Holland’s Theory in a Postmodern World: Is it still Relevant?

Emily E. Bullock, Ph.D.
University of Southern Mississippi
Robert C. Reardon, Ph.D. & Janet G. Lenz, Ph.D.
Florida State University
NCDA Global Conference 2008
Presentation Overview

- The “state” of Holland’s work
- Holland’s theory & common myths
- Summary
- Sources of additional information
Holland “Dethroned?”
Myth 1: Holland’s RIASEC theory ignores variables outside the six types

- Measures of RIASEC (e.g., SDS, SII) provide information beyond the 6 types.
- Constructs such as Congruence and Consistency allow for more in-depth interpretation of codes.
- Theory emphasizes the importance of counselor’s judgment.
Myth 2: Holland’s SDS only captures interests and personality characteristics, not values or abilities

- SDS subscales include measures of skills
- Research and theoretical propositions link RIASEC types to particular values
- SDS interpretation can include an assessment of values
Myth 3: More complex models than the hexagon are needed and provide more help to clients

- Holland’s hexagon structure repeatedly accounts for the underlying structure of occupations

- Support for Holland’s hexagon structure found across varied cultures throughout the world

- More complex models can be harder for adolescents & adults to understand
Myth 4: RIASEC types are not applicable to persons of different racial and ethnic heritages

- The SDS is available in more than 25 languages
- The SII has been translated into more than 17 languages
- Although the exact RIASEC structure has not been supported in all cultures, the research support is generally positive
Myth 5: Six types cannot capture the complexity of today’s work world

- World-wide market economies
- Standard Occupational Codes (SOC) as the new benchmark
- *Dictionary of Holland Occupational Codes* (3rd ed.)
- 1960-2000 census data
Employment and Six Kinds of Work
Myth 6: Holland’s theory of career choice is static and does not account for the development of a person’s type

- The development vs. choice dichotomy in career theory is a false one
- Research has shown types beget types and are learned
- SDS norms reveal limited changes over time
Myth 7: Holland’s theory cannot accommodate new and emerging jobs

- The Position Classification Inventory (PCI) can be used to develop codes for jobs
- Jobs are difficult to classify, e.g., job titles vs. occupational titles
- O*NET vs. DHOC code differences
- 2016 LMI forecasts based on RIASEC codes
## 10 Fastest Growth Occupations, 2006-16

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Employment</th>
<th>Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Network systems, data communications analysts</td>
<td>402K</td>
<td>RSI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal/home care aides</td>
<td>1,56K</td>
<td>SRE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home health aides</td>
<td>1,71K</td>
<td>SRC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Software engineers, applications</td>
<td>733K</td>
<td>RIC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veterinary techs</td>
<td>100K</td>
<td>ISR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal financial advisors</td>
<td>248K</td>
<td>ESC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make-up artists, theatre &amp; performance</td>
<td>3K</td>
<td>AER</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical assistants</td>
<td>565K</td>
<td>SCR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veterinarians</td>
<td>84K</td>
<td>IRE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substance abuse/behavioral counselors</td>
<td>112K</td>
<td>SRA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Code Order for big growth occupations: SERCIA.
Myth 8: Holland’s theory and the SDS are biased against women

- SDS is a “sex-fair inventory” (PUG)
- SDS captures daydreams as well as life experiences
- SDS uses raw scores to explore options, but norms are available
- The SDS identifies women with Realistic interests and skills
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>R</th>
<th>I</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Myth 9: The theory is simply codes matching occupational titles

- *Making Vocational Choices* (Holland, 1997) makes it clear there is more to it than that
- Expressed code (daydreams) provide important insight into how clients’ construct their world
- Theory specifies other factors that provide window into client’s life pattern, e.g., congruence, consistency, differentiation, etc.
Myth 10: “Matching” personal characteristics to options is no longer possible or useful in today’s work world

- Educational, occupational, & employment decisions still require individuals to consider lists of options
- Options derived from matching can be a springboard to considering alternatives not contained on “the list”
- SDS provides both an expressed and assessed measure of interests to use for exploration purposes
Myth 11: Holland’s theory can’t be used with persons who have chaotic work histories

- This is a common myth shared by persons with a “post-modern” perspective
- Holland RIASEC “lens” helps to bring some order to the chaos
- Use past skills & interests, categorized by Holland types, to help frame ideas for future options
Myth 12: Holland’s theory and the SDS don’t work well with A types

- Critical aspect is how career practitioner engages with the client, integrates RIASEC info, shares SDS results with the client
- Examples of creative techniques abound (Australia example, Hexagon party game, etc.)
- RIASEC card sorts can be used effectively with A types
Summary

- Review of research literature shows that Holland-related work continues to be prevalent in the field.
- Myths abound that are easily refuted by data and practice.
- Important for counselors to practice with full knowledge of the instruments, manuals, and theory associated with Holland’s work.
Sources of Additional Information

- FSU Tech Center with Holland-based resources
  
  http://www.career.fsu.edu/techcenter/designing_career_services/Holland’s_RIASEC_theory/index.html

I want to learn how Holland’s RIASEC theory can be applied to solving career problems and designing career services.

**TR 30: Comparison of Paper, PC, & Internet Versions of Holland’s SDS**
Learn about the similarities and differences among three different versions of the Self-Directed Search, one of the most widely used interest inventories.

**TR 33: A Holland Perspective on the U.S. Workforce**

**TR 38: Holland’s Theory and Implications for Academic Advising and Career Counseling**
Read a literature review and theory-based model on the application of Holland’s theory to postsecondary academic advising and career counseling services.

**TR 39: An Exploration of Profile Elevation on the Self-Directed Search**
Review a study on the validity of interpreting profile elevation and an exploration of possible, related variables.

**TR 47: Creating a Research Database on Holland’s Theories & Practical Tools**
Learn about the creation of a comprehensive bibliography of 1,609 reference citations related to John Holland’s theory and applications.
Sources of Additional Information

http://digitool3.lib.fsu.edu/R/?func=dbin-jump-full&object_id=38192
Sources of Additional Information

- Copies of Presentation Slides can be accessed at:
  - www.career.fsu.edu/techcenter
Sources of Additional Information

- NCDA *Career Convergence*, June 1, 2008.
Questions/Discussion
Thank You!

Emily Bullock, Emily.Bullock@usm.edu
Bob Reardon, rreardong@fsu.edu
Janet Lenz, jlenz@fsu.edu