

Call for papers for a special issue

Building the conceptual and theoretical foundation for fundraising's professional ethics

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For such a major component of the discipline of nonprofit marketing, fundraising doesn't have a lot in the way of professional ethics underpinning it. This is not to suggest for a moment that fundraising is in any way unethical; just that there are few theories of professional ethics on which to found ethical best practice.

Marketing has a sizeable literature on ethics. One five-volume set (Smith and Murphy 2012) contains reprints of 90 papers published in academic journals. These are the papers the authors consider best cover the issues, and far from exhaust the topic. Fundraising by contrast has an "ethics gap": it has only a handful of academic papers that address its professional ethics (MacQuillin 2016, p8) and just two single author books (as opposed to an edited collection of essays, of which there aren't many either) dedicated to the topic, both now 20-plus years old (Anderson 1996; Fischer 2000).

Both of these are books on applied ethics. Anderson's very first line is: "This is a book on applied ethics – ethical decision-making for practitioners in the work of philanthropy" (Anderson 1996, p ix). But the profession has very little in the way of normative ethics that underpins the attempt to apply ethics in practice.

One problem for the fundraising profession is that it attempts to apply ethics to professional dilemmas – such as how much to intrude into a person's personal space in the course of a solicitation – without a sound understanding of which normative theory it is attempting to apply. When it does attempt this, it usually applies – perhaps 'shoehorns' would be a better description – one of the classic normative theories such as Kantian ethics or Utilitarianism on to the problem.

Between its launch in 1996 until 2016, the *International Journal of Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Marketing* carried 62 articles (that's about three a year) that contained the words 'ethics' and 'fundraising' in the same article, but only one of these (Rosen 2005), looks at ethics as it relates to the entire practice and profession – the others talk about ethics in regards to particular types of fundraising (such as cause related marketing) or ethics is mentioned only in passing, for example, in how legal ethics relate to legacy solicitations.

Actually, the total of 62 articles is an overstatement because the search engine also picks up terms that have 'ethic' as a root, such as 'ethical treatment of animals', that have no relation to fundraising. It seems that most aren't actually about fundraising ethics at all.

The *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* fares similarly, with a search on its website for 'fundraising AND ethics' returning just 70 articles between 1986 and 2016. These articles are similar to those of the *IJNVSM*, and only one article (Clohesy 2003) looks at ethics as a set of principles to be applied to the whole profession.

There was a burst of interest in fundraising ethics in the early- to mid-1990s when a spate of booklets (e.g. Briscoe 1994a), magazine articles (especially in the *Chronicle of Philanthropy*) and book chapters (e.g. Elliot 1991, O'Neil 1997) appeared. But apart from Clohesy (2003) and (Rosen 2005) the only recent article to explore a theoretical concept of fundraising ethics is that by MacQuillin and Sargeant (2019), which presents the ideas developed in Rogare's grey literature (MacQuillin 2016, 2019a, 2019b) for an academic audience.

The fundraising profession and its academic branch have never really made a concerted effort to develop a bespoke normative theory of fundraising ethics, with just a small handful of researchers exploring the issue.

This special issue – a joint initiative between the Fundraising Ethics Research Network (FERN) at the fundraising think tank Rogare and the *Journal of Philanthropy and Marketing*– aims to put this right and begin to build a theoretical foundation for fundraising's professional ethics."

This is therefore a special issue that is most likely to consider conceptual articles (Salomone 1993; Watts 2009) that help to build this foundation, rather than articles that attempt to resolve applied ethical dilemmas. As an example, we would be less inclined to consider an article that argued that face-to-face street fundraising (to press into service fundraising's usual *bête noire*) were unethical based on, say, an argument that it generated negative perception among the general public,¹ than an article that aimed to establish a theoretical approach that could be used to establish why F2F (or any method of fundraising) were unethical.²

We will certainly consider such articles, but we are making clear that the focus of this special issue is on conceptually building fundraising's professional ethics, and so make it clear that this call for papers is actively encouraging such conceptual articles (Salomone 1993; Watts 2009).

The types of question and challenges this special issue might wish to consider are (this is a non-exhaustive list intended only as guidance):

- Who are fundraising's main ethical stakeholders, what rights to they have and what duties do fundraisers owe them? And from where do those duties derive?
- What types of ethical decision-making tools or heuristics do fundraisers employ?

¹ ...which would beg that question that negative public perception were a relevant criterion in assessing the ethicality of fundraising, and it is this kind of assumption for which this special issue aims to provide the conceptual basis.

² Having said that, we don't really wish to encourage articles arguing that any form of fundraising is unethical.

- How similar/different is fundraising ethics to marketing ethics and what can fundraisers learn from marketing ethics
- Ethics of fundraising regulation and self-regulation
- Criticisms of Rights Balancing Fundraising Ethics
- Criticisms of donor centred fundraising narratives, including potential challenges of 'white saviourism' in such narratives
- Ethics of data protection (particularly privacy and consent issues)
- What is the boundary between ethics and professional standards – are these conflated and what challenges, if any, arise from this conflation?
- What are the ethics of using so-called 'poverty porn' and how can the use of such images be justified ethically?
- Do people have a duty to give to charity? If they do, how much ought they give and, more importantly, what is the role of fundraiser's in ensuring they people discharge this duty?
- Ethical implications of the use of behavioural science in fundraising.

Gift acceptance/refusal and fundraiser remuneration (by commission) are two of the issues that receive much attention in the practitioner literature, and so we would consider submissions that bring fresh approaches to these questions. We would also consider more left-field ideas, such as postmodernist approaches to fundraising ethics, or using Critical Theory (Bohman 2005) to re-envision a role for fundraising.

All articles in the special issue will be peer-reviewed. FERN also hopes to stage a symposium/colloquium on fundraising ethics during 2021 and will draw the programme from the submissions to this special issue, and will also be published in the event's proceedings, though neither the acceptance for the symposium/colloquium/proceedings nor the special issue is contingent on acceptance for the other.

Submission Instructions:

Abstract Submission Deadline: 1st January 2021

Abstracts and Covering letters should be submitted, by Email, for consideration by the Guest-Editor: Ian Rogare (ianmacquillin@rogare.net)

Structured abstract guidance

Please submit an abstract of around 400-500 words using the following structure.

Purpose – What ethical dilemma, challenge or question will the paper will address?

Approach and methodology – how does the paper build new theory (conceptual paper) and/or how did you design your study (research paper)?

Findings – What new theory does the paper present (conceptual) and/or what are the findings from the study (research paper)?

Originality – How does this paper contribute to ethical knowledge and ethical literacy in fundraising, including recommendations for applied professional ethics (if relevant/appropriate)?

Deadline for Submission of First Manuscript: 1 April 2021

Once the submission materials have been prepared in accordance with the [Author Guidelines](#) manuscripts should be submitted online at <https://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/nvsm>

Special Issue Authors should answer 'Yes' when prompted at Step 1.

For further help with submissions, please contact: IJNVSMoffice@wiley.com

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