomplished without compromising the interests of the sponsor, or the scientific integrity of the research.
 - I will not drain the public's goodwill and cooperation through unnecessarily long interviews

or poorly designed questioning procedures. And I will not tolerate those who use the pretense of conducting research to get money from, exploit, propagandize, or otherwise take advantage of people.

- 3. I will protect the right to privacy by guarding the identity of individual respondents.**
- I will not release the names of respondents to anyone for any purpose other than legitimate validation, because the guarantee of anonymity is the respondent's only insurance against the disclosure of personal matters.
- 4. I will encourage sponsors to do research that seeks out and effectively represents the needs and views of the public.**
- It is my responsibility, as a researcher, to listen for the voice of the people, and to make it heard.
 - Research serves its highest purpose when it speaks for the citizen or the consumer, when it brings the wants and wishes and ideas of people to light, not for manipulation or exploitation, but for translation into needed products and laws and services.

E

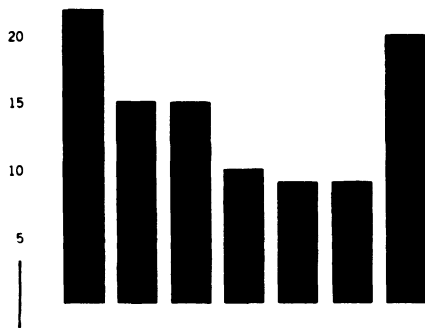
I stand, by my own election, as an honest broker between those who give their money for research and those who give their information. I will assure a fair exchange between the parties. I will practice research to serve the public as well as the private interest.

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