

# High-achieving, non-first-generation, female, undergraduate student views of family influence on career decisions

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### High-Achieving, Non-First-Generation, Female, Undergraduate Student Views of Family Influence on Career Decisions

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#### Abstract

This qualitative study sought to understand how high-achieving, non-first-generation, female, undergraduate students viewed the influence parents and families had on their career decisions. This study's six participants were students in the same honors college at a large, four-year, public university in the Southeast United States. Data from a pre-interview survey, initial interview, in-depth interview, and interview observation protocols were used to understand participants' career decision-making processes and the influence their parents and families had on those processes. Thematic coding was used to identify three common themes found among participants: (a) parent and family support (b) family influence on career decision-making process; and (c) career experiences of women. Within each theme, several sub-themes also emerged. This study served as a way to gain information about and understand career decision-making of high-achieving, non-first-generation, female, undergraduate students, an understudied population of students, and to contribute new information to the body of knowledge. The findings of this study provided insight into the influence families have on the career decisions of this particular population. Additionally, the findings offered a greater understanding of how gender identity impacts career experiences of high-achieving, female undergraduate students.

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Impact of family of origin on career choice. Values and attitudes related to the balancing of work and family are influenced by a number of factors, including the family of origin and exposure to trends in the labour force. In addition to familial influence on an individual's preferences for combining work and family, research shows that the occupational choices made by parents can exert a direct influence on the career choices of their children. Marks and Houston (2002) conducted a study of academically high-achieving girls aged 15 to 17 years, and found that their education and career plans were significantly influenced by perceived social pressure to give up work to care for their children. Another important family factor that influences children's ideas about future work is pressure from parents. The research's results show that among young individuals, both male and female, there is a high percentage of those who listen to the opinion of adults - nearly 40% in each subgroup. Parents and children's expectations nonetheless turned out to be unconnected from a purely statistical standpoint. The only dependence found between the cultural status of a family and the values attributed to a student's future work is that when cultural resources exist in the family, the teenager is more likely to focus on a job that ensures independence. Table 1. Connection between family factors and expectations for first job.