How Pink is the Sky?: A Cross-national Study of the Gendered Occupation of Pilot

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Abstract: The occupation aviation pilot has long been seen as the bastion of masculinity. Aviation has a long history of heroic deeds performed mainly by men.
and thus has developed an ethos that recognises 'the right stuff' as an important component of that image. Female pilots have also made a significant contribution to aviation. While these exploits have been recognised, female pilots are still considered the exception in the industry rather than being accepted as competent contributors. A survey of pilots across Australia, Norway, South Africa and the United States of America (USA) was utilised to ascertain the perceptions of pilots to gender-related issues on the flight deck. While drawing on the results from the quantitative analysis, the main focus is on the results of the qualitative analysis that draws on a grounded theory approach for the analysis of the comments from the surveys. The analyses identified Gender Issues, Equity, Flying Proficiency, Safety Orientation, Industry, and Survey as themes from the comments. The comments cover a broad spectrum of stereotypical perceptions and prejudices both for and against female pilots. The growing numbers of female pilots, albeit still small, is having an impact on the perceptions of pilots and the stereotypical male image of the occupation.


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