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The decision-making processes of dual-career couples

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The University of Arizona, 1992
THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES OF
DUAL-CAREER COUPLES

by

Kelly Ann Rose

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the
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STATEMENT BY AUTHOR

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ABSTRACT

Dual-career couples are a rapidly growing population who face many challenges due to their complicated lifestyle. The qualitative case study method was employed to specifically explore the decision-making processes of three dual-career couples in order to broaden the knowledge base about these couples and to yield information that would facilitate the development of educational and counseling programs to better serve this population.

The following methods were used to elicit information from the participants: audiotaped discussions of four career-related scenarios and individual responses to a short values survey. Factors identified in the couples' decision-making processes included money, geography (location), opportunities for career advancement, satisfactory job opportunities for both partners, family, future children, opportunity costs, career and personal happiness, and financial security. Recommendations for future research and suggestions for counselors, educators, and employers were made.
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Melissa and Chris, both 26, will be graduating from college soon; Melissa from medical school and Chris with a Master's Degree in Engineering. They have been living together for about a year and plan on getting married within the next 6 months. Melissa has just been offered residency as a pediatrician at a prestigious hospital in the Midwest. The couple has been residing in California where Chris has been with an engineering firm for 3 years. After receiving his master's degree, he will be given a substantial promotion. He enjoys working for this firm as there are many opportunities for growth. Melissa and Chris are now faced with decisions that will have a profound effect on the course of their professional lives as well as their life together as a couple: Whose career goals are met? Can both goals be met somehow?

Melissa and Chris are, of course, fictitious, but their situation is not. There are many couples like them and the numbers are growing. Statistics show that of all families in the United States earning $22,000 per year or more, 54% of these have dual careers (Long, 1984). For the purpose of this study couples like Melissa and Chris will be referred to as "dual-career" couples. A dual-career couple can be defined as two persons who are each pursuing separate careers while committed to a love relationship with each other. These couples are different from dual-earner couples, who generally have jobs as opposed to careers.
A career refers to a commitment to a profession that requires a large investment of time, energy, and ongoing education. This commitment is characterized by a high personal salience and a continuous developmental quality that includes advances in responsibility, pay, power, and status over time (Amatea & Cross, 1983).

Since 1960 the number of dual-career couples has more than tripled (Sekaran, 1986). Although these couples are still often referred to as couples with "nontraditional" roles, it is clear that they are becoming a rule rather than an exception. As the number of dual-career couples rises, the effects of their unique problems will be felt not only in their relationships but in the workplace and the counseling office as well. Many dilemmas face these couples who wish to be committed to their careers as well as each other. They may wonder if they can have it all.

Because of the numerous problems, dilemmas, and stresses dual-career couples face, their attempts to balance two careers and a relationship may fail. Many of these relationships end in divorce or separation (Sekaran, 1986). A couple comprised of two professionals may encounter difficulties more traditional couples do not experience.

Since both partners are actively involved in their own careers, many choices may need to be made by the couple concerning the development of the careers and the relationship. Issues of power, communication, and control may come into play. Having it all—a satisfying career and love life may have its price. Amatea and Cross (1983, p. 48) stated that "although the dual-career lifestyle provides its participants with many economic and psychological benefits, it also creates many pressures and stresses." Many of the problems that dual-career couples face have been addressed in the literature; problems such as role cycling and role overload (Sekaran, 1986) and personal identity conflicts
(Amatea & Cross, 1983). Although much has been written on the presence of this type of couple and their problems, very little has addressed the workings or process of their relationships. Dual-career couples face many decisions concerning both the individual and the couple. Decisions concerning transitions in the relationship such as promotions, job searches and transfers (Taylor & Lounsbury, 1988) and career changes (Gerken, Reardon, & Bash, 1988) may arise. These decisions have the power to affect the couples' personal and professional lives.

In order to make decisions concerning their future, the couple must communicate with each other. Recent research suggests that there are differences in the communication patterns of men and women (Veenendull & Braito, 1987). In addition, it is indicated that men and women who have developed an understanding for one another's beliefs and intentions will have a more flexible style of communicative coordination with their partners (Ting-Toomey, 1987).

Also incorporated into decision making for dual-career couples is power, which is defined as the ability to control or influence others (Webster's New World Dictionary, 1971, p. 583). Power processes refers to the relationship of the couple in terms of the use of power (Kingsbury & Scanzoni, 1989). Most research on power issues in dual-career families concerns the division of family tasks (Pleck, 1985). For the purpose of this study power processes will refer to the way in which each person in the couple uses his/her power to communicate and ultimately make decisions. Literature suggests that investigating power processes and decision-making outcomes of the couple is important in assessing relationship satisfaction (Kingsbury & Scanzoni, 1989).
**Purpose of the Study**

It is clear that communication styles and patterns are important in the decision-making process. The purpose of this study was to investigate the decision-making processes of dual-career couples at a state university through the use of case study method. By identifying factors and patterns apparent in the couples' decision-making process counselors, employers, and educators will have additional information to broaden the knowledge base, and identify needs not being met for this rapidly growing population.

**Areas Investigated**

The following questions illustrate the areas investigated in this study:

1. How do dual-career couples communicate with each other?
   a. Are certain patterns of communication apparent?

2. How are differences and disagreements dealt with?
   a. Is one partner more dominant?
   b. Is one partner apt to yield or "give in"?
   c. Is there a tendency to compromise?

3. What factors contribute to the couples' decision-making process?
   a. Job status?
   b. Family?
   c. Opportunities?
   d. Personal values?
   e. Geography?
f. Money?
g. Gender?

4. What special problems are these couples facing? What are their concerns?

**Definition of Terms**

The following terms and definitions are used throughout the study:

**Career**—a job that requires a high degree of commitment and a continuous developmental life, including extensive education, preparation and moving from one level to another to achieve expertise and responsibility (Rapoport & Rapoport, 1980).

**Couple**—two heterosexual persons who are co-habitating, engaged, or married.

**Dual-career couple**—two persons who are each pursuing separate careers while committed to a love relationship with each other.

**Dual-earner couple**—A couple who both have jobs, as opposed to careers, and bring in two incomes.

**Co-habitation**—Living together for 6 months or more.

**College student**—a university student, aged 20-25.

**Nontraditional couple**—a couple who do not fit the traditional arrangement of the man bringing in the income and the woman being a homemaker. Dual-career couples are considered nontraditional couples.

**Commuter marriage/relationship**—when the couple chooses to set up two separate households in different locations and reunite when schedules permit (Taylor & Lounsbury, 1988, p. 409).

**Young**—an individual, aged 20-30. Young dual-career couples are the focus of this study.
Scope and Limitations

The scope of this study was limited by the responses elicited through the semi-structured interview using open-ended questions, self-reported answers from a values survey, and the researcher's observations. The small sample size of three couples and the inability to control subject responses are limitations that are both inherent in case study research. Additionally, the career scenarios presented to each couple do not lead to specific answers but yield more nonspecific, detailed responses. The study is also limited in that the data was derived from a sample of students from a specific Southwestern university, therefore the information obtained in this study cannot be generalized.

Summary

Dual-career couples belong to a population that has increased rapidly over the past few decades. Each person is pursuing his/her own career while trying to maintain a healthy and satisfying relationship with their partner. How do they do it? Considering the obstacles these couples face, it would benefit all those involved to be more aware of what is happening with them. Although relatively little research has been conducted concerning dual-career couples, it is clear that serious interest in this particular population is growing. Employers, counselors, and the couples themselves are realizing the need for more investigation and assistance regarding the concerns and problems of dual-career couples.
CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This study describes the decision-making processes of three couples, all college students, who plan on pursuing their own careers while remaining committed to each other. The information gathered from the interviews can contribute to an understanding of how dual-career couples make decisions regarding their careers and life together. This information may help counselors, employers, and educators better understand the dilemmas these couples face and identify needs that are not being met.

To provide background information for this study, the literature review begins with an overview of dual-career couples, including couples in general, when that research is relevant. In order to create a clearer picture of the dual-career relationship, research comparing and contrasting career development for men and women is presented. Literature on decision making, which includes communication and power processes, as relevant to dual-career couples, follows. Research addressing personal values as related to career and family of professional, career-oriented persons is then presented. The sex roles of men and women in dual-career couples is explored, followed by literature on transitional problems such as career changes, transfers, promotions, and commuter relationships.

Finally, theories that facilitate the interpretation of the study's findings are discussed. Gelatt's Decision Making Theory (1962), the principal theory selected, is reviewed first. A brief overview of other theories that provide a basis for understanding
the lives of dual-career couples is presented including the theory of equity, systems theory, and David Rice's theory of family counseling. The review of literature is summarized at the end of Chapter 2.

**Dual-career Couples: An Overview**

Literature exploring the issues and characteristics of dual-career couples is fairly extensive. Researchers have been studying this type of couple for over 2 decades. Historically it began with Rapoport and Rapoport (1969, 1971) who first coined the term "dual-career family" to signify the type of family structure in which the husband and wife pursue a family life and active careers simultaneously. This term has extended to include dual-career couples, which for the purpose of this study defines couples who have no children and are not necessarily married. These are couples who are highly committed to their careers and view employment as an essential part of their self-definitions (Stoltz-Loike, 1992a).

When Rapoport and Rapoport first described the dual-career family in 1969, they anticipated that this type of family would become more prevalent in time. They believed that the dual-career family warranted investigation because of the massive changes in post-industrial society that would affect the patterning of work and family life. They stated "the dual career family is instructive to study in relation to these changes because while this is a variant pattern now it may become more prevalent given current trends" (p.3). Indeed, in one of the most recent books available, Dual Career Couples: New Perspectives in Counseling (1992a), Stoltz-Loike stated that "about 20% of all working couples are dual career couples, making them a substantial group characterized by distinctive psychological and career profiles" (p. 4).
In general, dual-career couples have high quality relationships due to a higher standard of living, greater socioeconomic status and collegiality between the partners (Stoltz-Loike, 1992a). Another assumptive characteristic of the dual-career lifestyle is that both partners engage in occupational and family work and share the roles involved in this work in a relatively egalitarian manner (Gilbert, 1985). This is not to say that all dual-career couples are egalitarian in their roles. Gilbert, author of *Sharing It All: The Rewards and Struggles of Two-Career Families* (1988) contended there is more than one type of dual-career couple. She stated that dual-career couples may fall into one of three categories (p. 104):

1. **Traditional dual-career couple**: The woman is responsible for family work as well as her career outside the home. The partners agree that the husband’s career is the preeminent one and that she could remain at home anytime if she wanted to. The man is generally supportive of the woman’s dual roles if it does not interfere with her domestic duties.

2. **Ambivalent dual-career couple**: Parenting is shared by both partners, but the woman retains primary responsibility for domestic tasks. Intellectually, these men do not think women should do all the housework, but in practice they expect it. Most of the current literature is based on the third type of couple:

3. **Role-sharing couple**: Both partners actively participate in household duties and parenting. This type of couple is the most egalitarian and represents the pattern many couples strive for. Generally, men in this situation actively support their partner’s career and appreciate the benefits of a dual-career lifestyle.
Despite the apparent advantages of an egalitarian relationship, these couples still encounter various difficulties. Men and women may view their roles in the relationship differently (Sekaran, 1986). Men who profess egalitarianism may still feel conflicted when faced with a partner who insists they should negotiate more equitable behaviors. Likewise, many women who want more help with children or household tasks may not be comfortable with asking for it (Scanzoni & Fox, 1980). Women do, however, seem to be more flexible in their adaptation to such a lifestyle, despite the conflicts and strains that may be involved. In addition, women typically hold more liberal attitudes towards sex roles and are more likely to push for more egalitarian relationships with spouses (Gilbert, 1985). Women's continuous efforts to create more egalitarian relationships may explain why dual-career issues largely remain women's issues (Stoltz-Loike, 1992a).

In addition to household tasks, other concerns arise:

1. When will the couple have children?

2. Where will they live?

3. How will they handle promotions transfers and other career changes?

Most college students anticipate being involved in a relationship, pursuing careers and raising a family (Stoltz-Loike, 1992a). Soon-to-be graduates may be in serious relationships and just about to embark on the first step of his/her career. Graduating couples may face challenges in the job search.

1. Do they search together or separately?

2. Do they look in a certain location or leave it open?

3. If they are unable to find work in the same place, how will they handle it?

4. Will one person's career take precedence over another?
Many of these graduates think they can work it out somehow. Despite their good intentions and high expectations, many of these future dual careerists do not possess a set of coping skills to help them deal with the challenges involved in balancing a family and career. They are confused as to how to plan their own careers in conjunction with their mate's. Male students, especially, find it difficult to envision changing or modifying their career process for that of their mate (Amatea & Cross, 1983).

These future dual-career couples do want to know how to manage a life that includes a family and a career. There are many challenges and rewards involved in such a full and complicated lifestyle. Current literature reports that couples, counselors, and employers seek specific strategies to help this population balance their positions as members of a working family (Stoltz-Loike, 1992a).

Women's Career Development

The term "dual-career relationship" declares that there are two careers involved, generally, a man's and a woman's. Are these career paths the same? One of the problems in reviewing literature for theories relevant to career development and decision making is that many of the theories are based on male developmental patterns. However, some theorists have generated ideas to explain developmental processes for both men and women. Some of these theories are discussed here.

Existing research indicates that there are some differences in the career development processes of women and men and other studies indicate that the two career development processes are similar. Borman and Guido-DiBrito (1986) concluded that while there are similarities, there are enough differences to warrant distinct theories for each gender. There are several career development theories, but only a few that address
women's career development specifically. Super (1957) had an early interest in career patterns and developed a career pattern for men consisting of four classifications and a pattern for women consisting of seven classifications. Each classification consists of its own characteristic. The major difference between the two patterns is that nearly all of the classification characteristics for women include children and marriage, while none of the men's do. From this information it seems that men typically do not consider marriage or family when planning their careers. Indeed, Stoltz-Loike (1992a) stated men tend to focus more exclusively on their career concerns while women are more likely to base career decisions on considerations related to both career and family. Young women today, especially highly educated ones who want to do it all, have a promising career and children as well. To an extent, contemporary society advocates the "do it all" syndrome. "Motherhood and careers are not seen as alternatives, but rather as a combination to which all women should aspire" (Baber & Monaghan, 1988, p. 200). This planned combination of career and family, however, has contributed to some changes in how women are planning their lives and careers. In a study involving 250 college women, Baber and Monaghan (1988) found that 71% of all participants planned to establish their career before having a child. It seems, then, that for most of these women their careers takes precedence, at least for a while. The study also found that 30% of the participants would return to work fulltime after the birth of the first child. The majority wished to work parttime, at least until the child started preschool. A major difference in the career development for women is that career women generally still want children. As a result, women's career development may be more discontinuous than men's due to their greater involvement in childbirth and childrearing (Velsor & O’Rand, 1984).
Other studies indicate male partners' attitudes toward the female partners' paid employment is an important factor in a woman's career development process. Early research by Hawley (1972) indicates career aspirations of college women were influenced by their perceptions of men's attitudes toward working women. More recent studies indicate that this is still a factor. Betz and Fitzgerald (1987) found that husbands' positive attitudes toward their employed wives can significantly influence the work force participation of wives.

Additionally, authors Borman and Guido-DiBrito (1986) suggested that women have unique problems that affect their career development. These include fear of independence, family/career conflicts, parental influences, lack of self-confidence, sex-role stereotyping, discrimination in pay, dual-career demands, and personal and environmental factors affecting women who choose nontraditional careers.

In her book, In A Different Voice (1982), Gilligan suggested that the entire developmental processes for men and women are different. Men strive for independence and separation, while women strive for attachment and connectedness. Because of this, men and women experience relationships differently. One of Gilligan's main points is that most life-cycle theorists base their information and insights on data drawn from studies on males. She stated this does an injustice to females because their behavior is compared and criticized with regard to male behavior. For example, many theories equate maturity with personal autonomy and concern with relationships is considered weak. This theory, based on male standards and behaviors, is then generalized to all adults. As a result, autonomous thinking, clear decision making, and responsible action (qualities associated with men) are considered undesirable qualities for women.
Fortunately, she says, men in mid-life are beginning to value the importance of intimacy, relationships and care. However, "only when life-cycle theorists divide their attention and begin to live with women as they have lived with men, will their vision encompass the experience of both sexes and their theories become correspondingly more fertile" (p. 23).

By the year 2000, women will constitute 47% of the workforce. The majority of these women will have families as well (Sullivan, 1992). Although a woman's career path may be more discontinuous than a man's, this does not mean that she achieves less. However, adjustments will need to be made. Many companies are making policy decisions to assist women's alternate career paths by making part-time work and other scheduling alternatives available (Stoltz-Loike, 1992a).

There are many factors that contribute to how men and women make career decisions. Women face unique problems in their career development. The following section explores decision-making processes as relevant to the career development of dual-career couples.

**Decision Making**

Making decisions is a skill every person will use on their own at some point in time. It is a skill most people will use when they are faced with career-related problems such as choosing a college major, changing careers, or combining career and family. At each of these points, the person is confronted with defining the problem, generating alternatives, making a decision, and evaluating an outcome (Larson, 1987). This process may work quite well for the individual, but what happens when there are two people involved in the decision-making process? Decisions that affect both of them will need
to be considered in order for them to continue functioning as a couple. To accomplish this they must learn a new skill—that of making decisions together.

Research on couples in general indicates that men tend to be more influential than women in mixed-sex dyad decision making (Eagly & Carli, 1981). The majority of this type of research, though, focuses on dyads of strangers rather than couples who are intimately involved. In their study concerning decision making of 70 unmarried sexually active dating couples, Gerrard, Breda, and Gibbons (1990) found that in some domains, depending on the subject or the task, women have a considerable amount of influence on couples' decision making.

Much of this research focuses on communication and decision making of more traditional couples. Most researchers agree that the dual-career couple is representative of couples with the "most equal resources and the most non-traditional sex-role attitudes of all couples within society" (Kingsbury & Scanzoni, 1989, p.23). They have a more egalitarian relationship than traditional couples. This relationship emphasizes personal happiness, friendship, self-expression, and assimilation rather than accommodation. Role sharing and mutuality in decision making are stressed (Pollack, Die, & Marriott, 1990).

If dual-career couples are generally more egalitarian, are their relationships and communication and decision-making processes different from more traditional couples? Houlihan, Jackson, and Rogers (1990) studied decision-making processes of satisfied and dissatisfied married couples and found that a state of equity (fairness) between couples when making decisions was associated with marital satisfaction. This suggests that couples who are more egalitarian in their relationships may be happier. Pollack et al. (1990) questioned whether differences in communication styles do exist between traditional and
egalitarian couples. The researchers assumed that because the egalitarian model is based on relationships, affect interchange and companionship, that good communication would be essential to maintain the relationship. Their results indicate more egalitarian couples obtained higher scores on a marital communication inventory (indicating good marital communication) than did the traditional couples.

Kingsbury and Scanzoni (1989) attempted to assess the power processes in decision making of married dual-career couples. They theorized that dual-career couples would be more equal in power concerning decision making than other types of couples. What they found is that it is the wife's attitude about sex roles that has the greatest impact on decision making. Wives with nontraditional sex-role preferences (career oriented) are willing to negotiate for their own points of view in deference to their partner's "legitimate" power. Because she works, the woman has more power (than women who do not work outside the home) thus balancing the power in the relationship and creating a more equally influential decision-making process.

Despite indications that egalitarian couples communicate better and are generally more satisfied, they may still misunderstand each other. Tannen, author of the book, You Just Don't Understand: Women and Men in Conversation (1990), suggested men and women have very different styles of communication. In general, women strive for intimacy in conversation. They wish to share with the other person, to have them listen. They usually do not want advice or solutions. Men, on the other hand, strive for status and independence in conversation. They do not want sympathy or emotional help, they want answers and high status. How, then, do couples ever manage to have an enjoyable or operative conversation? Tannen stated the key is to understand each other. People
would do well to realize there may be differences in the way men and women communicate and that everyone can learn from that knowledge.

Although Tannen's research indicates that there may be differences in how men and women communicate, it does not mean that this process is inflexible. Communication is a process that changes over time and may be different with different types of couples. In their study of couples in short-, medium-, and long-term marriages, Zietlow and VanLear (1991) found younger couples, married in the 1970s and 1980s, appear to be less differentiated in sex roles, more egalitarian, and more concerned with openly sharing feelings and communication than older couples. Additionally, the greater use of equivalency patterns of communication (establishing equality through identification with the other) among younger couples "may reflect a societal shift toward greater sharing of control and mutual respect" (p. 780).

Trying to understand each other and promote equality is something many couples may benefit from, but there is more involved when decisions concerning each partner's career and relationship are at stake. Although there is an abundant amount of information concerning dual-career couples, there exists only a handful of research that specifically explores the mechanics involved in joint decision making within couples.

Recent literature concerning dual-career couples just starting out indicates a need for certain skills in order to help them manage their lifestyle more effectively. Specifically, the need for more effective joint decision-making techniques is desired by many young dual-career couples (Scanzoni & Fox, 1980). Despite the fact that the majority of male and female college students believe they will combine career and family, feel they can do it all, and everything will work out, many of them do not know what this
partnership really means. Amatea and Cross (1983) asserted that "although there seems to be a genuine desire to somehow orchestrate the demands of a career and a relationship successfully, most students think in an individualistic manner and lack a clear sense of the process of interdependent decision making and planning" (p. 49).

To assist in the survival of the dual-career lifestyle, Amatea and Cross described a workshop designed for couples to attend together with the focus on the examination of each couples' decision-making style. This was accomplished by presenting, examining, and demonstrating four different decision-making styles. Each couple was to discuss the effectiveness of each style after using them in an assigned task. At the end of the workshop, participants were asked to evaluate the effectiveness and worth of the experiences. Results showed the participating 12 couples (aged 22-37)--8 married and 4 living together--gave high marks to the communication and problem-solving skill development components of the workshop. Additionally, the participants valued the opportunity to hear of other couples' situations and to spend time with their mate discussing personal issues and expectations.

Also involved in the decision-making processes of dual-career couples are the employers of these couples. Many businesses see dual-career issues as personal problems, but business is more likely to innovate and improve if managers understand the issues that may pertain to their employees (Long, 1984). Long, author of "Designing A Dual-Career Marriage Seminar," suggested a way to get managers involved and interested in their employees who are part of a dual-career couple. The half-day seminar for managers focuses not only on the issues in dual-career marriages, but teaches the manager to define the organization's role in helping dual-career couples resolve career and family concerns.
This is accomplished by presenting an integrative decision-making model to be used by the manager and the couple. The model stages are as follows (Long, p. 89):

1. Review and adjust the conditions of the involved parties to promote cooperation rather than conflict.
2. Test reality to help determine facts and adjust perceptions.
3. Review and adjust feelings and attitudes.
4. Define the depersonalized problem.
5. Search nonjudgmentally for possible solutions.
6. Evaluate alternative solutions and agree on a single solution.

Values

Our personal values, beliefs, and philosophies are also involved in how we make decisions, especially concerning career planning. Career counselors invariably use some exercise or instrument to help their clients identify their values as related to work, home, family, and leisure (Zunker, 1990). This type of information can help the client understand what he/she needs and/or wants from each of these areas. Persons who choose to participate in a dual-career relationship most likely will possess nontraditional values. Typically, individuals in a dual-career couple value the status, intellect, and the commitment involved in the pursuit of a career as well as the enjoyment and desire for a rewarding family life. Additionally, both men and women in this type of couple generally acknowledge liberal views about the roles and rights of men and women. In this type of relationship, women often show a stronger sense of self-direction, confidence, and independence, while men may exhibit more interpersonal warmth and expressivity.
than the traditional male (Gilbert, 1988). "These partners bring out characteristics in each other that are inhibited by traditional socialization" (p. 92).

Sekaran (1988) asserted that couples need to assess their value orientations to determine whether the career or family has assumed primacy. She stated that "unless they (the couple) adopt androgynous values, they will continue to experience frustrations" (p. 191). Partners may need to make necessary shifts in their values and behaviors. For example, men need to feel comfortable doing household work and women need to feel comfortable letting their partners take equal charge of the home so they can devote more time to their careers (Sekaran, 1988). Men with high needs for power and traditional views of sex roles (Gilbert, 1988) and women who are not willing to negotiate their own points of view (Kingsbury & Scanzoni, 1989) make unlikely candidates for a dual-career marriage. It is essential that each person be comfortable with this display of nontraditional characteristics and be similar in their values or they may not survive. "Any clash of contrasting philosophies within households is likely to undermine the likelihood of mutually satisfactory decision-making" (Scanzoni & Fox, 1980, p. 746).

**Sex Roles**

Associated with the values of each partner are their views concerning the various roles they play in the relationship. Gender roles or sex roles refers to positions that every person occupies in life. Every position carries a certain set of behaviors (norms) that make up a role and define how a person should act (Vannoy-Hiller & Philliber, 1989). We may occupy many roles in different settings—wife, mother, father, son, student, employee, etc. Each person may have his/her own idea of what is expected of each role. A large portion of the research on dual-career couples investigates conflicts that arise due
A large portion of the research on dual-career couples investigates conflicts that arise due to the roles that inevitably evolve because of the complex nature of the relationship.

Despite the fact that a majority of college students expect their spouse/partner to fully share in housework, researchers found that when it comes right down to it, men and women (professing to be egalitarian in their views) still argue about who does what and when (Gerken et al., 1988). Additionally, even though a woman in a dual-career partnership spends just as much time with her career as her male partner does, housework is still primarily her responsibility (Thompson & Walker, 1989). Wives employed full-time spend about 20 hours per week doing housework while husbands spend an average of 10 hours per week on housework, whether or not their wives are employed (Stoltz-Loike, 1992a).

One author has described the burden of household responsibilities as the "second shift" (Hochschild, 1989). The "second shift" refers to the work that needs to be done at home, after the first shift in the paid workforce is over. Generally, women take on more responsibilities in this second shift. Hochschild claimed many marriages have failed because of the divisiveness in household responsibilities. This "second shift" may not be due to male insensitivity but to a difference in how men and women perceive what is happening in the relationship. Men may at times be unaware that their wives consider household roles as not fairly balanced. Encouraging clearer communication about individual expectations and needs regarding housework can enhance task sharing between partners (Stoltz-Loike, 1992a).
Throughout the 20+ year span of research on dual-career couples, five major career dilemmas have been identified, three of them concerning the roles of each partner (Rapoport & Rapoport, 1976; Sekaran, 1986; Stoltz-Loike, 1992a):

1. **Role overload dilemmas:** Each partner in a dual-career couple shares responsibilities at home as well as having career achievement goals. There are still many planning, organization and coordinating obligations, even if they have hired help. Additionally, all those involved need love and emotional support. The overwhelming demands lead to role overload and stress.

2. **Identity dilemmas:** Earlier gender socialization of partners in a dual-career couple can lead to conflicts about their adult identities, particularly if they share household responsibilities equally. New definitions of what it means to be a good husband, father, mother or wife can help address this dilemma.

3. **Role-cycling dilemmas:** Decisions concerning how to plan events in a relationship, such as children and career changes, can be difficult. How and when such decisions are made can have a profound effect on the career and family roles of each person. Partners need to discuss the relative priorities of family and career issues and agree on when one role takes priority over another.

By identifying the various dilemmas dual-career couples face, counselors can help their clients restructure their priorities and plan new ways to address these dilemmas and reduce stress (Stoltz-Loike, 1992a).
Transitional Concerns

In addition to defining and managing the various roles that dual-career couples occupy, they may encounter situations that will require much thought and collaboration. Transitional situations involving job searches, promotions, career changes, transfers and commuter relationships may arise for the dual-career couple. Couples at the beginning of their relationship may be in a situation where both are looking for first jobs within their respective fields. Many questions arise. Do they want to look for jobs in the same or different organizations? If they are unable to find jobs in the same location, would they be willing to relocate or perhaps consider a commuter relationship? Or, would one person be willing to settle for less so they could be in the same place? Sekaran (1986) suggested couples discuss such scenarios as much as possible during their relationship, especially before getting married. Exchanging ideas and feelings on such matters will help avoid any misconceptions in the future.

Once each person’s career has been fairly well established, changes may still occur. Since persons in dual-career partnerships are generally highly educated and desire to continue the learning process throughout life, a career change for one person may become an issue for the couple. A career change may involve a temporary or permanent move to a different location. Most two-career couples wish to give equal weight to both partners’ interests; however, locations or relocating based on the husband’s needs are still the norm. This may be because the male is usually older, has been in his profession longer, and commands a higher salary than his female partner. If the other partner cannot find a suitable position in his or her field in the new location, a compromise is in order. This means partners may have to settle for something less than what they want
or feel they deserve (Gilbert, 1988). Many couples will forego advances in their careers by refusing to relocate; especially if they are well established in their careers and/or have children (Sekaran, 1986). If couples do decide to relocate, many companies are now offering to hire placement firms to assist the other spouse in finding a comparable employment opportunity (Long, 1984).

An alternative to both partners' moving at the risk of one partner's career is to establish a commuter marriage or partnership. Few couples do this, although the numbers are increasing. It is estimated that there are approximately 700,000 commuter marriages in the United States (Taylor & Lounsbury, 1988). Couples that do live in separate households do so for a short period of time—a few months to a few years. They have the intention to acquire jobs in the same location eventually. Gilbert (1988) reported that, in general, more women than men will opt to relocate for their partner's career. This difference may again be due to the tendency for men to have higher salaries. Moving to accommodate the woman's career may be too costly as her new salary probably would not justify the loss of the man's salary.

In addition to the stresses of being separated, research indicates that there may be some bias from employers regarding dual-career couples and geographic transfers. In their study, Taylor and Lounsbury (1988) found that executives evaluated couples who plan to transfer together more favorably than those who plan a commuter marriage. Some executives stated they doubted the employee would be giving his or her best performance when living with this type of arrangement. Others believed the commuter marriage would result in a divorce or a decision to leave the company. The authors suggested possible solutions to this bias against employees planning a commuter marriage.
These solutions include increasing awareness of companies regarding transfer related problems and the consideration of alternatives to a transfer.

Another situation that may occur is that of promotion without transfer. Typically partners report little discomfort about men out-earning women, especially in traditional dual-career couples. However, even more egalitarian, role-sharing couples may report stresses when the woman earns more than the man. Gilbert (1988) suggested the level of stress associated with the woman’s earning power is related to the stability of the male partner’s self-image and masculinity. If he is satisfied with himself and his career, he most likely will not be threatened by her career advances.

**Theories**

There are no theories currently available that specifically address the career decision-making processes of dual-career couples. However, several other well-established theories are appropriate to this study. These theories are presented and reviewed in the following discussion.

Decision Theory provides the foundation for interpretation of the data gathered in this study. Zunker (1990) offered Decision Theory as one method to describe the process of career choice. This theory is based on the premise that an individual has a choice of options and that decision making includes a sequence of events. The events that lead to a decision may include (Zunker, p. 45):

1. Defining the problem
2. Generating alternatives
3. Gathering information
4. Processing information
5. Making plans

6. Selecting goals

7. Implementing plans

Decision Theory is the basis of Gelatt's Decision Making Model (1962). This model incorporates the importance of values in the decision-making process. Additionally, the model proposes a concept of a series of decisions (immediate, intermediate, and future) indicating that decision making is a continuous process. The model's steps progress as follows (Gelatt, p. 242):

1. The individual recognizes a need to make a decision.

2. Collect data and survey possible courses of action.

3. Determine possible courses of action, outcomes and probability of outcomes.

4. Estimate desirability of outcomes. This step centers attention on the individual's value system.

5. Evaluate and select a terminal or investigatory decision.

Although the Decision Theory and Gelatt's model provide a specific description of how career decisions are made, they only address the individual's decision-making process. However, these theories may apply to dual-career couples if: (1) each person is keenly aware of his or her own values and (2) if they agree on the need for interdependence when making career decisions (Amatea & Cross, 1983, p. 49).

One theory that addresses the relationship process between two people is the Theory of Equity. Equity theorists (Adams, 1965; Homans, 1961; Walster, Walster, & Berscheid, 1978—all cited in Brehm, 1988) propose that relationship satisfaction will be highest when there is proportional justice: When each partner's outcomes (what they get
from the relationship) are proportional to his/her inputs (what they contribute to the relationship). Fairness is of paramount importance. Partners in equitable relationships should be relatively content, whereas those who have received more or less than they deserve based on their inputs should be distressed. Couples who are in more equitable relationships are generally more willing to discuss and negotiate situations so that both persons are satisfied (Brehm, 1988).

Equity, however, is not always enough to maintain a satisfying relationship. In their study addressing decision making of satisfied and dissatisfied married couples Houlihan et al. (1990) found that satisfied couples feel equity is important in decision making, but there are other factors involved too. True equity does not necessarily mean that each persons needs will be met or that the situation will be handled most effectively. The couples who reported satisfaction in their relationships believed that striving to meet the needs of each person and considering situational factors aided in their ability to make mutually satisfying decisions.

A problem with many career decision-making theories is that they do not include the family or home life as factors in the process. Systems Theory proposes that problems are not isolated to an individual person or factor but are part of the entire family system, and are influenced by many factors. This theory focuses on the importance of whole family participation, communication processes and the various roles each person plays when confronted with problems (Brehm, 1988). Gerken et al. (1988) proposed a career-planning course for college students based on Systems Theory. The course covered basic concepts of Systems Theory as related to career/life planning. It emphasized the
interrelatedness of three systems: individual, career, and family, and the need for flexibility and balance between them.

David Rice (cited in Stoltz-Loike, 1992a) combined Equity and Systems Theories into his approach to counseling. He believed equity is the guiding principal for marriage. Additionally, Rice evaluated the impact of career roles on family functioning as well as relationships between family members. He applied psychodynamic techniques directly to the conflicts and stresses of dual-career couples and includes discussion of the interdependence of career and family roles.

Summary

The literature review provides an overview of current research addressing the concerns and problems involved in the dual-career lifestyle. The specific areas covered are women's career development, decision-making, communication and power processes, sex roles and transitional problems. Theories relevant to decision-making processes of dual-career couples are discussed and evaluated. Together, these theories form the theoretical basis for this study.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This research utilized the case study method to investigate the career decision-making processes of traditional college-age, dual-career couples. The information was obtained by self-report through the use of an individual values survey, a demographic information sheet, and tape-recorded interviews of each couple's responses to four career-related scenarios. This chapter outlines the design of the study, presents issues of reliability and validity, identifies the population sample, describes the interview procedures, and discusses analysis of data.

Population and Sample

Participants in this study met the following requirements: Heterosexual couples between the ages of 20 and 25, married, engaged, or co-habitating for at least 6 months, have no children, and will have graduated from the University of Arizona between December 1991 and August 1992. In addition, each individual must be planning to pursue a career after graduation. The intent of the study was to focus on a homogenous group who would be experiencing similar life styles as dual-career couples. Participation was limited to three English-speaking couples who were willing to be interviewed.

Methods and procedures of this study were approved by the University of Arizona Human Subjects Committee (Appendix A).
Procedures

Each couple was referred to the researcher by persons who were aware of the study. Each participant was assured of his/her anonymity and was informed that the research was being conducted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the researcher’s Master’s Degree in Counseling and Guidance at the University of Arizona. A subject’s Consent Form was signed by each participant (Appendix B). Each participant was given a copy of the Demographic Information Sheet (Appendix C), a set of four career-related scenarios (Appendix D), and a values survey consisting of six items (Appendix E) at the time of the interview.

Data were obtained by the use of semistructured interviews in order to elicit full, detailed, subjective responses. Two of the interviews were conducted in the homes of the participants, while the third was conducted in an office on the University of Arizona campus. Each interview began with the individual completing the Demographic Information Sheet, which included seven closed-ended and two open-ended questions. Each participant was then asked to individually complete the values survey. Participants were asked not to share their answers with each other. The surveys were then identified with fictitious names then placed into an envelope. Each couple was then given the instruction sheet and the scenarios. The intent of the scenarios was to elicit free and open discussion regarding possible career decisions the couple may face together. Each couple read the scenarios themselves. The interviewer was present merely to clarify instructions. As each couple discussed the scenarios, the researcher took notes that included personal observations of the couple and their surroundings. The tape-recorded interviews lasted from 25-45 minutes. All the data including demographic information,
survey responses, and tape-recorded responses were combined to provide an overall view of each couple. In order to obtain full and meaningful information about how dual-career couples make decisions, the researcher relied on each couple's discussion of four career-related scenarios. The scenarios allowed each couple to discuss how they would handle various situations that might arise during their life together. They were given as much time as needed to discuss each situation.

For this study the subject's responses to questions were taped, transcribed, and evaluated but not presented to the subjects for review. The researcher chose to not present transcripts to the subjects because of the uniqueness of the questions. The questions were presented in a "what if?" context. The couples were asked to respond in terms of their anticipated decisions and actions regarding various career situations. The intention of the researcher was to capture the initial response of each couple; therefore, additional comments made after the fact would only confound the desired information.

In addition, a six-item values survey was administered to each person individually. This qualitative interview approach within case study research provided an opportunity for the views of each person and couple to be recorded and reviewed, thereby broadening the knowledge base concerning the decision-making processes of dual-career couples.

**Design of the Study**

The case study approach was chosen in order to describe how three couples make decisions about their careers and life together. The purpose for using the case study is "organizing and presenting information about a specific person [or persons] and his or her circumstances" (Runyan, 1982, p. 444). Yin (1989) specifically advocated the use of the case study approach when asking "how" questions over which the investigator has little
or no control. Like ethnographic studies, case study research is "not designed to prove or disprove hypotheses, but to explore situations and relationships" (Bodgan & Bilken, 1982, p. 3).

How couples make decisions can be considered a phenomenon; "any fact or event that is apparent to the senses and can be scientifically described" (Webster's New World Dictionary, 1971, p. 558). According to Merriam (1988), case study is a research design that can be used to study a phenomenon systematically. As further support of the case study approach, Merriam (p. 3) stated that "research focused on discovery, insight and understanding from the perspectives of those being studied offers the greatest promise of making significant contributions to the knowledge base and practice of education."

**Issues of Reliability and Validity**

Case studies are often criticized because some researchers view them as having low internal validity, which means it is difficult to rule out other causal explanations (Runyan, 1982). However, this logic does not apply directly to case study research as case study is not concerned with causal statements (Yin, 1989). Merriam (1988, p. 165) stated that "regardless of the type of research, validity and reliability are concerns that can be approached through careful attention to a study's conceptualization and the way in which the data were collected, analyzed and interpreted."

Several researchers suggest ways to increase the reliability and validity of the case study. Laing (1988) suggested that self-report (utilized in case studies) can be very valuable if the information gathered through this method is done carefully and in conjunction with other sources of information. A thorough review of current literature and presentation of a strong theory base are used in this study to increase credibility and
validity. In addition, the open-ended questions proposed to participants were designed to elicit unique, descriptive responses and avoid the presentation of implied answers or preconceived categories, which may contribute to low internal validity (Merriam, 1988).

Another strategy used to ensure internal validity is that of peer examination, asking peers, supervisors and colleagues to comment on the findings of the study as it progresses (Merriam, 1988). This strategy was employed by the use of a major advisor and two members, as part of the Master's thesis committee, to continually give feedback and advice concerning the findings of the study.

External validity, which refers to the ability to generalize findings from a single case to the population at large (Runyan, 1982), can be improved if the investigator provides a detailed description of the study's context. This is important so that the reader, who is interested in the information, can know exactly how the particular case can be useful to them (Merriam, 1988).

Data Analysis

Data analysis was performed by identifying values, topics of concern, and factors related to the decision-making process evident in the subject's responses to the values survey and the career related scenarios. Relationship concerns such as promotions, job searches, and transfers and career changes were explored and linked to themes, patterns, and factors that arose from the collected data and the literature reviewed. It is suggested that data analysis of qualitative studies consist of matching, comparing, and contrasting written notes, transcripts, and other sources until emerging patterns and themes are fully understood (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984). The acquired information was then reviewed
for common themes and patterns concerning dual-career couples and their processes of
decision making.

A method of graphing was used by the researcher to cross-reference the
information obtained from the interviews. The small sample size allowed for this method
to be quite effective. Tables 1-6 visually represent the correlated findings. This allowed
the researcher to compare the findings with other studies and made interpretations and
recommendations possible.

Summary

Chapter 3 presented the methodology of this case study research by presenting the
population and sample. The procedure of the interviews was described in detail in order
to improve internal validity. The design of the study was described and issues of
reliability and validity are addressed. Finally, an analysis of data was presented.
CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Chapter 4 presents case studies of three college-educated couples who were at the beginning of their relationship as dual-career couples. Case studies of each couple provide the basis for answering the following questions:

1. How do dual-career couples communicate with each other?
   Are certain patterns of communication apparent?

2. How are differences and disagreements dealt with?
   a. Is one partner more dominant?
   b. Is one partner more apt to yield or "give in"?
   c. Is there a tendency to compromise or not?

3. What factors contribute to the couples' decision-making processes?
   a. Job status?
   b. Family?
   c. Opportunities?
   d. Personal values?
   e. Geography?
   f. Money?
   g. Gender?

4. What special problems are these couples facing? What are their concerns?
Each case study includes a demographic profile of the couple, observations made by the interviewer and personal perceptions of the individual and the couple in response to the four career-related scenarios, which are based in part, on the study questions outlined above. Table 1 represents information gathered from the Demographic Information Sheets. Tables 2 (p. 53), Table 3 (p. 61), and Table 4 (p. 68) present factors involved in the decision making of each couple with regard to the four scenarios. In addition, responses to the values survey are presented in Tables 5 (p. 70) and Table 6 (p. 71).

The survey used six Likert-type questions (on a scale of 1-5) to assess personal values as related to careers. The questions addressed the following topics: opportunity for advancement, job status, job stability, family commitments, salary/benefits, and self-worth. The survey results are presented by individual and group response. Individual responses are grouped by couple so that comparisons within couples can be made.

Each of the four scenarios presented was designed to encourage the couple to make a joint decision regarding situations they may encounter as a dual-career couple. Scenario 1 focuses on the realization of a "dream job" for one partner that would mean a move to another state. Scenario 2 addresses a possible 6-month separation from each other, necessary for career advancement. Scenarios 3 and 4 deal with career changes that may have great financial and emotional impact on the couple. A short summary follows each case study. Results of the values survey follow the presentation of taped discussions.
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Table 1. Demographics
Case Study 1: Ashley and Bob

Demographic Profile

Ashley is a 21-year-old female who describes herself as Anglo-Saxon American. She will graduate from the University of Arizona in August of 1992 with a Bachelor of Science in Regional Development. Her plan after graduation is to find employment in a select region working for city planning.

Bob is a 23-year-old white male. He graduated from the University in May 1992 with a Bachelor of Arts. His plan is to travel to Europe for the summer then return to his hometown of Chicago, Illinois, in the Fall of 1992. Once there, he plans to go into the real estate business.

Ashley and Bob have been dating for 2.5 years. They lived together for the previous two summers in Colorado. While attending school, Ashley lives in her sorority house, and Bob lives in an apartment with roommates. They do not plan on living together if they both acquire jobs in the Chicago area.

Observations

Ashley and Bob met with the interviewer in an office at the University of Arizona. Bob seemed a bit apprehensive. Prior to beginning he mentioned that he and Ashley had discussed this topic before, and that the session might become a little heated. Ashley seemed more comfortable and asked several questions about the nature of the study.

Participants' Perceptions

In response to the question "Have you and your partner had any discussion about how you will handle your relationship as a dual-career couple? To what extent?, Bob replied, "A little. It's been a touchy subject." Ashley added, "We have discussed our
relationship after graduation but haven't come to a concrete solution or decision." Ashley and Bob's current situation centers around Bob's plan to conduct his job search in the Chicago area. Ashley plans on broadening her job search to other areas, in addition to Chicago. She is not quite sure where yet—wherever she can find a good job.

Ashley said, "I would like to be in Chicago. . . . I love the Midwest, I think it would be an excellent place to raise a family. But to me it seems like a career for myself is also very important so I'm weighing going to Chicago or focusing on my career first."

When discussing the first scenario (Appendix D) concerning one partner's "dream job," Ashley and Bob said:

Ashley: What we've decided on is that if one of us has the dream job, the excellent job, the job we're looking for, we will follow that person.

Bob: Right.

Ashley: I would say that I would follow you there. I would give up my job that has a chance to move up and maybe look for another one that has a chance to move up.

Bob: I'd do the same thing. If you had a dream job even if it wasn't in Chicago, even if it was wherever, even if it was in Globe, Arizona.

Ashley: I'd still go there; if it was a dream job. . . . If you were making great cash and you were doing what you want to do, and you're happy. I'd do that. 'cause I could always find a job in another place. If it (the job) was so great and it was understood between the two of us that we were going there for you and it was understood that I was making a sacrifice. . . .

After this exchange, Ashley changed the situation. She asked Bob if he would stay where he was while she went to this dream job for 6 months or so to try it out. At first, Bob said he would not do the separation, but then he changed his mind.
Ashley: Let's say I get out of school in August... we go to Europe, you're already there. I meet you there, we come back, I get a job starting October 1st and you don't have a job yet... would you wait for my job to start and then just come back with me or would you be looking for a job where you wanted to be?

Bob: Yeah, I would look for a job where I wanted to be. See, if I could find a great job and maybe stick it out for a couple of months... If I could find a job that was better than your job, then I'd call you and have you come back to where I was. But if I couldn't find anything, then I'd go back to where you were and try to find a job there.

Ashley responded affirmatively to this and proceeded to Scenario 2 (Appendix D) regarding a 6-month separation for job training. Both of them agreed immediately that they would stick it out for a 6-month separation in order to advance in their careers. The extra money and opportunity would be worth it, although it would depend on exactly how much extra money and benefits it would be.

Ashley: I would go for the 6 months and take the opportunity... We'd have to decide what part of our personal budgets we were going to put toward seeing each other... maybe once a month.

Bob: Yeah, we'd also have to consider what this training is going to get you. Is it going to make me a senior V.P., or is it just going to give me a hundred dollars more. You have to judge if it's necessary or if it's the right move. I could do it--assuming it's a decent promotion.

Considering how they would handle the situation if they chose to separate for 6 months, both said they would take the time to save money and pursue personal interests.

Ashley: I would probably get personally involved in something extracurricular to keep myself busy. Or really focus on a hobby, or get something done that I always wished I'd gotten done and make that be a goal to get my mind off of things while you were away... I'd be really bummed out because I couldn't see you for 6 months.
Bob: I wouldn't do anything a lot different. I'd kind of look at myself and take time out... to look at everything and consider if everything was going the way I wanted it in my life. I'd just become closer with my friends. I would pick a hobby or something. I'd probably work more... make a whole bunch of money and probably pay for the plane ticket to see you or travel somewhere. Yeah, I'd probably work 60 or so hours a week... just go crazy.

Ashley and Bob had difficulty with Scenario 3 (Appendix D). Both of them want to be self-sufficient while they are dating. However, they say it would be different if they were married or engaged. The result was that they flipped back and forth between discussing the situation from their current perspective (dating) or if they were engaged or married.

Bob: Well, I'd totally have to discuss it with you. If I were taking on the woodworking project. I have to tell you... you'd be floatin' some cash my way. I wouldn't do this unless we were engaged.

Ashley: You wouldn't?

Bob: Uh uh. I wouldn't do this if we were just as we are now.

Ashley: You wouldn't think that was fair....

Bob: No.

Ashley: I wouldn't either.

Bob: Engaged is like the least....

Ashley: ... committed we would be... and there's a lot of dependency on the person who has the income.

Bob: I would have to do some serious talking with you.

They both agreed that the money and the benefits would be hard to give up, but going to a job you hate, even for $40,000 per year would be difficult too.

Bob: ... I wouldn't stick with a company that I wasn't happy with, well, that's not true.

Ashley: If you woke up every morning....
Bob: ... hating the thought of going to work. ... How could you live like that? I wouldn’t do that. But I might consider, especially if we were like we are now, living like a hermit for a couple of years ... saving up all of my money and going to work even if I hated it. . . .

Ashley: . . . to have a cushion.

Bob: Yeah, certainly. Most definitely, so I’m not so dependent on you.

In an attempt to clarify their decision, Ashley presented her case, as if she were the one to take on the new enterprise.

Ashley: Okay, say we are like we are now, what would I do? First, I would just bounce the idea off you like I always do. I’d say, "I have something to bounce off you. You can think about it for a couple days before you say anything."

Bob: Um, I think I would have saved up a lot of the $40,000 before I would really want to do the T-shirt thing or the woodworking thing.

Ashley: I can’t see myself wanting to be dependent on you financially before we were married.

When asked how marriage would make this scenario or other scenarios different, Ashley shared that she would like to be independent for awhile. Bob referred to the greater level of commitment involved in marriage.

Bob: There’s a for-sure commitment.

Ashley: There’s no way out. I mean, you have to work with what you have.

Bob: Yeah, it’s like five-card stud. Once you’re married you have your hand, and you have to make the best of it. Before we’re married everything is still. . . .

Ashley: . . . still more independent.

Bob: Yeah, there’s still more time to back out.

Ashley: I have a personal goal that I’d want to be completely independent before I get married, just to know that I can . . . do what I want to do.
The final scenario (Appendix D), dealing with transfers and a possible commuter relationship, proved the most difficult and time consuming for this couple. Bob changed his mind several times. Ashley seemed to be more accommodating.

Bob: I wouldn't do that because of you.

Ashley: What if I agree. What if I say, "There isn't a job I really want in this town, but if you're going to be much more successful and still happy with what you're doing, then why not move?" I'll do something not that great for a couple of years and maybe that would be a prime opportunity to get married and have a family . . . and my career wouldn't be as important and the family would be more important.

Bob: No. I still wouldn't do it. This is exactly the scenario we are having right now. I wouldn't do it . . . because it's just like when we moved out to Boulder. It's you dependent on me and me always trying to make everything okay. Everything is getting better (in the career field) for the one person, and it's all going to shit for the other person.

Ashley: That's so true, because then the person with the not-so-good job could always say, "I did this for you."

Bob: Yeah, like, "You owe me."

The discussion about a commuter partnership centered around the inconvenience of driving 2 hours to work, and again, whether they were married or not. Bob stated he would participate in a commuter relationship if they were not married. For example, if he were to have a job in Phoenix and her job was in Tucson, he would drive to visit her, but not live with her. Ashley said she would drive 2 hours to work at the new job every day, if they were to live in the same house. Bob would not be willing to drive 2 hours. If they were engaged or married they lowered the driving time to 1 hour and would not maintain separate households.

Ashley: If we lived in the same place, there would be more of a chance to see each other. If we had two separate places an hour apart it would be easier to say, "Oh, I'm not going to drive home tonight, I'm just going to stay here tonight."
Bob: No, I wouldn't do two different places. That would be way too much a pain in the ass. And it would just cause problems.

Ashley: Um hum.

In order for one person to take the job two hours away, they both considered moving an hour closer (if they were married and living in the same residence) so that one could take the new job and the other could keep their old job. After discussing the scenarios, Ashley and Bob spoke at length about their job search predicament.

Ashley: I would hope that's where I find a good job (Chicago) but I have to consider myself to a certain extent . . . if I get a good job offer somewhere else. . .

Bob: The problem is what that extent is.

Ashley: Yeah. We can't figure out that fine line.

Bob: What we're hoping is that she's going to get a good job in Chicago or if she gets a job somewhere else it's not going to be a very good paying job.

If Ashley were not able to find a good paying job and if Bob did get a good job in Chicago, Ashley would move there. For this couple, money is a primary factor in their decision making.

Ashley: That (a good paying job) would be the deciding factor, because then I would go to Chicago for sure and make that my main focus. Just rake the town for a job.

Bob: It's a big town. There's definitely a job there, it's just . . .

Ashley: . . . a matter of pounding the pavement rather than broadening your horizons and your chances by trying a few more places. Another compromise we came to was say I did get a really good job in Kansas City or Phoenix or somewhere in town, you would consider it.
Bob: That's serious--there are certain places which I already told her I wouldn't live no matter if she had a job there or not. I wouldn't live in Phoenix. I won't live in Tucson and I wouldn't live in a lot of the South. So, even if she got some killer job there, it would be just hell to get me to go there.

Ashley: And the bad part of that is that if you did end up following me--I had this great job and you couldn't find a job, that would put a lot of pressure on our relationship because I would be the one (who made this happen) and you would be saying "you did this to me."

Bob: That's right.

Ashley: . . . "you brought me here and I'm miserable." So, hopefully, that won't happen. Hopefully we'll both just find jobs in Chicago.

Bob: Yeah, and the rainbow will have a pot of gold at the end of it.

Ashley: Uh huh. And we'll win the lottery and I won't have to worry about the salary.

When asked what they would do if Ashley couldn't find a job in Chicago both of them sighed.

Ashley: (reluctantly stated) Well, we really don't know.

Bob: We hope we don't have to make that decision.

Summary

Bob and Ashley are two very independent people who want to follow their own dreams, yet hope they can still be together. In reality, this may not happen, as Ashley and Bob are approaching the job search from different angles. Bob is focusing in a certain city while Ashley is considering many locations. They know they may face some tough decisions. At this point they hope to avoid such decisions because they really don't know what they will do. Table 2 presents factors involved in the decision-making process by Bob and Ashley for each of the four scenarios presented in Appendix D.
Table 2. Factors involved in responses to the four scenarios by Couple 1

1. Your partner has just received a wonderful job offer across the country he/she wants. It is the "dream job" that he/she has been waiting for. It is the perfect opportunity for your partner to exercise his/her talents and skills, and it pays excellently. You have a job that you enjoy, with good pay and a chance to move up in the company. What would you do? Why?

Bob and Ashley did not arrive at a concrete answer. Factors involved: Money, location; job opportunities (for both partners), and personal sacrifice.

2. Part of a desired career move for one of you includes 6 months of training in San Francisco, CA. After the training period you would be able to return to your homebase in Denver, CO, where you would be promoted. Your partner is currently working in Denver. Would you take the opportunity? What things would you and your partner consider when making this decision? How would you handle the separation (if this was your choice)?

Bob and Ashley would choose to take the opportunity. Factors involved: Money, opportunity to visit each other, career advancement, and benefits involved in new job.

3. One of you has a job with a salary of $40,000 per year with great benefits, including a company car. You've been with the company for a few years, but are tired of your work and don't like your boss. You just don't enjoy this career anymore. As a hobby, you do beautiful woodworking. You'd like to do this as a career, but it would mean not having an income for a while. Your partner has a secure career but with considerable less income than you. What would you do? What would your concerns be in this situation?

Their decision would depend on many factors. Factors involved: Level of commitment to each other, financial dependence, financial security, loss of income, dissatisfaction with career.

4. You have been with a company for several years and thoroughly enjoy working there. They have offered you an opportunity for advancement but it would require moving to a smaller town 2 hours away. The transfer would mean a salary increase of 25% and more fringe benefits, including a company car. If your partner moved with you, his or her income would drop drastically because of the lack of opportunities in his/her career field. There are no jobs that your partner would be truly satisfied with in this smaller town. What would you do? Why?

Their decision would depend on many factors. Factors involved: Level of commitment (married status), comparable job opportunities, driving distance, money, inconvenience (of commuter relationship)—too costly and too much driving.
Case Study 2: Megan and Scott

Demographic Profile

Megan is a 21-year-old caucasian female who graduated from the University of Arizona with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Communication in May of 1992. Her general plan after graduation is to move to Kansas City, Missouri, with Scott, acquire a job in the health care industry and then start nursing school in the Fall of 1993.

Scott is a 22-year-old white male who also graduated from the University of Arizona with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Economics and Communication in May of 1992. His plan is to obtain a career related position in his hometown of Kansas City, Missouri.

Megan and Scott have been dating for 3.5 years. They have lived together since August of 1990.

Observations

Megan and Scott rent a one-bedroom apartment near campus. Their apartment is comfortable and pictures of themselves, family, and friends are displayed throughout. They sat together on the couch during the interview. Both were eager and willing to share their story.

Participants' Perceptions

When asked if they had discussed their future as a dual-career couple, Megan stated:
Yes, we have decided that whoever has the best opportunity money, benefits, satisfaction) for a career will take that job and we'll work from there. Ideally, we both want to stay in Kansas City, but in the event of a transfer the above would happen. Also, as far as children are concerned, I will most likely stay home with them until they attend preschool.

Scott confirmed their plans:

Yes. We have decided that if we are both in career related jobs and if one of us is transferred, we will either move or stay in Kansas City, depending on which job is the best relative to where we each would like to be in our respective careers. Also, the decision will be dependent on which job has the most future value.

Prospects for the future, money, and location are important factors in how Megan and Scott make career decisions. When discussing Scenario 1 (Appendix D), Megan and Scott responded:

Scott: Pretty simple, we'd move. That's what I think. What do you think?

Megan: Well, if this job outweighs that job then, yeah. If it's that much better...but it also depends on other things like where in the country it is. We've talked about this before. We both want to be in Kansas City, that's our ideal place. But he might get a job with Hallmark, it's looking pretty good right now, and after two years there's a great possibility he'd be transferred. That kind of scares me because I want to raise my kids around his family... part of my family is there too.

Scott: But also... since Hallmark has its corporate headquarters in Kansas City... hopefully, if I stay with the company and move up, we'll end up living there anyway.

Megan: Yeah. We've talked about this and I've come around and decided that whatever is best at the time, we'll have to do it.

Scott: I think that if it was the perfect, ideal job for you or me, I think it would be unfair for the other person, you or I, to not let it happen. So I think, even if the place wasn't the number one place we wanted, if it was a great job... that paid well--if it was what you wanted or what I wanted, I think we'd probably move there anyway, don't you?
Children are also a factor in their decision making.

Megan: Um hum. It also depends on when in your career this happens. Like if it happened now I'd say sure, let's do it. But if we had a five or six year old . . . a kid in school, who had their group of friends, I'd have to consider that too. Especially if they were in high school. If it were going to happen now I'd say sure, we have nothing holding us back. Go for it.

Scott: So 99% of the time chances are that we would move, you think?

Megan: Um hum. Yep.

Megan and Scott felt they would do whatever needed to be done to accommodate each other's career and happiness. Both were very flexible, however, children would always change things. For Scenario 2, both felt they would take the job training offer, since they would only be apart for about 6 months, and it would allow the other person to advance in his or her career.

Megan: I think that if that's the only way that we're going to move up, then I'd think that we'd have to do it.

Scott: I agree.

Megan: I mean, I hate to bring the kids up every single time, but if I had a newborn baby, I wouldn't want to be alone or leave or whatever. If we could work around our schedule so it worked out better for us, then I wouldn't have a problem. You know, it would be hard to be away from you for 6 months but . . .

Scott: . . . but it's the right thing to do. I mean, if it was the way to move up in the company then.

Megan: Uh huh.

Scott: So we're saying that we would do it and we're saying once again, most of the time we would do it, but it kind of depends on the children.
Megan and Scott also mentioned that the separation would not be ideal but it would be "worth it."

Megan: Would it depend on me or you going to San Francisco? Would you feel comfortable letting me go for 6 months by myself and living by myself?

Scott: I wouldn't feel comfortable, but if it was the right thing to do I'd live with it.

Megan: Okay.

Scott: Yeah. I don't even know if I'd feel safe being alone for six months in a strange city (laugh) but if they offered me a good apartment in a good neighborhood ... those kinds of things.

When discussing Scenario 3, happiness in one's job was a large factor. Both feel job satisfaction is essential to the serenity of the individual and the couple. Both agreed they would support the other person while he or she pursued their dream job—as long as they are able to financially.

Scott: I think that if ... I absolutely hated the job that much. ... I'd be willing to try.

Megan: Yeah, because something like that ... if you're unhappy at work it travels to home and I wouldn't want that to come between us. Eventually it would make you miserable and hurt our relationship. So yeah, I would support you. (she laughs)

Scott: You would support me?

Megan: Or you could support me if I made the decision (to start her own business). If the person who kept the career made enough money to support the other one during that time. . . .

Scott: It also says that the other person makes significantly less income than you.

Megan: But if it's enough to get you through that time when you won't be making any income, then I think it's worth the sacrifice.
Scott: Right.

Megan: If it's going to save our marriage, or whatever. If it comes down to that. . . .

Scott: Right. Then if it doesn't work, for the person that is doing the woodworking or whatever, then he (or she) could just find another job. So I think that in a job where you don't enjoy it, if it seems like a dead end, then yeah, I'd definitely say we'd try the hobby.

Megan: Um hum.

Scott: You think so?

Megan: Yeah. Definitely.

However, when Megan brought up children, their answer changes. Both felt they would have to stick with the job, even if they did not like it, because of the added responsibility and expense of children.

Megan: Also, the answer to this would depend on kids. Because if it meant that the kids would have to do without things that they need or want, I'd be more apprehensive to let you quit your job or have me quit my job.

Scott: Children just make life so complicated.

Megan: Uh huh.

Scott: I think that we'd want to do it before we had kids (Scenario 3). I'd be much more willing to take a risk before kids. . . . I'd want more of the stability. I might have to consider keeping the job and be miserable with it for a little while . . . maybe even 'till their off on their own. If we didn't have kids I think we'd definitely do it.

Megan: It's kind of like in the movie Parenthood where Steve Martin (actor) hated his job but then his wife got pregnant.

Scott: He realized he couldn't just mess around with it, finding a new job and all. He was getting paid good money where he was, even though he hated it, he had to stay.
For Scenario 4, which would mean a move or a commuter relationship, neither would consider maintaining two separate households. They would consider moving to a point half way between so that both could keep their jobs. Money and location were both factors in this decision.

Megan: Move half-way and commute (laugh).

Scott: Seriously, I'd be willing to do that. If it's 2 hours away, move.

Megan: ... move an hour in between and you go 1 hour and I'd go an hour.

Scott: I'm serious. If that was a possibility, which I'm sure it would be, then I definitely think that would be a good idea.

Megan: Because the money that I would be making ... would pay for the commuting and everything. Then you'd be happy in your old job or whatever. We're always assuming that I'm the one that's going to move. But the chances of this happening are pretty slim. If it was him getting a new job--because I'm thinking of going into nursing. So I'm feeling like I'll always have an opportunity for a job so we haven't really talked about this that much. But if this were to happen, that would work (moving half way in between). It's kind of a long drive. But if there's nothing in between. No town or anything then. . . .

Scott: We'd build a house.

Megan: No. Then we'd have to pick (which one has to give up the job).

If children were in the picture, Megan said she would move (to his new job) because she probably would not want to work while the children are small anyway.

Megan: The other thing is, if this were to happen right around the time when we're planning to have kids and I'm planning on staying home some until they're in preschool, then it would probably work because I wouldn't really be that upset about not working for a little while. And you never know, it could turn around in 3 or 4 years, and we'd move back to the bigger city.

Scott: Right, because if we had kids at that time you might want to stay home with them anyway.
Megan: Uh huh. And with the extra money that you’d make, I’d be able to do that.

Scott: Yeah. But, if we did have kids, and you wanted to be working at the same time, the 25% increase in salary wouldn’t supplement what we’d lose from your job. Plus the happiness of you having a job you enjoy.

Megan: Well, I don’t know. In this smaller town, chances are the cost of living is lower, and well, I would like to live in a small town.

Summary

Megan believed she would be the one to accommodate her career in most cases, because she anticipates being able to find a job (as a nurse) quickly and easily in almost any location. Half way through the interview Megan stated she thought they were going to fast. Both of them found the interview to be fairly simple because they have discussed these very situations many times before. Scott mentioned at the beginning of the interview that they started talking about career and family plans in the first month of their relationship. During the interview Megan and Scott answered questions with ease and certainty. Both of them agreed that their goal is to be happy with their careers, but ultimately work for what is best for the relationship as a whole. Partnership is very important to them. At the conclusion of the scenario discussions, Megan asked how other couples were answering these questions because, as she stated, "These are difficult situations to be in. There are so many considerations."

Table 3 presents factors involved in the decision-making process by Scott and Megan for each of the four scenarios presented in Appendix D.
Table 3. Factors involved in responses to the four scenarios by Couple 2

1. Your partner has just received a wonderful job offer across the country he/she wants. It is the "dream job" that he/she has been waiting for. It is the perfect opportunity for your partner to exercise his/her talents and skills, and it pays excellently. You have a job that you enjoy, with good pay and a chance to move up in the company. What would you do? Why?

Scott and Megan would choose to relocate 99% of the time. Factors involved: Location, opportunity for advancement, children, job opportunities (for both partners), opportunity costs, fairness, and timing.

2. Part of a desired career move for one of you includes 6 months of training in San Francisco, CA. After the training period you would be able to return to your homebase in Denver, CO, where you would be promoted. Your partner is currently working in Denver. Would you take the opportunity? What things would you and your partner consider when making this decision? How would you handle the separation (if this was your choice)?

Scott and Megan would choose to take the opportunity. Factors involved: Benefits (of new job), money, opportunity for career advancement, and housing.

3. One of you has a job with a salary of $40,000 per year with great benefits, including a company car. You've been with the company for a few years, but are tired of your work and don't like your boss. You just don't enjoy this career anymore. As a hobby, you do beautiful woodworking. You'd like to do this as a career, but it would mean not having an income for a while. Your partner has a secure career but with considerable less income than you. What would you do? What would your concerns be in this situation?

Their decision would depend on many factors. Factors involved: Children dissatisfaction with career, financial stability, responsibilities, and timing.

4. You have been with a company for several years and thoroughly enjoy working there. They have offered you an opportunity for advancement but it would require moving to a smaller town 2 hours away. The transfer would mean a salary increase of 25% and more fringe benefits, including a company car. If your partner moved with you, his or her income would drop drastically because of the lack of opportunities in his/her career field. There are no jobs that your partner would be truly satisfied with in this smaller town. What would you do? Why?

Their decision would depend on many factors. Factors involved: Children; money, personal happiness, ability to negotiate location, timing (re: life plans).
Case Study 3: Jill and John

Demographic Profile

Jill is a 23-year-old white female who graduated from the University of Arizona with a Master's Degree in Counseling and Guidance in December of 1991. She has been working full time as a career counselor at the local community college. It is temporary work and she hopes to find a more permanent position as soon as possible. She would like to continue her career as a counselor and have children in about 5 years.

John is a 21-year-old male who describes himself as "West-Euro American". He will graduate from the University of Arizona with a Bachelor of Arts in Journalism in August of 1992. His plan is to get a job in his field and/or get into the real estate business.

Jill and John have been in their relationship for 3.5 years. They have lived together for the past 2 years and have been engaged for 1.5 years of that time. They were married post-interview in May of 1992.

Observations

Jill and John share a rented townhouse, a few miles from campus, with another male friend. Their home is comfortable and spacious. Jill is soft spoken and has a professional presence. Her attitude is warm and friendly. John is very charismatic and talkative. They both sat at the dining room table during the interview.
Participants’ Perceptions

When questioned about any prior discussion of dual-career issues Jill and John responded with:

Jill: Yes. We constantly plan and re-plan how we are going to arrange for our careers, family, and living situations. We are very serious about planning for our future, but we enjoy talking about it—it’s never a stressful discussion.

John: Yes. In round-about ways. We have never discussed the subject "dual-career couples." However we have talked about current, future occupations and dreams—what and when we will do things. Now, in 5 years, etc.

For Jill and John, money is a large factor in their decision-making process. It colors their decision in the first scenario. Additionally, the opportunity for jobs in their respective fields influences their decision.

Jill: You got offered this dream job. How would you approach me?

John: I would say that I got offered a dream job and it pays excellently and your job only pays well. And you have the skills to get a job where we are moving to and thus we are going to move.

Jill: Have you already looked into it that there are opportunities for me?

John: Well, I know that there is because you have a job that is pretty well universal. I have a harder time finding a job than you do. There is more demand in your field than there is in my field.

Jill: So you’re considering that I’m going to get a similar job where we would move.

John: Right. Paying similarly.

Jill: Okay.

John: Because you have a job that . . . gets jobs rather quickly. So I say do you want to move and then if you say you want to move then we move.
Jill:  What if I say "no"?

John:  Then if you say no then well, I guess you say no.

Jill:  And then do you take the new job?

John:  No. I don’t think that a dream job would be that important. I don’t really have a dream job.

After discussing the situation as if John were offered the job, they then reverse it to as if Jill were offered the job. Their answer is still the same. They would move, but only if the salary were high enough to justify the move and if the other person had a reasonable chance of finding a job in the new location.

John:  ... I like it, I have a good job. I think it goes the same way, but it has to pay excellently. It has to be enough where there are (good) opportunity costs.

Jill:  Opportunity for you to get a job ... but I could support both of us.

John:  Right ... support both of us ... because it pays so excellently.

Jill:  So the fact that it pays so excellently is important to both of us.

John:  Right.

Jill:  ’Cause that’s going to be security while the other person tries to find a job.

John:  I think that the dream job has to coincide with excellence in pay. For example, in our real world situation that we’ve contemplated: now if I were to get a job in L.A. and I would get paid $20,000, it wouldn’t be worth it because you have to give up your job that pays $20,000. Therefore, my job in L.A. would have to pay about $60,000 for there to be reason enough for us to move, wouldn’t you say?

Jill:  Right. So you’re saying that you’re going to put it on the back burner in hopes that you’ll get a dream job somewhere else that pays excellently.
John: Right.

Jill: Or it's better to stay. So we weigh the opportunity costs per income.

John: Right. Exactly.

When discussing Scenario 2, John and Jill agreed that they would take the job training offer and be separated for 6 months, unless there were extenuating circumstances. These circumstance might include illness or if Jill were pregnant. They might still take the opportunity even if Jill were pregnant.

Jill: Okay, we're going to be separated but we have a chance to come home on the weekends or something. And eventually we'll come back.

John: It just means that there is going to be a 6-month period where one is either going to have to live apart or one is going to have to not take the job offer. So, it's basically take the job and face 6 months' living apart.

Jill: Well, if you were the one that got the offer I would say go, unless I was really sick or something. . . .

John: If you got the offer I would say go because 6 months is not that long.

Jill: What if I was pregnant?

John: If you were pregnant then I would say go.

Jill: No, no. Say I was going to stay home by myself while you go for 6 months and I'm pregnant and we don't have any family in Denver. Then we'd have to talk, I think.

John: Right. Then we'd talk about it.

Jill: So basically we'd go for the career move.

John: Right.
The decision for Scenario 3 revolves around financial security.

Jill: Well, I'm the secure one. I would have to think really hard and fast about leaving $40,000 and benefits for woodworking.

John: Well, I think the important thing there is the $40,000 plus great benefits.

Jill: Right.

John: So this would be an opportunity to nest egg a lot of that cash away plus you have a job that pays fairly well. Okay, so we're throwing a lot of this cash in the kitty that will be able to finance a woodworking enterprise that's going to go worldwide in a matter of 5 years.

Jill: Right.

John: I'm not going to leave it (the $40,000 per year job). I'm going to work there for like 2 years and put away most of the cash and you're going to get (pregnant) and the benefits will pay for that. And we're going to drive around in a new company car and then in 2 years we're going to say goodbye to this job and we're going to open up a beautiful woodworking company.

Jill: Okay, so we wouldn't go for our interests until we were financially secure.

John: Right.

Jill mentioned that the last scenario, concerning commuting or moving, was the hardest one.

John: (answering immediately). The answer to this question is "no."

Jill: Okay, you wouldn't move.

John: We would not. Well, why can't I take the job and commute or live there half the year?

Jill: So you're saying you'd commute?

John: We could do both ways.

Jill: Okay.
John: Maybe for a year.

Jill: We could commute until we found jobs (in the same place).

John: You never know, they might just want you to work there for a year or so to learn a little more about the company. Then you could move.

Jill: Okay, so neither of us would want to pack up and move for the other persons job.

Overall, Jill and John said that they would consider driving 2 hours away for a job, but only for a year or less. Regarding a commuter relationship both agreed that they might maintain separate households, but only for a short period of time, 2 months or so. They would try to find decent jobs in the same place as soon as possible. They believed keeping up two separate households would not be cost effective for any length of time.

Summary

Jill and John have an air of playfulness about them. They are humorous in their discussions, yet realistic and serious. They answered the questions very quickly with no apparent disagreements. For them, financial security is very important when making career decisions. Both would like to stay in Tucson, pursue their respective career interests, and eventually raise a family.

Table 4 presents factors involved in the decision-making process by John and Jill for each of the four scenarios presented in Appendix D.
Table 4. Factors involved in responses to the four scenarios by Couple 3

1. Your partner has just received a wonderful job offer across the country he/she wants. It is the "dream job" that he/she has been waiting for. It is the perfect opportunity for your partner to exercise his/her talents and skills, and it pays excellently. You have a job that you enjoy, with good pay and a chance to move up in the company. What would you do? Why?

John and Jill would choose to relocate most of the time. Factors involved: Money, job opportunities (for both partners), opportunity costs, location, and opportunity for career advancement.

2. Part of a desired career move for one of you includes 6 months of training in San Francisco, CA. After the training period you would be able to return to your homebase in Denver, CO, where you would be promoted. Your partner is currently working in Denver. Would you take the opportunity? What things would you and your partner consider when making this decision? How would you handle the separation (if this was your choice)?

John and Jill would choose to take the opportunity most of the time. Factors involved: health, career advancement, money, and pregnancy.

3. One of you has a job with a salary of $40,000 per year with great benefits, including a company car. You've been with the company for a few years, but are tired of your work and don't like your boss. You just don't enjoy this career anymore. As a hobby, you do beautiful woodworking. You'd like to do this as a career, but it would mean not having an income for a while. Your partner has a secure career but with considerably less income than you. What would you do? What would your concerns be in this situation?


4. You have been with a company for several years and thoroughly enjoy working there. They have offered you an opportunity for advancement but it would require moving to a smaller town 2 hours away. The transfer would mean a salary increase of 25% and more fringe benefits, including a company car. If your partner moved with you, his or her income would drop drastically because of the lack of opportunities in his/her career field. There are no jobs that your partner would be truly satisfied with in this smaller town. What would you do? Why?

Their decision would depend on many factors: Factors involved: Inconvenience (of commuting), money, opportunity costs, amount of time involved, moving costs, and job opportunities (for both partners).
Values Survey

In addition to discussing four career-related scenarios, the participants were asked to complete an individual values survey. The survey consisted of six statements regarding personal career values. The survey utilized a Likert-type scale with 1 = not true at all, 2 = slightly true, 3 = moderately true, 4 = highly true, and 5 = very highly true. The participants were instructed to choose the number that best describes how true the statement was for them.

In order to ensure confidentiality and anonymity of the participants, data obtained from the individual values surveys are represented in the following manner. Table 5 represents the responses of each individual in the three couples. The couples are referred to as Couple A, B, or C. The letter M or F will follow, representing the sex of the participant (M = male; F = female). For example, CF refers to the female participant in couple C. The couples are presented in random order. The participants response to each question is represented numerically as described above. The purpose of this type of representation is to compare the self-reported values of values of the partners in each couple. Table 6 represents the participants responses as a group. The data are represented by the percentage of participants who answered each statement with one of the numbered responses.
Table 5. Values survey: Individual responses

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Statement 1. It is important to me that there are opportunities in my job for advancement

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Statement 2. I prefer a job where I will be recognized for my performance and loyalty

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Statement 3. Job stability and predictability are important to me. I will want a job that is secure during all economic conditions

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Statement 4. It is necessary that my job allow me the flexibility to fulfill my commitments to my family

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Statement 5. My decision to accept or reject a job opportunity is dependent upon the salary and fringe benefits

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Statement 6. I would feel that my college education was wasted if I were not always employed

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1 = Not at all true
2 = Slightly true
3 = Moderately true
4 = Highly true
5 = Very highly true
Table 6. Values survey: Group responses

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Statement 1. It is important to me that there are opportunities in my job for advancement

0% 0% 17% (1) 17% (1) 66% (4)

Statement 2. I prefer a job where I will be recognized for my performance and loyalty

0% 0% 0% 33% (2) 67% (4)

Statement 3. Job stability and predictability are important to me. I will want a job that is secure during all economic conditions

0% 17% (1) 17% (1) 33% (2) 33% (2)

Statement 4. It is necessary that my job allow me the flexibility to fulfill my commitments to my family

0% 0% 0% 17% (1) 88% (5)

Statement 5. My decision to accept or reject a job opportunity is dependent upon the salary and fringe benefits

0% 33% (2) 33% (2) 33% (2) 0%

Statement 6. I would feel that my college education was wasted if I were not always employed

67% (4) 17% (1) 17% (1) 0% 0%

1 = Not at all true
2 = Slightly true
3 = Moderately true
4 = Highly true
5 = Very highly true
Summary

Chapter 4 presented case studies of three dual-career couples. Each case included a demographic profile of the couple, observations made by the interviewer, and personal perceptions of the individual and the couple in response to four career-related scenarios. In addition, responses to an individual values survey were presented.
CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

Couples who choose to embark upon a lifestyle that combines two careers and a family life face many challenges. Most of these challenges will be rewarding, some of them will be quite taxing. The purpose of this study was to explore how dual-career couples handle these challenges in their decision-making processes. In order to fulfill this purpose a case study approach was used to gather information from three future dual-career couples. These couples were college students who were all in the first stages of the dual-career lifestyle. To assess their decision-making processes each couple was given a set of four career-related scenarios to discuss together. They were to contemplate and verbalize how they might handle each situation if it were to evolve during their relationship. They were instructed to present a solution to each scenario, if at all possible. The discussions were audiotaped, transcribed and evaluated for common themes and factors involved in the decision-making process. Additionally, a six-item Likert-scale survey was administered to each person in order to assess individual values as related to careers. Each person was also given a short demographic sheet to complete for background purposes.

The resulting data was reviewed, identifying patterns and themes pertaining to the decision-making processes of the three couples. Using the emerging patterns and themes,
recommendations were made for future research and programs that may help to better serve this rapidly growing population.

**Conclusions**

The persons who participated in this study form a rather homogenous group, therefore the findings cannot be generalized to all dual-career couples. However, many couples may have similar characteristics.

**Summary of Demographic Findings**

The participants in this study ranged from age 21-23 years. All are Caucasian. Career choices for the students were mixed. Two students received Bachelor's Degrees in Communications, one in Business, and one with a Master's Degree in Counseling and Guidance. One woman pursued a Bachelor's degree in Regional Development, which is typically a male dominated field. The participants had graduating dates ranging from December 1991 to August 1992. The couples had been in their respective relationships for 2.5 to 3.5 years. Currently, one couple resides separately, one lives together and the other were married soon after the interview took place. All three couples said they had discussed future plans concerning their careers and family on many occasions to varying degrees. For one couple, these discussions were often touchy and unresolved. The other two couples seemed more confident in their decision-making skills.

**Summary of Scenario Discussions**

When discussing the scenarios, each couple mentioned several factors involved in their decision making. The factors identified were money (salary), timing, convenience,
benefits, geography, family, career opportunities, and overall happiness. At times, future children were also a factor. Geography and family played an important part in that all three couples would like to start their careers in a certain area. One couple would like to remain where they were, another couple wanted to relocate to Kansas City, Missouri, while the other couple remains split, with one partner intending to reside in Chicago, Illinois. At least one person from each couple had relatives in the chosen area.

The discussions for Scenario 1 involved money, job opportunities for the other partner and location. In Case 1, Bob initially states that he would move to accommodate Ashley’s career opportunity. He then changed his mind and stated that he really wants to look for a job in Chicago and probably wouldn’t follow Ashley. Ashley just wants to find a good job wherever she can, hopefully one in Chicago. They do not really come to a decision other than each one trying to find a job and whoever finds the "best" job will ask the other person to follow him or her. The other two couples said they would go with the other person to pursue the dream job, but only if the money was worth the move and the other person could find a comparable job in the new location. It was important to all couples that each person be happy with the move. Interestingly, Couple 1 mentioned the recognition of personal sacrifice. For example if one partner were to pick up and move for the sake of the other persons career he or she would want this sacrifice to be recognized. Couple 2 mentioned fairness as a factor in their decision making. They felt it would not be fair to hold the other person back from a career opportunity just because it would entail a move.

For Scenario 2, all three couples said they would be willing to be separated for six months while the other person received job training in another state. The reason
given was that the extra money would be worth the time apart. The couples also recognized the importance of mutual support for career advancement.

Scenario 3 relied most heavily on the money factor. None of the couples relished the idea of giving up a large salary and benefits. Couple 1 would not let go of the $40,000 per year job unless they were more committed to each other. Both partners would feel discomfort at being financially independent on the other if they were not married or at least engaged. All three couples felt that happiness in one's career is very important, often more important than money. However, they recognized the need for financial security. The couples conceived a common solution; to keep the job for a few years, save as much money as possible and then take on the new career endeavor. This would mean that for awhile the couple would be supported by only one income. None of the couples would initiate this career change if their were children involved.

Scenario 4 proved to be the most difficult. Overall, a commuter relationship was not desired by any of the couples. Couple 3 would maintain separate households only if absolutely necessary. They would stay in this situation only until they found jobs in the same location, just for a few weeks or months. One woman said she would move with her partner to the new location if she had small children, because she probably would not work during that time anyway. Couple 1 expressed concern about financial dependence. Neither would want to move for the other's career unless there were comparable job opportunities available for him or her. Both partners felt that financial dependence on the other would cause much stress and pressure between them. All the couples offered a solution of moving half-way between job locations so that both partners could pursue their careers.
Gender did not seem to be a factor in the decision-making processes of these couples. Both sexes were generally willing to compromise, although two of the women felt they would accommodate their careers more readily than their partners. As pointed out by the couples themselves, this is due to the wider opportunity for employment in the career fields of these women; counseling and nursing. They felt they could find jobs almost anywhere thus their careers could withstand a change.

Communication between partners was generally egalitarian in nature. As with many conversations there were interruptions, but each partner allowed the other to voice his or her opinion. There appeared to be no surprises between partners when discussing the scenarios. Perhaps this was due to prior discussions between partners concerning such matters.

At least two of the women from these couples expect to experience an interruption in her career due to the desire to have children. This discontinuity in the career path of these women is consistent with the findings of current research and theory on women's career development. For the most part, these women plan to return to the work force full time as soon as possible or when the children enter preschool.

Summary of Values Survey

Consistent with research regarding career values and relationships, the participants reported similar values between partners and among each other. The majority of participants highly valued opportunities for advancement in their careers, job performance recognition and job stability. All participants valued the importance of job flexibility in order to fulfill commitments to family. Responses to item 5 regarding accepting or rejecting job opportunities on the basis of salary were evenly distributed between choices
2 (slightly true), 3 (moderately true), and 4 (highly true). Interestingly, 4 out of 6 respondents did not feel their college education would be wasted if they were not always employed. Perhaps this was because many of today's young couples feel there is more to life than work. Family and leisure are also rewarding and fulfilling aspects of these couples lives.

In general, these couples seem to have few disagreements. They have planned and discussed their futures in great detail. Two of the couples also expressed confidence in being able to work out almost any situation. One of the couples' was not so confident. In their interview they expressed concern over the lack of decisiveness between them. They appear to be operating more as individuals rather than as a couple. While it is important to honor ones individuality, the importance of interdependence needs to be recognized in order for these couples to effectively manage their lifestyle.

Although literature on dual-career couples stresses the need for joint decision-making skills and interdependence, it is imperative that each person have a keen sense of his/her own values and be able to make independent decisions. One professor, who is part of a dual-career couple, describes a situation in which she was offered a position at a university in another state. Her partner was well established in his career at their present location. They had many long talks, weighing the pros and cons. Ultimately, though, she had to make her own decision. "The bottom line, though, was that Frazier needed me to say that I wanted this position. That was a big leap for me. I wanted it to be our decision and yet first I had to make my commitment. I finally said what he was waiting to hear and our fate was sealed" (May, 1991, p. 382).
Comparison of Findings and Theories

When discussing the four career-related scenarios, each couple engaged in a process that helped them to arrive at a decision or a suitable stopping point. Consistent with Gelatt's Decision Making Model (1962), mentioned in Chapter 2, each couple recognized a need to make a decision, assessed the situation, and gathered all the information possible. They continued the process by discussing courses of action and outcomes and evaluating this information. Finally, each couple arrived at a final or investigatory decision. This process included expression of one's opinions, needs and desires, sharing information, asking for input from the other person, and cooperating together to arrive at a satisfactory agreement.

Sometimes more than one plan or solution to the situation was proposed by the couples. Other times no decisions were made at all. For one couple, arriving at a decision was very difficult, if not impossible. Perhaps they will only be able to make a decision when it becomes absolute reality for them. For this couple, individual desires may override the desire for interdependence. This lack of commitment to the relationship may contribute to a more difficult decision-making process for this couple.

The couples in this study are also striving for equality and fairness. Two couples specifically mentioned fairness when discussing career situations in that it would not be fair to keep a partner from advancing in his/her career by refusing to move or alter plans. For the most part, these couples are very thorough in considering all factors in each situation in order to increase their chances of making effective decisions. All three of the couples possess similar values; however, they differ on other accounts. Couples 2 and 3 seem to possess additional characteristics of a healthy degree of interdependence


allowing them to work as partners and strive for equity in their relationships. These characteristics are comparable to research. These characteristics are comparable to research on couples who report satisfaction in their relationships. Additionally, the theories discussed in Chapter 2 suggest that these characteristics will aid in a couples' ability to make mutually satisfying decisions.

Although the three couples who participated in this study are alike in many ways, it is apparent that they are not at the same level of commitment and interdependence. More than likely, these differences will also be apparent in the larger dual-career population. Many couples will experience some difficulty due to their complicated lifestyle. Other couples will experience extra difficulty because of their lack of awareness of personal values, lack of effective decision-making skills, and ignorance of the need for a healthy amount of interdependence.

Recommen_dations for Further Research

The following adjustments to the design of the study are recommended:

1. Include a greater number of couples as case studies so as to broaden the information base.

2. Interview each person separately in order to assess personal opinions concerning their situation.

3. Spend more time with each couple in in-depth interviews. Include interview questions that directly address their concerns and recommendations to other couples, counselors, educators and employers.
4. Present interview questions regarding the couples thoughts on counseling. Have they ever been to a counselor? Would they ever seek the services of a counselor? What would they see a counselor for?

5. Conduct a pilot study in order to prepare the most effective interviews.

Finally, in order for this study to be most effective and generate an abundant amount of information, a longitudinal study is recommended. To follow these couples for 10-15 years, with in-depth interviews every year, would provide valuable information to assist in meeting their needs.

Recommendations for Educational Programs

Recommendations to counselors, educators and employers regarding programs to assist dual-career couples are presented here.

Programs, workshops, and classes designed for couples and individuals can be held on college campuses. These programs would address issues and concerns of modern, career-oriented students. The programs would be comprehensive including components on values, work, family, and relationships. Panel discussions, presentation of decision-making and life-planning strategies, role playing, and self-exploration are a few subjects that could be involved in the programs. It is also recommended that academic advisors, campus counselors and instructors be offered inservice training regarding the special needs and concerns of dual-career couples.

Businesses can also share in the learning and helping process by providing seminars and training sessions for their managers and staff. These training sessions would increase awareness of the dual-career couple lifestyle and its impact on employees and businesses. The sessions would also provide specific methods and strategies for assisting
dual-career couples such as on-site daycare, flex-time, alternatives to relocation, and counseling and placement services. Emphasis would be on cooperation and accommodation between employers and their dual-career employees so as to promote effective working relationships.

Counselors and other mental health workers would do well to experience the above mentioned recommendations. Additionally, local and national seminars covering dual-career issues would provide counselors with information and specific tools to pass on to their clients to better assist them with their struggles and concerns. Current and future dual-career couples can benefit from counselors, educators, and employers who understand their concerns and from programs that teach them skills they can use throughout their relationship.

Summary

Dual-career couples have chosen a rewarding and fulfilling lifestyle that is accompanied by many challenges. Melissa and Chris, who were mentioned at the beginning of this study, face a difficult situation. What will they do? They look forward to promising careers and hope for a bright future together. Is it possible for them to enjoy both plans? Couples like Melissa and Chris face a lifetime of careful decision making due to the complicated lifestyle they have chosen. As the number of women in the workforce increases, more and more couples will be a part of the dual-career lifestyle. This type of couple is not going to go away and their concerns need to be addressed more effectively and realistically by counselors, educators, employers and all those involved in this growing population.
APPENDIX A

HUMAN SUBJECTS LETTER
February 17, 1992

Kelly A. Rose, B.S.
College of Agriculture
Department of Counseling and Guidance
Education Building, 218
Main Campus

RE: THE CAREER DECISION MAKING PROCESSES OF DUAL CAREER COUPLES

Dear Ms. Rose:

We received documents concerning your above cited project. Regulations published by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services [45 CFR Part 46.101(b)(3)] exempt this type of research from review by our Committee.

Please be advised that approval for this project and the requirement of a subject's consent form is to be determined by your department.

Thank you for informing us of your work. If you have any questions concerning the above, please contact this office.

Sincerely yours,

William F. Denny, M.D.
Chairman,
Human Subjects Committee

cc: Departmental/College Review Committee
APPENDIX B

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM
Subject's Consent

You are being asked to voluntarily participate in a research study on the career decision making processes of dual career couples. The study is being conducted by Kelly A. Rose in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Master of Arts Degree in Counseling and Guidance. The purpose of the study is to investigate the career decision making processes of dual career couples at the University of Arizona. It is hoped that the body of information will help counselors, educators and possibly employers to aid these couples in dealing with their challenging situation. It is also anticipated that the acquired information will provide potential for research in an area that has been largely unexplored.

As a participant you will be asked a few history gathering questions to begin with. You and your partner will then be given a set of career related scenarios to read and discuss, with the investigator present. The investigator will be there merely to clarify instructions. All discussions will be audiotaped. You will also be asked, individually, to fill out a short values survey which will be combined with information from the taped discussions and reviewed. It is anticipated that this interview will last approximately one and one half hours. Risks are minimal but may include some emotional discomfort or stress due to the subject matter. You may ask the investigator to stop at any time and your request will be honored immediately, without incurring any ill will. There is no cost to you. Your real name will never be used in the published results of this research, nor will any record be kept of your participation. Fictitious names will be used to protect your identity. All raw data will be destroyed at the conclusion of this project and a copy of the written findings will be furnished to you upon request.

"I have read the above "Subject's Consent." The nature, demands, risks, and benefits of the research study have been explained to me. I understand that I may ask questions and that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time. I also understand that this consent form will be filed in an area designated by the Human Subjects Committee with access restricted to the principal investigator or authorized representatives of the Department of Counseling and Guidance. A copy of this consent form will be given to me."

SUBJECT'S
DATE __________ SIGNATURE ________________________________

I have carefully explained to the subject the nature of the above project. I hereby certify that to the best of my knowledge the subject signing this consent form understands clearly the nature, demands, benefits, and risks involved in participating in this study.

INVESTIGATOR'S
DATE __________ SIGNATURE ________________________________
APPENDIX C

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SHEET

1. Age ____

2. Gender:  Male ____  Female ____

3. Race ____

4. Date of expected graduation ______

5. What degree will you receive? ____________________________________________

6. RE: couple

7. What is your level of commitment at this time?
   ____ Married? How long? ____
   ____ Engaged? How long? ____
   ____ Living together? How long? ____

8. Please tell me the total length of time you have been in this relationship.

9. Have you and your partner had any discussion about how you will handle your relationship as a Dual Career couple? To what extent?
APPENDIX D

CAREER SCENARIOS

INSTRUCTIONS: Please consider carefully the following scenarios. They are designed to promote discussion and decision making. Please read each paragraph one at a time, and discuss your thoughts, feelings and reactions together, out loud. I ask each of you to answer as honestly and openly as possible.

1. Your partner has just received a wonderful job offer across the country that he/she wants. It is the "dream job" that he/she has been waiting for. It is the perfect opportunity for your partner to exercise his/her talents and skills, and it pays excellently. You have a job that you enjoy, with good pay and a chance to move up in the company. What would you do? Why?

2. Part of a desired career move for one of you includes six months of training in San Francisco, CA. After the training period you would be able to return to your homebase in Denver, CO, where you would be promoted. Your partner is currently working in Denver. Would you take the opportunity? What things would you and your partner consider when making this decision? How would you handle the separation (if this was your choice)?

3. One of you has a job with a salary of $40,000 per year with great benefits, including a company car. You've been with the company for a few years, but are tired of your work and don't like your boss. You just don't enjoy this career anymore. As a hobby, you do beautiful woodworking. You'd like to do this as a career, but it would mean not having an income for a while. Your partner has a secure career but with considerable less income than you. What would you do? What would your concerns be in this situation?

4. You have been with a company for several years and thoroughly enjoy working there. They have offered you an opportunity for advancement but it would require moving to a smaller town two hours away. The transfer would mean a salary increase of 25% and more fringe benefits, including a company car. If your partner moved with you, his or her income would drop drastically because of the lack of opportunities in his/her career field. There are no jobs that your partner would be truly satisfied with in this smaller town. What would you do? Why?
APPENDIX E

SURVEY QUESTIONS

INSTRUCTIONS: The following statements focus on your personal values as related to career decisions. Please read each statement carefully and mark the item that best describes how true the statement is for you. Rate yourself as thoughtfully and honestly as you can.

1. It is important to me that there are opportunities in my job for advancement.

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2. I prefer a job where I will be recognized for my performance and loyalty.

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3. Job stability and predictability are important to me. I will want a job that is secure during all economic conditions.

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4. It is necessary that my job allow me the flexibility to fulfill my commitments to my family.

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5. My decision to accept or reject a job opportunity is dependent upon the salary and fringe benefits.

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6. I would feel that my college education was wasted if I were not always employed.

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REFERENCES


