

**MORAL DILEMMAS AND MARKET RESEARCH:  
REMEDIAL MEASURES TO MITIGATE THE DECEPTION OF RESPONDENTS  
IN MARKET RESEARCH**

**Jill Gabrielle Klein & N. Craig Smith**

**Centre for Marketing Working Paper**

**No.02-703**

**Revised August 2002**

Jill Gabrielle Klein is a Professor of Marketing at INSEAD ([jill.klein@insead.edu](mailto:jill.klein@insead.edu))

N. Craig Smith is a Professor of Marketing and Ethics at London Business School ([ncsmith@london.edu](mailto:ncsmith@london.edu))

Acknowledgement: The authors wish to thank Brian Sternthal, Alexander Simonson and Robert J. Thomas for helpful comments on earlier drafts of this paper. We are also thankful for the research assistance of Tiffany Barnett-White, Marlene Morris, and Mary Schneck.

MORAL DILEMMAS AND MARKET RESEARCH:  
REMEDIAL MEASURES TO MITIGATE THE DECEPTION OF RESPONDENTS  
IN MARKET RESEARCH

Abstract

Unethical practices have been blamed for reduced consumer willingness to participate in commercial marketing research. While some of these practices are clearly avoidable, other practices are arguably unavoidable, particularly some deceptive practices. This paper illustrates an approach to the dilemma posed by ethically suspect but seemingly unavoidable research practices. Drawing on psychology, it develops and tests remedial measures that might mitigate the use of deception in market research, including forewarning, debriefing, and providing compensation. Study findings suggest that remedial measures may lower respondent concern about the practice and increase the likelihood of research participation, particularly the use of forewarning. Implications for practitioners and academic researchers are discussed.

Research suggests that a substantial proportion of commercial marketing researchers may engage in research practices involving consumer respondents that are considered unethical by the research profession, particularly deceptive practices that are prohibited under widely-promulgated industry codes of conduct. One explanation for this apparent misconduct is that some researchers are unethical and engage in these practices knowing them to be wrong. This explanation may account for many instances of practices that are clearly avoidable, such as an intentional breach of a promise of confidentiality or failure to deliver promised compensation for participation. Another explanation is that researchers find that, under some circumstances, an ethically questionable practice seems unavoidable and possibly justifiable. This explanation is in many respects more interesting because it suggests that researchers may face moral dilemmas because of conflicting obligations to research sponsors and respondents. The purpose of this paper is to illustrate an approach to the dilemma posed by ethically problematic but seemingly unavoidable research practices, primarily deception. Having identified when deception may be justifiable, it develops and tests measures that might reduce or eliminate any harm that would otherwise result. These remedial measures may be appropriate to academic as well as commercial marketing research.

Researchers have a moral obligation to treat respondents with respect and not engage in deceptive or potentially harmful practices. This *prima facie* obligation is often evident in codes of conduct governing market researchers. For example, deceptive practices and misrepresentation are “expressly prohibited” under the code of the Council of American Survey Research Organizations (CASRO 1995), while the International Chamber of Commerce/European Society for Opinion and Marketing Research code states that “Any statement made to secure cooperation and all assurances given to an informant, whether oral or written, shall be factually correct and honoured” (ICC/ESOMAR 1986). Industry codes reflect the self-interest of the research profession as well as perceived moral obligations. CASRO (1995), for example, refers to respondents as the “lifeblood” of the survey research industry. Of particular concern are declines in research participation that can

be attributed to unethical research practices. Accordingly, the use of remedial measures may not only improve practice and avoid or reduce possible harm to respondents, it may also make research participation less aversive and help stem the increase in research refusal rates.

In a brief literature review, we examine the use and implications of ethically suspect research practices, the dilemma posed by deception and measures that might mitigate its use. Next, we report a study that investigated consumer responses to market research scenarios describing deceptive and potentially unethical research practices and possible remedial measures. We conclude with a discussion of the findings and the implications for practitioners and academic researchers, including the scope for improved practice and reduced research refusal rates.

## **DECEPTION IN MARKETING RESEARCH**

The importance of marketing research practice and its potential contribution to marketing decision-making have increased dramatically with the advent of new data collection methods and research technologies. However, the success of these and most other market research endeavors is still fundamentally predicated upon consumer respondents' willingness to participate in an activity that rarely yields direct benefits to the individual respondent.<sup>i</sup> Accordingly, practitioners are concerned at declining research participation rates (Nelems 1998; Peterson 1994). The Council for Marketing and Opinion Research (CMOR 1998, p. 1) goes so far as to suggest that “reversing or slowing the decline in respondent cooperation looms as one of the research industry’s most urgent challenges.”

More consumers are refusing to participate in market research, increasing costs and the likelihood of non-response bias. Further, where consumers participate reluctantly, there is good reason to suspect the quality of data obtained. Studies by CMOR reported refusal rates of 58% in 1997 (general public, random-digit-dialled sample, 10-20 minute interview, no disclosure of interview length, no incentive), an estimated increase of 20% since 1990 (Bowers 1997; Humbaugh 1998). Inconvenience is a major reason for refusal, as well as increased time pressure on respondents, telemarketing and growing wariness of strangers. However, ethically suspect practices

also are blamed; from oversurveying and overlong interviews, to rude and insensitive interviewers, to privacy concerns arising from cross-referencing responses with databases, to sales under the guise of research (“sugging”) and other deceptive practices (Bearden, Madden, and Uscategui 1998; Rothenberg 1990; Schlossberg 1992; Sudman and Blair 1999).

Industry concern about declining research participation has led to initiatives aimed at improving research practice. CMOR (1999) promotes a Respondent Bill of Rights, while the Marketing Research Association’s Consumer Advocacy Council has the mission of reversing the decline in research participation. Its guidelines refer to a key tenet of disclosure/honesty as follows: “Any statement made to respondents during any part of the interviewing process must be truthful and honest, and not mislead the respondent in any way. This includes purposely omitting any information from the respondent” (MRA CAC 1993, p. 3).

Schneider (1977) identified three categories of ethical issues involving consumer respondents: deceptive/fraudulent practices, invasion of privacy without informed consent, and general lack of consideration or concern for the respondent. Table 1 uses this classification and lists the major issues and respondent rights violated (Churchill 1991; Laczniak and Murphy 1993; Malhotra 1996; Schneider 1977; Smith and Quelch 1993; Tybout and Zaltman 1974; Zikmund 1991). It also shows whether these issues are covered under the main industry codes.

---

Insert Table 1 Here

---

Research has found that a substantial minority of researchers does not disapprove of a variety of questionable practices involving consumer respondents, with majority approval of some deceptive practices, such as the use of a fake research firm to hide the identity of the study sponsor (Akaah and Riordan 1989; Crawford 1970). There is also evidence to suggest that a number of these practices are being used and, in some cases, with a relatively high incidence (e.g., study

purpose or sponsor deception, study length deception), even though they are generally considered unethical under codes of conduct and prohibited, as shown in Table 1 (Akaah and Riordan 1990; Laroche, McGown, and Rainville 1986).<sup>ii</sup>

While more than a dozen studies have examined researcher judgments of ethics in marketing research, there have been few empirical studies of consumer respondents. Schneider and Holm (1982) conducted research with consumers on whether companies should be allowed to engage in various deceptive research practices. Sugging, fictitious sponsor identification, and faked respondent anonymity for reminder notification were classified as “problematic” practices; while lying about interview length, faked anonymity for sales leads or data match, and undelivered compensation of minimal or significant value were classified as “unethical” practices. Focus group research on behalf of the MRA by Tessar (1994) identified questionable practices that may not only influence research participation but also the image of the study sponsor. Issues identified include deception (interview length, study purpose); privacy (“how did you get my name?”); rude or poorly trained interviewers; and lack of consideration for the respondent’s time or safety. The importance of honesty, making the respondent feel valued and respecting their time was also found in follow-up focus group research (Payne and Partners 1998). An audit of phone research by CMOR, based on 385 surveys and 243,597 interviews, found that refusal rates are lower when interviews are kept short, interview length is disclosed, and there is “honest disclosure of facts during interview introduction” (including research client and subject matter) (Humbaugh 1998, p. 2). In sum, research with consumers suggests that some common research practices are considered inappropriate and may reduce future research participation.

Many ethically questionable practices in market research are clearly avoidable, such as follow-up interviews without warning or sugging<sup>iii</sup>. While these activities may continue, a lack of researcher integrity or “ethical sensitivity” appears to be at the root of the problem (Sparks and Hunt 1998). Of more interest in our study are practices that marketing researchers might view as

unavoidable and yet may be considered unethical. These are primarily deceptive practices, such as deceiving respondents about the purpose or sponsor of the study to avoid the possible response bias that might otherwise result. These ostensibly unavoidable practices may constitute moral dilemmas in the sense that they are “situations in which an agent morally ought to adopt each of two (or more) alternatives separately but cannot adopt both (or all) of them together” (Sinnott-Armstrong 1992, p. 836). The market researcher has an obligation not to deceive the respondent, yet this may conflict with an obligation to the study sponsor to obtain valid results or to protect client confidentiality.

A similar dilemma can arise in academic research in marketing. While much of the foregoing discussion refers to commercial marketing research, many of its key implications also apply to academic research. Clearly, there are many areas of overlap between the two activities, including common methods. While academic consumer research draws heavily on social psychology, surprisingly little attention has been given to that discipline’s provisions governing the use of deception in either academic or commercial marketing research (Kimmel 2001). Accordingly, in the next section, we examine how deception is addressed in psychological research as a basis for identifying when it might be justifiable in commercial marketing research and for proposing appropriate remedial measures.

### **DEVELOPING REMEDIAL MEASURES FOR MARKETING RESEARCH**

Ethical principles governing psychological research originated with the Nuremberg trials of 1947 and the Nuremberg Code can be seen as the basis of all subsequent guidelines governing experimentation with human participants (Schuler 1982). Voluntary participation and informed consent are fundamental prerequisites. The first American Psychological Association (APA) code was approved in 1953 and made substantially more stringent in the 1973 and subsequent revisions, particularly in light of controversy over the Milgram obedience experiments (Baumrind 1964). The guiding principles are perceived to be exacting, though they are to be applied within a cost-benefit framework, resulting in debates about the code’s interpretation and implementation (Kimmel 1996).

While it is broader in scope, the distinction we have made between avoidable and apparently unavoidable but problematic practices in marketing research is consistent with the APA approach to deception. The current version of the code (APA 1992; under revision for 2002) requires that deception not be used if it is avoidable. If an alternative procedure is not feasible, the use of deceptive techniques must be justified by the study's prospective scientific, educational, or applied value. A weakness of this approach is that psychologists might be too quick to anticipate significant scientific output (though Institutional Review Boards provide a partial check). As for commercial marketing research, although it makes an important contribution to society's welfare, few (if any) individual commercial marketing research studies could be claimed to be so important as to justify deception as envisaged under the APA code, particularly the more egregious forms.

The APA code also states that participants must not be deceived about a significant aspect of the study that would affect their willingness to participate, perhaps because of physical risks, discomfort, or unpleasant emotional experiences. It is important to consider the form and effects of the deception. Commercial marketing research generally uses only "mild deceptions"—deceptions that are not targeted at respondents' fundamental, self-related beliefs or values and unlikely to affect their willingness to participate—instead, respondents are deceived about "peripheral factors such as the research sponsor, why a procedure or measure is used, or the purpose of the study" (Toy, Olson and Wright 1989, p. 72). However, while the risk of harm to the individual by or as a result of the deception might be less or negligible, even mild deceptions are morally problematic. Deception may be judged unethical for deontological reasons, including a breach of a duty to tell the truth, as well as because of potential bad consequences (Kimmel and Smith 2001).

Deception is widely used in psychology, notwithstanding the provisions of the APA code and critics who charge that any use of deception is an unacceptable violation of the individual's right to voluntarily choose to participate in research (Adair, Dushenko and Lindsay 1985). Proponents of allowing deception argue that it is essential in many studies. Broder (1998), for



example, cites memory research and studies of incidental learning and of cognitive illusions that could not have been conducted without deception. Under these circumstances, it is argued, the decision to be made is not whether to use deception, but whether the research is necessary. While deception is still employed relatively frequently in psychology, its use overall and the use of the more active and potentially egregious deceptions are said to have diminished (Kimmel 2001).

Finally, the APA code stipulates that the deception must be explained promptly to participants within a debriefing to correct any misconceptions. It may not be sufficient simply to tell respondents that they were deceived and to provide correct information; effective debriefing may require “dehoaxing” and “desensitizing” (Holmes 1976). Providing an educational benefit is often viewed as an important part of debriefing, particularly if the participants are students (Schuler 1982). This does not lessen the possible harm from deception, but it may partially compensate and be included in the researcher’s assessment of the benefits and costs of research participation.

Forewarning is a more uncertain remedy to deception. Under informed consent provisions of the APA code (1992), researchers are obligated to brief participants beforehand about the study and explain that, should they choose to participate, they might withdraw at any time. However, the participant’s decision relies upon the information provided by the researcher. Clearly, if fully informed about the study, there can be no deception. Under forewarning, subjects in a deception experiment may be “informed in advance that some information may have to be withheld and that full disclosure of the purpose and procedures will be made at the end of the experiment” (Adair, Dushenko and Lindsay 1985, p. 60). However, if deceit is used to obtain consent, by definition it cannot be informed (Baumrind 1985). Further, reliance is placed on the researcher’s estimate of the risk to the respondent (Schuler 1982). One solution to these problems is to pretest the experiment to establish whether subjects would give consent, absent the deception (Kimmel 1996). A similar approach is adopted in the study reported below.

While the literature on ethics in commercial marketing research identifies the issues, including respondent deception, it offers few specific solutions. Tybout and Zaltman (1974) gave some attention to the possible remedial measures discussed above, but their advice was largely directed at academic marketing researchers and was questioned as unrealistic or irrelevant in the context of the survey research practiced by most commercial market researchers (Day 1975). None of the industry codes refer to debriefing and even the industry's more recent initiatives show little evidence of practitioners attempting to benefit from approaches to deception in psychology.

A case can be made that intentional deception is never permissible (Bok 1978). However, a more balanced view would argue that some deception in marketing research is morally justifiable where researchers face conflicting obligations and under certain conditions (Kimmel and Smith 2001). In keeping with the treatment of deception in psychological research, we propose treating deception in commercial marketing research as permissible under certain, narrowly prescribed conditions. These conditions are where the researcher has no alternative procedure available that could provide important findings sought by the client, the deception is mild, and appropriate remedial measures are used. We recognize that this position is not uncontroversial and note that our focus is on the use of remedial measures to mitigate the use of deception, rather than the ethics of deception, *per se*.

The appropriateness of remedial measures can be subject to empirical inquiry. The purpose of the study reported below was to illustrate in an exploratory study how possible remedial measures for deception in marketing research might be investigated and to demonstrate their effectiveness. Drawing on psychology, as discussed, the remedial measures examined are forewarning, debriefing, and the use of monetary and other forms of compensation. In addition, we explored the implications of a non-deceptive approach, i.e., telling the truth.

## STUDY OF CONSUMER RESPONSES TO DECEPTIVE PRACTICES

### *Overview*

Consumer respondents evaluated four deceptive practices in market research that might be considered unavoidable and justifiable (subject to the above criteria): study purpose and sponsor deception, undisclosed taping, and interview length deception. Benefits from research participation were also explored, consistent with Schuler's (1982) observations on the importance of assessing research costs and benefits for participants. Scenarios were manipulated in an attempt to determine whether the remedial measures we have identified may reduce respondent concern about deceptive practices and increase the likelihood of future participation in research. We sought ethical evaluations and emotional reactions of consumers as well as measures of the impact of these practices and of possible remedial measures on research participation.

### *Development of Scenarios*

*Pilot study.* In a mall-intercept study, 352 adult consumers were asked to imagine that they were a participant in a given market research scenario and to indicate their response to the described event. In total, the pilot study examined consumer reactions to 35 scenarios (each respondent rated 3 unrelated scenarios). The practices found to be most egregious to consumers were: study sponsor deception, breach of confidentiality, frugging (fundraising under the guise of research), videotaping without consent, and the non-disclosure of a follow-up interview. Some remedial measures were tested; for example, warning people of a follow-up interview led to more positive ratings.

The criteria for selection of scenarios for the current study were whether the deceptive practice was ethically suspect (relative to industry codes), perceived to be relatively frequent, and arguably unavoidable. Accordingly, practices included in the pilot study that are clearly avoidable were dropped from the main study, including frugging and the non-disclosure of a follow-up interview. A further consideration was the scope for remedial measures that lessen the potential for harm and reduce negative reactions to the research experience. In addition to the pilot study, the

development of the main study scenarios was informed by a separate investigation of practitioner and consumer respondent experiences.<sup>iv</sup> Following pretests, the final set of 23 scenarios was adopted. Below, we outline the scenarios used, including our rationale for their selection.<sup>v</sup>

*1. Length of Interview.* Interview length deception often occurs because interviewers fear respondents would decline to participate if given an accurate estimate of the time needed, perhaps because they have overlong and poorly constructed questionnaires. It is widely regarded as frequent and problematic. We regard deception by commission, where interviewers lie about the interview length, as unethical and clearly avoidable. This is consistent with industry codes that prohibit deception to secure cooperation (e.g., ICC/ESOMAR 1986) or specify that “respondents must not be enticed into an interview by a misrepresentation of the length of the interview” (CASRO 1995, p. 5). Deception by omission is more troubling. Some recent industry initiatives require interviewers to state the likely duration of the interview (MRA CAC 1993). However, for some studies, length may vary substantially, according to consumer responses and interest (Laroche, McGown, and Rainville 1986). Accordingly, five scenarios involving interview length were tested: (1) the interview is said to last 15 minutes and it does last 15 minutes; (2) the interview is said to last 15 minutes and it takes 30; (3) the interview is said to last 30 minutes and it does take 30; (4) the respondent is not told the interview length and it takes 15 minutes; (5) the respondent is not told the interview length and it takes 30 minutes.

*2. Taping.* Undisclosed taping of an interview would be deception by omission. Researchers may not wish to disclose taping because it might bias responses or influence participation rates. The CMOR (1999) Respondent Bill of Rights states that respondents will be told in advance if an interview is to be recorded, consistent with CASRO (1995) and PMRS (1984). However, ICC/ESOMAR (1999), in a change to its code, permits recording without advance notice if it would otherwise result in “atypical behavior”. However, respondents must be told about the recording at the end of the interview. Accordingly, two possible remedial measures for audiotaping

were examined: debriefing and forewarning. There were three scenarios: (1) a control scenario in which the respondent becomes suspicious of taping (due to “clicking” heard on the phone line) but the respondent is never informed of the taping by the interviewer; (2) the respondent is informed at the end of the survey that the interview was taped; (3) the respondent is forewarned (during solicitation) that the interview will be taped.

*3. Deception Concerning Purpose of Study.* Revealing the purpose of a study may bias responses. CMOR’s (1999) Respondent Bill of Rights commits researchers to disclosing the nature of the survey. The MRA CAC (1993) guidelines suggest that this need only note the general topic of discussion. Particularly troubling are instances of deception by omission where a different purpose is implied though unstated. For example, Tessar (1994) reported consumer frustration at being asked to do one thing (watch television programs) and then being questioned on something else (advertising). Accordingly, a typical advertising effectiveness research scenario was utilized to examine purpose deception. The respondent in the scenario is asked to watch a television program, even though the purpose of the study is to test advertisements aired during the program. Five remedial measures (or combinations thereof) for this deception were examined: (1) forewarning that the purpose cannot be revealed; (2) debriefing about purpose; (3) providing a benefit to compensate for the deception (a quiz about the program, with the possibility of winning a prize); (4) forewarning and debriefing; (5) forewarning, debriefing, and providing the benefit.

*4. Deception Concerning Sponsor of Study.* Revealing the sponsor of a study also might bias responses. Moreover, it can conflict with an obligation of research companies to protect client confidentiality that is specified in most industry codes. CMOR’s (1999) Respondent Bill of Rights, the MRA CAC (1993) guidelines, and some other codes, commit researchers to disclosing the name of the interviewer and the research company. This disclosure is unlikely to produce biased responses because it does not reveal the study sponsor. The problem is more difficult for in-house researchers where nondisclosure or deception may seem unavoidable (Sudman 1998). Accordingly,

five scenarios were tested: (1) control condition in which sponsor is not mentioned; (2) sponsor of research (client) is revealed; (3) respondent forewarned that sponsor cannot be revealed; (4) research firm identified and respondent forewarned that sponsor cannot be revealed; (5) respondent forewarned that sponsor cannot be revealed in advance, then is debriefed about sponsor identity.

*5. Benefits.* The effects of research participation benefits were examined, in keeping with our earlier discussion of compensation in psychological research. Monetary incentives are recommended (Bearden, Madden, and Usategui 1998; Sudman and Blair 1999) and the American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR 1999) advocates incentives as a “best practice” for maximizing response rates. One of CMOR’s earliest initiatives was the development of “thank you” cards for mailing to survey respondents that explained the benefits of market research. We tested four scenarios: (1) a control condition in which no benefits or incentives were given (same as control condition in study sponsor deception), (2) indirect benefits of research (“participation in research helps produce products that people would like to see in the stores”), provided during solicitation; (3) indirect benefits of research provided at the conclusion of the interview; (4) \$5 voucher incentive; and (5) \$20 voucher incentive.

## ***Method***

Data were collected in mall-intercept interviews in a middle class mall in Jacksonville, Florida. Potential participants were stopped as they shopped and were asked to participate in the study. Each respondent saw one scenario only, to minimize possible demand effects. Respondents were asked to read the scenario and then answer 3 sets of questions on the following two pages. The first two sets of questions asked for reactions to the scenario, the third asked respondents for demographic information and their level of participation in market research studies. When they were finished, respondents were thanked for their participation and given a written debriefing. A sample scenario (undisclosed study purpose with forewarning) is provided below:

Imagine that one afternoon you are at home and the phone rings. The person on the other end of the phone says:

"Hello, I'm with a national marketing research firm and we are calling consumers to ask whether they would be willing to participate in a study by watching a new TV program airing on network TV this evening. We will call you after the show to discuss your reactions. We would like you to watch this program as you would any other program, therefore we cannot say anything more about the specific questions you will be asked. Would you be willing to participate?"

You agree. After the show the research firm calls. The first few questions are about the TV program, the remainder of the 15 minute interview is about the advertising that appeared during the program.

*Dependent measures.* Our dependent measures were primarily intended to establish whether consumers would respond more favorably to research practices that include remedial measures to mitigate deception. Two sets of dependent measures were used, presented to the respondents as questions 1 and 2 (rotated within each scenario type to minimize possible order effects). One set measured respondents' ethical evaluation of the market research company's action described in the scenario. The set comprised the eight items of the Reidenbach and Robin (1990) multidimensional ethics scale (MES) and a single unidimensional measure of ethical evaluation (very ethical/not at all ethical). It should be noted that these measures are of respondents' perceptions of the ethics of the research practices. Many deceptive practices could still be unethical regardless of how they might be evaluated by research respondents.

The second set of dependent measures comprised 7 items measuring emotional reactions to the scenario, its effects on research participation, and whether respondents felt deceived. More specifically, respondents were asked to indicate on a 7-point scale the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with seven statements relating to participation in the study described (where appropriate), future participation in market research, and whether they would feel upset, angry, happy, irritated, or deceived by the experience. Our assessment of emotional reactions to research practices is in contrast to previous studies. While practitioners and academics may discuss

questionable practices in terms of whether or not they are ethical, it is quite possible that consumers themselves may evaluate practices in terms of how irritating or upsetting they are. Again, our purpose is to establish the effectiveness of remedial measures. We expect consumers to respond more favorably to the more effective remedial measures on one or more of our dependent measures.

*Sample.* Four hundred and six individuals agreed to participate in the study (a 24.5% participation rate).<sup>vi</sup> The sample was 50.5% female and median household income was \$30,000-44,999. Relative to the U.S. population, minorities were overrepresented (25.9% of respondents were black, 60.2% were white) and the sample was skewed toward the young (66% were 37 or younger), and was better educated (65.3% had one year of college or more). Respondents were familiar with market research; two-thirds had been asked to participate in a marketing research study in the previous 12 months, 27.8% reported having been asked to participate 3 or more times in the past year (the mean value for prior research participation was 2.41).

## RESULTS

Table 2 shows mean values for respondent ratings of the different scenarios. Below, we discuss the analysis of each group of scenarios in turn. ANOVA's and contrast tests were conducted to analyze differences in responses across scenarios. Because the dependent measures "irritated," "upset," and "angry" were highly correlated, they were averaged as an index of negative reactions (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .87$ ). Ethical evaluations reported in the table and analyzed below reflect the unidimensional measure only.<sup>vii</sup>

---

Insert Table 2 Here

---

*1. Length of Interview.* In examining interview length, we are interested in: (1) whether deception about length led to a more negative reaction than did the truth (or no information) about length; (2) whether the actual length of the interview would have an impact on respondents'



reactions; and, (3) whether telling versus not telling respondents about the length of the interview would influence responses. As Table 2 shows, respondents had the greatest negative reaction when they were deceived about the length of time the interview would take. Respondents who read the scenario in which there was deception about the length of the interview ("told 15/actually 30") had significantly higher negative reactions ( $t(84) = 2.93, p < .01$ ) and felt significantly more deceived ( $t(84) = 3.52, p < .01$ ) than respondents who saw the other scenarios. Deception about length did not significantly affect how happy respondents would feel ( $t(84) = .47, n.s.$ ), or how ethical they judged the research to be ( $t(84) = .65, n.s.$ ).

The two scenarios in which the interview lasted 15 minutes were contrasted against the two scenarios in which the interview lasted 30 minutes (the deception scenario was excluded). The length of the interview did not affect responses to scenarios: the t-scores for contrasts for all seven of the dependent measures were non-significant. There were also no differences in reaction between scenarios in which the length of the interview was disclosed during solicitation and when the length was not disclosed (the deception scenario was again excluded from this analysis).

Those who were not told the length of a 30 minute interview were more likely to participate in the future ( $t(84) = 2.91, p < .01$ ), had less of a negative reaction ( $t(84) = 3.09, p < .01$ ) and felt less deceived ( $t(84) = 2.95, p < .01$ ) than did those who were deceived about interview length.

In summary, respondents appear to be most sensitive to being deceived about the length of the interview. The actual length of the interview (15 or 30 minutes) did not affect ratings nor did the disclosure of the interview length at the commencement of the interview. However, participation in future research would appear to be more likely if people are not told the length of a 30 minute interview, rather than told that it will be 15 minutes and it takes 30 minutes.

*2. Taping.* Two possible remedial measures for audiotaping were examined: debriefing and forewarning. These two procedures were contrasted against a control scenario in which the respondent becomes suspicious of taping. Debriefing respondents at the end of the interview did

not affect reactions relative to the control (all  $t$  values were n.s.). Forewarning, however, did prove to be a successful remedial measure. Forewarned respondents were significantly happier with their participation, felt less deceived, and judged that the procedure was significantly less unethical than respondents in the other two taping conditions ( $t(47) = 2.28, p < .05$ ,  $t(48) = 2.19, p < .05$  and  $t(48) = 2.82, p < .01$ , respectively). Forewarning produced no significant differences in negative emotional reactions or willingness to participate in the future.

*3. Deception Concerning Purpose of Study.* Five remedial measures (or combinations thereof) for study purpose deception were examined. Forewarning respondents that they would not be told the purpose of the study (as opposed to simply deceiving them) led respondents to be significantly more likely to participate in the future, and significantly more likely to be happy with the experience ( $t(100) = 2.48, p < .05$  and  $t(100) = 2.46, p < .05$ , respectively). Debriefing respondents (relative to the control group) had a diverse impact on reactions to the scenario: debriefed respondents were significantly more willing to participate in the future and were happier with the research experience ( $t(100) = 3.82, p < .001$  and  $t(101) = 2.46, p < .05$ , respectively). But they also felt more deceived and had more of a negative reaction to the scenario than did the control respondents ( $t(100) = 3.22, p < .01$  and  $t(100) = 2.77, p < .01$ , respectively). The other remedial measures (incentive; forewarning and debriefing; and forewarning, debriefing and incentive) did not have any significant effect on reactions and no remedial measure had any significant effect on ethical judgments relative to the control condition (all  $t$  values were n.s.). Thus, while forewarning produced some positive reactions, debriefing produced both positive and negative reactions, perhaps because it reveals the deception. Accordingly, in combining forewarning and deception, the positive effects of the forewarning appear to be canceled out by telling respondents they were deceived. In addition, offering an incentive did not ameliorate the effects of the deception.

*4. Deception Concerning Sponsor of Study.* Methods of protecting against bias due to respondent awareness of the study sponsor were examined by comparing a control scenario in

which the sponsor is identified with three alternative practices. As Table 2 shows, the means across the different scenarios are quite similar. There were no significant differences between the control scenario and the alternative strategies (with the exception of a single significant finding: respondents felt more deceived when they were forewarned that they would not be told the study sponsor compared to when the sponsor was identified). However, when contrasted against a generic control, where there was no identification of the study sponsor, all four of these remedial measure scenarios evoked less negative reactions. There were significant differences on the negative reactions measure between the control and forewarning ( $t(83) = 3.03, p < .01$ ), research firm/forewarning ( $t(83) = 2.25, p < .05$ ), and forewarning/debriefing ( $t(83) = 2.18, p < .05$ ), though not for the other dependent measures (all  $t$  values n.s.). Thus, the findings suggest that not identifying the study sponsor can be problematic and show that remedial measures can reduce respondent concerns, but they do not speak to the superiority of any one remedial measure.

*5. Benefits.* The effects of explaining indirect benefits of research to consumers and of offering a voucher incentive were examined. The explanation of indirect benefits during solicitation did not significantly affect reactions relative to the control (in which respondents were simply asked to participate). The explanation of indirect benefits at the end of the interview, however, did leave respondents feeling significantly less deceived than respondents in the control ( $t(84) = 2.08, p < .05$ ). The vouchers did not have any effect on respondents relative to the control, except for the finding that the \$20 voucher led to significantly lower negative reactions compared to the control ( $t(84) = 2.80, p < .01$ ). Thus, there is some indication that the incentives for participation in research need to be reasonably substantial. However, there were no significant differences on any of the measures between the \$20 voucher scenario and the indirect benefits scenarios, suggesting monetary incentives may not be necessary if respondents can be persuaded that the research is worthwhile.

## DISCUSSION

Deceit is the intentional effort to mislead people. Bok (1978) suggests that whether it is justifiable is a question of crucial importance because it is a way of making people act against their will and the most common reason for distrust. Lying, which involves false statements that are intended to deceive is considered morally problematic by all major philosophical traditions and religions. Sometimes, research practitioners and academic researchers lie to their respondents. More often, they engage in intentional deception by omission; respondents are not told about an aspect of the study that might affect their decision to participate. In either case, the researcher has a moral obligation to establish that the deception is justifiable (Kimmel and Smith 2001).

We have argued that much deception in commercial marketing research may be avoidable; alternative procedures are available, particularly in the case of outright lies. Where alternative procedures are not available, the researcher must consider whether an intentional deception is warranted by the possible benefits of the study, even if the deception is mild (and we would argue that only mild deceptions are ever likely to be morally permissible for commercial research). If the deception is considered justifiable, its effects may be mitigated by the use of remedial measures similar to those found in psychology, particularly forewarning and debriefing. This approach may make research participation less aversive in addition to being less unethical and reducing any harm that might otherwise be perpetrated. Below, we discuss our empirical study of remedial measures, including its implications for academic researchers as well as practitioners.

### ***Remedial Measures for Deceptive Research Practices***

The handful of studies of consumer reactions to ethically suspect research practices has relied on survey research and focus groups. In our study, we used an experimental design to better explore these reactions and to test possible remedial measures; specifically, telling the truth, forewarning, debriefing, and providing compensation. Overall, we found that remedial measures did reduce perceived negative consequences and mitigate the use of deceptive practices. Consistent

with prior research, we also confirmed that deceptive practices (specifically, interview length deception and study purpose deception) appear likely to reduce future participation, at least relative to remedial measures. Our study points to the potential effectiveness of remedial measures, in the context of the deceptive practices investigated and probably more broadly. Subject to our study limitations, industry efforts to promote development of these measures would seem to be warranted. Below, we comment on each remedial measure in turn.

Telling the truth is more of an alternative to deception than a remedial measure. Clearly, from an ethical standpoint, it is preferable to avoidable deception. However, researchers may be uncertain when a deception is avoidable. Our study suggests that it is possible to test when a deception can be avoided without compromising research integrity or participation rates. For example, we found that disclosure in advance of the actual length of even a 30-minute interview did not result in more negative evaluations relative to nondisclosure or relative to disclosure of a 15-minute interview. Also, we found that disclosure of the research firm in combination with forewarning (that sponsor identity could not be revealed) was no different to forewarning alone.

The results of our study suggest that forewarning has considerable potential in mitigating adverse consequences of deception in marketing research. Forewarning about taping led respondents to feel happier with the research experience, to feel less deceived by the research, and to judge it as more ethical than did debriefing or failing to disclose that the interview was being taped. Likewise, forewarning respondents that they would not be told the purpose of the study made them happier with the experience and more likely to participate in the future. Forewarning also reduced negative reactions to study sponsor deception. Thus, telling respondents ahead of time that they will be taped, or that they will not be told the sponsor or the purpose of a study, appears to be an effective remedial measure.

Debriefing was less effective in reducing respondent concern about deceptive practices. In some cases, debriefing generated negative reactions, including feeling deceived—perhaps because

the deception is revealed and its effects are not fully assuaged as a result of the debriefing.

However, from an ethical standpoint, this may not make it any less necessary as a way of redressing a deception, at least in the absence of forewarning. Nonetheless, although psychological research generally requires forewarning and debriefing, we believe that forewarning alone may suffice for much commercial research, especially in light of our findings on forewarning. In particular, it is likely to be sufficient in most studies to forewarn respondents that a study sponsor cannot be revealed for reasons of client confidentiality. One test to be applied is whether advance knowledge of the identity of a research sponsor would have influenced the respondent's decision to participate.

Compensation also appears to be effective, though perhaps it need not be monetary. Explaining the benefits of research participation at the end of an interview appeared to be advantageous. While not significantly affecting willingness to participate in the future, or positive or negative feelings about the research relative to a control condition, telling respondents why their participation is worthwhile reduced feelings of deception, and was generally as effective as providing a \$20 voucher.

### ***Further Implications for Research Practitioners***

What of other ethically suspect and arguably unavoidable practices in marketing research? Marketing researchers may find their obligations to respondents conflict with obligations to clients or other stakeholders in ways that do not involve respondent deception. Possible candidates include overly personal questions and research on topics that the respondent might find difficult or embarrassing. Researchers might argue that these practices are inevitable, especially for clients in some product categories (e.g., personal hygiene, funeral services). Also, calls at inconvenient times might likewise be justified because this is when respondents are available or because the inconvenience cannot be known in advance.

We would propose that our framework for deceptive practices is also applicable to non-deceptive, ethically suspect research practices. The test is whether there is a genuine dilemma.

More specifically, the practice is permissible when the researcher has no alternative procedure available that could provide important findings sought by the client, the potential harm from the practice is negligible and would not affect willingness to participate, and appropriate remedial measures are used. For instance, we might reject the claim that calls at dinnertime are unavoidable because that is when respondents are more likely to be available. If these calls are known to inconvenience respondents they should be made at other times, notwithstanding lower response rates. The inconvenience of dinnertime calls can be empirically verified.

Showing consideration for respondents is not only an ethical obligation of researchers it is in the interests of the research industry, particularly given the apparent link between unethical practices and declining participation rates. It is particularly important that the market research industry differentiate itself from bogus ‘researchers’ and telemarketers. One way of doing this is to promote practices that go beyond current code provisions. For the prior example, this might include not calling at dinnertime even if the inconvenience to respondents is found to be relatively small (CMOR currently restricts calls to between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 9:30 p.m.).

### ***Implications for Academic Researchers***

Much of the foregoing discussion of deception and our tests of remedial measures may be applicable to academic research in marketing, both for reasons of ethics and the more pragmatic consideration of research refusal rates. Thus the use of deception in academic research also might be subject to similar criteria to those identified above and be accompanied by remedial measures. Indeed, because the deceptions are potentially less mild than those found in commercial market research, including deception by commission, the requirement for their justification and for the use of remedial measures could well be stronger.

Toy, Olson and Wright (1989) found that many marketing studies employ deception, though less than 40% reported conducting a debriefing. While the proportion of debriefings that actually took place was likely higher, it’s very possible that many researchers are not sufficiently familiar

with debriefing techniques or the ethical obligations that go with the use of deception (Toy, Wright, and Olson 2001). Our discussion of deception shows that there may be good reasons for reviewers and editors to require that the use of debriefings be reported and, perhaps, the rationale for the use of deception in the first place (Adair, Dushenko and Lindsay 1985). A further consideration is the obligation of an educational compensation to research participants, who are often students. Again, we have shown why this important and yet anecdotal evidence suggests this requirement also tends to receive too little attention (Smith 1998).

### ***Limitations***

Interpretation of our results must be tempered by the study limitations. First, there are inevitable trade-offs between control and richness in the use of an experimental design. More specifically, respondents read descriptions of research situations, and were not subject to the questionable practices directly. While we considered the latter approach, we concluded that to deliberately engage in unethical practices in order to test their effects would not be appropriate. Second, although our findings for remedial measures overall are relatively robust, this was a broad and inevitably exploratory study and this limits claims that can be made about the relative merits of different remedial measures or their most appropriate levels. A more complete design would extend to a greater number of treatments and levels for each treatment and with more scope for analysis across issues. Third, it is likely that there is some degree of non-response bias influencing our findings. We had only respondents willing to participate in the mall-intercept. Thus, those who have the most negative attitudes toward participating in research were unlikely to be included in our sample. In many respects, however, the participants in our study represent the segment of greatest interest to research practitioners: those who are willing to participate in research and comprise the pool of available respondents. Finally, although administered in a mall-intercept context, all the scenarios in our study questionnaire referred to phone research.



Further, while survey research and laboratory experiments may raise many ethical issues, marketing research that uses ethnographic or anthropological research methods has an additional element of complexity that we have not attempted to address. As Arnould (1998, p. 73) explains in relation to academic research, ethnography involves “constant role playing and interactional deceit” and the role of the ethnographer “is inevitably highly charged with ethical dilemmas.”

### ***Future Research***

There are several directions for future research. First, additional research could further confirm consumer reactions to the practices we examined, using more complete and more comprehensive designs, as well as develop and test other remedial measures. For example, studies might look at interviews of different lengths (e.g., 45 minutes) and the effects of incentives could be tested with different monetary amounts. Also, our short explanation of benefits got mostly non-significant results but in the right direction; future research could examine the best ways of communicating benefits for even stronger results. The robustness of remedial measures also could be tested across different types of research (e.g., focus groups). Further, practitioners as well as academic researchers might adopt this suggestion of additional research. Practitioners could measure whether there are additional costs associated with using alternative approaches (e.g., debriefing adds to interview length) and whether data quality suffers. Prior research on the use of remedial measures with deception in academic research suggests adverse effects on data quality are limited (e.g., Hawkins 1979; Toy, Olson, and Wright 1989).

Second, other deceptive practices might also be investigated, such as undisclosed observation or taping of focus groups and the use of secret shoppers (see guidelines in ICC/ESOMAR 1999). Third, studies could be conducted of non-deceptive but ethically suspect and possibly unavoidable practices, such as asking personal or difficult questions. Fourth, future research might examine consumer preferences for alternative research practices relative to the benefits of improved products or services resulting from the research (perhaps using a conjoint

approach to examine trade-offs consumers are willing to make between research participation and research benefit). Finally, problematic practices and remedial measures could be explored within the context of academic research, perhaps with researchers testing different approaches as part of other studies (e.g., changes in respondent satisfaction with short or long debriefings).

TABLE 1

## Major Ethical Issues Involving Market Research Respondents

Ethical Issues <sup>1</sup>		Respondent Right(s) Violated <sup>2</sup>	Code Restrictions on the Practice <sup>3</sup>
<b>A. Deceptive Practices</b>			
A1.0	Compromised promise of anonymity or confidentiality	Right to be (honestly) informed	<u>Specific:</u> AAPOR, AMA, AMA (NY), CASRO, ICC/ESOMAR, MRA (CAC), MRA (code), MRS, PMRS
A2.0	Study sponsor deception	Right to be (honestly) informed	<u>Specific:</u> MRS (identify sponsor when interviewing a competitor) <u>Broad:</u> AAPOR, CASRO, ICC/ESOMAR, MRA (CAC), PMRS
A3.0	Misrepresenting Research Procedures		
A3.1	Study purpose deception (including uses made of results)	Right to be informed Right to choose	<u>Specific:</u> CASRO, ICC/ESOMAR, MRS <u>Broad:</u> AAPOR, MRA (CAC), MRA (code), PMRS
A3.2	Questionnaire or interview length deception	Right to be informed Right to choose	<u>Specific:</u> CASRO, MRA (CAC), PMRS <u>Broad:</u> AAPOR, ICC/ESOMAR, MRS
A3.3	Follow-up contact without permission	Right to be informed Right to choose	<u>Specific:</u> ICC/ESOMAR, MRA (CAC), MRS, PMRS <u>Broad:</u> CASRO
A3.4	Undelivered compensation (incentives, summaries of results)	Right to be informed Right to choose	<u>Specific:</u> MRA (CAC) <u>Broad:</u> ICC/ESOMAR, MRA (code), MRS, PMRS
A4.0	Selling (and fundraising) under the guise of research	Right to be informed Right to choose	<u>Specific:</u> AMA, CASRO, ICC/ESOMAR, MRS, PMRS <u>Broad:</u> AAPOR, AMA (NY), MRA (CAC)

<sup>1</sup> Issues were identified from the following sources: Laczniak and Murphy 1993; Malhotra 1996; Schneider 1977; Smith and Quelch 1993; Zikmund 1991.

<sup>2</sup> Reflects Churchill 1991, Smith and Quelch 1993, Tybout and Zaltman 1974.

<sup>3</sup> Provisions identified in the codes of the American Association for Public Opinion Research (1991), American Marketing Association (1962), American Marketing Association New York Chapter (1980), Council of American Survey Research Organizations (1995), International Chamber of Commerce/European Society for Opinion and Marketing Research (1986), Marketing Research Association Consumer Advisory Council (CAC) "Guidelines and Practices to Promote Respondent Cooperation (1993), Marketing Research Association Code of Conduct (undated), Marketing Research Society (of U.K.) (1995), Professional Marketing Research Society (of Canada) (1984). Codes classified as "specific" included provisions that directly address the issue; codes classified as "broad" contained more general provisions that might be interpreted as restricting the unethical practice. For example, many deceptive practices might be viewed as prohibited under Article 1 of the ICC/ESOMAR code: "Any statement made to secure cooperation and all assurances given to an informant, whether oral or written, shall be factually correct and honored." However, this code does not have specific provisions governing interview length deception or study sponsor deception. Likewise, while the PMRS code suggests a mail-intercept interview should not exceed 30 minutes, the AMA (New York) code refers to "unnecessarily long interviews," and the CASRO code simply states that "Long interviews can be a burden." Some codes differentiate between required rules of conduct and recommended good practice.

Ethical Issues		Respondent Rights Violated	Code Restrictions on the Practice
<b>B. Invasions of Privacy</b>			
B1.0	Observation studies without informed consent (1-way mirrors, tape/video recording)	Right to privacy Right to choose	<u>Specific:</u> CASRO, ICC/ESOMAR, MRA (CAC), MRS, PMRS
B2.0	Coercive Practices		
B2.1	Failure to establish participation is voluntary or that respondent may withdraw at any time	Right to privacy Right to choose	<u>Specific:</u> CASRO, ICC/ESOMAR, MRS, PMRS
B2.2	Incentives that exceed small token of appreciation (esp. with poor consumers)	Right to privacy Right to choose	<u>Specific:</u> PMRS (not good practice)
B2.3	Research with children (without parental consent)	Right to privacy Right to choose	<u>Specific:</u> ICC/ESOMAR, MRA (CAC), MRS, PMRS
B3.0	Privacy Invaded During Data Collection		
B3.1	Calling unlisted numbers	Right to privacy	<u>Broad:</u> CASRO, ICC/ESOMAR, MRS
B3.2	Overly personal question/topics (e.g., age, income)	Right to privacy Right to choose	<u>Broad:</u> CASRO
B3.3	Projective techniques	Right to privacy Right to choose Right to information	<u>Broad:</u> CASRO
B3.4	Questions concerning others (neighbors, friends, relatives)	Right to privacy Right to choose Right to information	<u>Broad:</u> ICC/ESOMAR
B4.0	Privacy Invaded Subsequent to Data Collection		
B4.1	Merging data from several sources (without permission)	Right to privacy Right to choose Right to information	<u>Specific:</u> CASRO <u>Broad:</u> ICC/ESOMAR, MRS
B4.2	Selling respondent information (without permission)	Right to privacy Right to choose Right to information	<u>Broad:</u> CASRO, ICC/ESOMAR

Ethical Issues		Respondent Rights Violated	Code Restrictions on the Practice
<b>C. Lack of Consideration/Concern for Respondent</b>			
C1.0	Calls at inconvenient times (e.g., dinner time)	Right to choose Right to respect	<u>Specific:</u> CASRO, MRS (defines appropriate times) <u>Broad:</u> MRA (CAC)
C2.0	Lengthy Interviews or Questionnaires		
C2.1	Overlong interviews or questionnaires	Right to choose	<u>Specific:</u> PMRS (defines overlong interviews) <u>Broad:</u> AMA (NY), CASRO, MRA (CAC)
C2.2	Nondisclosure of length of (lengthy) interview	Right to choose Right to information	<u>Specific:</u> MRA (CAC) (advise respondents of interview length) <u>Broad:</u> PMRS
C3.0	Insensitive Research		
C3.1	Insensitive and rude interviewers	Right to respect	<u>Specific:</u> MRA (CAC) <u>Broad:</u> AMA (NY), CASRO, ICC/ESOMAR, MRS, PMRS
C3.2	Persistent interviewers (who “badger” respondents)	Right to respect	<u>Broad:</u> CASRO, ICC/ESOMAR, MRA (CAC), MRS, PMRS
C3.3	Topics that respondent doesn’t know or are difficult/of no interest/ depressing/ embarrassing	Right to respect Right to safety	<u>Specific:</u> CASRO, MRA (CAC) <u>Broad:</u> AAPOR, AMA (NY), ICC/ESOMAR, MRS, PMRS
C4.0	Incompetent Research		
C4.1	Poorly trained interviewers	Right to respect	<u>Specific:</u> MRA (CAC)
C4.2	Poorly written survey	Right to respect	<u>Specific:</u> AMA (NY)
C4.3	Failure to debrief (after necessary deception)	Right to respect Right to safety	<u>Broad:</u> MRA (CAC) (None)
C4.4	Failure to disclose researcher identity	Right to respect	<u>Specific:</u> CASRO, ICC/ESOMAR, MRA (CAC), MRS, PMRS
C5.0	Overuse of public/specific respondents in research	Right to respect	<u>Specific:</u> PMRS (not good practice) <u>Broad:</u> MRA (CAC)

**TABLE 2**

Respondent Ratings of Scenarios (N = 406)<sup>1</sup>

Scenario	Participate	Future	Negative	Deceived	Happy	Unethical
<b>1. <u>Length of Interview</u></b>						
told 15/actually 15	N/A	4.28	2.32	2.33	4.35	3.72
told 15/actually 30	N/A	3.76	3.51	3.59	4.12	3.59
told 30/actually 30	N/A	4.50	2.31	1.94	3.83	3.22
not told length/actually 15	N/A	4.11	3.07	2.50	4.11	3.22
not told length/actually 30	N/A	5.28	2.15	2.17	3.50	3.11
<b>2. <u>Taping</u></b>						
undisclosed audio-taping (c)	N/A	4.06	3.29	3.47	2.88	4.76
debriefing	N/A	4.19	2.98	3.63	4.00	4.45
forewarning	N/A	4.72	3.04	2.28	4.61	3.06
<b>3. <u>Deception - Purpose</u></b>						
told program/really ad (c)	N/A	3.33	2.96	3.06	3.44	3.72
forewarning	N/A	4.67	2.94	2.78	4.78	3.89
debriefing	N/A	5.39	4.33	4.89	4.67	2.89
told program/really ad/incentive	N/A	3.72	3.23	3.44	3.67	3.83
forewarning and debriefing	N/A	3.81	2.71	2.75	3.81	4.38
forewarning/debriefing/incentive	N/A	3.61	3.89	3.22	3.94	4.11
<b>4. <u>Deception - Sponsor</u></b>						
sponsor identified (c)	3.33	3.83	2.86	2.28	3.78	3.72
forewarning	3.61	3.67	2.48	3.56	3.71	3.11
research firm/forewarning	4.50	3.78	2.87	3.22	4.44	3.17
forewarning/debriefing	N/A	3.67	2.89	2.89	3.56	4.06
generic control (c)	N/A	3.29	3.87	3.88	3.65	4.06
<b>5. <u>Benefits</u></b>						
indirect/solicitation	N/A	3.83	3.31	3.06	3.67	4.28
indirect/at end	N/A	4.33	3.04	2.56	4.22	3.83
\$5 voucher	N/A	3.94	2.98	3.61	3.76	3.61
\$20 voucher	N/A	4.33	2.54	3.06	3.94	3.17
generic control (c)	N/A	3.29	3.87	3.88	3.65	4.06

<sup>1</sup> Approximately 18 respondents per scenario.

## REFERENCES

- AAPOR (1999), "Best Practices for Survey and Public Opinion Research." Effective date May, 1997. American Association for Public Opinion Research: [www.aapor.org](http://www.aapor.org).
- Adair, John G., Terrance W. Dushenko and R.C.L. Lindsay (1985), "Ethical Regulations and Their Impact on Research Practice," American Psychologist 40 (January), 59-72.
- Akaah, Ishmael P. and Edward A. Riordan (1989), "Judgments of Marketing Professionals About Ethical Issues in Marketing Research: A Replication and Extension," Journal of Marketing Research XXVI (February), 112-20.
- Akaah, Ishmael P. and Edward A. Riordan (1990), "The Incidence of Unethical Practices in Marketing Research: An Empirical Investigation," Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science 18 (Spring), 143-152.
- APA (1992), "Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct." Effective date December 1, 1992. American Psychological Association: [www.apa.org](http://www.apa.org).
- Arnould, Eric J. (1998), "Ethical Concerns in Participant Observation/Ethnography," in Advances in Consumer Research 25, Joseph W. Alba and J. Wesley Hutchinson, ed. Provo; UT: Association for Consumer Research, 72-74.
- Baumrind, Diana (1964), "Some Thoughts on Ethics of Research: After Reading Milgram's 'Behavioral Study of Obedience'," American Psychologist 19, 421-423.
- Baumrind, Diana (1985), "Research Using Intentional Deception: Ethical Issues Revisited," American Psychologist 40 (February), 165-174.
- Bearden, William O., Charles S. Madden, and Kelly Uscategui (1998), "The Pool is Drying Up," Marketing Research 10 (Spring), 26-33.
- Bok, Sissela (1978), Lying: Moral Choice in Public and Private Life. New York: Pantheon.
- Bowers, Diane K. (1997), "CMOR's First Four Years," Marketing Research 9 (Spring), 44-45.

- Broder, Arndt (1998), "Deception Can Be Acceptable," American Psychologist 53 (July), 805-806.
- CASRO (1995), "Code of Standards for Survey Research." Port Jefferson, NY: Council of American Survey Research Organizations.
- CMOR (1998), "CMOR Presses Attack on Many Fronts," Opinion 1 (Winter), 1.
- CMOR (1999), "Respondent Bill of Rights." Council for Marketing and Opinion Research: [www.cmor.org](http://www.cmor.org).
- Churchill, Gilbert A. (1991), Marketing Research: Methodological Foundations. Hinsdale: The Dryden Press.
- Crawford, C. Merle (1970), "Attitudes of Marketing Executives Toward Ethics in Marketing Research," Journal of Marketing 34 (April), 46-52.
- Day, Robert L. (1975), "A Comment on Ethics in Marketing Research," Journal of Marketing Research XII (May), 232-33.
- Hawkins, Del I. (1979), "The Impact of Sponsor Identification and Direct Disclosure of Respondent Rights on the Quality and Quantity of Mail Survey Data," Journal of Business 52, pp. 577-90.
- Holmes, David S. (1976), "Debriefing After Psychological Experiments: I Effectiveness of Postdeception Dehoaxing," American Psychologist 31 (December), 858-867.
- Humbaugh, Pam (1998), "Respondent Cooperation: Audit Update Yields Ways to Improve Results," Opinion 1 (Winter), 2.
- ICC/ESOMAR (1986), "ICC/ESOMAR International Code of Marketing and Social Research Practice," in Robert M. Worcester and John Downham, ed., Consumer Market Research Handbook. Amsterdam: North-Holland.
- ICC/ESOMAR (1999), "ICC/ESOMAR International Code of Marketing and Social Research Practice." Effective date 1994. European Society for Opinion and Marketing Research: [www.esomar.nl](http://www.esomar.nl).
- Kimmel, Allan J. (1996), Ethical Issues in Behavioral Research. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell.



- Kimmel, Allan J. (2001), "Ethical Trends in Marketing and Psychological Research," Ethics and Behavior 11 (2), 131-149.
- Kimmel, Allan J. and N. Craig Smith (2001), "Deception in Marketing Research: Ethical, Methodological, and Disciplinary Implications," Psychology and Marketing 18 (July), 663-689.
- Laczniak, Gene R. and Patrick E. Murphy (1993), Ethical Marketing Decisions: The Higher Road. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon.
- Laroche, Michel, K.L. McGown and Joyce Rainville (1986), "How Ethical Are Professional Marketing Researchers?" Business Forum (Winter), 21-25.
- MRA CAC (1993), Guidelines and Practices to Promote Respondent Cooperation. Rocky Hill, CT: Marketing Research Association, Consumer Advisory Council.
- Malhotra, Naresh K. (1996), Marketing Research: An Applied Orientation. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, Inc.
- Nelems, James H. (1998), "Critical Issues in Research Must Be Faced Now," Marketing News, 8 June, 15.
- Payne and Partners (1998), "Maximizing Respondent Cooperation in Survey Research." A report for MRA and CMOR. Port Jefferson, NY: Council for Marketing and Opinion Research.
- PMRS (1984), Rules of Conduct and Good Practice. Toronto: Professional Marketing Research Society.
- Peterson, Betsy (1994), "Insight into Consumer Cooperation," Marketing Research 6 (Fall), 52-53.
- Reidenbach, R. Eric and Donald P. Robin (1990), "Toward the Development of a Multidimensional Scale for Improving Evaluations of Business Ethics," Journal of Business Ethics 9, 639-653.
- Rothenberg, Randall (1990), "Surveys Proliferate, but Answers Dwindle," The New York Times October 5, A1.

- Schlossberg, Howard (1992), "Latest image study finds mixed results for researchers," Marketing News September 14, 8-9.
- Schneider, Kenneth C. (1977), "Subject and Respondent Abuse in Marketing Research," MSU Business Topics (Spring), 13-19.
- Schneider, Kenneth C. and Cynthia K. Holm (1982), "Deceptive Practices in Marketing Research: The Consumer's Viewpoint," California Management Review XXIV (Spring), 89-96.
- Schuler, Heinz (1982), Ethical Problems in Psychological Research. New York: Academic Press.
- Sinnott-Armstrong, Walter (1992), "Moral Dilemmas," in Lawrence C. Becker and Charlotte B. Becker, ed., Encyclopedia of Ethics. New York: Garland Publishing, 835-837.
- Smith, N. Craig (1998), "Ethics in Consumer Research," in Advances in Consumer Research 25, Joseph W. Alba and J. Wesley Hutchinson, ed. Provo; UT: Association for Consumer Research, 68.
- Smith, N. Craig and John A. Quelch (1993), "Ethical Issues in Researching and Targeting Consumers," in N. Craig Smith and John A. Quelch, Ethics in Marketing (Homewood, IL: Irwin), 145-195.
- Sparks, John R. and Shelby D. Hunt (1998), "Marketing Researcher Ethical Sensitivity: Conceptualization, Measurement, and Exploratory Investigation," Journal of Marketing 62 (April), 92-109.
- Sudman, Seymour (1998), "Survey Research and Ethics," in Advances in Consumer Research 25, Joseph W. Alba and J. Wesley Hutchinson, ed. Provo; UT: Association for Consumer Research, 69-71.
- Sudman, Seymour and Edward Blair (1999), "Sampling in the Twenty-First Century," Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science 27 (Spring), 269-277.
- Tessar, Linda (1994), "Research on Research - The Respondent Perspective." Rocky Hill, CT: Marketing Research Association.

- Toy, Daniel, Jerry Olson, and Lauren Wright (1989), "Effects of Debriefing in Marketing Research Involving 'Mild' Deceptions," Psychology and Marketing 6 (Spring), 69-85.
- Toy, Daniel, Lauren Wright, and Jerry Olson (2001), "A Conceptual Framework for Analyzing Deception and Debriefing Effects in Marketing Research," Psychology and Marketing 18 (July), 663-689.
- Tybout, Alice M. and Gerald Zaltman (1974), "Ethics in Marketing Research: Their Practical Relevance," Journal of Marketing Research XI (November), 357-68.
- Zikmund, William G. (1991), Exploring Market Research. Fort Worth, TX: The Dryden Press.

## ENDNOTES

---

<sup>i</sup> An obvious exception is passive data collection, such as click-stream data collected from online consumers. That said, privacy concerns have highlighted the importance of consumer acquiescence even in this context.

<sup>ii</sup> A survey of researchers who are members of the AMA (N = 128) provided further confirmation of prior research findings about the prevalence of specific types of ethically suspect research practices, with practitioners identifying more than a dozen practices restricted by industry codes as frequently occurring (above the mid-point on a 7-point scale), including: deception about interview length, overly long interviews, hidden taping/observing of respondents, failure to disclose researcher identity, study purpose deception and various forms of mistreatment of respondents, from calls at inconvenient times to not being treated with respect by interviewers (a summary of findings is available on request from the second author).

<sup>iii</sup> While suggesting is unethical, clearly avoidable and yet has been widely used, it might be viewed more accurately as a deceptive sales technique rather than an unethical research practice. As such it is illegal in the U.S. under the Telemarketing and Consumer Fraud and Abuse Prevention Act 1994.

<sup>iv</sup> Two separate studies were helpful in developing the scenarios used here. Our survey of AMA practitioners not only provided confirmation of prior research on the prevalence of specific suspect practices, but respondents also provided suggestions for alternative approaches and perceived justifications for practices considered unavoidable. Secondly, a mall-intercept study improved our understanding of consumers' positive and negative feelings toward research and of the context within which ethically problematic practices may arise.

<sup>v</sup> An appendix containing all 41 scenarios developed as part of this research is available on request from the first author.

<sup>vi</sup> The contract research firm reported a refusal rate (percentage of people who said no when asked to participate) of less than 1%. However, this is after "wave-offs", people who, when passing the interviewer, indicate that they are not interested in participating in a research study. The research firm reported a wave-off rate of 75.5%, consistent with other studies it has conducted in this mall. Hence, the participation rate for this study was 24.5%.

<sup>vii</sup> We conducted exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis to test the dimensionality of the MES in this study. This revealed a two-factor structure rather than the three dimensions of the scale, suggesting that attempts to understand the underlying rationale for respondents' ethical judgments, based on the MES, would not be reliable in this context.