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**Pisker, Barbara**

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# FAMILY INFLUENCE IN CAREER CHOICES

**Barbara Pisker**

## **Abstract**

This research paper provides a comprehensive review of the literature on the family influence on career choice, the factors influencing career choices, the comparative analysis between Western and Asian societies in terms of family influence on career choice and the integration of John Holland's career choice theory and the Chaos theory of Careers to provide a deeper understanding of the complexity and dynamic nature of the career choice process. The research highlights the importance of considering the role of family culture, the comparative analysis between Western and Asian societies, the role of other factors such as education, skills, personal values, and the labor market, and the integration of career choice theories in understanding the career choice decision-making process.

## **Keywords**

family influence, career choice, comparative analysis, career decision-making process.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Career choice is an important decision that individuals make in their lives. It not only impacts their future livelihood but also their overall well-being and satisfaction. Family, as a primary socializing agent, plays a significant role in shaping an individual's career choices. Numerous research has shown that children often choose career paths that are similar to those of their parents or other family members (Michaud & Parent, 2008; Arum & Arum, 2003; Correll & Benard, 2005; Sin & Gangl, 2002; Attewell & Newman, 2001). Additionally, family culture, which refers to the shared values, beliefs, and practices that shape the way a family operates and interacts with the world, has been found to play a significant role in shaping career choices (Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Furnham & Cheng, 2016).

However, family is not the only factor that influences career choices. Factors such as education, skills, personal values, and the labor market are also important considerations.

This paper aims to review the literature on the family influence on career choice and to explore the comparative analysis between Western and Asian societies in terms of family influence on career choice. Furthermore, it aims to integrate John Holland's career choice theory and the Chaos theory of Careers to provide a comprehensive understanding of the career choice decision-making process. Additionally, a graphical visualisation of the career choice decision-making process is presented.

### **Literature and Theoretical Review**

The literature on family influence on career choice can be broadly divided into two categories: intergenerational transmission of occupation and the role of parental resources.

Intergenerational transmission of occupation studies have consistently shown that children tend to follow in the footsteps of their parents in terms of occupation (Michaud & Parent, 2008; Arum & Arum, 2003; Correll & Benard, 2005; Sin & Gangl, 2002; Roos & Roos, 2007). This phenomenon is known as intergenerational transmission of occupation. The study by Michaud and Parent (2008) found that sons are more likely to choose careers similar to those of their fathers, especially if their fathers hold high-status occupations. Similarly, the study by Arum and Arum (2003) found that children whose parents hold professional or managerial jobs are more likely to pursue similar careers themselves. Roos and Roos (2007) found that intergenerational transmission of occupation is positively correlated with the level of education of parents.

In addition to intergenerational transmission of occupation, research has also shown that parental resources play a crucial role in shaping career choices (Attewell & Newman, 2001; Roos & Roos, 2008). Parental resources include factors such as education, income, and social networks. The study by Attewell and Newman (2001) found that parental resources have a positive impact on children's occupational attainment, with more educated and higher-income parents having children who are more likely to attain high-status occupations. Roos and Roos (2008) found that parental income has a positive impact on children's income, with children of higher-income parents having higher incomes themselves.

Additionally, family culture, which refers to the shared values, beliefs, and practices that shape the way a family operates and interacts with the world, has been found to play a significant role in shaping career choices (Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Furnham & Cheng, 2016). A study by Furnham and Cheng (2016) found that Chinese and Malaysian students reported higher levels of family influence on their career choices compared to British students. The study also found that Chinese and Malaysian students were more likely to report that their parents had the final say in their career choices, while British students were more likely to report that they had the final say in their career choices.

John Holland's career choice theory posits that individuals tend to select careers that match their personality traits, values, and interests (Holland, 1997). Holland's theory suggests that individuals can be classified into six personality types: realistic, investigative, artistic,

social, enterprising, and conventional. According to Holland, individuals tend to be drawn to careers that align with their dominant personality type. For example, individuals with a realistic personality type may be drawn to careers in the field of engineering or construction, while individuals with an investigative personality type may be drawn to careers in the field of science or research.

The Chaos theory of Careers suggests that career choice is not a linear process but rather a dynamic one, shaped by the interactions between the individual and their environment (Arnett, 2007; Brown & Brooks, 2010). This theory suggests that individuals are constantly adapting to the changing demands of the labour market, and that career choice is not a one-time decision but rather a continuous process. Additionally, this theory highlights the importance of understanding the complexity and uncertainty of the career choice process and its implications on the individual's well-being underlying the relation inbetween the individuals and their environment.

### **Factors and Decisions Making Process in Career Choices**

Education plays a crucial role in shaping career choices. A higher level of education can open up a wider range of career opportunities and increase the chances of obtaining high-status occupations (Arum & Arum, 2003; Correll & Benard, 2005). Research has shown that higher levels of education are associated with higher levels of occupational mobility and higher wages (Michaud & Parent, 2008).

An individual's skills and abilities also play a significant role in shaping career choices. Individuals with specific skills and abilities may be drawn to careers that require those skills (Sin & Gangl, 2002; Roos & Roos, 2007). Additionally, research has shown that specific skills and abilities, such as proficiency in a foreign language or technical skills, can increase the chances of obtaining high-status occupations and higher wages (Arum & Arum, 2003; Correll & Benard, 2005).

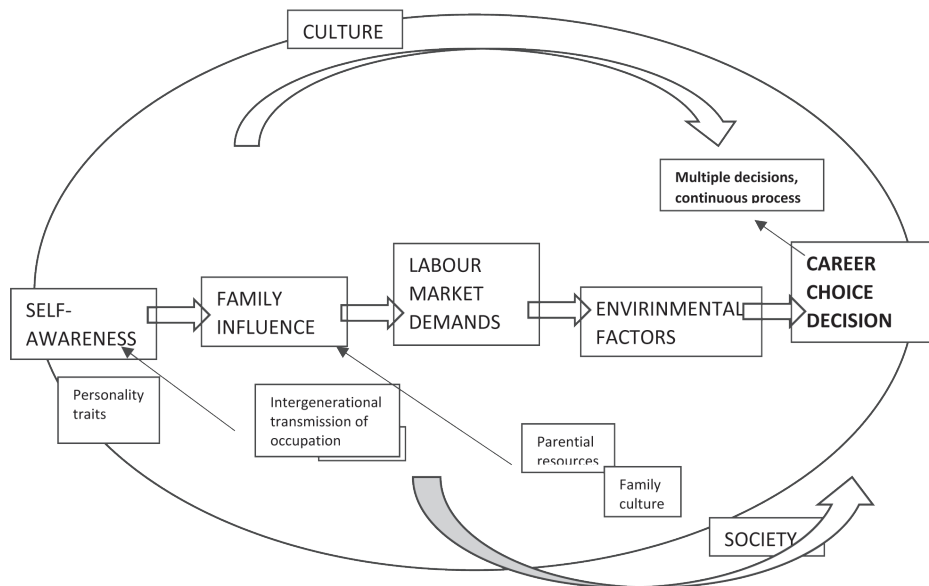
Personal values also influence career choices. Individuals may be drawn to careers that align with their values, such as environmentalism or social justice (Herr & Cramer, 2018). Research has shown that individuals who choose careers that align with their personal values tend to have higher levels of job satisfaction and well-being (Savickas, 2013).

The demand and supply of jobs in the labor market also influence career choices. Individuals may choose careers that are in high demand in the labor market, as these careers are more likely to lead to stable employment and higher wages (Arum & Arum, 2003; Correll & Benard, 2005). Additionally, research has shown that the availability of jobs in certain fields can influence the career choices of individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds (Roos & Roos, 2008).

It's important to note that these factors may interact with each other and with the family influence on career choice in a complex way. For example, personal values may influence the choice of a field of study, and that in turn may influence the career opportunities available to an individual.

A graphical representation of the career choice decision-making process, based on the literature review, is presented in Figure 1. The process starts with the individual's self-awareness, including their personality traits, values, and interests. These factors interact with the family influence, including intergenerational transmission of occupation, parental resources, and family culture. These factors then interact with the labour market demands and the individual's environment. The process ends with the individual's decision on a career path, which is not a one-time decision but rather a continuous process shaped by the individual's adaptability and resilience.

**Figure 1: Career Choice Decision-Making Process (Source: Author, adapted from Holland, 1997; Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Michaud & Parent, 2008; Furnham & Cheng, 2016)**



### Comparative Analysis Between Western and Asian Societies

Research has shown that the family influence on career choice may vary between Western and Asian societies.

In Western societies, individuals tend to have more autonomy in making career choices and may be less influenced by their family's career choices (Furnham & Cheng, 2016). They tend to prioritize self-expression and individual achievement in their career choices, and are more likely to pursue a career that aligns with their personal interests and values (Herr & Cramer, 2018). Additionally, Western societies tend to value independence

and self-reliance, which can lead to individuals feeling less pressure from their family to conform to traditional career paths (Savickas, 2011).

In contrast, in Asian societies, there is often a stronger emphasis on filial piety and obedience to parents, which may lead to individuals being more influenced by their family's career choices (Furnham & Cheng, 2016). Asian societies tend to emphasize the importance of fulfilling familial expectations and obligations in career choices (Herr & Cramer, 2018). In some Asian cultures, family honor and reputation are closely tied to one's career success, which can further increase the pressure on individuals to conform to traditional career paths (Super et al., 1996).

Furthermore, research has shown that in Asian societies, career choices are often influenced by Confucian values of respect for authority, social harmony, and the importance of fulfilling one's role in society (Furnham & Cheng, 2016). These values can lead to a stronger emphasis on the importance of choosing a career that is respected and valued by society, rather than one that aligns with the individual's personal interests and values (Herr & Cramer, 2018).

It's important to note that these are general trends and the influence of family and cultural values on career choices may vary within and across different cultures and societies. It's also important to consider that the trend towards more autonomy in career choice in Western societies may change over time and may be influenced by other factors such as economic, societal, and technological changes.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The literature review has shown that family plays a significant role in shaping an individual's career choices through intergenerational transmission of occupation, parental resources and family culture. Additionally, John Holland's Career choice theory and the Chaos theory of Careers have been integrated to provide a comprehensive understanding of the career choice decision-making process. Furthermore, the comparative analysis between Western and Asian societies showed that individuals in Asian societies tend to be more influenced by their family's career choices. Additionally, the role of education, skills, personal values, and the labor market on career choices have been discussed.

The career choice decision-making process is a complex and dynamic process, shaped by the interactions between the individual and their environment. It's important to understand the complexity and uncertainty of the career choice process and its implications on the individual's well-being. Additionally, the role of family culture in shaping career choices can help individuals make more informed decisions about their own careers and can inform policies that aim to support career development and upward mobility.

Future research could focus on identifying the specific factors that contribute to the family influence on career choice, and how these factors may vary across different cultures and societies. Additionally, future research could investigate how the integration of career choice theories such as Holland's theory and the Chaos theory of Careers can

enhance our understanding of the career choice decision-making process. Furthermore, research could explore the potential implications of these theories for career counseling and guidance, as well as for policies aimed at supporting career development and upward mobility.

Additionally, it is important to consider the potential implications of this research for career counseling and guidance. Counselors and career advisors can use the understanding of the family influence on career choice and the role of other factors to help individuals make more informed decisions about their careers. This can include helping individuals to identify their own values, interests, and skills and how they align with different career options. Additionally, understanding the cultural and societal factors that influence career choices can help counselors and advisors to tailor their approach to the specific needs and context of their clients.

Furthermore, this research can inform the development of policies aimed at supporting career development and upward mobility. For example, policies that support education and training can help to increase the number of career options available to individuals and can help to level the playing field for individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds. Additionally, policies that support the development of a strong and diverse labor market can help to ensure that there are a wide range of career options available to individuals.

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## Author

Barbara Pisker, PhD  
Assistant Professor  
University J.J. Strossmayer in Osijek  
Faculty of Tourism and Rural Development in Pozega  
Vukovarska, 17, 34000 Pozega, Croatia  
bpisker@ftrr.hr