

CHILDHOOD, ADOLESCENCE AND ADULTHOOD

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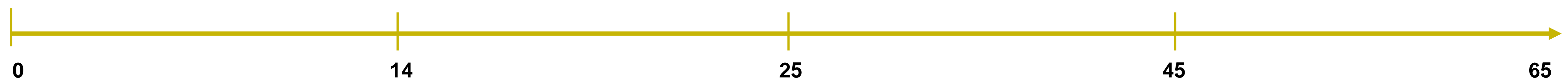
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In this study, different career exploration assessment procedures, adjusted to childhood, adolescence and adulthood, are presented and discussed, taking in account theoretical and empirical developments of the construct. The first procedure, aimed for 3 to 10 year-old children, includes the use of the *Career Development Child Interview Grid* (Araújo & Taveira, 2000; Araújo & Taveira, 2006) and the *Self Exploration Guided Task* (Araújo, Taveira, & Lemos, 2004; adapted from Gordon, 1968). The second procedure, designed to assess the career exploration process assessment of adolescents aged 14 years-old through adulthood, involves the use of the *Career Exploration Survey* (Taveira, 1997; adapted from Stumpf, Colarelli, & Hartman, 1983). The last procedures, developed for adults, include the use of the *Career Repertory Grid* (Silva & Taveira, 2005) and the *Career Narrative* for adults with low levels of schooling (RVCC-AEP, 2005; Gonçalves, Taveira, & Pereira, 2007). The benefits and qualities of each procedure are discussed. The authors conclude on the need for longitudinal career exploration assessment plans.

Introduction:

Career exploration is an important kind of vocational behavior that includes learning about the self and from the environment to help decide about a career direction, to ease adjustment to work, and to enhance performance (Blustein, 1992; Jordaan, 1963; Strumpf, Colarelli, & Hartman, 1983). In contrast to theoretical perspectives that have considered exploration to be a stage in career development (e.g., Ginzberg, Ginsburg, Axelrad, & Herma, 1951; Super, 1957) or career decision making (e.g., Harren, 1979; Tiedeman & O'Hara, 1963), exploration is depicted as a process with critical lifelong and adaptive functions. According to this processual view of the construct, self- and environment exploration are conceived as two dimensions of the same exploratory process.

Back grounded by a developmental paradigm, the authors aim at career development research, focusing on the evolution of career exploration results, through childhood, adolescence and adulthood. Thus, four exploration assessment procedures, that have been tested in individual studies (Mds and PhDs), are presented. In common, the fact that the four studies used longitudinal research designs, and recognized the importance of context and relationships in development.



	P1	P2	P3	P4
Experimented Measures and Procedures	<p>Career Development Child Interview Grid (GEC: Araújo & Taveira, 2000; Araújo & Taveira, 2006): allows assessment of self, work and life-roles exploration (e.g., self and work exploratory activity; occupational knowledge and preferences; vocational planning, and gender issues) Based on career development theories (e.g., Ginzberg, Ginsburg, Axelrad & Herma, 1951; Super, 1957; Gottfrenson, 1981) that propose childhood as a specific vocational development stage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A semi-structured interview - 19 items - Individual administration to the child by a psychologist - Administration time: 30 minutes <p>Self Exploration Guided Task (Araújo, Taveira & Lemos, 2004; adapted from Gordon, 1968): self exploration measure that provides children's self-description and perceptions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Semi-structured interview - Open question: "Who are you/How are you?" - Individual administration to the child by a psychologist - Administration time: 10 minutes 	<p>Career Exploration Survey (CES: Stumpf, Colarelli & Hartman, 1983; Taveira, 1997): reflects a complex hierarchical model of the career exploration process, which includes cognitive, behavioral and affective dimensions of the construct. Consists of four measures of the career exploration process (self exploration, environment exploration, intended-systematic exploration, amount of information acquired), five beliefs (employment outlook, certainty of exploration outcomes, external search instrumentality, internal search instrumentality, importance of preferred position) and three reactions (satisfaction with information, exploration stress and decision stress).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A survey for research purposes - 53 items - Likert-type response format, using a 5 or 7 point-scales - Individual or in group administration to adolescents and young adults by a psychologist - Administration time: 20 minutes 	<p>Career Repertory Grid (GRC: Silva & Taveira, 2005): permits the assessment of self construction as well as the assessment of the structural characteristics of that construct system (e.g., cognitive complexity, integration, career conflicts and dilemmas)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A 16x15 original grid, in which participants rate interpersonal and self elements along a common set of 15 bipolar constructs using a 7-point Likert scale (e.g., <i>competent vs. incompetent</i>). The 15 constructs were theory drawn, based on a career development literature review, and focused on causes of sex discrepancies in career development - Individual administration to young adults and adults by a psychologist - Administration time: 40 minutes 	<p>Career Narrative for adults with low levels of schooling (RVCC-AEP, 2005; Gonçalves, Taveira, & Pereira, 2007), informal method of career assessment based on Schlosberg's transition model (1995) and Savickas' career construction theory (2002, 2005), to be used within career intervention context</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Two specific assessment semi-structured activities of a larger career portfolio: "My career development trajectory" and "My biography". Adults are first asked to describe their career trajectory, step by step (eg., from 0-10, 11-20, 21-30, 31-40, 41-50, and 51-60 years old), including formal and informal learning, employment, family, leisure, and citizenship experiences. Based on this exercise, adults are then asked to construct a short narrative about their life/career trajectory, with references to most and less positive perceived life-career events and non-events - Individual administration to young adults and adults by a psychologist or another social worker, or self-administered with some support by a psychologist or another social worker - Administration time: 40 minutes
Advantages and Limitations	<p>Limitations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - High-costs: time consuming and specialized training required (e.g., children interviewing skills) - Inexistence of psychometric data <p>Advantages:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Allows assessment of the child's own perceptions - Allows a rich understanding of career exploration process and outcomes in childhood - A theory driven assessment instrument - Attempts to broaden the focus of career inquiry to include a more complete life span focus - Attends to a multidimensional view of career exploration - Replicable and adaptable to other ages 	<p>Limitations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enables the collection of only quantitative data <p>Advantages:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A process and outcome-oriented constructs formal assessment instrument - A theory driven assessment instrument - Low-cost:: offers the possibility to study a large number of adolescents or young adults per administration - Promotes the adherence to a multidimensional vision of career exploration, reinforcing the importance of cognitive-motivational and behavioural facets of the career exploration process - Allows the study of unique conditions clients bring to career counselling and guidance contexts - Stimulates the study of career development processes as well as career intervention results - Replicable and adaptable to other ages - Existence of psychometric data 	<p>Limitations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - High-costs: time consuming and specialized training required - Provided constructs in the grid can be less meaningful for the subjects than elicited constructs - Inexistence of validity data <p>Advantages:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A process-oriented construct assessment instrument - A theory driven assessment instrument, emphasizing a constructivist approach to career assessment - Helps to shape our understanding of relational influences as well as of modelling forces on a person's self-concept - Provides indices of cognitive development related with career construction - Enables the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data - Applicable to counselling contexts - Permits the collection of single-case idiographic data, and also the comparison of different respondents idiographic profiles - Replicable and adaptable to other ages or group administration 	<p>Limitations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - High-costs: time consuming and specialized training required - Requires some level of literacy of and narrative skills from participants - Uses outside career intervention context are not recommendable - Inexistence of normative data <p>Advantages:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A theory driven assessment instrument - Allows collection and integration of objective and subjective career data and visions - Stimulates career research with no schooling bound adults - Helps to better understand specificities of career development - Enhances client's career exploration, self-knowledge, motivation and action

Discussion and Conclusions:

The entire theoretical endeavour of studying exploration requires an array of methods that is expansive and flexible (Flum & Blustein, 2000). Accordingly to this idea, the authors presented diverse assessment procedures to assess career exploration, like structured and semi-structured interviews, questionnaires, and narrative eliciting procedures. These life-span process assessment devices were all originally theory-driven, and adapted to specific characteristics of their populations (e.g., age, language development, identity development).

Career exploration should be studied as a complex, multidimensional and multi-determined process (see Blustein, 1997). Therefore, the procedures presented by the authors for its assessment cover: (a) cognitive, emotional and behavioural aspects of career exploration (e.g., P2); (b) the recognition of social relations influences on the career exploration, as well as the influence of culture and personal meanings in the construction of one's self and world comprehension (e.g., P1 and P3); (d) the pervasive influence in life roles of exploration skills (e.g., P4).

All measurement devices share concerns about theory-guided interventions: results of administration of P1 have already been used to plan career education interventions in pre-school contexts (see Araújo, Taveira, & Lemos, 2004; Araújo & Taveira, 2006); results of administration of P2 have been used to assess intervention efficacy in career-decision interventions (see Faria & Taveira, 2006); P3 has been experimented in individual counselling, focusing on vocational dilemmas, identity development and vocational transitions (see Silva & Taveira, 2006); P4 was originally designed for counselling contexts, in interventions that aimed at reflection and integration of past career exploration experiences in order to plan ahead the future (see Gonçalves, Taveira, & Pereira, 2007).

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In the authors' view, one of the core outcomes of exploration is self-construction, which refers to the process of developing a coherent and meaningful identity and implementing that identity in a life plan. All procedures place a special focus on self-construction and exploration. Considering exploration as a means of self-construction represents a particularly important shift in the conceptual framework of exploration theory and research: while individuals construct their identity as a result of exploration, self-construction engenders further exploration (Flum & Blustein, 2000).

Investigations that build on traditionally important outcome issues, such as assessing the consequences of a given type or expression of exploratory activity, are important. However, in order to be more informative, investigations should provide a means of understanding how people construct and internalize their exploratory experiences. Thus, studies that combine traditional quantitative methods with qualitative methods are indicated (see Flum & Blustein, 2000). In this manner, four different devices have been presented in a tentative way to accomplish this goal.

The authors follow contemporary psychology's interests in respect to developmental, context-rich perspectives (see Vondracek, 2001) and concerns about the means of measuring psychological processes (see Blustein & Flum, 2000), namely career exploration. It has been demonstrated that it is possible and necessary to study career exploration, and advised the use of longitudinal designs: while asking people about their exploratory experiences, encompassing the diversity of relevant life roles (e.g., P4), and also focusing on exploration outcomes (e.g., P1) over time, we can learn more about how career exploration functions in evolving and complex lives.

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