**Career compromise, career distress, and perceptions of employability: The
moderating roles of social capital and core self-evaluations**

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Abstract

We surveyed 175 university undergraduates and assessed whether career compromise was associated with career distress and perceptions of employability (employment demand and employment confidence), and tested whether core-self evaluations and social capital buffered the effects of career compromise. Career compromise was associated positively with career distress and negatively with self-perceptions of employment demand. Social capital moderated the relationship between compromise and employment demand, and between compromise and employment confidence. No assessed variable moderated between compromise and career distress. Understanding the correlates of career compromise and under what conditions these relationships are strengthened or weakened contributes to an understanding of how goal adjustment in the career domain might affect young people's well-being and career progress.

Keywords: career compromise; career distress; perceptions of employability; core self-evaluations; social capital; career goals

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Making adjustments to and compromising on career goals is a pervasive, ongoing, process, integral to career development (Gottfredson, 1981). Individuals compromise on goals when they confront real or perceived barriers to achieving them; barriers, which can be external to the individual (e.g., family circumstances that preclude attending a desired course) or internal (e.g., lack of confidence to perform in prerequisite training; Creed, Patton, & Bartrum, 2004). However, while most career development theories explicitly or implicitly acknowledge career compromise as a part of settling on a career (e.g., Gottfredson, 1981; Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994), there has been little research into the processes around career compromise (Hesketh & McLachlan, 1991; Tsaousides & Jome, 2008). We assessed the level of career compromise made by first-year university students, tested if this compromise was associated with perceptions of their employability and career distress, and evaluated if personal resources (core self-evaluations and social capital) buffered the relationships between compromise and perceptions of employability and distress. Students in transition to a university setting are an appropriate sample for this study, for while the transition brings great opportunities, it also brings many challenges that lead to goal revision and compromise (e.g., students find that their course is too difficult, won't get them the career they want, or not as interesting as they hoped).

Career compromise

Career compromise is "changing one's career goals to accommodate to uncontrollable circumstances" (Gottfredson, 1981, p. 569). Several career theories spell out processes how this accommodation might occur. Holland's (1997) person-environment fit theory

proposes that individuals seek out work environments that are consistent with their values and meet their needs, and that they will avoid occupations and leave settings where there is a poor fit. This process of discarding options reflects the process of compromise. Lent et al.'s (1994) social cognitive career theory suggests that career choice is influenced primarily by one's efficacy for tasks associated with the choice and by the perceptions of outcomes if one expends energy on the tasks. Confidence and ability/outcome beliefs are contingent on previous experiences. However, individuals will adjust options and forego choices when they encounter barriers to achieving their goals; that is, they will compromise on their first choice options. Gottfredson (2005) proposed a similar compromise mechanism, arguing that young people select careers that match their self-concept, but when they are confronted with real-world difficulties, they will give up their most desirable options and settle on ones that are more achievable. Several influential theories provide meta-frameworks that account for goal pursuit and goal adjustment (Lord, Diefendorff, Schmidt, & Hall, 2010). Control theory (Carver & Scheier, 1998) and social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1991), for example, both suggest that people formulate goals, monitor their progress towards these goals, and respond to any discrepancies between goals and progress by increasing effort and/or revising or abandoning the goal.

Career compromise and well-being

Control theory and social cognitive theory both also propose that appraisal of goal progress is associated with affective responses, with perceived goal progress eliciting positive affect and lack of progress associated with negative affect. Additionally, there is considerable evidence indicating that having clearly articulated goals is beneficial for the well-being of the individual, and that having to let go of important goals is related to

dissatisfaction and reduced well-being (Latham & Locke, 2007; Lord et al., 2010). Giving up on an important goal constitutes a threat to the individual and can be interpreted as stressful (Carver & Connor-Smith, 2010). In the career area, women who were dissatisfied with their level of achievement also reported having less purpose in their lives and more symptoms of depression (Carr, 1997). Employees who saw their job as a compromise on what they had expected were less satisfied and expressed more negative attitudes about their careers (Hesketh & McLachlan, 1991). College students assigned to different compromise conditions reported well-being levels commensurate with their level of compromise (Tsaousides & Jome, 2008), and university students who reported higher levels of career compromise were more likely to report lower levels of satisfaction and more career distress (Creed & Blume, 2013). Based on this literature, our first hypothesis is that career compromise is negatively associated with well-being.

Career compromise and self-perceptions

Perceived lack of goal progress is also proposed to lead to poorer self-perceptions. From a social cognitive perspective, appraising goal progress as poor threatens self-perceptions and self-evaluations; whereas control theory states that lack of goal progress leads to poorer future outcome expectations. These negative outcomes have been demonstrated in the literature: failure to progress goals has been shown to be related to lower self-efficacy (Tolli & Schmidt, 2008), poorer ratings of ability (Bandura & Schunk, 1981; Lemyre, Hall, & Roberts, 2008), personal doubts, and lowering of standards (Lemyre et al., 2008).

An important self-perception for young people on the threshold of entering the full-time labour market for the first time is how competitive they think they will be in their

chosen career. Self-perceived employability, or the “perceived ability to attain sustainable employment appropriate to one’s qualification level” (Rothwell, Herbert, & Rothwell, 2008, p. 2), reflects an appraisal by that individual that they will be able to obtain employment in their chosen area. Originally applied to adults in the labour market, there is growing interest in how the construct applies to young people looking ahead to match their work preparedness to what will be required when they complete their pre-employment training (Rothwell et al., 2008).

Employability is a psycho-social construct. Young people consider both individual (e.g., personal resources and skills developed through early experiences, education, and work placements) and external factors (e.g., labour market, economic times, and family supports) when estimating how employable they might be when they commence work (Rothwell & Arnold, 2007). Specific to university students, Rothwell et al. (2008) identified four dimensions that are appraised by the individual to inform their perception of their employability: proactive personal attributes and motivation (individual factors) and labour market conditions and university reputation (external factors).

In adults, self-perceived employability has been found to be associated positively with subjective career success, career commitment (Rothwell & Arnold, 2007), career satisfaction (de Vos, de Hauw, & van der Heijden, 2011), current level of job-related skills, and self-presentation skills (Wittekind, Raeder, & Grote, 2010). In university students, it has been associated positively with university commitment (Rothwell et al., 2008; Rothwell, Jewell, & Hardie, 2009), ambition (Rothwell et al., 2009), academic major satisfaction, and career choice satisfaction (McIlveen, Burton, & Beccaria, 2013).

Consistent with goal setting and goal striving models (cf. social cognitive and control theories), having to compromise on one's career choice is likely to be associated with poorer self-appraisals, such as reduced confidence about one's career future, which is reflected in the perceived employability construct (McArdle, Waters, Briscoe, & Hall, 2007). While a test of the proposition regarding compromise and perceived employability has not been tested directly, there is indirect support for the contention. Wanberg, Zhu, and van Hooft (2010), for example, employed a diary study and found that job seekers who appraised their job search progress negatively on any day also reported less re-employment confidence on the same day. Additionally, McIlveen et al. (2013) reported that university students who were less satisfied with their academic and career direction also reported lower levels of perceived employability, which they operationalized as career optimism, career adaptability, and knowledge of the employment market. Consequently, our second hypothesis is that career compromise is associated negatively with self-perceived perceptions of employability.

Personal resources as moderators

Important personal resources that might buffer the relationship between career compromise and well-being and perceptions of employability are the individuals' core self-evaluations and social capital. Core self-evaluations are fundamental evaluations that people hold about themselves (Judge, Locke, & Durham, 1997). The construct is broadly dispositional, comprising the domains of self-esteem, generalized self-efficacy, locus of control, and emotional stability, all of which reflect the value that individuals place upon themselves, their ability to perform and be successful, their level of control, and the degree to which they are optimistic and free from worry. Research and meta-analytic

results show that core self-evaluations in adults are associated positively with life and job satisfaction, goal-setting, task motivation, performance, and job success (Chang, Ferris, Johnson, Rosen, & Tan, 2012; Erez & Judge, 2001; Judge & Hurst, 2008). These results parallel those found with young people, where core self-evaluations have been found to be associated positively with life satisfaction, career identity development (Hirschi, 2011), and college satisfaction and performance (Luthans, Avolio, Avey, & Norman, 2007). Individuals with higher core self-evaluations perceive fewer obstacles (Best, Stapleton, & Downey, 2005) and adjust more readily to change (Chang et al., 2012). Thus, we expected participants with higher core self-evaluations to manage setbacks better (i.e., manage career compromise better) and be more positive about the future (i.e., be more positive about their future employability). Feeling more in control (i.e., having an internal locus of control) is a potential mechanism for these effects (Chang et al., 2012). Consistent with these propositions, previous research has identified core self-evaluations as a moderator between perceived constraints and well-being (Best et al., 2005). From this, our third hypothesis is that core self-evaluations will moderate the relationships between career compromise and well-being and perceptions of employability, with higher core self-evaluations buffering, or cushioning, the effects of career compromise.

Goal setting and striving do not occur in a vacuum, but are embedded in social relationships and contexts (Jokisaari & Nurmi, 2005). Social capital, which is a fundamental human resource reflecting how well individuals are connected to others in ways that creates value for them and advances their goals, reflects these social connections (Coleman, 1988). Connections with others has been shown to be an imported aspect of career development in young people (Palladino Schultheiss, 2007) and career

success in adults (Ibarra & Deshpande, 2007). For example, expectations generated within the individual's social network and feedback from significant others are important for the development of career identity in young people (Kerpelman & Pittman, 2001) and job-seeking in adults (Wanberg, Kanfer, & Banas, 2000). More generally, social capital is associated positively with healthy development in young people (Coté, 2005), which in turn is important for later adjustment and well-being (Pettit, Erath, Lansford, Dodge, & Bates, 2011). Based on this research we considered that young people with higher social capital will be better placed to manage setbacks and be more optimistic about their future. Thus, our fourth hypothesis is that social capital will moderate the relationships between career compromise and well-being and perceptions of employability, with social capital buffering the effects of career compromise.

The present study

In summary, this study investigated the associations between career compromise and well-being (operationalized as career distress) and between career compromise and career self-perceptions (self-perceived employability) in a sample of young adults. We also tested for the moderating effects of two potentially important, personal resources (core self-evaluations and social capital), expecting that more positive self-evaluations and higher social capital will buffer the effect of career compromise.

Method

Participants

One hundred and eighty students enrolled in first year psychology course at one Australian university were eligible to participate in the study, for which they received credit towards their final course mark. We received 175 usable responses (response rate =

97%) from 144 women (82%) and 32 men (these gender proportions are typical for social science based courses at university). The mean age of the sample was 22 years ($SD = 7.22$). Twenty-six students (14%) reported their final-year high school grade to be in the *Very high achievement* range, 95 students (52%) indicated *High achievement*, 44 (24%) indicated *Sound achievement*, and 11 (6%) indicated *Limited achievement*.

Measures

Students completed scales assessing levels of career compromise, career distress, perceived employability, core self-evaluations, and social capital. Unless otherwise indicated, they responded using a 6-point Likert-like format with endpoints of *Strongly disagree* and *Strongly disagree*. Higher scores reflected higher levels of each construct.

Career compromise. As there was no existing scale suitable to assess career compromise (previous research has used one-item measures or assessed discrepancies between actual and ideal career goals; see Creed & Blume, 2011), we generated six items specifically for the study (See Appendix A). These six items assessed the extent to which the students perceived that their current career goals reflected a compromise on what they wanted to do. The items tapped perceived level of compromise on the salient work dimensions of status, interests, meaningfulness, level of responsibility, contribution to others, and what they really wanted to do. These dimensions were drawn from the job characteristics model (Hackman & Oldham, 1976), which identifies important work characteristics that contribute to making a job satisfying and successful (e.g., working at a job that reflects one's desired level of status will be more satisfying and motivating than working at a job that has less, or more, status than desired). Assessing compromise in this way provides a broader, multi-domain measure of career compromise. A sample item

was: “To what extent do you feel your current career direction will result in a less meaningful occupation than you really wanted?” (endpoints: *Not at all* and *To a great extent*). A principal axis factor analysis identified a single factor that accounted for 63% of the variance. Factor loadings ranged from .55 to .84; internal reliability was .88. Supporting content validity, we had experts review the items before including them in the survey; supporting construct validity, the scale was associated with other variables in this study in the expected direction (e.g., negatively with perceptions of employability and positively with career distress). See Table 1.

Career Distress. We used 14 subjective career distress items from the Coping with Career Indecision Scale (Larson, Toulouse, Ngumba, & Fitzpatrick, 1994), which was designed to assess level of subjective distress in relation to career decision making, avoidance of career thoughts, and career goal setting. Sample items were: “I often feel down or depressed about selecting a career” and “I get worried when I think about the intense competition in most careers”. Internal consistency was reported as .90, and construct validity was demonstrated for the full scale by finding negative associations with career decision certainty and positive associations with anxiety (Larson et al.). The scale has been used previously in studies with Australian university students (Creed & Blume, 2013). The internal reliability for the current sample was .91.

Perceived employability. We used the 16-item Perceived Employability Scale (Rothwell, Herbert, & Rothwell, 2008) to assess students’ perceived ability to attain sustainable employment appropriate to their qualifications. Rothwell et al. (2008) reported two factors for the scale with business undergraduates: one factor reflecting perceptions of university status, state of the external labour market, and value of students’

field of study; and a second factor that reflected belief in self. We also found two factors, which we labelled perceived employment demand (11 items; e.g., “There is generally a strong demand for graduates at the present time” and “People in the career I am aiming for are in high demand in the external labour market”) and employment confidence (5 items; e.g., “I am generally confident of success in job interviews and selection events” and “I feel I could get any job so long as my skills and experience are reasonably relevant”). Rothwell et al. reported internal reliability coefficients of .77 and .66, respectively, and found support for validity using factor analysis and discriminating the employability scales from other career scales. Alphas in this study were .81 and .75.

Core self-evaluation. We used the 12-item Core Self-Evaluation Scale (Judge, Erez, Bono, & Thoresen, 2003) to measure the combined core self-evaluations of general self-efficacy, self-esteem, emotional stability, and internal locus of control. Sample items were: “When I try, I generally succeed” and “I determine what will happen in my life”. Judge et al. reported internal reliability coefficients $> .80$ across several samples, a test-retest reliability of .81, and used factor analysis and correlations with other variables to demonstrate construct validity. Alpha for the current sample was .90.

Social capital. This was assessed using six bridging capital items from the Internet Social Capital Scale (Williams, 2006). Bridging capital reflects involvement and interaction with others in the community (“Interacting with people makes me want to try new things” and “I come in contact with new people all the time”). Williams reported internal reliability coefficients of .90, and tested validity using factor analysis and correlations with other measures of social behaviour. Alpha in our study was .83.

Procedure

The study was approved by our university ethics committee. Students were recruited via a notice on their course website and completed an on-line survey in their own time.

Results

We used hierarchical multiple regression analyses to test the hypotheses that career compromise would be associated negatively with perceptions of employability (employment demand and employment confidence) and associated positively with career distress, and that these associations would be weaker when core self-evaluations and social capital were higher (i.e., that core self-evaluations and social capital would moderate or buffer the relationships). In all analyses, career compromise was included at Step 1, the moderator variables were included at Step 2, and the interaction terms, which were created using standardized scores, were added at Step 3.

For perceived employment demand, compromise accounted for 4.8% of the variance at Step 1, $F(1, 173) = 8.70, p = .004$, core self-evaluations and social capital accounted for an additional 9.9% at Step 2, $F_{Ch}(2, 171) = 9.92, p < .001$, and the interaction terms explained an additional 5.1% at Step 3, $F_{Ch}(2, 169) = 5.36, p = .006$. At this final step, all variables accounted for 19.8% of the variance, $F(5, 169) = 8.33, p < .001$, with higher perceptions of employment demand being associated with lower levels of compromise ($\beta = -.24, sr^2 = 5.3\%$) and higher levels of social capital ($\beta = .29, sr^2 = 7.5\%$). One of the two interaction terms was significant: compromise x social capital ($\beta = .24, sr^2 = 5.0\%$). As a significant result can be obtained for an interaction term because of the effect of other interaction terms included in the model, we followed the recommendations of Jose (2013), and assessed the compromise x social capital interaction term in a focused

regression. This analysis included career compromise at Step 1, the moderator variable of social capital at Step 2, and the 2-way interaction term compromise x social capital at Step 3. In this analysis, the compromise x social capital interaction term contributed unique variance at Step 3, $\beta = .23$, $sr^2 = 5.1\%$; $F_{Ch}(1, 171) = 10.75$, $p = .001$, and was thus considered a robust outcome. This interaction term was graphed using simple regression equations based on values of the moderator 1 *SD* above and below the mean (see Figure 1; Preacher, Curran, & Bauer, 2004). The moderation reflects a buffering effect for social capital (Rose, Holmbeck, Coakley, & Franks, 2004): as level of compromise increased, perceptions of employment demand reduced for those with lower social capital ($t = -4.70$; $p < .001$), but remained unchanged for those with higher social capital ($t = -.12$; $p = .91$). In other words, the negative relationship between compromise and employment demand was stronger for those with lower levels of social capital, as expected.

For perceived employment confidence, compromise accounted for a non-significant 1.2% at Step 1, $F(1, 173) = 2.17$, $p = .14$, core self-evaluations and social capital explained an additional 33.4% at Step 2, $F_{Ch}(2, 171) = 43.76$, $p < .001$, and the interaction terms added an additional 5.5% at Step 3, $F_{Ch}(2, 169) = 7.70$, $p = .001$. At this final Step, 40.1% of the variance was explained, $F(5, 169) = 22.65$, $p < .001$. Core self-evaluations ($\beta = .47$, $sr^2 = 19.45\%$) and social capital ($\beta = .24$, $sr^2 = 5.0\%$) were associated positively with perceived employment confidence, and the two interaction terms were significant. When we ran the two additional focused regression analyses, the compromise x social capital interaction term was significant at Step 3, $\beta = .23$, $sr^2 = 5.3\%$; $F_{Ch}(1, 171) = 11.33$, $p = .001$, but not the one for compromise x core self-evaluation, $\beta = -.04$, $sr^2 = .01\%$; $F_{Ch}(1, 171) = .46$, $p = .49$. This is consistent with the initial analysis for employment

confidence, where the compromise x core self-evaluation interaction term had a much weaker association with employment confidence ($sr^2 = 1.6\%$) than the compromise x social capital term ($sr^2 = 5.2\%$). We graphed the compromise x social capital interaction term (see Figure 2), and again found a buffering pattern: as levels of compromise increased, employment confidence went down for those with lower social capital ($t = -3.79$; $p < .001$), but did not change for those with higher social capital ($t = 1.01$; $p = .31$); or, as expected, the negative relationship between compromise and employment confidence was stronger for those with lower levels of social capital.

For career distress, compromise accounted for 6.7% of the variance at Step 1, $F(1, 173) = 12.35$, $p = .001$, core self-evaluations and social capital explained 34.1% at Step 2, $F_{Ch}(2, 171) = 35.57$, $p < .001$, and the interaction terms were not significant at Step 3, $F_{Ch}(2, 169) = .64$, $p = .52$. At Step 3, 34.6% of the variance was explained, $F(5, 169) = 17.87$, $p < .001$. Compromise ($\beta = .20$, $sr^2 = 3.9\%$) and core self-evaluations ($\beta = -.51$, $sr^2 = 26.4\%$) were associated significantly with career distress.

Discussion

In this study, we hypothesised that career compromise would be associated positively with career distress and associated negatively with self-perceived perceptions of employability, and that core self-evaluations and social capital would provide a buffering effect on these relationships.

We found that career compromise was associated positively with career distress (even after core self-evaluations and social capital were partialled out of the relationship), indicating that when students reported having compromised on their career path they also reported experiencing distress in relation to their progress. This finding is consistent with

general goal setting theories, which propose that dissatisfaction results when goals are adjusted downwards (Lord et al., 2010), and consistent with empirical findings in the general psychological (Wrosch & Scheier, 2003) and career literature (e.g., Creed & Blume, 2013; Tsaousides & Jome, 2008). An important contribution to the literature here is that we devised and used a direct, multi-dimensional measure of career compromise; whereas previous research had used single items (e.g., Hesketh & McLachlan, 1991) or discrepancy scores (Creed & Blume, 2013).

Inconsistent with expectations, core self-evaluations and social capital did not buffer the effects of compromise on distress. We anticipated that those with higher positive self-evaluations and better-integrated social networks would report less distress in the face of setbacks compared to those with less positive evaluations and poorer networks. This has been found previously in other settings for self-evaluations (e.g., Chang et al., 2012) and for social capital (e.g., Furstenberg & Hughes, 1995). We assessed general self-evaluations and broad connectedness, and it might be that context-specific evaluations and capital have stronger effects on ameliorating the negative results of career compromise. For example, the construct of core self-evaluations incorporates general self-efficacy (Judge et al., 1997), when career self-efficacy might be a more salient protective factor against career compromise. Similarly, being able to draw on social contacts for specific career guidance might be more useful in career goal adjustment situations. Consistent with these suggestions, De Vos et al. (2011) found that support for career development in adults was associated positively with career satisfaction.

Career compromise was associated negatively with perceptions of employment demand (again after controlling for core self-evaluations and social capital), but was not

associated with reported employment confidence. In this study, perceptions of employment demand reflected individuals' self-assessment that their skills and attributes were in demand by employers; whereas employment confidence indicated their level of confidence in being employed in their occupation. Thus, compromising on desired career goals was associated directly with perceptions that employers will have more negative perceptions of what they have to offer, but was not associated with confidence about gaining work. The contribution here is demonstrating that compromising on career goals by young adults is associated with poorer self-perceptions.

However, both relationships (i.e., between compromise and demand, and between compromise and confidence) need to be interpreted in the context of the moderating variable of social capital. First, the negative relationship between compromise and perceived employment demand was stronger for those with lower levels of social capital, indicating that social capital buffered the relationship between compromise and employment demand. In the same vein, social capital buffered the relationship between compromise and employment confidence, as the negative relationship between compromise and employment confidence was stronger for those with lower levels of social capital. The results are in line with the social capital theory of career success (Seibert, Kraimer, & Liden, 2001), and the argument that when people have positive emotions and thoughts they have more capacity and resilience when facing challenges (Judge et al., 1997). Career compromise in young adults is likely to be widespread as individuals come up against the realities of preparing for a career (Gottfredson, 1981). It is difficult to protect young people against the need for adjusting their career goals, and evidence from the career identity literature suggests it is desirable for young people to be

exposed to crises in their development (Kerpelman & Pittman, 2001). However, young people can be given information and skills to better manage adjustment situations, such as developing their career decision-making and career exploration skills. Our study suggests that making sure young people are well-integrated into their community will protect against negative attitudes associated with compromise in the career domain. The contribution here is in identifying an important protective factor in these relationships.

In summary, partial support was found for our hypotheses: career compromise was associated with career distress and perceptions of employment demand (but not directly with employment confidence), social capital, but not core self-evaluations, moderated the relationship between compromise and employment confidence and between compromise and employment demand (but neither moderated between compromise and distress). These results suggest that career compromise is an important issue for young people, and that when they perceive high levels of compromise this is associated with poorer well-being and lower self-appraisals. The plausible, causal direction suggested by our hypotheses is that career compromise leads to a decline in well-being and poorer self-perceptions, which is consistent with goal setting theories (Latham & Locke, 2007; Seibert et al., 2001). However, our study was cross-sectional, and this direction cannot be confirmed. The reverse direction is also plausible: those with poorer well-being and/or lower self-perceptions are more inclined to compromise on their direction in the face of challenges. The dual-process model (Brandtstadter & Rothermund, 2002), for example, suggests that individuals who use accommodative coping strategies will be more likely to adjust personal goals to situational restrictions by discarding unsatisfactory attempts at achieving the goal, disengaging from the goal, and engaging in other, more achievable,

goals. Longitudinal studies are required to tease out the causal directions among these variables, and future studies can contribute to this understanding. Although whether compromise leads to poorer outcomes or poorer status leads to compromise, career compromise is likely to be an important consideration in the lives of young adults.

An additional limitation to the study is the sample used. We surveyed young adults, who were all early university students from one university, and our sample contained a preponderance of young women. Thus, we cannot be confident that our results will generalise to other groups, and future studies need to confirm these outcomes on other samples. Compromise is an important issue for young people prior to them entering university (or other) training as they need to resolve issues around which course and institution to take up, and important for near-graduates and graduates as they negotiate the transition from education to employment, and these samples need to be examined. Future research might also examine others moderator variables in the relationship between compromise and distress. We have suggested testing career-specific variables (e.g., career self-efficacy), but other examples include career-related strategies (Creed & Hughes, 2002) as well as more general self-regulatory resources (Lord et al., 2010). Career compromise might be associated with other outcome variables and these also should be examined. Variables related to career progress, such as university/training engagement and drop-out, have particular importance for later success and satisfaction (Princiotta & Reyna, 2009).

Finally, we developed and used a multi-dimensional scale to assess career compromise. Research on perceived occupational satisfaction and success indicates that there are important job characteristics apart from transactional arrangements that enthuse

and drive people (Dries, Pepermans, & Carlier, 2008). These characteristics include occupational meaning, making a difference, responsibility, status, and interests, and compromising on these characteristics reflects important adjustments that need to be made in the career domain. Our career compromise scale included items that tapped these components. Using this scale in future research will contribute to developing a better understanding of the nomological net of career compromise, and contribute to an ongoing evaluation and validation of the scale.

Conclusions and Implications

This study demonstrated important correlates of career compromise and identified under what circumstances these associations were strengthened or buffered. Interventions related to career compromise can result when young adults report poor academic achievement, need to deal with influences from important others, lack confidence, or perceive limited opportunities in the employment market. Taking a goal-oriented perspective to explore the individual's goals and goal compromises can be a useful starting point for understanding and remediation. Assisting individuals to explore and appreciate their goals, the barriers and supports to their goal achievement, the alternate goals to the one's thwarted and how these might change their future, and what they might do to be more successful in their goal pursuit, will help clarify the situation and place them in a better position to manage their crises and make decisions that will benefit them (Bridges, 1991). From our study, examining their connection to others and their community will be especially important to this.

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Figure 1. Social capital moderates the relationship between career compromise and perceived employment demand.

Figure 2. Social capital moderates the relationship between career compromise and perceived employment confidence.

Table 1
Summary Data and Inter-correlations for all Variables; N = 175

Variables	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Career compromise	13.57	6.86	-	-.22**	-.11	.26**	-.13	.05	-.17*	.08	-.02
2. Employment demand	44.15	4.79		-	.45***	-.04	.21**	.29***	.15*	-.05	-.07
3. Employment confidence	20.99	3.83			-	-.28***	.55***	.36***	.12	-.23**	.01
4. Career distress	40.31	13.25				-	-.55***	-.16*	-.15*	.03	.11
5. Core self-evaluation	46.95	9.24					-	.29***	.18**	-.05	.05
6. Social capital	27.00	4.48						-	-.04	-.15*	-.20**
7. Age	22.10	7.22							-	.31***	.04
8. Education achievement	2.23	.78								-	.11
9. Gender	-	-									-

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Table 2

Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analyses predicting Perceived Employability Demand, Perceived Employment Confidence, and Career Distress; N = 175

Variables	Employment Demand		Employment Confidence		Career Distress	
	ΔR^2	β	ΔR^2	β	ΔR^2	β
Step 1	.05**		.01		.07**	
Career compromise		-.22**		-.11		.26**
Step 2	.10***		.33***		.27***	
Career compromise		-.22**		-.06		.19**
Core self-evaluations		.10		.48***		-.52***
Social capital		.27***		.22**		-.02
Step 3	.05**		.06**		.01	
Career compromise (CC)		-.24**		-.07		.20**
Core self-evaluations (CSE)		.08		.47***		-.51***
Social capital (SC)		.29***		.24***		-.02
CC x CSE		-.06		-.14		-.04
CC x SC		.24**		.25***		-.04

For employment demand, R^2 at Step 3 = .20 ($R^2_{Adj} = .17$); for employment confidence, R^2 at Step 3 = .40 ($R^2_{Adj} = .38$); and for career distress, R^2 at Step 3 = .35 ($R^2_{Adj} = .33$). * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Appendix A

6-Item Career Compromise Scale

1. To what extent do you feel your current career direction is a compromise on what you really wanted to do?
2. To what extent do you feel your current career direction will result in a less meaningful occupation than you really wanted?
3. To what extent do you feel your current career direction will result in an occupation with less responsibility than you really wanted?
4. To what extent do you feel your current career direction will result in an occupation that will make less of a difference to others than you really wanted?
5. To what extent do you feel your current career direction is a compromise on the status you really wanted to have?
6. To what extent do you feel your current career direction is a compromise on the interests you have?