

**The General Theory of Marketing Ethics:  
The Consumer Ethics and Intentions Issues**

by

Scott J. Vitell  
The Phil B. Hardin Professor of Marketing  
University of Mississippi  
Department of Marketing  
School of Business Administration  
Tel: (662) 915-5468  
Fax: (662) 915-5821  
E-mail: [svitell@bus.olemiss.edu](mailto:svitell@bus.olemiss.edu)

and

Shelby D. Hunt  
The Jerry S. Rawls and P.W. Horn Professor of Marketing  
Texas Tech University  
Department of Marketing  
Tel: (806) 834-5233  
E-mail: [shelby.hunt@ttu.edu](mailto:shelby.hunt@ttu.edu)

Alexander Nill, Editor  
Handbook of Marketing Ethics  
Edward Elgar Publishing Inc.  
September 2012

**The General Theory of Marketing Ethics:  
The Consumer Ethics and Intentions Issues**

**ABSTRACT**

*The general theory of marketing ethics, first published in the Journal of Macromarketing by Hunt and Vitell (1986), has been the focus of much discussion and empirical testing. As a result, the theory was modestly revised a few years later (Hunt and Vitell 1993). The theory has also been further explicated in two subsequent articles (Hunt and Vitell 2005, 2006). This article reviews the theory, reports on empirical tests of the theory, and addresses two issues related to the theory: (1) Is the H-V theory a consumer ethics theory as well? (2) Are intentions a valid predictor of behavior in situations involving ethical issues?*

**Keywords:** ethics; theory; Hunt-Vitell theory of ethics; empirical tests

Scott J. Vitell (Ph.D., Texas Tech University), is the Phil B. Hardin Professor of Marketing and Chair of the Marketing Department, School of Business Administration at the University of Mississippi, University, MS 38677; phone: (662) 915-5468, email: svitell@bus.olemiss.edu. His research interests include marketing and consumer ethics, macromarketing, and marketing theory

Shelby D. Hunt (Ph.D., Michigan State University), is the Jerry S. Rawls and P.W. Horn Professor of Marketing at the Rawls College of Business Administration, Texas Tech University, Box 42101, Lubbock, TX 79409; phone: (806) 742-3436, email: shelby.hunt@ttu.edu. His research focuses on competitive theory, strategy, ethics, relationship marketing, macromarketing, marketing theory, and the philosophy of science.

## **The General Theory of Marketing Ethics: The Consumer Ethics and Intentions Issues**

### **Introduction**

Hunt and Vitell's "General Theory of Marketing Ethics," along with other models published during the early to mid-1980s, fundamentally transformed the landscape for ethics research from its strictly normative roots of moral philosophy (how *should* ethical decisions be made?) to a much more positive endeavor (how *are* ethical decisions made?), which provides a framework for empirical testing. The major contribution of this particular theory is its explication of the individual decision-making process in situations involving ethical issues. This decision process is comprised of both deontological, or rules-based, and teleological, or consequences-based, dimension. The deontological dimension is guided by norms or rules that one lives by whereas the teleological dimension is guided by the likely consequences of one's actions and how good or bad those consequences may be for oneself and other important stakeholders. One then evaluates, based primarily on deontology and/or teleology, various perceived alternatives and decides which are ethical and which are not. This evaluation then leads to intentions and behavior. Of course the theory recognizes that ethical evaluations or judgments, intentions and behavior are not always entirely consistent, and it explicates why this may sometimes be the case. Finally, the individual decision making process is potentially influenced by various environments that include one's culture, personal experiences, organization, profession, and/or industry.

Over the years, this has been one of the most frequently cited marketing ethics articles in the literature. It has helped to firmly establish ethics as a legitimate venue for empirical study, which, as mentioned, was not the case when the theory was first published. Indeed, in the first

author's defense of his dissertation – which was essentially the initial rendering and empirical testing of the Hunt-Vitell theory, one of the external members of his committee, a philosopher, vociferously defended the position that *ethics* was inherently not descriptive and therefore could *not* and should *not* be empirically tested. Ultimately, however, he agreed that the theory warranted empirical testing but only within the context of marketing, or some other social science such as sociology or anthropology. He remained steadfast in his belief that it should not be labeled “ethics” when used in this context. Of course, this theory is firmly based in normative ethical theories, namely, deontology and teleology, but it is and was designed to be essentially a descriptive not prescriptive theory of ethics. Nevertheless, over the years, some have used it prescriptively, and the theory does indeed lend itself to utilization as a normative decision model for both normative theorists and/or business practitioners. We might add, as explicated in an earlier article (Hunt and Vitell 2006), that it can also be successfully utilized as a pedagogical tool for teaching business/marketing ethics to students at all levels of university matriculation, as well as to business practitioners.

The purpose of this article is threefold. First, we provide an overview of the Hunt- Vitell theory. Second, we report on the empirical tests of the theory. Third, we address two issues that have been raised concerning the theory: (1) Is the H-V theory a consumer ethics theory as well? (2) Are intentions a valid predictor of behavior in situations involving ethical issues?

### **An Overview of the Hunt-Vitell Theory**

Our overview of the Hunt-Vitell theory follows closely the discussion of the theory in Hunt and Vitell (2006). The purpose of the original *Journal of Macromarketing* article that developed the Hunt-Vitell (H-V) theory was to (1) provide a general theory of ethical decision-

making and (2) represent the theory in a process model. The theory would draw on both the deontological and teleological ethical traditions in moral philosophy. While deontologists believe that “certain features of the act itself other than the *value* it brings into existence” make an action or rule *right*, teleologists “believe that there is one and only one basic or ultimate right-making characteristic, namely, the comparative value (nonmoral) of what is, probably will be, or is intended to be brought into being” (Frankena 1963, p. 14).

As a result of the numerous tests of the theory and the comments of various scholars on the theory, the model underwent a modest revision. Here, we discuss the revised model, that is, Hunt and Vitell (1993), which is displayed in Figure 1. Because we argue that the H-V theory is a general theory of ethical decision-making, we focus on how the theory incorporates other perspectives and concepts in the area of ethics. In particular, we show how the theory incorporates concepts from works on integrated social contracts (e.g., Donaldson and Dunfee 1994), moral intensity (Jones 1991), opportunity (e.g., Zey-Ferrell, Weaver, and Ferrell 1979), religiosity (e.g., Wilkes, Burnett, and Howell 1986; Vitell and Paolillo 2003), organizational commitment (e.g., Hunt, Wood, and Chonko 1989), Machiavellianism (e.g., Singhapakdi and Vitell 1991), strength of moral character (e.g., Williams and Murphy 1990), cognitive moral development (e.g., Trevino 1986), and ethical sensitivity (e.g., Sparks and Hunt 1998).

**[Insert Figure 1 about here.]**

The H-V model addresses the situation in which individuals confront problems that are perceived as having ethical content. This perception of an ethical problem in the situation triggers the process depicted by the model. If the individual does not perceive some ethical content in a problem situation, subsequent elements of the model do not come into play. Given

that an individual does perceive a situation as having ethical content, the next step is the perception of various possible alternatives or actions that might be taken to resolve the ethical problem. It is unlikely that an individual will recognize the complete set of possible alternatives. Therefore, the evoked set of alternatives will be less than the universe of potential alternatives. Indeed, ultimate differences in behaviors among individuals in situations that have ethical content may be traced, in part, to differences in their sets of perceived alternatives.

Once the individual perceives the evoked set of alternatives, two kinds of evaluations will take place: a deontological evaluation and a teleological evaluation. In the process of deontological evaluation, the individual evaluates the inherent rightness or wrongness of the behaviors implied by each alternative. The process involves comparing each alternative's behaviors with a set of predetermined deontological norms. These norms represent personal values or rules of moral behavior. They range from (1) general beliefs about things such as honesty, stealing, cheating, and treating people fairly to (2) issue-specific beliefs about things such as deceptive advertising, product safety, sales "kickbacks," confidentiality of data, respondent anonymity, and interviewer dishonesty. The norms, according to the H-V theory, take the form of beliefs of the following kinds: "It is always right to . . . ;" "it is generally or usually right to . . . ;" "it is always wrong to . . . ;" and "it is generally or usually wrong to . . . ."

The deontological norms include both the "hypernorms" and "local norms" of the integrative social contracts theory of Donaldson and Dunfee (1994) and Dunfee, Smith, and Ross (1999). Contrasted with specific, community-based, "local norms," hypernorms are universal norms that represent "principles so fundamental to human existence that . . . we would expect them to be reflected in a convergence of religious, philosophical, and cultural beliefs" (Donaldson and Dunfee 1994, p. 265). These hypernorms represent "a thin set of universal

principles that would constrain the relativism of community moral free space” (Dunfee, Smith, and Ross 1999, p.19). In the area of business ethics, they offer examples of hypernorms such as informing employees about dangerous health hazards and employees’ rights to physical security.

In contrast, the teleological evaluation process focuses on four constructs: (1) the perceived consequences of each alternative for various stakeholder groups, (2) the probability that each consequence will occur to each stakeholder group, (3) the desirability or undesirability of each consequence, and (4) the importance of each stakeholder group. Both the identity and importance of the stakeholder groups will vary across individuals and situations. For example, the stakeholders may (or may not) include one’s self, family, friends, customers, stockholders, suppliers, or employees.

Although the H-V theory proposes that the teleological evaluation process is influenced by the desirability and probability of consequences, as well as the importance of stakeholders, no specific information-processing rule (such as a lexicographic process) is postulated. Indeed, the model proposes that the information-processing rules will differ across different people’s personal moral codes. The overall result of the teleological evaluation will be beliefs about the relative goodness versus badness brought about by each alternative, as perceived by the decision maker. One interpretation of the teleological evaluation (TE) process for an alternative  $K$ , with regard to stakeholders 1, 2, 3, . . . ,  $m$ , who have differing importance weights (IW) is:

$$\bullet \quad TE_K = \sum_{n=1}^{n=m} [IW_n \times PosCon_n \times P_{Pos}] - [IW_n \times NegCon_n \times P_{Neg}]$$

$$+ [IW_2 \times PosCon_2 \times P_{Pos}] - [IW_2 \times NegCon_2 \times P_{Neg}] + \dots$$

In this formula:

$IW_1$  = Importance of stakeholder 1

$PosCon_1$  = Positive consequences on stakeholder 1

$NegCon_1$  = Negative consequences on stakeholder 1

$P_{pos}$  = Probability of positive consequences occurring

$P_{neg}$  = Probability of negative consequences occurring

We stress that the formula represents an *interpretation* of the teleological evaluation process.

We do not posit that people actually make these detailed calculations. Instead, we propose, people actually go through an informal process for which the formula is an idealized, formalized representation.

The core of the model comes next. The H-V theory posits that an individual's ethical judgments (for example, the belief that a particular alternative is the most ethical alternative) are a function of the individual's deontological evaluation (i.e., applying norms of behavior to each of the alternatives) and the individual's teleological evaluation (i.e., an evaluation of the sum total of goodness versus badness likely to be provided by each alternative for all relevant stakeholders). That is,  $EJ = f(DE, TE)$ , where "EJ" is Ethical judgments, "DE" is Deontological evaluation and "TE" is Teleological evaluation. It is possible that *some* individuals in *some* situations will be strict (e.g., "Kantian") deontologists and, therefore, will completely ignore the consequences of alternative actions (i.e.,  $TE = zero$ ). However, the theory maintains that it is unlikely that such a result would be found across many individuals and different situations. Similarly, though it is possible that some people in some situations might be strict (e.g.,

“utilitarian”) teleologists (i.e.,  $DE = \text{zero}$ ), such a result is unlikely across many individuals and situations.

Consistent with general theories in consumer behavior (e.g., Engel, Blackwell, and Kollat 1978; Howard and Sheth 1969) and the Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) models, the H-V model posits that ethical judgments impact behavior through the intervening variable of intentions. Like Petty and Cacioppo (1986) and Jones (1991), the H-V model proposes that both ethical judgments and intentions should be better predictors of behavior in situations where the ethical issues are central, rather than peripheral. Indeed, the issue-contingent model of Jones (1991) uses the H-V theory as a theoretical foundation and focuses on the importance of the moral intensity of an ethical issue as key for understanding situations involving ethical content. Supporting this view, research by Newstrom and Ruch (1975) found the ethical beliefs of managers to be highly congruent with their claimed frequency of behavior.

The H-V model proposes that ethical judgments will sometimes differ from intentions because TE also independently affects intentions. That is, though an individual may perceive a particular alternative as the most ethical, the person may intend to choose another alternative because of certain preferred consequences (e.g., there might be significant positive consequences to one's self as a result of choosing the less ethical alternative). The theory suggests that when behavior and intentions are inconsistent with ethical judgments, there will be feelings of *guilt*. Therefore, two individuals, *A* and *B*, may engage in the same behavior, yet only *A* may feel guilty, because *B*'s behavior is consistent with his or her ethical beliefs.

What is called *action control* in the model is the extent to which an individual actually exerts control in the enactment of an intention in a particular situation (Ajzen 1985; Tubbs and

Ekeberg 1991). That is, situational constraints may result in behaviors that are inconsistent with intentions and ethical judgments. One such situational constraint may be the *opportunity* to adopt a particular alternative. Zey-Ferrell, Weaver, and Ferrell (1979) empirically document the influence of opportunity on behavior in situations having ethical content. Similarly, Mayer (1970) identifies opportunity as being a condition that impinges on ethical behavior.

After behavior, there will be an evaluation of the actual consequences of the alternative selected. This is the major learning construct in the model. These actual consequences provide feedback to the category of variables labeled “Personal Characteristics.” Hegarty and Sims (1978) examined whether a system of perceived rewards and punishments could change behaviors in a situation involving ethical content. They concluded that “the results lend support to the notion that many individuals can be conditioned (i.e., can “learn”) to behave unethically under appropriate contingencies” (p. 456). Conversely, of course, the H-V theory maintains that individuals can also be conditioned to behave ethically.

The H-V model identifies several personal characteristics that often influence specific aspects of the ethical, decision-making process. Unquestionably, an individual’s personal religion influences ethical decision making. *A priori*, compared with nonreligious people, one might suspect that (1) highly religious people would have more clearly defined deontological norms and (2) such norms would play a stronger role in ethical judgments. Wilkes, Burnett, and Howell (1986) explore the meaning and measurement of “religiosity” in consumer research. Their measures of religiosity would seem to be appropriate for exploring the extent to which strength of religious belief *per se* results in different decision processes. However, religiosity is a complex variable, and multidimensional scales (e.g., Allport and Ross 1967) may also be useful in such studies. Vitell, Paolillo, and Singh (2005) used the Allport and Ross scale in a

consumer ethics setting to examine the impact of both intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity on ethical beliefs, where the former is characterized by individuals sincerely incorporating faith and religious beliefs into everyday life, and the latter is characterized by individuals simply using religion as a source of comfort, social support, self-justification, and/or status. Their findings indicate that while extrinsic religiosity has little impact on one's ethical beliefs, intrinsic religiosity is a significant determinant of consumer ethical beliefs.

An individual's value system would also impact the decision process. In general, we urge researchers to explore many different values and the extent to which these values impact ethical decision making. Consider, for example, "organizational commitment" as one such value. Hunt, Wood, and Chonko (1989) found corporations that have high ethical values will, subsequently, have employees more committed to the organization's welfare. This is an apparently positive outcome. However, is it possible that individuals exhibiting high organizational commitment (even *because* of the organization's ethical values) will then place such great importance on the welfare of the organization that they may engage in questionable behavior if such behavior were thought to be beneficial to the organization? Only research can answer this question fully. A four-country study (Vitell and Paolillo 2004) does, however, indicate a link between organizational commitment and the decision maker's perception that ethics should be a long-term, top priority of the organization.

"Belief systems" focuses on the individual's set of beliefs about the world. For example, one might consider Machiavellianism as a belief system, as has been explored by Singhapakdi and Vitell (1991). More generally, the kinds of beliefs we have in mind are those that reflect how the individual believes the world "works." To what extent does an individual believe that all people are motivated solely by self-interest? In moral philosophy terms, to what extent does a

person believe all others are guided by ethical egoism? The model suggests that, to the extent that an individual believes this is how the world actually “works,” this belief will guide the individual’s behavior by influencing the perceived consequences of alternatives and their probabilities.

Strength of moral character has been argued to be an important moderator of the relationship between intentions and behavior by Williams and Murphy (1990). Drawing on Aristotle’s virtue ethics, Williams and Murphy emphasize, among other things, the important function of role models in developing a virtuous moral character (i.e., one having such virtues as perseverance, courage, integrity, compassion, candor, fidelity, prudence, justice, public-spiritedness and humility). Thus, those individuals with high moral character would have the strength of will to behave in a manner consistent with their ethical judgments.

The subject of cognitive moral development (Kohlberg 1984; Rest 1986; Trevino 1986) has received much attention in the ethics literature. A study by Goolsby and Hunt (1992) found that marketing practitioners compare favorably with other social groups in their level of cognitive moral development. Furthermore, they found that marketers scoring high on cognitive moral development tend to be female, highly educated, and high in social responsibility. Because a higher stage of cognitive moral development implies a greater capacity to reason through complex ethical situations, it would seem that individuals high in cognitive moral development would, among other things, (1) bring in more deontological norms in any situation and (2) would consider the interests of more stakeholders in their decision making. Using a sample of 323 purchasing agents, Cole, Sirgy, and Bird (2000) explored whether cognitive moral development moderates the relationship between the desirability of consequences to self-versus-others and TE. They found, contrary to their hypothesis, no moderating relationship.

As a final personal characteristic, some people are, quite simply, more *ethically sensitive* than others. That is, when placed in a decision-making situation having an ethical component, some people never recognize that there is an ethical issue involved at all. Recall that the model starts with the perception that there is, indeed, some ethical problem involved in the situation. The systematic study of ethical sensitivity has begun in the areas of dentistry (Bebeau, Rest, and Yamoor 1985), professional counseling (Volker 1979), and accounting (Shaub 1989). In marketing, Sparks and Hunt (1998) explored the ethical sensitivity of marketing researchers and found, among other things, that their sample of practitioners was more ethically sensitive to research ethics issues than a sample comprised of marketing students. They conclude that “the greater ethical sensitivity exhibited by marketing research practitioners can be attributed to their socialization into the marketing research profession, that is, by their learning the ethical norms of marketing research” (Sparks and Hunt 1998, p. 105).

Like Shaub (1989), Sparks and Hunt (1998) found a negative relationship between relativism and ethical sensitivity. Two factors, they propose, may account for this negative finding. First, the disbelief in moral absolutes may reduce the likelihood of ethical violations “standing out” among other issues. In a world where all issues are relativistic shades of gray, ethical issues may just blend in with everything else. As a second explanatory factor, relativists may consider ethical issues in general to be less important than nonrelativists. Sparks and Hunt (1998) also found a significant, negative relationship between ethical sensitivity and formal training in ethics received by respondents. One potential explanation for this surprising finding is that, rather than strengthening beliefs in the existence of morally right and wrong behavior, existing ethics education programs may be serving only to strengthen relativistic views. Nucci and Pascarella (1987) note that a historical goal of US colleges and universities was to develop

moral responsibility and students' character by teaching ethical thought and action. However, McNeel (1994) points out that ethics training in higher education has become, increasingly, "value free."

Since the work of Bartels (1967), marketing has stressed the role of culture in influencing ethics. Likewise, the H-V model stresses the importance of "Cultural Environment" in influencing the process of ethical decision making. As components of culture, the H-V model suggests that researchers focus attention on religion, legal systems, and political systems.

The boxes in the model labeled "Industry Environment," "Professional Environment" and "Organizational Environment" specifically orient the model toward ethical situations for businesspeople and the professions. The H-V model proposes that all industries, professional associations and organizations have complex sets of norms, some of which are often formalized in codes, but most of which are informal norms communicated in the processes. These norms, therefore, form a framework by which individuals are *socialized* into their respective organizations, professions and industries. Much work needs to be done in identifying the extant informal norms across different industries and professional associations. For example, to what extent do the norms related to personal selling in the steel industry differ from those in the chemical industry, or in advertising? It would seem that these differing sets of informal norms would play prominent roles in influencing which deontological norms an individual would consider as governing moral reasoning in specific decision contexts. We next review the empirical tests of the H-V theory.

## **Empirical Tests of the Theory**

Hunt and Vitell (2006) provide a useful review of the empirical tests of the theory. Our discussion follows closely their review. There have been scores of studies that have used the H-V model as a theoretical foundation for empirical investigation and/or theoretical analysis. The research design of the first test of the theory explored how some 200 sales and marketing managers responded to the bribery scenario detailed in our 1986 paper (Vitell and Hunt 1990). Briefly, the results showed that managers did tend to depend on both deontological and teleological factors when making ethical judgments, and managers also tended to form their intentions for behaviors by relying both on their ethical judgments and teleological considerations. Moreover, we were able to conclude: “If one wants to foster more ethical behavior on the part of one’s subordinates, the results of this study indicate that it would be better to reward ethical behavior than to punish unethical behavior” (Vitell and Hunt 1990, p. 262). However, the results also revealed a shortcoming of the research design, to wit, many respondents simply did not see the bribery scenario as a true ethical *dilemma* (respondents seemed to clearly favor the alternative of issuing an order to the sales people to stop giving excessive gifts, but not reducing their compensation). Therefore, we urged researchers to create scenarios for testing the model that involved “true ethical dilemmas” (Vitell and Hunt 1990, p. 261).

In another test, Mayo and Marks (1990) explored how 100 marketing researchers would handle an ethical marketing research problem that centered on a research report that had questionable validity and reliability. Focusing on the “core” relationships of the model, they concluded: “The results provide substantial support for the relationships proposed in this part of the model, ...ethical judgments to resolve dilemmas are found to be jointly determined by

deontological and teleological evaluations,... [and] the relationship between judgments and intentions to adopt an ethical alternative is attenuated when its implementation does not result in a preferred consequence” (p. 163). Donoho et al. (1999) replicated Mayo and Marks’ (1990) research across four different national populations, finding evidence consistent with Mayo and Marks’ original results.

A study by Singhapakdi and Vitell (1991) explored the relationship between several background variables, including “Machiavellianism” and “locus of control,” and the deontological norms of 529 members of the American Marketing Association. Machiavellianism is a personality trait associated with a manipulative, unethical (or at least amoral) leadership style (Hunt and Chonko 1984), and people who have a high “internal locus of control” believe that events that happen to them occur because of their own behavior or their own personal characteristics (Rotter 1966). Using the marketers’ agreement/disagreement with seven items drawn from codes of ethics of the American Marketing Association as a measure of “deontological norms,” they found that those marketers scoring low on the Machiavellianism scale and those exhibiting a high internal locus of control had higher deontological norms.

Using the same American Marketing Association sample, Singhapakdi and Vitell (1990) also explored the relationships between various background factors and both “perceived ethical problem” and “perceived alternatives.” They found that marketers scoring high on the Machiavellianism scale perceived ethical problems as less serious and were unlikely to view punishment of unethical behavior as a viable alternative. On the other hand, marketers in organizations enforcing a code of ethics perceived ethical problems as more serious and were more likely to view punishment of unethical behavior as an acceptable course of action.

Unlike most ethics studies, the study by Hunt and Vasquez-Parraga (1993) used a field-experimental design to explore how 747 sales and marketing managers would handle ethical problems relating to salespeople (1) lying to their customers about plant capacity in order to negotiate better prices with purchasing agents and (2) recommending expensive products in their product lines even though less expensive products would better fit customer needs. This study represents the strongest test yet of the H-V model, because it (a) employed an experimental design, (b) overcame some of the measurement problems associated with previous tests and (c) used structural equation modeling techniques. The results showed that goodness-of-fit indices were extremely high (.999 and .994), the squared multiple correlations for “ethical judgments” and “intervention” were large (.691 and .657, respectively), the total coefficient of determination for structural equations was impressive (.717), the signs of all the parameters were in the expected direction, and all hypothesized paths were statistically significant. In short, the study found the model to fit the data “like a glove.” Equally important, it found that, at least in the situations they investigated, marketers relied *primarily* on deontological factors and only secondarily on teleological factors in forming both their ethical judgments and their intentions to act. It also found that women marketers (compared with men) seemed to rely more heavily on deontological considerations in forming their ethical judgments and less heavily on teleological in determining their intentions to act. Finally, those marketers who worked for companies that strongly enforced their codes of ethics (compared with those who did not) were more influenced by deontological considerations in forming their intentions to intervene and were less influenced by teleological considerations.

Using a sample of 450 Turkish sales managers, Menguc (1997) replicated the Hunt and Vasquez-Parraga (1993) study. He found that “Turkish sales managers rely primarily on

deontological evaluations in determining whether a salesperson's behavior is ethical or unethical, but teleological evaluations also play a role" (Menguc 1997, p. 346). He also found that Turkish sales managers are considerably higher in their intentions to intervene through discipline (i.e., punishment), when compared with U.S. managers. Overall, he concludes, the "findings provide support for the 'core' of the Hunt-Vitell theory of ethics" (p. 346).

Burns and Kiecher (1995) used the experimental design of the Hunt and Vasquez-Parraga (1993) study, but with a sample of 418 certified public accountants (CPAs) and scenarios that involved a CPA making recommendations on clients' tax returns. In their study, they extended the research design by specifically measuring the "deontological orientations" and "teleological orientations" of respondents. That is, they measured respondents' stated predispositions toward treating ethical issues deontologically and teleologically. In the replication phase of their research, their findings confirm those of Hunt and Vasquez-Parraga (1993). That is, the CPAs relied on both deontological and teleological evaluations in forming ethical judgments. Also, they found in the "extension" phase of their study that the paths from ethical judgments to intentions and from the teleological evaluation to intentions in the H-V model are much higher for the teleologically oriented subsample than the deontologically oriented subsample. Therefore, "taken collectively, the results show strong support for the H-V model" (Burns and Kiecher 1995, p. 42).

Vitell, Singhapakdi, and Thomas (2001) tested the H-V theory in a consumer context, with a design similar to that of Hunt and Vasquez-Parraga (1993). Three separate studies were conducted, with the first two studies using student samples of 148 and 82 respondents, respectively, and the third study using a national sample of 353 adult consumers. Results indicated that while deontology and teleology were both important in making decisions,

consumers tended to rely more on ethical norms (deontology) than on teleology (consequences) when forming ethical judgments and intentions. Again, these results support the H-V theory.

Finally, the H-V theory was tested in a Chinese as well as a U.S. context (Singh, Vitell, Al-Khatib and Clark 2007). Marketing managers in both countries were surveyed. While in the U.S. a randomized, national list of marketing managers was used, in China, surveys were distributed to several randomly selected firms. A responsible executive in each firm then distributed these to mid-level marketing managers within that firm. As might be expected, some differences between the countries were found to exist; however, in both countries, moral intensity was a significant predictor of ethical judgments and, in turn, ethical judgments were a significant predictor of behavioral intentions. Thus, the core of the H-V model was not only again supported within the U.S. context, but, more significantly, it was supported within the context of the Chinese culture.

To conclude this section, the empirical tests conducted so far provide strong support for the H-V theory. We turn now to discussing two issues that have frequently been raised by those who use the model in the classroom and/or research.

### **The Consumer Ethics Question**

First, readers should know that the Hunt-Vitell theory is a theory of consumer ethics, as much as it is a theory of ethics that focuses on individuals working within the environment of an organization, such as a business organization. This was alluded to, but not fully explicated, in the revision of the theory where we stated that the portion of the theory “outside the dashed lines” was the general theory of ethics (Hunt and Vitell 1993). That is, more specifically, when one

eliminates the antecedent constructs of professional, industry and organizational environments one is left with the *general theory of ethics*.

While not specifically mentioned in that revision, what is outside the dashed lines is a very workable general theory of consumer ethics. Much has been written concerning consumer ethics since the revision of the theory, and we want to make it clear that the theory is robust enough to account for all types of consumer behavior in situations involving ethical issues. Indeed, we argue that when consumers are confronted with ethical problems in the marketplace, they form their ethical judgments on deontological and teleological evaluations, which result from applying deontological norms to perceived alternatives, and from considering the probabilities of consequences and the desirability of consequences to stakeholders of differing levels of importance. Furthermore, consumers' ethical judgments are generally consistent with their intentions, which are generally consistent with their behaviors. Therefore, the concepts in the theory provide a useful framework for investigating consumers' ethical problems in the marketplace.

Furthermore, *consumer* social responsibility is a contemporary topic that can also be easily accommodated by the theory where moral decision making is an issue. While much has been written concerning corporate social responsibility, *consumer* social responsibility has only much more recently been given attention in the literature.

To clarify, one might define a corporate social responsibility-focused business as one that *proactively* offers *social benefits* or *public service*, and *voluntarily* minimizes practices that harm society, regardless of legality. In exchange for this socially responsible behavior, the organization may anticipate the approval and support of customers. However, this strategy is

only likely to be effective if there is consumer demand for the products or services that firms are indeed offering. For example, if a company offers more fuel efficient cars, or even electric cars, in the name of social responsibility, this strategy only works, or certainly works best, if there is consumer demand for fuel efficient/electric cars. Similarly, it may be in the public interest, and more socially responsible, for a firm to sell healthier foods, but as in the previous example, this really only works if consumers have an interest in purchasing healthier foods. That is, if consumers are to some degree socially responsible themselves, we posit that the general theory can then help to shed light on consumer decision making in these situations.

For example, why do consumers often express interest in green products, yet typically eschew purchasing these products unless they are, at most, only slightly more expensive, or even *less* expensive, than other much less “green,” or non-green, products (De Pelsmacker, Driesen & Rayp 2005; Vanclay, et al. 2010; Choi 2011)? The H-V theory can shed light on this question in several ways. For instance, the individual consumer might not totally believe that the claims of green products are likely to be honest. That is, products promoted as “green” are not truly *green*. Thus, when one has such doubts, it might appear to the consumer to be more ethical to purchase the non-green product instead. Alternatively, the consumer might favor green products in general, but when the cost for green products is too high, that same consumer, especially in bad economic times, might believe that it is personally more ethical to save money than to always buy green. This, of course, would be especially true if the individual is an ethical egoist, and thus more concerned with the direct, positive impact on him or herself rather than the overall long-term impact on society. One’s perception of the impact of one’s behavior on the broader environment may also come into play. That is, if one perceives that the impact on the environment of buying a particular non-green product is virtually negligible, then it may be

considered ethical by that individual to buy the non-green product, especially where there is a clear and immediate benefit to the *individual* such as from a lower price.

A recent study by White, MacDonnell and Ellard (2012) found that while consumers have generally positive attitudes toward ethical and/or socially responsible products, their actual intentions and behavior are not usually consistent with that positive attitude. Using fair-trade products for their study, the authors found that this may be, in part, because consumers do not often see clearly how their purchases of fair-trade products will alleviate any inherent injustices in the economic system. However, when consumers are informed as to how any perceived injustices can be redressed through fair-trade purchases, this generates a significant increase in terms of interest in fair-trade purchases.

Whereas a 2011 conference at the Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities in Essen, Germany (Kulturwissenschaftliches Institut Essen) was publicized as “Business Ethics: The Case of the *Forgotten* Consumer,” [our italics] this is indeed far from being the case. As recently pointed out by Schlegelmilch and Oberseder (2009), all areas of marketing ethics continue to advance, but most particularly ethical issues relating to the *consumer* [again, our italics]. Indeed, this area of ethics research is a modest 20 years old, but has grown most significantly since the year 2000. Much of this research has been conducted in North America, but studies are no longer uncommon in other parts of the world (e.g., Moulins and Toti (2011) in Africa; Van Kenhove, Vermeir and Verniers (2001) in Europe; Pomeroy and Dolnicar (2008), and Auger and Devinney (2007) in Australia; Rawwas (2001) in Asia; and Marquina (2007) in South America), among numerous others. Thus, it is most appropriate to show how the Hunt-Vitell theory explains *consumer* behavior in situations involving ethical and social responsibility issues.

Commented [s1]: Should be 2009 not 2008.

While consumer ethics research has covered the gamut of possible issues, one critical focus of consumer ethics research has been the role of religiosity in consumer decision making involving ethical issues. In fact, sufficient research has been conducted on this topic to warrant a recent review article (Vitell 2010). While some might argue that religion and moral reasoning are unrelated and represent distinct ways of thinking (e.g., Kohlberg 1981), many others argue that moral reasoning depends, at least in part, upon one's religious commitment (i.e., Glover 1997). In agreement with the latter view, empirical evidence shows that religiosity does indeed impact consumer ethical beliefs (i.e., Vitell and Paolillo 2003). One of the more interesting results is that the consumer's intrinsic religiosity, or the *living* of one's religion, has a significant impact on ethical judgments and beliefs whereas the consumer's extrinsic religiosity, or the *using* of one's religion, does not (Vitell, Singh and Paolillo 2006). A third possible religiosity dimension, labeled "quest," or one's ability to resist dogmatic responses to religious issues, has been linked to one's moral reasoning as well (Cottone, et al. 2007). These results indicate the need for multidimensional measures of religiosity. Indeed, a 1999 compendium of religiosity scales by Hill and Hood provides a comprehensive catalogue of various measures of religiosity, and contains well over 100 (126 to be exact) scales.

Moral identity is yet another recent, important research topic relating to consumer ethics as well as business ethics issues. Moral identity is essentially defined as one's moral self-concept regarding a set of traits that include compassion, fairness, generosity and honesty, among others. It is a "kind of self-regulatory mechanism that motivates moral action" (Aquino and Reed 2002, p. 1423). It consists of two fundamental dimensions, an internalization dimension which is actually being, and desiring to be, a person who is characterized by the set of traits mentioned (there are ten traits in all), and a symbolization dimension that involves

essentially wanting to be seen as a person who manifests these same characteristics. Thus, while an individual consumer might be equally strong in terms of both dimensions of moral identity, it is also possible that a person might be high in the symbolization dimension yet low in internalization or vice versa. Since the internalization dimension is seen as being relatively stable by Aquino and Reed (2002), it is more likely to precede and affect moral beliefs, intentions and behavior than is the symbolization dimension. Furthermore, recent research has shown that intrinsic religiosity is closely linked to the internalization dimension of moral identity, but that extrinsic religiosity is *not* linked to the symbolization dimension (Vitell, et al. 2009). Both the concepts of religiosity and moral identity, while relatively recent consumer research topics, fit solidly within the scope of the original Hunt-Vitell theory, as does most other contemporary consumer research.

Given the extent of current research efforts in the consumer ethics area, it seems appropriate for the present authors to emphasize the facility with which the theory can accommodate consumer ethics in addition to the original marketing/business ethics focus. While we had previously suggested that the theory could be used as a consumer ethics model (Hunt and Vitell 1993), it seems relevant to re-emphasize this so that today's consumer ethics researchers will have a conceptual template to guide subsequent research. This is especially important because consumer ethics research, as previously mentioned, is now being conducted in markets all over the globe, not just in North America.

### **The Intentions/Behavior Issue**

While some authors have (rightly) questioned (e.g., Devinney, Auger and Eckhardt 2010; Auger and Devinney 2007) whether intentions, as reported by respondents within the context of a survey or experiment, are likely to be a reliable predictor of actual behavior, it should be noted

that the Hunt-Vitell theory does *not* incorporate *reported* or *measured* intentions. Rather, being a conceptual model, the intentions construct in the H-V theory reflects one's *internal, behavioral* intentions regarding a moral issue. In fact, the link between intentions and behavior in the Hunt-Vitell model is based upon the theory of reasoned action which has characterized the "essential underlying dimension characterizing an intention [as] the person's estimate of the likelihood or perceived probability of performing a given behavior" (Fishbein and Ajzen 2010, p. 39).

Intentions are thus an indication of the decision maker's readiness and willingness to perform a particular behavior. The decision maker might consider a particular behavior as ethical and choose (intend) to engage in that behavior, but, depending upon the circumstances, the decision maker might consider a behavior as ethical yet not decide (i.e., intend) to engage in the behavior. Likewise, the decision-maker might regard a particular behavior as unethical and might either intend to pursue that behavior or not pursue it.

One reason that intentions, as commonly measured, may likely differ from actual behavior is that individuals must make judgments of their moral responsibility before initiating action, but when conducting research using hypothetical scenarios respondents can easily eschew any moral responsibility concerns since the situation is seen as hypothetical rather than real, at least at that moment. However, should the person be confronted with an actual situation, they then will suddenly have moral responsibility for their actions and any subsequent behaviors might become quite different than their previously *measured* intentions. But those subsequent behaviors are not necessarily different from their *internal, behavioral* intentions when confronted with an actual situation.

Similarly, note that one of the personal characteristics in the H-V theory is strength of moral character. Therefore, differences in strength of moral character may lead to measured

intentions differing from actions. That is, although one need not have strength of moral character to state one's intentions in a hypothetical situation (indeed, a socially desirable intention is quite easily stated), when faced with a real situation requiring strength of moral character, one's intentions and actions may differ significantly from those reported in a survey. In the final analysis, one's behavior may be quite consistent with one's actual internal intentions, but may be quite different from reported or measured intentions.

The Hunt-Vitell model would argue that there is a strong consistency between intentions and behavior. The greater inconsistency, when it exists at all, is between *ethical judgments* and intentions, as mentioned earlier in our discussion of the model. One's assessment of the personal harm and benefits from different courses of action might influence intentions and cause them to differ from ethical judgments. However, once behavioral intentions are formed they are likely to be consistent with the ensuing behavior, except where action control intervenes, as explained by the H-V model. It is only reported or measured intentions that are most commonly inconsistent with behavior. Thus, for example, consumers might claim to be interested in purchasing green products, but fail to actually purchase them unless their price is competitive with other non-green or even "black" products (e.g., Choi 2011; Vanclay, et al. 2010).

Within the context of a survey or experiment, consumers may be simply repeating the socially desirable responses that they believe the researchers want to hear, but these responses ("reported" intentions) are not the respondents, even weakly formed, actual, internal, behavioral intentions. Subjects may be responding with what they believe is the most ethical alternative in only a very broad sense. However, when faced with an actual situation they tend to take into consideration additional factors (not in the survey or experiment) that might change their ethical judgments, moral intentions, and ultimate behavior. For instance, when actually faced with

**Commented [s2]:** Vanclay et al. should be 2011. It is correct in the references.

making a decision to buy, or not buy, a green product, an individual consumer might take into consideration current budgetary factors and decide to purchase the non-green product, even believing that it was the ethical thing to do given that they could not afford the green alternative, i.e., it would be unethical to overspend when one cannot afford it. Alternatively, one might truly intend to purchase the green product, but “action control” prevents it, such as when the green product is currently unavailable. As stated in the Hunt-Vitell model, intentions are better predictors of behavior where the ethical issues are central rather than peripheral. When serving as a respondent or subject within the context of a survey or an experiment, individuals may be more likely to consider the apparent ethical issues as peripheral rather than central, and, thus, these measured intentions may not be a good predictor of behavior.

Thus, in summary, behavior might differ from reported or measured intentions, but as hypothesized in the model, behavior does not necessarily differ much from one’s internal, behavioral intentions. While there may not be that much confusion about this among most researchers, we believe that it is critical to make three things clear. First, the H-V model focuses on internal, behavioral intentions, not reported or measured intentions. Second, we agree with the critics that more studies need to attempt to measure behavior rather than intentions. Third, we recognize some of the difficulties in measuring behavior rather than intentions. Indeed, it is often difficult to measure behavior because this can be both time consuming and expensive. As a simple example, if one wants to measure behavior in a situation where a consumer receives too much change after an economic transaction, this will not only take much more time than a study asking intentions, but is potentially quite expensive, as the researcher would need to actually provide buyers with “too much change” in order to witness their actual behavior. Furthermore, placing subjects in an experimental context that seems to promote or induce unethical acts raises

significant ethical issues concerning the propriety of the research design. Ethics researchers must be alert to potential “Milgram” problems (Milgram 1963). The preceding does not mean that measuring behavior should not be attempted, but only that those attempts will encounter difficulties and should be carefully designed to avoid ethical problems.

### **Conclusions**

This article has provided an overview of the H-V theory of ethics and discussed empirical tests of it. Also, it has addressed two questions that are often raised with respect to the theory: (1) Is the H-V theory a consumer ethics theory? (2) Are intentions a valid predictor of behavior? Regarding the first question, our conclusion is that, not only is the theory a theory of consumer ethics, but the theory is also quite germane in serving as a template for current and subsequent research in this growing area. As for the second question, we have shown that decision-maker’s behavioral intentions are indeed a predictor of subsequent behavior. It is only measured intentions that sometimes differ considerably from actual behavior, not one’s internal, behavioral intentions. All empirical tests contain measurement errors; ethics research is no exception.

## References

- Ajzen, Icek. 1985. From intentions to actions: A theory of planned behavior. In *Action Control: From Cognition to Behavior*, edited by Kuhl, J. and J. Beckman, 11-39. Berlin: Springer-Verlag.
- Allport, G.W. and J.M. Ross. 1967. Personal religious orientation and prejudice. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 5: 432-43.
- Aquino, Karl and Americus Reed II 2002. The self importance of moral identity. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 83 (6): 1423-1440.
- Auger, Pat and Timothy M. Devinney 2007. Do what consumers say matter? The misalignment of preferences with unconstrained ethical intentions. *Journal of Business Ethics* 76 (4): 361-383.
- Bartels, Robert. 1967. A model for ethics in marketing. *Journal of Marketing* 31 (January): 20-6.
- Bebeau, M. J., J. R. Rest, and C. M. Yamoore. 1985. Measuring dental students ethical sensitivity. *Journal of Dental Education* 49: 225-35.
- Burns, Jane O. and Pamela Kiecker. 1995. Tax practitioner ethics: An empirical investigation of organizational consequences. *The Journal of the American Taxation Association* 17 (2): 20-49.
- Choi, Gunae 2011. Corporate social and environmental responsibility in service: Will consumers pay for it? Presented at Academy of Management Annual Meeting.
- Cole, Dennis, M. Joseph Sirgy, and Monroe Murphy Bird. 2000. How do managers make teleological evaluations in ethical dilemmas? Testing part of the Hunt-Vitell model. *Journal of Business Ethics* 26: 259-69.
- Cottone, J., P. Drucker and R. A. Javier. 2007. Predictors of moral reasoning: components of executive functioning and aspects of religiosity. *Journal for the Scientific Study of religion* 46 (1): 37-53.

- De Pelsmacker, Patrick, Liesbeth Driesen and Glenn Rayp 2005. Do consumers care about ethics? Willingness to pay for fair-trade coffee. *Journal of Consumer Affairs* 39 (2): 363-385.
- Devinney, Timothy M., Pat Auger and Gianna M. Eckhardt 2010. *The myth of the ethical consumer*. Cambridge University Press. New York.
- Donoho, C.L., M.J. Polonsky, J. Herche, and M.J. Swenson. 1999. A cross cultural examination of the general theory of marketing ethics: Does it apply to the next generation of marketing managers? In *Proceedings of the Seventh Cross Cultural Research Conference*, edited by S. Smith, Cancun, Mexico.
- Donaldson, Thomas and Thomas W. Dunfee. 1994. Towards a unified conception of business ethics: Integrative social contracts theory. *Academy of Management Review* 19 (April): 252-284.
- Dunfee, Thomas W., N. Craig Smith, and William T. Ross Jr. 1999. Social contracts and marketing ethics. *Journal of Marketing* 63 (July): 14-32.
- Engel, James F., Roger D. Blackwell, and David T. Kollat. 1978. *Consumer Behavior* 3d ed. Hinsdale IL: Dryden.
- Fishbein, Martin and Icek Ajzen. 1975. *Belief, Attitude, Intention and Behaviour: An Introduction to Theory and Research*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Fishbein, M. and Icek Ajzen, I. 2010. *Predicting and changing behavior: The reasoned action approach*. Psychology Press. New York.
- Frankena, William. 1963. *Ethics*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc.
- Glover, R.J. 1997. Relationships in moral reasoning and religion among members of conservative, moderate, and liberal religious groups. *Journal of Social Psychology* 137: 247-254.
- Hegarty, W. Harvey and Henry P. Sims. 1978. Some determinants of unethical behavior: An experiment. *Journal of Applied Psychology* 63 (4): 451-57.

- Hill, Peter C. and Ralph W. Hood, Jr. 1999. *Measures of Religiosity*, Birmingham, Alabama: Religious Education Press.
- Howard, John A. and Jagdish N. Sheth. 1969. *The Theory of Buyer Behavior*. New York: Wiley.
- Hunt, Shelby D. and Lawrence B. Chonko. 1984. Marketing and Machiavellianism. *Journal of Marketing* 48 (Summer): 30-42.
- Hunt, Shelby D. and Arturo Vasquez-Parraga. 1993. Organizational consequences, marketing ethics and salesforce supervision. *Journal of Marketing Research* 30 (February): 78-90.
- Hunt, Shelby D. and Scott J. Vitell 1986. A general theory of marketing ethics. *Journal of Macromarketing* 6 (Spring): 5-15.
- Hunt, Shelby D. and Scott J. Vitell 1993. The general theory of marketing ethics: A retrospective and revision. In *Ethics in Marketing*, edited by N.C. Smith and J.A. Quelch, 775-84. Homewood, IL: Richard D. Irwin.
- Hunt, Shelby D. and Scott J. Vitell 2005. Personal moral codes and the Hunt-Vitell theory of ethics: Why do people's ethical judgments differ? In *Business ethics: New challenges for business schools and corporate leaders*, edited by Robert A. Peterson and O.C. Ferrell, 18-37. Armonk: NY: M.E. Sharpe.
- Hunt, Shelby D. and Scott J. Vitell 2006. The general theory of marketing ethics: A revision and three questions. *Journal of Macromarketing* 26 No. 2 (December): 1-11.
- Hunt, Shelby D., Van R. Wood and Lawrence B. Chonko. 1989. Corporate ethical values and organizational commitment in marketing. *Journal of Marketing* 53 (July): 79-90.
- Jones, Thomas M. 1991. Ethical decision making by individuals in organizations: An issue-contingent model. *Academy of Management Review* 16 (February): 366-95.
- Kohlberg, L. 1981. *The meaning and measurement of moral development*. Clark University Press: Worcester, Massachusetts.

Kohlberg, Lawrence. 1984. *Essays on Moral Development: Vol. II The Psychology of Moral Development*. New York: Harper and Row.

Marquina, Percy 2007. Measuring the impact of social responsibility on consumer behavior: The Peruvian consumers. Presented at V Doctoral Consortium, Florida International University.

Mayer, R. R. 1970. Management's responsibility for purchasing ethics. *Journal of Purchasing* 4: 13-20.

Mayo, Michael A. and Lawrence J. Marks. 1990. An empirical investigation of a general theory of marketing ethics. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science* 18 (Spring): 163-72.

McNeel, Steven P. 1994. College teaching and student moral development. In *Moral Development in the Professions: Psychology and Applied Ethics*, edited by J. Rest and D. Narvaez, 27-49. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum and Associates.

Menguc, Bulent. 1998. Organizational consequences, marketing ethics, and salesforce supervision: Further empirical evidence. *Journal of Business Ethics* 17, #4 (March): 333-352.

Milgram, Stanley. 1963. Behavioral study of obedience. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* 67, #4: 371-378.

Moulins, Jean-Louis and Jean-François Toti 2011. Ethique et diversité culturelle : Le cas des consommateurs français et sub-sahariens. Presented at the Septièmes Rencontre Internationales de la Diversité.

Newstrom, John W. and William A. Ruch. 1975. The ethics of management and the management of ethics. *MSU Business Topics* 23, #1 (Winter): 29-37.

Nucci, L. and E. Pascarella. 1987. The influence of college on moral development. In *Higher Education: Handbook of Theory and Research*, edited by J. Smart, 271-326. New York: Armonk.

Petty, R. E. and J. T. Cacioppo. 1986. *Communication and Persuasion: Central and Peripheral Routes to Persuasion*. New York: Springer-Verlag.

Pomeroy, Alan and Sara Dolnicar 2008. Assessing the prerequisite of successful CSR implementation: Are consumers aware of CSR initiatives? *Journal of Business Ethics* 85: 285-301.

Commented [s3]: Should be 2009

Rawwas, Mohammed Y.A. 2001. Culture, personality and morality: A typology of international consumers' ethical beliefs. *International Marketing Review* 18 (2): 188-209.

Rest, James R. 1986. *Moral Development: Advances in Research and Theory*. New York: Praeger Publishers.

Rosenfeld, P., R. A. Giacalone and C. A. Riordan 1995. *Impression Management in Organizations: Theory, Measurement, and Practice*. London, UK: Routledge.

Rotter, Julian B. 1966. Generalized expectancies for internal versus external control of reinforcement. *Psychological Monographs* 80 (1): Whole No. 609.

Schlegelmilch, Bodo B. and Magdalena Oberseder 2009. Half a century of marketing ethics: Shifting perspectives and emerging trends. *Journal of Business Ethics* 93: 1-19.

Shaub Michael K. 1989. An empirical examination of the determinants of auditors' ethical sensitivity. *Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation*. Lubbock, TX: Texas Tech University.

Singh, Jatinder J., Scott J. Vitell, Jamal Al-Khatib and Irvine Clark III. 2007. The role of moral intensity and personal moral philosophies in the ethical decision making of marketers: A cross-cultural comparison of China and the United States. *Journal of International Marketing* 15 (2): 86-112.

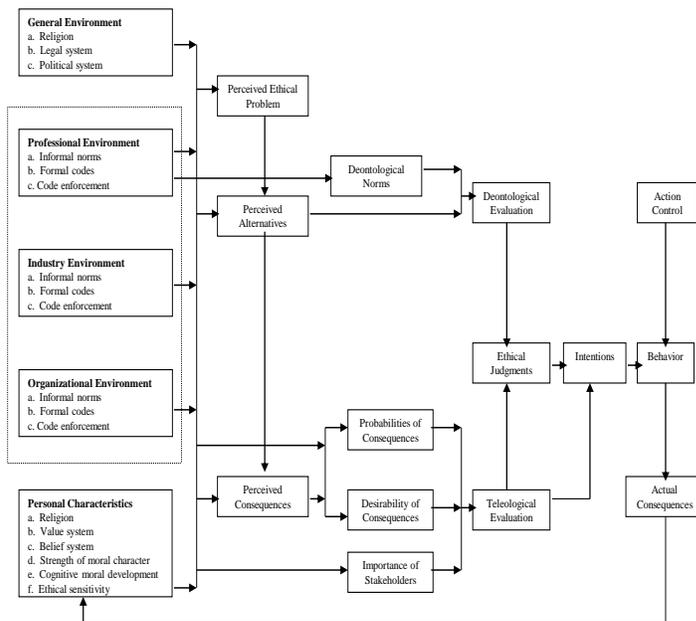
- Singhapakdi, Anusorn and Scott J. Vitell. 1991. Research note: Selected factors influencing marketers' deontological norms. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science* 19 (Winter): 37-42.
- Singhapakdi, Anusorn and Scott J. Vitell. 1990. Marketing ethics: Factors influencing perceptions of ethical problems and alternatives. *Journal of Macromarketing* 10 (Spring): 4-18.
- Sparks, John R. and Shelby D. Hunt. 1998. Marketing researcher ethical sensitivity: Conceptualization, measurement, and exploratory investigation. *Journal of Marketing* 62 (February): 92-109.
- Trevino, Linda Klebe. 1986. Ethical decision-making in organizations: A person-situation Interactionist Model. *Academy of Management Review* 11 (3): 601-17.
- Tubbs, Mark E. and Steven E. Ekeberg. 1991. The role of intentions in work motivation: Implications for goal-setting theory and research. *Academy of Management Review* 16 (1): 180-199.
- Vanclay, Jerome K., John Shortiss, Scott Aulsebrook, Angus M. Gillespie, Ben C. Howell, Rhoda Johanni, Michael J. Maher, Kelly M. Mitchell, Mark D. Stewart and Jim Yates 2011. Customer response to carbon labeling of groceries. *Journal of Consumer Policy* 34: 153-160.
- Van Kenhove, Patrick, Iris Vermeir and Steven Verniers 2001. An empirical investigation of the relationships between ethical beliefs, ethical ideology, political preference and the need for closure. *Journal of Business Ethics* 32 (August II): 347-361.
- Vitell, Scott J 2010. The role of religiosity in business and consumer ethics: A review of the literature. *Journal of Business Ethics* 90: 155-167.
- Vitell, Scott J., Mark N. Bing, H. Kristl Davison, Bart L. Garner and Milorad M. Novicevic 2009. Religiosity and moral identity: The mediating role of self-control. *Journal of Business Ethics* 88: 601-613.

- Vitell, Scott and Shelby D. Hunt. 1990. The general theory of marketing ethics: A partial test of the model. In *Research in Marketing*, edited by Jagdish N. Sheth, Vol. 10, 237-65. Greenwich, CT: J.A.I. Press.
- Vitell, Scott J. and J.G.P. Paolillo 2003. Consumer ethics: The role of religiosity. *Journal of Business Ethics* 46 (August II): 151-162.
- Vitell, Scott J. and J.G.P. Paolillo. 2004. A cross-cultural study of the antecedents of the perceived role of ethics and social responsibility. *Business Ethics: A European Review* 13 (April/July): 185-99.
- Vitell, Scott J., J.G. P. Paolillo and Jatinder J. Singh. 2005. Religiosity and consumer ethics. *Journal of Business Ethics* 57 (2): 175-181.
- Vitell, Scott J., J.G. P. Paolillo and J. J. Singh 2006. The role of money and religiosity in determining consumers' ethical beliefs. *Journal of Business Ethics* 64 (March II): 117-124.
- Vitell, Scott J., Anusorn Singhapakdi and James Thomas. 2001. Consumer ethics: An application and empirical testing of the Hunt-Vitell theory of ethics. *Journal of Consumer Marketing* 18 (2): 153-78.
- Volker, J. M. 1979. Moral reasoning and college experience. Unpublished manuscript, Minneapolis, MN: The University of Minnesota.
- White, Katherine, Rhiannon MacDonnell and John H. Ellard 2012. Belief in a just world: Consumer intentions and behaviors toward ethical products. *Journal of Marketing* 76 (January): 103-118.
- Wilkes, Robert E., John J. Burnett, and Roy D. Howell. 1986. On the meaning and measurement of religiosity in consumer research. *Academy of Marketing Science* 14 (Spring): 47-56.
- Williams, Oliver F. and Patrick E. Murphy. 1990. The ethics of virtue: A moral theory for marketing. *Journal of Macromarketing* 10 (Spring): 19-29.

Zey-Ferrell, Mary, K. Mark Weaver, and O. C. Ferrell. 1979. Predicting unethical behavior among marketing practitioners. *Human Relations* 32 (7): 557-569.

**Figure 1: Hunt-Vitell Theory of Ethics**

## Hunt-Vitell Theory of Ethics



Note: the portion of the model outside the dashed lines constitutes the general theory. The portion inside the dashed lines individuates the general model for professional and managerial contexts.

Copyright © 1991, Shelby D. Hunt and Scott J. Vitell. Reprinted by permission