

Why Do Women Like Working In Building Conservation?

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The Study

The study draws on the reasons women are attracted to Building Conservation and questions whether other areas within the construction industry could learn from Building Conservation to address a major skills shortage

Women in the Workforce

- ✦ Women make up 50% of the UK working population (Williams et al 2002)
- ✦ Women represented just 7% of engineering & technology occupations in the UK in 1994
- ✦ Just a 1% rise since 1979 (ONS 1995)
- ✦ The Construction Industry Training Board (CITB) placed it at 8.6% in 2002 across all positions
- ✦ 1% Trade, 10% Professional, 84% Secretarial, 2% Sole Traders

Encouraging Women into Construction

- ✦ RICS – Raising the Ratio
- ✦ RIBA – Why do Women Leave Architecture?
- ✦ CITB – Working towards a 10% year on year increase in participation

Aims of the Study

- ✦ To find out if it is possible that those working in Building Conservation have attained a way of working that is more attractive to women
- ✦ To find out how young people could be attracted to a career in this area

Targeted Research Groups

- ✦ Women working within Building Conservation
- ✦ School students (male & female) making their university course and career choices at a local school

Research Methodology

- ✦ Qualitative research
- ✦ Semi-structured questionnaires to both target groups

Study of Women in Building Conservation

Study of Women in Building Conservation

- ✦ Targeted at women of all ages working within all aspects of building conservation
- ✦ Including Architects, Building Surveyors, Conservation Officers, Trades and Crafts Women

Questionnaire aimed to discover:

- ✦ How long the women had been working in conservation
- ✦ Whether they had previously worked within the construction industry
- ✦ What attracted them to the profession
- ✦ Whether they believe conservation is heavily dominated by men, and if not why are the reasons for this?

Sample of Women

- ✦ SPAB and RICS Conservation Forum for a list of female members – Data Protection Act prevents disclosing this information
- ✦ Internet database listing Architects working in Building Conservation – 10 women
- ✦ Newspaper and Internet articles – 5 women
- ✦ MSc Heritage Management SHU – 5 women
- ✦ Limited sample however 115% response rate

Students at The Dronfield School

Students at The Dronfield School

- ✦ Focused on 17 and 18 year olds at a local school and their knowledge of building conservation
- ✦ Aimed to look at how young people might best be informed about a career in this area
- ✦ It was hoped that the findings would help increase the number of people entering the conservation sector by looking at the way young people are recruited.

Questionnaire to Sixth Form Students

- ✦ 60 questionnaires between 4 classes
- ✦ Art, Design Technology, History and Geography
- ✦ Questionnaires addressed:
 - subjects studied and preferred career choice
 - whether building conservation would be considered as a career
 - the best way of educating people about a career in building conservation

Analysis of the Data

- ✦ The results were analysed using two techniques
 1. Closed ended questions - Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS)
 2. Open ended questions – compiled, compared and trends identified
- ✦ Sampling – does the research sample represent the whole population of women working in building conservation?
- ✦ Proportions of participants mirrored the ratios of women working in different sectors of building conservation

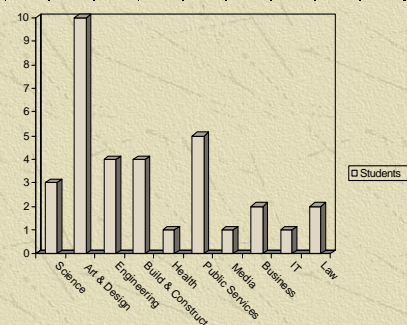
Women in Building Conservation

- ✦ The results show that 13 out of the 23 participants had previously worked elsewhere in construction and 8 of these for less than 5 yrs
- ✦ Unhappy in construction or using it as a stepping stone into conservation?

Career Choice of Students

- ✦ 58% return rate of questionnaires from students
- ✦ 71% male, 29% female
- ✦ 77% plan to go to university

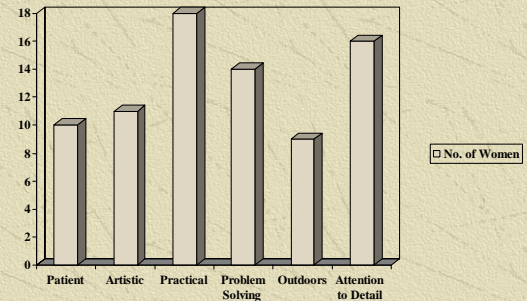
Career Graph



Why do Women Choose Building Conservation?

- ✦ 87% - personal interest
- ✦ 13% - work circumstances
- ✦ Women are attracted to building conservation through architecture, history, surveying, crafts and archaeology
- ✦ None were attracted to financial gains

Characteristics Graph



Is Building Conservation Male Dominated?

- ✦ 61% disagreed that building conservation was male dominated
- ✦ 39% agreed, however most of these women had previously worked in the construction industry

Why is Conservation Different?

- ✦ Requires 'sensitivity', 'patience', 'care', 'consideration' and 'attention to detail'
- ✦ 'Less cut-throat', 'less egotistical' and is 'less about business' than construction
- ✦ Less about 'work which can be seen' and more about being 'discrete'

Sexual Discrimination

- ✦ Are young people deterred from entering a profession dominated by the opposite sex?
 - 97% said NO
 - 3% said YES (surprising male student)
 - ✦ Have women in conservation experienced sexual discrimination at work?
 - 87% NO
 - 13% YES
- "Conservation is a relatively young sector of the industry, perhaps it doesn't have some of the ingrained attitudes as a hangover from the days when women's roles were limited"

How can Young People be Encouraged to Take up a Career in Building Conservation?

- ✦ Building conservation is quite different from other areas of construction and is attractive to women and others who are put off by the macho image construction holds
- ✦ There is a major shortage of people working in all areas of conservation
- ✦ The image of construction deters many before they reach building conservation
- ✦ Conservation should stand on its own two feet when recruiting

How can Young People be Encouraged to Take up a Career in Building Conservation?

- ✦ Once informed of the nature of building conservation 43% of students said they would consider a career in it
- ✦ 49% were interested in doing some work experience in building conservation
- ✦ Miss out the hurdle of the construction industry

Educating Students about Building Conservation

- ✦ Main influence of career choice was personal interest and knowing someone in the profession
- ✦ Most students said they were most influenced towards a career if they have a visit to the school
- ✦ A personal connection can have an inspirational trigger
- ✦ Less effective were career advisors, career event stands and career information databases

Conclusions to the Study

- ✦ The aspects that attract women are not the traditional aspects of the construction industry
- ✦ Money is not an incentive but passion for the work is
- ✦ Students from conservation related subjects show willing to consider a career and carry out work experience in this area

Conclusions to the Study

- ✦ Promoting conservation through art and history rather than through construction would dramatically increase the chances of wider participation by individuals put off by the image construction still portrays
- ✦ Could other areas within the construction industry e.g. Surveying follow this example?