

Marquette University
e-Publications@Marquette

Marketing Faculty Research and Publications

Marketing, Department of

10-1-1977

Women Executives: Their Educational Needs in Marketing

Patrick E. Murphy
Marquette University

Gene R. Laczniak
Marquette University, eugene.laczniak@marquette.edu

Published version. *Akron Business and Economic Review*, Vol 8, No. 3 (Fall 1977): 51-55.

Women Executives: Their Educational Needs in Marketing

by Patrick E. Murphy and Gene R. Laczniak

The days of women executives being a rarity in the corporation are over. Because of the women's liberation movement, the increased enforcement of federal legislation regarding sex discrimination, the pressure to maintain individual and family living standards and other factors, women are aspiring to and attaining managerial status in all functions of business — including marketing.

Not surprisingly, women are preparing themselves more formally for the management careers they desire — through undergraduate specializations in business administration and frequently the MBA degree. For instance, both Pennsylvania's Wharton School and Stanford's Graduate School of Business report that enrollment of women has risen from 4% and 1% in 1969 to 25% and 20% in 1975, respectively.¹ At a time when the percentage of students majoring in marketing is declining,² the number of women receiving marketing education is increasing substantially. Women now account for 16% of all marketing majors and the number of female marketing graduates has increased by 175% since 1968.³

One question which naturally arises, given the thrust of the above events, is whether business schools — and their marketing departments — should adjust their curricula to be more sensitive to the needs of current and future female managers. In the past, business schools have adapted their programs to major changes in the social environment. For example, many schools of business developed courses in environmen-

tal economics, ecological marketing and related topics to better prepare managers to deal with issues stemming from the physical environment.⁴ In addition, marketing departments have indicated the desirability of altering their marketing curriculum, both at the undergraduate and graduate levels, to give greater consideration to societal issues.⁵

But the problem of whether business schools and their marketing departments should change their programs because of the influx of women depends on many factors. Do females manage differently than males? Can new or special business school courses aid females in the climb up the corporate ladder? What type of discrimination are females likely to encounter? Would a special course on "women in business" be appropriate? What areas of the marketing curriculum are currently most valuable to practicing women managers in marketing?

In order to shed some light on these questions, 51 female marketing executives at several levels on the corporate ladder were surveyed.

The Research Method

Twenty respondents belonged to the "top 100 corporate women" as designated by a recent *Business Week* article.⁶ These women were selected because they are among the most successful marketing practitioners in the country. The twenty respondents are a highly educated group (90% hold at least a bachelor's

PATRICK E. MURPHY is an Assistant Professor of Marketing in the College of Business Administration at Marquette University, Milwaukee, Wis.

GENE R. LACZNIAK is an Assistant Professor of Marketing in the College of Business Administration at Marquette University, Milwaukee, Wis.

¹"Up the Ladder, Finally," *Business Week*, (November 24, 1975), pg. 62.

²Dik Twedt, "Business Degrees Show Steady Increase, but Marketing Education's Share Sinks," *Marketing News*, Vol. 10 (July 30, 1976), pp. 1 and 15.

³Jack Keane, "A Futuristic Perspective: Emerging Issues and Opportunities," (Speech delivered at American Marketing Association's "Marketing Implications of the Changing Role of Women," Chicago, Illinois,

January 28, 1977).

⁴Katherine A. Zsoldos, "Environmental Studies, What the B-Schools Are Doing," *MBA*, Vol. 6 (February, 1972), pp. 26 and 65.

⁵Norman Kangun, "Societal Issues in the Marketing Curriculum: An Optimistic Assessment," *Journal of Marketing*, (April, 1973), pp. 60-63.

⁶"The 100 Top Corporate Women," *Business Week*, (June 21, 1976), pp. 56-68.

degree and several have masters, doctorates or law degrees), very experienced (85% have 11 or more years business background), generally older (60% were 40 or above) and well-paid (65% with incomes over \$50,000 yearly). The response rate of this group was gratifying since twenty of thirty-three "top 100 corporate women" who held marketing positions elected to participate.

The second group sampled consisted of a Milwaukee-based organization of professional women called *Tempo*.⁷ Sixteen out of the thirty-five *Tempo* members who held marketing positions responded to the questionnaire. This local group was chosen because the *Tempo* members represent a selection of women in lower and middle-management positions which would perhaps be typical of most large cities. These respondents were slightly less educated (75% of the *Tempo* respondents held at least a bachelor's degree), less experienced (69% had acquired 10 years or less), younger (63% under the age, 40) and none earned more than \$25,000 annually, but all received at least \$15,000 per year.

The third group surveyed were fifteen female attendees at the American Marketing Association's conference on "Marketing Implications of the Changing Role of Women." These executives were selected to participate because of their interest in the role of women as consumers and marketing professionals, as was evidenced by their presence at the AMA conference. They were well-educated (40% held Master's degrees), moderately experienced (60% had 10 years or less), young (46% were under 30, and 40% between 30 and 39) and relatively well-paid (46% earned between \$15,000 and \$25,000, but several earned substantially higher salaries). Together, these respondents represent a cross section of female executives in marketing.

The data collection instrument consisted of a four page questionnaire. The format included multiple choice, dichotomous, scaling and ranking questions. General topics covered in the survey included managerial skills and styles of women versus men, sex discrimination experiences, importance rankings of functional business areas as contributing to professional success and importance rating of specific courses within the marketing curriculum. Considerable space was provided to encourage additional written comments. The questionnaire was mailed to the top corporate women and *Tempo* group, but was hand delivered to the AMA women's conference participants.

Results and Discussion

Table 1 shows the responses to questions concerning managerial style and skill differences and a sampling of comments related to these questions. By an

overwhelming 92%, the women believe that the performance of managerial skills are comparable for male and female managers. This result is not surprising given the universal nature of these skills in business and other professions. Generally, the top 100 and *Tempo* respondents felt that their current managerial style was also comparable to men in similar positions.

TABLE 1
MANAGERIAL SKILLS AND STYLE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN WOMEN AND MEN

Questions and Comments	Top 100 n = 20	Tempo n = 16	AMA Women's Conference n = 15	Total n = 51
Q: Do you believe that the performance of managerial skills (i.e., planning, organizing, communicating, implementing, etc.) is different for a female manager as compared to a male manager?				
Yes	5%	19%	0%	8%
No	95%	81%	100%	92%
Q: Do you feel your <u>current</u> managerial style (i.e., authoritarian... democratic) is comparable to male managers in similar positions?				
Yes	75%	88%	40%	69%
No	20%	0%	47%	21%
Don't Know	5%	12%	13%	10%
Comments: Yes - "I have to assume no one of us is unique and that my style (as perceived by me) is no different than other personalities having this style, male or female..." (Top 100)				
Yes - "Management is basically leadership and the ability to stimulate others enough to help them perform to the best of their ability, skills both men and women have." (Tempo)				
No - "Less authoritarian - motivate rather than dictate." (Top 100)				
No - "My style is more open. I am more interested in their career advancement than men are. I am eager to promote the people who work for me." (Conference)				
No - "Females better understand the value of participatory management." (Conference)				

However, the AMA conference participants were divided (40% - yes, 47% - no) in their response to this question. A possible explanation for this group's different perception is that they are younger, less experienced and in lower corporate positions; also, they may have not had occasion to "manage" as many people or to observe a large number of men in similar managerial situations, but this hypothesis is merely speculation. Another possibility, as the comments show, is that they may be rejecting the "typical" corporate managerial style. That is, they profess to be more open, democratic, empathetic and so forth.

Table 2 depicts the incidence of several types of sex discrimination as perceived by the respondents. All three groups reported that salary structure discrimination was most often experienced. Recent writings indicate that working women make, on the average, only about 60% of what men do in similar positions.⁸ Therefore, this finding is not surprising. Social/interpersonal discrimination closely follows salary discrimination in frequency with 48% of all the women indicating that they experienced this variety of social inequity. Forty-one percent of the women also believed that they have not been given adequate hiring and promotion opportunities because they were women. The one area where

⁷Patricia Roberts, "Businesswomen of Tempo Keep Up With Change," *The Milwaukee Journal*, (September 5, 1976), Part 6, pg. 2.

⁸S.C. Cowley, M. Lord and L. Whitman, "Women At Work," *News-*

week, (December 6, 1976), pp. 68-76; and June Kronholz, "Through More Women Work, Job Equality Fails to Materialize," *The Wall Street Journal*, (July 6, 1976), pp. 1 and 16.

corporations appear to be treating female marketing managers least indiscriminately is in the area of educational and training opportunities. The number of in-service and management development programs reported in the literature attest to a corporate commit-

TABLE 2
INCIDENCE OF SEVERAL TYPES OF SEX DISCRIMINATION

Question and Comments	Discrimination Type	Top 100 n = 20	Tempo n = 16	AMA Women's Conference n = 15	Total n = 51
Q. Have you experienced any of the following types of discrimination on the basis of sex in your current or recent past positions? (check all that apply)					
	Salary Structure	50%	59%	47%	55%
	Hiring/Promotion	45%	38%	40%	41%
	Educational/Training Opportunities	5%	20%	0%	8%
	Social/Interpersonal	50%	53%	40%	48%
	None	15%	7%	27%	16%
Comments:					
	"The entry points for women are frequently semi-blue collar and their 'starting salary' structure dogs them forever." (Top 100)				
	"A female just can't be 'one of the boys' in the social structure." (Top 100)				
	"You can legislate equality but you can't force people to change their thinking and/or predisposition." (Tempo)				
	"Discrimination against women in business is institutionalized." (Tempo)				
	"I was offered a clerical position and I had an undergraduate degree and was working on an MBA." (Conference)				
	"I haven't felt any discrimination and if I had any question, it would be on salary structure." (Conference)				

ment to the provision of training.⁹ In addition, a minority (16%) could not recall any instances of sex discrimination. The comments included in Table 2 convey some of the frustrations experienced by the respondents.

The responses of the female marketing executives to a proposal suggesting the initiation of an undergraduate course on "women in business" are illustrated in Table 3. There was a very mixed reaction to this

TABLE 3
REACTION TO THE INSTITUTION OF A "WOMEN IN BUSINESS" COURSE

Questions and Comments	Top 100 n = 19	Tempo n = 18	AMA Women's Conference n = 15	Total n = 49
Q: Do you think business schools should develop a specific course on "Women in Business"? (For example: To point out unique problems of women managers).				
Yes	11%	56%	47%	37%
No	83%	38%	53%	59%
Don't Know	6%	6%	0%	4%
Comments:				
Yes -	"To convince women that they can do it as well as a man and to give them some insight into the handling of male/female relationships in the business world." (Top 100)			
Yes -	"Great idea!" (Tempo)			
Yes -	"At least on a temporary basis while we are in a period of transition of women into management." (Conference)			
No -	"Because successful women will always be those who have the assertiveness to earn their way through existing structures." (Top 100)			
No -	"Problems are diminishing... Should learn to expect equal treatment in school." (Top 100)			
No -	"I would recommend de-emphasizing male-female differences and get on with business topics per se." (Tempo)			
No -	"Again, effective performance depends on individual skills and knowledge. Attitudes (i.e., toward women) should be resolved in experiences." (Conference)			

question with respondents from the "top 100" overwhelmingly rejecting the idea (83% said no). Tempo

members favored the idea (56% - yes) while the women's conference attendees were slightly opposed to it (53% - no). One possible reason for the contrast among the groups is that the younger, middle-management executives may think that such a course would help female students become better prepared for top level corporate jobs. However, the more experienced, high-level executives obviously don't agree with such a proposition. Comments included in Table 3 indicate strong feelings on both sides of the issue.

While some doubt may exist regarding the validity of these results, a survey of an additional seventy (27 from the "top 100" and 43 from Tempo) women executives outside the marketing area confirm the findings discussed above. Of these women, 84% also rejected the notion that the managerial skills were sex related. In response to the question on managerial style, the percentages (71% - yes, 20% - no and 9% - don't know) from this group were virtually identical to those compiled for the marketing executives. Although the amount of sex discrimination experienced was not quite as pronounced for the non-marketing respondents (Salary = 50%, Hiring = 29%, Education = 14%, Social = 44%, None = 19%), the same relative pattern held. Finally, the women executives outside marketing also believed by a 53% - 38% margin that a "women in business" course need not be offered. Thus, it appears that the results obtained from the additional women's group affirms the representativeness of the marketing sample.

Table 4 portrays the mean rank orders for each of the functional business areas. These means were de-

TABLE 4
A RANK ORDERING OF THE VALUE OF FUNCTIONAL AREAS IN CONTRIBUTING TO WOMEN'S MANAGERIAL SUCCESS*

Functional Areas	Top 100 n = 20 x	Tempo n = 16 x	AMA Women's Conference n = 15 x	Total n = 51 x
General Management	1.6	2.6	2.1	2.0
Marketing	2.4	2.5	2.1	2.3
Finance	4.0	3.8	4.1	3.9
Economics	3.9	4.5	3.7	4.0
Quantitative Analysis	5.1	4.4	3.2	4.2
Accounting	4.7	5.1	4.7	4.8

Comments on Business Curriculum Changes:

"Women executives have no special needs. Perhaps the change required is that business school administrators understand that fact." (Top 100)

"A special long-term course loosely entitled: The psycho-dynamics of power encompassing psycho-semantics, psycho-racism, psycho-sexism; psycho-communications. The seventies and subsequent decades will be dominated by these forces and those who understand them." (Top 100)

"For starters, delete sexism from textbooks, papers, etc. Start them thinking equally. Find qualified women as instructors, guest lecturers, etc. - discuss problems both men and women meet in this area." (Tempo)

"Conduct special mandatory workshops for men and women to interact on regular problems that reflect maleness and femaleness that are common in the business world." (Tempo)

"Get better, more dedicated teaching faculty." (Conference)

*Since functional areas were rated with 1 = most important, 2 = next most important, etc., a low score in the table indicates that the area contributes relatively more to managerial success than an area with a high score.

⁹M. Jane Kay, "What Do Those Women Want?" *University of Michigan Business Review*, (May, 1975), pp. 9-12; J. S. Heinen, D. McGlouchlin, C. Legeros and J. Freeman, "Developing the Woman Manager," *Per-*

sonnel Journal, (May, 1975), pp. 282-286; and Bette Ann Stead, "Real Equal Opportunity for Women Executives," *Business Horizons*, (May, 1974), pp. 87-92.

rived from responses to the statement: "Rank in order of importance how valuable each of these functional areas is in contributing to your success as a manager." Such information would help earmark the relative importance of marketing education in the professional development of women executives.

Overall, General Management was ranked first, followed rather closely by Marketing. The two younger groups did not place as much emphasis on General Management since they have probably not had the occasion to apply these principles as often as the top level executives. In addition, the other functional areas of Finance, Economics, Quantitative Analysis and Accounting lagged far behind Management and Marketing. The relatively high ranking of Marketing is understandable since marketing executives were the survey respondents. Not surprisingly, then, when asked to check one or two of the functional areas which would provide the most challenging jobs for women in the future, 58% of the total checked Marketing and 45% indicated Management. Finally, a few general comments are also contained in Table 4 concerning the changes in the current business curriculum necessary to prepare students to deal with the needs of future women executives.

Table 5 lists the mean importance scores for twelve selected marketing courses. The number of courses evaluated by the respondents was not meant to be exhaustive, but rather to represent the "typical" curriculum offering at medium and large colleges of busi-

TABLE 5
IMPORTANCE OF MARKETING COURSES IN CONTRIBUTING TO
FUTURE MANAGERIAL SUCCESS

Course	Top 100 n = 20		Tempo n = 16		AMA Women's Conference n = 15		Total n = 51	
	\bar{x}	Rank	\bar{x}	Rank	\bar{x}	Rank	\bar{x}	Rank
Marketing Strategy	1.6	(2)	2.08	(4) ^b	1.54	(1)	1.73	(1) ^b
Consumer Behavior	1.50	(1)	1.39	(1)	1.93	(2)	1.73	(1) ^b
Marketing Research	1.866	(4)	1.77	(3)	2.15	(4)	1.93	(3)
Advertising and Marketing Communications	2.38	(8)	1.57	(2)	2.0	(3)	1.98	(4)
Legal and Public Policy Issues	1.76	(3)	2.21	(7)	2.62	(9)	2.16	(5)
Product and Price Management	2.21	(6)	2.08	(4) ^b	2.38	(8)	2.23	(6)
Introductory Marketing	2.36	(7)	2.08	(4) ^b	2.26	(5)	2.24	(7)
Social Issues in Marketing	1.875	(5)	2.69	(9)	2.29	(6)	2.26	(8)
Quantitative Techniques Applied to Marketing	2.62	(10)	2.46	(8)	2.31	(7)	2.46	(9)
Channels and Physical Distribution	3.0	(11)	2.77	(10)	2.77	(10)	2.85	(10)
Retailing	2.50	(9)	3.15	(12)	2.92	(12)	2.87	(11)
Industrial Marketing	3.33	(12)	2.92	(11)	2.85	(11)	3.03	(12)

^a Importance was measured using a seven point Likert scale with 1 = extremely important ... 7 = extremely unimportant.

^b Indicates tie in importance rating.

ness. All courses listed were thought to be at least "moderately important" by the executives. The women were generally consistent in their importance designations. Marketing strategy, consumer behavior and marketing research, which proved to be the most im-

portant courses overall, fell into the five most important for all three respondent groups. At the other end, the four least important courses (i.e., quantitative techniques applied to marketing, channels and physical distribution, retailing and industrial marketing) were always contained in the lower half of the relative rankings for the various groups. Introductory marketing was consistently rated as being of intermediate importance, a finding which may seem surprising to some. Perhaps women believed this course to be too general to be of high importance but fundamental to future managerial success nonetheless.

Several differences in the importance ratings among the three groups (top 100, Tempo and women's conference) need examination. Courses which were viewed differently by the various respondents and possible reasons why these discrepancies occurred are as follows:

1. Advertising and Marketing Communications — A higher percentage of the Tempo and women's conference participants are presently employed by advertising agencies than the national sample. Therefore, these groups may have viewed these courses as more important for this reason.
2. Social Issues in Marketing — The top female executives possibly thought this course more important than the other respondents because they have a broader vision of the problems presently facing marketing and they see issues such as consumerism, ecology, etc. as having a strong impact on future corporate direction.
3. Quantitative Techniques Applied to Marketing — The top 100 respondents indicated lesser importance because they are an older, more experienced group and may not be as facile as the younger women with mathematical types of analyses.
4. Legal and Public Policy Issues — From their vantage point in the corporate hierarchy, the high level marketing women have likely experienced many recent legal controversies. Therefore, they felt this course to be very important and consequently believe a deeper understanding of the law and public policy process is necessary for future managers.

A note of caution needs to be stated about the findings. Although the differences between the three groups of women analyzed in Tables 1 - 5 no doubt would have yielded some significant differences, the sample sizes (i.e., Top 100 = 20, Tempo = 16, Conference = 15) somewhat precluded the meaningful use of statistical tests. Therefore, comparisons of means and percentages appeared to be a more viable approach. Although small in number, the sample does seem to be representative of the diversity of women holding marketing positions in U.S. corporations today. Consequently, these responses should be of interest to marketing educators.

Implications For Marketing Education

Since the results shown in Table 1 indicate that the respondents feel women and men employ basically the same managerial skills and style, business education should continue to treat these topics in an asexual manner. Possibly more female role models should be stressed, as some comments made by the women suggested, but exploring sexual differences in managerial situations may be dysfunctional at this time. In addition, developing a special undergraduate course on "women in business" (Table 3) is not supported by a majority of the sample. The continuing challenge to business educators, then, is to stress qualities necessary to become a successful manager regardless of sex.

The incidence of sex discrimination is widespread (See Table 2) and women students need to be prepared to cope with it. For example, women graduates should be encouraged to accept only positions for which they are qualified and to demand competitive salaries. Educators must be sensitive to the corporate situations into which their female students will go and emphasize the existing realities in their classroom presentations. Most importantly, professors must not be guilty of sex discrimination themselves.

Implications regarding marketing's importance as a functional area must be viewed in the light of the positions held by respondents. Clearly, a broad-based management education is seen as essential to the women surveyed (Table 4). The importance of Marketing as a functional area should not be over stressed even though it followed closely behind General Management in contributing to managerial success. It would seem premature to suggest Finance, Economics, Quantitative Analysis and Accounting are not important for female marketing managers. Rather, an understanding of these tools is probably necessary for any successful executive.

It should be added that prior research on the marketing curriculum is largely substantiated by this survey of female marketing managers (See Table 5). The findings generally support Coyle's research which placed marketing management, research and con-

sumer behavior among the five most important courses as perceived by marketing executives and marketing graduates.¹⁰ The sensitivity of the women, especially the top 100, to the emergence of legal and public policy issues suggests that marketing departments consider offering such a course.¹¹ Also, the importance placed on social issues and the legal area by the top level executives appears to amplify Hise's warning that marketing curricula need to examine value questions more closely.¹² Moreover, Hise reported that less than 15% of the schools he examined required a course in consumer analysis (i.e., behavior) and only 40% even offered it in 1973. The respondents in this survey strongly agree with a panel of six marketing educators who agreed that this course should be required of all marketing majors.¹³

Conclusion

The women marketing executives surveyed in this study generally feel that they *do not* manage differently from men nor do they want to be treated differently in the corporate setting. However, widespread instances of sex discrimination have been experienced in all of these sampled groups and most believe that they have not yet reached equal status with men. Colleges of business, then, need to assure that future female managers be given the managerial tools to take advantage of all opportunities to gain full equality with male managers.

The challenge to marketing departments based on this survey is a dual one. First, the managerial orientation in the curriculum must continue to be stressed. Moreover, a better understanding of why consumers behave as they do and knowledge of techniques to research this behavior must be given renewed emphasis. Secondly, these female marketing managers, especially those at the highest levels, believe a "macro" approach (i.e., legal-public policy and social issues courses) is also essential to future corporate success. Consequently, marketing educators may need to examine their curriculum in light of these findings to better prepare the future "corporate woman."

¹⁰Charles A. Coyle, "How Marketing Executives and Marketing Graduates Value Marketing Courses," *Collegiate News and Views*, (Fall, 1975), pp. 1-3.

¹¹William A. Staples and Patrick E. Murphy, "Growing Government Regulation — A New Challenge to Marketing Education," Kenneth L. Bernhardt, ed., *Marketing: 1776 - 1976 and Beyond* (Chicago: American Marketing Association, 1976), pp. 593-596.

¹²Richard T. Hise, "The Marketing Curriculum: Does It Reflect the Recommendations of Marketing Educators?" *Collegiate News and Views*, (Spring, 1975), pp. 11-16.

¹³David Luck, "Designing the Marketing Curriculum," Philip R. McDonald, ed., *Marketing Involvement in Society and the Economy* (Chicago: American Marketing Association, 1969), pp. 398-401.