

Perception of Work, Relationships and Career: A Study with Undergraduate Students

Fábio Nogueira Pereira¹

Centro Universitário do Espírito Santo (UNESC)

Abstract

This study researched how a population of 40 undergraduate students attending a career planning project in a private college perceived work, career and their relation with interpersonal relationships. The questionnaire revealed that most subjects perceived work positively, reported through four different perceptions of work, reported perceiving a social dimension of work, but about half of it reported that they didn't perceive people in general working in a way that showed being concerned about changing society. When the subjects listed people who worked with the same values they held, reports ranged through parents, bosses and friends; when asked about people that didn't have the same values, they listed work-mates, peers and siblings; when asked about most important people for their career, they listed their parents separately, teachers and children. Data suggested a wide participation of relationships in processing information and constructing conceptions related to work and career.

Keywords: career; interpersonal relationships; work.

Percepções sobre Trabalho, Relacionamentos e Carreira: Um Estudo com Universitários

Resumo

Esta pesquisa investigou como uma população de 40 universitários percebe o trabalho, sua carreira e a relação desses com relacionamentos interpessoais. O objetivo geral foi analisar como universitários participantes de um projeto de extensão de planejamento de carreira num centro universitário privado percebiam o trabalho, sua carreira e a existência de relação desses fatores com relacionamentos interpessoais. Foram objetivos específicos desta pesquisa: a) pesquisar aspectos da construção do projeto de carreira dos participantes; b) investigar a influência percebida dos relacionamentos na construção deste projeto; c) descrever percepções sobre o trabalho dos participantes; e, d) verificar possíveis relações entre esses fatores. Os dados foram colhidos através de questionário composto por uma questão fechada e seis abertas e foram tratados a partir de análise de conteúdo. A maioria da população relatou percepção positiva do trabalho através de quatro concepções diferentes e também perceber a dimensão social do trabalho. Metade dos participantes relatou não perceber que as pessoas em geral trabalham com o compromisso de transformar a sociedade. Ao nomear pessoas que conheciam que se dedicavam ao trabalho segundo deles mesmos, os sujeitos citaram o pai, o(a) chefe e a mãe; ao nomear pessoas que não se dedicam ao trabalho segundo sua concepção, citaram colegas de trabalho, amigos e irmãos, e o pai, a mãe, os professores e os filhos como as pessoas mais importantes para a carreira. As respostas sugeriram um cenário complexo no qual há participação de diversos relacionamentos no processamento de informações e na elaboração de percepções e concepções relativas ao trabalho e à carreira.

Palavras-chave: carreira; relacionamento interpessoal; trabalho.

Percepción acerca de Trabajo, Relacionamientos y Carrera: Una Investigación con Estudiantes de Pregrado

Resumen

Este estudio investigó cómo 40 estudiantes universitarios perciben el trabajo, la carrera y su relación con las relaciones interpersonales. El cuestionario reveló que la mayoría de los estudiantes percibe positivamente el trabajo y cuatro diferentes percepciones acerca del trabajo. La mayoría informó percibir una dimensión social del trabajo, pero sin embargo que cerca de la mitad informó que no perciben las personas en general trabajando con un compromiso con el cambio de la sociedad. Cuando preguntados acerca de las personas que trabajan y tienen los mismos valores que ellos tenían, informaron sus padres, jefes, sus madres y amigos; cuando se preguntó acerca de las personas que no siguen la misma concepción que ellos, informaron compañeros de trabajo, amigos y hermanos. Cómo personas importantes para su carrera, lo informaron sus padres y madres separadamente, los maestros y sus niños. Lo estudio sugiere una participación amplia de las relaciones interpersonales en el tratamiento de la información y la construcción de conceptos relacionados con el trabajo y la carrera.

Palabras clave: carrera; relacionamiento interpersonal; trabajo.

¹ fabionogueirapereira@gmail.com

Moving toward an understanding of career as part of something broader and that choices go on throughout life is a must for career counseling research and practice (Duarte, 2009; McCarthy, 2009). Thus, some authors promote the idea of such change and reviewing theory due to different work, career and interpersonal relationships configurations experienced nowadays (Bock, 1995; Ferretti, 1997; Lassance & Sparta, 2003; Lisboa, 1998; Lisboa, 2002; Ozella, 2002; Pereira & Garcia, 2007, 2009; Pimenta, 2001; Soares, 2002; Whitaker, 1998). Starting from a complex context in which career choices are made, career develops and relationships are built, one can establish a more critical and complex perspective on career as a social product. Therefore, in doing so researchers may contribute to a better understanding of relationships within a dialectic-systemic point of view (Pereira & Garcia, 2007, 2009).

In October 2009, the Brazilian Career Counseling Association (ABOP) held its 2nd Latin-American Congress and 9th Brazilian Career Counseling Symposium. From 141 researchers presented thirty papers were on high school students, twenty on college undergraduates, two on elementary students and two on vocational and technical education students. There were also ten papers on relationships within the family, two on friendship and one on interpersonal relationships in general (Melo-Silva & Lassance, 2009). These numbers give us a glimpse on an increasing interest for taking career as mentioned above, part of a life project, which was the topic approached in two conferences during this event (Duarte, 2009; McCarthy, 2009).

Keeping a healthy balance among study, work and relationships is a challenge to be conquered by many. Studying the impact of different relationships upon the building of a career project may allow the theoretical and technical development in both research fields. Researches on this balance, on the intersection between career counseling and interpersonal relationships may make major contributions to both research fields so to fulfill important gaps. This paper aims on searching for basic principles within psychosocial processes, interpersonal relationships and career planning for further theoretical contributions.

Robert Hinde's (1979; 1987; 1997) perspective on analyzing social phenomena is taken in this research as a primary theory background. Hinde is acknowledged by his efforts in building an interpersonal relationships science and theoretical instruments that consider social behavior in a complex dialectical-systemic scenario with different levels and dimensions (Hinde, 1997). According to his perspective, interpersonal relationships start from specific interactions into more consistent and complex relationships. The dialectical-systemic logic used by this author states that relationships unfold into group formations and so on to

form the whole of society. Hinde's idea relates different factors in multiple levels, each one affecting the other mutually and dialectically, considering the social-cultural structure, individual psychological processes and environmental factors.

Relationships: from childhood to adulthood

Stable relationships are established since childhood, and some of them last throughout High School and sometimes until adulthood (Garcia, 2005b; Garcia & Brandão, 2010; Pereira & Garcia, 2007, 2009; Souza & Hutz, 2008). School is a very common and proper primary place to effectively develop relationships outside the family and kinship ties (Garcia, 2006a; Garcia & Dettogni, 2010; Pereira & Garcia, 2007, 2009).

The intimacy once provided by family is later complemented by peers' and friends' during adolescence (French, Rianasari, Pidada, Nelwan & Buhrmester, 2001; Thomas & Daubman, 2001; Tsai, 2006) and peers' influence on school life and achievements, clothes wore, drinking and tobacco habits, and drug abuse is noted by several researches (Auhagen, 1996; Bearman & La Greca, 2002; Beaudoin & Lachance, 2006; Duck, 2004; French e cols., 2001; Garcia, 2006a; Kenny & Bledsoe, 2005; La Greca & Harrison, 2005; La Greca & Lopez, 1998; Laursen, 1996; López & Salas, 2006; Markward, McMillan & Markward, 2003; Nelson & McLeod, 2005; Reinhardt, Boerner & Horowitz, 2006; Wasserstein & La Greca, 1996; Wilson & MacGillivray, 1998). Friends become an important source of social and emotional support to youngsters as time goes by (Garcia, 2006a; Duarte & Souza, 2010). However, family remains a key player in interpersonal relationships processes so that friends play different and complementary roles.

Family usually continues as a reference and support source, especially for structural support, and peers and friends' role is related to exploring the social environment and providing emotional support (Bámaca & Umaña-Taylor, 2006; Duarte & Souza, 2010; Garcia & Brandão, 2010; Laursen, 1996; López & Salas, 2006). Feedback given by people with which one relates influences self-image construction, stimulates positive self-elaboration, self-efficacy and reaffirms a sense of comprehension of the world, of health issues and social acceptance and belonging (Auhagen, 1996; Duck, 2004, 2009; Fitzpatrick, 2009; Hinde, 1997) and may also affect our opinions and attitudes toward life (Bless, 2001; Gondim, 2002; Martin & Hewstone, 2003; Rashotte, 2007).

Peers, friends and family members may play different roles in relationships development and social behavior. Not only social, structural and emotional support is

provided by them but also they promote favorable situations in which certain social behavior may be seen as positive and expected, so that the social network's approval, disapproval, denial or interference in our behaviors may undermine a person's intentions (Fitzpatrick, 2009). In playing such roles, close relationships promotes the elaboration of one's personality, behaviors, emotions and attitudes toward life. Thus, the relationship network is a relevant research issue for social sciences since they interfere in psychosocial processes such as career planning.

Work, relationships and career planning

Humans are historical animals whose working efforts result in actions that are beyond the effort itself, i.e. human work also means something. Thus, humans construct pleasure or suffering meanings and communicate them through work, leisure activities and relationships (Codo, 1996). Reviewed literature points out different ways of experiencing work and the career development (Codo, 1996; Morin, 2001; Morin, Tonelli & Pliopas, 2007; Porto & Tamayo, 2003). An international research by MOW (1987) noted six different conceptions of work: A) work adds value to something; B) work is a central aspect of life; C) work is an activity that benefits others; D) work is unpleasant; E) work is demanding physically and mentally; F) work is a regular, paid activity.

Morin, Pliopas & Tonelli (2007) propose a more qualitative understanding and complement the conceptions above with three dimensions: a) an individual dimension, which involves personal satisfaction, independence and survival, career growth and learning opportunities, and Professional identity; b) an organizational dimension, composed by notions of utility, the possibility of maintaining interpersonal relationships and social insertion; and, c) a social dimension, in which work is a form of social contribution. In a research with a population of fifteen business graduate students, Morin, Pliopas & Tonelli (2007) observed a higher scoring in positive perceptions of work (conception B from MOW, 1987), so that it was reported to be related to independence due to salary earning, an unique, individual and creative contribution. Some subjects from this sample reported that would abdicate part of their earnings momentarily if there was a possibility of learning and developing skills at work.

According to Erick Erickson (Erickson & Erickson, 1998 cited in Magalhães & Gomes, 2005a; Erickson, 1998 cited in Magalhães & Gomes, 2005b), it is common to observe in medium adulthood (44- 60-year-olds) a greater perception of minding about the future and the next generations. This would probably happen due to the consolidation of intimacy in

interpersonal relationships and of a professional career. Magalhães and Gomes (2005a) pointed positive relation between generativity and career commitment in a research with 733 professionals. This reference also noted that the sample perceived work as important to the development of personal identity and self concept, and that career planning was related to generativity due to the possibility of doing something about a wrong career related choice and attitudes that sought generative fulfillment through work. Subjects with social interest also showed generativity related to career resilience, i.e. they showed ability in tolerating negative aspects of work and perceiving coping related positive aspects. Magalhães and Gomes (2005b) found higher generativity scores among medium adulthood subjects.

The last decade has brought many changes onto the labor market and job offers for the newly graduates became scarce. Competitiveness in the job market grew in such a way in Brazil so that a diploma and being qualified for work doesn't mean one will necessarily get a job (Nunes & Carvalho, 2007). Therefore, expectations for being successful getting a job, earning a salary and making one's career plan come true all fell into conflict and not favorable once confronted with reality (Gondim, 2002; Lima & Abdal, 2007; Nunes & Carvalho, 2007). It's also common to observe discrepancies between the profile asked by the job market and how students develop their abilities along their majors (Araújo, Sousa, Muniz, Gomes & Antonialli, 2008). Henceforth, paying the bills and make a living seems to be more important for part of the population than achieving results according to the career plans.

Another aspect that should be noted is that some students don't even think of a career plan due to such scenario nor meditate on their getting into the job market. It seems students are taken by politics, the economy and social drives without knowing what to do once they graduate. Teixeira and Gomes (2005) pointed out how the perception of how the labor market works, personal competence and being self-aware are more important to students than objective conditions related to career decisions. Their research also noted that the perception of support related to the students' career planning contributes to facilitating the decision processes and exploring career options. Thus, it seems reasonable to investigate close interpersonal relationships (e.g. family, friends, peers, workmates) and their function for self-perception, self image elaboration and career planning.

Previous researches have noted that thinking about one's own identity and becoming an adult, summed with the expectations for a life project and a consolidated career may cause distress in high school students (Bohoslavsky, 1998; Müller, 1998; Silva & Soares, 2001; Soares, 2002). Youngsters experience several different interpersonal relationships (peers, friendships, kinships, among other) throughout their everyday life and such relationships may

become source of social support and help coping with distress and anxiety resulted from the process of career choice and career planning (Pereira & Garcia, 2007, 2009; Silva & Soares, 2001). Peers, friends and parents are important people when talking about and elaborating information and content related to career choice (Pereira & Garcia, 2007, 2009). Adolescents exchange with their friends informations about graduation courses, universities and the job market as well as discuss their career plans and choices. Youngsters seems to discuss with their parents topics related to parents' work and career experiences, and the job market.

Magalhães, Lassance and Gomes (1998) refer to peers as a group of people of about the same age that could help youngsters discuss their plans for future, career, training for the labor market and personal experiences during this period of life. Adolescents look for close relationships as a emotional support source to make decisions. Parents, siblings, relatives, peers and sometimes a career counselor are a reference in this process according to Santos (2005).

Pereira and Garcia (2007) has observed in a population of 96 high school students from a private school different psychosocial processes (social support, social influence and cooperation). This sample answered a questionnaire about their interpersonal relationships (friendship, peers and family) and career choice. The results showed the existence of a complex relationships between friendship and career choice among adolescents, thus revealing that the choice process involves several different partners or social agents, such as i the systemic perspective adopted by Hinde (1997) for interpersonal relationships. Adult references (parents, teachers and professionals) influenced the sample's career options in a more direct or vertical way. Friends and peers discussed about these options and exchanged information about careers, courses and universities, showing a horizontal cooperative behavior so to help making their choice by the time of high school graduation. As observed in this sample, social influence would be more related to the career plan objectives and to adult references. Moreover, cooperation would be more related to information processing in order to choose a college major.

Despite friends' growing importance as a source of companionship, intimacy and social support, for example, friends and parents played different and complementary roles for youngsters (Laursen, 1996). Adolescents look for peers in order to share new experiences more often than with their families, which would be an instrumental and emotional support source to explore life. During adolescence, youngsters would look for immediate support away from kinship and friends seem to be essential playing such role (López & Salas, 2006).

Throughout the college years, students have the chance to explore career related environments by specific, optional, practical and professional subjects. Participating in activities such as internships, congresses, Summer courses, study groups and so forth, and getting in touch with teachers and professionals also contribute to their exploration. Besides the environment exploration, the students have the opportunity to think about their characteristics, abilities and interests. The project in which the sample from this research participated had the above mentioned goals.

Teixeira, Bardagi and Hutz (2007) didn't find positive correlation between age and environment exploration or self exploration in a sample of 384 college undergraduates. However, the possibility of increase in exploration activities due to contextual and social demands related to defining a career project and new career choices wasn't discarded by these authors. Furthermore, the convergence of professional and personal goals doesn't necessarily happen, according to some authors. Expectations on such matters are a result of a complex system consisted of social, economical and cultural aspects – including gender related factors and the attempts of balancing career and family demands (Cyrino, 2009; Saavedra & Taveira, 2007).

Previous research by Zortea and Tokumaru (2010) with 77 woman about interpersonal relationships within their family and social and economical aspects in the metropolitan region of Grande Vitória noted that income and family structure were related to how the sample perceived conflicts within the family. They also pointed out that the subjects usually looked for support from their husbands and secondarily from their mothers, as well as the possibility of their accumulating parental responsibilities.

Dutra, Veloso, Fisher and Nakata (2009) found a predisposition for perceiving the social network as an advantage for employability. This research had a sample of 83,576 workers from 491 companies and the authors noted that the sample didn't perceive the influence of the social network in the processes of career development or individual coping strategies. Teixeira and Gomes (2005) concluded from researching a sample of 252 college undergraduates that self-efficacy and self-concept perception and emotional support received from the family were related to career decisions, exploring career options and processing information about the job market. These results were similar to Pereira and Garcia's (2007; 2009) with a sample of high school students.

Engaging in career planning and the influence of vocational interests and personality aspects on managing the exploration processes mentioned above is noted by Magalhães and Gomes (2007) as relevant aspects. College undergraduates who were more aware of their own

career goals reported more often being satisfied with their career and invested in it as well as scored higher in entrepreneurial-like behaviors (Lemos, Bueno, Silva & Genicolo, 2007).

Kilimnik, Sant'Anna, Oliveira and Barros (2008) point out coping strategies in a sample of twelve graduate students who reported trying to converge the career project and other aspects of life, and adapting their career projects to the job market. This sample reported their search for new career options without having to quit their job what seems to be related to changing personal values or putting them aside for some time so to meet a balance between career and their families. Schein (1993) notes that changes in career anchors are better observed and clearer in longitudinal studies. Possible influences in these changes besides career related aspects may be the reevaluation of self-concept and personal values as a result of interpersonal relationships interactions. Souza and Lassance (2010) propose that further researches are needed in order to meet new possibilities of career counseling interventions which would consider such psychosocial phenomena related to interpersonal relationships. Personal values and interpersonal relationships cross career and personal projects in a dialect-systemic way and require the ability to adapt to and cope with changes. Career projects are part of a broader life project (Savickas, 1997; Duarte, 2009) and benefiting from these relationships may be crucial for balancing both projects.

Research objectives

This research intended to investigate how college students who attended a career planning project perceived work, their career, and relations between both and interpersonal relationships. In order do to so, a) aspects related to the subjects' career plan development were described and analyzed; b) the perceived influence of interpersonal relationships on the subjects's career plan was described and analyzed; c) the subjects' perceptions on work were described and analyzed; and, d) possible relationships among the above mentioned were examined.

This research is relevant both socially and scientifically because the development and construction of a career project is a cornerstone for stablishing a professional career, also with several consequences to interpersonal relationships and to life in a broader sense. From a scientific perspective, the present study investigated an aspect seldom researched in both vocational and career counseling and interpersonal relationships fields, especially in Brazil. The impact of relationships onto the construction and development of career projects and of the participation of relevant relationships on the perception of work and career. Just a few

references in Brazil take into consideration interpersonal relationships as part of the career development process and life planning yet.

Method

The sample consisted of 40 college undergraduates (13 male e 25 female) who attended a career planning project. Only one of the subjects had already gone through vocational assessments previous to enrolling in college. The subjects' average age was 27,6 years old (18- to 57-years old) and they were majoring in three different bachelors (Accountability, Business Administration and Law School). The majority of students who attend this college studied at public high schools, work full time and go to college at night; some of the students were granted with scholarships from federal or state government funds, or from the college.

The project's purpose was to teach strategic planning techniques and do group interventions in two-hours sessions during three weeks. The questionnaire which was used to collect data for the research was used in the first week before any intervention was done, and consisted of one closed question and six open questions.

All ethical aspects concerning the requirement of a voluntary informed consent process and maintaining the subjects' identity anonymous were met. Data was tabulated and results organized in categories within each investigated aspect in order to allow content analyses. Descriptive statistics was used to present result and no statistical tests were done so to assess variables and correlations.

Results and Discussion

Subjects were asked to choose from a three-expression set (to be, to do, to have) at least one that represented the way they thought about their career and which was predominant in their career and professional identity. The questionnaire described the expression *to be* was focusing on professional identity, *to have* on financial related aspects of work, and *to do* on doing professional activities or a job. Subjects could answer more than one option and, as mentioned below in table 1, the three options had similar report frequency.

Table 1. *Expressions that illustrate my career at the moment*

	TO BE	TO HAVE	TO DO
Frequency	22 (55%)	16 (40%)	25 (62,5%)
Didn't answer		1 (2,5%)	

Subjects justified their answer describing the expression *to be* as related to being recognized as a professional at work and by the social network, as well as to their satisfaction about their career. The expression *to have* was reported to be related to purchasing power and earning a salary. Explanations of the expression *to do* were related to working, investing in education and in implementing a career project. Subjects more often reported the expression *to have* as a result of studying and working.

Data was also grouped according to aspects of work perceived by the subjects (table 2) and four report groups were similar to those proposed by MOW (1987). It was observed a higher frequency in positive perceptions of work (A, 22,5%; B, 50%; C, 17,5%), predominantly the perception B as noted also by Morin, Tonelli e Pliopas (2007).

Table 2. *Perceptions of work*

Groups	Frequency
A	9 (22,5%)
B	20 (50%)
C	7 (17,5%)
D	4 (10%)
E	-
F	-

Reports grouped in perception B may have occurred due to the fact that most students from the institution where the research was held come from public school background, work full time and go to college at night. However, there wasn't any statistical testing to assess variables and possible correlations because the research had a descriptive purpose. Some subjects complained during the project sessions about their working conditions and reported their desire to apply what they had learned at the career planning project to increase their life quality and make career changes.

Most of the subjects (97,5%) report perceiving themselves as persons who relate work to social transformation (see table 3), as the social dimension of work previously mentioned by Morin, Tonelli e Pliopas (2007). But less than half of them (42,5%) reported perceiving others as persons who think like them about the social dimension of work. Only a smaller part of them (15%) named people who they perceive as having the same perception on work (see table 4). Our data differ from those of Magalhães and Gomes (2005a, 2005b), which observed

greater drive to generativity in middle adulthood. Subjects from our sample also reported worrying about the development of society and social transformation.

Table 3. *Impact of work on society*

Perceived the influence of work on society	
Yes	21 (97,5%)
Didn't answer	1 (2,5%)
Perceived that others work and worry about the development of society and social transformation	
Yes	17 (42,5%)
No	23 (57,5%)

Such data suggests the possibility of possible stereotyped reports or a desire to be perceived as one who worries about society or understands the social and transformational role of work. This phenomenon could have happened due to the subjects attending a career planning project, and further researches should analyze two different groups of subjects in order to also have one control group composed of students who didn't attend a similar project.

Table 4. *People who have similar and different perceptions of work*

Similar perception of work	
Father	15 (37,5%)
Boss	10 (25%)
Mother	4 (10%)
Siblings	2 (5%)
Another relative	2 (5%)
Fiancé(e)/Boyfriend/Girlfriend/Husband/Wife	2 (5%)
Teacher	1 (2,5%)
Workmate	1 (2,5%)
Friend	1 (2,5%)
Acquaintance	1 (2,5%)
Parents	1 (2,5%)
Didn't answer	2 (5%)
Different perception of work	
Workmate	16 (40%)
Friend	4 (10%)
Siblings	3 (7,5%)
Another relative	3 (7,5%)
Boss	2 (5%)
Themselves	2 (5%)
Acquaintance	1 (2,5%)
Politicians	1 (2,5%)
Didn't answer	6 (15%)

Our data complements Morin, Tonelli e Pliopas' (2007) on the relevance of interpersonal relationships to the organizational dimension of work (see table 4 and 5).

Subjects usually reported reference persons as having perceptions of work similar to theirs (relatives: father, 37,5%; mother, 10%; siblings, 5%; another relative, 5%; fiancé(e)/boyfriend/girlfriend/husband/wife, 5%; parents, 2,5%; or, boss 25%). Reports about people who didn't share perceptions of work were usually related to peers (workmates, 40%; friends, 10%).

Parents, teachers and children were named as more influential to their career by the subjects. Confronting data from tables 3, 4 and 5 (impact of work on society, people who have similar perceptions of work, and most influential people for career), we noticed a similar phenomenon pointed out by Pereira and Garcia (2007; 2009) in samples consisted of high school students. Parents and teachers were reported as influential people, as well as positive perceptions of family and themselves related to career development. However, peers (friends, workmates and classmates) were perceived negatively in relation to their personal values (perceptions of work and on others' perception of the social dimension of work).

Tabela 5. *Most influential people for career*

People	Frequency
Father	11 (27,5%)
Mother	10 (25%)
Teachers	4 (10%)
Children	4 (10%)
Boss	2 (5%)
Fiancé(e)/Boyfriend/Girlfriend/Husband/Wife	2 (5%)
Government	1 (2,5%)
Friends	1 (2,5%)
Classmate	1 (2,5%)
Didn't answer	5 (12,5%)

According to the data collected, different interpersonal relationships participate somehow in the process of building concepts related to work and career development. Each relationships plays its role and contributes in a unique way to the processing of information and to the elaboration of these concepts. We would like to point out the importance given to family in latin populations (previously noted by Bámaca & Umaña-Taylor, 2006) and the role played by friends during the transition from youth to adulthood, in the construction of a wider and broader social network and as a support source to explore the environment (Duarte & Souza, 2010; Garcia & Brandão, 2010; Laursen, 1996; López & Salas, 2006). These are relevant aspects that should be investigated in further researches.

Final considerations

College education is an aspect of life that has become more object of researches more often lately (Melo-Silva & Lassance, 2009), especially due to changes in the understanding of career development (Duarte, 2009; McCarthy, 2009; Savickas, 1997) – including stages ranging from the first career choice, through continued education to retirement, for instance. This is a new approach that tries to break up with trait-factor theories, which look for the right man for the job, and to provide an inclusive formation. Researches have investigated different populations from private high school students and further than the career choice at the end of basic schooling, which are very frequent in Brazilian references. This research intended to seek such broader approach of a life project which includes career by investigating college students who attended a career planning project and who went to public high schools.

Some phenomena related to the perception of work, career and interpersonal relationships were described above. Most subjects from our sample (90%) reported a positive perception of work, half of them (50%) having an understanding that work is a central part of one's life, with social dimensions and related to salary earning (perception B). Almost all students (97,5%) reported a relationship between work and the development of society; however, more than half of them also reported that doesn't perceive others engaging in work with an understanding of its social dimension. Our results were similar to Morin, Tonelli and Pliopas (2007), especially due to their positive perception of work and its individual, organizational and social dimensions, and of financial independence as its result. Data diverged from Magalhães and Gomes (2005a, 2005b) because our sample, constituted mainly by young adults, showed similar behavior to middle adulthood subjects on generativity. Further investigations should examine possible stereotyped self-perception in samples, through control groups and statistical testing. We also suggest assessing different populations such as graduate students, senior workers and retirees, for example.

Perception of relevant persons to the subjects' career and contribution to information processing and elaboration of perceptions related to career and work were similar to Pereira and Garcia (2007; 2009). Subjects also related further relevant persons, such as children, love/life partners, siblings, classmates, workmates and their boss. Friends were not as frequently named as relevant to career as previously noted by Pereira and Garcia (2007; 2009) in samples of high school students. We should also point out the reports of children and siblings as relevant to the subjects' career, which weren't mention by Pereira and Garcia (2007; 2009) or other reviewed references. The instrument used in this study named people

and asked subjects to grade their relevance to their career. Our methodology was different from Pereira e Garcia (2007; 2009), which had open questions to assess this aspect, what may have influenced in collecting different reports; however, we may also mention possible discrepancies related to changes in the perception of interpersonal relationships and career due to their development (Duarte & Souza, 2010; Dutra et al., 2009; French, Rianasari, Pidada, Nelwan & Buhrmester, 2001; Garcia, 2006a; Laursen, 1996; López & Salas, 2006; Santos, 2005; Schein, 1993; Thomas & Daubman, 2001; Tsai, 2006).

Our results remind us once again of the need for more researches on the role of relationships throughout the career development so to observe changes in career anchors (Kilimnik, Sant'Anna, Oliveira & Barros, 2008; Schein, 1993) and the influence of relationships in career planning. Studies with other populations and larger samples could contribute theoretically and with intervention proposals for varied populations, as already discussed by Lassance and Souza (2010).

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