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A COMPARISON OF STUDENTS ATTITUDES TOWARD
FASHION MERCHANDISING CAREERS

A RESEARCH PROJECT
PRESENTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
MASTER OF SCIENCE IN EDUCATION

BY
STEPHANIE MICHELE BROWN

APRIL 1990

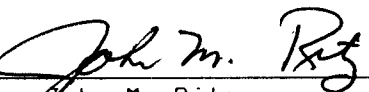
This project was prepared by Stephanie Michele Brown under the direction of Dr. John M. Ritz in VTE 636, Problems in Education. It was submitted to the Graduate Program Director as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Science in Education degree.

APPROVED BY:



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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The concept of a career in fashion has all too often been associated with femininity. This stereotyping has been around since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution when the only career women had was attracting a husband. Women's homemaking responsibilities were not seen by men. All they saw when they came home was their beautifully dressed wives and a hot dinner on the table. Fashion became a woman's job. It also had connotations of vanity and frivolousness (Adams, 1989, p.10).

Today fashion is not just sewing and matching the colors of socks to the shirts; it is management, personnel, visual merchandising, buying, designs, and advertising. Career opportunities for men and women in the fashion industry are limitless. Most of the higher paying positions require a degree or some other form of post-secondary training.

However, in today's society, women still dominate the classroom in fashion merchandising programs. It is easy to assume this fact is due to preconceived ideas about careers in fashion. Hopefully, this study will determine if these attitudes are changing by comparing the enrollments of a two year college fashion merchandising program in the Tidewater area and in the San Diego area. A comparison between schools in the east and west coast will determine if the attitudes are widespread or confined to a conservative area.

Although men's attitudes toward fashion is of great concern, one of the underlying purposes of this research study is to determine why the enrollments

in the fashion merchandising program at Commonwealth College are not increasing at the same rate as the enrollments in other programs. This study would bring insight to the attitudes men and women had about the field by studying the success of a two year fashion program in San Diego, California. It would provide Commonwealth College with tips on how to duplicate their success.

Statement of Problem

The problem of this study was to determine the student's attitudes toward fashion merchandising careers. This study compares male and female student attitudes from San Diego Fashion Institute on the west coast to Commonwealth College on the east coast. This research was to provide the school on the east coast, Commonwealth College, a better way of attracting more fashion students. By studying the attitudes, we can identify the appropriate marketing strategy in attracting these students.

Research Goals

This study sought to identify the reasons why men and women enrolled in fashion merchandising training programs. Five questions provided more specific direction for the study:

1. Do stereotyping and bias attitudes play a part in the low number of men in the fashion merchandising program?
2. Are attitudes different in the west coast compared to the east coast?
3. Are men's attitudes toward fashion careers different from women's attitudes?
4. How is the San Diego Fashion Institute marketing their program?
5. What can Commonwealth College do better to market their fashion program?

Background and Significance

Commonwealth College started a fashion merchandising program in January 1987 in hopes of attracting upwardly mobile retailing students. The Administration had expected the program to be extremely high profile and so glamorous that it would draw attention to itself. The program already had a ready-made market of high school students in fashion merchandising programs. This program had hopes of adding "sizzle" to the campus. Today, the fashion merchandising program is only three years old, but it is not gaining enrollment

as rapidly as expected. Administration is puzzled as to why the fashion merchandising program is not growing. This puzzle might be solved by studying men's and women's attitudes toward fashion careers.

There had been a number of informal grant programs that had aided state colleges in designing programs to recruit or enhance retention of men and women in programs considered non-traditional for their sex. One example of this was done by Alfred State University, College of Technology, in New York. Through a Sex Equity Grant awarded in August 1986, Operation AWARE (Adults Working to Advance through Retraining and Education) was established. This project was developed to recruit and enhance retention of men into their nursing program and women into their electronics program. Basically, the project developed aggressive promotional activities that were implemented by the admission representatives. No statistics or data was collected for Operation AWARE. Through a telephone interview with Barbara Fletcher, one of the developers of the project, information on its success was confirmed. Fletcher noted that there was a slight increase in the enrollment after the project. Some of their activities included seminars through the YMCA and public libraries and career days in high schools (Fletcher, 1990).

A similar research grant was done by Marybeth Hess, Admissions Counselor at Morrisville State University, Agricultural and Technical College. Again, this was a short term informal study that focused on career opportunities for men and women considering non-traditional careers for their sex (Rhodes, 1990).

In both cases, the studies had similar questions about recruiting men in non-traditional careers for their sex. Because both studies were not continued for a substantial amount of time and no follow-up study was done, enrollment figures today at the colleges cannot be a viable measurement for their success.

However, the results of this study may provide insight to how men may be recruited in this non-traditional career (fashion merchandising), thus aiding in increasing the enrollment of Commonwealth College. This research study also focused on an issue that had not been fully explored through other studies, concerning retention and recruitment of students in non-traditional careers.

Limitations

This study was limited to two educational institutions: In San Diego, Fashion Careers of California and Commonwealth College's Fashion Merchandising program. The limitations of this study were as follows:

1. Terms such as bias and stereotyping were difficult to measure with statistics but were detectable with surveys and personal interviews.
2. The enrollment numbers of the two programs differ.
3. The post-secondary institute in San Diego specializes in fashion careers where as the college in Virginia Beach has other occupational programs.

Assumptions

This research study assumes that both fashion merchandising programs have the same goals. These programs were specifically designed to ensure that students are gaining the same competencies needed for rapid advancement in retail. Both schools are degree granting institutes with the same recognized

national accreditation. It has also assumed that student's stereotyping of the fashion merchandising field considerably diminishes after the first year of education.

Procedures

A survey was developed and administered to students enrolled in the fashion merchandising programs at Commonwealth College and the San Diego Fashion Institute. This survey asked students why they chose a course in fashion merchandising. The results provided insight to whether or not students had a realistic idea about the opportunities in the fashion field.

Because tracking individuals who decided not to major in fashion merchandising was difficult, personal interviews with the prospective admission representatives would provide the researcher with the student's major questions about fashion careers. Telephone interviews with other institutions who had done similar research studies would enhance collection of data (Hess, Morrisville State University, Agricultural and Technical College; and Schwent, Alfred State University, College of Technology, New York).

The results of the surveys and interviews were compiled in two master lists (Commonwealth's list and San Diego's list) and ranked in order of importance. The attitudes that were expressed the most were ranked the highest. The study compared the two lists of attitudes from each institute.

Also, a statistical review of the male and female ratio of both programs would demonstrate the difference between the two colleges. The data should reveal an increase or decrease in the men and women enrolling in the fashion

merchandising programs within a five year time period. The data gathered from this study enabled conclusions to be formed on the similarities and differences of the two institutes.

Definition of Terms

The following terms were used throughout this study. They were listed and defined to assist the reader's comprehension of this study.

Operation AWARE - Adults Working to Advance through Retraining and Education. A project undertaken by Alfred State College to recruit men in nursing.

Fashion Merchandising - The occupation that involves the buying and selling functions of fashion apparel.

Attitude - A learned opinion or feeling towards a concept or object.

Stereotype - A standardized, oversimplified opinion shared by a group about a concept, object, or situation.

Marketing - Activities involved in promoting and selling a product or service.

Overview

Chapter One has stated the purpose of the study which was to compare west and east coast student's attitudes toward fashion merchandising careers. Included in this chapter was the study's research goals, background and significance, limitations, assumptions, and definition of terms.

Chapter Two will review literature related to the study. Chapter Three will describe in detail the methods and procedures used in conducting the research study. Chapter Four will report on the results of the study. Chapter Five will summarize the research study and draw conclusions.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Presented in Chapter II were sections concerning the purpose of the Fashion Merchandising program and the opportunities in fashion merchandising. This chapter focused on the qualifications, job descriptions and career outlook for students in this field. It also investigated several studies concerned with increasing the awareness and potential of nontraditional careers and eliminating disproportional enrollments in vocational education programs.

Purpose of the Fashion Merchandising Program

The purpose of the Fashion Merchandising program at Commonwealth College was to train students for an entry level management position in fashion merchandising. It provided sound business skills and was flexible to meet the ever-changing needs of the business community. The objectives of the program were to train students in fashion merchandising through an extensive eighteen month day or night program which requires completion of twenty-four courses.

Some of the courses in the Fashion Merchandising program that were required for graduation were as follows: Introduction to Fashion Merchandising, Textile Principles, Retail Management, Fashion Buying, Accounting Principles I, Business Organization, Principles of Marketing, Computer Concepts, College Math and English, Oral Communications and Written Communications. All of these courses were helpful in aiding the student to gain the skills necessary to be competitive in the fast-paced world of fashion.

Opportunities in Fashion Merchandising

Retail outlets had become so numerous throughout the country that it made career opportunities in fashion merchandising more obtainable. There are many career options available in Fashion Merchandising. Some of these exciting opportunities included:

The Merchandise Clerk or Stock Workers

This position was an excellent step for a student to get his or her foot in the door of a retail establishment. The merchandise clerk must be detail-oriented and be able to check merchandise in quickly and accurately. This position was the first rung on the career ladder. It was recommended the student obtain this position before graduation from the Fashion Merchandising program. (Dolber, 1975) In Virginia, it was estimated that approximately 138,451 sales clerks were employed in 1984. The projected employment for 1995 was 183,414. (VEC 1987)

Assistant Buyer

This position is a trainee position before becoming a buyer. The assistant buyer must be detail-oriented and have knowledge of the merchandising, inventory, supervisory sales and stock, and handling the department's budget. (Dolber, 1975)

The Buyer or Department Head

This is likely the most important position in the merchandising process. The buyer's responsibility was to match the correct merchandise with the store's customers and keep the store profitable. This position required much

traveling to showrooms and factories all over the world. (Dolber, 1975) In Virginia there were approximately 4,221 retail buyers employed in 1984. The projected employment for 1995 was 5,585. (VEC, 1987)

The Merchandise Manager

The next step on the ladder would be becoming a merchandise manager. Merchandise managers work closely with buyers and help them plan their trips. They were responsible for the training of buyers, assistants, merchandise clerks, and salespeople. (Dolber, 1975)

Fashion Coordinator

Another career option that did not follow the sale career ladder was becoming a fashion coordinator. This was the most competitive job in the world of fashion. The Fashion Coordinator is responsible for maintaining the store's image through fashion shows, research on trends, and other promotion activities. To get started in this career path one must first become an assistant to the fashion coordinator.

The Store Manager

The store manager was responsible for all operations in the store: opening and closing the store, serving customers, supplying, hiring, training, displaying, promoting the store and handling store security. One must become an assistant to the store manager to obtain such a position. (Dolber, 1975) In Virginia there were 5,132 store managers employed in 1985. The projected employment for 1995 was 6,500. (VEC, 1987)

This study demonstrated that there are many different avenues a student can take with training in Fashion Merchandising. Figure 1 illustrates the hierarchy of positions in a chart form.

THE MERCHANDISING DIVISION

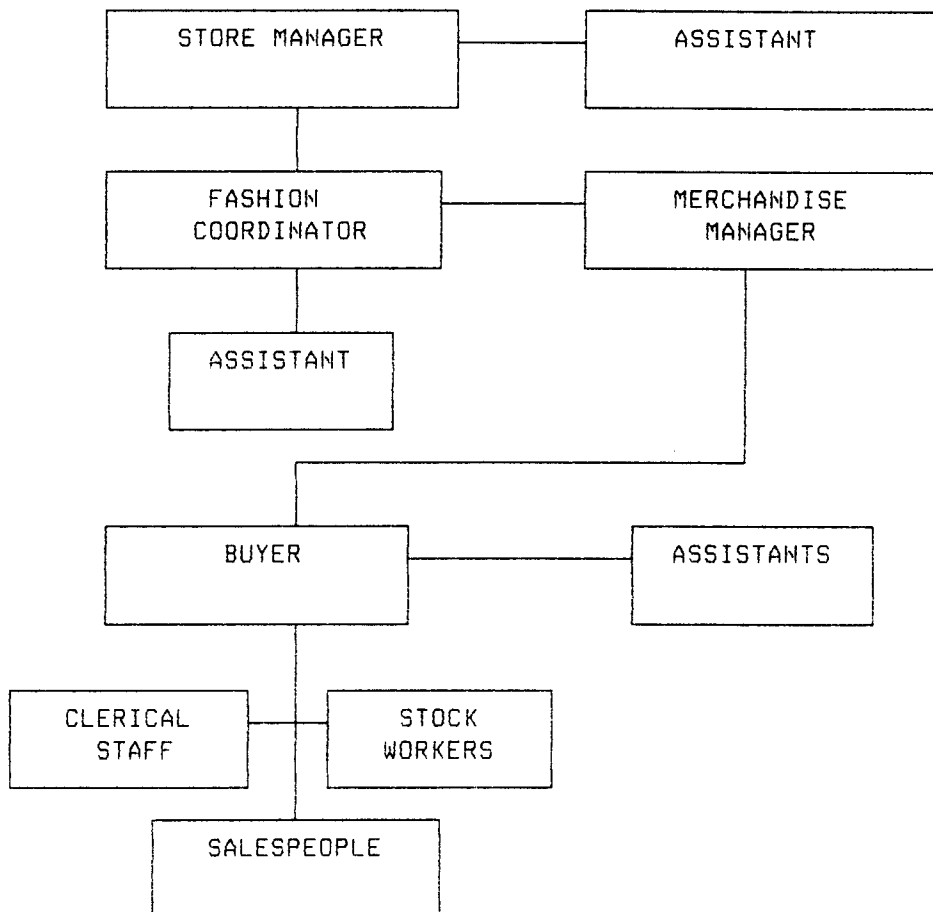


Figure 1
(Dolber, 1975, p. 79)

Related Projects to Promote Non-Traditional Careers

The following section investigated several studies that have been successful in increasing awareness and potential of non-traditional careers. Fashion merchandising was the non-traditional career of this study. One of the research goals was to determine how to overcome stereotyping and bias for fashion merchandising. A review of related projects may prove helpful to this study.

A project conducted in Broward County, Florida, explored the possibilities of encouraging women to participate in non-traditional vocational programs. Middle school age students were used in this study because of their generally accepted open-mindedness. During school presentations, students were given a pre-test and a post-test on their attitudes regarding sex equity. The test revealed that middle school students were more likely to change attitudes about sex stereotypes. (Zylinski, 1987, p. 22)

This study formed substantial evidence that instructional materials can be a major factor in achieving sex equity. Sex-affirmative individual aides that show males and females in non-traditional roles have positive effects, especially for younger students.

To achieve maximum results, this study developed an educational program utilizing several media approaches. The presentations include video cassettes, films, brochures, posters, public service announcements, guest speakers and direct meetings with students. The pre-test revealed that 82 students out of 1900 students had sex bias attitudes toward non-traditional careers. The post-

test showed only 37 students still had a problem accepting the reality of sex equity in the workplace. In order to achieve 100 percent success, awareness (education) of non-traditional careers must be reinforced at all levels in the education system. (Zylinski, 1987, p. 22)

Another successful project entitled, "Masculinity, Femininity, and Gender Role Conflict: Implications for the Helping Professions", was offered as a graduate summer class at Northeastern University. The six-day, 36 hour workshop was designed to help adults discuss and analyze their gender stereotyping and conflicts.

Some of the main principles discussed in the workshop were adults' gender role conflict and transitions. The workshop discussed how having stereotypical thinking and sex bias can cause conflict when rigid and result in personal restriction or devaluation of others and self. One outcome of this type of conflict is "gender role strain". This occurs when mental tension is experienced as a result of rigid expectations of norms of masculinity and femininity. This process can lead to poor psychological adjustment and self-esteem. (O'Neil, 1987, p. 10)

This gender role strain needs to be abolished before an individual is open-minded and able to function in a non-traditional career. This workshop was another form of awareness education used to break down sex bias and stereotypical thinking. (O'Neil, 1987, p. 10)

Another project was also targeted directly to high school age students. High school students need more information and "hands-on" experience with a wide variety of career opportunities before proper decisions can be made on career choices. A two week workshop for teenaged girls was developed to actively introduce them to eight different non-traditional careers: auto

mechanics, law enforcement, EMT/paramedic, livestock production, life science, hotel management, broadcasting, and advertising. An exciting, dynamic atmosphere was developed by staff at Sarasota County Vocational-Technical Center in Sarasota, Florida. The staff wanted the activities to be as much hands-on as possible. Many guest speakers and female role models were involved in the presentations at the workshop. It was no surprise that all the girls completed the workshop and 82 percent showed an increase in understanding of non-traditional career choices. (Thinking About Non-Traditional Careers, 1987, p. 25)

Another workshop conducted in Florida by Valencia Community College recruited sixty displaced homemakers and high school women into their programs. The workshop's primary objective was to inform women of the advantages of technological careers. Again, many hands-on activities, field trips, and guest speakers made this workshop successful. The name of this workshop was Project NOTE (Non-traditional Options in Training for Employment). The secondary objective was to encourage employers to hire women in non-traditional careers. This objective was not as successful as the first objective.

Common barriers expressed by women during the project included:

1. Financial expenses involved in training.
2. The difficulty in giving up current jobs in order to enroll in high wage training, and
3. The expense of child care while training.

This project was successful in educating women, but not so successful in job placements. (Fisher, 1987, p. 32)

Summary

A review of literature revealed that little was known, or had been explored, to promote sex equity for a specific program like fashion merchandising. Most of the studies reviewed were specifically directed toward women. The studies in Chapter Two implemented projects to break down any sex biases or stereotyped thinking that would prevent anyone from seeking non-traditional careers. The programs involved in this type of study emphasized open students' minds about non-traditional careers and that educators must point out the many rewards offered by non-traditional careers. Educating the public and providing additional information was the key to overcoming bias and stereotyped thinking. Ignorance is often the cause for bias attitudes and stereotyping. Education can cure ignorance, thus eliminating the stereotypical attitudes that hinder enrollment of non-traditional vocational education programs.

CHAPTER III

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

It was the purpose of this study to compare male and female student attitudes toward fashion merchandising careers. This study compared student's attitudes by sex from a school on the east coast with a school on the west coast. This chapter will outline the methods and procedures used in determining if there is a difference of student's attitudes, by sex and geographical area, toward fashion careers. Also provided in this chapter are sections on survey design, data collection and summary.

Population

The population of this study consisted of newly enrolled students at Commonwealth College in the Tidewater area of Virginia and students in an introductory course at the San Diego Fashion Institution. Newly enrolled students were picked for the study so that pre-conceived ideas about fashion merchandising careers would be detectable. To realize a truer representation in the collected data of the student's attitudes, it was assumed that student's stereotyping of the fashion field considerably diminishes after the first year of education. Therefore, it was necessary to survey the students before their education advanced. Sixty-four individuals, ranging in ages eighteen to fifty, participated in this survey.

Instrument Design

An instrument (Appendix A) was then designed explicitly to solicit that data from the respondents necessary to the completion of this study. The survey was designed using the Likert method of opinion measurement. A series of relevant questions regarding their opinions on issues in fashion merchandising were included in the survey. Three open end questions were included concerning the respondents' reason for choosing fashion merchandising as their career goal. This survey, along with a cover letter (Appendix B), requesting their assistance and explaining the need for their participation in this survey, and a postage-paid return envelope were then mailed to the Fashion Careers of California school in San Diego, California on 10 June, 1990. Another cover letter (Appendix C) along with the instrument were also distributed at a fashion program meeting at Commonwealth College on 12 June, 1990.

Data Collection

Once the data had been received, the researcher tabulated and analyzed the responses in accordance with the goals established in Chapter I. After tabulating the results of the survey, percentages were calculated for each of the closed end items on the survey. The responses to the open end questions were listed. All the findings of the survey, along with the percentages for each response, were presented in Chapter IV in narrative and tabular form.

Summary

This chapter discussed the methods and procedures used to secure the data for this study. A survey was administered by the researcher to newly enrolled students in Commonwealth College's fashion program in Virginia and Fashion Careers of California in San Diego. The results of this survey will be discussed in the following chapter. Finally, a summary, conclusion and recommendations arising from this study will be indicated in Chapter V.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The purpose of this chapter was to present the findings resulting from the survey. The data described was the result of a survey administered to all newly enrolled fashion merchandising students at Commonwealth College in Virginia and Fashion Careers of California College in San Diego.

This study has attempted to identify the attitudes of fashion merchandising students toward fashion careers. A comparison of the east and west coast post-secondary students was done to determine if there are different attitudes according to geographical location.

The information gathered through a survey instrument will be compiled and reported in this chapter. The total number of individuals that participated in the survey was sixty-four. The individuals surveyed were first quarter fashion merchandising students.

Personal Identification Data

Questions one through four of the survey questionnaire were designed to ascertain data directly concerning the personal identification such as sex, origin, length of time in the program, and if employed in a fashion job. All responses for question three concerning the length of enrollment in the Fashion Merchandising program were first semester students. This indicated to the

researcher that the data supplied by each respondent did belong in the scope of this investigation.

The data supplied by each respondent concerning sex and geographical location is presented in Table I. A total of sixty-four fashion merchandising students were surveyed including thirty-three (51.6%) students from Commonwealth College in Virginia and thirty-one (48.4%) students from Fashion Careers College of California. Of the total represented from Fashion Careers College of California, only four (12.9%) were males and the remainder, twenty-seven (87.1%), were females. The data collected from Commonwealth College showed that there were only one (3%) male represented in the investigation; thirty-two (97%) were females from the fashion merchandising program at Commonwealth College.

TABLE I
Personal Identification Data

	West Coast	East Coast
Number of males	4	1
Percentage of males to the total	12.9%	3%
Number of females	27	32
Percentage of females to the total	87.1%	97%
Total number of students surveyed	31	33
Total percentage of students surveyed	48.4%	51.6%

Question four of the survey notes if the respondent is currently employed in a fashion merchandising job. Table II indicated the number of students by sex and geographical region that were employed in the fashion merchandising industry. The data received from the Fashion Careers College of California illustrated that eight (38.1%) of the thirty-one fashion students were employed in fashion merchandising jobs. Two of these employed in fashion merchandising jobs were males and six were females. This left twenty-three (53.5%) of the respondents from California who did not have a fashion related job.

TABLE II
Number of Students Employed in the Fashion Industry

	YES	PERCENTAGE	NO	PERCENTAGE
Number of west males	2	9.5%	2	4.7%
Number of west females	6	28.6%	21	48.8%
<u>Total # of west respondents</u>	8	38.1%	23	53.5%
Number of east males	0	0%	1	2.3%
Number of east females	13	61.9%	19	44.2%
<u>Total # of east respondents</u>	13	61.9%	20	46.5%
Total # of respondents	21	32.8%	43	67.2%

The data collected from Commonwealth College of Virginia showed that twenty-one (32.8%) out of sixty-four of the students surveyed did have a fashion related job. All of the students with a fashion related job were females. Twenty students (46.5%) did not have a fashion merchandising job. The male from this group of respondents was included in this category. Out of the total respondents, twenty-one (32.8%) were employed in the fashion industry while forty-seven (67.2%) were not employed in fashion related occupations.

Specific Data on student's Attitudes

Section II of the instrument was designed to collect specific data concerning student's attitudes toward fashion merchandising program and the field in general. Table III will illustrate the total number and percentage of the respondent's opinions, while Table IV will break down the respondents' opinions according to geographical location. Questions five through eleven were set up using the Likert method of opinion measurement. The respondents were to mark their level of agreement with the statement or question.

Question five was designed to measure the fashion merchandising program in terms of its general educational value. Fifty-six of those responding, or 87.5%, were in general agreement that education would improve their chances of promotion. Only four (6.2%) of the sixty-four respondents did not agree that education affected their chance of promotions. Four (6.3%) were undecided in this matter. The East and West Coast respondents were equal in their opinions of the value of an educational training program.

Question six asked the respondents if they believed the name "fashion merchandising" sounds feminine and discourages males from entering the program. Thirty-four (53.1%) of the respondents disagreed with this statement. Twenty (31.2%) of those in disagreement were from the west coast while fourteen (21.9%) were from the east coast. Twenty (31.3%) of the total respondents agreed that the name fashion merchandising was feminine, seven (11%) from the west coast and thirteen (20.4%) from the east coast. Ten (15.6%) were undecided in this area. Both population groups were equally indecisive.

In item seven an attempt was made to see if the respondent thought the fashion merchandising industry was predominantly female. Thirty-four (53.1%) of the respondents disagreed that the fashion merchandising field is predominantly female. Eleven (17.2%) were undecided, while nineteen (29.7%) agreed that the fashion field had more women employed. There was a close correlation between the opinions of the west and east coast participants in the study.

Questions eight and nine were an attempt to determine if it was the name that kept the enrollments of males low in the fashion merchandising program. Question eight asked if the respondents thought more men would be attracted to this educational program if the name was different, while question nine asked if Retail Merchandising would be a better title. The west coast disagreed with the statement in item eight more so than the east coast respondents. Sixteen (25%) west coast students disagreed compared to seven (11%) of the east coast students. Twenty (31.3%) were undecided; eight west coast students and twelve east coast students. Fourteen east coast respondents agreed that Retail Merchandising would be a better suited title, while only seven west coast responded in agreement. Eight (12.6%) of the students from the west coast,

compared to six (9.4%) of the east coast students, disagreed that Retail Merchandising would be a better name for the program. Ten of the total number of respondents were undecided. The large sum of 40 (62.5%) total respondents agreed that Retail Merchandising would be a better name for the program. Sixteen were from the west coast and twenty-four were from the east coast.

Item ten was designed to see if there were other reasons for the lack of interest in the east coast. Item ten asked if the student thought the low starting pay in the fashion jobs to be a deterrent for some students. Fifty (78.1%) of the total participants in the survey felt the low starting pay in retail jobs to be a discouragement for some students. Twenty-four of these students were from the west and twenty-six from the east. Only six (9.4%) disagreed in this statement and eight (12.5%) were undecided.

Item eleven asked the participant in the survey if their attitude has changed for the better since enrollment in the fashion merchandising program. The responses were mostly affirmative. Fifty-three (82.8%) of the total respondents stated that they felt better about fashion merchandising as a career since they have enrolled in an educational institution. Twenty-eight (43.8%) of the west coast and twenty-five (39.1%) of the east coast respondents agreed that their attitude has changed for the better. Eight (12.5%) of the total, two from the west and six from the east were undecided. Only three (4.7%) of the respondents did not feel their attitude has changed for the better.

TABLE III

Total Population Results for Question 5 - 11

<u>Question</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>D</u>	<u>U</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>SA</u>
5. Do you feel a formal education in fashion merchandising would improve your chances of promotion?	2 3.1%	2 3.1%	4 6.3%	23 35.9%	33 51.6%
6. Do you believe the name "Fashion Merchandising" sounds feminine and discourages more men from entering this program?	8 12.5%	26 40.6%	10 15.6%	18 28.2%	2 3.1%
7. Fashion merchandising is a predominantly female field.	8 12.5%	26 40.6%	11 17.2%	12 18.8%	7 10.9%
8. Do you think more men would be attracted to this educational program if the name was different?	4 6.3%	19 29.5%	20 31.3%	17 26.65	4 6.3%
9. Would Retail Merchandising be a better title for the program?	6 9.4%	8 12.5%	10 15.6%	30 46.9%	10 15.6%
10. Do you feel the low starting pay in fashion merchandising careers is a deterrent for some students to select it as a career?	3 4.7%	3 4.7%	8 12.5%	34 53.1%	16 25%
11. Since you have been enrolled in the fashion merchandising program, do you feel your attitude has changed for the better toward fashion careers?	1 1.6%	2 3.1%	8 12.5%	26 40.6%	27 42.2%

TABLE IV

Geographical Breakdown of Questions 5 - 11

5. Do you feel a formal education in fashion merchandising would improve your chances of promotion?

SD		D		U		A		SA	
W	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W	E
1	1	2	0	2	2	10	13	16	17
1.6%	1.6%	3.1%	0%	3.1%	3.1%	15.6%	20.3%	25%	26.6%

6. Do you believe the name "Fashion Merchandising" sounds feminine and discourages more males from entering this program?

SD		D		U		A		SA	
W	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W	E
5	3	15	11	4	6	6	12	1	1
7.8%	4.7%	23.4%	17.2%	6.2%	9.4%	9.4%	18.8%	1.6%	1.6%

7. Fashion merchandising is a predominantly female field.

SD		D		U		A		SA	
W	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W	E
3	5	13	13	8	3	6	6	1	6
4.7%	7.8%	20.3%	20.3%	12.5%	4.7%	9.4%	9.4%	1.6%	9.4%

8. Do you think more men would be attracted to this educational program if the name was different?

SD		D		U		A		SA	
W	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W	E
3	1	13	6	8	12	5	12	2	2
4.7%	1.6%	20.3%	9.4%	12.5%	18.8%	7.8%	18.8%	3.1%	3.1%

9. Would Retail Merchandising be a better title for the program?

SD		D		U		A		SA	
W	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W	E
4	2	4	4	7	3	12	18	4	6
6.3%	3.1%	6.3%	6.3%	10.9%	4.7%	18.8%	28.1%	6.3%	9.4%

TABLE IV (Continued)

10. Do you feel the low starting pay in fashion merchandising careers is a deterrent for some students to select it as a career?

SD		D		U		A		SA	
W	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W	E
2	1	2	1	3	5	14	20	10	6
3.1%	1.6%	3.1%	1.6%	4.7%	7.8%	21.9%	31.3%	15.6%	9.4%

11. Since you have been enrolled in the fashion merchandising program do you feel your attitude has changed for the better toward fashion careers?

SD		D		U		A		SA	
W	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W	E
0	1	1	1	2	6	9	17	19	8
0%	1.6%	1.6%	1.6%	3.2%	9.4%	14.1%	26.6%	29.7%	12.5%

The research found that respondents learned of the fashion merchandising program in many different ways. Question twelve was an open-ended question designed to determine how the students learned about their corresponding program. The responses were separated according to the two geographical areas: east and west. The responses are shown on Table V.

A majority of the participants in the study found out about the program through friends; fifteen (48.4%) of the west coast respondents and thirteen (39.4%) of the east coast respondents. The next largest source of information about the program for the west coast respondents came through work (5), high school (4), or just seeking out the school through research on their own (4). Brochures (2 responses) and yellow pages (1 response) seem to be the smallest source of information for this group of participants.

Besides through friends, the high school counselors were the second

largest source of information for the east coast participants in the survey, (six responses or 18.2%). Four respondents (12.1%) got their information from brochures and yellow pages. Three (9.1%) of the participants responded other. Most of their responses were "walk-ins" to the school. Two (6.1%) respondents got information on the fashion merchandising program through commercials or television. Only one (3%) listed their employment as a source of information for the fashion merchandising program.

TABLE V
Participants' Means of Finding Out About the Program

<u>West Coast:</u>		
<u>Source</u>	<u>Total Number</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Friends	15	48.4%
Brochure	2	6.5%
Yellow Pages	1	3.2%
Through Work	5	16.1%
Other	4	12.9%
High School	4	12.9%
<u>East Coast:</u>		
<u>Source</u>	<u>Total Number</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Friends	13	39.4%
Brochure	4	12.1%
Yellow Pages	4	12.1%
Through Work	1	3%
Other	3	9.1%
High School	6	18.2%
Television	2	6.1%

Question thirteen attempted to get the students' opinions of the most effective means of advertising the fashion merchandising program. All the responses were recorded on Table VI according to geographical location. There were no percentages in this chart because some responded more than once while others did not respond at all.

TABLE VI

Most Effective Means of AdvertisingWest Coast:

<u>Advertising Method</u>	<u>Total Number</u>
Popular fashion magazines	10
Television/radio commercials	5
Presentations in the high schools	8
Presentations in community/retail establishments	3
Fashion shows/public realtions	4
Mail out brochures	0

East Coast:

<u>Advertising Method</u>	<u>Total Number</u>
Popular fashion magazines	2
Television/radio commercials	4
Presentations in the high schools	8
Presentations in community/business	2
Fashion shows/public relations	2
Mail out brochures	1

The last open-end question, fourteen, was designed to serve as a positive or negative determination concerning the respondent's impression of their corresponding fashion merchandising program. The responses were separated into two groups according to their geographical location and shown in Appendix D.

Most of the west coast participants felt the advertising was sufficient as it was presently at the college. They believed the Fashion Careers of California school's advertisements in the popular fashion magazines such as Glamour and Mademoiselle were effective. Eight students felt there should be more presentation in the high schools. Other participants felt the school could benefit from more public relations campaigns in the community and fashion industry. Five students replied that there should be more television commercials.

Eight of the east coast participants felt that Commonwealth College's Fashion Merchandising program should make presentations in the high schools. Television, radio commercials and community public relations each received four responses from the east coast participants as the most effective way to advertise. Two students believed there should be more community fashion shows to promote the program. Among the least effective methods for the east coast fashion program were fashion magazines and brochures.

Summary

In this chapter, certain personal identification data and corresponding opinions toward the fashion merchandising program and careers were analyzed in an attempt to determine the difference of attitudes toward fashion merchandising programs according to gender, geographical location, and careers. The information will be analyzed in the following chapter. Chapter V will consist of a summary, conclusions, and recommendations based on the survey results.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this chapter was to summarize the findings of the research report the conclusions, and make recommendations.

Summary

The problem of this study was to determine the students' attitudes toward fashion merchandising careers. This study compared male and female student attitudes from San Diego's Fashion Careers of California College and Virginia Beach's Commonwealth College fashion merchandising program. This research was to provide the schools a perspective on their students' opinions and hopefully improve their recruiting practices. The following questions were asked in order to give a specific direction to this research paper.

1. Do stereotyping and bias attitudes play a part in the low number of men in the fashion merchandising program?
2. Are attitudes different in the west coast compared to the east coast?
3. Are men's attitudes toward fashion careers different from women's attitudes?
4. How is the San Diego fashion institute marketing their program?
5. What can Commonwealth College do better to market their fashion program?

A survey instrument was designed and administered to thirty-one west coast fashion students from the Fashion Careers College of California and thirty-three of the fashion students at Commonwealth College. All participants in the survey were first semester students. The surveys were tabulated and the data was presented in narrative and tabular form using percentages. Based on this data, conclusions and recommendations for marketing the fashion merchandising programs were made.

Conclusions

In response to the research goals:

1. Do stereotyping and bias attitudes play a part in the low number of men in the fashion merchandising programs?

The research showed that (35.8%) individuals surveyed believed that there was a preconceived bias toward the name fashion merchandising. This attitude was stronger on the east coast. Based on personal interviews with instructors and admission representatives, the misunderstanding of what the term and fashion merchandising program is about was apparent. Based on their personal feelings toward the field, (question 11), the fashion merchandising students enrolled in the program showed an improved image of the program. This could be due to education, which is the key to overcoming most stereotyping and bias attitudes.

2. Are attitudes different in the west coast compared to the east coast?

Overall, very little difference surfaced from the survey instrument. The reason for the inability to establish this difference may or may not be due to a design deficiency of the survey instrument. The one significant difference

that was noted was in their responses to questions eight and nine, which asked the students if the name of this educational program was different, would it attract more males? The west coast participants agreed with this statement by 25% (16) over the east coast who agreed by 11% (7).

3. Are men's attitudes toward fashion careers different from women's attitudes?

Because there were only four male participants in the study, this question was unable to be answered accurately. The responses from the males in the study did not show any significant differences from the female responses.

4. How is the Fashion Careers of California College marketing their program?

The Fashion Careers of California College advertising is in various popular fashion magazines. They also seem to have an excellent report with the local high school counselors and retail establishments. Basically, I believe their reputation and students serve as the best recruitment tool. —

5. What can Commonwealth College do better to market their fashion program?

Eight responses from the students enrolled at Commonwealth believed that they need to get their name out into the high schools and local businesses. The researcher agrees that Commonwealth could strengthen their program by making formal presentations in the high schools. The fashion merchandising chairman of the department needs to do more public relations with the local businesses and communities. This could be as small as visiting the local retailers and introducing them to the program or as extravagant as having fashion shows open to the public on a regular basis and handing out information on the fashion merchandising program.

Recommendations

Based on the results and conclusions of this study, the researcher provides the following recommendations for the fashion merchandising program at Commonwealth College:

1. Continue sending brochures to local residents of Virginia Beach.
2. Advertise through the media -- radio, television, etc.
3. Promote program to local retailers. This could be done by sending program brochures to store managers and asking them to distribute these to their employees.
4. Make more presentations to high schools students and administration. Brochures could also be sent to his marketing teachers for distribution.
5. Promote all extra-curricular activities such as fashion shows through the media.
6. Complete additional research on non-fashion major males to determine attitudes.
7. The research study does not demonstrate sufficient evidence concerning a name change for the fashion merchandising program at Commonwealth. There is evidence that the school does need to work more toward eliminating certain stereotyping. This could be accomplished by educating the admission and administration staff about this issue and about the actual program curriculum. Another possible solution could be as simple as hiring male instructors to teach the fashion program to demonstrate to the students and faculty

that there are many opportunities in fashion for men as well. The staff members often are a strong role model for the students. The advertisements and promotional material should also be certain to have male representation. In the past this method has been overlooked.

8. Commonwealth College's fashion merchandising program needs to expand on the course offerings and extra-curricular activities. Field trips and co-op training should become an intricate part of the program.

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APPENDIX A

Survey of Student's Attitudes Toward Merchandising Careers

I. Directions: Please indicate your response by placing a check in the appropriate space provided.

1. Sex:

male
 female

2. Are you originally from the east or west coast?

east coast
 west coast

3. How long have you been enrolled in the Fashion Merchandising program?

just started
 1st semester
 2nd semester
 3rd semester
 last semester

4. Are you currently employed in a fashion merchandising career?

yes
 no

II. Directions: Please respond to the following questions by circling the level of your agreement. A brief response is needed for questions requiring descriptive information.

Key: SD=strongly disagree, D=disagree, U=undecided, A=agree, SA=strongly agree

5. Do you feel a formal education in fashion merchandising would improve your chances of promotion?

SD D U A SA

6. Do you believe the name "Fashion Merchandising" sounds feminine and discourages more men from entering this program?

SD D U A SA

7. Fashion merchandising is a predominantly female field.

SD D U A SA

8. Do you think more men would be attracted to this educational program if the name was different?

SD D U A SA

9. Would Retail Merchandising be a better title for the program?

SD D U A SA

10. Do you feel the low starting pay in fashion merchandising careers is a deterrent for some students to select it as a career?

SD D U A SA

11. Since you have been enrolled in the fashion merchandising program, do you feel your attitude has changed for the better toward fashion careers?

SD D U A SA

12. How did you hear about the fashion merchandising program?

13. In your opinion, what would be the best way to promote this program?

14. Comment briefly on your overall impression of the fashion merchandising program and how it could be improved.

Thank you for participating in this study!

Michele Brown

APPENDIX B

Michele Brown
911 Westover Ave. Apt. 6
Norfolk, Virginia 23507

Fashion Careers of California
1923 Morena Blvd.
San Diego, CA 92710

Dear Patricia O'Connor:

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for agreeing to assist me in completing my Masters of Science degree in Marketing Education from Old Dominion University.

The title of my study is "A Comparison of Student's Attitudes Toward Fashion Merchandising Careers." I would like to survey a sample of your students who are currently enrolled in your program. This survey is designed to compare male and female student's attitudes toward fashion merchandising careers. The purpose of this study is to determine what factors attract students to this field.

Enclosed is the survey for your review. The questionnaire is divided into two sections. Section I solicits personal identification data while section II collects specific data concerning students' attitudes. I have included a self-addressed, pre-paid envelope so you may easily return the completed surveys.

Again, thank you for your assistance in this matter, Ms. O'Connor. If you would like the results of this study, I would gladly furnish them to you upon completion. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Michele Brown

Michele Brown

APPENDIX C

Michele Brown
911 Westover Ave. Apt. 6
Norfolk, Virginia 23507

Fashion Careers of California
1923 Morena Blvd.
San Diego, CA 92710

Dear Fashion Student:

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for agreeing to assist me in completing my Masters of Science degree in Marketing Education from Old Dominion University.

The title of my study is "A Comparison of Student's Attitudes Toward Fashion Merchandising Careers." I would like to survey a sample of your students who are currently enrolled in your program. This survey is designed to compare male and female student's attitudes toward fashion merchandising careers. The purpose of this study is to determine what factors attract students to this field.

Enclosed is the survey for your review. The questionnaire is divided into two sections. Section I solicits personal identification data while section II collects specific data concerning students' attitudes. I have included a self-addressed, pre-paid envelope so you may easily return the completed surveys.

Again, thank you for your assistance in this matter, Ms. O'Connor. If you would like the results of this study, I would gladly furnish them to you upon completion. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Michele Brown

APPENDIX D

Question #14 - Comment briefly on your overall impression of the fashion merchandising program and how it could be improved.

Responses from the west coast:

- Great program
- It is a rewarding career, whether you go in it for yourself or work for someone else. It could be improved by getting the proper machinery.
- So far I have no complaints
- It is very informative and allows you to broaden your senses to new ideas
- Too expensive
- More in depth classes
- We need more interesting projects
- The courses are intense with information. Each course is very educational if you apply yourself.
- Exciting and interesting

Responses from the east coast:

- I think it's well done, but it should be transferable into other schools
- I feel the program does not need improvement
- Classes need to slow down
- Become a university and get more in depth with the subjects
- It is a good program, but you really need the experience at the same time you are attending the classes
- I like the program but I feel some of the teachers could be more professional
- I am very happy with the program
- Fashion merchandising is the best field for anyone who loves to enjoy the life of excitement and have a completely different day - every work day of the year
- Need more "fun" activities
- Need some design courses and more choices of fashion classes
- I enjoyed the classes and learned. Fashion is a business and should be taught as one. (and ours is)
- The program is fun and interesting. There is so much more in merchandising than I thought
- Less reading and more class participation activities
- Students need to be more involved
- Impressed
- More school hours and mandatory internship

APPENDIX D (Continued)

Question #14 - Comment briefly on your overall impression of the Fashion Merchandising program and how it could be improved.

Responses from the east coast (cont.):

- My overall impression is undecided. I wonder if all this education is really going to get me anywhere or if it is a waste of my time.
- I enjoy the program. I wish there was more designing courses.
- Improvements need to come from the administration first. Give the students the facts up front and keep in closer contact with the student. Get a larger budget for the fashion classes.
- I enjoy and hope to complete the program. I feel that more things could be done in the visual area. I like the fashion shows
- It should be like a university, so it will be more in depth.
- I believe the program offers a lot to its students.
- Basically it's pretty good. I learned quite a bit and I know now this is the field for me.
- More field trips and guest speakers
- I enjoy fashion merchandising - no need for much improvements
- Need more teachers