

**Parental Influence and Career Choice: How Parents Affect
the Career Aspirations of Their Children**

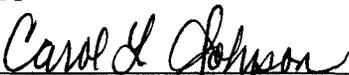
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ABSTRACT

While perception suggests career choice is an individual decision, research indicates a variety of influences are likely to determine ones ultimate career choice. Parents have been found to greatly impact the career selection process of their children. Many parents are unaware of all the ways they can influence their children's career decision. Work ethic, family values and gender stereotyping in the family may have greater impact than previously thought. This literature review dispels the myth that children and adolescents defy their parents' values and expectations regarding career options.

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Chapter I: Introduction

Choosing a career is often considered a major turning point in a young adult's life. This decision alone has the potential to open the door for success or close the door of opportunity. While often perceived to be an individual choice, research suggests that a variety of influences such as family, school, community, and social and economic factors are likely to manipulate one's ultimate career decision (Ferry, 2006). Among these factors, students report that parents have the greatest influence on which career they choose (Kniveton, 2004).

Few parents seem to recognize this impact and still believe that they have little to do with the career choices of their children (Taylor, Harris, & Taylor, 2004). In a study from the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill (Taylor, Harris, & Taylor, 2004), almost half of freshman parents stated that they believed they should remain neutral in regard to their child's career development. However, additional studies show that parents have a greater influence than teachers on career choice (Kniveton, 2004) and can even influence what major their children choose to pursue in college (Simpson, 2003). It is clear that parents believe they have less influence over their children's career decisions than the research supports. This perception seems to differ from the perception of children, who often report their parents to be of the highest influence (Ferry, 2006; Kniveton, 2004). Due to this perception gap, it is important to examine the result of parental influence in regard to their children's career choices.

While parents assume that their direct career advice may be influential, they may be unaware that they can also exert a strong career influence simply by serving as examples of workers (Kniveton, 2004). In fact, children as young as five years old begin

to identify with the occupation of their mother or father (Havighurst, 1964). Parents start influencing career decisions as soon as their children can pronounce their job title.

Parents may also be unaware of the impact their norms and values have on their child's career choice. According to Biddle, Bank, and Marlin (as cited in Simpson, 2003), "rather than responding directly to external pressures ... students internalize parental norms and preferences and act, therefore, in accordance with those norms" (Transmission of Values section, ¶ 1). Because parental norms and values are likely to affect career choice, it is important that parents understand the subtle ways that they communicate their norms and values on a regular basis.

Research shows that parental norms and values most often affect children's career aspirations via parental interactions (Lavine, 1982), involvement in schoolwork (Simpson, 2003), and gender expectations (Jacobs, Chhin & Bleeker, 2006; Hesse-Biber & Carter, 2000). While parents may assume other variables such as occupation or education to be most influential, their influence is most often exerted through normative channels including their interest in schoolwork and aspirations for educational achievement (Simpson, 2003).

Many adults underestimate their children's intuitive capabilities (Jacobsen, 1999). Poulter (2006) states that, "Children have a nonstop camera running in their mind, recording any and all behaviors, comments, and attitudes of their parents" (p. 174). For instance, children's career preference can be influenced by regularly witnessing gender-typed interactions in the home (Lavine, 1982). This might include the portrayal of a dominant or non-dominant parental role that conveys a message to children about their own role in society. While parents may not consider this to be influential at a young age,

these interactions can profoundly limit or expand their children's future career aspirations.

In addition to becoming aware of the norms and values they portray, parents also need to know that their children will likely adopt these norms and values as their own. Michael Rutter (as cited in Otto, 2000) stated that, "Young people tend ... to share their parents' values on the major issues of life ..." (p. 111). Similarly, Otto (2000) said that ninety-three percent of high school juniors in his study reported holding similar values to their parents. This is significant because it dispels the myth that children and adolescents tend to defy their parents' values and expectations. Instead, it may be more accurate to say that children are quick to adopt their parent's norms and values, perhaps without ever exploring their own. This may be due to children's natural desire to connect with their parents (Poulter, 2006). As a result, they seek acceptance by adopting parental values and living out their career aspirations. Jacobsen (1999) referred to this phenomenon as "hand-me-down dreams," which is the title of her book about parental influence.

The danger in these quick assumptions is that children may aspire to a career that follows their parents' norms and values without developing their own sense of self. Jacobsen (1999) pointed out the following wager: "If your family's values mesh with your own, you can find strength and guidance in them throughout your career, however, if these values don't mesh, you'll build a career that your parents take pride in, but that leaves you frustrated and empty" (Jacobsen, 1999, p. 101). For that reason, it is important for parents to understand the many ways that they can influence their children's career choice.

Statement of the Problem

This paper is a literature review about parental influence on their children's career aspirations. This topic was chosen to further explore knowledge regarding adolescent career choice and the role that parents play in this decision. This is an important topic because parents may not realize the major impact their norms, values and gender roles have on career choice. Parental influence may present opportunities or obstacles during career exploration. Therefore, the question is how do parents affect the career aspirations of their children? Literature was reviewed and summarized during the spring of 2008.

Objectives

There are four objectives this paper will address. They are:

1. To examine parental influence within four theories of career development.
2. To gather research showing a link between parental expectations and children's career decisions.
3. To investigate gender socialization within the home and its affects on children's career perceptions.
4. To provide insight about parent-child relationships and how this may influence children's career aspirations.

Definition of Terms

In this paper, the following terms will be defined for the sake of clarity and understanding. These terms include the following:

Career – “a profession for which one trains and which is undertaken as a permanent calling” (Mish, 2004, p. 187).

Gender Socialization – “individuals learn what men are supposed to do and what women are supposed to do” (Hesse-Biber & Carter, 2000, p. 94).

Parent - “a person who brings up and cares for another” (Mish, 2004, p. 900).

Socioeconomic Status (SES) - “an individual’s or group’s position within a hierarchical social structure. Socioeconomic status depends on a combination of variables, including occupation, education, income, wealth, and place of residence” (Hirsch, Kett & Trefil, 2002).

Assumptions and Limitations

When reviewing literature for this topic, the following assumptions were made. It was assumed that all children were able to identify and describe their parents’ careers. It was also assumed that the parents described in the research had stable and consistent careers while raising their children.

In addition to the previous assumptions, there were also limitations that must be addressed. First, not all research described whether or not the children had knowledge of their parents’ careers. Second, not all variables of parenthood, such as gender, cultural differences, sexual orientation, education level, and income were examined. Third, the literature may not have accurately reflected the cultural norms of diverse populations. Lastly, parental expectations might have been linked to additional variables that were not identified in the literature.

Chapter II: Literature Review

This chapter will begin with a review of four career development theories, with a specific focus on parental influences. Following this review, there will be a discussion of parental values and expectations in regard to how these variables can affect children's career aspirations. Next, the parent-child relationship will be examined including parental connection, separateness, and daily interactions in the home. The effects of gender socialization will also be reviewed with a special focus on a mother's influence during her children's career development. This chapter will conclude with an overview of the Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work Day program, which will include its history and level of influence on career exploration.

Theories of Children's Career Aspirations

In order to understand the reasoning behind much of the research on parental influence of children's career choices, it is important to examine four main theories behind the development of children's career aspirations. These theories include those of Eli Ginzberg (1988), Robert Havighurst (1964), Anne Roe (1957), and Linda Gottfredson (1981).

Of these four, Eli Ginzberg was the first to develop a theory about career choice that included the stages of childhood (Trice, 1995). Ginzberg's theory suggested that occupational choice is an ongoing process that occurs in a succession of three periods: *fantasy* choices (before age 11), *tentative* choices (between ages 11 and 17), and *realistic* choices (between ages 17 and young adulthood) (Ginzberg, 1988). It is during the first period of fantasy choice when children are most impulsive about their career choices and make "an arbitrary translation ... of needs into an occupational choice" (Ginzberg, 1988,

p. 360). In a review of Ginzberg's theory, Trice (1995) said that during fantasy choice, "children ... aspire widely and impulsively with the principal constraints being the father's occupation and parental suggestions" (¶ 3). Ginzberg (1988) made no other allusion to parental influence except perhaps in the periods of tentative and realistic choice when he said that adolescents must, "work out a compromise between their interests, capacities, and values, and the opportunities and limitations of the environment" (p. 361). It seems that these opportunities and limitations of the environment might include parental influence; however, he did not allude to this specifically. Instead, Ginzberg (1988) said that the family was not doing enough and had developed too much of a "laissez-faire attitude" by saying to children: "You make any choice you want. All I want is for you to be happy" (p. 362). It seems that Ginzberg was suggesting that parents should become more involved in career planning with their children. Perhaps when he said that, "No adolescent ever makes an occupational choice alone," Ginzberg (1988) impelled other theorists to research who has the greatest influence over an adolescent's career decision (p. 362).

Another theorist, Robert Havighurst (1964), also recognized vocational development, but he believed this to be a lifelong process rather than something that only occurs within the stages of childhood. Havighurst's vocational development model consisted of six stages, spanning the ages of five to seventy and older, however, only the first stage mentioned parental influence (Havighurst, 1964). This stage was entitled, "Identification with a Worker" and included ages five to ten. While in this stage, children identified with a worker who was close to them such as their father, mother, or other significant person (Havighurst, 1964). While he did not make further mention of direct

parental influence in his model, Havighurst did recognize additional factors that parents could arguably influence during their child's first stage of vocational development. For instance, Havighurst believed that children must achieve certain developmental tasks at each stage in order to move onto the next level. After reviewing four case studies in regard to his theory, Havighurst (1964) noted that, "By age 10, it was clear to the practiced eye that ... work careers would be related to their performance of the intellectual, social, and moral developmental tasks of childhood" (p. 222). While not stated by Havighurst, other researchers have supported the idea that parents influence their child's intellectual, social, and moral development (Hesse-Biber & Carter, 2000; Otto, 2000).

Anne Roe (1957), a third theorist, believed parents had a more direct influence on career choice throughout their children's lives. Roe's theory was largely related to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. She believed that any needs that were not satisfied during childhood, would either be eliminated from one's consciousness, or serve as unconscious motivators. For example, Roe (1957) stated that, "A child whose expressions of natural curiosity were thoroughly blocked, would cease to be curious" (p. 213). Therefore, Roe (1957) maintained that parental attitudes toward their children were more important than the career they possessed or their behaviors.

Roe also believed that parenting styles were a major factor in determining a child's career choice. She included the following six parenting styles in her model: "overprotection," "overdemanding," "emotional rejection," "neglect of the child," "casual acceptance," and "loving acceptance" (Roe, 1957, p. 214). Roe (1957) hypothesized that children who experienced the parenting styles of "loving acceptance," "overprotection,"

and “overdemanding” would be orientated towards careers with persons, such as jobs dealing with service, culture, or entertainment (p. 216). On the other hand, children exposed to parenting styles of “casual acceptance,” “neglect,” and “emotional rejection” would be oriented towards careers with nonpersons, such as scientific and mechanical interests (Roe, 1957, p. 216). According to Trice (1995), Roe abandoned most of her hypotheses in 1964, suggesting that children pursued careers based on parental attachment. For instance, Roe stated that children with secure attachments most often pursued person-oriented occupations (Trice, 1995).

The last of the four theorists was Linda Gottfredson (1981) who stated that children’s career choices were influenced by seven major elements including gender, social class, background, intelligence, interests, competencies, and values. Each of these elements was thought to affect a child’s self-concept at four different stages of cognitive development. Gottfredson (1981) proposed that at each stage, children began to restrict their career choices as they grew in understanding of who they were. The first of the four stages was called “orientation to size and power,” which occurred between ages three and five (Gottfredson, 1981, p. 558). At this stage, children were able to grasp the concept of adulthood for the first time. The second stage occurred between age six and eight and was called “orientation to sex roles,” followed by the third stage, “orientation to social valuation,” between ages nine and thirteen (Gottfredson, 1981, p. 559). At the third stage, children developed more abstract concepts of self and thought about social class as well as their own abilities when considering a career. The fourth stage began at age fourteen and was called “an orientation to the internal, unique self” (Gottfredson, 1981, p. 566). At this stage, Gofffredson (1981) believed that children began to rule out certain careers that

were not consistent with their self-concept including their personal interests, capacities, and values.

While none of Gottfredson's four stages made a specific reference to the child's parents, she did mention that a college student was more likely to have knowledge of the skills necessary within their father's occupation compared to knowledge of other professions (Gottfredson, 1981). She also found that most children aspired to a career within their own reference group and said that, "A lower-class child is most likely to orient to the lower class and adopts its standards for success ..." (Gottfredson, 1981, p. 563). In addition, Gottfredson (1981) mentioned that children would adopt their parents' aspirations and their ideas of acceptable careers. She also found parental influence to be more significant for children of lower intelligence and social status. However, even children of higher intelligence and social status were more likely to plan for college if encouraged by their parents (Gottfredson, 1981). Therefore, it seems that even though Gottfredson suggested that career choice was largely impacted by children's self-concept, she also acknowledged the role of parental aspirations and encouragement.

Parental Values and Expectations

After reviewing four major theories of career development, it seems that parental values and expectations can play a large role in the career path that children choose to follow. While many believe that children, particularly adolescents, pay no attention to the values of their parents, research has shown otherwise. Michael Rutter (as cited in Otto, 2000) said that, "Young people tend both to share their parents' values on major issues of life and also to turn to them for guidance on most major concerns. The concept that parent-child alienation is a usual feature of adolescence is a myth" (p. 111). Therefore, it

seems that children and adolescents pay much attention to what their parents expect of them, particularly when it comes to choosing a career. Some maintain that without parental approval, children are often reluctant to pursue, or even explore, certain careers (Taylor, Harris, & Taylor, 2004).

Parents demonstrate their expectations by showing heightened support for particular careers. This was shown in a study done by Ferry (2006), which looked at the factors that influenced the career choices of adolescents in rural Pennsylvania. Through the use of twelve focus groups, Ferry (2006) was able to identify the groups' perceptions of the importance of family factors when choosing a career. Ferry (2006) reported that, "Parents, followed by other family members, provided valuable learning experiences through their own role models and supporting activities that assisted in exploring career interests" (Findings section, ¶ 3). By showing support for particular activities, parents demonstrated their preference for certain career options over others. Not surprisingly, parents tended to show additional support for occupational choices that mirrored their own (Kniveton, 2004).

In addition to demonstrating a preference for certain activities, most parental values and expectations can be seen in the norms they model at home. Biddle, Bank, and Marlin (as cited in Simpson, 2003) argued that the way in which parents influence their children's values is most often accomplished through socializing norms, rather than enforcing specific expectations or modeling behaviors. Therefore, instead of rewarding children for conforming to parental expectations, children simply internalize the norms of their parents and then pursue careers that fall in line with those norms (Simpson, 2003). This was demonstrated in a study by Otto (2000), who asked a cross-sectional group of

juniors from six high schools how closely their ideas matched their parents' ideas about which occupations to pursue. In the results, 46 % said their ideas were "mostly similar" to their parents and 36% said "very similar" (Otto, 2000, p. 113). This shows that by the time children reached adolescence, they had adopted their parents' norms and expectations as their own.

Oftentimes, the adoption of norms and expectations occurs covertly, without parents even realizing that it is taking place. Jacobsen (1999) said that, "Even parents who believe children should be free to develop their own budding talents and goals sometimes indirectly contradict this stance" (p.15). Parents do this by demonstrating nonverbal responses to particular comments or by showing little interest in particular activities. According to Taylor, Harris and Taylor (2004), the reaction and comments that parents make about particular careers, "will be of significant influence" (Discussion section, ¶ 5). Therefore, even indirect responses, such as body language, gestures, or tone of voice, will be important in shaping children's perceptions of certain careers. According to Jacobsen (1999), "Adults often *underestimate* children's intuitive abilities and *overestimate* their own self- knowledge and self-control" (p.14). As a result, children may be greatly influenced by a "hidden" meaning, while parents may assume little to no influence. Although many parents believe they are neutral in regard to their children's career choices, most possess certain career preferences for their children (Jacobsen, 1999). This point was illustrated in the following vignette:

Molly loves playing the violin. Up until the age of twelve, her parents enjoyed her practicing. But after her music teacher suggests that Molly should become a concert violinist, she finds that when she plays, her father turns the radio up loud

and her mother bangs pots and pans in the kitchen...As Molly loses confidence in her talent, she also loses interest in playing the violin...In high school, Molly decides to become a doctor-her father's unfulfilled ambition that had been derailed by the financial demands of an early marriage and Molly's own birth. Her parents are thrilled with her choice, especially since "it was her own idea" (Jacobsen, 1999, p. 16)

In the case of Molly, it was obvious that her parents did not want her to become a concert violinist, but instead had other career aspirations for her. Although they did not express this verbally, they made their wishes known through nonverbal communication such as ignoring her violin playing and turning up the radio while she practiced. Even though they deemed medical school to be her own idea, it was clearly their own aspiration that they had hoped she would adopt.

The Parent-Child Relationship

While it is likely that parental values and expectations are conveyed within each household, the strength of their influence may be reliant upon the parent-child relationship. This includes parental attachment over time and daily interactions in the home. Both of these factors play a role in children's identity development and their career aspirations.

When discussing parental interactions, the aspects of parental connection, challenge, and support can be examined. According to Li and Kerpelman (2007), adolescents who feel connected to their parents tend to be troubled if their parents disagree with their career choice and will often choose a career that is more pleasing to them. On the other hand, if adolescents feel emotionally separated from their parents,

they will likely maintain their career choice regardless of parental approval (Li & Kerpeiman, 2007). These findings suggest that feeling separate from parents might be healthy for career exploration, but Li and Kerpeiman (2007) indicated that separateness could mean different things for different families. For instance, some adolescents might have disagreements with their parents because they believe they are different from them, while others have disagreements but remain connected. Both are forms of separateness, but to a different degree. Ultimately, Li and Kerpeiman (2007) found that, “separateness facilitates adolescents’ identity formation and enables adolescents to be more autonomous from their parents” (p. 113). While it is helpful to have a degree of closeness with parents, “A high degree of closeness ... coupled with little separateness may be an obstacle for ... adolescents to pursue careers that differ from their parents’ preferences” (Li & Kerpeiman, 2007, p. 113).

One way that parents can foster a healthy balance of connection and separateness is to provide challenge and support within the relationship. According to Rathunde, Carroll, and Huang (2000), “Challenge refers to the stimulation, discipline, or training that parents and other family members direct toward the child” (p. 115). It also includes the expectations that a family has on a child and how much that child wishes to fulfill those expectations. “Family support” refers to how parents respond to a child, including their levels of comfort and love within the home (Rathunde, Carroll, & Huang, 2000, p. 115). Parents help to create a challenging and supportive environment when they allow their children to explore their own interests and listen to their ideas in a nonjudgmental manner (Rathunde, Carroll, & Huang, 2000).

In a study that examined educational values and adolescent development, Maier (2005) found that support and challenge from parents affected an adolescent's educational values. Adolescents who experienced high levels of support in the home were more likely to form short-term educational values such as earning high grades in school (Maier, 2005). Adolescents who experienced a sense of challenge within the home were more likely to aspire to long-term educational values, such as aspirations to attend graduate school (Maier, 2005). Rathunde, Carroll, and Huang (2000) found that, "Students who said that their families ... expected them to do their best reported being more focused on career-relevant goals" (p. 126). Therefore, providing challenge to adolescents appears to influence their level of motivation, which can ultimately affect their ability to reach a certain goal (Maier, 2005).

Rathunde, Carroll, and Huang (2000) also discussed the variable of motivation within the context of family challenge and support. They listed four family categories including, "high-challenge, high-support families," "high-challenge, low-support families," "low-challenge, high-support families," and "low-challenge, low-support families" (Rathunde, Carroll, & Huang, 2000, p. 130). From their narrative data, Rathunde, Carroll, and Huang (2000) concluded that motivation to succeed played the largest role in families with high challenge but low support. This is because adolescents in this type of family experienced parental expectations that tended to be "arbitrary and external" (Rathunde, Carroll, & Huang, 2000, p. 133). As a result, more intrinsic motivation was necessary to achieve their goals.

The family interaction that best fostered a successful occupational future was the "high-challenge, high-support family." This family pattern had a strong belief in

individuality and provided teenagers with clear expectations (Rathunde, Carroll, & Huang, 2000). Chope (2006) had a similar assertion, stating that supportive family environments with high expectations were associated with “high level educational and occupational aspirations” (p. 32). When these variables were in place, adolescents had an increased self-esteem and recognized how their present actions contributed to their future (Rathunde, Carroll, & Huang, 2000).

It is clear from the literature that the parent-child relationship greatly influences an adolescent’s career aspirations. A sense of parental connection, along with challenge and support, all play a role in the motivation that adolescents will develop when making plans for their future. Adolescents also need to believe they can explore their career options and develop their identity. This exploration process must be supported by parental figures in order maintain a sense of connection and keep the lines of communication open.

Gender Socialization

Research has shown that mothers and fathers may influence their children’s career aspirations in different ways. Otto (2000) reported that young adults most often look to their mothers for career guidance. Poulter (2006) found that fathers have a more significant impact on children’s career choices, and Jacobs, Chhin & Bleeker (2006) concluded that children respond differently to maternal and paternal expectation depending on the gender of the child. All three researchers agreed that the variable of gender-stereotypes may greatly impact career choices of children.

While many are aware that children are exposed to gender socialization in the home, few may recognize the connection between children’s early gender socialization

experiences and their future career decisions. Jacobs, Chhin and Bleeker (2006) were among the first researchers to explore the relationship between parents' early gender-type expectations and the career choices their children made as adults. Their results reflected that parental expectations had an influence on young adults' career decisions, particularly fathers' expectations for their daughters (Jacobs, Chhin & Bleeker, 2006).

Just as parents directly and indirectly communicate their career preferences, they also communicate gender information to their children. Enrolling girls in ballet classes and signing up boys for football programs communicates gender socialization (Hesse-Biber & Carter, 2000). Children are also gender socialized by watching the role parents play in the home. For instance, many mothers continue to be the main contributor for most of the household tasks. Hesse-Biber & Carter (2000) contend that regardless of the increase in males sharing household chores, many women still take on the bulk of the duties. Children grow up experiencing gender socialization based on norms established in the home. Perceptions regarding gender roles and parental power structure may impact the career choices of children.

Children may also infer gender stereotypes at home by observing the power structure between mothers and fathers. This is exhibited in which parent enforces the discipline, controls the money, plans family events, and initiates family dialog. In 1983, Fishman (as cited in Hesse-Biber & Carter, 2000) analyzed the conversational patterns between husbands and wives and found that topics introduced by women were regarded as tentative and were more likely to be dismissed than those of males. He further concluded that husbands "control what will be produced as reality by interaction. They ... continually establish and enforce their rights to define what the interaction and reality

will be about” (Hesse-Biber & Carter, 2000, p. 96). As children are routinely exposed to these types of power structure interactions, they may identify males as having more influential power in some areas than women.

Parental power can have a strong influence over girls’ career preferences. In 1982, Linda Lavine found that girls who experienced strong father dominance in the family were more likely to choose predominantly female-occupied careers. This may be because the girls had been exposed to gender-specific roles in their households. When asked about their job preference, girls were more likely to name careers that were within the boundaries of traditional gender-norms since they were unlikely to regard male-occupied jobs as an option. It appeared that perceptions from home regarding the father’s power and gender expectations impacted career options for children.

Lavine (1982) also found that children’s career aspirations were only influenced by parental dominance observed at home, not the dominant role parents might have had at work. Originally, Lavine (1982) assumed that women in nontraditional jobs would “require a mental set that allows for equality with or dominance over males,” and that this “mental set” would be related to their parental power at home (p. 658). However, the results did not support this hypothesis. Instead, Lavine (1982) found that “work outside the home ... does not correlate with perceived power ... nor is it significantly associated with career preference” (p. 661). Therefore, only maternal role-modeling and perceived power in the home can be said to influence a daughter’s career preference.

A Mother’s Influence

While most research studies of children’s career aspirations focus on the father’s influence, more recent studies have begun to focus on the mother’s role. This is important

because more women are entering the workforce and working mothers tend to influence children's career aspirations differently than fathers. In fact, maternal influences are often "diametrically opposed" to the paternal influences (Simpson, 2003, Discussion section, ¶ 2). This is thought to be the result of a mother's own gender-socialization during her previous education and work experiences (Simpson, 2003). For instance, mothers who work in high-status jobs were not as inclined to encourage people-oriented and nontechnical fields compared to mothers who had experienced more gender-socialization (Simpson, 2003). Fathers, on the other hand, consistently appeared to encourage technical fields such as engineering (Simpson, 2003). Therefore, a mother's experience with gender-socialization impacted the types of careers she encouraged her children to pursue, while the father's gender socialization was not considered a factor.

Further research has shown that mothers tend to have a higher influence in regard to the employment expectations of women. For example, daughters who were raised by homemakers were more likely to expect that they would also stay home if they had children (Chope, 2006; Lavine, 1982; Weinshenker, 2006). Likewise, the sons of homemakers expected that their wives would stay home if they had children in the future (Weinshenker, 2006).

In addition to their homemaker status, studies also found that mothers tended to utilize different parenting practices according to their career. For instance, Maier (2005) found that mothers who had a career in the math and science field provided an equal amount of challenge and support to their male and female teenagers. However, mothers who worked in other high status professions, such as law or business, tended to show more support to their daughters and less to their sons. Maier (2005) argued that, "By

engaging in differential treatment of their teenagers ... mothers are reinforcing traditional gender roles” (415). She hypothesized that because of the unequal treatment that mothers in the math and science field experienced when pursuing their careers, they take extra precautions to ensure similar home environments for their daughters and sons (Maier, 2005).

While mothers tend to show different levels of challenge and support according to their occupation, adolescents consistently identify them as more influential than fathers when it comes to career planning (Otto, 2000). Even though boys perceive a positive influence from their fathers, they reported, “equal and occasionally higher percentages of positive influence from their mothers” (Paa & McWhirter, 2000, p. 40). Maier (2005) suggested that this might be due to more frequent discussions that happen between a mother and her children. She stated that, “Discussions are more likely to occur on a *daily basis* between mothers and adolescents. Fathers may involve themselves after a majority of the discussion has taken place with the mother” (Maier, 2005, p. 414). Li and Kerpelman (2007) stressed how important it is for mothers to be aware of their power to influence their adolescents’ life choices, especially those of their daughters. They suggested that mothers use this influence to “support their daughters’ construction of career aspirations” (Li & Kerpelman, 2007, p. 113).

Take Our Daughters And Sons To Work Program

One way that mothers have offered career support and encouragement is by participating in “Take Our Daughters and Sons To Work Day.” This program was formally started in 1993 under the more exclusive title, “Take our Daughters to Work Day” (TODTW). It was an annual event in April, originally set-aside for daughters to

accompany parents to work. Daughters were the main focus because it was believed that girls had unique issues during adolescence and needed a special day to focus on their own abilities and potential. An organizer of the event, Kalpana Krishnamurthy said, “A day at work, particularly a day watching women, would help heighten girls’ aspirations” (“Take our daughters--or sons?--to work,” 2000, ¶ 9). Therefore, mothers were able to provide positive career information and nurture their daughters’ self-esteem by participating in this program.

The purpose of the program was to broaden career exploration and perceptions of viable career options among adolescent girls. While this day was originally meant for daughters, both parents were encouraged to invite daughters for a day on-the-job career exploration. One 11-year-old girl visited the fire station where her father was the sergeant. She went to his work because she wanted to learn about all the jobs that were available to her (Reinhard, 1997). This is one example of breaking gender role stereotypes pertaining to career choices. In 1996, a poll by Reinhard (1997) indicated 16.6 million adults said that they or their spouse participated in Take Our Daughters to Work Day. Fathers provided the supportive father-daughter relationship that Li and Kerpleman (2007) suggested by taking part in this program.

After TODTW Day was established, many parents and community members believed it was discriminatory since it excluded boys. As a result, the Northeastern Community Development Corporation in Camden, North Carolina organized “Son’s Day” to address boys’ adolescent development (“Son’s day,” 1996). Instead of focusing on taking boys to work, this day was centered on “noncompetitive games ... that emphasize developing skills and enjoying each other’s company” (“Son’s day”, 1996, ¶

3). The goal of Son's Day was to teach nonviolent conflict resolution and nurturing roles for men, rather than learning the career tasks of their parents ("Son's day," 1996).

Due to the positive response of including sons in TODTW Day, the program title was changed to, "Take Our Daughters And Sons To Work Day." Carolyn McKecuen (n.d.), a member of the Take Our Daughters And Sons to Work Foundation, said that, "By bringing girls and boys together, we will continue to create a more equitable world-at home, at school, and in the workplace" (§ 4). Some parents supported this change. One Vermont mother said, "Of course boys should be included. Boys need to appreciate what their parents do and why, just as girls do" ("Take our daughters--or sons?--to work," 2000, ¶ 3). Other parents were not so supportive. They worried that girls might behave in a more "hesitant or reticent manner" with boys around ("Take our daughters--or sons?--to work," 2000, ¶ 4).

When larger corporations provide a structured opening program with break out sessions, it was found that it might be advantageous to separate the genders to reduce anxiety and increase willingness to ask questions and participate in the sessions. One father stated that the girls were more silent during the program, while the boys were "uninhibited and boisterous" ("Take our daughters--or sons?--to work," 2000, ¶ 7). To minimize this problem, the Take Our Daughters And Sons To Work Day website recommended that workers separate boys and girls for the first few activities when discussing their ideas about future work and home lives. It is believed that, "For some participants it will be easier to start these conversations in a group comprised of their own gender" (Take Our Daughters And Sons To Work Program, n.d., ¶ 6). Parents seemed to

agree with the idea of separation in hopes of preventing quiet girls from fading into the background.

While Take Our Daughters And Sons To Work Day provides career information and helps build self-esteem, one day at work will not be the primary career influence that parents impress upon their children. Instead, parental influence depends more on parent-child interaction, (Rathunde, Carroll, & Huang, 2000) the degree of separateness or closeness (Li & Kerpelman, 2007), and parental expectations for their child to pursue a career (Kniveton, 2004; Rathunde, Carroll, & Huang, 2000). While no two parents have the same career impact on their child, it is likely that some type of parental influence has affected each career decision.

Chapter III: Summary, Critical Analysis, and Recommendations

This chapter will provide a summary of key research findings from the review of literature related to the topic of parental influence on career choices of children. A summary of the four theories of career development, parental expectations regarding career options and the impact of gender socialization on career choice is included. Implications and recommendations for future research will be provided. Suggestions for school counselors who work with parents and students in the career transition process will be presented.

Summary and Critical Analysis of the Literature Review

After reviewing the literature, it was determined that parental influence over their children's career decisions is communicated through many channels. These channels include parental values and expectations, the parent-child relationship, and gender socialization. Many of these variables were found within the four main theories of career development. In Ginzberg's (1988) theory, children aspired to their parent's occupation during the first stage of development but were later forced to reach a compromise between their interests and what was available to them in their environment. Havighurst's (1964) theory also alluded to the way that children identify with a worker who is close to them, such as a parent. Roe (1957) believed that parenting styles were the greatest influence over a child's career choice, particularly in regard to deciding upon a person-oriented career. She later concluded that a child's attachment to their parent was the most influential factor. Gottfredson (1981) had the most detailed theory, including seven major elements that influence a child's career choice. Among these seven elements, gender and values were included.

Throughout the literature review, various research studies demonstrated the affects of parental values and expectations on their children's career choice. Adolescents were found to share their parents' values on major issues and even dismissed certain career options if they didn't have parental approval. This is contrary to popular belief that adolescence is a time of defiance, particularly against authority figures such as parents. While defiance was not discussed, it was recommended that parents allow their children some separateness in order to explore their identity and how this fits with their career aspirations.

Another variable that was discussed was gender socialization. While not overtly stated, studies seemed to suggest that this was not a positive influence on a child's career exploration. Studies showed that parents, especially mothers, socialize their children to perceive separate roles for men and women within society. The literature indicated that attention to parent interaction with each other, perceived power roles, and parent interaction between sons and daughters may impact career choices of children. Children who were gender- socialized were more likely to aspire to gender-typed occupations. Daughters and sons raised by homemakers were more likely to assume that a woman would stay home if she had children. This differed from daughters and sons of working mothers who said that a woman would return to work after having children.

Throughout the research, the studies about parents' gender-typed expectations reported an influence on girls' career preferences, but there was little mention of gender socialization on boys. In fact, boys' career aspirations were most often discussed in regard to the fathers' occupation rather than how fathers socialized their sons. Therefore,

gender socialization only appeared to have a significant influence on the career aspirations of girls.

Recommendations for Further Research

It is clear from the research that parents have a strong influence over the career choices that their children make. While past research mostly considered the father to be the greatest parental influence (Havighurst, 1964), current literature has demonstrated the equal influence that mothers have as well (Otto, 2000; Simpson, 2003). In fact, mothers today are more likely to contribute to family socioeconomic status and obtain a higher education, causing their status to nearly equal that of men (Simpson, 2003). As women enter the workforce with more education, they increase their earning power and financial contributions to the family. Future research should explore longevity in the workforce and look for trends in mentoring other workers as another contributing factor for career decision-making. Recent trends for work environments are to job share, work from a home office, or have a stay-at-home dad. These non-traditional roles may further encourage career choice exploration on topics not yet explored. A comparison of mothers who work at home, mothers who stay at home to care for children without compensation, and mothers who work outside the home for pay might shed light on new maternal expectations for children's career options also. In addition to further research on the changing roles of parents, research about the role the grandparents, siblings and extended family members might also be worthy of further investigation.

While current research reports on the influences of both mothers and fathers, there is still an imbalance on the effects of daughters and sons. It seems that researchers tend to highlight the career aspirations of girls more so than boys (Hesse-Biber & Carter, 2000;

Jacobs, Chhin & Bleeker, 2006; Lavine, 1982). Therefore, further research is needed about how boys might be influenced differently according to gender stereotyping and parental expectations.

Recommendations for School Counselors

School counselors can provide a link between parental influence and young adult career options. Counselors should emphasize the role that both parents play in influencing their children's career decisions. Allowing students to participate in the Take Our Daughters And Sons To Work Day program is a positive step. Planning for career exploration in the early grades and inviting parent participation are also ways to strengthen the communication between parents and children.

At the middle school and high school level, career fairs can help open the dialog between adolescents and parents regarding their experiences, preferences, and career related advice. Counselors need to make sure they have brochures, literature, and online resources that present opportunities to both male and female students. All career media should demonstrate diversity and avoid gender stereotypes. In addition, mentoring programs with a variety of community members should also be provided.

School counselors can help dissolve stereotypes by educating parents, community leaders and teachers about the shortages in the workforce, including the lack of women in math, science, medical and engineering fields. Encouraging males to seek information in non-traditional roles in the helping professions is another suggested activity for counselors.

Providing parent training is also a way that school counselors can help parents gain awareness of their role in the career planning process. Research shows that parents

highly underestimate their influence (Taylor, Harris & Taylor, 2004). Therefore, it would be beneficial for the school counselor to send home information and host workshops in regard to the many ways that parents influence their children's career choice. This would be helpful at all grade levels since children as young as five are influenced by their parents' career expectations (Havighurst, 1964; Hesse-Biber & Carter, 2000).

Finally, school counselors who are part of the American School Counseling Association National Model or state model for comprehensive programs can contribute to the body of research by keeping track of data pertaining to career choices of graduates. Looking at the role parents played in assisting with post-secondary career planning is critical to the success of graduates and to the documentation of data showing success of the counseling program.

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