EFFECTS OF CONFLICT STYLES AND FUNCTIONING IN ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS ON ADULT CAREER-RELATED DECISION-MAKING

by

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We accept this thesis as conforming
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ABSTRACT

The influences of couple relationship factors on career decision-making processes and outcomes were examined in this study. Although the field and scope of both career psychology and relational psychology are vast, there is an absence of empirical investigation of couple relationship factors that may be associated with career decision-making difficulties and decision-making styles. In this thesis, the effects of couple and family cohesion and adaptability, and couple-conflict types on career-related decision-making are explored. Within this broad research question, four specific hypotheses were proposed. First, individuals who are in relationships that are balanced will tend to have internal decision-making styles, whereas individuals in relationships that are unbalanced will tend to have external decision-making styles. Secondly, individuals in validating, volatile, or conflict-avoiding relationships will tend to have internal decision-making styles, whereas individuals in hostile relationships will tend to have external decision-making styles. Thirdly, there will be significant differences between balanced and unbalanced individuals, in terms of their levels of career indecision. Fourth, there will be a significant difference between couple-conflict groups in terms of their levels of career indecision. Using self-report instruments, data were collected online from a sample of 100 Canadian adults in committed romantic relationships. Chi-square tests and multivariate analyses of variance (MANOVA) revealed that none of the proposed hypotheses were supported. Furthermore, a post-hoc hierarchical multiple regression indicated that very little (approximately 3%) of the variance in career decision-making could be explained by relationship factors, over and above participants' background characteristics. These results must be interpreted in light of a number of limitations in the

study, particularly around the convenience sampling strategy that was used, and the characteristics of the people who responded to the survey.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Two components that are integral to most adults' lives and absorb the majority of a person's time are work and relationships. How people manage their commitments to significant others and to their work will not only influence their well-being in each of those areas, but can also impact every other aspect of their lives. More specifically, it is of utmost importance for counsellors, psychologists, and other mental health professionals to understand how work can affect relationships and how relationships can be affected by work. In this context, it is not surprising that career counselling and relationship (couple, marital, and family) counselling are two areas within psychology that have generated vast amounts of research and literature. What is surprising, however, is the relatively small number of studies that have explored linkages between these two areas of functioning.

Definitions

A career involves the entire course of events that constitute one's work life, and includes the total constellation of different roles played over the course of one's lifetime (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2005). Career development involves lifelong psychological and behavioural processes and contextual influences that shape one's occupational plan and path over a lifetime. Career development interventions include any activities that empower a person to effectively manage their career development tasks including, but not limited to, career counselling.

A family can be defined as a natural social system that occurs in many forms, from a variety of cultural heritages. A family is shaped by a number of factors, including its place and time in history, race, ethnicity, social class, religious affiliation, and number

of generations in this country (Goldberg & Goldberg, 2004). The focus of this thesis is the *family of procreation* rather than the family of origin. For the purposes of this thesis, family of procreation is defined as a pair of people (a couple) who have moved from a state of independence to a state of interdependence with one another, and established a committed partnership where the allegiance to their families of origin become secondary to allegiance to each other (Goldberg & Goldberg, 2004). This partnership may, but not necessarily must, involve becoming married and having children.

Familial and relational functioning (e.g., structural establishment and maintenance, communicational patterns, rule development, conflict resolution techniques, problem-solving methods) have tremendous implications for the well-being of each individual, and for the system as a whole. Gender, cultural background, and social class considerations also impact behavioural expectations and attitudes. Therapists who work with family systems, whether they be families of origin or families of procreation, recognize that individual behaviour is better understood as occurring within the primary network of a family's social system, and while conducting therapy they focus on what transpires both within a family member and between family members (Goldberg & Goldberg, 2004). This perspective affords couples the opportunity to address issues of dysfunction and to attain couple-related aspirations in their marriage or other committed relationship.

Background Information

The fields of career development and couples relations both have numerous guiding theories (some competing, some complementary) that influence the focus and direction of research and practice. Career development theories tend to emphasize either

individual differences related to occupations (describing how people find their "fit" within occupational structures) or individual development related to careers (how people express career behaviour across time; Savickas, 2002). Three theories that are of particular interest include: trait and factor, developmental, and social learning approaches.

Modern investigation of career development is typically defined as beginning with the work of Frank Parsons (1909), as noted in Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey (2005). Parsons sought to assist people in finding the right careers for themselves, based on their personal characteristics, and is considered to be the founder of trait and factor approaches to career choice. Other prominent trait and factor approaches include the work of John Holland (1973), who contended that career interests are an expression of an individual's personality; and Dawis, England, and Loftquist (1964), who emphasized the importance of "fit" between an individual's needs and skills, and the requirements of their work environments.

The foremost figure representing developmental career theorists was Donald Super. His theory (1951; 1980), and the work of those who have followed in his footsteps (e.g., Savickas, 2002), provide a useful framework for conceptualizing career development across a person's life span, acknowledging personal and situational influences on career development and placing work in the context of multiple roles played in life.

The most outstanding social learning approaches to career development include John Krumboltz' Social Learning Theory (Mitchell & Krumboltz, 1996) and Lent, Brown, and Hackett's Social Cognitive Career Theory (1994). These theorists assumed

that people's personalities and behavioural repertoires could be explained by their unique learning experiences. They also acknowledged the roles played by innate and developmental processes in career development and decision-making.

The work of these career theorists has served as the foundation from which many others have developed their approaches and interventions, focusing on specific aspects of the career development process. This thesis draws from the work of Gati, Krausz, and Osipow (1996), Johnson (1978), and Coscarelli (1983), who focused on the career decision-making process. Gati and his associates used decision theory to develop a model of "ideal" career decision-making, and created a taxonomy of difficulties with career decision-making. Johnson developed a theory of individual decision-making styles (later elaborated by Coscarelli), to explain the processes involved in making decisions (including career decisions). According to this theory, the decision-making process involves an individual's thoughts, perceptions, attitudes, information, and intricately balancing thousands of phenomena. These approaches are noteworthy because they focus specifically on the career decision-making process. There is a good fit between these models and the research questions to be addressed in this thesis.

As with career theories, family and couple theories abound. Four approaches that are foundational to most contemporary perspectives of families and couples work are family systems theory, structural family theory, systemic family therapy, and behavioural/cognitive theory. Murray Bowen (1978), the developer of family systems theory, conceptualized the family as an emotional unit with a network of interlocking relationships, which was best understood when examined within a multigenerational or historical framework. Bowen suggested that the core issue for all humans is to balance

family togetherness and individual autonomy, maintaining intimacy with loved ones while differentiating sufficiently as individuals. The major thesis of Salvador Minuchin's (1974) structural family therapy model is that symptoms are best understood in the context of family transaction patterns and that it is the underlying family organization or structure, rather than the presenting symptoms, that must be addressed to achieve lasting change. In contrast, the Milan systemic family therapy approach is focused on how family members differentially perceive and construe events, concentrating efforts to uncover connections that link family members and keep the family or couple system in homoeostatic balance (Selvini-Palazzoli, Boscolo, Cecchin, & Prata, 1974). Pioneers who extended the application of behavioural concepts to couple or family units include Richard Stuart (1969), Gerald Patterson (1971), and Robert Liberman (1970). These early behavioural family therapists focused on specific problems in families (e.g., poor communication between spouses and acting out behaviour in children and adolescents). Behavioural couple and family therapists emphasize the continuous interplay between assessment of family functioning and treatment planning. They design interventions to diminish specific problematic behaviour patterns, and use feedback from implementation of interventions to measure changes in targeted behaviours (Goldberg & Goldberg, 2004).

In this thesis the author draws from the work of Gottman and Olson, whose approaches are grounded in several family therapy theories, particularly the behavioural approach. Gottman's theory (1994a, 1999) was developed through behavioural analysis of couples, to arrive at scientifically-based techniques for helping couples in conflict. Olson and his team introduced the Circumplex Model of Marital and Family Systems (Olson,

Sprenkle, & Russel, 1979) in which they proposed that balanced couple and family systems (families that possess both separateness and connectedness) tend to be more functional, compared to unbalanced systems (families characterized by disengagement or enmeshment).

Previous empirical research combining family and career theories has been limited. Although it has been acknowledged that the family plays many different roles in career decision-making (Schulenberg, Vondracek & Crouter, 1984; Whiston & Keller, 2004), research has primarily focused on families of origin rather than romantic partnerships. Consequently, empirical exploration of the influence of couple factors on career decision-making processes and outcomes is virtually non-existent. Prior to this thesis, there had yet to be a career-related investigation of the factors involved in decision-making difficulties, decision-making styles, couple and family cohesion and adaptability, and couple-conflict types. To begin to address this gap in the literature, potential connections between couple relationship factors and career decision-making were explored in this thesis.

The next chapter includes a detailed review of theoretical and empirical literature on romantic relationships and careers. Results of this review illuminate the gap that exists in the integration of these two important areas of life. In addition, research questions addressed in the thesis are described. Chapter 3 includes a description of the methodology used in the study. In Chapter 4 results of the analyses are discussed. Chapter 5, the final chapter, includes discussion regarding the findings and limitations of the study, the significance of the study, and directions for future research.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Career development is an essential aspect of human living. It is a dynamic process that is interactive, contextual, relational, and often unpredictable (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2005). Another essential aspect of life and functioning is the family context in which a person lives. A family and its members are formed and shaped by a multitude of interwoven factors such as race, ethnicity, social class, life cycle stage, number of generations in a country, sexual orientation, religious affiliation, physical and mental health, level of educational attainment, financial security, values, and belief systems (Goldberg & Goldberg, 2004). Some researchers are beginning to examine how career development and family functioning, both in family of origin and family of procreation, are linked to each other. The following studies constitute attempts that have been made to examine vocational and family of origin dynamics together.

The complexities of relationships between career development and family functioning have been highlighted in two attempts to describe career development from a systemic perspective. Pryor and Bright (2003) proposed an ecological theory of career development, focussing on patterns of influence by family, friends, teachers, the media, and "happenstance." The authors argued that this approach more adequately captures the complex set of influences that are present in career decision-making. Similarly, Lopez and Andrews (1987) presented a family systems perspective on career indecision during young adulthood. In their article, they constructed a family systems view of career indecision by (a) examining the role of the family in career decision-making, (b) exploring the relationship of career decision-making to family development, and (c) conceptualizing career indecision as a symptom of inadequate parent-young adult

separation. The authors also speculated about family patterns that contribute to career indecisiveness: inadequate parent-child separation, where parental over-involvement in the son's or daughter's career decision-making journey inhibits the individuation process; or use of the young adult's career indecision to deflect attention away from other family conflicts (e.g., family anxiety regarding separation, incompatible parental expectations, or parental marital difficulties). Unfortunately, although they have been described in the professional literature, neither Pryor and Bright's model nor Lopez and Andrew's theory have received much empirical attention.

The extensive existing empirical literature that has examined family relationships and career development together has focused almost exclusively on family of origin, rather than family of procreation. Family of origin is not the focus of this thesis. For that reason, a full review of that literature is beyond the scope of this study. There is, however, a recent review of this topic that is worth summarizing. Whiston and Keller (2004) provided a comprehensive review of over 90 articles published since 1980, in which they empirically examined family of origin influences on career development and occupational choice. They reported that family structure variables (e.g., parents' occupations) and family process variables (e.g., warmth, support, attachment, and autonomy) have been repeatedly found to affect a multitude of career constructs across the lifespan. The research examining family of origin influences on career decision-making revealed that, for high school aged adolescents, family variables such as attachment, family relations, and direct parent involvement influenced various aspects of the career decision-making process, such as career certainty, indecision, and self-efficacy. Of particular interest to the present thesis, it was found that attachment and conflictual

independence (from parents) constitute particularly important influences on career commitment and decidedness for college students. These variables also seem to be more influential than overall psychological separation on commitment and decidedness. In terms of predicting indecision and difficulties with career decision-making, however, no consistent results were identified (although some weak findings suggest that overly controlling, organized, and enmeshed families may contribute to problems with decision-making). Overall, Whiston and Keller concluded that the processes by which families influence career development are complex, and influenced by many contextual factors such as race, gender, and age.

Career Development and Family of Procreation

Given the theoretical and empirical evidence linking family of origin and career development (e.g., Lopez & Andrews, 1987; Pryor & Bright, 2003; Schulenberg, Vondracek, & Crouter, 1984; Whiston & Keller, 2004), it is likely that when an individual enters into a family of procreation through marriage or co-habitation, the new family system will also influence that person's subsequent career development. Unfortunately, existing empirical literature on family of procreation influences on career development is very limited. Areas of research related to family of procreation influences on career development include studies on couple decision-making in general, including decisions about where to live (Adams, 2004), decisions to work less (Barnett & Lundgren, 1998), decisions about balancing family and work (Zimmerman, Haddock, Current, & Ziemba, 2003), decisions regarding division of household chores (Bartley, Blanton, & Gilliard, 2005), and the overall process of couple decision-making (Godwin & Scanzoni, 1989).

Adams (2004) explored the role of emotions in couples' decision-making regarding where to live and found that emotions are important in decision-making. Emotions, especially the emotions of fear, fatigue, frustration, loneliness, and happiness or unhappiness with ones' work, are salient influences affecting a couples' desire to relocate or remain in a particular location. Furthermore, these emotions are shaped in part by meanings that individuals attribute to living in the countries in question, and to characteristics of their own present situations and potential future locations. Secondly, the study showed that couples' decision-making, rather than having a beginning, middle, and an end, often occurs in on-going stages that fluctuate in intensity. Lastly, the authors found that numerous parties (i.e., associations, friends, children, and one's community), and not just the couple, influence the decision-making process.

Barnett and Lundgren (1998) studied factors affecting decision-making by dual-earner couples concerning the possibility of one (or both) partners working reduced-hour schedules. They found the best way to address this question was to examine two components: "if" and "who." To determine *if* a couple would be able to work less, it is important to consider the needs, desires, values, opportunities, and constraints of both partners as well as their obligations and relationships to others in their work/life systems (relatives, friends, organizations, and communities). In addition to these factors, couples take into account employment rate, living costs, cultural definitions of success, and work-place policies in developing work/life strategies to fulfill their work and family preferences. In deciding *who* works less, emphasizing the fluid and changeable nature of the career decision-making process, the authors suggest that couples take several factors into account, including gender, power, and gender-role ideologies.

Zimmerman et al. (2003) conducted an analysis of adaptive strategies of dual-earner couples in balancing family and work, and detected six general partnership themes: shared housework, mutual and active involvement in childcare, joint decision-making, equal access to (and influence over) finances, value placed on each partner's work/life goals, and shared emotional work (i.e., friendship and intimacy). Quantitative and qualitative analyses indicated that successful couples equally shared housework and emotional work. Wives tended to be primarily responsible for organizing family life and performed greater proportions of childcare. Wives also perceived that husbands' careers were prioritized slightly higher. Striving for mutually satisfactory marital partnership, or equality, was stated by the majority of participants as an integral strategy contributing to their success in balancing family and work. Finally, participants often indicated that an awareness of (and commitment to) equality, primarily motivated by love for one another, was essential to maintain their friendship and intimacy. Sustained vigilance was seen as necessary, in striving for (and protecting) equality in their relationships.

Bartley, et al. (2005) conducted a study in which they examined: (a) differences in perceived decision-making, gender-role attitudes, division of household labour, and perceived marital equity in dual-earner husbands and wives; and (b) the impact of perceived decision-making, gender-role attitudes, and divisions of household labour on perceived marital equity. Their findings indicated that decision-making, low-control household labour (i.e., little control over the scheduling and conductance of an activity such as meal preparation and clean-up), and high-control household labour (i.e., high control of the scheduling and conducting of activities such as home improvements and repairs) differed significantly between husbands and wives. Wives spent more time in

household labour tasks and were much more likely to be involved in low-control household tasks. They also found that decision-making and time spent in low-control household tasks influenced perceptions of marital equity for both husbands and wives.

Godwin and Scanzoni (1989) conducted a study that tested a conceptual model of the context, processes, and outcomes (levels of consensus) of joint marital decision-making. Context factors included love/caring, cooperativeness in past conflicts, commitment, modernity in gender role preferences, and inequity of resources. Process factors included coerciveness and control. They found that the context factor of spouses' emotional interdependence (love/caring) influenced both partners' coerciveness and degree of control. It was also found that specified context and process factors explained over half the variability in married couples' shared consensus regarding wives' activities. Lastly, they discovered that spouses who reached higher levels of consensus included husbands who had patterns of previous cooperativeness during conflict situations, more equitable economic resourcing with their spouses, wives whose communication styles were less coercive, and spouses who demonstrated greater control (capability to bring about intended changes).

Unfortunately, none of these studies explicitly incorporated a career development framework for examining couple career decision-making. No research has been conducted to determine factors that facilitate or impede couples' abilities to make successful career transitions. The lack of empirical findings in this area, coupled with the tremendous potential for discovering information that could be helpful to individuals and couples in career transitions, constituted the major motivations for this thesis. To more fully comprehend this research, however, it is important to first have an understanding of

the career decision-making process.

Career Decision-Making

The rapid rate of change in the global marketplace has increased the number of career transitions individuals make during their lifetimes (Gati et al., 1996). It follows that the quality of career decisions made during these transitions will impact both individuals and society. Making a career decision involves several levels of difficulty and complexity. There are significant implications for one's lifestyle and one's personal and occupational satisfaction. Hence, one of the primary functions of career counselling is to facilitate the career decision-making process, and help people select the most beneficial career tracks. It is of utmost importance for career counsellors to help individuals identify unique difficulties preventing them from reaching satisfying decisions, and to provide the necessary assistance.

When faced with choices from a group of possible alternatives, there are common characteristics in any decision-making process. Gati et al. (1996) proposed that there are additional features associated with career-related decisions. First, the number of potential alternatives is usually fairly large (e.g., number of occupations, colleges or universities, fields of study, or potential employers). Second, there is an extensive amount of information available on each alternative. Third, a large number of dimensions must be considered to adequately represent each alternative and each individual's preferences in detailed and meaningful ways (e.g., length of training, degree of independence, types of relationships with other people, etc.). Fourth, uncertainty plays a major role in career decision-making, with respect to both an individual's characteristics (e.g., present and future preferences) and the nature of future career alternatives.

To address difficulties in the career decision-making process, Gati et al. (1996) used decision theory in their development of a model of "ideal" career decision-making to create a taxonomy of career decision-making difficulties. Decision theory, as described by Lehmann (1959), is an interdisciplinary area of study concerned with how people make decisions in real life, and how optimal decisions can be reached. It is a body of knowledge and related analytical techniques to describe how decision makers choose from among sets of alternatives, in light of their potential consequences. According to decision theory, decisions are made in one of three conditions: certainty, risk, and uncertainty (Raiffa, 1968). Each of these categories requires a different approach to sort through alternatives and consequences.

Decisions involving certainty are characterized by alternatives that have only one consequence; thus, a choice among alternatives is equal to a choice among consequences. Decisions involving risk are characterized by alternatives with several possible consequences, with the probability of occurrence for each consequence known. Each alternative is therefore associated with a probability distribution, and the choice is among different probability distributions. A decision involving uncertainty occurs when the probability distribution for each consequence and each alternative are unknown.

In decision theory it is also proposed that the ranking of choices produced using a criterion to make decisions has to be in agreement with the decision makers' objectives and preferences. This means that an individual making a career decision should choose the alternative with the highest utility. The utility of each alternative is a function of the perceived gap between the individual's preferences and the alternatives available in each of these dimensions (Gati et al., 1996).

An "ideal career decision maker" is defined as a person who is aware of the need to make a career decision, is willing to make it, and is capable of making the right decision (i.e., a decision using an appropriate process and outcomes most compatible with the individual's goals; Gati et al., 1996). Because the career decision-making process is laden with complexities, it is very difficult for a person to be an ideal career decision maker. These researchers proposed that any deviation from the ideal career decision maker results in problems that may affect the individual's decision process in one of two ways: (a) by preventing the individual from making a decision or (b) by leading to a less than optimal decision.

Taxonomy of Career Decision-Making Difficulties

Utilizing a foundation constructed from decision theory and from the theoretical ideal career decision maker, Gati et al. (1996) created a taxonomy of difficulties in career decision-making. This taxonomy includes three major categories of difficulties, which are further divided into ten subcategories.

The first major category, "Lack of Readiness", includes three difficulty subcategories that precede a person's engagement in making a specific career decision: (a) *lack of motivation* to engage in the career decision-making process, (b) *general indecisiveness* concerning all types of decisions, and (c) *dysfunctional beliefs* about career decision-making. The two other major difficulty categories, "Lack of Information" and "Inconsistent Information", contain subcategories of difficulties that may arise during the actual process of career decision-making. "Lack of Information" includes four subcategories: (a) *lack of knowledge about the steps involved* in the process of career decision-making, (b) *lack of information about the self*, (c) *lack of information about*

various occupations, and (d) *lack of information about the ways of obtaining additional information*. The three subcategories within 'Inconsistent Information' are: (a) *unreliable information*, (b) *internal conflicts* (conflicts within the individual, such as contradictory preferences), and (c) *external conflicts*, which involve the opinions of significant others.

Gati et al.'s (1996) taxonomy of difficulties in career decision-making builds upon earlier work demonstrating that the process of career decision-making can be separated into distinct components (e.g., Brown, 1990; Gati, Fassa, & Houminer, 1995; Katz, 1966; Pitz & Harren, 1980). Each component reflects different kinds of difficulties. Difficulties that individuals may encounter during the career decision-making process can be classified into distinct categories, so that difficulties with common features are included in the same category (Campbell & Cellini, 1981). Specifically, Gati et al.'s (1996) classification of career decision-making difficulties was based on the following criteria: (a) belonging to the same stage or component of the process of career decision-making; (b) having the same assumed source; (c) having similarity in the hypothesized possible impact upon the difficulty (i.e., halting the process, or leading to a less than optimal decision); and (d) having similarity in the type of intervention needed to overcome it.

According to Campbell and Heffernan (1983), the individual may have either a single decision-making difficulty, or a combination of difficulties located in one or several categories. However, Gati et al. (1996) noted that it is expected that the difficulties within each category will co-occur more often than those from different categories. On the other hand, based on their review of adult vocational behaviour, Campbell and Heffernan (1983) pointed out that problem categories are not completely independent of each other, because problems from different categories can be associated.

Decision-Making Styles

Decision-making style can be understood as the way in which a person arrives at a decision (Gordon, Coscarelli, & Sears, 1986). Making a decision can be viewed as a continuous process involving the interplay of factors such as an ever-increasing amount of knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes that individuals acquire during their existence (Hazler & Roberts, 1984). Building on the work of Tiedeman and colleagues in the field of decision-making (e.g., Tiedeman, 1961; Tiedeman & Miller-Tiedeman, 1985; Tiedeman & O'Hara, 1963), Vincent Harren (1979) proposed that people exhibit distinct styles of decision-making. He posited that "style" can be thought of as an individual's distinguishing preferences for perceiving and responding to decision-making assignments. He identified three career decision-making styles: rational, intuitive, and dependent.

Gordon et al. (1986) described Harren's styles in the following way. The "rational" style is distinguished by the ability to recognize the consequences of earlier decisions upon later decisions. Individuals foresee the necessity of making decisions in the future, and prepare for those decisions by gathering information about themselves and the anticipated situations. Decisions are carried through deliberately and logically. The "intuitive" decision-maker also accepts a sense of ownership for decision-making. The intuitive style, however, differs from the "rational" style. The "intuitive" decision-maker has little regard for the future, exhibits little information-seeking behaviour, and engages in very little logical consideration of facts. Furthermore, the "intuitive" style of decision-making is centered in the use of imagination, and attention toward one's feelings. The

"dependent" style of decision-making differs from both the "rational" and "intuitive" styles in that it involves assuming an external responsibility for decision-making, deflecting one's own personal responsibility in the process. The individual who uses this style is greatly affected by the expectations of others, is passive and compliant, has a high need for social support, and perceives the environment as providing restricted or limited options.

Richard Johnson, a contemporary of Harren, developed a theory of decision-making styles to describe and explain the processes individuals use to make decisions. In Johnson's (1978) theory, he recognized that making a decision involves many factors, including an individual's thoughts, perceptions, attitudes, and information. In this process, thousands of considerations are intricately balanced. He divided decision-making into two separate tasks (gathering information and analyzing information), and claimed that although a person may analyze information while gathering it, the two processes remain distinct. Gathering information is accomplished through one of two internal, psychological processing styles: "spontaneous" or "systematic." He also identified two distinct thinking styles for analyzing information: "external" and "internal." Finally, he noted that individuals may vary in the degrees to which they are conceptually external or internal, and spontaneous or systematic.

According to Johnson (1978), people whose information-gathering styles are "spontaneous" are characterized by predispositions to react holistically. They have reactions to events or situations in total, as opposed to reacting to independent segmented aspects of those events or situations. In addition, their responses to their past, present, and future feelings about experiences occur in a global fashion. "Spontaneous" individuals

tend to gather information in an experiential manner, personalizing alternatives and evaluating them, sometimes without even experiencing the phenomena in question. This allows them to make quick, yet changeable, personal internal commitments based on their feelings toward each phenomenon. Finally, "spontaneous" individuals have flexible goal orientations. They can move from goal to goal, thought to thought, and idea to idea, in a fluid manner. They link one thought to another and move quickly through thoughts, experiencing thought-chaining processes.

The other information gathering style that Johnson (1978) identified is very different. Individuals with a "systematic" style tend to break an experience into its component parts, and react to each part independently. They need detailed information before they can comfortably decide on courses of action. "Systematic" individuals are cautious about psychologically committing to new ideas, thoughts, or actions. They evaluate each alternative and personalize only the ones they select. They collect a great deal of data before making commitments, and once they commit they are reluctant to change their selections unless an abundance of information suggests they should do so. Finally, "systematic" individuals move from goal to goal, thought to thought, and idea to idea, in a very deliberate fashion. They are aware of setting goals and moving from one goal to another, accomplishing goals with a methodical movement from one task to the next.

"External" processors think out loud. They tend to talk and think simultaneously, needing to hear their words in order to make sense of their thoughts and clarify situations. Johnson (1978) further elaborated his idea of "external" processing by stating that not all externals are highly verbal. Some are quiet and only talk about something when it is

important. The surest way to identify an "external" processor is by analyzing the content rather than amount of his or her conversation. Invariably he or she will be thinking out loud.

The distinguishing characteristic for "internal" processors is that they prefer to think about factors involved in decisions before they talk about them (Johnson, 1978). On matters involving novel or important content, "internals" will first ponder, and then speak. Talking without being able to take time to internally reflect upon what they want to say can be irritating and confusing for the 'internal' processor. As Johnson summarizes, "externals" will think out loud whereas "internals" will only talk about things they have thought through.

The combinations of ways in which people engage in data gathering and analysis led Johnson (1978) to propose the existence of four distinct styles of decision-making: external spontaneous, internal spontaneous, external systematic, and internal systematic. These categories can be conceptualized as lying on two perpendicular continuums, one for data gathering and one for data analysis. Thus, to plot these decision-making styles graphically, at opposite ends of the data gathering continuum are the constructs of "spontaneous" and "systematic" gathering, and at each end of the data analyzing continuum are the constructs of "external" and "internal" analyzing. According to Johnson's theory, individuals are able to adapt and use behaviours associated with decision-making styles that are different from their own; however, the adoption of an opposing style does not necessarily bring about greater understanding, because people make decisions most effectively when working within their own styles.

Integration of Career Decision-Making and Decision-Making Styles

Gati et al.'s (1996) and Johnson's (1978) different approaches to making decisions about future careers are complementary, dealing with different aspects of the process. The career decision-making paradigm focuses on problems and difficulties that individuals may encounter when making decisions, whereas decision-making styles include consideration of developmental skills and stages in decision-making. There are also some parallels between the two theories. Gati et al.'s "Lack of Readiness" and "Lack of Information" categories, though deficit focused, relate to Johnson's "spontaneous" and "systematic" styles, in that they both consider the data gathering step in the decision-making process. Similarly, Gati et al.'s "Inconsistent Information" category, though difficulty focused, and Johnson's "Internal" and "External" styles are both concerned with factors that influence the analysis of information stage in the decision-making process.

There are also a number of important distinguishing factors between these two theories. Johnson's (1978) theory explores internal psychological processes, whereas Gati et al.'s (1996) theory considers both internal and external influencers in the career decision-making process. Gati et al.'s (1996) theory distinguished between difficulties arising before actually beginning the career decision-making process, as well as those that arise during the process. The former include difficulties involving a lack of readiness to enter the career decision-making process. The latter distinguish between difficulties involving lack of information and difficulties in using available information due to information inconsistency. Thus, Gati et al.'s theory is not primarily concerned with how a person comes to a decision. He and his colleagues are instead concerned with what present factors (as opposed to past or future factors) are preventing an individual from

making an optimal career decision. Johnson's theory, however, is more concerned with how a person, in their past and present (and likely future) will make a decision by focusing on his or her information gathering and information analyzing styles. He is less concerned about what types of decisions a person is making and what is obstructing the decision-making process. It is clear that these two theories focus on somewhat different aspects of the decision-making process, in that Gati et al. are concerned with what is impeding a less-than-optimal career decision, whereas Johnson is focused primarily on how people come to make decisions (including career decisions). Attending to both of these theoretical approaches should provide a more complete understanding regarding the links between family of procreation and career decision-making. To more fully comprehend such connections, however, it is also necessary to understand perspectives on relational functioning in couples.

The Circumplex Model of Marital and Family Systems

David Olson, Douglas Sprenkle, and Candyce Russel (Olson et al., 1979) originally proposed the Circumplex Model of Marital and Family Systems in an attempt to bridge family theory, research, and practice. The central tenet of the Circumplex Model is that “balanced” couple and family systems tend to be more functional than “unbalanced” systems. Balanced, in this context, is defined as possessing both separateness and connectedness, and unbalanced systems can be seen as having high levels of either disengagement or enmeshment (Olson, 2000). In the original formulation of the Circumplex Model (Olson et al., 1979; Olson, Russel, & Sprenkle, 1983), the model consisted of two central dimensions of family behaviour: family cohesion and family adaptability. Subsequent research and theory revealed another important

dimension to consider: ways that families tend to communicate. Consequently, the current version of the Circumplex Model focuses on three central dimensions of marital and family systems: cohesion, adaptability (flexibility), and communication (Olson, 2000).

Family cohesion can be defined as the emotional bonding that family members have toward one another (Olson et al., 1983). How family systems balance the separateness of their members versus their togetherness is the central focus of the construct of cohesion. A family's level of cohesion is reflected in their emotional bonding, boundaries, coalitions, use of time (i.e., time together vs. time alone), space (i.e., private space vs. shared space), friends, decision-making, interests, and recreation (Olson, 2000). There are four distinct categories of functioning along the cohesion continuum that a family may experience: from disengaged, to separated, to connected, to enmeshed. It is based on these four levels that Olson hypothesized that balanced and optimal family functioning will occur between the levels of separated and connected, whereas relational problems will most likely develop at the unbalanced, or extreme, cohesion levels of disengaged or enmeshed. Olson further proposes that balanced couple and family systems tend to be more functional across the life-cycle, and will experience both connectedness and separateness from their significant others and/or their families. Conversely, unbalanced couple and family systems experience difficulties across the life-cycle due to either their lack of independence or their lack of attachment or commitment to their partners or families.

Family adaptability, also referred to as "flexibility", was originally understood as the ability of a marital or family system to change its power structure, role relationships,

and relationship rules in response to situational and developmental stress (Olson et al., 1983). The current definition of flexibility involves the quality and expression of leadership and organization, role relationships, relationship rules, and negotiations (Olson & Gorall, 2006). This dimension of the Circumplex Model focuses on how couple and family systems balance stability and change. Because couples and families need both stability and change, the ability to change when appropriate but remain stable at other times is a distinguishing feature in the identification of balanced and functional couple and family relationships, versus unbalanced and problematic relationships (Olson, 2000). Olson described four levels of flexibility, ranging from rigid, to structured, to flexible, to chaotic. The two central or balanced levels of flexibility (structured and flexible) are conducive to good marital and family functioning, while the extremes (rigid and chaotic) are the most problematic for marital and family functioning.

The third dimension in the Circumplex Model is communication. This involves the couple or family's skill level in listening to each other, and is reflected in their listening and speaking skills, self-disclosure, clarity, continuity tracking, respect, and regard for others (Olson, 2000). According to Olson, “listening skills” involve empathy and attentive listening, “speaking skills” includes speaking for oneself and not speaking for others, “self-disclosure” relates to sharing feelings about one’s self and the relationship, “tracking” is the system’s ability to stay on topic, and “respect and regard” are the affective aspects of communication and problem-solving skills in couples and families. Olson also states that balanced systems tend to have very good communication, whereas unbalanced systems tend to have poor communication. Thus, one characteristic of the communication dimension in the Circumplex Model is that it can facilitate or

impede a couple or family's movement on the cohesion and flexibility dimensions, by either promoting open boundaries that permit effective communication, or by restricting effective communication between couple or family members, keeping systems closed or randomly organized (Goldberg & Goldberg, 2004).

Empirical Support for the Circumplex Model

The Circumplex Model has received ample empirical support over the last 25 years. Olson and Gorall (2003) noted that the model has also been successfully applied to diverse couple and family systems in terms of ethnicity/race, marital status (cohabitating, married), family structure (single parent, stepfamilies), sexual orientation (gay and lesbian as well as heterosexual couples), stage of family life cycle (newlywed to retired couples), social class, and educational levels. The primary hypothesis of the Circumplex Model (that couples or families with balanced cohesion and adaptability will function more adequately across the family life-cycle than those at the extremes of these dimensions) has been widely confirmed across hundreds of studies (e.g., Kouneski, 2000; Olson, 1996). The weight of research evidence clearly supports the ability to distinguish between couples and families with "balanced" family functioning from those with "unbalanced" functioning.

The primary way that the three dimensions of the Circumplex Model are measured is the Family Adaptability and Cohesion Evaluation Scale (FACES). Gorall, Tiesel, and Olson (2006) describe the latest version of this instrument, the FACES IV self-report assessment. It is based on nearly a decade of research, and builds on previous FACES instruments that have been developed over the last 25 years. The FACES IV is a more comprehensive assessment of couple and family functioning than previous

assessments, offering more detailed assessments of balanced (healthy) and unbalanced (problematic) aspects of family functioning (Olson & Gorall, 2006). This more detailed assessment is provided through scales that measure balanced cohesion and balanced flexibility (similar to the previous versions of the FACES) and four unbalanced (problematic) scales labelled "enmeshed," "disengaged," "chaotic," and "rigid." The FACES IV also has three ratio scores: (a) the *Cohesion Ratio* score which is an assessment of the cohesion score in relation to the disengaged and enmeshed scores, (b) the *Flexibility Ratio* score which is an assessment of the flexibility score in relation to the chaotic and rigid scores, and (c) the *Circumplex Total Ratio* score which is a summary of the family's balanced (health) versus unbalanced (problem) characteristics in one score. An advantage of the Balanced versus Unbalanced ratio score is that it allows for a methodical approach when assessing curvilinearity of cohesion and flexibility. In addition, having a ratio score that allows for the summarization of a family's or couple's relative strengths and problem areas in a single score helps avoiding the complexities associated with using six scale scores (Olson & Gorall, 2006).

Couple-Conflict Types

John Gottman used behavioural analysis of couples to develop empirically-based methods for assisting couples in conflict (Gottman, Ryan, Carrere, & Erley, 2002). His systematic program of research has resulted in the identification of aspects of marital interactions that discriminate between unhappily and happily married couples. From his observational data, Gottman (1994a, 1994b, 1999) has concluded that couples in functional, high-quality, highly-stable marriages have very different ways of handling conflict than couples in dysfunctional, unstable marriages that are on paths toward

separation and divorce. In his typology of couple-conflict, he labels dysfunctional couples as "nonregulated" and functional couples as "regulated."

Nonregulated couples tend to make use of highly dysfunctional interactional processes. Specifically, Gottman (1994a) discovered that, compared to regulated couples, nonregulated couples were more dysfunctional in a number of domains: (a) more severe marital problems, (b) poorer physical health, (c) greater cardiovascular arousal, (d) more negative emotional expression, (f) less positive emotional expression, (g) more stubbornness and withdrawal from interaction, and (h) greater defensiveness. Reinforcing and adding to previous findings, Gottman (1998) identified seven behavioural patterns that characterize the interactions of nonregulated couples: (a) greater negative affect reciprocity; (b) lower ratios for positivity to negativity (this includes a climate of agreement in happily married couples); (c) less positive sentiment override (i.e., less ability to de-escalate negative affect during conflict discussions and provide psychological soothing); (d) the presence of criticism, defensiveness, contempt, and stonewalling; (e) greater incidence of the wife demand/husband withdraw interactional pattern; (f) negative and lasting attributions and narratives about the marriage and partner; and (g) greater physiological arousal during interactions.

Nonregulated couples also displayed the highest frequencies and greatest intensities in their conflictual interactions, using personal attacks and displaying very little positive affect (Gottman, 1994a). These hostile couples were significantly more likely to use one or all negative behavioural processes associated with what Gottman calls "the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse:" criticism, contempt, defensiveness, and withdrawal (stonewalling). Ordering from the least to the most dangerous of the

Horsemen, “criticism” can be understood as attacking someone's personality or character rather than specific problem behaviours, usually with blame; “contempt” is the intention to insult and psychologically abuse your partner; “defensiveness” is an attempt to protect oneself from a perceived attack by assuming a victim role and not taking responsibility for setting things right; and “stonewalling” involves erecting barriers to communicating and responding (Gottman, 1994b). Concomitantly, Gottman found that members of hostile couples are more likely to become flooded (i.e., by their partners' negative affect) and are less capable of soothing (i.e., calming the emotional reactivity) their own, or their partners', flooded emotions.

In contrast to the homogenous, hostile nature of nonregulated couples, there are three distinct types of stable and functional regulated couples: volatile, validating, and conflict-avoiding (Gottman, 1999). Gottman (1994a) describes “volatile” couples as having marriages that are intensely emotional, characterized by high levels of both positive and negative affect. “Validating” couples have conversations that involve conflict, in that one partner may not feel the same way another partner does, but he or she communicates verbally or nonverbally that he or she understands and accepts the expressed feelings as valid. “Conflict-Avoiders,” on the other hand, are characterized by emotionally flat communications and high levels of emotional distance between partners. Another key variable used to differentiate types is the degree to which (and the timing of) couple’s attempts to influence one another (Gottman, 1994a). Specifically, “volatile” couples continue their persuasion attempts through all parts of interactions; “validating” couples listen to one another first and then make their persuasion attempts in the middle portion of their discussions; and “conflict-avoiding” couples avoid influence attempts

throughout interactions. These three types also vary in their levels of affect expression, with volatile couples showing a great deal of affect, validating couples showing intermediate amounts of affect, and avoiding couples showing very little affect with each other (Gottman, 1999). Despite these differences in interactional styles the key unifying factor that Gottman identified in all types of regulated couples is a high ratio (at least 5-to-1) of positive-to-negative exchanges. This fosters a very rich climate of positivity that is absent from the relationships of unregulated couples.

Applicability of The Circumplex Model of Marital and Family Systems and Couple-Conflict Typologies

Although neither Olson's Circumplex Model nor Gottman's couple-conflict typology explicitly deal with career development, there are several applications for these two empirically-developed theories to career decision-making of couples. Potential inferences from Olson's theory will be considered first, followed by consideration of Gottman's theory.

Because the major premise of the Circumplex Model is that balanced couple and family systems tend to be more functional than unbalanced systems across the life cycle, it should follow that whether a couple is balanced or unbalanced may influence that couple's ability to negotiate the career decision-making process. Conversely, couples who are at the extremes of flexibility (chaotic or rigid) or cohesion (disengaged or enmeshed), may experience discontentment, defensiveness, or disjointedness, in response to misunderstandings about their partner's decision-making styles while conversing about career-related issues. Additionally, it is possible that individuals from balanced couples may use their partners as central resources for the successful resolution of problems with

career decision-making, whereas members of unbalanced couples may view their partners as adversarial or overbearing figures in their vocational futures, and will consequently struggle more with career decision-making difficulties.

There are also potential links between Gottman's theory and individual's career decision-making difficulties and styles. For example, it is possible that nonregulated couples (due to their frequent, intense, negative, attacking, conflictual interactions), and volatile couples to a lesser degree (due to their high emotionality and continuous persuasion attempts), will intensify the challenges involved in "Lack of Readiness" (perpetuating general career indecisiveness), "Lack of Information" (limiting information about themselves), and "Inconsistent Information" (increasing internal and external conflicts) in career decision-making difficulty categories. In contrast, it is possible that validating and conflict-avoiding couples may have the greatest potential for successfully managing their decision-making difficulties due to their communicative and affective characteristics.

It is also possible that some of Gottman's couple types may be associated with some of Johnson's decision-making styles. Volatile couples, due to their emotionally intense communicative patterns, may also be couples who are either internally or externally spontaneous in their decision-making styles. Couples whose conflict styles are validating may be more likely to have internal spontaneous (i.e., considering different aspects of a situation before talking about them) or external systematic (i.e., preferring to talk about one part of a situation at a time) decision-making styles. Finally, the conflict-avoiding couple type, preferring to keep conversations emotionally flat, may correlate with types who prefer to use internal systematic decision-making styles (characterized by

inner dialogues in which they cautiously consider various components of circumstances before discussing them with their partners).

It is evident from this literature review that the possible existence of substantive connections between career decision-making and various aspects of couples' relational functioning requires further empirical investigation. Unfortunately, there has been minimal previous research on this topic, resulting in gaps in knowledge about the career development of couples. The present study was designed to address part of this gap.

Research Hypotheses

As previously mentioned, no existing research has examined Gati et al's (1996) concept of decision-making difficulties, Johnson's (1978) concept of decision-making styles, Olson's (Olson et al., 1979; Olson et al., 1983) concept of couple and family cohesion and adaptability, and Gottman's (1994a, 1994b, 1999) couple-conflict types together. Specifically in this study, ways that romantic relationships affect career decision-making were examined. The effects of various aspects of relational functioning in romantic relationships upon career-related decision-making were explored. Within this broad research question, the following specific hypotheses were proposed:

1. Individuals who are in relationships that are balanced (both flexibly and cohesively) will tend to have internal (internal systematic or internal spontaneous) decision-making styles, whereas individuals who are in relationships that are unbalanced (whether chaotic or rigid, enmeshed or disengaged) will tend to have external (external systematic or external spontaneous) decision-making styles.
2. Individuals in validating, volatile, or conflict-avoiding relationships will tend to

have internal (internal systematic or internal spontaneous) decision-making styles, whereas individuals in hostile relationships will tend to have external (external systematic or external spontaneous) decision-making styles.

3. There will be a significant difference between balanced and unbalanced individuals, in terms of their levels of career indecision. Although there is insufficient evidence to make formal directional hypotheses, it is suspected that unbalanced people will, on average, have higher levels of career indecision.
4. There will be significant differences between couple-conflict groups in terms of their levels of career indecision. Although there is insufficient evidence to make formal directional hypotheses, it is suspected that hostile (nonregulated) people will, on average, report significantly higher levels of career indecision than validating, volatile, or conflict-avoiding (regulated) people.

CHAPTER 3: METHOD

Participants

In order to qualify for inclusion in this study, participants had to be aged 20 to 44 years, and needed to be involved in romantic relationships (which could include married/common law couples and dating couples) that had existed for at least 12 months prior to completing the research questionnaire. Participants could have been from any race or ethnic background and could have originated from, or resided in, any geographical location in Canada. Because the instruments used to measure the relationship variables were developed primarily with heterosexual couples, individuals in same-sex relationships were excluded from the study. No respondents reported being in same-sex relationships.

The sample consisted of 100 participants who were either born *and* living in, born in, or living in, Canada. This exceeded the minimum number of participants required for the study. The largest Chi-square analysis required 60 individuals, based on Field's (2000) recommendation for each cell to have an expected frequency greater than five participants, and the presence of a maximum of 10 cells in the largest analysis that was conducted. This sample size also met the requirements for the MANOVA analyses. The required number of participants for a MANOVA with an independent variable consisting of 5 groups and 3 dependent variables is 45 (assuming an effect size of .15, power = .80, alpha .05). For the other MANOVA with 2 groups in the independent variable, sample size calculations revealed a minimum required sample of 78.

The majority of the sample was female (73%), and the average age of participants was 30 (SD = 5.50). The average length of couple relationships was 6.78 years (SD =

5.30), with the majority of participants (68%) having been in their relationships for 6 years or less. In terms of ethnicity, 93% of individuals in the sample were of European ancestry (92.9%), with 5% East/Southeast Asian, 1% South Asian, and 1% Aboriginal/First Nations. Additionally, 69% of the sample described themselves as being Christian (Catholic, Protestant/Evangelical, or Orthodox), 24% had no religious affiliation, and 7% indicated having a different religious/faith background. The majority of the participants were either married or living common law (78%), with 13% dating, and 9% engaged. Seventy-eight percent were living with their romantic partners (24 of whom also had children), while 8% lived with others, 7% lived with parents, and 4% lived alone. In terms of educational attainment, 5% had completed no more than high school, 33% had some post-secondary training, 40% had completed bachelor degrees, and 22% had completed advanced degrees. Fifty percent of the sample was employed full-time, 24% were students, 17% were employed part-time, and 9% were unemployed. Many of the participants (44.6%) also indicated that they were already in the careers they wanted to be in.

Recruitment

Participant recruitment strategies that were employed included word of mouth and advertisements. Word of mouth recruitment involved directly asking individuals to participate, and asking others to spread the word about the study. Advertisements publicizing the opportunity to participate in this thesis were posted in local newspapers, via the Internet on Craigslist and through electronic mailing lists, and via flyers posted at (or electronically submitted to) family/community centers, church bulletins, and local universities. See Appendix A for a copy of the advertisement. An incentive to participate

was given to all participants who provided contact information; specifically, these individuals were entered into a draw to win one of three $50.00 gift certificates to The Keg Restaurant.

Instrument Selection Process

Instruments selected for use in the study had to meet the following criteria: (a) used in at least one previously published study, (b) fit with the research questions, (c) possessed satisfactory psychometric properties, and (d) could be administered in a relatively short period of time (an important consideration since there were four instruments used in the study). Many instruments were considered for the career and decision-making components of this thesis (i.e., the Assessment of Career Decision-Making, Harren, 1979; Buck & Daniels, 1985; the Career Beliefs Inventory, Krumboltz, 1994; and the Strong Interest Inventory, Strong, 1994). These were rejected for failing to meet one or more of the specific requirements of this study, including purpose, psychometric adequacy, administration time, and availability.

Due to the specific nature of the relational components of this thesis, and because the study was designed around the much researched and investigated work of David Olson and John Gottman, instrumentation for measuring relational components in this investigation was limited to instruments that used their theories and approaches.

Instruments

The five instruments selected for data collection included: The Career Decision-Making Difficulties Questionnaire (CDDQ), the Decision-Making Style Inventory (DMSI), the Family and Adaptability Cohesion Scales IV (FACES IV), four short scenarios that describe John Gottman's Couple Conflict Types, and a demographic

questionnaire to obtain descriptive information about the sample. The publishers provided written permission for the reproduction of these instruments as data collection tools for this thesis. Information on the five instruments can be found in Appendix B. All these instruments are designed to be completed by individuals, reflecting on the nature of their romantic relationship or career development.

Career Decision-Making Difficulties Questionnaire. The CDDQ (Gati et al., 1996) is a 34-item self-report instrument that can be used for initial screening of clients in career counselling settings, diagnosis of clients' career decision-making difficulties, and evaluation of career interventions. The first page of the questionnaire collects demographic information including the client's age, gender, and number of years of schooling. This page was not administered in the data collection for this thesis. Next, are 34 items in which participants rate, on 9-point Likert-type scales, the degree to which each difficulty describes them, from 1 – ("Does not describe me"), to 9 – ("Describes me well"). Finally, at the end of the questionnaire, participants rated the overall severity of their difficulties in the career decision-making process (1 – "not at all severe", to 9 – "very severe"). The instrument can be scored according to 10 subcategories of career decision-making problems, the three major categories of difficulty described in Gati and colleagues' theory (i.e., Lack of Readiness, Lack of Information, and Inconsistent Information), or as a full-scale score. In this thesis, career decision-making difficulty was operationalized as the three dimensions of the CDDQ.

Gati et al. (1996) reported median Cronbach alpha reliabilities for the ten scale sores as .78 for an Israeli sample and .77 for an American sample. Osipow and Gati (1998) reported a similar median Cronbach alpha of .76 for a sample of 403 American

college students. Gati et al. reported test-retest reliabilities of .67, .74, .72, for the three major categories, and .80 for the entire questionnaire (the length of time between administrations was one day). Internal consistency reliabilities (using Cronbach's alpha) of the ten scales for the 34-item version were .72, and .90 for the total CDDQ (Amir & Gati, 2006). Construct and concurrent validity of the CDDQ has been supported by Osipow and Gati (1998), who compared it to the Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy Scale (Taylor & Betz, 1983) and the Career Decision Scale (Osipow, Carney, & Barak, 1976; Osipow & Winer, 1996).

Decision-Making Style Inventory. The DMSI (Johnson, Coscarelli, & Johnson, 2007), a name revision from the previous DMI (Johnson, Coscarelli & Johnson, 1983), is a 36-item Likert scale self-report questionnaire used to measure an individual's decision-making style in accordance with Johnson's (1978) decision-making theory. The DMSI uses a 6-point Likert-type response format, with options ranging from 1 (*never*) to 7 (*always*), with the "4" option removed to force a decision toward one style or another The DMSI contains four distinct subscales (Spontaneous, Systematic, Internal, and External), each composed of 9 items. The internal consistency reliability scores, as reported by Coscarelli (1983), are .69 for the External subscale, .62 for the Systematic subscale, .55 for the Internal subscale, and .29 for the Spontaneous subscale. Test-retest reliability coefficients (based on a one week period between administrations) for the four scales have been found to be .41 for the Spontaneous, .59 for the Internal, .56 for the Systematic, and .71 for the External subscales. Using confirmatory factor analysis, Hardin and Leong (2004), have confirmed the existence of four distinct factors within the DMI, corresponding to each of the subscales. Hardin and Leong also found convergent

validity for the DMI through correlations between the DMI Internal and External scales with the Self-Construal Scale (Singelis, 1994), and with Independent and Interdependent scales.

For the purposes of the analyses in this study, career decision-making style was operationally defined as the category a participant fell into, in terms of their DMSI scores: external spontaneous, internal spontaneous, external systematic, or internal systematic. It should be noted that the hypothesized differences between external versus internal decision-making styles (hypotheses 1 and 2) were based on Coscarelli's (1983) assertion that, because each person has a preferred style of deciding, frictions can often occur between people of opposite types. It is important to clarify that neither type of decision-making style is inherently superior; they are simply different from each other (Johnson, Coscarelli, & Johnson, 2007).

The Family Adaptability and Cohesion Evaluation Scales. The FACES IV (Olson, Tiesel, & Gorall, 2006) is a 62-item, self-report, Likert type questionnaire to assess couple/family cohesion and flexibility dimensions, communication, and overall satisfaction with their family systems. Forty-two of the items measure the dimensions of cohesion and flexibility from the Circumplex Model (Olson et al., 1979), using a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 5 ("strongly agree"*),* producing six scale scores. These six scales include two that assess aspects of balanced family functioning (*Balanced Cohesion* and *Balanced Flexibility*), and four scales that measure the low and high extremes associated with unbalanced family functioning (*Disengaged* and *Enmeshed* for the Cohesion dimension and *Rigid* and *Chaotic* for the Flexibility dimension). Ten of the remaining items address the communicative aspects of the family

system using a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 5 (“strongly agree”). The final ten items of the scale assess the couple/family member’s satisfaction in terms of cohesion, flexibility, and communication, using a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (“very dissatisfied”) to 5 (“extremely satisfied”). Because this study focused on couple factors and not on familial ones, family related questions on the FACES IV were modified by exchanging the word “family” for the word “relationship”. This adjustment was made with guidance and permission from David Olson (personal communication, February 14, 2007).

In this thesis, “family” was operationally defined as “family of procreation,” rather than “family of origin.” Since the FACES IV provides specific scores for both balanced and unbalanced functionality, comparison groups were formed based on participants’ results from the Total Circumplex Ratio score, which summarizes the balanced and unbalanced scales (Gorall, Tiesel, & Olson, 2006). This score summarizes a person’s relative relational/familial strengths and problem areas into a single score. Participants whose scores were greater than 1 (indicating healthy functionality) were operationally defined as “balanced,” whereas participants whose scores were lower than 1 (indicating problematic functionality) were operationally defined as “unbalanced.”

Gorall, Tiesel, and Olson (2006) reported that the internal consistency reliabilities for the six FACES IV scales are as follows: Disengaged = .87, Rigid = .77, Enmeshed = .83, Chaotic = .85, Balanced Cohesion = .89, and Balanced Flexibility = .80. They also reported that the scales have adequate content, construct, criterion, and concurrent validity. Content validity was shown for the four unbalanced scales through a review and ratings of family therapists, which served as the basis for the selection of the scales.

Construct validity was demonstrated by the correlation of the six FACES IV scales with the Self-Report Family Inventory (Beavers & Hampson, 1990), the Family Assessment Device (Epstein, Baldwin, & Bishop, 1983), and the Family Satisfaction Scale (Olson & Stewart, 1989). The validation scales also demonstrated the criterion and concurrent validity of the FACES IV, through correlational and discriminant analyses. Finally, it should be noted that the FACES IV is based on nearly a decade's worth of research and is the most recent in a series of FACES instruments that have been produced over the last 25 years (Gorall et al., 2006). This long research tradition reflects the construct validity and utility of the instrument's underlying Circumplex Model as a way of conceptualizing family functioning.

Gottman's couple-conflict type scenarios. Holman and Jarvis (2003) created four scenarios to measure individuals' perceptions of communication in their romantic relationships, based on Gottman's (1994a, 1999) couple-conflict types. The scenarios are part of the RELATionship Evaluation, a 276 item self-report questionnaire, designed to assess individuals' perceptions of different aspects of their committed relationship and to help predict long-term marital quality (Holman, Busby, Doxey, Loyer-Carlson, & Klein, 1997). From his extensive program of laboratory-based observational research, Gottman proposes the existence of two broad categories of couples: "regulated" and "nonregulated." Within these two broader categories, he proposed four specific types of conflict styles. The regulated category consists of three couple types: *validating*, *volatile*, and *conflict-avoiding*, and the nonregulated category consists of the *hostile* type.

To administer the scenarios, participants were told that these descriptions were of how people in four different types of relationships handle conflict. They were asked to

indicate which type most closely resembled how they and their partners dealt with conflict. Respondents were presented only with the content of the scenarios (not the couple-conflict type labels). Participants then read the descriptions and chose from the response categories: 1 = Never, 2 = Rarely, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Often, 5 = Very Often. Because this is a new instrument, information on reliability and validity is limited. However, using cluster analysis, Holman and Jarvis (2003) found that the scenarios were able to distinguish between the four Gottman couple-conflict types.

The category that participants endorsed as most typical of how they dealt with conflict determined the group they were placed into. It must be noted, however, that some participants endorsed two, and some several categories, as being equally the most typical of their own interactions with their romantic partners. It was therefore necessary to create a category labelled *multiple*, for these participants. Additionally, to test hypotheses related to the effects of regulated versus unregulated conflict styles, participants were also grouped according to whether or not their own conflict styles were similar to the style described in the hostile scenario.

Demographic questionnaire. The demographic questionnaire was a 21-item self-report form. The items were used to collect participant information regarding personal characteristics, relational characteristics, educational status, occupational status, living arrangements, and family of origin characteristics. A variety of formats were used to present the questions, including checking boxes of options, or filling in blank spaces with open-ended responses. Because the instrument was created for this thesis, no reliability or validity information is available.

Procedure

Data collection for this thesis was conducted online using Survey Monkey, a private data collection management service. Participants were asked to log on to Survey Monkey and complete the entire survey, after reading the informed consent form, and clicking "continue" to indicate their consent to participate (see Appendix C for a copy of the informed consent form). Because information was gathered online, participants completed the instruments in uncontrolled environments of their choice. When both members of the couple wished to participate in the survey, participants were instructed to (a) complete the survey as separate individuals, rather than together and (b) not discuss the questionnaires with their partners until both of them had completed them. The proportion of the sample where both members of the couple completed the survey was not recorded.

Data Analysis

Prior to conducting the data analysis, all respondents who closed the questionnaire before completing it, and those who did not meet the criteria for inclusion in the study (e.g., older than the maximum age, not Canadian, and not living in Canada) were removed from the data set. Next, missing data from qualified participants who completed the study were dealt with. For the CDDQ, participants who were missing more than two responses for any subscale, had that subscale score coded as missing data. Two participants were affected by this procedure. A review of the CDDQ validity items was also conducted. People whose scores indicated potentially invalid patterns of response were coded as having missing data for the entire CDDQ. Two people were affected by this examination. For the DMSI, if a participant was missing data in any of the four scales, that participant's mean score for items on that scale was substituted for the

missing item. Three people were affected by this procedure. One was missing a "spontaneous" item and an "internal" item, the second person was missing one 'internal' item, and the third person was missing one 'spontaneous' item.

Using the Couple-Conflict Type Scenarios, each participant was categorized according to his or her dominant couple-conflict styles. The categories and their numbers were as follows: validating (n = 42), volatile (n = 17), avoiding (n = 7), hostile (n = 6), and multiple (n = 28). A second variable, balanced versus unbalanced relational functioning, was constructed using the FACES IV. Unfortunately, only one participant met the criteria for having unbalanced relational functioning, making it impossible to conduct the comparisons related to this independent variable. The first dependent variable in the analyses was participants' career decision-making styles, a dichotomous variable with participants categorized as either Internal (n = 45) or External (n = 55). The other dependent variable was participants' scores on each of the three dimensions of the CDDQ (Lack of Readiness, Lack of Information, and Inconsistent Information). See Table 1 for mean scores on each dimension for the full sample, and for each couple conflict style group.

Table 1.

Mean career decision-making scores for each couple conflict style group

	Lack of Readiness	Lack of Information	Inconsistent Information	Full CDDQ
Validating	M = 3.46 SD = 1.14	M = 2.99 SD = 1.75	M = 2.89 SD = 1.60	M = 1.71 SD = 0.37
Volatile	M = 3.37 SD = 0.83	M = 2.54 SD = 1.13	M = 2.50 SD = 1.04	M = 1.64 SD = 0.23

Conflict-avoiding	M = 2.81 SD = 1.19	M = 2.35 SD = 1.32	M = 2.20 SD = 1.58	M = 1.51 SD = 0.31
Hostile	M = 3.77 SD = 0.90	M = 4.24 SD = 1.75	M = 3.66 SD = .770	M = 1.97 SD = 0.23
Multiple	M = 2.83 SD = 0.76	M = 2.29 SD = 1.20	M = 2.48 SD = 1.25	M = 1.55 SD = 0.26
Full sample	M = 3.23 SD = 1.01	M = 2.75 SD = 1.54	M = 2.69 SD = 1.40	M = 1.66 SD = 0.32

The original research design involved four sets of data analysis to test the four hypotheses, with the relationship measures serving as the independent variables, and the career measures serving as the dependent variables. However, due to the lack of variation in relational functioning, it was not possible to conduct the analyses to test hypotheses one or three. Instead, it was necessary to conduct several different analyses to test the remaining hypotheses, and to conduct post hoc explorations of the data.

First, single sample chi-square analyses were used to explore the associations between couples functioning and Johnson, Coscarelli and Johnson's (2007) external versus internal decision-making styles. Next, independent-subjects MANOVA was used to examine the effect of couple's conflict groups on the three dimensions of the CDDQ (Lack of Readiness, Lack of Information, and Inconsistent Information). Additionally, an exploratory post-hoc analysis was conducted to determine the amount of variance in CDDQ scores that can be explained by a combination of several couples' relationship factors.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

Hypothesis 1

Because only one respondent in the entire sample scored in the "unbalanced" range of the FACES IV, it was not possible to test the hypothesis that individuals who are in relationships that are balanced (both flexibly and cohesively) will tend to have internal (internal systematic or internal spontaneous) decision-making styles, whereas individuals who are in relationships that are unbalanced (whether chaotic or rigid, enmeshed or disengaged) will tend to have external (external systematic or external spontaneous) decision-making styles.

Instead, a single sample chi-square test was conducted with the balanced participants in the sample, to determine whether there was a significant difference in frequency of those endorsing Internal decision-making styles versus those with External decision-making styles. This test failed to reveal any difference (χ^2 (1, N = 99) = 1.22, p > .05). There does not appear to be a significant difference in the presence of internal versus external decision-making styles in the balanced sub-group of participants. Although it remains possible that they are more likely to have an internal decision-making style than unbalanced couples, this partial test of hypothesis 1 provides no indication that individuals who are in romantic relationships that are balanced will tend to have internal decision-making styles.

Hypothesis 2

The second hypothesis was that individuals in validating, volatile, or conflict-avoiding relationships tend to have internal (internal systematic or internal spontaneous) decision-making styles, whereas individuals in hostile relationships tend to have external

(external systematic or external spontaneous) decision-making styles. A chi-square analysis strategy was used to determine whether there were any significant associations between the five couple conflict styles and participants' internal versus external decision-making styles. Results yielded no significant patterns of association (χ^2 (4, N = 100) = 4.87, $p > .05$). However, it was noted that although all the expected cell counts were above one, they fell below five for several cells. This presents a potential violation of the assumptions of chi-square. Given the possible violation, the test was re-run with the Gottman styles recoded simply into those who used a hostile (unregulated) style versus those who did not. Results of this alternative chi-square analysis confirmed the previous finding of no significant association between the couple conflict styles and decision-making styles. Hypothesis 2 was not supported by the data.

Hypothesis 3

The lack of participants with unbalanced couple relationships precluded testing of hypothesis 3, that there is a significant difference between balanced and unbalanced individuals, in terms of their levels of career indecision.

Hypothesis 4

The final hypothesis, that there are significant differences between couple-conflict groups in terms of their levels of career indecision (and specifically that people with a hostile (nonregulated) conflict style will report higher levels of career indecision) was examined using MANOVA.

Prior to running the MANOVA, it was necessary to implement a number of procedures to prepare and "clean" the data. Missing data had already been addressed for the data set. A search for univariate outliers was conducted using Tabachnick and Fidell's

(2007) recommendations of cases with standardized scores in excess of ± 3.29. All participants had standardized scores that were below this threshold for all three dependent variables. Multivariate outliers were explored by examining the Leverage values for all scores within the sample. Maximum Leverage values for the sample were within the threshold of ≤ .2, indicating an absence of multivariate outliers.

Next, an examination of the normality of distribution was conducted for each dependent variable within each Gottman style. There were several violations of normality. For the Lack of Readiness (LofR) variable the validating participants were not normally distributed (Kolmogorov-Smirnov (40) = .14, p = .047). For the Lack of Information (LofI) variable, distributions of scores in both the validating and multiple groups were non-normal (validating: Kolmogorov-Smirnov (40) = .163, p = .009; multiple: Kolmogorov-Smirnov (27) = .188, p = .016). No problems were found with the CDDQ Inconsistent Information (InInfo) variable. To address the violations of normality, square-root transformations were performed on all three dependent variables. The InInfo variable was transformed to ensure equivalence with the two variables where violations of normality were found. Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests on the transformed data set revealed that distributions of scores for these new variables were all within normal range (see Table 2). Consequently, these transformed CDDQ subscale scores were used in all the MANOVA analyses. Finally, the homogeneity of covariance matrices were tested using Box's M test (M = 22.72, F (24, 1347.05) = .79, p > .05). Results of this procedure revealed no problems with homogeneity of covariance. Pearson correlations were conducted for every pair of dependent variables to assess for the possible presence of multicollinearity. The results (r = .44, r = .49, r = .69) were all below .8, suggesting that

there was no substantial problem with multicollinearity.

Table 2

Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests for the transformed sample

	Statistic	df	*p*
Sqrt Lack of Readiness	.079	96	.157
Sqrt Lack of Information	.094	96	.037
Sqrt Inconsistent Information	.076	96	.200
Sqrt CDDQ Total	.063	96	.200

The MANOVA was then conducted with couple conflict style as the independent variable, and the three dimensions of the CDDQ as the dependent variables. Results of the MANOVA indicated that there was no significant effect of conflict style on CDDQ scores (Pillai's Trace = .15, F (12, 273) = 1.19, $p > .05$). Pillai's trace was selected because it is the most appropriate method for obtaining a meaningful single value that describes the ratio of systematic to unsystematic variance from the matrix produced by the MANOVA, in that Pillai's trace is the sum of the proportion of explained variance on the discriminant functions (Field, 2000). Additionally, an examination of the partial eta square values indicated that the size of the effect was quite small ($\eta^2 = .05$). Because the omnibus test was non-significant, there was no reason to conduct follow-up tests to determine where the specific patterns of difference might lie.

Given Gottman's theory that a key component of any couple's conflict style is whether or not that style is regulated, an additional MANOVA was conducted to explore the possibility that couples who used an unregulated conflict style were different from

those who use a regulated style, in terms of their decision-making difficulties. Results of this exploratory analysis also failed to yield significant results (Pillai's Trace = .0002, F (3, 92) = .006, $p > .05$).

In short, neither the planned MANOVA nor the speculative MANOVA provided any support for hypothesis 4.

Additional Post-Hoc Analyses

The original question that motivated this thesis was the issue of how individuals' functioning in their romantic relationships would affect their career-related decision-making. Although none of the planned analyses yielded any significant effects, it was decided to explore the general topic further, by conducting a series of hierarchical multiple regressions with each of the CDDQ major scale scores serving as dependent variables, and a variety of other relational variables as the independent variables.

First, to partial out and, therefore, control the effects of participants' background characteristics, age, gender, and educational level were entered into the regression model in a preliminary block. Four relationship factors were then entered into the model in a second block: (a) current relational status (coded as married/common law vs. dating/engaged/single), (b) length of time in current romantic relationship (number of years), (c) level of involvement of partner in their career decision-making process (response to a nine-point Likert scale item, ranging from 1 = "not at all involved" to 9 = "very involved"), and (d) hostile or not (as indicated by their score response from the Gottman scenarios, 1 = use of a hostile style, 2 = absence of a hostile style). Results of the regression revealed that the full model explained approximately 9% of the variance in career decision-making (R^2 = .088). However, the relationship factor variables

contributed a negligible amount to the model, beyond the effects of age, gender, and educational level: $\Delta R^2 = .03$, $F\ (3, 87) = 1.09$, $p > .05$. The full set of regression values can be seen in Table 3. Although this is purely a speculative exploratory analysis conducted with available variables, these results suggest that couple variables are relatively unimportant in determining people's levels of career decision-making difficulty, once age, gender, and education have been taken into account.

Table 3

Summary of hierarchical regression analysis for variables predicting overall level of career decision-making difficulties (N = 94)

Variable[1]	*B*	*SE B*	β
Step 1	2.054	0.377	
Age	-.012	.008	-.159
Gender	.011	.099	.011
Education	-.034	.053	-.068
Step 2	2.090	.494	
Relational status	.037	.070	.063
Length of relationship	.002	.011	.027
Partner involvement	-.018	.020	-.102
Hostile or not	-.007	.144	-.006

[1] $p > .05$ for all variables

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

Interpretation of the Results

None of the specific hypotheses were supported, possibly because almost the entire sample were in well-functioning relationships. Only one of the hundred participants had an unbalanced (unhealthy) FACES IV score. Also, only a small proportion (12%) of the sample reported having a hostile couple conflict style. Because the comparisons in this study were largely dependent on having couples with a range of relational functioning, the lack of unbalanced participants prevented the thorough examination and evaluation of balanced versus unbalanced couples. Additionally, the relatively low levels of dysfunction in the sample may also have affected the remaining tests that were conducted. With these cautions in mind, the fact remains that none of the hypotheses were supported. The data failed to reveal any significant effects of couples' conflict styles or relational functioning on individuals' career-related decision-making.

Exploratory post hoc analyses revealed that, for this well adjusted sample of adults, relationship factors had only a small, non-significant effect on people's career decision-making difficulties, over and above the individual difference factors of age, gender, and education. It appears, therefore, that when a romantic relationship is relatively good, the career decision-making of individuals in such relationships is independent of their functioning within the couple system. Because of the small number of people with dysfunctional romantic relationships in the sample, the generalizability of these results to unbalanced (unhealthy) individuals and couples is limited. Perhaps the couple system becomes more important in career decision-making when it is not functioning well.

The conclusion that relationship factors play a relatively minor role in career decision-making in well-functioning couples is consistent with existing family of procreation research. For example, Houlihan, Jackson, and Rogers (1990), in a study to investigate how satisfied and dissatisfied married couples make decisions of low, moderate, and high levels of difficulty found that multiple norms were used in the decision-making of both satisfied and dissatisfied couples. The level of decision difficulty influenced the use of both situational (specific) and need-based norms (decisions that benefited the partner with the greatest need). Also, satisfied husbands made greater use of need-based norms than dissatisfied husbands, when decisions were high in difficulty. Moreover, it was found that equity (partner outcomes proportionate to their relative input) was an important consideration in marital relationships. Satisfied and dissatisfied couples differed significantly in the degree of equity that characterized their relationships, with satisfied couples having higher levels of equity. The issue of differing levels of equity in different kinds of couples is relevant because other research has found that striving for marital partnership or equality is viewed as an integral strategy contributing to couples' success in balancing family and work (Zimmerman et al., 2003).

Haddock and Rattenborg (2003) also add to the awareness that healthy relationships help to foster a positive environment for dealing with work-related issues. They found that couples who believed they successfully balanced family and work commitments reported having high levels of gains and also some strain in their lifestyles. Benefits for couples who successfully balanced family and work included modeling an egalitarian relationship, increased self-identity and well-being, increased financial resources, time away from children that led to better parenting, beneficial social networks

through the workplace, and improved social and intellectual skills for their children. Challenges that these couples faced included working in places that were not family-oriented, feelings of guilt that both parents worked outside the home, and the need to make professional sacrifices in order to put the well-being of their families before their careers. Successful couples made conscious and concerted efforts to set limits on work. Haddock and Rattenborg's study of successful couples reveals that, while real conflicts exist between the demands of work and family, they are not insurmountable when the couple is in a healthy relationship.

David Olson's work can help to clarify the absence of a significant difference in the proportion of internal versus external decision-making styles that was found in this sample of balanced participants. Olson (2000) noted that the variable of couple/family decision-making is one of the components of couple/family cohesion (other variables included in cohesion are: emotional bonding, boundaries, coalitions, time, space, friends, interests, and recreation). A major benefit of having balanced levels of cohesion is that, because balanced couples manage their separateness and togetherness well, they are able to turn to one another for support and help with problem solving, thus creating an atmosphere of support during joint or individual decision-making. Consequently, at least for balanced couples, it seems that the presence of respect for personal boundaries around time together and time apart, and the establishment of emotional closeness and loyalty to the relationship, can have a stronger influence on a couple's decision-making than a particular decision-making style, whether internal or external.

Coscarelli's (1983) results help to clarify the findings in this thesis that there are no significant patterns of association between decision-making styles and couple conflict

types, by asserting that the information analysis process involved in decision-making styles is revealed not by how much a person talks, but rather by the way he or she thinks. In understanding the characteristics of internality versus externality it is imperative that the focus is on what is being said rather than how much is being said. Thus, it may be that the way the content is being formulated, perceived, and discussed (i.e., the expression of positive versus negative thoughts during conflict around a career decision) is more impactful than the method being used to resolve the issue. Gottman's (1994a) research also supports this possibility, noting that nonregulated couples displayed the highest frequencies and greatest intensities in their conflictual interactions, using personal attacks and displaying very little positive affect, whereas regulated couples fostered rich climates of positivity that were absent from the relationships of unregulated couples. Hence, the findings in this thesis may reflect the possibility that how (whether internally or externally) a person is conceiving and conceptualizing her or his situation is less impactful than the content (whether positive or negative) of his or her decision-making and eventual communications with a partner.

The *R-squared change* score found in this sample indicates that relationship factors are not significantly additive, beyond individual demographic differences, in predicting levels of career decision-making difficulty. Furthermore, the hierarchical analysis revealed that approximately 90% of the variance in career decision-making difficulties cannot be explained by the factors that were used in this study. Other variables such as stage of the career decision-making process, career decision-making self-efficacy, and career maturity, may be much more impactful on career decision-making when the deciders are in healthy romantic relationships.

Studies by Gati et al. (2001) and Amir and Gati (2006) support the first two aspects of this speculation. Gati, Saka, and Krausz (2001) examined young adults at different stages in the career decision-making process to locate patterns of career decision-making difficulties. Using Gati and Asher's (2001) PIC model (pre-screening, in-depth exploration, and choice; a three-stage model for career decision-making, as the framework for their study, they found that career decision-making difficulties were highest for those in the pre-screening stage of the career decision-making process, and lowest for those in the choice stage. Given the wide age range of participants in the Gati et al. (2001) sample, it could well be that stage of career decision-making would be a more salient variable to include in the model.

Gati et al. (2006) investigated relationships among measured and expressed career decision-making difficulties of young adults who intended to apply to college or university. They found that both measured and expressed difficulties correlated negatively with participants' career decision-making self-efficacy. Career decision-making self-efficacy is defined as an individual's beliefs concerning his or her ability to successfully accomplish certain tasks associated with career choice (Taylor & Betz, 1983). Given Gati et al.'s findings, it is possible that this individual factor may be more important for predicting career decision-making difficulties than relationship factors that were explored in this study.

Levinson and his associates (1998) view career maturity as an individual's ability to make appropriate career choices, which includes an awareness of what is required to make a career decision, and the degree to which one's choices are both realistic and consistent over time. In their review of approaches that assess career maturity, they

emphasize the importance of this variable for the career decision-making process. Specifically, they reported that career maturity has been associated with realistic self appraisal, environmental experience, family cohesion, and several personal characteristics such as intelligence, locus of control and self-esteem. Hence, the readiness of an individual to make an informed, age-appropriate career decision is an important component of the career decision-making process, especially in light of the developmental nature of this construct and how it can impact one's ability to cope with the choice one has to make or decisions one has made.

Overall, when there are no salient relationship difficulties in a person's family of procreation, aspects of his or her career development (such as decision-making stage, decision-making self efficacy, and career maturity) may be far more important than relational factors and background characteristics in determining the level of career decision-making difficulty that is experienced.

Finally, it is interesting to note that CDDQ scores found in this sample of Canadians can be compared in a descriptive way to existing research conducted by Gati et al. (1996) on young adults in Israel and the Unites States, and by Amir and Gati (2006) with an Israeli sample. Specifically, the patterns of CDDQ scores for this sample are similar to those for the American sample, in that the area of greatest relative difficulty was in the "Lack of Readiness" category. This is in contrast with both samples from Israel, where "Lack of Information" was the greatest relative difficulty category. Additionally, for American participants, Israeli participants, and participants from this study, the "Inconsistent Information" category had the lowest mean scores of all the categories. Although no formal comparison was conducted, results of this study suggest

that patterns of career decision-making may be relatively similar across North America (at least in relation to countries from other regions of the world).

Limitations

A major limitation in this study was the convenience sampling procedure and recruitment strategy, which resulted in a situation where virtually all of the participants had balanced relationships, and most handled conflict in regulated ways. The sample was lacking participants who were predominantly conflict-avoidant or hostile in their couple conflict styles, and who could be categorized as "unbalanced" according to the Circumplex Model of family functioning. This, as previously mentioned, made it impossible to explore the connection between romantic relationship functioning and career decision-making. Also, since most participants reported being in relatively healthy romantic relationships, the post hoc analyses may have limited generalizability to couples who are experiencing substantial relationship crisis.

Additionally, the sampling and recruitment procedure for this study resulted in a sample wherein the majority of participants were female, Caucasian/European, and described themselves as having Christian faith. Clearly, the lack of representativeness of the sample further limits the generalizability of the results. Is it possible that connections between relationship factors and career decision-making are stronger for men, people from minority cultural backgrounds, or other religious orientations? Only future research, with participants who have a greater range of background characteristics will be able to address that question.

Finally, the relatively small sample size (N = 100) may have masked small but significant effects of relationship factors on career decision-making. The power analysis

conducted to determine the required sample size for the MANOVA assumed a medium-sized effect. If there are real effects of couples conflict or other relational factors on career decision-making, but they are small rather than medium in nature, these analyses would have lacked the power to detect them.

Low reliability scores on some of the DMSI subscales could also reduce some readers' confidence in the generalizability of data from that instrument. Although some of the scale reliability scores for the DMSI appear low, Coscarelli (1983) noted that these reliability estimates are acceptable given the small number of items per subscale. Furthermore, the low Spontaneous subscale estimate could be due to either the nature of the items or the nature of the spontaneous decision maker, for whom reliability would not be expected, by definition. Also, Hardin and Leong (2004) pointed out that, despite the poor reliabilities of the Spontaneous subscale, a confirmatory factor analysis provided a nearly perfect fit to the data which supported the four-factor structure of the DMSI. For these reasons, it is reasonable to have confidence in the instrument and the resulting data to provide understanding of specific and stable decision-making styles.

Another limitation is the potential for non-independence of data that may have occurred in this sample, because it is not known how many couples participated together in the survey. Although participants were asked to not communicate with their partners about the survey (and this was screened for in the questionnaire), the problem of non-independence remains a concern even for participants where both members of the couple responded to the survey without talking to each other about it, given the fact that their relationship scores would be related to each other (because it is the same romantic relationship) may have created a violation of the assumption of independence of scores, a

requirement of both MANOVA and Multiple Regression analyses. Since 73% of sample was female, however, and none of them were in same-sex relationships, it is likely that only a relatively small proportion of the sample would have contributed non-independent data.

Finally, the scope of this study encompassed only the decision-making component of career development and several aspects of couple interaction and functioning factors. There may be stronger connections between other aspects of couples' relationships and career decision-making, or between couples' conflict styles and other aspects of career development. It would be premature to conclude from the lack of significance and small effect sizes found in this study that this area of research is not worthy of further exploration.

Significance and Implications for Counselling

Due to the relative novelty of combining couple relationship factors together with career decision-making factors, this study has made some contributions to the development of an emerging area of research. Considering the magnitude of the fields that are being combined (career/vocational psychology and relational/familial psychology) there are many opportunities for additional inquiry, theory development, and application in this area. Despite the absence of significant results, it is hoped that this thesis will stimulate further research regarding this combination of variables, and that this direction for research will eventually lead to the development of empirically-supported approaches to provide assistance to people struggling to satisfy both career and relational goals and desires. Additionally, further research in this area may eventually improve counsellors' abilities to locate specific relationship factors which influence career

development. These should, in turn, improve their ability to provide effective and efficient career counselling to clients who are in romantic relationships.

Unfortunately, since none of the hypotheses of this thesis were supported, it is premature to propose any specific recommendations for counselling practice. However, one possibility that must be considered in light of the small eta squared score found in the MANOVA and the small R-squared change score from the regression analysis: Career counsellors working with clients who are in good marital relationships may not need to spend a lot of time considering relationship issues when facilitating their clients' career decision-making.

Future Directions

To more thoroughly examine this topic, it is necessary to conduct a replication of this study using more systematic sampling strategies, to obtain a greater range of relational functioning and couple conflict styles. Specifically, it may be helpful to expand the criterion of "currently being in a relationship" to include individuals who were previously in a relationship, but are no longer in one. Better recruitment strategies that actively target individuals who have problems in their marital relationships may also be required. These adjustments are necessary to obtain a more comprehensive range of couple conflict styles and relational functioning, which will permit a more complete exploration of this issue.

Additionally, even if it is true that relationship factors are not important for career decision-making, it does not mean that these factors are not important for other aspects of career development. It may be helpful to explore other aspects of career development. Building on the work of Amir and Gati (2006), an investigation of relational functionality

and career decision-making self-efficacy could be interesting. It is possible that there are significant connections between relational factors and career decision-making self-efficacy that need to be further delineated. To expand on the work of Adams (2004), it may be advantageous to examine the relationship between stage of the career decision-making process relative to amount of emotional intensity for couples. An investigation of this type could provide information to avert or mitigate challenges couples face in specific phases of the career decision-making process.

Lastly, it may be beneficial to conduct further explorations on this topic using alternative, qualitative methodologies to gain a broader understanding of people's perceptions of how their romantic relationships affect their career development. For example, it would be possible to use the Critical Incident Technique (e.g., Butterfield, Borgen, Amundson, & Maglio, 2005) to identify romantic relationship themes that individuals have found to be beneficial and detrimental in their career decision-making processes. Moreover, it may be useful to identify joint projects and actions that couples engage in together as they negotiate decisions about their future careers. Young, Valach, and Collin's (2002) contextual action theory framework and associated action-project method would be an effective way to examine how couples make decisions together about their careers.

Results of this investigation of relational variables and their effects on adult career-related decision-making remain exciting, despite the limitations that were encountered, and the failure to reject the null hypothesis. The conclusion suggested by the pattern of results (i.e., that when a romantic relationship is relatively healthy, career decision-making appears to be independent of functioning within the couple system) is

certainly good news for couples. It would appear that one of the benefits of maintaining a balanced couple system may be smoother career decision-making processes for both individuals in a relationship. Also, due to the novelty of this area of investigation, merely asking the questions that were posed in this thesis may inform future researchers of other valuable variables to examine, offering more specific techniques for acquiring a suitable sample population. Finally, the undertaking and completion of this thesis adds to, and provides further impetus for, the exploration of the fascinating and mysterious fields of relational and vocational psychology.

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APPENDIX A: Recruitment

Romantic Couples & Career Decision-Making

Volunteers needed for a research study on relationship factors that influence career related decisions

Requirements: To be eligible to take part in this study, you need to be:

- 20 to 44 years of age
- in a committed romantic relationship (married or unmarried) of 12 months or longer
- have been in, or are in, the process of making a career or academic transition

Involvement: Completing an online questionnaire asking about various aspects of your relationship and career decision-making, lasting about 45 minutes.

Incentive: Participants can be entered into a draw to win one of three $50.00 gift certificates to The Keg Steakhouse restaurants.

Researcher: Todd Dutka, Counselling Psychology, Trinity Western University

For participation details and to fill out the survey please go to:
http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.asp?u=946713609742

For further information, contact Todd Dutka at: todd.dutka@agape.twu.ca

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APPENDIX B: Questionnaires

Please contact Dr. Itamar Gati at msgati@mscc.huji.ac.il to obtain a copy of the CDDQ.

Check 1 if the statement does not describe you and 9 if it describes you well. Of course, you may also check any of the intermediate levels.

Please do not skip any question.

For each statement, please check the number which best describes you.

1. I know that I have to choose a career, but I don't have the motivation to make the decision now ("I don't feel like it").

   Does not describe me Describes me well

   1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ 5□ 6□ 7□ 8□ 9□

2. Work is not the most important thing in one's life and therefore the issue of choosing a career doesn't worry me much.

   Does not describe me Describes me well

   1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ 5□ 6□ 7□ 8□ 9□

3. I believe that I do not have to choose a career now because time will lead me to the "right" career choice.

   Does not describe me Describes me well

   1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ 5□ 6□ 7□ 8□ 9□

4. It is usually difficult for me to make decisions.

   Does not describe me Describes me well

   1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ 5□ 6□ 7□ 8□ 9□

5. I usually feel that I need confirmation and support for my decisions from a professional person or somebody else I trust.

   Does not describe me Describes me well

   1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ 5□ 6□ 7□ 8□ 9□

6. I am usually afraid of failure.

Does not describe me Describes me well

1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ 5□ 6□ 7□ 8□ 9□

5. I like to do things my own way.

Does not describe me Describes me well

1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ 5□ 6□ 7□ 8□ 9□

8. I expect that entering the career I choose will also solve my personal problems.

Does not describe me Describes me well

1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ 5□ 6□ 7□ 8□ 9□

9. I believe there is only one career that suits me.

Does not describe me Describes me well

1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ 5□ 6□ 7□ 8□ 9□

10. I expect that through the career I choose I will fulfill all my aspirations.

Does not describe me Describes me well

1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ 5□ 6□ 7□ 8□ 9□

11. I believe that a career choice is a one-time choice and a life-long commitment.

Does not describe me Describes me well

1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ 5□ 6□ 7□ 8□ 9□

12. I always do what I am told to do, even if it goes against my own will.

Does not describe me Describes me well

1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ 5□ 6□ 7□ 8□ 9□

13. I find it difficult to make a career decision because I do not know what steps I have to take.

Does not describe me Describes me well

1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ 5□ 6□ 7□ 8□ 9□

14. I find it difficult to make a career decision because I do not know what factors to take into consideration.

Does not describe me Describes me well

1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ 5□ 6□ 7□ 8□ 9□

15. I find it difficult to make a career decision because I don't know how to combine the information I have about myself with the information I have about the different careers.

Does not describe me Describes me well

1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ 5□ 6□ 7□ 8□ 9□

16. I find it difficult to make a career decision because I still do not know which occupations interest me.

Does not describe me Describes me well

1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ 5□ 6□ 7□ 8□ 9□

17. I find it difficult to make a career decision because I am not sure about my career preferences yet (for example, what kind of a relationship I want with people, which working environment I prefer).

Does not describe me Describes me well

1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ 5□ 6□ 7□ 8□ 9□

18. I find it difficult to make a career decision because I do not have enough information about my competencies (for example, numerical ability, verbal skills) and/or about my personality traits (for example, persistence, initiative, patience).

Does not describe me Describes me well

1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ 5□ 6□ 7□ 8□ 9□

19. I find it difficult to make a career decision because I do not know what my abilities and/or personality traits will be like in the future.

Does not describe me Describes me well

1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ 5□ 6□ 7□ 8□ 9□

20. I find it difficult to make a career decision because I do not have enough information about the variety of occupations or training programs that exist.

Does not describe me Describes me well

1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ 5□ 6□ 7□ 8□ 9□

21. I find it difficult to make a career decision because I do not have enough information about the characteristics of the occupations and/or training programs that interest me (for example, the market demand, typical income, possibilities of advancement, or a training program's perquisites).

Does not describe me Describes me well

1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ 5□ 6□ 7□ 8□ 9□

22. I find it difficult to make a career decision because I don't know what careers will look like in the future.

Does not describe me Describes me well

1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ 5□ 6□ 7□ 8□ 9□

23. I find it difficult to make a career decision because I do not know how to obtain additional information about myself (for example, about my abilities or my personality traits).

Does not describe me Describes me well

1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ 5□ 6□ 7□ 8□ 9□

24. I find it difficult to make a career decision because I do not know how to obtain accurate and updated information about the existing occupations and training programs, or about their characteristics.

Does not describe me Describes me well

1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ 5□ 6□ 7□ 8□ 9□

25. I find it difficult to make a career decision because I constantly change my career preferences (for example, sometimes I want to be self-employed and sometimes I want to be an employee).

Does not describe me Describes me well

1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ 5□ 6□ 7□ 8□ 9□

26. I find it difficult to make a career decision because I have contradictory data about my abilities and/or personality traits (for example, I believe I am patient with other people but others say I am impatient).

Does not describe me Describes me well

1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ 5□ 6□ 7□ 8□ 9□

27. I find it difficult to make a career decision because I have contradictory data about the existence or the characteristics of a particular occupation or training program.

Does not describe me Describes me well

1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ 5□ 6□ 7□ 8□ 9□

28. I find it difficult to make a career decision because I'm equally attracted by a number of careers and it is difficult for me to choose among them.

Does not describe me Describes me well

1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ 5□ 6□ 7□ 8□ 9□

29. I find it difficult to make a career decision because I do not like any of the occupation or training programs to which I can be admitted.

Does not describe me Describes me well

1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ 5□ 6□ 7□ 8□ 9□

30. I find it difficult to make a career decision because the occupation I am interested in involves a certain characteristic that bothers me (for example, I am interested in medicine, but I do not want to study for so many years).

Does not describe me Describes me well

1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ 5□ 6□ 7□ 8□ 9□

31. I find it difficult to make a career decision because my preferences can not be combined in one career, and I do not want to give any of them up (e.g., I'd like to work as a free-lancer, but I also wish to have a steady income).

Does not describe me Describes me well

1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ 5□ 6□ 7□ 8□ 9□

32. I find it difficult to make a career decision because my skills and abilities do

not match those required by the occupation I am interested in.

Does not describe me Describes me well

1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ 5□ 6□ 7□ 8□ 9□

33. I find it difficult to make a career decision because people who are important to me (such as parents or friends) do not agree with the career options I am considering and/or the career characteristics I desire.

Does not describe me Describes me well

1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ 5□ 6□ 7□ 8□ 9□

34. I find it difficult to make a career decision because there are contradictions between the recommendations made by different people who are important to me about the career that suits me or about what career characteristics should guide my decisions.

Does not describe me Describes me well

1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ 5□ 6□ 7□ 8□ 9□

35. Finally, how would you rate the degree of your difficulty in making a career decision (past or present experience)?

Low High

1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ 5□ 6□ 7□ 8□ 9□

Please visit www.pfeiffer.com to purchase a copy of the DMSI.

DIRECTIONS FOR TAKING THE *DMSI*:

For items 36 to71, read each item and indicate how the statement is true of your behavior **in your personal life (**rather than your behavior in work or school—where you might have to adapt to an opposing environment).

Check the appropriate box next to each item:

1. Check the box on the far left indicates the statement is usually NEVER true of you.
2. Check the box on the far right indicates the statement is usually ALWAYS true of you.
3. The boxes in the middle indicate points between the extremes of NEVER and ALWAYS.

36. When faced with a serious decision, it is most helpful to me if I think about it myself rather than discussing it with someone else.

Never Always

1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ 5□ 6□

37. When a series of unrelated thoughts go through my mind, I move quickly from one to the other.

Never Always

1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ 5□ 6□

38. I understand things best by talking about them with someone else.

Never Always

1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ 5□ 6□

39. Just verbalizing things helps me understand my own feelings about a situation.

Never Always

1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ 5□ 6□

40. Unless I can't, I change activities when I first get bored doing something.

Never Always

1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ 5□ 6□

41. When faced with a serious decision, it is more helpful to me to talk about it with others than think about it myself.

Never Always

1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ 5□ 6□

42. I will make up my mind carefully and change it just as carefully.

Never Always

1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ 5□ 6□

43. I usually attempt to understand things by thinking about them myself.

Never Always

1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ 5□ 6□

44. I will mention an idea and I'm not sure where the idea came from.

Never Always

1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ 5□ 6□

45. I am most comfortable reaching a conclusion if I have time by myself to reflect on it.

Never Always

1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ 5□ 6□

46. I examine most all the possible consequences of a decision before acting.

Never Always

1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ 5□ 6□

47. If I want to learn something new, I will keep at it even though another more interesting and equally important activity might present itself.

Never Always

1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ 5□ 6□

48. The more information I need to analyze, the greater my need for

introspection.

Never Always

1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ 5□ 6□

49. After I've made a decision my tendency is to react to the whole of the event before reaching a conclusion, for example, I'll react to a movie as a whole without thinking about the plot, characters, special effects, or other things.

Never Always

1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ 5□ 6□

50. Sometimes I don't even need people around to sort out a decision; talking is what's important and at times a pet will do as well as anyone else.

Never Always

1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ 5□ 6□

51. Sometimes people will hear me argue for one position or another as I'm making up my mind, this can be confusing to others who don't understand my style as they see me argue all sides of an issue.

Never Always

1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ 5□ 6□

52. I prefer to act rather than think about the consequences of the action. I can usually see a strong reason to choose an alternative and would be surprised to find myself in a situation where it was impossible to make a choice.

Never Always

1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ 5□ 6□

53. The more information I need to analyze, the greater the need to talk.

Never Always

1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ 5□ 6□

54. Once a goal is established, I rarely lose sight of it.

Never Always

1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ 5□ 6□

55. When it comes to sorting things out I need time to organize my thoughts and talking about them before they are organized frustrates me.

Never Always

1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ 5□ 6□

56. I know there are always risks associated with any decision but I feel that you won't know for certain until you make it.

Never Always

1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ 5□ 6□

57. A pet could be a good companion when sorting out a decision because it wouldn't bother my thoughts.

Never Always

1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ 5□ 6□

58. My reaction to a decision is to examine the details and focus on the sum of the component parts before reaching a decision, for example,, I'll react to a movie as a function of it's plot, characters, special effects, etc., before deciding whether or not I like the movie.

Never Always

1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ 5□ 6□

59. If anything, I prefer to consider an action rather than take action. In the extreme, I could see how a really important decision might have so many strengths and weaknesses for each alternative that I would find it impossible to choose

Never Always

1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ 5□ 6□

60. People often ask me what I'm thinking because I tend not to offer my thoughts until I have analyzed the issue privately…and sometimes that takes time.

Never Always

1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ 5□ 6□

61. If I had to sit around and weigh all the reasons for picking, or not picking an alternative, I'd be bored and nothing would ever get done.

Never Always

1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ 5□ 6□

62. When it comes to a really tough decision, I am most comfortable about

making the decision when I can talk about it.

Never Always

1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ 5□ 6□

63. When I'm trying to sort out a problem, I like to have people to talk to when I have to decide what data to collect and how to think about what I've collected.

Never Always

1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ 5□ 6□

64. When I have several alternatives to choose from, I have a real preference to pick the first one that "looks good."

Never Always

1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ 5□ 6□

65. People say it is easy to know what I'm thinking because I tend to talk about what is going on in my head.

Never Always

1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ 5□ 6□

66. When a decision presents a series of alternatives I will tend to weight all of my reasons for each alternative before deciding on one alternative.

Never Always

1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ 5□ 6□

67. When I'm trying to decide what data I need or what to make of the information I've gathered, I really prefer peace and quiet.

Never Always

1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ 5□ 6□

68. In the course of a conversation, I have been known to ask, "What were we talking about?"

Never Always

1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ 5□ 6□

69. I will ask others for their opinion about the decision I might be making, but it seems I am most comfortable about, and make the best decisions when I have had the time to think about things myself.

Never Always

1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ 5□ 6□

70. I know there are always risks associated with a decision and I like to make sure the reasons for a decision outweigh the risks associated with that decision.

Never Always

1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ 5□ 6□

71. When I have several alternatives to choose from I begin by gathering information that tends to be detailed and analytical.

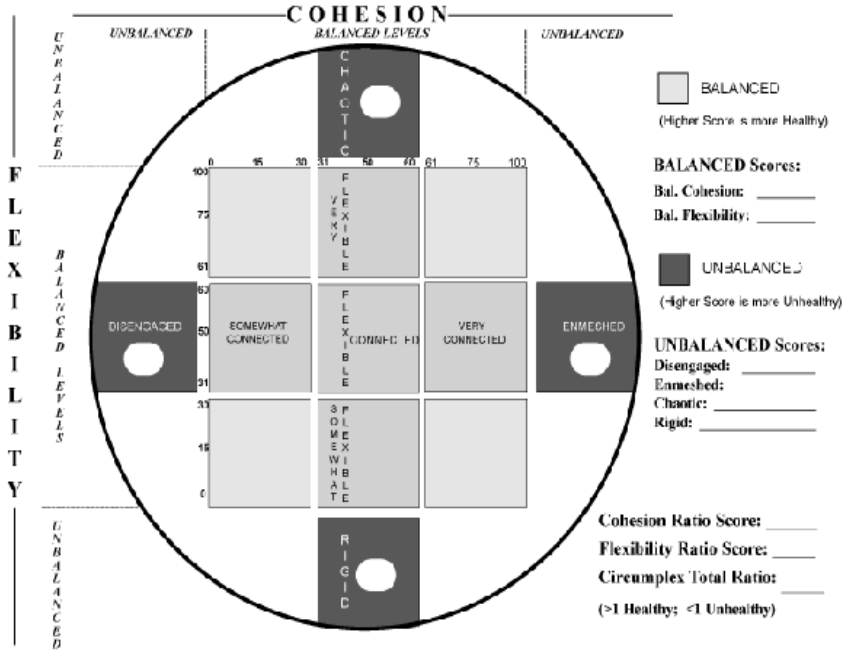
Never Always

1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ 5□ 6□

The authors of the FACES IV have requested that these test items be removed from the thesis. Please contact Life Innovations, Inc at cs@facesiv.com to obtain a copy of the FACES IV.

Circumplex Model and FACES IV Scores (Olson, Gorall, & Tiesel, 2006)

Figure 1: FACES IV Scores & Circumplex Model



Couple-Conflict Type Scenarios

The scenarios are part of the RELATionship Evaluation (Holman, Busby, Doxey, Loyer-Carlson, & Klein, 1997). To purchase the evaluation please go to http://www.relate-institute.org.

These descriptions are of how people in four different types of relationships handle conflict. We would like to see which type most closely describes how you and your partner deal with conflict in your relationship (respondents do not see the couple-conflict type labels which are in italics in the above descriptions). Read the descriptions then choose from the response categories, 1 = Never, 2 = Rarely, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Often, 5 = Very Often.

The couple-conflict type descriptions are as follows:

Volatile

134. In our relationship, conflicts may be fought on a grand scale, and that is okay, since our making up is even grander. We have volcanic arguments, but they are just a small part of a warm and loving relationship. Although we argue, we are still able to resolve our differences. In fact, our passion and zest for fighting actually lead to a better relationship, with a lot of making up, laughing, and affection.

1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ 5□

Conflict-Avoiding

135. In our relationship, conflict is minimized. We think it is better to “agree to disagree” rather than end up in discussions that will result in a deadlock. We don't think much is to be gained from getting openly angry with each other. In fact, a lot of talking about disagreements seems to make matters worse. We feel that if you just relax about problems, they will have a way of working themselves out.

1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ 5□

Validating

136. In our relationship, when we are having conflict, we let each other know the other's opinions are valued and their emotions valid, even if we disagree with each other. Even when discussing a hot topic, we display a lot of self-control and are calm. When fighting, we spend a lot of time validating each other as well as trying to persuade our partner, or trying to find a compromise.

1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ 5□

Hostile

137. We argue often and hotly. There are a lot of insults back and forth, name calling, put-downs, and sarcasm. We don't really listen to what the other is saying, nor do we look at each other very much. One or the other of us can be quite detached and emotionally uninvolved, even though there may be brief episodes of attack and defensiveness. There are clearly more negatives than positives in our relationship.

1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ 5□

Demographics Questionnaire

Participant Information

To ensure confidentiality, please **do not put your name on this questionnaire**. For each question below, you will be asked to either check a box or fill in a blank. Please take your time and answer each question completely. If you have any questions or comments about this questionnaire, please email me at todd.dutka@agape.twu.ca.

Demographics

138) Please indicate your gender.
□ Male □ Female

139) Please indicate your age: _____ (years)

140) Please indicate your current relational status.
□ Dating □ Engaged □ Common-law □ Married □ Single and not dating

141) Is your current relationship: □ Heterosexual □ Same sex

142) How long have you been in this relationship: ____ years and ____ months

143) Current living arrangement: □ Alone □ With Parents □ With Partner
□ With Others □ With Children □ With Partner and Children

144) Please indicate your current occupation (check all that apply).
□ Student
□ Unemployed
□ Part time employment
□ Full time employment
If employed, please specify your occupation(s): _____

145) Education: □ Some High School □ Completed High School □ Some College/University or post-secondary training □ Completed a bachelor's degree □ Completed an advanced Degree (e.g., Master's, PhD)

146) Have you considered what occupation you would like to have as a long-term career? □ Yes □ No

If yes, what occupation / career is that? _____

Are you currently in that occupation / career? □ Yes □ No

147) If you have chosen an occupation but are not yet in it, to what extent are you confident in your choice?
Not confident at all 1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ 5□ 6□ 7□ 8□ 9□ Very confident

148) Please indicate your ethnicity.
□ Aboriginal /First Nations □ Caucasian / European □ Latino / Hispanic □ African □ South Asian □ East / Southeast Asian □ Middle Eastern □ Caribbean□ Other (please specify)_____

149) Birthplace: _____

150) Current citizenship: _____

151) What country do you currently live in:
□ Canada □ United States □ Other (please specify):
_____

152) Religious/ Faith Affiliation: □ Protestant / Evangelical Christianity □ Orthodox Christianity □ Catholicism □ Judaism □ Islam □ Sikh □ Hinduism □ Buddhism □ None Other:_____

153) How successful have you been in your career decision-making?
Not at all successful 1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ 5□ 6□ 7□ 8□ 9□ Very successful

154) How involved has your romantic partner been in your career decision-making?
Not at all involved 1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ 5□ 6□ 7□ 8□ 9□ Very involved

155) Did you have contact with your partner, regarding any aspect of the questionnaires, while completing the forms: □ Yes □ No

From your family of origin (i.e., referring to your own parents):

156) Family Structure: □ Two Parents (biological) □ Two Parents (step family) □ Two Parents (adoptive) Two Parent (same sex) □ One Parent

157) Were you the: □ First Child □ Second Child □ Third Child □ Fourth or Older Child

158) Number of Siblings: □None □ One □ Two □ Three □ Four □ Five □ Six or more

If you wish to have your name placed in the draw for one of three gift certificates to the Keg Steakhouse restaurants ($50 value), and/or wish to receive a summary of the results of this study once it is finished, please send an email to todd.dutka@agape.twu.ca, with (a) your contact information (name and email address) and (b) the title of this survey in the subject line.

Debriefing

The primary purpose of this study is to discover whether or not a statistically significant relationship exists between career decision-making difficulties, decision-making styles, relational functionality, and couple-conflict type, and if such a relationship does exist, the strength of the relationships between these factors.

The data collected will be used to address the primary guiding research question of this study, which is:
What are the effects of different aspects of individuals' functioning in their romantic relationships on their career-related decision-making?

To ensure confidentiality, no participant contact information will be collected, or stored, through the questionnaire presented via the Survey Monkey web-site. The voluntary release of contact information sent to Todd Dutka, at todd.dutka@agape.twu.ca, will be used only to enter participants in the Keg Steakhouse restaurants gift certificate draw, and/or to send participants the study results. The voluntarily provided contact information will not be connected, in any way, to the questionnaire responses.

Once completed, you may borrow a copy of the entire thesis by visiting the Norma Marion Alloway Library at Trinity Western University, 7600 Glover Road, Langley, British Columbia, 604 888-7511, www.twu.ca/library.

If you have any questions or concerns surrounding any aspect of the study please contact me, Todd Dutka, via email at todd.dutka@agape.twu.ca.

APPENDIX C: Informed Consent Form

Different Aspects of Individuals' Functioning in Their Romantic Relationships and the Effects on Their Career-Related Decision-Making

Principal Investigator: Todd Dutka, student, Counselling Psychology, Trinity Western University. todd.dutka@agape.twu.ca

Supervisor: Dr. José F. Domene, Counselling Psychology, Trinity Western University. 604-513-2121 ext. 3871. jose.domene@twu.ca

Dear participant,

The purpose of this study is to examine the influence of relationship factors on career decision-making processes and outcomes. This study has been designed to explore whether or not a connection exists between couple factors and decision-making factors and, if so, how much influence do various couples relationship factors have on different aspects of career decision-making. We are specifically interested in what are the effects of different aspects of individuals' functioning in their romantic relationships on their career-related decision-making.

If you choose to participate, you will be asked to complete a questionnaire about these topics, lasting approximately 45 minutes. If both you and your partner are interested in participating, please complete the survey by yourself, rather than together; and do not discuss the questions with each other until both of you have completed it.

Some people may feel uncomfortable with sharing information online, or find some of the questions a bit personal. Rest assured, the information you provide will be kept anonymous and confidential. Also, you are free to withdraw from the study at any time, or to skip over any questions that you are not comfortable answering. On the positive side, participating in this study may increase your understanding of the connections between relationship functioning and career decision-making in your own life.

To ensure that all participants will remain anonymous, identifying information will not be collected through the questionnaire presented on the Survey Monkey web-site. Data collected from the questionnaire will first be stored in the secure Survey Monkey server, and then stored on password encrypted flash drive that will be stored under lock and key in an alarmed facility. The combined information from all participants will be stored in anonymous form, for possible future research. None of your data will be released without explicit permission from you, or as required by law.

Survey Monkey is a private data collection management service. According to their web-site, all participant data collected through Survey Monkey is safely stored, in the strictest confidence, on their secure servers in the United States of America. Survey Monkey also states that they have met the Safe Harbor and European Union (EU) Data Protection Requirements, that all collected and stored data is available only to the account holder, and that all information collected is kept confidential and secure, and is not shared with any third parties.

At the end of the questionnaire, you will be given the option to send contact information (name and email address) to Todd Dutka via email to receive a summary of the results of this study once it is finished, and/or to enter yourself into the draw to win one of three $50.00 gift certificates to The Keg Steakhouse restaurants (whether or not you complete the entire survey). You do not have to send this contact information, if you prefer not to.

Also, once completed, you may borrow a copy of the entire thesis by visiting the Norma Marion Alloway Library at Trinity Western University, 7600 Glover Road, Langley, British Columbia, 604 888-7511, www.twu.ca/library.

If you do not understand any aspect of this form, or have any questions or desire further information with respect to this study, please do not proceed until you have contacted **Todd Dutka** at todd.dutka@agape.twu.ca.

If you have any concerns about your treatment or rights as a research subject, you may contact **Ms. Sue Funk** in the Office of Research at Trinity Western University at 604-513-2142 or sue.funk@twu.ca.

12/04/07

By clicking on the “Yes" button to proceed with the survey, you are indicating that you (a) have read and understood the material in this consent form, (b) consent to participate in this study and (c) understand that your responses may be converted into anonymous form and kept for future research use after the completion of this study.