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Mutuality of romantic partnership and partners' daily activities : Toward conceptualizing romantic partnership as an occupational community

Romain Bertrand

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Romain Bertrand. Mutuality of romantic partnership and partners' daily activities : Toward conceptualizing romantic partnership as an occupational community. Psychology. Université Grenoble Alpes [2020-..], 2023. English. NNT : 2023GRALS034 . tel-04415338

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THÈSE

Pour obtenir le grade de

DOCTEUR DE L'UNIVERSITÉ GRENOBLE ALPES

École doctorale : ISCE - Ingénierie pour la Santé la Cognition et l'Environnement

Spécialité : PCN - Sciences cognitives, psychologie et neurocognition

Unité de recherche : AUTONOMIE, GÉRONTOLOGIE, E-SANTÉ, IMAGERIE & SOCIÉTÉ

Mutualité du partenariat romantique et activités quotidiennes des partenaires : Vers la conceptualisation du partenariat romantique en tant que communauté occupationnelle

Mutuality of romantic partnership and partners' daily activities: Toward conceptualizing romantic partnership as an occupational community

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Acknowledgment

When I began my Ph.D., Prof. Brenda Vrkljan told me that a Ph.D. is like a marathon. I had many occasions to remember this during the five years I spent working on this thesis! But just like runners need regular replenishment to complete the race, I would have not been able to complete this thesis without the support of many people.

Firstly, I would like to express my most sincere thanks to each of my three co-supervisors. I am very grateful to all of them for their availability, their support, their relevant and objective feedback as well as their interest in the topic of my research.

I thank Prof. Nicolas Vuillerme who provided me with ideal conditions for this work and precious feedback throughout the five years. I will never forget that it was he who, fifteen years ago, introduced me to the world of scientific research and encouraged me to train in occupational therapy. I thank Prof. Brenda Vrkljan for her considerable support in the writing of the four articles included in the thesis. I am grateful to her for giving me so much of her time. One of her articles was my first contact with occupational science a few years ago, and so working under her supervision provided me with the opportunity to 'close the circle'. Finally, I thank Prof. Nicolas Kühne for many precious discussions during the realization of the thesis, as well as for having been my mentor for many years. He rigorously but caringly enriched my scientific reasoning and scientific culture.

I am grateful to the members of the jury who have given me the honour of examining my thesis: Prof. Céline Baeyens, Prof. Anders Kottorp, Prof. Catherine Vallée, and Dr. Vivianne Visschers.

I also thank the many other people who supported me throughout this work. I particularly thank the participants in the empirical studies; without their precious contribution, I would not have been able to produce this thesis. I thank my colleagues of ErgoSum Sàrl, for their patience and their trust while I was facing the challenge of managing an occupational therapy practice and simultaneously working on this thesis. Thanks to Prof. Linda Charvoz for having shared her expertise on romantic partnerships and for fruitful discussions; thanks to Valentine Perrelet for having helped me to clarify my ideas for the discussion, and for inspiring the diagram presented in Figure 13 of the discussion; thanks to Prof. Isabel Margot-Cattin, for her advice and for being a mentor to me for many years. And last but not least, thanks to my parents for their support throughout the completion of the thesis, and for helping me to recruit the participants.

In this dissertation, I argue that the lives of romantic partners are strongly intertwined; whatever happens to one partner affects the other. This has never been truer than in the context of this thesis. So,

Acknowledgment

I would like to thank Christine, for her unconditional support and efforts. I could not have reached the end of this marathon without her. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.

I dedicate this Ph.D. thesis to Arthur and Célia.

Abstract

The thesis innovatively proposes to address romantic partnership through partners' daily activities. Indeed, a partnership has been suggested to be embedded in partners' routines, that is, how they structure their time within their everyday lives. It includes activities performed with (i.e., joint) or without the partner (i.e., apart). It has been evidenced that romantic partners' daily interactions reflect the mutuality of their partnership, that is, the identity of the relationship that emerge from their shared experiences. In turn, the degree to which everyday life becomes intertwined can inform how partners view themselves as individuals and as a partnership.

Little is known yet about how the mutuality of romantic partnerships is reflected in partners' daily activities since the extent to which these activities are a shared experience remains unclear. An occupational lens is of particularly value since it focuses on the meaning that romantic partners ascribe to their daily activities, or occupations. So the thesis aim is to investigate whether and how occupational engagement of romantic partners reflects the mutuality of their relationship.

Four complementary studies have been conducted. The first study is a scoping review that aims to identify, analyze, and synthesize published works in occupational therapy and occupational science on engagement of partners in their collective occupations. Results show that partners' engagement in their collective occupations reflect the we-ness of the partnership since partners ascribe a shared meaning. Results further suggest that these occupations can be restricted because of one partner's health issue, highlighting the need to explore how such restrictions are experienced by partners. The second study aims to explore the experience of partners affected by one partner's vision loss. Data have been collected from face-to-face interviews with 16 couples living in Western Switzerland. This qualitative descriptive study provides an unique opportunity to identify strategies that partners applied to re-shape their engagement in collective occupations to preserve the mutuality of the couple.

While these results show that occupational engagement shapes mutuality, the last two studies intent to investigate whether and how this relation is bidirectional. The third study is the protocol study of the IP-COUPLES research, the fourth study is the research in itself. This descriptive quantitative research uses the "perceptual congruence" model to examine how partners perceive their respective expectations in terms of joint and apart occupational engagement. This study is based on time-use data collected through questionnaires completed with 72 partnerships of any condition living in Western Switzerland. Results show that the mutuality of the partnership can shape partners' occupational engagement.

Taken together, results from this thesis suggest that the relation between occupational engagement of romantic partners and the mutuality of the relationship is bidirectional. As such, we argue to consider a romantic partnership as an occupational community. In other words, occupational

engagement of partners is constitutive of their partnership identity that transcends partners' individual selves. At this point, however, our conclusions should be considered with caution since they are mostly based on different-sex partnerships living in Western countries, and particularly, in Switzerland. Moreover, some of the results relate to partnerships affected by vision loss. Further studies should investigate this topic with regard to other health issues and with other forms of partnerships. Nevertheless, the thesis supports the need to develop interventions at a partnership-level that consider how partners manage their engagement in their collective occupations, especially when health issues are experienced by at least one of them.

Résumé

La thèse propose d'aborder le partenariat romantique à travers les activités quotidiennes des partenaires. Il a été suggéré qu'un partenariat s'inscrit dans les routines des partenaires, c'est-à-dire la façon dont ils structurent leur vie quotidienne. Cela comprend les activités faites ensemble (c'est-à-dire conjointes) et séparément (c'est-à-dire faites l'un-e sans l'autre). Les interactions des partenaires développent leur mutualité, c'est-à-dire l'identité de la relation qui émerge de leur expériences partagées. L'entrelacement de leur vie quotidienne peut aussi informer la façon dont chacun se perçoit en tant qu'individus et partenaires.

La manière dont la mutualité des partenaires se reflète dans leurs activités quotidiennes est peu connue, car la mesure dans laquelle elles représentent une expérience partagée est peu claire. Une perspective occupationnelle est pertinente car elle se centre sur le sens que les partenaires attribuent à leurs activités quotidiennes, ou occupations. Ainsi, le but de la thèse est d'étudier si et dans quelle mesure l'engagement occupationnel des partenaires reflète la mutualité de leur relation.

Quatre études complémentaires ont été menées. La première est une revue de la portée qui identifie, analyse et synthétise les travaux publiés en ergothérapie et en sciences de l'occupation sur l'engagement des partenaires dans leurs occupations collectives. Les résultats montrent que l'engagement des partenaires reflète leur mutualité dès lors qu'ils en partagent le sens. Ils suggèrent que ces occupations peuvent être restreintes par un problème de santé d'un partenaire, soulignant la nécessité d'explorer comment ces restrictions sont vécues au sein de la relation. Dans cette optique, la deuxième étude explore l'expérience des partenaires affectés par la perte de vision de l'un d'eux. Les données ont été recueillies à partir d'entrevues en face-à-face avec 16 partenariats de Suisse romande. Cette étude descriptive qualitative permet d'identifier les stratégies des partenaires pour remodeler leur engagement dans les occupations collectives afin de préserver la mutualité de leur relation.

Si ces résultats montrent que l'engagement occupationnel façonne la mutualité, les deux dernières études visent à investiguer la bidirectionnalité de la relation. La troisième étude est l'étude de protocole de la recherche IP-COUPLES, la quatrième étude est la recherche en elle-même. Cette recherche quantitative descriptive utilise le modèle de « congruence perceptive » pour examiner comment les partenaires perçoivent leurs attentes respectives en matière d'engagement occupationnel conjoint et séparé. Cette étude s'appuie sur des données d'emploi du temps recueillies avec des questionnaires remplis par 72 partenariats de toute condition vivant en Suisse. Les résultats suggèrent que la mutualité du partenariat peut façonner l'engagement occupationnel des partenaires.

Les résultats de la thèse tendent à montrer que la relation entre l'engagement occupationnel des partenaires et la mutualité de la relation est bidirectionnelle. Ainsi, nous proposons de considérer un

partenariat romantique comme une communauté occupationnelle : l'engagement occupationnel des partenaires est constitutif d'une « identité partenariale » qui transcende leur identité individuelle. Cependant, nos conclusions doivent être considérées avec prudence car elles sont majoritairement basées sur des partenariats de sexe différents vivant dans des pays occidentaux, notamment en Suisse. De plus, certains résultats sont relatifs à des partenariats concernés par la perte de vision. D'autres études devraient explorer ce sujet en regard d'autres problèmes de santé et avec d'autres formes de partenariats. Néanmoins, la thèse soutient l'importance de proposer des interventions aux partenariats qui tiennent compte de la façon dont les partenaires s'engagent dans leurs occupations collectives, en particulier lorsque des problèmes de santé sont vécus par au moins l'un d'entre eux.

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List of abbreviations

ACC: Activity Configuration Congruence

AMD: Age-Related Macular Degeneration

ASP : Actual similarity between partners

ASC : Actual similarity between one partner and his/her partnership

IP: Interpersonal Perception

LBI: Life-Balance Inventory

PSP : Perceived similarity between partners

PSC : Perceived similarity between one partner and his/her partnership

UP : Understanding between partners

UC : Understanding between one partner and his/her partnership

Community :

“A group of people with diverse characteristics who are linked by social ties, share common perspectives, and engage in joint action in geographical locations or settings.”

In: MacQueen, K. M., McLellan, E., Metzger, D. S., Kegeles, S., Strauss, R. P., Scotti, R., Blanchard, L., & Trotter, R. T. (2001). What is community? An evidence-based definition for participatory public health. *American Journal of Public Health, 91*(12), 1929-1938. <https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.91.12.1929>

Chapter 1 : Introduction

1. Foreword

1.1 Cathy and Jeremy

Cathy and Jeremy are both aged around 40 years. They live in a modern apartment with their two children in a mid-sized city in Northwest Switzerland. They met in their youth as students. Cathy and Jeremy never wanted to have a too close partnership, which for them means not being married and not being together all the time. When Cathy and Jeremy were asked to choose a metaphor that would best symbolize their partnership, they described two trees with intertwined branches. Jeremy explained that each tree grows on its side, Cathy added that if one tree falls, the other does not. However, both said that the intertwined branches strengthen both trees. For them, this symbol perfectly described their partnership since they perceive that they live both within a partnership and as individuals.

Cathy and Jeremy mostly engage apart in their daily activities (i.e., without the other partner). For them, that means living side by side. Cathy has been partially sighted for many years, but she has always tried to minimize the impact of her disability on her family. So, despite her vision loss, Cathy has always encouraged Jeremy to do things on his own. As such, he goes cycling and plays football. He trains several evenings a week and sometimes on weekends. He walks the dogs every morning, before breakfast, which he prepares for the whole family. On weekdays, Jeremy takes the children to school on his way to work. He also brings them home in the afternoon. Cathy stopped working years ago because of her impairment, so she spends much of her time at home. She has learnt to deal with her vision loss and her subsequent fatigability so as not to depend too much on her husband's daily support. She plays the harp in the morning, before preparing the meal. Depending on how tired she is in the afternoon, she walks the dogs. Cathy has not driven since the onset of her vision loss. She prefers to call a cab or her parents if she needs to go somewhere. Two evenings a week, Jeremy and Cathy walk their son to his football training. During the training, she plays cards with the other parents. Cathy goes to bed at the same time as the children, around 8 p.m. When his wife and children are in bed, Jeremy enjoys spending time alone during the evening, watching TV or playing football.

Cathy and Jeremy explain that they spend most of their time without the other partner. Nevertheless, they describe spending quality time together. They always eat breakfast and dinner as a family. These meals are important moments during which they organize the family's daily schedules or discuss their day. Moreover, Jeremy does not work in the afternoons, so he and Cathy walk the dogs together as often as possible. At weekends or during holidays, they sometimes go away together for a few days, leaving the children with Cathy's parents. Such moments give them an opportunity to discuss their partnership, their family, or any other topic. partners cherish such joint activities (i.e., during which they are with the other partner) since they provide a means to strengthen their closeness. Cathy and

Jeremy both argue that doing activities without the other partner, while maintaining certain joint activities, is essential for their partnership. Despite the worsening of her vision, Cathy does not wish to change their way of functioning since she believes that could threaten their relationship.

1.2 Michelle and Donald

Michelle and Donald have been married for almost 50 years. They live in a house in the countryside in Western Switzerland. Michelle has been visually impaired for decades. Her vision loss began before she met her husband. She has been receiving a disability allowance for 20 years, since she has stopped working. Donald is retired from a local public transport company. The partners present their relationship as “fusional” because they spend as much time together as possible. They symbolize their partnership with a tree. According to them, they are the roots of the tree, which come together to form the trunk, representing their partnership as a united entity.

Michelle and Donald have always given their partnership priority over their individual selves. They give priority to joint routines in which they have engaged together since they became partners. They share their faith, follow the same religious principles and attend the same church. They jointly undertook theological studies years ago to develop a charity related to their religion. The charity is still active, and it occupies most of their current time since both are board members. Their daily schedules are mostly filled with their charity-related activities, including fundraising, phone calls or meetings. But outside religion-related activities, Michelle and Donald spend a lot of time together. They sleep together and get up at the same time. In the morning, they pray and have breakfast together. After breakfast, Michelle does the couple's administrative tasks while Donald plays the piano or prepares for charity meetings. They meet for lunch, which they cook and eat together. In the afternoon, they do their grocery shopping, gardening, listen to music, or go for a walk, always together. In the evening, Michelle and Donald usually watch television. Michelle sometimes does crosswords while Donald reads. However, they always sit in the living room, near each other. They go to bed at the same time, around 10 p.m.

Despite her visual impairment, Michelle has always refused to wear glasses or to use a white cane. She considers that she is not sufficiently visually impaired to need these devices. Michelle has always wanted to do things on her own, that is, not be dependent on external support other than her husband. In addition, although she needs her husband's help with certain activities, such as driving, she has adapted her daily life. She installed zoom-software on her computer to be able to continue to read emails and process the bills. Since she is the only one who uses a computer within the partnership, she is also in charge of organizing holiday trips, something she much appreciates. Michelle has a magnifying glass for reading and she uses an adapted phone, with large keys. According to Michelle and Donald, such adaptations enable them to preserve their daily routines. In particular, they help Michelle to continue to participate in most of their joint activities without considerable effort. Michelle and Donald both hope to

continue such activities for as long as possible because they see them as essential to maintain their relationship.

1.3 Engaging in daily activities within the context of romantic partnerships

The portraits of the two partnerships above are summaries of data collected for one of the studies included in this thesis (Bertrand et al., 2022 - see chapter 3). Cathy and Jeremy, and Michelle and Donald, voluntarily participated in this research. They are two partnerships in which one partner has experienced the aggravation of a vision loss. Their portraits highlight the importance of their daily activities within their relationships. Interestingly, both partnerships use a similar metaphor to represent their relationship: a tree. Cathy and Jeremy describe their partnership as two distinct but intertwined trees, with the two partners mostly living side by side. For them, this means that each partner spends most of their time separately from the other (i.e., in apart activities), but they also spend quality time together (i.e., in joint activities). In contrast, Michelle and Donald describe their partnership as a single tree, the partners being the roots but the partnership is the preeminent entity, the trunk. They highlight how they spend most of their time together performing joint activities. Moreover, all the partners describe how a life event, such as a visual impairment, could threaten their daily routines, regardless of the nature of the relationship. According to them, such an impairment could affect the whole partnership.

At the time of the realization of the thesis (2018 to 2023), approximately 2.2 billion of individuals worldwide had vision loss (Demmin & Silverstein, 2020). Since age plays a decisive role in the onset or aggravation of visual impairment, the prevalence of this sensory loss should increase in the upcoming years, especially in the Western countries due to their aging population (Demmin & Silverstein, 2020; Swenor & Ehrlich, 2021). Thus, vision loss is considered as an important public health concern for the future that will need to be addressed for health and social professionals and researchers (World Health Organization, 2019).

Therapies for partnerships are mostly designed and proposed by psychologists, therefore, they primarily target psychological and emotional disorders that originate from facing critical life events like vision loss, as well as the ensuing relational difficulties (Asen, 2018; Bradbury & Bodenmann, 2020). Both partnerships, introduced previously, who would ask or be referred to an intervention, would probably receive such therapy since their respective relationships were challenged by the vision loss of one of the partners. Nevertheless, beyond the psychological, emotional, or relational distress, their respective portraits reveal the importance of considering daily activities within the partnership.

The consequences of vision loss on one's daily life have been evidenced as being far-reaching and wide-ranging (Lehane et al., 2018; Mamali et al., 2022). Such health issue has a resulting impact on not only partners' established routines but also the need to engage in new activities and/or ways of doing

such activities. These consequences include, but are not limited to, problems with social participation (Berger, 2012; Boey et al., 2021; Vu et al., 2005), communicating one's needs (Bertschi et al., 2021; Heine et al., 2002; Wang & Boerner, 2008), community mobility (Berger, 2012; Justiss, 2013; Laliberté Rudman & Durdle, 2008), as well as paid employment (Demmin & Silverstein, 2020; Mojon-Azzi et al., 2010). Thus, over the past 10 years, there has been a growing body of evidence outlining the impact of vision loss on close relatives, such as romantic partners (Hofsöe et al., 2019; Lehane, Dammeyer, & Elsass, 2017; Lehane et al., 2018; Mamali et al., 2022). However, such shared impact on daily activities and corresponding adaptation has yet been studied (Lehane, Dammeyer, & Elsass, 2017; Lehane, Dammeyer, & Wittich, 2017).

Improving knowledge on how romantic partners who face one partner's vision loss would facilitate the implementation of partnerships-level interventions that focus on their activities. However, to date, it remains unclear how the range of activities contributes to maintaining a satisfying long-term relationship, especially when partners face critical life events like vision loss. To this purpose, the current thesis addresses romantic partnerships and daily activities within such relationship from an occupational perspective. This perspective is particularly valuable since it focuses on the meaning that romantic partners ascribe to their engagement in daily activities, or occupations (Black et al., 2019; Hammell, 2004; Ikiugu et al., 2012). Applying such an occupational lens should help to further understand the unique contribution of partners' daily activities to the partnership, for partners who face vision loss, but also more broadly, to any partnerships. As such, this thesis is a first step towards the conceptualization of a romantic partnership as an occupational community, which is embedded in and organized around partners' occupations.

The next sections provide background information on romantic partnerships. The first section includes a historical and contemporary understanding of romantic partnerships; it is followed by theoretical considerations relating to this concept. These considerations lead to the concept of partnership identity, which is addressed in the next section, introducing the concept of mutuality, which is applied in the thesis. A typology of romantic partnership identities is then provided, along with a discussion of the shaping role of daily activities. The next two sections further investigate time-use patterns to better understand the importance of daily routines for partnerships: theoretical elements on time-use studies are discussed first, and then a state of the art on the contribution of time-use to romantic partnerships is provided. The last section briefly presents the occupational perspective of daily living, since this perspective is applied in the research studies relating to this thesis, to examine how the mutuality of partners is reflected in their time-use. The general introduction ends with the objective of the thesis, as well as a short overview of the four studies that make up the different chapters.

2. Background information about romantic partnerships

2.1 From a historical to a contemporary understanding

According to Grusec and Lytton (2012), two Canadian psychologists, social development is the process through which people learn to interact with one another in various social contexts. Social networks may develop and spread, ranging from intimate friendships to those that are more romantic in nature. Thus, romantic relationships typically develop between individuals who come together and coordinate to maintain a mutually satisfactory relationship (Banse & Rebetz, 2008; Santelli, 2018). A large majority of human beings experience such romantic partnerships throughout their life (Banse & Rebetz, 2008; Columbus et al., 2020). Moreover, this relationship has been shown to have a major impact on quality of life (Cruwys et al., 2022).

The French psychiatrist Charazac (2009) defined romantic partnership as “a clean space, an area of exchange and private creation uniting two beings” (p. 139). Such definition highlights that a partnership is a close association (usually) between two individuals. This conceptualization of romantic partnerships is shaped by a particular sociocultural context, i.e., by the laws and social norms of the country (Banse & Rebetz, 2008; Gaillard, 2009). In other words, political, social, religious, and economic contexts have strongly influenced how romantic partnerships have been understood through time (Cohen & Strong, 2020; Maestre, 2009; Rendon et al., 2014). For centuries, the marriage and cohabitation of a woman and a man was the only legally and socially accepted form of union in Western countries (Gaillard, 2009; Perrot, 2004). This particularly reflected the influence exerted by the Christian religion (Rendon et al., 2014; Witte, 2012). Such historical roots remain preeminent in Western societies (Sassler & Lichter, 2020). A romantic partnership is still often defined in mainstream or scientific literature as the union of a man and a woman (Cohen & Strong, 2020). However, from the mid-20th century to the early 21st century, a diversity of contemporary forms of partnerships emerged (Haritaworn et al., 2006; Ketokivi, 2012; Maestre, 2009; Magni-Speck, 2013). In many Western countries, marriage is no longer a requirement for the social and legal recognition of a romantic partnership (Karney & Bradbury, 2020). Nowadays, romantic partnerships endorse different forms of conjugality, such as married or non-married partners, or cohabiting or non-cohabiting partners (Maestre, 2009). Romantic partnerships can also involve different-sex or same-sex partners (Sassler & Lichter, 2020). Moreover, other forms of union are progressively emerging in Western countries (Klesse et al., 2022; Noël, 2006). Polyamory, defined as “a form of relationship where it is possible, valid, and worthwhile to maintain (usually long-term) intimate and sexual relationships with multiple partners simultaneously”, is an example of the emerging diversity of partnerships (Haritaworn et al., 2006, p. 15). The next section further explores the implications of a romantic partnership for partnered individuals. In this thesis, the term relationship encompasses the diversity of possible partnership-types.

2.2 An intimate and interdependent relationship

A romantic partnership is an intimate relationship between partnered individuals (Banse & Rebetz, 2008; Castro et al., 2012; Klesse et al., 2022). Such intimacy refers to the physical and psychological closeness between partners, as well as feelings of love, affection, and desire (Columbus et al., 2020; Lippert & Prager, 2001; Mashek & Aron, 2004). According to Montheil (2017), a French sociologist, such intimacy reflects the interdependence of romantic partners. Dutch psychologists Van Lange and Balliet (2015, p. 65) define interdependence as the “process by which interacting people influence one another’s experiences.” For them (Van Lange & Balliet, 2015), individuals who are in a close relationship continuously influence each other. Since romantic partnerships are a form of close relationship (Antonucci et al., 2004; Columbus et al., 2020; Rusbult & Van Lange, 2003; Theiss & Knobloch, 2009), romantic partners are likely to experience situations in which their behavior, actions, and decisions are mutually influenced (Columbus et al., 2020; Sels et al., 2020). Hefez (2013), a French psychiatrist, uses the metaphor of dancing to illustrate this interdependence within romantic partnerships; the partners mutually coordinate to create a cohesive performance. Continuing with this metaphor, Hefez (2013) suggests that romantic partners aim to achieve a well-executed choreography as the rhythm and tempo of their dance encompass balance and imbalance, satisfaction and dissatisfaction.

Scientific research on romantic partnerships has focused on the impact of such interdependent relationships on the psychological, and cognitive functioning of each partner (Columbus et al., 2020; Knobloch & Solomon, 2004; Van Doesum et al., 2018; Van Lange & Balliet, 2015). For example, in their systematic review of mental health outcomes of marriage in older couples, Caillot-Ranjeva et al. (2021) found that among the 21 included studies, 10 highlighted that each partner’s emotional markers (e.g., depressive symptoms, subjective well-being, and self-esteem) were correlated. In other words, a change in these markers in one partner corresponded to a similar change in the other partner (Caillot-Ranjeva et al., 2021). As such, in line with other psychologists (see for example, (Reis, 2014; Sels et al., 2016, 2020) the authors (Caillot-Ranjeva et al., 2021) argued that partners’ emotions are inextricably interconnected.

Research on romantic partnerships has suggested that a partnership identity emerges from a strong connection between partners (Cruwys et al., 2022; Fergus & Reid, 2001; Santelli, 2018). The next section further examines partnership identity through the concept of mutuality.

3. Mutuality: Considering identity at the partnership level

Research on marital happiness and stability has developed tremendously over the years, with the aim of better understanding the factors that favor a satisfying, long-term partnership (Cruwys et al., 2022; Karney & Bradbury, 2020). This has resulted in the emergence of systemic-constructivist social psychology, a theory that assumes that people’s values or behaviors are inherently derived from their participation in

different sociocultural systems (family, school, sports team, etc.) and that they reciprocally shape interpersonal interactions within such systems (Ahmad & Reid, 2016; Fergus & Reid, 2001). A romantic partnership is seen as a social system that involves partners who, through their ongoing interactions, share their thoughts, feelings, and beliefs to mutually create a shared meaning (Ahmad & Reid, 2016; Reid et al., 2008). This shared meaning has been described as a “culture” that is unique to the relationship (Ahmad & Reid, 2016, p. 618), referring to a partnership identity that emanates from the identification of each partner to their relationship (Cruwys et al., 2022; Fergus & Reid, 2001; Reid et al., 2006). As such, a partnership identity can be defined as “the degree to which the romantic relationship is central to one’s sense of self” (Cruwys et al., 2022, p. 19).

The idea of the partnership as a single identity that transcends the partners’ individual selves has been referred to in systemic-constructivist literature on romantic partnerships as the mutuality, or “we-ness” of the relationship (Buehlman et al., 1992; Rohrbaugh, 2021; Skerrett, 2003) that emerges from partners’ shared experiences (Skerrett, 2003). Such we-ness refers to partners’ shaping of a collective reality from their personal identity while being an integral part of it (Singer et al., 2015). However, this process depends on how both partners are willing to shape such a collective reality (Fergus & Reid, 2001). In other words, we-ness can be defined as “the degree to which partners see themselves as a collective entity, rather than two separate individuals” (Cruwys et al., 2022, p. 3). We-ness has been further labelled as the cognitions, emotions and behaviors of partners who “seek to promote the welfare and best interests of the relationship while maintaining a simultaneous awareness of each partner’s individual concerns” (Singer et al., 2015, p. 108). In their development and validation of the ‘We-ness Questionnaire’, Topcu-Uzer et al. (2021) described cognitions as the degree to which partners identify with the other partner and their relationship; emotions as the affective processes experienced by partners with regard to their partner and their relationship; and behaviors as the everyday actions of partners that reflect their cognitions and emotions.

The concept of we-ness was first used by Buehlman et al. (1992) to predict divorces among a sample of American married couples. They used an oral history interview, a semi-structured interview conducted with both partners, during which they asked about the partners’ relationship history (for instance, how they met, when they got married, the ups and downs of the relationship, and how their marriage has changed over time). Their data coding included ‘we-ness versus separateness’, i.e., the extent to which partners identified themselves as part of their partnership or rather emphasized their individualities. According to the authors (Buehlman et al., 1992), a low degree of we-ness in partners’ discourses indicated that their respective aspirations are no longer met within their partnership. Partners who showed such low we-ness also reported having reduced communication with the other partner because of their different points of view. As such, for Buehlman et al. (1992), the level of we-ness that

was reflected in partners' oral history interviews was a strong predictor of both marital satisfaction and dissolution.

In line with Buehlman et al. (1992), the recent literature on romantic partnerships has highlighted we-ness as a critical determinant of the maintenance of a satisfying long-term partnership (Kayser & Acquati, 2019; Topcu-Uzer et al., 2021). For instance, Cruwys et al. (2022), Australian psychologists, examined how we-ness could predict relationship satisfaction. Australian adults completed questionnaires to measure the we-ness of their romantic partnerships, their relationship satisfaction, and relationship instability. Regression analysis of the data showed that we-ness scores were strongly associated with scores of relationship satisfaction and instability. The authors (Cruwys et al., 2022) concluded that a high level of we-ness can predict a satisfying and stable partnership. Thus, a high level of we-ness between partners has been hypothesized to represent each partner's consciousness of the relationship (Singer & Skerrett, 2014). Therefore, we-ness reflects partners' abilities to consider the other's expectations accurately and cogently (Gildersleeve et al., 2017).

It has been suggested that time spent with the partner can strengthen the sense of we-ness if the relationship meets each partner's expectations (Gager & Sanchez, 2003; Gildersleeve et al., 2017). Moreover, research has suggested that partners shape the identity of their partnership by their engagement in their daily activities (Chavez, 2015; Gildersleeve et al., 2017; Kaufmann, 1992). The next section further examines how partnership identity is associated with the time spent without, or with the partner.

4. Partnership identity and daily activities

In her dissertation on the evolution of romantic partnerships and love triangles in the European literature of the first half of the 20th century, Mijea (2012) argues that a romantic partnership aims to reach the unity, but through a required plurality. In other words, examining the mutuality of romantic partnerships implies addressing how partners see themselves as individuals and as partners (Columbus et al., 2020; Cruwys et al., 2022; Fergus & Reid, 2001). This includes how romantic partners spend their time in their daily activities, i.e., with or without the other partner.

The French sociologist Kaufmann (1992, 2014) was among the first to argue that a romantic partnership is embedded in partners' shared or co-constructed routines. Hence, mutuality between romantic partners emerges when partners adequately adjust to each other's needs, including those activities they want to do apart or jointly. According to Santelli (2018), a French sociologist, individuals have dual aspirations in terms of their daily routines when they are involved in a romantic relationship: they aim to achieve fulfillment both as individuals and as a partnership. As such, Santelli (2018) describes

three different types of partnership identities, according to how partners prioritize their apart or joint activities.

The first type of romantic partnership is an “association of individuals” (Santelli, 2018, p. 24), where each partner focuses on self-realization, i.e., mostly outside the relationship. In this configuration, each partner prioritizes their own, apart activities to meet their own needs, such as hobbies, paid work or meeting friends. Joint activities are generally limited to sleep and meals. The partnership is a support to meet their own needs for sexuality and tenderness, as well as to gain financial and social security.

The second type is the “fusional partnership” (Santelli, 2018, p. 20), where the partnership is the prioritized entity. This implies sacrificing one's personal interests for the benefit of the partnership, which provides emotional, financial, sexual and moral security to each partner. Partners aim for their partnership to flourish, beyond their own individualities. On a daily basis, joint engagement in daily activities is prioritized, in particular domestic activities, like shopping, meals or household tasks. Social activities are also mostly performed jointly, for example, meeting family or friends. Paid work, however, mostly remains an apart activity.

The third type is a combination of the two other identities. Partners have similar aspirations regarding their partnership, including material, cultural, financial or social conditions. They aim to achieve a constant compromise between their individual needs and those of the partnership. The partnership is acknowledged as the “driving force” of the partners (Santelli, 2018, p.23) since it supports their self-achievement. Partners divide their time between apart and joint activities. As such, certain activities are mostly performed jointly, such as social activities, sleeping, and eating. Other activities are more often performed apart, especially leisure activities such as sports or meeting friends.

Although Santelli's typology of partnership identities (2018) is based on how partners divide their time between joint and apart activities, it remains unclear as to how the mutuality of romantic partners is reflected in their patterns of doing (Rossignac-Milon et al., 2020). In other words, we have yet to fully understand time-use in romantic partnerships. The next section introduces the topic of time-use.

5. Time-use studies

5.1 Background information

Time-use can be defined as how individuals “spend and structure their time” (Cornwell et al., 2019, p. 16.2). This has long been a topic of interest in social sciences (Bauman et al., 2019; Kolpashnikova et al., 2021) to examine objective and subjective aspects of human behaviors, especially in Western countries (Bauman et al., 2019; Harvey & Pentland, 2002). The sequence, length, and characteristics of the range of people's daily activities (such as paid work, leisure, social activities, physical activities, household

activities, sleeping, or eating), as well as their intensity and context, have been found to have both positive and negative health outcomes (Bauman et al., 2019; Kolpashnikova et al., 2021). Therefore, understanding individuals' time-use patterns are thought to advance knowledge of the relationships between work, play, family, social interaction, well-being, and health. However, the reliability of such time-use research has been challenged since it often focuses on observable aspects of people's time-use behavior (Hunt & McKay, 2015). Thus, the use of a diversity of methodologies across disciplines has been suggested to grasp the full complexity of human activity (Hunt & McKay, 2015).

Given the importance of time-use data, major national time-use study campaigns have been initiated in various Western countries, such as the Harmonized European Time-Use Survey (HETUS), in the 1990s (Harms et al., 2019). Other national time-use surveys have been conducted, and are ongoing, in Australia (Chau et al., 2012), the United Kingdom (Hoang & Knabe, 2021) and the United States (Kolpashnikova et al., 2021). Such time-use surveys aim to collect observable time-use data at the population level to study how people balance their time between their different activities, such as paid work, family or leisure time, and to examine the behavioral and health changes of the population over time.

Using samples from 12 nations, Szalai (1972) was among the first to establish a methodology of time-use research that is still extensively used today (Cornwell et al., 2019). This methodology involves the completion of a time-use diary that is randomly sampled throughout the year and includes details about particular events, activities, places, and social interactions. However, time-use studies encompass a wide variety of methodologies, which can be combined (Bauman et al., 2019; Cornwell et al., 2019; Harvey & Pentland, 2002). Certain methodologies are qualitative: time-use data are collected by direct observation of participants, interviewing participants about their daily activities, or from an ethnographic study. Such methodologies can provide rich time-use data but are costly and time-consuming (Harvey & Pentland, 2002). Moreover, such qualitative methodologies are associated with a high rate of non-compliance of individuals who are uncomfortable with this type of data collection (Harvey & Pentland, 2002). Quantitative time-use methodologies are also diverse (Gershuny & Sullivan, 2019; Harvey & Pentland, 2002). For instance, questionnaires can be used to collect data based on activity lists in which participants are asked to provide information on their participation in the different activities, including the frequency and duration of their participation. Such surveys require the accurate reporting of participation in a restricted list of activities. Therefore, this methodology is often time-consuming for participants, leading to poor compliance (Harvey & Pentland, 2002). Time-use diaries can also be used to collect quantitative time-use data. This involves the participant reporting the duration, sequence and any other information about daily activities over a certain period of time (often a single day - 24h -, or two days - 48h) (Bauman et al., 2019).

In the introduction of their book on time-use research, the British sociologists Gershuny and Sullivan (2019) discuss the difficulties relating to the collection of objective time-use data. Using the metaphor of fish in water, they explain (2019, p. 7) that since “we live in time [...] we are aware of the passage of time, we generally do not remember how much of it we devote to each of our activities”. Therefore, they argue that time-use data should be handled with caution. However, time-use data enables researchers to grasp the wide range of activities that people engage in (Kolpashnikova et al., 2021). Moreover, while time-use data encompass all the activities in which people engage on a single day, they also include information on when the activity occurred, how long it lasted, where it happened, and who the individual was with. As such, time-use studies go far beyond accounting for the time people spend performing their different activities (Cornwell et al., 2019). For instance, time-use studies are particularly popular for the study of inequality between men and women in terms of the time devoted to their respective daily activities, such as leisure or paid work (Kamp Dush et al., 2018), the time that parents allocate to the education of their children (Drago, 2009), the time spent at paid work and outside (Flood & Genadek, 2016), the ecological impact of human daily activities (Cornwell et al., 2019), or the relationship between well-being and daily activities (Hoang & Knabe, 2021). For instance, in their study about time-use, employment and the well-being of British people, Hoang and Knabe (2021) found that because employed people spent most of their time at work during weekdays, their level of well-being was higher during the weekend when they could engage in their leisure or social activities. Conversely, weekends and weekdays were found to be equally enjoyable for unemployed people (Hoang & Knabe, 2021).

In recent years, social science scholars have increasingly focused on time-use patterns within households in which one or both partners are employed in paid work, that is, single-earner or dual-earner partnerships (Bernardo et al., 2015; Cornwell et al., 2019). It has been highlighted that romantic partners face challenges in maintaining the work-life balance and that they struggle with their diverse responsibilities. As such, time-use patterns are crucial for the maintenance of a long-term partnership (Bernardo et al., 2015; Flood & Genadek, 2016; Panisoara & Serban, 2013). The next section focuses on time-use patterns in the context of romantic partnerships.

5.2 Time-use patterns in the context of romantic partnerships

A romantic relationship affects individuals' daily activities (Antoine et al., 2019; Knobloch & Solomon, 2004). As such, the time-use patterns of romantic partners can involve a range of daily activities, including those that individuals are expected to do, want to do, and need to do. (Flood & Genadek, 2016; Glorieux et al., 2011; Milek et al., 2015). This range of activities not only includes those in which partners engage together (i.e., joint activities) but also activities in which one partner engages without the other one (i.e., apart activities) (Bernardo et al., 2015; Cornwell et al., 2019; Milek et al., 2015). Sullivan (1996), an American sociologist, examined the time-use patterns of individuals in relation to their experience of

enjoyment within the context of romantic partnership. He (Sullivan, 1996) collected data from time-use diaries that reported each partner's patterns of daily activities. The diaries provided information about the total work time (paid and unpaid), the division of household tasks, and leisure time. Data from five-day diaries from 380 British different-sex partnerships, married and unmarried, were collected in 1986. The data were compared between the partners to identify which activities they had reported as involving joint or apart engagement. The preeminent activity for all participants was sleeping; participants declared spending more than 30% of their total daily time sleeping. Relaxing activities, eating and household activities also occupied a large part of their day. Moreover, each partner, whatever their gender, described the same amount of time spent in leisure and social activities (around 15% of the total time on a weekday, and 25% of the total time on a weekend day). Thus, sleeping and leisure activities were reported as the preeminent joint activities of partners whereas paid work (for men) or unpaid work (for women) was identified as the most time-consuming apart activity. In line with Sullivan (1996), time-use diaries have also been used in recent research on romantic partnerships to collect data relating to the joint and apart activities of romantic partners. For instance, Glorieux et al. (2011) examined 4,043 Belgian time-use diaries of partnered individuals in which activities performed on a workday and a day on the weekend were recorded. They (Glorieux et al., 2011) revealed that 53% of the day was spent with the other partner, mostly sleeping, eating, and in leisure activities such as watching television and going out with friends. Conversely, paid work and household tasks were mostly performed separately, i.e., without the other partner (Glorieux et al., 2011). Similarly, in Flood and Genadek's (2016) time-use study, sleeping, eating, and watching television were also reported as the most common joint activities among same-sex and different-sex American romantic partnerships ($n = 86,420$), whereas paid employment was cited as the preeminent apart activity.

In Sullivan's study of British partnerships (1996), participating partners completed a 5-point scale to measure their enjoyment when they engaged in their different recorded activities. As such, Sullivan (1996) found a significant association between partners' joint engagement in daily activities and their associated experience of enjoyment. That is, the more time partners spent together in certain activities, the more the experience was enjoyable for both. Leisure and social activities in particular procured the most enjoyment to partners when they were jointly engaged (Sullivan, 1996). Recently, scholars have further extended Sullivan's concept of the quality of the time spent with the other partner (Flood & Genadek, 2016; Gager & Sanchez, 2003; Glorieux et al., 2011). As such, certain activities, especially social and leisure activities that involve new experiences, have been shown to contribute to the well-being of respective partners (Aron et al., 2000; Cornwell et al., 2019; Glorieux et al., 2011; Reissman et al., 1993). It has been hypothesized that partners would synchronize their time schedules to preserve their joint engagement in such activities (Flood & Genadek, 2016; Gager & Sanchez, 2003; Sullivan, 1996).

Girme, Overall, and Faingataa (2014), three New Zealand psychologists, discussed how engaging in joint activities strengthens the closeness of the partnership. Based on measures of relationship quality, joint activity outcomes and the related experience of 196 individuals and 83 partnerships, the authors reported that relationship quality was strongly associated with the partners' joint engagement in satisfying and stress-free activities (Girme et al., 2014). However, authors highlighted that such joint activities strengthen the bonds between partners when their respective engagement is dedicated to their partnership (Girme et al., 2014). As such, for these authors (Girme et al., 2014), the extent to which partners share a similar experience of their engagement is more important than the type of activity performed in terms of strengthening the quality of the relationship. In fact, through their shared experiences, partners' relationship can develop to the point that their daily lives become inextricably intertwined (Antonucci et al., 2004; Columbus et al., 2020; Rusbult & Van Lange, 2003; Sassler & Lichter, 2020; Theiss & Knobloch, 2009). Within romantic partnerships, daily activities can become more and more interconnected across a range of life areas, including household tasks (Kaufmann, 1992), leisure activities (Berg et al., 2001; Chavez, 2015), parenting (Barnet-Verzat et al., 2011; Boyd et al., 2014) or paid work (Bernardo et al., 2015; Shockley & Allen, 2018). Such connectivity in the partners' patterns of doing is thought to reflect their we-ness (Gager & Sanchez, 2003; Gildersleeve et al., 2017). In consequence, the degree to which partners' daily activities become intertwined can inform their partnership's identity, i.e., how they see themselves as individuals or as a partnership (Knobloch & Solomon, 2004; Montheil, 2017; Sassler, 2010).

However, little is known about how partners' daily activities reflect their we-ness since the extent to which these activities are a shared experience remains unclear. An occupational lens is of particular value to examine this topic, since it focuses on the meaning that romantic partners ascribe to their daily activities or occupations. This perspective is briefly introduced in the next section.

6. Introducing occupational science: An occupational perspective on everyday doing

6.1 Background information

Mary Reilly (1962), a pioneering American occupational therapist and researcher (Kielhofner, 2008; Yerxa, 2000), argued that the relationship between people's daily activities, i.e., their occupations, and their health should be the central focus of the occupational therapy profession. She (Reilly, 1962) hypothesized that "man, through the use of his hands as energized by mind and will, can influence the state of his own health" (p. 2). Considering occupation as a vital need for human flourishing, Reilly (1962) claimed that occupational therapy should focus on people's resources and capacity to do, rather than on their incapacities. Reilly (1962) defined the concept of occupations as what individuals do to

master their environment, that is, a “self-initiated, self-organized activity which is goal-directed and contextualized in a specific environment over a span of time” (Yerxa, 2000, p. 91).

Furthering Reilly’s intellectual tradition, occupational science emerged as a distinct discipline in the early 1990s at the University of Southern California (United States) from a group of occupational therapy scholars (Clark et al., 1991; Lawlor, 2021; Yerxa, 2000). Along with Reilly’s work, the founders of the discipline were influenced by the early principles of occupational therapy; that occupations are powerful therapeutic means to improve one’s health and well-being (Hinojosa et al., 2017; Reed, 2017; Yerxa, 1990). These pioneering occupational scientists argued that there was a need for “the study of the human as an occupational being, including the need for, and capacity to engage in and orchestrate, daily occupations in the environment over the lifespan” (Yerxa et al, 1989, p. 6). Stemming from a clinical perspective, occupational science has spread in practice and research from occupational therapy to the human and social sciences (Hocking & Clair, 2011) with the aim to systematically study what people do. As such, in her article on the development and future of occupational science, Calhoun (2021) describes four foundational tenets of the discipline :

“1) occupation should be studied and scientifically supported to provide efficacy, value, and significance to occupational therapy practice; 2) humans are occupational beings with a biological need for occupation, which should be analyzed from an interdisciplinary perspective; 3) occupation has the potential to shape health and well-being through building functional capacity; and 4) occupational engagement promotes skill development and adaptation within contexts and environments” (p. 195).

However, while occupational science originally emerged from the occupational therapy profession, tensions have arisen over time concerning the extent to which the discipline should support therapeutic applications in occupational therapy, versus being an interdisciplinary study of occupation (Calhoun, 2021; Pollard et al., 2010; Laliberté Rudman, 2018). The first viewpoint stresses the need to design occupational therapy interventions that are evidence-based, through an expanded understanding of occupation. According to the second viewpoint, occupational science should focus on the holistic study of occupation as a complex phenomenon and how it is shaped by sociocultural factors. Despite such tensions, occupational science and occupational therapy have continuously overlapped in research and practice since both disciplines are dedicated to understanding people’s occupations and how occupations relate to health (Lawlor, 2021; Pollard et al., 2010).

Human occupations can be defined as “the wide-ranging expanse of everyday and extraordinary doings that individuals and groups engage in” (Laliberté Rudman, 2018, p. 242). As such, they encompass the range of daily activities that an individual does in everyday life (Hammell, 2004), and more broadly, the act of doing, being, becoming, and belonging (Wilcock, 1999, 2006). Occupations enable people to

meet their basic and social needs and shape their identity (Persson, Iwarsson, Erlandsson, & Eklund, 2001; Wilcock, 2006). Occupations reflect what one needs, wants, and has to do; engaging in occupations promotes human growth, well-being, health and social belonging (Ikiugu, 2005; Jonsson, 2008; Kristensen & Petersen, 2016).

Occupations have been described as meaningful (Hinojosa & Kramer, 1997; Ikiugu & Pollard, 2015; Wilcock, 2006) since they address an “intrinsic need for self-maintenance, expression and fulfilment” (Law et al., 1996, p.16). Such meaningfulness refers to one’s sense of purpose - how an occupation aligns with personal values and beliefs. However, Hammell (2004) has argued that an occupation is not meaningful per se, since it emanates from the subjective experience that individuals derive from being engaged in it. Thus, occupational engagement has been described as reflecting how people make meaning of their experience (Bejerholm & Eklund, 2007; Morris & Cox, 2017). Such experience is shaped not only by personal factors but also by social, cultural, physical and institutional contexts that can foster or restrain people’s occupational engagement (Hammell, 2004). As such, when they engage in an occupation, the experience that emanates from the meaning the individual ascribes to the occupation is shaped by their personal values as well as their sociocultural context.

Adopting an occupational perspective of daily life involves examining people’s occupations and their related experiences (Njelesani et al., 2014; Wilcock, 1993). Such a perspective could help to further understand how partners make meaning of their daily experiences within the context of a romantic relationship. By consequent, with regard to romantic partners’ interdependence, a collectivistic epistemology is adopted throughout the thesis since it supports understanding human occupation as a social phenomenon that shape and is shaped by interdependent relationships. This epistemology is described below, as well as the main derived concepts.

6.2 A collectivistic epistemology of human occupation

The concept of interdependence has been regularly addressed in recent years in the occupational science literature to examine occupations of individuals through their social interactions (Gerlach et al., 2018; Kantartzis & Molineux, 2014 Laliberté Rudman & Aldrich, 2017; Ramugondo & Kronenberg, 2015; Wagman & Håkansson, 2019). Human occupation is a “deeply social” phenomenon (Dickie et al., 2006, p. 85) that shapes and is shaped through interdependent relationships (Gerlach et al., 2018; Larson & Zemke, 2011; Ramugondo & Kronenberg, 2015). For instance, in a study that investigated the perspectives of family caregivers in Zimbabwe, Munambah et al. (2022) described how the occupation of play among children who were HIV+ was shaped by children’s interactions as well as with their parents or relatives. Such collectivist epistemology has been used in two distinct ways in the occupational science literature. Firstly, collectivism can refer to individuals who coordinate their occupational engagement, but where individual needs remain the focus (Larson & Zemke, 2003; Leclair, 2010; Orban et al., 2012). For

example, Orban et al. (2012) highlighted all the lifestyle changes made by the parents of a child with obesity aged 4 to 6 years who were engaged together in the process of supporting their child's weight loss. Secondly, collectivism can also refer to the ideology (Triandis, 1993) that focuses on the needs of the groups (e.g. family, ethnic group, work organization) (Gerlach et al., 2018; Magalhaes et al., 2019; Malfitano et al., 2021). For example, in their study of the influence of culture on occupational therapy practice in Jordan, Malkawi et al. (2020) found that the engagement of individuals in praying, a religion-related occupation, enabled them to follow the principles of the Islamic religion as a group. Because this second understanding of collectivism has recently emerged in occupational science literature, it is less widespread than the first (Malfitano et al., 2021). Concepts that derive from the collectivist perspective often focus on individual needs (Lavalley, 2017; Malfitano et al., 2021).

Thus, several concepts that are rooted in an "collectivist" epistemology (Malfitano et al., 2021) have emerged, reflecting individuals' interdependence (Hammell, 2014; Lavalley & Bailliard, 2021; Malfitano et al., 2021; Ramugondo & Kronenberg, 2015). The concepts of collective occupations (Ramugondo & Kronenberg, 2015) and co-occupations (Pickens & Pizur-Barnekow, 2009) have been used in the first study of the thesis (the scoping review) (Bertrand et al., Submitted) while the concept of shared occupations (Jones et al., 2017) has been used in the second study of the thesis (the qualitative descriptive study) (Bertrand et al., 2022). Like most concepts that have emerged from occupational science, these still lack a consensual definition (Hammell, 2009). Despite this, they have spread throughout occupational therapy and occupational science research (Malfitano, 2021). Moreover, depending on the author, such concepts may overlap or be used interchangeably. In this thesis, they are applied to better circumscribe a complex phenomenon: the interdependence of romantic partners (Sels et al., 2020). Therefore, the definitions used in this thesis for each concept are explained below.

1.1.1 Collective occupation

Several studies within the field of occupational science have considered a collective occupation as a key for bonding individuals (Kantartzis & Molineux, 2017; Laliberté Rudman et al., 2019; Ramugondo & Kronenberg, 2015). Ramugondo and Kronenberg (2015) extensively examined this concept in a theoretical paper that aimed to bridge the individual-collective dichotomy within the study of human occupations. According to these authors (Ramugondo & Kronenberg, 2015), collective occupations imply a high degree of interdependence between individuals. Hence, the centrality of human relationships is reflected in the process of co-construction and sharing of the meaning that individuals attribute to their daily experiences. They defined the concept of collective occupation within the perspective of Ubuntu, an ontological position in which humans and their communities are shaped through their continuous interactions. Therefore, they suggested that collective occupations are a "vehicle to building and sustaining relationships that work" (Ramugondo & Kronenberg, 2015, p. 12). As such, collective

occupation would refer to occupations that involve the collaboration and coordination of several interdependent individuals (Adams & Casteleijn, 2014; Malfitano et al., 2021; Peralta-Catipon, 2012). In their study of Greek families, Kantartzis and Molineux (2014) illustrate this concept by describing occupations that contribute to a collective whole, namely, a Greek family. Authors highlight how various occupations, such as milking goats, slaughtering lambs or cooking meat, are carried out by different family members, but all are related to a traditional religious family celebration (Kantartzis & Molineux, 2014). These authors state that such family occupations are collective because they are interconnected: their meaning is co-constructed and shared by each family member, which therefore supports the expression of a family identity (Kantartzis & Molineux, 2014).

In this thesis, collective occupation is conceptualised according to the view of Ramugondo and Kronenberg (2015): it implies the interdependence of romantic partners, as reflected in the co-construction and the sharing of the meaning they ascribe to such occupation. This is different from the concept of co-occupation, described in the next section.

1.1.2 Co-occupation

Like collective occupation, the concept of co-occupation reflects a collectivist epistemology of human occupation. This concept first emerged in research in occupational science in the context of mother-child interactions, to describe their joint occupational engagement (Zemke & Clark, 1996). This concept has subsequently spread in the occupational science literature (Pierce, 2009), for example, for the study of partnerships in which one of the spouses had a stroke (van Nes et al., 2009, 2012), or to examine joint engagement in activities in a day program for people with developmental disabilities and their caregivers (Mahoney & Roberts, 2009). It is generally accepted that co-occupation implies that the respective actions of at least two interdependent individuals mutually influence the meaning of their experience (Mahoney & Roberts, 2009; Pierce, 2009; van Nes et al., 2012). Therefore, co-occupations are embedded in the co-construction and sharing of the meaning that individuals ascribe to their occupational engagement (Pierce, 2009; van Nes et al., 2012). Pickens and Pizur-Barnekow (2009) suggest that a co-occupation involves both a shared physicality, that is, a direct and reciprocal influence between people, and a shared emotionality, i.e., an equally direct and reciprocal influence between people's emotions. Therefore, Pickens and Pizur-Barnekow (2009) argue that co-occupation implies the simultaneous time-space engagement of two people. Nevertheless, their definition has been questioned; for example, Pierce (2009) stated that co-occupation involves an interconnection between different protagonists, rather than their simultaneous space-time engagement. She illustrates this with the example of a mother tidying her child's toys: the child who plays with the toys and the mother who puts them away are engaged in co-occupation; child's play. If the child did not play with the toys, the mother would not have to tidy them; therefore, their actions are interconnected.

In this thesis, co-occupation is defined according to Pickens and Pizur-Barnekow's (2009) view; in addition to a shared meaning between romantic partners, co-occupation also requires the simultaneous sharing of space and time. Moreover, this definition of co-occupation is used by many occupational scientists (see for example, Aubuchon-Endsley et al., 2020; Drotzky et al., 2022; Mahoney & Roberts, 2009; van Nes et al., 2009).

1.1.3 Shared occupation

The concept of shared occupation, which is frequently mentioned in the occupational science literature, also reflects the collectivist epistemology of human occupation (Jones et al., 2017; Leclair, 2010). Nevertheless, this concept is often used interchangeably with the concepts of co-occupation and collective occupation. Thus, sharing an occupation has been referred “engaging collectively to carry out an occupation which a group wanted or needed to do, situated with a particular context and at a particular time, with people contributing to the occupation as they were able” (Jones et al., 2017, p. 95). This conceptualization is recurrent in the occupational science literature, as for example in the research by Aubuchon-Endsley et al. (2020) on the overlap between co-occupation and established aspects of reciprocity in the context of caregiver–infant relationships (Aubuchon-Endsley et al., 2020), and in Moore and Thew's (2023) study of the perceived experience of British adults (aged 18-24 years) participating in a community gardening group. In their studies, Aubuchon-Endsley et al. (2020) and Moore and Thew (2023) describe shared occupation as requiring the mutual and simultaneous engagement of several people. In other words, authors refer shared occupation to the concept of co-occupation as coined by Pickens and Pizur (2009). Moreover, a shared occupation has also been suggested not to require such simultaneity of engagement. In their research on the integration of a socio-altruistic music program as part of the training of Australian occupational therapists, Castro de Jong et al. (2021) describe shared occupation as involving an interconnection between people who, through their engagement, facilitate each other's actions. As such, those authors distinguish between shared occupation and co-occupation, since the first, unlike the latter, does not necessarily require the simultaneous engagement of the protagonists. Thus, in their definition, shared occupation is the same as collective occupation.

As Dickie et al. (2006) point out, in both definitions, the term shared occupation is used in opposition to the term solitary occupation. Within this individualistic perspective (Dickie et al., 2006), an occupation could be understood as a continuum of social interaction, with shared occupation and solitary occupation located at each end. This is how Pierce (2009) conceptualizes human occupation. Dickie et al. (2006) advocate for a collectivist epistemology of occupation by considering that any occupation is

shared. These authors illustrate this with the example of Beth's quilting¹ occupation. They (2006) consider this occupation as shared since it encompasses Beth's whole life story, but also:

[Her] local history, the place she lives, others who quilt, quilting organizations, fabric and places to buy it, government resources that support the quilt making efforts of citizens, for-profit enterprises from quilt shops to national shows, and manufacturing operations that produce the fabric, supplies, and tools she uses (Dickie et al., 2006, p.86).

It is through her relationships with all these elements that Beth engages in her quilt-making occupation. Beth's example illustrates that human occupation cannot be dissociated from the historical, community or socio-cultural context in which it is located (Dickie et al., 2006). Thus, for Dickie et al., (2006), people's occupations are consubstantially shared with their context, which includes, but is not limited to direct social interactions. In this thesis², the theoretical stance taken follows that of Dickie et al. (2006); to consider any occupation within the romantic partnership as a shared occupation. The distinction between this concept and the other concepts applied to the discussion of this thesis is specified below.

1.1.4 Application of the three concepts in the thesis

The epistemological stance taken throughout the thesis is collectivist. Using this approach, an occupation cannot be understood as an isolated phenomenon, but rather as a situated phenomenon. In this thesis, the concept of collective occupation is defined as implying a co-construction and sharing of the meaning ascribed by interdependent individuals, but without their simultaneous space-time engagement. Such definition refers to other articles from the occupational science literature (Adams & Casteleijn, 2014; Malfitano et al., 2021; Peralta-Catipon, 2012; Ramugundo & Kronenberg, 2015). According to Ramugundo and Kronenberg (2015), the concept of collective occupation helps to further understand the extent to which social interactions shape and are shaped by the occupational engagement of individuals (Hammell, 2014). Moreover, collective occupations are understood as shared occupations in reference to Dickie et al.'s (2006) understanding, but which involve the co-construction of a shared meaning between interdependent partners (Hammell, 2014; Hammell & Iwama, 2012; Ramugundo & Kronenberg, 2015). At last, the concept of co-occupation is defined throughout the thesis according to the definition by Pickens and Pizur-Barnekow's (2009) that includes people's mutual (i.e., joint) engagement. Therefore, throughout the entire thesis and the current discussion, co-occupation is understood as a collective occupation but with the simultaneous occupational engagement of individuals in space and time.

¹ In Anglo-Saxon countries, quilting covers a set of sewing works, generally making patchwork quilts.

² The concept of shared occupation is used in the third chapter of this PhD Thesis since this section refers to a manuscript that has been published. In this article, the concept is interchangeably applied with the concept of collective occupations.

The choice to distinguish between these three concepts in the current discussion is made to further grasp how the interdependence of romantic partners is reflected in their occupations. In other words, the application of these concepts to the study of romantic partners should increase knowledge of how their occupations reflect the mutuality of their partnership.

7. Objective of the thesis

Romantic partnerships are a particular form of social relation that involves interdependent partners (Columbus et al., 2020). It has been suggested that such relationships are embedded on partners' daily routines (Glorieux et al., 2011; Kaufmann, 2014; Santelli, 2018). Such routines reflect partners' time-use patterns and include the range of their apart (i.e., without the partner) and joint (i.e., with the partner) activities of daily living. Joint engagement of partners in certain activities, such as leisure and social activities, strengthens the quality of the relationship (Aron et al., 2000; Glorieux et al., 2011). Moreover, an identity of a partnership (i.e., the mutuality, or "we-ness") can emerge from how romantic partners spend their time, that is, together or without the other partner, when they engage in their daily activities (Santelli, 2018). However, examining romantic partnerships according to partners' time-use patterns should consider the complexity of everyday routines of partners (Kaufmann, 2014; Santelli, 2018). That is, through their routines, partners' level of intimacy can develop to the point that their daily life can become strongly intertwined.

Little is known yet about how the identity of the relationship of is reflected in each partners' time-use patterns. Nevertheless, partners' engagement in daily activities could be crucial for the maintenance of a satisfying long-term relationship. As such, to apply the concept of mutuality in combination with an occupational perspective on partners' everyday routines should further our understanding of the extent to which daily activities contribute to the maintenance of satisfying romantic relationships. The thesis' purpose is to bring knowledge on how a shared partnership identity emerge through partners' engagement in their daily activities, or occupations.

As such, the **objective of the thesis** is to investigate whether and how occupational engagement of romantic partners reflects the mutuality of their relationship.

8. Structure of the thesis

This thesis is a cumulative dissertation. It includes **six chapters**, including the introduction (**Chapter 1**). **Chapter 2** to **chapter 5** each corresponds to a study, their order differs from the chronological order of studies (see Table 1 for an overview). **Chapter 2** is a scoping review of the current body of literature from occupational therapy and occupational science. It aims to identify, analyze, and synthesize published work on the occupational engagement of individuals within the context of romantic partnerships. **Chapter**

3 is a qualitative, descriptive study that aim to explore with an occupational lens the lived experience of partners affected by one partner's visual impairment. **Chapter 4** describes the protocol for the IP-COUPLES study, and **Chapter 5** provides the results of this IP-COUPLES study. This descriptive, quantitative study used the "perceptual congruence" model to examine partners' expectations in terms of joint and apart occupational engagement. **Chapter 6** is a discussion and interpretation of the main findings in relation to the overall aim of this work. Implications for future research and a discussion of methodological and personal considerations is also provided.

The dissertation applies a mixed-method methodology, combining qualitative and quantitative research. According to Leech and Onwuegbuzie (2009), the dissertation has a fully mixed concurrent equal status design, as the quantitative and qualitative research are concurrently done. Moreover, data are analyzed with a specific methodology in each case. Eventually, theoretical, qualitative and quantitative data are given an equal weight when it comes to the final analysis, that is, the discussion.

Table 1. Overview of the studies

	Study 1	Study 2	Study 3	Study 4
Focus	Occupational engagement within the context of romantic partnership	Partners' re-shaping of their occupational engagement with respect to their mutuality	Perceptual congruence and occupational engagement of romantic partners	
Aim	To ascertain how engagement of people in collective occupations has been described within the context of romantic partnerships in occupational therapy and occupational science literature	1) To investigate the impact of vision loss on shared occupations, as perceived by those in romantic relationships, 2) To investigate the adjustments and adaptations that ensue as they navigate the impact of such a loss on their daily lives	1) To determine the similarities and differences between partners in terms of their perceptual congruence with respect to apart and jointly performed activities, and 2) To examine the association between apart and joint activities in terms of the perceptual congruence of time-use and the strength of this association	
Design	Scoping review	Qualitative descriptive	Protocol study	Descriptive observational
Data collection	Literature in occupational therapy and occupational science	Face-to-face joint interviews with partnerships	-	Questionnaires on the Life Balance, face-to-face with each partner separately and then with the two together
Data source	Primary research published in peer-reviewed journals	16 heterosexual partnerships from Western Switzerland affected by one partner's visual impairment	-	76 heterosexual partnerships from Western Switzerland

Chapter 2 : Unpacking collective occupational engagement in the context of romantic partnerships: A scoping review

Submitted to the Journal of Occupational Science, major revision requested :

Bertrand, R., Vrkljan, B., Kühne, N., & Vuillerme, N. (Submitted). Unpacking collective occupational engagement in the context of romantic partnerships: A scoping review. *Journal of Occupational Science*.

1. Abstract

Background: Romantic partnerships are a type of human interaction involving two people who participate in shared activities. The term 'collective occupations' has been used when referring to such activities, reflecting the level of interdependence between individuals. However, the question remains as to how collective occupations can be understood within the context of a romantic partnership.

Aim: To identify and summarize how collective occupations involving romantic partners have been described in the occupational therapy and occupational science literature.

Material and methods: A five-step scoping review of primary research was completed. The search included manuscripts published between 1995 and 2021.

Results: The search yielded 232 results of which 20 met the inclusion criteria. Three themes emerged: 1) 'Doing together': joint engagement in collective occupations; 2) 'Doing for each other': apart engagement in collective occupations; and 3) 'Doing as one': Navigating illness as reflected in collective occupations.

Conclusions and significance: Participation in collective occupations can reflect how partners experience a sense of we-ness in terms of the shared meaning ascribed to their engagement. The results highlight the need to further explore how disruption in collective occupations, such as when one partner experiences a health-related change, can impact a couple's sense of 'we-ness'.

2. Introduction

Social development refers to the process by which humans learn to socially interact with one another (Grusec & Lytton, 2012). Such development often begins within one's family and extends outward to social interactions in other social networks, such as school and work. As these networks grow and expand, stronger bonds can form with certain people, which can range from a close friendship to those that are more romantic in nature.

Romantic relationships most often involve two people whose daily lives and corresponding activities can become both interdependent and synergistic (Banse & Rebetz, 2008; Klesse et al., 2022). Montheil (2017), a French sociologist, stated that a couple's shared identity (i.e., the way of being together and facing the world) emanates from their degree of interdependence. To date, most research on romantic relationships has focused on the effects of such interdependence on one or both partners in terms of their psychological, behavioral, and cognitive functioning (Columbus et al., 2020; Knobloch & Solomon, 2004; Van Doesum et al., 2018; Van Lange & Balliet, 2015). Building on such research, French sociologist Kaufmann (1994, 2014) was one of the first to observe how romantic partners can become deeply embedded in one another's daily activities.

At the outset of a romantic relationship, individuals often engage in a range of shared activities. Such engagement has been found to strengthen their bond (Antoine et al., 2019; Knobloch & Solomon, 2004). Within marriage and other long-term romantic partnerships, the types of daily routines and corresponding activities in which individuals engage include, but are not limited to, household chores (Kaufmann, 1992), leisure (Berg et al., 2001; Chavez, 2015), parenting (Barnet-Verzat et al., 2011; Boyd et al., 2014), work (Bernardo et al., 2015; Shockley & Allen, 2018), and intimacy (Carvalho & Rodrigues, 2022; Cooper et al., 2018; Smith et al., 2019). Some have dichotomized these activities as those in which both partners participate concurrently (i.e., joint) or those performed without one's partner (i.e., apart) (Cornwell et al., 2019; Milek et al., 2015). Researchers have used time-use diaries to track joint and apart engagement (Flood et al., 2016; Flood & Genadek, 2016; Glorieux et al., 2011).

In their time-use study of 4,043 Belgian couples, Glorieux et al. (2011) compared workday and weekend activities using the respective diaries of both partners. They observed that couples spent 53% of their time with the other partner. Sleeping, eating, and leisure activities, such as watching television and social outings, were the predominant ways in which time was 'jointly' spent (Glorieux et al., 2011). Conversely, paid work and domestic chores, such as household or childcare, were activities completed apart (Glorieux et al., 2011). Similarly, Flood and Genadek (2016) found that sleeping, eating, and watching television were the most common joint activities among same-sex and different-sex American couples (n = 86,420) while paid work was reported as the predominant apart activity (i.e., without one's

partner). However, dichotomization of activities may not reflect the complexity of everyday activities and routines of romantic partners (Kaufmann, 2014; Santelli, 2018).

Daily life between romantic partners can become inextricably linked through their joint and apart engagement in various activities (Antonucci et al., 2004; Columbus et al., 2020; Rusbult & Van Lange, 2003; Sassler & Lichter, 2020; Theiss & Knobloch, 2009). In turn, the degree to which everyday activities become interdependent can both inform and transform how one or both partners view themselves as individuals and/or as a couple (Knobloch & Solomon, 2004; Montheil, 2017; Sassler, 2010). By examining the subjective and objective interdependence in relation to occupational engagement more closely, we can further understand the extent to which a shared identity might emerge between romantic partners.

The notion of interdependence has been raised in context of occupational routines when engagement involves more than one individual (Dickie et al., 2006; Gerlach et al., 2018; Rudman, 2013). In their theoretical paper that questioned the framing of occupations using a singular or individual lens, Ramugondo and Kronenberg (2015) coined the term 'collective occupations,' which they referred to as those occupations that involve a high degree of interdependence between individuals. Drawing on the notion of Ubuntu, an ontological stance in which humans and their communities are shaped through ongoing interactions with one another, human occupation was suggested as '...a vehicle to building and sustaining relationships' (p. 12). In another study that explored the perspectives of family caregivers in Zimbabwe, Munambah et al. (2022) described how 'play', a collective occupation among children who were HIV+, was shaped by not only how they interacted with one another but also how their parents created the opportunities for such interactions.

Viewing occupational engagement of romantic partners through a 'collective' lens rather than an individualistic perspective has the potential to further our understanding of how each partner's daily occupations are intertwined (Malfitano et al., 2021; Munambah et al., 2022; Ramugondo & Kronenberg, 2015). However, the question remains as to how the notion of collective occupations can be understood within the context of a romantic partnership. With a growing body of knowledge recognizing occupations as an interdependent phenomenon shaped by social forces (Eakman, 2007; Rudman, 2013; Malfitano et al., 2021), the aim of this scoping review was to identify and summarize how collective occupations involving romantic partners have been described in the occupational therapy and occupational science literature. Fostering our understanding of the notion of collective occupations within a romantic context using an occupational perspective can provide unique insights as to the meaning attributed to such engagement by one or both partners. This review will inform researchers in occupational therapy and occupational science who undertake studies investigating occupation as a shared, interdependent experience.

3. Methods

A scoping review is a rigorous method of searching existing evidence to synthesize knowledge and understanding on a particular topic (Levac et al., 2010; Walder et al., 2021). The current review used the modified approach of Arksey and O'Malley (2005), as suggested by Levac, Colquhoun, and O'Brien (Levac et al., 2010). This approach involves (1) identifying the research question, (2) identifying relevant studies, (3) selecting the studies, (4) charting evidence from such studies, and (5) collating, summarizing, and reporting the results (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005). The search strategy was informed by a librarian from the University of Applied Sciences and Arts of Western Switzerland who specializes in conducting such reviews to ensure the search was comprehensive in terms of capturing existing evidence.

3.1 Identifying the research question

This scoping review was guided by the following research question: What is understood about engagement in collective occupations in the context of romantic partnerships within research conducted in occupational therapy and occupational science?

3.2 Identifying relevant studies

Given the breadth of studies of romantic partnerships and that the aim was to understand engagement in collective occupations within the context of such partnerships, the search was limited to research studies and other relevant scholarship specific to occupational science and occupational therapy (Aldrich et al., 2018; Rudman, 2018). The search included a range of terms, such as 'romantic partnerships', 'intimate relationships', 'marriage', 'couples', and 'spouses.' Each term was linked to MeSH terms to find other entry terms (Meuser et al., 2022). The MeSH thesaurus did not retrieve the terms 'romantic partnerships' and 'intimate relationships'. 'Marriage' was linked to 'consensual union,' 'same-sex marriage,' and 'marital relationships'; 'spouses' was linked to 'married partners,' 'husbands,' 'wives,' 'domestic partners,' and 'informal caregiver'; and 'couples' was linked to 'family' and 'household.' These terms were then used in combination with variations of the word 'occupation,' including 'occupational engagement,' 'occupational performance,' 'collective occupations,' 'co-occupation,' and 'occupational patterns.' For example, the following combinations of terms were used: 'couples' AND 'occupation*' OR 'occupational engagement' OR 'occupational performance' OR 'collective occupation*' OR 'co- occupation*' OR 'occupational pattern*.' These terms were then entered into the search function of the electronic databases CINAHL, Psycinfo and Medline, which host most of the journals publishing occupational therapy and occupational science research (Walder et al., 2021). The time period for the search was chosen to range from 1993, which marked the inception of the Journal of Occupational Science (Ebsco Health, 2015) to August 2021.

3.3 Selecting the studies

The criteria for selecting manuscripts were pre-determined by two members of the authorship team (RB, BV). This scoping review mapped primary research within the occupational science and occupational therapy literature (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005; Pham et al., 2014). Additional inclusion criteria were as follows: a) manuscripts in English or French, b) romantic partners who were 18 years and older, and/or c) data (qualitative or quantitative) encompass the respective occupational engagements of both partners. Manuscripts were excluded if they (a) alluded to the concept of 'occupation' without providing a theoretical explanation, (b) focused exclusively on one of the partners in the romantic relationship and/or, (c) they centered on the family entity rather than focusing on the occupations of the respective partners. Grey literature, conference abstracts, posters, letters to the editor, and editorials were excluded, as the criteria for peer review can differ and, in some cases, may be absent. Using the criteria, each paper was independently assessed by these same two of the authors (RB, BV) using Covidence, a web-based review software. Each recorded their assessment by labeling each study as either relevant (R) or irrelevant (I). Initially, the researchers disagreed on the inclusion of three studies (1.3% of the total of studies); however, following a discussion, they agreed to include two of these studies.

3.4 Charting the evidence

Evidence charting involved extracting key information from each study (see Table 1). This information included the authors, publication year, research location, aim of the research, population, and methodology, as well as summarizing how engagement of romantic partners in collective occupations has been described. This chart was completed by the same two authors (RB, BV) and then reviewed by the remaining team members (NK, NV) who were not involved in study selection or the extraction process.

3.5 Collating, summarizing, and reporting the results

A qualitative thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was undertaken. The first author (RB) read each paper at least three times. Major concepts from the first two readings were coded in a separate document during the third reading. This coding was completed using MaxQDA software (Kuckartz & Rädiker, 2019). Codes were charted as they were identified. Once the third reading was completed, each manuscript was reviewed an additional time, using the final set of codes. The codes were then grouped into themes by the first author (RB). The first (RB) and second (BV) author met to discuss the themes. Based on this discussion, the framing of these themes was further refined. The third author (NK) performed a final peer review of the data extraction by reviewing a sample of the data, as well as the final set of themes.

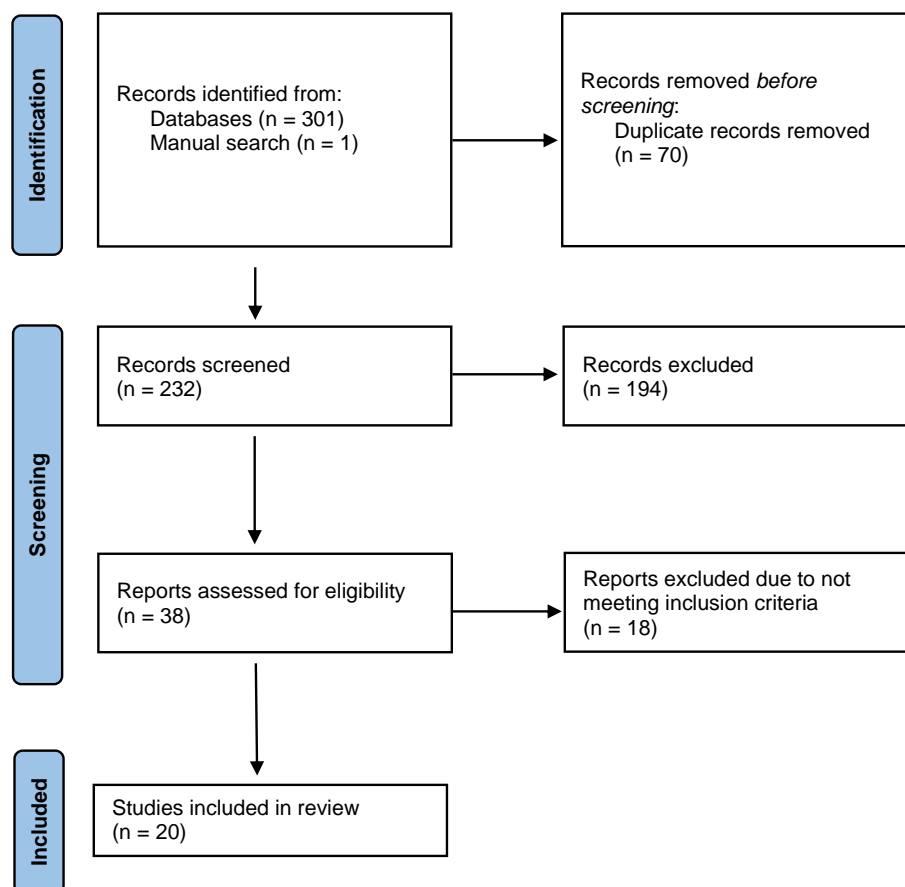


Figure 1. Flowchart depicting the selection of articles (PRISMA diagram) (Page et al., 2021).

4. Results

Once duplicates were removed, 232 unique manuscripts were identified, from which this number was reduced to 20 once abstract and full-text reviews were completed (Figure 1). The results of this review are first presented as a descriptive summary followed by the major themes that emerged.

4.1 Descriptive summary of included studies

4.1.1 General description

Of the 20 manuscripts, 15 (75% of the total of studies) used a qualitative design (Atler et al., 2016; Bailey & Jackson, 2005; Ekstam et al., 2011; Frank et al., 1997; Hasselkus & Murray, 2007; Heward et al., 2006; Martin et al., 2008; Medina et al., 2011; Nes et al., 2012; Persson & Zingmark, 2006; Rudman et al., 2006; Van Dongen et al., 2014; van Nes et al., 2009; Vikström et al., 2005; Yong et al., 2020); 3 (15% of the total of studies) were mixed-methods design (Heatwole Shank & Presgraves, 2019; Kniepmann, 2012; Vrkljan, 2010); and two (10% of the total of studies), a quantitative design (Baum, 1995; Kniepmann, 2012). Six of the qualitative research studies (40%) used a phenomenological design (Atler et al., 2016; Hasselkus & Murray, 2007; Martin et al., 2008; Medina et al., 2011; Persson & Zingmark, 2006; Van Dongen et al., 2014), two (13%) used grounded theory (Heward et al., 2006; Rudman et al., 2006) and

two (13%) used a longitudinal design (Ekstam et al., 2011; Nes et al., 2012). Other designs included one (7%) observational study (Vikström et al., 2005), one (7%) descriptive study (Bailey & Jackson, 2005), one (7%) narrative inquiry (van Nes et al., 2009), and one (7%) ethnography (Frank et al., 1997). One (7%) of the qualitative studies did not specify the design (Yong et al., 2020). Both quantitative studies involved cross-sectional methods (Baum, 1995; Kniepmann, 2012). Of the three mixed-methods studies (Heatwole Shank & Presgraves, 2019; Kniepmann, 2012; Vrkljan, 2010), one (33%) applied a narrative inquiry in combination with quantitative measures (Kniepmann & Cupler, 2014), while another (33%) combined a quantitative cross-comparative analysis with qualitative grounded theory (Vrkljan, 2010). The final mixed-method study (Heatwole Shank & Presgraves, 2019) did not specify the type of designs and how they were combined (33%).

Table 2. Peer-reviewed journals of occupational therapy or occupational science in which included studies were published (N=20)

Journals	Number of papers (N=20)	(Percentage of papers)
Journal of Occupational Science	5	(25%)
British Journal of Occupational Therapy	4	(20%)
Scandinavian Journal of Occupational Therapy	3	(15%)
American Journal of Occupational Therapy	2	(10%)
OTJR: Occupation, Participation, and Health	2	(10%)
Physical and Occupational Therapy in Geriatrics	2	(10%)
Canadian Journal of Occupational Therapy	1	(5%)
Occupational Therapy International	1	(5%)

Table 3. Number of papers according to their research location (N=20)

Research location	Number of papers (N=20)	(Percentage of papers)
United States	8	(40%)
United Kingdom	4	(20%)
Sweden	3	(15%)
Canada	2	(10%)
The Netherlands	2	(10%)
Austria	1	(5%)

Table 4. Number of articles according to their year of publication (N=20)

Year of publication	Number of papers (n=20)	(Percentage of papers)
1995	1	(5%)
1997	1	(5%)
2005	2	(10%)
2006	3	(15%)
2007	1	(5%)
2008	1	(5%)
2009	1	(5%)
2010	1	(5%)
2011	2	(10%)
2012	2	(10%)
2014	2	(10%)
2016	1	(5%)
2019	1	(5%)
2020	1	(5%)

4.1.2 Study informants

The studies (Bailey & Jackson, 2005; Baum, 1995; Ekstam et al., 2011; Frank et al., 1997; Hasselkus & Murray, 2007; Heatwole Shank & Presgraves, 2019; Heward et al., 2006; Kniepmann, 2012; Kniepmann & Cupler, 2014; Medina et al., 2011; Nes et al., 2012; Persson & Zingmark, 2006; Rudman et al., 2006; Van Dongen et al., 2014; van Nes et al., 2009; Vikström et al., 2005; Vrkljan, 2010; Yong et al., 2020) mostly involved community-dwelling romantic partners (n=18, 90% of the total of studies). Two studies had one individual who was living at home and their respective partner was living in a residential care facility (Atler et al., 2016; Martin et al., 2008). The majority of studies (Atler et al., 2016; Baum, 1995; Ekstam et al., 2011; Frank et al., 1997; Hasselkus & Murray, 2007; Heatwole Shank & Presgraves, 2019; Heward et al., 2006; Kniepmann, 2012; Kniepmann & Cupler, 2014; Martin et al., 2008; Medina et al., 2011; Nes et al., 2012; Persson & Zingmark, 2006; Rudman et al., 2006; Van Dongen et al., 2014; van Nes et al., 2009; Vikström et al., 2005; Vrkljan, 2010; Yong et al., 2020) included partners of different-sex partnerships (n=19, 90% of the total of studies) with the exception of one study (10%), which was of lesbian couples (Bailey & Jackson, 2005). In 16 of the studies (80%), at least one partner had a health issue, either dementia (n=5 studies) (Baum, 1995; Hasselkus & Murray, 2007; Persson & Zingmark, 2006; Vikström et al., 2005; Yong et al., 2020), stroke (n=7 studies) (Ekstam et al., 2011; Kniepmann, 2012;

Kniepmann & Cupler, 2014; Nes et al., 2012; Rudman et al., 2006; Van Dongen et al., 2014; van Nes et al., 2009) or other medical condition (n=3 studies) (Heward et al., 2006; Martin et al., 2008; Medina et al., 2011) that required the other partner's assistance in everyday living. In one of these study (Atler et al., 2016), participants were caregiving for a partner who has a dementia or a stroke. Moreover, in one of these studies, at least one participant had a health issue but did not require assistance (Heatwole Shank & Presgraves, 2019). The last three studies (15% of the total of studies) included romantic partners without any specified health issue (Bailey & Jackson, 2005; Frank et al., 1997; Vrkljan, 2010).

In certain studies (Atler et al., 2016; Hasselkus & Murray, 2007; Heward et al., 2006; Kniepmann, 2012; Kniepmann & Cupler, 2014; Persson & Zingmark, 2006; Van Dongen et al., 2014; Yong et al., 2020), study informants were the caregiving partner of a partner living with a disability. In another study (5% of the total of studies), the main study informants were the one who had the health issue. In these 9 studies, one partner informed about the consequences of the disability for both partners' daily life. In the other studies (n=11, 55% of the total), study informants were both partners (Bailey & Jackson, 2005; Baum, 1995; Ekstam et al., 2011; Frank et al., 1997; Heatwole Shank & Presgraves, 2019; Martin et al., 2008; Nes et al., 2012; Rudman et al., 2006; van Nes et al., 2009; Vikström et al., 2005; Vrkljan, 2010).

Information is not always provided regarding partners' ethnicity. Certain papers (n=6, 30% of the total of studies) indicated that their participants were of White Caucasian descent (Bailey & Jackson, 2005; Baum, 1995; Heatwole Shank & Presgraves, 2019; Heward et al., 2006; Kniepmann, 2012; Rudman et al., 2006). Three papers (15% of the total of studies) published in the United States described the involvement of a small proportion of their participants from other ethnic groups, such as African American (Kniepmann, 2012; Kniepmann & Cupler, 2014), Asian (Kniepmann, 2012), and Mexican American (Medina et al., 2011).

4.1.3 Data collection

Semi-structured or open interview was the predominant data collection approach used in both qualitative and mixed-method studies. Sixteen papers (80% of the total of studies) used such methods of with one or both partners. Observational data were collected in two (10%) studies (Vikström et al., 2005; Vrkljan, 2010). In one qualitative research (5%), data collection was done through a four month time-use diary of the partners who were caregiving for the other partner (Atler et al., 2016). In this study, participants had to describe what experience they associated with their range of activities.

Quantitative data collection involved mostly structured questionnaires. In two papers (10% of the total of studies), questionnaires were conducted with the two partners together (Heatwole Shank & Presgraves, 2019; Vrkljan, 2010) while, in another paper (5%), the two partners completed their questionnaires independently (Baum, 1995). In the last two papers (10%), questionnaires were conducted

with one partner, namely the caregiver of the partner with the health issue (Kniepmann, 2012; Kniepmann & Cupler, 2014).

4.2 Thematic analysis of included studies

Based on the thematic analysis, three main themes emerged that reflect the different yet complementary ways in which collective occupations have been described within the context of romantic partnerships: 1) 'Doing together': joint engagement as reflected collective occupations; 2) 'Doing for each other': apart engagement as reflected in collective occupations; and 3) 'Doing as one': Navigating illness as reflected in collective occupations. While these themes are described as distinct entities, some studies crossed more than one theme.

4.2.1 "Doing together": Joint engagement in collective occupations

This theme described collective occupations in which both romantic partners jointly participated, and the meaning ascribed to their shared engagement. Examples of joint occupations included, but was not limited to, social and leisure occupations, such as going on holidays (Heward et al., 2006; Martin et al., 2008; Nes et al., 2012), engaging in physical activity (Heward et al., 2006; Nes et al., 2012; Persson & Zingmark, 2006; Van Dongen et al., 2014; Yong et al., 2020), meeting with family (Atler et al., 2016; Heatwole Shank & Presgraves, 2019; Rudman et al., 2006; Van Dongen et al., 2014; van Nes et al., 2009), and attending social events (Kniepmann & Cupler, 2014; Rudman et al., 2006), including getting together with friends (Heward et al., 2006; Rudman et al., 2006). Joint engagement also involved religious observances, such as attending church (Atler et al., 2016; Hasselkus & Murray, 2007; Heatwole Shank & Presgraves, 2019; Rudman et al., 2006) or the Sabbath (Frank et al., 1997).

Although the types of joint occupations were wide-ranging and seemingly mundane, including going for a walk together (van Nes et al., 2009), sharing a meal, or visiting family (Atler et al., 2016) they were highly valued. Yong et al. (2020) found that when partners engaged in joint occupations that they both enjoyed, it strengthened their sense of togetherness.

Within four studies (20% of the total), joint engagement was described as co-occupation (Atler et al., 2016; Bailey & Jackson, 2005; Kniepmann & Cupler, 2014; Nes et al., 2012). Co-occupations were defined as a type of occupations in which two partners share meaning, time, and space (Kniepmann & Cupler, 2014; Nes et al., 2012). Co-occupations also influenced feelings of togetherness between partners (Kniepmann, 2012; Kniepmann & Cupler, 2014; Nes et al., 2012). For example, in their study of the impact of occupational change among spousal caregivers of those with stroke and aphasia, Kniepmann and Cupler described how participants emphasized the importance of engaging in joint occupations, such as going to the theatre or watching a movie, which maintained the couple's sense of togetherness.

Romantic partners described how they felt like a 'team' when they participated in joint occupations (Heatwole Shank & Presgraves, 2019; van Nes et al., 2009; Vrkljan, 2010). For instance, a study that geospatially mapped the outing of an older married couple, Linda and Albert, reflected how they jointly organized their out-of-home occupation due, in part, to Albert's health condition. The authors (Heatwole Shank & Presgraves, 2019) related Linda and Albert's discourse to a 'couple-level adaptive process,' which they described as the 'intersecting of [partners'] abilities and health' (p. 180). Similarly, Vrkljan (2010) reported how older married couples viewed themselves as a team when describing how they jointly navigated their automobile to places in their community. This study highlighted how each couple worked together to optimize driving performance where the shared goal was to arrive safely at their destination (Vrkljan, 2010).

4.2.1 "Doing for each other": Apart engagement in collective occupations

Another theme that emerged from the studies was the notion of how apart engagement in certain occupations was perceived by one or both partners as a collective occupation (Atler et al., 2016; Bailey & Jackson, 2005; Ekstam et al., 2011; Heward et al., 2006; Medina et al., 2011; Van Dongen et al., 2014). Paid work was the predominant example shared across studies by couples who were both dual- and single-earners (Bailey & Jackson, 2005; Heward et al., 2006; Kniepmann, 2012; Medina et al., 2011; Van Dongen et al., 2014; van Nes et al., 2009). Medina et al. (2011) described how male participants in their study identified their role as being to support the couple financially. Participants were of Mexican-American descent. Similarly, Martin et al. (2008) described how spouses whose partners had been placed in long-term care, described their role was to earn an income that would support the couple.

Other apart occupations congruent with this theme included performing household-related tasks (Atler et al., 2016; Ekstam et al., 2011; Heward et al., 2006; Kniepmann & Cupler, 2014), such as grocery shopping (Bailey & Jackson, 2005; Medina et al., 2011), cooking (Bailey & Jackson, 2005; Ekstam et al., 2011; Frank et al., 1997; Van Dongen et al., 2014), and managing finances (Bailey & Jackson, 2005; Martin et al., 2008; Van Dongen et al., 2014).

In a study of how same-sex female couples managed their finances, Bailey and Jackson (2005) used the term 'give and take' to describe how each partner contributed to the couple's financial health. A couple in their study explained how one partner was responsible for covering the down payment on a house with her income, while the other partner managed expenses, such as groceries. A woman who cared for her husband with multiple sclerosis (Heward et al., 2006) reported that she was in charge of preparing breakfast, which involved setting the table and preparing and serving food. In her view, her apart engagement in such occupations marked her new role as a carer (Heward et al., 2006).

In certain studies (Atler et al., 2016; Ekstam et al., 2011; Heward et al., 2006; Kniepmann & Cupler, 2014; Persson & Zingmark, 2006; Rudman et al., 2006; Van Dongen et al., 2014), participants described their apart engagement in their own leisure occupations as a way to restore their energy. For some, this energy was needed to continue caring for a spouse who was unwell (Van Dongen et al., 2014). Persson and Zingmark (2006) described this engagement as providing ‘a breathing space, a method of relaxation, and an opportunity to take a break from the ordinary’ (p. 225).

Finally, in their study of American Orthodox Jewish couples, Frank et al. (1997) detailed respective engagement of partners so that their couple as a whole observes religious principles. For instance, during Sabbath, women were described as the ones who did the grocery shopping and prepared meals while the men engaged in davening, which refers to the giving lecture of sacred texts (Frank et al., 1997).

4.2.2 “Doing as one”: Navigating illness and other issues that can challenge collective occupations.

This theme describes how a change in one partner’s health can challenge the apart and collective occupational engagement of both partners (Ekstam et al., 2011; Hasselkus & Murray, 2007; Heward et al., 2006; Rudman et al., 2006; Van Dongen et al., 2014; Vikström et al., 2005; Yong et al., 2020). Multiple studies described how their everyday lives became further intertwined when one partner required assistance from the other but the sense of meaning from sharing occupations was lost (Persson & Zingmark, 2006; Rudman et al. van Nes et al., 2009). Rudman et al. (2006) coined this change the ‘spill-over’, that is, how one partner’s illness can impact the occupations of one or both partners.

Certain studies (Atler et al., 2016; Ekstam et al., 2011; Hasselkus & Murray, 2007; Heward et al., 2006; Kniepmann, 2012; Medina et al., 2011; Persson & Zingmark, 2006; Rudman et al., 2006; Van Dongen et al., 2014; Yong et al., 2020) have described how a health-related change in one partner can affect that occupations of the other partner where they had to assume not only greater responsibility, but consequently lost their own occupations. For example, a spouse interviewed by Hasselkus and Murray (2007) shared how she had not been able to go to the grocery store or to church over the past year due to caring for her husband with dementia.

Changes in such occupations can also have social consequences for both partners, including less interaction with relatives beyond the immediate family (Van Dongen et al., 2014) as well other out of home activities, such as attending the local pub, or going to church (Rudman et al., 2006). In her analysis of how joint engagement of partners in care-related occupations can maximize function while minimizing the disruptive behavior that can occur in those with dementia of the alzheimer’s type (DAT) Baum (1995)

found a significant association with the caregiving partners' level of stress, which can further restrict participation in joint occupations.

Such restrictions have been linked to higher rates of caregiver burden (Heward et al., 2006; Van Dongen et al., 2014; Vikström et al., 2005; Yong et al., 2020). In their cross-sectional investigation of the experience of women caregiving for a husband with stroke, Kniepmann (2012) found a significant association between occupational loss and a higher level of burden alongside lower mental health among caregivers. Feelings of loss can further threaten the sense of normalcy within such unions (Hasselkus & Murray, 2007; Martin et al., 2008; Medina et al., 2011; Nes et al., 2012). For example, Medina et al. (2011) described how the loss of sexual intimacy between partners were a deviation from the norm. For participants, such activities were normal within couples.

Hasselkus and Murray (2007) described how romantic partners used their memories of collective occupations as a way to connect to one another. However, as one partners' memory became impaired, it was difficult to recollect such occupations thereby leading to further loss (Atler et al., 2016; Ekstam et al., 2011; Heatwole Shank & Presgraves, 2019; Kniepmann & Cupler, 2014; Rudman et al., 2006). Occupations done jointly were viewed as meaningful only when both partners were jointly engaged (Rudman et al., 2006). Another study that examined occupational changes for caregivers of a spouse with stroke and aphasia (Kniepmann & Cupler, 2014) described how the couple's joint occupations, such as going to the theatre or seeing a movie, no longer held any meaning because of one partner's inability to jointly participate.

Finally, in a case study of an older couple in which one partner had experienced a stroke, van Nes et al. (2009) described how the partners' respective occupational engagement became so intertwined, that they perceived themselves as 'one body with three hands' (van Nes et al., 2009, p. 194). As such, van Nes et al. (2009, p. 199) described how the couple became a single unit that 'blurred the boundaries' between apart and joint engagement.

5. Discussion

This scoping review synthesized research from occupational therapy and occupational science regarding how collective occupations have been described in the context of romantic partnerships. The findings suggest that collective occupations are not always done together, rather they can be performed jointly or apart, and that the meaning ascribed depend on each partner's perspective of the occupation in question. When one partner experiences a health-related change or illness, the resulting disruption and occupational loss can threaten the normalcy of the relationship thereby compounding the sense of loss.

Most research on occupational engagement in the context of romantic partnerships has involved different-sex unions, that is, a woman and a man, with the exception of one study of same-sex couples (Bailey & Jackson, 2005). While the normative hegemony of heterosexual partnerships continues to be the predominant focus (D'Amore et al., 2013; Kousteni & Anagnostopoulos, 2020), studies including same-sex or polyamorous relationships has gradually increased (Genadek et al., 2020; Hank & Wetzel, 2018; Kousteni & Anagnostopoulos, 2020; Rostosky & Riggle, 2017). However, participants in occupational science and occupational therapy research has yet to reflect the range of such relationships.

Dyadic studies view romantic partners as two interdependent individuals nested in a dyad (Brauer & Proyer, 2019). This view and corresponding studies can deepen our understanding of how each partner can mutually shape shared occupational experiences (Brauer & Proyer, 2019; McCarthy et al., 2011; Szulc & King, 2022). Three of the studies included in the current review used a dyadic approach to analyze engagement in everyday occupations, such as attending church, walking and driving. (Heatwole Shank & Presgraves, 2019; van Nes et al., 2009; Vrkljan, 2010). Hence, using a dyadic perspective to examine occupations in the context of romantic partnerships may be of value to elucidate the underlying meaning from both an individual and shared perspective.

Time-use research has long been a core mode by which occupational scientists and occupational therapists have examined the organization of occupations and habits across days, weeks, or even years (Hunt & McKay, 2015). In particular, time-use diaries can provide a way to understand in which people go about their daily life and the distribution and sequencing of their occupations (Bauman et al., 2019). Beyond analyzing how people spend their time, such diaries can also capture the context of their occupations in terms of where, and with whom an activity occurs (Bauman et al., 2019; Kolpashnikova et al., 2021). As such, time-use diaries within dyads such as couples have proven valuable to better understand gender equality in household labor division (Dribe & Stanfors, 2009; Yavorsky et al., 2015), gender roles and child rearing (Craig & Mullan, 2011; Craig & van Tienoven, 2019), as well as the work-life balance of single or dual-earner couples (Alonso-Domínguez et al., 2020; Bernardo et al., 2015). Interestingly only a single study in the current review used time-use diaries. In their study, Adler et al. (2016) asked their participants to complete a time-use diary over a 24-hour period. As they were completing the diary, participants were asked to identify 'when, where, and with whom they engaged in each activity, as well as the degree to which they experienced pleasure (enjoyment), productivity (accomplishment), and restoration (renewal) during each occupation' (Adler et al., 2016, p. 74). Combining data from time-use diaries with qualitative data from interviews and focus groups, the researchers highlighted how their everyday life can change due to the health issue of their partner (Adler et al., 2016). While this research focused only on the caregiving partner, such findings demonstrate the utility of time-use diaries that when combined with qualitative data (Hunt & McKay, 2015) can deepen understanding of

the synchronicity of daily life within dyads such as couples, which can become most apparent during times of disruption, such as the onset of an illness in one partner.

Based on the current analysis, collective occupations within the context of a romantic partnership, encompass both joint engagement (i.e., together) and apart engagement (i.e., individually) (figure 2). A closer examination of studies included in this review suggest that joint occupation has been used interchangeably with co-occupation (Atler et al., 2016; Kniepmann & Cupler, 2014; Nes et al., 2012). Co-occupation has been defined within the occupational science literature (Pierce, 2009), as the co-construction of a shared meaning between at least two persons (Aubuchon-Endsley et al., 2020; Pickens & Pizur-Barnekow, 2009; Pierce, 2009; van Nes et al., 2009). Such shared meaning has been linked to the sense of togetherness between individuals. However, our findings demonstrate that such meaning can also emerge from partners' apart engagement when it is perceived as contributing to the partnership (Kniepmann, 2012; Medina et al., 2011; Van Dongen et al., 2014). Such findings align with that of Kantartzis and Molineux (2014) who described the collective occupations of a Greek family as they planned for special event. In their study, each family member had an own role with contributing to the event who came together collectively to engage in the shared celebration. Kantartzis and Molineux (2014) emphasized the interconnected way in which each member's respective occupations were woven together to contribute to the tapestry of the collective occupation. Building on their results, our analysis indicates that even if one partners' occupation is seemingly disparate from contributing to the partnership, such as doing their own leisure activities, if it is perceived by the other partners as important, then it may be considered a collective occupation.

Some couples in the studies described themselves as a unit or a team (van Nes et al., 2009; Vrkljan, 2010). The notion of the couple as a single entity has been referred to as 'we-ness' (Buehlman et al., 1992; Rohrbaugh, 2021; Skerrett, 2003). We-ness has been raised previously in social psychology in reference to a couple's sense of identity that emerges from shared time and experiences (Skerrett, 2003). As such, we-ness is an interpersonal entity that encompasses not only one's own identity (Gildersleeve et al., 2017) but also that of as a couple. Past research has postulated that partners with a high degree of we-ness are more likely to maintain stable and satisfying relationships (Gildersleeve et al., 2017; Skerrett, 2003). Findings from the current review suggest the high degree of interdependence and symbiotic nature of romantic partners' occupational lives as reflected in their collective occupations. Interestingly, it is when one partner experiences a health-related change and the level of interdependence is disrupted that the meaning ascribed to both partners' occupational engagement becomes particularly evident (Heatwole Shank & Presgraves, 2019; Persson & Zingmark, 2006; Rudman et al., 2006). As such, the disruption of partners' occupational engagement has the potential to negatively impact their sense of we-ness.

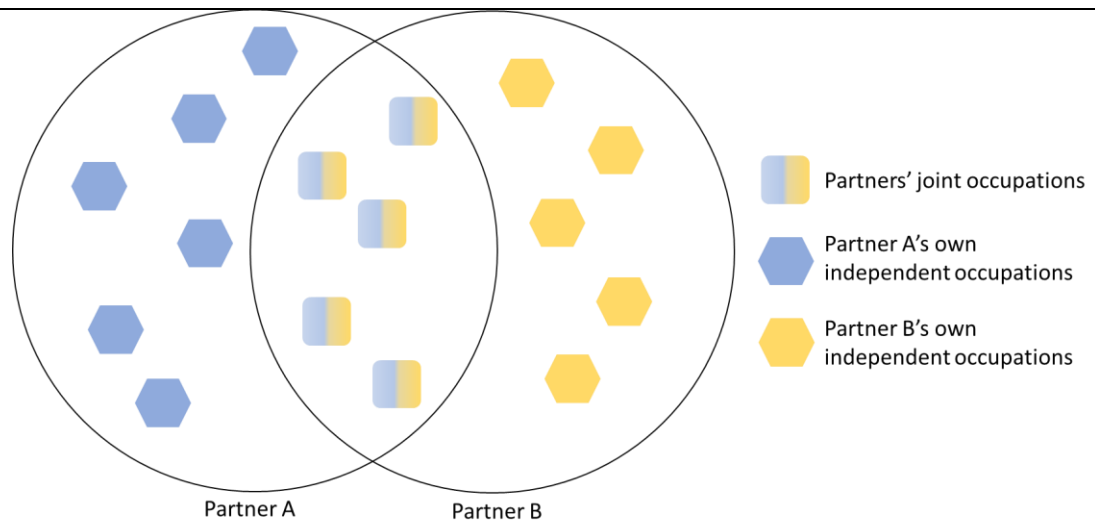


Figure 2. Graphic representation of collective occupations of two romantic partners.

6. Limitations

There are several limitations regarding this review that should be considered when interpreting the results. First, research published in the fields of occupational therapy and occupational science on romantic partners were the focus of the search parameters. As such, studies outside these fields but that investigated romantic partners with an occupational lens would not have been included. Additionally, studies relevant to this review may have been excluded because they were published in languages other than English or French. The support provided by the librarian from the University of Applied Sciences and Arts Western Switzerland mitigated this limitation. Finally, non-research papers, gray literature, book chapters, editorials, or conference abstracts were excluded from the current review, as the aim was to include primary research.

Another limitation is related to the geographical location of the included papers. Although such location was not set as inclusion criteria, all studies were conducted in Western countries. The authors of the included studies and their participants lived in Western countries. These countries share similar socio-cultural, economic, or political values (Collyer, 2018; Gerlach et al., 2018). Such geographical location of papers, researchers, and participants was expected, as most evidence produced in occupational therapy and occupational science originates from Western countries (Gerlach et al., 2018; Hammell, 2008). Conducting studies outside the Global North with non-Western participants during recruitment to ensure those being studied reflect the various occupational realities of couples across a range of unions (Gerlach et al., 2018; Neyrand, 2016).

7. Conclusion

This scoping review synthesized existing evidence from occupational therapy and occupational science literature on occupational engagement in the context of romantic partnerships, including the methods by which studies have been undertaken. From this review, collective occupations emerged as those that are either apart or jointly performed, which speaks to the highly interdependent and synergistic ways in which we go about our daily lives. Of the few dyadic studies conducted in occupational science and occupational therapy to date, this research has predominantly focused on caregiving. Results from this review highlight the need to further explore how daily life is both informed and transformed by the occupations of one or both partners, where time-use diaries of both partners could prove useful to understand how a sense of we-ness emerges, and, conversely, is lost when occupations are disrupted due to illness or any other major life event.

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Chapter 3 : When one partner can no longer see: Exploring the lived experiences of romantic partners in the context of vision loss

Published in the British Journal of Visual Impairment :

Bertrand, R., Vrkljan, B., Kühne, N., Charvoz, L., Fournier, J., Masse, M., Veyre, A., & Vuillerme, N. (2022). When one partner can no longer see: Exploring the lived experiences of romantic partners in the context of vision loss. *British Journal of Visual Impairment*, 0(0), 1-15. <https://doi.org/10.1177/02646196221139780>

1. Abstract

This qualitative descriptive study aims to explore the lived experience of the adjustment process of couples who face vision loss, investigating the impact of such loss on daily life and the adjustments and adaptations that ensue. To undertake such an exploration, the application of an occupational perspective is relevant where the meaning and purpose partners ascribe to their everyday activities, or occupations, can be investigated. A total of 16 couples living in Western Switzerland were interviewed between January to June 2020. Data collection was carried out with semi-structured face-to-face interview. Three themes emerge from the thematic analysis of transcripts. The first theme emphasizes that either separate or joint occupations of partners can be shared within couples, which all give sense to the partnership, the second one shows that vision loss disrupts the engagement of partners in such shared occupations. The third theme highlights partners' efforts to re-shape their engagement in their shared occupations in order to maintain a sense of couple's we-ness. While navigating vision loss requires both partners to jointly engage in this process of re-shaping, couples described tension that arises because of the partners with vision loss' growing dependence on the other partner. One's sense of control when navigating vision loss is critical to adjust to a changing and changed daily life. Further research is needed that focuses on how romantic partners ascribe a shared meaning and purpose to their occupational engagement, separate or joint, and how such meaning and purpose are impacted by the onset or aggravation of one partner's vision loss.

2. Introduction

The consequences of vision loss on daily life can be far-reaching and wide-ranging, including, but not limited to, problems with social participation (Berger, 2012; Boey et al., 2021; Vu et al., 2005), communicating one's needs (Bertschi et al., 2021; Heine et al., 2002; Wang & Boerner, 2008), community mobility (Berger, 2012; Justiss, 2013; Laliberté Rudman & Durdle, 2008), as well as paid employment (Demmin & Silverstein, 2020; Mojon-Azzi et al., 2010). As such, it is not surprising this type of impairment might also affect those around the individuals with vision loss, including their family and friends. Over the past 10 years, there has been a growing body of evidence outlining the impact of vision loss on close relatives, such as romantic partners (Hofsöe et al., 2019; Lehane, Dammeyer, & Elsass, 2017; Lehane et al., 2018; Mamali et al., 2022).

Romantic partnerships have been defined as a form of relation that occurs between individuals, mostly two (Banse & Rebetz, 2008; Klesse et al., 2022), with the shared aim of a mutually satisfactory relationship (Santelli, 2018). The concept of *we-ness* emerged in the early 2000s from systemic-constructivist social psychology (Fergus & Reid, 2001; Skerrett, 2003). *We-ness* has been described as the sense of mutuality (togetherness) that can exist between romantic partners in a couple, which usually develops over the course of a relationship (Buehlman et al., 1992), where partners would identify themselves as being part of a joint entity that transcends beyond their individual self (Buehlman et al., 1992; Singer et al., 2015). As such, *we-ness* can be reflected in how each partner shares a similar experience of their daily events (Gildersleeve et al., 2017; Topcu-Uzer et al., 2021). Numerous studies demonstrated that partners shape the identity of their couple through engagement in daily activities such as leisure (Chavez, 2015), household (Kaufmann, 1992), taking care of children (Gildersleeve et al., 2017) or work (Gildersleeve et al., 2017)

Couples' sense of *we-ness* can be challenged in the face of health-related changes (Rohrbaugh, 2021). Such changes can have a resulting impact on not only established routines but also the need to engage in new activities and/or ways of doing such activities. Vision loss is such a health-related change. This condition can be either sudden or progressive. In the case of progressive vision loss, sight typically changes more slowly over time. While one would expect that such a loss would impact not only the impact of the person experiencing vision loss but also their respective partner, this shared impact on daily activities and corresponding adaptation has yet been studied (Lehane, Dammeyer, & Elsass, 2017; Lehane, Dammeyer, & Wittich, 2017). By exploring the experiences of those living through this health-related change, there is a unique opportunity to explore how such changes are reflected in romantic partners' *we-ness* as well as consider corresponding strategies that enable the continuity of their partnership. To undertake such an exploration, an occupational perspective may be of particular value

where the meaning and purpose partners in relationship ascribe to their everyday activities, or occupations, can be investigated. A brief overview of this perspective is outlined below.

2.1 Using an occupational perspective to analyze meaning and purpose of everyday doing

Human occupation is the set of individual and collective activities in which a person engages in daily life (Wilcock, 2006). Adopting an occupational perspective of daily life involves examining what and how people do occupations and their corresponding experiences (Njelesani et al., 2014; Wilcock, 1993). Occupations reflect what a human needs, wants, and has to do, which has been linked to health, well-being and quality of life (Wilcock, 2006). Some have described occupations as being both meaningful and purposeful (Hinojosa & Kramer, 1997; Ikiugu & Pollard, 2015; Wilcock, 2006). For example, an occupation may be considered meaningful if it addresses an “intrinsic need for self-maintenance, expression and fulfilment” (Law et al., 1996, p.16).

The notion of shared occupations has been raised in the occupational science literature (Doble & Santha, 2008; Leclair, 2010). Such occupations reflect mutual engagement “...with others who share common experiences, interests, values and goals” (Doble & Santha, 2008, p. 187). In this respect, shared engagement has the potential to inform and transform a romantic partnership through which a shared identity can emerge (van Nes et al., 2012). Under optimal circumstances, partners in a romantic relationship often prioritize such shared occupations, which they perceive as strengthening their sense of we-ness (Gildersleeve et al., 2017; van Nes et al., 2012). When one or both partner’s experience a change in their ability to engage in such occupations, which could be due to illness, such as vision loss, or other unexpected or unforeseen circumstances, there can be ramifications on the relationship. While there is evidence to suggest an ensuing adjustment period by one or both partners that follows such a change (Gildersleeve et al., 2017; Nizzero et al., 2017; van Nes et al., 2012), additional study is warranted to further understand the experience of romantic partners who navigate changes in their shared occupations. Hence, the aim of the current study is to explore the lived experience of the adjustment process of couples who face vision loss. For this purpose, the study was designed to investigate 1) the impact of vision loss on shared occupations, as perceived by those in romantic relationships and 2) the adjustments and adaptations that ensue as they navigate the impact of such loss on their daily lives.

3. Methods

The current study is the second part of a 2-part research project funded by the Swiss Association of and for the Blind (UCBA) that was conducted from 2019 to 2021: SELODY or SEnsory LOss in the Dyadic, focuses on the effects of visual loss on romantic partnerships. The overall aim is to understand how partners experience the onset or worsening of such sensory loss. The first part of the study (Bertschi et

al., under review) is a longitudinal survey. Comprised of multiple questionnaires, administered in two stages with one-year interval, it investigates the extent to which one partner's sensory loss affect the couple, the stress partners experience, and their ensuing dyadic coping. The current study, the second sub-study of SELODY, is a qualitative descriptive study (Colorafi & Evans, 2016) that explores participants' experience of their adjustment process to vision loss. The research protocol has been approved by the Cantonal Commission of Ethics for Research on Humans (CER-VD) and the Cantonal Commission on Ethics in Human Research (CCER) (protocol number 2019-02221).

3.1 Study population and sample description

The current study was conducted in the French-speaking part of Western Switzerland at the request of the UCBA. At the time of data collection (January to June 2020), approximately 377,000 individuals (4.4% of Swiss population) were identified as having a visual impairment in Switzerland of which 50'000 were blind (UCBA, 2020). Following completion of survey questionnaires, which was the first part of the SELODY project, participants were asked to indicate their willingness to be contacted for a follow-up interview. If agreeable, the first author (RB) contacted the participants by phone where the aim of the current study and corresponding protocol was explained. They also had to meet the following inclusion criteria:

- partners had to jointly participate to the interview, i.e. together as a couple,
- they had to be over 18 years old at the time of the interview,
- they had to understand and speak French,
- they had not to be under legal curatorship,
- at least one partner was visually impaired,
- the onset of the visual loss occurred or progressed during their relationship.

Exclusion criteria were defined as follows:

- at least one partner had a disease or medical condition that would interfere with the ability to participate in the interview,
- at least one partner did not give or withdraws consent.

The consent form was sent to both partners and their enrollment was confirmed after the signed form was returned to the first author. A time was then set-up for their interview. Sixteen couples were included in the current study (Table 5).

Table 5. Description of the 16 couples who participated to the current study (AMD = Age-Related Macular Degeneration).

Couple ID	Partner with visual loss	Diagnosis	Other partner	Partnered since
1	Edmund, 81 years old	AMD	Nancy, 72 years old	51 years
2	Karen, 78 years old	AMD	Alberto, 83 years old	15 years
3	Alexis, 66 years old	AMD	Christian, 70 years old	42 years
4	Roy, 51 years old	Bilateral macular dystrophy	Alice, 55 years old	25 years
5	Dorothy, 73 years old	Retinal tears	Alexander, 71 years old	49 years
6	Joana, 37 years old	Usher Syndrom	Charles, 39 years old	14 years
7	Michelle, 65 years old	Retinitis pigmentosa	Donald, 67 years old	49 years
8	Nadia, 78 years old	AMD	Bogdan, 78 years old	55 years
9	Laura, 76 years old	AMD	Nathan, 69 years old	39 years
10	Sylvester, 77 years old	AMD	Rosa, 75 years old	40 years
11	Lukas, 76 years old	Retinitis pigmentosa	Helen, 75 years old	38 years
12	Angelo, 39 years old	Bilateral macular dystrophy	Claire, 42 years old	11 years
13	Cathy, 40 years old	Retinitis pigmentosa	Jeremy, 43 years old	15 years
14	Luis, 69 years old	Retinitis pigmentosa	Elizabeth, 64 years old	48 years
15	Mary, 74 years old	Leber hereditary optic neuropathy	Piers, 54 years old	25 years
16	Nigel, 76 years old	AMD	Carol, 76 years old	50 years

3.2 Procedure

A semi-structured qualitative interview of approximately 1.5 hours was completed with each couple. The interview was done face-to-face with the two partners by two members of the research team at a place of participants' convenience. As interviews were conducted during the coronavirus pandemic, the public health measures from Swiss authorities were followed. For example, both the researcher and participants wore masks throughout the interview. The interview guide asked participants open-ended questions that

explored the following topics: shared occupations of partners, how vision loss had affected such occupations, and the ways in which they navigated such consequences. Participants were informed that they did not need to answer questions if they did not want to or could stop the interview at any time. Interviews were audiorecorded and transcribed verbatim. The transcribed data were coded, and pseudonyms were used to ensure the anonymity of participants.

MAXQDA 12 software was used to organize the data. A continuous thematic analysis was undertaken, which involves identifying and noting themes as each subsequent interview was completed (Paillé & Mucchielli, 2016). This methodology consists of simultaneously developing themes from the analysis of the verbatims. The data analysis was conducted in two phases. The first phase consisted in developing the themes. For this purpose, the first (RB) author did a first coding of all transcripts; from this coding, he and the second (NK) author then developed the themes. Themes were refined all along the verbatims were analyzed, they were then grouped in main themes and related sub-themes (Paillé & Mucchielli, 2016). The second phase involved reviewing the process and determining the themes with other members of the research team who were not directly involved in data collection. Themes were discussed in a session with all members present, refinements of themes were done to obtain a general agreement from research team.

4. Findings

Three main themes emerged (see Table 6) that reflect how romantic partners experienced their adjustment process to vision loss. The first theme describes what occupations couples perceived as shared. The second theme highlights the disruption of partners' shared occupations because of the onset or worsening of visual loss. The third theme addresses how partners experienced navigating this disruption where certain occupations were re-shaped.

Table 6. Themes and related sub-themes (where indicated) that emerged from the qualitative analysis

Themes	Sub-themes
Sharing occupations within romantic partnerships : 'Doing together' and 'doing apart' but sharing a similar meaning	1) <i>'Doing together': Sharing the meaning of joint engagement in occupations</i> 2) <i>'Sharing yet apart': Engaging in apart occupations while sharing their meaning</i>
Experiencing the disruption of shared occupations because of vision loss : 'Seeing and doing no longer'	
Navigating the re-shaping of shared occupations : Experiencing tensions alongside efforts to maintain occupational engagement	1) <i>Maintaining the engagement in shared occupations of the partner with vision loss</i> 2) <i>Transferring an occupation from the partner with vision loss to the other partner</i>

4.1 Sharing occupations within romantic partnerships: 'Doing together' and 'doing apart' but sharing a similar meaning

Participants highlighted occupations that they perceived as shared those in which partners jointly engaged in as well as some of partners' apart occupations.

4.1.1 'Doing together': Sharing the meaning of joint engagement in occupations

When asked to describe the occupations they perceived as shared, most partners described those activities in which they engaged together. Nadia described a joint activity she did with her spouse, Bogdan:

We like [the] theatre a lot... That's something we still do together. Firstly by obligation [Laughs]... Because I can't drive anymore. You like theater and you taught me to like theater. And then, it's true that I like it a lot. It brought us closer.

Like Nadia and Bogdan, each couple named and framed a joint activity, and how its meaning was shared within their partnership. For Alice and Roy, it was their evening meal together:

Alice: Preparing dinner is our moment. This has always been important for us.

Roy: It's a moment of sharing, absolutely. We first have the aperitif; we drink a good bottle of wine. And then, we prepare the meal. And then, well, we hang out at the table.

Rosa and Sylvester talked about their holidays:

Rosa : We would go away for two or three weeks but we would change places every 2 or 3 days. We always liked to go on such touring holidays.

Joana and Charles used to hike together and described how they had done this activity almost every weekend since they first came together as a couple.

Joana: We often go for hiking on weekend. It's a kind of family tradition.

4.1.2 'Sharing yet apart': Engaging in apart occupations while sharing their meaning

Some participants reflected that some of each partner's apart occupations was shared since it contributed to the partnership. One participant, Edmund, described it as "doing for each other". He indicated that he was the one responsible doing administrative duties of his couple before suffering from vision loss:

Well, I was the one doing the bills, I was the one doing the payments, I was the one doing... doing that administrative stuff. She didn't like it at all so she was happy to leave it to me!

Christian acknowledged the contribution of Alexis especially since he was not "passionate with cooking". Alexis recalled:

He was often in a hurry. So I was the one who cooked. [...] I did the grocery shopping; I prepared the meals... I did that for a long time.

Nadia and Bogdan perceived that some of Nadia's engagement apart of Bogdan strengthened their togetherness since they explained:

Nadia: When I dance, I can evacuate my ruminations rather than spilling them out on my husband. It makes me feel really good.

Bogdan: [Laughs] For sure, I'd rather have her take out her anger by dancing than on me !

Participants further explained how vision loss has disrupted their shared occupations. The related experience is described in the second theme outlined below.

4.2 Experiencing the disruption of shared occupations because of vision loss: 'Seeing and doing no longer'

All participants reported their experience of vision loss as reflecting the disruption of their shared occupations, in particular those that were jointly done. For instance, Alice and Roy talked about how the latter's vision loss disrupted their evening meal:

Roy: I was afraid we would talk about my eyes at our meals, so I tended to avoid them, I spent less time at the table.

Alice: This period was very unpleasant for me. In fact, I felt an increasing distance between us.

Rosa and Sylvester shared how the way in which they travelled for holidays had be changed due to Sylvester's vision loss:

I don't really want it anymore, because in three days I don't have the time to become independent for anything. I can't find our room in the hotel, because for that, I would have to locate where I am to have my points of reference.

Nadia and Bogdan explained how the latter took the responsibility for choosing the play of theatre because his wife's vision loss. She explained:

We each read the program. I could give ideas, I could choose: "Here, this play might be nice". But now, I have to trust him because I cannot read anymore.

The disruption also concerned certain occupations in which partners apart engaged in. For example, Alexis explained that not being able to cook anymore for her husband Christian made her "somewhat feeling useless". This kind of experience was also described by Mary, who recalled that she was managing the couple's finances before losing vision:

As long as I could read on the computer, I would do it. Now that I can't, it's an extra burden for my husband. And I'm concerned because Piers has so many other things to do.

At last, participants' experience encompassed how they navigated the re-shaping of shared occupations. This is described in the third theme below.

4.3 Navigating the re-shaping of shared occupations: Experiencing tensions alongside efforts to maintain occupational engagement

The experience of partners is described in relation to the two key strategies of re-shaping identified from the transcripts.

4.3.1 Maintaining the engagement in shared occupations of the partner with vision loss

In their interviews, those experiencing vision loss described how they changed how they engaged in certain of their apart occupation. For example, Michelle explained how she learned to use vision aids to continue performing certain tasks for both her and her partner:

I only work with ZoomText for magnification. Without it, you forget, well... Because I can't read emails, I can't get a train ticket, I can do the payment... I can't read anything.

In fact, both partners expressed that finding alternative ways to participate in shared occupations was a primary concern for both of them. For instance, while acknowledging Rosa's efforts, she and Sylvester explained that they had changed the way they spend their holidays because of the latter's vision loss:

Rosa: Now we're changing, but we have difficulties to find places where we could stay three times 10 days, or a whole month, for example. I convince myself that we are not in a hurry, that we have all the time to go and see some landscape, and then we can go further.

Sylvester: It's not easy for you, I know, but I want to be autonomous.

However, many participants noted that they experienced tensions alongside such efforts. For Laura, who did the cooking for her couple and who wanted to continue despite her AMD, Nathan's insistence on assisting her during this task led to conflict:

When I'm cooking, he touches the buttons on the hotplates. And I don't see it. And then it's no good, it is burned! It bothers me anyway. It's like I can't do anything anymore. I often tell him that when you are visually impaired, it's just about vision loss, you don't get dumber.

While Joana's vision worsened because of her Usher syndrome, Charles went on to describe how he supported her participation in hiking:

I always hold her arm, there's no risk of her falling.

Joana however suggested tension when she explained:

No, no, he doesn't always stay near me, no. [...] When we go to pick mushrooms, each one goes on its side and I find myself alone sometimes!

4.3.2 *Transferring an occupation from the partner with vision loss to the other partner*

Participants described how they shift tasks to the partner with sight. Such shift could be experienced positively. Karen, for instance, indicated how, even with vision loss, she had been able to manage her entire household. However, when Alberto moved into her apartment, he took charge of all household-related occupations, that enabled her to focus on her "volunteering" instead of "wasting her energy":

I have to say that I am very grateful because he really helps me a lot, with the cleaning, the cooking, the grocery shopping.

Christian also shared how he took over the cooking from Alexis due to her vision loss, as he recalled:

My wife used to cook very well; I say, she "used to". With her disability, it was more and more pre-cooked meals. I have to do the cooking, because I don't want to eat pre-made, no.

Moreover, many participants expressed how they experienced tensions because of such transfer of occupations. Edmund, who has AMD, described as a tough experience to have to pass on a task that he had managed to his wife Nancy:

I can't anymore open an email and then read it. Gradually, it's less and less me and more and more my young wife who does that. Because she has good eyes. Because she is fourteen years younger than me... I don't have a choice.

She, in turn, expressed discomfort since these “new” occupations “definitely take up [her] time”, at the expense of her own chosen occupations. Partners with vision loss also experienced tensions when transferring their task to their partner. Michelle and Donald explained that they were doing the grocery shopping together, but that it has been challenging since Michelle lost her vision and had to rely on Donald to pick up the goods:

Michelle: I can't read the labels anymore; everything is written so small! I might make a mistake. But then, I'm frustrated that I can't do it on my own anymore. Maybe that's why I yell at him when he takes the wrong product!

Such dependence to the other partner is also a source of tensions for Nadia. She worried about her “growing dependence” on her partner, Bogdan, due to her AMD and its worsening progression. However, she also perceived how such dependence was necessary if she was to continue certain occupations like dancing:

Fortunately I have my husband to drive me. To go dancing, especially. He drives me there and back. As much as it pains me to admit it, I need him.

5. Discussion

The ensuing changes in everyday habits, routines, and occupations due to major vision loss not only impact the individual in question, but also those around that person, including their spouse or partner (Lehane, Dammeyer, & Elsass, 2017). Previous studies with couples have predominantly focused on the psychosocial effects of vision loss on the partnership (Lehane, Dammeyer, & Elsass, 2017; Lehane *et al.*, 2018). As evidenced by our findings, such effects are indeed felt by both partners. However, by using an occupational perspective, the current investigation goes one step further to explore how romantic partners experience vision loss by focusing on occupational engagement on the individual as well as the relationship and the shared meaning ascribed to such occupations (Leclair, 2010). As such, the themes emerging from the interviews undertaken with couples evidenced how partners experience tensions alongside their efforts to maintain their sense of *we-ness* when navigating the disruption in shared everyday activities and routines.

One partner's vision is known to challenge romantic partners' communication patterns and roles (Lehane, Dammeyer, & Elsass, 2017) and have psychosocial consequences for both partners, such as lower well-being and marital satisfaction (Lehane, Dammeyer, & Elsass, 2017; Lehane, Dammeyer, & Wittich, 2017) as well as an increase in depressive symptoms (Lehane *et al.*, 2018; Strawbridge *et al.*, 2007). However, the current study suggests that romantic partners' experience of vision loss further reflects the extent to which their shared occupations are disrupted. As such, participants in the current study acknowledged that an occupation can be shared within the partnership, whether it requires a joint or apart engagement of partners. Indeed, couples who participated to the study emphasized how important it was for both partners to jointly engage in occupations in which they attributed a similar meaning and intention (Leclair, 2010), namely since they were their most preferred time of being together. For Bogdan and Janique, going to the theater has become a common passion over the course of their relationship, that has brought them closer. Cathy and Jeremy explained that walking the dog was their preferred daily routine to spend time together as a couple. Such findings corroborates that shared time together, as perceived by both partners, can influence the quality of the relationship (Bernardo *et al.*, 2015; Flood & Genadek, 2016).

An occupation in which one partner engages separately can still be important when it comes to maintaining *we-ness*. In fact, participants recalled how these occupations were still contributing to their partnership. Previous research also showed how engaging in certain apart occupations, such as managing the finances of the couple, are perceived positively by one's partner (Bailey & Jackson, 2005). In fact, the current study suggests that not only helping with managing finances but also other occupations, which may seemingly be disparate from the couple *per se*, such as Nadia who practiced dancing on her own, can still be considered as have a positive impact. From the occupational literature, we know that engaging in leisure occupations, for example, can elevate mood and quality of life amongst other benefits (Borges da Costa & Cox, 2016; Lee *et al.*, 2021; Rampley *et al.*, 2019). Nadia and Bogdan showed how this separate engagement can have positive repercussions on the partnership. Thus, both our findings and literature suggest that romantic partners can attribute a shared meaning and purpose to certain occupations in which they do not engage in together. As such, understanding the impact of apart occupational engagement alongside joint engagement on couple's *we-ness* is important. Hence, when one partner experiences a health-related change, such as vision loss, how such apart and joint occupations are managed is critical.

Participants involved in the current study reported how their ability to engage in shared occupations (Leclair, 2010) became more challenged as the vision loss progressed. For example, Rosa and Sylvester changed the way they usually travelled while the time Alice and Roy once spent having dinner together was no longer the same, as he found it reminded him of all that he had lost. Mary, for her part, described how she felt bad since she could no longer manage the couple's finances. In fact, these

participants exemplify that the meaning and purpose attributed to occupations may change because of vision loss. Both Sylvester and Roy reported that their joint participation with their partner in trips or dinners respectively, had become difficult for them since they were exposed to the consequences of their disability. Similarly, Mary noted that her participation in managing the couple's finances, which the couple considered to be supportive of the relationship, had become impossible because of her vision loss. Thus, the loss of shared meaning that partners ascribed to such occupations resulted in their potential withdrawal that in turn may have affected their *we-ness*.

Navigating vision loss can require both partners to jointly manage the disruption that result in the re-shaping of daily routines, including shared occupations (Bodenmann, 2015; Lehane, Dammeyer, & Elsass, 2017; Lehane *et al.*, 2018; Rohrbaugh, 2021). Couples in the current study described how their experience encompassed such re-shaping, reflecting each partners efforts to preserve their disrupted occupations, whether by maintaining the engagement of the person with vision loss or by transferring the occupation to the other partner. While these were meant to alleviate stress, some described how such changes in routines lead to tension between certain partners experienced alongside their efforts. In fact, the partners with vision loss' growing dependence on the other partner was sometimes in conflict with their desire for autonomy. Autonomy, as French sociologist Gardien (2014, p. 53) wrote, can be defined as "belonging, being one's own master, governing oneself according to one's own rules." According to her (Gardien, 2014), remaining autonomous in dependence implies that if one partner requires assistance of the other one, it should not preclude his/her ability to make his/her own choice concerning daily life. In their grounded theory analysis of adults' adaptation process to chronic or acute disease, Walder and Molineux's (2017) outlined that health-related changes due to disease, and corresponding implications on daily life, challenge a person's agency and ability to make their own decisions, thereby experiencing a loss in their autonomy. Feeling a sense of control when one navigates such disruptions in health is key to adjusting to a changing and changed life (Grajo *et al.*, 2018; Walder & Molineux, 2017). The tension between autonomy and dependence was reflected in partners' experience of vision loss in the current study as a push and pull of trying to remain independent while also acknowledging the need for assistance. For instance, Nadia regretted that her husband Bogdan had to accompany her to her dance class, as she needed to be driven. However, she also knew that participating in this occupation gave her joy and could preserve her couple from her mood. Michelle expressed frustration at not being able to do the shopping on her own any longer since she needed her partner's support. Such subtle and seemingly minor changes yet had a big impact on the couples' experience. Further research is needed that focuses on these tensions given that such tensions may be early signs of cracks in the partners' sense of *we-ness*. Such cracks could be reduced if adapted support is proposed to couples facing vision loss in the re-shaping of their shared occupations. However, this requires a better understanding of how romantic

partners ascribe meaning and purpose to their occupational engagement, separate or joint, and how such meaning and purpose are affected by the onset or aggravation of one partner's vision loss.

6. Limitations

The findings of the current study should be considered in light of certain limitations. Firstly, we recruited a convenience sample for this study where all of the couples reflected heterosexual partnerships. As such, the experiences of our participants may not be representative of all kinds of partnerships. In addition, because partners were interviewed together and not separately, there is a possibility that individuals may not have expressed their feelings for fear of emotionally hurting the other partner (Torgé, 2013). However, none of the couples in the present study expressed this potential concern when they were asked for it. All participants were living in the same geographic region, Western Switzerland, which should be carefully considered given the differential in meaning of being in a romantic partnership may differ depending on sociocultural (Western) meanings and gender roles. Another potential limitation is related to the COVID-19 pandemic where public health restrictions were in place at the time of the interview. Such restrictions are also known to affect activity patterns (Fatmi, 2020; Güzel et al., 2020). As such, the impact of vision loss on couples' activities likely intertwined with the impact of the pandemic. While it was not possible to distinguish between what was specific to vision loss and what was specific to the pandemic. However, this distinction may not have been systematic in the participants' experiences.

7. Conclusion

This study is the first to the best of our knowledge to explore the experience of romantic partners facing vision loss with regard to daily activities. Using an occupational lens on this process where the meaning and purpose of everyday activities are explored at an individual and shared level, allows us to better understand not only the challenges that arise, but also how adaptations and strategies are enacted to support occupational engagement of both partners. Maintaining the couple's *we-ness* in a time of disruption requires effort where some shared occupations may be lost, prioritized, and reshaped. Findings from this study highlight how experiencing this process can reflect tension between partners, which arise from their struggle between autonomy and dependence. Further research should focus more closely on particular points of tension related to the re-shaping of occupations, which may be an early signal of fundamental shift in the meaning and purpose that partners ascribe to their shared occupations. This could help to design support for couples who navigate the transition and corresponding reshaping of occupations that ensue.

8. Funding

SELODY research was funded by the following Swiss institutions : Accentus - Margrith Staub Fonds, Association for the Benefit of the Blind Geneva (ABA), Blind and Disabled Center Bern, Federal Office for Equality for People with Disabilities (BFEH), IRIDES Foundation, the "Loterie Romande" and the Swiss National Association of and for the Blind (UCBA).

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Chapter 4 : Interpersonal perception of time-use patterns in romantic relationships: The IP-COUPLES study protocol

Published in the JMIR Research Protocols:

Bertrand, R., Vrkljan, B., Kühne, N., Charvoz, L., & Vuilleme, N. (2021). Interpersonal Perception of Time-Use Patterns in Romantic Relationships : Protocol for the IP-COUPLES Study. *JMIR Research Protocols*, 10(5), 454-463. <https://doi.org/10.2196/21306>

1. Abstract

Background: Perceptual congruence has been defined as the level of agreement between partners' on various aspects of their shared lives, including perceived engagement in individual and jointly performed activities. While the level of adjustment made by partners to such activities is thought to contribute to a couple's sense of mutuality, perceptions of time-use concerning activity engagement has yet to be considered. As such, this study will determine the level of perceptual congruence between partners' with respect to perceived time use in their respective and shared activities.

Objectives: The primary objective of the IP-COUPLES study is to determine the similarities and differences between partners' in terms of their perceptual congruence with respect to apart and jointly-performed activities. This study will also examine the association between apart and joint activities in terms of perceptual congruence of time-use and the strength of this association.

Methods: This descriptive observational study includes 100 couples from Western Switzerland who are recruited using snowball sampling methods. The Life Balance Inventory (LBI), a self-report questionnaires that captures activity configuration congruence (ACC), will measure apart and joint perceptions of both time-use allocated to daily activities and corresponding satisfaction. Due to COVID-19, the protocol can be administered virtually by the primary investigator. The mean scores of perceptual congruence variables will be used for analysis, namely perceived congruence of time use in terms of apart and jointly performed activities. For the first objective, an independent t-test will be used for each variable to compare the mean score between activities on the LBI. For the second objective, the correlations between the mean scores for these activities will be calculated for each variable using the Pearson correlation.

Results: The IP-COUPLES study protocol was developed in 2019 and 2020. Enrollment began in June 2020. Data collection will continue until October 2021 to account for time needed for recruitment due to COVID-19 pandemic crisis. Analysis and presentation of results is expected in 2022.

Conclusion: This study is exploratory, as it is the first to our knowledge to investigate how perceived time-use patterns with respect to apart or jointly performed, are similar or different among romantic couples. By investigating the interpersonal perception of time-use patterns among couples, the IP-COUPLES study is an important first step to understanding how romantic partners' daily activities are contributing to the level of satisfaction as a partner, as a couple, and to the sense of mutuality between partners in a romantic relationship.

2. Introduction

A romantic relationship has been described as particular form of social interaction between two individuals where one of the aims is a mutually satisfactory relationship (Banse & Rebetz, 2008; Santelli, 2018). However, to achieve such satisfaction is a complex process, often requiring behavioral and psychological adjustments to ensure each partner's respective needs and preferences are met in this relationship (Acitelli et al., 2001; Heyman et al., 1994; Schmid Mast & Hall, 2018). The notion of “we-ness” has been raised in social psychology in reference to a couple's sense of mutuality. A sense of mutuality often emerges from shared time and experiences over the course of a relationship (Skerrett, 2016). However, it is important to clarify that “we-ness” is an interpersonal entity that encompasses both partners (Reid, 2008). Moreover, “we-ness” also reflects the reciprocity between partners and the ability to accurately and cogently consider the other partner's perspective (Gildersleeve et al., 2017). Not surprisingly, researchers have postulated couples with a high degree of “we-ness” are more likely to have a more satisfying relationship where the ability to adjust to one another's needs is thought to be a contributing factor to satisfaction (Gildersleeve et al., 2017). Romantic partners who are better able to connect with their partner's respective experiences report higher rates of marital satisfaction (Andersen & Przybylinski, 2018; Nes et al., 2012). In fact, such connectivity between partners is thought to support the unicity of the couple where patterns in their behaviour and communication develop, as reflected in their shared activities or ‘patterns of doing’. While we expect shared ways of doing to be unique to each couple (Rossignac-Milon et al., 2020), it remains unclear as to how such patterns are reflected in a relationship. In other words, we have yet to fully understand ‘time-use’ in a coupled relationship, namely what activities are jointly done as a couple and what activities are apart done by each partner. We aim to further understand how romantic partners respectively and jointly perceive time allocated for apart and shared activities and the sense of satisfaction associated with such perceptions. Such research sets the stage for further study of how couples apart and jointly adjust their activities when navigating changes, such as the onset of medical conditions in one or both partners’, and the corresponding impact on the relationship and sense of ‘we-ness’.

2.1 Time-use patterns among couples

Kaufmann, a French sociologist, argued that a coupled relationship emerges from the formulation of shared or co-constructed routines (Banse & Rebetz, 2008; Kaufmann, 1992; Santelli, 2018). Hence, such routines are thought to be reflected in a couples' time-use patterns. These patterns are defined as how people “spend and structure their time” within their everyday lives (Cornwell et al., 2019, p. 16.2). For those in coupled relationships, we expect time-use patterns to be reflected in both separate and joint activities (Genadek et al., 2020; Glorieux et al., 2011; Kaufmann, 2014; van Nes et al., 2009, 2013). Thus,

everyday activities performed jointly as a couple are thought to contribute to the sense of unicity or mutuality of the relationship in question (Rossignac-Milon et al., 2020). Mutuality between partners can also emerge when a partner adequately adjusts to the needs of the other partner, including those activities one does apart. In fact, each activity, whether apart or done jointly, must consider both the expectations and needs of each partner. Hence, a romantic relationship can require the synchronization of time-use patterns and corresponding activities between partners (Cornwell et al., 2019; Flood & Genadek, 2016). However, each partner may have a different perspective when it comes to synchronization and the time allocated to such activities. Each partner may have to adjust to the needs of the other partner in terms of the time allocated for particular activities, while also considering his/her own needs.

Previous research examining time-use patterns among romantic couples suggested such patterns can either positively or negatively impact a relationship. For instance, it has been suggested that the time spent together as a couple has a direct influence on the perceived quality of the romantic relationship (Bernardo et al., 2015; Genadek et al., 2020). Joint or collaborative engagement in daily activities, especially those that involve new experiences, have been shown to contribute to the well-being of respective partners (Flood & Genadek, 2016; Glorieux et al., 2011; Panisoara & Serban, 2013) as well as feelings of mutuality as a couple (Cornwell et al., 2019; Drigotas et al., 1999; Reissman et al., 1993). Some researchers have suggested couples should spend more time on joint activities (Flood & Genadek, 2016; Glorieux et al., 2011), particularly those activities that are more social or leisure in nature (Cornwell et al., 2019; Flood & Genadek, 2016; Glorieux et al., 2011). Based on the analysis of time diaries of 4043 Belgian couples, Glorieux et al. (2011) reported that couples spent approximately 53% of their total time together with no significant differences between couples who were married and unmarried, although no information was provided about the duration of the relationship. Sleeping, eating, and watching television were the most commonly identified joint activities. Interestingly, shopping and leisure activities were largely conducted apart. Most shared time was spent in the home, during meals, evenings, and during the weekends (2011). Genadek et al. (2020) found female same-sex couples spent more time on joint activities compared to both heterosexual and male same-sex couples. These results suggest time spent on joint activities can influence the quality of the relationship, which may also correspond to perceived mutuality and to “we-ness”. Thus, when partners synchronize their time-use patterns, such synchronization requires each partner to allocate enough time for the other partner’s needs for apart activities as well as jointly performed (couple) activities. While it is thought that a couple’s mutuality can be strengthened when a partner shares a similar perception in terms of these activities, we do not in fact know the impact of perceptual congruence with respect to time-use on their relationship. Hence, examining and understanding similarities and differences in perceived time-use patterns between partners with regard to activities is important given what is known about the impact of time-use on

relationship quality (Cornwell et al., 2019; Flood & Genadek, 2016; Reissman et al., 1993). Many studies of time-use patterns (Knabe et al., 2010; Matuska & Erickson, 2008; van Tienoven et al., 2020) have considered individuals as singular entities in terms of analyzing their everyday activities when in fact daily life, for those in partnered (coupled) relationships, requires a complex interplay between individuals and their respective patterns of engagement. Hence, the current study will further our understanding of the similarities and differences between partners in terms of their perceived time-use when it comes to their apart and joint activities. The study design and methods for the IP-COUPLES study (Interpersonal Perception of time-use patterns among COUPLES) are based, in part, on the paradigm of Interpersonal Perception (IP).

2.2 Interpersonal Perception (IP): Measuring perceptual congruence of time-use patterns among couples

IP is defined in social psychology as “reciprocal perceptions” between individuals with regard to various topics, such as affect (Sadikaj et al., 2017), feelings (Kenny & Acitelli, 2001), food preferences (Acitelli et al., 2001), job satisfaction or political opinions (Kenny & Acitelli, 2001), between at least two individuals and the degree of congruence between these perceptions (Kenny, 1994; Sillars & Scott, 1983). Perceptual congruence refers to the degree of agreement between partners’ perceptions (Young et al., 2014). It is “...the association between partners’ perception of one another” (Iafrate, Bertoni, Margola, et al., 2012, p. 73). These perceptions are crucial for the relationship (Acitelli et al., 2001; Iafrate, Bertoni, Margola, et al., 2012). As such, the more partners are congruent in their perceptions of the other partner’s activities - for instance, they are able to perceive likes or dislikes in terms of time allocation - the higher their level of mutuality and satisfaction with the relationship (Gildersleeve et al., 2017; Iafrate, Bertoni, Margola, et al., 2012; Rossignac-Milon et al., 2020; Young et al., 2014). Studies have also suggested perceptual congruence between partners could be an indicator of problems in the relationship. For instance, each partner has a high degree of accuracy in terms of identifying the perceived needs of their respective partner, yet they are not able to meet these needs thereby leading to lower rates of marital satisfaction (Acitelli et al., 2001; Kenny, 1994).

Acitelli, Douvan and Veroff (Acitelli et al., 1993) were among the first to propose a model (see Figure 3) to measure perceptual congruence in a romantic relationship. They identified three key variables of perceptual congruence: 1) “perceived similarity”, that is the congruence between a partner’s self-perception and his/her perception of the other partner, where one partner’s own needs are projected onto the other partner (Sillars & Scott, 1983) In this way, there is assumed similarity, which refers to how one partner views the needs of the other partner as similar to oneself and, thus, influences his/her perception of the respective partner ; 2) “actual similarity”, which refers to the actual congruence between each partner’s self-perception ; and 3) “understanding”, which refers to the level of congruence between a

partner's perception of the other partner and how the partner in question actually perceives himself/herself.

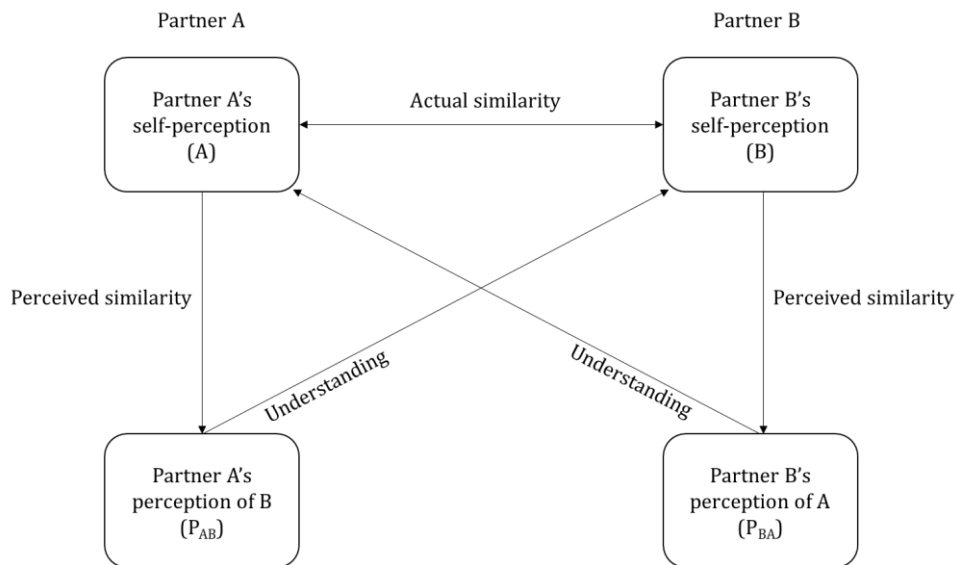


Figure 3. Reproduction of the model of perceptual congruence from Acitelli et al. (1993), presenting the three variables of perceptual congruence between partners in a romantic relationship. Arrows do not indicate a causal link but a correlation (Acitelli et al., 1993).

Using this model, studies of romantic couples have identified significant link between level of perceptual congruence and dyadic coping (Iafate, Bertoni, Donato, et al., 2012). Dyadic coping of a couple is described as the level of interdependence required to address an external stressor. When one partner is experiencing distress, a response is often expected from the other partner. Research indicates that strong perceptual congruence between partners in their dyadic coping strategies are related to a partners' respective level of satisfaction in the relationship (Iafate, Bertoni, Margola, et al., 2012).

Using the model put forward by Acitelli et al. (1993), the current study aims to build on our understanding of perceptual congruence among romantic couples by exploring the link between perceived time-use patterns in terms of individual and shared activities and the sense of mutuality in the relationship. For this purpose, we operationalize time-use patterns using the Life-Balance Model (LBM) (Matuska, 2012b; Matuska & Christiansen, 2008). In this model, life balance is defined as the configuration of time allocated to activities that are "healthful, meaningful, and sustainable to an individual within the context of his or her current life circumstances" (Bernardo et al., 2015, p. 11). The key component of the LBM is activity configuration congruence (ACC). ACC emerges from time-use patterns, where both the amount of time and corresponding satisfaction (with the time) allocated to daily activities are considered. Optimally, ACC reflects a balance between "one's actual activity configuration in everyday life" and "one's desired activity configuration in everyday life" (Matuska, 2012b, p. 230).

The aim of the IP-COUPLES study is to examine perceptual congruence of ACC between partners in a romantic relationship. More specifically, this study will examine the perceived ACC of 'apart'

activities, as reflected by each partner's ACC score on the LBI. Once this measure is completed, each partner will then complete his/her perceived ACC of 'joint' activities. Finally, the couple will complete the LBI measure together. Consequently, this study will capture the following: 1) how each partner perceives his/her own ACC in relation to his/her own 'apart' activities (LBI completed without the other partner) ; 2) how each partner perceives the ACC of his/her partner's activities that are performed apart (LBI completed without the other partner); 3) how each partner perceives the ACC of joint activities that are performed together as a couple (LBI completed without the other partner), and, finally, 4) how each couple jointly perceives ACC of their jointly-performed activities (LBI completed together as a couple).

We expect a sense of mutuality to be reflected in the level of perceived congruence between partners in terms of engagement in both apart and joint activities (Glorieux et al., 2011; van Nes et al., 2009). While it is thought that each partner in a romantic relationship must synchronize their time-use patterns to meet each other's needs, it remains unclear if and how perceptions of time-use between partners are similar or different from one another as well as how these patterns are perceived as a couple. From our results, we will also determine the association between apart and joint activities in terms of perceptual congruence and the strength of this association. In fact, results may emphasize a need to distinguish between apart and joint activities when designing interventions that address perceived synchronization of time-use patterns between partners. The current study sets the stage for future research focusing on the effect of potential interventions on time-use patterns and mutuality or "we-ness".

2.3 Objectives of the study

The aim of the IP-COUPLES study is to examine the perceptual congruence of ACC among partners that are in a romantic relationship. The primary objective of the IP-COUPLES study is to determine the similarities and differences between partners' in terms of their perceptual congruence with regard to time-use in both apart and joint activities. As well, this study will also examine the association between apart and joint activities in terms of perceptual congruence between partners and the strength of this association.

3. Methods

3.1 Study Design

This protocol involves a descriptive observational study that will be undertaken in Western Switzerland. This methodology is observational, meaning the focus is on exploring a specific phenomenon at a given point in time, namely perceptual congruence within romantic couples. Participant recruitment began in July 2020 and the aim is to finish data collection by October 2021.

3.2 Sample and recruitment

Previous studies on the notion of IP in coupled relationships were reviewed to determine the sample size necessary to achieve our intended objectives. To the best of our knowledge, no published studies have investigated time-use patterns in relation to the paradigm of interpersonal perception. We are aware that significant conclusions cannot be drawn due to the expected effect size. A post-hoc calculation will be done to counterbalance this limitation. Kenny and Acitelli (Kenny & Acitelli, 2001) included 238 married and unmarried couples to measure their perceptions with respect to well-being: feelings of closeness, feelings of caring, equity, enjoyment of sex, and job satisfaction. They calculated the correlation between the partners' actual feelings. The coefficients ranged from .47 (job satisfaction) to .20 (equity). Vanderbleek et al. (2011) explored the correlation between couple play and couple satisfaction and stability. From 30 couples, they found a coefficient of correlation of .70 ($p < .01$) between couple play assessment (CPA) and the satisfaction scale, .69 ($p < .01$) between CPA and the communication scale, .65 ($p < .01$) between the CPA and the conflict resolution scale, and .52 ($p < .01$) between the CPA and the idealistic distortion scale. Finally, Tucker and Ander (1999) included 61 undergraduate couples who were dating where they assessed each partner's attachment style, feelings about the relationship and perceptions of the other partner's feeling about the relationship. The coefficients of correlation for each partner's perceptions of the other partner's feelings about the relationship ranged from a mean of .31 ($p \leq .001$) for men, to a mean of .41 ($p \leq .001$) for women. From selected studies, we determined our sample size using Pearson's correlation calculations. We calculated a conventional large effect size of .5 ($P \leq .05$). Using the GPower software (Faul et al., 2009), we determined a sample size of 180 participants or 90 couples. Hence, the current study aims to recruit 100 couples for the current study, which is 200 participants in total. The recruitment of an additional 10 couples accounts for potential attrition of participants. Applying a post-hoc power analysis on this sample size, with the size effect of .5 ($P \leq .05$), gives a power value of 96%. Hence, this sample size is as large enough to confirm our hypothesized effect size. Because of difficulties of recruitment due to the COVID-19 pandemic, our plan is to conduct an intermediary analysis. For this analysis, we aim to have 72 couples (144 individuals) to undertake a post-hoc calculated power value of 90%.

Participation in this study is voluntary. Western Switzerland is a French-speaking region, which is the primary investigator's native language. The choice to focus our sampling to this country is mainly due to the restrictions in place due to the COVID-19 pandemic. While we recognize limiting our sample size to this geographic region has consequences on the generalizability of our results, ensuring the contextual elements are similar is important. For example, public health measures in place for this region are likely to affect time-use patterns and activity engagement and we expect these to be similar for the sample. For participants recruitment, announcements have been published in local newspapers, and on in e-bulletins and on websites of associations targeting those who are retired, as well as sports- or cultural-

related associations. If necessary, advertisements will be placed in the professional networks of the primary investigator for snowball sampling, which are people who work in health-related fields, such as occupational therapy and social work. The advertisement outlines the title of the study, its objectives, the inclusion criteria, the implications for participants and how the results will be used. Details are also provided about how to contact the main investigator (RB). Couples who agree to participate in this study contact this investigator by phone or by email in accordance with their preference. A brief overview of the study is then provided verbally as well as in writing, including ethical procedures. Inclusion, exclusion, and drop-out criteria are reviewed at this time. Couples, where one or both partner require assistance in daily activities, are excluded from the current study. The need for assistance may presuppose a health issue that could mean that one or both partners are more vulnerable, which can impact the dynamics of the relationship. Ensuring participants are protected from COVID-19 have been considered in the study design. Web-based meetings are strongly encouraged with the main investigator (RB). Finally, informed consent is sent by post or by email in accordance with the participants wishes. Both partners are required to sign the consent form and return a copy to the main investigator.

3.3 Inclusion criteria

- Cohabiting coupled partners, married and unmarried, where each partner is 18 years and older at time of data collection
- The respective partners must consider themselves to be in a romantic relationship
- The two partners read, understand, and speak French
- The partners have lived together in the same residence for at least 1 year
- The couple lives in Western Switzerland at the time of data collection

3.4 Exclusion criteria

- At least one partner has a disease or medical condition that requires assistance of the other partner or another caregiver with daily activities
- At least one partner is under legal guardianship
- At least one partner does not give his/her consent to participate in the study

3.5 Drop-out criteria

- Partners are not able to physically separate from each other during the meeting (e.g., move to another room), and therefore can hear each other's responses to the questionnaire
- Partners exchange answers during the course of data collection

- Worsening of a partner's health condition that requires the assistance of the other partner or caregiver with daily activities
- At least one partner revokes consent to the study

3.6 Data collection

Data collection is completed by the first author of the study. Participants are given two options with regard to the location for data collection. Originally, the study was designed for an in-person, face-to-face meeting at a physical location chosen by the couple (Kenny & Acitelli, 2001). Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, a videoconference (e.g., Zoom) is being offered as an option. This virtual alternative prevents physical meeting with people who may be at risk for COVID-19, or for whom it is impossible to do the meeting outside and safely.

The main questionnaire used in this study is the Life Balance Inventory³ (LBI) (Matuska, 2012a). The LBI was developed by Matuska, based on the Life Balance Model (Matuska, 2012a). It measures the life balance of individuals with respect to time allocated for different daily activities and their level of satisfaction with how their time is allocated for such activities. The LBI tracks time-allocation across 53 activities (e.g., shopping, driving, participating in groups, relaxing, participating in outdoor activities, working, using a computer, taking care of oneself, playing music, reading). For each activity, participants are asked to indicate yes if they do, or if they want to do, the activity in question. A participant will indicate 'no' if they do not do, or if they do not want to do, the activity. If they answer 'yes', participants are then asked to rate, using a Likert scale, if they are able to spend the amount of time they desire on the activity where '1' indicates less time than desired (i.e., "always less than what I want") and '5' indicates more time than desired (i.e., "always more than what I want"). The French version of the LBI has been validated (Larivière & Levasseur, 2016 – Annex 2) and will be used for the current study.

For the purpose of this study, the main investigator (RB) reads each question on the LBI and then list the different options for participants to respond. To limit loss of data or misunderstanding, participants also have a printed copy of the questionnaire, so they can also read the questions and provide the answers, as the questionnaire is administered by the investigator. The order of administration of the LBI is decided by partners at the outset of the initial meeting with the investigator, with one of the partner's volunteering to go first. The partner who volunteers to start stays with the investigator (online), while the other partner moves far enough away, preferably to another room (where he/she cannot hear any parts of questionnaires, as they are administered. If there is no possibility to move to another room, the other partner will be asked to wear headphones (and to listen music if possible) so the sound is muffled.

³ The Life Balance Inventory has been used and reproduced with the permission of its original author.

The first partner to be administered the questionnaires will provide his/her socio-demographic information (e.g., his/her age, education). At the second step, he/she completes the LBI a total of three times, using a different perspective each time: 1) self-assessment of his/her own ACC for activities that are performed apart ; 2) his/her perceptions of how he/she thinks his/her partner would respond with respect to his/her own ACC for these activities; 3) his/her perception of how his/her couple might respond to the questionnaire concerning the perception of ACC for joint activities. When the first partner completes the LBI from these three perspectives, the other partner then enters the room and follows the same steps. The other partner is also asked to leave the vicinity so as not to overhear administration and responses. In the final step, both partners are brought back together to complete the ACC jointly as a couple. They will also provide some further information about their relationship at this final step : the length of their relationship, the number of children they have together, the ages of the children, or how many children are still living with them.

If a couple withdraws or cannot complete any step of data collection, their data will not be included in the final analysis. As per previous studies, questionnaires will be completed by each partner individually to avoid any discussion between partners concerning their perceptual congruence on any of the activities (Kenny & Acitelli, 2001; Sadikaj et al., 2018).

3.7 Statistical analysis

Statistics will be calculated using IBM SPSS Software version 25 (Aldrich, 2018). For data coding, each couple will randomly be allocated a number. Partners in the couple will also be randomly allocated a letter, "A" or "B". The couple will be referred to as "C". For instance, we will refer to couple "1" as A1, B1, and C1; A2, B2, and C2 and so on. Prior to the analysis, the sample will be first described. The scores of LBI will then be reported as measures for the analysis that will aim to answer the study objectives. We will then do all calculations with the three variables of perceptual congruence, as described in the model by Acitelli et al. (1993): 1) actual similarity, 2) perceived similarity and 3) understanding of time-use patterns, respectively for activities performed apart and jointly. Because we expect to have a normally distributed sample, we will do parametric statistical tests.

4. Analysis

Prior to the analysis, the sample will first be analyzed in terms of their descriptive statistics. Intra and inter-individual central tendency and dispersion of scores will be calculated for 1) each partner's self-perception of his/her ACC for apart activities, 2) each partner's perception of the other partner's ACC for apart activities, 3) each partner's perception of the ACC for joint activities, and 4) each couples' perception of ACC for joint activities.

From the LBI scores, we will determinate the different coefficients of the three variables that comprise perceptual congruence, as per Actelli et al. and the LBI (see Figure 4):

- *Actual similarity between partners (A_{SP})*: The ratio between one partner's self-perception of ACC for his/her activities done apart and the other partner's self-perception of ACC for his/her activities done apart.
- *Actual similarity between one partner and his/her couple (A_{SC})*: The ratio between one partner's self-perception of ACC for his/her activities done apart and the couple's self-perception of ACC for activities jointly done by partners.
- *Perceived similarity between partners (P_{SP})*: The ratio between one partner's self-perception of ACC for his/her activities done apart and his/her perception of the other partner's ACC for his/her activities done apart.
- *Perceived similarity between one partner and his/her couple (P_{SC})*: The ratio between one partner's self-perception of ACC for his/her activities done apart and his/her perception of the of ACC for activities jointly done by partners.
- *Understanding between partners (U_P)*: The ratio between one partner's perception of the other partner's ACC for his/her activities done apart and the other partner's self-perception of ACC for his/her activities done apart.
- *Understanding between one partner and his/her couple (U_C)*: The ratio between each partner's perception of ACC for activities jointly done by partners and the couple's self-perception of ACC for activities jointly done by partners.

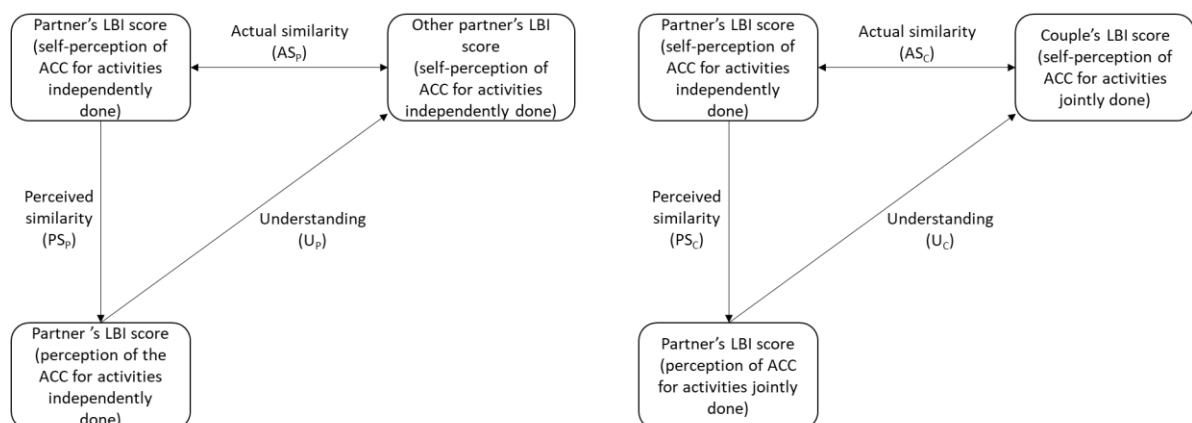


Figure 4. Coefficients of perceptual congruence of time-use patterns among couples that are used for statistical calculations (adapted from the model of Acitelli et al. (1993))

Objective #1: The first objective of the IP-COUPLES study is to determine if there are similarities and differences between partners' perceptual congruence of their apart and joint activities. Means score of

each variable of perceptual congruence will be calculated, 1), between partners (A_{SP} , P_{SP} , and U_P), and 2), between each partner and his/her couple (A_{SC} , P_{SC} , and U_C). Comparisons of means score will then be done using an independent t-test, between A_{SP} and A_{SC} , between P_{SP} and P_{SC} , and finally, between U_P and U_C .

Objective #2: The second objective is to examine the association between apart and joint activities in terms of perceptual congruence and the strength of this association. Correlations will be calculated for each variable of perceptual congruence using Pearson correlation. Three correlations will be calculated: between A_{SP} and A_{SC} , between P_{SP} and P_{SC} , and between U_P and U_C .

5. Data protection

All collected data will be anonymized. They will be kept for 10 years, in accordance with Swiss recommendations specific to data storage (Staiger, 2020). Data are stored on an encrypted external hard drive of the main investigator disconnected from any network. The data is only shared between members of the authorship team. No specific information is provided to participants nor between partners. They do not receive any analysis of their respective relationship. They can only access the final version of the study, where the results are consolidated. The cantonal commission of ethics for research on humans (CER-VD) gave its approval to the project (protocol number 2019-00847).

6. Results

The IP-COUPLES study protocol was developed in 2019 and 2020. Enrollment began in June 2020. Data collection will continue until March 2021, with ongoing adaptations due the evolving COVID-19 pandemic crisis. Analysis and presentation of results is expected to be available in early 2022.

6.1 Prior analysis

Firstly, the socio-demographic description of the sample will be reported in a table format. To facilitate readability, information that concerns all partners as individuals, and couples, will be presented in two tables. A bar graph will then be used to show the central tendency and dispersion of participant scores concerning 1) each partner's self-perception of his/her ACC for his/her apart activities 2) each partner's perception of the other partner's ACC for his/her apart activities, 3) each partner's perception of the ACC for joint activities and 4) each couples' perception of ACC for their joint activities. Coefficients of perceptual congruence variables will be presented in two tables. The first table will show the coefficients of perceptual congruence between partners' perception of ACC for apart activities, and the second table will present coefficients of perceptual congruence between partners' perception of ACC for activities jointly done as a couple, and those of the couple.

6.2 Study objectives

Each study objective will be addressed in a separate table displaying the respective results.

7. Discussion

The current study aims to enhance our understanding of the relationship between mutuality of romantic couples' and time spent (i.e., time-use patterns), either apart or jointly, on performing everyday activities. This study is exploratory in nature, as it is the first to our knowledge to investigate how time-use patterns of couples and corresponding activities, whether apart or jointly performed, are similarly or differently perceived among partners in a romantic relationship. As previously noted, time-use patterns reflect couples' ways of doing, which contribute to the unicity of the couple. Findings from previous dyadic studies suggest interacting in daily life as a romantic couple affects the level of interdependence, which may be reflected in the activities in which partners' engage (van Nes et al., 2009, 2013). In other words, the needs of each partner can influence the other's engagement in everyday activities. As such, the way partners perceive their respective partner's level of engagement in daily activities can influence how much they adjust to meet the needs of their partner. In some cases, they may even sacrifice their own needs in terms of their activities to accommodate the needs of their partner. Hence, the degree of adjustment or accommodation has been raised in previous research where the willingness of partners to adjust to each other's needs in terms of activities is thought to strengthen the sense of mutuality experienced by the couple (Gildersleeve et al., 2017; lafrate, Bertoni, Margola, et al., 2012; Rossignac-Milon et al., 2020; Young et al., 2014). The current study seeks to further understand the role of perceptual congruence of each partner in terms of engagement in these different type of activities, which remains unclear.

By investigating the interpersonal perception of time-use patterns within couples, the IP-COUPLES study will make an important contribution as to how romantic partners' daily activities contribute to feelings of satisfaction as a partner, and as a couple, and, in turn, the sense of mutuality between partners. By leveraging existing research on perceptual congruence and its related variables, we will be able to discern similarities and differences in how activities that are apart and jointly performed are perceived. Furthermore, we will go one step further in determining the extent to which each of these perceptions are related. We will also consider if there are significant differences between each variable of perceptual congruence, namely, actual similarity, perceived similarity, and understanding (Acitelli et al., 1993).

This research sets the stage for future investigations that delve further into the perception of time-use patterns among couples. A next step in the IP-COUPLES study is to investigate the extent to which health-related changes in one or both partners can influence how daily activities are perceived by

couples, and, in turn, how it may influence feelings of mutuality between partners. Another study emerging from IP-COUPLES could subsequently investigate relationships between marital satisfaction and the degree of mutuality among couples, and congruence with each partners' perceptions of time-use patterns as a couple

8. Limitations

The current study should be considered in light of certain limitations. The LBI questionnaire has been designed for use by single participant, and not for joint responses, as a couple per se. Given there are no questionnaires currently designed to capture joint activities and time-use, including satisfaction with such time-use, the LBI is the best tool available to be used for this purpose. Hence, our research team will carefully track and record any challenges that arise with regard to administering the LBI in this way. We expect our study will highlight the need to design and validate questionnaires that can be administered in this way, given what is known about co-performance of everyday activities.

Another potential limitation is related to the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result of the pandemic and public health recommendations for social distancing, a large part of the world's population has been affected by changes in their daily activity patterns. In Switzerland, since March 2020, there has been alternating periods of public restrictions. Hence, responses by participants on the LBI may depend on the restrictions at the time of the interview. However, the focus of the current study is not so much on the activities, as it is on perceptual congruence. Nevertheless, partners may not be aware, or may be even more aware, of one another's activity patterns and engagement. As previously noted, couples recruited for this study are expected to be from the same geographic region in Switzerland. While this sampling approach limits the generalizability of the findings, similar public health measures are expected to be in place in this region. Continuing to collect data and track participants in the IP-COUPLES study with regard to navigating the current pandemic and the post-pandemic period is being considered by the study team.

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Chapter 5: Gender differences and perceptual congruence in time-use patterns between romantic partners: A descriptive study

Submitted in The Journal of Time Use Research:

Bertrand, R., Vrkljan, B., Charvoz, L., Kühne, N., & Vuillerme, N. (Submitted). Gender differences and perceptual congruence in time-use patterns between romantic partners : A descriptive study. *The Journal of Time-Use Research*.

1. Abstract

The time spent by partners in their daily activities, whether jointly with the partner or apart, strengthens the we-ness of the couple. However, women and men can have either similar, different, or even contradictory expectations in terms of time-use. Uncertainty remains as to the extent to which partners' perceptions of such expectations converge or diverge. Drawing on the model of "perceptual congruence", the current descriptive study aims 1) to determine the similarities and differences in between women and men in their perception of apart and joint engagement; and 2) to examine the association between apart and joint engagement in terms of women and men's perceptual congruence and the strength of this association. 72 couples from Western Switzerland completed a questionnaire on their time-use patterns. Coefficients of perceptual congruence were calculated from the scores to the questionnaires and their association was tested with a Pearson correlation coefficient. Findings suggest perceptual congruence between partners who participated to the study, reflecting the we-ness of their partnership. Differences between genders emerge since participating women seem to project their own expectations onto those of their partner and their couple. Participating men, for their part, further distinguish the needs of their couple from those of their partner. However, the weak correlation between perceptual congruence of time spent in apart and joint activities, whether for women and men, suggest further research that focuses on the extent to which each kind of activities respectively contributes to the we-ness of the couple.

2. Introduction

Romantic partnerships can take on various forms from dating multiple partners to monogamy, including cohabitation, as well as more traditional approaches, such as marriage (Sassler, 2010; Sassler & Lichter, 2020). When individuals are in such partnerships, it can affect how they go about their daily life with resulting impact on their activities (Kaufmann, 2014; Meyer et al., 2016; Santelli, 2018). Researchers have long been interested in how such activities influence family life and shape identity (Brower, 2014; Fletcher et al., 2019). The meaning attributed to these activities have been explored, including their role in the formation and maintenance of close relationships (Bernardo et al., 2015; Brower, 2014). Evidence suggests that time-use patterns of romantic partners, or how they “spend and structure their time” individually as well as together (Cornwell et al., 2019, p. 16.2), can have a significant impact on the quality of a romantic relationship.

Time-use patterns can involve a range of activities, including those one engages in with their romantic partner (i.e., joint activities) as well as those individuals are expected to do, want to do, and need to do on their own (i.e., apart activities) (Flood & Genadek, 2016; Glorieux et al., 2011; Milek et al., 2015). In Western countries, differences across partnered women and men in such time-use have been evidenced in literature (Kamp Dush et al., 2018). It has been reported that women spend more time than men in household or parenting-related activities while men spend more time in paid work (Cornwell et al., 2019; Garcia Roman & Cortina, 2016; Kamp Dush et al., 2018) although such difference in time-use has narrowed over the past few decades (Brower, 2014; Voorpostel et al., 2010). In fact, both women and men have many expectations regarding their roles and the related activities in terms of time spent with or without the other (Flood & Genadek, 2016; Santelli, 2018). Thus, the time they spend together in daily activities corresponds to the quality of their relationship (Bernardo et al., 2015; Cornwell et al., 2019; Girme et al., 2014). This correspondence has mostly been explored in relation to those daily activities in which partners are jointly engaged (Brower, 2014; Fletcher et al., 2019; Girme et al., 2014). For instance, Glorieux et al. (2011), in their survey of time-use of Belgian couples (n=4043), showed that couples, whether married or cohabiting, spent approximately 53% of their total time together. Joint leisure and social activities were most strongly related to the higher levels of satisfaction in a relationship particularly when these activities provided new experiences (Glorieux et al., 2011). However, it has been evidenced that activities done alone can also have a positive impact on a relationship. As such, Bailey and Jackson (2005) studied financial management among same-gender female couples. Their interviews with 13 couples emphasized that the fair division of household-related activities between partners were linked to greater relationship satisfaction. Indeed, their results suggested that when a partner allocated time to such activities, which aligned with the skills, time, wishes, and life circumstances of the individual and the couple, it strengthened the partnership.

Literature suggests that romantic partners are not always synergistic since, while juggling their role-related demands, women and men can have similar, different, or even contradictory expectations concerning the time spent on apart or joint activities (Flood & Genadek, 2016; Santelli, 2018). Santelli (2008), a French sociologist, proposed a view of a romantic partnership as a constant compromise between each partner's expectations concerning time allocated to the relationship. While Santelli (2008) indicated that partners should ensure that they meet these expectations while still considering their own needs (Bernardo et al., 2015; Girme et al., 2014), the extent to which each partner's range of activities affects the quality of their partnership remains unclear. The current study addresses time-use patterns of romantic partners by examining the perspectives of how each partner, either woman or man, meets the other's expectations in terms of time spent together and apart on respective and joint activities.

2.1 Meeting each romantic partner's time-use expectations: Perceptual congruence within couples

We-ness has been conceptualized as partners' ability to accurately and cogently consider the other's needs (Gildersleeve et al., 2017). This concept emerged from systemic–constructivist social psychology and refers to a couple's sense of togetherness between partners that develops over the course of their relationship (Kayser & Acquati, 2019; Topcu-Uzer et al., 2021). We-ness was first used by Buehlman and her colleagues (1992) to predict divorces among American married couples. According to them (Buehlman et al., 1992), and evidenced by the recent literature (Kayser & Acquati, 2019; Topcu-Uzer et al., 2021), a high degree of we-ness among partners has been reported to be a strong predictor of marital satisfaction. Indeed, it has been suggested that time spent in daily activities can strengthen the sense of we-ness if each partner's expectations are met (Gildersleeve et al., 2017; Reid et al., 2006; Singer & Skerrett, 2014). Furthermore, couple's sense of we-ness manifests in the synchronization of partners' time-use patterns (Flood & Genadek, 2016). Such synchronization emerges from awareness of each partner expectations of time spent together and apart (Bertrand et al., 2021; Gager & Sanchez, 2003).

Partners who are aware of each other's needs are more likely to meet these needs (Donato et al., 2015; Elsaadawy et al., 2022; Gager & Sanchez, 2003). Thus, perceptual congruence between romantic partners is crucial for marital satisfaction (Rossignac-Milon et al., 2020). Such perceptual congruence is achieved when partners share a similar perspective across key areas (Iafrate, Bertoni, Donato, et al., 2012) including but not limited to emotional stability (George et al., 2020), political opinions (Acitelli et al., 2001), spirituality (George et al., 2020), dyadic coping (Iafrate, Bertoni, Donato, et al., 2012) and sexuality (Elsaadawy et al., 2022). Acitelli, Douvan, and Veroff (1993), three American psychologists, were among the first to propose a model of perceptual congruence, in which three coefficients were identified as key to a satisfying romantic partnership (see Figure 5). First, actual similarity (Acitelli et al., 1993; Iafrate, Bertoni, Margola, et al., 2012) is the alignment between each partner's own perceptions

regarding the partnership. Second, perceived similarity (Acitelli et al., 1993; lafrate, Bertoni, Margola, et al., 2012) is the alignment between one partner's self-perception and their perception of the other partner. Namely, this reflects the way in which one partner attributes their own needs to the other. The third variable, understanding (Acitelli et al., 1993; lafrate, Bertoni, Margola, et al., 2012), is the alignment between one partner's perception of the other partner and how the partner in question perceives their own self. This reflects the extent to which one partner's perception is accurate with the other's expectations.

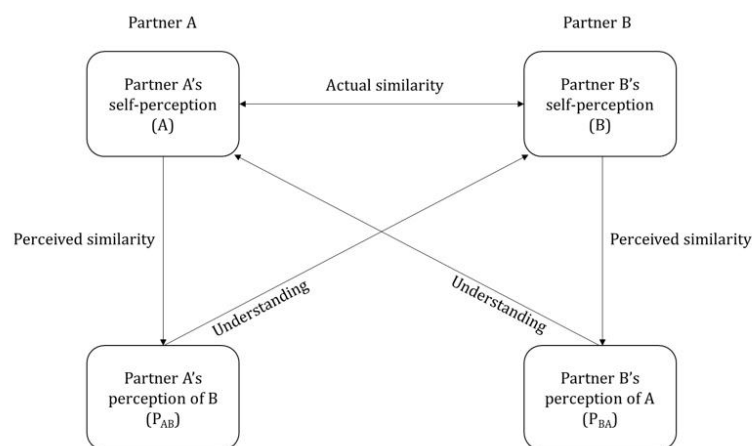


Figure 5. Acitelli et al.'s (1993) model of perceptual congruence, presenting the three coefficients of perceptual congruence between partners in a romantic relationship.

Partners with a high degree of actual similarity have been found to be more satisfied with their relationship (Acitelli et al., 2001; lafrate, Bertoni, Margola, et al., 2012). Indeed, it has been suggested that sharing similar values, interests, religious beliefs, marital ideals, attitudes, or personality traits is likely to contribute to marital satisfaction (Acitelli et al., 2001; Kouros & Papp, 2019). Moreover, in their study of marital satisfaction with North American couples, Murray et al. (2002, p. 576) demonstrated that partners who perceived the other as a “mirror of the self” were more satisfied with their relationships. As such, perceived similarity reflects an individual's belief that their partner, because they are similar to them, are more likely to understand and meet their own needs (lafrate, Bertoni, Margola, et al., 2012). Finally, understanding has also been shown to be important for long-lasting and satisfying partnerships since it refers to the partner's ability to take into account the other's needs (Acitelli et al., 2001; lafrate, Bertoni, Margola, et al., 2012). Thus, exploring perceptual congruence regarding partners' engagement in daily activities can provide additional information about how each partner perceives the other's expectations in terms of time spent together or apart, and in turn, its association with relationship satisfaction.

2.2 Measuring time-use patterns as a reflection of perceptual congruence between partners

Evidence concerning the association between time-use patterns in terms of daily activities and marital satisfaction has yet been determined (Bertrand et al., 2021; Brower, 2014). Focusing on how partners' spend their respective time on apart and joint activities should be further considered when investigating

the quality of the relationship (Cornwell et al., 2019; Flood & Genadek, 2016). Drawing on the model of perceptual congruence as described by Acitelli et al. (1993), the current study is the first, to our knowledge, to investigate perceptions of time-use patterns among partners in a romantic relationship, through the lens of gender. For this purpose, we operationalize time-use patterns as a reflection of each partners' life balance in accordance with the Life-Balance Model (LBM) (Matuska, 2010; Matuska & Christiansen, 2008). In this model, Matuska (2008), an American occupational therapist, describes life balance as activity configuration congruence (ACC). ACC refers to the time individuals allocate to their daily activities at a certain time and their current level of satisfaction regarding such allocation. In other words, ACC reflects a balance between "one's actual activity configuration in everyday life" and "one's desired activity configuration in everyday life" (Matuska & Christiansen, 2008, p. 230). The current study aims to examine the perceptual congruence of such balance between partners in a romantic relationship. While it is hypothesized that romantic partners synchronize their time-use patterns to meet the needs of the other (Cornwell et al., 2019; Flood & Genadek, 2016), uncertainty remains as to the extent to which partners' perceptions of time use in their apart and joint activities converge or diverge. Hence, the objectives of the current study are 1) to determine the similarities and differences in perceptual congruence between female and male partners, as reflected in their respective perception of time-use in apart and joint activities; and 2) to examine the association between apart and joint activities in terms of women and men's perceptual congruence and the strength of this association. The results will inform what is known about how apart as well as joint activities of partners contribute to the sense of we-ness within romantic relationships.

3. Methods

3.1 Participants

This descriptive study using self-reported questionnaires was conducted in Western Switzerland. The cantonal commission of ethics for research on humans (CER-VD) approved the research (protocol number 2019-00847) and the protocol study recently has been published (ANONYMIZED). Seventy-two cohabiting heterosexual couples living in Western Switzerland (144 individuals, 56.9% married, 33.3% in an open relationship, 9.8% in another type of partnership) gave their written consent to participate in the study. Participants were recruited between July 2020 and October 2021. Advertisements were placed in local newspapers and on the websites of local associations, for example for retired people and sports- and culture-related activities as well as using the first author's social networks. These advertisements outlined the title of the study, the names of the investigators, the study's objectives, and the inclusion and exclusion criteria. Participants were required to be 18 years of age at the time of data collection and to have cohabited with their partner for at least one year. Couples participated voluntarily in the study; no

remuneration was promised. Both partners were required to sign the consent form. Couples in which one partner required the assistance of the other to engage in daily activities were excluded, as such reliance could influence the dynamics of the partnership and, in turn, how they engaged in their activities. No participants dropped out of the study.

At the time data collection was undertaken, public health measures were in place due to COVID-19 pandemic. As such, data was collected primarily collected through online meetings, such as Zoom, that were arranged with main investigator (RB). If participants were agreeable to meet in -person, these meetings were held in accordance with public health measures, meaning masks were worn and social distancing measures. A total of 144 participants were recruited or 72 heterosexual couples, where the 72 men participants ranged in age from 21–79 years ($M = 44.43$ years, Median = 39.5 years, $SD = 14.59$); and the 72 women were aged 22–78 years ($M = 42.63$ years, Median = 37.5 years, $SD = 14.37$). The mean age gap between partners was 2.9 years (range 0–10 years, Median: 2 years, $SD = 2.56$). Partnership duration ranged from 2 to 57 years ($M = 17.8$ years, Median = 13 years). The sample included 85 Swiss participants (59.0%), 42 French participants (29.2%) and 17 participants of other nationalities (11.8%). The majority of participants were of White Caucasian ethnicity (97.9%); three participants (2.1%) were from other ethnicities (two Africans who were partnered and one Hispanic American). The participants' levels of education were less than high school (8.3%), high school (15.30%), graduate degree (59.0%), and other (17.4%). Their sectors of employment were primary (1.4%), secondary (9.0%), tertiary (72.2%), and unemployed (including retired people and students) (17.40%). The mean work rate was 71.20% (50.0% of participants worked full time - i.e., 100.0%), 28% of participants worked between 50% and 100%, and 2.8% of participants worked between 0 and 50%). Thirty-eight couples (52.8%) reported having children living at home, and 34 (47.2%) reported not having children living at home.

3.2 Measures

Activity Configuration Congruence (ACC). Participants completed the Life Balance Inventory (LBI), a questionnaire developed by Matuska (2010, 2012). This questionnaire measures an individual's ACC, that is, the balance between the time they allocate to their daily activities and their level of satisfaction regarding such allocation (Matuska, 2012). Participants answered the questions in relation to their own apart activities and their joint activities (i.e., the activities they do together with their partner). Fifty-three activities are listed in the questionnaire (see Appendix 2 for the list of activities).

3.3 Procedure

At the meeting with each couple, the demographic information about partners (age, nationality, employment status, level of education ...) and the couple (duration of the relationship, number of children,...) were first completed. The LBI was then described to both participants. They were informed

about the list of 53 activities, and that they would have to answer for each activity, 'yes' if they did or wanted to do the activity and 'no' if they did not do or did not want to do the activity. They were explained that a 'yes' answer led to the second step of the measure, where participants were asked to report if they felt able to allocate the desired amount of time to the activity. This measure uses a Likert-response scale ranging from 1 to 3, where '3' indicates the desired amount of time ("as much as I want"), '2' indicates "sometimes less than what I want" or "sometimes more than what I want," and '1' indicates "always less than what I want" or "always more than what I want" (Matuska, 2012). Total score indicates 1–1.5 (very unbalanced), 1.5–2 (unbalanced), 2–2.5 (moderately balanced), and 2.5–3 (very balanced) (Matuska, 2012). Participants provided their answer to each question different answers (Iafate, Bertoni, Margola, et al., 2012).

Each partner had to complete three times the LBI in relation to 1) their self-perceived balance for their own apart activities, 2) their perception of how their partner would assess their own balance for their apart activities, and 3) their perception of how their couple would assess the balance for their joint activities. Each partner independently completed the LBI, and successively with the first author (RB) in order to avoid partners discussing any of the listed activities (Kenny & Acitelli, 2001; Sadikaj et al., 2018). Partners decided who would answer the LBI first at the outset of the meeting with the main investigator. While one partner was completing the LBI, the other was asked to go to another room or to listen to music or watch a video through headphones to muffle the sound. For each activity, the principal investigator (RB) read the LBI questions to the participants who were then asked to state their answer. To avoid misunderstandings, participants were given a printed copy of the questionnaire so that they could also read the questions and answers. After each partner completed the LBI, the couple completed a last the LBI with the first author (RB). In this final step (4), partners completed the LBI together in relation to their self-perception of the ACC for their joint activities.

3.4 Data analysis

IBM SPSS version 26 was used for the statistical analysis (Aldrich, 2018). The LBI scores were reported as measures. Three groups were created for the data analysis. The first two groups, group A and group B, comprised the partners as individuals (Kouros & Papp, 2019; Poucher et al., 2022). From each partnership, the woman was assigned to group A and the man to group B. Group C consisted of the couples.

Descriptive statistics were first calculated. Inter-individual central tendencies and dispersions of scores were calculated for women and men, respectively, for 1) their self-perception of the balance for their apart activities, 2) their perception of the other partner's balance for their apart activities, and 3) their

perception of the balance for their joint activities. A fourth calculation was performed with 4) the couples' self-perceived balance for their joint activities.

The second phase of analysis is drawn on the model of perceptual congruence described by Acitelli, Douvan and Veroff (1993), with the three ratios of actual similarity, perceived similarity and understanding (see Figure 5). A value of 1 for each ratio indicates perfect perceptual congruence between partners (Acitelli et al., 1993). For instance, a coefficient greater than 1 indicates that one partner perceives the other's balance for their apart activities as worse than their own balance for their apart activities. A coefficient lower than 1 indicates that one partner perceives the other's balance for their apart activities as better than their own balance for their apart activities (Acitelli et al., 1993). The coefficients of the three variables were calculated independently for men and women as explained below.

3.4.1 Actual similarity between partners (A_{SP})

The ratio between each partner's self-perception of balance for their apart activities. $A_{SP(women)}$ is the ratio between women's self-perception and men's self-perception. $A_{SP(men)}$ is the reverse ratio, that is, between men's self-perception and women's self-perception.

3.4.2 Actual similarity between each partner and their couple (A_{SC})

The ratio between each partner's self-perception of balance for their apart activities and the couple's self-perception of balance for their joint activities. $A_{SC(women)}$ is the actual similarity between women's self-perceptions and the couple's self-perceptions, and $A_{SC(men)}$ is the actual similarity between men's self-perceptions and the couple's self-perceptions.

3.4.3 Perceived similarity between partners (P_{SP})

The ratio between each partner's self-perception of balance for their apart activities and their perception of the other partner's balance for their apart activities. $P_{SP(women)}$ reflects women's self-perceptions and their perceptions of men, and $P_{SP(men)}$ reflects men's self-perceptions and their perceptions of women.

3.4.4 Perceived similarity between each partner and their couple (P_{SC})

The ratio between each partner's self-perception of balance for their apart activities and their perception of balance of the couple for their joint activities. $P_{SC(women)}$ reflects women's self-perceptions and their perception of the couple's joint activities, and $P_{SC(men)}$ reflects men's self-perceptions and their perception of the couple's joint activities.

3.4.5 Understanding between partners (U_P)

The ratio between each partner's perception of balance of the other partner for their apart activities and the other partner's self-perception of balance for their apart activities. $U_{P (women)}$ reflects women's perceptions of men, and $U_{P (men)}$ reflects men's perceptions of women.

3.4.6 Understanding between each partner and their couple (U_C)

The ratio between each partner's perception of balance for their apart activities and the couple's self-perception of balance for their joint activities. $U_{C (women)}$ reflects women's perceptions of the couple, and $U_{C (men)}$ reflects men's perceptions of the couple.

Because each partner has their own measures but is also involved in the couples' measure, a paired t-test was run to address the first objective, that is, to test the differences between the perceptual congruence coefficients of the partners' apart and joint activities using their individual scores and those of the couple. To address the second objective, a Pearson correlation was then calculated to determine the association between the perceptual congruence of the partners' apart and joint activities using the partners' individual scores and those of the couple.

3.5 Transparency and openness

We report how we determined our sample size in the protocol study (Bertrand et al., 2021). In the current study, we present all data exclusions, and all measures, and we followed JARS (Kazak, 2018). Materials and analysis code for this study are available by emailing the corresponding author. This study was not preregistered.

4. Analysis

4.1 Descriptive statistics: Measuring the coefficients of perceptual congruence

Ratios for all three perceptual congruence coefficients (Acitelli et al., 1993) were based on the LBI scores. As such, these scores were first calculated. Figure 6 displays the LBI scores for partners concerning apart and joint engagement in daily activities. Table 7 displays the details of these scores. The coefficients for the three variables of perceptual congruence were calculated from the scores of the LBI questionnaire, respectively regarding apart engagement and joint engagement of partners. Figure 7 displays the coefficients for partners' apart engagement, Figure 8 displays the coefficients for partners' joint engagement.

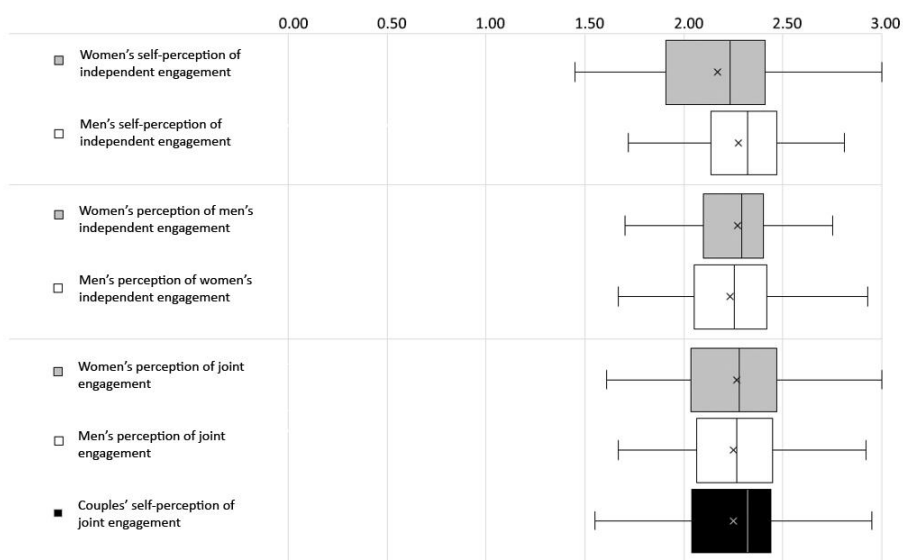


Figure 6. Central tendency and dispersion of LBI scores of group A (women), group B (men), and group C (couples). X (cross) is the mean score; the vertical line of the histogram bar is the median score; horizontal lines are the standard deviation.

Table 7. Scores of the LBI questionnaire, with the inter-individual central tendencies and dispersions of scores for women and men.

N=72 couples	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Median	SD
Women's self-perception of apart activities	1.45	3.00	2.17	2.24	.33513
Men's self-perception of apart activities	1.00	3.00	2.27	2.32	.31536
Women's perception of men's apart activities	1.59	3.00	2.27	2.29	.27470
Men's perception of women's apart activities	1.31	2.93	2.23	2.26	.26871
Women's perception of joint activities	1.27	3.00	2.27	2.28	.31209
Men's perception of joint activities	1.31	2.92	2.25	2.27	.30167
Couples' perception of joint activities	1.35	2.95	2.25	2.32	.30334

4.2 First objective: Measuring similarities and differences between partners' perceptual congruence of their apart and joint activities

4.2.1 Perceptual congruence between partners with regard to apart activities

Using the measures of perceptual congruence previously calculated (Figure 7), the coefficients for variables specific to perceptual congruence for apart activities were first compared. The coefficients were reviewed first from the perspective of women, namely calculating the ratio between women's scores and men's scores. As such, there was a good actual similarity between women and men concerning how they self-perceived their balance for their own apart activities, even if women's self-perception was slightly

worse than men's ($AS_{P(women)}$ of 0.97). While women tended to consider their apart activities marginally less balanced than their male partners, there was still a good perceived similarity between how women self-perceived their balance for their apart activities and how they perceived the balance of their male partners for their apart activities ($PS_{P(women)}$ of 0.95). Finally, women had a good understanding of the balance of their male partner for their apart activities since $U_{P(women)}$ is 1.01.

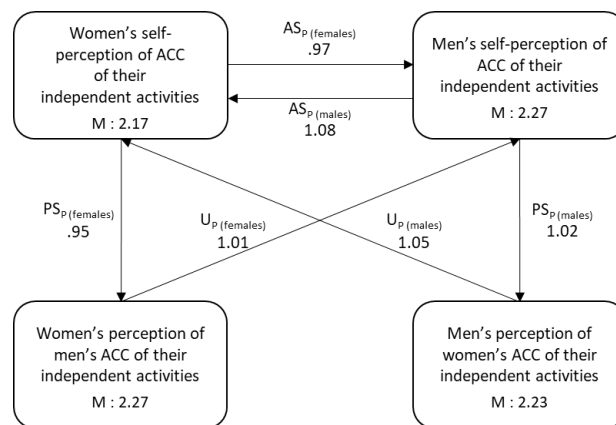


Figure 7. Mean LBI scores and coefficients of perceptual congruence between partners regarding their balance of apart activities, adapted from Acitelli et al.'s (1993) model.

Coefficients were then considered from men's perspective, namely, calculating the ratio between men's scores and women's scores. There was a good actual similarity between men and women concerning their respective self-perception of their balance for their own apart activities, even if men self-perceived their own balance as slightly better compared to women's ($AS_{P(men)}$ of 1.08). There was also a good perceived similarity between how men self-perceived their balance for their apart activities and their perception of their female partners' ACC for their apart activities ($PS_{P(men)}$ of 1.02). As for women, men tended to perceive their female partners as relatively similar to themselves regarding own apart activities, even if they considered themselves marginally better balanced. Finally, men had a good understanding of the ACC of their female partner for their apart activities ($U_{P(men)}$ of 1.05).

Table 8. Paired t-test measures for testing the differences between coefficients of perceptual congruence of partners' balance for their apart activities. * $p < .05$

Actual similarity	$AS_{P(men)}$
$AS_{P(women)}$	$t = .051$
Perceived similarity	$PS_{P(men)}$
$PS_{P(women)}$	$t = .010^*$
Understanding	$U_{P(men)}$
$U_{P(women)}$	$t = .371$

The differences between coefficients of the three variables of perceptual congruence between women and men regarding apart engagement were tested with a paired t-test (see Table 8). A non-significant difference was found between A_{SP} (women), and A_{SP} (men) ($p > .05$). A significant difference was found between the coefficients of perceived similarity of women (P_{SP} (women)) and men (P_{SP} (men)) ($p < .05$). Finally, the difference between partners' understanding of the other partner's balance of apart activities was not significant ($p > .05$).

4.2.2 Perceptual congruence between partners with regard to joint activities

Using the measures of perceptual congruence previously calculated (Figure 8), the coefficients for variables specific to perceptual congruence for joint activities were compared. The coefficients were reviewed first from the perspective of women, namely by calculating the ratio between women's scores and couples' scores. As such, there was a good actual similarity between how women self-perceived their balance for their own apart activities and how couples self-perceived their balance for partners' joint activities, even if women self-perceived their balance slightly worse than couples' (A_{SC} (women) of 0.97). While women tended to consider themselves marginally less balanced than their couple, there was still a relatively good perceived similarity between women's self-perceptions of balance for their apart activities and how they perceived their couples' balance for their joint activities (P_{SC} (women) of 0.96). Finally, women had a very good understanding of their couples' balance for their joint activities since U_C (women) was 1.01.

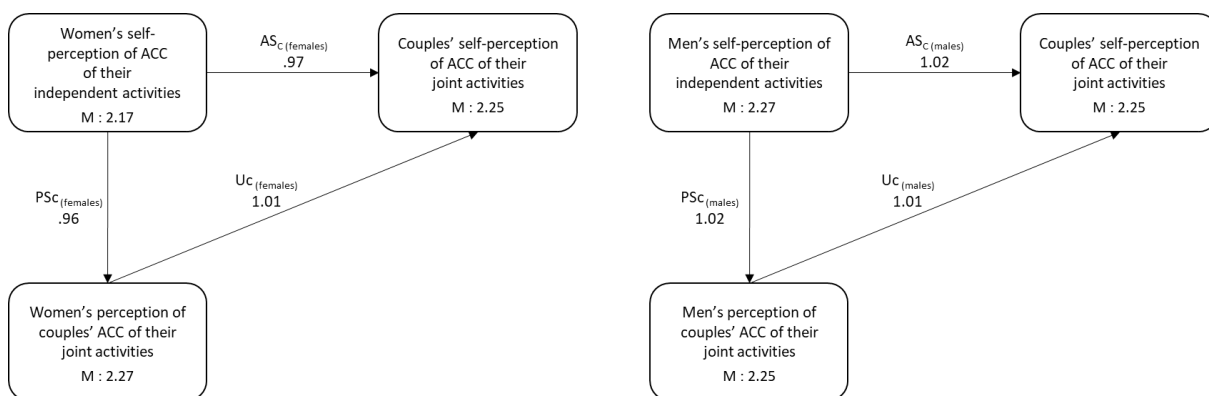


Figure 8. Mean LBI scores and coefficients of perceptual congruence between partners' ACC regarding their apart activities and couples' ACC regarding their joint activities, adapted from Acitelli et al.'s (1993) model.

Coefficients were then considered from men's perspective, namely by calculating the ratio between men's scores and couples' scores. The actual similarity between how men self-perceived their balance for their own apart activities and how couples self-perceived their balance for their joint activities was good, even if men self-perceived their balance as slightly better than couples' (A_{SC} (men) of 1.02). While men tended to consider themselves marginally better balanced in terms of their apart activities than those joint activities done as a couple, there was still a relatively good perceived similarity between their

self-perception of balance for their apart activities and their perception of the balance of their couples for their joint activities ($P_{SC (men)}$ of 1.02). Finally, men had a good understanding of how their couples perceived their balance for their joint activities ($U_{C (men)}$ of 1.01).

The differences between coefficients of each variable of perceptual congruence were tested with a paired t-test, 1) between women's apart activities and the couples' joint activities, and 2) between men's apart activities and the couples' joint activities, respectively (see Table 9). No significant difference was found between $A_{SP (women)}$ and $A_{SC (women)}$ ($p > .05$) while a significant difference was found between $A_{SP (men)}$ and $A_{SC (men)}$ ($p > .05$). No significant difference was found for women between the coefficients of perceived similarity of the balance of apart $P_{SP (women)}$ and joint activities $P_{SC (women)}$, respectively ($P > .05$), neither concerning men between $P_{SP (men)}$ and $P_{SC (men)}$ ($p > .05$). Finally, no significant difference was found between $U_{P (women)}$ and $U_{C (women)}$ ($p < .05$), while a significant difference was found between $U_{P (men)}$ and $U_{C (men)}$ ($p < .05$).

Table 9. Paired t-test measures for testing the differences between coefficients of perceptual congruence of partners' balance for their apart and joint activities. * $p < .05$

<i>Actual similarity</i>	$A_{SC (women)}$	$A_{SC (men)}$
$A_{SP (women)}$	t= .898	-
$A_{SP (men)}$	-	t= .012*
<i>Perceived similarity</i>	$P_{SC (women)}$	$P_{SC (men)}$
$P_{SP (women)}$	t= .611	-
$P_{SP (men)}$	-	t= .897
<i>Understanding</i>	$U_{C (women)}$	$U_{C (men)}$
$U_{P (women)}$	t= .867	-
$U_{P (men)}$	-	t= .045*

4.3 Second objective: Measuring association between apart and joint activities in terms of female and male partners' perceptual congruence and the strength of this association

Table 10 depicts the Pearson correlation coefficients between perceptual congruence of partners' ACC for their apart and joint activities. Figure 9 displays such correlations between the various perceptual congruence variables as they are reflected for partners' apart activities and couples' joint activities. There was a moderately strong correlation ($p < .001$) between $A_{SP (women)}$ and $A_{SC (women)}$ (.610) as well as between $A_{SP (men)}$ and $A_{SC (men)}$ (.711). There was a strong and significant ($p < .001$) correlation between $P_{SP (women)}$ and $P_{SC (women)}$ (.803) while the correlation between $P_{SP (men)}$ and $P_{SC (men)}$ was moderate (.510). Finally, there was a modest correlation ($p < .05$) between $U_{P (women)}$ and $U_{C (women)}$ (.269) as well as between $U_{P (men)}$ and $U_{C (men)}$ (.367).

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Table 10. Pearson correlation coefficients between perceptual congruence of partners' ACC for their apart and joint activities. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .001$

<i>Actual similarity</i>	<i>AS_C(women)</i>	<i>AS_C(men)</i>
<i>AS_P(women)</i>	$r = .610^{**}$	-
<i>AS_P(men)</i>	-	$r = .711^{**}$
<i>Perceived similarity</i>	<i>PS_C(women)</i>	<i>PS_C(men)</i>
<i>PS_P(women)</i>	$r = .803^{**}$	-
<i>PS_P(men)</i>	-	$r = .510^{**}$
<i>Understanding</i>	<i>U_C(women)</i>	<i>U_C(men)</i>
<i>U_P(women)</i>	$r = .269^*$	-
<i>U_P(men)</i>	-	$r = .367^*$

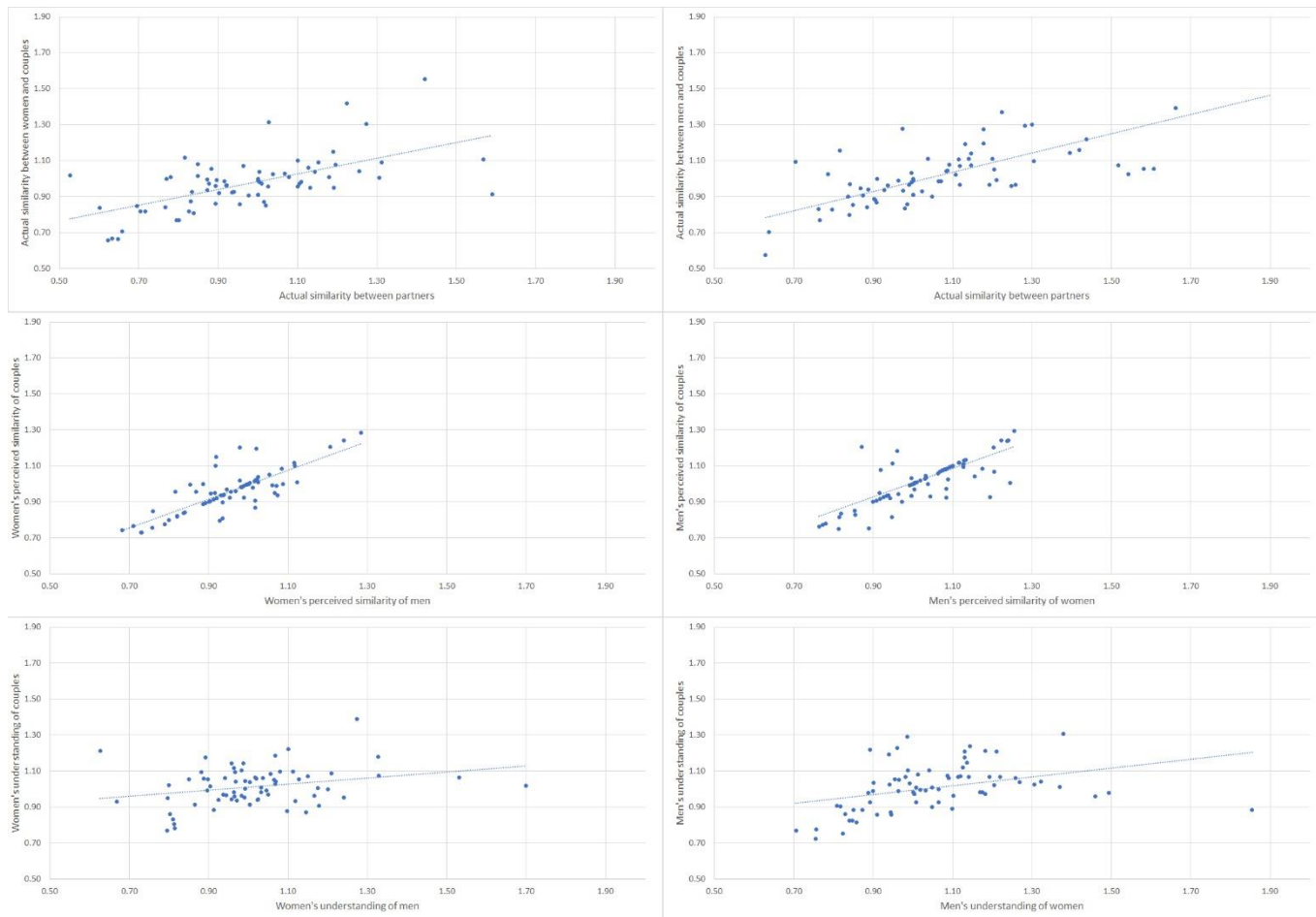


Figure 9. Graphic displays of Pearson correlation coefficients between perceptual congruence variables for partners' ACC for their apart and joint activities

5. Discussion

The current study aimed to investigate how romantic partners, either women or men, meet the other's expectations in terms of time spent together and apart on respective and joint activities. For this purpose, it aimed 1) to determine the similarities and differences in perceptual congruence between women and men, as reflected in their respective perception of time-use in apart and joint activities; and 2) to examine the association between apart and joint activities in terms of female and male partners' perceptual congruence and the strength of this association. Our results suggest perceptual congruence between partners who participated to the study in terms of how they view their own engagement in apart and joint activities. However, our results also highlight a moderate correlation between the perceptual congruence of apart and joint activities, respectively. As such, it seems relevant to distinguish between apart and joint engagement of partners in their daily activities when investigating how they reflect the we-ness of the partnership.

It appears that both participating women and men are accurate in their perception of the other's expectations in terms of time-use, which indicate high degree of mutuality between them, or we-ness (Gildersleeve et al., 2017). Cheung (2005), who studied the factors of long-term marital satisfaction of ten Chinese and Caucasian couples in Canada, suggested mutuality between partners regarding household division of labour as contributing to the maintenance of the relationship. In other words, for this author (Cheung, 2005), the mutuality of partners was reflected in each one's adjustment to the other's expectations of labour division. As such, Cheung (2005) argued that marital satisfaction is strengthened if each partner's assessment of the other are aligned. Similar to Cheung (2005), our results thus suggest high degree of perceptual congruence in terms of time-use and expectations of partner's in their apart and joint activities. However, in spite of such congruence, differences between genders emerge from our results. The need to make distinction between apart and joint engagement of partners when addressing time-use patterns is further addressed below.

5.1 A gender difference in perceptual congruence of partners' time-use patterns

Participants to the current study have similar perceptions regarding their respective partner's involvement in daily activities. Indeed, the coefficients of the perceptual congruence variables (Acitelli et al., 1993) – that is, actual similarity, perceived similarity and understanding – are aligned. This is the case for partners' apart activities as well as for joint activities and for both women and men. However, our findings show a gender difference in perceptual congruence since female partners' expectations in terms of apart engagement and joint engagement, i.e. with the partner, seem to be more confounded than for men. Indeed, the latter seemingly distinguish their own needs from those of their couple, and further distinguish

the needs of their couple from those of their partner. Women thus seem to project their own expectations onto those of their partner and their couple more than men.

Such findings are in line with the literature on romantic partnerships that has suggested men to be more likely than women to consider their own needs distinctly from the needs of their partners (Garcia Roman & Cortina, 2016; Girme et al., 2014; Kenny & Acitelli, 2001). In fact, numerous authors (Garcia Roman & Cortina, 2016; Kamp Dush et al., 2018) suggested that female partners are expected to be more dedicated to the closeness of their relationship than men, and therefore internalize the needs of their couple more than the latter. For instance, Voorpostel et al. (2010), who have studied time spent by American romantic partners in leisure, found that women spent most of their time for leisure activities jointly with their partner, while men spent more time apart, engaged in their own leisure. According to them (Voorpostel et al., 2010), this difference in terms of engagement in leisure activity reflected a difference in expectations of time-use between women and men, that is, men seemingly expected to spend more time on their own than women. Such difference was also observed by Uskul et al. (2004), in their study about the interpersonal closeness of Turkish and Canadian couples, who figured that female participants compromised with their own individual expectations in term of time-use in favour of their couple's. Thus, Girme et al. (2014), in their New-Zealand study about the maintenance of romantic partnerships through shared activities of partners, further suggested that women's perception of the quality of their partnership appeared to be influenced by their perception of how their male partners could engage in their desired activities.

The current study eventually supports a difference between women and men in terms of perceptual congruence of time-use patterns. At last, as men distinguish their needs from those of the couple, and as they project their expectations on those of their partner, they perceive women to also distinguish their expectations from those of the couple. Similarly, women, through projecting their own perspective to their partner and the couple, perceive that men's expectations are indistinguishable from those of their couple. However, the modest differences that emerge from our findings suggests to further investigate the potential association between the gender of the romantic partners and expectations in terms of time-use patterns, regarding both apart and joint engagement.

5.2 Perceptual congruence of the needs for apart and joint engagement: Same, or different?

Our findings also show that actual similarity between women and men's respective expectations in terms of apart engagement in daily activities is relatively strongly correlated to actual similarity between each partner's expectations for apart engagement and the couple's expectations for joint engagement. Similarly, women and men respective perceived similarity of the other partner's expectations are correlated to their perceived similarity of the expectations of the couple. As such, these two variables indicate that perceptual congruence of partners concerning their engagement in apart and joint activities

seem to be somewhat correlated. Our findings also show that the coefficients of understanding (Acitelli et al., 1993) are close to 1 for women and men, indicating that both partners who participated to the current study accurately perceived the needs of the other partner and of the couple in terms of apart and joint activities, respectively.

Despite this apparent we-ness between partners, our results indicate that men's understanding of the female partners' expectations for time spent on apart activities was significantly different from their understanding of couples' expectations for joint activities. Conversely, such findings suggest that women's understanding of the needs of their male partners related to apart activities and their couples' needs related to joint activities were equally accurate. All perceptual congruence variables have been explained as operating simultaneously (Acitelli et al., 1993; lafrate, Bertoni, Donato, et al., 2012). Thus, our results can explain the extent to which the understanding between women and men was different from the understanding between men and their couples, unlike women, for whom no significant difference was reported. Interestingly, for both women and men, each partner's understanding of the other's expectations regarding apart activities was weakly correlated with their understanding of the couple's expectations regarding joint activities. This finding suggests that even if a partner seems to accurately perceive the other's time spent on apart activities, they will not necessarily perceive the couple's need to engage in joint activities with corresponding accuracy and vice versa. If this point was more expected for men considering prior results, it seems to be similarly applicable to women even if they are less likely than men to distinguish between their own needs and their couple's needs.

Hence, Brower (2014) and other researchers (see for instance, Cornwell et al., 2019; Flood & Genadek, 2016; Santelli, 2018) suggested distinguishing between those activities that are apart and those that are jointly performed when considering expectations in terms of time-use patterns of romantic partners within the relationship. Our findings support this direction, as the low correlation between understanding coefficients suggest such a distinction. Indeed, our study highlights that even if partners have a high degree of perceptual congruence in terms of their apart activities, this may not be the case for joint activities, especially when it comes to understand the other partner's or the couple's perspectives, respectively. Consequently, we recommend future research to focus on the extent to which partners' engagement in apart and joint activities distinctly contributes to the we-ness of the couple

6. Limitations

The current study should be considered in light of limitations. Certain limitations concerns the questionnaire used in the current study. While questionnaires have been evidenced as a good methodology to get subjective information from partners about their relationship (Charvoz et al., 2016), researchers on romantic partnership have emphasized that questionnaires are also subject to biases

since participants can be influenced by social desirability or lenience effect when assessing their partnership. Murray et al. (1996) have described how these biases reflect a strong idealization effect in partners' responses (Charvoz et al., 2016). Thus, partners may have a biased perception of the other partner in order to protect their relationship. Indeed, to have such an idealized perception of the romantic partner could avoid harming the partnership (Charvoz et al., 2016). In addition, responses may also be biased by a halo effect. Nye (1988) has shown that partners who were satisfied with their relationship were more likely to attribute positive traits to themselves and to their partner, or, conversely, in unsatisfied couples, each partner would attribute negative traits to themselves and to the other. In fact, this refers to a form of global judgment on the partnership which leads the partners to perceive the different items of the questionnaire through a similar perspective (Charvoz et al., 2016). In our study, it is possible to assume such a social desirability or halo effect on our results. The partners' perception of being moderately well-balanced in terms of apart and joint engagement in daily activities could have been biased by these different effects. Furthermore, Gottman (1998) described the "GLOP problem" when different questionnaires are completed by the same person, i.e., a high correlation between the scores is likely to be found. This would be common when romantic partnerships are involved in the assessment and could generate a within-informants agreement stronger than the between-informants agreement. In the present study, this effect may have strengthened the perceived similarity of partners, which would consequently be artificially stronger than the actual similarity between the partners.

Moreover, another limitation that should be considered is related to the use of the LBI beyond its intended purpose. This questionnaire has been validated insofar as it is used to assess one individual's life balance in Matuska's sense (2012). In the current research, LBI scores were used to determine the perceived congruence between individuals as regards the balance of each of their joint and separate activities. Results based on these data should be handled with caution and their external validity should be nuanced. Nevertheless, the current research highlights the lack of a measurement instrument to capture how romantic partners perceive each other's expectations and adjustments in terms of daily activities. Designing a questionnaire to this purpose is further recommended.

Finally, since couples were recruited from the same geographic region in Switzerland (i.e, the Western part), such recruitment could have increased what Kenny and Acitelli (1994, p. 419) called the "stereotype effect," that is, a "typical way of responding". This effect can be defined as a mean response across participants to the different items of a questionnaire (Iafrate, Bertoni, Donato, et al., 2012). It captures the way in which partners' shared cultural background affects their perceptions (Iafrate, Bertoni, Donato, et al., 2012; Kenny & Acitelli, 1994). Iafrate et al. (2012) stated that partners in a romantic relationship are likely to have been similarly influenced by their environment, including family traditions, media influences and socio-cultural norms, as it is probably the case concerning participants to the current

study. Interestingly, such “stereotype effect” has however been associated to greater marital satisfaction (Iafraite, Bertoni, Margola, et al., 2012). Iafraite, Bertoni, Margola, et al., (2012), and others (see Poucher et al., 2022), have suggested that since this “stereotype effect” affects each partner of a partnership, there is a higher probability partners are congruent in their perception of the other. In other words, the stereotype effect could reinforce the we-ness of couples as reflected in their alignment in time-use of their respective apart and joint activities.

7. Conclusion

Partners who are in a romantic relationship engage in a range of daily activities. The current study is the first to our knowledge that aimed to understand the level of congruence between partner's in terms of their time-use within joint and apart activities. Our results indicate that partners who participated to the study, regardless of whether they are a man or a woman, have a relatively strong perceptual congruence concerning both apart and joint activities. While the present findings suggest the level of perceptual congruence regarding joint activities was moderately correlated with the perceptual congruence regarding apart activities, this study highlights that partners have differing perspectives of time-use patterns and that there are gender differences. As such, the current study sets the stage to further investigate how partners' expectations of involvement in daily activities contributes to the couple's we-ness since a strong perceptual congruence between partner's needs of apart activities is only moderately correlated to a strong perceptual congruence between partners in terms of joint activities.

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Chapter 6: General discussion

The application of an occupational perspective to the study of romantic partnerships helps to deepen understanding of how the engagement of partners in their daily activities (i.e., their occupations) is a crucial part of the relationship. The objective of the thesis was to investigate whether and how occupational engagement of romantic partners reflects the mutuality of their relationship. Four studies have been done for this purpose (see Figure 10 and Table 11 for an overview). Findings from all four studies show that the occupational engagement of the partners reflects the mutuality of their relationship, i.e., the partners' perception of their partnership identity. This mutuality is built up over the course of the relationship, through the partners' experiences of their occupational engagement. Thus, a critical life event, such as the onset of a health problem or aggravation of an existing health problem, can threaten the relationship if the partners' occupational engagement is challenged (Bertrand et al., 2022).

The discussion is organized into four sections. The first section addresses the conceptualization of the occupational engagement of interdependent romantic partners within the occupational science and occupational therapy literature. This section also explains how these concepts will be further applied in the subsequent sections. The second section discusses the extent to which partners' occupational engagements contribute to shaping their mutuality and how partners' mutuality shapes their occupational engagements. The third section draws on this process of mutual shaping between occupational engagement and mutuality to address the continuity of the partnership, i.e., how is maintained over time. It also discusses how one partner's health issue can disrupt this continuity. The last section proposes a theoretical opening for the conceptualization of the partnership as an occupational community, i.e., as the unit of analysis of romantic partners' occupational engagement.

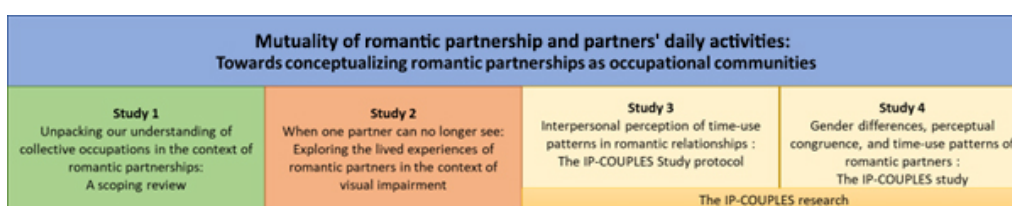


Figure 10. Thesis framework

Table 11. Overview of the studies

	Study 1	Study 2	Study 3	Study 4
Focus	Occupational engagement within the context of romantic partnership	Partners' re-shaping of their occupational engagement with respect to their mutuality	Perceptual congruence and occupational engagement of romantic partners	
Aim	To ascertain how engagement of people in collective occupations has been described within the context of romantic partnerships in occupational therapy and occupational science literature	1) To investigate the impact of vision loss on shared occupations, as perceived by those in romantic relationships, 2) To investigate the adjustments and adaptations that ensue as they navigate the impact of such a loss on their daily lives	1) To determine the similarities and differences between partners in terms of their perceptual congruence with respect to apart and jointly performed activities, and 2) To examine the association between apart and joint activities in terms of the perceptual congruence of time-use and the strength of this association	
Design	Scoping review	Qualitative descriptive	Protocol study	Descriptive observational
Data collection	Literature in occupational therapy and occupational science	Face-to-face joint interviews with partnerships	-	Questionnaires on the Life Balance, face-to-face with each partner separately and then with the two together
Data source	Primary research published in peer-reviewed journals	16 heterosexual partnerships from Western Switzerland affected by one partner's visual impairment	-	76 heterosexual partnerships from Western Switzerland

1. Together or apart: Engagement in collective occupations

Investigating the mutuality of romantic partnerships involves consideration of how mutuality reflects the interdependence of the partners (Alea et al., 2015; Cruwys et al., 2022). As such, this concept should be a means to further understand the interdependence of partners' occupational engagement. In fact, romantic partners are expected to engage in a range of daily occupations. Certain occupations are performed jointly by the partners, while others are carried out apart, i.e., each partner is engaged without the presence of the other (Bertrand et al., 2021, Bertrand et al., 2022, Bertrand et al., Submitted). The results of this thesis⁴ highlight how such occupations can be considered as collective if the meaning ascribed by the partners is co-constructed and shared within the partnership. This process of co-construction of a shared meaning is addressed first. It is then used in the second part of this section to discuss the extent to which collective occupations reflect the mutuality of partners.

1.1 The interdependence of partners and the meaning they ascribe to their daily occupations

The results of the different studies presented in this thesis show that the occupations in which the partners engaged are collective, whether they require joint or apart engagement, since they reflect the interdependence of the partners (Bertrand et al., 2022; Bertrand et al., Submitted; Ramugondo & Kronenberg, 2015). Such interdependence is part of the process of co-construction and of sharing of the meaning that partners ascribe to their collective occupational engagement (Bertrand et al., 2021, Bertrand et al., 2022, Bertrand et al., Submitted). Such results first emerge from the findings of the scoping review of 20 articles published in occupational science and occupational therapy literature between 1995 and

⁴ In this discussion, the results of the thesis refer to the four included studies.

2020 about occupational engagement on romantic partners (Bertrand et al., Submitted). Moreover, based on the analysis of data from 16 partnerships living in Western Switzerland, the qualitative study included in the thesis has enabled to further understand how a shared meaning emerges between partners (Bertrand et al., 2022). As suggested by Shank and Cutchin (2010), such shared meaning should be understood as being embedded in the dynamic and constant relationship between people and the world around. This relationship is created by occupational engagement. Therefore, through such engagement, individuals produce meaning that covers, reinterprets, or corroborates their “history of meanings”, as described by Wenger (1999, p. 53), a Swiss theorist of education.

This thesis supports the view that certain collective occupations may involve the joint engagement of the partners. Such occupations are understood as co-occupations, which implies, in addition to a shared meaning, shared time and space (Pickens & Pizur-Barnekow, 2009; van Nes et al., 2012). The different studies included in this thesis show how, for the romantic partners, co-occupations imply spending time together and strengthening the relationship. The scoping review (Bertrand et al., Submitted) summarize how leisure and social occupations, such as going on holiday (Heward et al., 2006; Martin et al., 2008; van Nes et al., 2009), meeting family or friends (Atler et al., 2016; Heatwole Shank & Presgraves, 2019; Laliberté Rudman et al., 2006), or participating in social events (Kniepmann & Cupler, 2014; Laliberté Rudman et al., 2006), strengthens the bond between the partners. Other types of co-occupation were also reported to strengthen the relationship when partners are engaged together, such as watching TV, eating or having sexual relations (Bertrand et al., Submitted). The qualitative descriptive study of romantic partners’ experience of one of the partners’ vision loss (Bertrand et al., 2022) corroborates these findings. The participants stressed that their joint engagement in leisure co-occupations, such as going to the theatre or walking the dog, constituted their special time together. These findings are in line with the scientific literature on romantic partnerships that suggests that the time partners spend together, particularly in social and leisure activities, contributes to the quality of the relationship (Bernardo et al., 2015; Bertrand et al., 2021; Genadek et al., 2019; Glorieux et al., 2011). Since the results of the thesis suggest that co-occupations such as leisure and social, strengthen the partnership, they also suggest that the extent to which partners share their experience when they engage together in an occupation is as important as the type of occupation itself (Bertrand et al., 2022, Bertrand et al., Submitted; Fletcher et al., 2019; Girme et al., 2014).

The results of this thesis, and particularly, the findings from the scoping review (Bertrand et al., Submitted) and the qualitative study (Bertrand et al., 2022), taken together, demonstrated that the collective occupations of romantic partners include, but are not limited to, co-occupations. Indeed, partners can also co-construct and share the meaning they ascribe to their occupations even if they engage in them apart. This was highlighted in our scoping review (Bertrand et al., Submitted) with regard

to occupations such as paid work (Bailey & Jackson, 2005; Medina et al., 2011; Van Dongen et al., 2014), financial management (Bailey & Jackson, 2005; Martin et al., 2008), household chores (Atler et al., 2016; Ekstam et al., 2011; Heward et al., 2006), certain hobbies (Heatwole Shank & Presgraves, 2019; Laliberté Rudman et al., 2006; van Nes et al., 2009) and religious-related occupations (Frank et al., 1997). The participants in the studies reviewed reported how their respective occupational engagements constituted each one's contribution to their relationship, despite the fact they required the apart engagement of one partner (Bertrand et al., Submitted). A similar finding was also salient in the qualitative descriptive study (Bertrand et al., 2022); participants stated that cooking, managing bills, or dancing were considered by both partners as a fair contribution to their partnership. These findings echo the theory of equity within the psychology literature on romantic relationships (Canary & Stafford, 1992). The authors of that theory (Canary & Stafford, 1992; Dainton, 2017) argue that people who are involved in a partnership in which each perceives their contribution as fair are more likely to be satisfied with such a relationship. This equity also encompasses how each partner perceives the contribution of the other to the relationship (Canary & Stafford, 1992). As such, a relationship in which partners perceive their own contribution and that of the other as fair is perceived as more satisfying (Dainton, 2017). The findings of this thesis suggest that when partners co-construct and share the meaning of their occupational engagement, they create an opportunity to support the equity of their contributions within the partnership. Research that further examines this topic would therefore be relevant to increase understanding of how occupations are negotiated between partners with regard to their respective perception of equity of contributions.

To summarize, when they engage in their collective occupations, whether jointly or apart, partners co-construct and share the meaning of their engagement (Bertrand et al., Submitted). Such shared meaning particularly refers to the quality of the relationship while spending time together, or to the fair contribution of each partner to the partnership. In this respect, occupational engagement reflects the mutuality of the partnership. This relationship is further discussed in the next section.

1.2 Mutuality and occupational engagement: A nonlinear process

According to Hammell (2004), the meaning of an occupation is unique, since it is ascribed by individuals according to their values, beliefs, intentions, and choices. Thus, the meaning refers to the perception that people have of the experience of their occupational engagement, which emerges as much from personal factors as from the context, including the sociocultural, political, or economic context (Ikiugu et al., 2012). The social environment, such as family, relatives, neighbours, or colleagues, has been suggested to contribute to the meaning that individuals assign to their daily experiences (Christiansen, 1999; Ikiugu & Pollard, 2015). The meaning-making of an occupation is therefore a process that should not be isolated from the social interactions that it involves (Christiansen, 1999; Ramugondo & Kronenberg, 2015).

A romantic partnership is a form of social interaction between interdependent partners (Columbus et al., 2020; Sassler & Lichter, 2020). This interdependence means that each partner's actions, behaviours, and decisions are constantly influenced by those of the other (Columbus et al., 2020). The results of this thesis suggest that this interdependence is apparent in partners' collective occupations, as it is embedded in the process of co-construction and sharing of the meaning that partners ascribe to them (Bertrand et al., 2022, Bertrand et al., Submitted). Therefore, this is how the collective occupations of partners reflect their mutuality (Buehlman et al., 1992; Gildersleeve et al., 2017). The mutuality of the partnership, or we-ness, refers to the identity of the partnership, which can transcend the individualities of the partners (Alea et al., 2015; Buehlman et al., 1992; Cruwys et al., 2022). Mutuality is shaped over time, when partners share the experience of their daily events (Cruwys et al., 2022). By viewing romantic partnerships through an occupational lens, this thesis advocates that partners' experience of daily events can be grasped through their occupational engagement (Bejerholm & Eklund, 2007). When co-constructing the meaning of their engagement, each partner involves their identity and conveys their values, intentions, beliefs, and choices: this shapes their respective experiences. Therefore, the shared meaning that arises from this meaning-making process means that the partners share their experience of their occupational engagement. Finally, through their engagement in collective occupations, partners are thought to shape the mutuality of their partnership: when they are engaged, whether jointly or apart, they share their everyday experiences and build their mutuality.

Nevertheless, the relationship between the occupational engagement and the mutuality of the partnership is not linear. Mutuality also refers to the way in which the partners reciprocally perceive the other's expectations concerning the relationship, while also considering their own expectations (Drigotas et al., 1999; Gildersleeve et al., 2017). The literature on romantic partnerships, especially in social psychology, has shown that romantic partners who have a high degree of mutuality are more satisfied with their relationship since each partners' expectations of the other are more likely to be satisfied, for example with regards to the division of domestic tasks or child education (Cheung, 2005; Gildersleeve et al., 2017; Reid et al., 2006). Therefore, such expectations encompass partners' daily routines (Flood & Genadek, 2016; Gildersleeve et al., 2017; Reid et al., 2006; Singer & Skerrett, 2014). The mutuality of partners therefore affects how they adjust to each other's expectations in terms of occupational engagement (Bertrand et al., Submitted; Gager & Sanchez, 2003).

The results of this thesis further expand the literature regarding the relationship between mutuality and the daily activities of romantic partners (Cheung, 2005; Cruwys et al., 2022; Gildersleeve et al., 2017). In particular, the findings from the IP-COUPLES study (the quantitative descriptive study of partners' perceptual congruence of each other's expectations in terms of time-use, Bertrand et al., Submitted) showed that all the participants considered themselves to be moderately balanced in terms of their

engagement in joint or apart occupations, and the objective measures indicated a strong congruence between partners' perceptions of their different collective occupations. This is highlighted through the coefficients of understanding between partners with regard to their occupational engagement in terms of joint and apart occupations (Acitelli et al., 2001) that were measured as close to 1 (Figure 11). This suggests that participating partners perceived and accurately adjusted to each other's expectations.

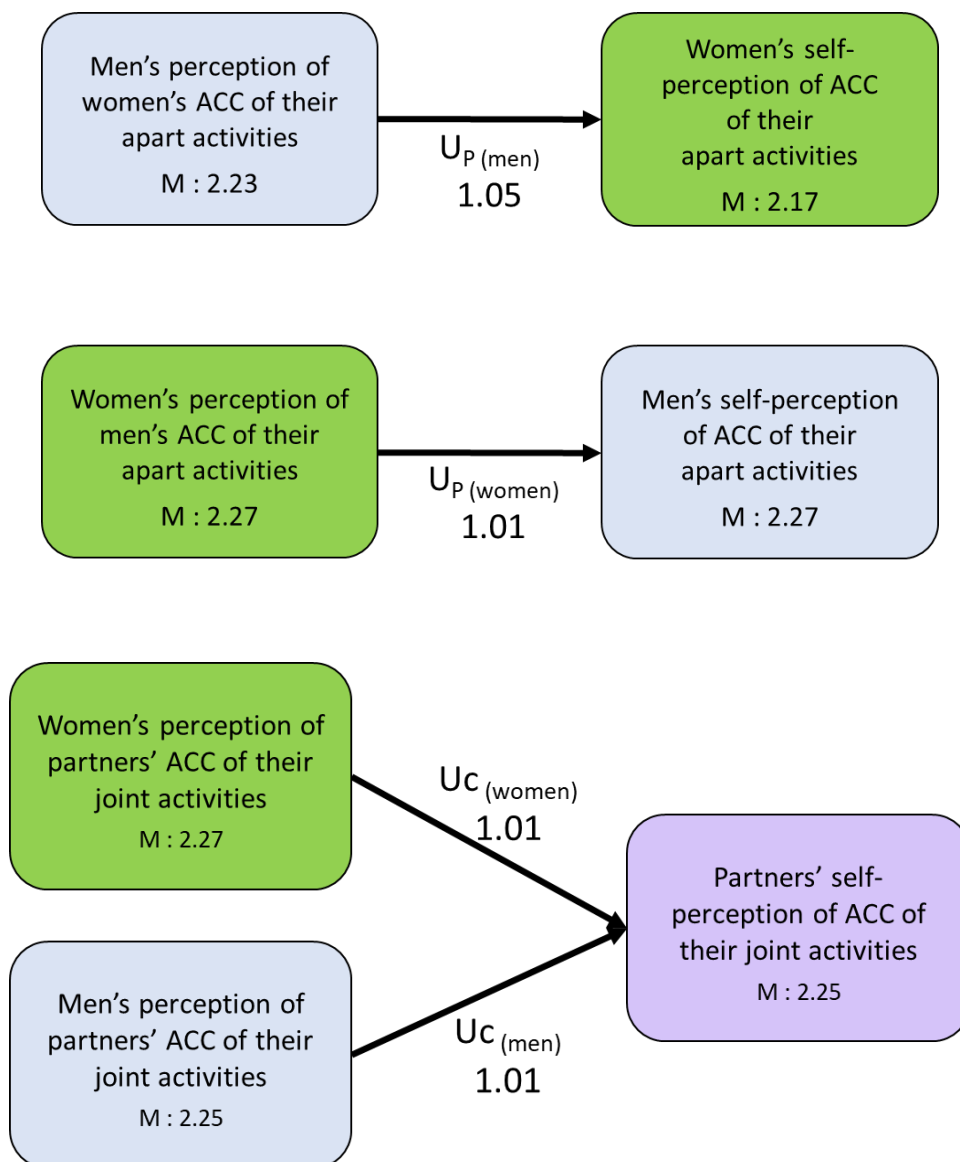


Figure 11. Coefficients of understanding between partners, calculated from the scores to the LBI (Bertrand et al., Submitted)

Moreover, the IP-COUPLES study showed that such expectations should be distinct with regard to the type of collective occupation. Thus, even if partners accurately adjust to each other's expectations in terms of joint engagement, this does not automatically mean that the adjustment would be as accurate for apart engagement (Bertrand et al., Submitted.). The extent to which the mutuality of partners is reflected in the perceptual congruence of their different collective occupations has not been examined in this thesis. Nevertheless, such findings suggest that partners who have a high degree of perceptual

congruence are more likely to have a high degree of mutuality (Acitelli et al., 1993, 2001). Therefore, the level of accuracy of the adjustment of romantic partners to each other's needs in terms of time-use depends on their level of mutuality (Bertrand et al., 2021, Bertrand et al., 2022, Bertrand et al., Submitted).

To summarize, the results of this thesis suggest that the relationship between occupational engagement and the mutuality of the partnership is a nonlinear process (Figure 12): the engagement of partners in their collective occupations is thought to shape their mutuality, and, conversely, the mutuality of the partnership is expected to influence partners' engagement in their collective occupations. The next section focuses on the continuity of this process over time, proposing that a partnership identity can emerge from partners' occupational engagement.

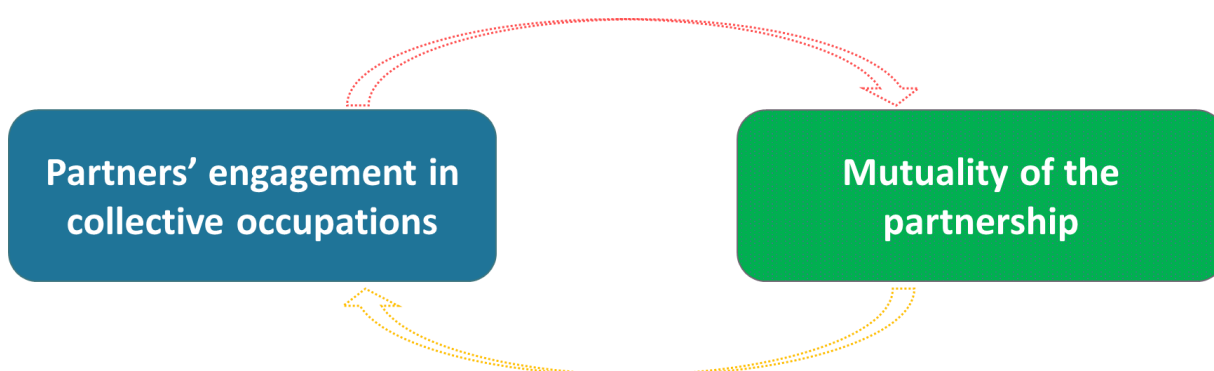


Figure 12. Relationship between partners' occupational engagement and the mutuality of their partnership: A suggested nonlinear process of shaping.

2. Partners' occupational engagement and the partnership identity

According to authors who have used the concept of mutuality to explore marital satisfaction, this concept has multiple facets (Cruwys et al., 2022). Nevertheless, the main facet of the mutuality of a partnership is the construction of a partnership identity by the accumulation of shared experiences between partners over the course of their relationship (Alea et al., 2015; Cruwys et al., 2022; Skerrett, 2016). Thus, mutuality as a partnership identity is strongly related to the maintenance of a satisfying relationship over time (Cruwys et al., 2022; Drigotas et al., 1999). The results of this thesis support the notion that the partners' engagement in their collective occupations contributes to the construction of a partnership identity, as long as this engagement is continuous. This notion of continuity is based on the theoretical framework elaborated by John Dewey about the continuity of experience (Dewey, 1906). It is briefly presented in the next section and used to understand how a partnership identity emerges through the continuity of partners' occupational engagement. How one partner's health problem challenges such continuity is then examined.

2.1 Dewey's continuity of experience

By the end of the 19th century, Dewey, an American psychologist, pedagogue, and philosopher, contributed to the emergence of a philosophy; American pragmatism (Foucart, 2013). This philosophy promotes the fallibilism of knowledge, i.e., even if knowledge is erroneous, it can be accepted if it is tenable. Pragmatism advocates for the indeterminate nature of reality, which means that reality is always open and contingent (Foucart, 2013). In his works (Dewey, 1906, 1989, 2005), Dewey gives a central place to human experience, which he defines as what individuals “do and what they suffer, what they desire and appreciate, see, believe and imagine” (Dewey, 1989, p. 10). According to Dewey (1906), experience stems from the dynamic interaction between individuals and their environment (Margot-Cattin, 2018). The experience is constant since such interaction is the very process of human existence (Dewey, 1906). Thus, an experience must be understood as a matter of relationships, or mutual adaptation, between a living being and his/her physical and social environment: human beings shape and are shaped by their environment, and vice versa. There is no one objective reality but only particular viewpoints that are specific to an experience (Dewey, 1906).

Thus, according to Dewey (1906), any human being builds and maintains his/her identity through their experience, which is part of a temporal continuity: the experience simultaneously exists in the past, the present, and the future (Fabre, 2017; Margot-Cattin, 2018). It is through their various experiences and their continuity that individuals evolve. However, this notion of continuity does not mean that an experience is always stable. Rather, an experience is unpredictable since it refers to the contingent nature of the world (Foucart, 2013). That is the reason why every experience is different: each is based on a particular situation and context. According to Dewey (1906), the situation is a moment in which an interaction occurs between a human being and his/her environment (Zask, 2008). Every situation has its own meaning that is related to the individual's inquiry process, i.e., the process of generating ideas, suggesting hypotheses, verifying them, experimenting, and measuring their consequences (Rozier, 2010). Through his idea of inquiry, Dewey describes human action as a means to enable individuals to face and resolve problematic situations. Such situations involve conflicts that can threaten the continuity of experience, and, in turn, challenge an individual's identity. Therefore, drawing on their past experiences, individuals act with the purpose of resolving their problematic situations so they can assume the continuity of their experience (Margot-Cattin, 2018).

To summarize, according to Dewey's pragmatic philosophy, experience is transactional; it is a whole that is embedded in the constant and dynamic interaction between individuals and their environment, and which contributes to shape one's identity. A problematic situation generates a risk of breaking the continuity of the experience. Through their inquiry and their actions, human beings aim to maintain or achieve this continuity. Thus, the use of an occupational approach to understand how partners

experience their relationship involves the examination of how the continuity of their experience is assumed through their occupational engagement. Moreover, it contributes to the knowledge of the extent to which situations of conflict can arise from one partner's health issue, such as vision loss. These points are discussed in the next two sections.

2.2 Occupational engagement of partners and the continuity of the partnership

The relationship between partners' engagement in their collective occupations and the related construction of the mutuality of the partnership has previously been described as a nonlinear process (Figure 11). According to the notion of continuity described by Dewey (1906, 2005), this process is continuous in time: it is part of a temporality, reflecting the way in which the partnership identity is constructed through the partners' experience (Buehlman et al., 1992; Gildersleeve et al., 2017; Reid et al., 2006). The continuity of the partners' experience is enabled by their engagement in their collective occupations. In this thesis, the continuity of experience refers to how the engagement of partners in their collective occupations is involved in the construction of a partnership identity over time (Figure 13), as described by Dewey (1906; 2005).

It has been suggested that partners' engagement in their collective occupations shapes the mutuality of the partnership. In other words, the more romantic partners engage in their collective occupations, jointly or apart, the more they share their experience and, in turn, shape their mutuality. Conversely, the more the partners strengthen their mutuality, the more they are likely to accurately adjust to each other's expectations in terms of engagement in collective occupations. Thus, although the French sociologist Santelli (2018) describes three different types of partnership identities depending on the time partners spend in joint or apart activities (the association of individuals, the fusional partnership, and the combination of the two), the results of this thesis suggest that partnership identity is not rigid: it is constructed and evolves throughout the partners' experience of their occupational engagement.

The romantic partners who participated in the qualitative descriptive study in this thesis (Bertrand et al., 2022) illustrated this idea of constructing a partnership identity through their occupational engagement. For example, one partnership explained that the evening meal was their favourite moment together. The partners recalled that their engagement in this co-occupation had always helped them to strengthen their bonds. Thus, they lived a continuous shared experience of joint occupational engagement. This co-occupation (eating the evening meal together) had therefore become constitutive of their partnership identity. Hasselkus and Murray's (2007) research on caregivers' experiences of caring for a relative with dementia (included in the scoping review (Bertrand et al., Submitted), also investigated the relationship between occupational engagement and the continuity of experience. Using data collected

from different participants, they (Hasselkus & Murray, 2007) highlight the extent to which both partners' daily occupations support the maintenance of a "normalcy" of the relationship (p. 14). Moreover, Hasselkus and Murray (2007) suggest that caregiving partners try to maintain their partner's engagement as well as their own, despite the health issue. By maintaining occupational engagement, caregiving partners can connect with the history of their relationship. In other words, they try to maintain the continuity of the partnership identity that they have constructed over time, through their shared experiences.

Beyond the construction of a partnership identity that develops through the continuity of the occupational engagement, the example from Hasselkus & Murray (2007) also suggests that a health issue encountered by at least one romantic partner can challenge the relationship. This is discussed in the next section.

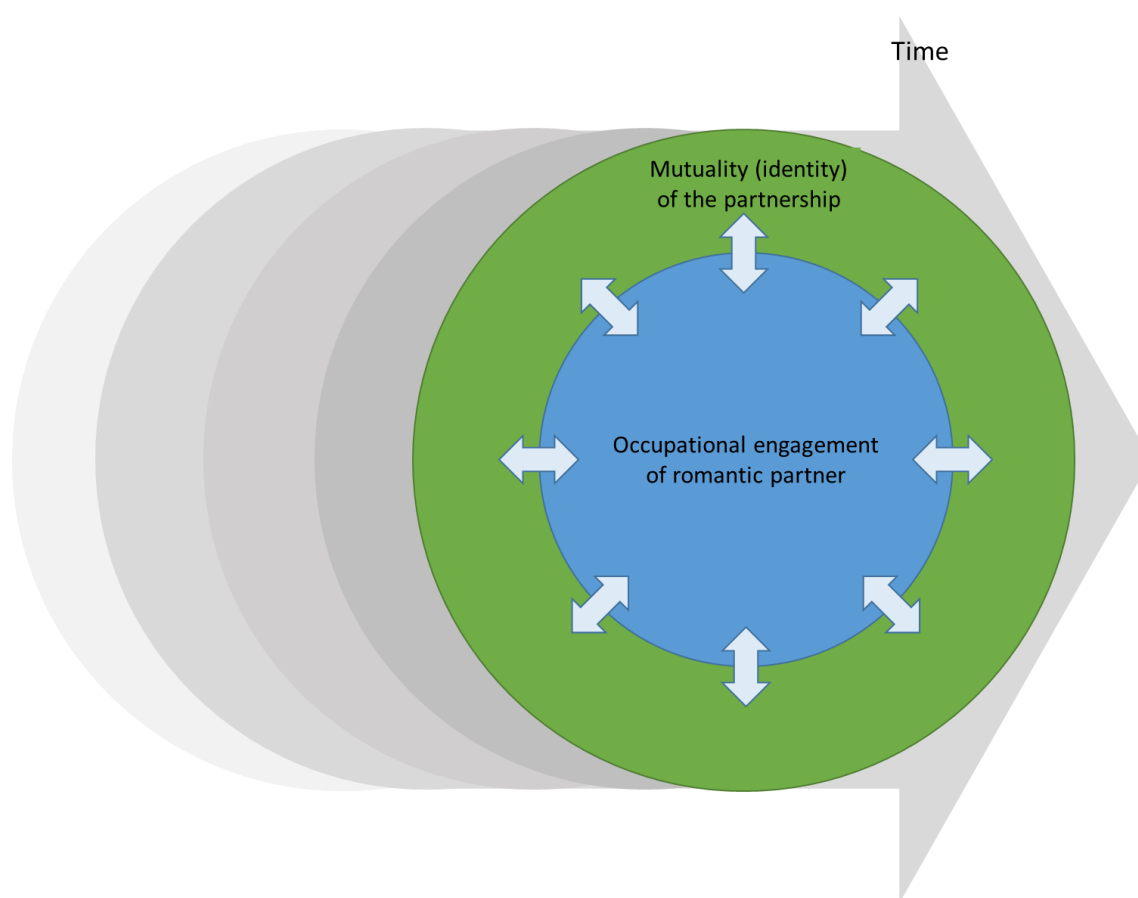


Figure 13. The construction of a partnership identity through partner's continuous experience

3.3 Disruption of the continuity of experience because of one partner's health issue

By addressing occupational engagement as a crucial constituent of the partnership identity, the results of the thesis help to understand the extent to which life events generate problematic situations, as described by Dewey (Foucart, 2013; Margot-Cattin, 2018), i.e., in which the continuity of the partners' experience is disrupted. Thus, the partnerships who participated in the qualitative study in this thesis (Bertrand et al., 2022) stressed how their engagement in some of their valued collective occupations became more difficult

over time because of the onset or aggravation of one partner's visual impairment. Such findings show that a health problem, such as vision loss, is not only a challenge for the partner in question but also for the whole partnership (Bertrand et al., 2022). For example, participating partners who previously holidayed for a few days in different places explained that they recently reshaped this occupation to stay in only one place. This change in their engagement ensured its maintenance since the aggravation of his visual impairment meant that it took more time for the partner concerned to get used to a new place (Bertrand et al., 2022). Another spouse who participated in that study (Bertrand et al., 2022) explained how managing the finances of the partnership using the computer had become increasingly challenging because of the aggravation of her visual impairment and ensuing difficulty reading to the point that the other partner had to endorse the responsibility of this occupation.

The occupations described by these two partnerships (respectively going on holiday and managing the finances of the partnership) are collective: the partners co-constructed a shared meaning, referring in their words to their togetherness of their contribution to the partnership (Bertrand et al., 2022). Moreover, these situations demonstrate the extent to which vision loss is a critical life event that affects how romantic partners co-construct the meaning of their occupations and can result in the loss of a shared meaning (Bertrand et al., 2022). Such a loss of shared meaning can lead to the loss of the collective occupation, which in turn affects the mutuality of the partnership (Bertrand et al., 2022). As such, the partnership identity that has been constructed over time is challenged by the disruption of the continuity of partners' experience.

The findings of the qualitative study of the thesis (Bertrand et al., 2022) include partners' actions to reshape their occupational engagement, i.e., to resolve the problematic situations caused by the visual impairment. The first action identified by the study was reshaping the occupation to maintain the engagement of the partner with vision loss (Bertrand et al., 2022). This strategy was illustrated by the first partnership mentioned above, who could no longer spend holidays as before. The partners decided to reshape their holidays by organizing long stays in only one place. The second action identified was transferring the challenged occupation to the other partner. This was the case for the second partnership with regard the management of the partnership's finances. The partners explained their decision to rely on the husband to continue this occupation. However, whatever the strategy identified, the reshaping of collective occupations is not self-evident. Indeed, the findings of the qualitative study highlight the fact that such change can create tensions between the partners. Some of the participants described how the changes in their occupational engagement led to a growing dependence on the other partner. This increased dependence could conflict with the other partner's desire for autonomy. Autonomy is defined by the French sociologist Gardien (2014, p. 53) as "belonging, being one's own master, governing oneself according to one's own rules." According to her (Gardien, 2014), remaining autonomous implies that one

partner's increasing needs for the other's assistance should not preclude his/her agency, i.e., the sense of control when navigating a changing and changed life (Grajo et al., 2018; Walder & Molineux, 2017). The tension between autonomy and dependence was reflected in the need of the partners with vision loss for the other partner to be able to maintain his/her occupational engagement. One partner's visual impairment disrupts the continuity of how both partners experience their engagement in their range of collective occupations. Therefore, tensions arise because the partnership identity is challenged. Nevertheless, the strategies found by the partners highlights their efforts to reshape their occupational engagement, that is, to maintain the continuity of their collective occupations. Therefore, when one partner experiences a health-related change, such as vision loss, managing the engagement in collective occupations is critical for the partnership.

According to Dewey (1906), such a finding indicates that the partners' experience is not rigid, but is contingent and unpredictable, because of the large range of potentially critical life events that could be encountered during the course of the relationship. Coping with vision loss may require both partners to jointly manage the disruption by reshaping their occupational engagement (Bertrand et al., 2022). Further research should examine this reshaping of partners' collective occupations in relation to other types of health problem. For example, literature has shown that wheelchair users experience restrictions in daily living, particularly with regard to their restricted access to out-of-home activities (Luoma-Halkola & Häikiö, 2022; Ralph et al., 2022). Tensions within the partnership are thought to potentially originate from such restrictions in one partner's occupational engagement (Laliberté Rudman et al., 2006). A further study could provide a better understanding of how romantic partnerships in which one partner becomes a wheelchair user reshape their collective occupations, as well as expand our findings on the ensuing consequences of such health condition for partners' mutuality. Another field of interest is also implied by the systematic review of Ablitt et al. (2009) on the relationship factors that influence the quality of a partnership when one partner has dementia. Drawing on their analysis of 31 peer-reviewed studies, authors emphasized how the continuity of the partnership's mutuality is crucial for maintaining a good relationship quality. But, while authors mentioned partners' shared activities as one important factor for such quality of the relationship, they do not further explore how these activities contribute to the continuity of their mutuality. A study that investigates partners' engagement in collective occupations when one partner has dementia could contribute to deepen our understanding of such phenomenon. As such, in addition to identifying other strategies of re-shaping, or refining those identified in the qualitative study of this thesis (Bertrand et al., 2022), such further research would provide a deeper understanding of the extent to which the tensions that emerge from reshaping occupational engagement indicate a fundamental shift in the partnership identity.

Such further research should consider the romantic partnership as the unit of analysis, i.e., a social identity that encompasses partners' individual selves (Cruwys et al., 2022). To this purpose, the collective occupations would be those of the partnership rather than those of the partners. As such, the next section discusses the conceptualisation of the partnership as an occupational community, which is enacted and evolves through its occupations (Lavalley, 2017).

3. The romantic partnership as an occupational community

The occupational science literature shows how individuals express and shape their identity throughout their lives through their occupational engagement (Christiansen, 1999; Ikiugu et al., 2012). Throughout this thesis, collectivist epistemology is used to understand identity shaping (Malfitano et al., 2021) based on the assumption that the evolution of partnership identity is based on the continuity of the collective occupations of the partners. Thus, as van Nes et al. (2012) suggest, occupational engagement should be understood as relating to the occupations of the partnership, rather than the joint or apart engagement of the partners. As such, the scoping review in this thesis (Bertrand et al., Submitted) reports how some participants in the studies reviewed described their partnership as a single entity, or as a team (Frank et al., 1997; Heatwole Shank & Presgraves, 2019; van Nes et al., 2009, 2012; Vrkljan, 2010). For example, in a study of how older married partners drive to unfamiliar places, Vrkljan (2010) reported how some perceived themselves as a team whose aim was to get their partnership safely to its destination. In their study of American Jewish Orthodox partnerships, Frank et al. (1997) exposed how occupational engagement is meaningful at a partnership-level, i.e., in relation to the partnership as a whole: through their occupational engagement the partners observe the Sabbath together. This occupational engagement is constitutive of the partnership identity, i.e., in relation to the partners' religion. This preeminence of the collective whole over individuality is also salient in the study by Kantartzis and Molineux (2014) of Greek families, mentioned earlier in this discussion. The participants described the family as a whole entity that encompasses each member. As such, the family identity is created by the engagement of each family member in the collective occupations related to a traditional religious meal. Such findings support the idea that a collective whole, such as a romantic partnership, should be examined at a group-level.

The literature on mutuality within romantic partnerships has also revealed that the mutuality of the partnership can grow to the point that it becomes an entity for the partners (Cruwys et al., 2022). This entity reflects how the partners' feelings of unity transcend their respective individuality rather than adding them together (Alea et al., 2015; Cruwys et al., 2022). Moreover, it has been argued that the identification

of their partnership as an entity by partners is a relevant marker of a stable and satisfying relationship (Cruwys et al., 2022).

Thus, the results of this thesis are in accordance with literature on the mutuality of romantic partnerships (Cruwys et al., 2022; Drigotas et al., 1999; Gildersleeve et al., 2017), but with an innovative perspective: they support the concept of the romantic partnership as an occupational community, that is how well are partners doing together. Thus, drawing on Ramugundo and Kronenberg's (2015) work on collective occupation, Lavalley (2017) explains in his theoretical paper on developing the transactional perspective of occupation for communities:

The question "How well are we doing together?" fundamentally asks us to evaluate and categorize the occupation of a group as a whole, undissected unit. It asks us to take note of the phenomena that emerge beyond the sum of individual experiences, to understand relationships and networks among and through which a community experiences occupation (Lavalley, 2017. p. 459).

Firstly, considering the romantic partnership as an occupational community rather than a dyad is a mean to acknowledge the large diversity of forms of unions that exist nowadays (Klesse, 2022; Sassler & Lichter, 2020). Moreover, a romantic partnership viewed as an occupational community, thus becomes the unit of analysis of partners' occupational engagement. As such, the partnership can be described as a complex relational system involving both partners as well as the social, cultural, or political systems and structures through which they act and which shape the meaning of the experience (Dickie et al., 2006; Lavalley, 2017). Hence, occupation is understood as a phenomenon that is related to the partnership rather than to the partners (Lavalley & Bailliard, 2021). Therefore, drawing on the reflections of Dickie et al. (2006), Ramugondo and Kronenberg (2015), or Lavalley and Bailliard (2021), we suggest that a partnership identity emerges from the partnership's occupations. This expands the view of how the collective occupations in which the partners engage are constitutive of the partnership identity. It is for this reason that occupations are part of the true existence of the partnership. Moreover, it is through their occupational engagement that the partners interconnect, co-construct and share their experiences. However, a romantic partnership must be understood as a non-rigid occupational community: it evolves and varies through the partners' coordination with each other and through their respective life courses (Lavalley, 2017). Strategies for reshaping occupational engagement after the onset or aggravation of a health issue, like vision loss (Bertrand et al., 2022), must be considered in relation to the partnership: they are all means for the partnership to continue to exist as an occupational community. The challenge is ultimately not to determine which partner will continue a particular occupation, either jointly or apart, but rather to ensure that the partnership safeguards the continuity of this occupation. Thus, the occupational engagement of the partnership enables the existence of the partnership, and the disruption of

occupational engagement, especially because of a health problem, is a significant threat to the partnership identity. This threat is likely to generate tensions between the partners. Figure 14 shows a model of partnership as an occupational community. Such community is constituted of occupations, i.e., a set of transactional relationships between the individuals and their context. The partnership interconnects the partners through their occupational engagement. It also illustrates partners' strategies for reshaping their collective occupations to ensure the continuity of the occupations within the partnership. This scheme opens the possibility for some occupations to be outside of the partnership, but within another potential occupational community.

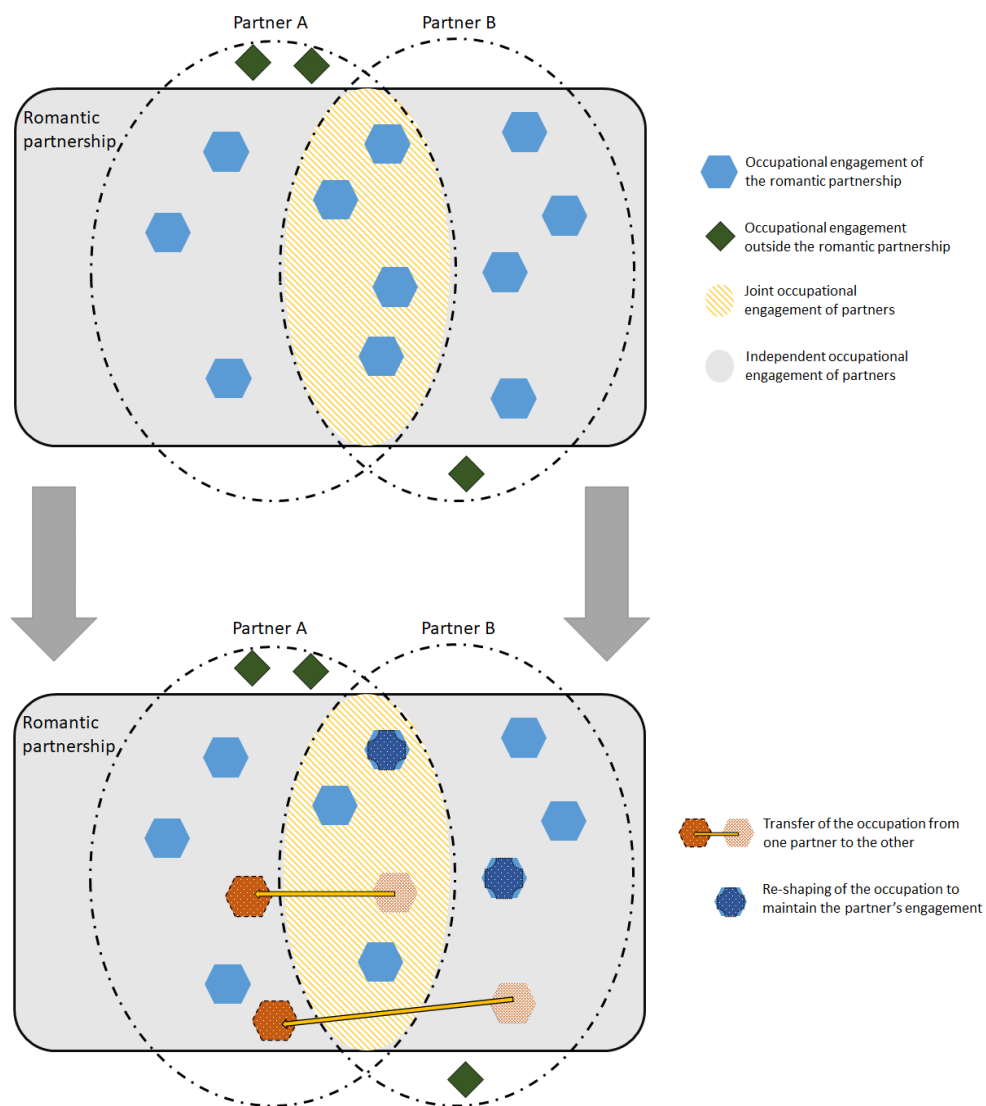


Figure 14. A model of romantic partnership conceptualized as an occupational community.

At last, conceptualising a romantic partnership as an occupational community is a further step towards understanding occupations as arising from a range of transactional relationships between individuals and their contexts, and not as an individual phenomenon. The transactional perspective of human occupation, as described by Dickie et al. (2006), is a relevant theoretical framework to examine how a partnership identity emerges from the occupational engagement of the partners and whether this

occupational community is threatened when the occupational engagement of its members is disrupted. Further research that applies this perspective to romantic partnerships, including the diversity of forms of union (Sassler & Lichter, 2020), and more broadly, to the potential range of occupational communities of which an individual can simultaneously be part (Lavalley, 2017), is required. Such research should help to deepen understanding of the transactional relationships that underlie the shared identity embedded in occupational communities. Therefore, further research that circumscribes and defines this concept is recommended and is included in our immediate plans.

4. Limitations, strengths, and future directions

The results of this thesis and the current discussion and analysis should be considered in the light of several limitations and perspectives. A first reflection concerns the scope of the results, with regards to the context in which the thesis and data collection were performed. A second reflection relates to the methodology used in the thesis; particularly the mixed method design. These two points are explained and discussed below.

4.1 The scope of the results

A first limitation relates to the populations from which data were collected and analysed. In the scoping review and the two empirical studies, the samples included are primarily Western. The studies selected for the scoping review (Bertrand et al., Submitted) were all conducted in countries that are part of the Global North (Collyer, 2018) and included mostly Western white individuals. Furthermore, the data collections for both the qualitative and quantitative studies (Bertrand et al., Submitted, Bertrand et al., 2022) were conducted in the same geographical region; Western Switzerland and included mostly Western white individuals. The author of this thesis (RB), the co-supervisors, and the co-authors of the different articles also have Western white backgrounds. North American countries (the United States and Canada) and Western European countries (such as the United Kingdom and Switzerland) are often viewed as sharing similar sociocultural, economic, and political values, described as individualistic (Collyer, 2018; Gerlach et al., 2018). As such, this thesis must be considered as conveying the socio-cultural, economic, or political values of a Western white population. This is the reason why the romantic partnerships described mostly involve relationships between a man and a woman, i.e., two people of different sex. This form of union is the most recognized and widespread in Global North countries. Therefore, the results are not representative of partnership diversity. However, sharing the experience and context of the participants to research, i.e., being an “insider” of the phenomenon studied (Berger, 2015), has been shown to be positive in the context of the research. Studying a topic that is familiar to the researcher facilitates the recruitment of participants and enhances the researcher’s sensitivity to their experience, leading to a more precise understanding of their data (Berger, 2015; Dodgson, 2019). It can

be criticized that the production of knowledge becomes even more subjective since the researcher moves away from an “outsider” position with regard to their research (Berger, 2015). This position as an “insider” is likely to have affected the findings in the thesis. Nevertheless, according to Berger (2015), three methods enable the restoration of a better balance between the researchers' own experience and that of the participants: the use of a diary, repeated review of the diary, and consultation by peers. These three measures were applied throughout the thesis. Firstly, the author of thesis completed a diary by recording each data collection phase for each empirical study and providing elements on the progress of the process. Secondly, the diary was reviewed with co-supervisors, especially while analysing the data for each study, as well as while writing the current discussion. Such review helped to identify how and when researchers' experience might have influenced the analysis of the data. Thirdly, frequent discussions with co-supervisors throughout each step of the thesis, including the elaboration of the theoretical framework, data collection and analysis, restitution, and analysis of the results, have been a means to reduce the insider bias. Moreover, future research on romantic partnerships should broaden the perspective by involving researchers and participants from countries other than those of the Global North, as well as involving a greater diversity of forms of romantic partnerships (Sassler & Lichter, 2020).

A second limitation that is related to the scope of the results is the use of the LBI in the IP-COUPLES research. As it has been mentioned in the corresponding chapter, this questionnaire has been used beyond its intent (Matuska, 2012). As such, findings that derive to the use of this questionnaire should be handled with caution since their external validity is limited. By consequent, future research on romantic partnerships should explore the relationship between the mutuality of a partnership and the occupations of each partner, with the support of a valid and standardized methodology. To the best of our knowledge, there is no tool that grasps the relationship between these two variables. To design such tool is in the immediate plans of the authors of this Ph.D. thesis, as well as establishing its validity.

Furthermore, it is important to mention that only one health issue was considered, vision loss (in the qualitative study). Nevertheless, this health issue concerns a significant part of the population studied. Indeed, at the time of the realization of the thesis, approximately 377,000 individuals (4.4% of Swiss population) were identified as having a visual impairment in Switzerland, of which 50'000 were blind (UCBA, 2020). Moreover, approximately 2.2 billion people worldwide live with a visual impairment (Demmin & Silverstein, 2020). Since age plays a decisive role in the onset or aggravation of visual impairment (Demmin & Silverstein, 2020), the prevalence of this sensory loss should increase in the future, due in particular to the aging of the Swiss population (Federal Statistical Office [FSO], 2020). Over the past 10 years, there has been a growing body of evidence highlighting the impact of vision loss on close relatives, such as romantic partners (Hofsöe et al., 2019; Lehane, Dammeyer, & Elsass, 2017; Lehane et al., 2018; Mamali et al., 2022). The thesis has therefore helped to better understand how

changes in partners' engagement in their collective occupations can affect the maintenance of the relationship. Such findings support the implementation of intervention that support romantic partnerships who face vision loss while preserving their partnership identity. However, although any health issue is likely to generate such problematic situations for a partnership, the situations identified in this thesis are specific to the targeted population. As such, they cannot be generalized to all types of health issues. Further research should hence address other health issues and the related experiences of the partners at a partnership-level, to complete, strengthen or nuance the results of this thesis. As mentioned previously, such research could examine the lived experience of partnerships who face one partner's mobility restriction or dementia. Examining how partners reshape their collective occupations to maintain their relationship is crucial to design adapted support interventions. As such, a research protocol (ID number 2018-00648) already has been accepted by the relevant ethics committee (CER-VD) for a future project that focus on mobility restriction, that will involve the author of the thesis and co-supervisors.

4.2 About a gender perspective

Another point that can be highlighted is related to the gender perspective. To date, adopting such a perspective in the study of romantic partners' mutuality has not been stressed in the literature on romantic partnerships. Moreover, as our study was a first investigation of the collective occupations of romantic partners, we have decided not to adopt a gender perspective in the thesis. As such, the results do not inform on any gender issues that may exist within romantic partnerships (Beagan & Saunders, 2005; Cheung, 2005; Garcia Roman & Cortina, 2016; Grau Grau et al., 2022). This gender perspective requires to recall that people's occupational choices are contextualized: they are influenced by the socio-economic and political context (Galvaan, 2015). Since the participants in the studies, the authors and co-supervisors all have Western backgrounds; it should be noted that, in these countries, differences between women and men within a romantic partnership are still described in terms of activities of daily living (Kamp Dush et al., 2018). At the time of writing of this thesis, and in the context of its realization (i.e., Switzerland), women spend more time than men in household or parenthood-related activities, while men spend more time in paid work or leisure, according to literature that applies a gender perspective to romantic partnerships (Cornwell et al., 2019; Garcia Roman & Cortina, 2016; Kamp Dush et al., 2018). Although this difference in time-use patterns between genders has reduced in recent decades (Brower, 2014; Voorpostel et al., 2010), it is still present in the countries in which the studies from the scoping review, as well as the empirical studies of the thesis, were conducted. This is particularly the case in Switzerland (Federal Statistical Office, 2020). Moreover, the findings of the IP-COUPLES study underline differences (though modest) in partners' expectations in terms of occupational engagement according to the gender of each partner (Bertrand et al., s. d). Such findings suggest that men are more likely than women to distinguish between their own needs and those of their partnership. These findings are consistent with

literature on romantic partnerships that has indicated a difference in time-use expectations between women and men (Garcia Roman & Cortina, 2016; Girme et al., 2014; Ogletree, 2015). Namely, men seem to expect to spend more time apart than women do, especially in paid work and leisure (Garcia Roman & Cortina, 2016; Girme et al., 2014). These studies demonstrate how time-use patterns within romantic partnerships seem to remain unequal between genders in Western countries. In other words, romantic partnerships still convey injunctions related to the partner's gender in terms of roles and activities (Garcia Roman & Cortina, 2016).

The occupational science literature suggests that human occupation conveys gendered injunctions (Huff et al., 2022; Wada et al., 2010). Some authors have recommended that research should seek to further understand and deconstruct injunctions that continue to influence and shape occupational engagement (Huff et al., 2022). Such research could be conducted within the context of romantic partnerships. In particular, it would be relevant to investigate the extent to which the partners' genders influence the construction of a shared identity within their occupational community. While it was not in the scope of the thesis, a secondary analysis of the data collected from the 16 partnerships in the qualitative study (Bertrand et al., 2022) was performed with a gender perspective. The purpose of the analysis was to legitimate future research on the mutuality of romantic partners with regard to their gender. This analysis first consisted of doing a cross-tabulation of the strategies of re-shaping of collective occupations with the gender of the partner who has the vision loss. The results tend to show that the gender of the partners has no significant influence on the re-shaping strategy (i.e., maintaining the engagement of the partner or transferring the occupation to the other partner). At this point, however, these primary results do not allow to state whether the re-shaping strategies depend on the gender of the partner or rather on the type of occupation. A second cross-tabulation was made with the tensions that emerge between partners when they re-shape their occupations. The primary results seem to highlight stronger tensions when it is the woman partner who has the vision loss. Although these results are very preliminary, they however show a relevance of doing a secondary analysis of the data from the qualitative study (Bertrand et al., 2022) with the prism of gender. Such research could provide interesting knowledge on the extent to which the partners' mutuality who face one's vision loss is both affected by the type of occupation that need to be reshaped and/or by the gender of the partner who has the impairment. Recruiting a larger sample would help strengthen the significance of the findings and facilitate their generalization to other health issues.

4.3 About the methodology

The dissertation is mostly based on data collected for two empirical research (Bertrand et al., Submitted., Bertrand et al., 2022). The first research is a descriptive qualitative study (Bertrand et al., 2022). The second, the IP-COUPLES study (Bertrand et al., Submitted), is a quantitative study. Therefore, the design of the thesis is mixed method research (Regnault et al., 2018; Ridde & Dagenais, 2013). Tashakkori and

Creswell (2007) define mixed methods research as “research in which the investigator collects and analyzes data, integrates the findings, and draws inferences using both qualitative and quantitative approaches or methods in a single study or a program of inquiry” (Tashakkori & Creswell, 2007, p. 4). Since the early 2000s, this methodology has become increasingly popular in social science research, particularly in psychology and health (Regnault et al., 2018; Timans et al., 2019). Some authors state that the mixed method design provides a very relevant opportunity to grasp all the complexity of human phenomena and to deepen understanding of them through the use of different types of research paradigms (Sandelowski, 2000; Tashakkori & Creswell, 2007). Thus, addressing a single research question from different perspectives can generate complementary results that provide a better in-depth understanding of the studied phenomenon.

Two paradigms that do not overlap were used in the different studies in this thesis. The constructivist paradigm (Guba and Lincoln, 1994) was used to guide the descriptive qualitative research (SELODY), whereas the post-positivist paradigm (Guba and Lincoln, 1994) was applied to the quantitative descriptive research (IP-COUPLES). The qualitative data allowed investigation of the extent to which the occupational engagement of the romantic partners shaped partnership identity within deterministic relationships. The quantitative data were complementary, since they revealed that the relationship between a partner’s range of occupations and their partnership identity was not causal (i.e., deterministic), but rather bidirectional. The combination of these two types of data therefore allowed a better grasp of the complexity of the phenomenon studied. The qualitative and quantitative data, along with the findings of the scoping review, support the conclusion of this thesis that a romantic partnership can be conceptualised as an occupational community.

However, research paradigms are worldviews that reflect ontological (i.e., a vision of reality), epistemological (i.e., a vision of knowledge), and methodological (i.e., a vision of research designs) distinctions (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). As such, rather than combining, the application of two paradigms means that a phenomenon is examined through two irreconcilable worldviews (Timans et al., 2019). Two paradigms were used in the current thesis to frame the studied phenomenon (i.e., romantic partnerships conceptualised as occupational communities). As such, whether it is the same phenomenon that is studied through two different worldviews might be questioned (Timans et al., 2019). It has been argued that examining a phenomenon in a particular way (i.e., in a post-positivist or constructivist paradigm) is to change this phenomenon (Timans et al., 2019). So, the combination of these two paradigms in the thesis could be considered as a limitation. Indeed, the integration of the results of the different studies included in the thesis may have been limited in the general discussion by the difficulty reconciling two research paradigms.

5. Conclusion

This thesis applied an occupational perspective to romantic partnerships with a particular focus on partnerships facing one partner's vision loss. The results revealed how romantic partners' collective occupations are crucial for the maintenance of a satisfying long-term relationship. In consequence, a health issue, such as the onset or aggravation of visual impairment, is a critical life event. By disrupting how partners engage in their occupations, such life events challenge the continuity of the partnership identity, and in turn, the maintenance of the relationship. Conceptualising a romantic partnership as an occupational community consists of advocating the occupational engagement of partners as constitutive of a partnership identity that transcends their individual selves. As such, to examine how romantic partners built a shared identity through their occupational engagement is a fundamental step for designing interventions at a partnership-level that support them to preserve their relationship when facing the consequences of one partner's health issue such as vision loss.

At this point, however, such conclusions should be considered with caution since they are based on, mostly, different-sex partnerships living in Western countries, particularly Switzerland. In addition, some results are related to partnerships affected by one partner's vision loss. Further research should include the diversity of forms of union as well as address different critical life events. Such research could expand, complete, or nuance the conclusions of this dissertation.

Résumé en français

Le psychiatre français Charazac (2009) définit la relation de partenariat comme « un espace propre, une aire d'échange et de création privée unissant deux êtres » (p. 139). Cette définition souligne qu'un tel partenariat est une association entre, souvent, deux personnes. Or, outre le mariage, une diversité de formes de partenariat a émergé depuis le milieu du XXe siècle (Haritaworn et al., 2006 ; Ketokivi, 2012 ; Maestre, 2009 ; Magni-Speck, 2013), telles qu'une relation sans mariage, de cohabitation ou à distance (Maestre, 2009), entre deux ou plusieurs partenaires de sexe différent ou de même sexe (Klesse et al., 2022 ; Sassler & Lichter, 2020). Quelle que soit sa forme, le partenariat romantique se fonde sur une relation d'interdépendance entre les partenaires (Columbus et al., 2020). L'interdépendance peut être définie comme le « processus par lequel des personnes en interaction influencent les expériences des autres » (Van Lange et Balliet, 2015, p. 65). Les partenaires vivent donc de nombreuses situations dans lesquelles leur comportement, les actions et les décisions sont mutuellement influencées (Columbus et al., 2020 ; Sels et al., 2020).

La psychologie sociale systémique-constructiviste (Karney & Bradbury, 2020) suppose que les valeurs ou les comportements des personnes dérivent de leur appartenance à différents systèmes socioculturels (famille, école, équipe sportive, etc.), ceux-ci façonnant les interactions sociales qui s'installent en leur sein entre individus (Ahmad & Reid, 2016 ; Fergus & Reid, 2001). Un partenariat romantique implique en ce sens des partenaires qui, à travers leurs interactions continues, construisent un sens partagé de leur expérience (Ahmad & Reid, 2016 ; Reid et al., 2008). Ce sens partagé a été décrit comme une culture propre à la relation (Ahmad & Reid, 2016), faisant référence à une identité partenariale commune (Cruwys et al., 2022 ; Fergus et Reid, 2001 ; Reid et al., 2006). Cette identité unique et partagée, qui transcende l'individualité des partenaires, a été conceptualisée dans la littérature systémique-constructiviste comme la mutualité de la relation, ou *we-ness* (Buehlman et al., 1992 ; Rohrbaugh, 2021 ; Skerrett, 2003). Cette mutualité émerge des expériences partagées des partenaires et fait référence à la mesure dans laquelle les partenaires se voient comme une entité collective et partagent une identité commune (Cruwys et al., 2022).

Du fait de leur interdépendance, tout événement qui affecte un des partenaires affecte également l'autre (Lehane et al., 2018, Mamali et al., 2022). La déficience visuelle, par exemple, est un événement de vie critique qui concerne le partenariat dans son ensemble. Alors qu'à ce jour, la plupart des thérapies proposées aux partenariats qui font face à des difficultés au sein de leur relation se concentrent sur des aspects relationnels ou psychologiques (Lehane et al., 2017), la littérature spécialisée sur les troubles de vision soutient que ceux-ci posent des défis en termes d'activités de la vie quotidienne au sein du partenariat, que ce soit pour les activités domestiques ou les activités sociales, à domicile et hors du domicile (Lehane et al., 2018). L'ajustement au quotidien des partenaires face à ce problème de santé reste néanmoins peu connu (Lehane et al., 2018). Mieux le comprendre doit permettre de concevoir et mettre en œuvre des interventions qui ciblent la reconfiguration des routines quotidiennes des

partenaires, tout en élargissant ces interventions à tout événement de vie qui, telle la perte de vision, les remet en cause. Néanmoins, concevoir et mettre en œuvre de telles interventions nécessitent au préalable d'explorer la mesure dans laquelle les activités de la vie quotidienne contribuent au maintien d'une relation de partenariat.

Plusieurs auteurs qui se sont intéressés aux partenaires romantiques ont décrit leurs routines comme impliquant un ensemble d'activités quotidiennes, dont certaines dans lesquelles les partenaires s'engagent ensemble (jointes), mais aussi d'autres dans lesquelles chacun s'engage sans l'autre (séparées) (Cornwell et al., 2019 ; Milek et al., 2015). Glorieux et al. (2011), qui ont analysé les journaux d'emploi du temps de 4 043 partenaires Belges, et Flood et Genadek (2016) qui ont analysé les activités quotidiennes de partenaires romantiques américains de même sexe et de sexe différent (n = 86 420), ont notamment suggéré que l'engagement conjoint des partenaires dans certaines activités, notamment les activités sociales et de loisirs, contribuent au bien-être des partenaires. Sur la base de mesures effectuées auprès de 196 partenaires et 83 partenariats, Girme, Overall et Faingataa (2014), trois psychologues néo-zélandais, soulignent néanmoins que c'est en partageant les expériences que les partenaires font de leurs activités quotidiennes que leur relation peut se développer au point que leurs vies quotidiennes deviennent entremêlées (Antonucci et al., 2004 ; Columbus et al., 2020 ; Rusbult & Van Lange, 2003 ; Sassler & Lichter, 2020 ; Theiss & Knobloch, 2009). En d'autres termes, la mesure dans laquelle les partenaires partagent leur expérience lorsqu'ils/elles s'engagent dans leurs activités reflète la mutualité de leur partenariat (Knobloch & Solomon, 2004 ; Montheil, 2017 ; Sassler, 2010). Ces activités quotidiennes doivent donc être considérées lorsqu'il s'agit d'examiner la mutualité des partenariats romantiques.

A cette fin, appliquer une perspective occupationnelle est pertinent dans la mesure où elle implique d'examiner les activités quotidiennes, ou occupations, des personnes et les expériences qu'elles en font (Njelesani et al., 2014; Wilcock, 1993). A partir, notamment, des travaux de Mary Reilly (1962), une ergothérapeute et chercheuse américaine, les sciences de l'occupation sont apparues comme une discipline distincte au début des années 1990 à l'Université de Californie du Sud (États-Unis) (Clark et al., 1991 ; Lawlor, 2021 ; Yerxa, 2000). Dans ce cadre, les occupations humaines peuvent être définies comme « la vaste étendue des actions quotidiennes et extraordinaires dans lesquelles les individus et les groupes d'individus s'engagent » (Laliberté Rudman, 2018, p. 242). Les occupations englobent donc l'ensemble des activités quotidiennes qu'une personne réalise au quotidien (Hammell, 2004) et, plus largement, l'acte de faire, d'être, de devenir et d'appartenir (Wilcock, 1999, 2006). Ainsi, les occupations sont qualifiées de significatives (Hinojosa et al., 2017 ; Ikiugu & Pollard, 2015 ; Wilcock, 2006) lorsqu'elles s'alignent sur les valeurs et les croyances personnelles des personnes. Cependant, Hammell (2004) a fait valoir qu'une occupation n'est pas significative en soi, puisque l'expérience qui découle de l'engagement des individus est façonnée non seulement par des facteurs personnels, mais aussi par des

contextes sociaux, culturels, physiques et institutionnels. Aussi, l'engagement occupationnel peut être compris comme reflétant le sens que les individus attribuent à leurs expériences. De fait, appliquer une perspective occupationnelle pourrait aider à mieux comprendre comment les partenaires romantiques font sens de leurs expériences quotidiennes. Dans la mesure où ce travail doctoral s'intéresse à des partenaires romantiques, il faut mobiliser des concepts occupationnels qui permettent de saisir l'interdépendance des partenaires. De fait, certains concepts ont émergé d'une posture épistémologique qualifiée de collectiviste, qui se base donc sur cette interdépendance des individus (Hammell, 2014; Lavalley & Bailliard, 2021; Malfitano et al., 2021; Ramugondo & Kronenberg, 2015) pour soutenir que l'occupation humaine est un phénomène social (Dickie et al., 2006). Le concept d'occupation collective, en premier lieu, renvoie à la centralité des relations humaines qui se reflète ici dans le processus de co-construction et de partage du sens que les individus attribuent à leurs expériences quotidiennes. Ainsi, l'occupation collective renverrait à des occupations qui impliquent la collaboration et la coordination de partenaires interdépendants (Adams & Casteleijn, 2014; Malfitano et al., 2021; Peralta-Catipon, 2012). La co-occupation est un autre concept qui implique que les actions respectives d'au moins deux individus interdépendants influencent mutuellement le sens de leur expérience (Mahoney & Roberts, 2009; Pierce, 2009; van Nes et al., 2012). Dans le cadre de la thèse, la co-occupation est comprise comme une occupation collective, qui, d'après la proposition de Pickens et Pizur-Barnekow (2009), nécessite outre le partage du sens, un partage du temps et de l'espace. Le concept d'occupation partagée (Jones et al., 2017), enfin, souvent utilisé de manière interchangeable avec les deux autres dans la littérature, renvoie dans la thèse, au fait que l'occupation d'une personne est toujours partagée avec son contexte, qui ne se limite pas uniquement aux interactions sociales mais inclut également le contexte historique, communautaire ou socioculturel dans lequel elle est située (Dickie et al., 2006).

L'**objectif de la thèse** est d'étudier si, et dans quelle mesure, l'engagement occupationnel des partenaires romantiques reflète la mutualité de leur relation. Un focus particulier est mis sur les partenariats qui sont concernés par la déficience visuelle d'un des partenaires.

La thèse est présentée sous forme d'articles et applique une méthodologie mixte, combinant recherche qualitative et quantitative. Elle comprend six chapitres, le premier étant l'introduction (**chapitre 1**). Les chapitres 2 à 5 correspondent chacun à une étude, leur ordre différant de la chronologie de leur réalisation.

Le **chapitre 2** est une étude de la portée de la littérature en ergothérapie et en sciences de l'occupation qui vise à identifier, analyser et synthétiser les travaux publiés sur l'engagement occupationnel d'individus qui sont impliqués dans un partenariat romantique. Cette étude s'appuie notamment sur le concept d'occupation collective qui fait référence aux activités qui reflètent un degré élevé d'interdépendance entre les personnes. Ramugondo & Kronenberg (2015) ont proposé ce concept en s'appuyant sur la notion d'*Ubuntu*, une position ontologique dans laquelle les humains et leurs

communautés sont façonnés par des interactions continues les uns avec les autres. Examiner l'engagement occupationnel des partenaires dans une perspective collective peut permettre d'approfondir la compréhension de la façon dont les activités quotidiennes de chaque partenaire sont entrelacées (Munambah et al., 2022 ; Ramugondo & Kronenberg, 2015). Cependant, la question demeure de savoir comment cette notion d'occupations collectives peut être comprise dans le contexte d'un partenariat romantique. Le but de cette étude de la portée est donc de déterminer comment les occupations collectives impliquant des partenaires romantiques ont été décrites dans la littérature en ergothérapie et en sciences de l'occupation. Dans ce cadre, l'approche d'Arksey et O'Malley (2005), affinée par Levac, Colquhoun et O'Brien (2010) a été utilisée pour sélectionner 20 études à partir d'un corpus initial de 232 études identifiées. Pour être inclus, les articles devaient a) impliquer de la recherche primaire (Arksey et O'Malley, 2005; Pham et al., 2014), b) être rédigés en anglais ou en français, c) impliquer des partenaires âgés de 18 ans et plus, et d) rapporter des données (qualitatives ou quantitatives) sur les engagements occupationnels respectifs des deux partenaires. La plupart de ces études ont été menées dans un pays qui peut être qualifié d'Occidental (Collyer, 2018), notamment les Etats-Unis (huit études, soit 40% du total) auprès d'une population majoritairement blanche. Quinze études (75% du total) sont des études qualitatives, deux études sont quantitatives, et trois autres proposent une méthodologie mixte. Les données ont été récoltées majoritairement auprès de partenariats hétérosexuels qui vivent dans la communauté, dont au moins un des partenaires présente un problème de santé qui nécessite l'assistance de l'autre dans l'accomplissement des activités de la vie quotidienne. Sur la base d'une analyse thématique, trois thèmes principaux émergent : 1) « Faire ensemble » : l'engagement conjoint tel qu'il se reflète dans les occupations collectives ; ce thème décrit les occupations collectives auxquelles les partenaires romantiques ont participé et la signification attribuée à un tel engagement conjoint. 2) « Faire les uns pour les autres » : engagement séparé qui se traduit par des occupations collectives ; ce thème décrit la façon dont certaines occupations séparées (faites sans l'autre) sont néanmoins perçues par l'un ou les deux partenaires comme des occupations collectives car chaque partenaire les expérimentent comme une contribution au partenariat. 3) « Faire comme un » : naviguer dans la maladie telle qu'elle se reflète dans les occupations collectives ; ce thème montre que l'état de santé d'une partenaire peut remettre en question l'engagement occupationnel des deux partenaires. De plus, les occupations respectives de chaque partenaire s'entremêlaient davantage lorsqu'un partenaire n'était plus en mesure de s'engager comme il le faisait avant la maladie. Ainsi, les résultats de cette étude de la portée suggèrent que les occupations collectives peuvent être réalisées tant conjointement que séparément. Une occupation est collective lorsque que les partenaires en partagent le sens qu'ils/elles attribuent à leur engagement respectif. Par ailleurs, dans certaines études examinées, les partenaires ont décrit se considérer comme une seule entité, ou une équipe (Frank et al., 1997 ; Heatwole Shank et Presgraves, 2019 ; van Nes et al., 2009 ; Vrkljan, 2010). Cela renvoie à la mutualité du partenariat, c'est-à-dire, le

sentiment d'identité partenariale qui émerge des expériences partagées par les partenaires (Skerrett, 2003). Par ailleurs, lorsqu'un partenaire est confronté à un changement ou à une maladie liés à sa santé, la perturbation, voire la perte occupationnelle qui en résultent, peuvent menacer la mutualité de la relation. Cette étude souligne donc l'importance de comprendre comment les partenaires romantiques s'ajustent face aux perturbations de leurs occupations collectives et aux conséquences non seulement sur leur relation mais aussi sur chacun d'entre eux.

Le **chapitre 3** est une étude qualitative descriptive qui vise à explorer l'expérience vécue des partenaires touchés par la déficience visuelle de l'une d'entre eux. Cette étude part du postulat que les conséquences d'un problème de santé telle que la perte de vision affectent la mutualité du partenariat (Rohrbaugh, 2021). De telles conséquences concernent donc les deux partenaires (Hofsøe et al., 2019; Lehane, Dammeyer, & Elsass, 2017; Lehane et al., 2018 ; Mamali et al., 2022) car la perte de vision de l'un d'entre eux peut affecter l'ensemble des routines du partenariat. En explorant les expériences des partenaires qui vivent ce changement lié à la santé, cette étude qualitative a permis d'explorer comment ces changements se reflètent sur la mutualité de la relation et d'examiner les stratégies adoptées par les partenaires pour ajuster leurs routines. Cette étude a été réalisée dans une perspective occupationnelle. Dans ce cadre, la notion d'occupation partagée (Doble & Santha, 2008 ; Leclair, 2010) a été utilisée pour mieux saisir comment l'engagement occupationnel des partenaires reflète un engagement mutuel « avec d'autres qui partagent des expériences, des intérêts, des valeurs et des objectifs communs » (Doble & Santha, 2008, p. 187). À cet égard, les occupations partagées ont le potentiel de faire émerger l'identité partenariale de la relation (van Nes et al., 2012). L'étude a pour buts d'étudier 1) l'impact de la perte de vision sur les occupations partagées, tel qu'il est perçu par les partenaires ; et 2) les ajustements et les adaptations qui s'ensuivent lorsque les partenaires doivent gérer l'impact de la perte de vue sur leur vie quotidienne. Cette étude a été menée en Suisse romande sur mandat de l'Union Centrale Suisse pour le Bien des Aveugles (UCBA). La collecte des données s'est faite en Suisse romande, entre janvier à juin 2020 avec seize partenariats volontaires et concernés par la déficience visuelle d'au moins l'un des partenaires. Des entretiens semi-dirigés d'environ 1h30 ont été menés avec seize partenariats, dans un lieu de leur choix. Chaque entretien a été réalisé en face à face avec les deux partenaires par deux membres de l'équipe de recherche. Les données ont été intégralement enregistrées et transcrites en assurant leur confidentialité ainsi que l'anonymat des participants. Une analyse thématique continue (Paillé & Mucchielli, 2016) a été entreprise avec les données pour obtenir des thèmes qui ont été validés par l'ensemble de l'équipe de recherche. Trois thèmes principaux ont émergé : 1) Partage d'occupations au sein des partenariats : « faire ensemble » et « faire séparément » mais partager le sens. Les participants ont souligné que leurs occupations peuvent être partagées, qu'elles soient conjointes ou séparées, dès lors que le sens qu'ils leur attribuent est partagé avec leur partenaire. 2) Vivre la perturbation des occupations partagées à cause de la perte de vision : « Ne plus voir et ne plus faire ».

Ce thème souligne que l'engagement du/de la partenaire qui présente la perte de vision dans les différentes occupations partagées du partenariat, est remise en question en raison de ce problème de santé. 3) Remodeler les occupations partagées : Expérimenter des tensions en parallèle aux efforts pour maintenir l'engagement occupationnel. Les participants décrivent deux stratégies mobilisées pour reconfigurer leur engagement occupationnel pour faire à la perte de vision de l'un des partenaires. La première stratégie est d'adapter la manière de réaliser l'occupation à la personne qui présente la déficience sensorielle afin qu'elle puisse continuer à s'y engager. La seconde stratégie est de transférer l'occupation à l'autre partenaire. Ces résultats montrent que les partenaires reconfigurent leurs occupations partagées pour faire vivre la mutualité de leur relation. Maintenir la mutualité du partenariat malgré la perte de vision nécessite des efforts où certaines occupations partagées peuvent être perdues, priorisées et remodelées. Néanmoins, les résultats de cette étude soulignent que l'expérience de ce processus peut refléter des tensions entre partenaires, qui découlent de la dépendance croissante des partenaires ayant une perte de vision vis-à-vis de l'autre qui entre en conflit avec leur désir d'autonomie.

Le **chapitre 4** décrit le protocole de l'étude IP-COUPLES, tandis que le **chapitre 5** fournit les résultats de cette étude. Il s'agit d'une étude descriptive quantitative qui s'appuie sur le modèle de « congruence des perceptions » décrit par Acitelli et al. (1993) pour examiner les attentes des partenaires en termes d'engagement occupationnel conjoint et séparé. La congruence des perceptions reflète la mutualité du partenariat qui serait manifeste dans la synchronisation des emplois du temps des partenaires (Flood & Genadek, 2016). Cette étude aborde donc la manière dont chaque partenaire perçoit les attentes de l'autre en termes de temps passé ensemble et séparément, ou autrement dit, dans des activités conjointes et séparées. Les objectifs sont 1) de déterminer les similitudes et les différences de congruence perceptive entre les partenaires féminins et masculins, comme en témoignent leur perception respective de l'utilisation du temps dans les activités séparées et conjointes ; et 2) examiner l'association entre les activités séparées et conjointes en termes de congruence perceptive des femmes et des hommes et la force de cette association. Soixante-douze partenariats hétérosexuels cohabitants en Suisse romande ont, sur la base du volontariat, été recrutés entre juillet 2020 et octobre 2021. Chaque partenaire devait être âgé de plus de 18 ans et parler et comprendre le français. Une perspective occupationnelle a été appliquée à travers le questionnaire que les participants ont complété, le Life Balance Inventory (LBI). Ce questionnaire a été élaboré par Matuska (2012) (Annex 1) pour mesurer l'équilibre de vie des individus, c'est-à-dire le ratio entre le temps alloué à une liste de 53 activités quotidiennes et le niveau de satisfaction associé. La collecte des données s'est faite par un entretien face-à-face avec l'auteur de la thèse qui lisait les questions. Chaque partenaire a complété trois fois le LBI, séparément de l'autre, pour 1) sa perception de son équilibre pour ses activités séparées, 2) sa perception de la façon dont son partenaire évaluerait son propre équilibre pour ses activités séparées, et 3) sa perception de la façon dont leur partenariat (soit les deux partenaires ensemble) évaluerait l'équilibre

de leurs activités conjointes. Les partenaires ont ensuite complété ensemble le LBI 4) par rapport à leur perception de leur équilibre pour leurs activités conjointes. Les scores ont été rapportés comme des mesures pour l'analyse statistique. Les résultats de l'étude suggèrent une congruence élevée des perceptions entre les partenaires qui ont participé à l'étude, en ce qui concerne leur engagement dans des activités séparées et conjointes. En fait, cette congruence des perceptions reflète un degré élevé de mutualité au sein du couple (Gildersleeve et al., 2017). En cela, l'ajustement de chacun aux attentes de l'autre se traduit par un équilibre de vie mesuré à partir des scores du LBI comme modérément équilibré, pour chaque partenaire pris individuellement ou pour les partenariats. Cependant, des différences ressortent selon le genre des répondants, puisque les attentes des femmes en termes d'activités séparées semblent être plus confondues avec leurs attentes en termes d'activités conjointes que pour les hommes. Ces derniers distinguent d'ailleurs davantage les besoins conjoints de leur partenariat de ceux propres à leur partenaire. Ces résultats renvoient à la littérature sur les partenariats amoureux qui a suggéré que les hommes sont plus susceptibles que les femmes de considérer distinctement leurs propres besoins de ceux de leurs partenaires (Garcia Roman & Cortina, 2016 ; Girme et al., 2014 ; Voorpostel et al., 2010). Les différences trouvées dans le cadre de cette étude, significatives mais modestes, suggèrent d'approfondir les attentes en termes d'emploi du temps au sein des partenariats avec le prisme du genre. En lien avec le second objectif, cette étude met aussi en évidence que la perception qu'ont les partenaires des attentes de l'autre en ce qui concerne ses activités séparées est faiblement corrélée avec leur perception des attentes du partenariat concernant leurs activités conjointes. Cette observation suggère que même si un partenaire semble percevoir avec précision le temps que l'autre souhaite consacrer à ses activités séparées, il/elle ne percevra pas automatiquement son besoin de s'engager dans des activités conjointes, et vice versa. Cette étude soutient de distinguer les activités séparées de celles qui sont réalisées conjointement lors de l'investigation de la mutualité des partenariats (Brower, 2014 ; Cornwell et al., 2019 ; Flood & Genadek, 2016 ; Santelli, 2018)

Le **chapitre 6** est une discussion et une interprétation des principaux résultats par rapport à l'objectif général de ce travail doctoral. Aborder la relation de partenariat romantique dans une perspective occupationnelle permet de saisir la mesure dans laquelle les occupations des partenaires sont constitutives de la relation. En définitive, les résultats du travail doctoral montrent que les occupations dans lesquelles s'engagent les partenaires, que ce soit conjointement ou séparément, peuvent être considérées comme des occupations collectives dès lors que le sens que chacun leur attribue est co-construit et partagé au sein du partenariat. A ce titre, le partage du sens doit être compris comme ne résidant pas dans l'individu ni dans son contexte social, mais, comme le rapportent Shank et Cutchin (2010), émanant de la relation dynamique et constante entre les personnes et le monde qui les entoure, celle-ci existant à travers l'occupation. Certaines occupations conjointes, c'est-à-dire, des co-occupations (Pickens & Pizur-Barnekow, 2009; van Nes et al., 2012), prennent pour sens partagé le fait de passer du

temps ensemble pour renforcer la relation. Par ailleurs, les partenaires peuvent également co-construire et partager le sens qu'ils attribuent à des occupations dans lesquelles l'engagement est séparé. Cet engagement occupationnel reflète alors la contribution de chacun à la relation (Bertrand et al., 2022 ; submitted). La thèse soutient que l'interdépendance entre les partenaires est manifeste dans leurs occupations collectives (Bertrand et al., 2022, Bertrand et al., Submitted) qui reflètent dès lors la mutualité du partenariat. Lorsqu'ils/elles co-construisent le sens de leur engagement, chaque partenaire s'implique avec son identité, véhicule ses valeurs, intentions, croyances et choix. C'est cela qui façonne l'expérience que le partenaire fait de son engagement. Le partage du sens qui découle de ce processus signifie donc que les partenaires partagent leur expérience. En somme, par leur engagement dans des occupations collectives, les partenaires façonnent la mutualité du partenariat (Buehlman et al., 1992; Gildersleeve et al., 2017). Néanmoins, la relation entre engagement occupationnel et mutualité ne doit pas être vue comme linéaire. En effet, la mutualité renvoie aussi à la manière dont les partenaires perçoivent de manière réciproque les attentes de l'autre envers la relation, tout en tenant compte des leurs (Drigotas et al., 1999; Gildersleeve et al., 2017). La mutualité des partenaires influencerait donc la manière dont ceux-ci vont s'ajuster aux attentes de chacun en terme d'engagement occupationnel (Bertrand et al., Submitted; Gager & Sanchez, 2003). La recherche IP-COUPLES (Bertrand et al., submitted) montre d'une part que l'ensemble des participants se considère comme étant modérément équilibré en terme d'occupations conjointes ou séparées. D'autre part, les résultats indiquent une forte congruence entre les perceptions des partenaires quant à leurs différentes occupations collectives. Ils suggèrent que les participants perçoivent et s'ajustent de manière satisfaisante aux attentes de chacun quant à leur engagement occupationnel. La mesure dans laquelle la mutualité des partenaires est reflétée dans la congruence de leurs perceptions de leurs différentes occupations collectives n'a pas été abordée dans la thèse. Néanmoins, les résultats suggèrent que des partenaires qui présentent un haut degré de congruence des perceptions sont davantage susceptibles de présenter un haut degré de mutualité (Acitelli et al., 1993, 2001). Par là-même, selon leur mutualité, les partenaires seraient en mesure de s'ajuster aux besoins de chacun en terme d'engagement occupationnel conjoint ou séparé (Bertrand et al., 2021, Bertrand et al., 2022, Bertrand et al., Submitted).

Il est par ailleurs admis que la principale facette de la mutualité du partenariat renvoie à la construction d'une « identité partenariale » qui peut se développer au cours de la relation par l'accumulation d'expériences (Alea et al., 2015; Cruwys et al., 2022; Skerrett, 2016). En s'appuyant sur le cadre théorique développé par John Dewey, psychologue, pédagogue et philosophe américain, autour de la continuité de l'expérience (Dewey, 1906 ; 2005), la relation entre l'engagement des partenaires dans leurs occupations collectives et la mutualité qui en découle doit être vu comme continue dans le temps : elle s'inscrit dans une temporalité (Buehlman et al., 1992; Gildersleeve et al., 2017; Reid et al., 2006). En d'autres termes, la continuité de l'expérience (Dewey, 1906; Rozier, 2010) renvoie à la manière dont

l'engagement occupationnel au fil du temps est constitutif de la construction d'une identité partenariale. Quand les partenaires s'engagent dans leurs occupations collectives, conjointes ou séparées, ils/elles partagent leur expérience et donc, construisent leur mutualité. Réciproquement, plus les partenaires renforcent leur mutualité, plus ils vont être en mesure de s'ajuster aux attentes de chacun en terme d'engagement dans les occupations collectives. Les résultats de ce travail doctoral suggèrent que cette identité partenariale n'est pas figée : elle se développe au fil des expériences que font les partenaires de leur engagement occupationnel. Aborder celui-ci comme constitutif d'une identité partenariale permet de saisir la mesure dans laquelle des événements de vie génèrent des situations problématiques telles que les décrit Dewey (Foucart, 2013; Margot-Cattin, 2018), c'est-à-dire, dans lesquelles la continuité de l'expérience est menacée.

L'apparition ou l'aggravation d'une déficience visuelle au sein du couple est un exemple de rupture de continuité qui est investigué dans la thèse (Bertrand et al., 2022). En effet, la perte de vision est un événement de vie qui affecte la manière dont les partenaires co-construisent le sens de leurs occupations, pouvant résulter sur la perte de sens partagé (Bertrand et al., 2022). Cela peut entraîner le retrait de l'occupation collective, ce qui affecte en conséquence la mutualité du partenariat (Bertrand et al., 2022). De ce fait, l'identité partenariale qui s'est construite au fil du temps est remise en cause. Les stratégies identifiées (Bertrand et al., 2022) soulignent les efforts entrepris par les partenariats pour remodeler leur engagement occupationnel, et maintenir la continuité de leurs occupations collectives.

A l'issue de cette thèse, il est proposé de comprendre la mutualité du partenariat romantique dans une épistémologie collectiviste (Malfitano et al., 2021). En d'autres termes, l'évolution d'une identité partenariale est fondée sur la continuité de l'engagement occupationnel des partenaires qui est alors moins à comprendre comme celui des partenaires (conjoint ou séparé), que comme celui du partenariat. Le partenariat est l'unité d'analyse, c'est-à-dire, une identité sociale qui englobe celle des deux partenaires (Cruwys et al., 2022). De plus, la littérature sur la mutualité des partenariats romantiques a mis en évidence que celle-ci peut être telle que le partenariat peut devenir aux yeux des partenaires une entité à part entière (Cruwys et al., 2022), transcendant leur individualité respective plutôt que les additionnant (Alea et al., 2015; Cruwys et al., 2022). Les résultats de la thèse corroborent cette idée mais en y ajoutant une perspective innovante : ils permettent de soutenir que le partenariat romantique est une communauté occupationnelle. D'après Lavalley (2017), la question « Faisons-nous bien ensemble ? », telle que posée dans le titre de la thèse, renvoie à examiner et catégoriser l'occupation d'un groupe dans son ensemble pour comprendre les relations et les réseaux à partir desquels une communauté fait l'expérience d'une occupation. En tant que communauté occupationnelle, le partenariat devient donc l'unité d'analyse de l'engagement occupationnel. Il faut donc décrire le partenariat comme un système relationnel complet, comprenant à la fois les partenaires mais aussi les systèmes et structures sociales, culturelles ou politiques à travers lesquels ceux-ci agissent et qui donnent du sens aux expériences

(Dickie et al., 2006; Lavalley, 2017). En d'autres termes, les occupations dans lesquelles les partenaires s'engagent sont constitutives de l'identité partenariale. C'est en cela que les occupations contribuent à faire vivre le partenariat ; en même temps, c'est en s'engageant dans ces occupations que les partenaires s'interconnectent, co-construisent et partagent leurs expériences. Il faut néanmoins comprendre le partenariat romantique comme une communauté occupationnelle non-figée : elle évolue et fluctue au gré de la coordination des partenaires et de leurs parcours de vie (Lavalley, 2017). L'enjeu n'est finalement pas de déterminer quel partenaire réalise l'occupation, si cela est conjointement ou non, mais plutôt de faire en sorte que le partenariat continue à assumer cette occupation. C'est ainsi que si l'engagement occupationnel du partenariat permet de faire vivre celui-ci, la remise en cause de cet engagement occupationnel, en raison notamment d'un problème de santé tel que la perte de vision, est un risque important pour l'identité partenariale. Finalement, considérer le partenariat romantique comme une communauté occupationnelle est un pas supplémentaire vers la compréhension des occupations comme émanant d'un réseau de relations transactionnelles entre des individus et leurs contextes, et non comme un phénomène individuel. De plus amples recherches qui appliquent cette perspective au partenariat, incluant la diversité des formes d'union (Sassler & Lichter, 2020), et plus largement, à toutes les formes de communautés occupationnelles dont peut faire simultanément partie une personne (Lavalley, 2017), sont suggérées, afin d'approfondir les relations transactionnelles qui sous-tendent leur identité. De telles études pourraient contribuer à concevoir et implémenter des interventions qui ciblent les partenariats romantiques qui font face à la perturbation de leurs occupations collectives, en particulier en raison d'une déficience visuelle d'un partenaire, mais plus largement, en raison de tout évènement de vie critique.

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Appendixes

Appendix 1 – Extraction of key information from studies included in the scoping review

Appendixes

Author, year	Publication	Research location	Aim / Research question	Participants	Study design	How partners' engagement in collective occupations is described
Atler, Moravec, Seidle, Manns & Stephans (2016)	Physical and Occupational Therapy in Geriatrics	United States	What are the lived experiences of spousal caregivers examined through their daily occupations and experiences?	Five women aged from 57 to 82, caregiving for their husband living with a stroke (n=3) or dementia (n=2). Heterosexuals partnerships, from Colorado area, four are community-dwelling.	Qualitative, phenomenological study	Both partners experience occupational disruption because of one's illness. Care-related occupations are time-consuming and are associated with negative experiences. Caregiving partner's apart occupational engagement is associated to a positive experience (restorative and pleasant). Meaning ascribed to couple's historically shared occupations is altered because of changes in the relationship dynamic.
Bailey & Jackson (2005)	Journal of Occupational Science	United States	Learn how lesbian couples engage in the specific occupation of household money management.	Thirteen same-sex partnerships of two community-dwelling US women, aged 35-78, from east and west coast, all White Caucasian.	Qualitative descriptive	Managing finances is a co-occupation of partners since it intersects with the growth of their relationship. Partners share a meaning of a fairness of their respective contributions while engaging in this co-occupation.
Baum (1995)	Journal of Occupational Science	United States	Examine the role of occupation in maximizing the function and minimizing the disturbing behaviors of the person with DAT, and minimizing the stress experienced by the carer, by understanding the effect that both deficits and occupation play on self-care, and disturbing behavior, and their relation to the carer's stress.	34 men and 38 women with DAT and their partners, aged 53-85, married heterosexuals community-dwelling partnerships, from Washington area, all participants were Caucasian	Quantitative, cross-sectional study	When they engage in care-related occupations with their partner with dementia, caregiving partners' stress is related to the onset of his/her disturbing behaviors. Maintaining the occupational engagement of the partner with dementia enables to reduce disturbing behaviors and to alleviate the stress of the caregiver. However, this requires adapting occupations to the partner with dementia's capacities.

Appendixes

Ekstam, Tham & Borell (2011)	Scandinavian Journal of Occupational Therapy	Sweden	Identify and describe two couple's approaches to changes in everyday life during the first year after a stroke.	Two heterosexuals community-dwelling partnerships of adults older than 70, from Stockholm. One partner has a stroke.	Qualitative study; Prospective longitudinal case study	Occupational engagement, needs and demands of both partners change when one has a stroke. There is a contrast between the two participating couples. In one couple, the partner has the support of the other to engage in her occupations, she improves her abilities and capacities. In the other couple, the partner abandons his occupations. The other partner endorses all occupations and does not support her spouse's engagement.
Frank, Bernardo, Tropper, Noguchi, Lipman, Maulhardt & Weidtze (1996)	The American Journal of Occupational Therapy	United States	Explore how the practice of Orthodox Judaism influence a person's daily occupation.	Four heterosexual community-dwelling married partnerships, from Los Angeles area, partners were in their twenties and were all born in North America.	Qualitative, ethnographic research	Romantic partners occupational engagement is interconnected since they describe it at a couple-level. Whether through their apart or joint engagement, the partners aim to observe religious principles (i.e., the Sabbath).
Hasselkus & Murray (2007)	The American Journal of Occupational Therapy	United States	Gain understanding of the nature of the caregivers' daily occupations as they relate to the caregiver's perceptions of wellbeing.	33 caregivers, including two men and seven women, aged 22-65, whose partners had a DAT, heterosexuals community-dwelling married partnerships	Qualitative, phenomenological study	One partner' DAT is an occupational disruption should be understood at a couple-level. The maintenance of partners' joint engagement in long-established occupations has a double purpose. Firstly, successful joint engagement in occupations is a source of satisfaction for both partners. Secondly, such joint occupational engagement can maintain a sense of unity and normalcy for the partners. This normalcy refers to the continuity of a couple's shared identity.
Heatwole Shank & Presgraves (2019)	OTJR: Occupation, Participation and Health	United States	Examine how an older couple's instrumental activities of daily life were mutually negotiated in the physical and social spaces outside the home.	One heterosexual partnership of community-dwelling adults older than 80, both partners were Caucasian	Mixed methods, Instrumental case-study approach	Joint community-based occupations of married community-dwelling older adults is intertwined. Changing patterns of occupational engagement and declining navigation and function is reported because of one's functional losses. Ageing at home is a couple's goal where each partner contributes with own capacities.

Appendixes

<p>Heward, Molineux & Gough (2006)</p>	<p>Journal of Occupational Science</p>	<p>Great Britain</p>	<p>What are the occupational issues for partners of people with multiple sclerosis?</p>	<p>Five men and four women, whose partners had multiple sclerosis, heterosexual community-dwelling partnerships, from the North of England</p>	<p>Qualitative, constructionist grounded theory</p>	<p>Romantic partners experience a disruption of their joint and respective apart occupations because of one's multiple sclerosis. Certain occupations can be maintained since they are adapted to the partner's capacities. New occupations emerge in relation with the disease (such as engagement in associations). Partners' apart and joint engagement in meaningful occupations contributes to the maintenance of the relationship.</p>
<p>Kniepmann & Cupler (2014)</p>	<p>British Journal of Occupational Therapy</p>	<p>Great Britain</p>	<p>To understand the occupational changes in spousal caregivers for survivors of stroke with aphasia.</p>	<p>Two men and ten women, aged 37-73, whose partners had a stroke and ensuing aphasia, heterosexual community-dwelling partnerships, from St-Louis (Missouri) area</p>	<p>Mixed-methods exploratory study</p>	<p>Romantic partners experience restrictions in their leisure and social co-occupation because of one's stroke. Such co-occupations were meaningful through joint engagement. Partners aim to find new opportunities of co-occupations while trying to connect to their past shared experiences.</p>
<p>Kniepmann (2012)</p>	<p>British Journal of Occupational Therapy</p>	<p>Great Britain</p>	<p>Investigate whether a reduction in valued activities contributes to burden and health-related quality of life.</p>	<p>Twenty women, aged 22-65, whose partners had a stroke, heterosexuals community-dwelling partnerships, 13 Caucasian, six African Americans, and one Asian</p>	<p>Quantitative, exploratory cross-sectional study</p>	<p>Partners of one partner with stroke must juggle between multiple demands (i.e., paid employment, family life and care-related). They experience occupational loss since they cannot maintain some of their valued occupations, apart or joint.</p>

Appendixes

<p>Laliberté Rudman, Hebert & Reid (2006)</p>	<p>Canadian Journal of Occupational Therapy</p>	<p>Canada</p>	<p>Gain an understanding of the experiences and perspectives of senior stroke survivors and their primary caregiver regarding a) how wheelchair user use facilitated and constrained participation in occupations; and b) how contextual factors enabled and constrained wheelchair use and participation in occupations.</p>	<p>16 stroke survivors/caregiver pairs, aged 44.5 to 86.2, including 13 heterosexual community-dwelling married partnerships, most participants were Caucasian</p>	<p>Qualitative, grounded theory</p>	<p>Stroke survivors and their caregiving partners are both affected by a restriction of occupational opportunities due to the onset of the disease. Apart and joint occupations of both partners (particularly leisure and social) are restricted.</p>
<p>Martin, Miranda & Bean (2008)</p>	<p>Occupational Therapy International</p>	<p>United States</p>	<p>To use horticulture activity to better understand the impact of separation because of a long-term disability where one spouse lives in a skilled nursing facility and the other spouse remains in the community.</p>	<p>Five men and one woman, aged 65-89, residing in a skilled nursing facility, and their community-dwelling partner.</p>	<p>Qualitative, phenomenological– hermeneutic study</p>	<p>Partners experience changes in their occupations due to the one partner’s placement. Such changes have an impact on the identity of the couple since the partners’ joint occupations are restrained, such as eating or going to church. Joint engagement in horticulture supports partners to connect to the history of their partnership.</p>
<p>Medina, Haltiwanger & Funk (2011)</p>	<p>Physical and Occupational Therapy in Geriatrics</p>	<p>United States</p>	<p>Explore the coping process and cultural nuances among Mexican-American men with chronic conditions.</p>	<p>Three Mexican-American men, older than 65, who have a diagnosed chronic illness, partnered with their wives acting as primary caregiver. Heterosexuals community-dwelling partnerships from Texas</p>	<p>Qualitative, phenomenological study</p>	<p>Due to their chronic illness, participants cannot engage apart in their own occupations through which they contribute to the household and fulfill their role as husbands. They need the assistance of their partner. Moreover, they experience the loss of sexual relations as an occupational loss and a threat to the partnership.</p>

Appendixes

Persson & Zingmark (2006)	Scandinavian Journal of Occupational Therapy	Sweden	Illuminate experiences of daily occupations from a meaning perspective among spouses living with a person with Alzheimer’s Disease.	Eight adults aged 59-75, whose partners had a diagnosis of DAT. Heterosexual community-dwelling partnerships	Qualitative, phenomenological–hermeneutic study	DAT affects occupational engagement of both partners. They experience an occupational adaptation as their occupational lives are increasingly intertwined. Supporting the partner's engagement in the couple’s historical joint or apart occupations strengthens the togetherness of the relationship.
Van Dongen, Josephsson & Ekstam (2014)	Scandinavian Journal of Occupational Therapy	Austria	Explore how some working Austrians experience and handle their changing daily occupations after becoming carers of a relative who has had a stroke.	Three part-time working carers, including two women aged 59, wives of husbands who had a stroke, heterosexuals community-dwelling partnerships.	Qualitative, phenomenological study	Both partners experience changes in their occupations because of the husbands’ stroke since he cannot do his own occupations. Since care-related occupations are time-consuming, caregiving partners must reduce their own leisure or social occupations. Partners reshape their occupations while they try to make sense of such changes.
Van Nes, Jonsson, Hirschler, Abma & Deeg (2012)	Journal of Occupational Science	The Netherlands	Advance knowledge of co-occupation amongst late-life couples by exploring how one couple experienced and gave meanings to one of their most valued co-occupations: going for a walk together	One heterosexual community-dwelling partnership of adults older than 80. One partner has a stroke.	Longitudinal 2-year qualitative study	Walking together is a co-occupation for both partners. They co-construct and share the meaning as well as share its space and temporality. Such shared meaning contributes to their couple identity since it strengthens partners’ togetherness.
van Nes, Runge & Jonsson (2009)	Journal of Occupational Science	The Netherlands	Gain an understanding of an elderly couple’s experience of their everyday occupations following a stroke	One heterosexual partnership of community-dwelling adults older than 80. One partner has a stroke.	Qualitative, narrative inquiry	Partners are coordinated when they engage in their occupations, whether jointly or apart. Boundaries are unclear between joint and individual occupations since they are all those of the couple. Partners experience togetherness and we-ness while jointly engaging in their co-occupations. A couple’s shared identity emanates from partners’ occupational engagement.

Appendixes

<p>Vikström, Borell, Stigsdotter-Neely, Josephsson (2005)</p>	<p>OTJR: Occupation, Participation and Health</p>	<p>Sweden</p>	<p>Identify self-initiated support strategies that caregivers provide when performing an everyday occupation together with their partner with dementia, identify negative aspects of caregiver support</p>	<p>Thirteen heterosexual community-dwelling partnerships of adults aged 58-85, from Stockholm. One partner has dementia.</p>	<p>Qualitative, observational study</p>	<p>While being jointly engaged (i.e., for coffee or tea making), caregiving partners use different strategies to support the occupational performance of the partner with dementia. Such support can strengthen the closeness of partners and the maintenance of joint occupational engagement.</p>
<p>Vrkljan (2010)</p>	<p>British Journal of Occupational Therapy</p>	<p>Canada</p>	<p>Examine, in-depth, those factors than can influence the adoption and shared use of new technology in older adulthood.</p>	<p>First part: Twenty-two heterosexuals community-dwelling partnerships of adults aged 60 years or older, from Ontario. Second part: two partnerships from the initial sample.</p>	<p>Mixed-method, cross-comparative case study</p>	<p>Both partners scaffold the occupational performance of their couple while using a in-vehicle technology to navigate and arrive safely at their destination. Partners consider themselves as a driving team since they are working together to achieve their goal.</p>
<p>Yong, Price, Napier & Matthews (2020)</p>	<p>British Journal of Occupational Therapy</p>	<p>Great Britain</p>	<p>Gain a deeper understanding of the experience of UK partner caregiving and how it impacts on the caregiver's occupational life</p>	<p>Ten partnered adults aged 63-88, whose partners had a diagnosis of dementia, heterosexuals community-dwelling partnerships</p>	<p>Qualitative design (no further information)</p>	<p>Caregiving for a partner with dementia has an impact of the other partner's occupational engagement. While prioritizing the partner with dementia's needs, the other partner may experience loss of his/her own occupational routines. The maintenance or new opportunities of joint occupations are a mean to support caregiving partners' adaptation to a new acquired life-role.</p>

Appendix 2 – Life Balance Inventory

Life Balance Inventory

To rate the following items, **STEP 1** indicate if you **do** the activity or **want** to do the activity by circling YES or NO. Then, **STEP 2**, for the activities you circled YES, think about yourself doing each activity in the past month, and rate how much time you **actually** spend in each activity compared to the amount of time you **want** to spend in each activity.

STEP 2: For the activities you circled YES, The amount of time I spend doing this activity is:

STEP 1:			ALWAYS LESS	SOMETIMES LESS	ABOUT RIGHT for me	SOMETIMES MORE	ALWAYS MORE
I DO this activity			than I want	than I want		than I want	than I want
Or WANT to do this activity							
Yes	No	Taking care of personal hygiene and bathing	1	2	3	2	1
Yes	No	Taking care of your appearance	1	2	3	2	1
Yes	No	Getting adequate sleep	1	2	3	2	1
Yes	No	Relaxing	1	2	3	2	1
Yes	No	Getting regular exercise	1	2	3	2	1
Yes	No	Eating nutritiously	1	2	3	2	1
Yes	No	Managing your health needs	1	2	3	2	1
Yes	No	Managing money (bills/budget/investments)	1	2	3	2	1
Yes	No	Driving	1	2	3	2	1
Yes	No	Taking the bus	1	2	3	2	1
Yes	No	Doing things with family members	1	2	3	2	1
Yes	No	Doing things with spouse/significant other	1	2	3	2	1
Yes	No	Doing things with friends	1	2	3	2	1
Yes	No	Taking care of children or family members	1	2	3	2	1
Yes	No	Having an intimate sexual relationship	1	2	3	2	1
Yes	No	Participating in groups (clubs, classes, etc.)	1	2	3	2	1
Yes	No	Meeting new people	1	2	3	2	1
Yes	No	Working for pay	1	2	3	2	1
Yes	No	Gaining competence in your job	1	2	3	2	1
Yes	No	Socializing at work	1	2	3	2	1
Yes	No	Participating in formal religious activities	1	2	3	2	1
Yes	No	Participating in traditional rituals, holidays	1	2	3	2	1
Yes	No	Participating in educational opportunities	1	2	3	2	1
Yes	No	Participating in professional organizations	1	2	3	2	1
Yes	No	Volunteering in the community	1	2	3	2	1
Yes	No	Participating in organized sports	1	2	3	2	1
Yes	No	Doing outdoor activities (hunting, fishing)	1	2	3	2	1

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STEP 2: For the activities you circled **YES**, The amount of time I spend doing this activity is:

STEP 1: I DO this activity Or WANT to do this activity			ALWAYS LESS than I want	SOMETIMES LESS than I want	ABOUT RIGHT for me	SOMETIMES MORE than I want	ALWAYS MORE than I want
Yes	No	Gardening	1	2	3	2	1
Yes	No	Communing with nature	1	2	3	2	1
Yes	No	Planning and coordinating events	1	2	3	2	1
Yes	No	Decorating or organizing spaces	1	2	3	2	1
Yes	No	Cooking	1	2	3	2	1
Yes	No	Doing housework	1	2	3	2	1
Yes	No	Shopping	1	2	3	2	1
Yes	No	Taking care of pets	1	2	3	2	1
Yes	No	Going to restaurants/bars	1	2	3	2	1
Yes	No	Going to plays, movies, sporting events	1	2	3	2	1
Yes	No	Doing crafts, hobbies	1	2	3	2	1
Yes	No	Making music	1	2	3	2	1
Yes	No	Making Art	1	2	3	2	1
Yes	No	Maintaining or repairing equipment	1	2	3	2	1
Yes	No	Sewing/needlework	1	2	3	2	1
Yes	No	Reading	1	2	3	2	1
Yes	No	Using computers (text, internet, blogs)	1	2	3	2	1
Yes	No	Reflecting or meditating	1	2	3	2	1
Yes	No	Journaling	1	2	3	2	1
Yes	No	Composing, writing, (music, poetry etc)	1	2	3	2	1
Yes	No	Dancing, yoga, etc.	1	2	3	2	1
Yes	No	Playing games of skill (cards, electronic, etc)	1	2	3	2	1
Yes	No	Watching TV	1	2	3	2	1
Yes	No	Mentoring (teaching) others	1	2	3	2	1
Yes	No	Traveling (any means, locally, globally)	1	2	3	2	1
Yes	No	Storytelling	1	2	3	2	1

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Please answer questions on the back side

About You

Please indicate the option that best describes you by putting an X in the box next to the answer or fill in the blank.

What is your age? _____ (fill in)

What is your sex?

- Male
- Female

What is your race?

- American Indian or Alaskan native
- Asian
- Black
- Hispanic or Latino
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- White

What is your marital status?

- Single
- Married/partnered
- Divorced
- Separated
- Widowed

Number of children _____ (fill in)

If you have children, how many are living with you?
_____ (fill in)

What is your employment status? (check all that apply)

- Full time
- Part time
- Temporary leave from job
- Unemployed and looking for work
- Retired
- In school
- Not employed outside the home

What is the highest level of education you completed?

- Less than high school
- High school diploma or GED
- Associate degree
- Bachelor's degree
- Master's or professional degree
- Doctoral degree

What is your yearly household income?

- Less than \$10,000
- \$10,000- \$22,999
- \$21,000-\$39,999
- \$40,000 - \$52,999
- \$53,000-\$72,999
- \$73,000- \$110,000
- \$110,000 or more

Add your

language here



The Life Balance Inventory

This is an invitation for you to complete the enclosed battery of assessments related to your lifestyle. It is a group of short questionnaires that will take about 20 minutes to complete where you will be asked about your time use in activities, your feelings, and your stress. Specific instructions precede each part.

The purpose of this research is

I deeply appreciate your willingness to fill out the assessments and assist with this research!
Please return the completed assessments to me as soon as you have finished them.
Many thanks in advance

signature

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Appendix 3 – Inventaire de l'Équilibre de Vie (Version française du LBI)

Inventory of Life Balance

Translation of the Life Balance Inventory (Matuska, 2010)

Translation by N. Larivière, erg., Ph. D. and M. Levasseur, erg., Ph. D. in collaboration with Lucie Moleski, student in ergotherapy; Francisca Beloin, student in ergotherapy; Cynthia Humphrey, erg.; Andrew Freeman, erg., Ph. D.; Ginette Aubin, erg., Ph. D., and revised by Stéphanie Boucher, professional translator

NOM : _____

DATE : _____

Instructions : Please answer the following statements in two steps.

STEP 1 : Among the activities stated, indicate those that you do or that you want to do by circling YES or NO.

STEP 2 : For the activities for which you have circled YES, evaluate if the time that you have **really** dedicated to each of the activities **during the last month** corresponds to the time that you would like to dedicate to it.

ÉTAPE 2 : Pour les activités pour lesquelles j'ai encerclé **OUI**, le temps consacré à cette activité est :

ÉTAPE 1 : JE FAIS cette activité ou JE VOUDRAIS FAIRE cette activité			TOUJOURS MOINS que je voudrais	PARFOIS MOINS que je voudrais	AUTANT ou PRÈS que je voudrais	PARFOIS PLUS que je voudrais	TOUJOURS PLUS que je voudrais	
1.	Oui	Non	Prendre soin de mon hygiène personnelle et me laver	1	2	3	2	1
2.	Oui	Non	Prendre soin de mon apparence	1	2	3	2	1
3.	Oui	Non	Dormir suffisamment et de manière satisfaisante	1	2	3	2	1
4.	Oui	Non	Me détendre	1	2	3	2	1
5.	Oui	Non	Faire de l'exercice physique régulièrement	1	2	3	2	1
6.	Oui	Non	Manger sainement	1	2	3	2	1
7.	Oui	Non	Prendre soin de ma santé (pression artérielle, vitamines, glucomètre, etc.)	1	2	3	2	1
8.	Oui	Non	Gérer mes finances (factures, budget, investissements)	1	2	3	2	1
9.	Oui	Non	Conduire (tout type de véhicule)	1	2	3	2	1
10.	Oui	Non	Prendre l'autobus	1	2	3	2	1

ÉTAPE 2 : Pour les activités pour lesquelles j'ai encadré **OUI**, le temps consacré à cette activité est :

ÉTAPE 1 : JE FAIS cette activité ou JE VOUDRAIS FAIRE cette activité			TOUJOURS MOINS que je voudrais	PARFOIS MOINS que je voudrais	AUTANT ou PRÈS que je voudrais	PARFOIS PLUS que je voudrais	TOUJOURS PLUS que je voudrais	
11.	Oui	Non	Faire des activités avec des membres de ma famille	1	2	3	2	1
12.	Oui	Non	Faire des activités avec mon (ma) conjoint(e) ou avec mon (ma) partenaire	1	2	3	2	1
13.	Oui	Non	Faire des activités avec mes ami(e)s	1	2	3	2	1
14.	Oui	Non	Prendre soin des membres de mon entourage (famille, enfants, amis, voisins)	1	2	3	2	1
15.	Oui	Non	Avoir une relation sexuelle intime	1	2	3	2	1
16.	Oui	Non	Participer à des groupes (clubs sociaux : club de lecture, club de cartes, cours, etc.)	1	2	3	2	1
17.	Oui	Non	Rencontrer de nouvelles personnes	1	2	3	2	1
18.	Oui	Non	Avoir un emploi rémunéré	1	2	3	2	1
19.	Oui	Non	Acquérir des compétences dans mon emploi	1	2	3	2	1

ÉTAPE 2 : Pour les activités pour lesquelles j'ai encerclé **OUI**, le temps consacré à cette activité est :

ÉTAPE 1 : JE FAIS cette activité ou JE VOUDRAIS FAIRE cette activité			TOUJOURS MOINS que je voudrais	PARFOIS MOINS que je voudrais	AUTANT ou PRÈS que je voudrais	PARFOIS PLUS que je voudrais	TOUJOURS PLUS que je voudrais	
20.	Oui	Non	Avoir des interactions sociales au travail	1	2	3	2	1
21.	Oui	Non	Participer à des activités religieuses officielles	1	2	3	2	1
22.	Oui	Non	Participer à des fêtes ou des activités traditionnels (anniversaires, cérémonies religieuses, Noël, etc.)	1	2	3	2	1
23.	Oui	Non	Participer aux activités éducatives dans des milieux d'enseignement ou dans la communauté	1	2	3	2	1
24.	Oui	Non	Prendre part à des activités d'une association ou d'un ordre professionnel	1	2	3	2	1
25.	Oui	Non	Faire du bénévolat au sein de la communauté	1	2	3	2	1
26.	Oui	Non	Participer à un sport organisé	1	2	3	2	1
27.	Oui	Non	Faire des activités de plein air (chasse, pêche, randonnée, etc.)	1	2	3	2	1

ÉTAPE 2 : Pour les activités pour lesquelles j'ai encerclé **OUI**, le temps consacré à cette activité est :

ÉTAPE 1 : JE FAIS cette activité ou JE VOUDRAIS FAIRE cette activité			TOUJOURS MOINS que je voudrais	PARFOIS MOINS que je voudrais	AUTANT ou PRÈS que je voudrais	PARFOIS PLUS que je voudrais	TOUJOURS PLUS que je voudrais	
28.	Oui	Non	Jardiner	1	2	3	2	1
29.	Oui	Non	Entrer en contact avec la nature (s'asseoir dans un parc, écouter le chant des oiseaux, etc.)	1	2	3	2	1
30.	Oui	Non	Planifier et coordonner des événements	1	2	3	2	1
31.	Oui	Non	Décorer ou aménager des espaces (organiser son espace personnel ou de bureau)	1	2	3	2	1
32.	Oui	Non	Cuisiner	1	2	3	2	1
33.	Oui	Non	Entretenir mon domicile	1	2	3	2	1
34.	Oui	Non	Magasiner	1	2	3	2	1
35.	Oui	Non	Prendre soin d'animaux de compagnie	1	2	3	2	1
36.	Oui	Non	Aller au restaurant ou dans des bars	1	2	3	2	1
37.	Oui	Non	Aller au théâtre, au cinéma ou assister à des événements sportifs	1	2	3	2	1

ÉTAPE 2 : Pour les activités pour lesquelles j'ai encerclé **OUI**, le temps consacré à cette activité est :

ÉTAPE 1 : JE FAIS cette activité ou JE VOUDRAIS FAIRE cette activité			TOUJOURS MOINS que je voudrais	PARFOIS MOINS que je voudrais	AUTANT ou PRÈS que je voudrais	PARFOIS PLUS que je voudrais	TOUJOURS PLUS que je voudrais	
38.	Oui	Non	Faire de l'artisanat, avoir des passe-temps (scrapbooking, faire de la photo, collections, etc.)	1	2	3	2	1
39.	Oui	Non	Jouer de la musique	1	2	3	2	1
40.	Oui	Non	Faire des activités artistiques (peinture, théâtre, musique, sculpture, etc.)	1	2	3	2	1
41.	Oui	Non	Entretien ou réparation des appareils	1	2	3	2	1
42.	Oui	Non	Faire de la couture, des travaux d'aiguille	1	2	3	2	1
43.	Oui	Non	Lire	1	2	3	2	1
44.	Oui	Non	Utiliser un ordinateur (traitement de textes, Internet, blogues)	1	2	3	2	1
45.	Oui	Non	Faire de longues et profondes réflexions ou méditer	1	2	3	2	1
46.	Oui	Non	Écrire dans mon journal intime	1	2	3	2	1
47.	Oui	Non	Composer, écrire (musique, poèmes, etc.)	1	2	3	2	1

ÉTAPE 2 : Pour les activités pour lesquelles j'ai encerclé **OUI**, le temps consacré à cette activité est :

ÉTAPE 1 : JE FAIS cette activité ou JE VOUDRAIS FAIRE cette activité			TOUJOURS MOINS que je voudrais	PARFOIS MOINS que je voudrais	AUTANT ou PRÈS que je voudrais	PARFOIS PLUS que je voudrais	TOUJOURS PLUS que je voudrais	
48.	Oui	Non	Danser, faire du yoga, faire du tai-chi, etc. (arts expressifs par le mouvement)	1	2	3	2	1
49.	Oui	Non	Jouer à des jeux d'habileté (cartes, jeux électroniques, etc.)	1	2	3	2	1
50.	Oui	Non	Regarder la télévision	1	2	3	2	1
51.	Oui	Non	Faire du mentorat (enseigner)	1	2	3	2	1
52.	Oui	Non	Voyager (tous les moyens de transport, localement, mondialement)	1	2	3	2	1
53.	Oui	Non	Raconter des histoires	1	2	3	2	1

Inventaire de l'équilibre de vie :

Cotation :

Score total (score des items cochés « oui »/ # items cochés oui):

_____ / _____

Interprétation	
1,00 – 1,49	Très déséquilibré
1,50 – 1,99	Déséquilibré
2,00 – 2,49	Moyennement équilibré
2,50 – 3,00	Très équilibré

Sous-échelles :

(1) Satisfaire besoins de base pour santé et sécurité (n = 6) : 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7

Score = score des items cochés « oui »/ # items cochés oui = _____ / _____ =

(2) Avoir des relations satisfaisantes (n = 10): 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 20, 35, 51

Score = score des items cochés « oui »/ # items cochés oui = _____ / _____ =

(3) Se sentir engagé, mis au défi et compétent (n = 19) : 8, 18, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 36, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 48, 49, 50, 52, 53

Score = score des items cochés « oui »/ # items cochés oui = _____ / _____ =

(4) Donner un sens et une identité personnelle positive (n = 15) : 2, 19, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 32, 33, 34, 37, 45, 46, 47

Score = score des items cochés « oui »/ # items cochés oui = _____ / _____ =

Note : les items « conduire » et « prendre autobus » vont dans le score total seulement.

