

Holland's Theory and Higher Education: Implications for Academic and Career Advising

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Program Annotation: Does Holland's theory improve understanding of the diversity in faculty behaviors and students' satisfaction with and success in college? Do research results of college environments help counselors know how to provide better services? A leading scholar presents findings from more than 20 studies and three discussants will explore the implications for practitioners.

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An Alternative Application of Holland's Theory and It's Implications for Career Counseling in College Settings

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Abstract

The central premise of Holland's theory is that vocational and educational stability, satisfaction, and success are contingent on the congruence or "fit" between individuals' personality types and their work or educational environments. Holland's theory and the associated instruments used to assess the personality types of individuals and the nature of their work and educational environments have been widely used by researchers and counselors in their efforts to assist individuals select work and educational environments in which they have the greatest likelihood of persistence, satisfaction, and success.

This paper has two primary purposes. First, we provide a description of how the congruence assumption of Holland's theory has been traditionally applied by researchers and counselors. We illustrate this initial purpose by using examples from two of our recent studies. The second purpose of the paper is to propose an alternative interpretation and application of Holland's congruence assumption, also using examples from our most recent study. Our alternative application of the congruence assumption focuses on the perceived learning outcomes of students who have selected academic environments (i.e., college majors) that are incongruent with their primary personality types. We specifically seek to determine whether such students are doomed to lower levels of success or achievement by virtue of their having chosen an incongruent academic environment, as would be predicted by the traditional application of the congruence assumption.

Our collective findings provide evidence that supports both the traditional and our alternative application of the congruence assumption. We conclude that the choice between the two approaches is predicated on one's vision of what college students should seek to accomplish during their college experiences. The implications for college students and for academic and career counselors are dramatically different depending on one's response to this fundamental issue. Ultimately, Holland's theory has much to offer those who select either approach.

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