



## Parenting in relation to child and adolescent vocational development <sup>☆</sup>

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### Abstract

Processes of child and adolescent vocational development include acquisition of knowledge, beliefs, and values about work options and requirements, exploration of interests that will be relevant for occupational interest development, development of academic aspirations, self-efficacy, expectations, and attainment. These elements serve to provide preparation for entry into a range of occupations and provide for the establishment of vocational aspirations, occupational self-efficacy, expectations, planning, and attainment. Parenting occurs within a family context influenced by a myriad of factors, including availability of financial capital, human capital, social capital, child agency, work-family interfacing, family roles, family structure, and the historical conditions affecting parents. These family contextual factors promote our understanding of differences in parenting in relation to child and adolescent vocational development. Far more complex than specific steps to entering the labor market per se, child and adolescent vocational development includes the interfacing of parenting and developmental processes.

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. *Relevance of parenting in vocational development*

Researchers of vocational behavior have been increasingly taking a life-span perspective, highlighting how vocational development begins before adolescence, and forcefully making the case for increasing our understanding of this phenomenon (Hartung, Porfeli, & Vondracek, 2005). It has already been recognized that the linkage of child development to vocational development has been neglected (Hartung et al., 2005; Vondracek, 2001). We know even less about the role of parents in child and adolescent vocational development despite evidence indicating that parents appear to be a stronger influence on children's vocational development than school or peers (Hartung et al., 2005; Schulenberg, Vondracek, & Crouter, 1984).

Both interests and competence, found to reciprocally influence each other (Tracey, 2002), have been central concepts in the study of vocational choices and satisfaction (Savickas, 1999a; Tracey, 2002). Thus, we review the existing developmental literature that bears on parenting and the development of interests, competence and other related aspects of vocational development such as knowledge about adult work and academic matters that are linked to vocational aspirations, self-efficacy, expectations, and attainment.

For the purpose of this review we did not put any lower limit on age in our definition of childhood, but most relevant literature of childhood, with the exception of research on attachment, was of middle childhood (i.e., elementary school age children). With respect to adolescence, we considered the junior and senior high school years plus undergraduate education years when youth are typically dependent on parental resources. In this review, "late adolescence" refers to college students. In sum, we have used a functional, developmental definition of adolescence rather than an age or biological definition. Because of the relative scarcity of literature focused on parenting in relation to child and adolescent vocational development, we allowed for this kind of flexible definition of childhood and adolescence.

Although researchers who study and theorize about vocational development typically have focused, until recently, on the adolescent and young adult years (e.g., Jackson & Hornbeck, 1989; Super, 1980; see Vondracek & Porfeli, 2003 for a review), vocational development is a complex of developmental processes which begin in childhood (e.g., Caspi, Wright, Moffitt, & Silva, 1998; Cook et al., 1996; Goldstein & Oldham, 1979; Hartung et al., 2005; McGee & Stockard, 1991; Seligman, Weinstock, & Heflin, 1991; Tracey, 2002; Trice, 1990; Vondracek, 2001). Caspi et al. (1998) documented the relevance of the parents during childhood for the study of successful entry into the labor market in young adulthood, highlighting, within the literature, the relevance of parents in vocational development. The purpose of this review is to assess and conceptualize our understanding to date of parental factors that operate in childhood and adolescence to influence vocational development.

What aspects of parenting help children: (1) to discover their abilities and interests that will be useful in choosing satisfying jobs; (2) to select and ultimately pursue particular occupations; (3) to achieve work self-efficacy; and (4) to benefit from strong work attainment? These questions are all aspects of vocational development, a complicated and multi-faceted process that builds on achievement and aspirations in the academic domain and extends throughout adolescence and adulthood to work settings. Vocational development

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