EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND CAREER DECISIVENESS

A Thesis

Presented to the faculty of the Department of Psychology

California State University, Sacramento

Submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in

Psychology

(Industrial/Organizational)

by

Heather Lynne Huhtala

FALL 2016
EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND CAREER DECISIVENESS

A Thesis

by

Heather Lynne Huhtala

Approved by:

____________________________, Committee Chair
Dr. Rachel August

____________________________, Second Reader
Dr. Emily Wickelgren

____________________________, Third Reader
Lisa Bear, SPHR

____________________________
Date

iii
Student: Heather Lynne Huhtala

I certify that this student has met the requirements for format contained in the University format manual, and that this thesis is suitable for shelving in the Library and credit is to be awarded for the thesis.

__________________________, Graduate Coordinator
Dr. Lisa M. Bohon

Date

Department of Psychology
Abstract

of

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND CAREER DECISIVENESS

by

Heather Lynne Huhtala

This study explored the relationships between emotional intelligence (EI), career interests and decisiveness of undergraduate students enrolled in a state university. The sample (n = 137) was primarily freshman (n = 54), female (n = 104), Hispanic/Latino (n = 43), and had a mean age of 19. Holland’s Self-Directed Search (SDS) (1985) assessed career interests, Brackett, Rivers, and Shiffman’s (2006) Self-Rated Emotional Intelligence Scale assessed EI and Germeij and Boeck’s (2002) General Indecisiveness scale measured decisiveness. Results indicated the relationship of EI (M = 66.99 SD = 9.56) is statistically significant between decisiveness (β = .52, n = 118, p = .00) and SDS differentiation scores (β = -.24, n = 118, p = .01). Findings support the idea that trainings to develop EI may be viable resources career counselors can employ when advising individuals who are exploring their career path. The results further contribute to the understanding of EI’s connection to career interests and decisiveness.

_______________________, Committee Chair
Dr. Rachel August

_______________________
Date
DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my family, most specifically, my parents. I could not have accomplished all that I have without your continuous encouragement and support. You were and still are my role models who taught me that hard work and discipline do pay off. Thank you.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

From the very first undergraduate course I had with Dr. Rachel August, I knew she was going to be an important figure in my life. It was not until much later did I realize just how influential she would be to my academic and professional career. I knew I would go on to pursue an advanced degree in Psychology, but was unsure of which specialized field. I considered the MFT route, but after attending an Organizational Psychology course taught by Dr. August, I knew I needed to explore this area more in depth. It was through Dr. August that I learned about the field and the graduate program of Industrial/Organizational Psychology at CSUS. And I was thrilled to learn she would be my advisor in the graduate program.

Many opportunities Dr. August extended to me as I served as a Teaching Assistant in several of her classes, audited a qualitative analysis course and through her encouragement, presented one of my studies at the 2013 Western Psychological Association Conference in Reno, Nevada. These experiences expanded my understanding of the professional arena and I will always be grateful for the opportunities and guidance she provided.

I could not have accomplished all of this without the guidance and assistance from my two other committee members: Dr. Emily Wickelgren and Lisa Bear, SPHR. The insightful suggestions and rich discussions helped shape and refine this thesis through to completion. I greatly appreciate the willingness to collaborate with and support me through the process.
Finally, I want to thank my fellow graduate student colleagues, my previous and current employers and my friends. The number of hours and support provided by my colleagues in the program are too numerous to count. The sleepless nights and group study sessions all made it possible to persevere through to the end. I also want to thank the employers I had over the past six and a half years. All were supportive in their own way. Some allowed me to flex my working hours, while others provided me opportunities to present my materials and receive feedback. Many times my friends provided encouraging words and offered to feed me during crunch time. All of this helped carry me through to the end and I am forever grateful for my supportive network of friends and professionals.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dedication</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Tables</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Figures</td>
<td>xi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.  INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.  BACKGROUND LITERATURE</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Interest</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holland’s Self-Directed Search</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Intelligence</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Differences</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trait Versus Ability Emotional Intelligence</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Intelligence and Training</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Intelligence in the Workplace</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decisiveness</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Intelligence and Decisiveness</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.  METHODS</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. RESULTS........................................................................................................... 35
5. DISCUSSION...................................................................................................... 42
        Limitations................................................................................................... 45
        References.................................................................................................... 47
# LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tables</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations Between Measures of Emotional Intelligence, Decisiveness and Career Differentiation Scores</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Regression Analysis Summary for Emotional Intelligence and Decisiveness</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Regression Analysis Summary for Emotional Intelligence and Career Differentiation Scores</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Regression Analysis Summary for Emotional Intelligence, Mediator Effect and Career Differentiation Scores</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figures</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Spatial relationships of the Holland’s hexagonal SDS career model</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Proposed model of the relationships between demographics, Emotional Intelligence, Decisiveness and Differentiation of career interests</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Beta weights from the Multiple Regression Model assessing Emotional Intelligence’s relationship to differentiation of career interests</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 1
INTRODUCTION

Over the years, researchers have put a substantial amount of attention and research into career development and vocational interests. Evidence of this focus can be seen in numerous sources and vast taxonomies such as the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB), Holland’s Self-Directed Search, Myers-Brigg Type Indicator (MBTI), the Online Occupational Network (O*NET), the Strong Interest Inventory (SII), the US Bureau of Labor Statistic’s Occupational Outlook Handbook, and so on. Career development partnered with personality types and vocational interests is a well-defined area. However, there is room for further development and exploration by incorporating the role emotional intelligence (EI) plays and the relationship EI has to career development and decisiveness.

The relationships between EI, decisiveness and career interests are important to explore, as the resulting information will contribute to many diverse areas. Exploration of these topics will further develop the theories within the fields of organizational and vocational behavior, applied psychology, and contribute to career counselors by providing insights that may assist them when providing guidance in their practice. The findings of this study may also be of importance to Human Resource professionals looking for ways to develop their staff and individuals who are interested in exploring their career path and understanding the link EI has to their decision as well.
Research suggests individuals in late adolescence to early adulthood are at risk of reinforcing and maintaining maladaptive career development tendencies if they do not have specific career interests in mind (Grier-Reed & Skaar, 2010; Porfeli & Skorikov; 2010). However, there is evidence that demonstrates EI can be taught and further developed within individuals as young school aged children (Brackett & Katulak, 2007). Not only is there evidence that EI can be developed, there is support that both trait and performance based EI can positively be affected by EI training interventions. Fabio and Kenny (2011) reported EI scores on self-report and physical performance measures increased after implementing an EI training program for adolescent students. What this indicates is not only are adolescents perceiving that their EI skills are better after exposure to training, but their actual skill-level did increase as depicted in the increased performance scores. This area could be of interest for future studies to explore the effects EI trainings have on other age groups and populations in assessing how they may facilitate career development.

Additionally, it is important to try to match a person’s vocational interests to the actual job, as one study found employee turnover intentions were strongly predicted by individuals who were not happy with the match between themselves and their job (Erford & Crockett, 2012). If the connections between EI and career development are studied more fully, then programs and informational courses about career exploration which incorporate EI information could be offered to people as a resource and tool. This could
possibly prevent individuals from taking jobs that are not necessarily a good match based on their vocational interests and help them pick the best fit job for themselves.

Finally, there is evidence that suggests having emotional intelligence is a helpful ability to have when applying for and maintaining a job. In 2004, 640 randomly selected college recruiters were surveyed on the most important qualities and skills that current employers were looking for in recent graduates. The responses were all in consensus that employers want to first and foremost see interpersonal skills above and beyond technical skills in prospective employees (Liptak, 2005). It is arguable that interpersonal skills and adaptability are in even more demand than ever before (Griffin & Hesketh, 2003). There are so many experienced and highly-skilled candidates looking for work in the job market; having interpersonal skills could be the competitive edge candidates need in order to secure employment. Employers want to hire individuals who are able to effectively communicate with others and regulate their own emotions; this is an especially pressing need with demographically diverse and globally-oriented workplaces.

To address these concerns, a sample of the student population at California State University of Sacramento was recruited from the research subject pool to explore the relationship between emotional intelligence, decisiveness and the differentiation (variability) of career interest scores. The undergraduate population is of interest for this study, as many individuals in college are seeking higher education in an effort to secure a job of their interest. If the relationship between EI and decisiveness is better understood
and suggests a positive relationship, then college career counselors may have another tool to use when assisting individuals to pick their courses and select their major.
Chapter 2

BACKGROUND LITERATURE

Career Interest

The field of vocational interests and career development dates back into the early 1900s. The two prominent names that laid the foundation and continued to further advance the scope of knowledge are Strong and Kuder. While these two researchers had differing approaches to the concept of vocational interests, both provided the research community and applied field of psychology an immeasurable foundation on which to build upon and continue to develop to this day.

It is important to understand the background behind the field of career and vocational interests. In the following sections, a brief overview of the interest items is discussed, along with a description of Strong’s and Kuder’s conceptualization of the concept, and the applicability and use of career interest inventories in the field of career counseling and career development.

The origin of many of the original interest inventories can be traced back to the product of a professional seminar conducted by Clarence S. Yoakum at the Carnegie Institute of Technology in 1919 (Donnay, 1997). The seminar sought to capture and write out items for the entire domain of vocational interests. From this larger item bank, researchers would go on to cherry-pick items to create their specific interest inventories. Through the iterative process of replication and as advancements in statistical analysis
functions progressed (e.g. factor analysis, item response theory) researchers were able to distill and refine the psychometrics of the inventories.

Strong’s view of career interests revolved around the idea that interests were common among occupational groups and that they fell within a continuum of liking to disliking (Donnay, 1997). This assumption held that individuals working within the same occupation had and reported similar likes and dislikes. Therefore, when individuals took the interest inventory, their responses were compared to the collective interest ratings of a particular occupational group. This theoretical comparison using an occupational group’s interest scores became known as a contrasted group comparison. Using this methodology drove the item scales to be diverse, as they needed to differentiate between the interests of people in general and hone in on specific aspects and facets of occupations. Conceptualizing the exploration of interests in this way served as a platform for further refinement and development of interest items.

Kuder had a different philosophy when it came to assessing individuals’ career interests. His approach was not to use contrasted groups or the collective whole, but rather compare the individual to the individuals within the entire occupational group. What this led to was the idea of person-match rather than contrasted-group matching. This distinction was made as Kuder felt individuals’ interests should be compared to the total interests of members of an occupational group regardless of the commonality of the interests (Ihle-Helley, Zytowski, & Fouad, 2004). The results produced by Kuder’s
inventory would reflect the degree of fit between an individual interest pattern and the interest patterns of individuals within the selected occupational group.

Interest inventories are a fundamental component to career exploration and development. Identifying and exploring one’s affinity towards different vocational duties and occupations lays a solid foundation when picking a career. Parsons (1909) said it best:

In the wise choice of a vocation, there are three broad factors: (1) a clear understanding of yourself, your aptitudes, abilities, interests, ambitions, resources, limitations, and knowledge of their causes; (2) a knowledge of the requirements, conditions of success, advantages and disadvantages, compensation, opportunities, and prospects in different lines of work; (3) true reasoning on the relationships of these two groups of facts. (p.5)

It is now more important than ever, to best understand one’s interests. Since the recession in 2008, the job market has changed dramatically and businesses are no longer offering the benefits packages they once did. Some jobs are lost to outsourcing while other positions are just permanently removed. Pension packages have diminished and some employers do not even offer 401ks, which leads to fewer incentives for employees to stay long term with one company (Rhee & Fornia, 2016). Not only have the businesses changed, but job seekers are moving around in different careers now more so than ever before. In this mobile and unpredictable economy, without a solid understanding of one’s
interests, abilities, and scope of different occupational requirements, a job seeker risks embarking on a haphazardous career path and incompatible job-fit.

While it is crucial to employers to find the right employees, the inverse is just as important. Job seekers need to find positions and occupations that will be a good match for themselves as well. According to the United States Department of Labor, in just the month of June 2016, 2.9 million people voluntarily quit their jobs. That is a substantial number of people to leave the workforce in one month alone. There are many reasons why individuals voluntarily turnover within an organization. The reason of not finding a good “fit” within a job is of interest for this study. Job-fit encompasses the extent to which individuals perceive their job, organization, or work environment aligns with their abilities, values, goals, and so on (Ferreira, Coetzee, & Masenge, 2013). Schutte and Loi (2014) found that higher employee EI was significantly related to more work engagement, better mental health, and more satisfaction with social support in the workplace. These areas have been the focus and attention of researchers to gather and understand empirical evidence around these ideas (Griffin & Hesketh, 2003). From this, it is not unreasonable to presume that individuals who then find a close fit or alignment to their job would be more likely to stay and possibly report higher levels of satisfaction.

The field of career development has numerous approaches and methodologies to assist individuals in their career interest exploration in an effort to achieve a good job-fit. In general, it is better to use more than one approach or resource when exploring one’s career path. Additional sources can provide insights from different perspectives and
convey a more holistic picture (Fabio & Maree, 2013; Furbish, 2013). The interest inventories are just one of the many tools career counselors and advisors use. Some interest inventories are designed to be scored and reviewed without the assistance of a counselor; Holland’s Self-Directed Search (SDS) is one such inventory. However, a benefit of a counselor reviewing the results is that a guided and collaborative discussion can possibly produce a more rich analysis of the results, rather than if the individual reviewed it independently (Healy & Chope, 2006). An untrained individual may dismiss and not think to consider the possibilities of the areas in which they report fewer “likes” or “interests.” At first glance, this may seem counter-intuitive to consider the areas or occupations that scored low in interest as many of the interest inventories advise to tally and focus on the sections with the highest scoring categories. The issue resides in that many of the interest inventories rely on the presence of prior exposure. It is likely that there are occupations that individuals are rating where they have never had any first-hand experience or exposure. By utilizing another resource and having a discussion with a counselor, entertaining the idea to explore the “disinterested” areas is an insight that could provide a more holistic picture as they explore their career paths.

Another goal of career counselors is to provide a basic foundation of skills that assist in career exploration and strategic planning development (Pool & Sewell, 2007). One simplistic approach that explains how strategic thinking is taught when it comes to career development is the DOTS model (Law & Watts, 2003). The acronym is as follows: 

*Decision learning, Opportunity awareness, Transition learning, Self-awareness.* This
framework stresses the importance of helping students become more self-aware. Through self-awareness, individuals have the crucial capability to identify and understand one’s interests, values and abilities when it comes to different tasks and duties. Then, the decision learning component focuses on honing decision making skills and ability to weigh the pros and cons of different options. Opportunity awareness revolves around the concept of knowing enough about the job market to be able to identify when and where to find employment opportunities and what the qualification requirements entail. Finally, transition learning skills involve developing strategies for how to locate new opportunities and best present oneself to prospective employers with interviews, resume development and so on. If career counselors are able to share with and train individuals in these four areas, the associated knowledge and skills can be a solid foundation on which continual career development will progress throughout a lifetime. Additionally, many of these skills are applicable to everyday life environments and can be beneficial to more domains than just career development.

Holland’s Self-Directed Search

It is important to understand the context in which Holland’s (1971) original Self-Directed Search (SDS) was created. Holland served in the US Army, where he was a classification interviewer, test proctor and administer of the Weschler intelligence assessment. From the patterns he observed in new Army recruits’ placement into different occupational roles after completing a short interview assessment, Holland decided to apply those associations to the development of a personality theory related to
different occupations (PAR, Inc., 2013). His first take at producing a career interest inventory is the Vocational Preference Inventory (VPI) and was released in 1953. The significance of this measure is that it grouped the items by varying occupations and crafted the items into different scales using trait-adjectives, paralleling with other personality inventories (Hogan & Blake, 1999). This organization and conceptualization of the groupings by occupation set the foundation for further developing his theory that lead to the hexagonal model of the SDS in 1971 (Gottfredson, 2009).

Holland’s hexagon displayed the patterns he observed of similar personality characteristics that seemed to complement different vocational environments. Each of the corners of the hexagon represent one of the six different dimensions: Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional (RIASEC). See Figure 1. The model was further developed with the following six assumptions (Holland, 1985);

1.) Most people can be categorized as one of the six personality types (RIASEC). By using three of the categories to represent individuals’ interests, this provides a more comprehensive representation of their career interests, rather than just one category.

2.) The six different vocational environments are linked to the personality categories. Further, people tend to surround themselves with others who share common interests and competencies.

3.) People will generally seek out opportunities and environments where they can utilize their skills and abilities and express their views on agreeable terms.
4.) The degree of similarity between each personality and vocational environment can be roughly estimated by the distance between the points on the hexagon making up their three letter pattern. For instance, the shorter the distance is between points, the stronger the relationship. And the further away the two points are, the less of a relationship.

5.) The degree of consistency within a person or an environment is also defined by using the hexagonal model. The distances between the dimensions represents the level of consistency or differentiation between individuals and the environment. For example, if a SDS code is RIA (Realistic, Investigative and Artistic), these dimensions are consistent, as the letters are most proximately located around the hexagon. Whereas a code of CAS (Conventional, Artistic, and Social), represents greater differentiation because the dimensions are more distal on the model.

6.) Finally, individuals who have similar SDS scores are thought to have a more solid understanding and solidified sense of their preferences and interests. Those individuals who have more differentiation between their SDS scores are assumed to have less understanding of their career preferences.
The main purpose of the SDS assessment allows individuals to explore possible career choices based on their interests towards occupational environments across six different personality types. The ease of administration and self-serve format of the SDS is appealing for many reasons. One draw to this inventory is that individuals are able to self-assess, and do not necessarily need the advice or counsel of a trained professional. Moreover, vocational and career counselors have an interest in the SDS because it allows them to assist more people in a more efficient amount of time. Since the SDS is user friendly and accessible online, it can be completed ahead of time and brought to an appointment, where the counselor can go over and facilitate further exploration and interpretation of the results in a one-on-one meeting (Reardon, 2016).

Another goal of the SDS is to provide individuals with insights to their interests with different occupations that may lead them to choose a career that is the best job-fit. There
is a plethora of research on the retention rates and job satisfaction of employees related to job-fit. One study explored employee turnover intentions across three person-environment types (e.g. person-job, person-supervisor, and person-organization). The strongest predictor for turnover intention was person-job fit (Tak, 2011). This suggests that individuals who reported their job being most dissimilar to themselves had the highest ratings that indicated they were thinking of leaving their job, when compared to fit with the organization or supervisor. In addition, employees who use interest inventories to find a good job-fit, such as the SDS, may indirectly benefit the organization as they could have obtained a better understanding and scope of their career interests before accepting the position (Johnson & Stokes; 2002).

In a different study, personality traits were explored in medical students when selecting their area of specialty. The results suggested that personality traits did hold some predictive ability when the medical students made their selection (Taber, Harting, & Borges, 2011). This study’s findings are important and lend support to the connection between personality types and different occupational choices (Erford & Crockett, 2012). If people have a good match with their work environment, all other factors being equal, this can lead individuals to experience greater satisfaction, perform better and persist longer than if they were in a lesser matched environment (Arnold, 2004). If vocational interests are displayed as expressions of personality, then they represent the manifestations of personality in varying situations and environments, such as hobbies,
recreational activities, preferences and occupations. This is the basic premise of the SDS framework.

There is much debate in the field of academia around the psychometrics of interest inventories and Holland’s SDS. While research will continue to progress and assess the validity and reliability of the SDS measure, it is important to note, using career interest inventories provides better chances of a successful career selection than by chance alone (Taber et., al., 2011). Burns (2014) compared the rate of exact matches of medical students’ placement in area of occupational residency to their vocational interest inventory results. The vocational interest inventories’ successful match rate ranged from 32% and 69%, which is well above the general rate of chance.

**Emotional Intelligence**

There is no debate regarding the origin of emotional intelligence (EI) being attributed to Salovey and Mayer’s 1990 publication. Goleman (1995) popularized the topic, making it commonly discussed in both academia and the general realm of business and organizations. Once the research field introduced the idea of exploring EI in the workplace, the interest for studying this concept expanded exponentially. The purpose of this thesis is to explore the relationship EI has with career interests and decisiveness. The following sections provide an overview of EI, gender differences, the different methods of measurement, the pros and cons of each measurement type, how EI can be trained and developed, and the applicability of EI in the workplace.
There are many different variations of what emotional intelligence encompasses. However, at the very core of the concept, EI is composed of the following competencies: perception, understanding, and using and regulating emotions in oneself and others (Mayer, Salovey & Caruso, 2004; 2008). Perceiving emotions involves individuals’ ability to identify emotions in themselves, other people and different environmental cues such as facial expressions and vocal tones. Understanding emotions is more complex; it relates to individuals’ ability to conceptualize how emotions combine, progress, transition from one to the other and then the outcomes of all these processes (Schutte, Malouff, & Thorsteinsson, 2013). Using emotions involves individuals’ competencies in harnessing their emotions during any given situation (Mayer et al., 2008; Puffer, 2010). Finally, managing emotions is the ability to reduce, enhance, or modify an emotional response in oneself and others. It is also the ability to experience a range of emotions while also making decisions about the most appropriate or useful emotions to use for each situation. For this paper, the four category construct of EI is conceptualized by perceiving, using, understanding and managing emotions as defined by Brackett, Rivers, Shiffman, Salovey and Salovey (2006).

There is a theory that describes the dimensions of emotional intelligence as levels on a hierarchical continuum. Mayer et al. (2008) suggest that as one advances through the different dimensions (perceiving, using, understanding and managing) of emotions, one’s EI increases. This seems reasonable as it would take more ability or skill to understand the complexity of an emotion rather than just accurately perceive its presence (Elfenbein,
Marsh, & Ambady, 2002; Damasio, 1994). Even more ability is required in regulating and controlling the emotion than understanding the scope of the emotion felt within one self or exhibited by others (Gross, 1998; Keltner & Kring, 1998). This theory of a hierarchical continuum is reinforced in the literature (Farh, Seo, &Tesluk, 2013; Brackett, Rivers, Shiffman, Lerner, & Salovey, 2006; Schutte & Malouff, 2013) and has empirical support (Mayer, Salovey, Caruso, & Sitarenios, 2003).

**Gender Differences**

It is always important to be aware of possible differences between the genders when looking at various constructs. By identifying any differences, researchers are able to have a better understanding and accurate view of the results for each gender when making generalizations. Gender plays a role in the varying RIASEC dimensions within Holland’s SDS. Men typically score higher on the *Realistic* domain than woman, and women tend to score higher in the *Artistic* domain (Holland, 1985; Perkmen & Sahin, 2013; Gottfredson & Holland, 1975). Puffer (2011) studied the connections between EI and undergraduate students’ vocational interests in relation to their career decision. Results indicated men scored significantly higher in EI for facilitation and “basic level processing” of emotions than did women. From this, the first hypothesis is as follows:

**H1**: Men will rank themselves higher on the EI scale than will women.

**Trait Versus Ability Emotional Intelligence**

When measuring emotional intelligence, researchers typically employ one of two main approaches of measurement: trait or performance-based ability. There are mixed models
of assessing EI as well, which combine both the trait and performance-based ability measures when conducting an overall assessment of EI. Each approach has pros and cons to its use and researchers must determine which method or combination of methods are most appropriate for each situation (Healy & Chope, 2006; Fabio & Maree, 2013).

When EI is measured by individuals’ perceptions of their EI competencies, this is considered trait EI. The focus of trait EI is to look at how individuals’ perceive their EI competencies such as, self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and social skills in different environmental contexts (Kafetsios, Maridaki-Kassotaki, Zammuner, Zampetakis, & Vouzas, 2009). Trait EI also has connections to personality domains (Fabio & Palazzeschi, 2015). Petrides, Pita and Kokkinaki (2007) conducted several factor analyses and their results indicated trait EI provided unique explained variance for personality constructs. Questions on trait-based EI inventories involve the respondents reporting how they typically manage their own emotions and regulate the emotions of other people (Schutte, Malouff, & Thorsteinsson, 2013). A foundational and traditional example of a trait-based EI inventory is the Bar-On (1997) model (Salovey & Mayer, 2004).

One of the benefits to measuring EI in this way is that the administration and scoring of the assessment is fairly simple. This ease of facilitation is a desirable and possibly cost-effective method for use in the workplace, as it may not require hiring an experienced test proctor to administer and interpret the assessment (Downey, Lee, & Stough, 2011). With performance-based measures on the other hand, often the scoring
involves more complex procedures, such as recoding reverse coded-items, and then incorporating them into the total score. For ease of facilitation and scoring, a trait-based inventory was used in this study.

There are caveats to using the trait based self-report measures of emotional intelligence. One issue that applies to all cases of self-report measures is the fact that self-report data is subject to inflated responses. When rating oneself, there is a universal pattern in the United States to rate higher than what is reality. There is some concern that the inflation caused by rater bias in self-report measures might be considerable enough to skew the data (Lievens, Klehe, & Libbrecht, 2011; Maul, 2012). While this may seem concerning, this bias is well documented in the literature and many more studies and researchers still utilize this method of assessment. The consequences of having inflated EI scores when it comes to training purposes does not hold the same level of concern than if the results of the scoring affected hiring of personnel or promotional opportunities. It is advisable when considering the use of self-report measures, the researchers be cognizant of the likelihood of somewhat inflated scores.

Ability-based EI differs from trait EI in that the focus of assessment is on the performance of the cognitive processing of emotions, rather than the perception of and self-reported level of ability (Austin, 2010). Ability-based or performance-based models have series of questions with distinct correct and incorrect answers, similar to other standard intelligence tests. The questions involve asking respondents to identify emotion(s) expressed in stimuli such as a photograph (Schutte, et., al. 2013).
Theoretically, individuals’ EI scores are then determined by summing the total number of correct responses. A foundational and traditional example of an ability-based EI inventory is the Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (Mayer, Caruso, & Salovey, 1999). Mixed-models are a combination of both the trait and ability-based measures. When researchers employ mixed models, this allows exploration of both the self-reported and actual performance measures, which can provide a more broad description of respondents’ EI (Cherniss, Extein, Goleman, & Weissberg, 2006).

A benefit to using the ability-based assessment of EI is that they may be a better fit for some populations. Billings, Downey, Lomas, Lloyd, and Stough (2014) raise an interesting point when it comes to the cognitive development of children and adolescences. They suggested that using an ability measure of EI with young children seems more viable as they may not have the level of introspection and self-awareness required for self-report techniques to provide reliable results. This may apply to other populations, which might not have the level of self-awareness and reflection required to accurately take the self-reported trait measures. However, since this study involved college students, utilizing a self-report trait EI assessment seemed appropriate as this population presumably had the necessary level of self-awareness needed.

**Emotional Intelligence and Training**

One notable feature and characteristic that makes EI an interesting topic for career counselors and Human Resource professionals, is the fact that EI can be developed within individuals to increase specific skills and overall trait and ability-based EI levels. Fabio
and Kenny (2011) demonstrated the beneficial results of EI training programs within a group of high school students. This study utilized a mixed-model approach and had the students complete both self-report trait and performance-based ability measures before and after a training program was implemented. The program consisted of four, two and a half hour sessions that were administered over the course of four weeks. Each session focused on one of the four components of EI: perceiving, using, understanding and managing emotions. The results indicated increases in both trait and ability-based measures, which points to not only did individuals’ performance in EI increase, but their perceptions of their competencies increased as well. With these results in high school students, expanding the scope of training to other age groups is also of great interest.

In a different study by the same researchers, Fabio and Kenny (2012) explored the relationship of EI and choosing a decision-making style. There are five different decisional styles: Rational, Intuitive, Dependent, Avoidant and Spontaneous. The rational style involves an affinity to use information and a logical and systematic approach to decision making. The intuitive style relies on emotions and feelings when it comes to making decisions. The dependent approach utilizes and relies on the opinions, feedback and input from others when making decisions. The avoidant approach harbors negative feelings and discomfort with the idea of making decisions and seeks to avoid situations that require decisions be made. And finally, the spontaneous approach employs the use of quick and instinctive thoughts when making decisions.
What Fabio and Kenny (2012) discovered was that students who scored lower on EI tended to also have difficulties in choosing a decision-making style. The researchers speculated that this occurrence might be due to the inability to effectively understand and facilitate emotions, which could be products of lower EI scores. Not having strong EI abilities could impair individuals’ decision-making, as there may be a lack of self-awareness and understanding on how individuals feel about a particular occupation. This under-developed area could then display itself as higher differentiation and variation of career interests on the SDS. As EI levels are higher, the career differentiation scores should be lower and more narrowed. This leads to the second hypothesis:

H₂: There will be a negative relationship between EI and differentiation of career interest scores.

Recall the previous study by Fabio and Kenny (2011), the students who scored lower on EI were exposed to the intervention program, their EI scores could be developed. Incorporating some of the methodology of Law and Watts’ DOTS (2003) model could also be fruitful in a training intervention. This possibility of improvement could help facilitate the development of an effective decision-making style, as well as assist them in many everyday situations throughout their lives.

**Emotional Intelligence in the Workplace**

Emotional intelligence is applicable and pertinent in the workplace. When it comes to employability and navigating within the workplace, EI is a critical factor. To be competitive in obtaining a job in the current market requires qualifications of knowledge,
skills, and abilities as well as EI or soft skills. Several studies indicated that individuals who have a broad range of psychological career resources, such as EI, were more easily able to adapt to changing career circumstances and be resilient during tremulous times (Griffin & Hesketh, 2003; Potgieter, Coetzee, & Masenge, 2012). Additionally, there is evidence that supports successful leadership qualities are rooted in EI competencies (Palethorpe, 2006; Gabel, Dolan, & Cerdin, 2005).

There are employers who use emotional intelligence assessments within the workplace. Some use these assessments for screening job applicants. One study assessed applicants’ perspectives on whether or not using an EI measure was a fair assessment for job candidate selection. Iliescu, Ilie, Ispas and Ion (2012) asked employees within the fields of sales, public sector and medical administration if EI was fair to use and found that participants do feel EI is a fair selection tool to use. While not all employers have explicit EI assessments they give to prospective candidates, the practice is not uncommon in the field.

**Decisiveness**

In the literature, researchers make the distinction between indecision and indecisiveness. Fabio, Palazzeschi, Peretz and Gati (2013) describe the first construct, indecision, as momentary or short-term issues that block individuals from making decisions. This experience is categorized as a normal stage or state that all people experience at least once during their lifetime. But what is more concerning is the latter construct of indecisiveness. It is described as a more chronic and consistent issue that
hinders individuals’ abilities to make decisions in various contexts and situations (Gati, Krausz, & Osipow; 1996; Germeijs & Boeck, 2002; Gati, Peretz, Fisher; 2012). In other words, it is closer to a trait than a state. If individuals have more of a long lasting difficulty with making decisions, their decisiveness skills may be under developed and presumably would score high on the Indecisiveness scale. Extending this inability to make decisions would likely spill-over into all realms of these individuals’ lives as well.

For ease of interpretation in the analysis and readability, indecisiveness’s reciprocal, decisiveness is used throughout this paper. And thus the fourth hypothesis is as follows:

\[ H_3: \text{There will be a negative relationship between decisiveness and differentiation of career interest scores.} \]

Since indecisiveness is a persistent inability to make decisions in various situations, exploring its relationship with career interests and EI is of interest of this study. It may lead to insights that can serve as catalysts in developing interventions designed to decrease general indecisiveness or increase decisiveness, and lead to more optional career choices.

**Emotional Intelligence and Decisiveness**

There are numerous studies that link decisiveness of individuals to emotional intelligence (Germeijs & De Boeck, 2002; Goldenberg, Matheson, & Mantler, 2006; Kafetsios et. al., 2009; Lievens, Klehe, & Libbrecht, 2011). For instance, Kafetsios et al. (2009) assessed the EI among college students in relation to their choices regarding career paths. They reported that students with higher EI scores were more assured in their
career path decision, a construct similar to decisiveness/decisiveness, than students with lower EI scores. Further results indicated that students intending to follow career paths associated with the sciences, scored higher on trait EI than students intending to follow the social science studies career path. These findings provide a foundation for the continued research into career interests, and the link between EI and decisiveness. Which leads to the fourth hypothesis:

\[ H_4: \text{Participants with higher EI will have higher decisiveness scores.} \]

The intended purpose of this study is to better understand the relationship between EI, decisiveness and the variability of career interests. Several demographic variables were collected and controlled for in the analysis as previous research indicates they are relevant in explaining some of the key variables of interest. Further exploration of the nature of these differences is also of interest. In relation to age, Chapman and Hayslip Jr. (2006) found consistent results to other studies that midlife adults perform better in certain dimensions of EI than younger individuals. The year in school or class level may also have an impact on variability of career interests. Perkmen and Sahin (2013) found that college seniors had a more solid sense of fit with their Holland SDS score. This seems to support Chapman and Hayslip Jr.’s findings, as students move up in their academic career and age, their awareness and interests further refine. Ethnicity was used as a control variable as the workforce is diverse and there will continue to be a trend toward diverse work environments. Understanding the possible varying patterns accounted for by ethnicity is a vital component to a successful work environment.
Finally, level of financial security was collected to control this variable and identify any possible differences between levels of financial comfort and career choices.

The full model of all the variables and their proposed relationships in this study are shown in *Figure 2*. In reviewing the different variables listed in this study’s the model, Baron and Kenny’s (1986) guidance on mediators was followed. A mediator is a variable that explains how and why external factors can have internal psychological significance on various outcomes. For example, the level of individuals’ decisiveness should have influence on EI’s relationship to differentiation of career interest scores. If an individual had lower abilities in decisiveness, internally this person may struggle with making decisions, which could be influenced by lower EI skills and lead to greater ambiguity in choosing a career (and greater differentiation). While someone’s natural EI abilities may enhance and help with self-awareness of emotions and interests, decisiveness should have a significant role to play in knowing and selecting one’s career interests. According to this and the previously discussed theoretical background, the fifth and final proposed hypothesis is as follows:

\[ H_5: \text{When controlling for age, gender, ethnicity, and financial security, decisiveness will act as a negative partial mediator to EI on differentiation scores.} \]
Figure 2. Proposed model of the relationships between demographics, Emotional Intelligence, Decisiveness and Differentiation of career interests
Participants

The participants in this study primarily consisted of undergraduate students all of whom were enrolled in the research website at California State University of Sacramento. They were assigned research credit for their participation as it satisfies a requirement for their Psychology course. A total of 151 surveys were received, but after reviewing the raw data, three surveys were discarded, as they had less than 10% of the items completed. Additionally, eleven cases had widespread missing values, so they were removed from the dataset, leaving a final sample size of 137.

There were 104 females (76.5%), and 32 males (23.5%), with a mean age of 20.72 and standard deviation of 3.49. In descending order, most of the participants were freshmen \((n = 54)\), then juniors \((n = 39)\), sophomores \((n = 27)\), seniors \((n = 17)\) and one post-baccalaureate individual. The sample identified their ethnicity as Hispanic/Latino \((n = 43)\), White \((n = 38)\), Asian/Pacific Islander \((n = 27)\), African American/Black \((n = 9)\), Other \((n = 2)\) but did not self-disclose, and 20 respondents did not answer the question. Individuals were asked to rate their level of financial security and a majority reported being financially comfortable \((n = 61)\), then in descending order, basic needs met \((n = 47)\), moderately difficult \((n = 15)\), very comfortable \((n = 8)\) and very difficult financially \((n = 6)\).
Materials

Emotional Intelligence was measured using the 19-item Self-Rated Emotional Intelligence Scale (Brackett, Rivers, & Shiffman, 2006). Participants were asked to rate how accurately each statement relates to themselves on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Very Inaccurate to 5= Very Accurate). The Self-Rated Emotional Intelligence Scale contains four factors: Perceiving Emotion, Using Emotion, Understanding Emotion and Managing Emotion. This last factor is split between managing one’s own emotions and managing other’s emotions, or social management. Within the Perceiving Emotions factor, there are four items. An example is: “By looking at people’s facial expressions, I recognize the emotions they are experiencing.” The Use of Emotion factor contains three items and an example is: “When making decisions, I listen to my feelings to see if the decision feels right.” Understanding Emotion consists of four items and an example is: “I have a rich vocabulary to describe my emotions.” Finally, the Managing Emotion factor has eight items. There are an equal number of items for managing one’s emotions and managing other peoples’. Several examples include: “I can handle stressful situations without getting too nervous;” “I know the strategies to make or improve other people’s moods.” The overall concept of EI is of interest to this study, hence the sum of scores across all factors was calculated. The Cronbach α for the total scale was .79.

To assess decisiveness, the 22-item General Indecisiveness scale (Germeijs & Boeck, 2002) was used. Participants were asked to rate themselves on a 7-point Likert type agreement scale regarding decision-making in general and in different kinds of situations.
The rating of agreement ranges from \(0 = \text{Strongly Disagree}\) to \(6 = \text{Strongly Agree}\). Each item has a reciprocal statement, which is an attempt to prevent response bias tendencies. Sample items include: “I find it easy to make decisions;” “I delay deciding;” “Once I have made a decision, I stick to that decision.” The scale for decisiveness was formatted in such a way as higher scores indicate more decisiveness and lower scores represent more indecisiveness. The Cronbach \(\alpha\) for this scale yielded a high value of .91.

Career interests were assessed through Holland’s Self-Directed Search (SDS) (Holland, 1985). This inventory consists of 48-items that explore a variety of different vocations. Participants were asked to answer questions in five different categories about their career interests on six different personality and career areas: Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising and Conventional (RIASEC). Within three of the four sections, the response style is a dichotomous format where the participant either agreed or disagreed with each statement. The number of agreed statements were notated for each dimension. The fourth section asked the participants to estimate and rank themselves on 12 different traits as compared to other people their own age. The 12 traits pertain to the six personality dimensions (RIASEC) and were ranked using a Likert-scale \((1 = \text{Low level of ability} \text{ to } 7 = \text{High level of ability})\). Participants were asked to not rank themselves at the same level as any other trait. The Likert value given to each trait was then recorded for each dimension and the face value of each trait (1-7) was used to sum the total score. At the end of the inventory, all “agreed” and “liked” statements and trait scores were tallied across all six dimensions for a total score. For sake of time, the
Occupational Day Dream section of the SDS was omitted, as it was not factored into the total score, and is not needed for the purpose of this study.

The three-letter total score that acts as a final score was recoded to represent differentiation, or variability, of the career interests. The recoding took place as follows: The first career code each individual received was given a “1”. The second code an individual received depended on how far away that particular career interest was to their strongest interest, as assessed by the placement of the two career areas on Holland’s Hexagon, refer to (Figure 1). In other words, if an individual’s second strongest career interest was directly next to his or her first strongest interest, then the second code that person received would be a “1”. But, if it is two links away from the first strongest career interest, then the second code would be a “2”. And, if it is three links away from the first strongest career interest, then the second code would be a “3”. The third code an individual received was identified much the same way. If the third code is directly next to his or her first strongest interest, then the third code that person received would be a “1”. But, if it is two links away from the first strongest career interest, then the third code would be a “2” and so on.

There are thus eight possible differentiation codes a person can receive: (1,1,1; 1,1,2; 1,1,3; 1,2,1; 1,2,2; 1,2,3; 1,3,1; 1,3,2, where a code of 1,1,1 = least differentiation/most narrow career interests, and a code of 1,3,2 = most differentiation/most varied career interests). These three digit codes were then re-coded on an eight-point scale (1=least differentiation to 8=highest differentiation). In this coding scheme, the order of the codes
for first, second and third-level interests are hierarchical. Participants who scored three interest categories away from the first letter as their second strongest interest (i.e. 1,3,1), show a relatively strong interest in two “opposite” career categories according to Holland’s hexagon model. Participants who score two interest categories away from the first letter as both their second and third strongest interests (i.e. 1,2,2), would not have nearly as “opposing” career interests. In this way, the different sections were summed to produce the three letter SDS code. This then provides the map on how to calculate the differentiation codes (1,1,1; 1,1,2, and so on) based off the distal proximity of each letter from the primary code.

The psychometric properties for the Holland’s SDS are well-documented and supported. Cronbach α coefficients for this inventory have ranged from acceptable levels .75 to good .87 (Schmitt, Golubovich, & Leong, 2011). Inter-rater reliability ranges from fair to acceptable values .29 to .33 (Burns, 2013; Glavin & Savickas, 2011; McHugh, 2012). The consistency and reliability of responses for longitudinal purposes is also supported (Miller, 2002).

**Procedure**

The Human Subjects Committee reviewed and provided approval for this study. The survey was posted electronically on the Psychology Department’s research website for any students registered with Psychology courses requiring participation. Students provided consent to participate in this study electronically before they could take the survey. The survey was open for participants to respond and then closed as soon as the
desired sample size was obtained. The raw data were directly downloaded into an Excel document and deleted from the research website, per the research website requested policies. The raw data were compiled and cleaned for erroneous and incomplete cases. There were 23 cases with tied scores in the career interest dimensions. To determine which dimension would be identified as the primary interest, an unbiased approach of flipping a coin was employed. Once the first place letter was determined, the other tied dimension was notated as the second interest, as the participant did rate that area high. The third code was then determined by the next highest scoring dimension. There was only once instance with a three-way tie for the first code placement. To settle this issue, three identically-sized highlighters of different colors (green, orange, and blue) were pulled from a bag. Each color represented one of the dimensions (Realistic, Conventional, and Social) and the first draw determined the first code, and a second draw was pulled to determine the second code.

An independent t-tests analysis was conducted to assess the possibility of gender differences in rankings of EI. To assess if EI was a viable predictor of decisiveness, a simple linear regression was employed. Two separate correlation analyses were run to assess the nature of EI’s relationship to decisiveness’ and to career differentiation scores. And finally, multiple regression modeling using the stepwise method was used to control for the demographic variables and explore the role of decisiveness on career differentiation scores.
Chapter 4

RESULTS

The independent-samples t-test did not show statistically significant differences for males ($M = 67.69, SD = 9.78$) and females ($M = 67.19, SD = 9.49$) on EI. The magnitude of the difference between the means (mean difference = -0.09, 95% CI: -0.49 to 0.31) was very small (eta squared = 0.0004). This is contrary to the first hypothesis that men would rate themselves higher than women on the EI scale.

The relationships between EI and career differentiation along with decisiveness and career differentiation were assessed by Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients. The results supported only the second hypothesis; there was a significant negative relationship between EI and career differentiation scores. Refer to Table 1 for the means, standard deviations and correlation coefficients. While decisiveness did have a negative relationship to career differentiation ($H_3$), the correlation was not statistically significant.

In regard to hypothesis 4, simple linear regression was used to assess if EI could predict respondent’s decisiveness scores. Preliminary analyses were conducted to ensure no violations to the assumptions of normality, linearity, multicollinearity and homoscedasticity. The total amount of variance that EI explained as a whole was 28.4%, $p < .007$. The model was significant $t (1) = 7.31, p < .001$, suggesting that EI scores are significantly associated with decisiveness. The relationship was positive ($r = .53, p <$
...and suggests that as EI scores increase, so does decisiveness. This is supportive of the fourth hypothesis.

Table 1

*Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations Between Measures of Emotional Intelligence, Decisiveness and Career Differentiation Scores*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.EI</td>
<td>67.07</td>
<td>9.13</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>.533**</td>
<td>-.176*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.Decisiveness</td>
<td>97.77</td>
<td>19.89</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td>-.042</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.Career differentiation</td>
<td>3.72</td>
<td>2.06</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p < .05. ** p < .001.

Following Baron and Kenny’s (1986) recommendations to assess if there is a mediator in a regression model, a test for mediation was conducted. There are three assumptions that must be met in order to indicate a mediator is present in the equation. First, there must be statistical significance between the proposed mediator variable (decisiveness) and independent variable (EI), see Table 2; second, there must be statistical significance between the DV (differentiation) and the independent variable (EI), see Table 3; and third, there must be statistical significance between the proposed mediator (decisiveness) and DV (differentiation). There were statistically significant relationships between two of the three assumptions; however, decisiveness did not statistically significantly explain the variance in differentiation of career interests. Therefore, it does not act as a mediator in the model and does not support H5. The multiple regression analyses demonstrate that there was however, a statistically
significant and strong positive association between EI ($M = 67.07, SD = 9.13$) and decisiveness ($M = 97.77, SD = 19.89$), $\beta = .52$, $n = 118$, $p < .001$, with high ratings of EI associated with high scores of decisiveness. In addition to the direct path between EI ($M = 67.07 SD = 9.13$) and differentiation scores ($M = 3.67 SD = 2.01$), $\beta = -.24$, $n = 118$, $p < .05$ being a significant negative association, when decisiveness ($M = 97.77 SD = 19.89$) is taken into account, the association is still significant $\beta = -.23$, $n = 118$, $p < .05$. As scores of EI increase, the differentiation of interests narrows, as expected. The final statistical loadings from the regression model are displayed in Table 4. Relationships from the regression model are displayed in Figure 2.
Table 2

*Regression Analysis Summary for Emotional Intelligence and Decisiveness*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>SE B</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>1.54</td>
<td>.127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class level</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>1.79</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>.938</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>.211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Security</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>1.68</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td>.183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>3.43</td>
<td>0.18*</td>
<td>2.47</td>
<td>.015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EI</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>0.52*</td>
<td>6.87</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. $R^2 = .41$ (N = 118, p = .000).*
Table 3

*Regression Analysis Summary for Emotional Intelligence and Career Differentiation Scores*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>SE B</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>.553</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class level</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.37</td>
<td>.716</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>.561</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Security</td>
<td>.48</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>0.21*</td>
<td>2.24</td>
<td>.027</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>.42</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>.340</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EI</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>-0.24*</td>
<td>-2.56</td>
<td>.012</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. $R^2 = .10$ (N = 118, p = .061).
Table 4

Regression Analysis Summary for Emotional Intelligence, Mediator Effect and Career Differentiation Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>SE B</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>.541</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class level</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>0.37</td>
<td>.716</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>.551</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Security</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>.21*</td>
<td>2.23</td>
<td>.028</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td>.333</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EI</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>-.23*</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>.044</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decisiveness</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>-0.19</td>
<td>.850</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. $R^2 = .10$ ($N = 118, p = .10$).
Figure 3. Beta weights from the Multiple Regression Model assessing Emotional Intelligence’s relationship to differentiation of career interests. Circles indicate demographic variables, independent variables are in rectangles and the dependent variable is an ellipse. The mediator of Decisiveness was not statistically significant.

*p < .01. **p < .001.
The goal of the current study was to extend the scope of knowledge around the relationship of EI with career interests and to what extent, if any, that decisiveness played a role in this relationship. To assess these relationships, several correlation and multiple regression analyses were conducted. This study used Holland’s Self-Directed Search and differentiation scores were subsequently calculated. Decisiveness was assessed using Germeijs and Boeck’s (2002) General Indecisiveness scale. Emotional Intelligence was assessed using Brackett, Rivers and Shiffman’s (2006) Self-Rated Emotional Intelligence Scale. More than half of the hypotheses were supported by the analysis.

The most notable results from this study is the evidence of EI being positively related to decisiveness and negatively related to career differentiation scores. The positive relationship between EI and decisiveness supports prior studies’ findings (Fabio & Kenny, 2011; 2012). This relationship is of importance to career counselors as it suggests that EI influences decisiveness. The data support the idea of developing overall EI in a means to improve decisiveness. Career counselors could use training exercises as viable tools and resources to offer to their clientele. This is also of interest and use to Human Resource personnel in regards to developing employees. If an organization seeks to grow their employees’ professional and interpersonal skills, exploring the idea of training EI may be an option to consider.
Although, it is important to remember that correlation does not equal or indicate causation; but rather a statistically significant influential positive relationship exists between EI and Decisiveness. Further exploration into the specific domains of EI should be addressed to more clearly identify which competencies of EI are most effective in influencing decisiveness (e.g. perceiving or understanding emotions). Future studies designed in such a way as to explore the nature of a potential causal relationship between EI and decisiveness would also be of interest to better understand the possible cause and nature of effect of these constructs.

The negative relationship between EI and differentiation makes logical sense. As individuals’ EI levels are higher, their career interests are then more focused or narrowed (represented by a lower level of differentiation). Here again, it is important to remember that correlation does not equal causation, but rather this relationship suggests that as EI is developed, it will have a beneficial effect on the narrowing of career interests. This is useful information to career counselors as a tool to assist individuals who may be struggling with identifying their career path. Counselors could provide an EI training (possibly focused on the facet of self-awareness) to their clientele, which should help individual’s understand themselves better and possibly make identifying their career interests more clear. This same approach could also be applied and utilized by Human Resource professionals who focus on developing their personnel to have a long a successful career within the company. As turnover is costly to organizations, many companies are focused on and are investing in the development and retention of their
current staff. This focus can be seen in the appearance of branches within different organizations with titles such as *Workforce Planning* and *People Operations* (Bock, 2015). Using EI trainings to assist employees in identifying their career interests may help them discover other areas within that organization that they could move into and develop a more well-rounded knowledge of that company.

There was no significant mediator effect of Decisiveness scores on EI’s relationship to career differentiation scores, however, given that this study is the first to pose such relationship, it may be that further testing with more refined instruments or more diverse populations would result in different outcomes. The gender difference in EI scores was not apparent in this study either. Men did not rate themselves higher in overall EI ability than women. Prior research indicates that men typically rate themselves higher than women on specific EI domains (e.g. use of emotions) whereas, women rank themselves higher in the more advanced level of EI (e.g. managing emotions) (Puffer, 2011). The distinction in Puffer’s findings are that specific facets of EI were explored between the genders; in the current study, overall trait-based EI was assessed and no significant differences were observed. However, the sample was overwhelmingly female-based and after cleaning the data for outliers and missing cases, there were just enough males to meet typical research standards of an acceptable sample size (*n~30*). It is suggested that future research ensure that the ratio of participant demographics be monitored throughout the sampling period to ensure that the sample is more representative of the true population of college students.
Limitations

There are several limitations to the generalizability of this study. For one, the restricted demographics of the sample may have had an adverse effect on the results. The sample consisted of primarily freshman females. In a more diverse sampling, the hypotheses may be supported. While the student population within the Psychology department tends to have a higher population of females, the current study’s sampling is not representative of the greater university demographics.

Another sampling bias in this study is that respondents had to have access to technology in order to participate. It is suggested that in future studies, reserving campus computer labs to allow participants to take the inventories may capture more individuals who might not have home access to a computer and the internet. The online format of sampling also is a possible limitation to the study as well. Due to the number of survey items and remote surveying nature, it is likely that participants experienced test-taking fatigue and abandonment.

As far as the data analysis, using Holland’s SDS as a measure of career interests and the self-report EI scale were not the most direct way to assess individuals’ vocational interests or EI. In future studies, it is recommended that a more stream-lined and direct measure be used when the focus of interest is on career interest diversification, such as Strong’s Interest Inventory (SII) or Osipow’s (1987) Career Decision Scale. Future studies may also want to consider using a performance-based EI scale, such as the
Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT, Version 2.0, 2002), to explore the variation between self-report and ability levels of EI.
References


Rhee, N., & Fornia, W. B. (2016). *Are California Teachers Better off with a Pension or a 401(k)?* Berkeley: UC Berkeley Center for Labor Research and Education.


