

Interests: Party Game Instructions

This exercise is adapted, with permission, from Richard Bolles' book, *What Color is Your Parachute?* (Ten Speed Press, 2000).

Purpose:

To help students understand the impact of interests on career decisions and introduce the concept of self-assessment.

Learning Objectives:

As a result of this exercise, students will understand (a) the concept of interests, and (b) the effect of interests on their choice and practice setting/work environment.

Group size:

Best with groups of 25-50

Time required:

30-40 minutes

Materials:

Copy of Workshop #2 Handout "Understanding Yourself: Interests," paper for Holland code letters to be taped around the room (see below), flip chart and markers or chalkboard to record results.

Preparation:

Using a marker, write the letters listed in the corners of the diagram on the "Understanding Yourself: Interests" hand-out (R, I, A, S, E, & C) in large letters on six separate sheets of paper (one letter per page) and tape them around the room in order.

Instructions:

• The diagram on your hand-out is an aerial view of a room in which a party is taking place. If you look around the room today, you will see that we are all going to attend this party. This is a different sort of party where the same or similar interests have grouped all of the partygoers.

Have students read over the six descriptions in the corners of the room.

• Which corner of the room would you be instinctively drawn to as the group of people you would most enjoy being with for the longest time? Leave aside any question of shyness, or whether you would have to talk with them. Now go to the area of the room with the initial of that group.

Once the students have gone to their first choice areas, instruct them to "mingle" and discuss why they chose this corner first. Keep a count of which areas of the room are most popular.

After about five minutes, get their attention and tell students that everyone in their corner has left for another party and so they must now go to their second choice and mingle. Take note of the numbers and repeat the procedure a third time.

Have students return to their seats and record on their handout the three corners of the room they chose in the order they chose them.

Discussion:

This game is based on the theories of Dr. John Holland, professor emeritus at Johns Hopkins University. His theory of careers is the basis for many career/interest inventories used today. Holland's theory states that most people and careers can be loosely categorized with respect to six types:

- Realistic
- Investigative
- Artistic
- Social
- Enterprising
- Conventional

While you may have some interests that apply to all six groups, you may be attracted primarily to two or three areas. Your Holland code is a type of shorthand for describing the interest types you resemble the most. The first letter of each of the areas represents your Holland Code, which can then be used to compare with medical specialties or work settings. For example, if your interests lie primarily in the **I**nvestigative, **R**ealistic, and **S**ocial areas, then your Holland Code is **IRS**. The first letter of your code shows the type you resemble most, the next letter the type you resemble somewhat less, and the third letter the type you resemble even less.

While there is some research on what codes match to which specialties (available on the CiM Specialty Pages), the Holland code structure is most useful in looking at practice or work setting. For example, if you have a strong investigative interest, then you may want to make sure that research or problem-solving are a part of your specialty or work setting. If you have a strong social interest, then you may be a future student affairs dean or academician, using your people and teaching interests.

Use the following questions for discussion:

- *Were there any areas or categories of the room more popular than others in our “party?”*
- *Do you think all physicians tend to have similar interests or do they vary among specialties? Do they vary among work environment/practice setting?*
- *What role do your interests play in influencing your career decisions?*
- *What might happen if you choose a specialty or work setting that is very different from your interests?*

Let students know that this is only a “party game” version of the true assessment instrument, the Self-Directed Search. It is available for students to take on the Internet for a fee of \$9.95, and there are links on the Web site (a paper and pencil version may also be available through the school or campus career center).