A COMPARISON OF MINORITY AND NON-MINORITY STUDENT
PERCEPTIONS OF AGRICULTURE IN ARIZONA

A Critique

Gregory W. Thompson
Oregon State University

This study addressed factors influencing minority and non-minority students to enroll in agricultural education programs and deals with an important topic that has been identified as a priority in our profession. Diversity is an issue that has been a reoccurring theme of our profession. This study is of particular importance to agricultural education in this country as we recognize the fact that we are not serving all segments of society. Perceptions of minority and non-minority students help us to begin to understand the problem.

The author did a good job of researching the literature, provided a thorough literature review and then carrying the findings of the literature review into the results and conclusions of the study. The literature review led the reader directly into the purpose and objectives that were clearly stated.

The population of the study consisted of 3,225 students enrolled in agricultural education classes in 66 high schools. A cluster sampling method was used to reach the maximum number of students. The author indicates that twenty-nine of the sixty-six high schools agreed to participate in the study. Questions arising from the methodology are: Will cluster sampling produce a representative sample of Arizona minority and non-minority students? Did 100% of the schools asked to initially participate in the study indicate they would participate in the study? The author indicated a response rate of 33.33%, however it seems 22 of the 29 schools responded for a 75% response rate. It would be interesting to understand more about the sample, as it seems Native American students were a focus of the study.

The instrument was validated and pilot tested. The pilot test indicated coefficients from .84 - .88 in the study. It would be beneficial to know the reliability coefficients for the sample in the study.

The results provide evidence that minority students are different than non-minority students in attitudes and perceptions concerning agriculture careers and agricultural education. Although not identified as a barrier, it was interesting to read that teachers were perceived by minority students as being the greatest barrier to enrolling in agricultural education courses. Recommendations were thoughtfully developed and provided a solid foundation for future research and program development. Further research to determine differences in minority groups would be interesting to determine if there is a need to target specific minority groups. The author is to be commended for a timely study that is practical and useful to not only the state, but the region as well.