EXAMINING THE INFLUENCE OF PARENTAL PRESSURE AND PERCEIVED CONTROL ON YOUNG ADULTS’ CAREER EXPLORATION

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts
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This study explored the career development and exploration experiences of young adults in Canada, through the lens of parental pressure experiences and perceptions of control. Using a grounded theory approach and a qualitative methodology, in-depth interviews were conducted to analyze participant narratives. Key themes emerged. Participants experienced more parental pressure in their university years compared to childhood or high school years. They engaged in more career exploration and placed a higher emphasis on person-career and person-academic fit during university years. Parental pressure did not seem to affect career exploration in later years, when other factors were contributing to career exploration. With regard to perceived control, most participants held a moderate to high level of perceived control over their overall and career environments, but felt that parental pressure reduced control over their career future. The results have implications for vocational psychology and career counselling with young adults.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost I would like to thank my family for supporting me emotionally throughout this entire process. My parents, in particular, I would like to thank for believing in me and helping me financially so that I could spend my time on this project. If it wasn’t for you, I’m not sure where I would be on this project right now.

I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr. Charles Chen, for giving me the flexibility to choose a topic of interest, and for being continuously available for support and guidance. I would also like to thank the participants for sharing their story and contributing to research. Your openness has allowed me to understand your experiences, document it, and share it with others.

Lastly, I would like to thank my partner David for supporting me throughout this process. Thank you for showing me unconditional love through these stressful times.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

The career development process in young adults is complex and yet integral to career research. An occupational choice is a critical one, as it is a choice of a way of life (Grady, 1983). Work provides an opportunity to develop a social identity, increase self-esteem, improve abilities, and is central to adult life in modern economies (Creed & Blume, 2013; Grady, 1983; Porfeli & Lee, 2012). Accordingly, the occupational choices of young adults, and processes by which those choices are made, are important topics both for research and for counselling.

Young adults develop attitudes toward three main areas: careers, relationships with others, and the self (Grady, 1983). Within the area of careers, primary tasks for young adults include developing autonomy, choosing a career field, and entering the working world (Ranta, Dietrich, & Salmela-Aro, 2014; Splete & Freeman-George, 1985; Zarrett & Eccles, 2006).

Ginzberg (1972) found evidence that tentative career choices emerged at age 11, realistic choices emerged at age 17, and occupational development and choice making continued throughout working life. However, career development was found to be most influential and stressful between the ages of 18 and 22 when young adults experienced a variety of pressures to make career-related decisions (Splete & Freeman-George 1985). Typically, young adults experience pressure from parents, friends, and teachers to make career decisions. Young adults also experience pressure from schools to make academic decisions (e.g., choosing an academic major or program, choosing a university or college to attend), which are important because they set the stage for the future and impact major career decisions (Rowh, 2008). Pressure to make a decision can be particularly stressful since career indecision
is a common phenomenon in early years of career development (Feldman, 2003). Furthermore, the construction of a vocational identity in young adulthood is a challenging task for many because it is usually developed in conjunction with other important developmental milestones (Blustein, Devenis, & Kidney, 1989; Cornelius, 1995; Lancaster, 2006).

Despite the abundance of research on career development in young populations, the process of career exploration in these younger populations has received limited attention (Rogers & Creed, 2011).

Career exploration has been recognized in the literature as “purposeful activities, directed toward enhancing knowledge of the self and the external environment, that individuals engage in to foster progress in career development” (Taveira, Silva, Rodriguez, & Maia, 1998, p. 89; Blustein, 1990, 1992). It is a vital component of career development and career decision-making (Blustein, 1990; Super, 1990). Similarly, both self and environment exploration have been found to immensely benefit vocational development in young adults and have been identified as important for promoting gains in career counselling and intervention (Taveira, Silva, Rodriguez, & Maia, 1998). Environment exploration refers to gathering information about career options, and other aspects of an occupation such as salary, demands, prestige, and education required, whereas self-exploration involves self-assessment and introspection.

Career exploration is a dynamic process that occurs throughout all ages and life stages, but is most prominent during late adolescence and early adulthood (Jordaan, 1963; Super, 1990). Students in grade 12 demonstrated more self and environment exploration and also found environment exploration to be more influential than their grade 9 student counterparts (Taveira, Silva, Rodriguez, & Maia, 1998).

Research on career exploration up to this point has mainly emphasized its propitious
nature but has not examined specific constructs that influence it. In particular, research has not yet explored the role of subjective experiences of parental pressure and control on career exploration. Thus, the current study’s objectives are to contribute to knowledge concerning the influence of personal experiences related to parental pressure and control on young adults’ career development and career exploration, and contribute more broadly to the area of young adult vocational psychology and career counselling. The aim of the current study is to further our understanding of career exploration in young adults by identifying the possible influence of these subjective experiences on career exploration.

For the purposes of the present study, parental pressure experiences are defined as the felt experience of pressure from one’s parent(s) to follow certain career opinions, plans, and/or actions. Parental pressure is not widely addressed in career literature, but is likely to affect the career development of young adults owing to the abundance of research suggesting that the family and broader social environments play a central part in it (Breton, 1972; Richardson, 1993, Whiston & Keller, 2004). For example, various constructs influenced largely by the family and social environment have been found to be integral to life-career development processes including religious affiliation, traditions, political affiliations, and cultural interests (Splete & Freeman-George, 1985). Socioeconomic status and social class, both ingrained in the family environment, are found to place a heavy weight on career choice and aspiration (Howard et al., 2011; Schoon & Parsons, 2002).

Parents in particular affect career development in adolescents and young adults. Stambler (1998) found that when young people make career decisions, parents were often influential in that decision. Parents are also the most commonly reported catalyst for initiating the decision-making process (Biggart et al., 2004). Additionally, research has found that young
people perceive their parents as being influential in their career development. In one study, 21% of students claimed their career choice was made collaboratively with their parents while 2% claimed that their parents were the main drivers behind their career decisions (Wong & Liu, 2010). Whiston and Keller (2004) also confirm that the majority of the research documents that young people perceive their parents as being influential in their career choices.

Most additional research examining familial and parental influences on career development has focused on attachment styles, parenting styles, and functionality of the home environment. Research within this arena has also investigated the role of parental support and inquiry as well as career-related communication between offspring and parents (Sickinger, 2012). Few studies, however, have addressed the role of specific parental behaviours (Dietrich & Kracke, 2009) such as career-related parental pressure and even less have explored the role of subjective experiences of these behaviours in young adults. The few articles that have addressed parental pressure suggest that it can have a negative influence on the development of career-related autonomy in offspring (Dietrich & Kracke, 2009; Splete & Freeman George, 1985). Splete and Freeman-George (1985) advocated for career counselors to be wary of this controlling dynamic in sessions, and to help young adults establish independence from parental pressure.

Research on parental and environmental control has yielded similar results with regard to other areas of development. Early research investigating the broader construct of parental control found that too much parental control prevented adolescents from participating in self exploration and establishing a healthy sense of autonomy (Nye, 1958). Other research on parental control distinguishes psychological control from other types of control (e.g., behavioural) (Ballash, Leyfer, Buckley, & Woodruff-Borden, 2006). Psychological control
describes extreme parental tactics consisting of manipulating and exploiting the parent-child bond, negatively affecting the psychological and emotional development of the child (Barber, 1996; Schaefer, 1965). This type of control is associated with a variety of negative outcomes in adolescents, including lower self-esteem and maladaptive perfectionism (Barber & Shagle, 1992; Bean & Northrup, 2009; Rogers, Buchanan, & Winchell, 2003; Shih, 2013).

The positive side of parental control has been identified in the literature and in academic settings as “autonomy support”, which minimizes the use of pressures and demands, acknowledges the feelings of others, and is characterized by parental encouragement for self-initiation and choice (Deci, Eghrari, Patrick, & Leone, 1994). Autonomy support in children’s learning has been associated with beneficial outcomes including higher intrinsic motivation and perceived cognitive competence (Deci, Schwartz, Sheinman, & Ryan, 1981).

Existing research on the negative role of parental pressure and control in young adult’s psychological and career development suggests that career-related parental pressure may have a negative impact on a young adult’s career development and more specific career behaviours involved in decision-making and preparation, such as career exploration. Thus, parental pressure holds critical importance for the present study.

The second construct that will be explored in the study, perceived control, was developed by Rotter in 1966 (Rotter, 1966; Brusoski, Golin, Gallagher, & Moore, 1993; Papirnik, 1981). It is often referred to as control orientation, or locus of control, and is commonly interpreted as one continuous variable (i.e., low to high) (Taylor, 2010). A high level of perceived control, or an internal locus of control, refers to “perceptions of mastery over one’s environment” and a sense of “personal control over one’s own fate” (Taylor, 2010, p. 447-448). This type of outlook is generally considered in the literature to be a healthy state of
mind that is beneficial to psychological and physical health (Menec & Chipperfield, 1997). In particular, higher levels of perceived control tend to moderate stress and increase the likelihood that an individual will seek out health information (Menec & Chipperfield, 1997; Schank & Lawrence 1993). Individuals with higher perceived control were also found to be more driven more toward achievement and relationships, and are often guided by their own sense of accomplishment (Nowicki & Duke, 1983).

Low perceived control, or an external locus of control, is a perception that external events are outside one’s personal control (Lefcourt, Miller, Ware, & Sherk, 1981; Levenson, 1981). Low perceived control has been associated with negative adolescent behaviours including delinquency, pregnancy, low school achievement, depression, and increased risk for suicide and anxiety (Beautrais, Joyce, & Mulder, 1999; Evans, Owens, & Marsh, 2005; Joe, 1971; Koppa-Frye, Saltz, Jones & Dixon, 1991; Nelson & Singg, 1998; Pearce & Martin, 1993). Individuals with low perceived control have also demonstrated less goal-directed behaviour and have sought out communication mainly as an escape (Rubin & Rubin, 1992; Steinfatt, 1987).

Research in the area of perceived control and career development has investigated the impact of the former on the latter. Some studies have used a perceived control term specific to vocational development, called ‘vocational locus of control’, to examine this relationship (Fournier & Pelletier, 1996). Other studies have examined the impact of more general perceived control on career development. Along these lines, research has found that a higher level of perceived control was a determinant of individuals’ motivation to be mindful of their career orientation, helping them to gain entry into the workforce (Chevrier & Inostra, 1987; Findley & Cooper, 1983). Furthermore, lower perceived control was associated with reduced
information-seeking behaviours (Steinfatt, 1987).

Owing to the above-noted research that suggests that increased perceived control is favourable to career development and that decreased perceived control is associated with reduced information-seeking, the literature suggests that perceived control is related to the career exploration experience and activities of young adults. Perceived control is therefore central to the current study since it seems to be an important factor in an individual’s career development.

Rationale of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the career exploration experiences of young adults in Canada, with particular emphasis on the role of parental pressure and perceptions of control. This research focused on 3rd and 4th year undergraduate students at the University of Toronto, who had experienced, or were currently experiencing, any amount of parental pressure. The rationale for selecting only 3rd and 4th year students was to ensure that participants had already partaken in some level of career exploration, due to their proximity to graduation and increased pressure to make a career choice.

The central research question in this study was: “What are young adults’ experiences of parental pressure and control in relation to their career development?” Secondary research questions were: (a) “How does one’s experience of parental pressure influence one’s career exploration as a young adult?” and (b) “How does one’s experience of parental pressure influence one’s level of perceived control in relation to his or her career development?”

The present study seeks to uncover themes from participant narratives through the use of in-depth, phenomenological interviews aimed at addressing career exploration experiences in young adults. Through the exploration of factors that influence career exploration in young
adults, this research aims to inform: (a) literature within the areas of young adults’ career exploration, (b) literature on the influence of parental and family dynamics and perceptions of control on young adults’ career development and career exploration, and (c) career counselling research and practice, vocational psychology, and related studies within the area of young adult career preparation and development experiences in Canada. Through investigation of participant narratives, this study aims to provide knowledge to these bodies of literature and practice, while contributing to the gaps in these areas of research.

The following four chapters will examine career exploration in young adults with particular emphasis on parental pressure experiences and perceptions of control. Chapter 2, Literature Review, provides an overview of existing literature on young adults’ career development and career exploration. This chapter also outlines the implications of young adult career exploration on young adult career development. Furthermore, the literature review explores parental pressure experiences and perceptions of control, and the relationship between these two constructs. Lastly, this chapter explores the potential impact that perceived parental pressure and perceived control have on career development and career exploration.

Chapter 3, Methods, outlines the present study’s use of a qualitative approach. More specifically, it examines the study’s use of interviews as a method of gathering meaning and insight from participant narratives. In addition, the methods chapter outlines the use of a constructivist grounded theory approach, developed by Charmaz (2006), within the present study and outlines participant recruitment, selection criteria, data analysis, and participant characteristics.

Chapter 4, Results, outlines key themes that were found during the data analysis. After outlining each participant’s unique description and circumstance, it compares subjective
experiences of parental pressure and career exploration during childhood, high school, and university years. This chapter also discusses levels of perceived control with regard to one’s overall and career environment, and compares this data to parental pressure experiences and career exploration.

Chapter 5, Discussion, conceptualizes and expands the results discussed in the previous section. This chapter reviews trends and relationships between levels of parental pressure and career exploration over time, while highlighting important components of each of these experiences separately. Additionally, this chapter examines discrepant findings concerning levels of perceived control and opinions about the impact of parental pressure on perceived control. The discussion chapter closes with a section on implications, limitations, and future directions.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

To facilitate an understanding of young adults’ career development and career exploration experiences, the main components of the literature are reviewed in this chapter. These categories include young adults’ career exploration experiences and components of their subjective experiences of career-related autonomy and control. More specifically, this chapter will review research in the area of (a) young adults’ career development, (b) young adults’ career exploration, and (c) the influence of young adults’ parental pressure experiences and perceptions of control on their career exploration experiences and overall career development. The purpose of exploring these categories is to provide an in-depth evaluation of young adults’ career development as it relates to experiences of parental pressures and perceived control. Lastly, investigating these categories can provide insight as to how these subjective experiences play a role in career exploration within this population.

**Young Adult Career Development**

Satisfaction with one’s career is one of the most important aspects of an individual’s happiness (Sharf, 2010). Since more than 10% of an individual’s total life is spent working (Government of Canada, 2012), career dissatisfaction often spreads into other areas of one’s life (e.g., relationships with family and friends). Individuals who are dissatisfied with their work often look to other areas of life to provide satisfaction; however, satisfaction found in these other areas rarely compensates for the lack of engagement experienced at work (Sharf, 2010). Since career development sets the stage for major career decisions, and thus overall career satisfaction, research in this area is important.

Vocational development comprises an array of developmental processes, which begin
in childhood and continue throughout life (Bryant, Zvonkovic, & Reynolds, 2006; Tracey, 2002). These developmental processes consist of various stages of developmental tasks (Splete & Freeman-George, 1985). In childhood, vocational development involves acquiring knowledge, beliefs, and values concerning career options and requirements (Bryant, Zvonkovic, & Reynolds, 2006). Vocational development also reflects interests, academic aspirations, self-efficacy, and expectations. In adolescence and young adulthood, these developmental processes continue, and educational commitments to career choices are carried out (Sharf, 2010). In Super’s life stages theory, adolescents and young adults are in growth and exploration stages respectively. In the crystallizing substage of the exploration stage, young adults are aware that they must pay attention to career-related issues (e.g., job availability) (Sharf, 2010; Super, 1990, Super, Savickas, & Super, 1996). During this stage, young adults also make important academic decisions (e.g., choosing a university/college, choosing a program/major). High school students face important developmental challenges that shape the course of their college or university experiences, while university or college students face similar developmental tasks that lay the groundwork for major career decisions (Perrino, 1985).

These developmental tasks are complex and filled with uncertainty. Research shows that both male and female children at the age of 12 portray career certainty, which continues through to age 15, but often wanes at the age of 17 (Patton & Creed, 2001). Career development is therefore a dynamic process among various ages and stages of life.

**Societal Pressure To Make A Decision**

Young adults receive a significant amount of societal pressure to make career decisions. In Canada, societal career pressure begins in middle school and early high school, when
children are forced to make decisions about high school courses (e.g., types of courses – regular/advanced, course subjects) (Patton & Creed, 2001). This pressure continues into late high school, when students often apply to university or college and select academic majors (Germeijs & Verscheuren, 2009). These types of choices are common among young adults since a university or college education is now a requirement rather than a bonus in the eyes of employers (Hirsch, 2008). Furthermore, individuals with a bachelor’s degree earn, on average, twice as much as individuals who do not graduate from high school (Sharf, 2010).

Considering the increase in the salary gap between university and high school graduates, university is commonly seen as a gateway to a larger salary and a better working life.

Career-related social pressure reflects the heavy weight that our society places on achievement and success. In day-to-day conversation, it is not uncommon for an adult or peer to ask a middle-school, high school, or university student what he is studying and what career path he plans to pursue. Our society tends to glamourize achievement and success, which in turn influences social discourse and the larger social environment.

Young adults often feel overwhelmed by the extent of social pressure that they experience (Sharf, 2010). Choosing a career is not as enjoyable as perhaps it should be, and is noted by many students to be a source of great stress (Germeijs & Verscheuren, 2009). Ideally, young adults should enjoy the process of choosing a career. It is for this reason that the study of career development in young adults is vital to current career research. The more knowledge we can gather about the processes by which young people make career decisions, the more knowledge we can acquire about how help can be provided in making these decisions, aiding in adolescent and young adult career development.
**Young Adult Career Exploration**

Career exploration is a term that refers to the process of knowing oneself, and the world of work, and how the two can interact (Porfeli & Skorikov, 2010; Jordaan, 1963). Career exploration intends to answer questions such as, “Who am I?”, “What do I want?” and “What do I need?” Exploration activities aim to answer questions about what jobs are appealing, how work can satisfy, and what one can offer to the world in exchange for personal desires (Porfeli & Skorikov, 2010). In large part, the selection of a suitable career hinges on the extent and nature of career exploration to arrive at fulfilling answers to these questions. Thus, career exploration has been recognized extensively as a necessary and important step in an individual’s career development (Phillips, 1982). Individuals engage in exploratory behaviours mainly during adolescence and young adulthood. These actions set the stage for future exploratory behaviours because they instill important beliefs about the effectiveness of career exploration (Taveira, Silva, Rodriguez, & Maia, 1998).

**Defining Career Exploration**

Career exploration is a behaviour that has been studied extensively in career literature. Over the years, theorists and researchers have attempted to define career exploration in an attempt to further specify and refine it.

Berlyne (1960) classified human exploratory behaviour into three dimensions: inspective and inquisitive, specific and diversive, and extrinsic and intrinsic. Inspective/specific exploration is usually aimed at reducing uncertainty about particular objects or ideas. This type of exploration would include exploration about something specific (i.e., a job option, a particular activity). Inquisitive/diversive exploration includes an investigation of the environment as a whole. This type of exploration would not involve exploration of specific
things but would involve exploration of one’s entire environment (e.g., all job options, all activities available). Intrinsic exploratory behaviour is independent from the desire to achieve an external reinforcement while extrinsic reinforcement is not. An example of intrinsic exploration would include an examination of recreational activities with no payment involved while an example of extrinsic exploration would involve an examination of job options involving payment. Jordaan (1963) then applied these types of exploratory behaviours to career exploration, and through this, outlined 10 dimensions or continua of career exploration. Of these dimensions, the self-to-environment career exploration dimension has received the most attention in research, and is supported by empirical evidence (Flum & Blustein, 2000; Robitscheck & Woodson, 2006).

Research has also incorporated career exploration into a career-decision-making model, which conceptually separates self and environment exploration (Germeijs & Verschueren, 2006). In this approach, six decisional tasks are identified as part of the decision-making process, based on taxonomies of decision-making problems. These six tasks include orientation (i.e., awareness of the need to make a decision), self-exploration (i.e., acquiring information about oneself), broad exploration of the environment (i.e., acquiring general information about career options), in-depth exploration of the environment (i.e., acquiring information about a smaller set of options), decisional status (i.e., progress on making a decision), and commitment (i.e., confidence about the decision) (Germeijs & Verschueren, 2006).

Continued advances in the career exploration literature have focused directly on diverersive and specific forms of exploration. In 2010, Porfeli and Skorikov created a slightly different model which segregated career exploration into diverersive career exploration (i.e., learning broadly about career options and the self, independently of each other, with an
emphasis on novel and interesting careers), and specific career exploration (i.e., learning about
career options and the self, in an attempt to gain a more in-depth understanding of specific
careers that seem aligned with aspects of the self).

These categories, diversive and specific, have been referred to in other literature as in-
breadth/broad, and in-depth, respectively (Porfeli & Lee, 2012). In-breadth/broad, or diversive
exploration, often precedes in-depth or specific exploration. Furthermore, in-breadth
exploration has been associated with a lack of career planning and confidence, while in-depth
exploration has been associated with better career planning and confidence with career choice,
and a stronger commitment to career (Porfeli & Lee, 2012). These two forms of exploration
likely occur across the lifespan and have been predicted to show a correlated pattern with other
career development processes (Patton & Porfeli, 2007; Porfeli, 2008).

Academic exploration has been explored quite minimally and indirectly in the
literature. However, social cognitive career theory literature emphasizes the importance of
academic development, suggesting that academic exploration is a significant aspect of career
exploration (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 2002). Academic choices lay the foundation for major
career decisions and directions, since university and program choices set the stage for future
career decisions and affect one’s employability. For example, choosing philosophy as a
university major or program will increase access to philosophy-related career options but will
limit opportunities for science or engineering-related career fields. Thus, academic exploration
is a valuable component of career exploration and career development.

Career maturity. Many career theorists consider career exploration to be a vital part of
vocational maturity (Super, 1990; Sharf, 2010; Patton & Lokan, 2001; Perrino, 1985). In this
way, career exploration would be expected to improve in both extent and nature alongside
developments in vocational maturity. Super (1990) considers vocational maturity to have five components: concern about career choice, information and planning regarding preferred choices, vocational preference consistency, crystallization of traits, and match between career choice and personal interests and abilities. Most, if not all of these components, require career exploration.

In the works of Super and colleagues in the area of career maturity, the Career Development Inventory (Thompson & Lindeman, 1981; Patton & Lokan, 2001) has been utilized. This inventory has allowed a more complete picture of the role of career exploration to emerge. It includes a variety of subscales aimed to categorize individuals based on their level of career maturity. Subscales included in this inventory are as follows: the Career Planning scale, the Career Exploration scale, the Decision-Making scale, World-of-Work Information, and Knowledge of Preferred Occupations. The Career Planning Scale aims to measure the extent to which an individual has engaged in information-seeking activities with regard to various aspects of work (Thompson & Lindeman, 1981; Sharf, 2010). Examples of information-seeking activities include gathering occupational information, talking with adults about plans, taking courses relevant to career development, and engaging in extracurricular activities or paid work.

The Career Exploration Scale measures willingness to explore or look for career information. This includes willingness to use resources such as friends and family, counsellors, movies and books (Sharf, 2010). Interestingly, research has found that willingness to use specific resources differ among individuals due to individual differences (Blustein, 1995). This subscale also measures the extent of information that one has acquired from particular sources. Both career exploration and career planning subscales focus on attitudes toward work,
and combined, are viewed as career development attitudes.

The Decision-Making Scale refers to the ability to use knowledge in the formation of career plans while the World-of-Work Information Scale refers to knowledge of major developmental tasks (e.g., why individuals change jobs) and knowledge of job duties for particular occupations. Together, these scales reflect career development knowledge and skill. This scale score, along with the career development attitudes scale score, creates a ‘Career Orientation Total’, which reflects a measure of career maturity (Thompson & Lindeman, 1981; Sharf, 2010). Knowledge of Preferred Occupational Group subscale is also an important part of the Career Development Inventory, and measures knowledge of preferred occupations including job duties, tools, equipment, and physical requirements. In addition, this subscale also measures nine different skill-related areas (e.g., verbal ability, motor coordination).

Super’s conception of career maturity has laid the foundation for subsequent work in the area of career exploration, and is still used today in career assessment and counselling settings (Sharf, 2010). In many ways, each subscale of Super’s career maturity theory demonstrates a type or dimension of career exploration. Thus, Super’s work illuminates the reality that career exploration is a vital component of career maturity in adolescents and young adults.

Benefits of Career Exploration

The value of career exploration can be seen in the “…fruits of the effort: an individual who explores, emerges from the experience with a clearer and more accurate assessment of him or herself (as an individual and in relation to the environment) and a realistic, justified basis for taking decisive action” (Jordaan, 1963; Phillips, 1982, p. 129). Empirical research on high school and college students reveals that career exploration can be a predictor and an
outcome of various career development processes (Porfeli & Skorikov, 2010). Few would argue that a career choice should be made without engaging in exploration; the selection of a suitable career relies heavily on the nature and extent to which a young adult engages in career exploration to answer meaningful questions about the self and the environment, and the fit between them (Porfeli & Skorikov, 2010).

**Career satisfaction.** Work adjustment theory, developed by Dawis and Lofquist (1984) is based on 50 years of research and has been adopted by U.S. government agencies as a basis for guiding public policy and counselling (Sharf, 2010). It has also been applied to other models (e.g., prevention job stress model) and career counselling approaches. Work adjustment theory asserts that it is important for an individual’s abilities, interests, personality and values to match components of his or her job (Eggerth, 2008; Sharf, 2010). In other words, this theory states that person-environment correspondence is an important piece of the career satisfaction puzzle. Person-environment correspondence predicts both work adjustment and job satisfaction, which is defined as “being satisfied with the work that one does” (Dawis & Lofquist, 1984; Walsh, 2003; Sharf, 2010, p. 101).

With regard to person-job congruence, research has often considered interests, abilities, and personality to be separate but equally important components in person-job match (Sharf, 2010). Morse (1975), for example, considered a worker’s personality to be the most relevant characteristic in examinations of psychological development and adjustment at work. In this article, personality was defined as an interaction of predisposition to particular characteristics with experiences in the environment involving other things and people (Morse, 1975). McCrae and Costa (1999) define personality as five traits that remain stable among various situations and life stages: openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism.
Career interests, however, have been identified as a separate factor important to person-job congruence (Fricko & Beehr, 1992; Locke, 1976). These views differ from the career choice theory developed by Holland (1973), which consider career interests and personality to be essentially the same. Lastly, abilities are defined as a combination of one’s intelligence, knowledge, and skills and are often considered to be important to person-job congruence (Chatman, 1991).

Person-job congruence was also found to predict vocational stability in both male and female students (Walsh & Osipow, 1973). Since exploring one’s own values, interests, and abilities is crucial to discovering person-job congruence, this evidence supports the value of both career exploration and person-job congruence. Research supports this notion, since higher levels of self and environment exploration have been found to result in a higher congruence between person and career (Greenhaus & Sklarew, 1981; Grotevant, 1987; Singh & Greenhaus, 2004). Person-job congruence has also been found to increase career satisfaction, adjustment, certainty, and identification with career choice.

Unfortunately, person-job congruence alone does not always facilitate career choice. In many cases individuals engage in career compromise (Creed & Blume, 2013). This occurs when an individual chooses a less desirable occupation in exchange for other necessities (e.g., opportunity, stability).

Research focusing directly on the relationship between career exploration, job satisfaction and related outcomes found that career exploration not only predicts job satisfaction, but also predicts vocational identity development, career decision-making, and job search activities, which in turn predicts higher wages during adolescence and early adulthood (Shoffner & Newsome, 2001; Stumpf & Hartman 1984; Werbel, 2000). The implications of
job satisfaction on life satisfaction have also been documented, as a correlation of .44 was found between the two constructs (Tait, Padgett, & Baldwin, 1989; Walsh & Eggerth, 2005).

Career choice and current work conditions. Career exploration is vital to career choice processes. Proper evaluation of experiences that contribute to a choice, and an understanding of one’s own interest, aptitude, and skill, is required, not only to make a realistic choice that matches one’s own abilities and interests, but also to make future career decisions (Perrino, 1985). Evaluation of experience is a key component of exploration, and is therefore necessary in making realistic career choices (Knefelkamp & Slepitza, 1976). Furthermore, exploration increases one’s confidence in career objectives and increases specificity of plans to achieve those objectives (Jordaan, 1963).

Career exploration is becoming increasingly important over time, due to the changing state of work conditions. Unlike previous generations, 21st century work conditions encompass rapidly changing conditions, high mobility, and lack of job security (Flum & Blustein, 2000; Srikanth & Isreal, 2012; Joo & Ready, 2012). Individuals who deliberately acquire and reflect on self-relevant information are best able to adapt to these rapidly changing environments (Flum & Blustein, 2000; Srikanth & Isreal, 2012). Career exploration is therefore important to building personal strength and stability and is useful for periods of career transition that are likely to occur throughout one’s lifetime (Zikic & Hall, 2009).

Academic choice. Similar to the ways in which career exploration is beneficial for career decision-making, academic exploration is also beneficial for one’s academic choices. Since academic choices set the stage for future career options, exploring one’s fit with academic options would appear to be an important step in one’s overall career development. Interestingly, many high school students do not consider whether certain academic options
match their career goals (Rowh, 2003). This is often the case in situations where one is interested in a type of graduate school that does not require a specific subject to be studied in undergrad (e.g., medical school). In these situations, high school students will often make an academic choice based solely on their interests, regardless of their future career goals. Unfortunately, Kimweli and Richards (1999) find that high school students, who make academic decisions based solely on their interests, tend to also struggle with identity formation.

To date, little research has been conducted on academic exploration. Therefore, it remains unclear as to how exactly young adults explore academic options and how this process of exploration affects their career development. The present study will therefore examine academic exploration along with career exploration to attain a better understanding of both processes within the large sphere of career development.

The majority of the literature on career exploration in young adult and adolescent populations is based on or associated with career decision-making and vocational identity (Rogers & Creed, 2011). Within the existing career exploration literature, the role of personal experience of parental pressure and perceptions of control has not yet been directly explored. Based on the existing research previously discussed in the area of exploration, the current research intends to explore various facets of exploration in young adults, including but not limited to the extent and nature of both academic and career exploration as well as search for person-career and person-academic fit during high school and university years. As defined and described above, ability, interest, and personality are three important components involved in person-career and person-academic fit and will therefore be examined in the present study. Unlike the model presented by Holland (1973), interest and personality are considered to be separate components and will therefore be examined separately. Other processes related to the
experience of exploration will also be explored. Furthermore, the current research intends to explore these facets through the lens of parental pressure experiences and perceptions of control.

**Examining Parental Pressure Experiences, Perceptions of Control, and Career Exploration in Young Adults**

Parental pressure experiences and perceptions of control represent two components of young adults’ subjective experiences that will be explored within the present study. Subjective experiences in the lives of individuals have been shown to be an important aspect of career development, as career actions rely heavily on how individuals perceive themselves, both through the lens of others and through the lens of the self (Savickas, 2002). An individual’s perceptions of control and parental pressure experiences help to explain the role of the broader social environment on career planning and other career actions. Therefore, exploring these constructs help us to better understand how young adults are interacting with their environment to produce concepts of themselves, their place in the world, and their ability to alter it, with regard to their careers.

Parental pressure experiences and perceptions of control are related to an individual’s career autonomy in the face of external pressures. Autonomy reflects self-direction and self-regulation and is recognized as a behavioural indicator for the way decisions are made (Perez & Cumsille, 2012). Past research demonstrates that autonomy is likely the foundation for the relationship between perceived parental pressure and perceived control. For example, Koper-Frye, Saltz, Jones and Dixon (1991) found that the quality of the relationship between adolescent and parent, measured by communication, had a direct effect on adolescent locus of control, whereby a negative adolescent-parent relationship resulted in lower perceived control.
Perceived choice has also been found to be quite influential in perceived control (Perlmuter, Scharff, Karsh, & Monty, 1980), suggesting that parental pressure concerning career choice might have an influence on an individual’s level of perceived control. Research on the direct relationship between parental pressure and autonomy has revealed that a parent who allows his adolescent child to make his own decisions and act by himself, and who reduces pressure strategies based on obedience and conformity, fosters the development of autonomy in that child (Perez & Cumsille, 2012).

Both psychological and behavioural pressure and control were found to be associated with negative autonomy development in adolescents. When parents placed limitations on their children’s actions, it also limited their child’s decision-making process, reducing his or her autonomy. Furthermore, research has shown that individuals with higher perceptions of control were found to be less sensitive to social pressure in cases in which they did not perceive the pressure to be to their advantage (Joe, 1971; Papirnik, 1981). Overall, these findings indicate that there may be a significant bi-directional relationship between perceived control and perceived parental pressure. For example, when a young adult is already demonstrating low perceptions of control, a pressuring parent may be viewed by the young adult as a “powerful other” that maintains control over her career decisions. Alternatively, a pressuring parent may maintain control in the relationship and over career actions, which may then influence the young adult to have lower perceptions of control.

Furthermore, these findings indicate that both real and perceived autonomy are major factors in this bi-directional relationship, due to the central role that autonomy likely plays in both constructs independently and together. Perceived control and parental pressure experiences are important for knowledge in the area of career exploration and planning due to
their influence on perceptions of career-related autonomy and control. Thus, the exploration of these constructs as key components in career exploration experiences is integral to the current research.

Previous research has explored the role of perceived control on aspects of career development in young adults. The role of parental pressure experiences on career development has been the focus of some literature although to a lesser extent. Some research has even examined the relationship between these two constructs. However, the role of both perceived control and parental pressure experiences in the career development of young adults has not yet been explored. Furthermore, the influence of parental pressure and perceptions of control on the career environment of young adults has also not been investigated. Therefore, this study aims to shed light on these key social and cognitive components, and their interconnectedness, in relation to the career exploration and career development of young adults.

Parental Pressure

Parenting and development. Family, friends, and school have been found to play a strong role in the socialization and development of children and adolescents (Gergen & Gergen, 1992). Of these three social influences, the family is usually the most powerful. An immediate family usually contains at least one parent or caregiver, and may also contain one or more siblings. Larger family systems can also include grandparents, cousins, or other relatives. Of these family members, parents have been shown to have the most influence on the development of offspring (Bryant, Zvonkovic, & Reynolds, 2006).

Parenting occurs as a part of a larger multilayered system of daily life, which researchers sometimes call “family context”. Family context is always relevant throughout the course of development. Furthermore, child development factors continually interact with
family context factors (Bryant, Zvonkovic, & Reynolds, 2006). Most family context models consider this interaction to be bi-directional (Kuczynki, Lollis, & Koguchi, 2003). In other words, parents influence their child’s behaviour, just as the child influences her parent’s behaviour.

Coleman (1998) identified that in every family there are financial, human, and social capital, which are used and developed by members of the family. Parenting occurs through these avenues of capital. Financial capital refers to wealth, whereas human capital refers to skills and capabilities of the child that parents encourage or discourage. Social capital refers to social functions between individuals, which include expectations, norms, sanctions, trustworthiness, and social structures within and outside the family that enhance child development (Bryant, Zvonkovic, & Reynolds, 2006). This capital and the broader social environment form a basis for a child’s future plans (Law, 1982).

Within the area of child development, parenting literature is mainly limited to the discussion of parenting styles (authoritarian, authoritative, permissive, neglectful), which reflect aspects of parental behaviour (i.e., warmth, control, punishment styles, responsiveness, and neglect) (Park & Walton-Moss, 2012). Parental control has blossomed as its own concept in the parenting literature, and has also been applied to other disciplines and areas of study. Since little research has examined parental pressure specifically, and since parental control is a similar and overlapping concept, aspects of parental control will be discussed in this section.

**Parental control.** As mentioned previously, parents exert control over their children in two ways: behaviourally and psychologically (Barber, 1996; Pettit et al., 2001). These two types of control have been recognized as two independent constructs (Smetana & Daddis, 2002). Behavioural control is described as a parental urge to manage, supervise, and regulate
their children. Controlling behaviour usually reflects familial norms and social rules (Perez & Cumsille, 2012). Within the domain of behavioural control are two components: discipline and monitoring. Monitoring refers to parental awareness and supervision used to track down a child’s activities and whereabouts. Discipline, however, encompasses strategies to enforce rules and foster values (Cummings, Davies, & Campbell, 2000) and is embedded in the above-mentioned parenting styles (e.g., authoritarian, authoritative, permissive).

Harsh and direct parent control tactics have been found to be associated with a variety of negative outcomes in children including lower school performance at ages 4, 5, 6, and 12, increased disruptive behaviour and aggression, as well as decreased prosocial behaviour (Hart, DeWolf, Wozniak, & Burts, 1992; Hess & McDevitt, 1984; Pettit et al., 1993). Parenting styles incorporating high levels of control and discouragement of autonomy have also been associated with the development of anxiety and depression in later years (Chorpita, Brown, & Barlow, 1998). However, authoritative parenting style consisting of high levels of control along with high levels of warmth has been widely recognized as the most effective parenting, as it has produced the most positive results in children (Steinberg, Elmen, & Mounts, 1989; Chapell & Overton, 1998). Therefore, it seems that a fine balance of a firm parental hand mixed with warmth, that is neither over-demanding nor autonomy discouraging, is the key to healthy child development.

In contrast to behavioural control, psychological control consists of parental attempts to reduce a child’s independence or autonomy, and has been linked to a variety of negative outcomes in children including internalizing problems and depression (Barber, 1996; Pettit et al., 2001). This type of control has also been linked to shyness and low self-esteem in college students (Eastburg & Johnson, 1990). Examples of psychological control include guilt and
anxiety induction, attempts to change a child, love withdrawal, restriction of verbal interaction as a punishment technique, personal attacks, criticism, and manipulation (Barber, 1996; Barber & Harmon, 2002; Steinberg, Elmen, & Mounts, 1989).

Smetana (1995) developed a social domain theory based on parental control and adolescent behaviour. This theory states that parental control can be exerted in three domains of adolescent behaviour; moral, conventional, and psychological. The moral domain includes universally applied principles about fairness and individuals’ rights while the conventional domain includes societal principles concerning the smooth functioning of social groups (Smetana, 1995). The psychological domain includes personal, prudential, and psychological sub-domains that mainly affect the self. This domain would encompass decisions relating to one’s identity and career.

Adolescents believe that parents should guide some aspects of their development, especially in the moral and conventional domains, but that parents should leave the psychological or personal domain in the hands of adolescents (Hasebe, Nucci, & Nucci, 2004; Smetana, 2000). Incidentally, parental control of personal domains have been linked to depressive symptoms and maladjustment (Hasebe, Nucci, & Nucci, 2004). Personal domain decisions have also been regarded as more autonomous (Smetana, Campione-Barr, & Daddis, 2004).

**Parents and career development.** As mentioned previously, vocational development is a complex process that begins in childhood and is influenced largely by the family (Bryant, Zvonkovic, & Reynolds, 2006; Chen, 2003). Parents are a stronger influence than school or peers on the vocational development of a child (Hartung, Porfeli, & Vondracek, 2005; Schulenberg, Vondracek, & Crouter, 1984). Research regarding parental influence on
children’s career development concern aspects of parenting that help children to a) determine their interests and abilities, b) choose and pursue occupations, c) attain occupational self-efficacy, and d) reap the rewards from solid work attainment.

Parents act purposefully in interactions with their children to alter and mold career development (Young & Friesen, 1992; Heckhausen & Beckmann, 1990). An example of this would include a mother showing her daughter around a university campus. The mother’s occupation would be an example of a non-intentional action, since the daughter would likely gather information about what is appropriate by observing her mother in her work role. Although intentional parental actions might seem to affect career development to a larger extent, non-intentional actions are equally important. Parental career choices actually provide a main source of career information for children (Sharf, 2010). Children also derive career information from overhearing conversations between parents (Galinsky, 2000). Therefore, with or without intention, parents become a main source of occupational information for their children.

In a study comparing children and parent responses to questions about preparation needed for occupations, 80% of children reported similarly to their parents (Otto, 2000). Children accumulate information regarding knowledge of job training requirements, availability of jobs, incomes, job-demands, and social status of occupations from their social environments (Walls, 2000). Furthermore, they derive the majority of this information by grade 9, which demonstrates that parents are a key source of this knowledge. Parental values are also transmitted through norm setting that children internalize and act in accordance with (Biddle, Bank, & Marlin, 1980). Internalization of parental values results in a stronger transmission of vocational values than external reinforcements (Bryant, Zvonkovic, &
Reynolds, 2006). This value transmission process has a large effect on children’s choice of educational track, major, and higher education.

Crites (1969) and Breton (1972) maintained that the family, peer, and academic environments have a direct and indirect influence on the career choices of an individual. Parents transmit knowledge about their own work lives and expectations regarding their child’s career and academic futures (Bryant, Zvonkovic, & Reynolds, 2006). Parental transmission of work knowledge and values seemed to have a large effect on the vocational development of adolescents, and young adults particularly, due to the fact that adolescents themselves believed that their parents were responsible for their own career development (Farnill, 1986). This demonstrates that adolescents expect and solicit parental influence on their vocational development, as adolescents typically look to the adults in their lives for information that will advance their own career interests (Otto, 2000). Adolescent-parent conversations about future career options as well as parental suggestions about how to attain educational and vocational information also correlate with adolescents’ career decision-making progress (Bryant, Zvonkovic, & Reynolds, 2006; Germeijs & Verscheuren, 2009; Young et al., 2001).

Since young adults receive the majority of career information from their parents, it is reasonable to assume that parental opinions about career options have an impact on young adults’ career thoughts. There are a number of reasons that explain why young adults may be susceptible to parental opinions regarding career actions. One reason is that young adults are dependent on parents for academic and career resources (i.e., funding for university, place to live while going to school). This is true in today’s generation more so than in past. Research on the dependence of youth found a significant increase in individuals aged 25-29 living at home between 2000 and 2010 (Labas & Ljubicic, 2012). Young adults are becoming increasingly
dependent on parents due to a combination of two factors: the worsened state of the economy that affects young adult financial situations and a decrease in young adults’ emotional and financial security (Holdsworth, 2007).

Another reason young adults may be susceptible to their parents’ career options is that in today’s generation, it is more common to see a close dynamic between parent and child, which tends to foster an increased reliance on parental career advice and opinion (Hofschneider, 2013, Pricer, 2008). Millennials (individuals born between 1981 and the early 2000s) seem to be closer to their parents in comparison to previous generations and have a reputation for being coddled by their “helicopter parents”, a term for parents who are overprotective or take an extreme interest in their child’s life. Some companies have even begun to use parental involvement to their advantage (Hofschneider, 2013, p. 1). By including parents in job interviews and notifying them of their child’s successes at work, companies have noticed an increase in employee productivity and have become more successful in attracting and holding onto talent (Hofschneider, 2013, p. 1).

Another possible reason may be due to the common need of children, adolescents, and even young adults, to seek the approval of their parents (Pickhardt, 2011; Rohner, Khaleaque, & Cournoyer, 2007). If young adults aim to please their parents, this would likely make them more influential to the career opinions of their parents. However, it is important to note that this desire for approval should dissipate as children age and require more independence from parents in all aspects of life (Taylor, 2010).

**Parental pressure and career development.** Because parents are a key source of knowledge regarding occupations and adolescents have been found to internalize this knowledge, situations in which a parent is attempting to alter or mold the career development
of an adolescent or young adult through the use of pressures or demands, are likely. Evidence suggests that this is not uncommon; as some individuals report that their parents control their career actions and choices too much (Schultheiss et al., 2001). Furthermore, some parents may attempt to impose their own ideas about career actions on the offspring, despite contrasting career wishes on the part of the offspring (Kracke & Noack, 2005). Sometimes this occurs because a parent is trying to fulfill their own needs through the career choices of their children (Amundson & Penner, 1998). Other times, it may happen because a parent believes he or she knows what’s best for their adolescent over and above what the adolescent believes is best for him or herself. A parent’s lack of knowledge about the job market may also cause a parent to pressure a child in a particular career direction (Amundson & Penner, 1998). Whatever the reason, expectations and needs of one’s family are of the most significant external factors that affect an individual’s career development (Duffy & Dik, 2009; Greenhaus & Powell, 2006; Halpern & Murphy, 2005).

Thus far, research about the parental role in adolescent and young adult career development has focused mainly on the positive aspects of parental involvement. For example, past research has demonstrated the importance of career-related communication with parents, as well as exploration and negotiation about career choice (Young, Marshall, & Valach, 2007). However, research has seldom explored the ways in which parents can become too involved in the career development of their children, through the exertion of pressure on a child to engage in particular career actions or to develop cognitively, behaviourally, and emotionally, toward a particular career direction.

More importantly, research has seldom examined the role of young adults’ perceptions of parental pressure. Subjective standpoints are important because some individuals are more
sensitive to pressure than others. Additionally, since the focus of study is the career
development of the young adult in question, the young adult’s perception and experience of
parental pressure is deemed the most relevant.

Since social context has been shown to be important in the career development of
young adults (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 2002) and given the influence of parental opinion and
knowledge on young adult career development, it is essential to understand the ways in which
parental pressure affects the career development of young adults. Furthermore, since career
exploration has been shown to be a vital component of career development, it is essential that
the role of parental pressure experiences with respect to young adults’ career exploration is
investigated.

**Parental influence and career exploration.** Like career development, career
exploration should be understood with reference to immediate social influences such as family,
school, the community, and broader social influences such as educational and vocational
opportunities present in an individual’s surrounding culture (Blustein, 1995; Richardson,
1993). These, along with other factors, have been found to influence both the extent and nature
of career exploration in young adults (Blustein 1990; 1995). In particular, parental influence is
one of the key variables in the career exploration of high school students (Kracke, 2002;
Vignoli, Croity-Betz, Chapeland, Fillips, & Garcia, 2005).

The role of the parental and familial dynamic in career exploration is an area that has
been studied extensively. One area in particular that has gained significant attention is the role
of attachment relationships in adolescence and childhood. High levels of security in
adolescent-parent attachment relationships are found to promote adolescent career exploration
(Blustein, Prezioso, & Schultheiss, 1995; Grotevant & Cooper, 1988; Vignoli, Croity-Belz,
Chapeland, de Fillipis, & Garcia, 2005). Similarly, family conflict and dysfunction is associated with poorer vocational identity and career self-efficacy in adolescents (Hargrove, Creagh, & Burgess, 2002). Research on attachment anxiety found that college students who are comfortable being away from their mothers are less undecided in their career choices than those who feel anxious about the separation (Tokar, Withrow, Hall, & Moradi, 2003). Furthermore, higher perceived attachment security with parents (and particularly the mother) predicts better coping with career choice processes and increases broad and in-depth environment exploration and self-exploration (Germeijs & Verscheuren, 2009).

Concerning child-parent attachment relationships, Anne Roe (1957) developed a personality development theory based on a child’s psychological needs, which derive from interactions with her parents. Roe (1957) asserted that occupational choice could be predicted both by individual differences and by psychological needs that develop in response to these relationships. By relating parent-child relationships to occupational groups, Roe identified three classification systems, each with two sub classifications, corresponding to attitudes toward or away from the child (Sharf, 2010; Roe & Lunneborg, 1990). The first classification system, concentration on the child, consisted of overprotective parents who limited curiosity and exploration as well as over demanding parents who demanded excellence.

The second classification system, avoidance of the child, consisted of emotionally rejecting parents who criticized their children and did not display affection, and neglectful parents who largely ignored their children. The third classification system, acceptance of the child, consisted of casually accepting parents who did not ignore their children but offered minimum displays of love, and loving accepting parents who displayed a warm attitude toward their children. Roe used these three classification systems to predict occupational selection
outcomes (Sharf, 2010). Overall, Roe argued that individuals tended to choose work situations that reflected the psychological climate of the home they were raised in. For example, a child reared by loving parents was more likely to choose a job that involved working with other people.

The above-mentioned research demonstrates that relationships with parents at younger and older ages are complex and play an important role in the career development and exploration activities of adolescents and young adults.

**Parental pressure and career exploration.** Existing research on the role of parental pressure in career exploration activities is limited. However, existing research in related areas demonstrates that parental pressure may affect career exploration in young adults. For example, Vondracek, Schulenberg, Skorikov, Gillespie, and Wahlheim (1995) developed a theory of vocational identity, through which one particular identity status sheds light on the possible role of parental pressure in career exploration experiences. Vocational identity theory encompasses the following four statuses of vocational identity: diffusion, moratorium, achievement, and foreclosure. Diffusion refers to a lack of concern for the future, while also not having made a commitment (low exploration, low commitment). Moratorium refers to wanting a direction but not having one (high exploration, low commitment). Achievement refers to knowing what one wants and taking action toward it (high exploration, high commitment). The fourth identity status, foreclosure, is one that is most relevant to the present subject matter.

Foreclosure refers to a situation in which someone has made a career decision without having participated in prior career exploration (high commitment, low exploration). An individual in foreclosure has not considered whether his job choice matches his own values,
interests, and abilities (Sharf, 2010; Eggerth, 2008; Walsh, 2003). In many cases, this happens because an individual is influenced by the opinions and pressures of family and friends (Sharf, 2010). Given the knowledge we have about the benefits of career exploration, this approach would not be favourable in the long run (Porfeli & Bora, 2012). This literature indicates that parental pressure can affect vocational identity in adolescents and young adults.

Related research has demonstrated that independence and autonomy also influence career exploration activities. Psychological ‘autonomy granting’ and separation from parents during adolescence facilitates career exploration (Bryant, Zvonkovic, & Reynolds, 2006). Adolescents of parents who are controlling of career choices are also more passive in their career preparation (Kracke & Noack, 2005). Dietrich and Kracke (2009) examined parental support, interference (control over career paths), and lack of engagement and how these variables influence career exploration and decision-making difficulties. Parental support was found to correlate positively with career exploration, while interference and lack of engagement were found to moderate this relationship. Parental support was also found to moderate the relationship between interference and decision-making difficulties.

The above-noted research, along with the research on vocational identity, demonstrates that pressure received from parents may directly impact career exploration activities. And although some level of parental involvement is encouraged (i.e., communication and support) in the career development processes of offspring (Young et al., 1997; Young & Valach, 2000; Sickinger, 2012), the above-mentioned studies indicate that career-specific parental behaviour can potentially harm the career development of young adults.

As stated above, a large body of research has investigated the importance of involving career exploration in career decisions (i.e., long-term job satisfaction). Relatively few studies,
however, have examined the factors that influence career exploration in young adults. Of the research that has examined the role of parents and family in career exploration, most has focused on the role of the parent-adolescent relationship (Ferry, Fouad, & Smith, 2000; Guay, Senecal, Gauthier, & Fernet, 2003). Few have addressed the role of specific parental behaviours (e.g., parental pressure) in career exploration. Furthermore, no studies have examined the impact of these specific behaviours on career exploration through the lens of one’s subjective experience.

Therefore, the current research will explore the role of parental pressure experiences on the career exploration activities and experiences of young adults. This knowledge will aid in career counselling interventions with young adults. In particular, counsellors’ increased understanding of familial factors that influence career exploration will help them to identify populations that may be struggling with parental pressure and to implement appropriate intervention strategies with these populations. This is especially important, given that interventions resulting in increased career exploration have been shown to help individuals cope in career situations (Spokane, 1991). Knowledge in this area will also be applicable to parenting literature and educational resources.

**Perceptions of Control**

Perceptions of control, or perceived control, refer to the extent to which one can determine one’s own internal states and behaviours, influence one’s environment, and produce desired outcomes (Wallston, Wallston, Smith, & Dobbins, 1987). ‘Perceptions of control’ and ‘perceived control’ will be used interchangeably throughout the current research study.

An internal locus of control or a high level of perceived control, refers to one’s belief that he has the ability to control outcomes and is linked to rational decision-making tactics. An
external locus of control or a low perceived control, however, refers to the belief that outcomes are controlled by features of the external environment such as fate, chance, or powerful others (Friedrich, 1987). This can include other people or forces beyond one’s power.

Although perceived control has been dichotomized into these high and low domains, this construct has been segregated further into various subconcepts (Rotter, 1975). Perceived control stems from social learning theory, and was originally portrayed as a trait-like dimension (Rotter, 1966; Rubin, 1993) since perceptions of control become ingrained over time, similar to a trait or a characteristic (Taylor, 2010).

Since the 1960’s, extensive research has been conducted to examine the effects of perceived control on an individual’s motivation and behaviour across various fields of psychology (Lefcourt, 1992; Rotter, 1990). These fields include, but are not limited to, personality, social, organizational, and vocational psychology. Within the field of vocational psychology, perceived control has been applied extensively, and there now exist several valid measures for ‘vocational locus of control’, a construct referring to one’s perceived control over vocational behaviour (Friedrich, 1985; Guan et al., 2012).

Within the realm of personality and social psychology, perceived control has been associated with concepts such as Seligman’s learned helplessness, Langer’s perception of control, and Bandura’s self-efficacy (Selander, Marnetoft, Asell, & Selander, 2008). Although perceived control is related to these concepts, the key difference is that perceived control is based mainly on expectancies while the other concepts are based mainly on motivation. Perceived control has also been applied to more specific aspects of psychology such as conflict management (Taylor, 2010).

Additionally, perceived control is applied to the ways in which people respond to
experiences that are either successful or unsuccessful (Fournier & Pelletier, 1996). In this line of research, perceived control was found to influence individuals’ use of prior experience and performance to guide predictions about future events (Carver & Scheier, 1991). More specifically, individuals with increased perceived control often utilized knowledge about prior experience to help them make these predictions.

**Perceptions of control and career development.** Perceived control has been discovered to be central component of the career development process (Brusoski, Golin, Gallagher, & Moore, 1993; Flynn, 1986). Since career development is an iterative process, a person engaged in career development must project or predict into the future about what the future may hold and what role they will play in it (Millar & Shevlin, 2007). Individuals who displayed high perceptions of control and believed that they could influence future events often engaged more fully in behaviours designed to bring about those predicted future events. In other words, these individuals engaged more fully with their own career development process (Millar, 1994).

In vocational perceived control measures, perceived control refers to the location in which the responsibility for an event lies. If it lies with the subject or individual, the individual is deemed to have a high perceived control (Fournier & Pelletier, 1996). If it lies with the external environment, however, the individual is deemed to have a low perceived control. Researchers in the field of career development generally agree that a higher perceived control is linked with adaptive career outcomes, whereas a lower perceived control is linked with maladaptive career outcomes (Perry, Liu, & Griffin, 2011).

These results correspond to perceptions of adaptation, since youth with higher perceived control rated themselves to be more adaptable to the world of work (Perlmutter,
Scharff, Karsh, & Monty, 1980). Higher perceptions of control are also found to correlate positively with better work performance ratings from supervisors or colleagues and with higher levels of job satisfaction (Guan et al., 2012). A meta-analysis conducted by Ng, Sorensen, and Eby (2006) confirmed that Rotter’s general locus of control (LOC) construct predicted career-related well-being such as job commitment and turnover intention. This meta-analysis also linked Rotter’s LOC to work motivation (i.e., task motivation, job involvement) and behavioural orientation involving performance on tasks rated by others and rated by the self. Perceived control was also found to correlate with career choices, as women with lower perceived control were more likely to make traditional and cautious career choices (Friedrich, 1987).

Perceived control is also linked to academic performance. For example, higher perceptions of control have been linked to increased motivation and performance (Perlmuter, Scharff, Karsh, & Monty, 1980). Internality was also linked to academic competence, social maturity, and independent behaviour (Nowicki-Strickland, 1973). Furthermore, perceived control was found to correlate highly with one’s self-concept and achievement in mathematics and reading (Garner & Cole, 1984). Lastly, this concept was related to problem-solving techniques, planning strategies, coping, analysis, and practice and was found to be a central component in everyday activities (Rotter, 1992).

As mentioned previously, perceived control is similar to self-efficacy, which is a central component of the career development process in young adults (Lent, Brown, Hackett, 2002). Self-efficacy and career confidence have also been shown to be important to career exploration behaviours (Gushue, Clarke, Pantzer, & Scanlan, 2006; Blustein, 1988). Some researchers, however, believe that when individuals feel they have the power to act and decide,
they are more likely to actualize their feelings of self-efficacy (Fournier & Pelletier, 1996). Therefore, perceived control is considered by some to be more important than self-efficacy in the career development processes of young adults. Perceived control will thus be examined in the present study as a key cognitive component in career development and career exploration behaviours. For the purposes of this study, perceived control will refer to one’s perception of the amount of control one has over one’s overall and career environment.

**Young adults and perceptions of control.** Like any other age group, young adults experience feelings of internality or externality with respect to their perceptions of control. However, owing to the difficulty younger generations are having finding their way into the working world and gaining employment, young adults are particularly susceptible to feelings of externality (i.e., low perceived control) with respect to their career actions and opportunities (Fournier & Pelletier, 1996). This evidence demonstrates that current economic struggles are causing younger generations to feel more helpless and powerless with regard to career possibilities. Since young adults are particularly susceptible to having lower perceived control over their career, it is essential that the impacts of this phenomenon be examined so that we can paint a more in-depth picture of young adults’ perceptions of control and how they are influenced by other factors such as parental pressure.

**Parental pressure and perceived control.** As mentioned previously, a negative adolescent-parent relationship was found to result in a lower perceived control (Kopera-Frye, Saltz, Jones, & Dixon, 1991). Furthermore, accepting and autonomy-supporting parenting styles as well as warmth and attentiveness have been shown to correlate with an internal locus of control in offspring (Carton & Nowicki, 1994; Suchman et al., 2007; Dew & Huebner, 1994). Since past research has shown a clear relationship between parental behaviours and the
perceived control of offspring, it is reasonable to assume that career-related parental pressure might have an effect on one’s perceptions of control related to one’s overall and career environment.

**The role of perceived control in career exploration.** Past research found that decision-making strategies were less relevant to individuals who believed that they had no control over what happened in their lives (Friedrich, 1987). Healthy decision-making strategies included exploratory behaviours such as wide searches for relevant information, generating alternative choices, evaluating those alternatives, locating differences among alternatives, and contingency planning (Janis & Mann, 1987). Therefore, someone with poor perceived control may be less likely to participate in these activities. Research conducted in 1987 in the domain of career development and perceived control demonstrated just that. Low perceived control was correlated with “reduced information seeking, limited attempts to generate job alternatives, use of more restricted criteria in evaluating job alternatives, less advanced planning in terms of early applications, reduced effort in contingency planning for a backup job, and generally reduced effort [in the] job decision-making process” (Lefcourt, 1976; Friedrich, 1987, p. 174). Perceived control is therefore centrally related to decision-making processes and career exploratory processes.

Youth with high perceptions of control are found to be more autonomous and self-motivating within the key exploratory developmental tasks of crystallizing (i.e., in-breadth exploration), specifying (i.e., in-depth exploration), and actualization (i.e., implementing a career choice) (Super, Savickas, & Super, 1996). Furthermore, increased internality among male university students was correlated with career maturity, attesting to self-knowledge and to the exploratory processes of assessing personal strengths and weaknesses (Perrino, 1985;
Super, 1990). Lastly, Luzzo, James, and Luna (1996) found that college students who watched an attributional retraining career intervention video encouraging students to connect external events to internal control, engaged in increased career exploration, as measured by the Career Exploration Survey (Stumpf, Colarelli, & Hartman, 1983).

The above-noted research demonstrates that perceived control is a central component in career development, as it plays a key role in decision-making strategies, career maturity and career exploration. It is clear that high levels of perceived control are desirable for young adults faced with career indecision. This research also demonstrates that perceived control may have a direct impact on the career exploration behaviours of young adults.

In addition to career exploration, academic exploration is an important element that could also be impacted by perceived control. To date, no study has investigated the role of perceived control on a young adult’s academic exploration behaviours. Furthermore, no study has investigated the role of career-related parental pressure on perceptions of control in relation to a young adult’s career environment. Therefore, through a qualitative design, the present study aims to provide a deeper understanding of students’ perceptions of control, career and academic exploration behaviours, and the connection between the two processes. This study also aims to explore the relationship between parental pressure experiences and perceptions of control, with respect to the career development of young adults.

**Parental Pressure Experiences, Perceptions of Control, and Career Exploration**

While many constructs play a role in the career exploration activities of young adults, parental pressure experiences and perceptions of control are the focus of this study for the following reasons. First, as stated previously, parents play an important part in young adults’ career development (Bryant, Zvonkovic, & Reynolds, 2006; Hartung, Porfeli, & Vondracek,
Within the realm of parental influence research, specific parental behaviours (e.g., pressure) and their affect on their children’s career development and specific career exploration behaviours have not been widely examined (Ferry, Fouad, & Smith, 2000). Furthermore, research has not yet looked into the subjective experiences of parental pressure in young adults, and the impact of these subjective experiences on career exploration. The present study aims to address these gaps in the literature by investigating the role of parental pressure experiences in the career exploration of young adults.

Secondly, perceived control and related concepts (e.g., self-efficacy) have been shown to be important in career development processes including decision-making, career choice processes, and career maturity (Perrino, 1985; Friedrich, 1987). These are all concepts related to career exploration behaviours. Few studies, however, have directly examined the role of perceived control in the career exploration behaviours of young adults. The aforementioned study by Luzzo, James, and Luna (1996) found direct results in college students but did not use qualitative in-depth interviews to obtain the data. The current study will attempt to extend these results by using a qualitative in-depth approach, examining personal reflections of thoughts, feelings, and behaviours.

Third, no studies have examined the ways in which career-related parental pressure impacts perceived control over one’s career environment in young adults. Therefore, this study plans to address the missing gaps in the literature by examining the interrelatedness between parental pressure experiences, perceptions of control, and career exploration in young adults. Parental pressure and career exploration experiences will be examined throughout childhood, high school, and university years.
CHAPTER 3

METHODS

The current study used a qualitative research approach and in-depth interviews to gather data. A constructivist grounded theory approach developed by Charmaz (2006) was used to analyze the data. This method was chosen because it allowed the researcher to gain an expansive understanding of young adults’ career exploration and career development experiences, as well as their perspectives of parental pressure and control within that arena. This chapter will discuss the rationale for using a qualitative design and a constructivist grounded theory methodology. This chapter will also include an outline of the recruitment and participant selection procedures, interview procedures, and a description of data collection and analysis.

Rationale for Qualitative Design

A qualitative methodology in the area of social sciences allows one to generate information. Rather than seeking out information specifically to prove or disprove a previously developed theory, qualitative methods use an inductive process to analyze data. This means that data is gathered first and assumptions are developed later. In other words, new theories are developed based on discovered information (Flick, 2009). The object under study therefore determines the method. This allows the researcher to capture the complexities of a participant, since she is not reduced to a single entity but rather is investigated in her entirety in everyday contexts (Camic, Rhodes, & Yardley, 2003; Flick, 2009; Slife, Yanchar, & Reber, 2005).

Qualitative methodologies focus on the perspectives of the participants and allow them to have a voice. Differences between individuals and cultures are therefore embraced during the data analysis and discussion of findings. This puts the participant in the position of a
subject, an expert, and an informant rather than an object. Therefore, with qualitative methods, one can derive meaningful answers and a greater understanding of the participant’s personal experiences. Furthermore, qualitative methods embrace complexity and texture within the participant’s story. Therefore, qualitative researchers accept the incompleteness and messiness within the data, reflecting the realities of the participant’s life (Shank, 2002).

In addition to embracing the subjectivity and complexity of each participant, qualitative methods also embrace the subjectivity of the researcher. The researcher’s thoughts, feelings, and reflections on the research are often documented and become an integral part of the interpretation. This is an integral part of any research process, since the researcher’s subjectivities are most often intertwined in the data analysis and interpretation (Charmaz, 2006).

Researchers are now using qualitative methods more often (Ponterotto, 2005). This is true particularly within the broad arena of psychology and specifically within the areas of career and counselling psychology (Chen, 2006; Chen & Lee, 2011; Shein & Chen, 2010; Ponterotto, 2005). One possible explanation for this is that qualitative methods use exploratory methods that allow for an abundance of information and expansion of intellectual ideas. Furthermore, since career is an ever changing and dynamic process, it is best to apply an exploratory method rather than attempt to measure and quantify career constructs. Furthermore, career is a subjective concept and relates to many other aspects of an individual’s life. “Individuals make decisions about their work role, such as occupational choice and organizational commitment, within the circumstances imposed by the social roles that give meaning and focus to their lives” (Savickas, 2002, p. 159). Therefore, career research is often well-suited to a qualitative, in-depth, exploratory method.
Based on findings from past research, young adult career exploration experiences demand further exploration within the qualitative scope. Given the abundance of information relevant to young adults’ career exploration experiences, it is essential that exploratory methods are used to ensure that important information can be considered and included. Since this study will examine young adult exploration experiences as well as parental pressure experiences and perceptions of control, qualitative methods will provide a more in-depth investigation and holistic perspective. Furthermore, using qualitative approaches, the present researcher can explore the uniqueness of each individual’s story. Participants are encouraged to share their complete experiences and include details regarding their career exploration experiences. Since personal perspectives include affect, cognition, and intention, the present researcher aims to embrace the ways in which participants make sense of their circumstances, and how this knowledge affects their career actions and development (Maxwell, 2005).

The current study’s design allowed for a holistic understanding of each participant’s unique experiences, and the ways in which each participant obtains meaning from them. In the current study, participants were encouraged to reveal personal accounts and experiences while the researcher attempted to derive important themes and concepts.

The above-noted reasons provide a foundation for why a qualitative approach was chosen for the current study. This study explored young adults’ career exploration experiences. Additionally, this study examined the ways in which young adults’ parental pressure experiences and perceptions of control influenced their career exploration and career development. Data was gathered using in-depth interviews, giving participants an opportunity to focus on issues important to them, providing a comprehensive understanding of each participant’s thoughts, feeling, perceptions, and beliefs (Murray, 1998; Thompson, 1981).
Within the broad scope of qualitative methodology, there are various types of approaches including ethnography, narrative theory, critical incident, phenomenology and grounded theory. These approaches range in focus from subjective viewpoints to reconstructing structures of the social field (Flick, 2009). Multiple approaches allow for flexibility in the qualitative research process.

Ethnography is the oldest qualitative approach, and refers to a descriptive type of study that is atheoretical in nature (Devers, Sofaer, & Rundall, 1999). Rather than attempting to understand why individuals act the way they do, this type of research aims to describe what an individual’s life is like. Unlike ethnography, narrative theory highlights structure and meaning from stories or accounts of events over a period of time (Ellet & Beausang, 2001). Both the perspective of the narrator and reader are important in narrative theory (Gergen & Gergen, 1986).

In the critical incident technique, investigators use a set of procedures to collect direct observations of human behaviour of critical significance (Cassell & Symon, 2004). These observations form the basis for practical solutions to problems as well as psychological principles. Phenomenology is a description of a phenomenon or an event, as it appears to those involved in the phenomenon or event (Ellet & Beausang, 2001). Both the investigator and the object under investigation are viewed as intricately linked. Within phenomenology lies the grounded theory methodology, which comprises the methodology of the current study.

**A Grounded Theory Approach**

The theoretical basis for grounded theory derives from Pragmatism (Dewey, 1925; Mead, 1934) and Symbolic Interactionism (Blumer, 1969; Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Hughes, 1971; Park & Burgess, 1921). Developed by Glaser and Strauss in the 1960’s, grounded theory
was deemed the most appropriate method to construct abstract theories about social processes, since these theories were “grounded” in the analytic codes and categories from data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Glaser and Strauss (1967) encouraged researchers to first explore a range of data and then uncover themes and findings within the data, rather than forming assumptions beforehand. They viewed participants as active agents and considered process, rather than structure, to be essential to human existence. Researchers were encouraged to use grounded theory strategies flexibly in their own unique way and to separate emerging theories from the scientific observer (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Researchers were also encouraged to conduct the literature review after developing an independent analysis.

In the 1980’s, Strauss and Corbin (1990) diverged from the rigidity of the classic grounded theory methods while Glaser (1992) remained true to the original version. Glaser (1992) continued to rely on “direct and often narrow empiricism” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 8) while Strauss (1987) moved the method toward verification and developed new and different technical procedures from that of the original comparative method (Strauss & Corbin, 1990; 1998).

Since then, researchers have further segregated constructivist and objectivist grounded theory approaches, asserting interpretive traditions and positivist traditions respectively (Bryant, 2002; Clarke, 2005). Charmaz (2006) has re-defined grounded theory to fit a social constructivist model. In this model, grounded theory embodies a consistent but flexible research process (Charmaz, 2006). Unlike Glaser and Strauss (1967), Charmaz (2006) believes that researchers are a part of the world they study and the data they collect. Grounded theories are constructed through “past and present involvements and interactions with people,
perspectives, and research practices” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 10). These theories are constructions of reality and offer an interpretive perspective of the world rather than an exact picture (Charmaz, 2006; Khan, 2014). Like all other qualitative methodologies, grounded theory is based on an inductive data analysis process (Charmaz, 2014; Merriam, 2002).

Since the present study aims to provide a deeper understanding of the career experiences of young adults, Charmaz’s (2006) constructivist grounded theory approach was used to analyze the data. This method enabled the present researcher to discover unexpected trends, meanings, and influences, and to use grounded theories to explain such influences (Maxwell, 2005). Furthermore, grounded theory honoured the researcher’s interpretive view of the participants’ stories and therefore aided in the exploratory process of discovering trends and themes and uncovering the reactions of participants (Charmaz, 2006).

Procedures

Recruitment

Participants for the present study were recruited through advertisements posted around the University of Toronto (U of T) campus and also through emails to University of Toronto undergraduate students (via the undergraduate student email listserv). Snowball sampling was also used as information about the study was spread through word of mouth. Study advertisements included information about the purpose of the study, selection criteria for possible participants, and the researcher’s contact information. Recruitment occurred over the span of two months. Since grounded theory methodologists typically report a sample size of 10 to 60 participants (Starks & Trinidad, 2007), a total of 20 participants were recruited for the current study. The current study has received ethics approval from the University of Toronto and is a student project under the supervision of Dr. Charles P. Chen of the Applied
Psychology and Human Development Department at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education.

**Selection Criteria**

Participants targeted for this study were University of Toronto undergraduate students who were in their 3rd or 4th year of study. Of these students, participants were selected who: (1) were currently experiencing, or had experienced, pressure from one or both parents with regard to career thoughts, feelings, and/or behaviours, and (2) were fluent in English.

The first criterion ensured that participants in the current study had experienced some degree of parental pressure. This was important because the presence of parental pressure was necessary to explore its influence on career exploration and perceived control. The second criterion ensured that participants were able to engage in in-depth interviews in the English language.

**Research Interviews/Data Collection**

Students who were interested in participating in the study responded by telephone or by email. If the student contacted the researcher by phone, the researcher determined, during the call, whether the interested student fit the selection criteria and was willing to participate. If the student contacted the researcher by email, the researcher requested the student’s telephone number over email. The researcher then called the participant to determine same.

At the time of the telephone conversation, a written script was used to ensure that all necessary details were covered and that the details were consistent with all participants. Details included the nature and purpose of the study (i.e., length of interview), the selection criteria, issues around confidentiality, and compensation. At this time, the participant and researcher also set up a time and date for the interview.
Lastly, potential participants were informed of the possible risks and benefits to the study. A risk of the study included participant distress or concern that may have occurred during the interview. A benefit of the study included feelings of strength, positivity, and growth resulting from the interview with regard to their career exploration or career development process. Referrals to resources such as psychological assistance or career counselling were available at the time of interview for participants who felt distressed or overwhelmed or for those who expressed interest. Participants were also reminded that they were able to withdraw from the study at any time without receiving any penalty.

Interviews were held in private rooms at the University of Toronto, in the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) Psychology Clinic. All interviews were audio-taped and ranged between 45 and 90 minutes in length. Participants were compensated $20 for their time. To ensure confidentiality, all paper materials were kept in a locked filing cabinet in Dr. Charles P. Chen’s locked research office. Only the researcher and Dr. Charles P. Chen had access to the cabinet. All electronic materials were encrypted and stored on the researcher’s password protected computer. Only the researcher had access to the electronic materials.

At the beginning of each interview, the researcher discussed the nature of the study, limits of confidentiality, and anonymity. At this point in time, participants signed a consent form that also contained this information. Participants were reminded that the interview would be audio-taped for transcribing purposes, and a verbal consent related to the audio-taping was requested. At the end of the interview, participants were given monetary compensation and asked to sign two copies of a receipt to confirm that they had received the compensation. One copy remained with the researcher and one copy was given to the participant.
Each phenomenological interview encompassed questions that probed a narrative, detailed response by the participant detailing parental pressure experiences, perceptions of control, and career exploration activities. These interviews were guided by a semi-structured model, since semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to follow-up on or clarify issues that the researcher deemed important in the interview process (Leavy, 2014).

Each interview began with some questions on participant demographics (e.g., age, year of study, country of origin). Participants were then asked a total of 63 questions investigating the following three areas: (1) career exploration experiences, (2) parental pressure experiences and (3) perceptions of control (see Appendix E). Within the third section of questions, a subset of questions also addressed participants’ opinions relating to how their parental pressure has affected their perceptions of control over their career environment.

Examples of questions in the first section, career exploration, included: Could you describe your career exploration experience from the time you started to think about your career future until now?

Questions in this section also addressed exploration of person-career and person-academic fit during high school and university. For example, “In your high school years, do you feel that you spent a fair amount of time searching for information related to your career future?” Please describe. (a) Would you say you searched for information related to many different career options or just a select few? (c) What careers in particular did you explore?

Questions in the second section, perceptions of parental pressure, investigated participants’ experiences with parental opinions and parental career pressure during childhood, high school, and university years. Examples of these questions included: “Do you feel that your parents put pressure on you to think, feel, or act in a certain way toward your career
future? (a) What in particular did they pressure you to do or feel? (b) How did you deal with this pressure? (c) Did you feel a need to comply with your parents’ requests?

Questions in this section also focused on how the participants’ felt about this pressure, and how they dealt with it. Lastly, questions addressed whether participants felt any concern about disappointing their parents or not abiding by their parents’ career wishes.

Questions in the third section, perceptions of control, explored participants’ perceptions of control in relation to their overall and career environment. Examples of questions in this section included: “How do you feel about the events that happen in your life - do you believe that they are largely within your control or largely outside of your control?” and “How much control do you feel that you have over your career actions?”

Lastly, the third section included a subsection that addressed participants’ perceptions of whether their parental pressure has affected their perceived control. Examples of these questions included: “Do you feel that the pressure you received from your parents influenced your perceptions of control over your environment?” “Why or why not?”

All of these questions aimed to uncover answers to the study’s overarching research questions. These questions also aimed to provide insight into participants’ perceptions of parental pressure and control. Lastly, the questions aimed to investigate participants’ career exploration activities and experiences.

**Participant Characteristics**

This study explored the career experiences of 20 females. The ages of all participants ranged from 20 to 25 years with an average age of 21.3 years. At the time of interview, half of all participants were in their 3rd year of study while the remaining half were in their 4th year. A total of 17 participants were enrolled in the Arts and Science program at the University of
Toronto. Two participants were enrolled in the Rotman School of Management program at the University of Toronto, and one participant was enrolled in the Mechanical Engineering program at the University of Toronto. Of the participants enrolled in the Arts and Science program, eight participants were majoring in Psychology and some of these had undertaken a double major with a science, economics, or language subject combination. All participants except one were enrolled in full-time studies at the time of the interview.

In terms of parental care, all participants were raised in a two-parent household. Only two participants did not live at home until they began university. Twelve participants reported not living at home during their time at university while the remaining eight participants reported living at home during their university years. With regard to religious affiliation, 12 participants did not consider themselves religious. Of the remaining eight, seven participants were Christian and one participant was Hindu. The ethnicities of participants were varied; a total of five participants were Caucasian, two participants were Indian, one participant was Kazakh, one participant was Korean, and the remaining 11 participants were Chinese. In terms of country of origin, nine participants were born in China, one participant was born in the United States, one participant was born in Kazakhstan, and one participant was born in India. The remaining eight participants were born in Canada (see Appendix F).

**Data Analysis**

After participant records were transcribed, the first step of data analysis was to read each participant narrative. After this stage, the researcher analyzed the narrative line-by-line, and highlighted and coded possible themes. This analysis was completed using the qualitative research data analysis software *NVivo 10*. Throughout this process, the researcher made notes of her interpretations of what stood out as important.
Each narrative was analyzed and coded multiple times in order to ensure that important
details regarding participants’ career exploration experiences were included in the overall
theme selection process. Important details and key themes regarding participants’ perceptions
of parental pressure and control were also top priority. The data was then studied and reduced
using grounded theory methodologies. After this process, the data was saturated and key
themes and categories were uncovered.

**Organization and Presentation of the Findings**

In the final step of the data analysis, the findings were organized into three sections:
parental pressure experiences, career exploration, and perceptions of control. The first two
sections were broken down further into three time zones: childhood, high school, and
university. Extent, nature and important aspects related to each experience (i.e., anxiety from
pressure, desire to comply, experience of stress, dream career, methods of exploration) were
discussed within each time zone. The final section, perceptions of control, details participants’
levels of perceived control related to their overall and career environment as well as their
opinions about whether their experience of parental pressure negatively impacted their
perceptions of control over career. Each section includes an overall glance at young adult’s
career development processes in the presence of parental pressure, as well as their perceptions
of control over their career environment. Additional themes that arose within the data set are
also discussed. The following section will begin with a brief introduction of each participant
and will finish with a discussion of the findings pertaining to each of the three sections
mentioned above.
CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The results chapter first outlines a brief profile of each participant. Each profile will detail her field of study as well as her unique experiences of parental pressure. Second, key themes related to young adults’ career exploration and parental pressure experiences will be organized into three time periods: childhood, high school, and university. In each time period, trends related to exploration and parental pressure experiences will be discussed. Both childhood and high school were marked by mild-moderate levels of parental pressure for many participants. High school years were marked by low career exploration, high academic exploration, and a low emphasis on person-career and person-academic fit. University years, however, were marked by high levels of both career and academic exploration as well as a high emphasis on person-career and person-academic fit. Most participants experienced a moderate-severe level of parental pressure during their time at university. The organization of these categories within these time periods allow for key comparisons to be made between participants’ experiences of parental pressure and career exploration within specific segments of their career development experience. Third, participants’ perceptions of control will be discussed in relation to their overall and career environment. A discussion of participants’ opinions of whether their experiences of pressure impacted their perceptions of control will follow. Most participants believed that their experiences of pressure impacted their perceptions of control.

Participant 1

Participant 1 (P1) is a 22-year-old Chinese female who was born in China and moved to Canada by herself when she was 20 years old. P1 attended elementary and high school at a
boarding school in Singapore. Having to choose between a commerce stream and a science stream in high school, she chose the “commerce stream” and thought she might continue on that path. In university, however, she realized she had an interest in psychology and considered a career in research or human resources. It was at this point that she began to feel pressure from her father, as he encouraged her to continue in business and possibly work in a bank. Currently, she feels that she is becoming increasingly independent from her parents’ wishes and attributes part of this change to the influence of western culture. She knows that she will choose a career that she feels is right for her, and is confident that her parents will eventually support her in her career decision.

**Participant 2**

Participant 2 (P2) is a 20-year-old Chinese female who was born in China and moved to Canada with her family when she was 2-years-old. P2 considered a variety of careers throughout her teenage years, including careers in clinical psychology, nutritional science, music, working with children, and working with seniors. Her father, however, encouraged her to pursue a career either in business or medical science. She therefore chose to enroll in the life science stream at U of T. After her first year, she switched to the psychology stream against the wishes of her parents. She is currently thinking about attending graduate school in the field of Psychology. She feels that her father has slowly come around to the possibility of a career in psychology and feels increasingly comfortable discussing her career future with him.

**Participant 3**

Participant 3 (P3) is a 21-year-old Caucasian female who was born in the United States and moved to Canada with her family when she was 11 years old. In high school, she thought mainly about going to medical school and becoming a doctor. During this time, both of her
parents were very supportive of this goal. She enrolled in a psychology and neuroscience double major at U of T. During her third year, she began to think about other careers in the fields of psychiatry, psychology, human resources, and business as she began to doubt whether she would “fit” into the competitive vibe of medical school. Her parents, however, continued to encourage her to pursue medicine. At this time, career conversations with her parents became increasingly negative and one-sided. She felt that she could no longer talk to her parents about her career future, since their goals for her contrasted so strongly with those she had for herself. Currently, she is still considering other career options and has applied to the Autism and Behavioural Sciences program at George Brown College in Toronto.

**Participant 4**

Participant 4 (P4) is a 20-year-old Caucasian female who was born in Canada. As a child, P4 thought strongly about becoming a teacher. Her mother, having been a school principal, supported the idea. Her father was in agreement, and also encouraged P4 to pursue law. Throughout her high school years, she continued to think about becoming a teacher and also considered a few other options including a hairstylist, advertising executive, and a career in law. Since her parents would not support a college education, she had frequent arguments with her parents about schooling related to hairstyling or advertising. After this, she decided not to pursue a career in hairstyling or advertising. She decided to enroll at U of T and majored in political science. Currently, she is planning on applying to teacher’s college after she graduates and feels that she is better able to vocalize her opinion in career conversations with her parents during disagreements.

**Participant 5**

Participant 5 (P5) is a 22-year-old Caucasian female who was born in Canada. As a
child, P5 considered a career in animal and human medicine. In high school, her mother made it clear that she would like P5 to become a professional. P5 decided to enroll in a double major in animal physiology and human biology at U of T. During her university years, her parents encouraged P5 to go directly to medical school or an Ivy League school after graduation. This was stressful for P5, as she wanted to complete a masters program in science before pursuing medical school. She had her eye on a number of programs including masters of clinical science, masters of science, and masters of public health. Furthermore, she had no desire to attend an Ivy League school. Recently, P5 decided to enroll in a masters of public health at U of T. After many career conversations with her parents, she feels that they have become more tolerant of her decision.

**Participant 6**

Participant 6 (P6) is a 20-year-old Indian female who was born in Canada. In high school, P6 remembered thinking about becoming a doctor or having a career in psychology, but focused mainly on doing well academically. Since her parents made it clear that they would like to see her go to medical school, she decided to enroll in a neuroscience and psychology double major at U of T, to prepare herself for both avenues. In her first year of university, pressure from her parents increased, as they continued to remind her of the academic requirements needed to be competitive for medical school. She was not receiving the grades that her parents expected of her, and she felt overwhelmed, as she did not want to let them down. In second year, she realized that her personality would fit a career in psychology or business better than a career in medicine. This was particularly stressful for her, since the Indian culture placed emphasis on obeying her parents’ wishes. Since then, however, she feels that they have both eased up on her. Career conversations are less stressful and more
constructive, and she feels they have both come around to her alternative career goals in the field of psychology.

**Participant 7**

Participant 7 (P7) is a 21-year-old Caucasian female born in Canada. As a child, P7 was encouraged by her father to find a steady, hard-working job. This continued into high school and was complemented by her mother’s encouragement to follow in her footsteps and pursue nursing. While P7 considered careers in many arenas including medicine, dentistry, and humanities, she ultimately decided to enroll in the linguistics program at U of T. At this time, pressure from her father increased, as he often said that he would like her to get a job immediately after graduating. P7 found this particularly stressful, as she was interested in attending graduate school and possibly pursuing research. As time went on, however, P7 realized that job security held increasing importance. She decided to switch into the computer science program, as this field had more job opportunities. Currently, she feels that conversations with her dad can be particularly difficult because she worries he will not approve of her career choice. She feels guilty about the cost associated with switching programs, but is happy with her choice and is looking forward to taking advantage of the internship opportunity available in her program.

**Participant 8**

Participant 8 (P8) is a 21-year-old Chinese female who was born in China and moved to Canada with her family when she was 11 years old. P8 recalled that in high school, she looked mainly into careers in the medical field (e.g., doctor, radiologist) and she remembered receiving encouraging messages from her parents about this field. After enrolling in life science at U of T, P8 began to receive more pressure from her parents to attend medical school.
This was stressful for her, since she had begun to think that she was not suited to the role of a doctor and began to consider other options including a career in business, writing, and research. During this time, career conversations with her parents were frustrating and one-sided. Although she has not abandoned medical school completely, P8 is currently considering a career in research and has looked into a variety graduate school programs in the sciences. She feels that she will choose a career that is right for her, and is confident that her parents will eventually accept her decision.

**Participant 9**

Participant 9 (P9) is a 20-year-old Kazakh female who was born in Kazakhstan and moved to Canada by herself to attend University at the age of 16. In high school, P9 realized she was interested in psychology but received pressure from her parents to study economics. Her father also encouraged her to pursue nursing but she decided nursing did not suit her. After enrolling in a psychology and economics double major at U of T, she was pressured by her parents to find a job immediately after graduating, in order to obtain hands-on experience. Since she was considering graduate school in psychology or in community development, this pressure was overwhelming for her. After time, she realized that getting hands-on experience was something she could do *before* graduate school. Since then, conversations with her parents have been less stressful and more constructive. Currently, P9 understands why her parents encouraged her the way they did, and she takes their opinions into consideration.

**Participant 10**

Participant 10 (P10) is a 25-year-old Korean female, born in Canada. P10 remembered being interested in psychology in high school and was therefore interested in taking psychology in university. She was also interested in enrolling in the kinesiology program. Her
parents, however, did not allow her to pursue kinesiology since they believed a program such as this did not suit a female. At this time, her parents wanted her to become a highly educated professional. She believed that her Korean culture played a role in this, since hard work was the top priority in her household. She decided to enroll in psychology at U of T. In third year, she entered a romantic relationship and began performing poorly in school. Her father yelled at her often and she remembered feeling guilty about her poor academic performance. In fourth year, she made a quick decision to enroll in a four-year chiropractic program since she felt that her options were limited due to her low grades. She is currently in her fourth and final year of that program and is still finishing up her bachelor’s degree at U of T. Her father continues to let P10 know what he thinks about her career actions. Overall, P10 feels that she has internalized the pressure she has received from her parents over the years and holds high expectations for herself.

Participant 11

Participant 11 (P11) is a 22-year-old Caucasian female born in Canada. Throughout high school and university, P11 dreamed of becoming an engineer or a doctor. In high school, her parents strongly supported this decision. They also made it clear that they did not want to see her become a teacher since they were both teachers and did not enjoy their jobs. She decided to enroll in the mechanical engineering program at U of T and is currently enjoying it. She feels that her parents talk about her career future more now, and feels increasing pressure to go into medicine or engineering. However, she also feels that she has more knowledge in the field of engineering, as her professors often talk about job opportunities in the field. She therefore feels more confident in career conversations with her parents. Overall, P11 feels that her parental pressure experience has been positive and feels fortunate her career interests have
matched those of which her parents approve.

**Participant 12**

Participant 12 (P12) is a 21-year-old Chinese female who was born in Canada but moved to Hong Kong with her family until the age of 17, at which point she moved back to Canada for university. As a child, her father would often bring her to scientific lectures and invite her to watch the Discovery channel with him. P12 felt that he was non-verbally encouraging her to go into medicine. In high school, she considered a variety of careers in the healthcare field including doctor, nurse, physiotherapist and psychologist. She decided to enroll in life science at U of T. After starting university, her parents began to verbalize their career opinions, often making it known that they would like her to attain a certain GPA to be competitive for medical school. Currently, she is certain that she would like to attend medical school and is trying her best to do well academically. She often avoids conversations with her parents about her poor academic performance.

**Participant 13**

Participant 13 (P13) is a 21-year-old Chinese female born in Canada. As a young child, P13’s father would often verbalize that he would like to see her become a doctor or a lawyer. She remembered feeling confused since he would often switch between the two and she was not sure which career interested her most. In high school, P13 considered a variety of careers including veterinarian, doctor, lawyer, museum curator, forensic scientist, and illustrator. Her father continued to verbalize his feelings about her career future. This time, however, he encouraged her to go into medicine, as her cousin was in medical school at the time. When she verbalized her desire to become an illustrator, both her father and her aunt dismissed the idea. She decided to enroll at U of T and chose neuroscience as her major. As the years passed, she
realized that her GPA was not high enough to be competitive for medicine or dentistry. Her interest in becoming a museum curator or forensic scientist grew, but she knew her parents would disapprove of these options. She decided to stop discussing her career future with her parents, since they would often disagree, leaving P13 more confused about what she wanted. She still feels that her parents have high expectations of her to find a respectable career, and remains unsure of what her next career move will be.

Participant 14

Participant 14 (P14) is a 21-year-old Chinese female who was born in China and moved to Canada with her family at the age of 9. In high school, P14 did not put much thought into her career future, but knew that wanted to continue in science because her interest and ability in the subject was high. Furthermore, her parents encouraged her to go into sciences. They also expected her to attend U of T and refused to fund a “college” education. She decided to enroll in a double major in psychology and health and disease at U of T. In second year, she considered attending graduate school for psychology or social work. However, in third year, she began to second-guess her commitment to science, as she realized she liked to organize events, and had gained some experience doing this at school. At this point, she began to consider a career in human resources, marketing, or event planning. In the summer after third year, P14 decided to improve her resume for graduate school and started to volunteer at CAMH and at another hospital, and completed a work-study program. She remembered feeling overwhelmingly busy and felt pressure from her parents to continue with all three responsibilities, since it would increase her chances of getting into a graduate program in psychology. Currently, P14 has a college program in human resources in mind and has told her mother about her plans. Her mother was hesitant at first but has come around to the idea and
has told P14 that she supports her decision to pursue a career in human resources.

**Participant 15**

Participant 15 (P15) is a 23-year-old Chinese female who was born in China and moved to Canada by herself to attend university at the age of 19. In high school, P15 often thought about a job in human resources, business management, landscape biology, or nutrition. Her father supported these choices, and often reminded her to have a clear career plan in mind. He gave her some books on people who have been successful in business, and encouraged her to attain a high level of education (i.e., a master’s degree or Ph.D). Since she was doing well in science and math, she decided to enroll in a double major in statistics and ecology and evolutionary biology at U of T. At this point, her father changed his opinion about her career and emphasized that it was important for her to land a job after graduating. He also felt that it wasn’t essential that she attain a higher degree, since he feared it might dampen her prospects of finding a romantic partner. Currently, P15 has applied to graduate school in biostatistics and plans to work in the fields of conservation or ecology environment later on. Both of her parents support her in this plan. Overall, P15 does not feel negatively about her parental pressure experiences as she feels that her parents simply want what is best for her.

**Participant 16**

Participant 16 (P16) is a 22-year-old Chinese female who was born in China and moved to Canada by herself to attend university at the age of 18. As a child, P16 was often reminded by her parents that it was important to find a stable job. She also felt an extreme amount of pressure to excel in school. In high school, P16 thought strongly about becoming a teacher, however, her parents encouraged her to pursue a career in banking. She decided to enroll in the Rotman School of Management U of T in order to please her parents. Currently, she is not
enjoying her program because she is not interested in what she is studying. Her hopes of becoming a teacher have faded, as she knows her parents will not approve. Instead, she is considering a job in banking. Currently, her parents are pressuring her to either stay in Canada and get a job, or move back to China and attend graduate school. Career conversations are often stressful for her, as she does not feel fulfilled in business studies.

**Participant 17**

Participant 17 (P17) is a 20-year-old Indian female who was born in the United States and moved to India with her family soon after. When she was 11 years old, she moved to Canada. As a child, P17’s father introduced her to the field of science. At this time, she denied any direct pressure but felt an expectation from him to pursue something in the field of science. In high school, P17 considered being a physician or a fashion designer. Her father did not support her dream to go into fashion design, and instead encouraged her to pursue a job in medicine. She remembered feeling pressure from him during this time, as he would tell her that she should be more serious about her career future. P17 chose a double major in human biology and bioethics at U of T. In second year, she realized that pursuing a job as a physician might not be best suited to her personality, since it required many years of hard work both during and after schooling. At this point, she began to consider other jobs in the healthcare field including a nurse and pharmacist. Currently, she is still deciding which direction to take in the healthcare field, and keeps fashion designer as a side option. The pressure she receives from her father has increased, as he often encourages her to take the MCAT and talk to her professors about medical school. She often confides in her mother for support.

**Participant 18**

Participant 18 (P18) is a 22-year-old Chinese female who was born in China and moved
to Canada with her family when she was 6-years-old. In high school, P18 thought about a career in business or healthcare. Specifically within healthcare, she considered becoming a physician. Her parents supported this decision and emphasized that it was important for her to find a job with stability and financial security. She decided to major in human biology and biology at U of T. In her first year, she realized that there were other options of interest in the health care field including biotechnology, nursing, pharmacy, and physiotherapy. Her parents supported these options as well, since they too offered financial security. Overall, P18’s experience of parental pressure has been positive, since she feels it has helped her stay motivated and thoughtful about her career future.

**Participant 19**

Participant 19 (P19) is a 21-year-old Chinese female who was born in China and moved to Canada alone to attend university at the age of 18. As a child, P19 had thoughts of becoming a chef or a doctor. Her parents assumed P19 would follow in her father’s footsteps and become a doctor. After grade 10, however, P19 was certain that sciences were not her strength, and she told her parents that she would not continue in science. They respected this decision, but immediately encouraged her to pursue commerce-related fields. She decided to enroll in the Rotman School of Management program at U of T. It was at this point that she had frequent arguments with her mother over whether P19 should specialize in finance or accounting. They could not agree on either one and P19 remembers being particularly stressed during this time. In the end, she decided to specialize in accounting and hopes to work in an accounting-related career either for a medium-sized firm or for the government. Her desire to become a chef remains, and she believes she might pursue that career after working as an accountant for many years.
Participant 20

Participant 20 is a 21-year-old Chinese female who was born in China and moved to Canada with her family at the age of six. As a child, P20 often thought about becoming a lawyer, judge, or teacher. In high school, however, P20 was strongly encouraged by her parents to go into the sciences. At the time, she was doing better in arts than in sciences and therefore felt more competent in the arts. She decided to enroll at U of T and chose sociology and cognitive science as her majors. Sociology was chosen due to her interests and cognitive science was chosen to please her parents. In university, the parental pressure subsided since they were content that she was attending a reputable university and was enrolled in one major in the field of science. Currently, P20 is considering a job as a teacher or social worker and her parents are supportive of those options, and hope that she will go to graduate school to pursue those careers.

Parental Pressure Experiences and Career Exploration

The following two sections are divided into three time zones: childhood, high school, and university, respectively. These sections include summaries of participants’ parental pressure and career exploration experiences during these time periods. Within the discussion of parental pressure, trends relating to extent of pressure, desire to comply with parents’ career wishes, receiving financial support, and anxiety resulting from pressure will be explored. Within the discussion of career exploration, trends related to extent of exploration, search of person-career and person-academic fit, methods of exploration, happiness with academic choice, experience of stress during exploration, importance of seeking preferential occupation, and descriptions of dream careers will be explored.

Childhood
**Parental pressure experiences.** Participants were asked about their experiences of parental pressure. Questions related to parental pressure aimed at addressing parental opinions about career and felt experiences of career-related pressure. During childhood, most participants (17 out of 20) experienced a mild (P14, P18, P2, P20, P3, P5, P6, P8, P9) to moderate (P1, P10, P11, P12, P15, P17, P4, P7) degree of career-related parental pressure. A mild degree of parental pressure was defined as pressure that had little to no influence in the participant’s development, and was often characterized by statements that reflected that there was little to no felt pressure. For example, when asked whether she felt career pressure as a child, P18 stated,

> I guess not directly, I guess very indirectly because they emphasized the importance of work ethic, they always taught me that if I work hard, I can do whatever it is that I want to do (P18).

When asked to clarify whether this indirect influence felt like pressure, P18 stated,

> When I was young, I think no. Because I wasn’t thinking much about career options when I was young (P18).

Similarly, P5 emphasized that her parents would often focus on her strengths as a child. When asked about her parents’ opinions concerning her career future as a child, P5 stated,

> I think when I was quite young they didn’t really mention it but then opinions would kind of creep in - “you’re really good at this, you should become this when you grow up”. They said it in like not a serious way but as a kid you think “oh yeah, I do need to do that” (P5).

When asked whether she felt pressure from her parents during this time, P5 replied,

> No, I don’t think that they were putting pressure on me when I was younger (P5).

These statements given by P18 and P5 reflect a mild degree of parental pressure in childhood.

A moderate degree of parental pressure was defined as pressure that had a moderate
influence on the participant’s development and was characterized by statements that reflected
that pressure was felt but was not extreme in nature. P12 stated that she felt pressure from her
parents as a child. When asked to describe her experience, she stated,

I think they wanted me to at a young age, have a goal in life and wanted me to be in
medicine. I feel that from their actions and from their words. They’re hinting at that,
even if they don’t explicitly say that you must be a doctor, or you must do something in
health care. They had a lot of expectations (P12).

Similarly, P17 discussed the opinions of her father toward her career future as a child.
She stated,

He always pushed me, or not pushed me, but introduced me more to the science field
and I’ve always been exposed to that as a major field. I never looked at any other
options when I was younger. Science was a big thing (P17).

When asked whether P17 felt pressure at this time, she stated,

I didn’t feel pressure but I felt the expectation (P17).

Both P12 and P17 indicate a moderate degree of parental pressure experience
throughout childhood, since the pressure seemed to have a moderate level of influence on their
development but was not extreme in nature.

**High School**

**Parental pressure experiences.** Similar to childhood, most participants experienced a
mild (P12, P18, P19, P5, P8) to moderate (P1, P11, P14, P15, P16, P17, P2, P20, P3, P7, P9)
degree of career-related parental pressure in high school. For example, P8 reported that her
parents encouraged her in high school to pursue medical school and become a doctor. When
asked whether she felt pressured by these encouragements, she stated,

Not really. They were still just mentioning it. It was only pressure to go to university
but not pressure into a certain career field (P8).

Similarly, when asked about parental pressure experiences in high school, P5 stated,
I don’t think there was pressure then really it was just exploring what do you like to do and what are you good at. But no major pressure from them at that point (P5).

Both statements from P8 and P5 demonstrate a mild degree of parental pressure in high school.

A moderate degree of parental pressure in high school was demonstrated by P1, when she explained that her parents hoped that she would pursue a job in commerce. When asked whether she felt pressure during this time, she stated,

Yeah. They feel like they’re pretty knowledgeable in what I study so they would discuss my homework and they would say something like what you should do to work in a bank (P1).

Similarly, P11 discussed her experiences of parental pressure in high school,

When I was choosing programs they definitely didn’t want me to go into something like teaching. They did want me to pursue engineering or to look at things that would get me into medical school (P11).

Both statements from P1 and P11 reflect a moderate degree of parental pressure in high school, since they reflect a moderate influence on development.

**Exploration experiences.** Participants were asked about their career exploration experiences. These questions targeted time spent searching for information related to one’s career future. Most participants (16 out of 20) reported engaging in a low amount (P1, P10, P11, P12, P14, P15, P16, P18, P19, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9) of career exploration in high school. A low amount of career exploration was defined by participants’ beliefs that they engaged in a low amount of exploration. For example, P10 said that she did not spend a fair amount of time searching for information related to her career in high school. When asked to elaborate, she stated,

I didn’t know what I wanted. Going to university was the next step. We had a careers and civics class but I didn’t know (P10).
Similarly, P13 stated that she was mostly focused on getting into university at that time. When asked whether she felt she spent a fair amount of time searching for career information in high school, she responded,

No, because I didn’t really know what my career future was going to be. And I was mostly focused on school because I was always told just get into a good university and you’ll be good (P13).

In addition to career exploration, questions targeted participants’ academic exploration. These questions addressed time spent searching for information related to participants’ continued academic future. A total of 11 participants (P1, P14, P15, P17, P19, P2, P20, P3, P4, P6, P9) reported engaging in a high amount of academic exploration in high school. A high amount of academic exploration was defined by participants’ beliefs that they engaged in a high amount of academic exploration. For example, P14 denied any career exploration in high school, but stated that she felt she had engaged in a fair amount of academic exploration at that time,

For that I went to the university fair. I talked to a lot of friends who were applying. We had a lot of assemblies in grade 12. They basically went with us step by step how to apply to university. Some university representatives actually came to our school, so we got some information about the programs from that (P14).

Similarly, when asked about whether she engaged in academic exploration in high school, P2 stated,

Mainly in grade 12, yes I have. I was searching more for academic information as opposed to career information (P2).

Since 16 participants indicated low career exploration in high school and 11 participants indicated high academic exploration in high school, the data reflects a trend in which a heavier emphasis is placed on academic exploration than on career exploration in high school.
**Person-career fit.** Participants were also asked about amount of time spent considering person-career fit. To examine this, questions addressed participants’ time spent focusing on how their interests, abilities, and personality matched their career goals. Out of all three fit criteria, interests and abilities were the most thought about in high school. A total of 11 participants (P1, P11, P12, P2, P3, P4, P5, P16, P7, P8, P9) thought about whether their interests and abilities matched their career goals in high school. For example, P11 expressed that her best classes were science and math. When asked about whether she felt that she spent a fair amount of time thinking about whether she fit with her career of choice in high school, she stated,

I do, yes. I remember I loved my math classes. I really enjoyed calculus, so I knew I wanted to do something that involved math. I enjoyed the biological aspect as well and I’ve always been interested in physics. So physics, biology, and math all came together into engineering or medicine (P11).

When asked directly whether she thought about her ability in these subjects, she answered that she had. P8 was also asked about whether she searched for information about fit in high school. In response to this, she stated,

Yes I did search for that. By using career cruising website, they ask a lot of questions about your personal interests and skills, and I answered those questions and they seemed to match up (P8).

Both statements by P11 and P8 reflect that time spent thinking about fit was often characterized by thoughts about ability and interest match.

**Person-academic fit.** In addition to person-career fit, participants were asked whether they considered the ways in which their interests, abilities, and personalities matched their academic goals (e.g., university of choice, program of choice, major of choice). A total of seven participants (P10, P15, P3, P5, P6, P8, P9) thought about interest only with regard to fit.
For example, when asked about what was important in her considerations about whether she academic fit, P10 stated,

It was more interest. Out of everything I was interested in it was literally kinesiology or psychology and my parents didn’t want me to do kinesiology so I did psychology because I felt like it was the most interesting to me, but not because I was thinking about a career in it (P10).

When asked whether changes in her self-concept resulted in changes in academic interests, she stated,

No, definitely not. I think peer pressure was medical school. So I did try doing chemistry and biology and the physics but I didn’t enjoy it, I hated it. And then when I did philosophy, psychology, and religion class at my high school I loved it (P10).

P10’s statements imply that interests were the most important factor in decisions regarding her academic future.

A total of six participants (P1, P11, P17, P19, P6, P7), however, considered all three fit criteria (i.e., interest, ability and personality) with regard to academic fit during their high school years. For example, when asked whether interest was more important than personality and ability, P6 stated,

I think, for me, ability and personality was also an equal player. As long as it went along with my personality and what I was able to do I think it was, all of them were equally important to me I wouldn’t say that interest was more important than the rest (P6).

P6’s statements imply that all three fit criteria were important in decisions regarding her academic future.

*Person-career and person-academic fit.* It is important to note that although the above-noted participants to considered interest and ability with regard to person-career fit and interest, ability, and personality with regard to person-academic fit in high school, a total of 11 participants (P12, P15, P16, P17, P18, P19, P6, P7, P8, P9, P3) did not spend a lot of time or
place a lot of emphasis on whether they fit with their career and/or academic goals during their high school years. For example, P6 denied engaging in much thought about career or academic fit in high school. When asked whether she felt she spent a fair amount of time searching for information regarding career fit in high school, P6 stated,

I didn’t. I wasn’t doing that much research for careers in high school. I had a fair sense of what my personality was like and what I was interested in as far as career options go so that’s always why I kept health care in the front of my mind. But that’s the extent that it was in high school. (P6).

Similarly, when asked whether she spent time thinking about career fit in high school, P7 stated,

We were forced to do a lot of that in the careers class but I didn’t view it as very helpful. I mostly saw it as wishy-washy; they can’t tell my future (P7).

P7 also denied engaging in much thought about academic fit in high school,

I didn’t do a lot of that because I honestly didn’t know what the university experience would be like (P7).

Furthermore, P9 denied engaging in thought about career fit in high school,

I wouldn’t say it was important. I think it became much more important later. So in high school I didn’t really care about the job (P9).

It is therefore evident that many participants did not engage in much thought about whether they fit with their academic and/or career goals during their high school years.

**University**

**Parental pressure experiences.** During university years, a total of nine participants (P10, P12, P14, P15, P16, P2, P7, P8, P9) experienced a moderate degree of career-related parental pressure. For example, P10 felt that the pressure she had experienced in high school continued over into her university years, and even increased in severity. When asked about her parents’ opinions concerning her career future in university, P10 stated,
Now there’s a new pressure of finding a good job, like we know you are in the program but now you have to find a good job within a good healthcare center. It’s the same thing but concerning those next steps (P10).

In discussing P10’s feelings resulting from career conversations with her parents in university, she stated,

They caused me a lot of stress. And I’m referring more to my dad because he’s the one that has the authority in the family and he has a lot of opinions but his approach wasn’t that good. It wasn’t helpful. It was more like pressure-full like what are you going to do and how are you going to get there? (P10)

P10’s statements reflect a moderate degree of parental pressure, since the pressure seemed to have an influence on her development but was not extreme in nature. P12 also described a moderate degree of parental pressure in university. Her parents often reminded her to stay focused on her ultimate goal, and often discussed success stories of others succeeding in the field of medicine. When asked whether these reminders felt like pressure, she stated,

Yeah. It goes both ways. It’s a really good way to stay motivated and not lose hope but in the meantime I feel like that’s how they imply their expectations on me so that’s how the pressure comes out (P12).

P12 also described her father becoming upset and angry at times when she was not carrying out the career actions that he thought she should,

My dad would sit me down and tell me on Facebook or in person what you are doing is wrong, you should have done this, this, and this to avoid it. It’s more of a lecture, and he gives me half-hour lectures for something small (P12).

Similar to P10, P12’s descriptions of parental pressure during university reflect a moderate degree of pressure.

While nine participants experienced moderate pressure in university, a total of seven participants (P11, P17, P18, P19, P3, P5, P6) experienced a severe degree of parental pressure during their university years. A severe degree of parental pressure was defined as pressure that had a severe influence on the participant’s development and was characterized by statements
that described a level of pressure that was extreme in nature. For example, P17 explained that her parents had higher expectations for her after she began her undergraduate degree. In particular, her father mentioned often that he would like to see her apply to medical school, to do well on the MCAT’s, and to do well academically. In describing her parents’ reaction to a possible situation in which P17 did not carry out the career actions that they had set out for her, she stated,

They would not be happy. Even my mom I don’t think would be happy but she would support me. And my dad would too but it would be disappointing for them (P17).

Similarly, in discussing P17’s experience of her parents’ expectations, she stated,

A lot of expectations. My cousins for example, they are studying in India, their parents don’t have a lot of expectations. So I wonder, why am I the one who has all of these expectations? (P17)

In P6’s experience, she felt that her parents’ opinions played a large role in why she chose a science-based major,

So the fact that it was in sciences was mostly for them because of the medical school. I knew that I wasn’t as interested in it, but I just wasn’t comfortable at that point in time to tell them that it wasn’t for me (P6).

In discussing whether she would expect her parents to feel angry or upset with her if she decided to choose a different career path, she stated,

I think yes. I would feel that way if I were to go about my life just disregarding sciences or just completely disregarding any sort of university career. Like if I wanted to be a plumber they would be extremely upset with me (P6).

Both P17 and P6 statements describe a severe experience of parental pressure during university.

**Desire to comply.** With regard to parental pressure experiences, participants were asked about their desire to comply with the wishes of their parents. All participants demonstrated some desire to comply with the career wishes of their parents. Out of all 20 participants, a total
of nine participants (P12, P13, P14, P18, P19, P2, P20, P3, P4) demonstrated a desire to comply that remained consistent throughout their years of development. In other words, these participants described a desire to comply that did not fade as they aged. For example, when asked whether her desire to comply was as strong now as it was before, P2 said,

They are, because I still want to do something that they would approve of (P2).

Similarly, when P3 was asked whether she felt a desire to comply with her parent’s career wishes in high school, she stated,

Definitely. Because I didn’t want to rebel against them since I liked to please others. I wanted them to think I was very ambitious, so yeah (P3).

When asked again if P3 continuous to feel this desire in her older years, she stated,

Yeah. I’m trying not to now but it’s still really hard to just do what you want and what you need rather than what they want for you (P3).

The remaining 11 participants (P1, P10, P11, P15, P16, P17, P5, P6, P7, P8 P9) demonstrated a desire to comply that faded as they aged. For example, P10 described that she felt a need to please her father more when she was younger,

When I was younger I definitely felt like I was trying to please my dad. Now the things I do are for me. I still try to get the best marks and learn as much as I can and now I learn for me not just marks. (P10).

When asked how P10 dealt with her parental pressure, she stated,

Now I definitely think it’s for me. I definitely don’t think I’m doing this for my parents anymore – I’m definitely doing this for me now (P10).

Similarly, P5 described whether she felt a need to comply with her parents’ career requests during her university years,

Not really. I always want to make them happy. You don’t want to do things that upset them but at the same time I knew that doing something that was right for me was more important. So I kind of disregarded that at that point (P5).
Whether or not it decreased with age, all participants felt a desire to comply at one time or another.

**Anxiety resulting from pressure.** As well as feeling a desire to comply, a total of 13 participants (P10, P12, P13, P14, P15, P16, P17, P18, P3, P6, P7, P8, P9) described feeling anxious in response to the pressure they had received from their parents. For instance, when P3 was asked to reflect about her feelings associated with the pressure she has received from her parents overall, she stated,

I feel that it gives me a lot of anxiety. I understand they’re just trying to be concerned and share what they think is best for me but at the same time they don’t really listen to me and the things that I have to say and so that makes me feel stressed (P3).

P8 also reported a similar experience when asked the same question,

I’ve been very stressed about it in the first three years of university because they’ve always been pushing me to go in one direction. However, it was not something that I was able to do or wanted to do with myself so I was always very stressed. I would not repeat it with my kids (P8).

Both statements from P3 and P8 reflect that some anxiety was felt as a result of the parental pressure they received.

**Closeness and financial support.** All 20 participants described feeling some level of closeness with both parents. For example, when asked whether she felt close to her parents, P15 stated,

I’m very close to both of them. I talk to them almost every day (P15).

Similarly, P4 responded to the same question with,

I’m fairly close with them, yeah (P4).

Some participants described feeling closer to one parent. For example, P3 stated,

I would say I’m close to them but I’m closer to my mom than my dad (P3).
In addition to describing a feeling of closeness to one or both parents, many participants indicated engaging in a high level of communication with their parents. For instance, when asked how often she spoke to her parents, P2 stated,

Pretty much everyday. If not on the phone than text messaging (P2).

In response to the same question, P7 stated,

With my dad once a week. With my mom every other day or everyday (P7).

As well as feeling close with parents, all 20 participants received some level of financial support from their parents. Participants described receiving help with their rent, school, food, and phone bills. Out of 20 participants, 11 participants claimed that their parents paid for everything, while nine participants split the cost of living with their parents.

**Exploration experiences.** Most participants (17 out of 20) engaged in a high amount (P1, P10, P11, P12, P14, P15, P16, P18, P19, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9) of career exploration in university. Since most participants engaged in a low amount of exploration in high school, this data shows that as participants’ increased in age, their exploration of career options also increased. Rationale and support for this data will be discussed in the discussion section. P12, for example, when asked about whether she felt she engaged in a decent amount of exploration in university, stated,

Definitely. A lot more compared to high school. Especially now being an upper year undergrad, graduation is coming soon and I have to think about how I’m going to make my dream happen (P12).

Similarly, when asked the same question, P6 stated,

More time now than I did previously. All of the research that I’ve been discussing with you thus far has been throughout my university days so definitely more so than I was before and I’m definitely more focused on career choices. I am certainly more focused now than I was in high school (P6).
With regard to academic exploration, a total of 14 participants (P1, P10, P12, P15, P16, P17, P18, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P8, P9) engaged in a high amount of academic exploration in university. Interestingly, the extent of academic exploration remained consistent throughout high school and university for many participants, suggesting that exploration of future academic options remained important throughout changes in age and developmental stages. Similar to the previous finding, an explanation for this data will be discussed in the discussion chapter.

For example, when P5 was asked about whether she felt she had spent a fair amount of time searching for information related to her continued academic future during university, she stated,

Yeah, absolutely, I feel that’s what my primary focus has been. I was looking into the masters of clinical sciences at U of T and also masters of public health at Western University. I was also looking at medical school programs throughout Canada (P5).

Similarly, P10 explains that her engagement in academic exploration increased in fourth year. When asked the same question, P10 stated,

Yeah, in my fourth year. My last year I was constantly on the Internet looking for programs and what the school admissions requirements were (P10).

Furthermore, 17 participants (P1, P10, P11, P12, P14, P15, P16, P17, P18, P2, P20, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9) stated that their search for academic information was related to their search for career information in university. For example, when P14 was asked whether her search for career information was related to academic information, she stated,

Yeah, because at that time I was thinking this is what I want to do. I want to help people. So social work seemed to be a good option and clinical psychology is not pure research so that way you get to recruit people and talk to them. So at that point I was thinking of what to do for my life (P14).

Similarly, P12 stated,
Yes, definitely. There’s no reason why I would look into medical school if I didn’t want to be a doctor. I guess most people who I know that apply actually know that they can do it, that they can succeed and this is what they actually want to do (P12).

Interestingly, in comparison to these participants who stated that their academic search was related to their career search in university, only 12 participants stated that their search for academic and career information was related during their high school years. This data indicates that as participants’ aged and became closer to their career goals, their search for future academic options became increasingly related to their search for career options. Furthermore, since most participants (16 out of 20) did not engage in a large amount of career exploration in high school, these findings also support the notion that attention to career options increased as participants aged and entered new stages of their career development.

**Person-career fit.** Similar to high school years, participants were asked whether they spent a fair amount of time thinking about how their interest, abilities, and personalities matched their career goals during university. Interestingly, while most participants thought about whether their interests and abilities matched their career goals in high school, most participants (16 out of 20) thought about whether all three fit criteria (e.g., interests, abilities, personality) matched their career goals during their university years (P1, P11, P12, P13, P14, P15, P16, P17, P19, P10, P3, P4, P6, P7, P8, P9). This data shows that overall, personality was more important in thought processes about person-career fit in university than in high school. For example, when asked about her thought process with regard to person-career fit, P13 stated,

> Interests, yes. Abilities, kind of. And personality, yeah, I guess. I would think if I could actually imagine myself in that kind of working environment (P13).

Some participants stated that they noticed an increase in attention to personality match in their university years. For example, P12 stated,
In high school I focused most on abilities and interest part - I was just trying to discover in my search in the field of medicine. But after coming to university I became more aware of my personality and characteristics, not just emphasizing on my interests and abilities (P12).

This statement by P12 reflects increasing attention to personality with regard to person-career fit in her university years.

**Person-academic fit.** With regard to person-academic fit, a total of 10 participants (P1, P11, P14, P15, P16, P18, P20, P3, P6, P7) thought about whether all three fit criteria (i.e., interests, abilities, personality) fit with their academic goals while a total of 5 participants (P13, P2, P4, P5, P8) thought about whether their interests and abilities fit with their academic goals in university. In comparison to high school, this data suggests that the number of participants who thought about all three fit criteria increased over time.

Second, it suggests that thought about interest only with regard to academic fit decreased, since only two participants thought about interest only in their university years. Overall, this data indicates that more participants thought about personality and ability match in their exploration of fit with academic goals in university. For example, when asked about time spent thinking about person-academic fit in university, P14 stated,

Well, one of the reasons why I said graduate school was out was because I just can’t see myself sitting there doing a research program everyday in the lab and sometimes research might go wrong, and I really don’t like that kind of fuss, verses event planning I actually like that kind of stress (P14).

P14 also made it clear that she felt that person-academic fit was very important, and became increasingly aware of this over the course of her undergraduate degree. Similarly, when P6 was asked whether she thought about how she would fit with graduate school or medical school in university, she stated,
Yeah I do, I mean I think that they are very different programs that prepare you in very
different ways and so I’m still considering that. I’m not 100% sure that graduate school
would fit my personality (P6).

When asked directly whether she felt it was important to find an academic program or
major that matched her personality, abilities, and interests, P6 stated,

The same; very important. There’s no separation for academic interests and career
options for me at this point. If I’m deciding on a neuroscience major and a masters
program, that means I will be going into neuroscience as a field so it’s certainly more
specific now than it was in high school (P6).

Both statements by P6 and P14 indicate a focus on all three fit criteria: interests,
personality, and ability with regard to academic goals. The following two examples illustrate
an emphasis on interests and ability with regard to academic fit during university years. When
P2 was asked whether she spent time thinking about person-academic fit in university, she
replied,

Yeah I have thought about that a lot. Just whether I was able to continue my studies in
graduate school, just knowing from my grades and stuff like that. Or whether I would
actually want to continue studies or whether I would just find a job right away (P2).

This statement reflects thought about ability and interest, and whether they fit with her
academic options. Furthermore, when P4 was asked about how important it was for her to find
a program or major that matched her personality, abilities, and interests, she stated,

Important because I want to make sure it matches my abilities (P4).

Later on, when she was asked about her reasons for pursuing future schooling for
Teaching, P4 implied that interests were also an important factor,

I love kids and teaching is always something that I’ve wanted to do with my life. With
volunteering, I’ve actually led quite a few discussions in class and I really enjoyed it
(P4).

**Person-career and person-academic fit.** In comparison to high school, when 11
participants reported placing a low emphasis on person-career and/or person-academic fit, a
total of 13 participants (P15, P16, P17, P18, P2, P20, P3, P7, P9, P12, P19, P6, P8) reported placing a high emphasis on person-career and/or person-academic fit in university. Furthermore, 11 of these 13 participants (P12, P15, P16, P17, P18, P7, P9, P19, P6, P8, P3) were the same participants who had reported placing a low emphasis on fit in high school. Therefore, 11 participants implied that their emphasis on academic and/or career fit increased over the years, while the remaining two participants implied that their emphasis on fit remained high throughout both high school and university.

P3, for example, was one of 11 participants whose emphasis on fit had increased over time. When asked about whether she spent time thinking about career fit in university, P3 stated,

Yeah I think I did it more in university because even though I felt pressure to pursue medicine I really thought about does this fit me, could I do this, do I want to do it, so I definitely thought about that more (P3).

Similarly, when asked the same question, P7 replied,

Yeah I would say when I started doing more research that became an important aspect. For example just the decision of would I want to go to graduate school or would I want to enter the workforce after undergrad. Whether I would be unchallenged in the workforce if I didn’t’ go into a more research oriented stream. Whether I would be too overwhelmed in research (P7).

These statements by P3 and P7 reflect an increasing emphasis on person-career and person-academic fit throughout university.

**Methods of exploration.** With regard to career exploration, participants were asked from what sources they had received the majority of their career information. They were also asked about memorable career exploration experiences, and whether their methods of career exploration had changed over the years.
All 20 participants consulted a variety of sources for career information. The most common exploration methods included searching online, consulting parents, friends, teachers, and career counsellors, and obtaining information from careers class in high school. For example, when P1 was asked about where she received the majority of her career information, she stated,

> Usually I would do an online search for jobs and if something interesting came up I would just go apply. And also I hear different information from my friends and if they told me there are some opportunities I would just go for it (P1).

When asked the same question, P10 stated,

> I talk to people from church. I try to talk to people within my profession in school. I try to get advice about opportunities about what I can do. And I still even look on the Internet a lot too to see what’s available and even what further school I can do to make me more knowledgeable or have better skills (P10).

Other, less common, methods of exploration, included obtaining information through volunteer experiences, work experiences, internships, and mentorship programs. For example, P14 stated that she received a lot of her career information from the mentorship program at the University of Toronto and from volunteer experiences,

> My mentor this year is from marketing so that’s a really big change because I found out that I like to do what I did for my school club, which was promoting every event, organizing every event. And then I’ve been volunteering in the hospital so I asked the coordinator about the positions that I can have after graduating with a bachelor’s here in the hospital (P14).

**Experiencing stress.** Participants were asked directly whether they felt the process of career decision-making to be stressful. Most participants (18 out of 20) replied that it was. For instance, when asked about whether she found this process to be stressful, P1 replied,

> Yea, it is. It’s a lot of pressure because I don’t want to choose the wrong career path that I’m not really passionate about, so that’s the main pressure (P1).

Similarly, P17 replied,
Yeah, I do because it’s about your whole life. What you decide now will impact what you do in the future (P17).

One participant in particular described a very severe experience of stress. When asked the same question, P10 replied,

Yeah, very. I was so stressed out that I had to go see a therapist (P10).

Since only two participants denied any experience of stress, it is clear that stress was a theme that was prevalent among many participants.

**Happy with academic choices.** Participants were asked whether they felt they were happy with their university program and major of choice. Although most participants described career decision-making to be stressful, 15 out of 20 participants described feeling comfortable, happy, and pleased with their academic program and major choice. When asked whether she felt happy with her academic choices she had made, P13 stated,

I’m content. I don’t regret any of it, because I like it, but I feel I like my minors better than my majors. So, I would have liked to focus more on anthropology if I could do it all over again (P13).

When asked the same question, P14 responded,

I really like it. I have zero regrets choosing psychology and health and disease. They’re broad but to me they cover so much and I really like psychology (P14).

Both P13 and P14’s statements reflect happiness and content with their program and major of choice.

**Dream career.** Participants were asked about whether they valued finding a job that they preferred, and also about their “dream career”. A total of 19 out of 20 participants stated that at some level, it was important for them to find a job that they prefer. In responding to whether or not it was important for her, P15 stated,

It’s very important because I don’t think I can survive if I’m not interested in what I’m doing with my life (P15).
Some participants responded by saying that they thought preference was important, but that other factors were important as well. For example, when asked the same question, P20 responded,

I think out of 100% it's probably at most 30-40% since right now I'd rather focus on getting a job that's within my field of study so it doesn't have to be something that I'm really into, it just has to be something that I can build upon (P15).

P20’s statement reflects that along with job preference, finding a job in her field of study is also important to her. Only one participant stated that job preference was not important.

When participants were asked about how they would envision a “perfect career situation”, or a “dream career”, 12 participants emphasized that the following three factors were important in a “dream career”: enjoyment, helping people, and learning new things. For example, when asked what was important to her in a dream career, P10 stated,

I hope that money is not an issue in the sense that I don’t want to feel like I’m working for money. I want to enjoy what I’m doing. I’m in the profession I’m in because I’m helping people and I’m talking to them (P10).

When asked the same question, P13 stated,

I’d like to be in an environment where I’m learning everyday. I’d like to have new experiences. I’d like the option of travel and, something where I’m using my brain. I don’t need to be like researching but I need to be solving something (P13).

While some participants described factors that were essential to a “perfect career situation”, some participants described particular dream careers (e.g., chef, hair stylist) that differed from the career that they had chosen to pursue. Career compromise was therefore a key component in these participants’ career choice process. This phenomenon will be discussed further in the discussion section.
Perceptions of Control

The following three sections are titled: overall, career, and pressure on control respectively. These sections divide participants’ perceptions of control into three categories: control over general events, control over career events, and beliefs as to whether parental pressure affected level of control. In discussing overall and career control, most participants believed they held a moderate amount to high amount of control over general and career events. In the last section, pressure on control, most participants believed that pressure they had received from their parents affected their levels of control over their career environment.

Overall

A total of 10 participants (P10, P12, P15, P18, P20, P3, P4, P6, P7, P8) believed that they had a moderate amount of control overall. A moderate amount of control was defined as demonstrating having a moderate amount of control over events that occur, achievements, and choices. Furthermore, moderate control was defined as having as last half of the control in the hands of the participants, in comparison to luck, fate, or other people. For example, when asked whether she believes there are limits to what she can achieve, P4 stated,

I think I can achieve pretty much anything (P4).

Furthermore, when she was asked what amount of control she feels lies in her own hands rather than in the hands of luck, fate, or others, she responded,

I don’t know. Probably 70% relies on you and your own hands and 30% relies on luck and other people around you (P4).

Similarly, when asked whether P10 believed there were limits to what she could achieve, she noted,

I don’t know. From all my experiences combined if you work hard you can get what you deserve but I’m a pretty spiritual person too so I know that there’s a limit to control (P10).
When asked whether she felt that the events that occurred in her life were largely outside of her control or largely within her control, she said,

I don’t know, half and half. For example if I just studied and did nothing else, I could have gotten into medical school or done physical therapy, but then all of these situations arise. Like mental health and panic attacks. So I think there’s a limit to people and to humans. I think we try to control things but it’s not always possible (P10).

While P4, P10, and other participants demonstrated that they held a moderate amount of control overall, seven participants (P1, P11, P14, P16, P17, P19, P9) indicated that they believed they held a high amount of control overall. A high amount of control was defined as perceiving a high amount of control over events that occur, achievements, and choices. Furthermore, a high level of control was defined as perceiving oneself to have the control in one’s own hands rather than in the hands of luck, fate, or other people. For example, when asked whether she felt that events are largely within her control of largely outside, P11 responded,

Largely within. I’d say 75% within and 25% outside (P11).

Furthermore, when asked about what amount of control lies in her hands, P11 stated,

In my own hands I’d say. I don’t really believe in fate. I think luck factors into power dynamics and that can be pretty important, other people, somewhat but not really. I think I have the majority of control (P11).

P11’s statement reflected a high amount of control overall.

Career

Nine participants (P10, P14, P16, P17, P20, P3, P4, P6, P7) believed they had a moderate amount of control over their career. A moderate amount of control over career was defined as believing in having a moderate amount of control over career actions and career
choices, and having a decent amount of career choice. P20, for example, when asked about how much control she felt she had over her career actions, stated,

   I would say the control is all in my hands, except that I’m not really sure of what the result will be career-wise (P20).

When asked specifically about what career actions she felt she had control over and what career actions she did not, P20 stated,

   Well I think that I definitely have less control over things like graduate school or further education but finding a job would be under my control. Because for graduate school they have different levels of requirements so that makes it a lot more difficult whereas for most jobs they will tell you straight forward if you’re suitable or not (P20).

Lastly, when P20 was asked whether she felt she had too much control or choice over her career actions, she stated,

   I think enough but not too much (P20).

Similarly, when asked about how much control P3 felt she had over her career actions, she stated,

   A moderate level of control. I definitely have control over what sorts of jobs I apply to and the school programs I apply to, but I definitely feel that I’m not fully in control because I feel like I have to withhold information from my parents so they won’t get upset with me or try to change my mind (P3).

While P3, P20, and the remaining seven participants indicated having a moderate amount of control over their career, 10 participants (P1, P11, P12, P13, P15, P18, P19, P2, P5, P9) indicated having a high amount of control over their career. A high amount control over career was defined as having a high amount of control over career actions and career choices, and beliefs about having a high amount of career choice. P13, for example, when asked about how much control she felt she had over her career actions, stated,

   A lot, like 80%. The other 20% are limits you set for yourself (P13).

When probed about what career actions she felt she had control over, she stated,
I think I have a lot of control because I can decide where I apply and all the choices I have is based on what I choose. So if you’re only talking about the choice itself its 100% me, but that journey can vary. And I think it’s different for every step as well (P13).

Similarly, when asked about the level of control P2 felt she had over career actions and which actions she had control over, she responded,

85%, I think. I feel like I do have a lot of control over them, it’s just whether I’m motivated to do it I guess. Anywhere from applying to a program or just applying for a job or a volunteer job it’s kind of up to me to do it (P2).

Both P13 and P2’s statements indicate a high perception of control over their career.

**Parental Pressure and Control**

Participants were asked whether they felt that the pressure they had received from their parents influenced their perceptions of control over their career environment. Out of 20 participants, 18 believed that at some level, their parental pressure had influenced their perceptions of control over their career environment. Many participants (P10, P13, P19, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P8) felt that the pressure had affected them in a negative way, by limiting their perceptions of control over their career future. For example, P10 stated,

Yeah, I would say so. Because the only options I had were to do something in the professional arena. So I never looked at anything else. So I could be doing something else that I’m pretty sure I would love and I am not aware of the other options out there because I’ve always just looked at such a small professional area (P10).

Similarly, P13 stated,

Yes. I limit myself because of what I know my parents want and what my family wants. They chose to focus on the sciences, and that didn’t always tie into my interests, because I like art (P13).

A fewer number of participants, however, (P11, P12, P15, P18, P20) felt that the pressure they received from their parents had increased their perceptions of control over their career future. P12, for example, stated,
Definitely, My dad always taught us that the harder you work, the better you do. And I think that has rubbed off on me (P12).

Similarly, P15 stated,

Yeah. Their pressure sometimes will push me to do things (P15).

The statements from P12 and P15 imply that their parental pressure had a positive influence on their career environments. Whether positive or negative, most participants believed that the pressure they received from their parents affected their perceptions of control over their career actions.
CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Findings discussed in the results chapter are reviewed within the present chapter. The results emphasized parental pressure and career exploration experiences of young adults throughout childhood, high school, and university. In addition, the results highlighted perceptions of control with regard to young adults’ overall and career environment. The discussion chapter will first outline the conceptual and theoretical implications of the study. Within this arena, the study’s findings pertaining to young adult career development experiences will be discussed within the following areas: 1) Parental pressure experiences, 2) Career exploration experiences, 3) Perceptions of control. Lastly, practical implications and limitations of the study’s findings are also examined, as well as directions for future research.

**Conceptual and Theoretical Implications**

This section describes conceptual and theoretical implications, which derive from the findings of the study. The findings are organized into the following subheadings: parental pressure experiences, career exploration experiences, and perceptions of control. Within the areas of parental pressure and career exploration, extent of pressure and exploration are reviewed as well as the relationship between parental pressure and exploration. Within the final area, perceptions of control, extent of perceived control relating to participants’ overall and career environment are discussed in addition to the relationship between parental pressure and perceived control. Relevant findings within each of these sections are also discussed. Lastly, conceptual and theoretical implications are summarized and discussed relevant to important career theories and the study’s research questions.
Parental Pressure Experiences

Parents have a strong impact on the career development of young adults. Expectations and wishes of one’s family are often the most significant factors that can affect an individual’s career development (Duffy & Dik, 2009; Greenhaus & Powell, 2006; Halpern & Murphy, 2005). In line with the literature, all participants in the present study experienced some degree of career-related parental pressure at one time or another. Overall, it was found that career-related parental pressure was more severe in university in comparison to earlier years (i.e., high school and childhood). Although there is no research that has directly examined career-related parental pressure over time, research in the field of parenting suggests that parenting often changes with the changing age of the offspring (Feldman, Wentzel, & Gehring, 1989). Furthermore, it is possible that as young adults approach their careers, parents may feel an increasing sense of urgency about their child’s career development and thus increase their level of career pressure. In fact, some participants (P11, P17, P19, P3, P6) implied that the proximity to career had a direct impact on the heightened level of career-related pressure in university.

Closeness to parents, financial support, desire to comply. In addition to finding that young adults felt increased parental pressure with age, the present study found that closeness to parents was common. This finding is in line with other research that suggests that young adults and their parents are closer now than they were in previous generations (Hofschneider, 2013; Pricer, 2008). Research also shows that parents who are closer to their children are often more likely to “coddle” their children and take an extreme interest in their child’s life (Pricer, 2008). Therefore, although this study did not investigate this directly, it is possible that the closeness of the young adult-parent relationship heightens the experiences of pressure. This process could be two-fold, such that a parent who is closer to their child might be more likely to
pressure their child and a child who is close to their parent may be more likely to feel the expectations/pressure of the parent.

In addition to a heightened feeling of closeness, this study found that young adults received some level of financial support from their parents. In particular, many participants (P1, P12, P14, P15, P16, P18, P19, P2, P7, P8, P9) reported that their parents paid for everything (i.e., rent, food, school, phone bills). This finding is supported by research that suggests that many young adults are dependent on their parents for academic and career resources (Labas & Ljubicic, 2012). This is true more so now than in previous generations, due to the worsened state of the economy and a decrease in young adults’ emotional and financial security.

Both findings stated above (e.g., closeness, receiving financial support) have strong implications for the final important piece of data found with regard to experiences of parental pressure; all participants felt a desire to comply with the career wishes of their parents at one point or another. This finding is supported by research that suggests that children, adolescents, and young adults often seek the approval of their parents (Pickhardt, 2011; Rohner, Khaleaque, & Cournoyer, 2007). Since parental approval-seeking is common, it is likely that this phenomenon affects the parental pressure experience, since it is probable that approval-seeking would increase the susceptibility of a young adult to the career opinions of his or her parents.

Due to the existing research on the topic as well as the findings from the present study, it is likely that closeness, financial support, and desire to comply are all inter-related processes that have a bi-directional relationship with parental pressure experiences. In particular, receiving financial support and wanting to comply to the wishes of the parents are highly related, since a young adult who is supported financially by her parents is more likely to feel
guilty if she decides to take a different route than her parents wish. Some participants explicitly stated that one reason they want to comply with their parents’ wishes is that they receive financial support for schooling and thus want to avoid feeling guilty for not complying with parental wishes.

This study also found that some young adults’ desire to comply had waned over the years. Many participants (P1, P10, P11, P15, P16, P17, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9) felt that their desire to comply had faded with age. This finding is also in line with other research that has shown that as children turn into adolescents who then turn into young adults, they desire an increased level of independence from parents in all aspects of their lives, including career-related aspects (Taylor, 2010). Therefore, it is possible that an increasing need for independence facilitates a decreasing desire to comply with the wishes of the parents.

**Anxiety from pressure.** The present study found that overall, parental pressure induced feelings of anxiety in young adults. Research on the impact of career-related parental involvement has mixed results. Although some research has found that parental involvement is a positive experience for young adults (Sickinger, 2012), other research has found it to affect young adults negatively (Splete & Freeman George, 1985; Dietrich & Kracke, 2009). Although the present study did not conduct an in-depth investigation on whether the impact of parental pressure had negative or positive outcomes, the results indicate that over half of participants felt anxiety as a result of parental pressure. This provides empirical support that parental pressure can have a negative impact on the emotional stability and wellbeing of offspring. That being said, a few participants noted that overall, their experience of parental pressure was positive. Overall, these findings demonstrate that each young adult can have their own unique experience of parental pressure, which can range from positive to negative.
Career Exploration

**Extent of career exploration.** The current study found that young adults appeared to engage in a low amount of career exploration in high school and a high amount of career exploration in university. Overall, research supports this finding, since career exploration is often correlated with developing vocational maturity (Super, 1990; Sharf, 2010; Patton & Lokan, 2001). Most participants indicated directly that they were not engaging in thought about a future career in high school. One reason for this may be because career indecision is common in the early stages of career development (Felman, 2003), and thus would make exploring one particular career path improbable. Furthermore, participants often noted that their exploration efforts in high school were focused mainly on academic exploration (i.e., university, program, major of choice). Reasoning for this finding will be discussed in the following sections.

**Role of parental pressure on career exploration.** Interestingly, at times when parental pressure was most extreme (i.e., university years), young adults engaged in more career exploration. This finding is contradictory to other research that suggests that parental pressure might negatively affect career exploration (Dietrich & Kracke, 2009; Kracke & Noack, 2005). However, there are a couple of potential reasons why career exploration increased in the face of increasing parental pressure. First, research has shown that career exploration increases with age and the development of vocational maturity, which partly explains the increase in career exploration over time. Second, since the present study found that a desire to comply faded with age for many participants, it is possible that increasing independence from parental wishes facilitated increased career exploration, especially in cases in which investigation of a particular career path contrasts with the career wishes of her parents. An increasing desire for independence and increasing vocational maturity (Taylor, 2010; Patton & Lokan, 2001) may
account for the findings, since it is possible that these processes minimized the effect of the felt experience of parental pressure in university.

**Extent of academic exploration.** The current study found that unlike career exploration, young adults engaged in a high amount of academic exploration in high school and university. A university or college degree has become a requirement in today’s occupational world, rather than a luxury, as employment opportunities for those without a university degree continue to plummet (Hirsch, 2008). Furthermore, income for non-university graduates is significantly lower than income for university graduates (Sharf, 2010). Therefore, the current study’s findings describing a high level of academic exploration in high school matches this research, since university or college is often the next step for today’s high school students.

The finding that the extent of academic exploration remains consistent into university years also compliments this research since enrolling in graduate school has also become increasingly desired and common (Hirsch, 2008). Lastly, this finding also complements another key result of the present study: young adults found their academic exploration to be highly related to their career exploration in university. Since career exploration was shown to improve in university, it is understandable that academic exploration remained important, since these two types of exploration were found to be highly related at the time. Others have discussed the relatedness of academic and career exploration. For instance, Lent, Brown, and Hacket (2002) emphasize the integration of academic and career exploration, since academic choices often lay the foundation for career paths.

In comparison to high school, a higher number of young adults reported that their academic exploration was highly related to their career exploration in university. This fits with
other research that suggests that some high school students do not consider whether their academic interests are related to their career interests, particularly in fields where an undergraduate degree in a non-related subject can be a prerequisite for continued education or job opportunities in that field (Rowh, 2003). For example, if a student is considering a career in law, an undergraduate degree in any subject is considered an appropriate precursor. Therefore, a student who wants to become a lawyer could enroll in any undergraduate university major. Furthermore, since graduate level academic pursuits are often more subject-specific than in undergraduate school (e.g., medical school vs. arts and science), this may explain increased relatedness that is found between career and academic exploration in university.

**Person-career and person-academic fit.** Both self and environment exploration, and the fit between them, is a vital aspect of career exploration (Porfeli & Skorikov, 2010). Overall, this study confirmed this finding, since most participants had engaged in some form of fit-related exploration. Furthermore, both person-career and person-academic fit exploration was found to increase with age. In particular, young adults placed less emphasis on fit in high school than they did in university. This finding supports other research that has found career exploration to be most prominent during late adolescence and early adulthood (Jordaan, 1963; Super, 1990). Specifically concerning fit, students in grade 12 engaged in more self and environment exploration than their grade 9 counterparts (Taveira, Silva, Rodriquez, & Maia, 1998). Since the current study did not specifically examine differences in fit exploration between grade 9 and grade 12, this research does not match exactly the results of this study, but provides support for this research since emphasis on fit increased with age and maturity.

This finding also complements the above-noted finding concerning increases in the extent of career exploration in university. It is clear that as young adults increase in age and
become closer to their careers, they search for more career-related information about the work environment (e.g., career options, salary, education required, work-life balance), the self (e.g., personality, interests, abilities), and the fit between them.

**Person-career fit.** The results of this study indicate that out of all three fit criteria, young adults thought most about interest and ability match with regard to career. Although most participants did not explicitly say that they focused more on interests and abilities than on personality, there was more discussion around interests and ability match than on personality match in high school. Although an overall increase in emphasis on career fit with increases in age complements the above-noted study by Taveira, Silva, Rodriquez, and Maia (1998), no research has explored thought processes about specific fit characteristics (i.e., personality, ability, interest) with regard to career. These results are among the first to be presented about fit characteristics explored in adolescence and young adulthood.

Even though there is no research to support this finding, there are many factors that may have contributed to the neglect in personality-career match in high school. First, since young adults were found to engage in a low amount of career exploration in high school, it is unlikely that much attention would be given to all three fit characteristics with regard to person-career fit. Second, since young adults were found to engage in a high amount of academic exploration in high school, and since many young adults thought about interest-only with regard to academic choices, it is possible that young adults were accustomed to considering mainly interest-related matches in high school and thus thought mainly about interest match with regard to career during this time.

Interestingly, young adults engaged in thought about all three fit criteria (i.e., interest, ability, personality) in university. It seems that young adults developed new insight into the
importance of including personality in person-career fit thought processes in university. This finding also fits with the result that young adults placed a higher emphasis on fit in university. When young adults are thinking more often about how they fit with their future career options, they are more likely to think about how all three fit criteria (i.e., personality, abilities, interest) fit with particular careers, rather than thinking only about interest and ability match.

**Person-academic fit.** With regard to academic fit, this study found that a number of young adults placed an emphasis on interest only during high school years. This finding is supported by other research that has found that some high school students who struggle with identity formation typically make academic choices based solely on their interests (Kimweli & Richards, 1999).

In addition to a group of young adults who placed emphasis on interest only during high school, a number of young adults also placed emphasis on all three fit criteria during high school years. This data contrasts with university years, since most young adults placed an emphasis on all three fit criteria in university, rather than focusing equally on interest-only and all three fit criteria. These results indicate that while there were a fair number of young adults who focused only on how their interests matched their academic choices in high school, there were very few who did the same in university.

Therefore, it is clear that an emphasis on all three fit criteria is more common among young adults in university. This finding is consistent with the above-noted finding emphasizing that attention to academic fit increased during university years. These two findings support each other, since an increase in fit is likely to produce more in-depth thought about how each individual fit characteristic (i.e., interest, ability, personality) fit with future academic options.
Furthermore, university or college is often considered the next logical step following high school (Hirsch, 2008). Therefore, it is possible that high school students think mainly about interest match when considering academic options, since it is the next step regardless of future academic or career interests. However, graduate school is not necessary in many career fields and students can either choose to begin working right after they finish their undergrad, or enroll in graduate school. Therefore, many students would likely examine all three fit criteria to carefully determine whether graduate school is the right step for them following university.

**Role of parental pressure on fit.** Similar to the discussion about an increase in career exploration in the face of increased parental pressure, fit also increased in the face of increased parental pressure (i.e. during university years). Therefore, it is possible that the same factors (i.e., increasing independence, developing vocational maturity) are at play with this trend. These factors might explain why young adults placed more emphasis on person-career and person-academic fit at times when career-related parental pressure was most extreme.

**Methods of exploration.** The results of this study indicate that young adults used a variety of methods to explore career options. Out of all methods of exploration, searching online was the most common. Young adults also used a variety of other sources including talking to counsellors, parents, friends, teachers, and receiving information in careers class. These methods have been documented in other research investigating the career exploration of young adults (Sharf, 2010). A fewer number of participants used other sources for information including volunteer experience, work experience, co-op, mentorship, and job extern opportunities, extra-curricular activities, and networking with alumni and professionals in the field. The observation that young adults differed in their methods of career exploration
complements the finding that individual difference is a strong component in explaining why people often differ in their methods of exploration (Blustein, 1995).

**Happy with academic choice.** Although parental pressure was common in the present study, most participants described feeling content with their current academic program and major of choice. In some cases, young adults had switched their university major, and were happier with their second choice. Unfortunately, there is no research that has been conducted directly on the prevalence of happiness with chosen major or its interaction with the presence of career-related parental pressure. Based on the current findings, it appears that many young adults were happy with their major despite the pressures of their parents. Although this study did not examine this directly, it is possible that young adults’ increasing sense of independence and choosing a major of interest accounted for these findings. Furthermore, some participants noted that their career interests aligned with the career wishes of their parents. Due to a common desire to comply, this may explain the described feeling of contentment with their academic choice.

**Dream career.** This study found that most young adults felt that it was important for them to find an occupation that they prefer. Many participants noted that being interested in their job and enjoying their job were the most important factors in career selection. These findings fit with other research that highlights one’s occupation as a central component of one’s life (Porfeli & Lee, 2012). In terms of a “dream career”, it was found that the following three factors were the most common components of a “dream career”: enjoyment, helping others, and learning new things. Other participants noted control, authority, stability, benefits, and a flexible schedule to be important in their idea of a perfect career. Although research has suggested that enjoyment and interest play a large role in career desirability (Creed & Blume,
2013), there is no support for the other factors in considerations of dream careers. Therefore, this finding sheds new light on the factors important to young adults’ desirable career situations.

Some participants indicated specific dream careers (i.e., chef, hair stylist) that differed from the career that they had chosen to pursue. This finding is supported by other research that demonstrates career compromise to be a prevalent phenomenon among young adults (Creed & Blume, 2013). Career compromise occurs when one chooses a less desirable career option due to the particular circumstance or to obtain other valuable career characteristics (i.e., career opportunity, stability). Since this study did not investigate the relationship between parental pressure and career compromise, it is unclear how parental pressure influenced decisions to compromise.

**Experiencing stress.** The current study found that most young adults noticed that the career decision-making process induced feelings of stress. This finding is supported by other research that demonstrates that stress is often a concern for young adults during the career development process (Splete & Freeman-George, 1985). The most common factors involved in the experience of stress expressed by participants included pressure from others to make a decision, career indecision, and having to balance career decision-making with other workloads (i.e., school). Pressure from others has been cited by others as a large component of stress (Rowh, 2008) as has career indecision (Feldman, 2003). Workload balance has not been documented as a contributor to stress during career development.

**Perceptions of Control**

**Extent of perceived control.**

**Overall.** This study found that levels of perceived control for young adults’ overall
ranged from moderate to high. This was reflected in participants’ statements indicating a moderate to high amount of control over general events, achievements, and choices. When this finding is considered in the context of the literature on parental pressure, these results contrast with literature that suggests parental pressure would negatively affect levels of perceived control, such that perceptions of control would be lower when experiencing parental pressure (Perez & Cumsille, 2012; Perlmutter, Scharff, Karsh, & Monty, 1980). Therefore, these findings raise interesting questions about the relationship between parental pressure and overall perceived control. According to this study, parental pressure has either little effect on one’s perceived control or has a positive influence.

With regard to parental pressure having little effect on one’s overall perceived control, one possible reason for this is that young adults’ perceptions of control over their overall environment could be influenced by other factors that do not involve interactions with parents (e.g., self-efficacy, financial resources, naivety) (Selander, Marnetoft, Asell, & Selander, 2008). With regard to parental pressure having a positive influence on overall perceived control, there have been no studies to date that have examined this phenomenon or provided evidence to support this notion.

Career. In terms of career environment, young adults were found to also have moderate to high levels of perceived control. This was reflected in participants’ opinions that they had a moderate to high level of control over their career actions and career choices, and had a moderate to high amount of career choice. This finding also contrasts with other research that suggests young adults are particularly susceptible to low levels of perceived control with regard to their career actions and opportunities due to difficulties associated with gaining employment (Fournier & Pelletier, 1996).
Similar to overall perceived control, findings concerning career-related perceived control contrast with research that suggests parental pressure would negatively affect levels of perceived control in the offspring (Perez & Cumsille, 2012; Perlmuter, Scharff, Karsh, & Monty, 1980). According to the findings of the present study, career-related perceived control has either no relationship with parental pressure (i.e., each construct is independent of each other) or is positively influenced by parental pressure.

With regard to parental pressure having little effect on one’s career-related perceived control, one reason for this is that young adults’ perceptions of control over their career environment could be influenced by other factors that do not involve interactions with parents (e.g., work opportunities, education opportunities, career-related self-efficacy) (Selander, Marnetoft, Asell, & Selander, 2008).

With regard to parental pressure having a positive influence on career-related perceived control, it is possible that young adults’ perceptions of control over career are heightened in the face of parental pressure. There has been no research to date on the positive effects of parental pressure on career-related perceived control. However, one possible reason for this finding could be that parents who have higher career expectations for their children might also have more financial resources to offer to that child to be successful in his or her career. This increase in financial support may allow a young adult to feel that they have more control over their career, considering they most likely have more education and work options from which to choose (Caplan & Schooler, 2007). Another possibility is that parents who have high career expectations for their children might also instill a sense of confidence about their ability to succeed in their career.

**Opinions about parental pressure on control.** Results of this study suggest that
contrary to young adults’ statements indicating moderate to high levels of perceived control over career actions and choices despite parental pressure, most young adults believed that their experiences of parental pressure had negatively influenced their perceptions of control over their career environment. This belief fits with the above-noted literature suggesting that parental pressure might negatively affect perceived control (Perez & Cumsille, 2012; Perlmutter, Scharff, Karsh, & Monty, 1980). However, since the present study found discrepant results (i.e., opinions of young adults vs. expressed perceived control), it is unclear whether the study’s findings match or contrast with existing research.

The discrepancy between young adults’ opinions and their expressions of perceived control pose interesting questions about the study’s results. There are a number of explanations that could account for the discrepancy. One possibility is that young adults are mistaken about the impact of their parental pressure on their levels of perceived control. This would mean that the assumptions related to the findings in the section above (i.e., parental pressure does not influence or positively influences perceived control) would stand.

Another possibility is that they are not mistaken, and the impact of pressure on control manifests in ways in which this study was unable to detect. This would mean that parental pressure does in fact harm perceived control, but that this was undetected in the present study. In other words, there is a chance that parental pressure does have a negative impact on perceived control. However, it is possible that this impact was not visible to the researcher in the narratives provided at this particular snapshot of time. For example, it is possible that parental pressure had decreased levels of perceived control at different time periods (e.g., high school or childhood) or that perceived control levels would have been even higher than the levels documents by the study (i.e., high rather than moderate to high).
**Relationship between perceptions of control and career exploration.** Since this study did not examine levels of perceived control over time, it is difficult to determine the interaction between career exploration and career-related perceptions of control. However, since career exploration improved with maturity, and levels of perceived control were examined at that heightened state of maturity, it is possible that increases in career exploration contributed to moderate to high feelings of control and vice versa. In other words, the findings may suggest that career exploration and perceived control are intricately linked. This is an idea that is supported by research. For example, Super, Savickas, and Super (1996) found high perceptions of control to be related to more exploratory behaviours in career development. Furthermore, career maturity was found to correlate with high perceived control among male university students (Perrino, 1985; Super, 1990). Lastly, Luzzo, James, and Luna (1996) found college students to engage in increased career exploration after watching a video on connecting internal control to external events. It is therefore possible that developments in career maturity and career exploration facilitated increased levels of perceived control in the present study.

**Summary of Conceptual and Theoretical Implications**

As described above, findings concerning three key areas are important to the present study: parental pressure experiences, career exploration experiences, and perceptions of control. These key areas have important theoretical implications for career research. With regard to parental pressure, this study found that young adults experienced more parental pressure as they aged. Furthermore, young adults described feeling close to one or both parents, received financial support, had a desire to comply with the wishes of the parent(s), and described feeling anxious as a result of the pressure. In terms of perceived control, young adults demonstrated having moderate to high levels of perceived control with regard to their
overall and career environment.

Within the career exploration arena, young adults tended to explore more during university years, when parental pressure was heightened. Academic exploration was more common at younger ages (i.e., high school years) and was tied to one’s career exploration throughout high school and university, but was linked more often to one’s career exploration in university. This finding has implications for theories pertaining to career exploration. It is clear that young adults today are engaged more in academic exploration than in career exploration in the early stages of career development, and are placing equal effort on both academic and career exploration in later stages. Furthermore, they are often considering academic pursuits as a stepping stone to future career goals in both high school and university. Therefore, theoretical models of career exploration should aim to integrate academic exploration with career exploration. Integration of this sort would increase the validity of various measures aimed at examining career exploration and related career development activities during these critical years. This would add value to future quantitative and qualitative studies examining career development in young adulthood.

The above-noted findings concerning parental pressure, perceived control, and career exploration are in support of four important career theories. First, these findings support the life stages theory developed by Super (1990), since young adults’ career exploration increased with age and maturity. Second, findings concerning the prevalence of academic exploration in both high school and university and its interconnectedness to career exploration support aspects of the social cognitive career theory developed by Lent, Brown, and Hackett (2002), a theory that considers academic exploration to be an important component of career exploration.

Third, findings concerning the level of parental pressure that young adults’ experience
and its effect on a young adult’s career development demonstrate the significance of the family environment in one’s career development. These findings support the personality development theory developed by Roe (1957), a theory that emphasizes the role of one’s parent in one’s career choices. Lastly, Dawis and Lofquist’s (1984) work adjustment theory is supported by findings that young adults are aware of the importance of person-career and person-academic fit for job satisfaction, and this awareness increases as they mature.

In addition to supporting career theories, these findings have implications for the research questions of the present study. The central research question was: what are young adults’ experiences of parental pressure and control in relation to their career development? Secondary research questions were: (a) “How does one’s experience of parental pressure influence one’s career exploration as a young adult?” and (b) “How does one’s experience of parental pressure influence one’s level of perceived control in relation to his or her career development?”

Secondary research question (a) can be answered with the following findings. Since young adults’ career exploration was found to increase as they aged, and since parental pressure was found to also increase with age, the findings indicate that parental pressure does not affect career exploration in young adults as they increase in career maturity and approach crucial career decisions. However, as young adults did not engage in a large amount of career exploration in earlier years, parental pressure may have had more of an influence during those years.

Secondary research question (b) can be answered with the following findings. Since all young adults experienced some degree of parental pressure, and since young adults had moderate to high perceptions of control over their career environments, parental pressure did
not seem to affect their perceptions of control over career. However, young adults felt that pressure from their parents negatively influenced their perceptions of control over their career.

Combining the answers to both secondary research questions reveals an answer to the central research question. It seems that many young adults experience parental pressure over career directions. Although this pressure does not seem to influence career exploration or perceptions of control over career, it does have a negative impact on young adults’ felt experiences of career-related control, and results in feelings of anxiety for many. These feelings of anxiety may result from an internal conflict between a desire to comply with parental wishes and a desire to fulfill one’s own career wishes. These findings have practical implications for professional and self-help, which are addressed in the following section.

**Practical Implications**

The section above revealed career development experiences representative of young adults in Canada. In particular, factors which influenced the overall career development experience relating to parental pressure, career exploration, and perceptions of control were identified. These factors arose within the narratives and opinions of young adults, and contribute to many young adults’ current academic and career experiences. These findings have several implications for practice within vocational and career psychology.

**Professional Helping**

This study has a variety of implications for professional practice in the fields of vocational psychology, counselling for youth and young adults, career guidance and career counselling for young adults, and family therapy. Young adults would benefit significantly from seeking career counselling, given the prevalence of stress and indecision during these early years of career development (Splete & Freeman-George 1985). It is therefore imperative
that counsellors emphasize the importance of healthy coping strategies to deal with the stress that often results from these career-related disturbances. In addition to educating young adults about coping strategies, it is important that counsellors become aware of the unique circumstances of each young adult. As the findings of the present study indicate, young adults experience unique levels of parental pressure and perceived control, which affects their overall career development experience. It is therefore important for the counsellor to avoid making assumptions about these experiences since they often vary among individuals.

With regard to experiences of parental pressure, counsellors should be aware that experiences of parental pressure are common among young adults. This awareness will promote the counsellor to be more sensitive to statements that may indicate presence of parental pressure, and will therefore allow for appropriate assistance in these matters. This knowledge is also important for family therapy since career-related parental pressure may be elicited in settings such as these.

Although many negative experiences of parental pressure were documented, some young adults described positive experiences Therefore, it is also important for the counsellor to allow each young adult to describe his or her experience fully without preconceived notions. Furthermore, since many young adults experienced anxiety at one point or another in response to this pressure, counsellors should be aware of anxiety that can result and be sensitive to statements that may indicate anxiety. This allows for appropriate interventions to be utilized (e.g., anxiety reduction).

Since the findings of the study indicate that parental pressure often results in negative felt experiences of control over one’s career environment, it is important that counsellors normalize this reaction to parental pressure and help the young adult work through these
feelings.

The findings of this study also indicate that many young adults are caught between an increasing sense of independence and a desire to comply with the wishes of their parents. It is essential for the counsellor to help the young adult find a balance between his or her own career wishes and the career wishes of his or her parents. In this balance, the young adult will be fulfilled by his or her own career wishes, while also attempting to satisfy the career wishes of his or her parents. Lastly, the findings pertaining to young adults’ dream careers provide important knowledge for counsellors. Counsellors should be aware of the factors that many young adults desire in a career, and help young adults articulate these desires and create an action plan to achieve them in their future job role.

With regard to career exploration experiences, counsellors should be aware of the varying stages of career development, and in particular, career maturity that takes place as young adults age. For example, this study found increased emphasis on person-academic and person-career fit as well as increased career exploration with age. Counsellors should therefore encourage younger adults and adolescents to think about fit and to engage in career and academic exploration early on.

In addition to career counselors, there are school-based services that aid students in making academic decisions. In particular, academic advisors are often provided to students. These advisors often work with students to make choices about courses and majors of study. The results of this study have implications for academic advisors working with young adults. First, since the results indicate that career-related parental pressure is common for young adults, academic advisors should be aware of this when working with young adults. For instance, advisors might probe students about the reasons behind their academic decisions.
while emphasizing the importance of balancing one’s own needs with the needs of one’s parent(s). Furthermore, advisors should be aware that academic and career choice processes are often stressful for young adults, and provide coping strategies and therapeutic resources when appropriate.

**Self-Helping**

In addition to knowledge about professional helping, this study contributes to knowledge with regard to young adults’ self-helping. Even with the help of a professional, a young adult’s desire to make positive changes in her career development is often self-induced. Furthermore, it is not always possible for an individual to receive professional help, either for financial reasons or for reasons related to stigma about seeing a professional or admitting that one needs help. Therefore, the current study’s contributions to self-helping are an important discussion point.

First, it is imperative that young adults are informed about healthy coping strategies to manage the stress that is often experienced during key career development stages. Knowledge about the common occurrence of stress during these times would also be beneficial to young adults to normalize the stress experience. Furthermore, knowledge about the occurrence and experience of parental pressure as well as healthy and effective ways to respond to the pressure would be important to inform young adults. This would include ways to balance one’s own wishes with the wishes of the parent, normalizing the experience of resulting anxiety and learning ways to manage the anxiety.

It is also important that young adults are made aware of the importance of perceived control over career actions. Young adults in varying stages of career development may experience varying degrees of perceived control. Therefore, methods aimed to increase
perceptions of control with regard to career actions should be made readily available to young adults. This information would be important to all young adults, including populations with and without the presence of parental pressure.

In addition, resources about parental pressure should be available to young adults. For example, self-help books and articles should be available online. These resources should aim to normalize the experience of parental pressure while also providing suggestions about how to react to the pressure. Given feelings of closeness that often permeate the relationships between young adults and their parents, conflict between a parent and a young adult may be overwhelming to a young adult. Therefore, suggestions should include ways in which to interact with a pressuring parent to reduce conflict and facilitate open communication.

Suggestions would also include advice as to how to provide support to a friend or sibling who is experiencing parental pressure. Furthermore, suggestions should include ways to accept and confront the internal conflict that often results when young adults are torn between wanting to fulfill their own career wishes and wanting to fulfill the career wishes of their parents. Lastly, young adults should be encouraged to reach out for help if they find themselves overwhelmed by parental pressure experiences.

**Limitations**

There are various limitations to the present study. The first limitation concerns characteristics of the sample, which limit the scope of the study. One characteristic of concern is that all participants were female. This limits the scope since it is unclear whether the gender of the participants impacted the results. For instance, if the study’s participants included an equal number of female and male participants, one might expect to see different results pertaining to the experience of parental pressure, career exploration, and perceived control.
This is concerning given previous research that has demonstrated key gender differences in career exploration, relationships with parents, and perceived control (Hardin, Varghese, Tran, & Carlson, 2006; Matthewson, Burton Smith, & Montgomery, 2011; Specht, Schmukle, & Egloff, 2013).

Another characteristic of concern is that most participants’ backgrounds were that of privilege. All participants received funding from their parents for their university education. University is expensive, and therefore requires a substantial amount of financial stability and savings on the part of parents. In fact, many families cannot afford to send their children to university (Habib, 2013). The level of privilege among the sample in the present study limits the scope of the findings since the sample is likely unrepresentative of the larger population as a whole. Although this sample of young adults would likely compare to another sample of young adults at another university, this sample would not compare to young adults whose parents face a different economic situation and are unable to support their children in their wishes to attend university or college. This difference is significant because difference in socioeconomic status may reflect differences in career exploration, parental pressure, and perceived control (Diemer & Hsieh, 2008).

Lastly, another characteristic that influences the samples’ scope is that most participants were enrolled in the faculty of arts and science. Arts and science is a faculty with many varieties of subject matters available for study including psychology, sciences, religion, language, and economics. Therefore, this faculty is a much more broad area of study, in comparison to other, more specific faculties at U of T, such as the faculty of applied science which offers only engineering courses and the Rotman School of Management at U of T, which offers courses in accounting and finance. Since these faculties differ in the specificity of
subjects, it is possible that important differences in career exploration, parental pressure, and perceived control would appear for young adults in more specific subject faculties.

A second limitation to the study lies in the biases of the researcher. The researcher of this study was responsible for all avenues of the investigation: interviewing, transcribing, coding, analyzing, and reporting the data. Since these processes rely on one’s own understanding and interpretation, they are likely influenced by the researcher’s personal assumptions and biases. In an attempt to reduce these biases, the researcher asked participants for clarification during the interview process and included participant quotes in the reporting process to provide evidence for key themes. However, biases of the researcher are inevitable and are considered to be meaningful constructions of knowledge in qualitative research (Mehra, 2002).

The third limitation of this study pertains to the method of data collection. Since this study did not investigate participants’ career development longitudinally, reflections of career exploration and parental pressure were based solely on memory. It is therefore unclear whether participants’ reflections of these experiences were accurate.

The fourth and final limitation of this study concerns the study’s objectives. Unfortunately, the influence of culture and ethnicity was beyond the scope of the study. This is unfortunate since it is likely that participants’ culture influenced their parental pressure experiences, since culture often changes family systems and the interactions within them. Furthermore, Toronto, Canada, would have been an ideal place to examine the effect of culture due to its cultural diversity.

**Future Directions**

The study of young adults’ parental pressure experiences and perceived control with
regard to career development is just beginning. Due to the paucity of research on these constructs themselves and their impact on the career exploration of young adults, there are many opportunities for future researchers to investigate within this field. Since this research project was one of the first investigating subjective experiences of parental pressure, career exploration, and perceived control as well as the relations between them, the goals of the project were quite broad. Therefore, it is the hope of the present researcher that this study will lay the groundwork for future research within this area, hopefully providing a more in-depth exploration of these and related constructs. This will not only provide a more narrow focus of the issues at hand, but will provide some degree of consistency for the results of the study.

There were a few interesting findings of the present study that could be examined more thoroughly in the future. One finding of particular interest concerned the discrepancy between the results about the relationship between parental pressure and perceived control. Although participants believed that their experience of parental pressure had negatively impacted their perceptions of control over their career environment, their statements regarding their career-related perceived control indicated otherwise, since most participants demonstrated moderate to high levels of perceived control over their career. As mentioned previously, there are a variety of reasons that could account for this discrepancy. It would therefore be worthwhile for future research to examine this relationship at a closer level, perhaps incorporating a combination of objective and subjective methodologies to determine what is behind the discrepancy.

Another interesting finding was that as participants aged, they experienced increasing degrees of parental pressure, yet engaged in more career exploration. Although possible reasons for this finding were discussed above (e.g., increasing independence from parental
wishes), it would be worthwhile to examine this more closely in order to determine the effect of parental pressure on career exploration activities and to determine the impact of other factors.

The last set of interesting findings concerning parental pressure are the findings that all participants reported feeling close to one or both parents, receiving financial support, and reported a desire to comply. These findings have interesting implications for the effect of the parent-child relationship on the experience of parental pressure. More research is needed in this area to clarify how these factors interact to enhance or hinder the experience of parental pressure.

With regard to specific limitations mentioned in the previous section, future research should also consider sample scope in terms of gender, socioeconomic status, faculty and program of study, and should consider examining parental pressure and career exploration at various time periods throughout an individual’s development to minimize the possible inaccuracy involved in memory-based descriptions. Lastly, future research should consider examining the influence of culture on young adults’ parental pressure and career development experiences.

**Conclusion**

The previous section included suggestions for future research given the findings of the current study as well as their implications for theory and practice. Through the use of in-depth interviews, the present study found that young adults experienced a mild-severe range of parental pressure throughout their career development, typically experiencing more severe amounts in their university years, at which point they also engaged in more career exploration and placed a higher emphasis on both person-career and person-academic fit. Extent of
academic exploration, however, remained consistent in both high school and university. In general, this study found that young adults wanted to comply with the career wishes of their parents, received financial support, and indicated closeness with one or both parents. Parental pressure experiences tended to cause anxiety among many young adults, however, some young adults experienced parental pressure positively. Additionally, this study found that young adults’ perceptions of control over their overall and career environments ranged from moderate to high. Interestingly, however, they believed that their experiences of parental pressure negatively affected their perceptions of control over their career.

To conclude, it is hoped that the present study lays the foundation for important research in the area of young adult career development. Within this area, this study may stimulate future research about the impact of parental influence and perceptions of control. Overall, this study should inform researchers working in this field and young adults developing their career and academic goals.
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APPENDIX A: Recruitment Advertisement (Poster)

RECRUITMENT ADVERTISEMENT

RE: Perceived parental pressure and perceived control: Young adult career exploration

The recruitment poster will contain the following information:

RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS WANTED for a study on PERCEPTIONS OF PARENTAL PRESSURE IN YOUNG ADULT CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Attention all University of Toronto undergraduate students!

Do your parents have their own opinions about what you should be doing with your life? Are they not afraid to let you know what these opinions are?
Do you ever feel pressured by your parents to act or feel a certain way toward your career future?

If you are:

- in your 3rd or 4th year of undergraduate study at the University of Toronto
- currently experiencing, or have experienced, pressure from one or both of your parents with regard to your career thoughts, feelings, and/or behaviours
- fluent in English
- Interested in participating in this study!

Please contact:
416.843.6636
pamela.corey@mail.utoronto.ca

Study will consist of an interview which will be 90-120 minutes in length.

Interviews conducted in English – Fluency is required

FINANCIALLY COMPENSATED $20

The interviews are part of a research project lead by myself and Dr. Charles Chen in Counselling and Clinical Psychology at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto.
APPENDIX B: Recruitment Advertisement (Email)

RECRUITMENT EMAIL ADVERTISEMENT

RE: Perceived parental pressure and perceived control: Young adult career exploration

The recruitment email will be sent to one or more University of Toronto undergraduate email listservs, and will contain the following information:

Attention all University of Toronto undergraduate students!

Do your parents have their own opinions about what you should be doing with your life? Are they not afraid to let you know what these opinions are? Do you ever feel pressured by your parents to act or feel a certain way toward your career future?

My name is Pamela and I am a student at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto. I am currently recruiting participants for a study I am conducting, on young adult career exploration experiences, and perceptions of parental pressure and control.

The study will consist of a 90-120 minute interview. Each participant will be compensated $20.

If you are:

- in your 3rd or 4th year of undergraduate study
- currently experiencing, or have experienced, pressure from one or both of your parents with regard to your career thoughts, feelings, and/or behaviours
- fluent in English
- interested in participating in the study!

Please call 416-843-6636 or send an email to pamela.corey@mail.utoronto.ca.

The interviews are part of a research project lead by myself and Dr. Charles Chen in Counselling and Clinical Psychology at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto.

THANK YOU!
APPENDIX C: Telephone Script

TELEPHONE SCRIPT (or LETTER) OF INITIAL CONTACT

RE: Perceived parental pressure and perceived control: Young adult career exploration

Thank you very much for calling, and I really appreciate your interest in my research project. First, I would like to tell you a bit about the study. Then you can take some time to consider whether you would like to participate in this project or not. If you have questions, please feel free to interrupt me at any time to ask them.

You are cordially invited to attend this interview. The interview is part of a research project being conducted by me, Pamela Corey, master’s student at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto (OISE, UT), under the supervision of Dr. Charles Chen.

The interview questions are designed to examine perceptions of parental pressure in young adult career development.

It is expected that the results from this study will lead to a better understanding of young adult career development processes within the scope of parental and familial influence. The interview questions will cover information about your career development and exploration experiences as well as your perceptions of parental pressure and control. Questions will also cover relevant demographic information.

Risks to this study include the possibility of becoming distressed or upset as a result of discussing challenging events that occurred with regard to parental influence over your career environment, or perceptions of control over your environment. If you wish to decline to answer a question or wish to take a break or stop the interview you may do so at any time, without receiving any consequences. This will not be a problem or impact the study adversely.

You may find some things beneficial to your participation in the study. I hope that you will benefit from the interview process with an increased self-awareness on issues related to career exploration and development. We also hope that you would find the exploring nature of the study an interesting process from which you might learn something. However, if the study does not benefit you directly, we hope that it will assist us in adding to career counselling and career development research with regards to young adults. We really appreciate your interest, and we are very grateful to your participation.

To follow the nature and purpose of the study stated above, research participants in this study will include a total of 20 participants who are undergraduate University of Toronto students in their 3rd or 4th year. Each participant is invited to complete an audiotaped interview that will last for 90-120 minutes. The interview will take place in a meeting room at OISE/University of Toronto. As part of the interview, you will be asked to complete and return a 2-page Participant Information Sheet that contains your contact information and basic demographic information relevant to this research project.

Participants will be interviewed who meet the following criteria:
(1) You are in your 3rd or 4th year of undergraduate study at the University of Toronto.

(2) You are currently experiencing, or have experienced, parental pressure related to your career thoughts, actions, and/or behaviours.

(3) You are fluent in English (interviews are conducted in English).

As one of the participants, your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You are under no obligation to complete the study, even if you finish a portion of it and then decide that you do not wish to continue. You may choose to refuse to answer any particular question or questions posed to you and still complete the interview. You may also refuse to participate or withdraw from the study, at any time, without any negative consequences to your personal life or academic standing.

In recognition of the time and effort you have given to participate in this research project, we would like to offer you an honorarium of $20 if you agree to participate and complete the interview process.

While we will be making an audiotape of this interview, your responses to this interview will be kept completely anonymous. Your results will be assigned to a code number to protect your identity. Any information that could lead to identify you (e.g., name) will be removed from the data while the interviews are transcribed into written data, i.e., written transcripts of the interview session. You will be assigned a pseudonym in the interview, as well as throughout the entire research process, including in the data analysis, final research report(s), and other related presentations and publications. Any possible identifying information about you will be replaced by a code during the research process. Your contact information, such as your name, phone numbers and email address, will be coded and kept separately from other files. All written data will be kept in secured files and in a locked cabinet to which only the researcher (Pamela Corey) and Dr. Charles Chen will have access. All electronic files (e.g., audiotaped files) will be kept on a password protected computer and will be encrypted. Only the researcher will have access to this computer. The data will be kept for 5 years starting from the completion date of the research project. After this 5-year time period, all the data including the audiotapes will be destroyed and/or erased. In the event that, during the interview, you express an intention to harm yourself or harm others, it is our duty to break confidentiality and report this content to the authority.

These research results may be presented in public settings such as professional and/or academic conferences, and other public forums. Reports and articles based on the research may also be published in academic and/or professional journals. Under such circumstances, your identity will remain strictly confidential, and only your pseudonym and coded information may be utilized.

We will be very glad to provide you with a summary of the current study's results if you wish to receive such a summary report when this research project is completed.

If you have any questions about your rights as a participant, you may contact the Research Ethics Review Office by email at ethics.review@utoronto.ca, or by telephone (416-946-3273). You may also contact my supervisor, Dr. Charles Chen, at cp.chen@utoronto.ca.

If you need more time to think about your option, please feel free to do so. You may contact me in a later time.
If you are sure that you want to participate in this research, I can set up a date and time with you now for the research interview. Whether you will participate in the interview or not, I really appreciate your interest. Again, thank you very much for your time, and your inquiry about our research project!
APPENDIX D: Consent Form

Printed on OISE/University of Toronto letterhead

CONSENT FORM

RE: Perceived parental pressure and perceived control: Young adult career exploration

You are cordially invited to attend this interview. This interview is part of a research project being conducted by myself, Pamela Corey, under the supervision of Dr. Charles Chen, a Professor of Counselling Psychology at Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto (OISE, UT). The interview questions are designed to examine young adults’ career exploration experiences as well as perceptions of parental pressure and control. It is expected that the results from this study will lead to a better understanding of the role of social and familial pressure and perceptions of control on young adult career exploration experiences. The interview questions will cover information about your experiences with career-based parental pressure, your perceptions of control, and your career exploration experiences.

Risks to this study include the possibility of becoming distressed or upset as a result of discussing challenging events that occurred with regard to parental influence over your career environment, or perceptions of control over your environment. If you wish to decline to answer a question or wish to take a break or stop the interview you may do so at any time, without receiving any consequences. This will not be a problem or impact the study adversely.

You may find some things beneficial to your participation in the study. I hope that you will benefit from the interview process with an increased self-awareness on issues related to career exploration and career development processes. We also hope that you would find the exploring nature of the study an interesting process from which you might learn something. Even if the study does not benefit you directly, we hope that it will assist us in adding to career counselling and career development research with regards to young adults. We really appreciate your interest, and we are very grateful to your participation.

To follow the nature and purpose of the study stated above, research participants in this study will include a total of 20 participants who are undergraduate University of Toronto students in their 3rd or 4th year. Each participant is invited to complete an audiotaped interview that will last for 90-120 minutes. The interview will take place in a meeting room at OISE/University of Toronto.

The term “young adult” in this study refers to a person who meets the following criteria:

(1) You are in your 3rd or 4th year of undergraduate study at the University of Toronto.

(2) You are currently experiencing, or have experienced, parental pressure related to your career thoughts, actions, and/or behaviours.

(3) You are fluent in English (interviews are conducted in English).
As one of the participants, your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You are under no obligation to complete the study, even if you finish a portion of it and then decide that you do not wish to continue. You may choose to refuse to answer any particular question or questions posed to you and still complete the interview. You may also refuse to participate or withdraw from the study, at any time, without any negative consequences to the compensation you will receive, your personal life, or academic standing.

In recognition of the time and effort you have given to participate in this research project, we would like to offer you an honorarium of $20 if you agree to participate and complete the interview process.

While we will be making an audiotape of this interview, your responses to this interview will be kept completely anonymous. Your results will be assigned to a code number to protect your identity. Any information that could lead to identify you (e.g., name) will be removed from the data while the interviews are transcribed into written data, i.e., written transcripts of the interview session. You will be assigned a pseudonym in the interview, as well as throughout the entire research process, including in the data analysis, final research report(s), and other related presentations and publications. Any possible identifying information about you will be replaced by a code during the research process. Your contact information, such as your name, phone numbers and email address, will be coded and kept separately from other files. All written data will be kept in secured files and in a locked cabinet to which only the researcher (Pamela Corey) and Dr. Charles Chen will have access. All electronic files (e.g., audiotaped files) will be kept on a password protected computer and will be encrypted. Only the researcher will have access to this computer. The data will be kept for 5 years starting from the completion date of the research project. After this 5-year time period, all the data including the audiotapes will be destroyed and/or erased. In the event that, during the interview, you express an intention to harm yourself or harm others, it is our duty to break confidentiality and report this content to the authority.

These research results may be presented in public settings such as professional and/or academic conferences, and other public forums. Reports and articles based on the research may also be published in academic and/or professional journals. Under such circumstances, your identity will remain strictly confidential, and only your pseudonym and coded information may be utilized.

We will be very glad to provide you with a summary of the current study's results if you wish to receive such a summary report when this research project is completed.

If you have any questions about your rights as a participant, you may contact the Research Ethics Review Office by email at ethics.review@utoronto.ca, or by telephone (416-946-3273). You may also contact my supervisor, Dr. Charles Chen, at cp.chen@utoronto.ca.

Signing the bottom of this form will constitute your consent to this interview, as well as your consent to participate in this research project.

Thank you very much for your time and valuable cooperation.
Charles Chen, Ph.D.
Professor
Counselling and Clinical Psychology Program
Department of Applied Psychology
And Human Development
OISE, University of Toronto
Tel: 416-978-0718
Email: cp.chen@utoronto.ca

Pamela Corey
Counselling and Clinical Psychology Program
Department of Applied Psychology
and Human Development
OISE, University of Toronto
Tel.: 416-843-6636
Email: pamela.corey@mail.utoronto.ca

I have read and understand the above information and voluntarily consent to participate in the research project described above. I have read and understand the efforts the researcher will take to keep my contribution to this study confidential. I understand that the interviews will be audio-taped. I have had all my questions answered and copies of all forms have been provided to me.

________________________________________________________
(Print: First and Last Names of Research Participant)
APPENDIX E: Interview Questions

THEME QUESTIONS FOR THE INTERVIEW

RE: Perceived parental pressure and perceived control: Young adult career exploration

Demographic Information

1. Gender: _________

2. Age (in years): ____________

3. School information

   Year of Study: _____
   Academic Major _______________________
   Program currently enrolled in _______________
   Program length __________
   Full time or part-time student ____________

4. Family information

   Raised by mom/dad/both/caregiver ___________
   Lived at home until University?  Yes/No
   Currently living at home?  Yes/No

5. Religion

   Would you consider yourself to be religious?  Yes/No
   If yes, what is your religion?  _______________

6. Nationality

   Were you born in Canada?  Yes/No
   If not, where were you born? _______________
   When did you move here? _______________
Date of Interview: ___________________________

Questions:

(A) Career Exploration.

1. From the time you started to think about your career future until now, do you feel that you’ve changed your mind quite frequently about your career decisions or do you feel that you’ve been certain about your career path all along?
   a) If changed mind, why was this the case? Roughly how many times did you change your mind?
   b) If been certain, why was this the case?

2. Did you find the processes of career decision-making to be stressful? Why or why not?

3. How important is it to you to find a job that you prefer?

4. Could you briefly describe your career exploration experience from the time you started to think about your career future until now?
   a) Out of your exploration experiences, which one is the most memorable to you?
   b) Where did you receive the majority of your career information?
   c) Over the years, have you changed where you looked for career information or has it always been from the same source?
   d) Would you describe your career exploration experiences as stressful? Why or why not.
   d) Would you describe your career exploration experiences as positive and exciting or as negative and anxiety provoking? Please describe further.

5. In your high school years, do you feel that you spent a fair amount of time searching for information related to your career future? (career options, specific information about certain careers such as salary, job demands, and prestige etc.)
   a) Can you describe further your experience with this (provide specific examples)?
   b) Would you say you searched for information related to many different career options or just a select few?
   c) What careers in particular did you explore?
   d) Would you say that careers you were interested in belonged to the same category or field, or different categories or fields? (please elaborate – what field(s)?)
      - If they belonged to same category or field, why was this the case?
      - If they belonged to different categories or fields, why was this the case?

6. In your high school years, do you feel that you spent a fair amount of time searching for information related to your academic future? (University or college options, program options, “major” options etc.)
   a) Can you describe further your experience with this (provide specific examples)?
b) Would you say you searched for information related to many different University programs/majors or just a select few? (please elaborate – what programs/majors?)
   - If information belonged to one type of program or major (i.e., science), why was this the case?
   - If information belonged to different types of programs or majors (i.e., science and music), why was this the case?

c) Did you feel that your search for academic information was related to your search for career information? (e.g., graduating from particular academic programs would lead you to obtaining employment in a particular field)

7. In your high school years, do you feel that you spent a fair amount of time searching for information about how well “you” fit with particular career options? (personality-job match, ability-job match, value-job match etc.)
   a) Can you describe further your experience with this (provide specific examples)?
   b) What careers in particular did you think about?
   c) Would you say that the careers you thought about belonged to one particular category or field or several different categories or fields? (please elaborate – what field(s)?)
      - If they belonged to the same category or field, why was this the case?
      - If they belonged to different categories or fields, why was this the case?
   d) At this time, did changes in your self-concept result in changes in career interests? Please explain why or why not.
   e) How important was it to you at the time to find a job that matches your personality, abilities, and interests?

8. In your high school years, do you feel that you spent a fair amount of time searching for information about how well “you” fit with certain academic options? (personality-program match, ability-program match, value-program match etc.)
   a) Can you describe further your experience with this (provide specific examples)?
   b) Would you say that the academic options you thought about belonged to one category or field or several different categories or fields? (please elaborate – which ones?)
      - If they belonged to same category or field, why was this the case?
      - If they belonged to different categories or fields, why was this the case?
   c) At this time, did changes in your self-concept result in changes in academic interests? Please explain why or why not.
   d) How important was it to you at the time to find an academic program or major that matched your personality, abilities, and interests?

9. In the time you spent at University up until now and including now, do you feel that you spent a fair amount of time searching for information related to your career future? (career options, specific information about certain careers such as salary, job demands, and prestige etc.)
   a) Can you describe further your experience with this (provide specific examples)?
   b) Would you say you searched for information related to many different career options or just a select few?
c) What careers in particular did you explore?

d) Would you say that careers you were interested in belonged to the same category or field, or different categories or fields?
- If they belonged to same category or field, why was this the case?
- If they belonged to different categories or fields, why was this the case?

10. In the time you’ve spent at University up until now and including now, do you feel that you spent a fair amount of time searching for information related to your continued academic future? (further University or college options, program options, “major” options etc.)
a) Can you describe further your experience with this (provide specific examples)?
b) Would you say you searched for information related to many different University programs/majors or just a select few?
- If the information belonged to one type of program or major, why was this the case?
- If the information belonged to different types of programs or majors, why was this the case?

c) Did you feel that your search for academic information was related to your search for career information? (e.g., graduating from particular academic programs would lead you to obtaining employment in a particular field)

11. In the time you’ve spent at University up until now and including now, do you feel that you spent a fair amount of time searching for information about how well “you” fit with particular career options? (personality-job match, ability-job match, value-job match etc.)
a) Can you describe further your experience with this (provide specific examples)?
b) What careers in particular did you think about?
c) Would you say that the careers you thought about belonged to one particular category or field or several different categories or fields? (please elaborate – what field(s)?)
- If they belonged to same category or field, why was this the case?

d) At this time, did changes in your self-concept result in changes in your career interests? Please explain why or why not.
e) How important was it to you at the time to find a job that matches your personality, abilities, and interests?

12. In the time you’ve spent at University up until now and including now, do you feel that you spent a fair amount of time searching for information about how well “you” fit with certain academic options? (personality-program match, ability-program match, value-program match etc.)
a) Can you describe further your experience with this (provide specific examples)?
b) Would you say that the academic options you thought about belonged to one category or field or several different categories or fields? (please elaborate – which ones?)
- If they belonged to same category or field, why was this the case?
- If they belonged to different categories or fields, why was this the case?
c) At this time, did changes in your self-concept result in changes in your academic interests? Please explain why or why not.
d) How important was it to you at the time to find an academic program or major that matched your personality, abilities, and interests?

13. Do you consider yourself to be someone who has sought out a large/proper/decent amount of information related to your career future and/or your place in it?
   a) When you compare yourself with your friends, do you still feel this way?

14. Do you consider yourself to be someone who has sought out a large/proper/decent amount of information related to your academic future and/or your place in it?
   a) In comparisons with your friends, do you still feel this way?

15. Are there any other aspects of your career exploration experience that I didn’t ask about that you think are relevant or important?

(B) Perceptions of Parental Pressure.

16. Tell me a little bit about your family situation. Are both parents present in your life?
   a) If yes, describe this further. How are they present?
   b) If no, describe this further. How are they not present?

17. Do both or one of your parents work? If so, what do they do?

18. Are you close with both of your parents or one of your parents?
   a) If you are close to both, describe this further. How are you close?
   b) If you are close to one parent, why is this the case? Tell me more about this situation.
   c) If you are not close to either, why is this the case? Tell me more about this situation.

19. Are you currently living inside at home or on campus?

20. Do your parents financially support you? If yes, what do they help you with? (school, rent, food etc.)
   a) Has this always been the case or has this changed in the past?

21. How many times a week would you say you communicate with your parents?
   a) Is this communication over the phone, over the internet, or in person?

22. Growing up, did you feel that one or both of your parents had opinions about what they thought was best for you? (friends to hang out with, interests to have, music to listen to etc.)
   a) If yes, what did you feel that your parents worried most about?

23. Did you feel that these opinions were in any way overbearing or overwhelming? Did you feel that your parents were too strict with their rules or did you feel that they were putting unnecessary pressure on you?
   a) If yes, please describe your experience with this. How did you deal with this?
      - For your family, do you feel like this pressure was a part of your culture or different from your culture?
24. At this time in your life, do you feel that your parents still have opinions about what they think is best for you? (in general, not just in your career life)
   a) If yes, what do they worry about now? And does this bother you? Elaborate please.

25. At this time in your life, do you feel that your parents put unnecessary pressure on you to behave or think in certain ways?
   a) If yes, please describe your experience with this. How do you deal with it now?

26. Growing up, what kind of opinions did one or both of your parents have about your career future?
   a) How did your parents convey those opinions? Please give examples.
   b) What opinions did they have?
   c) Did your parents agree on those opinions or did they have conflicting opinions?

27. Growing up, do you feel that your parents put pressure on you to think, feel, or act in a certain way toward your career future?
   a) If yes, what kinds of things did they pressure you about? (Prompt: certain career directions, career options, career fields, continuing family business etc.)
   b) What in particular did they pressure you to do or feel?
   c) What do you feel that your parents were most concerned about? (Prompt: career prestige, salary, job requirements)
   d) Did you feel like your parents were most concerned about your happiness or theirs? (If yours, did this change how you felt about it?)
      - If neither, why do you think they did it?
   e) How did you deal with this pressure?
   f) Did you feel a need to comply with your parents’ requests?
      - If yes, why? (Prompt: felt a need to please them, was afraid of consequences if you didn’t comply, agreed with their views?)
      - If no, why not? (Prompt: felt like you wanted your independence, felt that they were being unreasonable?)
   g) At this time, did this pressure cause arguments between you and your parent(s)?

28. Growing up, how did career conversations go with your parents? (prompt: who said what, what was the topic of discussion?)

29. During your high school years, what kind of opinions did one or both of your parents have about your career future?
   a) How did your parents convey those opinions? Please give examples.
   b) What opinions did they have? Were they similar to the opinions they had while you were growing up?

30. In your high school years, do you feel that your parents put pressure on you to think, feel, or act in a certain way toward your career future?
   a) If yes, what kinds of things did they pressure you about? (Prompt: certain career directions, career options, career fields, continuing family business etc.)
b) What in particular did they pressure you to do or feel?
c) What do you feel that your parents were most concerned about? (Prompt: career prestige, salary, job requirements?)
d) Did you feel like your parents were most concerned about your happiness or theirs? (If yours, did this change how you felt about it?)
   - If neither, why do you think they did it?
e) How did you deal with this pressure?
f) Did you feel a need to comply with your parents’ requests?
   - If yes, why? (Prompt: felt a need to please them, was afraid of consequences if you didn’t comply agreed with their views?)
   - If no, why not? (Prompt: felt like you wanted your independence, felt that they were being unreasonable?)
g) At this time, did this pressure cause arguments between you and your parent(s)?

31. In your high school years, how did career conversations go with your parents? (prompt: who said what, what as the topic of discussion?)

32. In your University years up until now and including now, has the opinions of your parents concerning your career future changed from that of high school or childhood years?
   a) What opinions did they have?
   b) How did your parents convey those opinions? Please give examples.

33. In your University years up until now and including now, do you feel that your parents put pressure on you to think, feel, or act in a certain way toward your career future?
   a) If yes, what kinds of things did they pressure you about? (Prompt: certain career directions, career options, career fields, continuing family business etc.)
   b) What in particular did they pressure you to do or feel?
   c) What do you feel that your parents were most concerned about? (Prompt: career prestige, salary, job requirements?)
   d) Did you feel like your parents were most concerned about your happiness or theirs? (If yours, did this change how you felt about it?)
   - If neither, why do you think they did it?
   e) How did you deal with this pressure?
   f) Did you feel a need to comply with your parents’ requests?
      - If yes, why? (Prompt: felt a need to please them, was afraid of consequences if you didn’t comply agreed with their views?)
      - If no, why not? (Prompt: felt like you wanted your independence, felt that they were being unreasonable?)
   g) At this time, did this pressure cause arguments between you and your parent(s)?

34. In your University years up until now and including now, how did career conversations go with your parents?
   a) How did they start and how did they end?
   b) Overall, did you feel that these conversation caused negative feelings like frustration and anxiety or did you find them to be constructive and helpful?
35. At any point in your life did you ever worry that your parents would punish you (e.g., emotionally, physically, mentally) if you did not carry out career actions that they believed you should?
   a) If yes, please describe further, with examples.

36. At any point in your life, did you ever worry that your parents would be angry or upset with you if you did not carry out the career actions that they believed you should?
   a) If yes, please describe further, with examples.

37. At any point in your life, did you ever worry that your parents would stop loving you or disown you if you did not carry out the career actions that they thought you should?
   a) If yes, please describe further, with examples.

38. How much do you believe that the reason you are in your current academic program is a result of your parent(s) influence or pressure?
   a) If a lot, please describe further.
   b) If not a lot, please describe further.

39. Why did you choose the academic program and major that you are currently in?

40. Why did you choose the University that you are currently at?
   a) If not mentioned, how much of a role did the following factors have on your academic choice of University: distance from home, friends attending same school, interest in the field, parents went to that University

41. At this point in time, do you feel comfortable/happy/pleased with the academic choices that you have made thus far? (program choice, major choice etc.)
   a) Are you pleased with your current academic choices?
   b) Have you gone through any academic choice changes? (program choice, major choice etc.)
   c) How much are you enjoying your current academic program?
   d) How many classes would you say you missed thus far in the semester?
   e) Does the completion of your current academic program or major set you up for occupational opportunities that you are interested in or that you want to pursue?

42. At this point in your life, have you chosen an occupation or an occupational direction that you will take after you complete your undergrad?
   a) If yes, what is it and why did you make that decision? How much influence do you believe that the pressure you received from you parents affects that decision?
      - Are you happy with that choice?
   b) If no, why do you think you haven’t made that choice yet? (Prompt: not sure yet, on the fence between two options?)

43. If you decided to switch academic programs/schools/majors, how do you feel this would go over with your parents?
a) Do you wish to switch programs or are you happy with the program/major have chosen?
   - If you wish to switch programs, does this worry you?

44. When you think about the career-related pressure that your parents have placed on you in your lifetime, how do you feel about it? (Prompt: positive/negative, helpful/not helpful)

45. Are there any other aspects of your parental pressure experiences that I didn’t ask about, that you think are relevant or important?

(C) Perceptions of Control.

46. Do you believe that if you work hard enough you can achieve anything, or do you think there are limits to what you can do?
   a) What are those limits?

47. If participant has religious affiliation: Do your religious beliefs play a part in your perceptions of control over your environment? Why or why not?

48. Do you think your culture plays a part in your perceptions of control over your environment? Why or why not.

49. In general, how do you feel about the events that happen in your life? Do you believe that they are largely within your control or largely outside of your control?
   a) If largely outside, describe further, with examples.
   b) If largely within, describe further, with examples.

50. In general, how do you feel about the choices that you have? Do you feel that you have a lot of choice in the decisions you make, or not very much?

51. In general, do you feel that other people stand in the way of you making choices or getting what you want?
   a) If not, is it luck, chance, fate, or something else? (e.g., internal attributes like anxiety), Please describe further.

52. When presented with novel tasks (i.e., a difficult assignment you’ve never done before or a complicated recipe), how do you usually feel? (Prompt: anxious and worried, comfortable and calm)
   a) If you hit a bumpy road in a new task, do you think you would easily give up or would you persist and search for help?

53. What amount of control do you feel lies in the hands of luck, fate, or other people, and what amount of control do you think lies in your hands?

54. How much control do you feel that you have over your career actions? (Prompt: career direction, career decisions, etc.)
a) If not much, describe why this is - who or what control your career decisions?
b) If a lot, describe this further.

55. What types of career actions do you feel you have control over, and what types do you feel you do not have control over?

56. How do you perceive your career choices in terms of control? In other words, do you feel that you have control over those choices or do you feel that your choices are restricted by external variables?
   a) If restricted, what are those external variables?
   b) If not restricted, why do you feel this way?

57. When it comes to your career choices and actions, do you feel that you have too much control or choice?

58. If you were able to organize or setup your career world in any way you wanted to, how would you do it? In other words, what would constitute your idea of a perfect career situation? (e.g., perfect job, perfect social surroundings)
   a) What factors make this ideal situation different from your “realistic” career world?

59. Do you often seek advice from counsellors, siblings, parents, teachers, or friends about your career future?

60. Are there any other aspects of your perceptions of control, related to your career or in general, that I didn’t ask about, that you think are relevant or important?

   Influence of parental pressure on perceived control

61. In general, do you feel that the pressure you received from your parents influenced your perceptions of control over your environment? Why or why not?

62. Do you feel that the pressure you have received from your parents have any influence on your perceptions of control over your career environment? Why or why not? What about your career options or interests?

63. Are there any aspects of the pressure you received from your parents that you believe have impacted you?
   a) What aspects are these and how have they impacted you?

64. Are there any aspects of the pressure you received from your parents that you believe have impacted your career thoughts, behaviours, and actions?
## APPENDIX F: Participant Information Table

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