



Comparing two career adaptability measures for career construction theory: Relations with boundaryless mindset and protean career attitudes[☆]



Kim Yin Chan^{*}, Marilyn A. Uy, Moon-ho R. Ho, Y.L. Sam, Oleksandr S. Chernyshenko, Kang-Yang Trevor Yu

Nanyang Technological University, 50 Nanyang Avenue, Singapore 639798, Singapore

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ABSTRACT

We examined the constructs underlying the Career Maturity Inventory-Adaptability Form (CMI-C) and the Career Adapt-Abilities Scale (CAAS). Data from 852 university students indicated that the second-order factors for both scales correlate .43, suggesting that they measure different yet related constructs. All three subscales of the CMI-C correlate most with the “concern” subscale of the CAAS rather than with the corresponding subscale. It appears that the CMI-C is a measure of particular career adaptability for choosing a career whereas the CAAS is a global measure of career adaptability for dealing with all of the tasks of vocational development across the life span. Regression analyses show that the CMI-C does not add to the prediction of boundaryless mindset and protean career attitudes over the CAAS. Relationships between the CMI-C and CAAS with entrepreneurial, professional, and leadership career motivation profiles showed that the CAAS is more strongly related to boundaryless mindset and protean career attitudes, while the CMI-C appears to relate to more traditional (professional and leadership) career motivations.

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1. Introduction

The fields of career development, assessment and counseling are undergoing a paradigmatic change with “career adaptability” fast replacing “career maturity” as a central construct in both research and practice (Goodman, 1994; Savickas, 1997, 2005, 2013). The focus of career development in the past century was to help individuals to be more ready to decide on a job, occupation, or vocation. This attention to career maturity or choice readiness has shifted toward career adaptability (Savickas, 1997), that is, “helping a client to look ahead and to look around, to develop the self, and, in due course, to choose suitable and viable opportunities to become the person she or he wants to be” (p. 257).

Super initiated interest in the construct of career adaptability when he asserted that career maturation was more suitable for adolescent career development and career adaptability was more relevant for adults. Super and Knasel (1981) wrote that career choice readiness or maturity, although central to adolescent career development, should not be extended to adults because career decision-making readiness was unlikely to increase with age, and, adults face a greater variety of developmental tasks than youth. Instead of maturity, they proposed adaptability as the central process in adult career development. Subsequently, Super, Thompson, and Lindeman (1988) revised and published an adult version of their *Career Development Inventory*—a measure of adult career maturity

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^{*} Corresponding author at: Nanyang Business School, S3-01B-62, 50 Nanyang Avenue, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore 639798, Singapore. Fax: +65 6792 4217.

E-mail address: akychan@ntu.edu.sg (K.Y. Chan).

which worked poorly. The new inventory — called the *Adult Career Concern Inventory* (freely available on www.Vocopher.com) — measured the first dimension of career adaptability, namely career concern or planfulness.

Following Super's important conceptual distinction between adolescent maturity and adult adaptability, there have been numerous additional attempts at operationally defining the career adaptability construct, including measures by Hirschi (2009), Kenny and Bledsoe (2005), Klehe, Zikic, vanVianen, and De Pater (2011), Rottinghaus, Day, and Borgen (2005) and Nota, Ginevra, and Soresi (2012). McArdle, Waters, Briscoe, and Hall (2007) have even operationally defined career adaptability in terms of a boundaryless mindset and proactive personality.

Today, research interest seems to focus on the self-report measures developed by Savickas and Porfeli (2011, 2012) which aimed to operationally define career adaptability as conceptualized in Savickas (2005, 2013) career construction theory. In 1997, Savickas called for vocational maturity to be replaced with career adaptability, which he defined as “the readiness to cope with the predictable tasks of preparing for and participating in the work role and with the unpredictable adjustments prompted by changes in work and working conditions” (p. 254). He argued that it would better integrate the individual differences, development, self, and context approaches to the study of careers from a life-span, life-role perspective, and that “The cultural climate for switching from maturity to adaptability seems right. The construct of career adaptability coincides with the increased interest in adult development as well as our more rapidly changing technology and economy” (p. 255).

Initially, Savickas and Porfeli (2011) developed a measure of career adaptability for students in grades six through twelve by applying Savickas (2005) career construction theory to Crites (1978) well-established Career Maturity Inventory (CMI) Form B1. From the pool of 75 items, they were able to use 18 items to empirically derive a measure of career choice readiness and produce three 6-item content scales corresponding to the three career construction theory dimensions of adaptability: (1) a *concern* for one's future, (2) the *curiosity* to explore social opportunities while also experimenting with possible selves, and (3) having the *confidence* to design and implement one's future career. Statistical analysis indicated that the six additional items intended to measure the construct of control did not load as well on the general factor of career choice readiness. They attributed the latter to the fact that the control items in the CMI-B1 were worded to measure lack of social independence or “consultation” rather than an intrapersonal sense of control. They retained these six items as a scale measuring attitudes toward consultation, thereby producing a 24-item inventory that “reflected” adaptability attitudes. The 24-item *attitudinal* measure was named the revised CMI-C or “Adaptability Form” (Crites & Savickas, 2012). The CMI-C measures readiness to cope with the vocational development task of specifying an occupational choice, one of the three tasks of the exploration stage in a career.

Subsequently, noting that career construction theory represents career adaptability resources as an aggregate construct comprising “a multidimensional matrix of specific attitudes, behaviors, and competencies—the ABCs of career construction”, Savickas led an international research team to construct a self-report measure of career adaptability in terms of global “strengths” or “psycho-social resources” directed particularly toward career choice among school students and adults.

The development of the CAAS involved careful analysis and clarification of the concepts of adaptivity, adaptability, adapting, and adaptation. Savickas and Porfeli (2012) argued that career adaptability should be viewed as human capital “defined as accumulated competencies and knowledge gained through education and experience (Sullivan & Sheffrin, 2003)”, which, in contrast to the personality traits of flexibility or willingness to adapt, “develop through interactions within the inner and outer worlds of the person” and are thus more “changeable than traits” (p. 663). They therefore sought to operationally define career adaptability in terms of “self-regulation strengths or capacities that a person may draw upon to solve the unfamiliar, complex, and ill-defined problems presented by developmental vocational tasks, occupational transitions, and work traumas” (p. 663). The CAAS therefore measures adaptability in terms of “psycho-social resources.” The Career Adapt-Abilities Scale (CAAS; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012) consists of a second-order general factor labeled “adaptability” and four first-order factors labeled concern, control, curiosity and confidence.

The CAAS is intended as a measure of global career adaptability for coping with each of the vocational development tasks from adolescence through retirement as well as the challenges involved in occupational transitions and work traumas. Conceptually, to the extent that the CMI-C and CAAS both purport to measure career adaptability with identically-labeled subscales corresponding with career adaptability factors as conceptualized in career construction theory, it is useful to know how the CAAS as a measure of *global* career adaptability relates to the CMI-C as measure of *particular* career adaptability for career choice readiness. It is also important to determine whether the CMI-C adaptability scales make any further contribution to assessing adolescent career adaptability beyond simply measuring career adaptability particularly for specifying an occupational preference.

Beyond mere construct validation of both measures, we also sought to examine a key assumption underlying the current shift in the research and practice fields of career development, assessment and counseling where career adaptability is rapidly replacing career maturity as a central construct—that career maturity is related to having more traditional careers (e.g., professional and leader/manager) while career adaptability is related to having more post-modern, boundaryless mindset or protean career attitudes.

The 1970s–90s witnessed various calls for fundamental changes in the ways that we study and view careers, work and organization life in the new century (Sullivan, 1999). Hall (1976) introduced the “Protean career” metaphor, Arthur and Rousseau (1996) described the “boundaryless” career, and Richardson (1993) called for psychologists to embrace social constructionism alongside epistemological approaches in career counseling. Likewise, noting that previous career theories were “rooted in assumptions of stability of personal characteristics and secure jobs in bounded organizations”, Savickas et al. (2009) called for career theories and concepts to be “reformulated to fit the postmodern economy” (p. 240). New theories like “career construction” (Savickas, 2002, 2005, 2013) and “life-designing” (Savickas et al., 2009) thus emerged to guide career development research and practice.

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