



MOVIn

Method for Observing Vocational
Interests

User Manual

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The *Method for Observing Vocational Interests* includes the user manual, the observation grids, the guide for interpreting results and a CD-ROM for calculating results.

Legal deposit – Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec, 2010

ISBN 978-2-923871-00-4

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the following organizations for their financial support in the form of study grants for Virginie Cobigo or of human resources time devoted to carrying out this project:

- **Consortium national de recherche sur l'intégration sociale (CNRIS)**
- **American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD) – Quebec Chapter**
- **Fonds québécois de recherche sur la société et la culture (FQRSC)**
- **Chaire de déficience intellectuelle et troubles du comportement (Chaire DITC)**

We also thank the CRDITEDs that participated in the research project that made development of the MOVIn possible:

- **Services de réadaptation l'Intégrale**
- **Centre de réadaptation Gabrielle-Major**
- **Centre de réadaptation Lisette-Dupras**
- **Centre de réadaptation Les Filandières**
- **Services de réadaptation du Sud-ouest et du Renfort**

Finally, we extend our heartfelt appreciation to all the professionals and persons with intellectual disabilities who gave so generously of their time.



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Introduction

In 2006, the *Fédération québécoise des centres de réadaptation en déficience intellectuelle et en troubles envahissants du développement* (FQCRDITED) adopted a new definition of its service offer. Specialized services to support employment accessibility, particularly the assessment of vocational interests, are now part of their mandate (Fédération québécoise des centres de réadaptation en déficience intellectuelle, 2006). To be able to offer these services, job coaches and professionals need tools to assess preferences in work activities. Vocational interests are usually assessed by interviewing the person directly. Images might be used as communication aids. However, persons with intellectual disabilities sometimes have difficulty expressing their preferences verbally, due especially to limitations in their capacities for communication and introspection. They are also more likely than members of the general population to acquiesce and to exhibit a high level of social desirability. This severely inhibits the promotion of their self-determination and their quality of life. Indeed, their job activities are then planned according to what those around them assume are their preferences. **Yet several studies have shown that a person's actual preferences may differ from those assumed by support staff and family members.** It is therefore important to have tools for assessing preferences that do not rely on language.

This user manual includes:

- A description of the development of the *Method for Observing Vocational Interests* (MOVIn)
- A description of the MOVIn and the conditions for its use
- An explanation of how the assessment results are calculated.

Also included are the following assessment support tools:

- Observation grids to gather data for the assessment
- A guide for interpreting results
- A CD with Excel[®] files to calculate the results of the assessment and to simplify their interpretation




Background and objectives

Services to persons with intellectual disabilities are aimed at providing the support they need to improve their functioning. The support also aims to increase **social participation**, improve **quality of life** and promote **self-determination** (Fédération québécoise des centres de réadaptation en déficience intellectuelle, 2000, 2006; Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux, 2001). Thus, professionals working with persons with intellectual disabilities encourage them to participate actively in their community by taking on meaningful roles that are appropriate to their age, sex and culture (Fédération québécoise des centres de réadaptation en déficience intellectuelle, 2000; Nirje, 1969; Wolfensberger, 1972). For this reason, any decisions regarding a person must be based on his or her own interests and goals, so it is important to give the person the opportunities and support required for expressing preferences and making choices.




Persons with intellectual disabilities have cognitive limitations that can make it difficult to express their preferences, such as difficulties with planning, projection in time, reasoning, problem solving and understanding complex ideas. Cognitive limitations can also limit their capacity for introspection. Yet these skills are required for decision-making every day. This is especially true when it comes to selecting a vocational activity. Limitations in adaptive skills can also inhibit the expression of preferences and choices. For example, persons with intellectual disabilities can have trouble expressing themselves through language due to a limited vocabulary, problems with articulation or pronunciation, a receptive language impairment, etc. (Cameron & Murphy, 2002). In addition, persons with intellectual disabilities are known to be more susceptible than the general population to social desirability and acquiescence; they tend to choose options they think will please their questioner or to express agreement with that person (Finlay & Lyons, 2002; Guillemette & Boisvert, 2003). Also, when presented with questions having two possible responses, they tend to select the second option (Perry, 2004).





Because of these limitations, professionals and parents often assume a major role in taking decisions affecting the life of a person with intellectual disabilities, particularly when it comes to vocational activities programming (Kishi, Teelucksingh, Zollers, Park-Lee, & Meyer, 1988). However, professionals' and parents' ideas about a person's preferences are sometimes different from that person's actual preferences (Lohrmann-O'Rourke & Browder, 1998; Stancliffe, 1995). Therefore it would be useful to be able to measure a person's preferences directly rather than to only consider the preferences assumed by the person's entourage.

The *Method for Observing Vocational Interests* (MOVIn) was created in order to:

-  Provide job coaches and professionals with a **direct measure of vocational preferences** of persons with intellectual disabilities.
-  Offer persons with intellectual disabilities a **means of expressing their preferences** in relation to vocational activities.
-  Offer persons with intellectual disabilities a **means of being actively involved**.



Development of the MOVIn

The *Method for Observing Vocational Interests* (MOVIn) was developed in four stages. Following a review of the scientific literature on the subject, the MOVIn was validated by a group of experts and then pretested. A field test was then conducted with a larger number of job coaches and persons with intellectual disabilities. Finally, the participating job coaches were interviewed to obtain their feedback on the MOVIn and its value in use within their work context.



Integrative review of the literature on assessing preferences in vocational activities

The integrative review of previous studies was the subject of an article published in *Education and Training in Developmental Disabilities* (Cobigo, Morin, & Lachapelle, 2007) which presented the studies' objectives, the procedures they used, the participants' characteristics, and their main results and conclusions. Recommendations were made regarding the development of a method that would use observations to assess preferences in vocational activities.



Validation and pretesting

The MOVIn was presented to a group of five experts for their comments. Then the MOVIn was pretested by two job coaches and two persons with intellectual disabilities whose means of communication were nonverbal. The results of the validation and pretesting and a description of the MOVIn are presented in an article published in *La revue francophone de la déficience intellectuelle* (Cobigo, Lachapelle, & Morin, 2007).





Field test

The MOVIn was tested with 19 persons over the age of 21 years with intellectual disabilities who had difficulty expressing their preferences using language. One person diagnosed with pervasive developmental disorder was recruited, and findings were analyzed for exploratory purposes. Sixteen persons working in centres specializing in services for persons with intellectual disabilities and pervasive developmental disorders (CRDITEDs) in the Montreal region used the MOVIn. The results of the field test suggest that the MOVIn can be used to assess work task preferences of persons with intellectual disabilities. Of the 19 assessments done, 12 showed clear preference profiles and only one appeared non valid.



Evaluation of the MOVIn's value in use

Value in use is a key concept in program evaluation as it measures the value of the program or instrument in relation to the needs of potential users (Patton, 1997). It describes its concrete utility, and the most favourable conditions for its use - that is, the conditions that require the least effort to achieve the desired results and are most easily integrated into the usual way of doing things in the milieu.

All the job coaches reported being satisfied with their experience using the MOVIn and recommended its use. Any reluctance they had felt beforehand about using the MOVIn had disappeared. **Twelve of the 16 job coaches who participated highlighted the lack of concordance between the preferences they had assumed and those assessed with the MOVIn.**

The field test results and the measurement of value in use are presented in an article published in *Education and Training in Developmental Disabilities* (Cobigo, Morin & Lachapelle, 2009).



Description of the MOVIn and conditions for use



Who is the MOVIn for?

The MOVIn is intended for all persons with intellectual disabilities who have limited communication skills. These persons may be able to have a conversation to relate things that happened, but may have trouble expressing themselves or understanding meaning using more complex language.

The MOVIn is also aimed at persons with intellectual disabilities when their vocational interests are difficult to assess in interviews or with vocational interests inventory using visual support. For example, among the people most likely to benefit from this approach are those who will respond to interview questions but say they like all the activities proposed, who answer yes to almost all the questions, or who check with their questioner to make sure their answer satisfies him or her.


Careful! It is important to note that **the MOVIn was not evaluated among persons with pervasive developmental disorders**. We recommend not using the MOVIn with these persons, especially if they are accustomed to functioning within a TEACCH-type structure. The lack of predictability and structure in the assessment process may produce anxiety in the person being assessed, which can lead to problem behaviours (such as self-injury).



Who can use the MOVIn?

Observers should be trained in using the MOVIn and should have experience working with persons with intellectual disabilities. They should be familiar with observation techniques. In particular, observers should be able to define a behaviour operationally. They should be able to differentiate a behaviour (e.g. putting screws into a bag) from a judgment or a characteristic of the person (e.g. “being distracted” is not a behaviour). Observers also must be careful not to introduce any bias into the assessment. For example, they need to be aware of any behaviours of their own that could lead the person to choose one option over another. They also need to take into account the tendency of persons with intellectual disabilities to want to please their questioners and to respond affirmatively.





It is not necessary for observers to know the person being assessed. They should, however, establish a good connection and put the person at ease before starting the assessment. On the other hand, it could be that an observer who knows the person being assessed would better understand the person's nonverbal signs and more easily identify external factors that might influence the assessment (such as the presence of a peer during the assessment), which could produce a richer and more accurate interpretation of the results.



Precautions to take before the assessment: notes to the observer

An **assessment session will require 20 to 25 minutes** (6 tasks to carry out in 3 minutes each, with a few minutes of transition between tasks).




Before starting a session, make sure you have enough time and are fully available to carry out the assessment.

For example, you may need to ask a colleague to supervise the rest of the group for the duration of the session. If needed, it may be preferable to carry out the assessment when the other persons you are supervising are not there (e.g. lunch break). You could also conduct the assessment in a separate room. This may be appropriate if the person is easily distracted by stimulations in the surroundings. In fact, it is important to minimize any potential for distractions.







 It is advisable to do the assessment when production demands are lowest.

 Make sure the person being assessed is in a good frame of mind at the time of the assessment.


For example, make sure the person is not tired or sick. The person's choices could also be influenced by tasks carried out in the hours preceding the assessment, so it is advisable to do assessments in the morning. This will also increase the person's availability for the assessment.

 It is advisable to set up a table on which you would present the choices to the person being assessed.

 Make sure all the objects required for presenting choices are immediately nearby.

 Set up a work station for each of the four tasks and direct the person to the work station corresponding to the selected option.

Setting up work stations reduces the handling of the material and avoids having to undo the person's work after the 3 minutes of observation.

 Also make sure you have all the materials required so that the person can work at the selected task for the duration of the observation.

Each task is presented 3 times over the course of an assessment session, for a 3-minute observation each time, so there should be enough materials on hand to allow the person to work at least 9 minutes on each task.





Assessment procedure

1. Selection of tasks and presentation modalities

The person's preferences are assessed for **four tasks** that he or she either already does regularly in the workplace or has been taught beforehand. The person does not need to be able to do the task efficiently, but should know the various steps needed to carry it out and be able to do them WITHOUT verbal instructions.

Examples of tasks for a participant

Task 1: Shredding paper

Task 2: Sweeping

Task 3: Putting screws into a bag

Task 4: Sorting blocks by colour

During the assessment session, propose tasks by presenting the participant either with **objects representing** these tasks or with pictograms. The objects to be used are the same ones used in the natural work environment and are used only in one of the four tasks for which preferences are being assessed.

Examples of representative objects

Task 1: Sheets of paper

Task 2: A broom

Task 3: A bag and some screws

Task 4: Coloured blocks

Careful! Pictograms can be used **if, and only if**, the person already uses them in the workplace. No new pictograms should be introduced during the assessment.



To ensure that the person understands the link between each object and the task it represents, a test is done beforehand. Show the person the object without giving any instruction about what is expected. You can encourage the person to do the task without saying what to do. If the person moves toward the task to be done, you can assume that he or she understands what this object represents. If not, another object or task should be used, or a training carried out.

In the assessment, **tasks are presented to the person in pairs**, using the **representative objects**. It is important to ensure that the two objects are **within the person's reach** (around 30 cm.) and within visual range.

Careful! It is very important to present the objects related to the tasks **two-by-two**. If only one object is presented at a time, the person being assessed will not understand that it is possible to choose not to do the proposed action. Studies have shown that it is impossible to assess preferences if only one activity is presented at a time.

Careful! It is also important to present the two options simultaneously and not one after the other.

An assessment of preferences requires **several assessment sessions**. During each assessment session, **all the possible pairs of tasks must be presented (6 pairs possible)**.

Possible pairs for four tasks in session 1

Pair 1 (1 vs. 2): Sheets of paper vs. broom

Pair 2 (2 vs. 4): Broom vs. blocks


Pair 3 (3 vs. 2): Bag+screws vs. broom

Pair 4 (1 vs. 3): Sheets vs. bag+screws

Pair 5 (3 vs. 4): Bag+screws vs. blocks

Pair 6 (4 vs. 1): Blocks vs. sheets of paper





Pairs are presented in random order. The alternation of object presentation either on the right or the left side of the person being assessed is also determined in advance. The pair sequences are noted on the observation grid, as well as each object's positioning in relation to the person being assessed (i.e., to the person's right or left). Assign a number from 1 to 4 to each of the tasks, and indicate these on the grid, and present the pairs according to the order and positioning marked on the grid. An example of the observation grid is supplied with the user manual, as a separate sheet.

2. *Presentation of pair 1*

Present the objects simultaneously. Place them facing the person at a distance of about 30 cm. Show the person the objects and ask “**WHICH ONE DO YOU WANT?**” Do not name the activities.

Example (session 1)

Pair 1: *Pair (1 vs. 2)*: Sheets of paper vs. broom

Then observe the person being assessed and note on the observation grid which of the two proposed tasks is selected. **A choice is registered when the person takes one of the objects in hand for at least 5 seconds, points to or names the corresponding task, or starts to do the corresponding task.** On the observation grid, circle the number corresponding to the selected task.

Example 1: registering the choice of activity

Julie takes the broom in her hand and holds it for about 5 seconds. The selected activity is “sweeping”.

If she chooses another object within these 5 seconds, the second choice will be the one registered.



Example 2: registering the choice of activity

Julie takes the broom in her hand, BUT puts it down few seconds later to point to the sheets of paper. The selected activity is “shredding paper”.

Carrying out the selected task

Then move the non-selected object away from the person, or direct the person toward the appropriate work station.

Verbal instruction

“**YOU’VE CHOSEN** *name of the activity*. **YOU CAN START NOW.**”




Observe the person as the task is being carried out (**3 minutes**) and complete the observation grid. A timer is programmed to ring at the end of 3 minutes of observation. During these 3 minutes, note on the observation grid the time spent on the task. **Use of a stopwatch is required.**

Activate the stopwatch when the person starts working on the task, that is, as soon as he or she begins a behaviour required for doing the task.

- **Stop the stopwatch when the person stops working on the task**, that is, when he or she is no longer exhibiting any behaviour required for the task.
- **However, if the person slows down the pace of work** or exhibits behaviours not needed for the work, but continues doing the task, **do not stop** the stopwatch.





Careful! Do not prompt the person to resume working after having stopped.
Do not provide encouragement while the task is being done.

After 3 minutes (when the timer rings), ask the person being assessed to stop working on the first task selected, and then present a new pair according to the procedure described above.

Verbal instruction

“THANK YOU, THAT’S VERY GOOD! NOW YOU CAN CHOOSE ANOTHER ACTIVITY.”

3. Presentation of pair 2

Now present the second randomly determined pair of tasks (according to the sequence written in the observation grid). For each new pair presented, observe the person being assessed, following the same procedure used in the presentation of the first pair. Fill in the second column of the observation grid.


4. End of an assessment session

An assessment session ends when all the possible pairs of tasks have been presented to the participant (here, 6 pairs possible). After each session, review the results interpretation guide and note the relevant information. A copy of the guide is supplied with the user manual, as a separate sheet.

5. Procedure for subsequent sessions (2 to 7)




Because a preference is a repeated choice, several assessment sessions must be programmed. The recommended number of sessions is seven, within an eight-week period maximum (**7 sessions × 20 minutes = 2.5 hours for a complete assessment of one person**).





Careful! The first two sessions are not included in calculating the results. Their purpose is to familiarize the observer and the person being assessed with the assessment situation. It is in the first two sessions, therefore, that changes can be made to the assessment environment, the tasks presented, etc. Afterward, nothing can be changed.

Careful! Pay attention to how the assessment unfolds and to the behaviours of the person being assessed. In some cases the assessment could be considered non valid. Here are some examples of situations you might encounter:

-  Some neurological aspects could disturb the assessment. For example, the person could exhibit perseveration or experience problems of perception or information processing. You might observe, in these cases, that the person consistently chooses objects placed on the same side.
-  Visual limitations could also interfere with the assessment if the person cannot adequately distinguish between the objects presented.
-  If the person being assessed has had few opportunities to make choices in his or her life, it may be hard to understand the concept of being able to express a choice.

We therefore recommend paying attention to characteristics of the person that could be obstacles to the assessment.

Careful! The assessment environment differs significantly from the usual work environment (e.g. stopping an activity after 3 minutes regardless of performance, no reinforcement given, etc.). This could produce anxiety or frustration in the person being assessed and lead to problem behaviours. In such cases, it is up to the observer to judge whether it is appropriate to continue the assessment. Problem behaviours are not compatible with creating a climate of trust that is required for the assessment.





Calculating the results

An Excel[®] worksheet helps with calculating and interpreting the results. Open the Excel[®] file found on the CD supplied with the user manual. Choose the worksheet in your preferred language (select one of the tabs on the bottom left, “Français” or “English”). Enter your observation data, as well as the relevant nominative data, in the **blue cells**. The other data will be modified automatically.

Session 3						Session 4					
Pair 1	Pair 2	Pair 3	Pair 4	Pair 5	Pair 6	Pair 1	Pair 2	Pair 3	Pair 4	Pair 5	Pair 6
1	3	2	4	4	1	3	1	3	2	4	2
00:01:30	00:02:30	00:03:00	00:03:00	00:02:00	00:03:00	00:01:55	00:02:12	00:03:00	00:03:00	00:01:12	00:00:45
si = 1	00:01:30				00:03:00		00:02:12				
si = 2		00:03:00						00:03:00			00:00:45
si = 3		00:02:30				00:01:55		00:03:00			
si = 4			00:03:00	00:02:00						00:01:12	



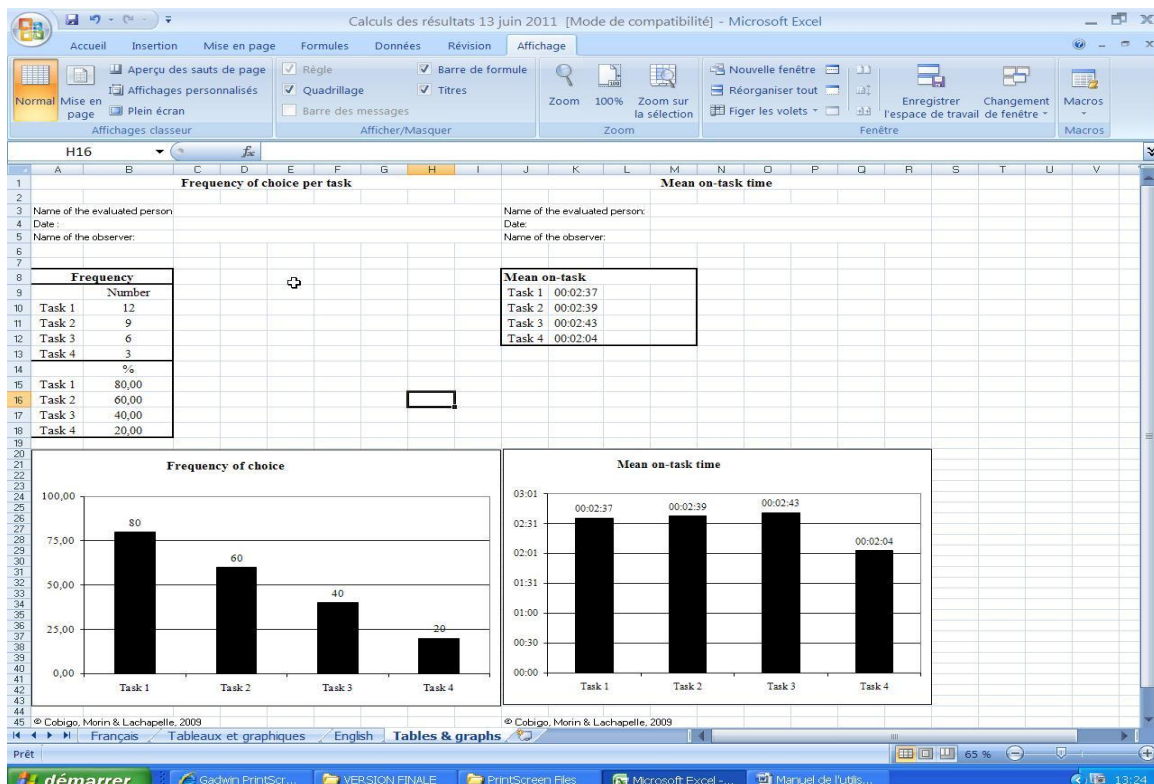
1. Task selected


Click on the cell corresponding to pair 1, session 3. Click on the arrow that appears to the right of the cell and select the number of the selected task from the two possible options.

Reminder:

The data from sessions 1 and 2 are not counted in the results.

Use the same procedure for the other pairs. From the analysis of the observation grid, the frequency of choices can be calculated for each task presented to the person being assessed. These frequencies are presented in tables and graphs on the worksheet labelled “Tables & graphs”.





A task selected more than 70% of the times it was presented is considered to be preferred to others; a task selected between 50% and 70% of the times it was presented is moderately preferred, and a task selected less than 50% of the times it was presented is not preferred (in comparison to the three other tasks presented). To establish the preference profile, compare the selection frequency for each task.

2. *Time spent on the task*

Indicate in the corresponding cell the time spent on the task as registered on the stopwatch. Enter the data in the following format: **00:minutes:seconds**. For example, for a period of 1 minute and a half out of the 3 minutes of observation, you will enter 00:01:30.

The average time spent on a task in 3 minutes of observation is calculated automatically and presented in tables and graphs on the “Tables & graphs” worksheet. The average time spent on a task does not say anything about the person’s vocational interests. It is provided only as a rough guide to the person’s task performance. The tables and graphs can be printed on two 8½ x 11 inch pages.



Limitations of the MOVIn

The *Method for Observing Vocational Interests* (MOVIn) does not provide any assessment of the person's performance on each task. Research shows that performance in a work task is not influenced by the degree of preference for that task. This is all the more true for persons with intellectual disabilities, since they often tend to want to please the person with whom they are interacting.

It also cannot be used to assess the influence of external factors on the assessment results. However, the guide to interpreting results, which is a questionnaire supplied with the observation grids, will allow you to take notes on these factors and will enable you to take into account the context in which the results were observed (e.g. presence of a peer, task done while standing vs. sitting, etc.). This questionnaire should be completed after each assessment session. You can also use the MOVIn to compare a person's preferences with respect to working conditions. For example, you can present the person with two tasks to be done while standing and two tasks to be done while sitting and compare the preferences in relation to these two conditions, rather than comparing them by task.

The MOVIn cannot be used to assess a person's preferences for unfamiliar tasks. You can, however, precede the assessment with a training in the behaviours required to carry out a new task. This is clearly a drawback in comparison with other vocational inventories. However, it seems to us that it is difficult to know whether one likes a task or not without having tried it! This is even more the case for persons with intellectual disabilities, whose cognitive limitations make it difficult to construct a mental image of an activity they have never done.

It is also important to know that **a person's preferences change over time**. It is therefore necessary to **repeat the assessment regularly**.


The MOVIn makes it possible to **compare the degree of preference among several activities**. The degree of preference for one activity can vary depending on other activities proposed. It can therefore also be useful to **carry out several assessments in which you vary the activities presented**.



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