Critical Reflection in the Marketing Curriculum

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This article examines how we can encourage students to engage critically with marketing ideas and activities. Critical marketing studies are currently on the margins of the discipline, and the ideas and challenges to conventional marketing studies posed by critical scholars are rarely tested or implemented in the marketing classroom. Often these are perceived as too academic and elitist to be relevant to the modern business environment. Drawing largely from debates in the management education literature, this article discusses the problems and possibilities of introducing critical reflection into the marketing curriculum and describes some strategies for encouraging critique in the marketing classroom.

Reflection is a key concept in the theories of learning that inform management education (Kolb 1984; Schon 1983). As educators, we create opportunities for reflection, say, through the design of work-based learning programs and individual and group-based course work (Graeff 1997). We encourage our students to think about and learn from the experience of doing this work. Reynolds (1998), however, argued that this type of reflection, although valuable, promotes an individualized perspective on experience or, in the case of group projects, an interpersonal perspective. The aim of critical reflection, by contrast, is to encourage thinking about these experiences within a broader macro context, in addition to the individual and interpersonal one. This reflection recontextualizes marketing away from the current micro focus on marketing management (Smith and Robbins 1991). Thus, its implementation in the marketing curriculum predicates the inclusion and discussion of wider moral, societal, and political issues (Turnquist, Bialaszewski, and Franklin 1991). Within this approach, students are encouraged to question received truths, taken-for-granted assumptions, and to address the relationship between power and knowledge (Reynolds 1998). A number of philosophical and critical theories, including postmodernism and feminism, provide the frameworks for questioning assumptions and power-knowledge relationships. These frameworks already inform the work of a number of marketing scholars, including Bristor and Fischer (1993). However, for the most part, marketing educators have been uninterested, unwilling, or unable to incorporate this work into the marketing curriculum (Stern 1993).

Our aim in this article is to consider the possibilities for critical reflection in the marketing curriculum and to address some of the problems of implementing it in the classroom. Our argument is that critical reflection has a place in the marketing curriculum across the wide range of marketing courses at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Through this article, we hope also to promote critical reflection among marketing educators, and encourage more widespread adoption of critical perspectives in curriculum design and delivery. To do so, we draw primarily on recent and ongoing debates in the management literature on critical management education. We draw on these sources largely because these issues have not been debated and discussed in any depth in the marketing or the marketing education literature (Burton 2001).

THE CRITICAL ACADEMIC: AN OVERVIEW

Academics are expected to engage critically with ideas, to describe someone as a critical academic amounts to tautology; being critical comes with the territory. Increasingly, however, management and marketing academics are deliberately adding the prefix critical to their work; thus, we have critical consumer research (Belk 1995), critical public relations (L’Etang and Piczeka 1996) and critical management studies (Alvesson and Willmott 1992a), to name but a few. In addition, there are many critical analyses of marketing emanating from academics in other disciplines (Alvesson 1994; Burton 2001; Thomas 1997). Here the use of the prefix critical is a code signaling that the author subscribes to one of a number of radical philosophies and theories that explicitly seek to identify and question the ideologies and assumptions underlying the production and the products of knowledge. When critical theorists talk of the ideologies underpinning knowledge, they are emphasizing that knowledge is a product of the social, cultural, and historical conditions in which it
develops and that it is inscribed with power relations and vested interests.

The term critical is most closely associated with Frankfurt School Critical Theory and with the work of Adorno, Marcuse, and Habermas. Murray and Ozanne (1991) have discussed its relevance and application in marketing. Their pioneering work has resulted in a tendency to conflate critical theory and research with Frankfurt School Critical Theory. However, critical scholars in management and marketing draw their inspiration from a number of philosophical and theoretical sources of which Frankfurt School Critical Theory is only one. Others include feminism, postmodernism, poststructuralism, and radical ecology (Burton 2001; Fournier and Grey 2000; Holman 2000).

Of course, these radical philosophies do not sit as comfortably together as the overarching critical label might imply. Postmodernists and poststructuralists have little empathy with Frankfurt School theorists, and feminists have distanced themselves from all of the others. For example, many feminists consider that both critical theory and postmodernism have little to offer on the subject of bringing about improvements to the status of women and other marginalized groups. For many poststructuralists and postmodernists, critique is an end in itself, an act of resistance to theory. By contrast, critical theorists (Murray and Ozanne 1991), feminists (Bristor and Fischer 1993), and some postmodernists (Firat and Venkatesh 1995) embrace distinctly emancipatory objectives. They aim not only to critique dominant ideologies but also to transform them. This can be expressed as creating a more equitable society, giving voice to those who are marginalized by mainstream discourse, and so on.

Critical marketing theory and research have so far failed to reach out to the marketing classroom. One of the problems is that critical theories and research are often seen as too academic and elitist and, therefore, irrelevant to the needs of current and would-be marketing managers in our classrooms (Burton 2001; Watson 2001). Issues concerning relevance have dogged marketing and management education since their inception. Debates on relevance often involve conceptualizing the marketing domain as composed of binary opposites or dichotomies; theory versus practice, academic versus practitioner, academic research versus practitioner research, and marketing education versus marketing training, to name but a few. Often, marketing theory and academic research in marketing are portrayed as being insufficiently relevant to marketing practice (Shimp 1994).

Critical management scholars do not see being more relevant and being more academic as oppositional (Grey 1996; Willmott 1994). Paradoxically, they argue that marketing research and marketing education may need to become more academic to become more relevant; to better reflect what managers actually do. They argue that the current curriculum is too narrow, technocratic, and managerialist in orientation and, because of this, it fails to fully reflect managers’ actual experiences of managing (Grey 1996; Holman 2000; Pridde 1994; Watson 2001; Willmott 1994). We go on to discuss these arguments more fully below.

**IS THE MARKETING CURRICULUM MEETING MANAGERS’ NEEDS?**

It is argued that the current emphases in the marketing curriculum do not meet the needs of marketing managers. First, marketing, as it is represented in most marketing textbooks, is viewed almost exclusively from the perspective of the individual marketing manager. Marketing education focuses narrowly on management decision making within organizations, largely to the exclusion of considering managing within wider moral, political, and societal contexts, thus resulting in a managerialist orientation (Belk 1995; Grey 1996; Pridde 1994). Second, as Grey (1996) pointed out, management education subscribes to an instrumental view of knowledge whereby the educators’ task is to proffer a variety of models and techniques that equip managers with useful knowledge. Pridde (1994) made a similar point about marketing education, which, he argues, focuses too heavily on the technology that can be employed to aid the decisions of marketing managers such as market segmentation, the product life cycle, and database marketing. This approach to management and marketing education is usually described as technocratic, given its preoccupation with technical skills and competencies (Willmott 1994), and it reflects a view of the professional manager as someone who can competently employ a battery of techniques (Alvesson and Willmott 1992a).

A technocratic and managerialist approach fails to reflect what managers actually do in two key respects. First, a managerialist orientation tends to ignore the fact that issues of politics and morality suffice the managerial role; they cannot be considered simply as an add-on to the marketing curriculum. Watson (1994, 2001) found managers to be practical theorists with little faith in textbook techniques and well aware of the complexities of managing, including complex moral dilemmas. Corey (1993) explained how practicing marketing managers face various ethical, moral, and social dilemmas as part and parcel of doing marketing work; they come with the territory of marketing.

There is little evidence of the presence of wider moral, societal, and political issues in the marketing curriculum (Turnquist, Bialaszewski, and Franklin, 1991), and a recent survey of doctoral students in marketing revealed low levels of expertise in these areas (Moore-Shay and Wilkie 1997). Of course, many educators include a discussion of marketing ethics in the curriculum, but these tend to be represented ultimately as issues of personal or individual morality and responsibility and breaches of ethics portrayed as the lapses of deviant individuals. Ethical issues are rarely located within wider societal, social, and institutional contexts and structures (Freeman and Gilbert 1992; Furman 1990).
Second, a technocratic focus that emphasizes the ‘what’ and ‘how to’ of marketing management fails to meet the needs of managers who work in the increasingly uncertain and complex world of marketing practice. Many practitioners, and some academics, describe this as a postmodern world characterized by ambiguity, uncertainty, diversity, disorganization, rapid change, the erosion of traditional divisions, questioning of received truths, and the undermining of established forms of expert knowledge (Thomas 1997; Holman 2000; Dehler, Welsh, and Lewis 2001). Marketers more than any other business professionals are expected to make sense of and interpret the world outside of the organization (monitoring and analyzing the environment, understanding consumers). This almost impossible task, undertaken in the increasingly globalized and simultaneously fragmented markets, requires managers who are able to recognize, be sensitive to, and able to cope with a multiplicity of very different and often contradictory discourses (Burton 2001; Dehler, Welsh, and Lewis 2001). These conditions require a new emphasis in the curriculum; one based on questioning underlying assumptions, practices, and discourses of marketing (Dehler, Welsh, and Lewis 2001; Grey 1996; Priddle 1994). To prepare our students to cope with change and uncertainty, we need to encourage them to develop the conceptual abilities to identify and question current marketing assumptions, practices, and discourses and to accept paradox and ambiguity. They require these conceptual abilities every bit as much as they need to develop their technical ‘what’ and ‘how to do’ abilities.

**Benefits of Critical Reflection in the Marketing Curriculum**

A marketing curriculum that incorporates more critical perspectives through a process of critical reflection may help shift the current managerialist and technocratic focus in the curriculum toward one that better reflects the needs and concerns of marketing managers. Table 1 illustrates the differences between the current emphases in the curriculum and one where more emphasis is placed on incorporating critical perspectives. It needs to be emphasized that we do not advocate a position whereby the traditional curriculum is abandoned. Rather, we argue that a greater emphasis needs to be placed on macro issues than on managerial ones than is the case at present. These issues would be considered from the perspectives of all parties with a vested interest in marketing, not just marketing managers (Belk 1995; Hunt 1991). Furthermore, marketing theories and techniques would be made more problematic than is currently the case, and more emphasis would be given to students’ experiences of marketing and interdisciplinary perspectives. We discuss the benefits of these emphases in the marketing curriculum in a little more detail below.

**Table 1**

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<tr>
<th>Traditional Curriculum</th>
<th>Critical Curriculum</th>
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<td>Marketing as a management function within the firm</td>
<td>Managers do marketing in wider social, cultural, and historical contexts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marketing studied from a single perspective</td>
<td>Marketing studied from multiple perspectives: marketing managers in companies (e.g., managers, consumers, and citizens)</td>
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<td>Marketing concepts and techniques need to be learned</td>
<td>Marketing concepts and techniques are made problematic</td>
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**More Emphasis on Macro Issues**

Too often, macro and micro perspectives are represented as being two separate, self-contained, and even oppositional, domains of marketing. This artificial split tends to emphasize the bifurcation between theory and practice, academic marketing without managerial implications, and marketing practice without academic elitism. It is argued here that these two domains are not mutually exclusive; the macro perspectives can enhance understanding of the complex and uncertain world in which marketing managers currently operate.

To this end, marketing theory and practice need to be located within their historical, social, and cultural contexts. Indeed, it is the burgeoning subfield of marketing history, much of which is not ostensibly critical, that provides some of the most challenging critiques of the development of marketing knowledge and practices (Burton 2001; Nevett 1991). Analyses of the social, moral, and political imperatives that underpin many of our theories, models, and practices need to be made explicit. Currently, these are invisible, marginalized, or added on to the existing curriculum. These issues are likely to resonate with the everyday personal and professional concerns of marketing managers because they offer some explanations or at least help them understand their current position (Watson 2001).

**Multiple Perspectives**

Most marketing textbooks examine marketing from the singular perspective of the marketing manager. However, there are good reasons why we need to examine marketing from multiple perspectives including, for example, the perspectives of citizens and consumers. To illustrate this, any marketing practitioners and academics now recognize the importance of consumption at the individual, social, and cultural levels. For the most part, we consider consumers as targets of marketing actions; however, the power relationship...
between producers and consumers is more complex than was previously assumed to be the case. Gabriel and Lang (1995) attempted to capture the complexity of the consumer by examining consumers as victims, activists, rebels, hedonists, identity seekers, and so on. There is increasing recognition of the importance of understanding consumers’ experiences of consumption, the ways in which consumers attach meanings to brands, and what exactly consumers do with marketing as opposed to what marketing does to consumers.

Of course, since marketing managers are also consumers and citizens, it seems even more appropriate that the marketing curriculum reflects the multiplicity of their roles. More important, the ability to reflect on marketing theory and practice through these multiple lenses is to begin to recognize and accept areas of conflicting and mutual interests.

Making Theory and Techniques Problematic

The teaching of marketing and management techniques is important. However, there is a tendency to focus on the techniques as means (increasing sales through sales force reorganization) rather than their ends (impact of increasing consumption). Indeed, the acquisition of a body of techniques or technical expertise is the basis on which managers are able to legitimate their exercise of power (Roberts 1996).

In addition, the proliferation of techniques and perspectives such as relationship marketing and mass customization means that there needs to be some approach to examine them from a more macro perspective, to rise above their individual content. It is argued that critical reflection is one approach to make sense of the proliferation of diverse and sometimes contradictory perspectives, through the identification and examination of the ideologies and taken-for-granted assumptions that underpin them.

This requires a shift in emphasis from the current content-based approach to teaching and learning. Market research, for example, is typically represented as a set of data collection and analysis techniques and rarely, if ever, engages in any critique of its own assumptions (Maxwell 1996). Gender, race, and class are treated as purely functional categories that help us segment markets. Ecological and environmental issues are shrunk to monitoring the rise and fall of the green consumer and how marketers anticipate or respond to this (Dobscha 1993).

Acknowledging the problematic nature of marketing theory and techniques enables educators and students alike to recognize the complexities, contradictions, and diversities of the current world of marketing practice.

PROBLEMS IN IMPLEMENTING
A CRITICAL MARKETING APPROACH

While recognizing the many potential benefits of a more critical approach to marketing education, undoubtedly there are a number of problems in implementation.

First, the theories and philosophies that provide the frameworks that inform critical reflection are not always presented in ways that appeal to potential marketing audiences. Grey (1996, p. 18) referred to the use of “esoteric and redundant language,” and Nord and Hermes (1992, p. 219) referred to the “unnecessarily technical and stilted prose” in critical work such that gaining even a basic understanding of this work is made more difficult than it could or should be.

Second, much of the existing critical work originates with scholars from disciplines outside of the marketing academy. Many of them have what Burgoyne (1995) described as a disdain for management and have spent their academic careers, or at least taken up some considerable journal space, representing management and marketing theory as unreflective, totalitarian, and socially and morally redundant (Anthony 1986). Furthermore, critical work tends to draw inspiration from radical, overtly political, Marxist or neo-Marxist philosophies and theories, although this need not necessarily be the case (Fox 1994). Many of these critiques seem to consist of criticizing everything without offering any solution. Indeed, it is possible to envisage marketing students who can so thoroughly deconstruct marketing that they become incapable of managing or simply lose the desire to do so.

Third, as Cavanaugh and Prasad (1996) argued, critical discourse has only marginal influence over the curriculum because its practitioners have failed to relate it to the world of management and management practice. Others have warned of the dangers of critical thinking being confined exclusively to the pages of academic journals (Brown 1996). Since academic reputations are built on publications rather than teaching, there may be little motivation for critical scholars to integrate their ideas into the marketing curriculum.

For these reasons, Grey (1996) and Alvesson and Willmott (1992b) have argued that there needs to be a rapprochement between critical and traditional approaches. To effect such a rapprochement, critical scholars within the marketing academy need to address the criticisms identified above. Of course, rapprochement is not without its dangers: it can lead to an incorporation that dulls critical imagination, a phenomenon that has also been experienced in other disciplines (Campbell 1992; Currie and Kazi 1987). Currently, critical perspectives in marketing, with their ability to shock, provoke, and articulate the unthinkable, provide a counterpoint to mainstream marketing work, which may also help halt any drift by the discipline into self-complacency.

IMPLEMENTATION IN THE CLASSROOM

There are a number of classroom strategies that educators wishing to incorporate critical reflection into the marketing curriculum may employ. The primary objective of these strategies is to incorporate critical reflection into the curriculum in ways that do not result in an add-on approach; critical perspectives becoming just more segments or knowledge added.
on to the existing marketing curriculum. This is the reason why so much emphasis is placed on critical reflection. Critical reflection requires some shift in emphasis in the curriculum but not its wholesale revision. More important, it requires a significant shift in pedagogical emphasis, in teaching and learning in the marketing classroom.

The differences in emphases between the traditional and critical classrooms are illustrated in Table 2, and we describe these in a little more detail below.

**Process- Versus Content-Based Learning**

A content-based approach to learning is inherently flawed for the simple reason that any syllabus that emphasizes techniques can date very quickly. Professionals in many fields have discovered that the application 20 years later of techniques learned as a student is often of little help and may indeed be a positive hindrance to good practice. In contrast, a process-based approach to learning considers the different steps through which learning is achieved, with a view to learning about learning. Besides techniques, therefore, students need to be taught to reflect on and critically evaluate practice at a conceptual level, so that they can in the future adapt their thinking as circumstances change. This philosophy underpins the currently fashionable notion of lifelong learning: that our task as educators is to create conditions whereby students learn to learn.

A number of educators have revealed their classroom strategies for incorporating critical reflection into their teaching and learning strategies, both from a management perspective (Cavanagh and Prasad 1996; Dehler, Welsh, and Lewis 2001; Grey, Knights, and Willmott 1996; Perriton 2000; Reynolds 1999; Thompson and McGivern 1996; Watson 2001) and from within individual disciplines, such as economics (Feiner and Roberts 1995; Shafikford 1992) and law (Ingulli 1991). It is clear from these accounts that they involve strategies that place great emphasis on the learning process, often regarding conventional didactic approaches as entirely inappropriate to the development of the critical imagination (Grey, Knights, and Willmott 1996). Meanwhile, the argument here is that didactic teaching may be appropriate for the teaching of facts but is inappropriate when you are trying to make facts problematic.

**Active Versus Passive Learning**

The traditional didactic model of teaching assumes that students are empty vessels and it is the task of the teacher to fill them up with knowledge (Friere 1972). Students’ experiences are devalued in this model since it operates on a clear distinction between the knowledgeable (teachers) and the ignorant (students) (Sinclair 1997). The learning in this instance is entirely passive. The active learning model, by contrast, involves learning by doing and draws on students’ experiences. Although some students may have little experience of business, management, or marketing in a managerial role, they all have considerable experience as consumers and are themselves products of the wider economic, political, cultural, and social environments.

Perhaps it is not surprising then that the ideas of critical pedagogy have such appeal to educators who advocate critical perspectives. Critical pedagogy is primarily associated with the work of Friere (1972), Giroux (1983), and McLaren (1995). Sometimes referred to as education for democracy, critical pedagogy is based on the assumption that the critical classroom holds the potential to change society at large for the better. It starts with the learner whereby students are encouraged to articulate their experiences. The teacher then helps learners explore how cultural meanings and identities are self-constructed within and against the ideological frameworks of mass culture, institutional settings, and discourses. Students will then be equipped (empowered) with the critical tools or critical consciousness required not only to understand the ideological sources of voicelessness and disempowerment but, more important, to enable them to respond to individual and collective oppression.

It is necessary to reiterate that students’ experiences are neither sought for their own sake nor with the end of providing students with opportunities to develop self-awareness—a kind of (seminar) group therapy. Rather, these experiences provide the starting point for praxis; for calling experience into question, for analysis of the wider social systems and structures that provide the context for reflecting on experience, and for the purpose of enabling learners to transform their reality (ideally collectively) rather than merely understand it.

However, critical pedagogues assume that students are able and willing to voice or articulate their experiences; an assumption that overlooks the power relationships in the classroom and the consequent risks involved for students. Teachers assert their authority not least by the fact that they are responsible for grading students; this mediates the relationship between teacher and students, no matter how “equal” the teacher tries to be (Kenway and Modra 1992).

Ellsworth (1989) has described the very considerable personal risks in revealing experiences, particularly for students.
who are marginalized due to their gender or race, in case these experiences are later “used against them.” In addition, there is now a substantial body of research demonstrating considerable differences in speech, listening, and communication patterns generally between (and within) these and other groups that fill our marketing classrooms (Coates and Cameron 1989). Dialogue rather than promoting mutual understanding may actually disempower and silence the very groups to whom it aims to give a voice (Rigg and Trehan 1999).

Making Knowledge Personal

Much of mainstream academic discourse is stripped of the personal (and the emotional). We expect students to engage in their examination and critique of marketing concepts and theories in an abstracted, logical, and rational manner. Interestingly, we are prepared to accept that consumers engage emotionally with our marketing activity such as branding and advertising but not that we as marketers (and academies) engage personally rather than rationally with “brands” of discourse. Bringing the personal into the academic is an important objective of feminist work. Middleton (1995), for example, illustrated this rational/emotional dichotomy by writing her article in two columns, one column speaking in an academic voice and the other in her personal voice.

To make it personal, we encourage students to put the personal into their engagement with marketing theory and research. For example, reading some of the work on environmental marketing (Seager 1993) or gender issues (Hirschman 1993) is as likely to evoke rage among some students as it is to delight others. The object of this exercise is not ostensibly to make a point about dichotomous ways of thinking or how the rational is valued in academia and the personal and emotional is devalued. Rather, the point is to encourage students to reflect on how their personal biography and history relates to what they read:

Can I see what I think, feel, and do reflected in this work? Why might it anger, disturb, or delight me or simply leave me unmoved? Does it reflect or pose a challenge or threat to my values and my interests, and in what ways might it do this?

Our task as educators is to ask the questions but not to try and answer them; this we leave for students. We do not assume that our intervention or mediation in the public space of the classroom is necessary for students to address these questions, and anyway, many prefer to do so in private or with peers outside the classroom.

Models and Techniques Subject to Critical Scrutiny

Compared with even five years ago, we now have various bodies of material, which reflect these different discourses in a marketing context. For the most part, these critical analyses of marketing are confined to specialist texts (Belk, Dholakia, and Venkatesh 1996) and conference proceedings (Costa 1996). Some journals regularly publish critical work, including the Journals of Macromarketing, Public Policy and Marketing, Consumer Affairs, Consumer Policy, Consumer Research, Consumption, Markets and Culture, Marketing Theory, and Business Ethics Quarterly.

We can invite students to compare and contrast different ways of seeing and understanding marketing phenomena. For example, students might be asked to compare Fullerton’s (1988) analysis of the development of modern marketing alongside that of Fischer and Bristor (1994) and then compare both of these with the three eras schema that can be located in any introductory marketing textbook. From this, it is not too difficult to make a point about interests and values reflected in the academic texts; that knowledge comes inscribed with various interests, values, and biographies and our task becomes one of finding ways to enable students to recognize these. This type of exercise can introduce students to the notion of the plurality of perspectives. Of course, simply acknowledging that a plurality of perspectives exists might be very laudable but may bring with it the risk of students adopting a complacent, or even apathetic attitude, in recognition of such diversity. This may stem from a feeling of powerlessness to affect change in the face of diversity.

Cavanaugh and Prasad (1996) introduce the concept of macro authorship to their students. Essentially, this involves working on the assumption that every individual author can be located within an overarching category of authorship. This category comprises the theoretical tradition to which the individual author subscribes, the paradigm within which the theory is articulated, and the social and historical context in which this paradigm was able to flourish. The task becomes one of locating the individual author within one of these overarching categories. Others (Feiner and Roberts 1995) work on the basis of asking students to consider whose interests a particular theory or technique is serving. Simultaneously, questions are asked about whose interests might be poorly served or marginalized by the theory, or whether it is simply taken for granted that everyone’s interests are the same. Priddle (1994), who argued that it is too often taken for granted that the interests of marketing managers and consumers converge, emphasized this point. The marketing concept, for example, assumes that the interests of organizations and the wider communities and society of which they are a part will converge.

It is important that this task is not seen as a negative or destructive one with the message: trust no text, no theory, and no author. Instead, it should be seen as questioning assumptions about the authority of knowledge and authorship. This is not the same as saying that the text, theory, and author have no authority, a position adopted by theorists at the extreme end of the critical continuum.
Knowledge Remade by Students through Reflection in Practice

According to John Burgoine (1995), the best way for students to discover the inadequacy of the technocratic approach to management and to recognize the importance of the political, social, and moral dimensions of managerial work is to give them opportunities to practice it. We agree but add a note of caution. Sometimes when the "techniques" prove difficult to apply or work less well than promised, students (and practitioners) can resort to self-blame; perhaps we do not really understand the complexities involved, we may have missed something important, maybe we applied them wrongly, and so on. Thus, opportunities to practice should be undertaken in an environment that encourages both reflection on practice and the reworking or rewriting of theory. A simple example may help clarify this point.

Students in a market research class organize themselves into teams to undertake a survey from inception to completion. Market research texts provide clear and easy-to-follow templates for setting objectives, research design, fieldwork, analysis, and so on. On completion, students are asked to reflect on what they learned about the survey process. Generally, students do not find it difficult to identify specific methodological limitations of their work and, drawing from the texts, state how these might have been better addressed. However, reflective accounts tend to emphasize the primacy of interpersonal factors, including different agendas among members of the team, negotiating compromises, leadership battles, and how some minor methodological point becomes the territory for (re)negotiating power and control with and over others. Often students will represent these as an aberration, a waste of valuable time, something that should have been sorted out at the beginning so that everyone can get on with the real work. Key learning points here are that these aberrations are an integral part of doing management and also that the techniques or models, while important and useful to managers, are (re)negotiable within the managing process.

Critical reflection requires students to consider marketing knowledge and their experiences of making this knowledge within a wider context. One way to focus on critical reflection is to ask them to consider, on the basis of their experiential learning, what is not discussed in textbooks and what this might tell them about how the survey process, and market research generally, is represented in textbooks.

On the basis of having completed each stage of the survey process, including interviews with respondents, some students begin to ask questions about the survey findings and who and what these actually represent. The findings, and the questions that elicited the data in the first place, have been subject to negotiation and compromise within the survey team. Furthermore, during the fieldwork stage, the nature and extent of refusals from potential respondents to participate in the survey often dismays students. While these may seem

naive questions, they provide a basis for discussion on more fundamental issues on the roles of the researcher, client, and respondent in market research and the role of market research itself; for example, whose interests are being served?

To illustrate, the discussion about refusals normally centers on what the individual researcher might have done to reduce their incidence, such as rewording the opening appeal to participate in the survey. Focusing on those who elect to participate in the survey rather than those who do not can broaden this issue. Why is it considered acceptable for a perfect stranger to accost someone, say, while shopping, to ask questions about private attitudes and behavior? What broader appeals or claims are employed to justify or legitimate market research such that many more people cooperate voluntarily with surveys than refuse to do so?

In this way, the focus of debate shifts from cooperation with a particular survey to cooperation as a social/societal phenomenon. Here students draw from their own experiences as researchers, research subjects, and users of research. They can also gain insights by examining how the issue is addressed in the market research literature (the fact that it is not addressed can be just as revealing). To illustrate, students can often find (or be directed to) appeals to democracy in the market research literature, including explicit links between consumer enfranchisement and market research (McDonald and King 1996). They can also go on to discuss whether such links are sustainable in the current environment and how this might have an impact on levels of volunteer cooperation with market research.

The literature is replete with examples of the tactics researchers can employ to increase response rates, and this work is important and useful. The rationale here is that students can better evaluate these tactics when volunteer cooperation is understood within a larger context and can also begin to identify entirely new approaches to cooperation based on their analysis of this phenomenon at the macro level.

CONCLUSION

Critical perspectives have an important role to play in the marketing curriculum. Some educators may argue that critical reflection involves a questioning of the discipline literature and professional values that could result in a wholesale loss of faith in marketing as a discipline and as a profession. We argue, in fact, that the very opposite applies. It would be wrong to convey the impression that all students, or even a majority of them, are prepared to engage with marketing in the ways we have suggested. However, those students who are prepared to arm themselves with critical concepts envisage the potential for change rather than adopt a sense of powerlessness. It is these students who are less likely to fear diversity, ambiguity, and change or to slavishly accept and follow professional norms, values, and practices. Indeed, it may be
these students who will identify and fashion new ways of seeing and doing marketing practice, and it is this kind of marketing practitioner who will move marketing as a practice forward and, ultimately, the discipline itself. In these ways, students can reap the benefits of taking a critical perspective. It is also to be hoped that these ideas will inspire other marketing educators to develop and discuss their own approaches in an open forum.

REFERENCES


