Tackling Life's Tasks: Comparisons of the Orientations Developed by Young People to Work, Study, Leisure, and Personal Relationships.

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Action contexts such as work, course of study, leisure, or personal relationship, differ in the kinds of orientations they encourage and support. For example, they vary in the extent to which they encourage understanding and control of one's own actions, or self regulation, acquiescence to external regulations, maintenance of group harmony and cooperation, deliberation vs. automaticity in skills, or concern with advancement or future security. Individual people may also differ in the extent to which they adopt such orientations as these, each person developing and maintaining a particular approach, independently of the setting.

This paper reports a study concerned with: (1) differences in the profiles of orientations such as those mentioned above typical for young people in the range of 17 to 20 years in the four contexts of work, study, main leisure activity, and main personal relationship, in addition to the profiles for their ideal job; (2) correlations between orientations in different settings;(3) differences between the profiles typical of different groups of young people based on gender, earlier educational background, and present engagement in work and study.

When people enter into life's activities and subsequently reflect on them, they do so with a variety of self feelings and thoughts (eg. Bandura, 1988). There are several conceptually distinct aspects of these self-perceptions, including self evaluation in terms of perceived self-efficacy, competence, or knowledgeability (Bandura, 1988), type and strength of the goals involved and the needs they fulfil (Maslow,1962), causal attributions for success and failure (Weiner, 1977) or beliefs about the ways in which events are controlled (Skinner and Chapman, 1984), presentation of self to others (Shavelson, Hubner, and Stanton,1976), perceptions of the nature of the task, attitudes towards the context or people involved in the activity, concern for other people, amount of effort extended, and approaches to undertaking the task, eg. whether dependent on others' direction or self originating.

Some of the aspects of this wide array of action characteristics have to do with the evaluative aspects of self concepts in different contexts (eg. Coopersmith, 1967; Shavelson et al, 1976). Other aspects are concerned with approaches taken to tasks in particular contexts. This paper is concerned with the second of these features, which we term "orientations". A number of measures commonly associated with career counselling are concerned with such orientations. For example, the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (Myers and McCaulley, 1985) utilizes four orientations - extraversion vs. introversion, sensing vs. intuition, thinking vs. feeling, and judging or order vs. perception or flexibility. Such measures have been used to help young people match their general orientations with particular job characteristics (eg. Holland, 1985).

The notion of "orientation" has also been used in describing students' approaches to study (eg. Biggs, 1987; Entwistle and Ramsden,1983; Marton and Saljo,1976a,b). Biggs describes an orientation to study as comprising both a motivation to study in a particular way and the strategies for doing so. On the basis of his and others' research, he has identified three orientations: a deep approach, in which the concern is with understanding concepts and procedures and finding relationships between them, a surface approach, in which the concern is with instrumental aspects of study and with memorizing material or learning procedures without necessarily understanding them, and an achieving approach, which is concerned with organization and systematic effort aimed at maximizing achievement. According to Biggs, an achievement orientation may be combined with either a deep or surface orientation.

In this study, the notion of orientation is generalized beyond career counselling and approaches to study to life tasks generally. Just as there appears to be a relationship between self-efficacy, the nature of causal attributions, effort, and success (eg. Bandura, 1988; Borkowski, Carr, and Pressley, 1987), there may be important relationsips between orientation, effort and success in a variety of life contexts. Orientations are seen to differ from self-efficacy in that they may not necessarily be subject to self-evaluation. They differ from causal attributions in that they represent an approach to tasks rather than a self-explanation of the outcomes of doing tasks.

In order to explore the utility of such a proposal, it is necessary first to identify particular orientations appropriate to a variety of life contexts, and then to explore whether such orientations have some consistency across different contexts and the extent to which they are sensitive to contexts. It is also of importance to identify systematic sources of individual differences in orientations. It is with such a study of orientations in various contexts that we are here concerned. The propositions to be tested then are as follows:

(1)Some orientations to action are applicable across a variety of life activities.

(2)Although such orientations may not be mutually exclusive, they may be applied independently of each other.

(3)There are individual differences between peoples orientations, even in the same context.

(4)There is some constancy in a particular person's orientations across different contexts.

(5)Different contexts impose a pressure for different orientations, leading to more similarity between people within particular contexts than between contexts.

Orientations

Control Orientation; Self Generated Action.

The major types of orientation in which the study focused were suggested by the notion of control beliefs (Skinner and Chapman, 1984) of which there are three aspects. First, there is the extent to which the person believes that an outcome can be controlled by anyone's actions; second, there is the extent to which that the person believes that outcome can be controlled by his or her own actions (Skinner and Chapman, 1984); and third there is the extent to which the person attributes success or failure to his or her own actions, effort, or ability. What we term control orientations refer to the first and second of these beliefs.

Among concerns of major importance to young people are feelings of competence and self regulation (Evans and Poole, 1987; Poole and Evans, 1988). Similarly, their major attribution for success and failure on a variety of life tasks is to internal causes, particularly effort. It might therefore by expected that a major orientation that they would try to bring to life activities would be understanding and control over tasks performed, in contrast to simply following procedures set by others; that is, they would be concerned with self generated action.

Self generated action is a possibility in a variety of contexts, e.g. work, study, leisure, or personal relationships, and in a variety of task aspects within these contexts, including learning new procedures or acquiring new knowledge, planning, problem solving, taking an initiative, deliberation, and evaluating how well overall task expectations have been fulfilled. Table 1 lists these and other task characteristics, and in the second column shows a number of orientations to self generated action which correspond with them. Thus "discovering" or "working things out for oneself" is an orientation to self generated action concerned with learning. Orientations are concerned with the task characteristics and approaches to the task, rather than with the attribution aspect of control beliefs, which are concerned with post-task self-evaluation.

Orientations are not, however, applied in a contextual vacuum. In particular the context may offer more or less opportunity for a particular orientation to be used. For example, a person may prefer to discover concepts for him or herself but be frustrated by the contextual pressures to follow the instruction of others. In assessing orientations in an actual setting, then, it is necessary to include features of both the context and the person's preference. This could be achieved in part by asking two sets of questions, one concerned with what actually is the case, the other with what would ideally be the case. In the present study we have mainly been concerned with the former. The questionnaire items thus focus on activity in context, e.g. the item, "I work things out for myself" is responded to in terms of the person's job. It could be argued that were analysis of the responses to such questions to yield factors suggesting individual differences in orientations independent of contexts, as well as ones depending on context, that such items are also assessing a personal orientation as well as context orientation. In one case, however, we have also used the second approach, comparing "ideal" job with "actual" job. This gives some indication of whether personal orientations to action in this context are different from the orientations implicit in action forced by job conditions.

External Orientations; Other Generated Action.

Some task characteristics, such as planning or problem solving, allow of self generated action only, at least while the task is being actively pursued, but, for some task aspects, the source of the persons's action may derive as much, or more, from the actions of others as from internal sources. For example, learning new procedures may involve less self discovery and more direct instruction or modelling; in monitoring how well task requirements have been satisfied, a person may rely more on feedback from others than his or her own judgment. From the point of view of others, for example, employers, such approaches may represent an attempt to foster productivity directly. A press to competition may also be a feature of such a context.

Automaticity

The third orientation to be studied is the desire, or pressure, to handle tasks in a routine non-deliberative manner. Automaticity may have advantages in that it frees the person for other task aspects or thinking. It may have disadvantages in that it leads to boredom and lack of challenge. In either case, it appears to be a somewhat separate orientation which can only be applied with particular types of task characteristics.

Concern with Relationships or People

Personal relationships emerged in previous studies (Poole and Evans, 1988) as not only a major concern of young people but as a perceived means of fulfilling their life goals. They are also perceived by young people as important aspects of contexts such as work experience (Evans and Poole, 1988) and leisure (Evans and Poole, forthcoming), and of events that have been most salient in their lives (Poole and Evans, 1989). Thus concern with people, expressed in terms of getting on with others, cooperating with others, and making friends, is likely to be an important orientation in the four life contexts of interest here. While it seems paradoxical that some people may have little interest in the quality of relationships in their major personal relationship, this is a distinct possibility. It may well be, for example, that the instrumental aspects of relationships are valued more by some than cooperation or friendship.

Future Security

Future security has also emerged in a variety of studies (Evans and Poole, 1987) as an important concern of young people. Among Australian youth it is one of the most important concerns (Blakers, 1988). While it is not strictly an action orientation, so much as a concern, it seemed important in this study to see to what extent future security was a

perceived feature of what was provided by different contexts, as well as a concern of the persons themselves.

As Table 1 indicates, a number of the orientations with which we are concerned could be conceived equally well as task characteristics. For others, the tasks may permit varying orientations. In either case, the analysis in Table 1 enabled the writing of items which corresponded with the orientations discussed. A number of other possible orientations were considered, but set lower in priority for examination in the present study. These included personality dimensions less easily controlled by the person, e.g. extraversion-introversion. Behaviourial tendencies relating to style of thought or action, such as rigidity vs flexibility, or analytical vs intuitive, might also eventually deserve inclusion in such a study but were considered to less general than the orientations chosen. Those that are included emerged principally from our previous work on what young people themselves saw as the most salient aspects of their activities.

The orientation to "self generated activity", or control over one's actions, is similar to the "deep orientation" used in the literature on approaches to study (eg. Biggs,1987), and to some aspects of "achievement oreintation", in that the items used to define it involve discovery, understanding, problem solving, and evaluation criteria, on the one hand, and planning time, planning ahead, and decision making, on the other. However, there is a need for further empirical analysis to show how far these aspects can be separated. The data and analysis reported later was unable to separate them in the four contexts studied here.

The orientation to "other generated action" also bears some similarity to the "surface approach" described in the literature on approaches to study. However, the orientation conceived here is intended to focus on the source of activity rather than on the nature of the action.

Given the above definitions of these five orientations, the remainder of this paper reports a study designed to investigate the questions posed earlier, concerned with differences between contexts, correlations between orientations, and differences between groups of people.

Method

Sample

The sample comprised 559 young men (N=232) and women (N=327) from Brisbane and Sydney between the ages of 17 and 20, who had two years previously participated in Year 11 and 12 academic programs (N=289), TAFE pre-vocational programs (N=192), or school transition courses (N=78), and who had been involved in an earlier study.

Instruments

The participants responded to a mailed survey (response rate = 79 percent) seeking a variety of details about activities since leaving school and including four single page questionnaires, each with same format, concerned with orientations in their actual job (either part time or full time, if applicable), ideal job, course of study (either part-time or full-time, if applicable), main leisure activity, and main personal relationship(s). Each questionnaire was worded slightly differently to accommodate to the context of interest, but essentially asked the person to describe what the context was like, in terms of themselves, on a four-point scale ranging from 1= "not like.....at all" to 4= "very like ....". There were 21 items common to each questionnaire, with wording made appropriate for the particular context. Thus for actual job, Item 1 was: "I had to copy others to learn the job"; for ideal job: "Being able to copy others"; for course of study: "I am shown how to do things"; for leisure: "I learned to do this activity by copying others"; and for main personal relationship;" I learned to get on with them by copying them". Illustrative items for each orientation for the actual job context are given in Table 2.

In addition, information was either used from the previous study, or sought in the survey, on each of the following: gender; course undertaken two years previously (trade pre-vocational, business studies pre-vocational, transition or alternative Year 11, and academic Year 11 or 12); present work or study status (full time work plus study, full time work no study, part time work or part time study or both, full time study, full time study plus part time work, neither work nor study); present job type, if applicable (technical or professional, skilled trades, clerical or office, care or social service, non-routine sales, unskilled labour, food preparation); job prestige (high, medium, low, based on Broom, Jones and Zubrzycki, 1976); employer type, if applicable (federal government, state government, local government, private sector); and study institutions, if applicable (university, college of advanced education, college of technical and further education).

Results

Clustering of Items

Factor analysis of the five different questionnaires was used to confirm the clustering of orientations proposed prepared theoretically in Table 1. The results of the factor analysis are of significance in that (1) the factors for each of the five contexts were

similar in the clustering of items which resulted, and (2) the clusters produced were aligned with the orientations built into the five sets of items as indicated by the columns of Table 1, rather than with the task or context aspects indicated by the rows of Table 1. That is, the items which were highly correlated with one another were those of similar orientation rather than similar function. In the case of the "control" orientation, there were for each context four factors on which the 11 items were complexly related in a similar way for each context.

Two of the "clusters" (automaticity and future security) had only one salient item, while the others each had several items. The means for the most salient items in each cluster, according to the factor analyses, are shown in Table 2. The overall means for the composite orientation scales formed by adding the items in each cluster are given in Table 3, and the rank orders of these means are shown in Table 4.

Within each of the three main orientation clusters, i.e. control, externally generated action, and concern with people, where there were at least three items for each cluster, and there were moderate to high correlations between items, resulting in useful reliabilities, as measured by Cronbach aplha coefficients, for these three composite scales. The alpha coefficients are shown in Table 3.

Comparing Profiles of Orientations Across Contexts

There was considerable similarity in the rank orders of the 21 items on different contexts. The highest ranking set of items overall was "I can tell when I am doing well", which had mean ratings above 3.1 in all contexts, and 3.7 for "ideal job" on the 1 to 4 scale. The lowest ranked items overall were three of the sets of items in the "externally generated action" cluster, typically: "I have to compete with others" ("ranked between 15 and 21) "I am told how to improve my work" (ranked between 16 and 20); and "I am told exactly what is expected of me" (ranked between 16 and 20). The participants thus not only preferred self-generated to other-generated activity, as indicated by the ratings for ideal job, but thought that they actually applied this preference in the four life contexts. Overall the coefficient of concordance between the different contexts on the 21 items was .61, suggesting a moderate level of similarity, but also some differences, between contexts.

Because there was some variation among the means of items within orientations, particularly for externally generated action, it is more difficult to compare the profiles of mean composite ratings on the orientations across contexts. However, the rank order of the means shown in Table 4 suggests that control over one's own actions, concern for other people, and concern with future security are more typically the orientations in all four life contexts, and more desired in ideal jobs, than externally generated action or automatic non-deliberative action.

As well as similarities, there were also some marked differences between contexts for some of the orientation items. This variability could have been due to variations in wording. The differences in wording were meant to accommodate to the task domains of each context. For example, the second item was, for actual job: "I was told how to do it" (rank 3); for ideal job: "Being told exactly how to do things" (rank 19); for course of study: "I am told a lot of facts or theory" (rank 1); main leisure activity: "I was told how to get the best out of it" (rank 14); and main personal relationship: "I was told how to get on with them" (rank 21). Rather than the differences being due to wording, however, it seems more likely, that the differences between contexts reflect actual differences in context expectations. The differences for the above item contrast actual jobs and course of study with ideal job, leisure, and personal relationship, suggesting, in the case of former, a conflict between context ethos and preferred orientation.

Similarly the item which for "actual job" is represented by: "You need to understand a lot to do this job" had high rank for actual job, ideal job, and course of study, but low rank for leisure and personal relationships. This again appears to reflect real differences between the context demand and some young people's preferred orientation in these contexts. Future security also varied in rank order; it was highly valued for ideal job and seen to apply to course work, but received well less than median rank for actual job, leisure, and personal relationship. Again there appear to be real differences in perceptions of different contexts.

Other variations were less marked. "Getting on with people" and "cooperation" were rated much lower as orientations in courses of study than in the other contexts, but for "planning ahead", the reverse was the case. The need for practice was rated as less of a feature of personal relationships than of the other contexts.

These differences between contexts are of interest because they show clear differences in the extent to which particular behaviours are encouraged, which may be of use in exploring the distinctive features of different contexts. A more finely gained analysis could similarly be used to study differences between settings in the same overall context, for example, different types of work, or different types of leisure.

Correlations between Orientations in Different Settings

The second question is concerned with the source of variability in orientations -

whether it is due principally to variability in the major contexts themselves, or to individual differences between people, each person tending to bring a unique profile of orientations to all contexts. One approach to answering this question is through the analysis of covariation among the 25 orientation-context combinations. It is possible that covariation is mainly within contexts, but that orientations do not covary across different contexts. Another possibility is that the same orientation is correlated across different contexts but not correlated with other oreintations.

In factor analysis terms, the first of these possibilities would result in independent "context" factors and would indicate that orientations are largely a product of the context. The second would result in "orientation" factors, relating the same oreintation across different contexts. Such factors would indicate that people have orientations independent of contexts, but that the degrees to which they manifest different orientations are not related to one another.

It is also possible that both of these kinds of factors might occur, indicating that both contexts and individual tendencies play a part in the way a person responds in a setting. Context variation might arise because each of the major contexts represents many particular settings and differences in individual responses to the settings. Variation between individual people might arise from differences in personality, experience, and life purposes which are maintained independently of context.

In order to investigate these possibilities, exploratory factor analyses were carried out, the first with those participants who were engaged in full-time or part-time work, the second with those involved in full or part-time study. For the first, all variables concerned with course of study were omitted; for the second, those concerned with actual job were omitted. Variables concerned with ideal job, leisure, and personal relationships were common to all participants. The results of these two analyses were similar orientation variables for these last three contexts, but of course differed in that the other variables were not common.

A third analysis, using all variables, but based on pairwise deletions of missing combinations, agreed with both the first and second analyses, where variables were similar. It is the solution for that analysis, a varimax solution based on (iterative) principal factor analysis of 25 variables corresponding with all context-orientation combinations, that, for convenience, is reported in Table 5. Two extra variables were included the analyses: work self concept and course self concept. These were each components of the same fifteen semantic differential items responded to according to whether it was job or course the person was considering. The items measured self perceptions on security, belonging, and achievement, in the particular context. Each composite was unifactorial, and the reliabilities of the scales (Cranbach Alpha) were .87 and .90 respectively. The results of the factor analyses indicate clear context factors, one for each context, and three factors which cut across contexts and relate to orientations.

Context Factors

For each context, there was a factor defined almost solely by the oreintation variables for that context only. These, Factors 1 to 5, are regarded as context factors, as defined above. The automaticity orientation variables have coefficients less than .20 for all of these factors, and, for actual job and ideal job, the factor coefficients for the external orientation variables are also less than .20. For each of the work and course contexts, the corresponding self concept variables also load on the factor.

The other three factors are each such that the variables which load on them are almost solely of a single oreintation type - external orientation, automaticity orientation, and people orientation. These are called "orientation" factors, as described above. The automaticity orientation factor has substantial coefficients for three contexts only - actual job, ideal job, and course of study.

There are some exceptions to the above patterns. For those participants studying full or part time, control orientation in their study had a low correlation with control orientation in their ideal job and in leisure. These corrrelations were not large enough to give rise to a separate control orientation factor, but they did produce overlaps in the context factors. Work self concept and study self concept were also moderately correlated (r=.43), giving rise to both having substantial coefficients for the actual job context factor.

Orientations to external origin are related across contexts, suggesting that there may have been a general tendency to require external help, and perhaps control, on the part of some of the participants, and the coefficients on the "external origin" factor indicate that this tendency is related also to a desire to be able to perform tasks automatically. The orientation to automatic tasks generalizes only over work and study, and is weakly negatively related to an orientation to self regulation at work. By contrast, orientation to concern with people is quite general, although the loading for this orientation in personal relationships is weak. That is, responses in the context of one's main personal relationship do not necessarily generalize to other contexts.

These results clearly support the notion that variability in the strength of young people's orientations is in part determined by the particular kind of activity or context, and

in part determined by the tendency the particular person has to a particular orientation. There does not, however, appear to be any general orientation to self-regulation (control) or to concern with the future. The extent to which these two orientations are expressed, according to these data, is almost solely dependent on the particular activity.

Differences between Groups.

Differences between group means were found for each of the 25 orientation-context combinations. There were no significant group differences for leisure contexts. The other results are given in Table 6.

Gender Differences.

There was considerable agreement between the actual job, ideal job, and course of study contexts. Males rated external origin higher than females; females rated automaticity higher than males; and, except for course of study, females rated concern with people higher than males. While males rated control over their own action higher than females for their actual job, for personal relationships, the reverse was true. For personal relationships also, females give higher ratings to orientation to people, ie. the quality of the relationship, and to future security.

Original Course Type.

The group which differed most from others comprised those who had undertaken the TAFE pre-vocational course one or two years earlier. These participants rated themselves lower than did others on orientations to people in their actual and ideal jobs, and on orientations to control over their own actions and automaticity in personal relationships. They rated themselves higher than did others on external origin in their jobs, and, along with former transition students, gave highest ratings on external origin in present course of study, and on future security in their actual job. Those engaged earlier in the TAFE business study courses gave higher ratings in actual and ideal job to automaticity. Former Year 11 and 12 academic students were among those giving lower ratings for external origin and future security in job and course contexts. There appears to be some distinctiveness in the orientation profiles of those with different educational backgrounds. This may be accounted for by the kind of work or study in which they were currently engaged.

Work Characteristics.

Those participants who were engaged in both work and study rated automaticity lower for ideal job and course of study than others. Those in full time work were more concerned with the future security aspects of their job than those in part time work. Otherwise, current work or study status made little difference to the ratings in orientations in the five contexts. However, for those in jobs, job type, job prestige, and type of employer gave rise to differences. Those in routine sales or skilled trades rated themselves higher than did others on external origin, and those in both routine and non-routine sales rated themselves higher than did others on automaticity.

Orientation to control in one's work is related to both job prestige and job type. Those in jobs requiring more training and more skill saw themselves as having more control over their actions than others. The same applied to perceptions of future security, for which, also, those in government jobs, particularly state and local government, also rated themselves higher. Orientations to self-regulation and perceptions of security thus go with the job in predictable ways.

Except that those who were more highly skilled appeared to be less concerned with orientations to people in their ideal jobs, there were no differences between those with different work characteristics on any of the orientations in any of the other life contexts.

Institution Type for Course of Study.

Among those young people who were currently undertaking a course of study, either full or part time, those attending universities rated themselves both lower on external origin and on self regulation or control than those at CAE's. TAFE students were among those who rated themselves higher on external origin but also lower on internal control than others.

These results for group differences suggest that gender and educational background contribute generally to differences in orientation, but that job type, job prestige, and type of employer lead to systematic differences in orientations on the job only. Course type differences, for those undertaking formal testing are associated specifically with orientations to self generated and other generated actions in the course of study. Again

there is evidence for both differences between contexts and more pervasive individual differences, in part associated with gender and earlier education. Variability in leisure contexts are, however, not even partially accounted for by these group differences.

Discussion

Orientations to life contexts have been defined so as to refer to the dispositions people bring to carrying out tasks or actions in these contexts, as distinct from evaluative aspects of self concepts, or self esteem, which refer to how competent people believe they are, and attributions for success and failure, which refer to the causes invoked in explaining outcomes.

In choosing the orientations to investigate in this study, we have relied mainly on the concerns expressed by young people themselves. However, the same type of study design and analysis could be used for other possible oreintations based on personality characteristics or opportunities afforded in work and other life contexts. The five orientations studied were self regulated action, or control; other regulated action, or external origin; being able to perform tasks automatically; concern with people, entailing cooperation, getting on with others, and friendship; and concern with future security. Those orientations were hypothesised as operating independently of each other, rather than being mutually exclusive. In this way an individual person could have many possible profiles of measures in the five orientations which might differ from context to context.

There were considerable differences between contexts. The highest ratings for all orientations were made for ideal job, except for external origin, for which ideal job was equal second, but otherwise there was no fixed pattern for the ordering of orientations across contexts, although the leisure context generally received relatively low mean orientation ratings. When orientations were compared however, they formed two groups: Self regulation or control, people, and future were rated higher than automaticity and external origin for all five contexts, the differences in the means of self regulation and external origin living quite large, particularly for ideal job and main personal relationship. This suggests that young people value control over their own actions highly, and believe that in these life contexts, internal control is more often the case for them than external regulation. Similarly orientations to people and future security appear to be both valued and achieved.

As far as the present study is concerned, variation in orientations can, as hypothesised, be accounted for by both variation within contexts, and stable differences between individuals across contexts for particular orientations, notably external origin, automaticity and people. Some of the sources of individual variation were explored in terms of gender, earlier educational background, and type of present job or course. Gender differences are an important source of variation, the findings being consistent with Gilligan's (1982) contention that females tend to focus more on personal relationships and males more on objects and analysis. The higher ratings for females on the automaticity orientation may to some extent be confounded with the same result for those who undertook the TAFE business studies courses (nearly all females), which presumably led on to office work requiring a large component of automatic skills. Earlier educational background also appears to contribute to variation in the other orientations.

The findings suggest a number of further lines of research. First, the notion of orientation needs to be expanded and a number of instruments developed to separate more precisely aspects of orientation due to the person and to the context. There needs to be a more formal test of the assumptions made here that orientations are a combination of context and personal approach.

Second, the broad methodology of this study could be applied to more finely differentiated settings within the gross contexts used here, for example by concentrating on different job types, course types or leisure settings.

Third, the orientations used in this study have a rationale in terms of the demands of life contexts as well as personal characteristics. Other possible orientations eg. extraversion-intraversion need to be similarly investigated to see if they are context sensitive in the same way. The variables used here may be shown to have utility for guidance and counselling, leading to methods to help young people understand the determants of contexts in terms of their own orientations.

Fourth, the orientations explored here may be more finely analysed. The notion of control over one's own actions is similar in a number of ways to aspects of both "deep" and "achieving" approaches in the "approaches to study" literature (eg.Biggs,1987). It would be useful to explore further whether a separate "achieving" orientation is a viable construct over the range of contexts used here. Similarly the automaticity orientation needs to be more fully analysed to distinguish between automatic action that derives from expertise and automatic action deriving from easy low skill tasks.

The main aim of the present study was to relate together the notion of orientation and variability in context. It has provided a demonstration of their interrelationships in terms of relatively coarse variables. Given the positive findings from this study, a more fine grained analysis would seem desirable. It seems possible that orientations are responses of the particular person to the particular setting, but that such responses are by no means

constant for the same individual across settings. Settings themselves may contribute to individual variation in orientations in unique ways. It needs to be understood how this variations is generated for any particular setting.

Table 1. Questionnaire Items Classified by Task Characteristics and Orientations

Characteristics of Tasks and Contexts	Orientations: Self Generated Action (Control)	Other Generated Action (External)	Automaticity	People	Future	No. of items
Learning	Discovering Discussion Practice	Direct Instruction Modelling			5	
Planning and Problem Solving	Set goals or plan time Plan ahead Decision making Problem solving				4	
Initiative	Seek improvement Try new tasks				2	
Deliberation vs Automaticity	Need knowledge or understanding		Automatic		2	
Social Expectations		Compete Cooperate Make friends	Getting on	4		
Task expectations	Can tell when successful Told what is expected	Told how to improve		3		
Future Security			Future security	1		
Number of Items	11	5	1	3	1	

Table 2. Means* for Representative Individual Orientation Items in Various Contexts

Contexts	Illustrative	Actual	Ideal	Course	Leisure	Personal

Orientation Items	Job	Job		Relations	
Control					
I have to make a lot of decisions	2.4	3.3	2.8	2.5	2.7
I try to see how I could improve	2.9	3.8	3.2	3.2	3.3
You need to understand a lot to do this job		2.7	3.7	3.5	2.2	2.2
External/Productivity					
I was told how to do it		3.2	2.3	3.5	2.4	1.4
I'm told exactly what is expected of me		2.4	3.3	2.8	2.9	2.7
Automaticity					
Most of my job can be done automatically	2.2	2.7	1.9	2.3	2.4
People Orientation					
My job teaches me how to get on with people		3.0	3.6	2.8	2.8	2.9
Future Security					
My job will secure my future	2.5	3.8	3.4	2.5	3.2

* Reduced to 4-point scales ; 1 = low in characteristic, 4 = high

Table 3. Means, Standard Deviations, and Reliabilities for Orientations in Various Contexts

Orientation	Actual Job		Ideal Job		Course		Leisure		Pers. Rel.		No. of
	Mean*	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Items
Control	2.7	0.6	3.3	0.4	3.1	0.5	2.7	0.7	2.7	0.5	11
	.81		.81		.80		.85		.77		
External	2.4	0.6	2.4	0.6	2.9	0.6	2.2	0.8	1.8	0.8	5
	.56		.62		.62		.79		.64		
Automaticity	2.2	1.1	2.7	1.1	1.9	0.9	2.3	1.0	2.4	0.9	1
People	3.1	0.9	3.6	0.6	3.0	0.9	2.8	0.8	2.9	0.6	3
	.76		.79		.79		.84		.64		
Future Security	2.5	1.2	3.8	0.5	3.4	0.8	2.5	1.1	3.2	0.9	1

* Reduced to 4-point scales; 1 = low, 4 = high

Reliabilities (Cronbach Alpha Coefficients) are shown below the means, where applicable

Table 4. Rank Orders of Mean Orientation Ratings within Contexts

Orientation	Ideal Job	Actual Job	Course	Leisure	Pers Rel
Future	1	3	1	3	1
People	2	1	3	1	2
Control	3	2	2	2	3
Auto	4	5	5	4	4
External	5	4	4	5	5

Coefficient of Concordance = .67* Average rs = .60

Table 5. Context and Orientation Factors of Life Activities in 1986:
(Principal Factor Analysis: Pairwise Deletions, Varimax Transformation)

	Context Factors				Orientation Factors			
Variables	AJ	IJ	CO	LE	PR	Ext	Auto	Peop
AJ Control	71						-29	
external							51	
automatic								42
people	36							44
future	59							
IJ Control		78						
external							61	
automatic							32	47
people		44						40
future		45						
CO Control		25	65					
external				53			32	
automatic							38	27
people			57					47
future			40					
LE Control			27	69				
external					54		26	
automatic								
people				73				34
future				48				
PR Control					75			
external						41	45	

	automatic			
	people		84	21
	future		54	
Work Self Concept		63		
Course Self Concept		35	51	

AJ = Actual Job; IJ = ideal job; CO = course; LE = Leisure; PR = personal relationship

* Blanks indicate the coefficient was less than .20; decimal points omitted.

Table 6. Significant Differences between Group Means in Orientation Ratings[a]

		Context			
Grouping/Orientation		Actual Job	Ideal Job	Course	Pers Rel
(a)	Gender				
	Control	M>F	F>M		
	External	M>F	M>F	M>F	
	Automaticity	F>M	F>M	F>M	
	People	F>M	F>M	F>M	
	Future Security			F>M	
(b)	Original Course				
	Control		* > Trade		
	External	Trade > *	* > AC	Trade,Trans > Bus,Ac	
	Automaticity	Bus > *	Bus > *		
	People	* > Trade	* > Trade		
	Future Security	Trade,Trans > Bus > Ac		* > Trade	
(c)	Work/Study Status				
	Automaticity		* > Combined W,S	FTS/NW > Combined W,S	
	Future Security	FT Work > PT Work			
(d)	Job Type[b]				
	Control	TP,ST,C1,SS, > NRS,UL,F,RS			
	External	RS,ST > *			
	Automaticity	RS,NRS > *			
	People	* > ST,TP			
	Future	TP,ST > Cl,SS > UL,NRS,F,RS			
(e)	Job Prestige				
	Control	Hi > Med, lo			
	Future	Hi > Med > lo			
(f)	Employer Type				
	Future	State, Local Gov > Fed Gov > Private Sector			
(g)	Study Institution				
	Control		CAE > Uni,TAFE		
	External		* > Uni		

a There were no significant differences for Leisure.

b TP = technical or professional; ST = skilled trades; Cl = clerical or office; SS = Care, social service; NRS = Non-routine sales; RS = routine sales; UL = unskilled labourer; F = food preparation; W = work, S = study, NW = no work.

FTS (PTS) = Full time (part-time) study.

* Refers to all remaining groups in the contrast.

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