

## VALIDITY OF STUDENT RATINGS OF MARKETING RESEARCH INSTRUCTORS

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### ABSTRACT

Student evaluations of professors are very common at AACSB business schools and are used for several purposes. Perhaps the most common is for comparison of professors with their colleagues in the tenure/promotion process. This paper focuses on a source of bias in that evaluation; a bias based on students' background and type of course. The concern is that this bias may adversely affect instructors in marketing research courses. The potential bias can not be measured directly in the marketing research class because all the students are marketing majors.

To measure this bias the authors added a question to the student evaluation form concerning the student's concentration within the business major. This altered form was administered in two required business major courses: operations management (a quantitatively oriented course) and social, political environment of business (a non-quantitatively oriented course).

Marketing and management students were grouped together in the analysis and are referred to as nonquantitative students. Accounting, finance, business analysis, and computing systems students were grouped separately and are referred to as quantitative students. The design of this study allows the comparison of the ratings by quantitative and nonquantitative students of instructors in quantitative and nonquantitative courses.

Twenty different instructors of the two courses and 300 students participated in this study. The data were analyzed so that the differences between individual instructors did not affect the results. The effect of instructor was controlled for by averaging over many instructors.

### RESULTS

On 13 out of 14 items on the rating form, the nonquantitative students rated the instructor better in the nonquantitative course than did the quantitative students. T-tests on these differences show that five are significant at the 95 percent level.

On all 14 items on the rating form, the nonquantitative students rated the instructor worse in the quantitative course than did the quantitative students. T-tests on these differences show that six are significant at the 95 percent level.

The hypothesis that instructor ratings vary by the concentration of the student and the subject matter of the course is supported by these data.

### IMPLICATIONS

The implication of these results for marketing research instructors is that their average ratings may be lower than those of other instructors simply because they are teaching a quantitatively oriented course to students who are likely to be nonquantitatively oriented.

The amount of the bias is estimated by comparing the average instructor ratings by the nonquantitative students in the quantitative and the nonquantitative courses. Ratings are 1 through 5 with 1 being the best. The average rating over the 14 questions in the quantitative course was found to be 1.86. This is .41 worse than the 1.45 average rating given to instructors in the nonquantitative course. This is a significant difference in the author's department where the overall mean rating in 1989-90 was 1.76. If a marketing research instructor were to receive a 2.10 average rating, it would be interpreted as a notably poorer than average rating. Yet with an adjustment of .41 the rating changes to a better than average rating of 1.69, a very desirable score.

If these findings are confirmed by further studies, perhaps the instructor ratings in marketing research courses should be compared only to those of other marketing research instructors. Or, alternatively, the ratings could be adjusted as shown above to make them comparable to instructors not teaching marketing research. These findings may also be applied in other fields such as psychology or sociology where possibly nonquantitatively oriented students are required to take a quantitatively oriented course such as statistics.