

THE ETHNOCENTRIC PERSPECTIVE OF MARKETING STUDENTS  
AND FACULTY TOWARDS BUSINESS MAJORS

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ABSTRACT

An important area of investigation that can provide valuable input to programmatic educational improvement, recruitment, structuring of course offerings, and vocational guidance is the current student perception of his/her major.

One variable is the comparative student perceptions of their selected majors is the comparative status ranking of majors. Student selection of a major is a preparatory step to entrance into selected occupations. Thus, the measurement of the status of majors may be a suitable proxy variable for occupation, a leading indicator of social stratification.

The concentrations offered by the school of business of a large western four-year university were selected as the area of interest. Two hundred and thirty-six senior business administration students and 33 business administration faculty answered a six-item questionnaire. Using a cluster-type, convenience sampling method, the survey was administered by a graduate student in sections of the capstone course required of all business graduates and in upper division courses required of certain concentrations. The first survey question asked the respondent to rank the 10 listed business concentrations offered by the university's school of business according to the respondent's perception of their status. An open-ended question was used to capture the criteria the respondent used in his/her determination of the rankings. In addition, demographic data was collected

for both the student and faculty populations. The median rankings of all the concentrations revealed that students in each concentration ranked their concentrations as higher than did students in other concentrations. Thus compared to nonmarketing students, marketing students ranked marketing significantly higher (three ranks higher). Similar to marketing students, marketing faculty perceive marketing as more prestigious than do faculty and students in other business concentrations. Although students base their perceptions of the concentrations using the same criteria: public perception, demand for graduates, and quality of the program. However, they view their own concentration through much rosier lenses than they view other concentrations.

The status perception of the concentrations suggest operational imperatives. For example, even though each concentration displays ethnocentricity in the ranking of its own concentration, there is, nevertheless, a positive relationship between the prestige ranking of the concentration and the number of students enrolled in the concentration. Thus, for example, a desire to increase enrollment in a business concentration could be accomplished by improving the "quality of the program," one of the criteria of status perception. In general, understanding the current student perception of his/her major is valuable information that provides a baseline reading and a pulse of the health of the major.