



Planning for the Future: International Future Time Orientation and Life Project Scales



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Introduction

Throughout the years, extensive research has been done on what influences people's decisions. What prompts a student to apply to one school over another? Do future goals really influence a student's academic performance in a class? Researchers have found that psychological future and personal goals play a vital role in an individual's present behavior, decision making, and self-concept. More specifically, future time orientation (FTO) is the degree to which people's thoughts of the future influence their present-day actions (Husman & Lens, 1999). Similarly, the theory of Life Project (LP) refers to a set of short to long-term goals that shape self-concept and identity (Little, Salmela-Aro, & Phillips, 2017).

This project will develop an International Future Time Orientation Scale and Life Project Scale working in conjunction with research teams in Brazil, Portugal, Spain, the United States, and Uruguay. FTO and LP constructs have recently been created by Portuguese research teams and evaluated by experts from the six different countries for theoretical validity. In this study, FTO has three dimensions: distance, connectedness, and valence. Distance is defined by Husman and Shell (2008) as the degree to which psychological distance is perceived as near or far from the present time. Connectedness is how connected a person's present is to their future (Husman & Shell, 2008). Valence is how much the future is valued in the present by the individual (Husman & Shell, 2008). For LP, the three main constructs created for this research are: identification, organization, and involvement. Identification is the perception of a persistent set of goals. Organization is the extent to which someone is able to plan, strategize, and take action toward the accomplishment of their goals. Finally, involvement is the extent to which present activities are influenced and oriented by one's goals. The research teams will conduct focus groups for construct evaluation before mass data collection begins in summer of 2020.

The structures of both scales' factors will be analyzed quantitatively with exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis. The development of reliable international FTO and LP scales are a necessary instrument as they could be applicable to larger populations. Overall, this exciting research focuses on what influences an individual's decisions and can greatly benefit prospective psychological and educational studies.

Research Question

The purpose of this study is to create a valid measure of FTO and LP that may be generalized to a larger, more diverse population, by providing a new measure of FTO and LP for people aged 18-60 years old living in Brazil, Portugal, Spain, the United States, and Uruguay.

For the construction of the scales, it is hypothesized that:

Future Time Orientation Scale	Life Project Scale
1. Factor structure will be organized into the three dimensions: 1) distance, 2) connectedness, and 3) valence.	1. Factor structure will be organized into the three dimensions: 1) identification, 2) organization, and 3) involvement.
1. High scores in valence will be related to high scores in connectedness and valence.	2. High scores in involvement will be related to high scores in organization and identification.
2. The scores in connectedness and valence will be correlated.	3. High scores in organization will be related to high scores in involvement
	4. The relationship between identification and involvement will be partially mediated by organization

For the relations between FTOS and LPS and other measures, it is hypothesized that:

Future Time Orientation Scale	Life Project Scale
1. High scores in connectedness will be related to high scores in concern.	1. High scores in identification will be related to high scores in consistency of interest and valence.
1. High scores in valence will be related to high scores in valence.	2. High scores in organization will be related to high scores in connectedness.
3. High scores in distance will be related to high scores in extension.	3. High scores in involvement will be related to high scores in persistence and effort.

See Figure 1 and 2

Methods

Phase 1: Construction of the Scales

Initially, the FTO and LP scales were constructed in Portuguese by the research team in Portugal. The scales were constructed with the goal to minimize language differences between Portugal and Brazil. The scales were then translated with the support of two independent translators into English. The English version of the scales were presented to the remaining collaborating countries for translation and evaluation. Spanish and Uruguayan research teams translated the scales into Spanish, with the help of two independent translators, working to minimize language differences between Latin America and Europe.

Phase 2: Expert Evaluation of the Scales

After the construction of the scales, experts from research teams in Brazil, Portugal, Spain, the United States, and Uruguay, who did not participate in the initial construction of the scales, evaluated the items via an online format to ensure theoretical adequacy. Experts were provided with a form containing the items in the two scales. The experts, five of which are experts in psychological future constructs and one in psychometric scale construction, filled out the form to either accept, reject, or suggest improvement for the items in the scales with justification. The experts were also required to identify which of the three FTO dimensions, (valence, connectedness, or distance) or which of the three LP dimensions, (identification, organization, or involvement) they believed the item belonged to. For each item, the agreement between experts was calculated by the extraction of *kappa* coefficient (Cohen, 1960). Items totally accepted by experts and with *kappa* coefficient equal or higher than 0.8 were included in the scales. Any items below the *kappa* coefficient 0.8 were rejected or re-sent to the experts for a new evaluation.

Phase 3: Focus Groups—Evaluation of the Scales from the Target Population

The next phase of research, the evaluation of the scales by a convenient sample from the target population, will be completed in the next two months. Brazil and Portugal have already completed their focus groups, while the remaining countries are in the process of doing so. In the United States, participants will be placed into three focus groups depending on age: Group 1: 18-29, Group 2: 30-44, and Group 3: 45-60 years old. A focus group session will consist of four to six participants individually completing the Future Time Orientation Scale (FTOS) and Life Project Scale (LPS) and providing feedback to the researcher regarding the clarity of the items on the scales in a semi-structured group interview. It is important to conduct focus groups to ensure the coherency of the scales for the general population before the main data collection begins.

Phase 4: Mass Data Collection

The final phase of the research, to be completed by Fall 2020, entails the main data collection across six countries: Brazil, Portugal, Spain, the United States, and Uruguay. The FTO and LP scales will be distributed via an online survey to participants between 18 and 60 years of age to approximately 1000 people in each country. In the United States, Amazon Mechanical Turk (mTurk) will be used to collect data. mTurk is a completely anonymous data collection tool (Smith et al, 2016, p. 3140). The survey, containing the FTO and LP scales as well as achievement and concern subscales, an extension measure, and short grit scale, will be released to over 1000 mTurk workers (participants) who meet the qualifications of the study in the United States. Workers can either accept or decline the survey and will be paid upon completion. mTurk is a valid tool used by social science researchers to reach populations beyond college student samples (Minton et al, 2013). The goal of this study is to create valid FTO and LP scales that are applicable to the general population. By using mTurk for data collection, there will be a more diverse and representative sample.

Relations between FTO and psychological variables (delay of gratification, extension, and concern)

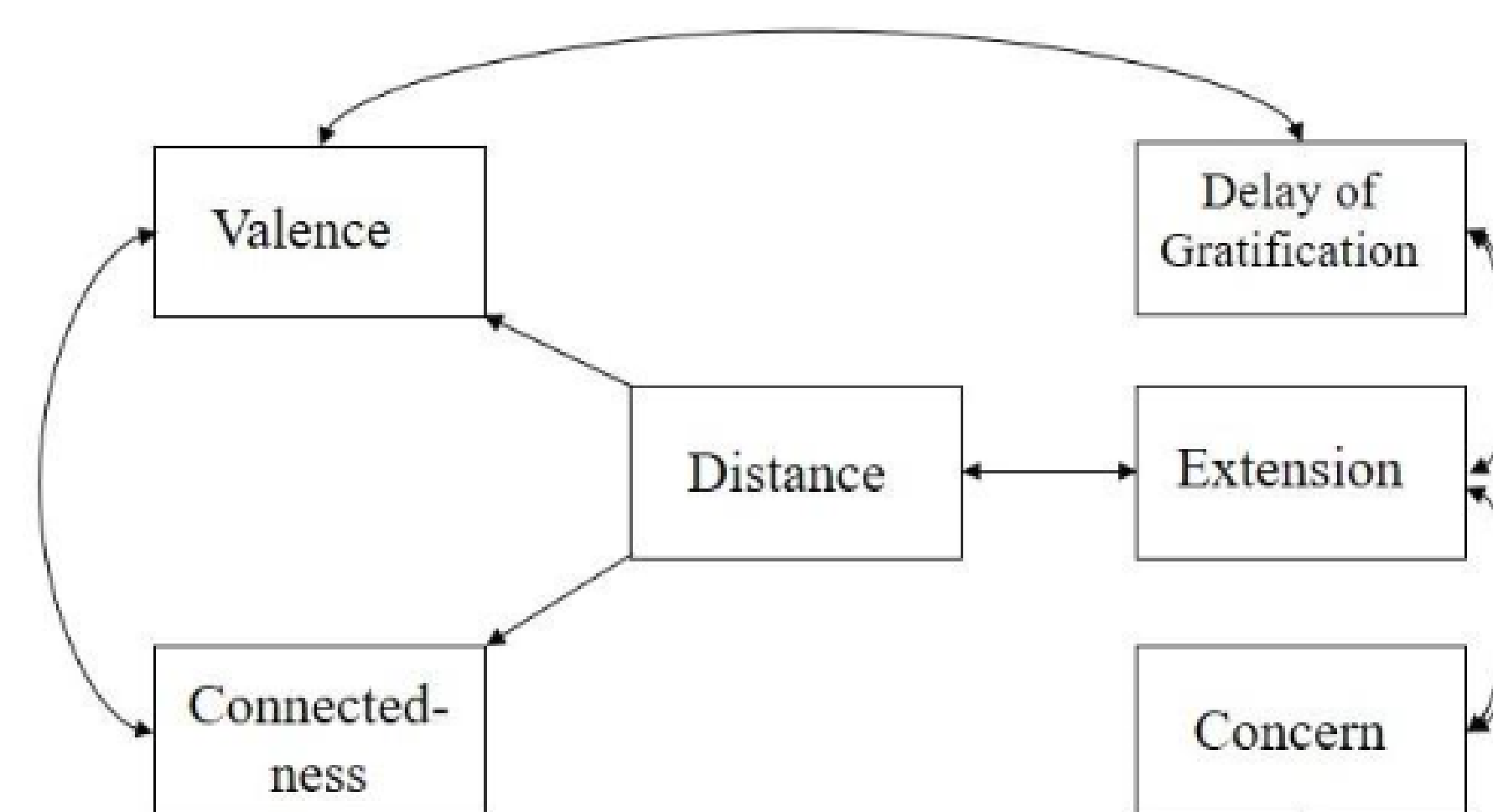


Figure 1

Relations between LP and psychological variables (FTO and grit)

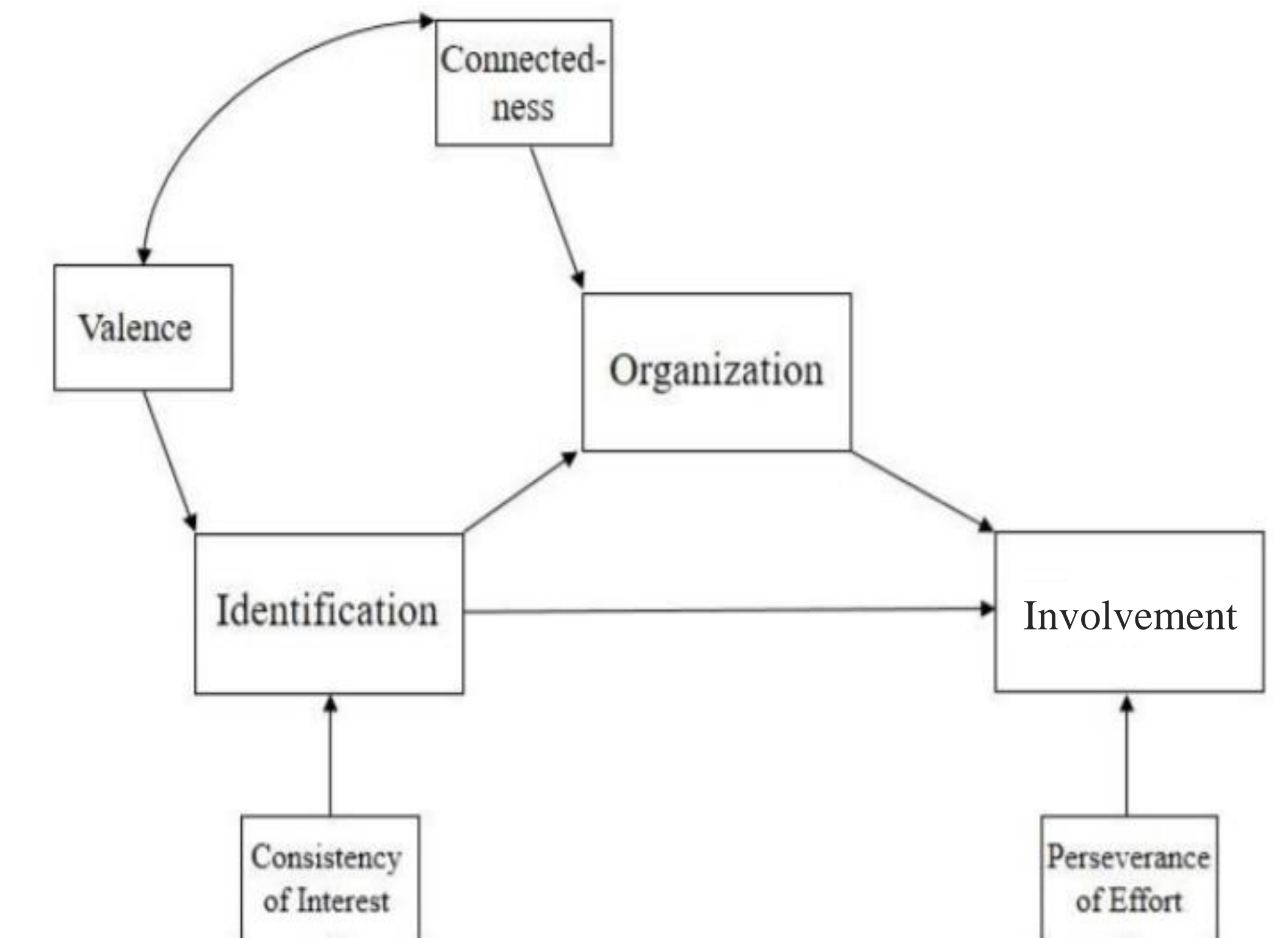


Figure 2

Conclusions

Valid and reliable Future Time Orientation and Life Project scales that are applicable to a more general population are important for psychological and educational domains. By constructing new measures of FTO and LP, conducting focus groups, and collecting data in six different countries, there will be a greater understanding of how people's self-concept and decision making is influenced by their psychological time perspective and the subsequent short- and long-term goals in their lives.

References

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