
POSITIVE COMPROMISE: A NEW PERSPECTIVE FOR CAREER PSYCHOLOGY

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One of the main challenges in the current world of work is the constant change and adjustment individuals encounter. To deal with such uncertainty, a person often has to give up something less feasible and achievable in order to accomplish career goals and projects that are more practical and obtainable. As a result, compromise becomes an inevitable vital construct in a person's career. This article explores the importance of maintaining an open stance in your work life—paying particular attention to the role of compromise in the career development process. It reviews the meaning of compromise in the current career theories; expands on the existing conceptualisation of compromise; and proposes a new perspective—positive compromise—to redefine the role and function of compromise in vocational and career psychology. Following this new conceptual framework, implications for career development intervention and career counselling are illustrated.

Globalisation and new socio-economic reality in the 21st century has brought new challenges to the current world of work and beyond. One of the key aspects accompanying these challenges is a fast-changing vocational environment that comprises much uncertainty. Such uncertainty poses a complex, dynamic and—more importantly—less predictable world of work for many individuals; including those current workers, as well as job seekers (Herr, Cramer, & Niles, 2004; Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2002; Peterson & Gonzalez, 2000; Sharf, 2002; Zunker, 2002).

One example of uncertainty that affects both current and prospective workers is the disappearance

of job security in the workplace. As a major phenomenon in people's work life, the disappearance of job security has been a constant theme illustrated in the last decade by academics in vocational psychology, sociology, and economics (Bridges, 1994; Collin & Young, 2000; Hall, 1996; Johnson & Mortimer, 2002; Rifkin, 1995). Organisational restructuring and downsizing curtails the existing workforce in a company, while reducing or even stopping the opportunity for new hiring. To reduce costs and increase productivity for organisations, short-term contract positions are created when a need for new recruitment arises. As a result, current and would-be employees experience a constant sense of

uncertainty that accompanies their everyday work life (Caplan & Teese, 1997; Cappelli, 1999; Cartwright & Cooper, 1997). Other complicated and varied dynamics can also affect individuals' work life in a similar manner. Combined, these factors generate and reinforce uncertain vocational prospects for many individuals.

To deal with such uncertainty, individuals have to make frequent changes and adjustments, while forming goals and implementing plans in the vocational aspects of their lives. An essential aspect in making effective changes and adjustments is a person's vision and will to prioritise their choices. In doing so, people often have to give up something less feasible and achievable, in order to fulfil goals and projects that are more practical and obtainable under the circumstances. As a result, compromise becomes an inevitable vital part of individuals' career decision-making processes; as well as choice formation in other aspects of their work life.

THE NOTION OF COMPROMISE: THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Perhaps the most well known theoretical model with a major focus on the concept of compromise in vocational and career psychology is Gottfredson's (2002) theory of circumscription, compromise and self-creation. Gottfredson defined compromise as the process by which individuals abandon their most-preferred alternatives.

Compromise is adjusting aspirations to accommodate an external reality. Anticipatory compromise takes place when people begin to moderate their hopes (assessments of compatibility) with their perceptions of reality (assessments of accessibility). As they do, the aspirations they voice will shift away from their ideal and toward the expected. Experiential compromise takes place when individuals meet a barrier in implementing their most-preferred choices.

The barriers and opportunities in implementing different aspirations include, for example, the local availability of particular kinds of education and employment, hiring practices (including discrimination), and family obligations. They also include the fact that not all combinations of sex type, prestige, and vocational interest type are



readily available in the labour market ... for example, there is more high-prestige work that is distinctively masculine than feminine, and some combinations do not even exist (low-level investigative work). These external constraints restrict virtually everyone to some degree; few have unrestricted choices (pp. 100–101).

Gottfredson's notion of compromise combined psychological and sociological perspectives into a whole, demonstrating a clear person–environment interaction in forming a compromise.

Some theories in vocational psychology addressed the notion of compromise in a more indirect and inexplicit manner. The traditionally established theoretical models in the trait-and-factor framework focus on the rational matching between the person and the world of work. Theoretical models such as Holland's (1997) theory of personality type, and Dawis and Lofquist's (1984) theory of work adjustment are examples of this type of model. If there is a mismatch between the two sides, either one of them has to make a compromise. That is, the person comes to the realisation that his personal qualities (abilities, interest, values) do not fit with the demands of the working environment. Therefore, he has to search for other alternatives. According to Dawis (2002), the most ideal situation is to find a perfect correlation. However, very often this ideal situation does not exist. As a result, both sides are involved in a so-called 'adjustment process'. The adjustment itself is a form of compromise.

The concept of compromise is also reflected in theoretical models focusing on career decision making. Krumboltz's social learning theory of career decision making is a good example (Mitchell & Krumboltz, 1996). According to Krumboltz and Hamel (1977), a career decision maker goes through a seven-step 'DECIDES' process that includes:

- Define the problem;
- Establish an action plan;
- Clarify values;
- Identify alternatives;
- Discover probable outcomes;
- Eliminate alternatives systematically;
- Start action.

The key intention in this model is finding optimal alternatives, while eliminating non-desirable options. A person who is engaged in this process may have to make compromises, while selecting or eliminating other alternatives. At least two of the main catalysts to trigger this career compromise are genetic endowment, and environmental conditions and events (Mitchell & Krumboltz, 1996). When a person realises the impact of these two factors on their career choice, they start to make compromises in their career decision making.

A very similar career decision-making skills model is also presented by the cognitive information processing theory (Peterson, Sampson, Reardon, & Lenz, 2002; Sampson, Reardon, Peterson, & Lenz, 2004). Applying cognitive psychology in the context of vocational psychology, these authors illustrated a generic information-processing skills model. Termed by the acronym CASVE, the five-step processing model includes:

- Communication (identifying a gap);
- Analysis (inter-relate problem components);
- Synthesis (create alternatives);
- Valuing (prioritise alternatives);
- Execution (form strategies).

It is apparent that the processing tasks illustrated in here require compromise. Of particular note are the third and fourth key steps in this process—both creating and prioritising alternatives point to the need to eliminate less desirable options, while optimising more desirable possibilities and preferable choices. Compromise seems to be a must when individuals weigh pros and cons of a career decision, aiming to yield a more viable and optimal outcome based on the

information available, and the human effort that would be invested in the entire process of the cognitive information processing.

TOWARD THE CONCEPT OF POSITIVE COMPROMISE

The preceding review of key tenets from career development and counselling theories has provided some useful foundations to build a conceptual rationale for the further development of the notion of compromise. As outlined, compromise is an important variable that is worth serious consideration in vocational and career psychology. This is because whether it is highlighted as a central construct in Gottfredson's (2002) theory, or treated as an indirect component in the other theoretical models (Dawis, 2002; Holland, 1997; Krumboltz & Hamel, 1977; Mitchell & Krumboltz, 1996; Peterson et al., 2002; Sampson et al., 2004), compromise often plays a significant role in individuals' career development and other work life experiences. Although individuals may not always be cognisant in every compromising situation in which they are involved, they do encounter compromise as part of common experiences in all aspects of their lives in general, and in their vocational lives in particular.

The proposal of positive compromise is based on the philosophical definition and meaning presented by the aforementioned career development theories. It acknowledges the responsive and remedial nature of compromise. That is, a person may have to give up her demands and expectations that are not achievable given restrictive circumstances in the world of work and conditions caused by individual limitations. While this basic characteristic of compromise remains unchanged, there is an attempt to expand on the original definition of compromise. The addition of the adjective 'positive' before the notion of compromise is not just an attempt to create a new term, but rather, it proposes a new perspective in understanding and utilising the notion of compromise. The central tenet of this perspective is about making 'compromise' a more broadly defined concept that can encompass significant new meanings in the context of vocational and career psychology, which add a more proactive, constructive and holistic flavour of human action in career problem solving (Cochran, 1994).

Positive compromise in the context of vocational and career psychology lies with the prime philosophy of exercising more control over a reality that is very often beyond human control. As addressed earlier, human life experiences are very often not ideal, and nor are vocational aspects of human life. As a result, individuals come to realise that they can not expect to reach an ideal state of career development as they have hoped and planned. There is often a gap between an ideal state of work life and a real state of work life (Cochran, 1994). In this sense, career choice and development for many individuals is not about reaching the most ideal state of affairs, but rather finding a better solution for a career problem. Therefore, compromise serves as a viable coping mechanism to achieve this better solution. A person under these circumstances has to give up something in order to maintain or gain something.

In framing a more balanced trade-off between the things the person wants to maintain and is willing to relinquish, positive compromise aims to infuse some insights and related coping strategies into the compromising implementation. Positive compromise takes into account several variables in vocational and career psychology that may empower the individual with more preparation and expertise in making a compromise. Consequently, individuals become capable of making better choices in their career planning and decision making. Positive compromise aims to expand on the notion of compromise, enriching the concept with new contents. It includes a series of considerations that convey a combination of constructive human qualities, searching for better options in the vocational aspects of their lives.

Positive compromise emphasises a sense of human agency (Bandura, 2001a, 2001b; Betz, 2001; Chen, 1999; Cochran, 1997; Cochran & Laub, 1994; Lent, Brown & Hackett, 2002). Individuals have to give their best effort, even if they know that the result of this effort may be settled with a second-best outcome because of the compromising process. Individuals should not only possess the will to, but should also take concrete action to make things happen. In doing so, they become capable of exercising more control over their compromising experiences, and enhancing their career construction in the long-term.

Positive compromise stresses the importance of keeping an open attitude (Gelatt, 1991; Krumboltz,

2003; Mitchell & Krumboltz, 1996; Mitchell, Levin & Krumboltz, 1999). When dealing with complex issues emerging from your work life, flexibility is needed to think bigger and wider. An open mind is the foundation for imagination and creativity which is of critical importance to forming compromising options. The more change-oriented you become, the more swiftly you can act to adopt changes and create optimal changes to a compromise situation.

Finally, positive compromise points to the need for proactive preparation, which is based on a sense of personal agency in conjunction with the open-mindedness. To compromise in a meaningful and optimal manner, a person must become a visionary who can see a better option in making a compromise. In the meantime, the person must develop a range of skills and expertise in making a more optimal and constructive compromise. These skills include capacities such as assessing the pros and cons involved in the compromise, managing the possible risks, and implementing an effective and attainable plan.

Combined, these considerations provide useful rationale for forming the conceptual framework of positive compromise. The next section incorporates these considerations into the career development practice; illustrating the pertinence of utilising positive compromise in career development intervention. Although the following discussion aims to exemplify positive compromise in a career-counselling context, the implications of this conceptual framework are not confined to this kind of career development practice. For example, vocational and professional development consultation in an organisational environment may find these implications advisable, while lay people may also benefit from these implications in their own self-directed career exploration and construction process.

INCORPORATING POSITIVE COMPROMISE INTO CAREER PSYCHOLOGY PRACTICE

Open Positioning

The importance of maintaining an open attitude has been a constant theme in career development literature for the last decade. Academics and practitioners have recognised the significant role and function of individuals being open and flexible when coping with

work life and career issues. This open attitude is pivotal, because it provides individuals with the necessary mindset for facing changes—an essential quality of being psychologically adaptable to a fast-changing world of work. Open mindedness deserves special attention in making compromises happen. Career counselling intervention can help the client foster and reinforce a sense of openness in career choice and their decision making process. The central goal is to help the client understand that while an open attitude is an advisable state of mind when dealing with most career exploration and development issues, it has particular pertinence to making compromises in your work life experience. A person needs to have an open mind that willingly studies and considers a range of options in forming a compromise.

This requires that the client stay flexible when making a career compromise. The client should understand that compromise is a realistic solution considering the circumstances; however, it is not a perfect solution to a career problem. Compromise recognises that there are certain hurdles in the real world of work, and attempts to find some way to 'work around' these hurdles, rather than totally overcome them. Sometimes, there might be a way to overcome these obstacles, but it is not worthwhile to invest the time and resources in doing so. For example, many experienced foreign-trained professionals (e.g. medical doctors, engineers, architects, nurses and teachers) have the intention of continuing their professional life after immigrating to Canada. However, they soon realise that this is extremely difficult to achieve because of complicated barriers including recognition of academic and professional credentials, and regulatory rules and restrictions to regain their professional qualification and licensure. While the possibility of overcoming these problems does exist (e.g. to go through an extremely lengthy period of retraining to regain their current professional status in the host country), many individuals do not have the time and resources to consider this. As a result, they may have to compromise their original intention, and adjust to a more obtainable and realistic work life and career option under the circumstances. Very often, these barriers are beyond human control due to complicated socioeconomic and environmental reasons (Hotchkiss & Borow, 1996; Johnson & Mortimer, 2002; Sharf, 2002).

Under such circumstances, a sole focus on what a person wants to do is dogmatic and irrelevant. For example, a university student on a basketball scholarship has a career goal of becoming a professional basketball player with the NBA. Although he possesses very good skills like most of his team mates, he does not possess the same height as others in his team. It is clear that the student's opportunity for further advancement in the career path of becoming a professional basketball player is restricted by circumstances, and he has to compromise. There are too many situations similar to this vignette in people's real life and career development experiences. In this context, compromise is not an optional choice, but rather a necessity that people have to deal with, and should be dealt with in a productive and positive manner. People should find a way to minimise the possible negative impact the barriers may have on their career decisions. Following this rationale, compromise in your work life, just as in experiences in other aspects of your social and personal life, is not only unavoidable but also necessary.

Clients need to realise that in making career compromises, an open stance is a must. In compromising, clients may need to give up something to obtain a better solution along the career pathway. For practitioners, fostering open mindedness is first and foremost to help form the foundation for the compromise to occur. A career counselling intervention that facilitates a sense of positive compromise helps the client become more psychologically adaptable to a variety of possibilities and changes. With this open-mindedness, the client becomes more responsive to new situations and options emerging from a career situation. This allows the client to have more psychological resilience when facing reality. It also allows the client to foster a more contingent attitude and related skills in perceiving and coping with a career problem. Consequently, this open stance can generate more creative alternatives when compromising, making it a better experience and more fruitful outcome in the client's career development effort.

Vision Development

Compromise is the result of negotiation (Amundson, 1994). A key aspect in the process is that a person has

to negotiate between two or more options, trying to find a better way to solve a career problem (Cochran, 1994). This negotiation requires that the person possess the capacity to make a better decision in a given situation. Therefore, a main goal of career counselling is to help the client develop and strengthen their ability to envision viable possibilities to cope with their work life and career issues. This vision development is of critical importance as it represents a macro-conceptual framework on which strategic perspectives can be formed to deal with the emerging issues and needs in one's work life and career development. Two aspects may be notable when helping clients work on vision development.

Think wide. Thinking wide allows clients to consider a broad range of perspectives about work life issues. Practitioners should help clients adopt a more comprehensive and integral view that allows for different perspectives and variables while approaching a compromise. Clients should be encouraged to realise that a better compromise is an informed compromise. For example, thinking wide includes not only perspectives you can think of, but also views of how others in different positions would view the same issue. By empathising with others, the need for compromise becomes relevant; while the conditions for a specific compromise become clear. Events and developments that appear to have minimal connection with your vocational life may have an impact on your overall quality of work life, and, therefore, need to be addressed in the compromising process. Clients are often reminded to take a step back so that they will be able to have the time and space to take a close look at a career issue from several different possibilities. Such possibilities can be easily overlooked if the client is too anxious with, and preoccupied by their own perception of the issue, which is often too narrow in scope.

Think ahead. With a broad thinking frame as a foundation, thinking ahead pertains to making viable future career plans based on what you can observe and interpret currently. Peavy (1993) reasoned the critical importance of envisioning our future work life in the post-modern and post-industrial era. To extend on Peavy's (1993) rationale, envisioning the future in career counselling is about helping the client develop a strategic vision which will lead to more viable plans and coping-mechanisms for potential compromises

ahead. This strategic vision is based on the accumulation of past and present experiences. Therefore, the client should be reminded of the importance of utilising their existing knowledge while making future plans. The client will be better off if they can be open towards new ideas and emerging trends.

These emerging trends will likely have an impact on a person's work life and career development in the future. For example, an emerging technology or human service may have the potential to initiate and form a new sector of the labour market, which may lead to more career opportunities. However, a similar development may negatively impact on others' work life through a reduction in or disappearance of certain occupations. With an increased sensitivity of future prospects, the central purpose of career counselling is to help the client connect the anticipated new trends in the world of work to their own career projection. In doing so, it may be helpful for the client to understand that envisioning their future career is not a science, and they should be flexible, maintain an open mind, and a willingness to acquire new learning experiences. Career counselling should promote all these aspects in the intervention process.

Risk Management

A compromise is based on a relative estimation of pros and cons, and there will rarely be an ideal option in a compromising situation. When compromising on a situation, even with thinking broadly and ahead, there are still risks involved, and to some extent, a person is 'taking a chance' when selecting a better possibility. By adopting the conceptual framework of positive compromise, practitioners should address in a constructive way the risk phenomenon and its influences. The counsellor can help the client deal with the potential risks on several levels.

Comprehend the risk. The client needs to be aware of the potential risk in a career exploration and career development context (Amundson, 1995; Collin & Young, 1992). The guiding principle of career counselling is always to promote the vocational wellbeing of the client. Following this principle, it is understandable that the counselling process attempts to lead the client to look at a more positive direction, shedding light on viable possibilities that may be potential career opportunities. While this is certainly

a right direction to take, a pitfall that can often accompany this is overlooking the possible risk factors in a client's career effort. As the person involved in the situation, the client is often too overwhelmed to see all the complicated variables that may influence their career choice and decision making. The counsellor has the responsibility to remind the client of the possible risk factors with each career option and opportunity. Clients will need varying levels of advice with this, but the main task of the counsellor at this stage is to increase the client's awareness of risk existence.

Develop a sense of comfort. Clients need to try to be comfortable with the uncertainty that often accompanies the risk in the compromising process. An increased risk awareness and sensitivity should help; yet, this does not necessarily mean that the client is psychologically prepared to accept reality. A risk involves unknowns in a person's assessment of a situation. There is often the chance of not knowing what the outcome of the compromise will be. The reality of uncertainty almost always exists in these situations, and it is not helpful to avoid or ignore this reality. Therefore, it is imperative that clients psychologically prepare to accept the risk component when making a career compromise.

The counsellor can help clients recognise the necessity of making such preparations while entering into a decision-making situation and weighing different options. Clients come to realise that whether or not they feel comfortable with the uncertainty, the uncertainty in a compromise will not vanish because of their denial of its existence. Therefore, it is more productive if the uncertainty is normalised as an ordinary facet of the compromise. Career counselling should assist clients to maintain a positive and constructive attitude while facing uncertainty; similar to the notion of positive uncertainty proposed by Gelatt (1989), and planned happenstance by Krumboltz et al. (Krumboltz, 2003; Mitchell et al., 1999). With a positive attitude, clients feel more comfortable living with a sense of uncertainty, and deal with it in a more proactive manner. Counsellors should gradually discuss some small risks to increase the clients' tolerance level of the risk component. On the basis of that, counsellors should then address and analyse some of the larger risks involved. The issue of risk should be constantly mentioned while counsellors

help clients explore compromise options in career decision-making situation.

Enhance risk-coping skills. Clients need to have some skills to cope with the risk component. A person's long-term and strategic vision development can have a considerable impact on their skill and style in approaching the risk management task. Parallel to the vision development process, counsellors can help clients to consider the possible risks when planning a compromise. It is unrealistic that all the risks or the scale and impact of each risk can be predicted accurately. However, some rational and logical calculation of the possible risks can provide a foundation for the client to make some psychological and tangible preparation.

For example, a final-year biochemistry student has just received an offer from a multi-national pharmaceutical company. She likes the offer and believes it is a favourable career opportunity for her. However, there are several undesirable conditions attached to the offer; including the condition that she must relocate to overseas with a substantial amount of psychological, socio-cultural and physiological adjustment. The company also indicates that it may transfer the would-be employee to another country in the future. To help the client negotiate risk factors, it may be helpful if the counsellor and client focus more on the undesirable variables associated with the immediate relocation. In other words, envisioning the immediate future circumstances is more viable and practical to the present decision-making task. To foresee risks several years ahead (if this career path is accepted and followed) may not be as easy. However, a look at the immediate future will provide the client with some useful preparation, from which more visions and preparation may be developed should she decide to take the position and begin her career with this company.

Counsellors should provide clients with direct advice, if clients need assistance to learn some basic strategies in risk management. Counsellors should draw clients' attention to several key points in addition to the importance of vision development:

- 1) Risk-coping skills are essentially embedded in your experiences. As clients start to pay more attention to their past learning experiences, they may be surprised by the amount of resources in their personal repertoire. The career counselling process

helps clients become more aware of these skill resources, making use of them and transferring them into the present circumstances to make a more optimal career compromise.

2) Clients need to realise the importance of becoming an intentional learner who endeavours to assess the risks and deal with them in a situational way (Law, 1996; Patton & McMahon, 1999). The learned coping skills are not applied to a compromise with a dogmatic approach, but in a contextual manner (Young, Valach & Collin, 2002).

3) Clients need to have at least some concrete preparation before taking on the risk component in the compromise. Although there can be no guarantee that such preparation will work each time, clients are better off with preparation than without. Clients should be advised to have several scenarios and options planned when encountering a career compromise (Schlossberg & Robinson, 1996).

Counsellors can play a more proactive role in this situation, using different helping styles and techniques to facilitate clients of very different needs or with different levels of coping skills.

Utilise intuition. As one of the main components in human psychology, intuition is an important component in the decision-making process, especially because there is only a certain amount of time that a client's options are available. Following intuition is about making a decision based on your 'gut feelings'. As a person's gut feelings and associated perceptions might be incorrect, there are obvious pitfalls if clients are overly dependent on intuition. However, with a developed intellectual vision and an array of accumulative learning experiences, intuition can be a useful supplement to your decision. The rationale to support the use of intuition here is straightforward. While intuition usually appears as a phenomenon of a person's psychological functioning, it actually represents a psychological complexity which integrates a variety of aspects of a person's thoughts and feelings including, but not limited to, a person's values, worldview, interests, self-concept, self-efficacy beliefs, aptitudes, etc. These psychological variables interact and interplay in a dynamic process that generates a person's intuition.

Career counselling can encourage clients to utilise their informed intuition. This intuition is neither ill advised nor intention-free. Rather, intuition is an

intentional and purposeful response, based on their learned experiences and developed visions. Clients may find it helpful to use intuition when making a career compromise. Intuition can often tell what a relatively better compromise might be when the person faces two or more possibilities. For example, based on a personal value preference, person A may pursue the possibility with more tangible reward such as higher pay. But person B may rather compromise some tangible rewards so that he can receive more psychological rewards such as a sense of meaningfulness, agreeable working environment or less stressful work demands. The use of intuition becomes more relevant in recognising and managing the possible risks involved in the compromising process, especially when clients have to conduct a quick assessment of the situation, form a judgment, make a decision and implement an action to accommodate a career compromise.

Action Implementation

Having addressed a series of important aspects in making a more positive compromise in a person's career journey, a pivotal construct that deserves much attention is the facet of action implementation (Cochran, 1990, 1991, 1997; Polkinghorne, 1990; Young & Valach, 1996, 2000). Human action is the key component that connects all aspects in the compromising process. Attitudinal change, increased awareness, vision development and skills enhancement cannot occur without human action. In this sense, action implementation must accompany the entire career exploration and decision-making process. Positive compromise is ultimately a manifestation of making constructive actions to reach a better solution for an emerging career problem. During the entire career counselling process, the counsellor's focus should be on encouraging clients to understand they should take ownership of their career decision making and to act. An instrumental component of this ownership is each client's effort to make positive compromises happen. Counsellors should help clients to focus on actualising their compromise plan, while becoming more proactive in making compromise initiatives.

Actualise the compromise plan. Once a compromise is made, clients should implement the compromise with decisiveness and resolve. Clients need to be

aware that good compromises can often coincide with unpredictable and uncontrollable events that affect the compromise. Even if a later development suggests that the compromise contained shortcomings and disadvantages, a person has to believe they took the best compromise at that particular time in that particular place. While the experience of compromise can become a valuable asset in a person's learning experience, there is no place for regrets. Hesitation and procrastination need to be replaced by concrete action to make compromises happen. Positive compromises have to be realised within a specific timeframe, and clients need to be actively engaged in realising their compromise plan, comparable to the concept of active engagement proposed by Amundson (2003).

Take proactive initiatives. To become an agent in their career development, clients can take a more proactive role in positive compromise. The term compromise often conveys passive and reactive connotations. With a more developed vision, clients do not always have to play a reactive role in the compromising process. Clients can take the initiative to make a compromise happen. This means they can project a compromising process to exert more control over the outcome. The mindset of career projection (Chen, 1997a, 1997b) should put clients in a more advantageous position to negotiate the conditions for making the compromise. A range of life career management skills is of vital importance in this projective effort. Good initiatives have to be based on sound strategic vision and executed in a skilful manner. Skills such as thorough observation, critical analysis and coherent synthesis are vital components to enable an informed compromise. Otherwise, optimal results are unlikely to be achieved even if clients have the vision and resolution to project such compromise initiatives in the first place.

CONCLUSIONS

Compromising is an inevitable part of many people's work life and career development experiences. It reflects one of the pivotal, yet challenging, issues that needs to be addressed should researchers and practitioners attempt to revitalise the psychology of careers for the 21st century (Savickas, 2000). This article has attempted to conceptualise the notion of compromise from a new and different angle;

proposing the perspective of positive compromise in the context of vocational and career psychology. Positive compromise focuses on maintaining an open attitude towards change, while integrating a sense of human agency and creativity into the process of making compromise in one's work life reality, including career planning, career decision making, career development and professional enhancement, and various life-career transition experiences.

Positive compromise points to both a conceptual framework and a series of coping mechanisms in the career development domain. Although this concept and its related strategies are mainly intended to provide practitioners with an alternative helping model in the field, researchers may find this conceptual approach helpful for theory development and research in the broad realm of vocational and career psychology. In addition, positive compromise presents a flexible and viable intervention approach in both self-helping and professional helping contexts. Individuals can apply this conceptual model to their daily interaction with the world of work, while professional helpers can adopt the model in career development interventions such as career counselling and vocational guidance. The notion of positive compromise is certainly a welcome addition to the insights that will enrich and enhance the content of vocational and career psychology.

Acknowledgement

An earlier version of this paper was presented at the 64th Annual Convention of the Canadian Psychological Association, June 2003, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada.

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THEORY AND PRACTICE

This section is designed as a brief professional review of the article. It provides relevant study questions and answers for readers to test their knowledge of the article.

Why is the notion of compromise worth attention in vocational and career psychology?

Answer: To deal with the constant changes and adjustments in our post-modern and post-industrial world of work, people find that they have to make various compromises in their work lives and career pursuit. Thus, drawing attention to the role and function of compromise in vocational and career psychology is necessary.

What is the conceptual foundation for the newly proposed theoretical perspective of positive compromise?

Answer: Positive compromise is based on the conceptualisation and understanding of the meaning of compromise in the existing theoretical models in vocational and career psychology. It proposes that the scope of compromise needs to be expanded to make it a more comprehensive, open and constructive coping mechanism in people's life career journey.

What are the main contents of positive compromise?

Answer: Positive compromise is a series of considerations that encourage a combination of constructive human qualities when people are searching for better options in the vocational aspects of their lives. Positive compromise emphasises a sense of human agency. It stresses the importance of keeping an

open attitude in dealing with complex issues emerging from one's work life. And it identifies the need of proactive preparation to generate a range of skills and expertise in making a more optimal and constructive compromise

How can the positive compromise framework be applied to the career development intervention?

Answer: Vocational and career psychology practitioners can easily use the positive compromise framework in practice in a flexible manner. Career development interventions guided by a positive compromise framework can focus on helping aspects such as fostering an open stance, developing visions, enhancing risk management skills and promoting action implementation.

What is the meaningfulness of proposing the positive compromise framework?

Answer: The meaningfulness of positive compromise is its intent to propose a conceptual framework and a set of related coping mechanisms in career development interventions. Thus, positive compromise attempts to contribute to the building of a theoretical perspective that can help to enhance the quality of practice. In doing so, theory will guide better practice, and vice versa, practice will enrich further theory development.