

# This Week's Citation Classic

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Holland J L. *Making vocational choices: a theory of careers*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1973. 150 p.  
[Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, MD]

**A typology of six personality types, six corresponding occupational environments, and their interactions is offered as a tool for understanding work histories, vocational satisfaction, and achievement, and for organizing and interpreting personal and occupational data. [The *Science Citation Index*® (SCI®) and the *Social Sciences Citation Index*® (SSCI™) indicate that this book has been cited over 260 times since 1973.]**

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"The origins of my typology are multiple. The key experiences are stretched over most of my work history, and I have noticed that I give different explanations on different days.

"My military experience (1942-46) as an induction interviewer led me to think that people fall into a relatively small number of types. Later my vocational counseling experience with college students, physically impaired, and psychiatric patients reinforced my belief that it is useful to see people as types. My counseling experience also made me anxious to find a way to organize occupational information so that the counseling assessment could be related more explicitly to occupations.

"The three versions of the theory are similar; each revision was an attempt to provide a theory that better complies with scientific standards of logic and evidence. Between revisions, I have listened to critics,

friends, and the evidence. In all, I have had about 20 active collaborators who performed the necessary research, clarified my thinking, taught me something about the philosophy of science, and kept me from quitting when I became discouraged.

"It was easy to get discouraged. The first statement<sup>1</sup> resulted in a stalemate that a friendly journal editor resolved in my favor, but a critique was published simultaneously in the same journal. Psychologists had been burned by typologies and were in no mood for another. The 1966 statement, a book,<sup>2</sup> received more positive reviews (I finally had some evidence) and the 1973 statement generally received positive reviews.

"I attribute the current popularity and high citation of my delusional system to many things. (1) It is easy to comprehend and to apply to research or practical problems. This is occasionally a defect because some social scientists cannot believe that relatively simple formulations can be useful. (2) It has spawned some popular self-help devices (the Self Directed Search<sup>3</sup> and its multiple imitations). (3) It has provided a technical terminology that lends status to the typology—terms such as hexagonal model (a theory without a diagram cannot be science), congruency, and type. The types (Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, Conventional) have also become part of the vocabulary of counselors and researchers. (4) The typology rests on considerable research evidence (300+ articles so far), and the theoretical ideas are often applied successfully to a wide range of practical problems. For example, the Canadian government has used the classification to reorganize their occupational classification for counseling purposes. And (5) the typology has become more immune to criticism as defects have been eliminated or softened in successive revisions. I hope to produce one more revision, for critics and friends continue to act as coauthors."

1. Holland J L. A theory of vocational choice. *J Couns. Psychol* 6:35-45, 1959.

2. .... . *The psychology of vocational choice*. Waltham, MA: Blaisdell, 1966. 132 p.

3. .... . *Professional manual for the self directed search*. Palo Alto, CA: Consulting Psychologists Press, 1979. 96 p.