



## Like father, like son: explicating parental influence on adult children's public sector preference

Chung-An Chen, Chih-Wei Hsieh, Don-Yun Chen & Bo Wen

To cite this article: Chung-An Chen, Chih-Wei Hsieh, Don-Yun Chen & Bo Wen (2021): Like father, like son: explicating parental influence on adult children's public sector preference, International Public Management Journal, DOI: [10.1080/10967494.2021.1948467](https://doi.org/10.1080/10967494.2021.1948467)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/10967494.2021.1948467>



Published online: 19 Jul 2021.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)




View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)



# Like father, like son: explicating parental influence on adult children's public sector preference

Chung-An Chen<sup>a</sup>, Chih-Wei Hsieh<sup>b</sup>, Don-Yun Chen<sup>c</sup>, and Bo Wen<sup>b</sup> 

<sup>a</sup>Nanyang Technological University; <sup>b</sup>City University of Hong Kong; <sup>c</sup>National Chengchi University

## ABSTRACT

Research on how parents influence their children's public sector preference is becoming more plentiful; unfortunately, these studies do not include the analysis of cultural contexts. In this study based in Taiwan, elements of Confucian ideology, which encompass submission to authority and male dominance, are proposed as the main sources of this parental influence. First, parents directly transmit values, such as public service motivation (PSM) as well as security and growth values, to their children and subsequently shape their sector preferences. Second, parents' opinions and expectations about whether or not their children should consider a public service career in turn affects children's own public sector preference. Statistical results from the parent-child dyadic data support both value transmission and parental expectation mechanisms. Additional analysis shows that the father's influence is stronger than that of the mother.

## ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 18 June 2020  
Accepted 23 June 2021

## Introduction

What determines individuals' preference for a public service career has long been a core issue in public administration research. Most studies center on how this preference is affected by personal values such as job security, high pay, and public service motivation (PSM) (Hansen 2014; Ko and Jun 2015; Vandenabeele 2008), or by need fulfillment in the current working environment (i.e. person-environment fit) (Chen, Bozeman, and Berman 2019). These studies commonly assume that individuals make independent and autonomous career choices.

Nonetheless, individual choices are never perfectly independent or autonomous. Instead, they are more or less dependent upon parental influence (Dick and Rallis 1991; Guan et al. 2016). Yet studies that peer into parental influence on children's government career choice are limited. To our knowledge, only two studies investigating this specific relationship can be found in the existing literature (Fischer and Schott 2020; Stritch and Christensen 2016). They indicate that, according to social learning theory (Bandura 1971), parents being public servants may exude a role-modeling influence that first increases children's PSM, which subsequently promotes their aspiration to a public service career. In combination, these two studies deliver the following crucial messages: First, intergenerational transmission of values and attitudes (Barni et al. 2011; Grønhoj and Thøgersen 2009), especially the transmission of PSM, shapes children's public sector preference; second, intergenerational transmission is mainly carried out through the effect of role modeling.

While these views are logical and insightful, some drawbacks should not be overlooked. First, values and attitudes that influence one's choice for a public service career are not limited to PSM. Evidence shows that various job-related values and attitudes, such as job security and personal

growth, can be as influential as PSM (Ko and Jun 2015; Tschirhart et al. 2008; Van de Walle, Steijn, and Jilke 2015). In the realm of transmission of values, as well as its impact on children's public sector preference, a view beyond mere PSM is warranted and serves as a point of departure for the further development of knowledge surrounding this important topic.

Second, intergenerational transmission of values and attitudes may not necessarily be carried out through parents being public servants. For example, some parents have strong PSM, but for some reasons they have never worked in the public sector. These parents, even without a public service position, can still directly transfer their PSM to children through family socialization (Schwartz 1994). A positive correlation between parents' and their children's PSM as well as children's strong interest in a public service career can thus become possible (Grønhoj and Thøgersen 2009). On this note, this study strives to investigate parent-child value transmission as well as its impact on children's public sector preference.

Finally, in addition to intergenerational transmission, parents can pass on values to their offspring and accordingly shape their public sector preference through expectations (Ferry, Fouad, and Smith 2000; S. A. Leung et al. 2011). Parental expectations are feelings or beliefs that parents have about their children's future job. Dictated by their own values, attitudes, and sometimes life experiences, parents may form an expectation on the sectors their children will eventually pursue.

In sum, we are interested in knowing how parents shape children's preference for a public service career. In our view, parents influence children's public sector preference via two major channels: (i) parent-child value transmission and (ii) parental expectations. These two mechanisms, albeit sharing an identical core of parents' values, influence the sectoral preferences of children in a sharply different manner. In the case of intergenerational transmission of values, parents do not necessarily expect children to choose a public service career, and in extreme scenarios, even expect children not to enter the public sector. Children may consciously or unconsciously pick up values from parents and form their own public sector preference. By contrast, under the premise of parental expectation, parent-child value alignment may not exist at all. To a great extent, children choose a public service career to simply please their parents.

Data used for hypothesis testing come from Taiwanese parents and their adult children who, at the time of the survey administration, were college attendees. By gathering responses from two different sources (i.e., parents and their progeny), this data collection approach successfully circumvents common method bias and thus improves the plausibility of the findings presented later in this article. Prior to developing specific research hypotheses, we elaborate on the context of Taiwan, or East Asia in a broader sense, as it greatly differs from Western settings. First and foremost, as securing government employments in Taiwan has long been considered as bringing fame to the family, parents often encourage their children to partake in the public service exam (Chen et al. 2020). Moreover, the impact of parental expectations on children's occupational choices is extremely pronounced in East Asia where the culture of authoritarian filial piety<sup>1</sup> dominates and is socially endorsed (Hynie, Lalonde, and Lee 2006; J. T. Leung and Shek 2011). Finally, East Asian societies are more or less characterized by male dominance, or chauvinism (Chen and Hsieh 2017). Fathers usually make major decisions, including children's future careers, on behalf of their entire family. A more detailed depiction of the contextual uniqueness is hence necessitated to lend greater credibility and relevance to the posited hypotheses.

## **The context of Taiwan**

### ***Public sector employment***

Public sector employment is extremely popular in East Asian countries, including Taiwan. According to a recent comparative study (Chen et al. 2019), approximately 56% of private sector workers in Taiwan prefer switching to the public sector, compared to merely 23% in the U.S. and

13% in New Zealand. Meanwhile, only 25% of government employees in Taiwan demonstrate their interest in pursuing private sector employment, which, nonetheless, is considered by 39% and 60% of their U.S. and New Zealand counterparts, respectively.

East Asian people's predilection toward public sector employment can be traced back to the imperial examination (*Keju*), a centrally administered public service exam that first appeared in AD 605 in China and was later adopted by other East Asian nations (Tian 2004). To fulfill the purpose of enhanced social mobility, *Keju* was open to all applicants regardless of their socio-economic background. In ancient times, emperors even used wagons, gold, and extravagant marriages to entice young generations to take this public service exam (Kracke 1947; H. Liu 2010). Although *Keju* was officially abolished over a hundred years ago, a majority of East Asians to date still believe that government employment guarantees quality life, and deem it the most glorious way to pursue prestige, face, power, and privilege for their family (Chen et al. 2020). Simply put, it is in part the historical legacy that makes public sector employment a distinctive career choice for young generations.

### **Submission to parents and authority**

Due to the perceived material attractiveness of public service positions, many parents strongly expect their children to enter the public sector (Chen, Chen, and Xu 2018). The weight of parental expectation in Taiwan is further enhanced by young people's submission to parents and authority, which stands as the intellectual core of Confucian values (Chen and Hsieh 2017). Prior scholars often make sense of this unconditional submission to authority through the lens of filial piety. Filial piety underscores how children should treat parents. It first stresses affective reciprocity between children and parents (Yeh 2003): parents must love children, and children ought to reciprocate this love by having a grateful attitude toward their parents, taking care of their parents, and pleasing their parents. However, the notion of filial piety can gradually morph into blind obedience – children are obligated to suppress their personal views and comply with their parents' wishes so that family harmony can be maintained (Chen and Hsieh 2017). In some cases, for the sake of pleasing their parents, children will live with them even after marriage (Yeh 2003). This phenomenon squares with the argument made by Yang and his colleagues (K.-S. Yang, Yu, and Yeh 1991; K. S. Yang 2006), who believe that submission to authority is most prevalent in Confucian societies. The tradition of authoritarian filial piety, which represents an informal but deeply entrenched type of submission to authority, thus substantiates the viable impact of parental expectations on children's career trajectories.

### **Male dominance**

In addition to compliance to authority, male dominance is another pertinent Confucian hallmark. The attitude toward gender in East Asia is more conservative compared to that in the West (Chen and Hsieh 2017). While Confucianism never explicitly states that women are inferior to men, it suggests that men and women have different roles to play and these roles, analogous to *yin* and *yang* (i.e., shady and sunny sides), complement each other. For example, men act as a protector and a breadwinner for their family, whereas women take charge of domestic affairs (Sung 1981). As an unintended corollary, however, this Confucian view has infamously given predominant power to men (Chen and Hsieh 2017). For example, the father is viewed as the head of household and is expected to make key decisions for his family. This internalized male-dominance ideology brings practical realism to both parent-child value transmission and parental expectation mechanisms envisioned in this article.

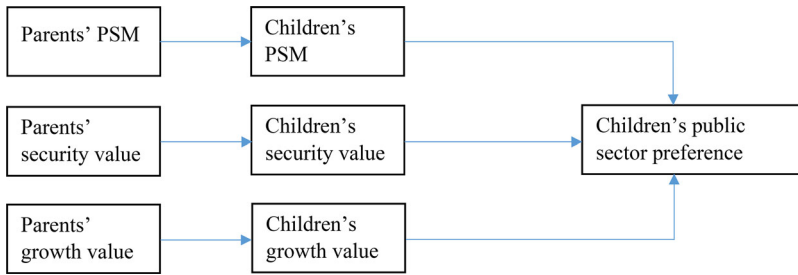


Figure 1. The Parent–Child Value Transmission Mechanism.

## Hypothesis development

### Channel I: parent–child value transmission

Parent–child value transmission refers to direct intergenerational transmission of values between parents and their offspring. It occurs when parents possess a certain value and, either intentionally or unintentionally, pass it down to their children. Scholars argue that family socialization is the main mechanism that facilitates parent–child value transmission (Grønhøj and Thøgersen 2009; Hoge, Petrillo, and Smith 1982). Through this very process, children are taught the values and behavioral patterns necessary for them to become a member of the society in which they live and internalize these contents so that transmission can be completed (Brim 1966). This will eventually result in parent–child value congruence (Whitbeck and Gecas 1988). Conversely, parent–child value dissonance occurs when children choose to reject the values that parents want them to endorse (Barni et al. 2011). To measure the extent of parent–child value transmission, a common method is identifying values of interest, collecting data from family dyads (i.e. parent and child), and testing parent–child correlation of values (Grønhøj and Thøgersen 2009; Whitbeck and Gecas 1988).

Although studies that examine the influence of parent–child value transmission on career choice are scant, this phenomenon is more likely than not to exist. As elaborated by Jungen (2008), “parents may also be unaware of the impact their norms and values have on their child’s career choice ... While parents may assume other variables such as occupation or education to be most influential, their influence [on children’s career aspiration] is most often exerted through normative channels.” Likewise, Poulter (2010) argues that children have incredible learning and memory abilities, “recording any and all behaviors, comments, and attitudes of their parents” and later translating these preserved memories into their supposed roles in society. Departing from this logic, we are led to believe that values held by parents tend to exert their effects on children’s career preferences via the channel of parent–child value transmission.

Figure 1 outlines our explanatory model of public sector preference basing on the notion of parent–child value transmission. Here, we first examine the transmission of PSM. PSM is often considered as a cluster of values and attitudes that go beyond self-interest and emphasize serving the public interest (Taylor 2008; Vandenabeele 2007). Evidence shows that PSM, with a few exceptions (Lee and Choi 2016), in general positively predicts individual preference for a government or a service-related job (Ritz, Brewer, and Neumann 2016). If parents transfer PSM to children and children’s PSM positively predicts their public sector preference, we should expect that parents positively influence children’s public sector preference via the transmission of PSM.

Apart from PSM, we also consider work values in the present study. In studies of career choice, scholars often examine the impacts of multiple work values. Findings from work value ranking generally suggest that security and growth values (i.e., the extent to which individuals are security or growth oriented), among others, are of highest importance to public service workers and job seekers (Houston 2011; Ko and Jun 2015). As far as security value is

concerned, it captures the desire for life security, such as a stable future and attractive pension plans that are typical add-ons associated with public sector employment. A few scholars place these two elements in the same category (Chen and Bozeman 2013; Lyons, Duxbury, and Higgins 2006) as they both provide employees a sense of life protection. In Taiwan, security value, better known as “iron rice bowl mentality,” is assumed to be the main impetus for people to seek public sector employment (Su 2010). Empirical evidence gleaned from international studies shows that security value positively predicts individual public sector preference. For example, by testing large-sample international data from the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP), Houston (2011) indicates that public employees place a heavier emphasis on job security than their private sector counterparts. Using the same data, Van de Walle and his colleagues (2015) find that security value indeed motivates people to pursue a public service career. Hansen (2014) similarly finds that those who highly value security are less likely than others to switch to the private sector. Taken together, if parents transfer security value to children and children’s security value positively predicts their public sector preference, we should expect that parents positively influence children’s public sector preference via the transmission of security value.

In terms of growth value, which can be understood as the preference for personal growth, scholars often measure it with different item names, such as the chance to learn new things, the chance to use abilities, interesting work content, and challenging tasks (Jurkiewicz, Massey, and Brown 1998; Lyons et al. 2006). Despite being one of the top concerns for job seekers, whether growth value drives one to choose a public service career remains inconclusive. For example, some studies find that public employees value personal growth more than their business sector peers (Houston 2011; Jurkiewicz et al. 1998; Lyons et al. 2006), and others find that growth value enhances one’s interest in a public sector job (Van de Walle et al. 2015). However, evidence from Asia shows the opposite. By examining data from university students in China, South Korea, and Singapore, Ko and Jun (2015) claim that those who are attracted to a private sector career report a higher score on growth value than their cohorts with a predilection for a public service career. Similarly, Chen and his associates (2019) test data from Taiwanese business sector workers and find that those who intend to switch to the public sector report a lower score on growth value compared to those who want to remain in the private sector.

Evidently, findings from Asia imply the necessity of considering the presence of unique cultural and institutional settings in contrast to the West. In fact, the economy of the aforementioned Asian states started to grow rapidly since the 1980s. The fast-expanding private sector in recent decades appear to be more attractive to those who desire challenging work content. In addition, as mentioned, a public service position in East Asia symbolizes social status, power, and privilege, which attracts extrinsically motivated people who care less about intrinsic job rewards (Chen et al. 2020; Lee and Choi 2016). As the present study is based in Taiwan, we are inclined to believe that the parent–child transmission of growth value will weaken, as opposed to enhance, adult children’s public sector preference.

In a nutshell, we postulate that children’s public sector preference is shaped by the parent–child transmission of PSM, security value, and growth value. Following previous studies (Grønhoj and Thøgersen 2009; Whitbeck and Gecas 1988), we measure the extent of parent–child value transmission by testing parent–child correlation of these values. Subsequently, the effect of value transmission on children’s public sector preference is best portrayed as a causal sequence, as depicted in Figure 1 above. For instance, the pathway from parents’ PSM to children’s public sector preference is described as the indirect effect between the two through children’s PSM. In statistical parlance (Hayes 2018), this means that children’s PSM mediates the relationship between parents’ PSM and children’s public sector preference. As we are keen on testing these indirect effects, we therefore offer the following hypotheses:

- H<sub>1</sub>: Children's PSM mediates the positive relationship between parents' PSM and children's public sector preference.
- H<sub>2</sub>: Children's security value mediates the positive relationship between parents' security value and children's public sector preference.
- H<sub>3</sub>: Children's growth value mediates the negative relationship between parents' growth value and children's public sector preference.

### **Channel II: parental expectation**

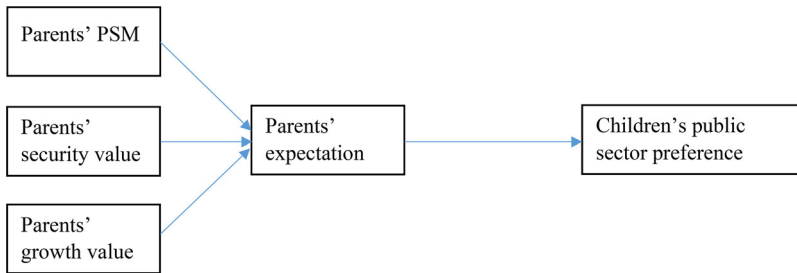
In addition to parent–child value transmission, we propose that parental expectations also explain how parents indirectly shape children's public sector preference. Many, if not all, parents expect children to be successful, as they continue to set goals or wishes for their offspring over the life course. It is argued that parents' socio-economic characteristics, along with life experiences, influence their expectations on children (Wang, Deng, and Yang 2016). For example, older parents are more likely to discourage children's premarital sexual intimacy. By looking more deeply into these cases, we find that a more fundamental determinant is parents' values (J. T. Leung and Shek 2011): older parents discourage premarital sex because they grew up in a conservative culture and accordingly incorporate the culture into their value system. Indeed, parents cannot transfer their socio-economic status and life experiences to children, but they can viably influence the next generation by forming expectations on children.

Predictably, parental expectation has received more research attention in Asia or among Asian communities, partly because of the commonalities underlying Asian cultures (Ferry et al. 2000). By looking through Hofstede's cultural dimensions (Hofstede 1991), we find that power distance is greater and a collectivist culture is more prevalent in Asian countries. Scholars argue that these two cultural features grant parents considerable leeway to maneuver their children (S. A. Leung et al. 2011; Sawitri, Creed, and Zimmer-Gembeck 2014): namely, children in a culture of large power distance tend to accept the exertion of power from more authoritative figures in a family, such as parents; likewise, children growing up in a collectivist culture exhibit a similar tendency to make a decision that pleases significant others (e.g., parents). In East Asian states, especially those deeply influenced by Chinese cultures, parental expectations are often described as "expecting children to become dragons," in which dragon symbolizes supremacy (J. T. Leung and Shek 2011). As we analyzed earlier, the effect of parental expectation can be even more pronounced in East Asia where authoritarian filial piety dominates.

Does empirical evidence support that parents' expectation eventually affects children's career preference? With some exceptions (Hussain 2013), most studies, especially those focusing on East Asians or Asian Americans, show that parental expectations do have a significant impact on children's career preference in general (Fouad et al. 2008; Hou and Leung 2011; S. A. Leung et al. 2011; Sawitri et al. 2014). Then what values and attitudes drive parents to expect their children to obtain a public service position? As we addressed earlier, PSM, security value, and growth value are all potential candidates that gear one's preference toward or away from a public service career. These values may also evolve into parents' expectation on children, encouraging (or discouraging) the latter to pursue a public service career. Figure 2 visualizes these causal sequences. We thus hypothesize that parents' values lead to their expectation on children for having (or not having) a public service career; such an expectation accordingly affects children's public sector preference. As parents' expectation serves as an intermediate endpoint in the pathway from parents' values to children's public sector preference, we construct the corresponding hypotheses as follows:

- H<sub>4</sub>: Parental expectation on children for having a public service career mediates the positively relationship between parents' PSM and children's public sector preference.





**Figure 2.** The Parental Expectation Mechanism.

H<sub>5</sub>: Parental expectation on children for having a public service career mediates the positive relationship between parents' security value and children's public sector preference.

H<sub>6</sub>: Parental expectation on children for not having a public service career mediates the negative relationship between parents' growth value and children's public sector preference.

## Methods

### *Sampling procedure*

The empirical data of this study came from Taiwanese college students and their parents who were randomly selected to participate in a phone survey conducted between April and July in 2016. Given that a complete roster of college students in Taiwan was unavailable at the time, we devised a two-stage random sampling strategy to reach the targeted respondents. In the first stage, we employed a random digit dialing (RDD) method to access households with landline numbers. In the second stage, we made calls based on the last two digits of telephone numbers randomly chosen by the computer. When the placed call was answered, the interviewer kicked off the conversation by confirming that at least one household member was a college student. Upon confirmation, the phone survey process officially began. If a student picked up the call, the student would be interviewed for the parts in which questions were designed for students. After the completion of student interview, we subsequently invited one of the parents to participate, answering questions prepared exclusively for parents. The reverse process would be applied when the call was immediately received by a college student's parent. To ensure a high success rate, phone calls were usually made during a long school break, weekends, holidays, or workday evenings when both college students and their parents are likely to be home. These efforts, although costly and time-consuming, helped enhance the representativeness of the eventual sample.

The parent-child relationship in the Taiwanese context further justifies the use of this survey method. In Western countries, children are oftentimes encouraged to be financially independent and leave home when they are college aged. By contrast, under the influence of Confucianism, or more precisely, filial piety, many people in Taiwan still believe that children "should not travel far when parents are still alive" (Yeh 2003). Many adult children choose a university close to home regions to honor the exact spirit of this proverb. In addition, given the fact that Taiwan is a small island, traveling to and from the university is quite convenient. Finally, living at home is apparently less costly. These reasons combine to increase the likelihood that many adult children in Taiwan still live with their parents even when they are attending college.

A total number of 5,257 calls was successfully made. This number excludes the following types of calls: (i) respondents claimed that no college students were living in their households; (ii) respondents claimed that at least one college student was living in their households, but no parent was present; (iii) respondents could not complete our survey in its entirety due to physical or mental problems; (iv) respondents could not be surveyed due to a language barrier; (v) respondents were unable to comprehend the purpose of our survey and therefore declined to participate.



We conducted this telephone survey across two phases. In the first phase, we gathered 255 paired responses (i.e., collected dyadic data from both college students and their parents) and 984 individual responses, of which 140 were from students only and the remaining 844 were from parents only. In the second phase, we made follow-up calls to the 984 households covered in the first phase, hoping to solicit responses from the absent “party.” However, we only managed to complete 287 cases, of which 191 and 96 were from the parents and students missed in the previous round, respectively. In total, our sample consists of 255 (Phase I) + 287 (Phase II) = 542 fully paired data points, yielding a completion rate of 10.31%. Please refer to [Appendix A](#) for more details about the data collection process.

Of these 542 student-parent duos, 255 students (47%) and 172 parents (31.7%) were males. On average, sampled students were 20.9 years old and their parents were 54.8. While only 65 (12%) of these parents had worked in the public sector, 204 students (37.6%) considered public service jobs as their top career choice. It is noteworthy that 310 students (57.2%) in our sample were majoring in humanities and social sciences.

### Measures

The main outcome variable, adult children’s public sector preference, is measured with the following question in the questionnaire: “*Regarding your future career, which of the following sectors is your first choice?*” Students choose among public, for-profit, and nonprofit. We then create a dichotomous variable by combining the private and nonprofit sectors (i.e., the public sector = 1; the private or nonprofit sector = 0). Most scholars have noted that public and nonprofit organizations in Western studies are commonly perceived as within the same category in contrast to for-profit businesses. Scholars assume that prosocial individuals tend to avoid for-profit organizations in favor of careers that will allow them to contribute to the society, which can be found both in public organizations (B. Liu, Hui, Hu, Yang, and Yu 2011; Vandenberg 2008) and in nonprofit establishments (Houston 2006; Mann 2006; Tschirhart et al. 2008). However, in Taiwan and East Asia in general, people often associate prosocial inclinations with nonprofit employment (Chiang 2002). This is primarily because government employment, as previously discussed, is closely associated with prestige, power, and privilege, and is thus much more popular than nonprofit or for-profit employment in the eyes of the majority of East Asians. Therefore, we treated government employment as an independent category.

The main explanatory variables are parents’ PSM, security value, and growth value. We measure PSM using 12 ordinal-scale items (1 = strongly disagree; 6 = strongly agree) with 3 for each sub-dimension, namely attraction to policy making, commitment to public values, compassion, and self-sacrifice (Cronbach’s alpha = 0.87). All items are adapted from Kim and his colleagues (2013). In line with earlier studies (Chen and Hsieh 2015; Vandenberg 2011), we do not separate the four dimensions in order to maintain statistical parsimony. Two work value variables, security value and growth value, are operationalized under the same section in the questionnaire for parents. The overarching question is stated as “In your mind, how important are the following factors when one chooses a job?” Security value is measured with two ordinal-scale items (1 = not important at all; 6 = very important): job security and pension plans (Cronbach’s alpha = 0.76). This is in line with earlier studies that treat both items as a sign of life protection (Chen and Bozeman 2013; Lyons et al. 2006). Growth value is also measured with two ordinal-scale items (1 = not important at all; 6 = very important): the chance to use one’s abilities and a job that matches one’s own interest (Cronbach’s alpha = 0.71).

In the first proposed channel ([Figure 1](#)) that suggests the parent–child value transmission mechanism, children’s PSM, security and growth values are mediating variables. The measures for these three mediators are identical to those used in the questionnaire for parents: 12 ordinal-scale items for PSM (Cronbach’s alpha = 0.88), 2 items for security value (Cronbach’s alpha = 0.68),

and 2 items for growth value (Cronbach's alpha = 0.67). In the second channel (Figure 2) that displays the parental expectation mechanism, the mediating variable is parental expectation. It is measured with a single-item ordinal-scale variable (1= no expectation at all; 6= very strong expectation): "How much do you expect your children to enter the public sector?"

### Analytical technique

Our research aim, to explicate parental influence on children's public sector preference via parent-child value transmission and parental expectations, necessitates us to perform a series of statistical analyses on the mediating effects of children's PSM, security value, growth value as well as parental expectation on children for having a public service career. The conventional method of mediation analysis is the causal steps approach promoted by Baron and Kenny (1986), which stipulates that a true effect of the mediator ( $M$ ) on the relationship between an independent variable ( $X$ ) and a dependent variable ( $Y$ ) must meet all of the following conditions. Simply put, the basic imperative of a true mediation relationship is that  $X$  must be a significant predictor of  $Y$ . While the regression coefficient  $a''$  signifies the direct effect of  $X$  on  $Y$ , the indirect effect of  $X$  on  $Y$  through  $M$  is the product of  $b$  and  $c$ . Specifically,

Condition 1:  $Y = \beta_1 + cX + \varepsilon_1$  and  $c$  is significant.

Condition 2:  $M = \beta_2 + aX + \varepsilon_2$  and  $a$  is significant.

Condition 3:  $Y = \beta_1 + c'X + bM + \varepsilon_3$  and  $b$  is significant while  $c'$  is smaller than  $c$ .

However, because the indirect effect is quantified as the product of  $a$  and  $b$ , Hayes (2009) criticizes the causal steps approach and recommends that inferences about a mediation effect should base on the testing result of this product alone, even if there lacks a significant direct effect of  $X$  on  $Y$ . As we are drawn to test aforementioned indirect effects, we align our analytical strategy with Hayes' approach and accordingly perform medication analysis with PROCESS, a tool developed for SPSS and SAS (Hayes 2018). Because our dependent variable is binary in nature, logistic regression is used at the final stage of mediation analysis. As a result, the tested effects are on a log-odds metric.

In our regression models, we include several variables, including parents' job as well as children's age, gender, and college major, as statistical controls. According to previous studies (Fischer and Schott 2020; Stritch and Christensen 2016), parents' public sector employment may galvanize individuals into the pursuit of a public service career and therefore should be controlled if we are to estimate the effects of parent-child value transmission and parental expectations on children's public sector preference. We consider age and gender at the same time because they are the most obvious individual characteristics available in the dataset and also frequently examined by researchers. The variable college major is also controlled for because we suspect that it may affect one's levels of public sector preference if he or she is trained to care for the society through the curriculum of humanities and social sciences.

### Findings

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics of our variables of interest. While 37.6% of student respondents prioritize the public sector for their future career, the remaining majority state that the private or nonprofit sector is their first choice. In terms of parental expectation on children for having a public service career, the mean score is 4.31, denoting that our parent respondents somewhat expect their children to pursue public sector employment. When it comes to PSM, security value, and growth value, parents' and children's scalar quantities are evidently high, tilting toward the maximum end of these scales. From a comparative perspective, security value

**Table 1.** Descriptive Statistics.

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Children’s public sector preference	542	0	1	.376	.485
Parents’ PSM	542	2.42	6.00	4.736	.69948
Parents’ security value	542	2.50	6.00	5.476	.79705
Parents’ growth value	542	1.00	6.00	5.389	.77371
Children’s PSM	542	1.67	6.00	4.362	.71273
Children’s security value	542	1.00	6.00	5.104	.88931
Children’s growth value	542	1.00	6.00	4.978	.91125
Parents’ expectation	542	1	6	4.310	1.459

**Table 2.** Regression Results (DV = Mediators).

Variable	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4		Model 5		Model 6	
	Children’s PSM		Children’s SV		Children’s GV		Parents’ expectation					
	B	t	B	t	B	t	B	t	B	t	B	t
Parents’ job (1 = public sector)	-.274	-2.931**	-.172	-1.47	-.241	-2.028*	-.029	-.158	-.019	-.109	.031	.160
Children’s age	-.019	-.895	.036	1.310	-.008	-.291	.020	.457	.010	.246	.007	.153
Children’s gender (1 = male)	-.045	-.684	-.214	-2.611**	-.028	-.342	-.308	-2.367*	-.320	-2.572*	-.266	-1.979*
Children’s major (1 = HSS)	.082	1.238	-.083	-.996	.232	2.764**	-.057	-.433	.058	.459	-.046	-.342
Parents’ PSM	.051	1.179					.594	6.878**				
Parents’ SV			.100	2.086*					.733	10.064**		
Parents’ GV					.150	3.016**					.251	3.117**
N	541	541	541	541	541	541						
F	2.835*	2.775*	4.677**	10.351**	21.232**	2.777*						
R <sup>2</sup>	.026	.025	.042	.088	.166	.025						

Notes: 1. SV: security value; GV: growth value; HSS: humanities and social sciences.  
\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ .

(Parents = 5.476; Children = 5.104) is the highest among the three, whereas PSM (Parents = 4.736; Children = 4.362) is the lowest. Moreover, these values are more highly rated among parents than among their children. All in all, our respondents seem to value life security slightly over personal growth and PSM, and parents tend to care about these values a little more than their children.

The regression results reported in Table 2 are primarily used to illustrate the relationship between parents’ and children’s values (Models 1-3). Because parent-child value transmission is the fundamental underpinning for Hypotheses 1-3, it is of vital importance to test if parents’ and children’s values correlate. However, the regression analysis surprises us with mixed results. In Model 1, parents’ PSM does not successfully predict children’s PSM as the relationship is indeed positive but statistically insignificant ( $p = .24$ ). Besides, in stark contrast to established knowledge (Fischer and Schott 2020; Stritch and Christensen 2016), parents being public servants leads to a decrease, instead of an upsurge, in children’s PSM. Despite these bewildering findings, Models 2 and 3 do support our theoretical conjectures as the correlations between parents’ and children’s security and growth values are both positive and statistically discernible at  $\alpha = .05$  level. As far as control variables are concerned, children’s gender, college major, and parents’ current job exert different effects as shown in Models 2-3. Females, compared to males, are more likely to regard security value as important. Those majored in humanities and social sciences are more likely to think highly of growth value than their counterparts in other disciplines. Finally, parents’ public sector employment has a significantly negative effect on children’s growth value.

**Table 3.** The Gender Effect.

	Full sample (n = 542)	Father (n = 172)	Mother (n = 370)
PSM transmission	.041	.021	.049
SV transmission	.084*	.142	.056
GV transmission	.127**	.214**	.052
Parental expectation on children's public sector preference	.210**	.291**	.176**

Notes: SV: security value; GV: growth value.

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ .

Because the relationship between  $X$  and  $M$  also determines the indirect effect of  $X$  on  $Y$  through  $M$ , Table 2 contains the regression results of parents' values on the final mediator, parents' expectation (Models 4-6). As shown, parents' PSM, security value, and growth value all significantly predict parental expectation, meaning that these values shape the parents' expectation on children for having a public service career. In these regression models, children's gender stands out as another significant predictor. When further scrutinizing this gender effect, it can be seen that female children, compared to their male counterparts, are more likely to be expected to seek public sector employment by their parents.

A gender effect may also take place on the side of parents. In a society where male dominance is present, as elucidated in the preceding section, fathers make almost all major decisions, including their children's future career paths, on behalf of the family. Following this line of thought, we conducted an ad-hoc analysis to examine whether the speculated gender effect on the parental side is also at play. Results in Table 3 show that coefficients are generally greater when fathers are the representative of the parents. This conclusion clearly holds in the scenarios of security value (SV) transmission, growth value (GV) transmission, and the impact of parental expectation on children's public service intentions. Nonetheless, in the case of intergenerational transmission of PSM, no systematic father-mother differences can be observed. Why is it the case? To solve this puzzle, we need to distinguish job-related from non-job-related values and attitudes. Key measurement components of PSM, such as *an interest in public policymaking, compassion, and self-sacrifice*, probe individuals' levels of prosociality and are not particularly related to job characteristics. On the contrary, mechanisms of SV, GV, and parental expectations become logically compelling only when certain aspects of jobs *per se* are thoroughly considered. We may then conclude that fathers are commonly more influential than mothers in predicting their children's job-related choices and preferences.

Table 4 provides the crucial final piece of the mediation puzzle. In Model 1, consistent with our prior finding, children's public sector preference pivots on neither parents' PSM nor their own PSM. Therefore, Hypothesis 1 is not supported. In Model 2, both parents' and their children's security values positively correlate with the dependent variable. The testing result of the indirect effect of parents' security value on children's public sector preference through children's security value is detailed in Table 4. Hayes' PROCESS (2018) uses the bootstrap standard error method to estimate this indirect effect, and it is deemed statistically significant at  $\alpha = .05$  level if its 95% bootstrap confidence interval is entirely above or below zero. Because the calculated confidence limits (BootLLCI and BootULCI) are indeed both above zero (Table 4), Hypothesis 2 is thus supported. In total, children's security value mediates 6.5% (.028) of the total effect (.4337) of parents' security value on children's public sector preference. Likewise, children's growth value significantly mediates the relationship between parents' growth value and children's public sector preference (BootLLCI =  $-.0823$  and BootULCI =  $-.0024$ ), but this mediating effect is negative as reported in Table 4. The size of this indirect effect is 51.6% (.0331/.0642). Therefore, Hypothesis 3 is also supported.

Our analytical results also lend support to hypotheses concerning the parental expectation mechanism, namely Hypotheses 4-6. As reported in Table 4, parents' expectation significantly

**Table 4.** Regression Results (DV = Children's Public Sector Preference).

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4		Model 5		Model 6	
	B	z	B	z	B	z	B	z	B	z	B	z
Parents' job (1 = public sector)	.689	2.529*	.677	2.465*	.579	2.144*	.658	2.387*	.643	2.330*	.642	2.330*
Children's age	-.018	-.285	-.037	-.567	-.026	-.403	-.029	-.450	-.028	-.432	-.026	-.391
Children's gender (1 = male)	-.333	-1.714	-.320	-1.622	-.347	-1.777	-.250	-1.261	-.297	-1.496	-.261	-1.321
Children's major (1 = HSS)	.038	.195	.139	.699	.106	.537	.087	.434	.114	.572	.082	.411
Parents' PSM	.072	.557					-.111	-.804				
Children's PSM	.238	1.816										
Parents' SV			.406	3.165**					.246	1.783		
Children's SV			.280	2.521*								
Parents' GV					.031	.265					-.084	-.703
Children's GV					-.220	-2.199*						
Parents' expectation							.331	4.703**	.264	3.689**	.321	4.734**
N	541	541	541	541	541	541						
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	.026	.040	.020	.047	.051	.047						

Notes: SV: security value; GV: growth value; HSS: humanities and social sciences.

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ .

**Table 5.** The Testing Results of Indirect Effects.

Model/Mediator	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
Model 1/Children's PSM	.0122	.0149	-.0118	.0487
Model 2/Children's SV	.0280	.0196	.0002	.0757
Model 3/Children's GV	-.0331	.0210	-.0823	-.0024
Model 4/Parents' expectation	.1963	.0521	.1092	.3102
Model 5/Parents' expectation	.1936	.0569	.0916	.3141
Model 6/Parents' expectation	.0807	.0332	.0272	.1573

Note: SV: security value; GV: growth value.

predicts children's public sector preference in Models 4-6. Furthermore, Table 5 reports that the indirect effects of parents' values, including PSM, security value, and growth value, on children's public sector preference through parental expectations are positive and significant in all three models, evidenced by the fact that the values of BootLLCI and BootULCI are unvaryingly above zero. The size of these indirect effects is 63.8% (.1963/.3076), 44.1% (.1936/.4392), and 49% (.0807/.1637) respectively.

## Conclusion

The present study centers on the two main conduits through which parents shape their children's public sector preference in an East Asian context. First, parents transmit PSM, security value, and growth value directly to children, which consequently affect their children's public sector preference. Second, by taking into account the actuality of submission to parental authority, a core aspect of Confucian culture, we posit that parents form sectoral expectations for their children according to their own values, which consequently influence children's public sector preference. Lastly, we conjecture the existence of male dominance, another crucial facet of Confucianism, under which fathers are more likely than mothers to influence children's career choices through parent-child value transmission and parental expectations.

With five out of six hypotheses being supported by analytical results, we claim that both direct parent-child value transmission and parental expectation contribute significantly to children's preference for a public service career. We also found that fathers have more of an effect than

mothers on children's sectoral preferences through both mechanisms. Based on these results, it is safe to conclude that Confucian values, including both submission to authority and male dominance, are still deeply engrained in the fabric of Taiwanese society.

### **Unexpected findings**

Notwithstanding the statistical support to two proposed mechanisms, some unexpected discoveries merit further discussion. First, inconsistent with our first hypothesis, parents' PSM is not significantly correlated with children's PSM. In addition, parents being public servants *negatively predict* children's PSM, sharply contradicting the findings of two seminal studies (Fischer and Schott 2020; Stritch and Christensen 2016). Put differently, our findings suggest that parents shape children's public sector preference through the transmission of security and growth values, but not necessarily through the transference of PSM. Do our findings challenge the established knowledge that public servant parents can transmit PSM to children through role modeling, and accordingly affect their children's preference for a public service career? We refrain from making an overstatement or aggressive assertion. Instead, we believe that our findings complement the existing research from a cultural standpoint.

Does prosociality account for the reason that Taiwanese parents are much more zealous to encourage their children to join the civil service workforce? Probably not. Statistics show that West Europeans and North Americans, compared to their East Asian counterparts, are in general more inclined to donate money and volunteer for charity organizations<sup>2</sup>. East Asians' keen interest in a public service career, to a considerable extent, can be ascribed to the material attractiveness of public service positions mentioned earlier in this article. According to the motivation-crowding theory (Frey and Jegen 2001), however, material rewards as an extrinsic motivator can "crowd out" an individual's intrinsic and prosocial motivations.

Lessons from the discussions above are straightforward and somehow worrisome: the unparalleled popularity of public service positions in East Asia hinges more closely on materialistic and face-earning image than a prosocial motive or an intrinsic recognition. Public servant parents' role modeling in the West may viably help transfer PSM to their offspring (Fischer and Schott 2020; Stritch and Christensen 2016). Public servant parents' role modeling in East Asia, by ironic contrast, transmits material values and consequently crowds out children's intrinsic and prosocial motivations. This narrative vividly coincides with our findings that parents being public servants negatively predict children's PSM and growth values.

### **Theoretical and practical implications**

The theoretical contributions of the present study are apparent: it broadens the knowledge base of parental shaping and its influence on adult children's public sector preference. In addition to role modeling, we offer two additional views, namely parental expectation and child-parent value transmission. We also propose that intergenerational transmission of values should not be limited to PSM, but instead, encompass security and growth values. In fact, the validation of these two mechanisms is largely attributed to methodological improvements. Two earlier studies (Fischer and Schott 2020; Stritch and Christensen 2016) mainly rely on a single data source – adult children's responses – to capture parental shaping, precluding the possibility of understanding parents' value priorities and expectations on children. By virtue of collecting data from both parents and children, we are able to offer fresh theoretical insights, and meanwhile, appease the concern of common method bias.

With regard to practical implications, we admit that external interventions to either parent--child value transmission or parental expectation are infeasible. The widespread and dogged "iron rice bowl mentality" is also difficult to break. However, public sector practitioners can still benefit



from our findings. Considering that job seekers are often hooked by the material attractiveness of a government position, they could begin pursuing their own interest at the expense of the public welfare upon joining the public workforce someday (Hsieh 2018). Thus, when parents are unable to nurture their children's PSM, public managers in charge of staff development ought to devise well-planned training program that helps equip young employees with a sense of civic duty. Moreover, it is worth noting that the public sector seems to have lost its appeal to college students with a "growth" aspiration spurred either by the values or expectations of their parents. It makes intuitive sense that self-motivated individuals are least likely to put up with various forms of suffocating red tape that governs public sector organizations (Bozeman and Feeney 2011; Kaufman 2015). Innovative managerial practices are hence needed to break the undesirable status quo of the running of public sector organizations (DeHart-Davis and Pandey 2005; Steijn and Van der Voet 2019). For example, job enlargement and enrichment can be used to reduce boredom at work and motivate employees to perform their tasks at hand more creatively and flexibly. More importantly, public managers must guide employees to align their personal goals with the general public interest and help them find meaning and regain passion in their daily job routine. With the healthy evolution of the public sector culture, parents' and their children's perception of public employment will change accordingly.

### **Research limitations**

This study is not immune to limitations, and the most obvious one stems from our sampling technique. By collecting dyadic data via telephone survey, we, on the one hand, circumvented the weaknesses of common method variance, but suffered from a low response rate of 10.31% on the other. As explained in detail in [Appendix A](#), dyadic data are often gathered in two separate phases – resembling the process of collecting panel data – and data loss frequently occurs in the second phase. Imaginably, a low response rate can worsen non-response bias. To address this issue, future scholars could shorten the length of the survey or recruit respondents via email instead of the telephone.

Collecting dyadic data also risks the possibility of omitting the influence from the second parent. A more desirable approach is to collect data from family triads, namely the child and his or her both parents (Barni et al. 2011), allowing researchers to have a holistic view on parental shaping. However, interviewing three people in a telephone survey is time-consuming and unlikely to be successful. An alternative approach is administering an online or mailed survey. If a complete roster of college students is unavailable, researchers may need to carefully select some colleges or universities with geographical or socioeconomic representability in the first place. Researchers can also bid for face-to-face interviews. Similarly, an email invitation will be required before the interview. These two alternative methods can better facilitate triadic data collection as they offer ample time for the targeted respondents to provide answers.

Another limitation is the negligence of genetic influence. Akin to earlier studies on family socialization, we assume that a significant correlation coefficient between parents' and children's values is a manifestation of value transmission. However, this correlation may be confounded by and owing to a genetic effect. A study on the impact of parental affection on children's prosocial behavior shows that the correlation between parents' negative affection and children's prosocial behavior is mediated by genetic factors (Knafo and Plomin 2006). A similar finding is revealed in another study, which shows a moderate level of genetic correlation between self- and parent-reported prosocial behavior (Gregory et al. 2009). More advanced analysis should thus be employed in the future to disentangle heritability effects from socialization processes.



## Future research directions

As mentioned here and there throughout this article, some findings in the present study are not in line with the existing knowledge (Fischer and Schott 2020; Strich and Christensen 2016), and we attribute the discrepancies mainly to East-West cultural and institutional differences. Our conjectures, albeit logically convincing, require further empirical evidence obtained in other jurisdictions to prove. Following our footsteps, future scholars can conduct comparative studies: collecting data from countries in both the East and the West under an identical research design and comparing the results. Scholars can also add items about filial piety (Yeh and Bedford 2003), compliance to authority (Farh and Cheng 2000), or collectivism/individualism (Hofstede and Bond 1984) into the survey questionnaire so that East-West cultural differences, in terms of the different levels or the impact of parental expectation, can be theoretically grounded and contextually juxtaposed. Finally, a qualitative component — mainly in the form of semi-structured, in-depth interviews with college graduates and their parents — needs to be embraced to gather a textured, nuanced, and elaborate understanding of one's sector choices. In sum, emboldened by the present study, scholars should sail out by conducting cross-cultural comparative research on parental shaping in the future.

## Notes

1. The words “filial” and “piety” are originally derived from Latin; *filius* refers to being a son in relation to a parent, and *pietas* means dutiful (Hamilton 1990). The term describes a core pillar of Confucian ethics, referring to the utmost duty of respect and care for one's parents (also see: Bedford and Yeh 2019).
2. Please refer to [https://www.cafonline.org/docs/default-source/about-us-publications/caf\\_wgi2018\\_report\\_webnopw\\_2379a\\_261018.pdf?sfvrsn=c28e9140\\_4](https://www.cafonline.org/docs/default-source/about-us-publications/caf_wgi2018_report_webnopw_2379a_261018.pdf?sfvrsn=c28e9140_4), the 2018 World Giving Index, for detailed statistics.

## Funding

This work was supported by Taiwan Ministry of Science and Technology Research Grant (NSC-102-2410-H- 004-124-MY2; TGBSIII) and Singapore Ministry of Education Tier-1 Grant (RG61/16).

## Notes on contributors

**Chung-An Chen** is Associate Professor in the Public Policy and Global Affairs Programme, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. He has a broad interest in public management issues with a particular focus on organizational behavior and human resource management.

**Chih-Wei Hsieh** is Associate Professor in the Department of Public Policy at the City University of Hong Kong. His research interests focus on public service delivery, human resource management, and organizational behavior. He has published articles on emotional labor, public service motivation, and workplace diversity.

**Don-Yun Chen** is Professor in the Department of Public Administration, National Chengchi University, Taiwan; researcher in the Taiwan Institute for Government and Communication Research, National Chengchi University, Taiwan. His areas of specialization are democratic governance, e-Governance, bureaucratic politics, policy analysis and management.

**Bo Wen** is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Public Policy at the City University of Hong Kong. His primary areas of study are public management, organization theory and behavior, institutional analysis, policy implementation, regulatory governance, and Chinese politics.

## ORCID

Bo Wen  <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-2287-473X>

## References

- Bandura, A. 1971. *Social Learning Theory*. New York, NY: General Learning Press.
- Barni, D., S. Ranieri, E. Scabini, and R. Rosnati. 2011. "Value Transmission in the Family: Do Adolescents Accept the Values Their Parents Want to Transmit?" *Journal of Moral Education* 40(1):105–21. doi: [10.1080/03057240.2011.553797](https://doi.org/10.1080/03057240.2011.553797).
- Baron, R. M., and D. A. Kenny. 1986. "The Moderator-Mediator Variable Distinction in Social Psychological Research: Conceptual, Strategic, and Statistical Considerations." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 51(6):1173–82. [Database] doi: [10.1037/0022-3514.51.6.1173](https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.51.6.1173).
- Bedford, O., and Yeh, K. H. 2019. "The History and the Future of the Psychology of Filial Piety: Chinese Norms to Contextualized Personality Construct." *Frontiers in Psychology* 10(100): 1–11. doi: [10.3389/fpsyg.2019.00100](https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.00100).
- Bozeman, B., and M. K. Feeney. 2011. *Rules and Red Tape: A Prism for Public Administration Theory and Research*. New York: M. E. Sharpe.
- Brim, O. G. 1966. "Socialization through the Life Cycle." Pp. 3–49 in *Socialization after Childhood*, edited by O. Brim and S. Wheeler. New York: Wiley.
- Chen, C.-A., and B. Bozeman. 2013. "Understanding Public and Nonprofit Managers' Motivation through the Lens of Self-Determination Theory." *Public Management Review* 15(4):584–607. doi: [10.1080/14719037.2012.698853](https://doi.org/10.1080/14719037.2012.698853).
- Chen, C.-A., B. Bozeman, and E. Berman. 2019. "The Grass is Greener, but Why? Evidence of Employees' Perceived Sector Mismatch from the US, New Zealand, and Taiwan." *International Public Management Journal* 22(3):560–89. doi: [10.1080/10967494.2018.1425228](https://doi.org/10.1080/10967494.2018.1425228).
- Chen, C.-A., D.-Y. Chen, Z.-P. Liao, and M.-F. Kuo. 2020. "Winnowing out high-PSM Candidates: The Adverse Selection Effect of Competitive Public Service Exams." *International Public Management Journal* 23(4):443–64. doi: [10.1080/10967494.2019.1658663](https://doi.org/10.1080/10967494.2019.1658663).
- Chen, C.-A., D.-Y. Chen, and C. Xu. 2018. "Applying Self-Determination Theory to Understand Public Employee's Motivation for a Public Service Career: An East Asian Case (Taiwan)." *Public Performance & Management Review* 41(2):365–89. doi: [10.1080/15309576.2018.1431135](https://doi.org/10.1080/15309576.2018.1431135).
- Chen, C.-A., and C.-W. Hsieh. 2015. "Does Pursuing External Incentives Compromise Public Service Motivation? Comparing the Effects of Job Security and High Pay." *Public Management Review* 17(8):1190–213. doi: [10.1080/14719037.2014.895032](https://doi.org/10.1080/14719037.2014.895032).
- Chen, C.-A., and C.-W. Hsieh. 2017. "Confucian Values in Public Organizations: Distinctive Effects of Two Interpersonal Norms on Public Employees' Work Morale." *Chinese Public Administration Review* 8(2):104–19. doi: [10.22140/cpar.v8i2.131](https://doi.org/10.22140/cpar.v8i2.131).
- Chiang, M. H. 2002. "A Description of Public Administration Education in Taiwan." Paper presented on the Memorial Conference for Professor Ching-Chen Cheng's 100th Birthday at the Chinese Public Administration Association, Taipei, Taiwan. (in Chinese)
- DeHart-Davis, L., and S. K. Pandey. 2005. "Red Tape and Public Employees: Does Perceived Rule Dysfunction Alienate Managers?" *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 15(1):133–48. doi: [10.1093/jopart/mui007](https://doi.org/10.1093/jopart/mui007).
- Dick, T. P., and S. F. Rallis. 1991. "Factors and Influences on High School Students' Career Choices." *Journal for Research in Mathematics Education* 22(4):281–92. doi: [10.2307/749273](https://doi.org/10.2307/749273).
- Farh, J.-L., and B.-S. Cheng. 2000. "A Cultural Analysis of Paternalistic Leadership in Chinese Organizations." Pp. 84–127 in *Management and Organizations in the Chinese Context*, edited by J. T. Li, A. S. Tsui, & E. Weldon. London: Macmillan.
- Ferry, T. R., N. A. Fouad, and P. L. Smith. 2000. "The Role of Family Context in a Social Cognitive Model for Career-Related Choice Behavior: A Math and Science Perspective." *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 57(3):348–64. doi: [10.1006/jvbe.1999.1743](https://doi.org/10.1006/jvbe.1999.1743).
- Fischer, C., and C. Schott. 2020. "Why People Enter and Stay in Public Service Careers: The Role of Parental Socialization and an Interest in Politics." *International Review of Administrative Sciences*. doi: [10.1177/0020852319886913](https://doi.org/10.1177/0020852319886913).
- Fouad, N. A., N. Kantamneni, M. K. Smothers, Y.-L. Chen, M. Fitzpatrick, and S. Terry. 2008. "Asian American Career Development: A Qualitative Analysis." *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 72(1):43–59. doi: [10.1016/j.jvb.2007.10.002](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2007.10.002).
- Frey, B. S., and R. Jegen. 2001. "Motivation Crowding Theory." *Journal of Economic Surveys* 15(5):589–611. doi: [10.1111/1467-6419.00150](https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-6419.00150).
- Gregory, A. M., Light-Häusermann, J. H. Rijdsdijk, F. Eley and T. C. 2009. "Behavioral Genetic Analyses of Prosocial Behavior in Adolescents." *Developmental Science* 12(1):165–74. doi: [10.1111/j.1467-7687.2008.00739.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-7687.2008.00739.x).
- Grønhoj, A., and J. Thøgersen. 2009. "Like Father, like Son? Intergenerational Transmission of Values, Attitudes, and Behaviours in the Environmental Domain." *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 29(4):414–21. doi: [10.1016/j.jenvp.2009.05.002](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jenvp.2009.05.002).

- Guan, P., A. Capezio, S. L. D. Restubog, S. Read, J. A. L. Lajom, and M. Li. 2016. "The Role of Traditionality in the Relationships among Parental Support, Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy and Career Adaptability." *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 94:114–23. doi: [10.1016/j.jvb.2016.02.018](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2016.02.018).
- Hamilton, G. G. 1990. "Patriarchy, Patrimonialism, and Filial Piety: A Comparison of China and Western Europe." *British Journal of Sociology* 41(1): 77–104. doi: [10.2307/591019](https://doi.org/10.2307/591019).
- Hansen, J. R. 2014. "From Public to Private Sector: Motives and Explanations for Sector Switching." *Public Management Review* 16(4):590–607. doi: [10.1080/14719037.2012.743575](https://doi.org/10.1080/14719037.2012.743575).
- Hayes, A. F. 2009. "Beyond Baron and Kenny: Statistical Mediation Analysis in the New Millennium." *Communication Monographs* 76(4):408–20. doi: [10.1080/03637750903310360](https://doi.org/10.1080/03637750903310360).
- Hayes, A. F. 2018. *Introduction to Mediation, Moderation, and Conditional Process Analysis: A Regression-Based Approach*. New York: Guilford publications.
- Hofstede, G. 1991. *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind*. Maidenhead: McGraw-Hill.
- Hofstede, G., and M. H. Bond. 1984. "Hofstede's Culture Dimensions: An Independent Validation Using Rokeach's Value Survey." *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* 15(4):417–33. doi: [10.1177/0022002184015004003](https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002184015004003).
- Hoge, D. R., G. H. Petrillo, and E. I. Smith. 1982. "Transmission of Religious and Social Values from Parents to Teenage Children." *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 44(3):569–80. doi: [10.2307/351580](https://doi.org/10.2307/351580).
- Hou, Z-j, and S. A. Leung. 2011. "Vocational Aspirations of Chinese High School Students and Their Parents' Expectations." *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 79(2):349–60. doi: [10.1016/j.jvb.2011.05.008](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2011.05.008).
- Houston, D. J. 2006. "Walking the Walk" of Public Service Motivation: Public Employees and Charitable Gifts of Time, Blood, and Money." *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 16(1):67–86. doi: [10.1093/jopart/mui028](https://doi.org/10.1093/jopart/mui028).
- Houston, D. J. 2011. "Implications of Occupational Locus and Focus for Public Service Motivation: Attitudes toward Work Motives across Nations." *Public Administration Review* 71(5):761–71. doi: [10.1111/j.1540-6210.2011.02415.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6210.2011.02415.x).
- Hsieh, C.-W. 2018. "No One Can Serve Two Masters: Revisiting the Interaction Effect of Love of Money and Public Service Motivation on Job Satisfaction." *Public Performance & Management Review* 41(4):745–67. doi: [10.1080/15309576.2018.1462214](https://doi.org/10.1080/15309576.2018.1462214).
- Hussain, S. 2013. "Parental Expectation, Career Salience and Career Decision Making." *Journal of Behavioural Sciences* 23(2):62–76.
- Hynie, M., R. N. Lalonde, and N. S. Lee. 2006. "Parent-Child Value Transmission among Chinese Immigrants to North America: The Case of Traditional Mate Preferences." *Cultural Diversity & Ethnic Minority Psychology* 12(2):230–44. doi: [10.1037/1099-9809.12.2.230](https://doi.org/10.1037/1099-9809.12.2.230).
- Jungen, K. A. 2008. "Parental Influence and Career Choice: How Parents Affect the Career Aspirations of Their Children." Doctoral dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Stout.
- Jurkiewicz, C. L., T. K. Massey, Jr., and R. G. Brown. 1998. "Motivation in Public and Private Organizations: A Comparative Study." *Public Productivity & Management Review* 21(3):230–50. doi: [10.2307/3380856](https://doi.org/10.2307/3380856).
- Kaufman, H. 2015. *Red Tape: Its Origins, Uses, and Abuses*. Washington DC: Brookings Institution Press.
- Kim, S., W. Vandenabeele, B. E. Wright, L. B. Andersen, F. P. Cerase, R. K. Christensen, C. Desmarais, M. Koumenta, P. Leisink, B. Liu, et al. 2013. "Investigating the Structure and Meaning of Public Service Motivation across Populations: Developing an International Instrument and Addressing Issues of Measurement Invariance." *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 23(1):79–102. doi: [10.1093/jopart/mus027](https://doi.org/10.1093/jopart/mus027).
- Knafo, A., and R. Plomin. 2006. "Parental Discipline and Affection and Children's Prosocial Behavior: Genetic and Environmental Links." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 90(1):147–64. doi: [10.1037/0022-3514.90.1.147](https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.90.1.147).
- Ko, K., and K.-N. Jun. 2015. "A Comparative Analysis of Job Motivation and Career Preference of Asian Undergraduate Students." *Public Personnel Management* 44(2):192–213. doi: [10.1177/0091026014559430](https://doi.org/10.1177/0091026014559430).
- Kracke, E. A. 1947. "Family vs. merit in Chinese Civil Service Examinations under the Empire." *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 10(2):103–23. doi: [10.2307/2718257](https://doi.org/10.2307/2718257).
- Lee, G., and D. L. Choi. 2016. "Does Public Service Motivation Influence the Intention to Work in the Public Sector? Evidence from Korea." *Review of Public Personnel Administration* 36(2):145–63. doi: [10.1177/0734371X13511974](https://doi.org/10.1177/0734371X13511974).
- Leung, S. A., Z.-J. Hou, I. Gati, and X. Li. 2011. "Effects of Parental Expectations and Cultural-Values Orientation on Career Decision-Making Difficulties of Chinese University Students." *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 78(1): 11–20. doi: [10.1016/j.jvb.2010.08.004](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2010.08.004).
- Leung, J. T., and D. T. Shek. 2011. "Expecting my Child to Become "Dragon"—Development of the Chinese Parental Expectation on Child's Future Scale." *International Journal on Disability and Human Development* 10(3):257–65.
- Liu, H. 2010. *The Culture of Keju in China [Zhongguo Keju Wenhua]*. Shenyang, China: Liaoning Education Press.
- Liu, B., C. Hui, J. Hu, W. Yang, and X. Yu. 2011. "How Well Can Public Service Motivation Connect with Occupational Intention?" *International Review of Administrative Sciences* 77(1):191–211.

- Lyons, S. T., L. E. Duxbury, and C. A. Higgins. 2006. "A Comparison of the Values and Commitment of Private Sector, Public Sector, and Parapublic Sector Employees." *Public Administration Review* 66(4):605–18. doi: [10.1111/j.1540-6210.2006.00620.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6210.2006.00620.x).
- Mann, G. A. 2006. "A Motive to Serve: Public Service Motivation in Human Resource Management and the Role of PSM in the Nonprofit Sector." *Public Personnel Management* 35(1):33–48. doi: [10.1177/009102600603500103](https://doi.org/10.1177/009102600603500103).
- Poulter, S. B. 2010. *The Father Factor: How Your Father's Legacy Impacts Your Career*. Amherst, Ny: Prometheus Books.
- Ritz, A., G. A. Brewer, and O. Neumann. 2016. "Public Service Motivation: A Systematic Literature Review and Outlook." *Public Administration Review* 76(3):414–26. doi: [10.1111/puar.12505](https://doi.org/10.1111/puar.12505).
- Sawitri, D. R., P. A. Creed, and M. J. Zimmer-Gembeck. 2014. "Parental Influences and Adolescent Career Behaviours in a Collectivist Cultural Setting." *International Journal for Educational and Vocational Guidance* 14(2):161–80. doi: [10.1007/s10775-013-9247-x](https://doi.org/10.1007/s10775-013-9247-x).
- Schwartz, S. H. 1994. "Are There Universal Aspects in the Structure and Contents of Human Values?" *Journal of Social Issues* 50(4):19–45. doi: [10.1111/j.1540-4560.1994.tb01196.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4560.1994.tb01196.x).
- Steijn, B., and J. Van der Voet. 2019. "Relational Job Characteristics and Job Satisfaction of Public Sector Employees: When Prosocial Motivation and Red Tape Collide." *Public Administration* 97(1):64–80. doi: [10.1111/padm.12352](https://doi.org/10.1111/padm.12352).
- Stritch, J. M., and R. K. Christensen. 2016. "Raising the Next Generation of Public Servants? Parental Influence on Volunteering Behavior and Public Service Career Aspirations." *International Journal of Manpower* 37(5):840–58. doi: [10.1108/IJM-12-2014-0249](https://doi.org/10.1108/IJM-12-2014-0249).
- Su, T.-T. 2010. "Civil Service Reforms in Taiwan." Pp. 609–626 in *Public Administration in East Asia: Mainland China, Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan*, edited by E. M. Berman, M. J. Moon, H. Choi. New York: CRC Press.
- Sung, M. H. 1981. "The Chinese Lieh-nu Tradition." Pp. 63–74 in *Women in China: Current Directions in Historical Scholarship*, edited R. W. Guisso, S. Johannesen. Youngstown, NY: Philo Press.
- Taylor, J. 2008. "Organizational Influences, Public Service Motivation and Work Outcomes: An Australian Study." *International Public Management Journal* 11(1):67–88. doi: [10.1080/10967490801887921](https://doi.org/10.1080/10967490801887921).
- Tian, J. 2004. *The History of Public Sector Exams in China [Zhongguo Kaoshi Sixiangshi]*. Beijing, China: Shangwu Yinshu Guan.
- Tschirhart, M., K. K. Reed, S. J. Freeman, and A. L. Anker. 2008. "Is the Grass Greener? Sector Shifting and Choice of Sector by MPA and MBA Graduates." *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 37(4):668–88. doi: [10.1177/0899764008314808](https://doi.org/10.1177/0899764008314808).
- Van de Walle, S., B. Steijn, and S. Jilke. 2015. "Extrinsic Motivation, PSM and Labour Market Characteristics: A Multilevel Model of Public Sector Employment Preference in 26 Countries." *International Review of Administrative Sciences* 81(4):833–55. doi: [10.1177/0020852314563899](https://doi.org/10.1177/0020852314563899).
- Vandenabeele, W. 2007. "Toward a Public Administration Theory of Public Service Motivation: An Institutional Approach." *Public Management Review* 9(4):545–56. doi: [10.1080/14719030701726697](https://doi.org/10.1080/14719030701726697).
- Vandenabeele, W. 2008. "Government Calling: Public Service Motivation as an Element in Selecting Government as an Employer of Choice." *Public Administration* 86(4):1089–1105. doi: [10.1111/j.1467-9299.2008.00728.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9299.2008.00728.x).
- Vandenabeele, W. 2011. "Who Wants to Deliver Public Service? Do Institutional Antecedents of Public Service Motivation Provide an Answer?" *Review of Public Personnel Administration* 31(1):87–107. doi: [10.1177/0734371X10394403](https://doi.org/10.1177/0734371X10394403).
- Wang, Y., C. Deng, and X. Yang. 2016. "Family Economic Status and Parental Involvement: Influences of Parental Expectation and Perceived Barriers." *School Psychology International* 37(5):536–53. doi: [10.1177/0143034316667646](https://doi.org/10.1177/0143034316667646).
- Whitbeck, L. B., and V. Gecas. 1988. "Value Attributions and Value Transmission between Parents and Children." *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 50(3):829–40. doi: [10.2307/352651](https://doi.org/10.2307/352651).
- Yang, K. S. 2006. "Indigenized Conceptual and Empirical Analyses of Selected Chinese Psychological Characteristics." *International Journal of Psychology* 41(4):298–303. doi: [10.1080/00207590544000086](https://doi.org/10.1080/00207590544000086).
- Yang, K.-S., A. B. Yu, and M. H. Yeh. 1991. "Chinese Individual Modernity and Traditionality: Construction Definition and Measurement." Pp. 241–306 in *Chinese Psychology and Behavior [Huaren Xinli yu Xingwei]*, edited by K.-S. Yang & K.-K. Hwang. Taipei: Laureate.
- Yeh, K.-H. 2003. "The Beneficial and Harmful Effects of Filial Piety: An Integrative Analysis." Pp. 61–82 in *Progress in Asian Social Psychology: Conceptual and Empirical Contributions*, edited by K.-S. Yang, K.-K. Hwang, P. B. Pedersen, & I. Daibo. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers/Greenwood Publishing Group.
- Yeh, K.-H., and O. Bedford. 2003. "A Test of the Dual Filial Piety Model." *Asian Journal of Social Psychology* 6(3): 215–28. doi: [10.1046/j.1467-839X.2003.00122.x](https://doi.org/10.1046/j.1467-839X.2003.00122.x).

## APPENDIX A: data collection details for the telephone survey

Of all the calls made to randomly selected households, 16,427 went through, which included the following unsuccessful calls: (i) there were no college students living in the household ( $n = 9,949$ ); (ii) at least one college student was living in the household, but no parent was available to come to the phone (e.g., the college student was living with grandparents) ( $n = 181$ ); (iii) the called party was unable to respond to the survey due to a physical or mental issue ( $n = 181$ ); (iv) he or she could not answer the survey questions due to a language barrier, as some respondents were unable to communicate in Mandarin Chinese or Taiwanese Hokkien ( $n = 56$ ); (v) the called party was unable to comprehend the purpose of our survey and thus declined to participate ( $n = 803$ ). After excluding these types of calls,  $16,427 - 9,949 - 181 - 181 - 56 - 803 = 5,257$  were successful.

Collecting dyadic data via telephone survey was quite similar to the process of gathering panel data, which involved making follow-up calls. In the first phase, 255 cases were fully completed and 984 cases were only partially concluded. In terms of the latter, 140 involved students only (parents were not at home), and 844 involved parents only (students were not at home). In the latter cases, we asked parents' permission to call again at a more convenient time to reach their children, or to give us their children's cell phone numbers. Only 113 out of 844 (13.4%) agreed to the latter. Similarly, in the cases in which only the children were home, we asked permission to call again at a later time to reach their parents, or to give us their parents' cell phone numbers. However, only 30 out of 140 (21.4%) agreed to this. The completion rate of the first phase was as follows:

- Full completion (both parents and children were home):  $255/5,257 = 4.9\%$
- Partial completion:  $984/5,257$  (children only were home + parents only were home) = 18.7%
- Total:  $(255 + 984)/5,257 = 23.6\%$

In the second phase involving the 984 partially completed cases, we reached out using the landlines or the cell phone numbers provided earlier by students or parents during the first phase. Among the 844 "parents-only" cases, we reached out to their children and completed 191 cases, with a success rate of  $191/844 = 22.6\%$ . In other words, we lost 77.4% of the data from the first phase. Among the 140 "students-only" cases, we contacted the parents and completed another 96 cases. The success rate in this scenario was  $96/140 = 68.6\%$ , losing 31.4% data from the first phase. Key statistics in the second phase are as follows:

- Completed cases:  $191 + 96 = 287$
- Success rate:  $287/984 = 29.2\%$
- Data lost:  $100\% - 29.2\% = 70.8\%$

In total, we managed to complete 542 cases, 255 of which came from the first phase and 287 from the second phase – yielding an entire response rate of  $542/5,257 = 10.3\%$ . As shown above, if this survey had been administered in a cross-sectional manner, the success rate could have been as high as 23.6%. However, by focusing on dyadic data and collecting them in two waves – similar to panel data collection – we lost 70.8% of data from the partially completed cases of the first phase; thus, the total response rate dropped to 10.3%.