Gender Straightjacket: Education and Vocational Choice

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The purpose of this paper is to examine whether the educational system in the United States fosters societal constraints based upon gender. Furthermore, we will study the degree to which these constraints limit the choices girls make on pursuing particular professions. The question we try to answer is whether the efforts made in bringing about a level playing field in the classroom has resulted in an increase in the number of females obtaining non-traditional vocational training opportunities and jobs. Our findings show that corrections made to the educational system in the late 1960s and early 1970s resulted in not only leveling the playing field in education for girls but may have even placed them at an advantage over boys. We are especially interested in ascertaining whether girls utilized this advantage by pursuing non-traditional vocations or whether they continued to be constrained by a gender straightjacket.

In conclusion, we will determine whether the strides made in the educational system were sufficient to encourage girls/women to break out of societal constraints or whether the problems of gender identification are so deeply rooted in our culture that it will take more effort and energy on many different areas to correct them. Finally, we will attempt to offer some possible courses of action for policy-making considerations.