



Editorial

# Marketing and Sustainability: Business as Usual or Changing Worldviews?

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**Abstract:** Marketing, and the business schools within which most marketing academics and researchers work, have a fraught relationship with sustainability. Marketing is typically regarded as encouraging overconsumption and contributing to global change yet, simultaneously, it is also promoted as a means to enable sustainable consumption. Based on a critical review of the literature, the paper responds to the need to better understand the underpinnings of marketing worldviews with respect to sustainability. The paper discusses the concept of worldviews and their transformation, sustainability's articulation in marketing and business schools, and the implications of the market logic dominance in faculty mind-sets. This is timely given that business schools are increasingly positioning themselves as a positive contributor to sustainability. Institutional barriers, specifically within universities, business schools, and the marketing discipline, are identified as affecting the ability to effect 'bottom-up' change. It is concluded that if institutions, including disciplines and business schools, remain wedded to assumptions regarding the compatibility between the environment and economic growth and acceptance of market forces then the development of alternative perspectives on sustainability remains highly problematic.

**Keywords:** green marketing; sustainable marketing; sustainable development; sustainability; institutional change; paradigm change; worldview

## 1. Introduction

For many people who work in the field of sustainability, along with many consumers, the field of marketing is often equated as being antithetical to sustainable development because of how it is integral to the encouragement of consumption and serves corporate interests [1,2]. Where even the promotion of sustainability or environmental and social causes becomes a form of 'woke washing'—where businesses and corporations adopting the veneer of progressive values for profit [3]. Nevertheless, the expansion of the marketing concept [4] has reached a stage where there is much interest, especially in the sub-fields of macromarketing, transformative and social marketing, in ensuring that marketing is a force for good [5]. Undoubtedly, there has been a substantial growth in "green", "environmental", and "sustainable" marketing, much of which has been focussed on promoting "green" products, understanding market segments and consumer's preferences for environmentally friendly products, and the role of the environment in branding [6–8]. However, the extent to which the growth of apparent

interest in the environment and sustainability among marketing researchers has either transformed the field of marketing, or actually contributed to improved sustainability at the global scale appears highly debatable [9,10]. “Ecological awareness has been treated, like most virtues in the capitalist marketplace, as an individual taste rather than a social necessity” [11] (p. 86). For example, in examining the contribution of marketing to research on climate change, including mitigation and adaption, Hall [12] searched 53,685 documents in 89 marketing serials with respect to the occurrence of “climate change” or “global warming” and found that only 349 (0.65%) had either climate change or global warming mentioned in their text and the terms being used as a keyword in only 16 documents (0.03%). Yet marketing, especially as a method, is widely recognised as being able to make a substantial contribution to climate change research and policymaking [13–15], although the vast majority of research on the relationship between climate change and marketing occurs outside of the marketing field and that the research that is conducted “within” marketing tends to be focussed around social marketing approaches to behavioural change [10,12,16].

Despite criticism of the embeddedness of marketing in contemporary neoliberal capitalism and its contribution to the marketisation and commoditisation of the environment [17–19], Achrol and Kotler argued that in the third millennium, the super phenomena of marketing will be characterised by sustainable marketing [20]. Sustainable marketing is broadly characterised by a number of elements [8] including: the recognition of resource limits of growth [21], sustainable consumption [22], a transition from an anthropocentric to a biocentric paradigm [23], and the development of sustainable product life cycles [24]. However, despite awareness of the significance of sustainability issues in marketing there are a wide range of interpretations of how this may be achieved [8,25]. In recognition of some of these issues, Achrol and Kotler [20] (p. 45) noted, “marketing scholars are cognizant of the imperative for a new and probably radical reformulation of its fundamental philosophy, its operational premises and the heuristics that are used to make marketing decisions. But what are the conceptual underpinnings of such a worldview?” For Achrol and Kotler the conceptual underpinnings lie in the development of new patterns of consumption and production [20]. The present paper responds to the call to better understand the underpinnings of marketing worldviews with respect to sustainability and suggests that the transformation of marketing requires an understanding of worldviews and its ability to transition, and how change may be brought about by institutional and individual actors. This is also particularly timely given the growing positioning of business schools, within which the majority of marketing academics reside, as a positive contributor to sustainability [9].

## 2. The Psychology and Theory of Worldviews

To understand the differing positions and perspectives of sustainability, the psychology and theory of worldviews must first be examined. Such a theoretical understanding allows reflections about the meaning, composition and learning involved in the creation and change of worldviews. Worldviews can be defined as “the inescapable, overarching systems of meaning and meaning-making that inform how humans interpret, enact, and co-create reality” [26] (p. 156). The concept of a worldview has been utilised across many social science disciplines and has become recognised as an important concept with respect to understanding sustainability behaviour, decision-making and policy [26–28]. A worldview is how we make sense of the world and frame the fundamental realities of the world around us [29]. This includes the assumptions about life, objectives, (un)desirable behaviours and relationships, and acceptable goals. Overall it provides “the epistemic and ontological foundations for other beliefs within a belief system” [29] (p. 4). Most importantly, worldviews shape how individuals perceive issues, their potential solutions and become a fundamental part of individuals’ identities [30]. However, while individuals have their own worldview, societies also possess shared, taken for granted, dominant worldview(s) which serve to shape a societies understanding and framing of issues and societal problems [28]. The dominant worldview can be held by the majority of a society or, more critically, by the most powerful groups of society [31].

The notion of a worldview is sometimes used interchangeably with the concept of a social paradigm [32]. However, Olsen et al. argue that a social paradigm is limited to the perceptual and cognitive orientation that a group of individuals uses to interpret and explain aspects of social life [29]. As such, a social paradigm is more restrictive than a worldview as it is held by only a specific group and not all members of society, and it pertains only to certain aspects of social life, not the totality of social existence. As such, a worldview is an holistic construct which encompasses the totality of human life and existence, such as ontological and epistemological beliefs [26].

Beliefs, values, and attitudes are common in marketing literature, but how these concepts are differentiated, especially from a worldview, is often a point of debate (i.e., [29,30,33,34]). Olsen et al. describe a worldview as containing belief systems and social values associated within the system [29]. Therefore, to understand a worldview, beliefs and values must be examined. Social values involve what is good and bad or (un)desirable in social life communicating what “should be” [29]. Rokeach describes a value as “a single belief ... that has a transcendental quality to it, guiding actions, attitudes, judgements and comparisons across specific objects and situations beyond immediate goals to more ultimate goals” [33] (p. 18) For example, one may value family, love, and success. Rokeach also identified two types of values: terminal values, which are composed of beliefs about desirable end-states (i.e., world peace); and instrumental values composed of beliefs about modes of conduct (i.e., honesty) [34]. Thus, values help guide our actions as well as our preference for societal objectives (i.e., equality) and initiatives (i.e., policy) [35]. In contrast, a belief is a specific idea about any aspect of life that individuals are convinced is true, regardless of evidence [29]. Similarly, a belief system is a set of interrelated beliefs which deals with a broad social condition, such as belief systems about family life, economic activities, human rights, and the meaning of life [29]. As such, individuals have numerous belief systems which may sometimes be inconsistent with each other. Lastly, attitudes differ from both beliefs and values. An attitude is described by Rokeach [33] (p. 18) as “an organisation of several beliefs around a specific object or situation”. As such, an attitude is an expression of a value [34]. Consequently, while values can be measured, this is usually done by asking questions related to beliefs and attitudes.

Koltko-Rivera also extends knowledge about beliefs and worldviews in a slightly different way [30]. He described three types of beliefs: descriptive or existential beliefs, which are capable of being true or false; evaluative beliefs, wherein an object of belief is judged to be good or bad; and prescriptive or proscriptive beliefs, in which the desirability of means or end of action is judged (usually considered a value) [30]. According to Koltko-Rivera, only beliefs regarding the nature of reality, desirable (proper) guidelines for living, or the (non)existence of important entities are worldview beliefs [30]. This interpretation is similar to Olsen et al. [29] and Rokeach’s [33,34] description of values, but goes beyond social dimensions to include the nature of reality. Extending the worldview concept even further, Hedlund-de Witt created the Integrative Worldview Framework, which comprises five fundamental beliefs related to ontology (nature of reality), epistemology (knowledge of reality), axiology (what is a ‘good life’), anthropology (the human role and position is in the universe), and societal vision (how to organise and address societal problems) [26]. In this case, guidelines about living, rather than the nature of reality of existence of entities, may be related to the social world, specifically the values, beliefs, and attitudes related to sustainability (i.e., anthropology and societal vision).

### 3. Social Paradigms and Individual Worldview Transformation

Olsen et al. suggest that change can occur from both internal logical contradictions (i.e., inconsistencies in beliefs and values) and external discrepancies between beliefs, values and social conditions [29]. Although this description of social paradigm change seems to relate more to individual rather than societal transformation in worldview, it resonates strongly with studies of policy learning and change in which significant changes in policy may also reflect shifts in policy paradigms [36,37].

The theory of social paradigm change examines change at the societal level, however transformation at the individual level requires attention to different processes (i.e., the relationship between agency and structure) and the embeddedness of multiple-scales of change from the individual through organisations and communities through to society as a whole. In psychology, worldview transformation has primarily received attention in relation to perceived threats and crisis. In these studies, transformation is where “people experience fundamental shifts in perception that alter how they view and interact with themselves and the world around them” [38] (p. 226). Studies have discussed how changes in worldview are usually a combination of factors, termed destabilisers, and together these destabilisers can result in an ‘aha’ moment [38]. These pivotal moments challenge “people’s previous assumptions, leading them to change the way they see the world. Attempts to fit the new experiences or realizations into their old perspective fail, often forcing their awareness to expand to make room for the new insight” [38] (p. 227). However, changing worldviews is not easy. Dunbar, Fugelsang, and Stein used functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) to investigate minor and major conceptual theory change in individuals, and showed that the learning centre of the brain, the caudate and parahippocampal gyrus, responds to theory-confirming data, while the brain activates the anterior cingulate cortex, precuneus, and dorsolateral prefrontal cortex, associated with error detection, processing, and working memory when disconfirming data is provided [39]. Consequently, when individuals are presented with inconsistent information to their preconceived notions, learning does not easily occur. While inconsistent information is never easy to hear or to take on board, waiting for shifts in consciousness through random life-changing experiences, such as dangerous climate change related events or other natural hazards, may be too little too late, as such “intentional practice and experiential education” have been predicted to enable worldview transformation [40] (p. 31).

Social learning has been offered as a means for enabling worldview reflection and transformation [41], alongside associated concepts such as transformational learning and critical thinking [41–43]. Specific recommendations or reflections for ways to elicit critical thinking in regards to taken-for-granted assumptions, especially in the business world, have been discussed by several authors. Kearins and Springett take both a theory and practical approach to teaching students [42]. Based on their critique of power relations and ideology, and social engagement (praxis), the authors take a stakeholder approach to teaching students about sustainability, reflecting on the differing views of stakeholders, and undertake several activities (reflecting on individuals’ environmental awareness and class goals, creating a timeline of events and their effects on people and the environment, site visits and personal class journey reflections). In addition, behind in-class discussion and assessments is the idea to “empower students to become active participants in setting their own learning goals” [42] (p. 198). Similarly, Redding and Cato focused on globalisation and other major business issues confronting business, such as the role of transnational corporations, new technologies, and environmental concerns, within the context of international trade, free trade, protectionism, and social justice [44]. They focused on interweaving a questioning and critical mind attitude throughout their courses, where students were encouraged repeatedly to “question everything”, “do not take our word for it”, and “show me the evidence”, especially through online discussion boards. Stubbs and Cocklin advocate teaching business students about differing worldviews (neo-classical, eco-centric, ecological modernisation), suggesting that this approach, through reflexivity and critique, will “broaden the students’ perspectives on sustainability, while also engaging them at the personal level” [43] (p. 216). Others have been interested in the effect of a sustainability/environmental course on student’s worldviews; however, so far research has only focused on and shown short-term change [45–47].

Scholars have suggested that success in teaching and researching sustainability requires a change in universities’ structure and curriculum [48,49]. Curriculum in universities has been seen as occupying an anthropocentric and modernist–humanist position which has been claimed to inhibit the pursuit of strong sustainability [49]. Consequently, while a ‘top-down’ (managerial) approach to sustainability appears to have limited possibilities in being effective, it has been argued that a ‘bottom-up’ (individual) approach, through faculty and students, has potential to implement change in curriculum and

research [50]. Giacalone called for business academics and lecturers to “be the change we want to see in the world” and to “live and teach the standards of a different worldview” [50] (p. 419). However, little empirical investigation has been carried out about the current state of these worldviews in business schools, or more specifically in marketing departments, or even how business and marketing academics view their roles as educators and researchers for a sustainable society [8]. Nevertheless, scholars have reflected on the broad sustainability worldviews present in society.

#### 4. Sustainability Worldview

One of the major contemporary challenges facing business schools is how they respond to the complex and interrelated issues of global change, including climate and environmental change, land and water degradation, social issues, disparities in wealth, weakened democratic institutions, war and religious conflict [51,52]. Many authors and reports together with media commentary have identified that we are in, or currently on the very brink of, an existential crisis for humanity and biodiversity on this planet as a whole [53,54]. As such, the subject matter of sustainable development, or sustainability, ranges from solving ecological problems (e.g., climate change, ocean acidification, biodiversity loss) to social and economic issues (e.g., inequality, human rights, and poverty) [55–57]. However, the diverse and, at times, contested conceptualisations of sustainability has led to a wide range and often competing ideas about how to implement public and business policies, such as those related to natural resource conservation, production, and consumption, and the adoption of communication and technological innovations [27,31,56,58,59].

A wide range of frameworks and models have emerged that seek to capture the various conceptualisations of sustainability. In the 1980s and early 1990s, environmental typologies were created recognising differing perspectives and approaches to institutional change [60]. McManus criticised such works as focusing too much on the economic aspects, excluding the cultural bases for sustainability [60]. He identified nine different approaches to sustainability, which included free-market environmentalism, market interventionism, steady-state theory, smaller-scale advocacy, eco-feminism, eco-Marxism, ‘mirror nature’, and the constant natural capital stocks criterion [60]. Providing such a comprehensive typology, his conceptualizations are seen throughout later works. Such frameworks include the conceptualisations of weak and strong sustainability which explores the substitutability paradigm of natural resources [61,62], and ecocentric and anthropocentric epistemology focusing on the value placed upon nature based on either intrinsic or extrinsic value [63]. These worldviews, although seemingly dichotomous, are best understood as being the extremes of a continuum of approaches to sustainability.

Hopwood et al. and Davidson focus on the political aspects of sustainability, with the former creating a mapping approach based on three differing approaches to business, economic and political reform [59], while the latter proposes a typology of ideologies of political actors resulting in six approaches to addressing sustainability [56]. Hopwood et al. divides the three perspective into status quo, reform and transform; as the names suggest, the status quo focuses on minor, incremental changes in market structure, while reform focuses on decreasing the sustainability knowledge gap, favouring lifestyle change but not economic or social transformation which the transform perspective wishes to see. Similarly, Davidson offers that neoliberal and liberalism perspectives rely on current capitalist systems, with liberalism more open to market intervention, social democratic ideologies believe in smaller scale communities and ecological economics (economic growth within the earths limits) and radical perspectives take variants of eco-feminism and eco-Marxism addressing redistribution of resources and inequities in power. Some researchers have also proposed typologies for how businesses adopt sustainability [64]. While others address how sustainability should be taught in education [65–67]. However, more recent work by Hedlund-de Witt’s relates to the various dimensions of worldviews which previous works have failed to elaborate on and is the one of the few to conduct empirical research of sustainability worldviews [26,68–72].



Hedlund-de Witt demonstrates that worldviews have implications on individual behaviours, especially in the sustainability realm [26,68–72]. Her research addresses the fundamental principles of worldviews and demonstrates that our conceptions of the world, going beyond individual beliefs, values and attitudes, impact upon our behaviours and sustainability views. Specifically, Hedlund-de Witt [26,68] highlights four differing sustainable development worldviews: traditional, modern, postmodern, and integrative. The Integrative Worldview Framework, as previously discussed, is composed of five fundamental beliefs related to ontology, epistemology, axiology, anthropology, and societal vision [26]. The fundamental beliefs related to ontology, epistemology and axiology do not specifically relate to the environment and sustainability dimensions (i.e., belief in God, means of self-expression and individuality, and means to acquire knowledge), while anthropology and societal vision beliefs are related to sustainability and the environment [26]. Table 1 displays the variation in sustainability typologies based on the work of Hedlund-de Witt as well as its overlaps.

**Table 1.** Sustainability typologies.

Worldview	Societal Vision	Similar Typology	Associated Concepts
Integrative worldview	Humanity is one with nature (unity/synergy)	Ecocentric; transformative; radical	Non-substitutability (Strong sustainability), Deep ecology
	Humans as evolutionary co-creators with unrealised potential	Radical	Address inequity
	Post-industrial societies (i.e., social entrepreneurship)	Transformative	Localisation (small scale); Redistribution of wealth (Radical)
	Consciousness growth and a synthesis of interests/perspectives as solution to social/environmental problems	Transformative; radical	Eco-feminism
Postmodern worldview	Humanity in a cautious relationship with nature	Social democratic	Limits to growth, degrowth
	Humans as unique/distinctive individuals		
	Post-industrial societies (i.e., service economy and creative industries)	Social democratic	Steady state; ecological economics
	Mobilisation of the public as solution to social/environmental problems	Reform	
Modern worldview	Humanity in control of nature	Anthropocentric; neoliberalism; liberalism; free-market environmentalists	
	Humans as ‘homo economicus’, hedonistic, materialistic	Status quo; neoliberalism; liberalism; free-market environmentalists	Profit motive; economic growth.
	Industrial society		
	Science/technology as solution to social/enviro problems		
Traditional worldview	Humanity in a managerial stewardship role of nature	Anthropocentric; neoliberalism	Substitutability (weak sustainability)
	Social purposes determined by higher orders		
	Traditional societies (i.e., farming)		
	Religion and traditional values as solution to social / environmental problems		

Sources: [26,56,59–61,63,68].

Research in the U.S. and the Netherlands found more concern about climate change, more political support for addressing climate change, consumption of less meat and an increased willingness to save more energy among ‘Postmoderns’ and ‘Integratives’, compared with ‘Moderns’ and ‘Traditionals’ [69]. However, the various worldviews may differ between samples. For example, other research has

shown five worldviews through factor analysis: ‘Inner growth’ (inner growth as the primary focus in life), ‘Contemporary spirituality’ (spiritual connection), ‘Traditional god’ (religious belief and focus), ‘Focus on money’ (focus on axiology, in terms of money), and ‘Secular materialism’ (rejection of meaning, individualistic liberalism, and belief in science) [68]. The latter two worldviews make significantly less sustainable food choices compared to the former two worldviews but correlations were small [68]. Considering the different worldview classifications, more research is needed to examine the generalisability of these worldviews across samples as well as cultures. As such, research is ripe for further empirical investigation into worldviews, especially in regards to their support for policies, initiatives and overall environmental concern. Such research is especially needed in business disciplines which grapple with ideological, historical and epistemological issues when integrating sustainability, and the effect this can have on education and research.

## 5. The Industrial Worldview and Its Presence in Business and Marketing Studies

The dominant industrial worldview emphasises science, technology and consumption. It has a strong belief in economic growth, the market, human domination over nature, and faith in technology to solve environmental and other social problems [73,74]. This worldview is generally espoused by government organisations, corporations [28], and business studies [75–77]. The industrial worldview, with its emphasis on scientific and technological success, consumerism and materialism, has been identified as one of the root causes of our current unsustainability especially given its dominance over other ways of framing social and environmental concerns [19,27,28].

The call for sustainability to be incorporated into business studies and marketing [43,67,75,77–79] can be identified within two streams—micro-marketing or macro-marketing [79,80]. Micro-marketing or managerial marketing usually focuses on how to achieve sustainability within an organisation without questioning key issues regarding consumption and economic growth. In such managerial green and sustainable marketing discourses, the consumption of green products and their eco-efficiency is seen as contributing to sustainable development [2]. Therefore, from this perspective, it is up to the consumer to choose to consume green products [8], an assumption also linked to the notion of consumer sovereignty [81], levels of consumer knowledge and the pre-eminence of markets [82]. In a similar vein, corporate sustainability is enacted because there is a ‘business-case’ for sustainability, or in other words, sustainability issues allow cost reductions, new markets and competitive advantages to occur [83–85]. As such, sustainability is defined in terms of companies creating economic benefits, as well as perceived environmental and social benefits [86].

Conversely, in the macro view, macromarketing, critical marketing, and others in sociology, geography and tourism studies, discuss the often contradictory and controversial nature of the relationship between sustainability and marketing. This body of research sees the principles of sustainability as fundamentally incompatible with the current business worldview, and thus, business and marketing theory and education [15,75,76,87]. Consumers are seen as constrained by the institutions which govern their actions, whether formal (i.e., pricing structures) or informal (i.e., social norms) [2,88]. Thus, changing product offerings without changing the surrounding structures operates within the dominant paradigm. This transformative perspective advocates for businesses and marketers to change the institutional environment to encourage both sustainable production and consumption [8]. For example, on the micro-level, adopting sustainable practices and only working with suppliers who do the same, and at the macro-level, advocating for policy change (i.e., subsidies and taxation) [8]. Furthermore, business models are questioned and addressed, discussing the limits to growth and the profit motive, and encouraging new models based on the sharing economy and social entrepreneurship [89,90].

This philosophical and theoretical splitting of sustainability in the business and marketing context is similar to Mulligan’s identification of two cultures of business education [91]. The first culture, what he described as the science-based view, or more accurately an engineering view, is more technical in nature and evaluates effectiveness in business. The second culture, a so-called humanities-based

view, looks at why or what ought to be. The same cultural split can be seen in business and marketing studies in the context of sustainability, with one stream looking at how a business and marketing can be sustainable (in business itself, by maintaining relationships with customers and using sustainable materials), while the other stream looks at what business ought to be in a sustainable society and questions the very nature of businesses and marketer's role in society and sustainability. Just as moral judgment could not be supported by empirical means, neither can sustainability judgments, and thus, this is where issues of attitudes, values, and beliefs (worldviews) become key means of contention without any real means of settling who's right or who's wrong [91]. Thus, while sustainability usually becomes a practical issue to those in the science-based view, it becomes a moral, value, and inherently political issue (because of the relationship between worldviews and power structures) in the humanities-based view. The following discussion gives an overview of criticisms of the business worldview and its current (in)compatibility with sustainability related issues, such as the environment and ethics.

In the mid-1990s, Gladwin et al. discussed the business schools flawed assumptions of nature and humans [92]. They perceive management as based on a limited flawed theory which is potentially 'pathological' separating humans from nature [92]. Such a worldview places business as a central role in society, justifying issues such as ethics and sustainability in monetary terms [87]. Economic growth is seen as a major priority, which remains relatively unquestioned [93], but runs contradictory to sustainability as we live on a finite planet [94–96]. Gladwin et al. propose three differing worldviews in organisational management: ecocentrism (focus on nature), sustaincentrism (interconnection with humans and nature, and balance of environmental issues with social issues), and technocentrism (belief in human separation from nature and technological solutions to environmental problems) [92]. A number of scholars therefore argue that an alternative worldview is needed, one based on post-material values, social well-being, and focused on the betterment of people and planet, and the community [87]. Similar calls to arms for marketing has occurred [19]. Overall, Gladwin et al. argue that business theory must remove growth assumptions and move away from quantitative expansion to qualitative improvement [92]. The need to go beyond the economic metrics of success, wealth and happiness is frequently embraced and is illustrated in work on such concepts as voluntary simplicity and degrowth [94–96]. Thus, marketing must acknowledge its impact on the natural and social environment but also its potential contribution to demarketing and consumption reduction [15,82].

Similarly, Painter-Morland argues that management education has certain ontological and epistemological assumptions that undermine the ability to integrate responsible management education [97]. These ontological assumptions are about calculating well-being and wealth in monetary terms, and a continued focus on self-interest, while the epistemological assumptions are focused on utilitarian objectivism (self-interest as a moral imperative), fact over value (adopting positivist methodologies), and considering only what is measurable as valuable (justification in instrumental terms). As such, the current business worldview is regarded as one which "undermine[s] the most basic tenets of ethics and social responsibility" [87] (p. 267). Accordingly, some have argued that a redefinition about the meaning of wealth, and thus well-being, is needed to successfully integrate responsible management principles [19,93,98,99].

Furthermore, Springett has been a vocal advocate of the ideological struggle in the business school, especially with respect to integrating sustainability within business education [75,77]. Overall, Springett views management orthodoxy, based on growth and reductionism, and on market-driven and competition values, as the antithesis to the radical ideas sustainable development demands [75,77,85,92]. She sees management and business education promulgating the industrial worldview, and sustainability as a threat to this "orthodox paradigm of business and business theory" [75] (p. 148). Therefore, ideological critique, critical and reflexive thinking, and active learning in business education must take place in order to effectively address this somewhat hidden ideology [75]. Springett addresses this ideological struggle in the curriculum and suggests courses are needed that consider values, specifically addressing the values and worldviews that have led to



sustainability crises, and questions how we can overcome it [75,77]. As such, it has been suggested that students need to engage with different worldviews of sustainability, so that they can analyse their assumptions about business, society and the environment, which in turn will challenge their taken-for-granted assumptions [43]. Beyond the education of students, questions remain about how to change this worldview which is ingrained in business schools and thus, faculty, which ultimately effects sustainability education and research.

## 6. Philosophical Barriers in Practice and Opportunities for Change

While the conceptualisation of worldview provides a clear background for how individual and social beliefs, attitudes, and values are formed, in practice, institutional theory has provided insight in how stability as well as change occurs in organisations, especially in relation to changing perspectives (of actors). The problem of significant societal change, especially in relation to sustainability, is largely due to our worldview and cognitive rules that constitute the nature of our reality (i.e., frames which involve myths, concepts etc.), which are articulated and constrained by organisations and actors [29,100]. This is a type of ‘philosophic’ institution, such as the ideology of consumption and more broadly, the industrial worldview [101]. Consequently, these shared cognitive frames make it very difficult to deviate from them [102]. The concept of worldviews helps to relate or translate the concepts of shared cognitive frames and institutional logics in practical terms in any organisation (i.e., business school).

Formal and informal institutions provide stability to social and economic life, the former are rules and standards imposed by governing bodies (e.g., regulation, policy), while the latter shared are meanings and values (i.e., social norms) [103]. Informal institutions become ingrained in habitual behaviour and social practices, and are thus, hard to change [103,104]. Moreover, formal institutions are formed to address social, economic and environmental issues, and both its formation and maintenance is reliant on informal institutions [103,105]. However, a further distinction for institutions have been offered by others. For example, others see institutions constrained by the regulative, guiding action through coercion; the normative, guiding action through norms (i.e., role relationships, values, behavioural norms); and the cognitive, guiding action through the frames and categories used to know and interpret their world (belief system and worldview) [100,106].

In contrast to the diffusion metaphor present in much institutional theory, organisational actors may be seen beyond mere carriers or receivers of meanings and practices, instead they are ‘active interpreters’ who negotiate meaning [107]. In this case, competing worldviews can challenge and thus, destabilise arrangements, practices and institutions [108]. In other words, in the ensuing struggle with meaning, actors draw on differing “discourses and find new ways to frame and theorize change” [107] (p. 205). When new meanings are created and doubt about the current worldview is incited, then deinstitutionalisation can occur and shift existing norms and practices [109]. Here, institutional entrepreneurship is involved in a discursive struggle [107,110].

The meta-theory of institutional logics help define how institutions shape heterogeneity and stability but also change [111]. Institutional logics provide meaning to actors and activities and are “socially constructed, historical patterns of cultural symbols and material practices” [112] (p. 2). Once institutional logics are ascribed legitimacy, they become ingrained in practices [113]. There are multiple sources of rationality in society, with each societal sector, such as the market, family and democracy, representing a different set of expectations for appropriate social relations and behaviour [111]. These institutional logics operate at the individual, organisational and societal levels [114,115]. Consequently, it is important to study how these nested levels interact with each other [111]. Such tensions and struggle between differing logics (i.e., the market and sustainable logic) are supported by studies, such as those of Toubiana [116] and Green [117,118]. Table 2 displays the variations of the two logics. Both Toubiana [116] and Green [117,118] empirically reveal the role of a dominant thinking in business schools which prevents the ability to both see the importance of

social justice and green issues in business studies and the ability to address these issues when one is interested in its integration.

Toubiana interviewed various business faculty in Canada about the integration of social justice and the key institutional barrier found in her study was hegemonic institutions and their profit-based ideology [116]. Similarly, Green found that few economic academics considered the need to rethink economic theory to be able to integrate environment-economy and sustainability linkages, an issue that frames and connects with much of the marketing education received in business schools [117]. Moreover, while the business school, especially the American model, has tended to espouse a culture based on neo-liberal capitalist principles, more recently, the very processes of the business school and the university have seen a further shift from an academic logic towards a market logic [119]. Academic logic emphasises the search for knowledge, research freedom, and intangible rewards in the form of knowledge discovery and peer recognition. In comparison, the market logic commodifies academic research and aims for measurable results which have market value (i.e., high number of publications and citations, rankings of journals and institutions, and external research funding) [119–121].

**Table 2.** The market and sustainable logic.

Characteristics	Market Logic	Sustainable Logic
Economic system	Market/neoliberal capitalism	Sustainable capitalism/non-capitalist approaches
System logic	Reductionism	Holism
Sources of identity	Marketer as profit maximiser	Marketer as positive contributor to society and environment
Sources of legitimacy	Profit maximisation/economic return to shareholders	Contribution to society and environment/value to stakeholders
Basis of mission	Profit maximisation/economic return to shareholders	Contribution to society and environment/return to stakeholders
Basis of attention	Create value for consumers	Create value for consumers, society, and the environment
Basis of strategy	Competition	Cooperation
Temporal perspective	short-term (immediate sales and quarterly performance)	Long-term effects (including inter-generational effects)
Role of education	Work ready professionals	Create global citizens, critical thinkers, and emancipated students

Change can occur in institutions through shifts in institutional logics, specifically through institutional entrepreneurs, structural overlap of institutional logics, event sequencing (unique events), and competing institutional logics [111,122]. Embedded agency supposes, taking a perspective much like Giddens [123], that while individuals are constrained by institutions, institutions are socially constructed [106]. Institutional contradictions within and among institutions lead some actors to initiate change to address these contradictions and thus create institutional change [124]. Most recent research in institutional (logic) change, examines how competing logics influence organisational fields [125] as well as the actions of institutional entrepreneurs [113,126]. Research also explores how organisations deal with competing logics, such as through a paradoxical [127,128] or hybrid approach [129], which is common amongst social enterprises and the healthcare industry for example [130]. While research has examined the impact of the new managerialism logic in higher education [131], further studies are needed to explore how academics deal with competing logics in relations to sustainability.

In this case, research in the corporate setting may shed light on how individual actors deal with the competing logics of the market and sustainability in their workplace. Such works often reflect on the identity work [127,132] and adoption of strategies to align contradictions [133,134] that actors engage in. The drivers to enact change for sustainability has also been found to differ between sustainability managers. For example, Visser and Crane found four different motives for holding such managerial positions, “Experts” enjoyed giving advice, “Catalysts” like change through

influencing policy and leadership, “Facilitators” enjoyed increasing knowledge and empowerment amongst employees, while “Activists” believed in the greater social good and leaving a legacy [135]. However, these studies [132,134,135] focus on those already adopting a sustainability position within an organization and more research is needed on how those interested in sustainability, and who do not hold such positions (of power), could implement sustainability in their organization’s practices. Wood et al. provides such an insight for sustainability educators, and also identify three types of motivations and experiences; the “Saviour” uses instructive and transmissive pedagogies and has positivist views of sustainability, while the “Nurturer” aims to increase knowledge and discuss differing worldviews, and the “Struggler” goes ‘against the tide’ of their discipline and colleagues [136]. However, more research is needed on how to enact change in higher education, as faculty are attributed to over half of the implementation of sustainability initiatives [137].

## 7. Conclusions

Business schools and the mainstream marketing discipline adhere to an economic or industrial worldview believing in unlimited economic growth, free markets, the value of increasing consumption of products and services, and technological solutions to environmental problems [31,43,75,76,97]. With their current educational experience, business school graduates, including many of those that go on to teaching and research positions, act as the foot soldiers of the industrial worldview and contemporary neoliberal capitalism. The position and role of business education in influencing marketing practice and thinking is substantial and many commentators believe that a change in thinking in business education and research, away from a neo-classical economic worldview, must occur if we want to transition to a more sustainable society and planet [15,42,75,77,87,97,138].

Given business schools’ current positioning, many questions still exist about how sustainability can be taught and integrated into theory and practice in the marketing discipline [79]. Questions also remain about what is taught about sustainability, as responding to environmental change is often framed in terms of ‘working better’ and improving per unit output efficiency by maintaining levels of consumption and accelerating innovation in order to reduce the materials and energy inputs employed in designing, making, distributing and selling products and services [83]. Which is the approach that, in great part, has got humankind into its present environmental predicament in the first place.

Institutional barriers, specifically within universities, business schools, and the marketing discipline, also affect the ability to effect ‘bottom-up’ change [139]. If institutions, including disciplines and business schools, remains wedded to assumptions based on the compatibility between the environment and economic growth and acceptance of market forces then the development of alternative perspectives on sustainability remains highly problematic. As Bernstein observes, “the institutions that have developed in response to global environmental problems support particular kinds of values and goals, with important implications for the constraints and opportunities to combat the world’s most serious environmental problems” [140] (p. 2). In business schools and marketing departments, the strength of the dominant paradigm is such that, “the scope of *relevant* social science is typically restricted to that which is theoretically consistent” with the dominant worldview [141] (p. 1280) (our emphasis). This means that policymakers, research agencies, universities and the private sector, fund and legitimise lines of enquiry that generate results that they can accept and manage, even if they do not necessarily provide the “solution” to the sustainability problem [82,142], with the same approach also often extending into educational and research practices [9,12]. The result is a self-fulfilling cycle of credibility [143] in which evidence of relevance and value to policymakers and research funders helps in securing additional resources for approaches that fulfil the dominant paradigm and not others.

If sustainability is to be achieved, then worldview change is something that will be required at all scales from the individual through to the global. However, in order to achieve change the norms that are central to institutions need to undergo a substantial shift. Arguably, far too much attention has been given to the assumption that a well-designed institution is “good” because it facilitates cooperation

and development rather than actually focus on its norms and institutionalisation as first and necessary steps in the assessment of what kind of worldviews institutions—including disciplines and business schools—are promoting and their potential outcomes. Such an approach has only served to reinforce first- and second-order change rather than paradigm shifts [144]. The consequence of this situation is that liberal environmentalism and the dominant paradigm in which it is embedded “has resulted in enabling certain kinds of responses to global environmental problems consistent with it, such as possibilities for the privatization of environmental governance in some areas or the increasing use of market mechanisms. But at the same time it has made trade-offs much more difficult because it denies that they may be necessary among values of efficiency, economic growth, corporate freedom, and environmental protection” [140] (p. 14). Nevertheless, it is the growing awareness of the contradictions in, and policy and management failure of, the dominant paradigm that may also offer an opportunity for third-order change.

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