



# Analyzing individual differences in vocational, leisure, and family interests: A multitrait-multimethod approach

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## Abstract

This study investigates the latent structure of individual differences in vocational, leisure, and family interests. The participants consisted of 302 French adults who rated their like or dislike for activities based on Holland's RIASEC typology and presented in three life domains: work, family and leisure. The multitrait-multimethod model proposed by Eid [Eid, M. (2000). A multitrait-multimethod model with minimal assumptions. *Psychometrika* 65, 241–261.] was used with the vocational interests as standard comparison, and was applied separately on each of the 6 RIASEC types. Results indicated that interests strongly intercorrelated whatever their vocational vs. leisure or family contextualization. However, since these correlations were controlled for measurement error, the results also suggested that the effects of these contextualizations of the activities could not be ignored because they accounted for a non negligible part of the variance for several activities. Theoretical and practical implications are discussed and directions for future research are presented. © 2007 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

*Keywords:* Vocational interest; Leisure interest; Work and leisure; Work and family; Family and leisure; Holland's theory; Multitrait-multimethod matrix; Confirmatory factor analysis

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## 1. Introduction

The study of individual differences in vocational interests has been a cornerstone of vocational psychology and career counseling since the early 1900s (Bestworth & Fouad, 1997). The way in which these individual differences interact with others' various individual differences in terms of personality or abilities, for example, and jointly determine vocational behavior (Sullivan & Hansen, 2004b) has been enriched by contemporary perspectives on vocational psychology which lay stress on multiple roles and contextual conceptualization of career choice and development (Savickas, 2002; Super, 1990; Super, 1996; Vondracek & Fouad, 1994; Vondracek, Lerner, & Schulenberg, 1983; Young, Valach, & Collin, 2002). As Richardson noted (1993), "If inquiry is limited to work in jobs and occupations, what might be known about people in the multiple and interacting contexts or environments of their lives is severely truncated" (p. 248).

In this study, the term vocational interest refers to the interest in an activity performed in the work context (also called work life domain). Our goal was to examine how individual differences in adults' interests in activities that can be performed in various life domains are correlated. More precisely, the present study assessed to what extent interindividual variability in vocational interests account for interindividual variability in leisure and family interests respectively, by using a multitrait-multimethod approach of interests in work, leisure, and family life domains, where 'traits' represent interests in a given activity, and 'methods' represent the life domains within which these activities are performed.

A theoretical issue was whether strong or weak correlations between vocational and avocational interests should be expected. Historically, the measurement of interests has concerned work interests. The measurement of vocational interests can be traced to 1927 with Strong's first notable inventory (Strong, 1927), and has received steady attention since that time (Bestworth & Fouad, 1997). Many authors have developed models and inventories but John Holland is the one with the strongest influence on how vocational interests are conceptualized and assessed. Holland (1959, 1973, 1985, 1997) suggested that people and environments can be categorized according to six types (Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional: RIASEC). He also suggested that the choice of an occupation is an expression of personality, and that people tend to seek environments that will allow them to express their personality: "If vocational interests are construed as an expression of personality, then they represent the expression of personality in work, school subjects, hobbies, recreational activities, and preferences" (Holland, 1973, p. 7). Accordingly, Holland's view predicted that the interest in an activity, of a given type, performed in the work domain, should strongly correlate with the same type of interest performed in other life domains such as leisure or family. An alternative view would be that interests in activities are actually interests which have sense in a given context. Thus, interests in a given activity could vary depending on the context where the activity is performed and, as such, their measurement should take into account their contextualization.

Many researchers have investigated the link between vocational interests and leisure on the bases of interest inventories and the RIASEC model. Some authors have proposed a categorization of leisure activities based on Holland's types (Cairo, 1979; Holmberg, Rosen, & Holland, 1991). Most of these studies investigated the association between vocational interests and participation in leisure activities, or time spent in leisure activities (Cairo, 1979; Miller, 1991; Taylor, Kelso, Cox, Alloway, & Mathews, 1979; Varca & Shaffer, 1982; Warren, Winer, & Dailey, 1981). The research designs were quite similar: A vocational inventory

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