



Influences on Career Choices as Perceived by Youth in Mumbai

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Abstract

The aim of this research was to survey the (a) career choices and career shifts of youth in Mumbai, (b) youth perceptions of influences on their career choice, and (c) their satisfaction with career choice. Gender differences were examined in relation to each aspect of the aim. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used in the survey. Sixty-five youth, male and female, 18-to-28 years old, from middle- and higher-income families participated in this mixed-methods survey. Career choices of youth were largely class-specific and gender-specific. Youth ratings for importance of influence on career choice were highest for self, followed by mother, father and teachers. The lowest rating was for professional career guidance services, mainly because of non-use. Most frequently obtained combinations of important influences on career choice were "self and family" and "self, family and teachers". Youth were mostly either very or extremely satisfied with their career choice. Youth justified their importance ratings for various influences on career choice and their rating for satisfaction with career choice. Some gender differences in findings were observed. For example, men identified a higher number of important influences on career choice than women. Implications for career guidance practice are discussed.

Keywords: influences on career choices, youth, role of self, role of family, Mumbai, India

Identity development neither begins nor ends in adolescence or early adulthood. Similarly and more specifically, neither are decisions relating to choice of a career or occupation limited to adolescence or early adulthood. Brown and Brooks (as cited in Patton & McMahon, 2006a, p. 5) define career development as "a lifelong process of getting ready to choose, choosing, and typically continuing to make choices from among the many occupations available in our society". At the same time, choosing a career remains an extraordinary developmental achievement in adolescence and early adulthood. Even though career trajectories no longer may be singular, linear or necessarily stable (Bakshi, 2011), the choice of a career represents a coming of age for youth.

The salience of even an initial career choice can be interpreted using Paul Baltes' life span theory. Career choice is exemplary of development as selective adaptation, a key idea in Baltes' life span theory. It both opens

as well as closes opportunities; in Baltes' words, exemplifying a gain-loss dynamic (Baltes, Lindenberger, & Staudinger, 2006). In other words, in choosing one career over another we select to optimise certain characteristics and competencies over others. Each choice allows the building of particular strengths; at the same time each choice precludes other competing choices—that is, one choice is at the cost of other choices. Ontogenetic development is crucially tied to the minor and major choices made by an individual, ranging from how one spends one free hour in the evening (e.g., go for a walk, read, play sports, watch TV, hang out with friends, play with younger sibling) to key choices such as that of a career. As a result of structure-function bidirectionality (Thelen & Smith, 2006), it is these choices that make who we are both biologically and psychologically. Clearly, career choice is substantially meaningful in helping determine developmental outcomes in adulthood.

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In similar vein, personhood both impacts and is impacted by career choices. Indeed it is a person who decides to start in a particular career or occupation. This decision to start in a particular career or occupation could have been made with varying degrees of self-awareness, deliberation, liberty, and contentment. Despite varying degrees of deliberation or liberty in making that decision, undeniably the decision is a portal to particular activities, experiences and (hierarchically ordered) social relationships. In participating in these, as well as contributing to creating these experiences (in small or large ways), personhood and other aspects of development are clarified and built. In the careers literature, these ideas resonate with Savickas' description of "postmodern conceptions of a self that is formed, maintained, and revised through interpersonal relationships and work roles, and which evolves during a life course of contribution to and cooperation with a community" (Savickas, 2005, p. 68).

Choosing a career path is pivotal for youth; it is also challenging and in fact burdensome (Gottfredson, 2005). The concepts of a psychosocial moratorium and identity crisis (Erikson, 1968) are corollaries of a society characterised by a confusing multitude of choices, including career choices. In the past 100 years the menu of occupations and lifestyles has expanded to include a considerably larger number of choices, many of which are less limited by sociopolitical boundaries (Gottfredson, 2005). In India, with caste-based occupational role allocation gradually breaking down especially in urban areas (Arulmani & Bakshi, 2011), and with the proliferation of newly-emerging occupations, the choice of a career has become a more complex decision for youth and families to make. Within India, Mumbai is the most populous city with a population of 1.3 million; in fact, Mumbai is one of the world's most populous cities. Mumbai is also the financial, commercial and media-and-entertainment capital of India, an industrial hub, home to many Fortune Global 500 companies, and has major ports (<http://www.mcgm.gov.in/irj>). It is clear, therefore, that an impressive range of career-related opportunities are generated in Mumbai. Understandably, selecting a career path is a fairly challenging process for youth who are residing in Mumbai.

Who or what enables youth to make a particular career choice in today's times? Who has had a say in whether a youth becomes an

engineer, a lawyer or a photographer? To what extent is the process through which youth select their career paths self-directed or one that is largely influenced by others such as the family? There are some answers to be found in both Indian (e.g., Akhilesh, 1991; Arulmani, 1995) and nonIndian research (e.g., Millward, Houston, Brown, & Barrett, 2006). However, there is a need for additional research in this area (Whiston & Keller, 2004). Other than the need to remedy the overall insufficiency of empirical evidence in this area, Whiston and Keller (2004), for example, have strongly recommended that family influences on career development be examined in cultures characterised by a high degree of interconnectedness—India is one such culture. Moreover, because majority of the extant research in this area is quantitative, they have urged that researchers use diverse methods in examining family influences on career development.

Accordingly, the objectives of this research are as follows: (a) To survey the career choices and career shifts of youth in Mumbai. (b) To examine youth perceptions of influences on their career choice using mixed methods (quantitative and qualitative). This includes ascertaining the perceived role of a variety of influences such as self, family, friends and professional career guidance services. (c) To examine youth's satisfaction with career choice. Moreover, gender differences are examined in relation to each of these objectives.

Method

Participants

Purposive sampling was used to select 65 youth from Mumbai. Eligibility criteria included age (18 to 28 years) and that the person was from at least a middle-income family. Care was taken to ensure that the sample was heterogeneous with regard to gender, community, and occupation/educational stream. Thus, the participants were 38 (58.5%) women and 27 men from middle-income and higher-income families, in the age range of 18 to 28 years ($M = 21.98$ yr, $SD = 2.18$ yr). The main religious communities represented in the sample are Hindu ($n = 34$, 52.3%) and Jain ($n = 23$, 35.4%) whereas the main ethnic communities represented are Gujarati ($n = 25$, 38.5%), Kutchi ($n = 17$, 26.2%) and Maharashtrian ($n = 10$, 15.4%).

A little over half of the youth were studying ($n = 34$, 52.3%), 10 were both studying and working (15.4%), and 21 were working (32.3%). Majority of those studying were enrolled in degree courses (41 out of 44): 26 were completing their Bachelor's degree (e.g., B.A., B.Com., B.Sc., B.Arch., B.Eng., Chartered Accountancy), 14 were completing their Master's degree (e.g., M.A., M.Com., M.Sc., MBA, MMS, MCA-Ed.Tech.), and one was studying in preparation of admission into MD. Almost all of those who were working and not currently studying had a university education (19 out of 21). Examples of occupations of those working are interior designer, architect, lecturer, physiotherapist, engineer, and accountant.

Procedure and Measures

An interview schedule soliciting contact information, background information, and all information necessary for meeting the research aim was constructed by the first author. The interview schedule was piloted and found to be yielding all relevant data.

Telephone interviews were conducted with 35 youth, email interviews with 14 youth, and face-to-face (individually-administered) interviews with 16 youth. The youth answered questions about their current career choice such as: *Have you made a career choice? What is your career choice?* They were asked about whether they had shifted careers within a broad discipline or across disciplines, when, and what the shift had entailed.

Next, their perceptions of the importance of each of a variety of influences on their career choice were sought using a 5-point Likert scale. This scale ranged from 1 for 'least important influence' to 5 for 'most important influence'. Using this scale, youth rated the extent of importance of influence of mother, father, another family member, teachers, friends, career guidance services (e.g., school or college counsellor, career guidance centre, career guidance workshops or fairs), media, and self, on their making a career choice. Importantly, the youth justified each of their influence ratings. For instance, if a youth had rated her father as being a less important influence (scored as 2), she explained why and how her father had played a less important influence on her career choice. Lastly, the youth indicated how satisfied they were with their career choice on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 for 'not at all satisfied' to 5 for 'extremely satisfied'. The

youth also provided a justification for their satisfaction rating.

Plan of Analysis

Data was analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively. Descriptive statistics were computed; when needed tests of comparison (e.g., t tests, χ^2 tests) and relationship (i.e., Pearson's r) were computed. The qualitative data analytic strategy used is thick description. Thick description is a strategy that permits readers to interpret the data firsthand (Patton, as cited in Highlen & Finley, 1996).

Results

Career Choices and Career Shifts

Almost all of the youth from Mumbai stated that they had currently decided on a career: 62 out of 65. Examples of those who were undecided include a 20-yr-old woman enrolled in MA (History/Psychology) and a 21-yr-old man completing B.Sc. (Information Technology).

At the same time, the career choices of many youth were not stable: 25 youth (38.5%) had changed their decision once in the past. For example, a woman had changed her educational path from commerce to fashion designing: *"After 10th, my friends had decided to choose commerce, and I didn't want to get separated from them. So I also chose commerce. After 13th, I completely lost interest in the field and looked out for options based on my interest. This is when I decided to join the fashion designing course."* Another woman explained: *"After B.Com. I wanted to do something different than normal M.Com., so I decided to do interior designing"*. A 23-yr-old man shared that he had shifted from a commerce-related job to acting, another from commerce to photography. Other youth had switched specialisations within a discipline (e.g., B.E. in IT to B.E. in Electronics and Telecommunications) or switched to allied disciplines (e.g., Human Development to Human Resource Development).

The career choices of the 62 youth from middle- and higher-income families were largely class-specific and gender-specific (see Table 1). The class specificity is indicated by the medium to high occupational prestige of career choices (i.e., preschool teacher to researcher and engineer). Notably, all selected careers required formal education;

Table 1. Career Choice of Youth in Mumbai.

Career Choice of Youth in Mumbai	<i>f</i>		
	Male n = 27	Female n = 38	Total n = 65
Unclear about career choice	2	1	3
Engineer	8	1	9
Researcher (e.g., Environmental Science Researcher)	1	1	2
Accountant/Financial Consultant/Banker/Lawyer	4	6	10
Businessperson	3	0	3
Manager (Corporate, HR, Event, Travel & Tourism)	2	5	7
ICT-related (e.g., Web Designer, 3-D Animation Production Artist)	3	1	4
Counsellor/Teacher (Preschool, School, University)/Special Educator/Owner of Preschool	0	12	12
Creative Arts/Design (e.g., Architect, Interior Designer, Fashion Designer, Photographer, Actor/Director, Journalist)	3	7	10
Dietician/Physiotherapist	0	4	4
Merchant Mariner	1	0	1

this was also for the types of businesses that a few aspired to own or to expand. With regard to gender-specificity, engineering was a career choice predominantly made by men whereas careers related to counselling and education were chosen only by women. Also, more women than men had selected creative arts/design-related careers (e.g., interior designer).

Youth Perceptions of Influences on Their Career Choice: Quantitative Findings

The number of influences on their career choice that youth rated as at least somewhat important ranged from 1 to 7, with a mean of 3.63 and a standard deviation of 1.54. The number of influences on their career choice that youth perceived as more or most important ranged from 0 to 6 with a mean of 2.46 and a standard deviation of 1.36. Low magnitude but significant gender differences were obtained: men identified a higher number of important influences on career choice than women. Thus, on an average, men identified 4.19 influences ($SD = 1.50$) and women 3.24 influences ($SD = 1.46$) as at least somewhat important in making their career choice ($t = 2.56, p = .013$).

The means and standard deviations of youth ratings for the importance of each type of influence on career choice are presented in Table 2. The number and percentage of youth who identified an influence as playing a more or most important role with regard to their career choice are also presented. Across all

youth, the mean rating for self was highest: 4.18. In fact, 80% of the youth from Mumbai stated that they themselves had played a more or most important role in making a career choice. The mean importance rating was lowest for professional career guidance services: 1.29. Only, 2% of the youth from Mumbai stated that professional career guidance services had played a more or most important role in making a career choice.

After self (although much lower than the rating for self), the mean importance ratings were highest for parents. Forty-two and 43% of the youth rated their mother and father (respectively) as having played a more or most important role with regard to their career choice. Further, it was noticed that the importance of influence of various family members on youth's career choice was scattered across each type of family member (namely, mother, father, brother, sister, cousin, uncle, aunt, grandmother, grandfather and brother-in-law). In other words, a youth had been influenced in an important way by a family member: however, the mean rating for each specific family member was low. In sum, it was important to ascertain the importance of influence of one or the other family member in making a career choice. Therefore, a new variable was constructed which measures the youth's perception of the highest influence that a family member (whether mother or father or brother etc.) had played with regard to his/her career choice. For each youth, this variable's score is the youth's highest rating for any family member. Importantly, the mean rating

Table 2. Youth Perceptions of Influences on Their Career Choice.

Whose Influence	Rating <i>M (SD)</i>			More or Most Important Rating ^a <i>f (%)</i>		
	All Cases <i>N = 65</i>	Men <i>n = 27</i>	Women <i>n = 38</i>	All Cases <i>N = 65</i>	Men <i>n = 27</i>	Women <i>n = 38</i>
Self	4.18 (0.85)	4.26 (0.71)	4.13 (0.94)	52 (80)	23 (85)	29 (76)
Mother	2.83 (1.50)	2.93 (1.52)	2.76 (1.50)	27 (42)	13 (48)	14 (37)
Father	2.78 (1.61)	3.59 (1.53)	2.21 (1.42)	28 (43)	18 (67)	10 (26)^d
Other family members ^b	2.12 (1.50)	2.44 (1.65)	1.89 (1.35)	15 (23)	8 (30)	7 (18)
Family ^c	3.74 (1.36)	4.15 (1.29)	3.45 (1.35)	44 (68)	22 (81)	22 (58)
Teacher	2.37 (1.55)	2.37 (1.50)	2.37 (1.60)	20 (31)	9 (33)	11 (29)
Friends	1.78 (1.29)	2.04 (1.43)	1.61 (1.18)	9 (14)	4 (15)	5 (13)
Media	1.63 (0.96)	1.85 (0.99)	1.47 (0.92)	3 (5)	1 (4)	2 (5)
Career Guidance Services	1.29 (0.72)	1.26 (0.76)	1.32 (0.70)	1 (2)	1 (4)	0 (0)

Note.

^a The youth had rated each influence on career choice on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 for 'least important influence' to 5 for 'most important influence'. These columns refer to the number (and percentage) of youth who rated each of the influences as a 'more important influence' or 'most important influence'.

^b Represents youth perception of the highest influence that a family member other than parents (e.g., brother, sister, cousin, aunt, uncle, grandfather and grandmother) had had on his/her career choice.

^c Represents youth perception of the highest influence that a family member (including parents) has had on his/her career choice.

^d Significant differences are in bold

for the influence of family was 3.74, with 67.7% of the youth identifying one or the other family member as having played a more or most important role in the youth's career choice.

Next in importance were teachers, with 31% of the youth rating teachers as a more or most important influence in making a career choice. Interestingly, a few youth added one or two of the following as more or most important influences on their career choice: parents' friends, dentist, family GP, guru, girlfriend and master's research project.

Table 2 also includes youth's ratings of importance of various influences on career choice by gender. Significantly more men than women rated two of the influences as more or most important. Sixty-seven percent of the men versus 26% of women rated their father as having played a more or most important role in making a career choice ($\chi^2 = 10.48, p = .001$). Also, 81% of the men versus 58% of the women rated one or the other family member as a more or most important influence on their career choice ($\chi^2 = 4.02, p = .045$).

Most frequently youth identified self and family members as more or most important influences on their career choice ($n = 15,$

23.08%). The next most frequent combination of more or most important influences on career choice was "self, family members and teachers" ($n = 14, 21.54%$). Self featured in combination with other influences judged as more or most important in the ratings of 43 youth; likewise, family member(s) featured in combination with other more or most important influences in the ratings of 38 youth. Nine youth rated only their own self and six youth only their family member(s) as a more or most important influence on career choice.

Youth Perceptions of Influences on Their Career Choice: Qualitative Findings

The justifications for rating self as at least a somewhat important influence in making a career choice indicate a fair degree of self-awareness and knowledge of the world of work in the youth who participated in this study. Forty-one percent of youth included their own interest in the chosen field as part of their justification. In fact, the youths' justifications for the importance of the self included one or more of the following: interest; liking for particular activities; dislikes; their experiences which clarified their interest/liking; their judgement of what they were good at; and their knowledge of the skills, activities and prospects in a profession. Some of the youth

described a match between own interests/liking for particular activities and the skills and activities of the profession they had selected. A 20-yr-old woman explained: *"In my second year B.Sc. course I was managing college events and I enjoyed doing that a lot. So, I decided to make event management a career."* Another 20-yr-old woman studying to be a Chartered Accountant justified: *"...I always wanted to find out the reason for paying taxes and then I was also interested in math and accounts in college."* A 26-yr-old woman working as an Interior Designer clarified: *"I always wanted to do something creative and which requires lot of imagination and a field in which I can work with people so I chose interior designing as my career..."* A 22-yr-old man working as a Web Designer stated: *"There was pressure to find a job. However, choice of career was due to interest and aptitude as well as because of good opportunity to make money"*. A 23-yr-old woman working as a supervisor in a preschool specified: *"I love kids; kind of community I am in, I am not allowed to get into a full-time career so took up career which allows me to work part-time..."*

Youth justifications for ratings of importance of influence of others on their career choice were varied. For example, youth had rated fathers as having a more or most important influence for reasons ranging from being a source of inspiration, a role model who also provided practical career-related experiences, to coercion. For example, a 20-yr-old woman studying Interior Designing explained: *"He is my role model and after seeing his work in this field I felt I want to join this field and design places... My dad gave me a chance to get the practical knowledge on site and visualize the things."* In comparison, a 24-yr-old male engineer stated: *"This was a dream of my father to make me an engineer which after some time became my passion."* Whereas, a 25-yr-old male engineer said: *"He forced me to take up engineering"*.

Youth provided similar reasons for identifying mothers as more or most influential in making a career choice. For instance, an 18-yr-old student explained why she had rated her mother as a more important influence: *"She did a lot of hard work to make us educated...She is a role model for me."* While, a 23-yr-old man studying and working as an actor explained: *"Because she was the one who always wanted me to get into this career and also the first break that I got in acting was*

through her reference." Likewise, a 24-yr-old man studying for admission into MD said: *"My dad is a doctor. My mother wanted me to continue in the same field as that of my dad."*

Youths' reasons for identifying others as less influential with regard to their career choice included absence of pressure from parent, freedom to make own choice, and lack of interest from parent. Furthermore, indicative of possible gender biases, only women cited these reasons. A 23-yr-old woman working as a tour consultant justified: *"Because he (father) never was concerned as to what I do with my career"*. A 24-yr-old woman working as a physiotherapist clarified: *"Because my mother was not worried, she was okay with whatever I did. She was not much aware of this field and listened to the information I got."* Interestingly, some youth rated their father as having less influence on their career choice because he had provided only financial support; other youth rated their father as having had a more or most important influence because he had provided financial support. Justifications for mother's role in influencing career choice did not include the provision of financial support.

Role of Professional Career Guidance Services on Career Choice of Youth

As many as 84.62% of the youth, rated professional career guidance services as the least important influence. This was largely because of non-use (see Table 3). For example, only two of the youth had had a career-related interaction with a college counsellor. In fact, 52 of the youth (80%) had had no experience of professional career guidance services, 3 shared that the experience was unhelpful, and most of the remaining 10 rated their experience as a somewhat important influence on their career choice. For example, a woman whose career goal is to be a counsellor explained that she considered her college counsellor as her role model and an indirect influence on her career choice. Also she had visited a career counsellor who had suggested that she select Arts and a career in which she had to deal with people because she liked working with people. In clarifying the rating of somewhat important influence, this student added: *"But the decision of going into counselling was mine."* Two of the youth mentioned that they had benefited from the career guidance services that had been organised by their community.

Table 3. Use of Professional Career Guidance Services by Youth.

Type of Professional Career Guidance Service	<i>f</i> <i>n</i> = 65
Not used at all	52
Career-related interaction with a school counsellor	2
Career-related interaction with a college counsellor	2
Attended a career workshop or fair	6
Visited a career guidance centre	3
Identification of own interests, aptitudes, strengths	8
Information on different careers	7
Suggested matches between own strengths and available careers	6

Satisfaction with Career Choice

Ratings for satisfaction with career choice (for the 62 youth who had made a career choice) ranged from 2 (slightly satisfied) to 5 (extremely satisfied) with a mean of 4.29 and a standard deviation of 0.73. Largely, the youth were either very satisfied ($n = 27$, 43.55%) or extremely satisfied ($n = 27$) with their career choice. There was no significant difference between the satisfaction of men and women. Satisfaction with career choice was not correlated with importance ratings for self ($r = .029$, *ns*) or family ($r = .202$, *ns*) as an influence on career choice. Satisfaction with career choice was modestly correlated with number of influences on career choice identified as at least somewhat important ($r = .327$, $p = .005$).

Youth who were moderately satisfied with their career choice explained that their current choice was their second preference as they had not been able to get in the field they were most interested in because of less than adequate academic performance, or that they were dissatisfied with their salary. A 19-yr-old woman studying in her third and final year of B.Com. justified: *“My first preference was always BMS (Bachelor’s in Management Studies). But because of less percentage I couldn’t manage to get into it and finally had to continue for TY (third year) B.Com. I have rated moderately satisfied because now I am doing it with interest as I can get into MBA in marketing after doing my TY B.Com.”* A 26-yr-old woman working as an interior designer justified: *“When I work, I enjoy; when I’m paid—not satisfactory.”* An example of those who were very satisfied includes a 25-yr-old man working as an architect who explained: *“Because I like what I am doing but now I have*

to work under someone else which I don’t want to do whole my life. I want to have my own office. So once I have my own office, I will be extremely satisfied”. Youth gave different explanations for being extremely satisfied with their career choice such as many opportunities to learn, financial benefits, doing what one loved, not having compromised own interests, and doing very well/getting positive feedback and promotions. A 24-yr-old man working as an Instrument Design Engineer justified: *“I am learning everyday a new thing and I am also growing as a person. I was very shy person in my school and college days but now my confidence has increased very much...”* A 23-yr-old actor explained: *“Because I am very proud about the fact that I have not compromised my dreams, my calibre and my interests...”* A 21-yr-old woman working as a preschool teacher shared: *“Because I get along with the kids very well and they find me quite approachable. It completely matches my interests. I am into a profession that gives me opportunities to do what I like the most.”*

Discussion

The key findings in this study pertain to youth perceptions of influences on their career choice. Youth ratings of the extent of importance of each of various influences (e.g., mother, father, teachers, friends and media) on career choice were highest for self; next highest were the ratings for the influence of mother and father, followed by the influence of teachers. As many as 80% of the youth rated their own self as a more or most important influence in making a career choice as opposed to 42, 43 and 31% of the youth who rated their mother, father and teacher(s) as more or most important influences.

How may these findings be interpreted? What do these findings indicate about the roles of the family and self in career development of youth? In understanding these findings, it is important to underscore that the youth in this study rated and described the influence of self and others on their *particular* career choice, not career in a broader sense. In other words, they described who or what influenced them to choose, for example, to become an engineer (instead of a lawyer or an actor).

In a broader sense, the role of the family is outstanding as an influence on ontogenetic development including career development (see Kerka, 2000). Family members including one or both parents, older siblings, and uncles etc. could role model specific competencies and challenges related to particular careers as well as general work competencies and risks. More broadly, many of the settings in which children and youth participate are dependent on choices of parents. Thus, parents' decisions and choices of where to live, what to provide materially and relationally in the home, which school to enrol their children in, how to structure out-of-school time for children, impacts children's development in ways that would be meaningful for later success in the world of work. There is support for these ideas in the socialisation literature: the family is acknowledged as a key influence in the socialisation of children and youth (Parke & Buriel, 2006). In family systems theory, parents are also conceptualised as providers of opportunities, who regulate (e.g., make available through own choices, mediate, initiate, arrange, and monitor) children's utilisation of material and social resources within and outside the home (Parke, Burks, Carson, Neville, & Boyum, 1994).

The findings of this study do not diminish the magnitude of the role of the family in preparing and facilitating individuals for work roles both directly and indirectly. However, neither is the influence of the family on the individual unilateral or unidirectional. The youths' reporting of the salience of the self in making a career choice is congruent with socialisation and careers theory: The role of individuals in their own development is an important and more recent theme in multiple literatures.

Thus, within the structure of opportunities provided by family members, children and youth exercise choices that impact their development considerably as well.

Given two hours of leisure time in the evening, one youth may choose to read a book, another may work on giving his bicycle a new look. Moreover, children and youth also influence parents in modifying the structure of opportunities. Children's suggestions of how they wish to structure their out-of-school time may lead to joint decisions or even child-initiated decisions. In the socialisation literature, the view of children as passive recipients of parental influence has been replaced (starting in the 1960s). In the new paradigm, children are viewed as equally active agents, contributing to their own socialisation and therefore, development (Parke & Buriel, 2006). This theme receives exemplar attention in action theory. In action perspectives, from adolescence onward, the role of the individual as an active coproducer of own development changes to include intentionality. Adolescents (and later adults) intentionally contribute to their own development by setting developmental goals, matching action to these plans, monitoring and evaluating actions, and reconstruing goals and/or modifying circumstances (Brandtstädter, 2006).

Compatible with socialisation and action theories is the developmental-contextual theory that Vondracek, Lerner and Schulenberg have contributed to the careers field (see Patton & McMahon, 2006a; Whiston & Keller, 2004). In this theory too, there is explicit acknowledgement of the dynamic interaction between the individual and changing contexts (including the family). Vondracek et al. explain that work roles are influenced by the roles that a child learns in the family setting (as cited in Whiston & Keller, 2004). Moreover, there is a mutuality of influences between the individual and contexts—each influences and is influenced by the other. Patton and McMahon, in describing developmental-contextualism as one of the advancements of career theory, state that Vondracek et al. call special attention to self-determination and the personal agency of individuals.

There is evidence in this research of the reciprocally impactful key influences of family (and other social groups) and self. Part of this evidence has to do with the class and gender specificity of career choices of youth in this study. Despite most youth rating their own self as more or most important in making a career choice, all career choices were class specific and many were gender specific. Clearly, it is

within a pool of careers, which would largely garner family approval (i.e., a pool of careers congruent with family expectations and aspirations, and family standards and lifestyle), that the youth have explained why they specifically chose to become, for example, a counsellor or a photographer. Their notions of autonomy and possibly “free will” appear circumscribed within the limits of what would meet family approval. Of course, this is exemplary of a systems view: the roles of the self and the family are interconnected rather than disparate, and therefore, judgements of own role subsume the role of the family.

In fact, this finding is consonant with many threads in the literature. It echoes Gottfredson’s theory of circumscription and compromise. She states that adolescents’ “occupational aspirations...reproduce most of the class and gender differences of the parent generation” (Gottfredson, 2005, p. 72). This finding is also an example of the contextual affordances and limitations that enable or constrain the agency of individuals, described in Vondracek, Lerner and Schulenberg’s framework (as cited in Patton & McMahon, 2006a) and in action perspectives (Brandstädter, 2006). Illustrative of such affordances and limitations, are the values, beliefs, expectations, aspirations and standards that families coalesce for their unit as a whole, and define specifically for a member of the family, including the daughter or son. Lavour and Heppner (2009) found that adolescents from privileged families (in USA) perceived that they had plentiful choices with regard to occupations. However, their role models and learning experiences focused on a rather constricted range of upwardly mobile occupations and the adolescents had positive outcome expectations only for these occupations. Lavour and Heppner concluded that the desire to maintain social class privilege substantially curtailed the range of occupational choices for these adolescents. In similar vein, Arulmani and Nag-Arulmani (2004) have described social cognitive environments that foster ingrained ways of thinking about work and occupations. They draw our attention to career beliefs—namely, cognitions relating to work, occupations and career development that reflect and represent a distinctive social cognitive environment. They add that career beliefs include positive and/or negative valences that facilitate or obstruct individual career development. Thus, an adolescent’s proficiency and persistence or prestige beliefs with regard to education and

career are drawn from the social cognitive environment of the family, social class and community.

Other evidence in support of the mutually impactful roles of the self and family includes the finding that very few of the youth identified only their self or only their family as a more or most important influence on career choice. Outstandingly, the youth identified self *and* other influences as more or most important influences on their career choice. “Self and family” or “self, family and teacher” were oft-repeated combinations of influences.

How do these findings compare with other researches on youth and career choices? Two large-scale studies, one conducted in India and the other in U.K., are especially relevant. Arulmani (1995) studied 654 young Indian professionals, 25-to-28-years old, who had been working in various fields for 2 or 3 years. The youth were interviewed about the influences on their career choice. Across the youth in the Arulmani study, the most represented influence on career choice was that of parents (46%), followed by parents and self (24%). Least represented was the sole influence of self (4%). There are some important similarities and differences across the current study and the Arulmani study: 70% of the youth in the Arulmani study reported that parents had influenced their career choice, in comparison with 58.46% of the youth in this study identifying parents as a more or most important influence, and 73.85% identifying parents as at least a somewhat important influence on career choice. Influence of family members (parents and others) in the Arulmani study was 85%, in this study was 67.7% as a more or most important influence. The sharpest difference has to do with the reported role of the self: 28% in the Arulmani study versus 80% in this study. What do these differences reflect? Research efforts need to be directed in order to clarify whether these differences indicate a change in times, or are representative of the contrast between a Mumbai versus non-Mumbai Indian sample in self-awareness and knowledge of the world of work. In this study, youth justifications for high ratings for influence of self included own judgements of what they liked, disliked and were good at, their knowledge of the skills needed in a profession etc. There is also indication in this study of the possibility that fewer families in Mumbai exercise coercive

control over their adolescent children than families in other parts of India.

Interestingly, the conclusions from the current study are congruent with those obtained in job perception and job preference surveys in U.K., in particular a school survey of 2447 students and a college survey of 537 students (see Millward et al., 2006). Millward et al. (2006) concluded that their results (with regard to job preferences) indicated that the youth “were highly active in making their own decisions about what they want based on what they know they can and cannot cope with, combined with knowledge of what they are good at” (p. 36). Youth heavily depended on their own personal instincts or judgements of what was right for them. Personal experience was the foremost source of job knowledge, acquired through work observation, actual work experiences, or through talking to family or friends in those jobs. In making job decisions there were three outstanding influences: family advice/role models/informal chatting, work experience, and inspired by own interests/enjoyment. Students rated parental advice as the most used and most helpful source of career advice.

Important parallels can also be drawn between the two studies regarding the role of career guidance services. Although almost 50% of the youth in the Millward et al. study had used career service as against the 20% in this study, yet, compatible with this study and other research in India (e.g., Arulmani & Nag-Arulmani, 2005; Bakshi, 2011), Millward et al. conclude that in making job decisions “(o)verall, the informal and personal sources presided over the formal and impersonal sources of information in their impact on decisions made” (p. 58). Thus, they report that 14% of students found formal methods of career advice useful, and only 4% of all students found interviews with career advisors useful in making job decisions. Likewise in this study, of the 13 youth who had experienced professional career guidance in one or the other form, 3 outrightly said that it was unhelpful and most of the remaining judged it as a somewhat important influence on their career choice. In the Indian context, even in a megacity such as Mumbai, there is an urgent need to address relevance, access, quality, utility and cultural resonance of professional career guidance services for traditional populations such as youth.

The gender differences obtained in this study also merit discussion. All gender

differences were in favour of men; therefore, it is possible that these differences are indicative of gender biases. Thus, men reported a significantly greater number of influences on their career choice; and, more men than women reported one or the other family member as an influence on career choice, particularly fathers. It appears that families even in megapolitans like Mumbai are more focused on enabling (at times even controlling) the career choices of sons; they are somewhat less concerned about the career choices of women/daughters. This may spring from beliefs about traditional gender-stereotyped role allocation in families: with marriage and child rearing defining a woman’s identity and an occupation defining a man’s identity (DeFrain & Olson, 1999). Plus, in Western and Northern India in particular, there is a notion that the daughter does not belong to her family of origin but to her in-laws; throughout childhood the daughter is being raised for somebody else, the daughter is not “ours”. In fact, ingrained patriarchal orientations and traditions in India have had regrettable consequences: discriminatory practices towards girl children have been rampant (e.g., Agrawal, 2005). Social reformatory, UN (e.g., UNICEF), and NGO-related action in this area has some history; career counsellors too need to address gender-related issues and support both genders in clarifying their occupational or career choices and making selections that maximise human potential.

Conclusion

Before concluding, it is necessary to take note of the limited scope of the current study: that is, a relatively small sample size and participants who are socioeconomically privileged and from a single city. Clearly, it is imperative that youth perceptions of influences on career choice are investigated with a larger sample size and with participants drawn from multiple cities/regions, rural areas, and different socioeconomic groups.

Despite the limited scope, this study helps steer us towards directions that appear valuable. These include the following implications for career guidance practice: To reiterate, in Mumbai and many other parts of India, access to and cultural-relevance of professional career guidance services even for student populations are as yet largely unaddressed and require substantial attention and effort. The *Jiva* approach to culturally-resonant career guidance and counselling

developed by Arulmani is a notable exception (see Arulmani, 2011). Research evidence is clearly favourable for this model. For example, Arulmani (2011) found that urban high school students from lower SES homes who participated in a culturally-resonant career guidance intervention had a dramatic reduction in negativity of career beliefs. Clearly, such a model can be adopted and/or adapted by career counsellors in other parts of the country.

In addressing quality, career counsellors will do well to be sensitive and responsive to the mutually impactful roles of the self and the family. Prescriptive modes in career guidance practice must be replaced with those that accept, respect and strengthen the role of the individual as an active coproducer of own

development. Patton and McMahon (2006b) recommend that individuals play a more active role in the career counselling process. Compatible with a systems view, the identification and realisation of career-related aspirations of individuals by individuals must be scaffolded carefully with cognisance of the varying nature and extent of control that families exercise over the career choices of their sons and daughters. In other words, career counsellors must recognise and work with acknowledged and unacknowledged influences of the family: "Who says that I have to become an engineer or a doctor or a lawyer?" Even when youth say "I say", the pool from which they are making a choice itself calls attention to the conjoint influence of the family.

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