

## Abstract

In the present study we examined 459 undergraduate students at a large Midwestern university who stated they are pursuing a female-dominated career. Using the Career and Personality Assessments (CAPA) online (Betz & Borgen, 2010), we assessed their interest and confidence on the major RIASEC themes, specific vocational scales, and life engagement scales. Results indicated that men and women pursuing female-dominated careers have differing levels of interest and confidence on themes and specific scales related to their intended area of work. We examine possible reasons for gender differences within female-dominated fields, practical implications, and future research directions.

## Introduction

- There is a paucity of research examining career development of men in non-traditional careers (Betz, 2005; Heppner, 2013) with most studies on gender non-traditional work focusing on women in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) fields.
- Previous studies have shown that men who choose non-traditional careers endorse more socially liberal attitudes, have higher educational aspirations (Lease, 2003), and support less masculine gender roles (Tokar & Jome, 1998).
- Little research has been done to examine if men who pursue non-traditional careers are similar to the women who are in those fields. Women who pursue STEM fields often show high interest, but low confidence in this area (Rottinghaus, Betz, & Borgen, 2003). Therefore, it is possible that men will show similar patterns in female-dominated fields.
- The current study examines vocational interests and confidence of men and women who are pursuing female-dominated careers.
- Research Question 1: Are there gender differences on RIASEC themes for men and women pursuing female-dominated careers?
- Research Question 2: Are there gender differences in vocational interests and confidence for people pursuing female-dominated careers?
  - Hypothesis 2a: Men pursuing female-dominated careers will have equal interest, but lower confidence than women pursuing female-dominated careers in specific scales related to women's work.
  - Hypothesis 2b: Men pursuing a female-dominated career are more interested and confident in the Management specific scale.
- Research Question 3: Are there gender differences in educational aspirations for people pursuing female-dominated occupations?
  - Hypothesis 3: Men pursuing female-dominated careers have higher educational aspirations than women pursuing female-dominated careers.
- Research Question 4: Are there gender differences for interest and confidence in Teamwork and Leadership for people pursuing female-dominated careers?
  - Hypothesis 4: Men show greater interests and confidence in Leadership and women will be more interested and confident in Teamwork.

## Method

### Participants:

- A total of 459 participants (76.5% female) who identified their intended career as female-dominated were selected from a sample of 4,707 students (50.2% female) enrolled in a career exploration course at a large Midwestern university. Participants ranged in age from 17-47 with a mean age of 20.29 years old. Racial/Ethnic backgrounds of the participants were White (80%), Black (11.3%), Asian/Pacific Islander (3.5%), Hispanic (3.1%), American Indian (.2%), and other identified (2%).
- We used the Betz and Hackett (1981) metric to define careers as female-dominated when 30% or less of total people in the occupation are men.

## Measures

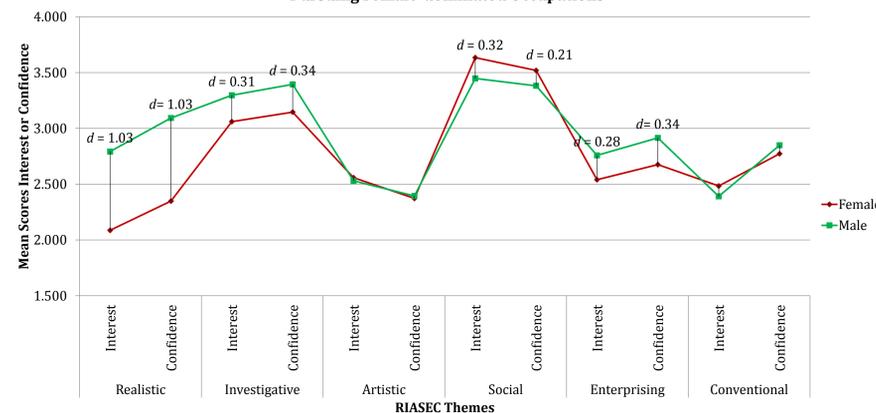
- The Career and Personality Assessments (CAPA) online (Betz & Borgen, 2010) is comprised of the CAPA Confidence Inventory (CCI) and the CAPA Interest Inventory (CII).
- **CCI.** The CCI is a 190-item inventory that measures self-efficacy or confidence related to the six Holland themes, 27 specific dimensions of vocational activity, and 6 "Life Engagement" styles. The responses are measured on a 5-point scale ranging from *No Confidence At All* (1) to *Complete Confidence* (5).
- **CII.** The CII is a 292-item inventory that measures interests related to the six Holland themes, 35 specific dimensions of vocational activity, and six "Life Engagement" styles. The responses are measured on a 5-point scale ranging from *Strongly Dislike* (1) to *Strongly Like* (5).

## Results

### RIASEC Analyses

- A MANOVA indicated that there was a significant effect of gender for RIASEC themes on interest and confidence for men and women pursuing a female-dominated occupation,  $F(12, 446) = 26.48, p < .001$ ; Wilks's  $\Lambda = 0.584$ .
- As shown in Figure 1, men who are pursuing a female-dominated occupation reported significantly higher interest in Realistic ( $F(1, 457) = 100.05, p < .001$ , Investigative ( $F(1, 457) = 7.66, p = .006$ ), and Enterprising ( $F(1, 457) = 6.90, p < .01$ ). Women who are pursuing a female-dominated occupation reported significantly higher interest in Social ( $F(1, 457) = 8.58, p < .01$ ).
- Men reported significantly higher confidence in Realistic ( $F(1, 457) = 9.74, p < .01$ ), and Enterprising ( $F(1, 457) = 10.60, p < .001$ ).
- Women reported significantly higher confidence in Social ( $F(1, 457) = 3.87, p < .05$ ).

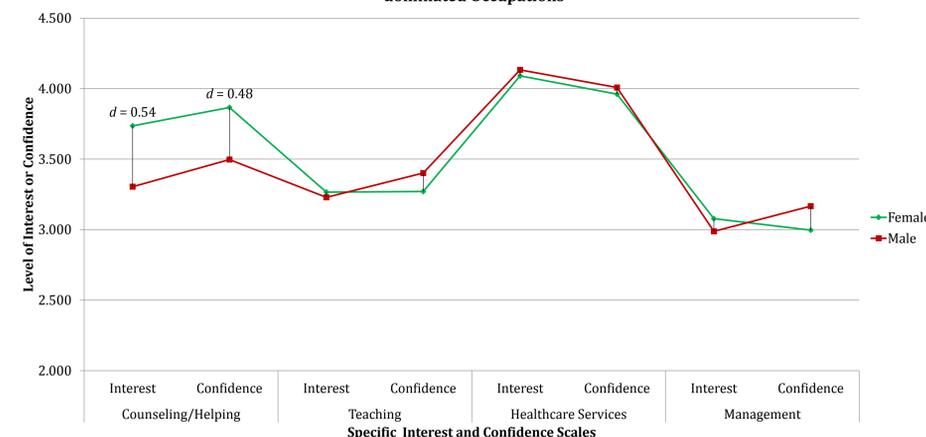
Figure 1. RIASEC Interest & Confidence for Women and Men Pursuing Female-dominated Occupations



### Specific Scale Analyses

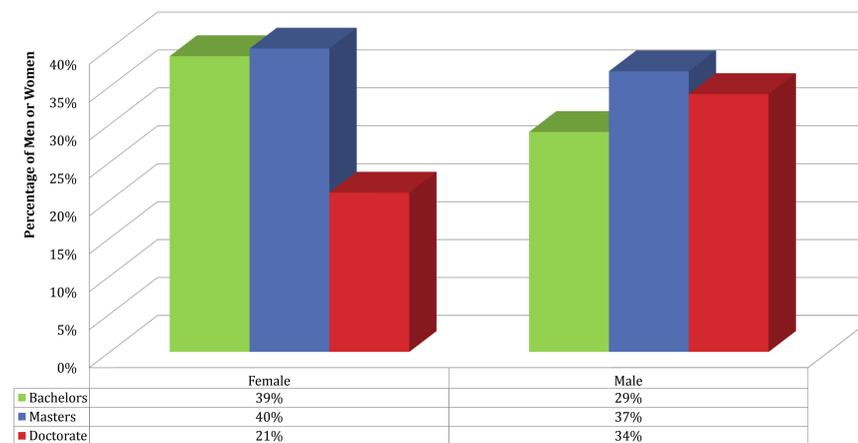
- A MANOVA indicated that there was a significant effect of gender on interest and confidence for the specific scales for men and women pursuing female-dominated occupations,  $F(8, 450) = 9.47, p < .001$ ; Wilks's  $\Lambda = 0.825$ .
- As shown in Figure 2, women reported significantly higher interest in Counseling/Helping ( $F(1, 457) = 25.12, p < .001$ ).
- Women reported significantly higher confidence in Counseling/Helping ( $F(1, 457) = 19.82, p < .001$ ).
- Confidence in Management did not show significant gender differences ( $F(1, 457) = 3.60, p > .05$ ).

Figure 2. Mean Specific Interest and Confidence Scores for Women and Men pursuing Female-dominated Occupations



- A chi-square test indicated that disproportionately more men who are pursuing a female-dominated occupation desired a graduate degree,  $\chi^2(2, N = 459) = 8.867, p < .05$ . (Figure 3)

Figure 3. Educational Aspirations for Men and Women Pursuing Female-dominated Careers



- A MANOVA indicated that there was not a significant effect of gender on interest and confidence for the life engagement scales of Leadership and Teamwork for men and women pursuing female-dominated occupations,  $F(4, 454) = 1.09, p > .05$ ; Wilks's  $\Lambda = 0.990$ .

## Conclusions

Men and women who pursue female-dominated careers show similar patterns of interests and confidence in the themes related to the occupations they are pursuing. However, their mean levels of interest and confidence differ significantly. This may be explained by the division of labor within female-dominated careers where men are over represented in management positions (Williams, 1992). Our analysis shows that men and women show equal interest and confidence in management and leadership positions. Perhaps because the men in our sample reported lower confidence on Social they are drawn to positions that have a less social component as in management. Men may also be more likely to advance in female-dominated careers if they seek more education, given that our results indicated that men are more likely to desire a graduate degree than women entering female-dominated careers. Future research into the gender disparity in management positions is warranted. Overall, our sample seems to have a high proportion of men and women interested in medical fields which results in high interest and confidence in investigative

| Career                 | Holland Theme | Participants | Career                   | Holland Theme | Participants |
|------------------------|---------------|--------------|--------------------------|---------------|--------------|
| Dental Hygienist       | SRC           | 15           | Occupational Therapist   | SI            | 17           |
| Dietician/Nutritionist | IS            | 16           | Paralegal                | CIE           | 1            |
| Elementary/Special Ed. | SAC           | 18           | Physical Therapist       | SIR           | 75           |
| Event Planner          | ECS           | 5            | Physician Assistant      | SIR           | 20           |
| Fashion                | AE            | 8            | Medical Technician       | RIS           | 24           |
| Interior Designer      | AE            | 5            | Social Worker            | SE            | 18           |
| Librarian              | CSE           | 1            | Speech Path./Audiologist | SIA           | 9            |
| Nurse                  | SIC           | 224          |                          |               |              |