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A Study of the Career Salience, Marriage/Family Plans and Sex-role Identity of Twelfth Grade Girls in Vocational and Academic Programs as Determinants of Vocational Choice

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A STUDY OF THE CAREER SALIENCE, MARRIAGE/FAMILY PLANS
AND SEX-ROLE IDENTITY OF TWELFTH GRADE GIRLS IN VOCATIONAL
AND ACADEMIC PROGRAMS AS DETERMINANTS OF VOCATIONAL CHOICE

_____

A RESEARCH REPORT PRESENTED TO
DR. DAVID JOYNER
OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY

_____

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
OF
MASTERS OF SCIENCE DEGREE
SECONDARY EDUCATION

_____

BY
JANET F. DICKINSON

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This research paper was prepared by Janet F. Dickinson under the direction of Dr. David I. Joyner in Education 636, Problems in Education. It is hereby submitted to the Graduate Program Director in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Science in Education.

APPROVED BY: _____   _____

Dr. David I. Joyner   Date
Advisor

_____   _____

Graduate Program Director   Date

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My gratitude and appreciation are sincerely extended to the administration, faculty and students of Poquoson High School for their excellent cooperation in the research conducted for this study.

TABLES

Chapter 1

THE PROBLEM

During the first half of this century, the majority
of American women worked for a year or two after high school,
married and then remained at home with the children while
their husbands supported the family. Most high school girls,
with this future in mind, were not deeply concerned about
preparing for an occupation.

Today more than half of all the women over sixteen
work outside the home. Numerous factors are responsible for
this change. Many women work to enable the family to enjoy
a more prosperous life style. Later marriages with fewer
children, the soaring divorce rate, the women's rights move-
ment and technological developments which simplified women's
housekeeping chores have all been contributory causes.

Many young women today experience conflicting feelings
toward the traditional wife/mother role and the contemporary
career woman image. This study will focus on the effects of
those attitudes toward vocational choice.

Statement of the Problem

The primary purpose of this study is to examine the
marriage/family plans, sex-role identity and career salience
of senior girls at Poquoson High School and to compare the
responses of the girls enrolled in vocational programs with

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the responses of those enrolled in college preparatory programs.

Research Goals

This research study will attempt to answer the following questions concerning senior girls at Poquoson High School:

1. Is there a significant difference in career salience of students in vocational programs and those in college preparatory programs?

2. Is there a significant difference in marriage/family plans of students in vocational programs and those in college preparatory programs?

3. Is there a significant difference in the sex-role identity of students in vocational programs and those in college preparatory programs?

Background and Significance

Because of the influx of women into the world of work, much research has been conducted as to why women work and what factors influence their occupational choice. Previous studies have looked at factors such as high school counseling experiences (Karbon, 1980), self-concept (Illfelder, 1980), family characteristics and relationships (Goodale and Hall, 1976), cultural background (Ginzburg and Associates, 1951) and attitudes toward sex-role equality (Marshall and Wijting, 1980). The respondents are typically classified as either career-oriented or homemaker-oriented. Some studies have differentiated between women with traditional and non-traditional career goals.

High school girls who elect to enroll in vocational programs have determined the direction of their future career at a relatively early age; and those who choose the secretarial, clerical or home economics course of study have clearly opted for the traditional female role. The selection of a high school vocational program may also indicate that these girls do not consider their career sufficiently important in their lives to warrant investing the time, effort and money required to obtain the further education necessary to qualify for most professional occupations. Girls who enroll in college preparatory programs have decided to pursue career goals which, whether traditional (nurse, teacher) or non-traditional (engineer, attorney), will require an investment in additional education.

This study seeks to differentiate between the girls who choose vocational and college preparatory programs in high school, and explore the possible motivations behind those decisions. It is anticipated that in this research project the girls in the former category will evidence lower degrees of career salience, place higher emphasis on their future role as homemaker, and hold more traditional views on sex-role identity than those girls in the latter category.

The results of this study will be significant for high school guidance counselors, vocational educators, administrators, parents and others who counsel and influence high school girls in their selection of vocational or college preparatory programs of study.

Limitations

The following limitations were recognized and established prior to investigation:

1. The population of Poquoson falls largely into two main categories, military families and families which have resided in this community for several generations and are very close-knit and traditional. The influence of these two factors may compromise the validity of the results of this research in relation to the general population.

2. This study seeks to examine only the relationship of career salience, marriage/family plans and sex-role identity to career choice. Other determinants of vocational choice were not considered.

3. Future implications of this study may be limited due to the rapid changes in women's role in society and the world of work.

Assumptions

The following basic assumptions apply to this study:

1. That the respondents will answer the survey questions honestly.

2. That the survey instrument accurately measures those factors for which it was designed.

Procedures

A survey instrument, in the form of a questionnaire, will be distributed to all senior girls at Poquoson High School. A cover letter to the students will explain that their responses to the questions will be used in research to determine factors which influenced their vocational choice.

The completed questionnaires will be divided into two categories, vocational and college preparatory. The data will then be tabulated and the findings for the two categories will be compared. Any significant differences in the responses of the two groups will be reported, conclusions will be drawn, and appropriate recommendations offered.

Definition of Terms

Career salience. The degree of priority ascribed to occupation among other sources of satisfaction in a person's life.

Marriage/family plans. One's intentions regarding marriage, number of children and commitment to the wife/mother role.

Sex-role identity. One's perception of appropriate masculine/feminine behavior and the degree to which one feels she conforms to that perception.

Overview of Chapters

Chapter 1 has outlined the purpose of this study and suggested its possible significance to those involved in vocational counseling of high school girls. Chapter 2 will review

the professional literature which relates to the study. Chapter 3 will detail the methods and procedures which will be utilized in collecting the data. The findings will be reported in detail in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 will summarize the research, offer any conclusions which can be supported by the data, and present appropriate recommendations.

Chapter 2

A REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A review of the literature revealed several theories pertaining to the psychology of vocational choice, as well as research studies concerning the particular factors which influence women's vocational decisions.

General Theories of Occupational Choice

Ginzberg (6) presented one of the first efforts to develop a systematic framework for the study of occupational choice, and his work has continued to serve as a starting point for the structuring of other research. He found that a person's occupational choice is actually a compromise between idealistic preference and realistic assessment, which occurs over a span of three distinct periods in a person's life. He identifies the following breakdown of stages of choice determination:

1. The fantasy period. Between the ages of 6 and 11, this period is characterized by desire for function pleasure, irrational goals, distortion of time perspective and adventuresome quality.

2. The period of tentative choices. Divided into substages of interest, capacity, value and transition, this period is typical of 12 to 18 year olds.

3. The period of realistic values. In this stage, the young adult explores various areas of study,

makes a commitment toward a general discipline and finally specifies a particular occupation.

Lo Cascia (12) related vocational choice to environment. His research showed that children of well-managed homes learn to plan ahead; however, children of families (usually lower income) where life must be dealt with on a day-to-day basis often develop limited abilities to plan for the future.

Kinnane and Pable (11) also studied the relationship between home environment and occupational choice. Their research centered on the influence of materialistic atmosphere, family cohesiveness, cultural stimulation, social mobility and adolescent independence.

Super (18) developed a self-concept theory for vocational development. This theory combined his five stages of development (growth, exploration, establishment, maintenance and decline) with his theory of career patterns. For females the patterns he found were:

1. Stable homemaking - school, marriage.

2. Conventional - school, work, marriage.

3. Stable working - school, work.

4. Double track - school, work and marriage.

5. Interrupted - school, work, marriage and children, return to work.

6. Unstable - school, any sequence of work, marriage and children.

7. Multiple trial - school, unrelated work.

He found career goals based upon internalization of society's expectations, satisfaction of personal wants and needs, and desire for self-expression.

A theory of careers which encompasses vocational choice, work history, job changes and occupational achievement was presented by Holland (9) in 1973. This theory characterizes people according to six basic personality types, namely:

1. Realistic type - orderly, technical, concrete.

2. Investigative type - observational, scientific, scholarly.

3. Artistic - creative, esthetic, nonconforming.

4. Social type - idealistic, extroverted, adventurous.

5. Enterprising - manipulative, self-confident.

6. Conventional - conforming, conscientious, unimaginative.

A person's attributes determine which type he/she resembles most; total resemblance to all six types determines the person's personality pattern. The interaction of the personality type and environmental climate lead to predictable outcomes. The environment, which depends on the percentage of personality types encompassed, tends to promote some types and defeat others.

Women and Career Planning

Ginzberg studied a small group of college women to determine the applicability of his theory. He found little difference between the women and male groups previously studied

until the realistic period. From that point on, the girls were influenced by one major consideration - they planned their future primarily in terms of marriage. Career plans became subsidiary.

Many young women continue to believe that post-secondary education bears little relation to their future lives, according to the results of a study conducted by Harway and Astin (8). This is one reason why fewer women than men pursue post-secondary education. A tendency to underprepare in mathematics and science also limits educational and career options for women.

In a study of over 1,000 junior and senior girls in Ontario high schools, Glaze (7) found that most of the girls had moderate career commitment. Their plans for career involvement would depend on whether or not they had children and the age of the children.

Steiger and Cooper (17) found that girls tend to enroll in vocational education programs which do not prepare them for gainful employment (home economics) or which prepare them only for low-paying, dead-end jobs. In 1972 they found 49% of the vocational girls were enrolled in home economics, 30% in office education and 5% in trade and industrial. Steiger and Cooper identify trade and industrial, which accounts for 47% of the male enrollments, as the only course which leads to higher paying jobs. Their study also revealed that in 1973 the median wage for men was $11,186, while women's median was $6,335. They identified the causes as:

1. The tendency of women to work in lower paying occupations.

2. The fact that women tend to be more highly concentrated in just a few job clusters. In 1970 half of all women workers were employed in just 17 occupations, while half of all male workers were employed in 63 occupations.

Restrictive images of women's proper role are perpetuated by textbooks, course offerings, guidance counseling systems and the attitudes conveyed by many teachers, according to Steiger and Cooper (17). If students emerge from school handicapped by outmoded attitudes, perceptions and training, it will be very difficult for them to change in their adult lives.

Watson (22, p. 76) states, "Ideally, the choice of a profession is made in response to personality needs, but once chosen, the profession tends to mold the personality of the chooser."

Steiger and Cooper found more than 25% of all women workers concentrated in just five occupational categories - secretary, public school teacher, retail sales clerk, bookkeeper and waitress.

Warnath (21) found that because women are more accustomed to the dominant-submissive situation, they are more accepting of counseling. Even among the more career-oriented, he found women perceived themselves as subordinates and deferred to a male counselor.

Steiger and Cooper's study indicated that instead of offering the right kind of assistance, many vocational education programs actually hinder women by reinforcing stereotypes and encouraging women to prepare for homemaking roles. This practice persists in spite of the fact that 90% of all women will seek jobs outside the home at some point in their lives, and vocational training concentrates on the traditional female occupations, where pay is low and opportunities for advancement are limited.

Prediger (15) hypothesized that sex restrictive interest scores merely reflect the effects of socialization. Therefore, we must revise society in order to eliminate sex restrictive interest scores. His study of high school students produced the following results using the Gottfredson, Holland, Gottfredson Vocational Interest Inventory:

Girls	Career	Boys
67%	Education and Social Welfare	20%
13%	Art, Music, Literary	8%
11%	Office	3%
1%	Skilled Trades, Technical, Service	40%
8%	Scientific	23%
1%	Management and Sales	6%

Ginzberg comments that our school system demands that the student take specific actions at stated times, and confronts him/her with alternatives that will influence his/her future, before that student is ready to select his/her most suitable life's occupation.

Sex-Role Identity

Patrick (14) conducted a survey of high school seniors to determine their sex-role bias. The results revealed that 45% of the boys and 29% of the girls agreed that women should stick to women's jobs and not compete with men.

Marshall and Wijting (13, p. 299) define sex-role identity as "the degree to which persons regard themselves as possessing sex-stereotyped characteristics." Career orientation, a characteristically more masculine quality, may therefore vary with the degree to which women identify with stereotypically masculine or feminine roles and characteristics.

The results of the Bem Sex-Role Inventory (2) evidenced that whether women would pursue their need for career achievement at the possible expense of their family depends partly on the degree to which they have stereotypically feminine self-images.

A study comparing the attitudes of women in male- and female-dominated occupations was conducted by Wood and Greenfield. They found that women in male-dominated jobs indicated a greater desire for recognition from co-workers, becoming an authority, achieving a higher salary and obtaining a title of responsibility.

In a study of reactions to success and failure, Feather and Simon (5) found that women view success and achievement as masculine attributes. Women who would seek success, therefore, must possess high self-motivation and an internalized reward system.

Vogel et al. (20) found that both men and women with employed mothers see fewer differences between masculine and feminine roles than those with homemaker mothers. Women's perceptions were more strongly influenced than men's, and women evidenced raised estimations of their own sex about characteristics considered socially desirable for the opposite sex.

In their study of sex discrimination in career counseling, Harway and Astin (8) found that women are influenced in their career choices by what they believe men think is appropriate. Women believe that the ideal woman should strive for a balance between self-realization and intrafamily nurturing. But women's view of men's ideal woman is significantly more family oriented and personally subordinated. Some women do not seek work roles because they believe that men prefer traditional homemakers, when in fact men prefer as their ideal a balanced woman. Men appear somewhat more conservative about women's role, but their attitudes are generally not as conservative or restrictive as women believe.

Married Women and Work

In separate studies during 1957 and 1976 by Inglehart (10), housewives who had plans to work in the future were asked what would be their main reason for working. In both years the majority of the women listed economic reasons as their primary motivation. Ego satisfaction was listed second by a majority of the respondents in both years. The importance of economic

motivation dropped slightly in 1976, whereas ego satisfaction rose, but neither shift was statistically significant.

Bisconti (3) began a study of marriage, career and job satisfaction with a group of women who entered college in 1961. Follow-up surveys in 1965, 1971 and 1975 produced the following findings:

1. Being married appears to be associated with relatively high job satisfaction.

2. Less than 33% of the married and 80% of the un-married women work full time.

3. Employed married women report higher levels of intellectual and social self-confidence than unemployed married women.

4. Only a small number of married women indicated that marriage was an obstacle to their current employment.

Some interesting statistics are reported by Bomboy (4). In 1900 only 20% of the women worked outside the home; today we know that 9 of every 10 women will work at some time during their lives. The number of working women doubled from 1950 to 1979, and the "typical American family" of father working and mother at home with two children constitutes only 7% of today's families.

U.S. Department of Labor (19) statistics show the life expectancy of today's high school senior girls to be 73.1 years. The outside labor force will include 53% of these girls, and they will work an average of 20 years. These

projections are based on the mortality and labor force partici-
pation rates recorded in the 1960 birth year. Nearly half of
the children under age 18 had mothers in the labor force in
1976 as opposed to one-third in 1970. Women who head families
are more likely to be in the labor force than wives living
with their husbands. This is especially true for divorced
women; three-fourths were working or looking for work in 1976.

Skove (16) finds that currently more than half of the
women on the lower Virginia peninsula are working. Nationally
43% of the married women with children under the age of 6
years are part of the labor force.

Summary

There are many factors which influence a woman's de-
cision of whether or not to work outside the home, and her
particular vocational choice. Research has shown personality
patterns, self-concept, environment, and family background to
be powerful determinants. As a girl matures, she must com-
promise between her early idealistic preferences and more
realistic options. Women are particularly influenced by
their perceptions of women's proper role. They are also
sensitive to the sex-role attitudes of the men in their lives,
whether expressed or perceived. A woman's commitment to the
nurturing of her family may influence her vocational choice.
Many women's choice of the teaching profession is in some
part motivated by the fact that the working hours will allow
ample time with the children. Marital status may determine
the extent to which a woman considers compensation as a
determinant of vocational choice.

The fact remains that women are going to work in ever-increasing numbers. As educators, we must look at how our students are preparing for that eventuality. We must study the motivations behind their choice of high school program and career, so that we will be better equipped to counsel and guide them in those decisions. Chapter III will describe the methods and procedures used to determine the influence of career salience, marriage/family plans and sex-role identity on vocational choice of senior girls at Poquoson High School.

Chapter 3

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

The purpose of this study is to determine whether the career salience, sex-role identity and marriage/family plans of senior girls at Poquoson High School are determining factors in their choice of vocational or college preparatory programs.

Research Design and Methodology

The intent of this research is to evaluate career salience, sex-role identity and marriage/family plans by means of a survey instrument, and to compare the responses of the girls enrolled in college preparatory programs with those of the girls enrolled in vocational programs. The survey will be distributed, completed and collected during school hours, and it is estimated that the entire procedure will require twenty minutes of class time.

Dr. Roy Vorhauer, Poquoson High School Principal, and Mr. George Curtis, Assistant Superintendent of Schools, have granted the researcher permission to conduct this study.

Population

The subjects surveyed in this study will include the entire female population of the senior class at Poquoson High School, approximately 100 students.

Field

The city of Poquoson is a residential community of
approximately 8,000 inhabitants located on Virginia's southern
peninsula. It is bordered by the larger cities of Hampton
and Newport News to the south, historic York County to the
west and the Chesapeake Bay to the north and east. Once pri-
marily a fishing and farming village, Poquoson is now populated
largely by military families or civilians employed by one of
the nearby military installations. The school system is inde-
pendent, there is only one high school in the city, and the
student body includes very few minorities.

Survey Instrument

The instrument used to collect the data will consist
of fourteen closed questions and one open-ended question.
Questions one through five are designed to ascertain marriage/
family plans, questions six through ten to measure sex-role
identity and questions eleven through fifteen to measure
career salience. (Appendix I)

The survey form will be accompanied by a cover letter,
addressed to the students and requesting their cooperation.
(Appendix II)

Summary

Upon completion of the survey, the results will be
tabulated, analyzed and interpreted. The results of the sur-
vey will be presented in Chapter IV and the significance of
Those findings will be discussed in Chapter V.

Chapter 4

FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to examine the marriage/
family plans, sex-role identity and career salience of senior
girls at Poquoson High School and to compare the responses of
the girls enrolled in vocational programs with the responses
of those enrolled in college preparatory programs.

The goal of the research was to obtain answers to the
following questions:

1. Is there a significant difference in marriage/
    family plans of students in vocational programs
    and those in college preparatory programs?

2. Is there a significant difference in the sex-role
    identity of students in vocational programs and
    those in college preparatory programs?

3. Is there a significant difference in career
    salience of students in vocational programs and
    those in college preparatory programs?

Analysis

The respondents were all senior girls at Poquoson High
School. Of a total of 104 surveys distributed, 78 replies were
received. The respondents were first asked to identify their
high school course of study and specific career goal. Of the
78 completed surveys, 46 were categorized as college preparatory,

25 as vocational, and 7 were disqualified by the researcher due to conflicting statements regarding course of study and career goal.

Table I presents a breakdown of students responses to each of the 15 survey questions. The results are given in percentages of students choosing each of the possible responses to the 15 questions. The vocational and college preparatory groups were tabulated separately.

Questions 1 through 5 deal with marriage/family plans. The responses to question 1 reveal that the average vocational student plans to marry at an earlier age than the average college preparatory student. Question 2, concerning family size, shows results contrary to the researcher's expectations. It was anticipated that the vocational students would plan for larger numbers of children than the college preparatory students. The opposite was true, however; the vocational students predicted an average of 1.84 children, and the academic students an average of 2.13.

The overwhelming majority of the respondents in both groups anticipate a democratic style of marriage, as question 3 reveals. However, a larger percentage of the vocational students (16%) anticipate a marriage style with a male head of household than was found in the academic group (4%).

In their responses to question 4, both groups of girls reveal plans to work for many of their adult years. However, 23% of the vocational students plan to stop working after their children are born, as opposed to only 11% of the college bound

students. The vast majority of both groups feel it is necessary to prepare for the possibility of having to be self-supporting, question 5.

Questions 6 through 10 were designed to disclose the respondents sex-role identity. The results of question 6 are contrary to the researcher's expectations in revealing that a slightly larger percentage of the vocational students have working mothers. A possible explanation might be that the vocational students are often from homes of a lower socio-economic level, necessitating a working mother. Perhaps a better question would have been whether the student considered her mother to be a career woman.

The majority of the vocational students, 60%, plan to work in traditionally female occupations; 87% of the college preparatory students do not. Question 7.

In responding to questions 8, 9 and 10, a great majority of both groups of girls replied that they do not believe a woman's place is in the home, would not feel ill-at-ease or uncomfortable in a traditionally male occupation, and would enjoy an occupation which involved supervising both male and female employees.

Questions 11 through 15 were designed to measure career salience. In answer to question 11, 43% of the college preparatory students replied that they would feel unfulfilled or discontent if they did not have a career outside the home, as opposed to only 36% of the vocational students. All of the vocational students consider the role of homemaker to be as

important a vocation as a career outside the home, as compared to only 78% of the college preparatory students. Question 12.

The two groups prioritized their reasons for working differently in question 13. The vocational group listed money first in 61% of the responses, and personal satisfaction first in only 36% of the responses. The academic group listed personal satisfaction first in 48% of the responses and money first in only 37% of the responses.

Both groups prioritize their future, question 14, in order of family, career, social/religious activities and hobbies. Yet there were significant differences in percentages. In the academic group, 20% felt career would be first priority, while only 8% of the vocational students listed career first.

In answer to question 15, a majority of both groups feel they are pursuing their true career choice; however, a higher percentage of vocational students did not. Reasons most often offered concerned imminent marriage plans, insufficient funds for college, poor grades or lack of confidence.

<div align="center">Summary</div>

Concerning marriage/family plans, the most significant differences between the two groups occur in the areas of marriage age and relationship of employment plans to family life. Tables II and III illustrate these differences.

Of the five questions measuring sex-role identity, the dissimilarities in responses of the two groups were negligible except in reply to the question pertaining to working in a

traditionally female occupation.   Table IV illustrates.

Questions 11 through 15, concerning career salience provide a consistent, if not dramatic, variance in the degree to which the two groups ascribe priority to occupation among other sources of satisfaction in their lives.   See Table V.

Chapter 5 will summarize the research, offer conclusions supported by the data, and present appropriate recommendations.

Table I

SURVEY

1. At what age do you think you will most likely marry?

	Vocational	Academic
18 to 20	32%	6%
21 to 23	28%	46%
24 to 26	36%	37%
27 -	4%	11%
never	0%	0%

2. How many children do you hope to have?

	Vocational	Academic
none	8%	0%
one	20%	7%
two	60%	52%
three	4%	15%
four or more	8%	24%

3. What style of marriage do you anticipate?

	Vocational	Academic
democratic - shared authority	84%	91%
male head of household	16%	8%
female head of household	0%	0%

4. How long do you plan to work?

	Vocational	Academic
before marriage only	4%	0%
before motherhood only	28%	11%
before motherhood and after children start school	28%	37%
continuously throughout adult life (maternity leaves)	40%	52%

5. Do you think it is necessary to prepare for the possibility of having to be self-supporting due to separation, divorce, or widowhood?

	Vocational	Academic
yes	100%	96%
no	0%	4%

Table I (Continued)

6. Does your mother work outside the home?

	Vocational	Academic
yes	68%	53%
no	32%	47%

7. Do you plan to work in a traditionally female occupation such as nurse, teacher or secretary?

	Vocational	Academic
yes	60%	13%
no	40%	87%

8. Do you believe a woman's place is in the home?

	Vocational	Academic
yes	8%	6%
no	92%	94%

9. Would you feel ill-at-ease or uncomfortable in a traditionally male occupation such as engineer or telephone repair-person?

	Vocational	Academic
yes	24%	22%
no	76%	78%

10. Would you enjoy an occupation which involved supervising other employees, both male and female?

	Vocational	Academic
yes	88%	91%
no	12%	9%

11. As a wife and mother, would you feel unfulfilled or discontent if you did not have a career outside of your home?

	Vocational	Academic
yes	36%	43%
no	64%	57%

Table I (Continued)

12. Do you consider the role of homemaker to be as important a vocation as a career outside the home?

	Vocational	Academic
yes	100%	78%
no	0%	22%

13. For what reasons might you work?

Vocational	Academic
money	personal satisfaction
personal satisfaction	money
social contact	dedication to profession
dedication to profession	social contact

14. As an adult, how do you think you will prioritize the following aspects of your life?

Vocational and Academic

family
career
social/religious
hobbies

15. Are you pursuing the career goal that is your true first choice?

	Vocational	Academic
yes	76%	87%
no	24%	13%

Table II

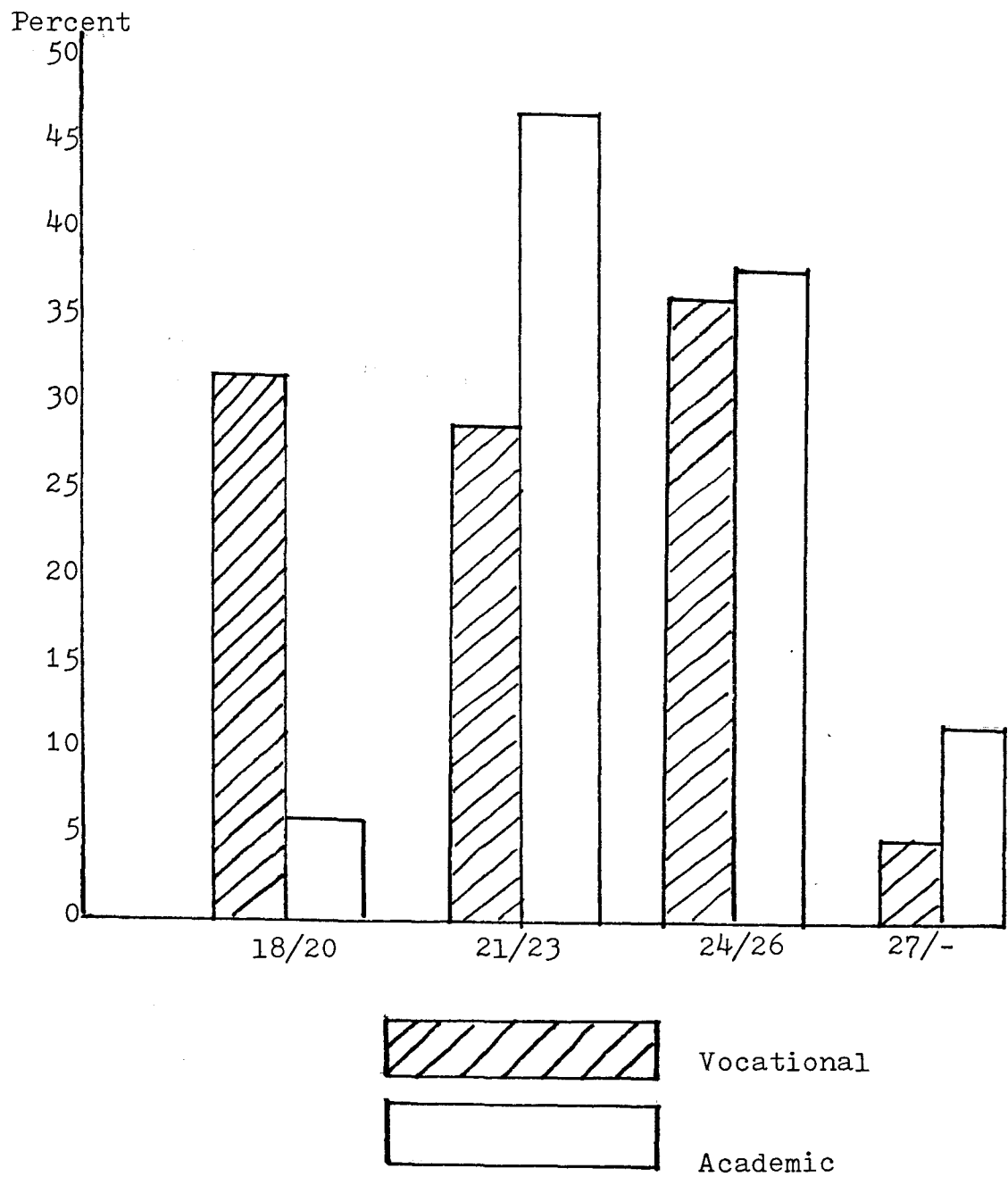AT WHAT AGE WILL YOU MARRY?

Percent

Vocational

Academic

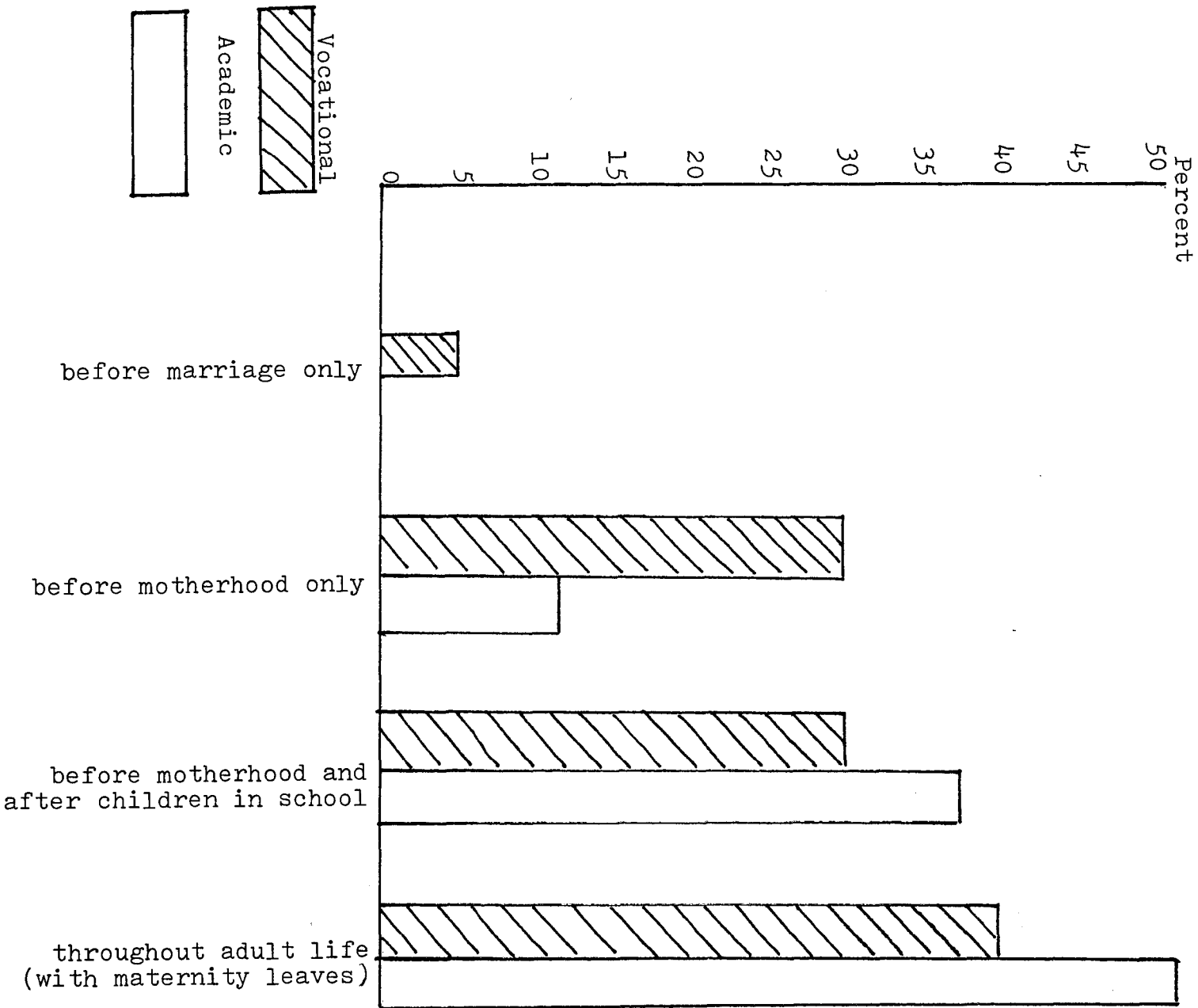Table III

HOW LONG DO YOU PLAN TO WORK?

Table IV

DO YOU PLAN TO WORK IN A TRADITIONALLY FEMALE OCCUPATION
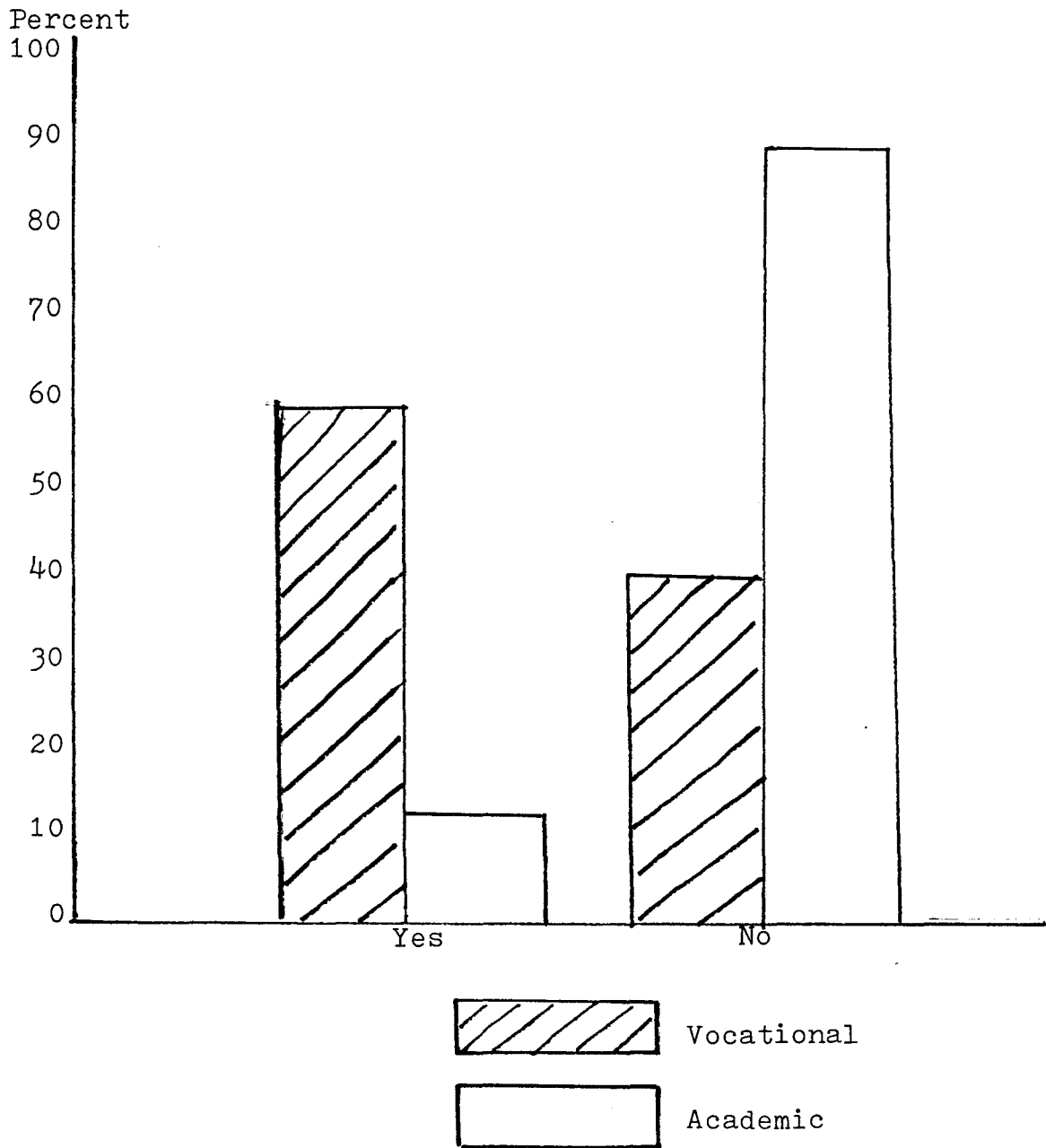SUCH AS NURSE, TEACHER, OR SECRETARY?

Percent

Table V

CAREER SALIENCE

<u>Responses</u>

As a wife and mother, I would feel unfulfilled
or discontent if I did not have a career out-
side of the home.

I do not consider the role of homemaker to be
as important a vocation as a career outside
the home.

I would work primarily for personal satisfaction
rather than money.

Career will be given highest priority in my
adult life.

I am pursuing the career goal that is my true
first choice.

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   10   20   30   40   50   60   70   80   90   100
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Vocational

Academic

31
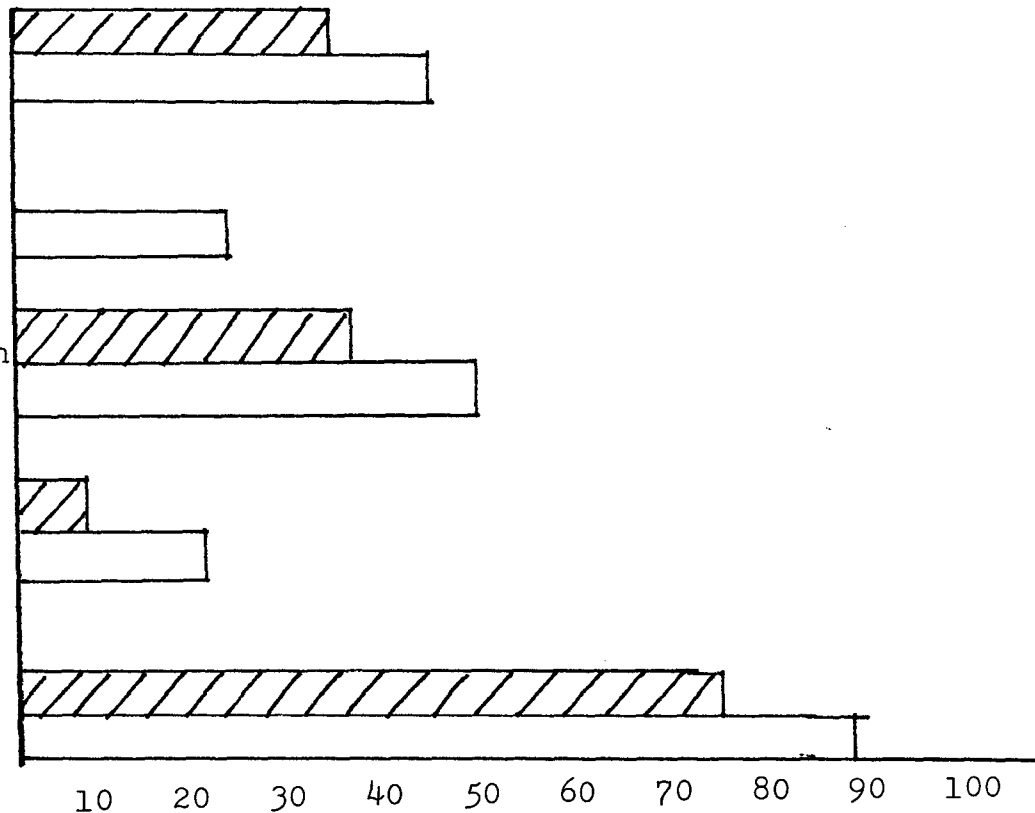
Chapter 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Data obtained from the study was presented in Chapter
IV. Chapter V will provide conclusions derived from the anal-
ysis of those findings and recommendations based on those
conclusions.

Conclusions

The first question addressed in this research asked
whether there is a significant difference in marriage/family
plans of the senior girls at Poquoson High School who chose
the vocational course and those who chose the academic course.
As Tables II and III illustrate, the academic students plan
to marry later and work for a larger segment of their adult
lives. The fact that the vocational students plan to marry
sooner and devote more time to their families (as opposed to
careers) may have been a factor in their decision to choose
a vocation for which they could prepare during high school,
rather than investing time and money into further education
in order to pursue a professional career.

The second question posed by this research is whether
there is a significant difference in the sex-role identity of
the Poquoson High School vocational students and academic
students. While a majority of both groups feels they would
not be uncomfortable in a traditionally male occupation, a

significantly higher percentage of the vocational students
have chosen to work in a traditionally female occupation.
Given the fact that most traditionally male occupations offer
higher salaries than traditionally female occupations, it
appears contradictory that while 76% of the vocational stu-
dents feel they would not be uncomfortable in a traditionally
male occupation, 60% of the group is pursuing a career which
is traditionally female. It should also be noted that in
response to question 13, the majority of the vocational stu-
dents indicated that they would work primarily for money.

One reason for this contradiction may be the fact that
the vocational students did not want to attain the further
education necessary for many of the occupations in the tradi-
tionally male category. It may also be that while most girls
in this liberated generation profess to feel free to choose
among all occupational categories, many are, in fact, still
bound by tradition to choose those roles which society has
identified as characteristically more feminine.

The third question which the research was designed
to measure asked whether there is a significant difference in
career salience of Poquoson High School senior girls in voca-
tional programs and those in academic programs. The responses
in this area definitely reveal a significant difference. The
vocational students' responses indicate that they ascribe
lower priority to occupation as a source of satisfaction in
their lives than the academic group. It is probable that this
lower career salience was a determinant in the vocational

students' selection of occupations for which they could prepare
relatively easily during high school.

Recommendations

Vocational counseling of all students should begin in
the elementary years in the form of career education. Attitudes
and concepts are formed in these early years which will be
carried into adult life. Older elementary and middle school
students should be introduced to more serious career exploration
including observation of the world of work, discussion of occu-
pational clusters, hands-on experience, success models, film-
strips and an opportunity to discover personal strengths and
weaknesses.

Career counseling is of the utmost importance in the
period immediately preceding that point when the student must
decide whether to select the college preparatory program or
a vocational program. The counseling experience itself may
actually be a determining factor in that decision.

The counseling needs of girls differ somewhat from
those of boys. Marriage and family plans should be discussed,
and the girls should be encouraged to examine the influence
of those plans on their career choice. Here the counselor
should introduce some statistics for discussion; for example,
currently only two-thirds of all households are headed by a
married couple (1). Fifteen percent of all households are
headed by women (1). For every ten marriages in 1977, there
were five divorces (1). Over half of the women in the United
States during 1980 were working, and will work an average of

20 years (19). The girls should be encouraged to see that al-
though they may envision their future primarily in terms of
marriage and family, their career may, of necessity, become
an equally important part of their lives.

Sex-role identity should be another topic of discussion.
The girls should examine their attitudes toward the appropriate
roles of men and women in our society, their own self-image,
and how these perceptions might influence their career choice.
Again, some statistics might be introduced. In 1978 the aver-
age male high school graduate earned $16,396; the average
female earned $9,769 (1). Of all women in the United States
labor market, 71% were employed in clerical, blue collar or
service jobs (1).

Career salience should also be a topic of discussion.
This segment could include an examination of when and why each
girl will work, what priority her career will hold in her life,
and how that role will mesh with her role as homemaker.

As educators, we each play a part in our students'
total career education. The presentation of relevant, un-
biased information, and ample opportunity for exploration and
introspection, will assist each girl in choosing the best
possible occupation for the woman she will become.

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POQUOSON HIGH SCHOOL
SURVEY

What is your high school course of study?
>   ( ) Vocational (please check specific program)
>   ( )   Home Economics
>   ( )   Secretarial / Clerical
>   ( )   Distributive Education
>   ( )   Other (please specify) _____

>   ( ) College Preparatory

>   ( ) Other (please specify) _____

What is your specific career goal? _____

Unless other instructions are given, please place a check beside
the response that most closely expresses your reaction to each
of the following questions. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated.

1. At what age do you think you will most likely marry?
>   ( ) 18 to 20
>   ( ) 21 to 23
>   ( ) 24 to 26
>   ( ) 27 -
>   ( ) never

2. How many children do you hope to have?
>   ( ) none
>   ( ) one
>   ( ) two
>   ( ) three
>   ( ) four or more

3. What style of marriage do you anticipate?
>   ( ) democratic, with shared authority
>   ( ) male head of household
>   ( ) female head of household

4. How long do you plan to work?
>   ( ) before marriage only
>   ( ) before motherhood only
>   ( ) before motherhood and after children start school
>   ( ) continuously throughout adult life (with maternity leaves)
>   ( ) other (specify) _____

5. Do you think it is necessary to prepare for the possibility of
    having to be self-supporting due to separation, divorce, or
    widowhood?
>   ( ) yes
>   ( ) no

6. Does your mother work outside the home?
>   ( ) yes
>   ( ) no

7. Do you plan to work in a traditionally female occupation such as nurse, teacher, or secretary?
   ( ) yes
   ( ) no

8. Do you believe that a woman's place is in the home?
   ( ) yes
   ( ) no

9. Would you feel ill-at-ease or uncomfortable in a traditionally male occupation such as engineer or telephone repairperson?
   ( ) yes
   ( ) no

10. Would you enjoy an occupation which involved supervising other employees, both male and female?
    ( ) yes
    ( ) no

11. As a wife and mother, would you feel unfulfilled or discontent if you did not have a career outside of your home?
    ( ) yes
    ( ) no

12. Do you consider the role of homemaker to be as important a vocation as a career outside the home?
    ( ) yes
    ( ) no

Please number the responses to questions 13 and 14 from 1 to 4, with 1 being your first choice.

13. For what reasons might you work?
    ( ) money
    ( ) personal satisfaction
    ( ) social contact
    ( ) dedication to profession

14. As an adult, how do you think you will prioritize the following aspects of your life?
    ( ) career
    ( ) family
    ( ) hobbies
    ( ) social/religious activities

15. Are you pursuing the career goal that is your true first choice?
    ( ) yes
    ( ) no

    If not, why? _____
    _____
    _____
    _____
    _____

February 2, 1981

Dear Senior:

Your assistance is requested in a research study
designed to determine the influence of certain
attitudinal factors upon the career selections
of high school girls.

Please record your reactions to the fifteen short
questions on the attached survey form. There are
no right or wrong answers, and you need not sign
your name to the form.

Your cooperation in this project is most deeply
appreciated. If the findings are significant,
they may be helpful in career counseling of high
school girls in future years.

Sincerely,

Janet Dickinson

(Mrs.) Janet Dickinson
Graduate Student
Old Dominion University

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