

CAREER PATHWAYS AND POSSIBILITIES

Research Overview



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Why Career Pathways and Possibilities? Finding Your Unique Destination

Have you ever wondered why some people stay in a particular role, proceeding steadily along a specific career path for most of their professional lives? And, conversely, why some roles prove to be a hit-and-miss, leading to high turnover? Often, it is a matter of personality fit. Everyone is wired differently, and not all jobs fit all people. For example, one study found that extraversion, when measured through a Big 5 personality assessment, predicts leadership and success in sales and management positions (John, O. P., & Srivastava, S., "The Big Five Trait taxonomy: History, measurement, and theoretical perspectives," *Handbook of personality: Theory and research* (2nd ed., pp. 102–138), 1999). The more you know about yourself and your personality, the better equipped you are to make a job and career decision that fits you uniquely.

That is where the **Career Pathways and Possibilities (CPP)** comes in. CPP is a validated measure of 5 personality traits and an indicator of associated roles and career paths. By linking attributes of one's individual personality with roles and careers that match, individuals can make better choices at any point along their career journey. "Knowing your Big Five composition can help you find a workplace environment that matches your personality" (Indeed, "Big Five Personality Traits: Finding the Right Jobs for You," 2024).

Since 2000, CMP has supported thousands of companies, clients, and individuals with their career journeys. Over the years, we have utilized various tools and coaching approaches, refining our methodologies to meet each person's unique needs while creating and leveraging best practices in career transition and development. In the process, CMP has authored two seminal books on careers, *Make it Work* and *Don't Dread Monday*, conducted regular studies on career progression, and actively contributed to a number of publications on issues of assessment and careers, including Forbes.

In our work with individuals and organizations, we realized there was a gap in the toolset—as people consider their career options, they could use more empirical insight into which career options "fit" their unique profile. As a firm, we had a vision to leverage our expertise in building validated assessments and supporting career transition and development to create a meaningful career insight tool.

Our vision was realized with the Career Pathways and Possibilities (CPP). This research overview will further outline the CPP's construction process, including Trait development, Item and Rating Scale construction, Benchmarking process, and Reporting. We also outline best practices for correctly and consistently utilizing the CPP for its specific and intended purpose: as a self-guided and practical developmental experience for job searchers.

CPP Assessment Design Trait Development

There is a plethora research available on the Big 5 Personality Traits: “The Big Five remain relatively stable throughout most of one’s lifetime. They are influenced significantly by genes and the environment, with an estimated heritability of 50%” (Lim, Annabelle G.Y. and Mcleod, Saul, “Big Five Personality Traits: The 5-Factor Model Of Personality,” *Simply Psychology*, 2023); “The Big 5 traits provide a comprehensive understanding of individual differences in behavior, thoughts, and emotions” (Schoenwald, Christine, “What Career You Should Have, Based On Your ‘Big Five’ Personality Traits,” *Your Tango*, 30 May 2023).

But how do we define “personality?” The American Psychological Association (APA) defines personality as “individual differences in characteristic patterns of thinking, feeling, and behaving” (2017). Your unique personality is an important part of who you are. In fact, “Personality is the strongest and most consistent cross-sectional predictor of high subjective well-being” (Boyce, Christopher J., Wood, Alex M., and Powdthavee, Nattavudh, “Is personality fixed? Personality changes as much as ‘variable’ economic factors and more strongly predicts changes to life satisfaction,” *Social Indicators Research*, 111(1), 287–305), 2013). And knowing that certain personality traits align with roles and careers, it’s important to have a reliable way to conceptualize and measure them. Please see the CPP traits and definitions in Table 1.

Table 1: CPP Traits and Definitions

CPP Traits	Descriptions
Openness	How receptive a person is to new concepts, ideas, and experiences.
Diligence	How goal-centric, motivated, and organized a person is.
Sociability	How much a person puts the concerns and interests of others ahead of their own.
Accomodation	How sensitive a person is to emotional triggers and stressful situations.
Sensitivity	How much a person is energized by interactions with the external world.

CPP Assessment Design

Item and Rating Scale Construction Process

Our intent in constructing items for the CPP was ease of understanding, content alignment with the 5 Traits, and length of assessment administration time. Upon administering the CPP to an initial benchmarking sample of 112 individuals across a wide span of demographics and professions, items were further refined to promote more significant scoring differentiation (see Benchmarking Process for more information). A total of 60 questions were included in the final version of the CPP.

A 5-point Likert rating scale, shown below in Table 2, was chosen as the CPP response structure. The research literature supports the use of multiple and clear rating choices for behavioral and leadership-style assessments ("Assessments 2013: Finding the Perfect Match," Aberdeen Study, 2013). There is some debate as to a 5-point vs. 7-point rating scheme to further "space out" the choices for an individual assessment taker (see Sauro, Jeff, "15 Common Rating Scales Explained," 14 August 2018), but we chose simplicity and user-friendliness in selecting the 5-point Likert rating scale.

Table 2: Item Rating Scale

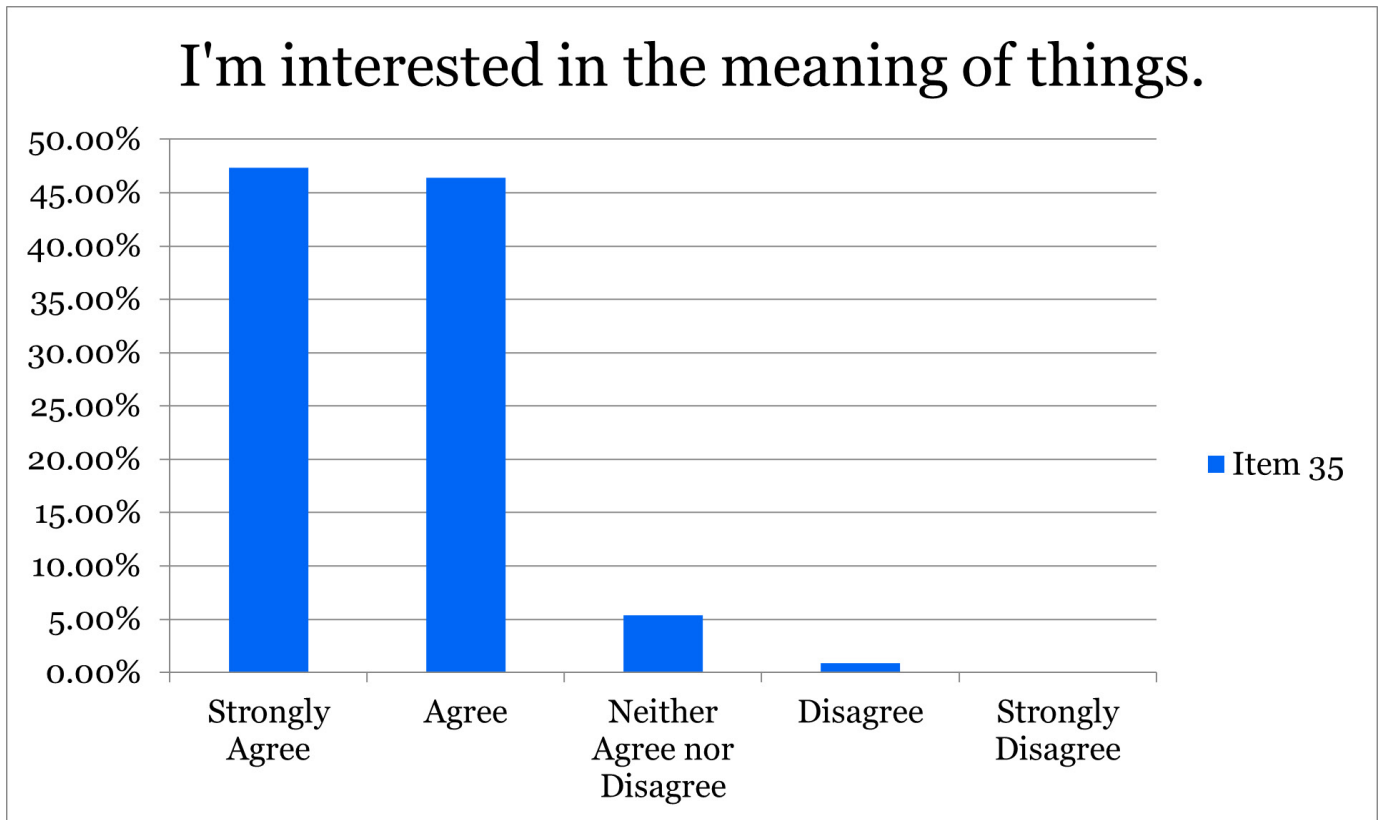
Numerical Rating	Rating Level
1	Strongly Disagree
2	Disagree
3	Neither Agree nor Disagree
4	Agree
5	Strongly Agree

CPP Assessment Design Benchmarking Process

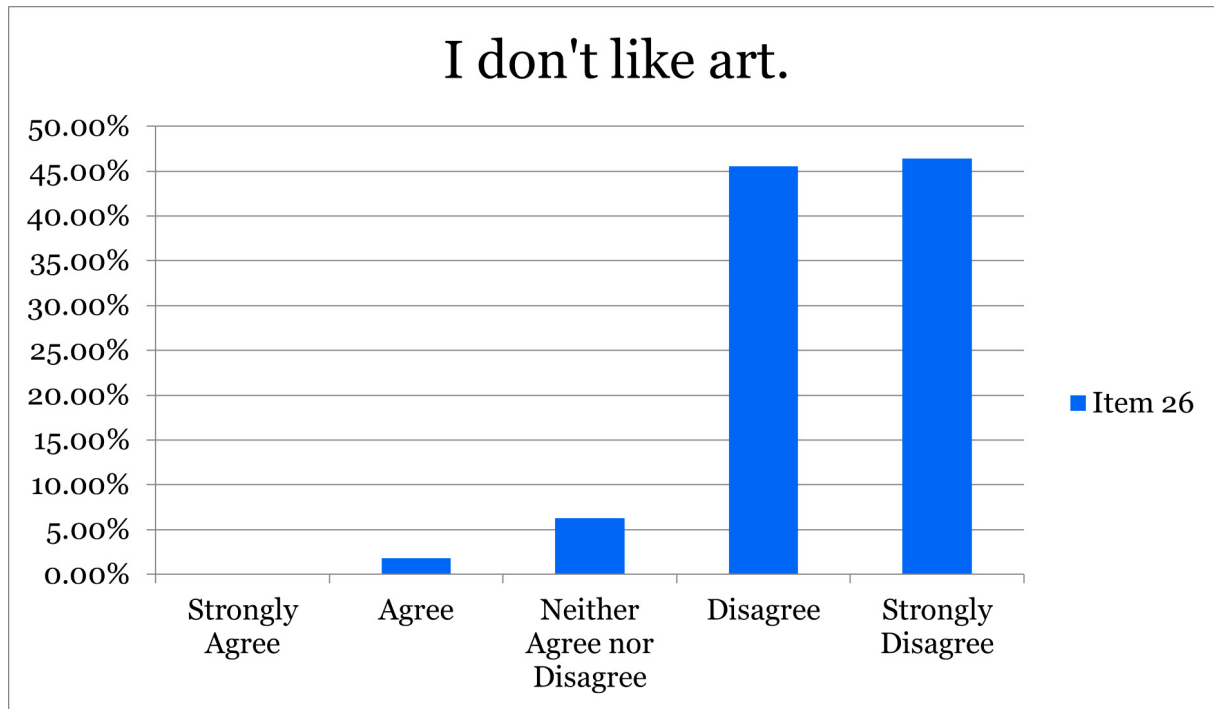
The CPP Version I (before making any Item modifications) was administered to a varied group of individuals (N = 112) to establish Item and Trait benchmarks. Each item's distribution pattern was studied to determine if item refinements could potentially achieve greater differentiation. In some cases, Item responses were grouped too heavily on the "Agreement" end of the rating scale (see Item Example A) and, in other cases, too much on the "Disagreement" end (Example B). Examples A and B are original CPP Items that were modified in the final CPP Assessment based on this methodology. A total of 11 out of 60 Items were modified by the end of our research. Example C illustrates an Item retained in the final CPP where no modification was necessary based on the normalcy of the curve.

CMP will continue to update our benchmarks as the data becomes available.

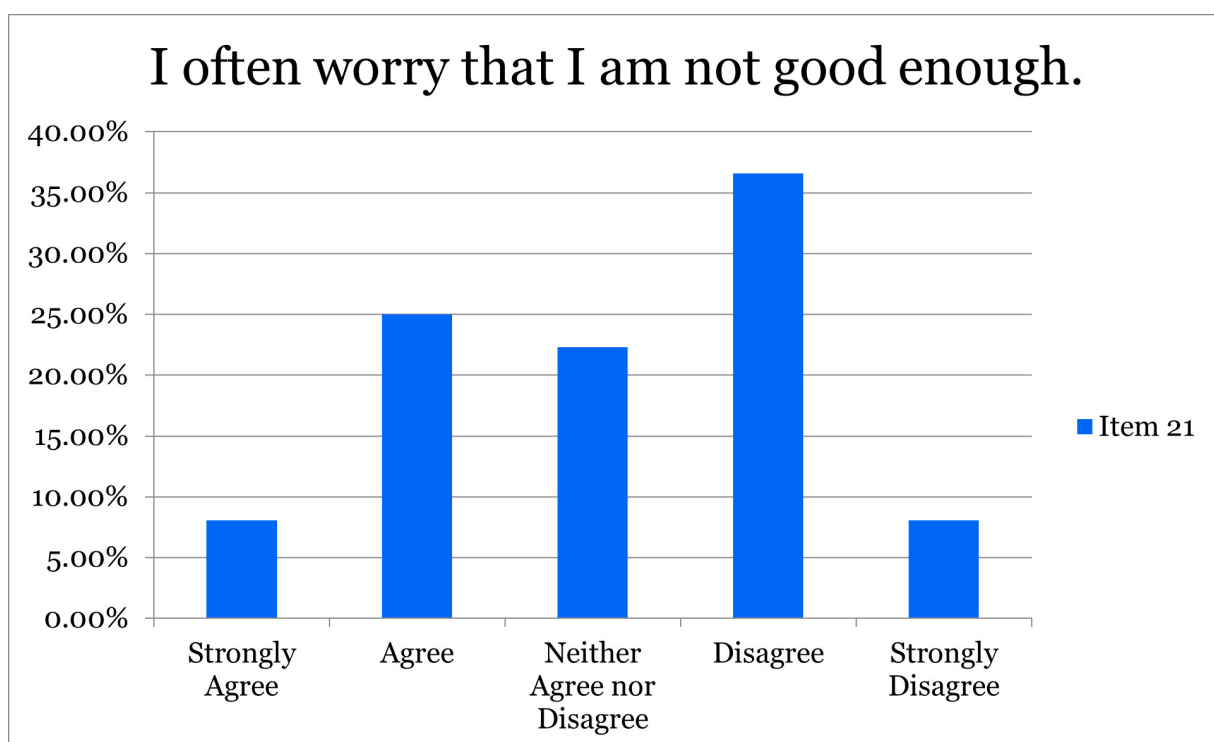
Example A: "Agreement" End of Scale (Positively Skewed)



Example B: “Disagreement” End of Scale (Negatively Skewed)



Example C: “Normal” Distribution



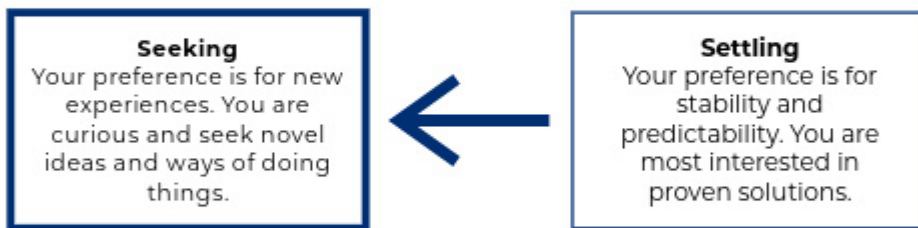
CPP Assessment Design Reporting

The CPP Career Fit Profile outlines an individual's personality preferences based on a normative sample for the 5 CPP traits. Each trait is identified with a preference (left or right side) and linked to a list of aligned work environments and occupations for career direction.

Below is an example of how a trait would show up in the final report and Development Guide:

CAREER FIT PROFILE: OPENNESS

Level of interest in proven and predictable solutions versus new ideas and experiences.



Given your Openness results, below are work environments and occupational families you may feel most comfortable with.

Individuals with higher **Seeking** levels thrive in work environments that reward creativity, innovation, and adaptability. They are often imaginative, curious, and open-minded, making them valuable contributors to brainstorming sessions, problem-solving initiatives, and research-oriented roles. People higher in Seeking enjoy work environments characterized by the following:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Opportunities for shorter-term career change/mobility ✓ Shifting responsibilities and accountabilities ✓ New methods and processes ✓ Flexible career paths ✓ Flexible schedule and work hours | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ New products and services ✓ Innovative systems and methods ✓ Ambiguity and change ✓ Brainstorming ✓ Constant new learning and problem-solving opportunities |
|---|---|

Occupational families, or career occupational types, that fit high Seeking profiles are:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Management Analysts ● Scientists ● Industrial Engineers ● Architects ● News Analysts, Reporters, and Journalists | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Market Research Analysts ● Editors ● Writers and Authors ● Anthropologists and Archeologists ● Mechanical Engineering Technologists and Technicians |
|--|---|

Best Practices

The Career Pathways and Possibilities (CPP) was created with a very specific purpose in mind: To support the personal and professional development of those in job transition at any stage of their career journey. The CPP is not a measure of fit or prediction in a hiring or promotion context and should only be used for self-insight and development.

CMP recommends the following best practices to ensure consistent and proper use of the CPP for its intended purpose.

1. Please always remember that the CPP is not intended to be used for a pre-employment assessment, employment placement, or promotion decisions.
2. Individuals in transition should complete the CPP to identify potential Gaps to develop and Strengths to leverage for their career success.
3. We encourage each individual to complete the CPP periodically. We promote this method to gauge development progress.
4. Connecting the results of the CPP with other data points can often yield a fuller profile perspective. Other evaluative ratings-based events, such as performance appraisals, can surface deeper development insights.
5. Participants should consider sharing their CPP results with people in their circle of influence who know them well and can share valuable feedback and insights.

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The image features a large, dark blue circle in the center, which overlaps with a smaller white circle. The letters 'CMP' are displayed in a white, serif font, with the 'M' positioned within the white circle. The background is composed of several overlapping shapes: a large dark blue circle, a smaller white circle, a yellow circle in the top right, and a blue circle in the bottom left.

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