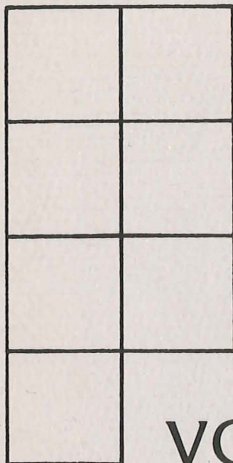




792475



VOCATIONAL EDUCATION:

A SURVEY OF FEMALE STUDENTS IN NON-TRADITIONAL AVTI PROGRAMS

No. 3 IN A SERIES OF REPORTS EVALUATING SEX EQUITY
IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION IN MINNESOTA

COUNCIL ON THE ECONOMIC STATUS OF WOMEN
400 SW, STATE OFFICE BUILDING
SAINT PAUL, MINNESOTA 55155

SEPTEMBER 1979

LC
1504
.M6
M55x
no.3

LEGISLATIVE REFERENCE LIBRARY
STATE OF MINNESOTA

"Our teacher tends to lean toward the more knowledgeable students, leaving the less knowledgeable behind. We girls never had shop class so we get left behind."

"The job and placement office does not encourage women in this field; I would like to think I'd get a job after this extensive study."

"The counselor and one math teacher's attitude was, a women's place isn't in a shop."

"In grocery management the guys are going to be managers and the girls are going to be checkout girls as far as my teacher's concerned."

"If only there were financial aid -- it is hard to keep a home, job, children, and also pay for school too."

"I waited so long to get in the course that I wasn't sure when they finally called about going back."

"The teacher loves to confuse the girls for laughs."

"I was pleasantly surprised by the fact that my fear was silly and unnecessary."

"My mom figured it was a men's course and didn't like the idea at first. Now that I have just about made it through and have gotten good grades and I am most assuredly going to get a good job she has changed her mind and is very proud of me."

"One little bit of encouragement makes me able to keep going for weeks."

"The male students seem to respect me a lot for having the nerve to join them."

"My kids think I'm the greatest and I am more confident than ever. I wasn't sure I'd be able to keep up with the guys, but I found I could even do better with a little extra work . . ."

These comments were made by women enrolled in non-traditional courses who participated in a survey conducted in the spring of 1979 in ten Minnesota Area Vocational-Technical Institutes (AVTIs). One hundred and seventy-six women between the ages of 17 and 59 responded. The median age was 23, with about two-thirds of the women age 25 and under. All the women were enrolled in courses in which male students predominated.

Marital status varied with the age of the students. Overall 58 percent of the women were single, 19 percent were married, 17 percent were divorced, and 6 percent were widowed or separated.

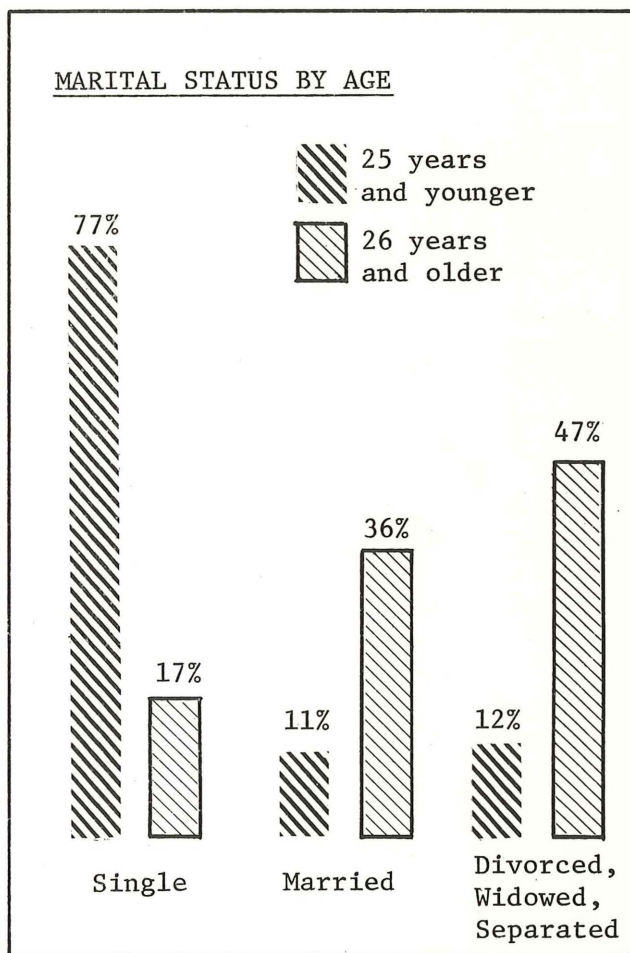
In general, the survey revealed that the major reasons more women do not enroll in non-traditional courses are that they are discouraged from entering or they were never given information about non-traditional courses. Retention did not appear to be a problem for non-traditional students, since most women indicated that they enjoyed the course work and had positive reactions from others after enrolling.

The survey showed that women under age 26 experienced more discrimination while taking non-traditional courses, and cited this as a primary problem. On the other hand, women age 26 and older indicated that the major problems they faced were home-related, such as arranging for child care and having

class hours which coincide with elementary and high school hours. Both age groups felt disadvantaged compared to male classmates in their lack of course-related experience.

The survey indicated that there is a major need for more informative course catalogues and for more comprehensive counseling within the high school and vocational school system. Survey findings showed that:

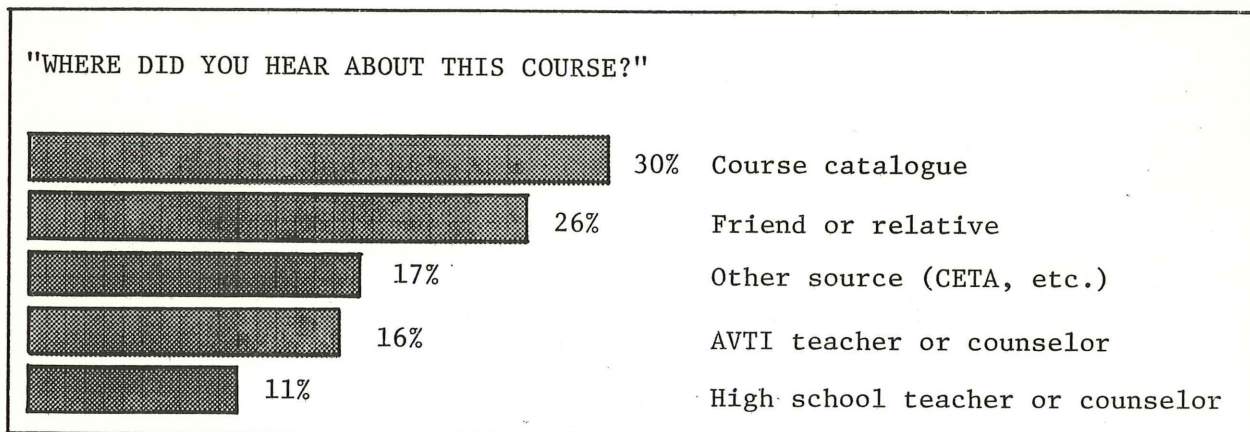
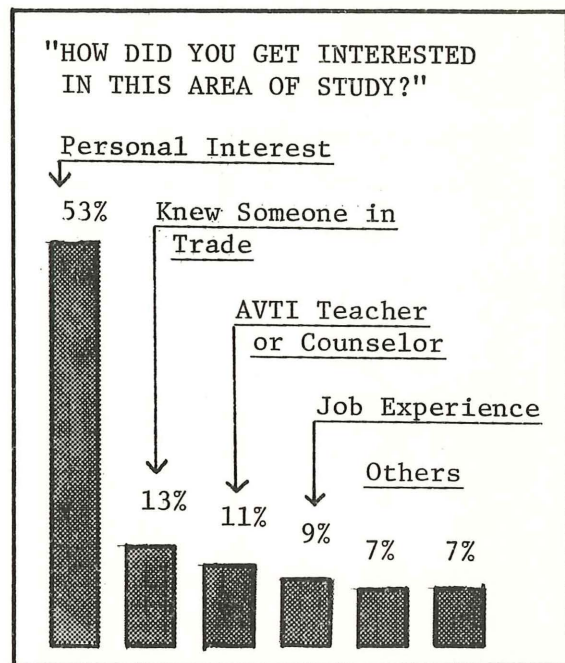
- Interest in non-traditional courses is usually due to personal interest in the area of study, rather than through encouragement by others. When asked, "How



did you get interested in this area of study?" 53 percent answered, "personal interest." Nearly all respondents reported inadequate information regarding program opportunities, and many women mentioned that AVTI counselors initially discouraged consideration of non-traditional courses. Often counselors told women they could not enroll, instead of suggesting supplementary courses to prepare for non-traditional areas.

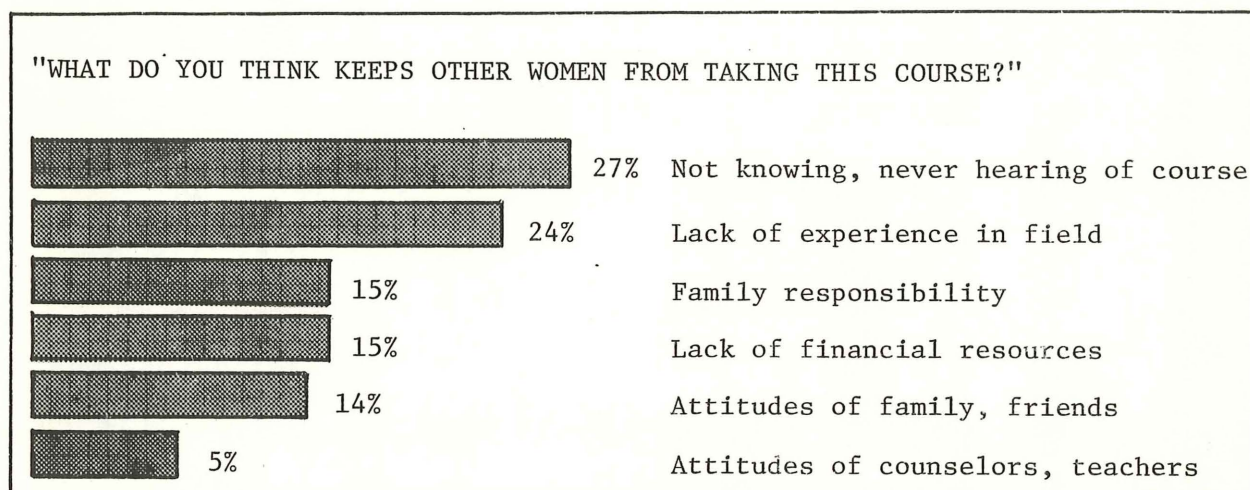
● Frequently women said they had not been informed of the total cost or required background for the course they were taking. As a result, they were financially and educationally unprepared for the course they were entering, and realized this only after starting their program. Obviously this created additional problems for students enrolled in non-traditional courses.

● When asked where they heard about the course, 30 percent of the women reported they had learned from a course catalogue -- the most frequent response. In only one of the surveyed schools did the majority of respondents say they heard from an AVTI counselor or teacher. In addition, women age 25 and younger were the least likely to cite AVTI counselors or teachers as their source of information, indicating that AVTI counseling is ineffective in recruiting younger students into non-traditional courses.



● Twenty-seven percent of the surveyed women believed other women did not enroll in a non-traditional course because they had never heard of it. This was

the most common response. Although only 5 percent of the women believed that counselor attitudes actually prevented women from considering non-traditional courses, a real weakness in counseling services is indicated by the surveyed women's belief that other women are never told about non-traditional courses.

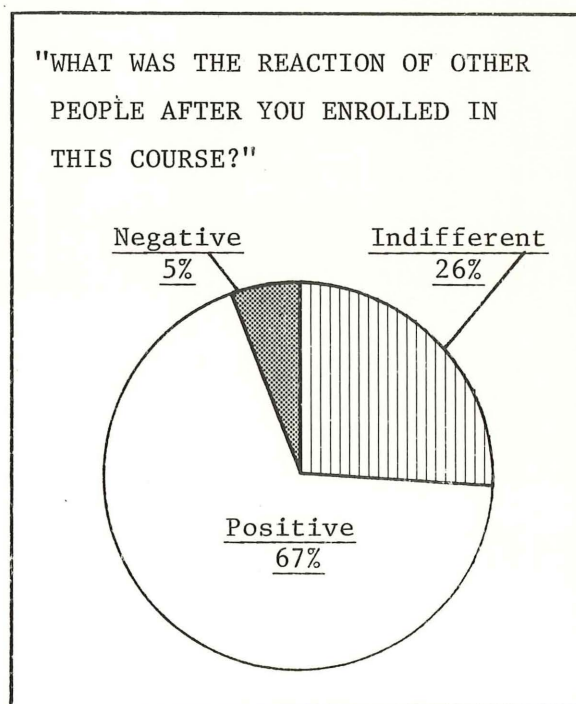


Several women commented that counselors advised secretarial, clerical, and nursing courses only.

● Women age 26 and older commonly referred to higher wages in non-traditional fields as an influencing factor when they were considering non-traditional courses. Often they reported that placement offices, CETA, or career counseling centers had first advised them of the employment benefits and opportunities in non-traditional areas. Women age 25 and younger, who generally received AVTI counseling, rarely were aware of the financial benefits of non-traditional employment for women. These results indicate that wage information would be a useful addition to AVTI counseling and course descriptions.

The survey indicated that women taking non-traditional courses were satisfied with their programs. Many expressed enthusiasm and confidence in their ability to perform in non-traditional occupations. Survey results showed that:

● Most women received positive reactions from other people after they enrolled in non-traditional courses. Only 5 percent indicated that they had received negative responses from other people. Seventy-six



percent of the women age 26 and older felt other people reacted positively, compared to a lower percentage -- 66 percent -- expressed by the younger women.

● Ninety percent of the women felt they were treated equally by teachers, other students, counselors, and in entrance exams and requirements. Although there were complaints of particular instructors being biased, several other women thought they were given special attention and help.

The final survey question asked if respondents knew of anything which would have made it easier for them before they enrolled, when they were enrolling, and while taking the non-traditional course. Many women had no suggestions, others gave informative suggestions reflecting difficulties they were experiencing. The comments which appeared most often showed that:

● Because of the relative inexperience of women in non-traditional courses compared to male classmates, they often needed extra classroom help or supplemental tutoring. Frequently women mentioned crowded classes which made it difficult for teachers to meet their special needs. Because of inadequate preparation, women said they had to spend extra study time just to "keep up" and to understand basic material. And because a woman is often alone among male classmates in a non-traditional course, she is placed under unusual pressure, and often has difficulty asking many questions.

● Adults with families felt their needs were overlooked in the vocational education system. Many women over age 26 stated they had difficulty finding baby sitters and the extra money to pay them. Often classes start at 7:00 AM, preventing mothers from seeing their children off to school in the morning. This problem is not only one which affects women in non-traditional courses, but all students with family responsibilities.

● Women wanted to be aware of other women in their field of study and future occupation. Frequently women expressed the need for "someone who can understand, another woman," and to be assured that there were other women who had taken non-traditional courses and were employed.

● Women in non-traditional courses expressed a need for encouragement. Because they are breaking tradition, and may have been initially discouraged, they need extra support from teachers, counselors, and other students. One woman commented, "One compliment can carry me a whole week."

RECOMMENDATIONS

6

Women need to be informed of non-traditional courses. They should be made aware of the financial benefits of non-traditional occupations and understand the prerequisites for coursework before they enter. Every effort should be made to provide extra help or tutoring to women in non-traditional courses and to extend teacher's understanding of the disability of inexperience many women have at the beginning of non-traditional coursework. In general, women considering and participating in non-traditional courses need support and encouragement.

ADMINISTRATORS:

Workshops and materials concerning sex bias and women's role in the workforce should be provided for teachers and counselors.

Teacher and counselor evaluations should include monitoring for sex biased instruction and attitudes.

Priority in admission to non-traditional courses for women and men should be considered.

Women's special needs such as child care should be considered in the provision of services and the allocation of financial aid.

Class hours should be flexible when possible to provide for women with school-age children or transportation constraints.

COUNSELORS:

Program options, both traditional and non-traditional, should be carefully explained to all students, including information on wage benefits, course content, required supplementary courses, and course costs.

Positive suggestions for pre-program training or supplementary courses should be given to prospective non-traditional students.

AVTI and vocational counselors should work with high school teachers and counselors to encourage increased enrollment of women in non-traditional courses.

Peer tutoring programs or other supplemental help to students enrolled in non-traditional programs should be initiated.

Support groups for women in non-traditional courses should be established or encouraged.

TEACHERS:

Course materials and teaching methods should be carefully reviewed for evidence of sex bias or assumptions.

Less experienced students should be provided with additional help or referred to resources for supplementary training.

Lists of graduates of non-traditional courses or women employed in non-traditional occupations should be made available to non-traditional students.

Prospective employers should be encouraged to talk to students about job opportunities in non-traditional programs and should be encouraged to employ women in non-traditional occupations.

Non-traditional students should be given encouragement, and confidence expressed in their ability to successfully complete a non-traditional program

SURVEY RESULTS

8

The survey was sent to students at the following AVTIs: Austin, Duluth, Hutchinson, Mankato, Moorhead, Minneapolis, 916, Pipestone, Red Wing, and Staples.

Of 176 respondents, age distribution was:

Age	Number	Percent
17-21 yrs.	70	42%
22-25 yrs.	37	22%
26-30 yrs.	27	16%
31+ yrs.	32	19%

Number of responses for each question:

1. "Where did you hear about this course?"	Under age 26	Age 26 & above	Total responses
Friend or relative	41	14	55
High school teacher or counselor	24	0	24
AVTI teacher or counselor	18	15	34
Course catalogue	45	19	64
Other	23	14	37
2. "How did you get interested in this area of study?"	Under age 26	Age 26 & above	Total responses
Knew someone in the trade/class	19	11	30
Contact through high school	17	0	17
Personal interest	92	28	120
Job experience in course area	10	10	20
AVTI counselor or teacher	16	10	26
Other	5	10	15
3. "What was the reaction of the following people after you enrolled in course?"	Under age 26	Age 26 & above	Total responses
	P I N	P I N	P I N
Teachers	98 20 5	43 7 1	141 27 6
Friends	93 34 4	42 11 3	135 45 7
School/work counselors	81 33 5	39 7 2	120 40 7
Family/relatives	97 27 14	41 6 5	138 33 19
Students in course	76 45 4	43 10 1	119 55 5
Other students in school	58 58 2	28 22 51	86 80 3
4. "Are men and women treated equally. ."	Under age 26	Age 26 & above	Total responses
	YES NO	YES NO	YES NO
by teachers?	104 21	55 4	159 25
by students in course?	104 20	49 5	153 25
by counselors	104 12	48 2	152 14
in exams and requirements?	114 3	50 0	164 3
in other areas of your school?	100 11	41 6	141 17
5. "What do you think keeps others of your sex from entering this field?"	Under age 26	Age 26 & above	Total responses
Attitudes of family/friends	48	12	60
Attitudes of counselors/teachers	20	3	23
Not knowing/never hearing of course	83	40	123
Lack of previous experience	74	31	105
Family responsibilities	46	22	68
Lack of financial resource	47	20	67

PLEASE COMPLETE THIS SURVEY, FOLD, AND STAPLE SHUT, THEN RETURN IT TO YOUR TEACHER

AGE _____ SEX m f SCHOOL _____
COURSE TITLE _____ MARITAL STATUS single widowed married divorced separated
LENGTH OF TIME IN THIS COURSE _____
PARENTS OCCUPATION: MOTHER _____ FATHER _____

1. Where did you hear about this course:

_____ friend or relative
_____ High school teacher or counselor
_____ AVTI teacher or counselor
_____ course catalogue
_____ other, where? _____

2. How did you get interested in this area of study?

_____ knew someone in the trade/class _____ job experience in this course area
_____ contact through high school _____ contact through AVTI counselor or teacher
_____ personal interest _____ other _____

PLEASE EXPLAIN ANSWERS

3. What was the reaction of the following people after you enrolled in this course?

<u>positive</u>	<u>indifferent</u>	<u>negative</u>	(rate reactions of each of these groups)
1	2	3	teachers
1	2	3	friends
1	2	3	school/work counselors
1	2	3	family and relatives
1	2	3	students in course
1	2	3	other students in school

PLEASE GIVE EXAMPLES

4. Are men and women students treated equally . . .

yes	no	by teachers?
yes	no	by students in course?
yes	no	by counselors?
yes	no	in course entrance exams/requirements?
yes	no	in other areas of your school?

PLEASE EXPLAIN OR GIVE EXAMPLES

5. What do you think keeps other people of your sex from entering this field?

(check all that apply)

_____ attitudes of family and friends	_____ family responsibilities (i.e.child care)
_____ attitudes of counselors and teachers	_____ lack of financial resources
_____ not knowing or never hearing of the course	
_____ lack of previous experience in this field	
_____ other _____	

6. Are you satisfied with this class?

yes	no	EXPLAIN
-----	----	---------

7. What would have made it easier for you . . .

when you were considering taking this course?

when you enrolled in this course?

while taking the course?

PLEASE COMPLETE THIS SURVEY ENTIRELY, FOLD, STAPLE SHUT, THEN RETURN IT TO YOUR TEACHER