

FACTORS TO CONSIDER IN PRIORITIZING/COMPROMISING AROUND  
FUTURE CAREER PATHS IN EMERGING YOUNG ADULT COUPLES

By

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## ABSTRACT

Research on Gottfredson's theory involved the evaluation or application of principles as they apply to individuals pursuing their own career plans. Little research exists on how the process of career compromise occurs within the context of committed romantic relationships. To address this gap, the process of career compromise in emerging young adults in committed romantic relationships was investigated. Qualitative methods were used to explore: (a) who is compromising, (b) what aspects of career are being compromised, (c) what contextual and personal factors are influencing the compromising process, and (d) what areas of life have higher or lower priority than career, in terms of the compromises being made. Data were drawn from a larger study, utilizing the action project method to investigate career decisions in emerging young adult couples. Data from six couples were examined within and across cases through deductive qualitative analysis. Findings provide partial support for Gottfredson's theory as participants attempted to preserve their career interests, but eventually compromised to maintain prestige. Three important findings emerged from the analysis: (a) men compromise their career interest in order for their partners to pursue their careers, (b) financial pressures and partner happiness were equally influential across all couples, and (c) evidence of career compromise is a joint process that is uniquely expressed in all couples. The investigation provides greater insight into how the principles proposed by Gottfredson in her theory of compromise are applicable in a larger context within couples.

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Important life decisions such as choice of occupation can be difficult to make, especially when a compromise is required. It may be particularly difficult to reach an acceptable compromise about future career decisions when one is involved in a committed romantic relationship. The difficulty arises because individuals in these relationships need to take their partner's thoughts, feelings, needs, and goals into account. This can be particularly challenging for younger romantically involved individuals who are simultaneously faced with establishing desirable careers, being supportive of their partner's occupation choices, and maintaining or developing strong, committed mutual relationships. Focusing on career awareness and compromise during early adult stages of life is crucially important in order to help couples effectively negotiate career decisions (Brott, 1993).

In career development, compromise has been theoretically defined as a selection strategy used in the process of systematically rejecting unacceptable career options from a variety of occupational possibilities, which creates a "zone of acceptable alternatives" (Gottfredson, 2002). In the pursuit of a desired career, however, certain obstacles and barriers may act as deterrents in the quest to achieve the most preferred occupations. Issues such as finances, relocation, level of education, investment in career, desired family life, availability of jobs, and occupation flexibility may prove to be problematic, deterring individuals from obtaining their ideal occupations. In this context, Blanchard and Lichtenberg (2003) defined compromise as an event whereby individuals give up

their most preferred occupational choices for alternatives which are less attractive, but more realistically attainable.

A qualitative research design was implemented in the current study, to permit examination of how Gottfredson's (1981, 2002) concept of compromise manifests itself in the career decision-making processes of young adult couples. Four specific research questions were addressed:

1. Who is doing the compromise? One member of the couple, both, or neither?
2. What aspect of the career is being compromised? Interest, sex-type, or prestige?
3. What contextual and personal factors are influencing the compromising process: debt, job market, or personal values?
4. What areas of life have higher or lower priority than career, in terms of the compromises being made: relocation, partner, or happiness?

The overall purpose of this proposed research is to gain a better understanding of the process of career compromise in emerging young adult couples. In other words, what are the important factors that are involved in the process of making career compromises, and do these compromises occur in a way that is consistent with Gottfredson's theory of circumscription and compromise?

Chapter 1 of this thesis is the introduction. Chapter 2 consists of a critical review of the literature, exploring the element of career compromise as it occurs in young adults and young couples (as described by Gottfredson, 2002). Chapter 3 provides a detailed outline of the research method, including information regarding the design, participant characteristics, process of recruitment, methods of data collection (action project method), and data analysis (deductive qualitative paradigm and procedures for upholding rigour and trustworthiness). Chapter 4 presents the findings from the data in textual

format, while Chapter 5 provides a summary; a discussion, with special attention given to the limitations; and future directions for research.



## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

A university professor, the first female faculty member in her department, gave up her position to accommodate her husband's job relocation. A physician did not accept an offer for partnership in a medical practice because of her husband's expressed "hatred" towards her potential partner (Whitmarsh, Brown, Cooper, Hawkins-Rodgers, & Wentworth, 2007, p. 231).

These cases were examples of career compromise made by women in order to satisfy relational needs. Similarly the current study explored the inevitability of career compromise within a couples' context and the difficulties that was experienced in the process. This chapter contributed to the development of the theoretical foundation upon which the research was completed through the exploration of previous research findings. Specifically, Gottfredson's (2002) theory of compromise and other and how compromise occurs as seen through various theoretical lenses. Finally, this chapter addressed the gap in the literature and the affect of this gap on the counselling profession.

### *Gottfredson's Theory of Career Compromise*

Gottfredson (1981, 2002) defined compromise as the process of letting go of one's ideal preference in order to accommodate one's external realities. She proposed a theory to explain how career compromises can occur in individuals. In her theory, one of the key factors of career decision-making competence is the ability to make a compromise and live with it. It is essential to explore the decision-making process to understand the issues involved in career compromises (Super, 1984). Although career compromises can occur at any stage in life, they are most prominent during early adulthood. Career compromises can occur in adolescence, but usually become more serious later on, when young adults

are in positions to choose their future careers and embark on their adult lives. Research has revealed that almost every individual undergoes the process of having to abandon an ideal career that is unavailable or unattainable, which may lead to anger, frustration, regret, and confusion (Gati, Houminer, & Fassa, 1997). A compromise becomes inevitable once people come to the realization that their ideal aspirations are unreachable.

Gottfredson's (2002) theory of circumscription and compromise proposes four principles that she believes govern career compromises in adolescents and young adults: (a) developing conditional priorities, (b) opting for "the good", (c) staving off the "not good enough", and (d) accommodating to compromise. The first principle involves the order in which different dimensions of work will be sacrificed when an individual is faced with a compromise: first the field of interest, followed by prestige, then finally sex-type. Gottfredson believes that one's gender identity is the most protected aspect of one's self-concept. She reasons that one's occupation is a public representation of one's self, and most people have priorities regarding how they would like to be viewed in the public eye. In particular, it is assumed that men will not want to pursue stereotypically feminine careers, for fear of being seen as not masculine.

The second most protected aspect of one's self-concept is one's social standing. This refers to social status and the social class associated with one's occupation. Gottfredson (2002) asserts that humans are social beings and thus protecting how one is perceived by others in a social context is more important than fulfilling one's interests. Finally, field of interest is hypothesized to be the most flexible and most likely occupational aspect to be sacrificed when one's ideal career is unavailable. Research supports the important roles that sex-type, prestige, and interest play in making career

decisions; however, the relative levels of influence for these factors have not always been found to be in the order proposed by Gottfredson (Blanchard & Lichtenberg, 2003).

In her second principle, Gottfredson (2002) proposed that individuals will not be able to pursue their ideal vocational aspirations, but rather will settle for choices that are “good enough”. The process of selecting a good enough choice over an optimal choice involves a thorough investigation of one’s values, gathering information on different occupations, and determining occupational accessibility. This process usually reveals that “optimal choices” are excessively demanding and inconvenient to pursue, and therefore unattractive options for engagement.

According to the third principle, an individual will not commit to an occupation if she or he finds all her or his options to be unsatisfactory. Instead, she or he will delay committing to any occupation. This avoidance may include continuing to pursue an untenable career, or searching within one’s zone of satisfactory occupational alternatives for other, more viable, options.

Gottfredson’s final principle of “accommodating to compromise” describes peoples’ adjustment to the career compromises they have made. Specifically, she states that individuals are better able to accommodate psychologically to compromises in type of work activity, less to compromises that involve prestige, and least to compromises that threaten their gender identities. Psychological accommodations to compromise in this context suggest an individual’s willingness and ability to adjust to a situation that calls for a compromise.

Gottfredson’s (2002) theory has been criticized on the grounds that sex-type and prestige are too strongly linked and, therefore, the distinct role played by each of these factors is unclear (Blanchard & Lichtenberg, 2003). This means that the investigation of

these three constructs as independent variables becomes difficult due to their high degree of interrelatedness. This interrelatedness was acknowledged by Holt (1989), who attempted to control for sex-type while examining the roles played by prestige and interest in career compromise among forty-two male and female undergraduate engineering and social work students. Participants were forced to choose between pairs of jobs in series; and to rank jobs by preference using a card sort procedure. Results lend support to Gottfredson's theory as both groups chose occupations based on interest. However, engineering students were more likely to choose based on prestige regardless of interest, whereas social work students chose based on interest rather than prestige, suggesting that the relative value of what is compromised first may be related to field of work.

Acknowledging the non-independence of the three dimensions of compromise, Leung and Plake (1990) investigated only the importance of sex-type and prestige in choosing careers within a heterogeneous sample of 246 college students from a Midwestern university. They used the Occupational Choice Dilemma Inventory (OCDI), a forced-choice questionnaire requiring participants to address occupational dilemmas that represented systematic variations in sex-type and prestige levels. Results of their study provided only partial support for the first principle of Gottfredson's theory: When forced to make a choice between sacrificing sex-type or prestige, participants tended to sacrifice sex-type and used prestige as the factor that governed their career choices. The authors interpreted this to mean that (a) college students have wide boundaries around what acceptable sex-types are, and (b) as long as different occupational choices are neutral in sex-type rather than opposed to one's own sex-type, there is a greater tendency to sacrifice sex-type in favour of prestige. However, they also found that once a minimum

level of acceptable prestige was satisfied, prestige became less prominent than sex-type; when the choice was between a medium and a high prestige occupation, sex-type played more of a role in the decision. Evidently, the relative importance of sex type and prestige in making compromises around one's future career is complex, and may depend on how much deviation from optimal sex-type or prestige expectations is involved in the choices that are available.

Findings from Leung and Plake (1990) were supported in a replication study with a sample of Asian American college students (Leung, 1993), again using the OCDI. It was found that participants were less likely to sacrifice prestige than sex-type, but also that there appear to be relatively wide acceptable sex-type boundaries and minimum levels of acceptable prestige, after which sex-type becomes more important. Prestige seemed to be a more important factor, especially for women, who were willing to consider non-traditional jobs that had higher levels of prestige than the traditionally female alternatives they were given. Although these findings suggest that Gottfredson's theory underestimates the importance of prestige, it is important to note that cultural considerations were not fully explored in this investigation. Given the inherent subjectivity of what "prestige" and even "sex-type" mean to different individuals, it is unclear how many of the findings may be attributed to specific pairs of career dilemmas presented in the instrument, rather than prestige and sex-type per se.

In light of the emerging literature that indicated a general lack of support for the theory of compromise proposed by Gottfredson (1981), Hesketh, Elmslie, and Kaldor (1990) conducted two studies to clarify the situation. They used a more realistic methodology to test the theory of compromise than those applied in previous studies (e.g., Davidson, 1986; Hesketh, Durante, & Pryor, 1990; Pryor & Taylor, 1986; Pryor, 1985;

Taylor & Pryor, 1985, all as cited in Hesketh et al., 1990). The first study had 73 career-dissatisfied adult participants ranging in age from 15 to 53 years. The second sample consisted of 90 high school students with an age range from 15 to 18 years. Both studies had equal numbers of men and women, and high and low socio-economic status was represented in the samples. Both involved qualitative measures (i.e., fuzzy ratings; and fuzzy paired comparisons; and perceived importance of sex type, prestige, and interests) to test the theory of compromise. The focus of the second study was to determine whether Gottfredson's (1981) theory had a class or gender bias, specifically, whether non-support for the theory was limited to those of a higher social class or a particular gender.

Results from both studies failed to provide support for Gottfredson's (1981) proposal that sex-type is the most important factor when making career compromises, followed by prestige, and interest. Rather, the order of importance demonstrated by participants was interest, followed by prestige and sex type.

Results of the second study also indicated that neither social class nor gender had moderating effects on the results (Hesketh, Elmslie, & Kaldor, 1990). Results of these studies suggest that interest plays a more important role than either sex-type or prestige, in realistic examinations of career compromise. It was postulated that interest was not sacrificed due to its multifaceted, complex nature which incorporates sex-type and prestige.

Gottfredson's hierarchical conceptualization of the relative importance of sex-type, prestige, and interest in governing compromise is generally not well supported in the empirical literature. Instead, findings reveal that these factors appear to overlap or be somehow interconnected, making this a theory that is difficult to evaluate (Blanchard & Lichtenberg, 2003).

### *Factors Affecting Career Compromise*

As a consequence of these research findings, in 1996 Gottfredson proceeded to modify her theory to take into account these discoveries. The most recent revision to her theory alters the first principle to state that the degree of compromise faced by an individual governs which factor will be most likely compromised. In a relatively low compromise situation, an individual is more likely to protect interest, followed by prestige, and then sex-type. In a moderate compromise, prestige is least likely to be compromised, followed by interest, then sex-type. When a high level of compromise is involved, sex-type is the last to be compromised, followed by prestige, and then interest (Gottfredson, 2002). Gottfredson suggests that a low compromise is one that allows an individual to choose between acceptable alternatives, whereas an individual having to choose between unacceptable alternatives would constitute a major compromise. A moderate level of compromise would mean having to choose between options about which the individual was uncertain.

The first principal of Gottfredson's (2002) revised theory of compromise was tested by Blanchard and Lichtenberg (2003) with a sample of male and female university students with ages ranging from 20 to 27 years. It was hypothesized that individuals would choose occupations based on interest when engaging in minor compromises, but based on prestige and sex-type when faced with moderate and major compromises, respectively. Consistent with Gottfredson's theory, in the low compromising condition participants chose occupations that were most in line with their interests, followed by prestige, and then sex-type. However, results from the moderate and high compromising

condition revealed that equal importance was placed on sex-type and prestige. Apparently there were no differences between the latter two levels of compromise. In summary, results of this study indicated that Gottfredson's theory is accurate in predicting the lower importance of interest in major career compromises, but underestimates the value placed on prestige in the career decision-making process.

Gottfredson does not explicitly attend to gender differences in her theory of career compromise (Blanchard & Lichtenberg, 2003); however, she has suggested that men are less likely and less willing to compromise on sex-type than women. Her supposition is consistent with gender differences that emerged from Blanchard and Lichtenberg's investigation, which showed that women placed more importance on prestige than on sex-type. Similarly, in Leung and Plake's (1990) and Leung's (1993) studies, women tended to choose prestige over sex-type in career compromises. Men were less likely to sacrifice sex-type for prestige when a choice existed between a lower prestige masculine job and a higher prestige feminine job. These findings are consistent with previous research conducted by Blanchard and Lichtenberg revealing that women gave slightly higher ratings to prestige than sex-type. Results of several studies also indicate that men are less flexible in compromising prestige, but are more willing to sacrifice field of interest, whereas women are shown to be less flexible in compromising on interest (Gati, 1992; Hesketh, Elmslie, & Kaldor, 1990; Leung & Harmon, 1990).

Gati (1992) hypothesized that different sex-roles would influence readiness to make compromises, as well as the content of those compromises. His study included 1,252 women and 751 men who used a computer-assisted career decision-making system (MESHIV) to rate the degree of importance given to their considerations when making a career decision and also to their preferences. Items on the MESHIV include simple and



complex aspects of career decision-making. The term aspect is defined as any consideration or factor pertinent in making a choice among occupational alternatives. Eighty-seven percent of his sample were 18-24 years of age, and the remaining 13% were 25 years of age and older. Results revealed no overall gender differences in readiness to compromise. Across-subject correlations of simple and complex aspects revealed that there were individual differences in readiness to compromise. In other words, the differences in readiness to compromise can be attributed to within-individual differences (i.e., readiness by some to accept compromises in some aspects but not others) and within-group differences (i.e., some individuals are more ready to compromise than others) rather than to gender differences. The lack of relationship found between gender and compromise in this study may reflect the evolution of men's and women's approaches to choosing careers, which can be attributed to the decreasing gender gap for roles among young adults. Despite these results, the importance of gender must not be overlooked, because many studies do indicate that women are more likely to consider opposite sex-type occupations (Jagacinski, 1987). At the same time, however, the findings across these studies suggest that it is also important to attend to individual characteristics and variations in understanding compromise. Gender and gender role attitudes are only two of a multitude of factors that affect the process of making career compromises.

### *Negotiating Compromise in Romantic Couples*

Goodnow (1997) argued that *interpersonal* planning is important because life decisions are not made by one individual alone. In a committed romantic relationship, it takes two people to make decisions around work-family life. In this context, the element

of interpersonal planning is important for understanding career compromise.

Incongruence between a partner's preference for work-family accommodation and what is realistically being experienced in the relationship is likely to affect not only the relationship, but also each individual's sense of well-being. Therefore, couples' shared visions of plans to integrate work and family are important to examine. Since the dual career family has become the norm in North America, synchronization of career and marriage has become a complex task. In emerging young adulthood, this process is complicated by the fact that people are often attempting to launch their careers while simultaneously building long-term committed romantic relationships (Arnett, 1997, 2004). Coordinating a relationship and both partners' career plans can be quite stressful and anxiety provoking, because individuals not only need to take into account their own needs and preferences but also the needs, preferences, and aspirations of their partners.

Unfortunately, Gottfredson's theory (1981, 2002) is focused primarily on the individual rather than more systemic levels of functioning. To date, analysis of career compromise and multiple role planning has been centered on individuals (Peake & Harris, 2002); therefore, little is known about the nature of career compromise as it may occur in young adult couples. Previous studies conducted with young adult individuals have demonstrated that the process of compromise is not clear and does not always follow the sequence set forth by Gottfredson. What is known is that there appear to be boundaries with respect to sex-type, prestige, and interest that individuals seem to impose upon themselves when making career compromises. Also, what principle is compromised seems to depend on the degree of compromise that is required. However, the three principles of compromise seem to be interrelated, and individual differences and beliefs (e.g., traditional gender role beliefs) appear to influence the process. Moreover, inferences

can not be drawn from results of studies conducted with individuals to couples, because the desires of two people need to be taken into account.

#### *Other Research on Career Compromise in Couples*

Although there is an absence of research grounded in Gottfredson's theory on couples' career compromise, there is existing research on how couples generally resolve conflicts and reach compromises together.

*Dual-career couples.* The term dual-career couples was first introduced in the 1960s by Rapoport and Rapoport (as cited in Neault & Pickerell, 2005), who defined it as two people with individual careers in a mutually committed relationship. Parker and Arthur (2004) believed career provides a venue for individuals to develop their identity and find meaning while dedicating energy to nurturing their own self-development and simultaneously nurturing the relationship. Therefore, they proposed that the dual career couple can be re-conceptualized as a three-career couple to include the relationship, as equal amount of time, energy and resources are needed to sustain each. Moreover, achieving a work-family balance is challenging, as the couple must navigate through the many changes they face in traditional values, family structures, and gender role expectations.

Many theoretical frameworks have been offered to help conceptualize the negotiation between couples and career (e.g., Apostol & Helland, 1993; Burgess & Huston, 1979; Challiol & Mignonac, 2005; Whitmarsh, Brown, Cooper, Hawkins-Rodgers, & Wentworth, 2007). Challiol and Mignonac noted that these frameworks can also be used to help elucidate research findings on how couples compromise when conflicts arise between individual careers and the couple's relationship. Three

frameworks proposed by Challiol and Mignonac as being useful are: (a) the economic approach, (b) relative resource theory, (c) role theory, and (d) social exchange theories.

*The economic approach.* The neoclassical explanation assumes that maximizing family gains is the driving force behind how a decision is made. Maximizing family gains means that each partner places the welfare of the family before individual interests and well-being (Challiol & Mignonac, 2005). According to this approach, if a partner has a job offer to relocate, the decision will be made based on whether the relocating partner's earning potential will exceed the earning loss of the other partner. In this scenario, if a partner is presented an opportunity to have a career in his or her area of interest that only maximizes personal gain and not family gain, then he or she will have to compromise that opportunity for the well-being of the family. Factors such as income and alternative job opportunities for both partners that increase family gains are strong indicators of how the decision will be made, and who will be doing the compromising.

*Relative resource theory.* Relative resource theorists suggest that the partner with the most power in the couple drives the decision-making process (Challiol & Mignonac, 2005). Power in a romantic couple is assumed to be directly related to the amount of socio-economic resources a partner contributes; the more resources a partner contributes, the more power that partner will have in the decision-making process. For example, when deciding to relocate, the partner with the most power will have precedence in deciding whether to relocate to further his/her career goals, while the other partner may have to compromise to the detriment of his/her own career goals. Another variable that has been found to play an important intervening role in the career compromising process is the availability of alternative job opportunities for the partner who does not want to relocate,

or the flexibility a job offers a woman wanting to have children (Eby, 2001; Eby & Russell, 2000; Feldman & Bolino, 1998).

According to Statistics Canada reports, in 1999 women earned only 70% of the average salary of men when employed full-time, while in 1995, women were found to carry out two-thirds of the household work (Matlin, 2004, as cited in Coogan & Chen, 2007). Coogan and Chen noted that as a result, women experience more interruptions, make less income, and have less opportunity for vocational advancement. Consequently, women end up making compromises as in many cases men yield more power in the dual career couple as they contribute more financially (Green, 1997).

This finding is supported by Biernat and Wortman's (1991) investigation of the shared home responsibilities of 39 married couples in which both partners are in relatively equal status careers. The focus of this study was on women employed in the academic arena and in business. The findings revealed that couples with wives employed in both areas of work were happiest when the male's earnings were higher than the female's. In the business women's group, compromises made by women to invest more time at home were determined by the husband's income, education, and work hours. In this situation, the couples were happiest when the husband's career was given priority. In contrast, in the academic sample, the nature of the compromise was that if one worked longer hours the other would invest more time at home. Women in the academic career group also were more satisfied when their husbands earned more, but were less satisfied when their husband's career was given a higher priority. Biernat and Wortman proposed that the differences between the groups may be that women in academic careers are more ambivalent about norms regarding traditional gender roles. They also concluded that all

women are socialized in traditional gender roles but both men and women are struggling to deal with career decisions as changes in society propel changes in gender roles.

*Role theory.* Role theory addresses how gender differences impact family and career decision-making and ultimately the compromising process. This theory suggests that the process and outcome of decision-making within the couple is affected by the manner in which the individuals in the couple define their own family roles, career, and beliefs regarding gender roles (Challiol & Mignonac, 2005). In contrast to the economic theory, role theory hypothesizes that “whether or not a [partner] assumes (or shares) responsibility for the provider role may shape the value placed on that spouse’s earnings potential in bargaining over the division of family roles and responsibilities” (Bielby & Bielby, 1992, p. 1245). Challiol and Mignonac explained that according to this theory men and woman are socialized in their gender roles and these roles lie on a continuum from traditional to modern. The traditional gender role is defined by the man possessing the power in making decisions who therefore, would not have to compromise if he chooses not to. The woman would have to compromise her career goals to put the family first. However, in current North American society, decisions tend to be more negotiable, and it is less clear who has the power.

A national survey was used by Fritz and Lantos (1991) to examine the differences that may exist in the career and family patterns of full-time and part-time pediatricians. Three hundred and seventy five members of the American Academy of Paediatrics were contacted with a 65% response rate. The sample included full-time men with a mean age of 46, and women full-time and part-time with a mean age of 40. Results indicated that 21% of women paediatricians were working part-time, and 37% of women have worked part-time at some in their career. Findings also revealed that 70% of women employed

full-time were married, in comparison to 95% of part-time employed married women and 97% of married men working full-time. The part-time women's work included mostly teaching and very little research related work. Many of the part-time women reported having made career compromises, but the majority indicated that they were happy with their career decisions. These results indicate that women in committed relationships often make career compromises in order to have children and to focus on family well-being instead of being purely career-oriented. The predictions of role theory have been supported by other research that shows women are more likely to compromise their career for the career gains of their male counterparts even if the women's career provides more gains for the family (Becker & Moen, 1999; Bielby & Bielby, 1992).

Challiol and Mignonac (2005) reports that other researchers have purposed the idea of career priority which posits that when making compromises the individual whose career the couple favours gets first priority. Also, decisions to relocate depend on who the couple perceives as having the highest priority. Findings from Challiol and Mignonac supported their hypothesis that the willingness and acceptance of relocation for career gains was weaker when the member of the couple whose career had the least priority was the one offered the relocation.

Apostal and Helland (1993) investigated the level of commitment, types and number of role changes, and the relationship between commitment and role change in a sample consisting of dual career partners. Findings indicated that both partners agreed on traditional gender roles when it came to household work. However, in the area of non-domestic activities such as career, improved role negotiation was needed as the wife made more compromises to benefit their dual career life style.

*Social exchange theory.* Social exchange theory is similar to the economic approach, as couples are theorized to make decisions in the direction that will provide them with the most gains (Challiol & Mignonac, 2005). This framework introduces the idea that individuals provide services and activities valued by each other (Burgess & Huston, 1979). According to Challiol and Mignonac, the crucial distinction between social exchange theory and the economic approach is that in the latter relations are based more on contractual agreements and in the former relationships between two people are driven by a set of non-specific obligations and trust that results in relationships that are personally profitable and mutually satisfying.

As Challiol and Mignonac (2005) pointed out, this theory assumes that each partner in the couple is interdependent, with each partner's behaviour providing rewards for the other. This interdependence explains why each member of the couple is prone to considering his or her partner's preferences in the compromising process. Taking a partner's preferences and satisfaction into consideration can be more important than taking the opportunity to satisfy one's own career goals. Therefore, when a potentially compromising decision needs to be made, both partner's desires are given equal weight in order to maintain a good relationship. Currently, this framework has been the most widely used to elucidate how decisions to compromise are made.

Whitmarsh, Brown, Cooper, Hawkins-Rodgers, and Wentworth (2007) found support for the social exchange theory in investigating career planning, career decisions, and work history of women who are in gender-neutral and female-dominated careers. Women in both types of careers emphasized the importance of support from their significant other in encouraging their career development. Whitmarsh et al. suggested that shared responsibility and strong marital partnership contribute greatly to a successful



dual-career marriage. Women who chose to juggle career and family responsibilities often had to make compromises in the area of home and family in order to advance their career.

Many women admitted having been discouraged by their partners in pursuing a gender neutral career as their partners did not think that they would be successful in juggling both family and career responsibilities (Whitmarsh, Brown, Cooper, Hawkins-Rodgers, and Wentworth, 2007). These women were able to achieve their goals of balancing family and work by being in a female dominant career that allowed time for family and successful re-entry into the work force. These women received support from their partners in their decision to pursue a female-dominated career, which gave them the ability to make family their priority and not their career.

Haddock and Rattenborg (2003) noted the importance of providing and focusing on mutual goals in family life as a key factor in the negotiation process. Forty-seven couples with children, with a mean age of 40 and an average combined income range of \$34,000 to \$220,000, were assessed on work-family gains and work-family conflict. Results obtained from a battery of instruments and semi-structured interviews indicated that couples valued role modeling an egalitarian partnership which included supporting one another's work and family goals while demonstrating positive regard for each other. Couples who were successful in balancing work and family made a conscious and concerted effort to set boundaries in their professional lives. In making this effort the couples had to make professional sacrifices when they both agreed to prioritize family well-being over career.

Therefore compromises were made based not only on family values but also in the direction that allowed an increase in the family's financial resources and flexibility. Increasing financial resources was related to family values; more income meant having a

better lifestyle (e.g., buying a home, better health care, higher quality childcare). The issue of income was an important consideration in the compromising process as the additional income allowed both partners to take more risks in their careers, such as pursuing a career path that was more in line with their interest but paid less. Having a dual income household afforded the flexibility to make these changes and support each other's divergent career directions.

Green (1997) posited that dual career couples consciously or unconsciously make decisions to give equal precedence to both careers. If giving equal importance to both careers is not possible then couples must make a choice as to whose career should be given priority. In cases such as this, decisions inevitably require a compromise. Using a mixed method case study approach, Parker and Arthur (2004) investigated the key issues that couples face in attempting to achieve this balance. Their research revealed that it was important for the couple to bring issues out of the subconscious to the conscious realm by addressing issues through three different dimensions. These dimensions include knowing-why (e.g., individual motivation, personal meaning), knowing-how (e.g., developing skills related to desired career), and knowing-whom (e.g., personal relationships spanning work and personal life). Additional themes that emerged included (a) learning to appreciate mutual core values, (b) sharing individual progress, (c) supporting each other, (d) valuing the support, (e) being intentional about spending quality time together, (e) not expecting to always have a stable relationship and (f) viewing the changes that a dual-career couple faces as opportunities to take advantage of the emergence of greater flexibility in career planning. Although the findings reveal that being conscious of issues allows couples to better negotiate issues and compromise to overcome challenges, the

time-bound nature of this research did not include a follow-up to observe how the compromises materialized.

Neault and Pickerell (2005) investigated if it was possible for couples to have a successful career without compromising personal satisfaction, relationships, and maintaining life balance. Two areas that were explored were the challenges that the couples encountered in a dual-career relationship, and what strategies were employed to manage two careers and a relationship. Some areas where challenges emerged were impact on career, personal well-being, and domestic/family responsibilities, and personal well-being. Catalyst (as cited in Neault & Pickerell) noted that in terms of impact on career, couples considered both careers to be of equal importance, but when conflict between both careers arose and compromises needed to be made, the man's career tended to be given priority. Similar findings were reported by Lang (2000) where women were twice as likely to make compromises despite the couple's sense of equality. Neault and Pickerell also found that majority of couples agreed that ultimately, each felt that one career needed to take priority over the other. In terms of impact on domestic and family responsibility, the women often made the career compromise when the couple focused on beginning a family; while other couples negotiated postponing having children or limiting the number of children they would have in order to give equal priority to both careers.

### *Gap in Research*

Despite of the increased frequency of dual-career couples and the growing challenges they face, literature providing guidance to career counsellors working with couples is surprisingly scant (Haddock, 2002). Haddock reviewed approximately twenty years of research (1979-1999) pertaining to articles related to dual-income couples in

seven major family therapy journals, and found only nine articles addressing this issue. This lack of knowledge regarding issues related to dual-income couples has filtered into the counselling room, where professionals are not able to adequately provide quality therapeutic services to their clients. In a national survey of a random sample of clinical members of the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy (Haddock and Bowling, 2002) found that work-family balance issues presented in approximately one-third of client couples. Sadly, almost one-half of the sample reported that they were not adequately trained to assist couples with issues pertaining to dual-careers. Furthermore, it was apparent that misconceptions regarding the dual-career family were held by many therapists, which may have negatively affected their assessment and treatment of these couples (Haddock & Rattenborg, 2003). Finally, research on couples' decision-making (which includes career compromise) often neglect how this process occurs (Adams, 2004).

Neault and Pickerell (2005) noted that the issues faced by dual-career couples were very similar to the challenges couples reported facing over 20 years ago, even though the prevalence of dual career couples has increased since then. However, Phillips, Christopher-Sisk, and Gravino (2001) found after exploring the literature on career decision-making that there was very little attention given to the relational context when examining how career decisions should be made. With regards to the significant other relational component in the context of a romantic relationship, more recent studies have indicated that couples were moving towards adopting more supportive egalitarian views in juggling dual careers (Quek & Knudson-Martin, 2006, 2008). In exploring the gender construction among 20 dual-career couples in a collectivist culture, Quek and Knudson-Martin (2006) found that couples have begun to give both careers equal priority in

response to the political and social influence on economic development which encompassed career development. Adopting egalitarian values was seen as practical and carried out through direct processes such as having equal input in the decision-making and making career a central part of the relationship. Quek and Knudson-Martin (2008) also found that the shift towards this equality occurs in steps and this process involved men being encouraged to change role expectations when women's careers were given priority. However this shift occurred within a gender structure where men had the main control regarding power shifts with women having the power to influence the men in the decision-making process. Although recent research has indicated that couples' career development within a relational context has shifted where both careers within the couple were given equal priority, couples continue to face challenges with respect to negotiating decisions.

The purpose of the present study was to gain more insight regarding complex processes of negotiating career compromises in emerging young adult couples, when they are also involved in committed romantic relationships. The current investigation builds on previous research on Gottfredson's (1981, 2002) theory of career compromise, to examine how couples make such compromises together, as they jointly pursue their career and life goals. Using an exploratory research design, the specific questions that were addressed are: (a) who is doing the compromise (e.g., one member of the couple, both, or neither), (b) what aspect of the career is being compromised (e.g. interest, sex-type, or prestige), (c) what contextual and personal factors are influencing the compromising process (e.g. debt, job market, personal values), and (d) what areas of life have higher or lower priority than career, in terms of the compromises being made (e.g., living in a particular geographic location, partner happiness).

A qualitative analysis of an existing data set was used in order to truly understand the dynamic, complex process of how couples engage in and negotiate career compromises. There is virtually no existing empirical research on the career compromise process of emerging adults in committed romantic relationships. Thus, a flexible, exploratory method designed to capture whatever outcomes may emerge is eminently suitable to address the issue. At this stage, quantitative research results may not adequately capture the complexity and diversity of participant responses. Qualitative methods are more useful for revealing unanticipated factors that proved to be important influences on the compromise process. The method selected for the current study is described in detail in the following chapter, along with information regarding the sample and the nature of the data set.

### CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

#### *Design*

This thesis involved a novel analysis, addressing new research questions, of data from a larger study that was conducted using Young, Valach, and Domene's (2005) action project method. During the data collection and exploration phase of the original study, a number of different themes and patterns emerged. One particularly salient theme among many of the couples was the issue of career compromise. The issue of compromise was deemed important enough to pursue in a separate exploration focusing specifically on this phenomenon. In the present study, this unanticipated emergent theme of career compromise was explored in detail.

Although data were collected using the action project method, Gilgun's (2005b) analytical strategy was chosen to address the research questions posed in this thesis. Deductive qualitative analysis, as described by Gilgun, is a method that is well suited to assessing and reformulating theoretical models. One of the main assumptions of deductive qualitative analysis is the idea that, not only is there a significant amount of knowledge in existence about identifying and theorizing social processes, but also that conceptual models have been developed based on existing knowledge. In deductive qualitative research, existing knowledge is viewed as incomplete knowledge that can be applied until evidence requires additions or changes to pre-existing knowledge. During the process of constructing new knowledge, one must always keep in mind the pre-existing theories that explain the processes that are being observed. This top down process requires a certain degree of theoretical sensitivity. Having knowledge of existing

theories is imperative to identify events and processes that are being observed. Researchers using this type of analysis begin their work with a conceptual model such as Gottfredson's theory of compromise, proceed to study data in depth, and finally reformulate the model to accommodate the data. This reformulation and development of theory occurs through dialectics: the process of remaining cognizant of the constant interaction that occurs between observations and their theoretical implications. This method was deemed appropriate and highly effective for exploring the process of career compromise in adult romantic relationships.

### *Research Team*

The research team for the original study consisted of two primary investigators, and six graduate-level research assistants. Prior to conducting any of the data collection interviews, all team members completed at least one course in interviewing/counselling skills and 18 hours of training in the action project method. The current study exploring the process of career compromise was conducted by a team of two researchers. Both researchers were part of the original study. The author of the current study was a research assistant in the original study, and the second analyst was the principal investigator for the original study.

I, the author of this thesis, will refer to myself in the first person for the following two paragraphs, describing relevant background and preconceptions about the phenomenon of career compromise. I am a 28 year old woman who holds an honours bachelor's degree in psychology with a minor in biology from the University of Toronto in 2004. During my undergraduate degree I began to explore career options, which culminated in my decision to pursue a career that captured my interest. After two years in



the workforce exploring different options, I decided to pursue a Master of Arts degree in Counselling Psychology at Trinity Western University. This decision was based on my interests, and passion for helping others. My current research interests include career development, with specific interest in emerging young adults and cross-cultural/multicultural issues in counselling.

As I entered into the process of conducting thesis research, I believed that career compromises in committed romantic relationships are inevitable to some degree, especially during the emerging young adult phase. I also believe that career compromise can be a point of contention between partners in couples, because compromises by one individual in a couple may cause internal conflict that may lead to problems between the partners in the future. My approach to research is consistent with the underlying assumptions of Gilgun's deductive qualitative analysis. I believe in the importance of using pre-existing knowledge as a base for future research and theory development, even when I am engaged in exploratory research. I believe that one should not be expected to begin each research project anew, pretending that truths about the area of study that were previously uncovered do not exist. Existing understandings about any phenomenon should be used as starting points to test, reformulate, and add to any current body of knowledge.

The second analyst for the current study is Dr. José Domene, a 35 year old male with a background in vocational psychology, family therapy, and research methodology. He was the principal investigator of the larger study from which the data were drawn, and has been involved in all stages of that study. He is also the supervisor for this thesis. Dr. Domene has been in a committed romantic relationship for 12 years, having married after two years of dating. Although he has held various jobs, he does not perceive himself to

have been forced to make any substantial compromises in terms of career aspirations, and he is currently in an occupation that he considers ideal in terms of interest and prestige, and well within his sex-type boundaries. Instead, where he perceives he and his partner have compromised is in terms of geographic location (negotiating where to live in relation to each others' employment and educational opportunities) and choosing not to have children (discussing and choosing to prioritize other areas of life such as career advancement and church involvement, over the time and energy that he believes would be necessary to devote to being a good parent).

In terms of his pre-existing perspectives on the research topic, Dr. Domene has many friends and colleagues who have had to make career compromises in a variety of different ways. This anecdotal experience causes him to believe that career compromise is a real and common experience. However, he entered into the analysis questioning Gottfredson's proposed order of compromise, instead believing that what people in current Canadian society give up first is perhaps more individualized than her theory of circumscription and compromise would suggest.

### *Participants*

Inclusion criteria for the current study were: (a) couples in a romantic relationship for a minimum of six months; (b) defining their relationship as "committed" (regardless of whether they are married, dating, common law or in some other kind of relationship); and (c) both members in the couple aged between 19 and 29 years; (d) presented issues regarding making career compromises. Participation was not restricted by sexual orientation, however only heterosexual couples volunteered to participate. Couples were excluded if they (a) had children or were pregnant; (b) were uncomfortable

communicating with each other in English; or (c) if only one member of the couple was willing to participate.

From the pool of 19 couples who participated in the original study, six couples were identified as needing to achieve some degree of compromise in their career planning. They were purposively selected for inclusion in the current study. A summary of their demographic characteristics is presented in Table 1. Note that the ethnicity and employment information uses the participants' self-described categories. The selection process involved finding couples from the original study who were in the process of actively planning and making decisions around their future careers. One or both individuals in the couple need to have made a previous career compromise while involved as a couple, or be currently faced with the prospect of a compromise. Issues of compromise did not need to be explicitly stated in order for the couple to be included in the study, but underlying issues of compromise had to be implicitly present within the collected data that was available for interpretation. Additionally, it was necessary to exclude couples in the original study who had not given permission to use their data for additional research beyond the original study, and those who had not completed data collection by the beginning of data analysis for the present study.

Table 1

*Demographic Characteristics of Participating Couples*

	Age	Ethnicity	Immigration status	Annual income	Level of education	Employment status
<i>001 (12<sup>1</sup>)</i>						
Female	20	South Asian	Student visa	< \$5,000	In post-secondary	Student
Male	27	European-Canadian	Canadian-born	\$5,000 - \$14,999	In post-secondary	Student
<i>002 (12)</i>						
Female	26	South African	Immigrant	\$45,000- \$59,999	Masters degree	Employed: counsellor
Male	28	European-Canadian	Canadian-born	\$15,000- \$29,000	In post-secondary	Student/employed : plumbing apprentice
<i>003 (30)</i>						
Female	27	European-Canadian	Canadian-born	\$15,000- \$29,999	Masters degree	Student/employed : therapist
Male	25	European-Canadian	Canadian-born	\$60,000- \$74,999	Bachelors degree	Employed: garage installer
<i>004 (24)</i>						
Female	29	Danish,	Canadian-	\$30,000	Aesthetics	Employed:

		Scottish, English	born	– \$44,999	diploma	customer service manager
Male	28	South African	South Africa	\$75,000 – \$99,999	Bachelors degree	Employed: community service and volunteer coordinator
<i>005 (48)</i>						
Female	27	Mennonite	Canadian- born	\$30,000- \$44,999	Bachelors degree	Employed: audio visual technician
Male	27	European Canadian	Canadian- born	\$5,000 - \$14,000	Bachelors degree	Student Employed: community health worker
<i>006 (15)</i>						
Female	22	Latino- American	Work visa 4 years	\$5,000 - \$14,999	Bachelors degree	Student interning at an ecological conservation
Male	24	European- Canadian	Canadian- born	\$15,000- \$29,999	Bachelors degree	Employed: project manager & sales rep.

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<sup>1</sup> Length of relationship, in months.

### *Recruitment*

A variety of strategies were employed to recruit participants for the original study. Recruitment strategies targeted the general public through Face Book, e-mail LISTSERV, word of mouth, a Web site detailing the larger study, newspaper advertisements, and flyers posted in local community centers, public libraries, and post-secondary educational institutions. See Appendix A for an example of the recruitment notice. Most couples who participated in the larger study reported hearing about the study through word of mouth. All recruitment materials provided information for couples to contact the research team to indicate their interest in volunteering. Couples who did so were then contacted back by phone to provide details of the study, answer any questions or concerns, and ensure that they met inclusion/exclusion criteria via a screening interview. Couples were given an honorarium of \$100 for participating in this study.

### *Data Set*

*Data collection.* Note that this is a description of the data collection procedure for the original study, since no new data were collected for the present study. The data collection process began in October 2006 and ended in April 2008. Data were collected using Young, Valach, and Domene's (2005) action project method, which involved face-to-face, semi-structured interviews, videotaped observations of couples' joint conversations, and self-report journal entries detailing participants' career-related actions for three months. Each participating dyad was involved in three interviews conducted over an eight month period (protocols can be found in Appendices B-D). These interviews were conducted in multiple stages, consisting of an introductory session, a conversation between the participants, and a "self-confrontation" procedure. The purpose

of the introduction was to build rapport and prime the couple to think about the research topic by asking questions related to their careers and lives together. Participant consent was also obtained at the beginning of the first interview (see Appendix E), and a list of counselling resources were given (see Appendix F). Subsequently, each couple was left alone to discuss their future career and life plans; this conversation was video-taped. Immediately following the joint conversation, the couples were separated into two different rooms for a self-confrontation procedure, where they were asked to comment on the thoughts and feelings they experienced during the couple conversation, a process that was facilitated by watching a video play-back of the discussion.

Next, the two researchers who conducted the interview coded the transcripts using the principles of action theory (Young, Valach, & Collin, 1996; Young, Valach, & Domene, 2005; Young, Valach, Dillabough, Dover, & Matthes, 1994). This coding process involved examining the manifest behaviours by watching the video of the joint conversation, the verbal information presented in the video, and the internal processes described through the self-confrontations. Using this analysis, separate narratives were written for male and female partners, as well as joint narratives. These narratives were then examined by the entire research team, who worked together to identify the joint projects that couples appeared to be working on, regarding their career and life goals together.

The narratives and identified joint project were subsequently presented back to each couple during their second interview, which took place approximately six to eight weeks after the first interview. In this meeting, the product of the preliminary analysis was presented to the couple, that is the individual and joint narratives, and a proposed career project associated with a topic that appeared salient to them during their joint

conversation. Feedback was then elicited about the accuracy of the narratives and the interpretations of the conversations, with corrections and amendments made at the direction of the participants. Finally, each couple and associated interviewers engaged in a discussion around which of their existing career projects they wanted to focus on in the next stage of the research.

Participants' engagement in their chosen projects was monitored in the three months following the second interview. During the monitoring period, participants individually completed journals detailing project-related activities in which they engaged, and returned journal entries back to the research team via e-mail every two weeks (see Appendix G). Those participants who chose to fill out a journal by hand were contacted by telephone every two weeks, to encourage their progress.

The third interview took place following the end of the monitoring period. Similar to the first interview, the third interview consisted of a video-taped joint conversation by the couple, but this time focusing on the progression (or stagnation) of their joint project, followed by self-confrontation interviews with each member of the couple. This was followed by a debriefing period where the purpose of the research was reviewed, answers to any questions or concerns of the participants were given, and information regarding obtaining outcomes of the research was provided.

*Transcription.* Data were transcribed by a professional transcriber, using a natural language transcription strategy that preserved the underlying meaning of the text by "cleaning-up" non-verbal utterances. Additionally, the research analysts reviewed the video tapes and made corrections to the transcripts before any analyses were conducted, to ensure that the final transcripts reflected their own interpretations of what was said.



Once transcription was complete, the data from each dyad were coded, keeping in mind the definition of career compromise set forth by Gottfredson (1981).

In summary, the data set generated from this action-project method of data collection consisted of transcripts of all parts of the interviews, video-recordings of both joint conversations, and participants' monitoring logs, completed on either electronic forms or on paper. Identifying information was removed from the data records at the point of transcription. All information was stored in a secure lab containing a locked filing cabinet for storage of paper documentation and audio/video files and a password-protected computer which contained all electronic data.

### *Analytical Process*

In the present study, the deductive method of qualitative analysis proposed by Gilgun (2005a) was used to address the research questions posed in Chapter 2. Gilgun's deductive analytical method is neither naïve empiricism nor an informed quasi-inductive approach. Instead, it allows for research to begin with a pre-existing conceptual framework that was used to help identify various socialization processes (such as compromise), and for the attribution of meaning to data that were collected. Beginning research with a conceptual model such as Gottfredson's (1981, 2002) theory of compromise allowed for model testing, theory building, and refinement of theory. A case-by-case exploration of the data was used first, to examine and identify relevant information about career compromise within each dyad by itself. This was followed by a cross-case analysis which helped to determine what conceptual categories repeatedly emerged across the couples in the group. In addition to coding for explicit content, inferences were also made about the implicit occurrences of compromise that was specific

to each dyad, as well as across the dyads in the group. The interpretations of these implicit occurrences emerged out of the primary researcher's understanding of subtle, usually observational, indicators about something that was present. For example, some couples did not verbally indicate that they were making career compromises; however, the presence of compromises was evident through their actions. Consistent with Gilgun's perspective, interpretations were treated as products of co-creation, in terms of how participants represented themselves in reaction to how researchers were perceived during that time.

In order to determine what, if any, kind of compromise each couple engaged in over their 6 months of research involvement, the definitions and descriptions of career compromise provided by Gottfredson (1981, 2002) were attended to throughout the analytical process. That is, transcripts from each interview were reviewed closely for content relevant to the compromise processed, specifically: (a) who did the compromise (e.g., one member of the couple, both, neither); (b) what aspect of the career was compromised (e.g., interest, sex-type, or prestige); (c) what contextual and personal factors were influenced the compromise process (e.g., student loans/debt, gender, differences in education level); and (d) what areas of life had a higher or lower priority than career, in terms of the compromises made (e.g., delaying having children in order to pursue employment; pursuing less ideal careers in order to live in particular geographic regions). The process of reviewing transcripts of all interviews was supplemented by watching videotapes of the joint conversations, and attending to the information provided in participants' journal entries.

Following Gilgun's (2005a) suggestion, the extraction of codes and formation of categories for these four dimensions of career compromise was conducted using an open

coding procedure consistent with those described by Strauss (1987) and Strauss and Corbin (1998). This analytic strategy involved a three-step sequence: (a) conceptualizing, (b) categorizing, and (c) developing sub-categories. Conceptualizing the data involved delving into the data to abstract and label concepts. The second step in the sequence (categorizing), called for generation of broad categories, based on the content of the data, discovering relationships between the concepts and classifying them. The final step entailed examination and analysis of the categories to narrow them down and extract sub-categories, which helped to frame answers to question such as when, where, how, and why individuals responded the way they did.

After analyzing the data from each dyad, overarching concepts and conclusions related to the phenomenon of compromise that emerged from the coding process were reviewed across the entire sample, focusing on themes and experiences that occurred repeatedly. Identification of these overarching concepts permitted the separation of aspects of career compromise that were present across couples from those which were more individualized. This review process involved constant flux between broad concepts, categories, and sub-categories that resulted in more satisfactory reflection upon the career and life compromise phenomena, as they were experienced by participants (Gilgun, 2005).

### *Rigour*

A number of precautions were incorporated in the deductive analytical method to maintain integrity of data collection and analysis. According to Lincoln and Guba, (2000), rigour is required to establish the authenticity of findings, and to determine whether the findings accurately reflected how the participants constructed their social

worlds. Findings need to be trustworthy if they are to contribute to policy and counselling practice. Lincoln and Guba suggested two ways by which findings can be evaluated for their trustworthiness: (a) the number of safeguards present in the research design and application of the method and (b) the extent to which the researchers can defend their final interpretations.

*Multiple analysts.* To reduce the influence of each analyst's personal bias in the process of extracting codes and formulating categories, a team-based approach was used, similar to that found in the action project method (e.g., Young, Valach, & Domene, 2005) and the consensual qualitative research method (e.g., Hill, Thompson, & Williams, 1997). Researchers independently reviewed the data, then met together and discussed their initial impressions and codings. These meetings involved describing, justifying, and challenging each others' interpretations of the data until a consensus occurred regarding the most valid interpretation. This process reduced the possibility of interpretations that were primarily the product of any single of a researcher's expectations, and not evident in the data. This team-based approach was used at both the case-by-case and the cross-case levels of analysis. The focus of case-by-case meetings was to understand what categories were present in each couple's data set; in cross-case meetings the focus was to determine which categories that was repeatedly present. It must be noted, however, that the team consisted of only two members - the principal investigator and the thesis supervisor. Although a larger team would have been preferable, time and resource limitations precluded the use of a larger team.

*Triangulation of multiple types of data.* In this study, the data set included multiple kinds of data, such as interview transcripts, observations of actions through video recordings, tapes of self-confrontation procedures, and self-report journals from

participants. This provided a breadth of information that extended beyond any single data collection method. The use of different sources of information allowed for nuances to emerge that may otherwise have been missed (e.g., incongruence between what a participant says and her non-verbal communication; self-confrontation descriptions that allowed the participant to explain the underlying intent behind a statement that was made). The convergence of multiple kinds of information also acted as an assurance that patterns of findings observed were not artefacts of a particular data collection technique (Krefting, 1991).

*Negative case analysis.* The coding process also involved a negative case analysis, where cases and content that may alter, strengthen, or undermine the guiding theory and improve insight regarding the descriptive material were identified (Gilgun, 2005b). This involved seeking alternate patterns and contradictions to the principles proposed by Gottfredson (1981, 2002). According to Gilgun (2005a), searching for disconfirming evidence helps guard against forcing a theoretical model on the phenomena being observed. It also helps to avoid overlooking other phenomena that may be present, which could contribute to developing and enriching the theory. Findings from the negative case analysis revealed some patterns outside of what Gottfredson proposed that need to be given consideration when applying the theory to couples. Findings suggested that individuals did not necessary make compromises on their interest in order to achieve a higher social standing but rather because they prioritized financial stability and partner happiness above pursuing their ideal career. Also, findings suggested that individuals settled for the “good enough” choice due to external factors (e.g., job market) and couples goals (e.g., reduce debt) and not solely because they were unwilling to undergo the demanding process of understanding their values and accessing information regarding

pursuing their ideal career. Finally, the findings revealed that individuals did not continue to delay committing to a career outside their ideal preferences. Instead they committed to careers outside their ideal preferences because they needed to financially provide for the couple and to achieve goals set mutually by the couple. Findings from the negative case analysis suggested that Gottfredson's theory may need to be modified and extended in order to take into consideration the unique circumstances of couples, including relational and contextual factors, so that this theory will more accurately reflect the diverse experiences of couples.

*Audit trail and auditing.* A detailed audit trail was created by maintaining complete descriptions of the research team, the participants, the process of data collection, and the steps taken in conducting the analysis. This enhanced the trustworthiness of the research process, since it allowed others wanting to understand the process to follow the logic leading to the conclusions.

In addition to maintaining an audit trail, a preliminary draft of the findings was examined by a researcher who was not involved with this thesis, but is familiar with both the data set and method of analysis. A member of the research team from the original study was selected as the auditor. The auditor reviewed the findings in light of her familiarity with the data, and provided feedback regarding how well the conclusions resonated with her own experiences of how career compromise manifested in the sample. The final description of the results presented in the following chapter incorporates all but one of the changes suggested by the auditor. These changes were: (a) further clarification and explanations of existing quotations, (b) incorporation of different quotations to clarify points that were made, (c) exclude names to further ensure confidentiality, and (d) with respect to couple 005, a substitution was made from concrete language "the man

constantly measured himself against his brother” to more tentative phrasing “the man tended to measure himself against his brother”.

However, there was one point which the auditor was not in agreement with that was considered, but rejected after consideration and discussion by the research team. The auditor disagreed with my interpretation on what career the woman in couple 004 considered to be her ideal one. The auditor’s interpretation of the woman’s primary career goal was becoming a stay-at-home mother, with her job of working in a spa or office being a temporary occupation until the couple began a family. The auditor’s interpretation contradicted my understanding, which was that working as an aesthetician in a spa was her ideal career. Consequently, further consideration was taken by the research team, which resulted in the conclusion that there was a need to differentiate between the ideal career goal of the individual and the joint career goals for her. Evidence that the woman’s ideal career was to be an aesthetician working in a spa included her explanation:

Um, the only thing different in the future is - like, right now I'm working in the fashion industry. But it's just working in the head office - customer service manager, I mean it's a lot of office work. Um, whereas I used to be an aesthetician and working in a spa. So I've always wanted to open my own spa. So if I go back part-time, I'll probably go back part-time to the spa I used to work at...

The woman did not enjoy her current occupation because it was not consistent with her ideal career. She currently holds a diploma in aesthetics but was unable to continue work as an aesthetician due to an accident that forced her to look for alternative options. If the woman needed to go back to work in the occupation that was outside her ideal career after having children, she would rather not work. This was evident by the couple’s exchange:

Female: And I won't have to go back to work. Woo hoo.

Male: Cause, yeah, you definitely don't wanna go back to work.

Female: [pause] Not where I'm at, no.

If the man was able to financially support the couple once they had children then the woman would only want to go back to work if she could find an occupation that was within the boundaries of her preferred occupational choices. However, the woman's goal of pursuing her ideal career was in conflict with the couple's joint goals for their family. The woman struggles to explain this conflict and the need for her to compromise pursuing her ideal career in order to become a stay-at-home mother: Their *joint* ideal career was for her to be a stay-at-home mother. She explained:

We would make other sacrifices, that's not - I'd rather hardly have anything than to, you know, I don't wanna put my children in daycare. [laughs] Neither does [Male]. So that's where we're kinda looking at, for our financial freedom in that way, well, we could be bringing in more than I'm making now, and me still be at home so um - yeah - with it. And I don't mind taking a couple years off, as long as we're earning, you know, like five or six, maybe even ten grand a month.

The woman acknowledged that they both needed to make individual sacrifices in order to prioritize couple goals above their individual goals. The woman does not “mind” not working if the couple were to become financially stable. However, she would also prefer to find a satisfying career. The couple's joint preference for the woman was for her to become a stay-at-home mother, but her individual ideal career was to work in a spa. If their joint goal was not to have children in daycare, then the woman would pursue her ideal career. The woman provides insight into what her plans would be if the couple's goal of having a family did not conflict with her individual career plan in her statement “that's just me, whereas, an office job isn't fully. But it's a really- it's good for now. But



definitely if we weren't planning on having a family, I probably would start looking in another direction". The couple had aspirations to open up a spa of their own, but their career goals conflicted with their plans to have a family. The woman explains:

We originally had talked about opening a spa. Like, this is, probably about a year ago. But then, those were some major decisions, because that would have been a *huge* financial risk. Like huge! (laughs) Um, we didn't have the money up front, but we did have investors that were gonna front the money. Um, then again it is your life, like, okay, well do you want a family, because that would have to really get put on hold and I'm twenty-nine now, like, I don't wanna wait too much longer and - so it's just kinda - it just depends, like, are you wanting more career- like, as a woman, or am I wanting [unclear] the other right now. (laughs) And, like my boss from my old spa, um, she started just as she had a baby. And it was, like, insane.

It appeared that the woman was struggling between the idea of following the couple's joint goal of having children by pursuing a career of becoming a stay-at-home mother, versus pursuing her individual ideal career goal. The struggle she was experiencing seemed to be affected by her observation of the struggles others faced when attempting to juggle motherhood and career. She continued to explain that opening a spa was a longer-term joint career goal for the couple "in the future when, like, maybe when the kids are in high school...Cause then that would be totally feasible, that way...until we get to be financially stable, yeah." This can be interpreted as indicating that, for her, the career of being a stay-at-home mother would be temporary until she could pursue her spa career.

## CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

In this chapter, findings that emerged from the deductive qualitative analysis will be reported. The coded statements were synthesized and the responses interpreted. After separating and labelling, the data were systematically categorized from the themes and patterns that emerged. Findings from each couple address the questions that guide the research as well as additional information that is unique to each couple but pertinent in the compromising process. Results from this analysis reflect the complex multifaceted nature of the compromising process over time.

### *Within-Case Analysis*

*Couple 001.* With this couple, both the woman and man were engaging in compromise; the aspect of career that was compromised was interest. As the couple engaged in jointly negotiating their future career plans, it was clear that the man was searching for a career that was consistent with his interest, and was unwilling to consider occupations outside his interest. In contrast, the woman was willing to compromise her career interest for any occupation that would serve her immediate financial needs:

He's like very particular about what he likes, and what he doesn't like, and - you know. If, there's a job, you know, it's like, there's an easy job, but he, he won't do it just because it's easy money. It's like, you know, he thinks it through and it has to match with, like, his values and stuff, and I'm not, I should be more like that, but I'm not. Pretty much, like, if there was a job that I wasn't really interested in, like, you know, I don't know, like, cleaning bathrooms and it paid well, I would

take it. But he wouldn't, I think. It would have to, like, stimulate him mentally or something. I don't know.

For the woman, contextual factors such as current financial needs and the value of being open to any occupation played a large part in her willingness to compromise. Some other important factors for the woman were paying off debt, completion of their educations, and attaining jobs that would enable them to be financially stable in order to begin a life together:

But of course we wanna, like, pay off the student loan and get, get by, you know, have enough money to start in India. Ah - yeah, 'cause I don't know how soon it would be before we get a job, so we need to like, make a bunch of money to go and start a life.

The woman's willingness to accept any occupation was heavily influenced by her desire to decrease debt and become financially stable. Also, the availability of jobs for both individuals and job market trends definitely influenced the couple's decision about where to live, and the woman's willingness to compromise her occupational interests. For example, when the couple was discussing their future employment possibilities, the woman stated:

Female: "And I could go to teaching school and baby-sit!"

Male: "Baby-sit?"

Female: "Yeah. Would there be a good market for babysitting? In..."

Male: "Like a nanny or..."

Female: "I could work at a daycare. It'd be good."

Male: "Hm-mm".

Female: "[pause] And I could paint, and try [unclear]. [unclear]"

Male: "Hm-mm."

The woman appeared to be searching through occupations in her zone of acceptable alternatives to find a satisfactory occupation if they needed to relocate for the man to pursue his occupational interests in photography. Although the man's career interests were in photography, he also felt that he might be called to become a priest, which would require a compromise of interests. For example, the man admitted that he would have to give up following his interest in becoming a photographer if he was called to become a priest. He spoke in an uncertain tone saying "um, more or less, like, yes, I understand and perhaps that won't be too much of a difficult compromise [laughs] for me to make in the end, you know."

The man experienced some emotional discomfort at the thought of compromising his interests to pursue what he perceives to be a higher calling, as was evident in his tone of voice and hesitant laughter. This verbal-paraverbal communication conflict suggested incongruence between what was being said and what he actually felt. His desire to pursue his calling would also affect where the couple would live, which is an issue that was important to both, and the couple seemed to particularly struggle with this issue. In order for the man to becoming a priest in the Russian Orthodox Church, he would have to move to New York for seminary, which was a move his partner did not want to make. The man showed discomfort and evidence of being conflicted as he laughed nervously and spoke in an uncertain tone while discussing his partners' views of moving:

She just doesn't like New York, you know. It's cold, the people, she's very Indian in the sense that she needs warm people, and friendly people and, um, New York doesn't really ...[laughing] [unclear] too much I don't think, or, and ah, the climate as well. [laughs].

Although the woman's preference was not to move to New York, she was willing to compromise and relocate if her partner decided that he truly was called to become a priest. Her willingness to compromise was evident when she said "OK. [pause] Well, like I said, I am flexible and I'll go anywhere with you, but - oh, I like the idea of going to India a lot. [laughs]" At the same time, this statement also revealed her reluctance by her nervous laughter and diversion of the conversation. However, her willingness to relocate depended on their relationship status. If they were married with children then the commitment level would be higher, and therefore would affect the compromising process. The priority placed on marriage and children differed across time. There was a shift in priority from marriage being lower than career at the time of the first interview to higher at the time of the second interview. The woman made it clear to her partner by saying, "Ah yeah, I just said the kids thing and I was like, this is my bottom line; if we have kids, no seminary, if we don't, fine, that's great." Which indicated that regardless of the man's desire to enter seminary, the woman would not support him in that decision if they had a family. Therefore, the man would have to compromise his calling to become a priest. Throughout their discussions, they often referred to, and were influenced by, their religious community regarding decisions around the man's career path and where they should live. The couple was equally invested in the career negotiating and compromising process. However, they did seem to experience distress when they were not able to reach agreement regarding whether they should complete their educations together. She said "If you're gonna marry me, you should stay. [pause] I think we should stop talking". It was evident by the woman's nonverbal and paraverbal expressions that she was experiencing emotional distress to the point that it impeded their ability to reach a resolution. That eventually led to the abrupt end of the discussion. Although the woman was willing to

compromise her career interests, her partner's struggle with compromising the path to which he felt called for the sake of the relationship caused her some anxiety. Overall, the couple equally contributed to the discussions, with the woman taking the lead and being more openly expressive, and the man being less verbose and more subdued and contemplative.

*Couple 002.* Both individuals in this couple engaged in career compromise. The aspect being compromised was career interest. Both individuals seemed to experience dissatisfaction in their present occupations. The man's dissatisfaction and frustration with his career appeared to be a result of the chain of career compromises he was forced to make throughout his life. The woman explained:

He, he's, he's tried um several, um, things before. He did some aircraft interior Mechanic, um, training and that didn't work out. Like, he got screwed over with the apprenticeship thing there. And then he did try some electronics things as well, and that just didn't work out. He just hated that and, um, yeah, so, kinda been a bit patchy but - yeah, he seems to like what he's doing now.

The man's career exploration journey involved trying out numerous occupations within his zone of acceptable alternatives. Circumstances beyond his control forced him to compromise his preferred careers until he settled on a career that enabled him to achieve success. However, he continued to experience dissatisfaction because he was in a career path that was not his preferred choice, did not allow him to contribute financially as much as he liked, and had less prestige than he desired. The woman tried to explain what was on her partner's mind:

Um. Yeah, I like, [unclear] with things, like, I - that's another thing that I

[laughs] I [unclear] I know it bugs him, but, that, that's kind of before, with, you know, like, he, he said to me, you know, it's, he, it's not important to him how much he makes, just that he's making money and he's contributing, which is, you know, it's important to me too. Um, but, I also think, you know, and, with that whole, him wanting to, wishing he was in a different place career-wise, you know, like, further up the totem pole kind of thing. So I just - yeah, I just feel for him.

Although the man was currently dissatisfied with his career, he was optimizing his position by compromising his short-term earnings in order to gain experiences that would provide him with the knowledge that would eventually allow him to be in a more prestigious position and permit him to make a greater financial contribution in the future. He said, “You know, like, what's two more dollars an hour, over a lifetime of experience?” He continued to explain: “I don't see that being - like, yeah, it's, it's good, um, short-term, but [unclear] I'm thinking long-term here.”

While the man's frustrations were mainly to do with where he currently was in his career progression, the woman's dissatisfaction with her career stemmed from feeling stuck in a particular position where there was a lot of workplace stress. She explained her dissatisfaction with her current employment:

The biggest thing is just my job stress and - um - what happened recently was, like, I've always- I, like - not always, um - I've, I've felt a little stuck in my position because, I know, um, like I know - it would be a major - loss, like, financially and all - like, there's so many aspects if I were to actually quit - my [company name] job and go to, like, a community agency or something. Um. So I felt a little stuck in that because you have to be in your position for two years

before you can actually change jobs within the [company name].

The woman expressed a preference for changing her work situation and also for eventually having the ability to work part-time when they began a family. However, the woman felt pressure to remain in her current position due to the couple's financial needs. Other contextual and personal factors that contributed to their decision to compromise were shared values regarding paying off student loans and being able to save money to buy a home. This was indicated when the woman explained the financial pressures:

Like right now, it's not really a reality for us to, think about that until, we're, we're in a better place as far as my student loans being paid off go and as far as him making more money goes, so, yeah.

It was evident that she felt the need to compromise, particularly with regard to remaining in an unsatisfying occupation in order to achieve financial security. It also appeared that some of the stress would be alleviated once her partner was in a better position to provide financially.

In their discussions, the partners in the couple often compared themselves to their friends and families. Life circumstances of their families and friends appeared to heavily influence not only their career decisions but also their plans for having children and buying a home. These influences were evident to the researcher, but not necessarily to the woman participant:

Yeah, I know, I'm not too clear. I said, the whole house thing bugs you and [unclear] and he's like, well it doesn't bug me, but part of this five-year plan he had when he was twenty was - I guess from discussions we've had, you know, he's seeing his friends buying houses and stuff, and like, as part of that, um he's just,



where he thought he'd be, you know, married, kids, house, and we're married, several years past his [unclear] date. [laughs]

The woman continued to express her concerns of having children, what she had observed from her friends' experiences, and how it had added to her concerns:

Ah, no, no, I think I, I um, I think we're both pretty much agreed that, um, [unclear] I wasn't worried that he was thinking that. But I think we both pretty much agreed that, you know, we're, we're gonna wait a few years. Um - but ah, I do know that - given the opportunity he would, he would like to have them sooner, but ah, a close friend of ours had a kid two days after our wedding, and we've seen what she's gone through and, I, yeah. [laugh] - like I don't know that he really gets, what it will be like for me, just 'cause we've, I've really, really been watching closely, with what this friend of ours has gone through. And I mean it hasn't been horrible for her, but just like, I'm like - I see what it's like.

This couple continually engaged in comparisons between themselves and others and allowed their conclusions to affect their compromising process. The compromises were evident through the woman's willingness to have children sooner than she felt ready and to take on part-time work. Also, both individuals seemed to experience some emotional discomfort. The woman expressed feelings of being misunderstood and feeling the pressure to have children earlier and work part-time. In contrast, the man felt some dissatisfaction and inner conflict at not having achieved his goals due to the career compromising process he experienced in the past.

Areas that had a higher priority than career interest were financial security, traveling, partner's happiness, ability to buy a house, and being in a position that would allow the woman to work part-time when they began a family. An area of life that had

lower priority than career was fulfilling multiple current needs, such as saving money to buy a car. Although financial security was placed higher in priority than career, it was prioritized lower than ensuring each other's happiness. As the man explained:

It does but - and it would if she had to change jobs but - I mean, the stress level, um- her changing and getting a pay cut, is a lot less worse than her staying there and being stressed out beyond belief and then going into a breakdown or something. So, I mean, we'll make do. If she's gotta change jobs, she's gotta change jobs. There's just no, no [unclear] ands, ifs or buts. We'll, we'll survive. But if she's not liking where she is, then - and it's causing her - harm because she's always stressed then, you know, we gotta get her out of there.

The man was extremely supportive and understanding of the woman's desire to change jobs, even if it meant experiencing a financial loss. Although the man was supportive, the woman continued to feel pressure to remain in her current position because she felt the responsibility for providing financially to allow them both to work toward achieving future goals, such as buying a home and having children. Overall, both individuals participated equally in the conversations and engaged in both verbal and nonverbal communication indicating positive regard, empathy, and support. They were both willing to compromise various preferences and interests within their careers in order to do what was best for the relationship and for advancing their situations in life.

*Couple 003.* Both individuals in this couple engaged in career compromises, specifically career interest. During data collection, the woman contributed more to the conversation, often taking the lead in asking questions, prompting, and openly expressed her emotions. In contrast, the man typically responded with one-word answers, lacked emotional expression, and had flat affect. As a result, much of the dialogue was initiated

and centered on the woman. The woman's specific area of interest was working as a counsellor in the public sector, focusing on geriatric clients. The woman was very adamant about pursuing her career in that area of interest and not compromising her values and interests. The conversation proceeded as follows:

Male: "Well, it's because you don't wanna do addictions counselling."

Female: "Yeah. I really don't think that'd be a good fit for me."

Male: "So, just because you wanna do geriatrics."

Female:

Well, but [sighs] a lot of the other jobs are based on nurses or social workers, although I probably could get either a confirmed disorders therapist job, or an addictions job. But I- I don't wanna do that. That's not, I have no interest in that, that's like you not wanting to punch a clock.

The woman had a strong desire and intention to pursue a career in her area of interest; however, the current state of the job market in her region deterred her from achieving her ideal career. Although the woman stated that she was unwilling to work in an area outside her interest, she was forced to compromise her ideal career for one that was available and attainable. As a result of this compromise, the woman experienced a great deal of stress, frustration and, ultimately, a low degree of job satisfaction. She said:

Yeah. And that's - I have to be honest - that's really frustrating for me, like the career stuff. I know it's not really reflected in this video. I kinda gloss over it. Um, but it is - a huge frustration for me, and I feel very - devalued where I'm currently working, and the system I work in. It's not, like, one person. I'm not blaming anybody. It's just the system and the way it works, and knowing that my services aren't really valued, because

anybody could do what we've been trained to do. So as far as career and looking forward, it's like, come on! I went to school and spent how much money for this?

One of the main reasons that the woman was forced to compromise was to obtain the financial resources required to advance the couple to the next stage of life. For example, the couple wanted to eradicate debt and work toward owning a home. The woman was very specific regarding her choice of residence, whereas the man's only priority was to buy any home, regardless of where it was, and its proximity to work:

Chilliwack, we'd have to live in Chilliwack and the commute would be murder for both of us, so that's really impractical. I get it. It's an impossibility. [pause] And even Mission, the houses are expensive, and the acreages. And that's still far out. The commute for you would be, again, ridiculous. And potentially for me, depending on where I'm working. So, I don't know what the answer is. All I know is [pause] I, these things are really important to me. [pause] And so it's really hard for me to say, OK, I'll live in a - oh, I can think of one other person that lived with seniors actually, and they had, like, an apartment, [name]. [pause] And it was so quiet in there.

The woman acknowledged that the issue of buying a home was a huge point of contention within the couple. Their desire to own a home and to find a satisfactory career for the woman was largely influenced by their families and friends. Throughout their conversations, the couple would often refer to others who had bought homes, were satisfied in their careers, and were able to reach desirable stages of life. The couple's dissatisfaction seemed to be largely influenced by constant comparisons to others and internalized expectations they had for themselves. The fact that they constantly compared

themselves to others, and the ways those comparisons affected them, appeared to be outside their awareness, which was evident in their nonverbal communication throughout the conversations, as indicated when the female said:

Yeah. They're playing the market out here, and - other friends of ours have been looking, and looking. And it's like, and he's, my brother just upgraded his house, and so it's like - all these people around us are kinda moving on. And I think he sees us as - still stuck - I don't know what his take on that would be. That's my take on it.

The manner in which others affected the woman's compromising process was also evident through her journal entries:

[Male] and I were at a friend's place (newly purchased) and there was a discussion about the benefits of purchasing our own home. The discussion had the same elements as always - that [Male] wanted to purchase and I was not ready to purchase - the only difference was that I found myself moving more toward the idea of at least looking.

In addition to the woman's career compromise, the partners in this couple were forced to compromise their desires to own a home in order to achieve financial security. Paying off debt to become financially secure played a large role in their decision to delay buying a house. The woman explained her need to be financially secure:

That would drive me crazy 'cause - I need to have a job. But it's - just with everything, I just - now's the time for us to have a job, so that we can have enough money for that time period and - and then hopefully get out of debt before we take on more debt, like a house.

Ultimately, the woman did seem to be willing to compromise her ideal living conditions and to consider buying a house without being in a financial state that was comfortable for her. The life situation of the couple caused the woman a lot of distress as she seemed to be stuck in a compromising cycle. She wanted to be financially secure, even at the cost of pursuing her ideal career:

That would have been something that came about partially because of this - I Think - um [pause] They have down here that I didn't want to live in a townhouse or an apartment and - I still don't want to. They say that I expressed that I was unwilling to. Um, I guess I'm willing to, I just don't like it. But I know we're not gonna be able to afford anything else unless - something major happens - and we get a lot of money.

One of the factors that influenced the woman's willingness to compromise her ideal living conditions and buying a house was her desire to make her partner happy. Their respective partner's happiness contributed greatly to the compromises made by the couple. This was especially true for the man. The ideal career for the man involved opening his own business, not in the area in which he was trained, but in his area of interest. However, the man compromised his ideal in order to support his partner. He said "and as far as me starting my own company - probably be after you're done school." The man made a career compromise in order to help his partner pursue her career goals. The woman acknowledged that she greatly benefited from her partner's current work, which allowed him to support her career aspirations and she showed gratitude for his compromise:

Yeah. And it's interesting, 'cause he still is so supportive about me going back to school, and he knows that I'm not happy where I'm at and he's willing to make all

those adjustments. And not everybody would be. [Male] [unclear] thing. And even if I do get funding and stuff it's still financial pressure, right? You never get quite enough.

The man explained his reasons for making compromises and being supportive of his wife's career decisions in his journal:

[Female] and I were talking about her quitting her job and I told her she should and that she could make more money working less hours in private practice. I was just trying to make sure [Female] is happy at her job.

For both individuals, "partner's happiness" received higher priority than "ideal career". The man made a compromise for his partner and, once she has attained a more ideal career, he would be able to pursue his aspiration of opening his own business.

Interestingly, the underlying reasons for these compromises were somewhat different.

The man's career compromise was to allow his partner to pursue her career goals so that she would have job satisfaction. The career compromise made by the woman was motivated by a combination of not being able to find work in her area of interest and her desire to achieve career satisfaction by attaining further education.

The issue of finances definitely influenced the couple's decision to compromise and received higher priority than obtaining their ideal careers. This issue was especially difficult for the woman, who struggled with wanting financial security but at the same time wanting to refrain from obtaining a job solely for financial gain. She went on to say:

Yeah. You'll have more flex-, flexibility and stuff but it's like - [unclear] finances against my personal values. And that's a really hard thing and so his goal for me is private practice - even after I get my Ph.D., private practice - and - my goal for me is like, no I wanna serve, which is part of the problem. But I want more money, as

well. But I don't, I wouldn't give up a public health care job. Or I say that now. I wouldn't want to give up a public health job, just to make more money, knowing that I'd serve a different population that I-, and I don't think that's right.

The woman continued to explain her reasons for compromising:

[laughs] So - um - and as far as, um, pursuing a job that I find satisfying and purposeful, that was in here. I think we both still agree that I need to do that. However, in the meantime, we're just sticking with, I'm just sticking with something that - pays the bills, because there are no openings right now in the positions I would - want to have.

The woman was faced with the dilemma of wanting to pursue her interests and values in her career, but also needing financial security. Throughout the conversations it was apparent through her paraverbal markers and behaviours that the woman was distressed that she was faced with this dilemma, because of the inevitable compromise that needed to occur. Although the woman reiterated many times the importance of not taking just any job instead waiting for her ideal career, she eventually compromised her ideal career to meet her need for financial security.

*Couple 004.* Career compromises were made by both individuals in this couple. Both individuals compromised their career interests in order to meet the needs of their future family. The man was open in discussing his desire to pursue a career in his area of interest and seemed determined to pursue his ideal career as a counsellor:

I've always loved counselling. I've always - enjoyed talking to people  
 And - having done my degree in it, I've been exposed to it more so. I do enjoy it  
 So - the goal is to go into counselling, actually, one day. So we'll see. We'll see  
 what happens. At this point it's just to get some more work experience, and earn a



bit of money.

The man prioritized the need to have financial stability for the couples' future family over his desire to become a counsellor, thereby compromising his ideal career. He progressed from speaking about his needs and career interests to what would be best for the couple. He believed that a coordinator's job will be a good opportunity to have increased income, as evident when he said "I mean, I think for me it'll be good for ah, like if [name] doesn't come back, and I do step up into his coordinator position - that'd be a very good thing for us." This occupation is not in his area of interest; however, it would provide the couple with the income needed to pay off debt and secure their finances in preparation for children. The man continued to explain how financial security and paying off debt was a higher priority, which led him to compromise his career interests:

Well I mean, definitely, like, the - getting out of the little debt that we  
Have - having no debt. And if there *is* a little bit of debt, make sure it's a very  
small amount. I think that's a definite goal. [pause] Yeah. Making sure that the  
family's taken care of, financially.

He cautiously qualified, "The rest of the debts I don't like, so that's a definite motivator for me - to - get the career up and running". He was willing to compromise his ideal career and pursue a less interesting career that would provide him with the income needed to achieve financial security for the couple.

Similarly, the woman also compromised her desire to pursue her career of interest in favour of the couples' value of beginning a family. The woman's preferred area for a career was to work as an aesthetician in a spa, rather than her current position of working in an office. She indicated:

Like, right now I'm working in the fashion industry. But it's just working in the

head office - customer service manager, I mean it's a lot of office work.

Whereas I used to be an aesthetician and working in a spa. So I've always wanted to open my own spa. So if I go back part-time, I'll probably go back part-time to the spa I used to work at.

It was clear that the woman has a desire to pursue a career in her area of interest; however, she is conflicted because she has two personal values which can not be simultaneously fulfilled: pursuing a career in her ideal area of interest, and wanting to become a stay-at-home mom. The data appeared to indicate that the woman began to reduce this cognitive dissonance by compromising her desire to become an aesthetician in a spa:

But, um, down the road, we talked about possibly opening our own spa, but that also takes a lot of time and [unclear] and I don't know if I really want to do that either. Or maybe when the kids are in high school or something, but - I don't know, it's a lot of - like, I've seen, it's a lot of work and a lot of time and you gotta be there a lot and I just - I also don't want my family to sacrifice because of that. My aunt did a similar thing. When the kids were in high school, she opened a little woman's gym and - she was so busy all the time. Like, she juggled everything amazingly. But, um, she just sold it and she's so - it's like such a weight lifted off her shoulders, so, yeah. But I think we'll just take it [laughs] one year at a time and we'll see.

The woman prioritized her desire to have a family and becoming a stay-at-home mom over her career interests. Many of the couple's decisions to compromise were heavily influenced by others, whom they used as a guide for what their lives should resemble. The woman's decision to put her family first over opening a spa was influenced

by what she observed in her aunt's life. Similarly, when the couple became involved in a small business venture, they gauged what their income should look like in comparison to the earning potential of others. This was what each partner had to say:

Female: "Well [unclear] our goal for the next three months, um - is to make a couple hundred per week. Bring in a couple hundred per week."

Male: "Well, I think if [name] bringing in [pause]"

Female: "Yeah"

Male: "Three hundred bucks a week?"

Female: "Yeah"

Male: "We should almost just make it, that, you know, we wanna get to the point where we're earning three hundred bucks a week."

It was evident in this exchange that the couple's goals around income were influenced by others, especially their peers. Their motivation for becoming involved in this small business was mainly to increase their income and they assessed their success compared to others. Their desire for the man to be in a career that provided a higher income was driven by their shared goal of allowing the woman to stay at home and take care of their future children. The woman expressed her desire to start a career as a stay-at-home mother.

And this [business opportunity] could only make our future even better, and can enable me to be a stay-at-home mom, which we'd like me to be - but just with his income and mortgage and everything, you know, who knows, like - what - like, I would have to go back, like, two days a week - not full time.

Since the woman was unable to pursue her ideal career (esthetician), she chose an alternative (stay-at-home mother) that fit with their mutual goals and was still in her zone

of acceptable alternatives; however, she experienced some guilt about not contributing financially:

There's more pressure, so, and I just wanna make sure - that [Male] isn't under too much pressure with having to provide and all that type of thing. So, I mean, ultimately we would like me to stay home as much as possible, but we've talked about how I might have to go back, like, two days a week, which would be fine too, because it's nice - talking to some moms - it's nice to get out just for those couple of days, too, or just have your own time, which - and I'm totally cool with that, you know, what with, we have to do whatever we have to do, so, yeah. But I just wanna make sure that - yeah, we're being careful and - I don't want him to feel. [laughs]

It was evident that she was experiencing discomfort about not contributing financially, but at the same time she expressed happiness and gratitude for her partner, whose compromise was allowing her to pursue her goals. She seemed to reduce the psychological discomfort by stating that she would reciprocate by eventually returning to the workforce. Although her willingness to re-enter the work force at some point seemed to be for financial reasons, she also seemed to be motivated by her desire to see her partner happy.

This couple became involved in a small part-time business venture in an industry unrelated to their occupations. They were focused on increasing their earning potential to match others in the same line of work. They didn't seem to be aware of the role of the influence of others on their career compromising process; however, unlike the other couples in this sample, this couple prioritized having a family over career and didn't intend to delay having children until after achieving financial stability. In fact, the woman

was pregnant at the time of the final interview. It was evident from their interviews that the underlying motivation for making career compromises was to become financially secure in order to have a life that matched their values when they began to have children. The compromises were mainly driven by the value they both had about the woman becoming a stay-at-home mom so that their future kids would not be in daycare. The woman's desire to become a stay-at-home mom was made possible by her partner, who compromised his own career interests to enter a higher-paying occupation instead of going back to school to pursue his career interest in counselling. They both agreed that career compromises needed to be made, so that they would have the finances to buy a desirable home in a family-centered community and have enough income so there wouldn't be a need for both individuals to work.

Career compromises become very complex when career decisions need to be made within a couple. This difficulty is largely due to the need to identify and analyze individual career goals, distinguish them from joint goals for career and family, and make compromises when individual goals conflict with joint goals. In couple 004, the woman's individual ideal career was to work as an aesthetician in a spa. The man shared the woman's long term career goal of opening a spa together; however, their joint goal of becoming parents and not having to put children in daycare was prioritized above those individual goals. This pattern can also be seen in couple 002 where the woman needed to shift to part-time work in light of the couple's goal of beginning a family and not putting children in day care.

*Couple 005.* Career compromises were made by both individuals in this couple. Both were similar in that they both made compromises in their career interests; however, the underlying motivations behind their compromises differed. The woman's career

decision process was a difficult one, involving several changes in direction. At one time, she was interested in becoming a missionary; however, that career path was diametrically opposed to the direction that her partner was heading in. As he stated it, “My call is to Canada. *That* much I found out. So there was tension - for a while, a significant source of tension, because there was no way I was going to support that.” Consequently, the woman decided not to pursue work in missions, and instead prioritized the needs of the relationship, choosing to please her husband and maintain a cohesive relational unit.

The woman also had a strong interest in the field of human kinetics. After she completed her degree in human kinetics and became registered as a kinesiologist, she was faced with the disappointment and frustration of not being able to find work in her field of interest. The man explained his partner’s journey while exploring career alternatives, and the distress of that compromise:

No. Nursing is - a culmination. She started [school] as a pre-med student, went into kinesiology, had some delays in graduating, and during that time was working, you know, at [a sandwich shop] and [a supermarket], and - positions that she absolutely disliked. And then she finally got qualified as a kinesiologist, to discover there were not many opportunities. There were a few part-time openings, but none full-time. And she was very disappointed and disillusioned with that. To become a full physiotherapist required - a long trip, both in time and distance. She wouldn't have qualified for UBC, but I think she might have qualified for Toronto. And we just couldn't support that. [pause] That's why she went into this kind of wandering time of, ‘What shall I do?’ She had the missions but, as personally beneficial as she found that, it didn't give her the skills, and now she's kinda come full circle, and she [unclear] back to nursing.

It appeared that the current state of the job market was very influential in this decision to compromise, as she was not able to find opportunities in her area of interest and was unable to pursue further training in her field due to factors such as time to complete, relocation, and finances. Her decision to become a nurse is a classic example of the process that Gottfredson describes, nursing was within the woman's zone of acceptable alternatives, and she chose to pursue this more realistic aspiration after realizing that her idealistic aspiration of becoming a kinesiologist would be too much effort to pursue. Intriguingly, nursing is also further toward the "feminine" end of Gottfredson's sex-type axis.

The period of time the woman spent searching for a satisfying career in her original field of interest can be seen as an initial unwillingness to compromise. However, in the end, her frustration and desperation to find work led to her decision to compromise her more ideal career for the "good enough" choice of nursing:

Well I started out at, um, [university in] pre-med. And halfway through my second year I switched to human kinetics. I graduated with a bachelor of human kinetics, and sort of did some work in the field of kinesiology and, um, I'm, like, registered. And I worked with a couple of teams. And I get really frustrated at times that I've spent four years here and have a degree and can't use it for a full time job. But, I guess, there I was more thinking of, like, wow, I - there's - like, as fun as it is for me to work with teams and as much as I enjoy that - there's no real satisfaction in it, like, there's - yeah. It's fun, and it's not difficult work, but I don't feel like I'm really helping people. There's a certain amount where you're helping with injuries and stuff. But I guess - yeah I don't feel like I'm really making a difference. And with nursing there's just more opportunity to do that. And I really wish that I could

have gone a little farther with the Kines but, at the same time, I don't - I don't think it ever would have fulfilled me the same way that a nursing career will.

A career in nursing seems to provide this woman the opportunity to use her skills, despite the fact that it is less prestigious than pursuing more advanced degrees in kinesiology or medicine. Her emerging optimism toward her new career choice (i.e., her prediction that nursing will be more fulfilling than kinesiology) may be due to the dissonance she experienced when she had to relinquish her unwillingness to compromise. In order to reduce this dissonance, she rationalized her decision to compromise by choosing to view her choice of pursuing a career in nursing as the optimum choice.

The man also went through a period of time during which he was trying to find a career that was fulfilling, a time when he tried out occupations which his personality was not suited for, such as sales. He did not excel in these occupations and had very low career satisfaction, until he became an audio-visual technician. He indicated that his current occupation as an audio-visual technician was "something I'm definitely suited for, even though I didn't, ever train formally for it." Intriguingly, although he enjoys the work, he feels pressure from external sources to give up his current position as an audio-visual technician to pursue a more prestigious career in law. It is almost as if working as an audio-visual technician is below his family's tolerable boundary for careers, which has motivated him to return to school to pursue a law degree:

My immediate family is, for now, my brother, my younger brother. I'm the oldest, the middle one is about to go to UBC for med school, and the youngest is currently doing an electrical engineering co-op in San Jose. So if I didn't have these law school ambitions, I would definitely be the lowest achieving of the lot.

There was that pressure to find - something more significant to do, although it was



almost purely self-imposed. My family is very hard-working, and we tend to aim for high achievements. So to stay only as a technician would be to settle for less. So I'm at least gonna take a run at law school and see what happens.

This man tended to measure himself against his brothers, and felt as though he needed to pursue a more prestigious career in order to be viewed favourably. He didn't appear excited or confident about going to law school, but instead viewed it as something that had to be done.

The man would often refer to himself as an audio-visual technician, and commented on how his personality complemented his current occupation, by saying, "I'm not one to seek out attention. I'm a sound technician, and by nature we tend to not like being seen." He often identified himself with his current occupation and seemed to enjoy his work, but at no point in the conversations did he comment on his interest in law, other than the fact that it would be a more prestigious career.

Although the partners in this couple made career compromises for different reasons, they were reciprocal. They made those compromises for each other, and for the current and future needs of the couple. The woman explained:

The whole law school thing is a relatively new idea, probably last year and a half. And, yeah, the only reason that it was getting put off, until after I've finished, was that we can't afford to both be students at the moment. And so one of us needs to be working and, well, I can't work and be a nursing student full-time, just 'cause of the hours we put in. And so I can work part-time, but that's not gonna be able to pay for food and rent. So [Male]'s gonna work and we - I guess - came to that decision just because I had already been accepted at nursing school. So I started, and then - when he got this idea, we were kinda like, OK, well - he'll do what he

can at [name of school] and take courses if he can through, like, on-line, and stuff. That'll help him get prepared for it so he has a better idea of where he actually wants to go, so that when he wants to write the LSAT, he'll have that preparation behind him. And then after I finish - after I finish my RN, I'll work during that year so he can be either writing the LSAT, or doing something like that.

It appeared that in addition to individual career compromises, there were compromises occurring within the context of the couple with regard to career. These compromises seemed to stem from the financial needs of the couple. The man delayed applying to law school and continued to work at his current occupation in order to support the couple financially, while his wife was in school pursuing her career. When the woman completed her degree, she would support her husband financially while he attended law school. Issues around relocation are another issue for compromise, in the sense of negotiating individual preferences regarding where they wanted to live and work. The couple discussed the issue of relocation extensively, and many factors were taken into consideration regarding who was willing to compromise - what aspect of their future careers. Some factors that were taken into account were the man's desire not to "sell out" to the United States, proximity to family, cost of living, owning a home, and the flexibility/transferability of the woman's career. The most important factor that dictated where they would live in the near future was the location of the law school the man would attend, which was a source of concern for the couple:

Female: "I don't know that I really want to work and live in Winnipeg."

Male: "The cost of living and rent and everything is a lot cheaper in Winnipeg. We could even own our own house."

Female: "I don't want to own a house in Winnipeg! [laughs]."

Male: "Me neither."

Female: "Move into the middle of nowhere. [laughs]."

Female: "Well, I'm OK to move to other provinces - just, really not Manitoba or Saskatchewan."

Female: "How about Calgary? [laughs] If they don't have law schools, it's not gonna get you very far."

[pause]

Female: "Well no, but you also have to realize that you may have to open your own - horizons a little wider."

Male: "I don't want to - have only Winnipeg accept me."

The decision of where the couple would eventually live depended entirely on the location where the man would attend law school, resulting in the prioritization of his career pursuits over the woman's career, once she completed her education. The woman was not only open to negotiating where she was willing to live and work, but also seemed supportive of her husband if he was willing to move outside his comfort zone. Much of her willingness to compromise was also due the fact that it was possible for her to find an occupation in her field wherever they decided to relocate. The issue of finances was always a consideration in their process of determining where they needed to relocate, as represented in the man's discussion of the cost of living and buying a home:

Yeah, there was a - chance at a job at UBC. Same as what I'm doing now, with a slightly increased wage, although a higher cost of living as well. And it doesn't look like I'll be getting that. And frankly, I'm alright with that because this is a sure thing. And it's working quite well for us.

The man seemed to prioritize the issue of prestige higher than his interest in his current occupation. An alternative explanation might be that the man was attempting to rationalize the fact he didn't get the job he wanted, by assigning more value to the importance of financial security. The woman also prioritized financial security of the couple higher than their career interests:

And I think it's just - part of that is both of our abilities to realize that we need - money - at some point- to pay for food and pay for rent and, even if we're not willing, or if we don't enjoy the job that we're at. We never leave ourselves stranded and quit before having another job to [same time as male] replace the income.

The couple's entire career compromise process was heavily influenced by their mutual need for financial security. They seemed to be very practically-minded and logical in their compromising process. Throughout the process, both individuals were highly supportive of each other and cared about their respective partner's happiness. The woman described her partner's concern for her:

There were times when I was working, like, three different jobs at a time, that were all kind of part-time, stupid things that were obviously jobs and never gonna be careers, but it got us through, and it was hard. I know it was stressful for me, so I'm assuming [laughing] it was pretty stressful for you to see me like that. But.  
[cut off]

The man replied: "Cause there was no resolution at the time," which indicated his feelings of helplessness. At the same time, the woman indicated her concern for her partner's happiness:

He often likes to compare himself to his brothers - and I think he feels bad when he tries to stack up against [his brother], that he doesn't quite - make it, so it's something that I don't - I don't know. It gets frustrating for me, but I don't know what to say about it. [laughs].

It was clear that both individuals experienced a high degree of frustration and stress when their partner was unhappy with their current situation. They both were forced to compromise their desires to see the other person happy due to circumstances beyond their control. For the man, it was watching his wife working in jobs in which she was unhappy in order to have financial security. For the woman, it was her frustration of not knowing how to help her partner find a satisfying career. They both showed their support and happiness when one achieved career satisfaction, as demonstrated when the man expressed his satisfaction after seeing his partner happy:

It's a welcome change. The frustration before was incredible, and to see her this excited and, yeah, there's frustrations in some of her courses but, this level of - almost passionate excitement - It's - amazing, that she's on a very fulfilling path for her.

It is apparent that the individuals in this couple highly prioritized their partner's happiness and financial security. Both individuals made career compromises in the past, and continued to do so in order to achieve mutual personal goals. The man compromised pursuing his career interests in order allow his partner to complete school, at which time she planned to make compromises to allow her partner to pursue a career in law. It is evident that the man was particularly influenced by his family to compromise his career interests in order to pursue a career that was more prestigious. Although the woman was

able to see this influence, the man did not seem to be fully aware of the influence this had on him.

*Couple 006.* Change in attitudes toward compromise over time was most clearly evident in the final couple. During the first interview, it didn't appear that this couple would compromise their career ideals. However, as their progress was followed over the months of their involvement in the research, it became evident that both individuals were forced to compromise, and agreed that career compromise was necessary. One of the major themes that emerged was the high level of importance they both placed on career values, ideals, and interests. It was interesting, therefore, to note that what was eventually compromised were their career interests. Three categories of career values emerged in their conversations. The first was the value of not conforming to large corporate work, but instead pursuing freelance work. As the man explained:

Well, I think freelance gigs are good for you still, with the, with the photography [unclear]. And I was like, yeah, I know, just like with design, like I don't, I'm finding myself realizing that like, I don't, haven't really enjoyed - corporate design as much as like, design that celebrates ideas or art. So like, I'd rather design an album cover for a friend, or I really enjoyed - designing a college or high school newspaper because there was, like, a propagation of ideas that were opening the minds of [pause].

The woman indicated support for her partner's value of pursuing freelance work:

Because, like, I know - I think it'd be good if, for freelance stuff. I think - I think it would be hard to start it, like, right away - so how does that - so maybe it's, like, you still have a part-time job, and then you get so much more freelance stuff that you quit the part-time job. Like that?

The man responded by saying “Yeah - so that's kind of - like freelance is sort of alone but I think it's always within sort of a community.” It is important for the man to be working freelance so that he has the freedom and flexibility to be creative and produce work that has personal meaning to him. This value was important enough for him to not engage in any type of part-time work other than freelance. Another aspect that attracted him to freelance work was the opportunity to be in community. For both individuals, the value of being in community and interacting with others who had similar values was prioritized above career. Also, for both individuals the search for job satisfaction and job fulfillment was prioritized over choosing a career based on high income. It was also important that they avoided employment that didn't fit with their values. Both partners in the couple discussed their desire not to compromise, while also discussing occupational interests within the zone of their acceptable alternatives. The man explained that “Opportunity is somewhere else. So, like, that's what you know, so, that's what I kinda hear, and stuff like, ‘You don't feel that fulfilled in this job’. What would fulfill you more at a similar job?” The woman expanded on her concerns:

[pause] To be [pause], yeah, to be more involved, or [pause] and it's also scary at the same time, like, to be more involved in the projects - That means, maybe, that I need to go do more school, [laughing] but I don't wanna go do more school. At this point right now - Yeah, I'll learn more, I'll learn, I'll learn a lot, when I'm here - I just don't know [pause] I don't know. I'm not - I wouldn't be heartbroken if we moved and I had a good opportunity somewhere else, because I could learn there too.

Then the man reiterated his concern:

And that's what my question was, "Experience for what?" It was, like, "What's the purpose?" In a way, I struggle with people who just build resumes. And I don't wanna ever get in that place. Like, I have a good enough resume. But - people who work for their resumes who are, like, "This job's good for my resume" - It's like, so is the next one, and the next one, and the next one. And then they realize they're forty and, like, they're still not satisfied but, hey, "Look I can get a new job." And it's kinda like, you know, hopefully you can find purpose within, where you're working. And a good résumé's a by-product, rather than a - but at the same time, where we are right now, we're both looking for experience in our jobs. And we're both very early in our fields and we have a whole bunch of abstract education from university, and we need to kind of get our hands dirty. So, you know, that's kind of what I'm doing with my two jobs in freelancing, building resumes, so - But that's sort of my question all the time. So that's - kinda what I was asking her. It's like, OK, so you get experience, so - yeah.

Their desire not to compromise was heavily influenced by their value of pursuing knowledge and enriching experiences through their desired careers. Instead of pursuing careers that would offer opportunities for rapid advancement or great financial rewards, they desired work that would provide opportunities for new learning and fulfillment. Those values were so important that fulfilling careers were prioritized over geographical location. Both partners were willing to relocate to obtain work that fit with their values. Although they were willing to relocate, their decision regarding where to live was heavily influenced by the possibility of creating a desirable community, being surrounded by people who held similar values, and finding trustworthy people to nurture and support the man's freelance career. For those reasons, the man's preference was to move to Seattle



where he had friends with similar values whom he trusted to cultivate his freelance photography career. It was apparent that the man's career decisions and unwillingness to compromise were highly influenced by his social network:

And - then at, ah, in Portland. And, I saw a job for like - a, graphic, like for illustrators. So I forwarded the job to him. And I was asking him like, if *you* were me, what types of jobs would you look for [name]?

In addition to eliciting advice from his friends, he explained that his work values were connected to the need to have others provide input for his work:

With moving I think - with freelance - I'd wanna be always surrounded by people who I can dialogue with or even have morning meetings, etc - And all the noisy people around - But, like - and Seattle having more - opportunities and connections. I think I could see something like that, I think they have quite a few. He has quite a few, like, hometown friends from San Francisco that now live there as well.

The man often consulted those he trusted, to assist him with his career decision-making process. Therefore, it was important for him to not compromise his need to be surrounded by a trustworthy community that would help him further his career. Although he was heavily influenced by others in his decisions around career, the individuals from whom he sought advice were people who had values that were aligned with his own. He resisted folding under the pressure of others who did not hold similar career values. He explained the pressure he felt from his family:

I think we, we do [unclear] like pressure of the family. Like, for myself I guess I would say that - my dad would like to see me in a nine-to-five job, or teaching, you know, something kind of traditional and practical.

The man resisted this family pressure to compromise his interests and career values to obtain employment to please his family. Another important factor that influenced their decision to resist career compromise was the couple's shared religious beliefs, as explained by the man in his self-confrontation:

Um, and we're both Christians and there's something of, you know, like, I think that's where we, we still have this sort of like, burden of being in God's will, God's will for your life, God's call - But both of us have - both of us have struggled, like she's struggled before, with how she can use biology to glorify God. And - you know, where she's um - she would struggle with like, yeah, why I am studying this, like, I should be helping people. Whereas she's come to some sort of reconciliation in the past year of, like, no I'm here for all God's creation and for endangered species, and this is totally where I need to be- and I, myself, as well - It's like, I'd like, I have a gift with photography and design. But yet, like - a lot of just, "So what?" Is it helping people, beyond - making good businesses - slicker, you know? [pause] So that's where it's, like, how can I - Both of us have struggles with, like, how we can use it to glorify God or to, to really help humanity. But, not really - haven't fully found that and we're sort of still muddling about.

This couple often evaluated how their personal ethics fit with occupations they wanted to pursue. If an occupation didn't fit with their values, they didn't pursue it. Therefore, in contrast to the other couples in the sample, financial security did not appear to be a high priority in their career decision-making process. They would rather volunteer or take low paying jobs at organizations that fit their values and offered learning experiences that would benefit them in the future. Financial security, however, did appear to be a point of discomfort in the backs of their minds. When discussing the economic

stress they were experiencing, they displayed nonverbal and paraverbal markers (e.g., uneasy laughter) that indicated a degree of inner conflict regarding wanting to prioritize work values over financial need. This was apparent in their dialogue with each other, and with the interviewers. For example, the man stated:

But it's sorta like, we're both kinda waiting - I think where we are right now is that we're both kinda waiting for one of us to, to find that perfect job. And then the other one can follow. So?

In response, the woman expressed her concerns: “Um - yeah, it's just, everything's up in the air. And I, I also kind of [pause] It's like, we kind of need some money [laughs] by this September.”

The woman appeared to be more cognizant of their economic situation, while the man struggled with acknowledging their financial need, and the possibility that compromise might be necessary. For example:

Um, we have student loans. So it's sort of a - I think it's like - an ever-present burden above us. Like, we're not exactly wealthy. Um -, it hasn't become like a huge, huge issue, although - yeah, like it hasn't been a huge issue. It's just been something we need to be aware of all the time. So, you know, that's - it's harder to take risks when you have financial responsibilities - It seems like people sort of give up on some dreams, but I think we both wanna still engage that, and that's really good. So, we're both not those people. Its like, “I know I wanna do this, and this is how I'm gonna do it.”

The couple expended a great deal of effort to avoid compromising their ideal careers and work values; however, financial issues were a point of concern in their lives. Although they indicated that they were unwilling to compromise their work values, their

financial needs forced them to face the idea of compromise. A lot of the risks that the man alluded to pertained to pursuing unstable freelance occupations that fit with his values, but didn't necessarily provide him with the finances to allow the couple to save for their impending wedding and housing needs. In light of those needs, he was unable to take those risks. He appeared to be experiencing frustration in balancing his work values with the ever-growing need for financial stability, and maintaining partner satisfaction. As the couple's wedding date approached, the man questioned his values of pursuing freelance work:

I could increase that [freelance work] and have it be more of a primary source of income, along with doing some other work but, you know, at what point can we take that step? And when would it meet our immediate needs? Um, and what would that mean for [Female's] work situation? And if we're gonna stay, what would that mean with having - um - insurance coverage etc.? So, it's a lot of questions like that, that we're still kind of dealing with.

The female expressed her opinion in response to her partner's strategy for moving away from freelance work and pursuing a corporate occupation:

Like, he knows that, no, he probably won't work for [a video game company] or architect firms or whatever, but, ah, he's learning how to do other types of skills. So I just wanna make sure that I, I know that he *is* getting some sort of skills and not just kind of selling out, I guess.

While the man was going through the process of deciding whether he needed to compromise his work values to achieve financial security, the woman appeared to support him if he chose to compromise his work values and work for a corporation. In the latter part of the conversation, it became clear that the woman's choice to be supportive of the

man's decision to compromise his work values had more to do with her desire to not have the pressure of being the sole financial support for the couple, and her need for the man to provide financial security at the cost of his own values. However, the woman experienced some discomfort about allowing her partner to compromise his ideal career, which was apparent through her desire to know that he was also benefiting from the compromise.

The couple discussed which geographical location would be best suited for their career pursuits. As different geographic locations were better suited for each of their careers, they were faced with the reality of having to make compromises on where they should live if they wanted to continue being together. The woman expressed concern at various stages of the interview about having to compromise her preferences:

Our options ended up being, like, yeah, Seattle or Vancouver. And, uh, in Seattle - you know, it was looking like, you know, we would need somebody who, who had the full-time, main income job. And that was looking like it was gonna be me. And right now, I'm not at a job - that I enjoy at all, or I really - don't even really, I don't know, believe in very much. Or maybe I do, but I'm just not the one who should be there. And um - so I mean, there was still a potential that maybe I would have to work there still, if we were in Seattle. Or I would be the one, um, making - most of our income. And then [Male] would be, uh, in order for [Male] to, you know, kind of pursue his more, uh, personal, entrepreneurial, photography business, you would have, like, a part-time job, and then be able to have more opportunity to work on [unclear] business on the side.

The woman continued to express her interest in moving to Canada so that she would be able to pursue her career interests. This would allow her partner to accept a corporate job that would provide the couple with more financial security:

So, like - being in Seattle, we would have - more stresses. Maybe I wouldn't be able to do, ideally, what I would like to do, um, kind of just whatever I would *have* to do. And then um [Male] would hopefully be getting, you know, the steps he needed to make, in order to make his business good. But when this whole thing came up, and [name of company] offered [Male] a really good job with extended benefits to me, um, it just - it offered him a, kind of a more - consistent, and uh - I guess [unclear], I don't know, like, just steady, yeah, steady place to be. And especially while we're moving in together, we're, you know, first year of being married and um - But I do - you did mention that maybe, you know like, in 6 months, 9 months, 12 months we would move to Seattle. But why can't we stay in Vancouver, and you do your stuff? Why would it have to be Seattle?

This idea was reiterated in her self confrontation:

And it's just kind of scary for me to have something, where I would, I would kind of - yeah, I would be the one who - how we survive would depend on me. And then, maybe he would end up - being with this friend all the time, having great ideas, but never really following through. So I was, uh, I'm more fearful of - jumping into that kind of thing without a nice foundation or, yeah, background for him to - have firm goals [pause]

In contrast, the man expressed his desire to move to Seattle because it would be most beneficial for his own career:

As we go down the road. But - um - I, I guess I feel I have more friends in Seattle. And, uh, possible collaborators for creative work on the side as well. So not just photography - wise. And, and that could be really, um, good - really rewarding,

beyond photography, to do some creative work with some friends in Seattle who'd like to start a business [pause]

The woman realized that she would have to compromise her career interests and continue in an occupation that was not satisfying, in order for the man to pursue his interests in freelance work. This realization caused the woman a great deal of stress and she felt the burden of being the sole supporter for the couple. As a result, there was a shift in her priorities. Previously the woman prioritized the career of her partner over where they lived. However, now she prioritized where they lived higher than career, as she insisted on living in Vancouver. This was in part due to the fact that, had they moved to Seattle, the man would have been in a better position to pursue his freelance work, but had he stayed in Vancouver he would be able to take a corporate job and be in a better position to financially support her career aspirations and provide financial security for the couple. Moving to Vancouver also meant that the woman would not be able to work (she was not a Canadian citizen), which would give her the opportunity to do what she desired, which was to volunteer to gain more experience in her chosen career path. The man expressed his frustration with the possibility of having to compromise:

And I - and if she would wanna have - if she had kids, you know - we're thinking of having kids sooner or later - and for me not to have, like, a salary, I think it would just add stress. And I think that she's just quite - she's quite happy about that. And I never realized how happy she would be, until she saw that offer. 'Cause I - 'cause that night before we got the offer, like, we were pretty certain I was gonna go down to Seattle. Like, we were both really giddy about that, like, I had made a decision to go down, because it was just too stressful for us being apart - And so, like - it's, it's pretty, pretty fascinating to see, you know, how she

does support me in a vision, like, and just working at, at [name of company]. At the same time, I feel that she doesn't necessarily understand where I wanna go, if I go on my own, like, both with photography and doing some creative work.

Despite the man's frustrations, he attempted to accept the need for the compromise and rationalized the need for it:

But I'm realizing more and more that it's really good for me to take - to be responsible with having sort of a salary. And I think it is opening up [Female] to having more freedom with her work, 'cause she doesn't - like her work right now. And I know - and I don't like that she has to do the work she's doing right now. So - for her to be able to gain volunteer experience is really good. I just hope, you know, it all works out, that she'll be able to do it, so - yeah.

The Man realized that he needed to compromise his ideal career to take on a corporate job, in order to achieve financial stability after their wedding and new life together. Although in the first interview the man emphasized the importance of his career values, he was forced to compromise. He shifted from prioritizing his career values over financial security to compromising the occupation that he would prefer to do, in order to gain the financial stability needed for a marriage and eventually a family. His compromise was also influenced by his desire to have his partner find satisfaction and happiness in her work. As the couple became more committed to each other and faced a new life together, it became apparent to them that they could no longer follow their individual career values. It became impossible for both of them to pursue their ideal career directions. The man was forced to compromise for the good of the couple. However, the compromise inevitably caused the man some distress, as he felt he was



unable to follow his career interests, and felt that his partner didn't fully understand the consequences that the compromise would have on his job satisfaction.

Yet another shift that occurred was in how they prioritized community and togetherness. During the first interview, this couple dialogued about the importance of community and prioritized it above career; however, a shift occurred in which they had to live apart to pursue employment. The man expressed his dissatisfaction having prioritized career over their relationship:

Ah, I think it was difficult that we couldn't pray together, because we weren't together. I think that's where, like, a lot of the - um - the immediate needs, more like intimate needs, or just like social needs for us, like, just couldn't be met and were sort of in a relational purgatory, being in - being in an engaged period where - especially living two hours away - that a lot of immediate needs couldn't be fulfilled. And so, like, income, living arrangements, and we couldn't go to church, not to participate in that side by side, really wore us down.

The couple has had to compromise their religious and personal values of being together in order to pursue their individual careers. Although they stated that they didn't want to compromise their values, it was apparent that they had given their careers a higher priority, at least for a period of time. Both individuals experienced distress over being apart to pursue their career interests, which caused a shift in the man's priorities and led to his decision to compromise concerning his preferred career, to achieve what was best for the couple. Another factor that caused the man to compromise and the woman to support him in his compromise was the influence of their parents. The man expressed the pressure he felt:

And it's her mom pulling the weight with the, with um - income-wise - *my* parents' expectations, like, "Well, [Male] you should have a full-time job before you go down". And, so there's a bit of, like, we need to live up to this.

And the woman also explained the influence others had on their compromise process:

Yeah. Um, we had - discussions with our, between ourselves. Um, we were also, you know, praying for the right things to happen at the right time. And also ah - I think what really - clicked it all was talking to our parents. And after - you know, after them hearing that [Male] was given this offer, and that he would be able to support *me*, that's, like, essentially um - they both, you know, revealed to us that that's exactly what they had been praying for. So um, knowing that, like, we couldn't, we couldn't really, you know, ignore this, this opportunity. So, uh. yeah. So, between ourselves, I think it was our parents who had the most influence. 'Cause we talked to other people, but - nobody who could really - just people who'd say, [unclear] [laughs] yeah, without uh, seeing into our situation. Yeah.

The man felt pressure from his parents to have a full-time stable job before he moved to Seattle to be with his partner. He remained reluctant to compromise his vision for his own career and seemed to prioritize his career plans over being with his fiancée. However, he felt a lot of pressure from not only his parents but his fiancée and her parents to find a stable corporate job that would provide them with financial security. His decision to compromise and take the job that was offered to him in Vancouver was influenced by his desire to allow his fiancé to find career opportunities that interested her. The woman was therefore able to pursue her career interests in her preferred geographical location. One of the woman's concerns regarding moving to Vancouver was the fact that she lacked a visa to work in Canada; however, she prioritized her desire to gain

experience and knowledge in her field of interest over the ability to find paid work. In light of their upcoming wedding and financial expenses that accompany a marriage, the man realized that a career compromise was necessary:

And I think that's where, right now, we feel like our immediate need is to have a solid income when we get married in January - So I think we still feel like - it's better for us to deal with those questions within even the first year of marriage, *having* a healthy income, rather than trying to figure all that out, and not be happy, and have little money and [unclear]. So, that's where I think a lot of this is gonna be continued, like, this whole conversation, and kind of referring back to whether our immediate needs are being met.

While the man acknowledged the need for the compromise, he attempted to reduce his discomfort with it by stating that these compromises were only temporary:

We might wanna change some of the, uh, some of our work options still. But that's, but that's gonna be OK, 'cause we're gonna have a solid foundation to work from, rather than - I guess what I'm saying is, there's still, there's still a - a bit of compromise. But that's - I think that's always gonna be there, until we've really found it.

In the end, the couple's goal of balancing their immediate needs such as maintaining a stable income, while developing occupational directions that fit their values became problematic. They concluded that no matter how much effort was put into avoiding having to compromise their career interests and ideals, they needed to do so in order to be able to manage life together as a couple. At the beginning of their research involvement, the couple was able to pursue their individual career interests. However, they began to realize that compromise was

necessary in a relationship, especially when committing to marriage and planning for a future family.

## CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

The process of career compromise in couples was explored by examining how six couples negotiated challenges that are involved in making career decisions together. Parker and Arthur (2004) suggested that non time-bound research may be needed to track how challenges such as compromise are pursued in couples. The action project method of collecting qualitative data over time provided the opportunity to have a clearer picture of the nature of compromise. Findings from this study provided additional information regarding the utility of Gottfredson's (1981, 2002) principles of career compromise, for understanding the career development processes and actions of romantically involved young adult couples, extending the current body of empirical research on this aspect of Gottfredson's theory. Results from this study partially supported the principles outlined in Gottfredson's theory, but also suggested that some aspects of the theory may need to be modified. The findings reflected the multifaceted, complex experiences of the participants and were found not to be predictable across couples as Gottfredson's theory would suggest.

Evidence of career compromise was apparent through investigation of the couples' career decision-making processes. Consistent with previous literature (Gati, Houminer, & Fassa, 1997), the experiences of these participants reveal that career compromises are inevitable. Examination of this phenomenon indicates that decisions to compromise were joint rather than individual processes. The analyses also revealed that, although the exact process of compromise was unique for every couple, some themes that emerged were consistent across the sample.

### *Who is Compromising*

In the past, women tended to make more career compromises to accommodate their partners and families (Milkie & Peltola, 1999), and traditional career theories (i.e., role theory) suggested that women were more likely to make career compromises than men or that men would play more powerful roles in making decisions (Biernat & Wortman, 1991). However, the findings of this research, using recently collected data, reveal that men and women equally engage in career compromises. Thus, it would appear that, in present-day Canadian contexts, women are less willing to make career compromises relative to their male counterparts who, in turn, are more willing and more likely to make compromises regardless of the levels of those compromises. The reasons for compromise, however, tended to differ according to gender. Interestingly, most men compromised pursuing their ideal careers temporarily in order for their partners to pursue their career interests. In contrast, the majority of women's career compromises resulted from their inability to pursue their ideal careers due to external contextual factors.

This trend was apparent in the following couples: In couple 003 the man had to postpone his aspirations of opening his own business in order for his wife to return to school to pursue her career; in 004, the man sacrificed his interest in becoming a counsellor in order for his wife to pursue her goal of becoming a stay-at-home mother; in couple 005 the man put his educational aspirations of going to law school on hold until his wife completed her degree; finally, in couple 006 the man compromised his career interests of pursuing freelance work in order to financially provide for the couple and to allow his partner to pursue her career goals. This finding is inconsistent with previous research that supports traditional gender-role theory, which predicts that women will be

more likely to compromise their careers for the careers of their male partners (Becker & Moen, 1999; Bielby & Bielby, 1992).

This finding may be a reflection of changing social trends in traditional values, family structure, or gender role expectations, as suggested by Parker and Arthur (2004). However, it may also partly be attributed to the particular characteristics of a sample in which all the women have a higher or equal levels of education relative to their male counterparts. These women would therefore have opportunities to equally contribute to, and maximize, family gains as outlined by the economic approach. Relationships between the couples in this sample appear to be more egalitarian, because these couples give the women's careers equal priority. This movement toward more egalitarian relationships with respect to careers may be explained through Biernat and Wortman's (1991) findings that women in academic fields are becoming more ambivalent regarding traditional gender roles. Also, as evident in couples 002, 003, 004, and 006, it is beneficial for the women in these couples when their partners are able to make more money to support their career interests. The finding that women are less willing to make career compromises supports Haddock and Rattenborg's (2003) and Biernat and Wortman's (1991) observation that traditional cultural norms about gender in dual-earner couples are being challenged. This is evident by the increased number of women in the workforce.

In contrast to the findings of previous research (e.g., Lang, 2000), the women in this sample were *less* likely to compromise their careers than their partners. The couples in this sample would be considered non-traditional because the careers of all female spouses were valued and taken into consideration in the compromise process. An

explanation for why the men were willing to compromise may be that the higher education levels achieved by these men liberalized their attitudes toward equality in marriage (Biernat & Wortman, 1991). Alternatively, the absence of children might provide the freedom for women to pursue their career interests, when the responsibilities of child rearing don't present as current stressors.

### *What is Being Compromised*

Results from this study provide no indication that maintaining sex-type boundaries was a factor in the couple compromise process. This finding lends support to the conclusions of research previously described (Leung, 1993; Leung & Plake, 1990), that perhaps emerging young adult couples in the current social context have much wider boundaries around what are acceptable sex-type occupations. Another explanation may be that the couples perceive their compromises to be moderate to low, a situation where prestige and interests may be more highly protected (e.g., Gottfredson, 2002). In certain cases when faced with higher levels of compromises (i.e., 003, 004, and 006) individuals rationalized expanding their boundaries to accommodate life circumstances, particularly financial pressures, to ease the dissonance they experienced. For example, the man in couple 006 who insisted that he would not compromise his interest in freelance work accepted a job at a corporation to meet the financial needs of the couple. Similarly, in couple 003, the woman who insisted that she wanted work in the field of geriatrics was forced to find other work for similar reasons. Therefore, high levels of compromises are brought down to moderate levels, which allow couples to psychologically accommodate these sacrifices.



Consistent with previous literature, most couples are very protective of career interests as well as prestige. They were the last aspects of career choices to be relinquished. In the end, many couples were forced to compromise their career interest for prestige. Additionally, it appeared from the couples' experiences that they did not define occupational prestige as only relating to social class or status as Gottfredson (1981) stated, but also which occupation provided them with more financial gain. Although higher prestige careers tend to be associated with higher income, there are several instances in this sample where individuals pursued higher income, lower prestige occupations such as plumbing and garage door installation, rather than more prestigious ones. Indeed, most of the men in this sample were currently in lower prestige occupations, which suggest that their choices were based more on financial return than social status. This result may reflect the pattern observed in some previous studies which reveal that maintaining careers that fit into social class stereotypes tend to be a lower priority for males. Instead, the experiences of these participants indicate that young adult men may prioritize their compromises based on partner satisfaction and financial remuneration. All couples compromised pursuing their individual ideal career interests to some degree, to meet the couple's needs. One way couples negotiated career compromises was to take turns, giving priority to one partner's career at a time, as in the case of couples 002, 003, and 005. The decision regarding whose career would take priority depended on the current educational situations and financial resources of the couple. Both men and women who are dissatisfied with the compromises they make indicated that the situation was only temporary, and that they intended to pursue their ideal careers later on. This finding provided partial support for Gottfredson's (1981,

2002) theory that prestige is more protected than interest, because those with lower prestige occupations (the men in this sample) were more prone to compromise, giving their partner's more prestigious careers precedence. However, contrary to Gottfredson's theory, the couples were more protective of their career interests than choosing occupations to maintain sufficient social standing. It is important to note, however, that in the context of a couple, women with more prestigious careers were only able to pursue their careers with the agreement and assistance of their partners, who have higher-income lower-prestige occupations.

#### *Prioritization and Factors Influencing Compromise*

How couples prioritize and navigate career compromises is influenced by many factors that are unique to each couple and their particular situations. Career compromises were more salient for the couples who were married and had completed school. As seen in the compromising process in couple 001 (who were unmarried and currently in school), there was more room to be intolerant of compromise. For example, the woman was unwilling to allow her partner to enter seminary if they had children, and she emotionally shut down and became visibly distraught when he mentioned dropping out of school. In contrast, married couples were more willing to engage in negotiation and explore various options to compromise. This suggests that level of commitment plays an important factor in the compromise process, such that those who have higher levels of commitment (i.e., married) are more invested in their relationships. Those more invested in relationships might feel more pressured to compromise to maintain satisfying relationships and work toward mutual goals for the future.

Regardless of commitment level, however, several themes emerged that were consistent across all couples. Each couple's decision to make compromises was influenced by financial need/security, partner happiness, important people in their lives (i.e., family and friends), and living arrangements (i.e., buying homes or relocating).

*Finances.* Findings from this investigation shed more light on the role of financial security in the career compromise process among emerging young adult couples. The desire to decrease debt and save for future goals was always given the highest priority when making career compromises. This even appeared to be true of couples who explicitly stated that they were not willing to compromise their career aspirations or values regardless of the financial costs. Discrepancies were revealed through multiple types of information that were collected (i.e., what participants stated in their interviews, what they were observed to be doing in their conversations, and what they revealed about their underlying thought processes in the self-confrontations). Those who insisted that they intended to pursue careers that were more in line with their interests and work values found that they had to compromise their interests and values to pursue more viable occupations that would provide stable incomes. One of the major external factors affecting interest-related compromises was the job market and the unavailability of occupations to fit their interests and values. Those who persisted in their pursuit of occupations their fields of interest were faced with the harsh reality of needing to settle in order to meet the financial need of the couple.

These decisions are made jointly as couples, to plan ahead for future goals. Contrary to the economic approach, which predicts that the partner who has the most earning potential is least likely to compromise (Challiol & Mignonac, 2005), findings

from the current investigation indicated that both individuals had equal input. In many cases, however, the individuals who didn't compromise their interests experienced feelings of guilt for asking their partners to support them in their pursuits. Those who make compromises for their partners experience frustration about not being able to pursue their ideal occupations and, in one case (male in 006), reported feeling misunderstood by his partner who pushed for the compromise. One way that these individuals dealt with the emotional distress of experiencing incongruence and dissonance was to rationalize their decisions to compromise. This finding supports Hilton's (1962) description of the important role that cognitive dissonance plays in career decision-making. According to Hilton, cognitive dissonance can be used to describe what an individual will do when no satisfactory alternatives for a career are available. For example, when individuals need to compromise career interests in order to make a higher income, they may eventually come to believe that the compromise is what they actually want. They may also reduce the dissonance by rationalizing the choice to take on the career of compromise as being only a temporary measure, taken in order to obtain financial security. However, in the end the compromises need to be made for the best interest of the couple, to achieve financial security. This suggests that having a stable income and financial security is extremely important for emerging adult couples, because they are in the process of building their lives together and working toward mutual goals such as purchasing homes and beginning families. This finding is consistent with theories which suggest that finances are the main driving force in career decision-making and compromises (Challiol & Mignonac, 2005).

*Living Arrangements.* Contrary to previous research described by Adams (2004), the earning capacity of each spouse did not play a major role in the compromise process. Instead, partner's happiness and lack of financial security seemed to drive discussion around relocation and home purchase. One result from this investigation was that decisions to purchase homes are important factors that propel many couples to compromise their career interests, to pursue occupations that provide more substantial incomes, and allow them to buy homes. Decisions regarding relocation, however, depend on job availability and opportunities for career enhancement that are present in locations.

Making decisions around living arrangements was found to be a mutual exchange where both partners made compromises. For example, if a couple were thinking of relocating (as was the case in couples 001, 005, and 006), the new location would need to provide job opportunities for both partners. This finding is consistent with more recent research indicating that decisions about relocation are greatly affected by probabilities that spouses will find jobs in those new areas (Eby, 2001; Eby & Russell, 2000; Feldman & Bolino, 1998). This is consistent with Challiol and Mignonac's (2005) findings, that decisions around relocation were indeed joint processes in which both individuals searched for solutions through compromise. Factors which played a part in the process of compromise include priorities given to individual careers, as well as expectations for family lives. Challiol and Mignonac also noted that decisions around career compromise need to be understood by acknowledging the interdependence of the couple and the process of empathy between the two members.

*Influence.* An important finding emerged from the couples' verbal statements, observed actions, and contextual features in their lives. Consistent with previous research

(e.g., Edwards, 1969) factors outside of their immediate awareness, such as socialization factors (i.e., family members and friends) proved to be influential in the career compromise process. According to Adams (1994), many researchers of decision-making make the false assumption that couples' decisions only involve the dyad, but in reality many others such as family members and friends are highly influential in this process. Adams' assertion was supported by the current research findings that the compromise process in couples is influenced by others in their lives. For example, couples 002, 003, and 004 were influenced by friends and family regarding purchasing homes, or making plans for balancing part-time work to take care of children in the future. The man and woman in couple 005 were influenced by their families of origin to pursue careers in law and nursing, respectively. Families of both members of couple 006 were very influential in persuading the man to accept a corporate job, and friends and community affected their decision about where to live.

The influence of others in the compromising process was evident through joint conversations, self-confrontations, and observed actions. This finding is consistent with previous investigations (Phillips, Christopher-Sisk, & Gravino, 2001; Schultheiss, Palma, Predragovich, & Glasscock, 2002) attesting to the importance of relational influence and social support in the career decision-making process. Many of the couples took others' opinions and experiences into account when making decisions to compromise. Couples also compare themselves and were influenced by siblings and friends who were at the same stage of life as they were. This was especially apparent in the male member of couple 005, who felt compelled to pursue law in order to have a career as prestigious as his siblings. Although the impact of others on the couples' compromise process was

evident to the researchers through the multiple kinds of data gathered over time, not all individuals were conscious of the role of that influence, or how it affected their decisions.

*Partner Happiness.* How each of the above factors is prioritized depends on the individual life situations of each couple; however, findings indicate two aspects of life that are consistently prioritized higher than others, in every instance of compromise observed across the couples: finances and partner happiness. A key factor that seems to reduce dissonance and promote the acceptance of career compromise is the desire to promote their partner's happiness. Individuals often compromised their own preferences regarding living arrangements and pursuit of their career goals for the welfare of the couple. This finding is consistent with (a) social exchange theory, which provides greater insight into why individuals will make compromises that does not promote their own happiness, and (b) Challiol and Mignonac's (2005) research, which revealed that partner happiness promotes relationship satisfaction and contributes toward preserving relationships. Partner happiness was found to be as important as, if not more important than, pursuing career goals that would only fulfill one partner's needs.

Many couples needed to compromise their own career interests to meet the demands of external realities, but also to promote partner happiness by enabling their partners to pursue their career interests. In couples 002, 003, 005, and 006, one spouse made compromises to enable a partner to pursue further education, or to provide opportunity for their partner's career advancement. In their investigation of career paths of women in female dominated careers, Whitmarsh, Brown, Cooper, Hawkins-Rodgers, and Wentworth (2007) found that women are best able to continue their educations and pursue their careers when their partners provide them with substantial encouragement and

support. In the current study, spouses whose partners made compromises for them verbalized appreciation for those compromises, and noted that they would one day be in positions to be able to help their partners who had compromised their careers.

Those who made the compromises often stated that they were willing to do so because they valued their partner's happiness; however, there was sometimes incongruence between what they claimed and how they felt. For example, the man in couple 006 made a career compromise for his partner but expressed dissatisfaction about having to make that compromise through both statements made in the self-confrontation, and his nonverbal and paraverbal communication during the joint conversation. He attempted to gain congruence and reduce dissonance by stating that perhaps the compromise was actually what was best. This suggests that perhaps those who compromise are not as content in making these sacrifices, and may experience some level of internal conflict later.

#### *Gottfredson's Principles of Compromise*

Findings from the current study suggest that, over time, all couples make compromises, even when they initially claim that they do not intend on compromising their ideal career preferences. This is consistent with Gottfredson's theory that compromise is a normal and necessary aspect of career decision-making, when individuals realize that their ideal or most preferred career choice is unattainable. Also consistent with Gottfredson's theory, in this sample of participants the first aspect of career to be sacrificed was interest. Contrary to her theory, however, interest was not compromised to maintain prestige or sex-type, but because of contextual factors that forced couples to prioritize current financial pressures and partner happiness above



pursuing their ideal careers. It appears that, within a relational context, career compromises are driven by the desire to meet mutual needs and goals, which are taken into consideration and prioritized above individual desires.

Unfortunately, the analyses did not reveal what role sex-type plays in couples' career compromise process. One reason for this may be that in the current sample, most couples were already in or working towards their careers (with the exception of couple 001), and therefore already had a good idea of what career direction they wanted to take. It is possible that individuals often go through the process of establishing their sex-type boundaries in adolescence, before they decide to be part of a committed relationship such as marriage. Thus, by the time that they participated in this research, occupations that were outside of their sex-type boundaries were not even within the realm of possibility. Alternatively, it may be that in young adults from 21st century Canada, the sex-type boundaries of what they consider to be an appropriate occupation are broad enough so that they rarely have career interests that lie outside of these boundaries.

Evidence from this investigation provides some support for Gottfredson's second principle of "opting for the 'good enough'" (Gottfredson, 2002, p. 106): Participants usually settled for the "good enough" choice and, in most cases, were satisfied with their choice. However, this choice was not made because couples were unable or unwilling to undergo the process of searching for what their ideal career might be, but because of external pressures (e.g., job market, need to lower personal debt) that impeded their ability to achieve their preferred choice. In most cases, individuals already had information regarding the accessibility of their preferred choice and the values that led them there. Therefore, emerging adults in committed romantic relationships may

sometimes have to settle for non-ideal careers in order to have sufficient income to enable them to achieve other life goals, or to enable their partner to pursue their career goals.

Many participants' experiences resonated with Gottfredson's (2002) third principle of staving off the "not good enough." Many participants initially expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of job availability or choices in their present social context. As a result many underwent a process of searching and pursuing occupations that were unattainable such as in the cases of the man in 002, the woman in 003, and the man in 006. Many avoided becoming committed to any occupation and continued searching for more alternatives. Contrary to Gottfredson's principle, which predicts that individuals will continue to delay committing to an alternative occupation or procrastinate in making career decisions, most participants did engage in compromise and made career decisions (though sometimes temporary ones) by the time that they had concluded their research involvement. This finding suggests that young adults in a romantic couple may not have the luxury of engaging in avoidance tactics for a long period of time as those who are not in a committed relationship. Couples who are at the early stages of marriage or are planning to begin to a life together seem to be financially vulnerable and feel the urgency of obtaining an alternative occupation in order to produce a stable income. Although these individuals made compromises, there is still evidence that they are somewhat governed by the principle of staving off the "not good enough," as some rationalize these decisions as being temporary.

Participants' choice to label their career of compromise as temporary also lends some support to Gottfredson's (2002) final principle describing "accommodating to compromise." According to this principle, it would be most difficult for couples to

psychologically adjust to compromise involving sacrificing sex-type. As described earlier, definite conclusions could not be made regarding how individuals adjust to compromises around sex-type. However, the women in couples 002 and 004 had an easier time adjusting to compromises around work by prioritizing having children above work and the men in couple 003, 004, and 006 justified the career compromises they made by claiming that they wanted to be able to provide financially for the couple. Although they represent minority experiences in the sample, these compromises may have been easier to justify because their choices appear to protect sex-type.

Gottfredson's final principle also suggests that couples find it more difficult psychologically accommodate compromises involving prestige than interest. Findings from this study reveal that individuals had more difficulty psychologically adjusting to compromises around interest than prestige, although this finding may be, in part, a result of the fact that interest was more often compromised than prestige. The only psychological distress that was noted in making sacrifices around prestige was the financial loss that may accompany choosing a lower prestige career option. However, findings support the assertion that the general satisfaction with one's non-ideal career depends on the extent to which it would allow one to be viewed in a desirable way, either through work or the benefits that the career affords the couple. In the current sample, many compromises were made for financial reasons, although this was not always the case. In couple 005, the man was willing to sacrifice his current occupational interest in order to have a more prestigious career and so that he would be viewed more favourably by others (primarily his family). In other cases, young adults may be willing to make sacrifices in order to satisfy their partner or to be perceived as being able to contribute to

the household income. The latter case leaves room to wonder if the sacrifices that people make for their romantic partners are truly altruistic, or if they are driven by the gratifying idea of being viewed in a desirable way by others as Gottfredson (2002) suggested.

### *Contributions to Counselling Practice*

As revealed by the findings of this study, career compromise and problems arising from these compromises are salient issues in emerging young adults in a committed romantic relationship. The findings have the potential to assist counsellors to work more effectively with the challenge of career compromise in a relational context, by providing insight into the nature of the process. This exploration revealed that career decisions pertaining to an individual within a committed romantic relationship are actually a joint process where both partners equally contribute to making decisions around compromises. Furthermore, the examination of this process reveals the interconnected, ongoing and reciprocal nature of these compromises. Counsellors, particularly career counsellors, would benefit from understanding that career compromises are a mutual decision and, consequently, that there are potential benefits to inviting the couple to engage in career counselling together.

Findings from this investigation suggest that career compromises are inevitable in a relational context. Individuals are faced with difficult career decisions, and are forced to put their own desires aside and make compromises for the welfare of the couple. This is especially true as couples seem to be reacting to the evolving perceptions of appropriate gender roles in society by embracing non-traditional ways of making decisions in a couple. Counsellors should be aware of these changes and be prepared to help individuals grapple with how their own values fit with social changes and assist them to function

within a changing system. This may include helping clients explore and gain awareness of their career values and what aspects they are willing to compromise. It would also be beneficial for counsellors to aid clients in deciphering how their career and personal relational values fit by exploring their relationship expectations and values. Once they have gained a deeper understanding of their career and relationship values they will be able to prioritize their values and decide what they are willing to compromise. Guiding clients to become aware of societal and relational influences on their career decision-making process, and what they are willing to compromise, can help empower clients to make decisions based on their own goals and values. Providing a validating empathetic environment can help clients with the process of accepting the need to compromise. Teasing apart and bringing awareness to external influences, their values, and barriers to achieving their goals can allow clients to understand the reasons they need to compromise and make informed decisions that may reduce the cognitive dissonance they could otherwise experience. Counsellors can mediate the negotiation process for their clients, so that couples are in a position to gain insight into who might need to make a compromise in order to achieve their mutually decided upon goals for the future. This negotiating process can occur by providing couples with communication skills and facilitating discussions around career compromise between the couple. Creating a safe environment for couples to express their concerns about feeling the pressure to compromise for their partner will increase understanding allowing each other to be supportive of these sacrifices.

It was found that being forced to compromise career interests caused some degree of internal conflict and frustration. The process of career compromise proved to be a

difficult process for couples, because they needed to take not only their own needs and values into account, but also those of their partners. Some couples are not aware of all of the issues involved in the compromise process, or the important repercussions (e.g., guilt and frustration) that can result from their decisions to compromise. Additionally, some compromise for sub-optimal reasons (e.g., being unaware of other options). To address these issues, counsellors could encourage couples to engage in more exploration of alternative career options prior to making a choice, in order to maximize their clients' probability of finding an acceptable alternative before abandoning their ideal, but unrealistic, career preference. In many cases where couples make compromises that go against their values, counsellors could help them to explore and make conscious the rationalization and dissonance they experience as a result of this incongruence. This study also reinforces the idea that counsellors should not only pay attention to verbal statements made by clients, but also attend to their non-verbal and paraverbal communication, in order to facilitate awareness of incongruence in couples. Furthermore, counsellors can help clients to understand and be more empathic when their partners are struggling with compromise. Ultimately, as Gati, Shenhav, and Givon (1993) suggested, counsellors have a responsibility to understand the process and issues involved in career decision-making and compromise in couples, so that they are better able to assist these clients.

Factors that influence the process of making compromises in young adult couples, and how couples prioritize multiple goals when making their career decisions were also revealed in this study. Findings from how and what couples' prioritize indicate that the prioritization process is very complex and unique to each couple. Factors that lead to

compromise in one couple may not be a consideration in other couples. However, one consistent finding across the sample is that couples tend to take turns giving priority to one partner's career, based on convenience and the desire to promote partner happiness. Being aware of motivations and the impetus that drives these decisions can be beneficial in the counselling process. Counsellors may find it useful to explore the career compromise process through a holistic and contextual lens, taking into account personal values, future goals, and finances, as well as factoring in the unique contextual components that may contribute to this process in any given dyad of clients.

Despite the idiosyncratic nature of prioritization, counsellors should be aware of the important role of finances and the importance of financial security to young couples struggling with career planning. Findings of this study reinforced the idea that job market and economic pressures play a large part in causing couples to feel as though they need to compromise. Young couples feel many financial constraints as they begin their lives together and transition from school into the world of full-time work. Counsellors should be aware of these stresses in order to help couples come to grips with having to face the undesirable reality of compromising career values and interests.

Counsellors should also take care not to underestimate the influence of other people outside the dyad in the career compromise process. Couples in this study often felt insurmountable pressure from family and friends to be moving in certain directions at this point in their lives. Couples also compared themselves with peers and siblings, and strove to be at the same level as them. Often, couples were not conscious that they were engaging in this comparison process or that they were influenced or pressured by others. Counsellors can assist couples like these to become aware of social influences and

pressures, and help them to distinguish between the needs of the couple and pressure from others. Doing so may provide greater insight into the effects that other people can have on their decisions. Gurman and Fraenkel (as cited in Parker & Arthur, 2004) indicated that integrating separate careers in the context of a couple give rise to issues that need to be brought out of the subconscious and into the conscious realm of the dyad, in order to truly resolve any internal or external distress. Findings from this study provide greater insight and appreciation of some of these issues.

Counsellors may also find it useful to ensure that clients, particularly younger couples, are aware that career compromises are often necessary in functional romantic relationships, but should be made for the right reasons. Ideally, counsellors could take a step by step approach to explore individual and joint needs (including work/personal values and future goals), identify compromises that are satisfactory to both members of the couple, and process the implications of each compromise while specifically addressing any psychological distress that may result from the compromise. Hardy (as cited in Green, 1997) noted that it is important to help couples realize that the key to having a successful relationship is to embrace the paradox of compromise. The findings from this study prove useful for career and couples counselling. Awareness brought to these issues in the couples' context can be used to guide practitioners who are counselling couples faced with career compromises.

### *Limitations*

*Nature of the data-set.* A primary limitation of this study is that the data were derived from a larger study investigating a broader topic of career decision-making in emerging young adult couples and, therefore, was not specifically designed to address the



issue of career compromise. However, by investigating the broader topic of career decision-making, the larger study afforded the opportunity to observe how compromise emerged from couple's regular daily interactions. Thus, it is probable that the data-set was adequate to address the research questions, at least in an exploratory way.

*Method.* A potential methodological limitation is that, during the monitoring period, many participants were not diligent in providing detailed accounts of their goal-directed activities, and in some cases failed to complete journal entries. This problem has been found in previous action-project method studies (e.g., Wouterloot, 2007; Young, Marshall, Domene, Arato-Bollivar, Hayoun, Marshall, Zaidman-Zait, & Valach, 2006), and must be dealt with by recognizing that reported activities are samples of participants' lived experiences and not by any means complete accounts of their career-related activities. That is, the data set may have captured only part of how couples engage in career compromise. Nevertheless, the information that was captured does provide insight into how the compromise process can sometimes occur in young adult couples.

Additionally, although member-checking was conducted as part of the larger study from which the data were drawn, the findings that emerged from the present study were not reviewed by the participants. Member-checking was not practical, given the fact that this study was a secondary analysis of an existing data set. Nevertheless, the absence of member-checking raises a concern, particularly in the places where the research team based their interpretations on information other than what the participants explicitly stated; it is possible that these conclusions differ from the understandings that the couples would have constructed for themselves. Although the inclusion of an external auditor prevented researchers' biases from overwhelming the data, there is no guarantee that the

auditor's perspective would have matched that of the participants themselves. Thus, some caution needs to be adopted when reading this study. Although the interpretations are grounded in theory and the data, it is unclear how well the findings match young adult couples' own understandings of the career compromise process.

*Sample.* One of the limitations of this study is that the sample does not include many couples from visible minorities or diverse cultural backgrounds. Because the process of compromise may be guided by the values of a culture, transferability of the findings to more ethnically and culturally diverse populations may be problematic. At the same time, because Gottfredson's (1981, 2002) theory was developed in a North American context, using a sample of participants who come from the same cultural context is probably the best choice for exploring the applicability of that theory to individuals in romantic relationships. The question of whether Gottfredson's theory is relevant for couples across different cultures is important, but is a separate one from the questions addressed in this study. However, it should be noted that previous research conducted in different countries has found similarities across cultures with respect to the issues that plague dual-career couples (Elizabeth, 2001; Elloy, 2001 Green, 1997).

A clarification may also need to be made with respect to sexual orientation of the sample. The sample consists only of heterosexual couples, and therefore the findings may not adequately reflect the experience of career compromises within gay male or lesbian relationships. The current study only addresses the experiences of career compromise within heterosexual couples participating in this research.

The values and priorities of these young adult dyads may also differ significantly from younger dating couples, because they may have had more time to adjust to the

school-to-work transition, clarify their priorities, and experience higher levels of commitment in their relationships. The age of the participants is important to attend to in interpreting the findings of this study because a much of the previous research on Gottfredson's theory has been conducted with somewhat younger samples. Thus, the age of the participants may be responsible for some of the differences between the findings of this study and the existing body of literature.

*Size of team.* The research team consisted of two primary researchers and one auditor. Having a larger team may have provided richer discussion produced a greater range of interpretations, insight, and perspectives. However, Gilgun (2004) states that, in her method, having even one other researcher who is knowledgeable about the topic would be sufficient to provide new perspectives and create a dynamic that provides confirmation and nurture greater understanding of the findings. Therefore, the size of the research team is sufficient to provide the collaboration, accountability, and insight necessary to cultivate an in-depth analysis of the data.

#### *Future Directions*

Holland proposed that individuals seek careers and work environments that are adaptable to their interests (Holland, 1997). He also hypothesized that congruence between individuals' career interests and their environment would promote job satisfaction, motivation, and performance; this has been supported by subsequent research (Ton & Hansen, 2001). Through the current study, it was revealed that some participants experience incongruence between career interests and current occupations as a result of compromise. It would be beneficial for future researchers to design a study where a follow-up would be able to assess the implications this psychological distress or

impact after compromises have been made (e.g., job dissatisfaction, motivation, resentment towards partner). A follow-up study could also assess whether the claimed temporary nature of their compromise was in fact that. The manner in which these compromises are viewed and handled during the decision-making process has significant implications for future career outcomes, and ultimately for the quality of people's lives.

Gottfredson's (2002) theory of compromise provides a fertile ground for further exploration of the process of career compromise in emerging young adults who are in a committed romantic relationship. The current study can be used as inspiration for future research that continues the work that was conducted, while minimizing the limitations in this study. Designing research with more heterogeneous samples or with younger individuals or those who are not married may present opportunities to gain more insight into if and how sex-type may play a factor in the compromising process and how the process may differ according to maturity and commitment level. Also, many opportunities exist to extend this study by including couples of varied cultural backgrounds as well as gay male and lesbian couples.

In light of the findings of this study, another future direction for research would be to quantitatively explore the connection between career compromise and relationship factors, specifically utilizing assessments and measures that target the issue of career compromise. Specifically, quantitative measures can be used to investigate relationship between factors such as how marital satisfaction mediates the relationship between willingness to compromise and satisfaction of the compromise (i.e., career satisfaction and psychological distress). Another direction would be to assess the effect of career compromises on relationship satisfaction. Instead of open-ended interviews, a

combination of questionnaire items and psychological inventories can be used to measure predictor and criterion variables. Also, other indices and measures can be used to further examine the definition of prestige within the couples context as many individuals opted for a more prestigious career.

The analyses conducted in this study generated additional research questions that should be further explored in future research. It would be beneficial to further explore whether those who compromise are acting out of altruism or out of their desire to be viewed favourably by their partners or others. Also further investigation to clarify if individuals are concerned with protecting sex-type while making career compromises in a couples' context may prove to be fruitful for further understanding this complex process; findings may be beneficial for counsellors to help those grappling with this difficult task of compromise.

Results from this study provide information that illuminates the process of career compromise in a relational context. As discussed in the previous section, these findings have utility for counselling practices in career, individual, and couple settings. Future research should be conducted to investigate the efficacy of couples' approaches to counselling for career compromise in a career counselling setting. Particularly, it is necessary to empirically determine the effectiveness of the recommendations for dealing with career compromise within a couples' context that were suggested in the earlier section. Until this additional research is completed, the recommendations remain potentially useful ideas rather than necessary interventions that must be implemented.

*Final Summary*

The current research is an exploration of how six emerging young adult couples in a committed romantic relationship prioritized and made career compromises together, in a relational context. Gottfredson's (2002) theory of compromise was used as a framework to assess whether findings are consistent with how individuals make career compromises in a non-relational context. Results from this investigation have contributed to the literature on the process of compromise, through an in-depth analysis of multiple kinds of data about how compromise can occur over time. Furthermore, several possible benefits for counselling practice and future research were generated. The joint nature of career compromises made in a couples' context highlights the unique relational factors and their influence on the compromising process. Furthermore, these couples' experiences draw attention to the potential consequences of career compromise and the adverse effects they may have on the individual and perhaps the relationship. Due to this complex multifaceted process of career compromise in a relational context, further investigation may prove to be helpful in providing a more holistic picture.

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## **APPENDIX A: SAMPLE RECRUITMENT FLYER**

Note that the format of the following advertisement may change to fit the specific medium, but the content will always be the same.

Script:

Couples needed for a research study on couples' career planning.

Involvement:

- 7 hours total
- 3 interviews over 6 months

Compensation: \$100 per couple

Need to be:

- 19 to 28 years old
- In a committed relationship (married or unmarried) for 6 months or longer
- Making decisions together about future education / career plans

Researchers:

- Dr. José Domene, Counselling Psychology, Trinity Western University
- Dr. Richard Young, Counselling Psychology, University of British Columbia

For more information, or to volunteer, call (604) 513-2121, ext. 3871 or e-mail: jose.domene@twu.ca

## APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW 1 PROTOCOL

### Career Development as a Couple's Project Study: Interview 1 guidelines

#### PRELIMINARY

\*Explain what you will be doing in all 3 parts of today's interview\*

\*Figure out what the 2 Self-confront locations will be and where you will wait during the conversation\*

\*1 person sets up the equipment: both audio-recorders; both cameras\*

\*1 person explains consent & gets sigs from both people first; administers demographic questionnaire\*

#### WARM UP

As we mentioned in the consent forms, we will be video- and audio-taping everything, to make sure we have accurate records of what is going on. I'll just turn on the equipment now.

**\* remember to turn on the audio-tape \***

#### Rapport-building:

Ease into the process with questions / comments related to weather, where did find out about the study, positive comments about the home, etc.

Ask about the school / work that they said they were doing in demographics: what it is like, permanent or for now, what thinking about in future etc.

Priming for topic (\*remember to do this in conversational style, don't just follow the script\*):

So our study is about the career plans and decisions that they are making together, (things like deciding on a career path; what to do after finishing their education; where to live and work; how to balance career plans with relationship plans).

From your perspective [pick one], what kinds of issues might come up, when a couple is planning what to do around their future careers?

[to other] and, what about from YOUR perspective?

How about for the two of you specifically, are those the kinds of things that you are still in the middle of discussing and deciding upon?

[If no]

Then what things ARE you talking about, in terms of planning for the future?

[If yes]

So, if you had to pick only one or two things that you feel will be the most urgent to deal with in the next few months, what would they be [get BOTH people's opinions]?

\* follow-up questions / comments about the issues they raise- the point of this follow up is the get them thinking about career-related projects \*

**\* Don't proceed onto the next section until you are certain that they are primed to be thinking about occupational stuff \***

**When the couple appears ready to engage with each other, or if they spontaneously start react to each other's comments:**

So, do you think the two of you are up to having a conversation with just each other about this stuff?

OR

So, it looks likes the two of you are up to having a conversation with just each other about this stuff; are you?

[If no] What part is confusing? What needs to happen first?

OK, well we will leave the room now, so that you can do that. Take the next 20 or so minutes or so to have your conversation, and come and get us when you are done.

## **JOINT CONVERSATION**

**\*remember start video recording, confirm that audio-recording is working\***

While the couple is talking, do any preliminary preparations for self-conf.



[If still discussing after ½ hour, go in and ask them how it is going, and if they are about ready to wrap up]

**SELF-CONFRONTATION (each participant separately)**

**\*remember to confirm that audio recorder is working\***

So now we are going to review the conversation that you just had, to help me get a better understanding of your perspective- what you were thinking and what you were feeling in each segment of the conversation.

Whenever something important comes up, I want you to stop the recording and tell me about it. I'll do the same if I notice something that seems important, or if it looks like there is a shift in the focus of what you are talking about.

Do you understand what we will be doing? Are you ready to begin?

[section by section, playing tape]

What were you thinking and feeling in that section?

What was your goal (trying to do) in that part of the conversation?

What do you think [partner's name] was trying to do in that part of the conversation?

**\*Make sure you get their EMOTIONAL reaction, not just their cognitions\***

**At end of tape:**

So overall, what were your thoughts about the conversation you just had?

- *Typical vs. not typical*

- *Feelings about conversation*

- *Overall, what were your goals; what were you trying to accomplish in this conversation?*

Is there anything else that I should know, about that conversation?

Let's see if \_\_\_ and \_\_\_ are done.

## APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW 2 PROTOCOL

### Career Development as a Couple's Project Study: Interview 2 guidelines

#### INTRO

Hellos.

Remind them of taping.

Today's interview will be much shorter than last time, and mainly to confirm our understanding of what was going on in the first interview. There will be some individual time, and some time with everybody together.

**\* Set up audio-recorders in the 2 rooms \* \*Do not video-tape\***

#### FEEDBACK (separately)

So, in the last few weeks, had a look at the conversation and self-confrontation that you guys did last time, and wrote up a summary of it. What we want to do today is to check with you to make sure we were on the right track... does what we say make sense from your own perspective.

I'm going to read out the narrative that we came up with to you, and I want you to stop me at any time if you have questions, or we got something wrong, I want you to tell me what it should say instead.

[read narrative, slowly, pausing at each paragraph and asking some variation of "does that fit with you?"]

Is there anything important that we missed?

In the next part, we are going to share this with [name]. Knowing that, is there anything that you would like me to change or omit, before we do that? Are you comfortable with sharing this with him/her?

## CONFIRMING THE PROJECT

[have each participant share their narrative with their partner, to read.]

[elicit reactions to the other person's narrative: are there any surprises or things you didn't know?]

As you probably remember, the point of this study is to figure out how couples are working together on their future careers. For the next three months, we are going to ask you to keep track what you are doing ...

But, first, we need to figure out what career-related goals, or decisions, or tasks you want to be focusing on, in the next few months. We call these things "projects"

Remembering that we define "career" very broadly... not just work, but education, choosing to focus on a family, figuring out where to live or move to; stuff like that.

Anyway, the couples career projects that we saw you guys as working on right now, based on the last interview with you include: [read summary of projects]

Is this off the mark in any way, or no longer an issue?

<if the written project is fine, proceed to explanation of monitoring>

<if we need to find an alternative project>

So what kinds of things DO you need to be focusing on together in the next few months, in terms of your future career and life? [explore more fully what that means]

So is the project of [read either the original or the modified version of the project] something that would you like to focus on in the next stage of the study?

And what kinds of things could that involve? [Solicit examples of the kinds of actions that could "count" as being project related. *Make sure you ask for / suggest examples of actions other than conversations.* Also, this is where you can include

examples related to occupations, and also not related to occupations. You can also refer to the examples already written on the narrative summary]

### **EXPLANATION OF MONITORING PERIOD**

OK. So in the next few months, as you work together on this “career development project,” what we would like you to do is to keep track of the things that you do together to work on that... you joint actions and activities.

Specifically, we would like you to keep a written record, jotting down what you did, what you were hoping to accomplish, and how it turned out.

This is something that is important for each of you to do individually, because we want to be able to get at, and compare, each of your different perspectives.

There are two ways for us to do this. The easiest one (for us), is to send you the template electronically, and for you to type up the activities, and e-mail the logs back every 2 weeks.

The other option is to use these log-books [demo]; you will write up the activities as they happen. Every 2 weeks, we’ll give you a phone call, so you can update us.

[get their preference for how to do the monitoring]

Do you have any questions about the monitoring period, or what we are asking you to do?

[give hard-copy logs, if needed]

[give them their copies of the narratives, but make sure you keep the corrected version for yourself, so that you can fix the electronic version]

[get contact info- phone AND e-mail... just to make sure we can contact you if we need to]

[give them your contact info: e-mail and phone]

Goodbyes. I guess we’ll touch base in two weeks.

## APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW 3 PROTOCOL

### Career Development as a Couple's Project Study: Interview 3 guidelines

#### INTRO

\*1 person sets up the equipment: audio-recorders; camera\*

\* Hellos & general rapport-building questions\*

\*Explain today's session:

- like first interview, except this time focused on a *how the project went*
- will let you talk with each other first, and then review the tape individually, with an interviewer
- After we are done, we'll do a 'debrief', which is basically a chance for you to ask questions about the study.

\* If there are log-related questions that remain outstanding, address them first.

\* Remind them what the project was about: read the description of the project back to them. [*this means that you need to bring a copy of the final, decided-upon project with you*]

So, we were hoping that you could discuss with each other how things have been going, in terms of working on that project. Things like:

- So, from your own perspective, was the project a success, or is it something that you are still working one, or what?  
(and why do you think it was successful nor not)
- What is the outcome of the project: what decisions / plans / changes have come about? What is still left to be done?
- What did you actually do together to work on the project, and were those things effective or not, and why?

In other words, we would like you to have a conversation with each other, about (a) the project, (b) and how it went over the past 3 months, and (c) what's going to happen next.

Do you have any questions about what we would like you to do? So, do you think the two of you are up to having a conversation with just each other about this stuff?

OK, well we will leave the room now, so that you can do that. Most people find that this conversation is a lot shorter than the first one, but take your time and come and get us when you are done.

### **JOINT CONVERSATION**

**\*remember to insert a new tape & start recording\***

Do any preliminary preparations for self-conf.

[If still discussing after ½ hour, go in and ask them how it is going, and if they are about ready to wrap up]

### **SELF-CONFRONTATION (each participant separately)**

**\*remember to insert a new tape & start recording\***

So now we are going to review the conversation that you just had, to help me get a better understanding of your perspective- what you were thinking and what you were feeling in each segment of the discussion.

Just like in the 1<sup>st</sup> interview, when something important comes up, I want you to stop the recording and tell me about it. I'll do the same if I notice something that seems important, or if it looks like there is a shift in the focus of what you are talking about.

Do you understand what we will be doing? Are you ready to begin?

[section by section, playing tape]

What were you thinking and feeling in that section?

What was your goal (trying to do) in that part of the conversation?

What do you think [partner's name] was trying to do in that part of the conversation?

\*Make sure you get their EMOTIONAL reaction, not just their cognitions\*

**At end of tape:**

So overall, what were your thoughts about the conversation you just had?

- *Typical vs. not typical*

- *Feelings about conversation*

[The following questions can be omitted if their answer is clearly evident in the conversation itself. If in doubt, ask them.]

So, from your own perspective, was this project a success, or is it something that you are still working one, or what? Why do you think it was successful / not)

Overall, from your own perspective, what is the outcome of the project: what decisions / plans / changes have come about? What is still left to be done?

Also, was there anything important about the project, and what you have been doing together for the past 3 months, that you didn't get a chance to talk about with [partner]?

- follow-up questions to get a sense of what else was going on.

Now let's see if \_\_\_ and \_\_\_ are done.

**DEBRIEF**

\*Give remaining incentive and thank them\*

Before we leave, you guys have any questions for us about our study, or the things that we asked you to do?

[If necessary, give summary of purpose of study]

We hope to have everybody interview, and all the information analyzed some time in 2008. We will be posting a summary on our web-site. However, would you also be interested in us sending you the summary of our overall conclusions?

[If yes, ask for contact info for that time.] Plus you can always e-mail us at "couplescareer@shaw.ca" if you don't hear from us soon enough.

Thanks again for being willing to share this part of your life with us.

## APPENDIX E: CONSENT FORM

### Career Development as a Couples Project

**Principal Researcher:** Dr. José Domene, Counselling Psychology, Trinity Western University  
**Co-investigator:** Dr. Richard Young, Educational and Counselling Psychology and Special Education, University of British Columbia

**Research Assistants:** Ashley Cavanaugh, Bradley Kauffman, Serita McLelland, Jessica Nee, Christopher Tse, Michelle Behr, Melanie Domene, Becky Stewart.

**Contact info:** If you have any questions about the research procedures, you may contact *José Domene* by phone at (604) 513-2121 ext. 3871 or by email at [jose.domene@twu.ca](mailto:jose.domene@twu.ca)

If you have any questions about ethical issues involved in this project, you may contact *Sue Funk* at the TWU Office of Research at (604) 513-2142, or [sue.funk@twu.ca](mailto:sue.funk@twu.ca)

Dear participants,

Thank-you for your interest in this study, which is designed to explore young couples' goals and plans for their future careers, and how they negotiate and act together to implement their career goals, as a couple. This study has been funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

If you both agree to participate, you will be asked to take part in three interviews over six months. The interviews will be audio- and video-recorded. These interviews involve several stages, including answering general questions about your future career plans as a couple and individually, reviewing our summaries of what happened in previous interviews, having conversations with each other about this topic, and reflecting on what you were trying to do in that conversation. You will also be asked to keep a written record of the things that you do together to figure out or achieve your career plans for three of the six months.

In terms of your time commitment, the first and third interview will be approximately 2.5 hours each, the second interview will be approximately 1 hour, and you may spend one or two hours in total on the logs. If you are interested in the results of the study, you will be given the opportunity to leave your contact information so that we can send you a summary, once we have finished with everyone.

The potential risks of participating in this study are minimal. However, some couples may find it embarrassing to be video-taped, or uncomfortable talking about their future careers plans, especially if there are some disagreements. If you ever feel uncomfortable, you can take a break from the interview, choose not to answer some of the questions, or even decide that you no longer want to continue at all. It is important to remember that some level of disagreement about the future is normal in any couple, and not automatically a sign of problems with the relationship. However, if problems do develop over the next six months, we will be available to help participants find an appropriate career or relationship counsellor, depending on their needs.



Your participation in this study will help us to find out what couples are doing *together* as they plan for their future careers, because most of the previous research on career development has ignored the fact that many people in committed romantic relationships do not make plans individually, but as a couple. Some couples may also discover that participating will help them to figure out what they want to do in the future, or motivate them to pursue their career goals.

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time. To compensate you for the time that the two of you spend on this study, and for any travel or other costs that come from participating, *as a couple* you will be given \$30 after the first and second interviews, and \$40 after the third interview.

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Specifically, we will store all information and recordings in locked filing cabinets and password protected computer hard-drives; only the investigators and research assistants will have access to the information. Transcripts (with names and other identifying information removed), and coded data will also be securely stored for potential future analysis.

Your signatures below indicates that you have received a copy of this consent form for your own records, and that you consent to participate in this study and that your responses may be put in anonymous form and kept for further use after the completion of this study.

---

Signature

---

Date

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Name (please print)

- Check this box if you give us permission to retain your video-recordings for future data analysis, after the completion of this study.
- Check this box if you give us permission to retain and show your video-recordings for training research assistants in the future.
- Check this box if you give us permission to retain and show your video-recordings when presenting the results of our study at future conferences and other academic venues

(Note that we will only use video-recordings for each of these purposes if both members of the couple have given us permission to do so.)

## APPENDIX F: LIST OF RESOURCES

### **Career Development as a Couples Project: Counselling Resources**

If you become distressed or in need of counselling services at any time over the course of your research involvement, please feel free to ask your interviewer for a referral to an appropriate counselling agency.

In addition, below is a list of different counselling agencies in the Lower Mainland, in case you prefer to make your own arrangements.

Columbia Counseling Group. 604-852-2557. Abbotsford.

Fraser River Counselling. 604-513-2113. Langley.

Surrey Community Services Society. 604-584-5811. Surrey.

New Westminster Counselling Centre. 604-525-6651. New Westminster.

Burnaby Counselling Group. 604-430-1303. Burnaby.

Catholic Family Services. 604-443-3220. Vancouver.

Jewish Family Service Agency. 604-257-5151. Vancouver.

UBC Life and Career Center. 604-822-8585. Vancouver.

Please note that this is by no means an exhaustive list, and you are definitely welcomed to search for your own counsellor instead, if you prefer. Good places to begin such a search include:

BC Association of Clinical Counselors (<http://www.bc-counsellors.org/memgate.htm>)

BC Association for Marriage and Family Therapy (<http://www.bcamft.bc.ca/consumer-info/choose-therapist.htm>)

Canadian Counselling Association (<http://www.ccacc.ca/cccdire.php>)

## APPENDIX G: LOG-BOOK TEMPLATE

### **Career Development as a Couple's Project Study:** **Log-book for Monitoring project-related Activities**

Please complete the logs individually, not as a couple (this will allow us to compare and contrast your different perspectives on the same action).

When you and your romantic partner do something *together* that is related to your couples' career project (e.g., have a conversation about future career plans), please take a moment to record what happened.

If you are completing the logs electronically, e-mail them to [couplescareer@shaw.ca](mailto:couplescareer@shaw.ca) every 2 weeks. Add further activities to the end, if needed. If you are completing them on paper, expect a call every 2 weeks to touch base about your project-related activities.

**Name:**

**Date:**

**Activity** (what action or activity, related to your monitoring project, did you do?):

**Goal** (what you were hoping to accomplish through this action/activity?):

**Outcomes & Barriers** (How did the activity turn out, and what (if anything) got in the way of achieving your goals?).