

## **Inclusive marketing education: understanding the role of gender in the student experience**

Adam Hepworth, PhD  
Ohio University

Jessica Babin Weeks, PhD  
Ohio University

Jacob Hiler, PhD  
Ohio University

### **ABSTRACT**

Committing to an inclusive educational culture is not only ethically responsible, but it also allows students to reach their full potential. However, creating an inclusive culture presents challenges, especially when feeling included may mean different things to different people. This research examines marketing undergraduate students' inclusive experiences in the college of business. In doing so, it aims to understand inclusion from the student perspective and endeavors to create meaningful progress toward cultivating inclusion in education. The researchers approach this aim through interviewing and surveying students about their experiences. The findings indicate that individuals' differences, namely gender, play a role in shaping students' perceptions about inclusion. This research advances the literature in educational inclusion by building an understanding of how marketing students define and experience inclusion, offering insight into the role of gender in shaping inclusion perceptions, and discovering opportunities for professors to create an inclusive experience for their students.

Keywords: marketing education, undergraduate education, diversity, inclusion, gender

## INTRODUCTION

Establishing an inclusive environment has become a primary aim of businesses and educational institutions alike. Not only is it ethically responsible to foster a commitment to inclusion—defined here as when members feel accepted, valued, and a sense of belonging (Ferdman, 2014)—but inclusive organizations perform better. The benefits of creating an inclusive culture are considerable with inclusive organizations creating happier employees (Keone, 2019), acquiring and retaining talent (Stevens, 2020), and outperforming competitors (Dixon-Fyle et al., 2020). Companies and universities have therefore shifted to accommodate employees and students to better instill a sense of belonging.

Given the importance of higher learning institutions in educating and training future generations of business leaders, universities have become leaders of the movement toward full inclusion (Shorter-Gooden, 2014). Universities that commit to enhancing diversity, equity, and inclusion experience a range of benefits including increased knowledge and understanding among students (Slaten et al., 2018) and improved graduation rates (Bradley, 2021). In support of this pursuit, university faculty and staff can be positive agents of change and directly impact students' inclusive experiences (Winters, 2014).

Accreditation standards mandate that business schools develop learning environments that are conducive to inclusive practices (AACSB, 2018). Much like developing inclusive marketing practices demonstrate how marketers can better address customers' needs (Rivera, et al. 2020), understanding marketing undergraduates' experiences can help faculty address students' educational needs. Prior research suggests that building inclusive practices into marketing education can in turn help organizations apply inclusive approaches as well (Rivera, et al. 2020). However, evidence suggests that undergraduate marketing students, especially those who feel included, may be unaware or ignorant about problems associated with inclusion (Grier, 2020). Therefore, a greater understanding of individuals' experience with inclusion is necessary to understand the opportunities that exist to enhance it.

Instituting broad measures to improve inclusion can be challenging, as personal characteristics unique to the individual shape how each experiences inclusion (Bae et al., 2016; Sax, 2009), and thus vary their perceptions of inclusion as well (Ferdman, 2014). For instance, one's perceived representativeness—defined by the member's gender, age, ethnicity, etc.—can impact how included one feels in a group (Lee, Matusovich, & Brown, 2014). Further, innate gender differences drive individuals' motivation, interests, selection of major, and subsequent academic performance, all of which contribute to one's unique experience (Krishna & Orhun, 2022; Su, Rounds, & Armstrong, 2009). It is therefore necessary to account for individual differences, namely gender, that can impact perceptions of inclusion (Tinklin et al., 2003).

This research examines marketing students' inclusive experiences in the college of business. In doing so, the researchers aim to understand inclusion from marketing students' perspective and endeavor to create meaningful progress toward cultivating inclusion. The research addresses how marketing undergraduate students define “inclusion” within several dimensions of their educational experiences in the major and college. Next, the research examines the role of gender<sup>1</sup> in shaping inclusion perceptions. Last, practical opportunities are

---

<sup>1</sup> Examination of gender in this research accounts for the individual's identification as man, woman, non-binary, or other as a socially constructed identity, rather than accounting for biological differences between the sexes. Thus, terms “man” and “woman” are used to describe gender, though “male” and “female” are used as adjectives when describing students.

explored for marketing faculty to enhance student inclusion. With the goal of better understanding marketing students' inclusive experiences and constructing an environment that supports, affirms, and welcomes all, the current research examines three research questions:

- (1) How do marketing undergraduates feel included in the college of business?
- (2) Do perceptions of inclusiveness differ among male and female marketing students?
- (3) What opportunities exist to enhance students' perceptions of inclusion in the college and classroom?

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Definition of "Inclusion"**

A consensus has not been reached on one definition of inclusion across streams of research and different contexts, including organization and educational research (Ferdman, 2014). Being able to bring one's full self to a space or situation, whether that be a classroom or a workplace, and having one's unique point of view valued are often mentioned as a result of an inclusive environment. An inclusive environment is one within which all individuals are accepted and feel that they can contribute to and belong in the group (Ferdman, 2014), though achieving an inclusive environment or culture is a complex undertaking (Gonzales et al., 2021).

The experience of inclusion is how people "feel safe, trusted, accepted, respected, supported, valued, fulfilled, engaged, and authentic in their working environment, both as individuals and as members of particular identity groups" (Ferdman et al., 2009, p. 6). Ferdman (2014) explains that perceived inclusion is not only a result of the individual's treatment by coworkers and supervisor, but also includes the person's own behavior and attitudes. Thus, perceived inclusion is individualized and dynamic, and will differ by person and even by situation.

Inclusion is often present in conversations alongside similar constructs of diversity and belonging. While diversity is a composition of diverse people (across the categories of gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, age, abilities, experiences, etc.), inclusion is obtaining full engagement from each individual (Shorter-Gooden, 2014). Put simply, "diversity is about counting heads; inclusion is about making heads count" (Winters, 2014, p. 206). Less clear is the difference between inclusion and belonging, and these terms are often used interchangeably. The concept of "belonging," which describes a person's feelings or reaction to external efforts to make him/her/them feel included, is most similar to inclusion research that focuses on the perceived experience of inclusion at the individual level (McGregor, 2019; Ferdman, 2014).

Theoretically, Brewer's optimal distinctiveness theory (ODT), which explains that individuals seek to balance their needs for uniqueness and belonging, is a common underlying theme in much of the inclusion literature. According to Brewer (1991, p.477), individuals seek to balance their needs for a) "validation and similarity to others" and b) "uniqueness and individuation" through an optimal level of inclusion in group settings.

### **Inclusion in Educational Research**

Educational researchers began studying the inclusion of children with disabilities in a school setting, eventually broadening to all students, across their differences and identities (Ferdman 2014; Moriña et al., 2020). As explained by Gonzales et al. (2021, p.446), inclusion attempts to reform organizations, including schools and classrooms, so that those who have been

historically underrepresented might experience a sense of organizational belonging. In higher education, a greater focus has been university “belonging” which frequently is synonymous with “inclusivity.” Based on research by Baumeister and Leary (1995) and Maslow (1954), individuals must feel that they belong in order for them to move to levels of knowledge or understanding; students who do not feel that they belong may have a more difficult time gaining knowledge or understanding than other students (Slaten et al., 2018). In the context of achieving inclusion in higher education, Linder et al. (2015) suggest that leading students to better understand how their identities have influenced their opinions and experience can help create more inclusive classroom settings.

To best educate students and to prepare them to participate in a diverse world, this research seeks to better understand the concept of “inclusion” in the context of undergraduate marketing education. As explained by Shorter-Gooden (2014, p. 451), “Colleges and universities are arguably the most important institutions in which to work toward full inclusion, as they are the prime training ground for the future professionals, managers, and leaders in almost all industries.” While diversity can be mandated by boards, inclusion must stem from voluntary actions of faculty and staff (Winters, 2014). Faculty therefore have an imperative to promote inclusion and equity, as well as care and respect towards students (Edmondson et al., 2020). Interactions with university faculty and staff are fundamental to students’ perceptions of inclusion, as students’ relationships with university faculty and staff are crucial for students to “feel accepted or empathically heard” (Slaten et al., 2018, p. 15).

Researchers in higher education, human resource management, and organizational psychology have made strides in conceptualizing inclusion, though much remains unknown (Shore et al., 2018). In particular, there is a lack of understanding of the behaviors and actions that characterize inclusion, and thus a need for actionable advice (Winters, 2014). Moriña et al. (2020) found that faculty members nominated by students as being inclusive showed commonalities, including having a teaching passion, believing all students should have access to inclusive education, and portraying a good attitude.

Despite the positive outcomes that stem from inclusive environments and the ethical imperative for business schools and their faculty to provide inclusive environments for their students (AACSB, 2021), little research has directly addressed this topic in the context of marketing education. Much of the scant literature in this domain focuses on pedagogical innovations that teach issues of diversity, inclusion, and multicultural marketing to marketing students (Carter, 2009; Stern, 2008; Rivera et al., 2020). Such pedagogical efforts by marketing faculty have an important impact on student career readiness, preparing them to perform the business function of marketing (Carter, 2009; Ertimur & Lavoie, 2019) with an eye towards inclusion, which can help companies not only create social impact but also to increase profit (The Diversity Movement & AMA, 2022). Pedagogical innovations surrounding diversity and inclusion also help prepare business students, regardless of their individual identities, to join an increasingly diverse workforce (Grier, 2020) as moral and ethical leaders (Payan & Iyer, 2006; Edmondson et al., 2020).

## **Gender Differences**

In addressing the issue of inclusivity within undergraduate education, one important demographic dimension is gender (Puritty et al., 2017). Though a binary definition of gender does not include all students (Graham & MacFarlane, 2021), understanding how female and

male-identifying marketing students experience inclusion is a starting point. Literature in inclusive education contends that research into inclusion should always pay attention to the gender dimension (Tinklin et al., 2003). Accordingly, gender may account for differences in how individuals experience inclusion (Bae et al., 2016; Sax, 2009), which likely shapes their perceptions of inclusion. Gender representativeness in groups has been found to enhance perceptions of inclusion (Andrews & Ashworth, 2014); alternatively, underrepresented groups based on gender, race, and other demographics are subject to microaggressions and discrimination, which can harm their inclusive educational experience (Puritty et al., 2017). Though women have been historically underrepresented in business schools, recent trends suggest a balancing of gender is beginning to establish (Krishna & Orhun, 2020). Yet, women remain underrepresented in other aspects in business education including within their business major (i.e., Bryant et al., 2012; Siegfried, 2020).

Given that gender differences account for differences in how members perceive organizational inclusiveness, perceptions of what constitutes inclusion may vary by gender as well. An international survey of more than 2,000 business executives found that women believed their organizations were less diverse and inclusive than men and also felt a lesser sense of belonging to the organization (Russell Reynolds Associates, 2018). Industry research also found a considerable perception gap between men and women's perceptions of equal opportunity for women in the workplace, gender pay disparity, and career barriers encountered by women, all of which women consistently rated as more negatively biased against them (Zhao, 2020). Discrepancies in gender-based perceptions of inclusion extend to educational experiences as well. Musser and colleagues (2017) found that male undergraduate students feel less supported in new social environments that have new expectations (namely, university classrooms) and often refrain from seeking assistance because societal gender norms associate such behavior as displays of weakness. Further, women believe their faculty are more supportive, providing them with "academic advice, career guidance, emotional support, and honest feedback about their skills and abilities" (Sax, 2009, pg. 5). Because of these varied perceptions in their educational experiences, male and female marketing students are expected to rate their experiences differently.

## **STUDY 1: IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS**

### **Description and Analysis**

To address the first research question about the how marketing students define "inclusion," nineteen undergraduates from a large, midwestern public university were interviewed by a small team of student researchers and their faculty advisor (the primary investigator) to learn about their experiences in the college. Respondents were selected purposively to target specific qualities that represent a diverse population (Etikan et al., 2016) and thus shed light on an array of experiences with inclusion. The participants accordingly varied on race (63% White, 21% Black, 16% other), gender (43% women, 56% men), and undergraduate year (24% senior, 24% junior, 19% sophomore, 33% freshman). In-depth interviews (IDIs) were completed in the spring of 2021. The interviews were conducted using a semi-structured approach to allow for the respondents to speak on their lived experiences with inclusion and other related phenomenon within the classroom and greater college.

The data analysis was conducted using a phenomenological (Thompson et al., 1994) and hermeneutic (Arnold & Fischer, 1994; Thompson et al., 1994; Suddick et al. 2020) approach. The phenomenological approach allowed for the exploration of lived accounts from the students and the identification of broad thematic patterns regarding their definitions of and experiences regarding inclusion. In addition to this, utilizing a hermeneutic approach in the analysis allowed for the discussion of socio-cultural discourse and historical perspectives fundamental to formulating an understanding of inclusion through the eyes of the respondents. The interview data were reexamined and discussed among the authors iteratively and comparatively (Glaser & Strauss, 2017). These interpretivist methodologies allowed the authors to rigorously identify key themes regarding inclusion and generate a framework to test in Study 2. Throughout the process of analyzing the data, four key themes emerged from the respondents' definitions of inclusion: "feeling comfortable," "having a voice," "feeling welcomed," and "feeling they belong."

### **Feeling Comfortable**

The first and most predominant theme was that of "feeling comfortable." As one respondent noted "being around people that bring a sense of comfortability" was a critical part of inclusion. Students acknowledged that if they did not feel comfortable, it was more difficult for them to be their authentic selves which could lead to feeling left out or isolated. Respondents who experienced this isolation acknowledged that "sometimes I feel intimidated" and "sometimes don't feel welcomed within my class groups." However, another respondent, who felt more included, noted that their learning community "made me feel more comfortable transitioning to college and I got to meet people right away who had similar classes as me."

### **Having a Voice**

Another important theme the respondents frequently acknowledged was their ability to "have a voice." One respondent noted that their definition of inclusion centered around the idea of "people around you being genuine about caring about you and your opinions" with another noting that their definition involved feeling "safe to speak." Though the idea of having a voice was important to many of the respondents, the respondents acknowledged that having a voice was often tied to a student's role within student organizations. One student who was very involved believed they had a voice "because I am involved in orgs and they connect me to people and leadership roles," whereas another student who was not involved in student organizations stated that "the (college) only cares about the student that are leaders in specific organizations, the rest of us don't have a voice or an opinion that matters."

### **Feeling Welcomed**

Beyond this, respondents also highlighted the importance of "feeling welcomed" especially early in their college journey. The theme of feeling welcomed emerged when respondents reflected on early college courses with one respondent stating, "It was nice to get to know some of those people...it just gave you some like friends that you automatically had in like a lot of your classes, which was nice." Another respondent acknowledged that feeling welcomed in classes that were online during the COVID-19 pandemic, made them feel much more included stating that their professors were "just so welcoming and want you to feel like at home." Though

some students acknowledged that if “sometimes I feel intimidated” this would soon be mitigated by the welcoming environment which made it “easy to talk to people within the (college).”

### **Feeling They Belong**

Finally, a sense of “belonging” was prevalent in students’ interviews. Many respondents acknowledged that belonging was enhanced by their involvement in student organizations, with one stating that “I feel like there was a lot of opportunities that were provided, especially during freshman year when people would come to like the big freshman classes and pitch their groups or organizations that they were involved in. So, I feel like I always found the (college) to be inclusive by at least providing you with opportunities.” The sense of belonging experienced by some respondents resulted from cultivating a “no judgement zone” which put students at ease.

### **Sources of Inclusive Support**

During the process of analysis, it also became apparent that there were multiple sources contributing to how students felt included. These sources included their professors, peers, class structure, and student organizations. Each of these sources could have differential impacts on how included a student would feel. For example, one respondent noted that they felt more included by their fellow students rather than the college faculty and staff stating, “It is essentially only the students who keep each other included.” These differential impacts did not only occur across these four sources but could also differ within sources. Regarding how well various professors have done with making him feel included, one respondent noted, “some have done a really good job and others have done really bad.” The insights learned from this study are carried forward into the survey in Study 2.

## **STUDY 2**

### **Sample and Method**

The purpose of Study 2 was twofold: 1) to quantitatively examine marketing students’ experiences with inclusion and gain a more robust understanding of those experiences and 2) to determine whether those experiences differ between men and women. The first two research questions were addressed using themes that emerged in the IDIs by constructing a quantitative survey in which participants responded to questions regarding their college experiences.

The research team recruited 211 marketing major undergraduates in the college of business in the spring of 2021. Fifteen students did not respond to the gender question, bringing the analyzable sample to 196. Survey respondents were given course credit for participating in the research. The average survey response was seven minutes. Data were analyzed using IBM SPSS 27. The demographics of the survey respondents were as follows: race (86% White, 5% Black, 6% other, 3% no response), gender (43% women, 56% men, 1% non-binaries), and class rank (33% senior, 38% junior, 18% sophomore, 11% freshman).

Questions in the survey were constructed using the qualitative research inquiry findings (Padgett, 2016) to measure perceptions of inclusion, manifestations of inclusive experiences, and sources of support. The survey design centered around themes learned in the interviews in which participants discussed how they felt included. To measure importance and level of inclusion,

respondents were asked: How important is inclusion to your college experience and success? (1: *Not important at all* to 5: *Very important*, “INCLU\_IMPORT”), and How included do you feel in the college? (1: *Not included at all* to 5: *Extremely included*, “INCLU\_FEEL”).

Next, four items, manifestations of inclusion that were informed by the qualitative IDIs, were examined: I feel comfortable (S1), I feel I have a voice (S2), I feel welcomed (S3), I feel I belong (S4) (1: *Strongly disagree* to 5: *Strongly agree*). Responses to these items were highly reliable (Cronbach’s  $\alpha = 0.876$ ), reflecting the consistency of these four items in measuring “feeling included.” See Table 1 (appendix) for details on factor loadings. (One additional factor: “I feel there is a sense of diversity” fell below the threshold of 0.7 and was removed.)

Finally, respondents indicated how supported they felt by: professors, peers, class structure, and student organizations (1: *Not supported* to 5: *Very supported*).

## Findings

To address the second research question of whether perceptions of inclusion differ among male and female marketing students, independent samples T-tests were run. Results are listed in Table 2 (appendix). Female marketing students ( $M=4.53$ ) indicated that inclusion is more important to their experience and success (INCLU\_IMPORT) in the college than male marketing students ( $M=4.24$ ,  $p<.01$ ). Women ( $M=4.04$ ) also expressed they felt more included than men ( $M=3.77$ ,  $p=.037$ ) in the college. Differences in individual measures were found between male and female marketing students, with women responding that they felt they had a voice ( $M=3.76$ ,  $p=.021$ ) and felt welcomed ( $M=4.35$ ,  $p=.035$ ) more than men. Interestingly, women ( $M=4.34$ ) felt more supported by their professors than men ( $M=4.07$ ,  $p=.02$ ), though no other sources of support—peers, class structure, or student organizations—were significantly different for gender.

## Discussion

The results of the survey support that male and female marketing students differ in their perceptions of inclusion. Specifically, women responded that inclusion is more important to their college experience than men. Though the percentage of female students in business schools is closer to equitable than it once was, female students still make up less than half of total business school students (Krishna & Orhun, 2022). Research shows that those who experience underrepresentation in groups believe that feeling included is more important to their experience (Winters, 2014; Ferdman, 2014), in support of the findings from this research. Interestingly, women also responded that they felt more included than men, which may reflect current efforts by the college to include underrepresented groups. More specific measures indicated that women felt more welcomed and had more of a voice when compared with men. These findings provide evidence that men may indeed feel more discouraged and less supported in unfamiliar environments (Musser et al., 2017). Additionally, the results indicate that professors are more important sources of inclusion for women than men. This finding echoes past research that finds women feel more supported by academic faculty (Sax, 2009) and provides the impetus for the final study in which the research explores *how* male and female marketing students feel supported by professors.

## STUDY 3: QUALITATIVE SURVEY



## Sample and Method

A qualitative survey was employed to address the third research question of uncovering opportunities to enhance students' perceptions of inclusion. The results of Study 2 shed light on the importance of professors as a source of support, especially for women. Study 3 explores how professors might help marketing students feel more included inside and outside the classroom.

In exchange for extra credit on an assignment, the research team surveyed 95 undergraduates in the marketing capstone course in the spring of 2022. The analyzable sample was reduced to 82 respondents after 13 participants registered incomplete responses. The demographics of the survey respondents were as follows: race (95% White, 5% non-white or multiethnic) and gender (62% female, 37% male, 1% non-binary). Most respondents were seniors (96%), as students in a spring semester capstone course were surveyed.<sup>2</sup> The average survey response was seven minutes. Participants were asked two questions in which they were instructed to write a few sentences describing a time in which a professor made them feel included and another time in which they made them feel excluded. Lastly, participants were asked how their business professors could make them feel more included.

## Findings

Students cited instances of inclusion both in the classroom and outside the classroom. Female students frequently pointed to in-class examples of support they receive from professors. One woman stated, "my professor has always allowed me to have a voice in class. I feel like I can say whatever I am feeling without being judged." The theme of "having a voice" was mentioned by more than 10% of all students surveyed, the majority of those (8) being female. Consistent with this theme, another female student described the difficulty that students experienced at the beginning of the pandemic and a professor who made her feel "validated and heard" in class by periodically checking in with her. This finding is in line with organizational research that suggests that women may derive a sense of worth from having a voice in the workplace (Settles et al., 2007) and that empowering women by giving them a voice can reduce conflict and status hierarchies by bolstering inclusion in gender-diverse climates (Nishii 2013).

Male marketing students frequently described examples of when professors showed support outside of the classroom through professional mentorship, writing letters of recommendation, and providing professional advice. One male senior stated that his "professor went out of his way to act as a mentor" and "guided (him) on which job offer" to select. When asked about how professors excluded them, male students stated that they felt excluded when professors were indifferent to building personal relationships and did not invest time in getting to know students. Forming mentoring relationships with students outside of the classroom may be a critical aspect of enhancing male students' perceptions of inclusion. Given the reticence of male students in asking for assistance (Musser et al. 2017), professors can actively encourage students to seek career and academic guidance.

## DISCUSSION

---

<sup>2</sup> Senior students in the marketing capstone course were targeted as survey participants as they have had the longest tenure of students in the college and thus more interactions with professors during their tenure. These students have also had more time in in-person classes than younger students who have spent most of their college career in online courses.

The aims of the research were to understand marketing students' inclusive experiences, examine whether male and female students' perceptions differ, and find opportunities for improvement. IDIs in the first study addressed the research question about how marketing students feel included, notably identifying several sources for feeling included. Results from the survey found that women felt like they had a voice, felt welcomed, and felt supported by their professors more than men. Finally, a qualitative survey uncovered opportunities for professors to enhance inclusion. Female students indicated professors help with inclusion through in-class actions (e.g., encouraging personal perspective); alternatively, male students mentioned that professors' behaviors outside of the classroom (e.g., providing career advice) made them feel more included.

This research provides insight into how marketing educators can support students by making them feel more included in their college experience. It contributes to the literature by showing that individuals differ in both how they experience inclusion (Bae et al., 2016; Ferdman, 2014; Lee et al., 2014) and what matters to them when developing an inclusive experience (Sax, 2009). Further, it provides evidence that gender accounts for differences in inclusion perceptions and is critical when determining how to create an inclusive environment (Tinklin et al., 2003).

Findings from this research provide marketing educators with practical insight for improving inclusion. First, found to be an important source of inclusion, professors can enhance inclusiveness both inside and outside of the classroom. Inclusive classrooms recognize that differences exist based on students' backgrounds and learning styles (Ferdman, 2014). Therefore, course content should account for diverse perspectives and incorporate input from students, especially for those of different backgrounds (Saunders & Kardia, 2004). Creating a welcoming classroom environment that is free from judgment and empowers students by giving them a voice will encourage students to freely participate. Also, getting to know your students early in the semester by having them write a couple of paragraphs about themselves or respond to a brief survey will help with strengthening connections with students (Saunders & Kardia, 2004). Outside of the classroom, professors can invest time in professional relationships with students to ease potential anxiety students may otherwise experience from asking professors to be a professional reference, write recommendation letters, or offer career advice. Additionally, professors can encourage students to seek career placement advising to help with navigating the job application and interview process. Supporting male students through career counseling and mentorship may slow the exit of men from higher education (Belkin, 2021).

This research found that marketing students view their peers as important sources of inclusion and instrumental to enhancing their overall experience. Peers were frequently cited as an important source of inclusion with 43% of respondents ranking them as the most important inclusion source. Marketing educators and administration can leverage peers to enhance inclusion through peer mentorship programs for incoming students. Such mentorship programs have increased retention of first-year students, especially for diverse populations (Talbert, 2012). Further, peer mentorship programs have been found to connect individuals to the greater campus community and foster a sense of belongingness (Strayhorn, 2012).

Finally, though this research found that membership in student organizations is an important source of inclusion, underclassmen indicated they felt overwhelmed by the quantity of organizations. Nonmembers remarked that they felt intimidated by the qualifications and perceived status of some student organizations, which prevented them from seeking membership. Faculty and administration can lessen the perceived entry barriers to membership by facilitating connections between students and social organizations. One recommendation for connecting

students early in their college experience is to disseminate a survey that aligns first-year students' general interests with various student organizations. The college can then use information from survey responses to connect organizations with first-year students and help students benefit from developing inclusive experiences earlier in their time in the college.

## LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This research inquiry includes limitations that suggest possible avenues for future research into inclusive marketing education. Though individual—namely, demographic—differences may indeed shape students' inclusion perceptions (Bae et al., 2016), the sample was limited in racial/ethnic diversity. Research suggests that minority groups feel a lesser sense of belonging than White individuals who are better represented (Kennedy & Jain-Link, 2021). Future research should further explore the intersection of student identities, including race/ethnicity and gender identity, and perceptions of inclusion (Tinklin et al., 2003). The current research was limited by the inability to recruit a more racially/ethnic diverse sample of students.

Research should also explore whether perceptions of inclusion differ based on individual characteristics beyond a dichotomized measure of gender. The findings suggest that a much greater sample is needed to sufficiently account for gender identities beyond the man/woman dichotomy. There is an imperative to explore issues of inclusion in the classroom for gender nonconforming students (Graham & MacFarlane, 2021). Calls have been made for advocacy on campuses for LGBTQ+ students and first-generation college students (Crittenden et al., 2020); research should explore how to create inclusive marketing education for diverse identities.

In addition to demographic or identity-based differences, individual differences in personality types or other traits may play a role in how included a student feels in the business college environment. For example, an introverted or shy student may feel excluded when a professor calls on him/her/them in class, while an extroverted or gregarious student might feel more included when called upon to speak in class. Understanding students' participation preferences can create an inclusive classroom for every individual.

This research contributes to the literature by developing an understanding of marketing students' experience with inclusion, revealing key differences in inclusion based on gender, and offering a glimpse into how men and women feel included by their professors. Future research should continue to explore inclusion in marketing education to provide all students an inclusive educational experience. Only by acknowledging inclusion as a unique, individual experience will educators truly make conscious improvements towards creating an inclusive experience for all.

## REFERENCES

- AACSB. (2018). *2013 Eligibility procedures and accreditation standards for business accreditation*. Retrieved from <https://www.aacsb.edu/-/media/aacsb/docs/accreditation/business/standards-and-tables/2018-business-standards.ashx?la=en&hash=B9AF18F3FA0DF19B352B605CBCE17959E32445D9>
- AACSB. (2021, December). *Our commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging*. [https://www.aacsb.edu/-/media/publications/research-reports/deib\\_positioning\\_paper.pdf](https://www.aacsb.edu/-/media/publications/research-reports/deib_positioning_paper.pdf)
- Andrews, R. & Ashworth, R. E. (2014). Representation and inclusion in public organizations: An empirical evaluation of the UK civil service. *Public Administration Review*, 75, 279-288. <https://doi.org/10.5465/ambpp.2014.15171abstract>
- Arnold, S. J., & Fischer, E. (1994). Hermeneutics and consumer research. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 21(1), 55-70. <https://doi.org/10.1086/209382>
- Bae, K. B., Sabharwal, B., Smith, A. E., & Berman, E. (2016). Does demographic dissimilarity matter for perceived inclusion? Evidence from public sector employees. *Review of Public Personnel Administration*, 37(1), 4-22. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0734371X16671367>
- Baumeister, R., & Leary, M. (1995). The need to belong: Desire for interpersonal attachments as a fundamental human motivation. *Psychological Bulletin*, 117(3), 497-529. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.117.3.497>
- Belkin, D. (2021, September 6). A Generation of American Men Give Up on College: 'I Just Feel Lost'. *Wall Street Journal*. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/college-university-fall-higher-education-men-women-enrollment-admissions-back-to-school-11630948233>
- Brewer, M. B. (1991). The social self: On being the same and different at the same time. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 17, 475-482. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167291175001>
- Bradley, E. H. (2021, July 14). To boost college graduation rates, look for the successful 'positive deviants'. *Brookings*. <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/brown-center-chalkboard/2021/07/14/to-boost-college-graduation-rates-look-for-the-successful-positive-deviants/>
- Bryant, P. C., Fabian, F., Kinnamon, E., & Wright, P. (2012). Tailoring entrepreneurship education: Exploring components of entrepreneurship education for underrepresented groups. *Journal of Business and Entrepreneurship*, 23(2), 1-24.
- Carter, E. V. (2009). Deepening multicultural marketing instruction: The universal and temporal dimensions of ethnic diversity. *Journal for Advancement of Marketing Education*, 15, 46-66.
- Crittenden, V. L., Davis, C., & Perren, R. (2020). Embracing diversity in marketing education. *Journal of Marketing Education*, 42(1), 3-6. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0273475319897230>
- The Diversity Movement & AMA. (2022). Best practices guide to inclusive marketing. <https://thediversitymovement.com/inclusive-marketing-guide/>
- Dixon-Fyle, S., Dolan, K., Hunt, V., & Prince, S. (2020, May 19). Diversity wins: How inclusion matters. *McKinsey & Company*. <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/diversity-and-inclusion/diversity-wins-how-inclusion-matters>
- Edmondson, B. S., Edmondson, V. C., Adams, J., & Barnes, J. (2020). We challenge you to join the movement: From discourse to critical voice. *Journal of Management Education*, 44(2), 247-266. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1052562919856643>

- Ertimur, B., & Lavoie, D. R. (2019). Calibrating the self: Building self-awareness and encouraging self-reflection in understanding consumer behavior. *Marketing Education Review*, 29(2), 113-118. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10528008.2019.1609993>
- Etikan, I., Musa, S. A., & Alkassim, R. S. (2016). Comparison of convenience sampling and purposive sampling. *American Journal of Theoretical and Applied Statistics*, 5(1), 1-4. <https://doi.org/10.11648/j.ajtas.20160501.11>
- Ferdman, B. M. (2014). The practice of inclusion in diverse organizations: Toward a systemic and inclusive framework. In B. M. Ferdman & B. R. Deane (Eds.), *Diversity at work: The practice of inclusion* (pp. 3-54). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118764282>
- Ferdman, B. M., Barrera, V., Allen, A., & Vuong, V. (2009, August). Inclusive behaviors and the experience of inclusion. In B. G. Chung (Chair), *Inclusion in organizations: Measures, HR practices, and climate*. Symposium presented at the 69th Annual Meeting of the Academy of Management, Chicago.
- Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (2017). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. Routledge.
- Gonzales, L. D., Hall, K., Benton, A., Kanhai, D., & Núñez, A. M. (2021). Comfort over change: A case study of diversity and inclusivity efforts in US higher education. *Innovative Higher Education*, 46(4), 445-460. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10755-020-09541-7>
- Goodman, J. K., Cryder, C. E., & Cheema, A. (2013). Data collection in a flat world: The strengths and weaknesses of Mechanical Turk samples. *Journal of Behavioral Decision Making*, 26, 213-224. <https://doi.org/10.1002/bdm.1753>
- Graham, S. C., & MacFarlane, A. J. (2021). Gender nonconforming individuals and business education: A systematic review of the literature. *Journal of Management Education*, 45(4), 599-626. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1052562920962149>
- Grier, S. A. (2020). Marketing inclusion: A social justice project for diversity education. *Journal of Marketing Education*, 42(1), 59-75. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0273475319878829>
- Kennedy, J. T. & Jain-Link, P. (2021, June 21). What does it take to build a culture of belonging? *Harvard Business Review*. <https://hbr.org/2021/06/what-does-it-take-to-build-a-culture-of-belonging>
- Keone, M. (2019, Oct 10). Why inclusion matters now more than ever. *Forbes*. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbescommunicationscouncil/2019/10/10/why-inclusion-matters-now-more-than-ever/?sh=4fe98c457866>
- Kramer, R. M. (1991). Intergroup relations and organizational dilemmas - the role of categorization processes. *Research in Organizational Behavior*, 13, 191-228.
- Krishna, A., & Orhun, A. Y. (2022). Gender (still) matters in business school. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 59(1), 191-210. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022243720972368>
- Krishna, A. and Orhun, Y. (2020, Dec 23). How business schools can help close the gender gap. *Harvard Business Review*. <https://hbr.org/2020/12/how-business-schools-can-help-close-the-gender-gap>
- Lee, W.C., Matusovich, H.M., & Brown, P.R. (2014). Measuring underrepresented student perceptions of inclusion within engineering departments and universities. *International Journal of Engineering Education*, 30(1), 150-165.
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic Inquiry*. Sage Publications.
- Linder, C., Harris, J. C., Allen, E. L., & Hubain, B. (2015). Building inclusive pedagogy: Recommendations from a national study of students of color in higher education and

- student affairs graduate programs. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 48(2), 178-194. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10665684.2014.959270>
- Maslow, A. (1954). *Motivation and Personality*. New York: Harper.
- McGregor, J. (2019, Dec 30). First there was 'diversity.' Then 'inclusion.' Now HR wants everyone to feel like they 'belong.' *The Washington Post*. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2019/12/30/first-there-was-diversity-then-inclusion-now-hr-wants-everyone-feel-like-they-belong/>
- Microsoft. (2021). *Global diversity & inclusion report*. <https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/diversity/inside-microsoft/annual-report>
- Moriña, A., Sandoval, M., & Carnerero, F. (2020). Higher education inclusivity: When the disability enriches the university. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 39(6), 1202-1216. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2020.1712676>
- Musser, T., St. Pierre, T., Wilson, D., & Schwartz, M. (2017). Experiences of male undergraduates that lead to academic failure. *Nacada Journal*, 37(1), 87-98.
- Nishii, L. H. (2013). The benefits of climate for inclusion for gender-diverse groups. *Academy of Management Journal*, 56(6), 1754-1774. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2009.0823>
- Payan, J. M., & Iyer, V. (2006). Are Female Marketing Students Always More Ethical Than Male Marketing Students?. *Journal for Advancement of Marketing Education*, 9, 26-30.
- Padgett, D. K. (2016). *Qualitative Methods in Social Work Research*. Sage Publications.
- Puritty, C., Strickland, L.R., Alia, E., Blonder, B., Klein, E., Kohl, M.T., McGee, E., Quintana, M., Ridley, R.E., Tellman, B., & Gerber, L.R. (2017). Without inclusion, diversity initiatives may not be enough. *Science*, 357(6356), 1101-1102.
- Rivera, R. G., Arrese, A., Sádaba, C., & Casado, L. (2020). Incorporating diversity in marketing education: A framework for including all people in the teaching and learning process. *Journal of Marketing Education*, 42(1), 37-47. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0273475319878823>
- Russell Reynolds Associates (2018, September). Diversity and inclusion pulse: Decoding differences in gender perceptions and experiences. <https://www.russellreynolds.com/en/insights/reports-surveys/diversity-and-inclusion-pulse-decoding-differences-in-gender-perceptions-and-experiences>
- Saunders, S., & Kardia, D. (2004) Creating inclusive college classrooms. *A guidebook for University of Michigan graduate student instructors*, 46-56.
- Sax, L. J. (2009). Gender matters: The variable effect of gender on the student experience. *About Campus*, 14(2), 2-10.
- Settles, I. H., Cortina, L. M., Stewart, A. J., & Malley, J. (2007). Voice matters: Buffering the impact of a negative climate for women in science. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 31(3), 270-281. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-6402.2007.00370.x>
- Shore, L. M., Cleveland, J. M., & Sanchez, D. (2018). Inclusive workplaces: A review and model. *Human Resource Management Review*, 28(2), 176-189. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.hrmr.2017.07.003>
- Shorter-Gooden, K. (2014). *Creating diverse and inclusive colleges and universities*. In B. M. Ferdman & B. R. Deane (Eds.), *Diversity at work: The practice of inclusion* (pp. 451-481). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118764282>
- Siegfried, J. J. (2020). Trends in undergraduate economics degrees, 2001-2019. *The Journal of Economic Education*, 51(3-4), 359-363.

- Slaten, C. D., Elison, Z. M., Deemer, E. D., Hughes, H. A., & Shemwell, D. A. (2018). The development and validation of the university belonging questionnaire. *The Journal of Experimental Education*, 86(4), 633-651.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00220973.2017.1339009>
- Stern, B. (2008). Course innovation: Diverse consumers: race, ethnicity, religion, social class, and gender. *Marketing Education Review*, 18(1), 55-60.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10528008.2008.11489025>
- Stevens, P. (2020, June 11). Companies are making bold promises about greater diversity, but there's a long way to go. *CNBC*. <https://www.cnbc.com/2020/06/11/companies-are-making-bold-promises-about-greater-diversity-theres-a-long-way-to-go.html>
- Strayhorn, T. (2018). *College students' sense of belonging: A key to educational success for all students*. Routledge.
- Su, R., Rounds, J., & Armstrong, P. I. (2009). Men and things, women and people: a meta-analysis of sex differences in interests. *Psychological Bulletin*, 135(6), 859-884.
- Suddick, K. M., Cross, V., Vuoskoski, P., Galvin, K. T., & Stew, G. (2020). The work of hermeneutic phenomenology. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 19.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406920947600>
- Talbert, P. Y. (2012). Strategies to increase enrollment, retention, and graduation rates. *Journal of Developmental Education*, 36(1), 22. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1035683>
- Thompson, C. J., Pollio, H. R., & Locander, W. B. (1994). The spoken and the unspoken: a hermeneutic approach to understanding the cultural viewpoints that underlie consumers' expressed meanings. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 21(3), 432-452.  
<https://doi.org/10.1086/209409>
- Tinklin, T., Croxford, L., Ducklin, A., & Frame, B. (2003). Inclusion: A gender perspective. *Policy Futures in Education*, 1(4), 640-652.
- Winters, M. F. (2014). *From diversity to inclusion: An inclusion equation*. In B. M. Ferdman & B. R. Deane (Eds.), *Diversity at work: The practice of inclusion* (pp. 205-228). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118764282>
- Zhao, S. (2020). Overcoming barriers to women's leadership and unlocking the power of diversity. Center for Creative Leadership. <https://cclinnovation.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/overcoming-barriers-womens-leadership-center-for-creative-leadership.pdf>

**APPENDIX**

**Table 1. Factor loadings for inclusion.**

Factor	Indicator	Symbol	Estimate	Std. Error	z-value	p	95% Confidence Interval	
							Lower	Upper
Factor 1	S1	λ11	0.698	0.048	14.448	< .001	0.604	0.793
	S2	λ12	0.794	0.060	13.186	< .001	0.676	0.912
	S3	λ13	0.703	0.047	14.903	< .001	0.611	0.796
	S4	λ14	0.748	0.054	13.733	< .001	0.641	0.854

**Table 2. Marketing undergraduate inclusion survey results.**

Survey Item	N	Mean	Sig.
<b>Inclusion in the College</b>			
INCLU_IMPORT	96 (f)	4.53	.002*
	100 (m)	4.24	
INCLU_FEEL	96 (f)	4.04	.037*
	100 (m)	3.77	
<b>Manifestation of Inclusion</b>			
<i>I feel comfortable.</i>	96 (f)	4.39	.179
	100 (m)	4.23	
<i>I have a voice.</i>	96 (f)	3.90	.021*
	100 (m)	3.56	
<i>I feel welcomed.</i>	96 (f)	4.41	.035*
	100 (m)	4.18	
<i>I feel I belong.</i>	96 (f)	4.32	.153
	100 (m)	4.15	
<b>Sources of Support</b>			
Professors	96 (f)	4.49	.012*
	100 (m)	4.17	
Peers	96 (f)	4.23	.826
	100 (m)	4.20	
Class Structure	96 (f)	3.77	.722
	100 (m)	3.72	
Student Orgs	96 (f)	4.03	.428
	100 (m)	3.91	

F = female, M = male

\* = significant at  $p < 0.05$