

## Module – Career and Education Planning

**Topic:** Nontraditional Job Opportunities

**Competency:** Students will identify inappropriate discriminatory behaviors that may limit opportunities in the workplace.

**Length:** Two Class periods

**Objective:** Students will:

- Identify how some jobs have been stereotyped or discriminated against as “men’s” or “women’s” work.
- Identify biases against age, gender, and race in the workplace.
- Identify myths and realities about women in non-traditional jobs

**Materials:** “*JOB CHECKLIST*” worksheet; Awareness of Nontraditional Jobs Quiz; Answer Sheet, Myths and Realities About Women in Nontraditional Jobs.

**Description of Activity:**

1. Discuss with students the stereotyped roles that exist in society. This activity will focus on discriminatory behaviors toward men and women in nontraditional jobs. Begin the activity by testing the students on their awareness of nontraditional jobs. Discuss their answers.
2. To help define stereotypes, have students brainstorm the kinds of jobs they think women do and then the jobs that men do. Make two lists on the board that include these different jobs: “Women’s Work” and “Men’s Work”. Encourage students to explain why certain jobs belong on only one of the lists and to examine where their attitudes and job roles come from.
3. Give the students the “*JOB CHECKLIST*” worksheet and asks them to complete. Group the students in pairs and ask them to compare their answers.
4. With the large group, discuss how people tend to form opinions based on sex and age. Ask students if they think these opinions are fair. You might ask them to bring up examples of adults they know who have broken job-role stereotypes (for example, female highway construction workers; male daycare workers).
5. Discuss the students’ results and the implications on men/women job stereotyping.
6. Optional activity – Discuss myths and realities of women (and men) in nontraditional jobs.

**Evaluation:**

Students will recognize stereotyping in jobs and its impact on themselves and others. Students will be able to identify nontraditional jobs for consideration in their career planning.

## JOB CHECKLIST

Identify which jobs on the list are traditionally done by men/women.

JOB	MEN	WOMEN
Plumber	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Librarian	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Forest Ranger	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Secretary	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Elementary Teacher	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Photographer	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Scientist	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Babysitter	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pilot	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Carpenter	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lawyer	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cab Driver	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Truck Driver	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Architect	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Nurse	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Dental Assistant	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cashier	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Artist	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Model	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bank Teller	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Accountant	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Homemaker	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gardener	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Radio Announcer	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Day Care Worker	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Postal Worker	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Musician	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Professional Athlete	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Physical Therapist	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Factory Worker	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Newspaper Editor	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Computer Programmer	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Part Two

Read the stereotypes about age below. Write what you think about each opinion. Then list other stereotypes about age.

1. Kids under age 16 aren't responsible enough to have a job.

2. Knitting is for old ladies.

3. Once people reach 60, they are not productive in jobs.

4. Write your own.

## **MYTHS AND REALITIES ABOUT WOMEN IN NONTRADITIONAL JOBS**

**MYTH:** Blue collar or heavy physical labor is nontraditional for women.

**REALITY:** For generations women have worked alongside men on American farms tilling the soil and picking the crops – tasks that demanded incredible strength and stamina. During World War II women also contributed to the war effort by successfully performing thousands of jobs in such “nontraditional” fields as heavy manufacturing, technology and management.

**MYTH:** Women are not strong enough to do heavy labor.

**REALITY:** Many blue-collar jobs are more physically demanding than pink-collar jobs.

But consider some other facts:

Many blue collar jobs are no more physically demanding than housework, especially when performed while carrying a 30-pound toddler on your hip.

Traditional female occupations like waitress, nurse, and home healthcare aide involve heavy lifting too.

The average woman may have less upper body strength than the average man, but when women are well conditioned, make adaptations in work techniques to take advantage of their lower body strength, and use the mechanization that is available, they can succeed in most jobs. Lack of raw strength is usually not a factor in job performance.

**MYTH:** Nontraditional jobs are too dirty, noisy, and dangerous for women.

**REALITY:** Some nontraditional jobs have disadvantages, and workers entering these fields should weigh the benefits from the drawbacks. However, hot grease, toxic cleaners, dirty diapers, and bedpans have their downside too, but nobody seems too concerned about protecting women from these smelly, dangerous items.

**MYTH:** A woman’s place is in the home.

**REALITY:** Whether they marry or not, most American women will work an average of 34 years outside the home. For millions of women, divorce, single parenthood, and economic hard times make staying at home impossible. For many others, the desire to use their talents and training in the world of work makes employment an attractive alternative to full-time homemaking.

**MYTH:** Women will lose their femininity if they work in a trade.

**REALITY:** The sense of “who you are” comes from within. A hardhat and boots can’t change that. A job is what you do, not who you are.

**MYTH:** Women on a job site make it hard for men to concentrate and encourage a sexually charged work atmosphere.

**REALITY:** Everyone, men and women, need to know that work is a place for professional behavior and anything less should not be tolerated on the job. Obviously this is an imperfect world where sexual harassment is a reality. No doubt, it's a part of life for some women involved in nontraditional work, but unfortunately, it also raises its ugly head in many traditional settings as well.

**MYTH:** Women do not have the mechanical or mathematical aptitude for skilled-trade work.

**REALITY:** Not! Women have the ability to perform well in all academic and technical areas required in nontraditional work. Consider the abilities of women with regard to home repairs and operating household machines.

**MYTH:** Training programs in nontraditional fields do not want to admit women.

**REALITY:** Many employers and training programs are actually encouraging women to enter their fields. Affirmative action requirements and simply the knowledge that women make good workers are helping to open doors for females. If you are interested in receiving training in nontraditional employment, consider the following; Access Routes:

Nontraditional careers via traditional job-based career ladders  
Nontraditional careers via industry-sponsored training  
Nontraditional careers via traditional apprenticeship training  
Nontraditional careers via community college programs  
Nontraditional careers via college preparation

**MYTH:** The disadvantages of nontraditional work outweigh the advantages.

**REALITY:** This may be true for many women. But, it may not be true for you. If you like the idea of high pay, working outdoors, being strong and physical, using your innate talents, doing something that interests you, building something tangible, or being adventurous, then this kind of work may be right for you.

## MYTHS & REALITIES FOR (YOUNG) MEN CONSIDERING NONTRADITIONAL STUDIES & CAREERS

**MYTH:** Men are not (or are less) nurturing and thus cannot make good nurses and teachers.

**REALITY:** Many men are nurturing, and are successful and effective in careers like nursing and teaching. Many men also want to be active fathers and involved with their families. Sometimes boys and men are discouraged from nurturing others because it is not masculine or "macho" for men to show their nurturing side and skills. Young boys may get teased for playing with dolls or having a favorite teddy bear. Nurturing is more a matter of personality and skills, not gender.

**MYTH:** A man's place is in the workforce making money and as the breadwinner in the family.

**REALITY:** Although more women than men are the main caregiver in their families, more and more fathers are becoming the primary parent for their children. More fathers are staying home

and taking care of their children while the wife/mother works, more fathers are participating equally in the housework and childcare in their family, and more fathers have sole or shared custody of their children in situations of divorce. With most wives/mothers working full-time, fathers need to participate fully in the important job of raising their children.

**MYTH:** Creativity and the arts (music, dance, visual arts) are not masculine.

**REALITY:** Boys and girls, women and men have equal capacities to be creative. Many of the world's most talented and successful artists have been men. There are many ways to be creative, both in more traditional (such as the arts) and nontraditional ways (designing/creating new technologies, services, businesses, and approaches to solving problems).

**MYTH:** Men are not emotional.

**REALITY:** Boys and men have all the same feelings as girls and women. The masculine stereotype has discouraged males from acknowledging and expressing any sort of "vulnerable" or "weak" feeling, such as sadness/crying, fear, insecurity and tenderness. When boys and men experience these feelings, they are encouraged to distort and express these feelings as anger and violence, protecting them from being vulnerable. Everyone needs the permission to acknowledge and appropriately express all the feelings that all of us experience.

**MYTH:** A man can't make enough money if he goes into a nontraditional career or job.

**REALITY:** While it's true that traditionally female jobs and careers often pay less than traditionally male ones, men can make a good living, supporting themselves and helping to support their families, in nontraditional jobs and careers. Although money is important in deciding what kind of work to pursue, it is not the only (or even the most important) consideration. Just as the women's movement has helped women achieve greater employment opportunities and equal/fair pay, men need the permission to pursue studies and careers based on their interests, skills and satisfaction, not solely on how much money these jobs/careers pay.

\*Adapted from Nontraditional Occupations, Arizona Department of Education

## Test Your Awareness of Non-traditional Careers

1. Traditional coursework or occupations for women lead to low-wage jobs. True False
2. Fifty-percent of all families headed by women of color are living in poverty. True False
3. Occupation, not education, is the most important variable affecting earnings. True False
4. The most important factor in reducing the likelihood that displaced homemakers and single mothers will live in poverty is increased education. True False
5. Teen mothers are more likely to finish high school and postpone subsequent pregnancies when they are enrolled in school during pregnancy and after childbirth. True False
6. Men are entering the workforce at twice the rate of women and are leaving the workforce at a slower rate than women. True False
7. On the average, women can expect to be in the workforce longer than men. True False
8. Women with high school degrees earn the same as men with high school degrees. True False
9. Females continue to be clustered into traditionally female occupations. True False
10. The ratio of girls to boys in computer courses is equal. True False
11. Women who take more than two college-level math courses often achieve pay equity with men. True False
12. Women now account for 52% of the labor force. True False
13. On average, women make 78.5 cents for every \$1.00 that men make. True False
14. At the current rate of change, the wage gap will not be eliminated until the year 2039. True False
15. Over the course of her career, the average woman loses approximately \$50,000 to the wage gap. True False

## Answer Sheet

1. True
2. False, approximately 75%.
3. True
4. True
5. True
6. False, women are entering the workforce at twice the rate of men and leaving the workforce at a slower rate.
7. False, women will be in the workforce for 34 years and men for 40 years.
8. False, women earn 47% less than men.
9. True, women comprise 79% of administrative support workers and only 2% of workers in construction trades. In 1998, the six leading occupations for women were still secretaries, nurses, beauticians, waitresses, instructors, and cashiers.
10. False, no more than one-third of the participants in computer courses, programs, and camps are girls.
11. True
12. False
13. True
14. True
15. False