The word "choice" is conceptualized as the process of choosing in meaningful and important and dynamic situations. The process is open to a number of cultural influences in my life, among them: educational practices, my family, religion, marriage and career. There are a number of behavioural differences between various cultures within the Caribbean, which can be explained within a culture theoretical framework and give reason for the plea to include cultural factors in the choices I make in life.

My cultural values affect to a great extent the choices made. The term "cultural values" refers to a set of rankings people in society confer on to a myriad of social behaviours. Certain practices are ranked highly if they are perceived as somehow good or of value to the society.

At different points in my life, I constantly find myself in a position where I have a choice between two or more alternatives. Whether to get a tertiary education or not, whether to become a lawyer or a doctor, who would make a good mate as opposed to who would not, whether you choose to be an Adventist or a Roman Catholic. I usually select the one alternative that satisfies the value consensus of my culture or has a subjective value. For instance, you are only suppose to continue reading this essay if you value the topic and if the topic is in consensus with the values of your culture. If one of the two conditions is not met, you should by now be thinking of doing something else. So it is evident that society's cultural values affect to some extent the choices we make.

On the issue of education, I am expected to get a tertiary education after secondary schooling, as this is valued by my family and culture, i.e. My family highly value a university or college education and children usually instill these values in my head, causing me to have bias approach to other choices after a secondary education.

The effect of cultural values on the family is that I make choices as to whether or not to establish a family, or even to raise a family to the norms of society. Often times family leaders overlook the needs of their family to satisfy the values of society. For example, my family's vision of an ideal family is seen as a man, a woman and children living together; these are what my family values and does in turn build these concepts of what a family is to me. The point being established here, is that an I will tend to develop a family upon the foundation of my family's cultural values.

The extent to which society's cultural values influence the choices we make in our lives in relation to religion is common in the Caribbean because of the widespread selection of religions in the Caribbean society and culture. In Jamaica, the value of religion is high in the culture and people tend to make the choice of a suitable religion depending on the values of the society. Different people in the society value the religion of different cultural values because of their family background; that is, people will prefer the religion to which their family from all ages belongs.

Therefore, making decisions on the issues of importance and with far-reaching consequences is much more difficult than simple multiplication of numbers and likelihood of outcomes. This probably is one of the reasons why many of my "big choices" are regulated by cultural norms. In my culture, decisions on how to view the world, which god to believe in, which profession to learn, where to live and who to marry, are in fact, more influenced by the social and cultural context than my individual (personal) decisions. Certainly, this limits individual freedom. On the other side, this also alleviates the burden of constantly making choices whose consequences can barely be overseen.

When planning to make a decision, I am often preoccupied with the dominant motive of cultural values within my society. I make decisions with the aim of removing the most prominent shortcomings, regardless of whether the prominent ones are also the important ones, or not. On the strategic level, this often causes an insufficient adaptation of choices to changing circumstances within my society and culture. As a member of society, I react to what the society appears to demand from me and do not, by myself at times, attempt to make the choice that always satisfy me, but rather my choices are influenced by society's cultural values.

The cultural influences of society on the choices I make in life are dependent upon various factors, which I have broken down in this essay into three factors.

"Predictability" and "plan-ability" of the environment or society, in which I live. It is well known that cultures differ in the context to which public life, economic affairs and the

private and social life of people are predictable. This predictability of different spheres of the society have influenced the way in which I make my choices. If a society is completely predictable, there is not much complexity in the extent to which society's cultural values affect the choices I make because there will be routinized solutions available for all kinds of choices.

Exposure, this is, the degree to which a culture requires and promotes experiences in different areas of decision making. Exposure may be related to the accountability of the society, but it may also be a function of dominant value systems necessary to promote exposure. For instance, highly Individualist cultures promote independence and self-reliance. Therefore, children, juveniles and adolescents will be likely to be confronted with different kinds of decision making, which is influenced by their society's cultural values. In growing up I have collected experiences within my society and the decisions or choices I make, different strategic approaches and with the consequences of poor choices. In highly Collectivist cultures, on the other hand, the value system promotes obedience and conformity to the norms of the in-group. In situations of choice, individuals will be given advice on what to do and there will be role models to follow. Therefore, exposure to and individual experience with this type of decision making will be limited.

Differences in Individualism and Collectivism are likely to also influence the way in which I make my choices. It has often been described how Individualistic cultures reinforce risk taking and confrontation aimed at increasing personal benefits, even at the cost of others. In

Collectivist cultures personal benefits are less valued if others in the group suffer or if society oriented values are endangered. Therefore, in Collectivist cultures as a decision maker, I proceed more carefully and should pay greater attention to the social implications of choices in my life.

With respect to exposure, the amount of schooling have also been an important factor. However, the ways of teaching are critical. If learning at school is equated to instilling knowledge of repetition of prefabricated solutions, there will be only limited development of choice making.

Power distance and social hierarchy. These well known cultural dimensions are also be influential in shaping the ways of decision or choice making in my life. Attempts to make a decision only make sense when I am given sufficient "leeway", not only to make a series of choices, but also to bring them to work. The notion of "control Span" captures this idea. High power distance cultures are more likely to limit the control span of individuals not on top of the hierarchy and thus hamper individual choice making rather than promoting it. This does not mean that high power distance necessarily results in poor choice making, however, the strategies will be different.

As a member of the Jamaican society when making choices, I will pay attention to possibly adverse social implications of my choices and is, therefore rather conservative or risk avoidant in relation to society's cultural values.

It is not the purpose of this essay to develop a fully evolved model of cultural influence on the choices I make in my life. It attempts to argue that choice making, being universally required, is nevertheless likely to vary cross-culturally and individually. In looking on choice making, I acknowledge this possibility and pay attention to cultural influences on and culture variation on decision making.

The ways in which I make my choices in my life are indeed influenced by cultural factors. Culture plays a significant role in the way I make choices, as it creates exposure through: value systems, which affect: my family, education, marriage, career and religion.

Secondly, there are reasons to believe that there are culture-specific choice making styles that are developed according to the functional requirements of the society to which I belong. Difference in predictability have led to differences in decisiveness or "strength" of my choices. In my culture - the Jamaican culture would be an example: I know that there are differences in predictability between various domains of life (between, for instance, public life and social life). Culture differences in power distance have worked in a similar manner in shaping the way in which I make choices in my life.

In conclusion, it has remained a task for future incorporation of cultural factors into otherwise personal factors in the relation, impact and extent to which society's cultural values affect the choices I make. It will remain that as a human being, in making choices, I am highly influenced by cultural values. I get involved in social activities in my society and show real

behavior, make real choices and often, real emotions and thus, in a way allow a glimpse on

culture at work.