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Careers studies and gender: approaches and perspectives

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Abstract

We investigate career studies based on management, psychology, and sociology approaches that use the concept of gender as their foundation. We use the integrative literature review based on Torraco (2016) perspective to expose these fields. Furthermore, we aspire to understand the conceptual relationships expressed in the texts and propose ways to comprehend this topic. To this end, we reinforce the idea of interdisciplinarity and the indispensability of a critical lens which allows readers of the review and future researchers to identify strengths, weaknesses, benefits and new positions related to the subject of interest.

Keywords: careers; gender; literature review; integrative; feminism.

Estudios de carrera y género: enfoques y perspectivas

Resumen

Investigamos estudios de carrera basados en enfoques de gestión, psicología y sociología que utilizan el concepto de género como base para sus observaciones. Utilizamos la revisión integradora de literatura de Torraco (2016) para exponer estos campos. De esta manera, buscamos

comprender las relaciones conceptuales expresadas en los textos y proponer formas de comprensión de este tema. Para ello, reforzamos la idea de interdisciplinariedad y la indispensabilidad de un lente crítico que permita a los lectores de reseñas y futuros investigadores identificar fortalezas, debilidades, beneficios y nuevas posiciones relacionadas con el tema de interés.

Palabras clave: carreras; género; revisión de literatura; integradora; feminismo.

1. Introduction

The concept of careers has different meanings and can be used in different scenarios, including sociology, psychology, anthropology and organizational studies. However, the original image came from the construction of personal and professional experiences and was based on the ideals of the nineteenth century's industrial, capitalist, liberal society (CHANLAT, 1995; CARVALHO et al., 2015). Moreover, it is interpreted as interdisciplinary due to the multiplicity of concepts that encompass and enable the type of fruitful interconnection that can formulate a coherent and rich dialogue (MOORE; GUNZ; HALL, 2007).

Axiologically and paradigmatically, this study addresses the view that careers are always built, disseminated, reinforced and elaborated in context. Thus, they are located at the crossroads between societal histories and the lives of individuals. The roles that act as constituent components of careers also indicate this dual link (CARVALHO et al., 2015; INKSON; DRIES; ARNOLD, 2014; MAYRHOFER; MEYER; STEYRER, 2007). Thus, careers should be analyzed and researched from a broad, human perspective (GRANDJEAN, 1981). It is noteworthy that, according to the view we use in this study, careers are interpreted as discursively produced rather than having a concrete existence of their own (PRASAD; D'ABATE; PRASAD, 2007).

Another fundamental concept worth noting is that, in this study, we understand sex and gender as distinct concepts. "Sex" indicates biological characteristics that classify living beings (ACKER, 2006; BUTLER, 2002). Therefore, this definition echoes an essentially organic view, and its application reiterates reductionist aspects of society (ACKER, 2006; BUTLER, 2002). The conceptual distancing of the terms "sex" and "gender" occurred in the 1980s through the work of poststructural theorists. From these studies, gender began to be understood as socially constructed (AHL; MARLOW, 2012).

In turn, the conceptual communion between careers and gender often explores how knowledge, options and career (re)constructions are explicitly and implicitly shaped and how they develop over time. In addition, how these processes are perceived in the scenario in which they operate is exposed, which allows an understanding of the diversity of human relationships by capturing the heterogeneity of connections. Already stated tells us that there are, at different levels, regimes of inequality exist in all organizations. Several practices maintain class, gender, sexuality and race, among other factors, as interconnected roots of distinction. The impacts of these actions vary concerning the degree to which they are present and how they are institutionalized and maintained as natural (AHL; MARLOW, 2012; HOLVINO, 2010; KNIGHTS, 2019).

The interconnection among these basic assumptions is (re)formulated from the specific history, politics and culture of each society and impacts the careers of individuals in different spheres. Therefore, the understanding that organizations and institutions are neutral is broken. Similar, this reformulation challenges the understanding of gender equality, which is also incorporated into the discourses. Furthermore, the context, experiences, changes and choices associated with different stages of life alter organizational, social, psychological and economic dynamics as well as careers (HUPPATZ, 2015; JONES; DUNN, 2007; MOORE; GUNZ; HALL, 2007).

From this perspective, and with an integrative review, this study investigates career studies based on management, psychology, and sociology approaches that use the concept of gender as their theoretical foundation. In doing so, we expose the main path that discerns the field. In addition, we aim to understand the conceptual relationships expressed in the texts and propose to study this topic. To this end, we reinforce the idea of interdisciplinarity and the indispensability of a critical lens, which enables both the author of the review and future readers of the study to identify strengths, weaknesses, benefits and new positions for future research related to the topic of interest.

2. Basic understanding of careers and gender

The term career is derived from *Carraria* in Latin, described as a road or lane, and reflects the idea of a continuous path. With this definition, an individual's career path is considered a linear trajectory of

related jobs, with upward vertical mobility and a sense of the inevitability of occupational events. Career paths have been described as "stairs" or "rails". This view has theoretical and methodological implications that reflect conceptions of a structural, even functionalist, approach (CUZZOCREA; LYON, 2011).

However, a different elaboration was presented by the members of the Chicago School. They treated the subject of careers as a heuristic applicable to a much wider range of situations than is typical of current usage (BARLEY, 1989). With this new epistemological position, the view of careers has changed; a new way of assimilating the nuances of this social and organizational phenomenon has emerged that indicates that a career can be understood as an explicit recognition located at the intersection between societal histories and an individual's life (BARLEY, 1989; CARVALHO et al., 2015).

From this point of view, in this study, we disregard the notion of a career as synonymous with a job; otherwise, we postulate both as divergent. The subjects' actions will not be singled out in unique, chained perspectives free from contextual impact. In other words, careers are not limited to professional activities. Other means of realization permeate social, cultural, contextual, temporal, and spatial aspects (HUGHES, 1937). Therefore, they take many forms and are not only linked to formal jobs (BAILYN, 2004), relating to the trajectories that subjects experience in the micro and macro environment in contemporary relationships (MAYRHOFER; MEYER; STEYRER, 2007).

Thus, the assertion that "careers are always careers in context" is adopted as a fundamental precept (MAYRHOFER; MEYER; STEYRER, 2007, p. 215); in other words, careers are not limited to only one person moving within "professional" structures. Rather, they are related to the individual's belonging in the context in which they act and therefore involve relationships between the micro and macro environments of contemporary social relations. Another aspect of interest in the debate is linked to the opening of interdisciplinary studies. From this perspective, understanding careers can come from different theoretical lenses. From this point of view, the interconnections can be analyzed and researched from a broad perspective, linking societies' histories and subjects' biographies (GRANDJEAN, 1981). Inkson *et al.* (2014) highlight three approaches that can assist in research on the subject: the sociological, psychological, and administrative approaches. In addition to outlining a field of interest for investigations in organizational

studies, this study will be used as a guide for the observations traced by the literature review.

From a sociological approach, careers are understood according to social aspects. Therefore, culture is considered; the norms, rules, and institutions that subjects interact with can influence their career paths (ARTHUR; HALL; LAWRENCE, 1989; KHAPOVA; ARTHUR, 2011; MOORE; GUNZ; HALL, 2007). Under the psychological approach, they clarify the dynamics behind the life course. Therefore, they observe vocational guidance, subjects' adjustment, the differences in choices, perceptions of success, and the interpretation of life cycles concerning careers(MOORE; GUNZ; HALL, 2007). Finally, from the administrative approach, they highlight organizations' roles in guiding subjects' behaviour; they help interpret professional events; and support organizational decision-making (BENDASSOLLI, 2009; CARVALHO et al., 2015). Furthermore, they perceive careers as an artifice that favours the allocation of resources, support for decision-making, and symbolic management (BENDASSOLLI, 2009).

However, perspectives related to career studies do not end with these three theoretical views. For example, studies of gender and career often explore the topic by addressing how knowledge and choices – made explicitly or implicitly – develop over time. Furthermore, attention is given to temporal and spatial dimensions, reiterating the importance of the context, experiences, changes, and choices associated with different stages of life. Finally, these agendas address knowledge and symbols capable of challenging the understanding of gender as neutral in the organizational environment by critically incorporating challenges into interpretations of career experiences (LEWIS; SIMPSON, 2015).

To define the concept of gender, I use the perception of Scott (1995), a historian responsible for disseminating the notion that this is a constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived differences between the sexes and that it acts as a primary means of giving meaning to relationships of power. This concept, derived from the vision of North American researchers, reflects the social origins of the subjective identities of men and women (SCOTT, 1995).

In this case, with the interactions between gender and careers, it is possible to observe the sexual division of work. This action discriminates against ideal forms of work according to the biological characteristics of the subjects. According to the rules of domination that circumscribe this redefinition, men must have the aptitude for the productive sphere;

women, on the other hand, are naturally destined for the reproductive sphere. In addition, men are biologically more likely to assume functions of strong added social value (political, religious, military, and so forth). Therefore, many times, through work and career paths, a naturalist ideology is repeatedly asserted that limits notions of gender to sex, reducing social practices to the natural destination of the species (KERGOAT, 2009).

In summary, the theme that unites careers and gender is interdisciplinary (FRAGA; GEMELLI; ROCHA-DE-OLIVEIRA, 2019). We also highlight the statement by Mayrhofer et al. (2007), which indicates that all scenarios are marked by gender relations, or are gendered, as indicated by Rocha-de-Oliveira & Fraga (2020). Careers, inscribed and structured in these domains, interconnected societies and organizations to the historical differences of gender (ROCHA-DE-OLIVEIRA; FRAGA, 2020).

From this panorama, we observe the possibility of capturing the heterogeneities of connections, raising social knowledge about how things work, or should work, thus exploring how subjects and the roles they assume act and relate to each other in specific contexts. In addition, from the union of the concepts, a social vision is explored that is encapsulated in roles that interrelate (JONES; DUNN, 2007).

Therefore, in this study, we seek to understand studies on careers that conceptually use the notions of gender to support their perspectives, outline scenarios, change logic, contribute to the foundation of others and even perpetuate paradigms in research involving the theme. Thus, we intend to highlight implications and explore ways to use both concepts synchronously. In addition, we will seek to establish a theoretical framework with epistemological and ontological implications for the approach to the theme.

3. Methodological foundations

As a way of examining scientific articles that deal with the conceptual interconnection between career and gender, we carried out an integrative literature review based on the precepts of Torraco (2016). The author developed this technote to offer brief and effective guidelines for developing research that generates new knowledge on the reviewed topic. This approach reviews, criticizes, and synthesizes the literature in an integrated way so that new frameworks and perspectives are generated.

The steps outlined correspond to (1) selecting a topic (either mature or on the rise) that needs to be reviewed, providing a general understanding of what is known or not about the subject; (2) organization and structure of the text which can be temporal, methodological or conceptual; (3) careful examination of arguments through a critical lens, identifying strengths as well as any shortcomings, omissions, inaccuracies, and other problematic aspects of the literature; and formulation of (4) synthesis and construction of analysis based on ideas, concepts and interrelationships presented in the literature. Torraco (2016) highlights that this methodological strategy makes it possible to review, reconceptualize, update, synthesize, criticize and answer specific research questions on the topic investigated from the existing literature, increasing knowledge on the topic under discussion.

Taking into account the observations outlined, we selected career studies that addressed gender in their foundation, outlined by perspectives of interest to organizational studies, the approaches of administration, psychology and sociology. To find this field of discussion mature in the academic literature, we surveyed studies based on the keywords: career studies AND gender. Initially, we consulted the Web of Science database. A wider body of journals is compiled on this platform (CHEN et al., 2018). Then, to cover new studies, we searched for the same keywords in Scopus, as this base covers the most prestigious journals in many areas of knowledge (CHEN et al., 2018).

Due to the breadth of topics usually interconnected to different areas of knowledge, we noticed the need to filter studies only by scientific articles that had the selected combination of terms in their topic of analysis; and mentioned the areas of interest for this research (the approach to management, psychology and sociology). This option made it possible to reduce the vast number of articles found and, in the same way, to expose those that would meet the objective proposed by the integrative review undertaken. The steps for conducting the research are summarized in Figure 1.

1st filter: Formulation of keywords (career studies AND gender).

2nd filter: Search in the Web of Science and Scopus databases (only scientific articles with career studies AND gender in their topic).

3rd filter: Reading and analysis of the entire corpus of the study, eliminating those that did not mention the areas of interest of the research.
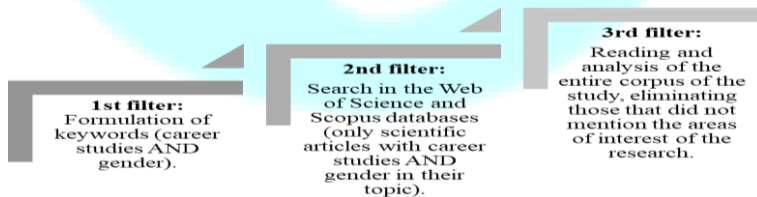
Figure 1. Synthesis of the steps and filters applied in the research
From the Authors (2022)

The first two steps have been done mechanically through the devices available on digital platforms. We found 47 articles on the Web of Science and 30 in Scopus from its implementation. After reaching this number, all articles were downloaded, analyzed and categorized. Unfortunately, a large part was duplicated or did not mention the areas of interest for the research (administration, psychology and sociology). Therefore, studies that did not have theoretical, methodological and conceptual applications linked to these fields of interest were excluded from the study corpus, for example, clinical studies in engineering, physics, mathematics, and nutrition, among others.

After reading the articles, 23 of the total were selected. Thus, 24 articles were excluded, considering that they were duplicates or did not relate to the topics of interest mentioned above. This refinement was carried out to express systematically the organized and didactic way the main concepts used by authors who approach careers and genres in their studies. Table 1 summarizes the studies and characterizes the articles that make up the integrative review implemented.

Table 1 - Synthesis of articles part of the review

Title	Author	Year	Career synonymous with profession?	Predominant approach
The importance of gender in mid-career: A longitudinal study of MBAs.	Joy A, Shcneer & Frieda Reitman	1994	No	Administrative
Procesos culturales e individuales implicados en la estereotipia de género. Una aproximación empírica a la elección de carrera.	Mercedes López-Sáez	1994	No	Psychological
The cultural constructs of race, gender and class: a study of how Afro-Caribbean women academics negotiate their careers.	Sheila T. Gregory	2006	No	Sociological
Gender differences in public relations students' career attitudes: A benchmark study.	Betty Farmer & Lisa Waugh	1999	No	Administrative
The academic career: a study of subjectivity,	Petra Angervall	2018	No	Sociological

gender and movement among women university lecturers.				
Gender equality during the transition to parenthood: A longitudinal study of dual-career couples in Singapore.	Karen Mui-Teng Quek et al.	2011	No	Administrative
The impact of gender culture on women's career trajectories: an Australian case study.	Andrea North-Samardzic & Lucy Taksa	2011	No	Administrative
The process of choosing a management career: Evaluation of gender and contextual dynamics in a comparative study of six countries: Hungary, Israel, North Cyprus, Turkey, UK and the USA.	Cem Tanova; Mine Karatas-Özkan & Gözde Inal.	2008	No	Administrative
Gender and careers: a study of persistence in engineering education in Bangladesh.	Edwina Pio et al.	2013	No	Psychological
Gender and careers in city management: A case study of the career paths of one department's MPA graduates.	Alexander N. Aguado & George H. Frederickson	2012	Yes	Administrative
Gender role attitudes and careers: A longitudinal study	Elizabeth A, Corrigall & Alison. Konrad.	2007	Yes	Psychological
Validity, gender research, and studies of the effects of career development interventions.	Carol Kehr Tittle.	1988	No	Psychological
Gênero e carreira científica: um estudo a partir dos dados das universidades federais da região norte do Brasil.	Ariane S. Tavares & Temis G. Parente.	2015	No	Administrative
A qualitative study on perceptions of surgical careers in Rwanda: A gender-based approach.	Sojung Yi et al.	2018	Yes	Psychological
Gendered Motivations to Pursue Male-Dominated STEM Careers Among	Milagros Sáinz et al.	2020	No	Administrative

Spanish Young People: A Qualitative Study.				
Gender stereotypes and patronage practices in women's careers: A study of the Mexican executive branch.	Fernanda Vidal Correa	2016	No	Psychological
Gender and hardiness as predictors of career adaptability: an exploratory study among Black call centre agents.	Melinde Coetzee & Nisha Harry.	2015	No	Psychological
Gender differences in young adults' inclination to sacrifice career opportunities in the future for family reasons: comparative study with university students from Nairobi, Madrid, and Reykjavik.	José Andrés Fernández-Cornejo et al.	2016	No	Administrative
Les trajectoires professionnelles des couples mariés en Allemagne: Une étude longitudinale de long terme de carrières des époux en Allemagne de l'Ouest.	Hans-Peter Blossfeld; Sonja Drobnič & Götz Rohwer.	1998	Yes	Sociological
Measurement invariance in careers research: using IRT to study gender differences in medical students' specialization decisions	Tara Behrend, et al.	2008	No	Psychological
Beyond 'gender differences': a Canadian study of women's and men's careers in engineering	Gillian Ranson.	2003	No	Administrative
Parent–child career construction: A narrative study from a gender perspective.	Maria Chiara Pizzorno, et al.	2014	No	Psychological
Gender differences in children's and adolescents' career aspirations: A follow-up study	Sandberg, D. E., et al.	1991	No	Psychological

From the Authors (2022)

It is worth noting that the scientific articles investigated were not restricted in terms of language and year of publication. However, the vast majority were written in English, but we noticed the representativeness of the Spanish language in the compiled studies. Furthermore, the first study that composed the corpus is dated 1994. Finally, most understand the concept of careers different from the unilateral notions of employment and sequentially linked professions.

After this systematization, we followed the qualitative analysis process proposed by Riessman (2008). This strategy is appropriate for interpreting many types of texts – oral, written and visual – and asking questions about "what" is said, written or shown visually. However, in the thematic approach, the focus is on the specific content and what is told – the events and cognitions to which the language refers (the content of speech). Likewise, it reflects what is experienced. The sequential and structural characteristics of the narratives focus on the investigated case and not on the assimilation with other similar ones. This perspective encourages the search for new theoretical insights based on the data (ZACCARELLI; GODOY, 2013).

Thus, new frameworks and perspectives on the study's objective are generated (TORRACO, 2016). Regarding the database analysis, Torraco (2005) recommends deconstructing central themes into sub-topics that may include interactions, applications, and research methods. The future sections were organized to capture the dynamics of the studies, allowing researchers to have a holistic and synthetic conceptualization of the topic (TORRACO, 2016).

Findings of the study

In the following topics, we will delve deeper into analysing the texts that make up the integrative review, seeking to identify theories, positions, limitations and useful understandings for the field that unites careers and gender.

Overview: paradigmatic approaches based on psychological, administrative and sociological approaches to studying careers and gender

Inkson *et al.* (2014) note that careers are understood through metaphors that creatively synthesize different phenomena. Through singular expressions, understandings formulated by ordinary people, organizations, the media, and other artifices that shape perceptions daily

are exposed. The author's perception of three different understandings of careers is used to explore existing concepts and interconnections in the investigated corpus. Inkson et al. (2014) note these different influence ontologies on what careers are and how should study them in certain contexts. Based on this vision, the texts integrated into these studies were categorized and brought paradigms that reinforce positions attached to sociological, psychological and administrative approaches.

The sociological aspect highlighted some understandings arising from the origin of the concept; it defines careers as the result of an individual's history and emphasizes roles that are stimulated by society's expectations (INKSON; DRIES; ARNOLD, 2014; KHAPOVA; ARTHUR, 2011). Thus, concerning gender, careers are understood in terms of the social and cultural structure, norms, rules and institutions with which individuals interact and that impact their choices (INKSON; DRIES; ARNOLD, 2014; MOORE; GUNZ; HALL, 2007).

Inkson *et al.* (2014) observed that studies based on sociology show that everyone has a career. However, careers are not related to work roles alone; they involve objective and subjective elements and are not limited (ARTHUR; HALL; LAWRENCE, 1989; INKSON; DRIES; ARNOLD, 2014). This point of view is also observed in the text of Gregory (2006), who seeks to understand whether the careers of individuals are socially constructed in context based on a panoramic view of the everyday experiences of black women. For this purpose, these and similar questions resonate throughout Gregory's theoretical elaboration: "What academic, professional and personal choices did you make when negotiating your careers?" and "What other personal experiences helped shape your life?" (GREGORY, 2006).

The psychological aspect focuses on individuals and their career decisions. The term vocation occupies a special place in these studies (INKSON; DRIES; ARNOLD, 2014); accordingly, such studies address differences in individual choices, how they can affect individuals' perception of success and how life cycles change careers (MOORE; GUNZ; HALL, 2007). We observed these positions in the studies included in this review. For example, Behrend et al., (2008) researched gender, vocations and careers. In Coetzee & Harry (2015), the manifestation of two psychological constructs (resistance and career adaptability) is explored among females working in call centres in the African context. Observations in the readings corroborate Inkson *et al.* (2014). They observed that the psychological aspect has a practical and

objective focus on helping individuals make good decisions, particularly in their choice of employment and occupation, to provide the maximum benefit for themselves and society.

The administrative approach to careers, in turn, focuses on the relationship between careers and the organizational scenario. The focus is on practical matters such as personnel selection, development, performance, evaluation policies, promotion and the formulation of benefits for both parties. Such studies are closely related to human resources studies focusing on generating personal and organizational benefits (CARVALHO et al., 2015; INKSON; DRIES; ARNOLD, 2014). Farmer & Waugh (1999) emphasize the need for organizations to help women manage the continuous progress of their personal and professional development. Furthermore, North-Samardzic & Taksa (2011) identify and show the changes in gender cultures underlying organizations.

However, the texts presented in this review are not limited to understanding careers and genders only in these three major categories. Thus, several currents of thought are integrated as the foundation for understanding the interactions of the concepts of gender and careers in the texts included in this study. Interdisciplinarity is a central point that favours interpersonal understandings that improve the observation of a macro environment (CHUDZIKOWSKI; MAYRHOFER, 2011). We emphasize that when designing a monodisciplinary study, there is the possibility of experiencing some analytical limitations due to biased apprehensions produced, at certain times, by a single theoretical lens. This positioning can harm the broad observation of the scenario, generating a reductionist and singular knowledge (CHUDZIKOWSKI; MAYRHOFER, 2011).

Therefore, Chudzikowski & Mayrhofer (2011) reinforce the need for a constant search for the interdisciplinarity of knowledge and, from there, expand the horizons of research. Thus, this positioning provides a conceptual framework and allows new questions and answers to be formed through systematically integrating theories and methodologies. For example, López-Sáez (1994) notes the conceptual convergence between psychology and social theories and the understanding that cultural norms can affect the socialization process and career choices. These two factors predict how people perceive their social world and interpret personal experiences.

Conversely, the analyses in Quek et al. (2011), who studied dual careers*,* were constructed beyond the simplistic understandings of the division of labour to include each person's ability to influence the relationship and connect their personal goals and interests. Thus, views on status in the relationship, mutual accommodation and attention to the other, aligned with physical, emotional and economic well-being, are included. This convergence is observed in Angervall (2018), who unites careers, subjectivity and gender in observing a group of academic women who express interest in doing research and who, for different reasons, are involved in only teaching and administration.

In short, several epistemological, ontological and paradigmatic positionings can compose studies on careers and gender. However, uniting these positionings, which are highly recursive, with other analytical perspectives increases the understanding of the investigated scenario and allows new questions and answers to be posed through the systematic integration of theories and methodologies from different disciplinary inheritances (CHUDZIKOWSKI; MAYRHOFER, 2011).

Ways in which gender and careers have been interpreted

In a preliminary observation by North-Samardzic & Taksa (2011), the central argument is based on Jones (1998) and Harding (1987) elucidate the understanding that gender practices are an inextricable part of organizations. The authors clarify the dynamics perpetuated in the work environment and expose the means that encourage individuals to become agents and (re)producers of relationships, discourses and knowledge that feed the distinctions related to gender and generate discriminatory processes in different contexts.

This understanding shows that organizations can dynamically reflect on and influence their organizational culture to achieve linked meanings and transform them into institutionalized practices. Unequal gender relations exist in organizations. However, they are complex to observe because, in many cases, they are masked by discourses in favour of equality. Nonetheless, it is useful to address this position because it increases the understanding of how career trajectories are constructed and creates perceptions that avoid the reproduction of distinctions (HARDING, 1987; JONES, 1998; NORTH-SAMARDZIC; TAKSA, 2011).

Lopez-Saez (1994) attests that beliefs about gender are not

restricted to descriptive interpretations of the organizational setting. Instead, these processes are complex and act in relational dynamics, affecting the identity of individuals. Pizzorno et al., (2014) contribute to this perspective by arguing that identity is an important construct for understanding this relationship. For this purpose, individual history is used. This view is constructed from the narratives of the self with the individual's different roles. This perception explains how individuals guide and explain their choices, illustrating relational, cultural circumstances, power inequalities and relationships that limit their freedom of choice (PIZZORNO et al., 2014). The notion of identity is also applied in the study by North-Samardzic and Taksa (2011) to understand how women navigate their career trajectories. In that study, the researchers observed tensions between identities that reflect ambivalence about experiences related to the gender culture with which the participants live (NORTH-SAMARDZIC; TAKSA, 2011).

In the same way, an understanding of stereotypes that differentiate men and women into categories emerges, and these constructed distinctions are transmitted and (re)produced into categories. Thus, gender stereotypes affect the image that a person creates of him- or herself starting at birth and produce identifications that (re)formulate the individual's perceptions about the scenario in which they live (LÓPEZ-SÁEZ, 1994). Correa (2016) corroborates this concept by observing that in the organizational context, the stereotypical male is risky, aggressive, forceful, dominant and able to withstand pressure, while the female stereotype describes women as emotional, concerned, kind, compassionate and warm. Through this lens, the author observed, in the context of the executive branch, gender stereotypes and their importance in the definition and elaboration of the main political practices, such as recruitment, selection and appointment of individuals in the executive branch, reinforcing discriminatory practices (CORREA, 2016).

Another recurring concept in integrated studies is the notion of **institutionalization** since intuitions structure various social segments. However, these "patterns" do not operate in disarray; on the contrary, they are related to the various actions of different organizational forms (CORREA, 2016). Correa (2016) states that many studies based on an institutional approach exclude the notion of gender from their considerations. In this way, they ignore ideas, interests and rules that solidify barriers and limit the rise of some subjects in their careers. To explore this thought, the author applies the foundations of feminist institutionalism by Krook & Mackay (2011). Based on the authors,

institutions are composed of gender regimes, and in many cases, these practices reveal institutionalized oppressions (KROOK; MACKAY, 2010).

Through these works, the notion that institutions are neutral is contradicted. Instead, scholars favour this perspective to understand that conceptual interconnection is a source of internal and external changes. In addition, they emphasize the importance of valuing the historical and sociological perspective of rational and discursive choices. Therefore, these works contribute to recognizing formal and informal practices that transmit gender and produce structural barriers that differentiate the genders within institutional structures (KROOK; MACKAY, 2010).

The notion of agency of individuals was also observed. This idea addresses the view of engagement established by actors in different environments who, through interaction, reproduce and transform structures in interactive response to problems through changing historical situations (EMIRBAYER; MISCHE, 1998). Tanova et al., (2008) promote this understanding by exposing, with the human agency approach, a rhetorical perception of career choices that are conceived based on new means that move people to action. This relationship is best understood through a history of careers that explains what guides an individual's choices and uses that information to help the individual attain a sense of agency. Therefore, interpreting human agency exposes relational circumstances, cultural conditioning and power inequalities that limit freedom of choice (PIZZORNO et al., 2014).

This multidimensionality also is explored from the conceptual triad (capital, field and *habitus*) founded by Pierre Bourdieu (1986). This view has interdisciplinary support and is adaptable to analyzing contexts beyond the original research interests. For example, used Tanova *et al.* (2008) reveal how the sequence of roles can reinforce or alter relationships by demonstrating how organizations remodel them. Moreover, it positions social relations within a system of exchange, which expands the application of this view to all material and symbolic relations without distinction (HUPPATZ, 2015; MOORE; GUNZ; HALL, 2007; TANOVA; KARATAŞ-ÖZKAN; İNAL, 2008).

On the other hand, Tavares & Parente (2015) approach a new strategy that explores careers and gender: the metaphor of the "glass ceiling". This positioning highlights a way of conceptualizing the human experience. It evidences the existence of a barrier in the career of women

and other members of socially marginalized groups that prevent them from progressing. In addition, it reveals the consequences of discriminatory actions in organizations. However, it does not address all forms of marginalization and oppression found at the organizational level (PRASAD; D'ABATE; PRASAD, 2007), reinforcing just a single prism of what can be a continuum of interconnected oppressions.

Excessive use of the view that careers are socially constructed is observed, although some of the uses of this view are subtle. They are (re)produced to the investigated context (GREGORY, 2006; LÓPEZ-SÁEZ, 1994; NORTH-SAMARDZIC; TAKSA, 2011; TANOVA; KARATAŞ-ÖZKAN; İNAL, 2008). Through this theoretical lens, it is understood that careers develop over time because of the interaction among an individual's interests, understandings, reactions and initiatives. Thus, careers are transformed through a continuous process of meaning creation (TANOVA; KARATAŞ-ÖZKAN; İNAL, 2008).

Furthermore, it demonstrates that there is no objective truth, as the understandings of the various interactions are (re) formulated socially. A current used by Quek et al., (2011) and Fernández-Cornejo et al., (2016) that can be applied to the previous precepts is the vision of postmodern feminist constructivism. This conceptual subdivision understands that perceptions of reality are created and maintained through the selection and organization of information. Knowledge, truth, power and social relationships are socially constructed rather than discovered or revealed. To this end, gender relations are interpreted as relational and situational, which is "done" rather than a personality characteristic. Thus, it composes social discourses that shape common value systems and cultural practices that reflect views in different contexts (QUEK et al., 2011).

In summary, most of the selected texts are in agreement with Grandjean (1981) for careers should be researched in a broad perspective, placing a human bias, making it an intersection of societal history and individual biography. Gregory (2006) in a way, reinforces this statement by exposing that in the Caribbean, there is a point where the history and culture of the country merge, enabling the understanding of social relations, as well as the careers of women who work there. Therefore, there is a common point that unites social structures, cultural norms and institutional definitions to direct, define and restrict the actions of subjects who navigate institutions, professions, careers and occupations (MOORE; GUNZ; HALL, 2007). The following topic takes

up some of these views by exploring the latent limitations of career studies when approaching gender concepts.

Limitations in studies about careers with gender approaches

When observing the reviewed literature, we noticed that some of the investigated texts used perspectives that do not promote or prevent the application of this interdisciplinary dialogue between the studies of careers and gender. Therefore, dialogic perspectives were avoided, which allowed a joint understanding of social, economic, institutional and organizational relationships, among others. Furthermore, they did not base observations on interactions formulated in different contexts. We identified one of the potential dilemmas that hamper the studies of careers linked to the notions of gender in the investigated framework: the formulation of extremely descriptive results that distinguish and reiterate binary aspects understood as limiting.

In this sense, some texts constructed studies with one-sided views. That is, only an understanding of the subjects was observed, formulating reductionist results and disseminating universalizing characteristics to the entire investigated sample. Furthermore, they did not consider that knowledge about the relationships between careers and gender is conceived through observing the incarnate subject situated in particular places and times, oriented towards the environments with which they relate. Leaving aside observations can reinforce the relationships between the cultural, contextual, spatial and temporal environment (LONGINO, 2017).

In summary, these studies did not consider other dimensions that reiterate discriminatory societal processes. Therefore, they used homogeneous samples regarding race, class, sexuality, and ethnicity. Therefore, the findings were redundant and not applicable to scenarios in which there is a multitude of groups. Furthermore, the analyzed samples generalize characteristics to external groups. In other words, they applied genders (especially women) as equal or with universal characteristics. And, they reduced the differences seen in the organizations only to previously reiterated stereotypes, in which men are holders of strength and women are providers of the home (thus reinforcing the biological view of the sexes).

Likewise, they built studies based on functionalist perspectives that only address rigid and binary characteristics of gender aspects of

careers. Using this, studies on the frequency of behaviour and percentage of men and women in certain segments do not expand the debate and limit understanding of the context. In this sense, institutionalized objectivism had repercussions, mostly reinforced by a masculine view of science. Furthermore, they did not use subjectivities aligned with the contextual and social analysis of the phenomenon, leaving aside the background that modulates beliefs and reinforces individual and collective inferences shared in the community (LONGINO, 2017).

These same studies do not differentiate sex and gender, using them as synonymous concepts. Instead, we recapitulate that sex and gender are understood as distinct concepts. "Sex" indicates biological characteristics that classify living beings, an essentially organic delimitation that alludes to reductionist aspects of society and the fixed identity of social actors (ACKER, 1990, 2006; BUTLER, 2002). On the other hand, "gender" is linked to the view of overlapping social, symbolic and material conditions that produce experiences and build the definitions of "masculine and feminine" (ACKER, 2006; ELY; MEYERSON, 2000). Therefore, by associating both – sex and gender – a uniformity is imposed on individuals, that is, a reductionist and simplistic view of the social context.

Therefore, by aligning them, limiting discourses about the "natural" and biological differences between beings are favoured. In addition, they reinforce understandings that contribute to maintaining the reproduction of differentiations (HARDING, 1987; JONES, 1998; NORTH-SAMARDZIC & TAKSA, 2011). For example, the study by Pio (2013) highlights the relevance of the concept of "gender" to understand the existing career relationships in the patriarchal society that is the target of his study: the city of Bangladesh. With this perspective, which understands gender as a device that formulates, regulates and shapes subjects' identities in contemporary scenarios, it analyzed Western career models in a transversal way beyond their individualistic roots, including social and contextual views. From the same fear, López-Saez (1994) sees gender as a social construct, which interacts to influence behaviours, and through relationships with other characteristics, such as sex, culture and professional roles, maintain dominant value systems, influencing judgments made about other people and yourself.

Although there are limiting understandings about gender and sex in the studies that make up the integrative review, most comprise socially formed gender. Therefore, it is not fixed but reformulated through

complex social processes and practices linked to the context (BUTLER, 2002; RODRIGUES, 2005). Furthermore, they emphasize its links with other constituents of social identities, such as race, class and ethnicity. Therefore, they link the gender category to other perspectives that naturalize identity characteristics. In addition, they position gender as an artefact that influences organizational culture, creating specific symbols, images, values and rules in which the linked meanings are dynamically achieved, transforming them into institutionalized practices (SHIELDS, 2008).

Through the insight disseminated in many integrative review studies, can figure out the problems these individuals face and how organizations respond to them can be achieved. Therefore, analytical and theoretical possibilities arise, which motivate the observation of socially constructed and discursively produced actions. Consequently, the essentialism that reduces careers and gender to a concrete existence, limited to natural or biological action, is broken. In this sense, analyses will hardly be complete just addressing the formal aspects of organizations.

Therefore, when observing the considerations constructed by the analyzed texts, the importance of paying attention to what is not spoken, silenced, reproduced and normalized in everyday life in the most diverse ways of exercising careers is also revealed (PRASAD; D'ABATE; PRASAD, 2007). Thus, when aligning studies on careers with observations and theories about gender, the importance of a position that raises subjective and critical perceptions and reinforces contextual aspects is noted. This commitment would be useful to this agenda and to other investigations that interconnect the various contemporary relationships that create limitations to the ascension of some individuals in their career paths, as well as the use of methodological resources that evidence the analysis of different contexts, which expose the structures of the formal and informal organizations that maintain, disseminate and structure differentiations for different groups.

4. Final considerations

This integrative analysis allowed us to visualize a theoretical framework used to understand careers and gender together in studies available in international research databases. Furthermore, exposing the concepts and approaches linked to psychology, sociology, and organizational studies, allowed us to highlight limitations arising from the

restricted use of the concept of sex and generalist perceptions about its impact on individuals' careers. With that, we stimulated the debate and built new examples of the application of the theme to specific contexts.

Furthermore, from the premises of Torraco (2005; 2016), we could understand the possibility of a theoretical opening to feminist studies between the lines of the investigated studies. This vision allows us to unravel how gender and careers intersect, relating them to categories that reflect interconnected and mutually constitutive social differences that build mechanisms of oppression for different subjects. Thus, recapitulating seminal texts on the subject, we find in Marshall's (1989) a call to this communion.

Marshall (1989) highlights that feminist theories act as an umbrella of perspectives for career studies. Furthermore, it informs that being and doing are continuous and are constantly evolving and changing. Thus, the social, economic, identity and organizational transformations in feminist perspectives from the 1960s onwards ascended various theoretical positions ranging from the psychological to the structural, from the biological to the social. Thus, for the study of careers, feminism is fundamental for understanding the complex interaction between individuals and the contextual structures in which they operate.

Marshall (1989) reinforces that career theory is attentive to gender issues, mainly related to the negative points generated by stereotypes. However, in some aspects, it does not address the devaluation of socially marginalized groups at its core. From a feminist perspective, the intention arises to review career theory, which is often rooted in patriarchal values. Therefore, new visions must analyze careers covering the individual's entire life. Thus, it is necessary to review the practices used to understand them.

Therefore, an agenda aligned with this perspective should expose the processes in which participants are co-creators of meaning in the research. Through a conceptual sensitivity and language, to map and value the various considerations that inform individual choices that impact the formation of careers. In short, feminist theories for career studies have a lively and lived perspective, which means that careers, and their interactions with different contextual spheres, develop during the daily lives of individuals, generating impacts on the theory and practice of the modern scenario, as well as academically (ACKER, 1990, 2006; HOLVINO, 2010; MARSHALL, 1989).

This vision also makes it possible for us to answer questions such as: Is there a difference in acceptance of the career restriction between groups? What is the impact of race, gender, sexuality, and nationality, among others, on the career decision process? Are the demands of your home country relevant? Are there other forms of social identification that restrict participation in careers? What objections do socially marginalized groups face when interested in "traditional" careers? (OIKELOME; HEALY, 2013).

An agenda aligned with this perspective can stimulate transformations and change the meanings imposed on different relationships, in addition to mapping and valuing the various considerations that inform individual choices that impact the formation of careers. However, there are limitations regarding the scope of the study, and the method we used since the ability to synthesize the articles depends on the author's deep understanding of the topic and its literature. In addition, the guidelines outlined by Torraco (2016) prevented us from using a large number of articles due to the requirement for depth in the analyses. Therefore, our results cannot be taken as a single truth. Otherwise, they act as drivers for new knowledge and as a model to help overcome omissions, deficiencies or other problems identified in the literature. Thus, the purpose is limited to the conceptual follow-up reasoning, which enables readers to follow the connections between the research problem, literature criticism, and theoretical outcome.

In this sense, this integrative analysis reinforced the importance of a broad, grounded understanding capable of exposing complex relationships based on contexts and promoting analyses that expand and welcome a plurality of evidence. A feminist approach carries ethical, political, theoretical, and practical commitments that seek to transform society through a plural analysis that has been neglected for various reasons throughout its existence (hooks, 2014).

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