

MARKETING EDUCATION STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS TOWARD MARKETING EDUCATION COURSES

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ABSTRACT

For more than a decade, reform in vocational education has been a major topic in national reports calling for educational change. A majority of these documents identify the teacher as the major change agent. The instrument used in this study is designed to assess attitudes of vocational education students regarding the vocational course in which they are enrolled. Responses from 354 secondary marketing education students are analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The five core propositions of exemplary teaching developed by The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards provide a philosophical framework for further examination of study findings. Findings suggest that students are generally positive about their marketing course and form perceptions toward marketing courses based on three factors—Personal Relevance, Educational Value, and Life Skills.

Marketing related occupations are expected to experience a continual growth pattern beyond the first decade of this new century. The Bureau of Labor Statistics (1998) predicts there will be approximately two and a half million new jobs and four million replacement jobs in marketing occupations by 2006. Careers in marketing stretch across a wide array of industries and businesses and are found in both private and public sectors. Marketing positions are available to persons holding advanced degrees as well as those with high school diplomas.

There are more than 7,000 marketing education programs operating in high schools throughout the United States (Marketing Education Resource Center, 2000). These programs are designed to meet the needs of students with at least three different interest levels: (a) students desiring marketing career exploration, (b) students wishing to begin their marketing careers following high school, and (c) students wanting to obtain some form of post-secondary education in a marketing area.

A fundamental role of marketing educators should be to provide their students with courses that meet their current and future personal and career needs. Therefore, marketing education teachers at the high school level should be concerned with providing students with educational preparation about marketing skills, jobs, and careers as well as developing employment characteristics vital to persons involved in marketing occupations.

A search of the professional literature revealed numerous documents prepared during the last decade of the 20th century that demanded educational reform, especially in the area of high school vocational programs (Lynch, 1996). A majority of these reports acknowledge that it will

be teachers and their classroom practices that ultimately will transform education (Lynch). In this new century, marketing teachers will be critical in initiating and implementing changes to improve marketing education and marketing education programs.

Hatzios and Heath-Camp (1991) reported that marketing education programs exhibit 10 tangible attributes and 9 symbolic attributes. The 10 tangible attributes identified included: (a) students trained in marketing jobs, (b) graduates employed in good paying positions, (c) marketing teachers involved with job placement, (d) student practical experience gained through on-the-job training, (e) students prepared for college, (f) programs enhanced by a variety of learning experiences, (g) credit earned by students for working, (h) students taught to communicate effectively, (i) students taught responsibility, and (j) students prepared to make good career choices. Hatzios and Heath-Camp described symbolic attributes using the following adjectives: (a) modern, (b) friendly, (c) confident, (d) exciting, (e) professional, (f) sophisticated, (g) wants-to-be-rich, (h) business-like, and (i) sociable/outgoing.

In studies of attitudes related to the attributes described above (Hatzios, 1996; Heath-Camp, & Camp, 1992), both tangible and symbolic attributes were found to be significant contributors to the attitudes held by marketing and non-marketing students. However, the tangible attributes exhibited by marketing education programs accounted for more of the variance in both groups of students than did symbolic attributes. Hence, marketing and non-marketing students tended to be more influenced by attributes dealing with work preparation, employment, and careers.

A number of studies show that career and technical students believe their programs of study have value. Ruff (1993) studied perceptions of fashion marketing students toward their courses. Students found their fashion marketing courses to be valuable. In another study, Womble, Ruff, and Jones (1995) found that business education students believed that their business courses prepared them for employment in business related jobs. Students enrolled in trade and industrial education courses indicated that their courses were worthwhile and interesting (Jones, Womble, Searcy, 1997).

The attitudes held by marketing education students about their marketing courses are of particular importance as we move into this new century. If, as Lynch (1996) has indicated, the catalyst for vocational education reform will be in the hands of classroom teachers, a study of student attitudes compared with exemplary teaching practices can help determine effective or ineffective program components and inform decision making about program changes. Making appropriate changes will enhance student learning and program success. Marketing teachers must be in tune with the needs of their students and the marketing workforce.

PHILOSOPHICAL FRAMEWORK

According to the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS, 1997), there are five core propositions that serve as a foundation for recognizing exemplary teachers: “(1) Teachers are committed to students and their learning, (2) Teachers know the subjects they teach and how to teach those subjects to students, (3) Teachers are responsible for managing and monitoring student learning, (4) Teachers think systematically about their practice and learn from experience, and (5) Teachers are members of learning communities” (pp. 1-3). Standards presented by the NBPTS provide a foundation for the development and growth of vocational education teachers. Vocational educators who successfully apply these propositions strengthen their teaching and improve student learning (NBPTS).

The first proposition calls for vocational teachers to make knowledge available to all students. Exemplary teachers willingly change their teaching strategies through observation and knowledge of their students' needs (NBPTS, 1997). The second proposition directs vocational teachers to develop a powerful understanding of the subject(s) they teach. This proposition requires an in-depth understanding of their subject, its development, organization, linkage to other subjects, and real-world applications (NBPTS). The third proposition instructs vocational teachers to take control of their courses and programs. Exceptional teachers are able to engage their students in learning through a variety of educational enrichment strategies. They are able to effectively and appropriately teach, motivate, discipline, and assess student performance (NBPTS). The fourth proposition charges vocational teachers to act as role models for their students. They reinforce their teaching through examination and use new findings, ideas, and theories to enhance their instructional practices (NBPTS). The last proposition encourages vocational teachers to become involved in their school and local communities. Exemplary teachers can evaluate and select appropriate school and community resources so that students benefit from collaborative experiences (NBPTS).

Credibility and respect in marketing education can only be developed through the application and maintenance of high standards—for marketing teachers, their courses, programs, and students. Education is a process that is constantly evolving. Thus, it must be continually examined for potential improvements. The NBPTS provides marketing teachers with propositions that can help guide them through the educational growth and change needed for this new century.

PURPOSES AND OBJECTIVES

The study described in this article obtained and examined perceptions of students enrolled in marketing education courses. Examining marketing students' perceptions about their marketing courses and exploring these perceptions using the five propositions set forth by the NBPTS can prove instrumental in helping marketing educators and career-technical administrators with teaching, program, and curricular reform.

The primary purpose of this research was to investigate student perceptions about the marketing education courses in which they were enrolled. Selected variables were examined to determine possible influences on student perceptions. The specific objectives of this study were to (a) describe characteristics of students enrolled in secondary marketing education courses, (b) describe students' perceptions toward marketing courses, (c) identify underlying dimensions that comprise secondary marketing students' perceptions, and (d) examine the influence of select variables (e. g., gender, grade level, career objective, post graduation plans, and reasons for enrolling) on students' perceptions about marketing courses.

METHOD

PARTICIPANTS

The target population for this study included all secondary students enrolled in marketing education courses taught in eight intentionally-selected high school programs located in a southeastern state in the United States. A purposeful sampling of intact classes was used in order to minimize disruption of students and ensure that a variety of marketing education programs was represented in the sample. The final research sample consisted of 406 students enrolled in Marketing Education courses. Of the 406 surveys distributed, 354 returns generated a response rate of 87%. All returned surveys were deemed usable and included in the analysis. The research sample included 160 (45.2%) male participants and 194 (54.8%) female participants. It represented 251 (70.9%) Caucasians, 79 (22.3%) African-Americans, 8 (2.3%) Asians, 7 (2.0%)

Hispanics, and 1 (.3%) Native American. Eight (2.3%) students identified their ethnic origin as other. Survey participants consisted of 265 (74.9%) 12th-grade students, 71 (20.1%) 11th-grade students, 14 (4.0%) 10th-grade students, and 4 (1.1%) 9th-grade students. Table 1 summarizes this information as well as other demographic and work-related data from section 1 of the survey.

Table 1

Demographics and Related Characteristics of Students Enrolled in Secondary Program (N = 354)

Personal Characteristics	Percent
Gender:	
Female	54.8
Male	45.2
Race:	
Caucasian	70.9
African American	22.3
Hispanic	2.0
Asian	2.3
Native American	0.3
Other	2.3
Grade level:	
9 th	1.1
10 th	4.0
11 th	20.1
12 th	74.9
Grades usually earned in school:	
Mostly As	25.4
Mostly Bs	57.9
Mostly Cs	16.1
Mostly Ds	0.6
Mostly Fs	0.0
Enrollment Characteristics	
Have you taken any other vocational education courses?	
Yes	45.2
No	44.6
Not sure	10.2
Most important reason for enrolling in the current program:	
Thought it would help me get a good job after high school	12.1
Thought it would help me in college	9.0
Liked the teacher	5.4
Thought it would be easy to pass or get a good grade	4.2
Needed the credit and nothing else was available or appealing	3.1
Friend recommended it to me	10.5
Guidance counselor recommended it to me	4.2
Wanted to get out of school early by enrolling in a cooperative on-the-job training experience	33.9
Interested in the subject	11.6
Other	5.9
Employment Characteristics	
Employed:	
Yes	87.6
No	12.4

Involvement in a cooperative on-the-job training experience:	
Yes	65.5
No	28.4
Not sure	6.1
Number of hours worked per week reported by students:	
10 or less	3.5
11-20	35.8
21-30	42.9
31-40	13.5
Over 40	4.2
Job sources reported by students enrolled in program:	
Teacher	8.4
School counselor	0.3
Friends or family	54.0
Newspaper	1.3
Other	35.7

Educational/Career Characteristics

Immediate plans upon graduation from high school:	
Work full-time	9.6
Attend a 2-year college or vocational school	17.5
Attend a 4-year college or university	52.8
Work full-time and attend school part-time	5.6
Military	2.5
Undecided	8.5
Other	3.4
Where the most information about careers was obtained:	
Parents	26.0
Teachers in the class	18.4
Other teachers	6.5
Other adults	6.8
Friends	5.1
Guidance counselors	5.4
School career center	6.2
Books	1.4
Magazines, newspapers, or television	15.3
Other	9.0
Educational level of students' mothers:	
Did not finish high school	8.5
High school graduate	39.0
2-year college graduate or some college	16.1
4-year college graduate	21.5
Completed some college	10.5
Not sure	4.5
Educational level of students' fathers:	
Did not finish high school	6.8
High school graduate	31.1
2-year college graduate or some college	10.5
4-year college graduate	27.4
Completed some college	11.3
Not sure	13.0

**Note: Tables may not equal 100% due to missing data or rounding error*

INSTRUMENTATION

The student perceptions instrument used in this study was originally developed by Ruff (1993) and revised by Womble, et al (1995) and Jones et al. (1997) to assess the perceptions of students enrolled in vocational courses. The instrument refinement process consisted of a continual review of the extant literature and suggested revisions provided from vocational students who responded to statements that might be misinterpreted or unanswered. Content validity was established through a review process using a panel of five vocational educators (Long, Convey, & Chwalek, 1985). Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficients of .84 (Womble et al.) and .80 (Jones et al.) were computed for the Likert-type scale used in the instrument.

The first part of the survey helped to develop a profile of student respondents and requested demographic, employment, and career plans information (see Table 1). The second part of the survey consisted of 20 statements requiring forced responses on a Likert-type scale: 4 = strongly agree, 3 = agree, 2 = disagree, and 1 = strongly disagree (see Table 2). The second part of the instrument provided most of the data for this study.

PROCEDURE

A list of all secondary Marketing Education programs in the state was obtained from the state's department of education. Four strategic regions in the state were identified and two Marketing Education programs from each of the regions were selected for a total of eight participating programs. Marketing teachers distributed the surveys to their classes and asked for students' voluntary participation in the study. Teachers instructed students to complete only one survey even if they were enrolled in more than one Marketing Education course, to provide complete and honest responses, to take their time when responding, and to use as much time as needed. Students placed completed surveys into an envelope which they sealed thereby maintaining their anonymity and relieving their fears regarding teachers' knowledge of responses.

Data were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Latent dimensions underlying the 20 statements that measured student perceptions were identified using factor analysis. The scree plot (see figure 1) and the number of Eigen values greater than one were used to determine the number of factors underlying item responses. The factor structure was required to approximate simple structure; items were required to load at least .30 on one factor, while demonstrating low loadings on any additional factors. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was employed to determine if significant differences existed between or among select demographic and background variables on identified dimensions of student perceptions. A .05 level of significance was established for all analytic procedures. SPSS was utilized in the calculation of all statistical analyses.

FINDINGS

The sample consisted of students enrolled in eight selected Marketing Education programs in a single southeastern state. Therefore, caution should be applied when generalizing results of this study to larger populations. Report of results includes characteristics of marketing students, student perceptions of marketing education courses, factors identified in student perceptions, and influence and comparison of select variables.

CHARACTERISTICS OF MARKETING STUDENTS

Study results include characteristics of marketing education students. Information related to students' enrollment, employment, and educational and career characteristics were evaluated. Major student characteristics are discussed in the following paragraphs and further detailed in Table 1.

Enrollment characteristics. Approximately half (45.2%) of the students reported having taken other vocational education courses. When directed to identify the most important reason for enrolling in the marketing course, 33.9% of students indicated that they wanted to get out of school early and that enrolling in cooperative on-the-job training experiences provided them with this opportunity. The second most selected response was students believed that taking a marketing course would help them get a good job after high school (12.1%). The third most selected response was interest in the subject (11.6%). While marketing teachers would probably prefer that the percents corresponding to these two options were higher, it seems that getting out of school early was more of an incentive for taking a marketing course when instructed to select the most important reason for enrolling. The response that was selected by the least number of students was a need for high school credit and nothing else was available or appealing (3.1%).

Employment characteristics. Interestingly, 87.6% of the students reported being employed; however, only 65.5% of the students reported their positions as cooperative ventures. There could be two possible explanations for this finding. First, 6.1% of students indicated they were not sure if they were involved in cooperative education. The terminology used on the instrument may have been unfamiliar to the students. Secondly, students may be working but not have room in their academic schedule to include this experience. Therefore, students may be taking the marketing course but not taking its cooperative component. These students may be working but not receiving high school credit for their job nor getting out of school early. A majority (56.4%) of students reported working between 21 and 40 hours per week. Over half of the students (54%) identified friends or family as their primary job sources. Surprisingly, a relatively low percentage of students (8.3%) indicated their marketing teachers as their primary job source.

Education/career characteristics. A large percentage of students (75.9%) reported having plans to obtain some form of post-secondary education. Over half of the students (52.8%) have plans to attend a 4-year college or university. These findings may seem large; however, the educational level of students' parents may help to explain the post-secondary aspirations of these students. Students reported that 48.1% of their mothers had some form of college education with 21.5% holding a 4-year degree. Likewise, students reported that 49.2% of their fathers had some form of college education and that 27.4% of their fathers graduated from a 4-year institution. Mortimer, Dennehy, and Lee (1993) found parents' educational levels to have a significant impact on the educational aspirations of their children.

Most of the students obtained their information about careers from their parents (26%) and their marketing education teachers (18.4%). Interestingly, however, 15.3% of students obtained most of their information about careers from magazines, newspapers, and television.

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS TOWARD MARKETING COURSES

The second objective and primary purpose of this study was to describe perceptions of students toward the marketing education course in which they were enrolled. The sample was comprised of secondary students enrolled in similar programs—all marketing education courses—but in different regional locations throughout the state. The mean scores and standard deviations associated with the 20 statements from this section of the survey are compiled in Table 2.

In summarizing these results it is important to note that items 5, 11, 13, 15, and 17 have been recoded to reflect positive responses. For example, # 5 originally read: *The information presented in this course is out of touch with the "real world."* The statement that corresponds to the recoding now reads positively: *The information presented in this course is in touch with the "real world."*

Table 2

Perception of Students

Rank Order	Item Number	Item Statement	Mean	SD
5	1	This course prepares me for employment.	3.12	.61
7	2	This course prepares me for education after high school.	2.97	.61
12	3	This course informs me about where to get more education after high school.	2.82	.67
9	4	I like the types of projects and assignments we do in this course.	2.90	.72
11	5	The information presented in this course is out of touch with the "real world."	2.87	.76
9	6	This course teaches me to solve problems and make effective decisions.	2.90	.64
8	7	This course teaches me how to communicate effectively (including both speaking and writing).	2.93	.67
16	8	This course teaches me math skills needed by workers in the business world.	2.55	.73
9	9	This course improves my ability to get along with other people, especially in the workplace.	2.90	.73
6	10	This course prepares me to make good career choices.	3.07	.63
3	11	This course was a waste of time for me.	3.25	.74
2	12	I am glad I enrolled in this course.	3.34	.64
7	13	Other elective courses (such as art, chorus, business, etc.) are more beneficial to me than this course.	2.97	.68
14	14	This course in my school is just as beneficial to me as the academic courses (such as English, math, history, etc.) that are required of all students.	2.74	.81
1	15	My teacher does not have sufficient knowledge of this course to teach it.	3.38	.77
17	16	The projects and assignments required in this course are challenging for me.	2.45	.70
10	17	This class is boring.	2.89	.85
4	18	I would recommend this type of class to my friends.	3.17	.64
13	19	My interest in a career in this subject area has increased since I have been in this course.	2.77	.77
15	20	This course prepares me to effectively relate to people of various cultural and ethnic backgrounds in the workplace.	2.69	.76

Note. Statements 5, 11, 13, 15, & 17 were recoded to reflect positive responses. Scoring Scale: 4 = Strongly Agree, 3 = Agree, 2 = Disagree, 1 = Strongly Disagree

Therefore, the recoding of these statements reversed the value of student responses as follows: a response of 1 = 4; a response of 2 = 3; a response of 3 = 2; and a response of 4 = 1.

Mean scores for the 20 individual scale items ranged from a high of 3.38 (*My teacher has sufficient knowledge of this course to teach it*) to a low of 2.45 (*The projects and assignments required in this course are challenging for me*). On the 4-point Likert-type scale, mean scores ranging from 3.38 to 3.07 were generated for 6 of the statements; another 6 statements generated mean scores ranging from 2.97 to 2.90; 4 statements generated mean scores ranging from 2.89 to 2.77; and 4 statements generated mean scores at or below 2.74. Hence, students appear more likely to agree with the statements about their marketing courses than to disagree.

FACTORS IDENTIFIED IN STUDENT PERCEPTIONS

The third research objective of this study was to identify underlying dimensions that comprise secondary students' perceptions about marketing courses. A pre-existing data structure was not assumed. Exploratory principle axes factor analysis with varimax rotation was used to identify latent factors underlying students' perceptions about their marketing education courses.

Factor analysis is used for the purpose of parsimony and to provide a simpler explanation and more meaningful organization underlying a set of measures than keeping the measures intact can provide (Tinsley & Tinsley, 1987). Based on the scree plot (Figure 1) and the number of Eigen values greater than one, a 3-factor solution was selected and accounted for 43.89% of the total variance. All scale items with a factor loading of .30 or higher were considered in determining the underlying dimension of each factor (see Table 3).

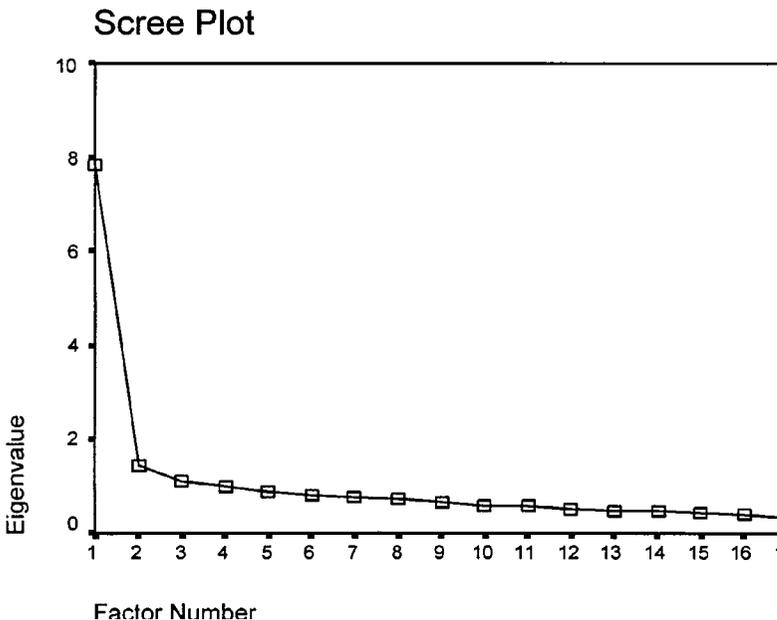


Figure 1. Scree plot illustrating the 3-factor solution resulting from factor analysis.

Factor one, *Personal Relevance*, explained 16.76% of the total variance and included 8 items. Five items loading on factor one related to how students personally value taking the marketing course and consisted of statement numbers 11, 12, 13, 17, and 18 (e.g., *I am glad I enrolled in this course*). The remaining statements, (4, 5, and 15) dealt with how students personally valued the information and assignments provided in the course (e.g., *I like the type of projects and assignments we do in this course*).

Table 3

Factor Loadings by Varimax Rotation for Perceptions of Students Enrolled in a Secondary Marketing Education Program

Perception Scale Statements	Factor 1 Personal Relevance	Factor 2 Educational Value	Factor 3 Life Skills	h ²
11	.706(.50)	-	-	.59
12	.674(.45)	-	-	.57
15	.602(.36)	-	-	.41
17	.575(.33)	-	-	.54
18	.534(.29)	-	-	.52
4	.520(.27)	-	-	.47
13	.474(.23)	-	-	.30
5	.306(.09)	-	-	.12
3	-	.636(.41)	-	.45
2	-	.662(.44)	-	.58
19	-	.554(.31)	-	.40
14	-	.542(.29)	-	.44
1	-	.426(.18)	-	.46
20	-	.412(.17)	-	.34
16	-	.374(.14)	-	.18
8	-	.350(.12)	-	.20
7	-	-	.640(.41)	.58
6	-	-	.619(.38)	.58
9	-	-	.589(.35)	.51
10	-	-	.549(.30)	.54
Eigen value	3.35	3.10	2.33	8.78
% total	16.76	15.50	11.63	43.89
% of trace	.382	.353	.265	100%

(common variance)

Factor two, *Educational Value*, consisted of 8 items and explained 15.50% of the total variance. Five of these statements (1, 2, 3, 8, and 20) related to the educational value of the course after graduating from high school and dealt with post-secondary education as well as employment (e.g., *This course prepares me for education after high school*, and *This course teaches me math skills needed by workers in the business world*). Statements 14 and 16 referred to the educational rigor of the marketing course (e.g., *The projects and assignments required in this course are challenging for me*). Finally, item 19 expressed increased interest in a career related to the course subject matter since enrolling.

The remaining four statements, 6, 7, 9, and 10 loaded on factor three, *Life Skills* Factor three accounted for 11.63% of the total variance. These statements identified skills needed by all employees regardless of their specialty area (e.g., *This course improves my ability to get along with other people, especially in the workplace*).

INFLUENCE AND COMPARISON OF SELECT VARIABLES

The final research objective of this study was to examine the influence of select variables (e.g., gender, grade level, career objective, post-graduation plans, and reasons for enrolling) on students' perceptions about marketing courses. Items loading on the three factors identified through the results of the factor analysis were summed to form three composite variables: (a) *Personal Relevance*, (b) *Educational Value* and (c) *Life Skills*(see Table 3). These composite variables were used as dependent variables in ANOVAs that examined the influences and compared differences of select variables. A complete report of ANOVA results is presented in Table 4. Table 5 includes the means for variables where significance was found.

Table 4

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) for Student Perceptions

Independent Variable	F-Value df	Factor 1 Personal Relevance	Factor 2 Educational Value	Factor 3 Life Skills
Gender	1	1.30	.08	2.62
Grade level	3	3.58*	2.73*	3.73*
Other Marketing Courses	2	2.44	1.48	1.28
Post graduation plans	6	.90	1.20	1.42
Grades usually earned in school	3	3.45*	4.89**	1.49
Currently employed	1	.09	.52	.09
Hours worked per week	4	2.68*	1.54	.85
Involvement in cooperative training	2	1.28	.47	.19
Current job source	4	.63	.58	.83
Career information source	9	2.50*	2.45*	2.58*
Reason for enrolling in course	9	3.51**	2.76*	1.66
Educational level of mother	5	1.98	.51	.94
Educational level of father	5	2.12	1.07	1.78

*- $p < 0.05$, **- $p < 0.01$

An examination of the influence of grade level on student perceptions revealed significant differences on all three factors: (a) *Personal Relevance* $F(3, 349) = 3.58, p < .05$; (b) *Educational Value* $F(3, 348) = 2.73, p < .05$; and (c) *Life Skills* $F(3, 349) = 3.73, p < .05$. Mean scores produced by 11th graders were slightly higher than mean scores of students in other grade levels

on all three factors. However, 10th and 12th graders had mean scores that were close to the mean scores generated by 11th graders on all three factors. Ninth graders had the lowest mean scores on *Personal Relevance* of the marketing course, its *Educational Value*, and *Life Skills*

Students' grades earned in school generated significant differences on factor 1, *Personal Relevance* $F(3,349) = 3.45, p < .05$ and factor 2, *Educational Value* $F(3,348) = 4.89, p < .01$. Students reporting they earned mostly As, Bs, and Cs were almost as equally positive on both factors. However, students making mostly C's had higher mean scores on both factors than students making mostly B's and higher mean scores than those making A's on the *Educational Value* of the course. Not surprisingly, students reporting they earned mostly D's had the lowest mean score when examining *Personal Relevance* and *Educational Value* of their marketing course.

Table 5

Mean Scores on the Three Factors for Independent Variables Where Significance Was Found

Independent Variable	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
	Personal Relevance	Educational Value	Life Skills
	<u>M</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>M</u>
Grade Level:			
9 th	19.25	17.75	8.75
10 th	24.43	22.21	12.21
11 th	25.54	22.76	12.19
12 th	24.68	21.98	11.71
Grades Usually Earned in School:			
Mostly As	25.32	22.43	-
Mostly Bs	24.55	21.92	-
Mostly Cs	25.02	22.54	-
Mostly Ds	17.00	13.00	-
Mostly F's	-	-	-
Reason for Enrolling in Program:			
Thought it would help me get a good job	25.44	23.21	-
Thought it would help me in college	24.72	22.90	-
Liked the teacher	26.32	22.95	-
Thought it would be easy to pass	23.00	21.87	-
Needed the credit	23.18	20.27	-
Friend recommended it to me	25.32	22.25	-
Guidance counselor recommended it	23.73	22.27	-
Wanted to get out of school early	23.75	21.01	-
Interested in the subject	26.37	23.02	-
Other	26.71	23.04	-
Hours Worked:			
10 or less	27.36	-	-
11 to 20	25.38	-	-
21 to 30	24.48	-	-
31 to 40	24.00	-	-

Career Information Source:

Parents	24.41	21.93	11.65
Teacher in this class	26.42	23.55	12.58
Other teachers	23.87	21.70	11.30
Other adults	25.38	21.08	11.75
Friends	23.17	22.28	12.22
Guidance counselor	25.05	22.16	11.00
School career center	24.82	22.68	12.23
Books	26.80	25.00	13.80
Magazines, newspapers, television	24.59	21.43	11.44
Other	23.39	20.84	11.19

Another significant difference was found between the variable, hours worked per week on factor 1, *Personal Relevance*, $F(4,305) = 2.68, p < .05$. Students reporting they worked over 40 hours per week generated the lowest mean scores towards the personal relevance of the marketing course. Students working 10 hours or less a week had the highest mean scores.

Students' career information source was found to be significant on all three factors: (a) *Personal Relevance*, $F(9,343) = 2.50, p < .05$; (b) *Educational Value*, $F(9,342) = 2.45, p < .05$; and (c) *Life Skills*, $F(9,343) = 2.58, p < .05$. Students reporting they used books as a source, generated the highest mean score on all factors, indicating that these students perceived their marketing course to have *Personal Relevance* and *Educational Value* as well as develop *Life Skills*. Students who use their marketing teachers as their career information source generated the second highest mean scores on all three factors. Students using their friends as their career information source produced the lowest means with regard to the marketing course's *Personal Relevance*. Students using other resources not identified had the lowest means when referring to the course's *Educational Value*. The least positive resource when comparing career information sources with *Life Skills* was students' guidance counselors.

Significant differences were further discovered between students' reasons for enrolling in marketing courses and factor 1, $F(9,343) = 3.51, p < .01$, and factor 2., $F(9,342) = 2.76, p < .05$. With regards to *Personal Relevance*, those students who took the course because they thought it would be easy to pass were the least positive. Those students who took the marketing course for reasons not identified were the most positive toward *Personal Relevance*. Students interested in the subject matter and those who liked the teacher were almost as equally positive toward *Personal Relevance*. Students who took the marketing course because they needed the credit were the least positive regarding the *Educational Value* of the course. Students who thought the course would help them get a good job after high school, students interested in the subject, and students who took the course for unidentified reasons recorded the most positive responses about *Educational Value* of the course.

CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

The perceptions of students toward the marketing courses in which they were enrolled are examined in this exploratory study. According to findings of this study, students' perceptions can be summarized by three factors: (a) *Personal Relevance*, (b) *Educational Value*, and (c) *Life Skills*. The personal value of the marketing courses and information and assignments provided in courses to students are compiled in factor 1. Factor 2 includes items measuring the extent to which the marketing courses provided educational gain. Statements included in factor 3 were specific life skills needed by all persons. Results suggested that students' perceptions of marketing

courses differed depending on their grade level, grades usually earned, hours worked per week, career information source, and reason for enrolling in course.

Perceptions of the value of other vocational courses were similarly summarized in previous research conducted by Ruff (1993), Womble, et al. (1995), and Jones, et al. (1997). However, one difference did surface in this study; three factors rather than two emerged from the factor analysis structure. The newly identified factor was factor 3, *Life Skills*

There are three reasons why a third factor may have surfaced in this analysis and not in the other studies conducted by Ruff (1993), Womble et al. (1995), and Jones et al. (1997). First, this study included a larger percentage of employed students than did the other research studies. Second, students in this study tended to work more hours per week than did the students in the previous studies. And, third, more students in this study than in the other three studies reported being actively involved in a cooperative on-the-job training experience.

Marketing education was originally established as a cooperative educational program designed to provide on-the-job experiences for its students and until the Vocational Education Act of 1963 was federally mandated as a cooperative program (Marketing Strategy Committee, 1987). Since that time, marketing education has been expanded to include a variety of delivery systems consisting of cooperative and non-cooperative programs. These fundamental philosophies associated with marketing education still impact the curriculum and may be responsible for the findings identified in the previous paragraph as well as contribute to the development of the third factor, *Life Skills*

In the first factor, *Personal Relevance*, the recoded statement (item 15), *My teacher has sufficient knowledge of this course to teach it*, received the highest mean score ($M = 3.38$), indicating that students had positive perceptions about the knowledge levels displayed by their teachers and their abilities to effectively teach the topics associated with marketing. In this same factor, the positive mean scores for the recoded statements (item 12 and 11, respectively), *I am glad I enrolled in this course* ($M = 3.34$) and *This course was not a waste of time for me* ($M = 3.25$), suggests that students are glad to be involved in the marketing courses and that their experiences in these courses have been worthwhile. While it is difficult to draw a direct connection to the standards set forth by the NBPTS, these findings do suggest marketing teachers' commitment to their students, their students' learning, and their teaching—characteristics clearly identified in the first two NBPTS standards (*Teachers are committed to students and their learning* and *Teachers know the subjects they teach and how to teach those subjects to students*). It appears, at least from these findings, that marketing teachers teaching the courses examined in this study exhibit commitment to their students and their teaching.

The lowest mean score in factor one, while still on the positive end of the Likert-type scale, was generated for statement five ($M = 2.87$): *The information presented in this course is not out of touch with the "real world."* The second and last propositions identified by the NBPTS speak about the development of real world skills and use of community resources. Marketing teachers must stay in tune with the happenings in the real-world and should be masters at selecting and infusing real world resources from their communities into their daily teaching. This study may indicate that the marketing teachers teaching these courses may need to concentrate on bringing in additional resources from the "real-world" to energize their teaching. Marketing teachers should reach out to their communities in search of learning resources and growth opportunities. They

should embrace the overall impact their communities have on their marketing students and programs.

In the second factor, *Educational Value* statement 1 (*This course prepares me for employment*) received the highest mean score ($M = 3.12$), indicating students felt positive about the employment preparation provided through their marketing course. Students' abilities to apply what they have learned in their classrooms to the real world are apparent in the second proposition listed by the NBPTS. It is encouraging that these marketing students were able to connect learning in marketing courses to employment.

The lowest mean in factor 2 was for item number 16: *The projects and assignments required in this course are challenging for me* ($M = 2.45$). While this statement may not be easily linked to a specific NBPTS proposition, it is an underlying component in all five. Teachers guided by the standards set forth by the NBPTS are eager to provide students with academic challenges that prepare them for real-world opportunities following high school. Students who are not challenged by educational experiences may become bored and inactive in the classroom environment. Marketing teachers should strive to become proactive educators, ready to modify their teaching for the improvement of their students' learning (Bettenhausen, 1998). Marketing teachers who seek to meet the standards proposed by the NBPTS will attempt to make their courses challenging and will encourage advanced learning from all their students.

All of the statements in factor 3, *Life Skills*, had a mean score of 2.90 or higher, indicating that students believed they developed skills needed by employees in the workforce. Again, all five propositions posed by the NBPTS can be applied to those general skills being taught and surfacing in the third factor. According to the NBPTS (1997), vocational educators are essential in preparing students to embrace a variety of general life skills that can be easily applied across a range of careers and in a variety of industries.

Grade level was found to be a significant variable in all three factors. It is not surprising that 11th graders held more positive views of *Personal Relevance*, *Educational Value*, and *Life Skills* than 10th or 9th graders. Eleventh graders tend to be in their first or second year of the marketing program and much of what they are learning is new and fresh. Many of these students have recently started working and seriously thinking about their futures. Therefore, it is probably easy for them to apply information provided in marketing courses. It may, however, seem surprising that 11th graders were also more positive than their 12th grade counterparts. However, by the 12th grade many students in marketing education programs are in their third year. By this time, it may be that much being taught in marketing courses seems repetitive and students' abilities to apply value from these courses become clouded by previous learning experiences. Referring back to the propositions identified by the NBPTS, marketing teachers must be committed to their students' learning and they must be responsible for managing and monitoring that learning. It is necessary that marketing teachers enrich their advanced students' learning with a variety of strategies and challenging opportunities that increase their abilities to link the classroom with their future career and educational aspirations. The NBPTS (1997) calls for vocational teachers to develop educational activities that lead to mastery of student knowledge.

Students' grades usually earned in school were found to be significant in factor 1 and factor 2. It is not surprising that average and above average students, those making As, Bs, or Cs, had significantly higher means than those making Ds. Students making mostly Ds are likely to be

disinterested in school regardless of the course and may be unable to distinguish its personal relevance or educational value. However, the NBPTS states that vocational teachers should be dedicated to successfully educating all students regardless of their abilities. Marketing teachers need to assess the needs of students in their programs making mostly Ds and attempt to develop instructional activities that will spark their interest and ignite their learning processes. Hopefully, educational growth in marketing classrooms for these students will create a synergistic effect in their other school subjects and in their career hopes for the future.

The number of hours students spent working per week revealed a significant finding in factor 1, *Personal Relevance* of marketing courses. The more hours that students reported working, the less personal relevance they reported in the course. This finding may seem startling to marketing educators. It may seem that increased working hours would lead to expanded opportunities for students to apply concepts learned in the course and thereby increasing personal relevance. However, it appears from this study that course relevancy begins to lessen after 10 hours of work.

School administrators have long debated the effectiveness of on-the-job training experiences. They frequently are concerned that time spent working decreased students' time studying (Swope & Wrisley, 1995). It may be that students who spend so many hours on-the-job do not see much relevance from their marketing courses because much of what is learned in their classrooms has already been learned in the working environment. It may be that students who work long hours are tired when attending school and are unable to gain or recognize the marketing courses' personal relevance. Consequently, this finding suggests a need to closely monitor the learning that takes place on-the-job as well as the number of hours their students spend at worksites. Such a need is supported by Swope and Wrisley who suggests that administrators will likely continue attempts to decrease students' working hours and the position held by NBPTS (1997) that marketing teachers become responsible for managing and monitoring their students' learning.

Another interpretation of the significant finding related to the number of hours worked may be linked to the amount of work-based experience students gain by working increased hours. Students may discover that classroom content is out-of-touch with practice in business, causing their marketing course to become impractical or irrelevant and making the relevancy of the marketing course decrease. According to the NBPTS (1997), vocational teachers must possess a powerful understanding of the subject(s) they teach. Therefore, marketing teachers have a responsibility to their profession and their students to remain highly knowledgeable about marketing skills, content, trends, and developments.

Another area from the study that may impact the number of hours worked by students is *students identified job source*. A large percentage of students indicated that they obtained their job through family and friend connections (54%) or other unidentified sources (35.7%). Marketing teachers ranked much lower as a source for that cooperative experience (8.4%). For cooperative experiences to be valuable, marketing teachers need to be actively involved in the selection and evaluation of appropriate community resources and cooperative placements (NBPTS, 1997).

The variable, students' career information source, was found to be significant on all three factors. Students who relied most heavily on books and their marketing teachers for career information were able to gain *Personal Relevance* and *Educational Value* from their marketing course. These students also recognized the *Life Skills* being taught. It may seem surprising that students would rely on their friends and families when obtaining a current job but on their marketing teacher

when obtaining career information. However, it may be that students do not see their current job as a potential career and obtain that job based on what happens to be available. However, when thinking about lifelong career options their marketing education teacher becomes more valuable, relevant, and knowledgeable. While this finding is positive, it highlights the need for marketing teachers' involvement in job selections, evaluations, and monitoring.

The last variable found significant in factor 1 and 2 was reason for enrolling in the marketing course. Students' interest in marketing increased the *Personal Relevance* and *Educational Value* of the course. The NBPTS (1997) urges vocational teachers to advance the knowledge of vocational subject matter through a variety of strategies: creation of engaging learning activities, guiding of students through advanced topics, and use of diversified materials and resources. Marketing teachers need to learn and apply methods for engaging the minds of their students while manifesting a consistent desire for information about marketing occupations and careers. Marketing education classrooms should be filled with excitement and intrigue.

SUMMARY

This study represents one exploratory approach to attempt to clarify the function and value of marketing education courses offered at the high school level using the responses of students enrolled in a marketing course. The five propositions established by the NBPTS have been used as a philosophical framework on which to connect these findings. Findings from this study provide a better understanding of the characteristics of students enrolled in marketing education courses and their perceptions about their experiences in these courses. A majority of study findings were positive. However, marketing education's ability to remain viable in this new millennium will be dependent upon marketing educators' abilities to stay in tune with their students' perceptions as well their abilities to deliver quality courses and programs.

Marketing programs, like many vocational programs across the nation, have been experiencing drops in enrollment. Marketing education teachers must be able to create, implement, maintain, and advance programs that are interesting, useful, challenging, and valuable to diverse groups of present and future students. To accomplish these encompassing tasks successfully, marketing teachers need to examine their students' perceptions on a regular basis. The NBPTS propositions can help marketing teachers structure and evaluate their findings. Comparing student perceptions about their marketing courses with standards for quality teaching can help marketing teachers undertake appropriate course and program modifications necessary to enhance overall marketing education programs as well as meet the educational and career aspirations of their students.

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