



CHIP OFF AN OLD BLOCK



How much are children influenced in their choice of profession by their parents?

We asked four young people about their experience.



A Graham Button

I suppose most people are influenced in one way or another by the jobs their parents do. My dad is a freelance builder, like his father and his grandfather, and that means he was often out working in the evenings or at weekends when I was a child. I grew up thinking hard physical work was what fathers usually did. I think he was proud of doing a 'real' job, something with his hands, which is perhaps why he always tried to push me into taking up the same profession. And of course he had his own business, which he wanted to continue after he retired. When I was in high school, I decided that I really didn't want to go into the family business, so at the moment I'm studying History at university. My father probably thinks I'm going to become a partner in his firm after I graduate, so I worry that we might have a big fight about this some time in the future.

B Sue Smith

My mother's a nuclear physicist, which sounds very exciting. The truth is it's a pretty tough profession. For years my mother wasn't getting paid very well at the institute where she worked. That's one of the things that discouraged me from going into the same sort of work. And I just don't think it's a very interesting job. Of course it sounds very important, but as far as I can see, you spend most of the day at a desk doing hundreds of calculations, and then checking and rechecking them. My mother did try to motivate me to take an interest in science subjects when I was about 14 or 15, and I think she'd be secretly pleased if I wanted to be a scientist, but she's never put any sort of pressure on me. But I know she also thinks — as I do — that there aren't so many jobs available in pure research, which is what she does.

C Barry Porter

When people find out my mother's an actress, they always ask what Hollywood films she's been in, and I have to explain that she's only ever worked in provincial theatres. She's hardly ever been on television, which is why not many people know her. That's one of the problems with the theatre: very few people get to the top of the profession, and you have to be extremely lucky just to make a living from it. Actors are nervous, highly-strung people, worrying about where the next job's coming from. Even if I had any talent for acting, I'd be put off by that side of it. Most of the other actors I've met, people working with my mother, strike me as very arrogant people; I don't really think I'd get on with them. As you can gather, I really don't think my future is in the theatre, and in any case my mother has always tried to steer me away from taking up the profession.

D Ruth Lawrence

My father teaches Maths at high school, which definitely used to come in handy when we had a Maths test the next day! I suppose there were disadvantages, too. I think in the back of his mind he expected me to be good at Maths because he was always there to explain it. The truth is I've always been terrible at the subject. He also used to tell me about the satisfaction you can get from teaching, and I do think he's right about that. He'd talk about the long holidays and the short working day, trying to get me interested in taking a teaching qualification. I used to think I wanted to be a teacher, but then I began to think of the disadvantages. The profession's changed and these days teachers have to work a lot in the holidays and prepare a lot at home. In the end I decided to go into accounting, and I don't really think my dad's job affected my decision at all.

Which of the people:

1. thinks their parent's job is boring? _____
2. was discouraged from following the same profession? _____
3. changed his or her mind about a future career? _____
4. experienced pressure to follow the same profession? _____
5. dislikes other people in their parent's profession? _____
6. would not follow the same profession for financial reasons? _____
7. feels they have not been influenced in choosing a career? _____
8. comes from a long line of people in this profession? _____
9. thinks the profession in question offers few opportunities? _____
10. was encouraged to follow the same profession? _____
11. thinks the profession in question is too stressful? _____
12. is concerned that their choice will cause an argument? _____
13. thinks that success in their parent's profession is difficult? _____
14. thinks their parent's profession is rewarding? _____