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Introduction

This user's guide is for career professionals: counselors, coaches, trainers, academic advisors, and others who use the *Strong Interest Inventory*® Profile and Interpretive Report to help students and clients with career exploration, career enrichment, and career transition. It includes strategies, practical resources, and tools to serve as a framework for the efficient and meaningful delivery of assessment results to individuals and groups. It also includes the theoretical rationale for the *Strong* and information on the development and improvements of the current revision.

The guide was developed out of the authors' appreciation for both the simplicity and complexity of the *Strong* assessment. Its simplicity lies in the ease with which occupational codes, career fields, and styles of work and learning are presented. This helps ensure that the client will be able to grasp the information and make use of it and facilitates group interpretations and workshops. Its complexity lies in its theoretical underpinnings, its normative depth, its layers of information, and its interpretive nuances. This helps ensure that the results are accurate and valid and will be applicable to the widest range of career clients.

To help new and experienced *Strong* users get the most from this powerful assessment tool, we begin by describing the overall organization of the *Strong Interest Inventory* assessment, with an emphasis on the six Themes, which are useful ways of connecting interests to the world of work. Chapter 1 of this guide is essentially a guided tour of the *Strong* 2004 Profile and Interpretive Report. Each section of the Profile is intro-

duced, followed by a detailed explanation of the *Strong* scales and indexes, starting with the administrative indexes, then moving to the General Occupational Themes, the Basic Interest Scales, the Occupational Scales, and the Personal Style Scales.

Chapter 2 deals with how to interpret and use the *Strong*. We start with a discussion of factors that may affect interpretation, followed by instructions that should be used with clients to maximize the usefulness of their results. We then present general strategies for individual interpretations and group sessions. Next are detailed suggestions for how to conduct a group interpretation.

Chapter 3 opens with a discussion of results that may present challenges for interpretation. We conclude with some specific suggestions as to how the *Strong* can be used with different kinds of clients, including adults, college students, and high school students.

Following that are four appendixes. Appendix A answers frequently asked questions; appendix B links the *Strong* Occupational Scale names to the U.S. Department of Labor O*Net™ job database; appendix C provides a table to convert *Strong* standard scores to percentiles; and appendix D lists female and male mean scores for each of the GOTs, BISs, and PSSs. Three reproducible masters in the back of this guide can serve as activities and worksheets to help clients apply *Strong* results to their career search.

The user's guide is designed to be used as a starting point—interpretation strategies for you to modify and expand on to meet the needs of your particular clients,

plus a basic summary of the body of knowledge available in the *Strong Interest Inventory® Manual* (Donnay, Morris, Schaubhut, & Thompson, 2005). Keep in mind that it is you, the career professional, who makes the *Strong* come alive for your clients and students. Guides and manuals can only provide basic information such as that which is presented here.

Note, however, that this user's guide is intended as a companion to the *Strong Interest Inventory® Manual*, not as a replacement. For more in-depth coverage of the

theory underlying the *Strong*, as well as a complete description of the current revision and the technical details, *Strong* users should consult the manual.

Where Do I Go Next? Using Your Strong Results to Manage Your Career (rev. ed.) also expands on the General Occupational Theme, Basic Interest Scale, and Personal Style Scale descriptions. This booklet is “translated” into client/student language and is very helpful with the “next steps” that follow *Strong* interpretations.

What You Need to Know Before Using the Reports: A Guided Tour

The *Strong Interest Inventory*[®] assessment provides a powerful method for matching the interests of an individual with opportunities for jobs, education, and leisure activities. The framework that underlies the *Strong* and helps to organize client results is the same theory that describes and organizes the world of work.

The 2004 *Strong* assessment is the result of nearly a century of comparing the interests of people with those of workers in various occupations. Stanford University professor E. K. Strong's initial work focused on the degree of similarity between clients' interests and those of satisfied workers, a system that has proved its validity and usefulness through many revisions of the instrument.

John Holland's theory of personality types and work environments was added to the *Strong* assessment in its 1974 revision. Although Holland supplied the theory, the underlying dimensions had been apparent in research with the *Strong* for years. The theory suggests that in our culture people and work environments or occupations can be categorized into six types, which Holland calls Themes: Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional—also known collectively by their initials as RIASEC. Most simply, the categories provide a framework for matching people's interests with the characteristics or features of jobs. People tend to seek environments that meet their interests and allow them to express their values and attitudes. Factors such as job performance, satis-

faction, and retention are determined by the interaction between the person's personality and the characteristics of the environment. Thus the Themes can be used for matching students with satisfying majors, exploring career fields and occupations, addressing job search and career adjustment concerns, and determining career development issues.

The six Themes are commonly arranged around a hexagon, as shown in Figure 1.1. Themes that are closer together on the hexagon have more closely related characteristics, while those on opposite sides of the hexagon are more dissimilar. Holland's RIASEC theory provides an organizing simplicity to results on the *Strong* instrument while at the same time adding a richness and depth to its interpretation.

People are naturally attracted to activities that they enjoy, in turn developing skills and abilities in those areas. Conversely, they avoid activities that are not enjoyable to them and often don't develop the corresponding skills unless it is necessary for them to do so. As individuals mature, they tend to return to the corners of the hexagon that are most enjoyable to them, eventually establishing a pattern of interests that are reflected in a RIASEC personality, or Theme code, that identifies their primary interests. Most vocational psychologists agree that interests stabilize by about the age of 25, although patterns become evident much earlier than that. It is these patterns that the *Strong* assessment is concerned with, as these Theme patterns suggest potentially satisfying fields of study, work environments, hobbies and leisure interests, corporate cultures, and so on.

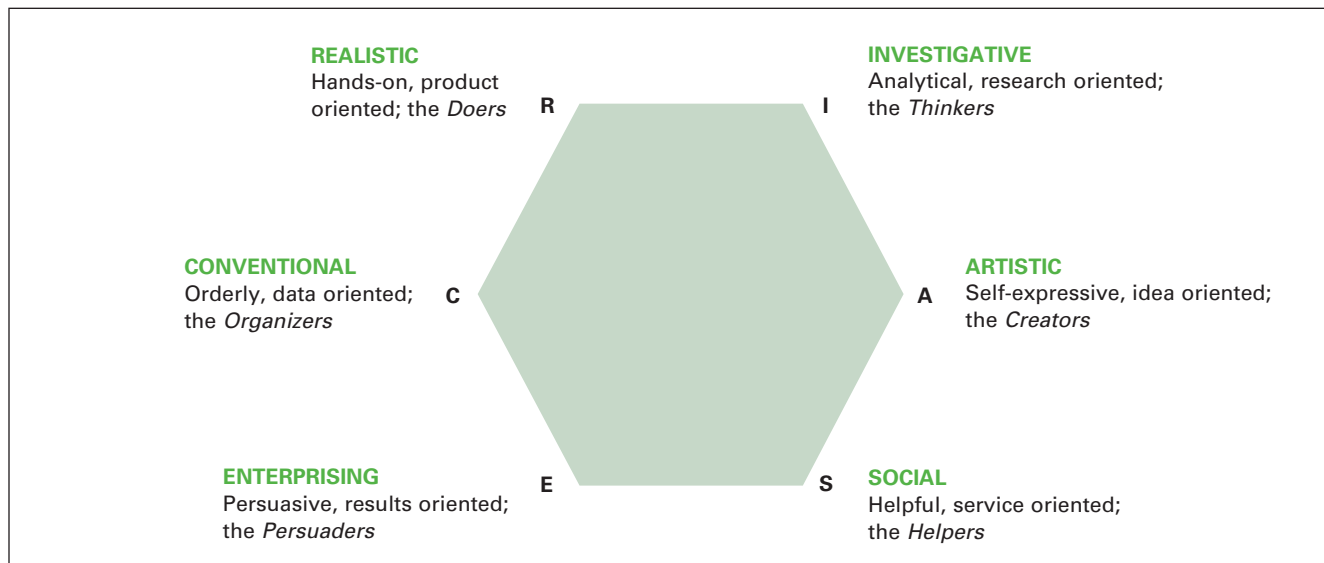


Figure 1.1 Holland's Six Work Types

To reveal the pattern of an individual's interests, the *Strong* assessment consists of the scales listed in Table 1.1. When describing the *Strong* scales, it may be useful to consider a geographic analogy, as follows:

- General Occupational Themes: the state or province in which you live
- Basic Interest Scales: your city or town
- Occupational Scales: your specific street address
- Personal Style Scales: the way you decorate your home

Reports

A respondent's complete results on the *Strong* assessment are reported on his or her *Strong* Profile, a nine-page document. The *Strong* Interpretive Report gives an in-depth interpretation and application of *Strong* results, adding nine pages of highly personalized information to the initial Profile. Both the Profile and the Interpretive Report underwent significant revisions in 2004. Several Profile and report formats are available from the publisher in both color and black-and-white. The formats target users in a variety of settings and can be accessed through both mail-in and SkillsOne® scoring. For current information on formats and pricing, and to review sample reports, consult the CPP catalogue or Web site at www.cpp.com.

To experienced *Strong* users, the 2004 Profile and Interpretive Report at first glance will look quite different from previous revisions. Changes include the following:

- New graphics for the Profile and Interpretive Report make them easy to interpret and visually appealing
- Bar graphs, charts, and bulleted points have replaced pages of data
- Results are gender specific
- The Profile Summary at the end replaces the up-front Snapshot of Results

A more careful investigation will reveal the same thoroughness of research, organization, and attention to detail that users have come to expect from *Strong* reports. Table 1.2 describes each section of the Profile, its uses, and the changes present in the 2004 edition.

Less experienced users will find the visual presentation immediately easy to understand. Interpretive possibilities and individualized applications will become evident as they gain experience and expertise.

While the Profile provides basic information about respondents' results, the expanded Interpretive Report adds information that is particularly helpful to clients who are in the process of researching occupations, career fields, and educational interests. The Interpretive Report value added to each section on the Profile is indicated in Table 1.3.