To assess the effect of the efforts to encourage the selection of nontraditional occupations, Vetter examined the extent of change in enrollment patterns of girls and women in vocational education for the period 1972-82. In the traditionally male programs of agricultural, technical, and trade and industry education, the number and percentage of female students had increased. The growth was primarily due to increased enrollment of women in such traditional programs as cosmetology (categorized in trade and industry) and in data processing (technical), although increases were documented in such trade and industry areas as commercial photography, drafting, graphic arts, and law enforcement. The traditionally female areas of occupational home economics and office occupations showed an increase in male student enrollment. Despite the advances in nontraditional enrollments, women and men who enroll in nontraditional programs faced a number of problems, including sex bias and stereotyping; harassment; lack of support by family, school personnel, and peers; lack of guidance programs; lack of role models; and job placement. (Twenty-seven print resources provide more information about nontraditional occupations and vocational education. Groups and organizations that support entry into nontraditional occupations are listed.) (YLB)
In the 1970s and 1980s, efforts have been made to encourage men and women to choose occupations nontraditional for their sex. For example, the Perkins Act and the Final Regulations for the Act prescribe that 3.5 percent of the funds reserved under the Vocational Education Opportunities Program be designated for individuals who are participants in programs designed to eliminate sex bias and stereotyping in vocational education (Section 401.92), often referred to as the sex equity program. Have such efforts resulted in individuals crossing traditional gender lines in making career choices? In choosing nontraditional programs, do men and women continue to face problems?

In order to assess the effect of the efforts to encourage the selection of nontraditional occupations, Vetter (forthcoming) examined the extent of change in enrollment patterns of girls and women in vocational education for the period 1972-82. In the traditionally male programs of agricultural, technical, and trade and industry education, both the number and percentage of female students had increased. However, within these categories, the growth was primarily due to increased enrollment of women in such traditional programs as cosmetology (categorized in trade and industry) and in data processing (technical), although there were some increases in such trade and industry areas as commercial photography, drafting, graphic arts, and law enforcement programs.

On the other hand, the traditionally female areas of occupational, home economics and office occupations showed an increase in male student enrollment. Within office occupations, women have made noteworthy advances in the area of supervisory and administrative management, where they now account for over half the students enrolled in this program, as compared to one quarter in 1971. Vetter suggested that the enrollment changes within home economics and office occupations are probably attributable to the efforts to recruit nontraditional students.

Although advances have been made in nontraditional enrollments, women and men who enroll in nontraditional programs face a number of problems. These include sex bias and stereotyping; harassment; lack of support by family, school personnel, and peers; lack of guidance programs; lack of role models; and job placement. If there is to be continuing progress in the area of nontraditional enrollments within vocational education, these deterrents need to be addressed.

More information about nontraditional occupations and vocational education can be obtained by consulting the resources below. In addition to print resources, groups and organizations that support entry into nontraditional occupations are listed.

Print Resources


Hayes, Rader. "Gender: Nontraditional or Sex Atypical or Gender Dominant or... Research: Are We Measuring the Same Thing?" Journal of Vocational Behavior 29, no. 1 (August 1986): 79-88. (ERIC No. EJ 342 208).


**Resource Organizations**


Coalition of Labor Union Women, Center for Education and Research, 2000 P Street, NW, Washington, DC 20036 (202/296-3408).

Equal Rights Advocates for Women, 1370 Mission Street, 4th Floor, San Francisco, CA 94103 (415/621-0505).


Project on Equal Education Rights, 333 H Street, NW, 11th Floor, Washington, DC 20005 (202/682-0940).

Tradeswomen, Inc., P.O. Box 40664, San Francisco, CA 94140 (415/821-7334).

Wider Opportunities for Women, 1325 G Street, NW, Washington, DC 20005 (202/737-5764).

Women Employed Institute, 5 South Wabash, Suite 415, Chicago, IL 60603 (312/782-3902).

Women's Bureau, U.S. Department of Labor, 200 Constitution Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20210 (202/223-6611).

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