Personality typology approach

This approach has its roots in Parson's idea of an optimal allocation of people and occupations. Three assumptions can characterise it:

1. Due to specific psychological characteristics, each person is best suited for a certain type of occupation.
2. People in different professions have different psychological characteristics.
3. Job probation and satisfaction vary with the match between the personal characteristics of the professional and the job requirements.

This allocation takes place in a relatively open cognitive process. The essential principles as established by Parsons in his book Choosing a Vocation (1909) can be summarised as follows.

■ Is it better to choose a profession than just to hunt for a 'job'?

■ No one should choose their profession without thorough and honest self-analysis and counselling support.

■ The occupation selector should have a good overview of the occupations and not just grab a favourable or random opportunity.

■ The advice of experts who have made careful studies on personality traits and professions, as well as on prerequisites for success, is advisable for every young person.

■ Each person should make their own decisions, but they can be helped to do so in a considered way, weighing positive and negative aspects.

■ A good career choice combines three main factors: (1) An accurate knowledge of the self, one's own abilities, interests, ambitions, resources and limitations; (2) Knowledge of the requirements and probationary criteria, the advantages and disadvantages, the possibilities for development and income opportunities in different fields of activity; (3) Careful reflection on the connections between these two areas mentioned.

■ The counsellor should, with the greatest possible openness and friendliness, help the career chooser to perceive himself as others see him and to correct possible characteristics that stand in the way of career success.

■ Career counsellors should acquire a high degree of knowledge about the world of work.

The trait-and-factor approach was always very much based on individual uniqueness, which led to a preference for differential psychology. While the goal of an optimal 'matching men and jobs' up to the 1930s focused on the requirements of the job, from the 1940s onwards, research in the USA turned to individual trait characteristics. A key factor was the use of factor analysis in test construction and evaluation of success criteria so that the number of independent personality traits in the

areas of abilities (including general intelligence, special talents, vocational skills), occupational interests and character traits could be limited to 10 to 20. Since the 1940s, the terms 'trait' and 'factor' have been inextricably linked in the name of this theoretical orientation. Today, the trait-and-factor view can be found in a number of methodological approaches in career guidance. Probably the best-known approach is that of John Holland.

With his theory, Holland (1997) wants to provide answers to three fundamental questions:

a. Which characteristics of the person and the environment are responsible for satisfactory career decisions, high commitment and willingness to perform at work?
b. Which characteristics of the person and the environment are responsible for stability or change in a person's professional life?
c. What are the most effective methods of help for professional problems?

The theory is mainly directed towards helping people of all ages with questions of career choice, career change, career satisfaction, and, to a lesser extent, educational and social behaviour and personality development.

Four assumptions characterise the core of this approach:

1. In our Western-oriented industrial culture, most people can be assigned to one of six personality types: the realistic, the explorative, the artistic, the social, the entrepreneurial or the conventional type. These types represent model conceptions with the help of which the determination of the individual personality profile of a concrete person and, above all, their problem-solving strategies can be classified.
2. The professional-social environment can also be divided into the six types mentioned above. Each of these environments is dominated by people of the corresponding personality type.
3. People seek out those environmental conditions that allow them to apply their skills and abilities, to rediscover their attitudes and interests, and to take on appropriate roles.
4. Behaviour is determined by the interaction between personality and environment. Knowledge of the personality and the sphere of life enables, in principle, prediction in terms of career choice, career change, and educational and social behaviour.

The four basic assumptions are supplemented by secondary statements that are intended to improve the application to concrete situations of prediction and explanation:

Consistency refers to the degree of similarity between the personality types and the environmental types. For example, a person who belongs to the realistic-exploratory type is easier to assess in his or her professional behaviour than one with a realistic-social orientation. *Differentiation* means the

unambiguity and 'purity' with which people and professional environments can be assigned to a certain type. *The identity of* a person means that the individual has a clear and stable idea of his or her own goals, interests and aptitudes. Identity of the environment means organisational clarity, stability and integration of goals, tasks and rewards. *Congruence* is when a person operates in an environment that corresponds to his or her type. If, on the other hand, a realistically oriented person lives in a work environment with primarily social demands, there is incongruence.

The network of relationships between the types can be represented as a hexagonal model. The spatial arrangement offers the determination of both the consistency (three levels) and the congruence (four levels) of a person or an environment.
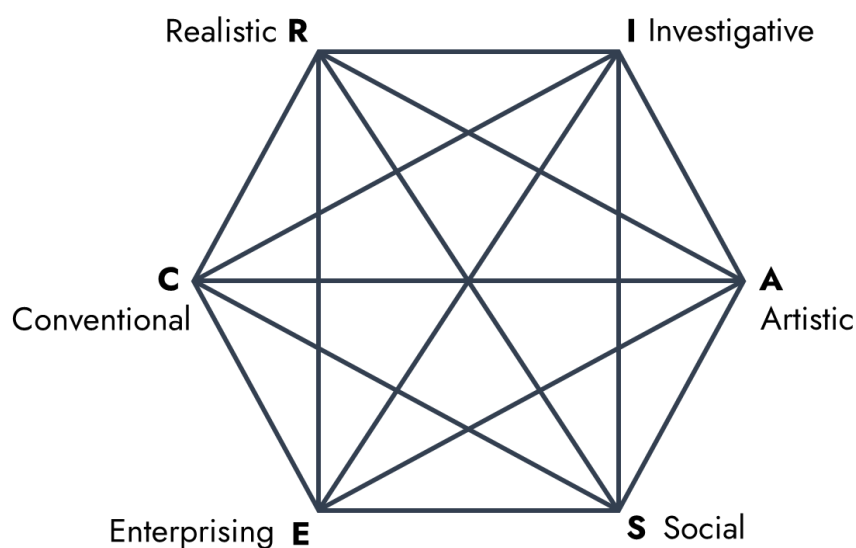

Figure 1: Hexagonal model for the relationship of personality types or environmental types.

The degree of similarity between types is expressed by correlation coefficients. The closer the type expressions determined in a person are to each other in the hexagon, the greater the personality consistency. For example, the combination RIK is considered more consistent than the combination RES. Basically, the first two letters of the so-called Holland codes should be considered in terms of their position in the hexagon. If they are adjacent, there is a high degree of consistency.

As an implementation aid for the counselling practice, the personality types, according to

- professional preferences and rejections,
- values and life goals,
- Self-perception,
- Problem-solving style,
- Behaviour in counselling and,
- preferred occupations (examples), briefly characterised.

Realistic type (R)

Prefers working with machines, materials, and tools; likes to solve concrete problems; deals with animals; avoids social tasks and cooperation with people who have different interests or views; the spectrum of interests is rather narrow. Possesses traditional value system, prefers working in fixed organisational framework, considers ambition and self-control as important values. Emphasises own manual, technical and physical skills. Is aware of their limitations in terms of interpersonal relationships and social tasks. Prefers concrete, practical and structured solutions or strategies as opposed to theoretical, scientific or imaginative approaches. Expect concrete advice on how to solve professional problems but are reluctant to reveal their emotions about professional decisions; when the conversation turns to preferred interests, traditionally male-oriented activities are emphasised.

Mechanic, electrician, forester, gardener, radio and television technician, helicopter pilot, farmer, locomotive driver.

Exploratory type (I)

Prefers professions or situations where something is explored (e.g. medicine, biology, technology); avoids entrepreneurial tasks. Values activities in school and science, as well as self-determined, intellectual, logical and ambitious action. Family security, loving and loyal friendship appear less important; is liberal-minded and open to new ideas. Is convinced of one's own scientific and mathematical talents; subjectively has a broad spectrum of interests; finds it frustrating to have to convince others of something. Seeks intellectual challenges and problems; collects and analyses objective information. Pays little attention to personal feelings and social orientation. Prefers to deal with professional problems independently, using rational methods. The counsellor is seen more as a collegial helper than as an expert.

Biologist, chemical laboratory technician, astronomer, geologist, scientific author, Medical-technical assistant

Artistic type (A)

Prefers expressive, non-conformist, original activities; avoids tasks of a routine nature. Likes experiences and challenges in the aesthetic field, self-expression, and imagination; does not want to be dependent or responsible; is very open to feelings and ideas of others; extremely liberal thinking. Self-perception: expressive, open, original, intuitive, liberal, non-conformist, independent, talented for drama, literature, and music; appreciates less economic activities and repetitive work. Tries to solve problems rather unconventionally by artistic means. Emphasises in counselling the importance of art, music, and literature in their life; prefers unstructured counselling approaches;

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seeks to stand out from other clients with original means of expression; brings in emotions more strongly and views the decision-making process more affectively than cognitively logically.

Author, Decorator, Musician, Photographer, Florist, Actor, Journalist

Social type (S)

Wants to help others with personal and professional problems through information and direct giving; avoids activities in technical or scientific abstract fields. Strong social and ethically oriented attitude, belief in the equality of all; values religious orientation. Self-image is characterised by the desire to help others, to understand them and by the idea of one's own good teaching skills; would be frustrated by abstract tasks or those requiring patience and precision; tends towards more traditional values and has a medium self-assessment. Problems are seen in their social context; interpersonal relationships play the main role. In contact with the counsellor, is very interested in what the counsellor is doing and tries to support him/her; is well suited for professional group counselling because others can be helped there; tends to talk too much and take on the role of the helper.

Counsellor, teacher, speech therapist, bartender, social worker, educator,
nurse, hairdresser

Entrepreneurial type (E)

Prefers activities which they can freely shape, for example, in terms of commercial success, and avoids those with a systematic exploratory or abstract character. Tends to represent traditional values in relation to performance; wants to determine others in terms of the goals to be achieved. Self-image: aggressive, high self-confidence, strong in leadership, persuasive language, lack of scientific ability; would not be happy in positions of little influence; emphasises traditional, relatively rigid value system. Solves problems as entrepreneurially as possible, mainly by influencing others. Likes to present himself self-confidently in counselling; likes to talk about previous professional successes. Sometimes, counselling seekers of this type have difficulties with the realistic assessment of their abilities; they want to get ahead quickly and are not afraid of competitive situations.

Salesperson, Manager, Advertising Manager, Sales Representative, Sales Manager, Self-employed

Conventional type (C)

Prefers work with systematic planning, administrative activities, and data processing; avoids artistic activities. Likes to work in clearly defined organisational structures and emphasises traditional virtues in professional, political and private life (ambitious, obedient, friendly). Considers artistic

activities, close personal cooperation or compliance to be subordinate values; has a very narrow value system. Considers him/herself well-adjusted, neat and especially capable in the areas of administration, accounting, and data processing. Applies tried and tested methods to solve problems; prefers directives because it is difficult to look for new ways on one's own initiative; has difficulties with ambiguous tasks or with summarising information from different sources. Likes to clearly define their problems in counselling and to have clear agreements on how to proceed; likes to emphasise their organisational skills; wants clear advice and implementation instructions; reacts with frustration and criticism to organisational shortcomings.

Work in financial authorities, banks, tax consultancy, controlling, data processing, bookkeeping

A number of instruments have been developed to determine a person's personality type and to assign it to the corresponding environments. Of these, "Self-Directed Search (SDS)" is certainly the best-known system. The concrete assignment of people to professions is expressed with a three-letter code. The first letter shows the type that is most pronounced in the person, or that is particularly required in the occupation. The following letters show the second and third strongest 'fit'. One should always bear in mind that Holland's approach is about ideal types that serve as schemes for classifying concrete persons. This was already pointed out by Eduard Spranger (1950., p. 114), one of the intellectual fathers of Holland's typology (1997, p. 6). Spranger had already developed the following six 'ideal basic types of individuality' in the early 1920s: "1. the theoretical man, 2. the economic man, 3. the aesthetic man, 4. the social man, 5. the power man, 6. the religious man".

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