Published in final edited form as:

Int J Educ Vocat Guid. 2015 July ; 15(2): 145–162. doi:10.1007/s10775-015-9302-x.

Youths' socialization to work and school within the family

Bora Lee,

Department of Human Development and Family Studies, Pennsylvania State University

Postdoctoral Scholar, and

Department of Human Development and Family Studies, Pennsylvania State University

Dr. Erik Porfeli

Family & Community Medicine, Northeast Ohio Medical University

Abstract

The present study tested a model of socialization to work in the family context and its implications as a lever for school engagement using a sample of 154 parent-youth dyads living in the United States. A path model was fitted to data. Findings revealed that parents' reported work experiences was aligned to youths' perception of their parents' success in the work domain. Also, a significant association was found between youth's perception of their parents' family success and youth's emotional and experiential conceptualizations of work. Furthermore, youth who viewed work as a positive experience were more likely to be engaged in schoolwork, both emotionally and cognitively. Implications for vocational guidance are discussed.

Keywords

work socialization; family; school engagement; Youth Development Study

Youth are socialized to adult roles within the family context (Putney & Bengtson, 2002). Research on work and family, parental involvement and socialization, and youth academic and vocational development has supported the development of a socialization model that is manifest in two basic forms, each focused more or less exclusively on work and academic outcomes. The first form of the model offers insight into how youth are socialized to work through their parents' work experiences (Bryant, Zvonkovic, & Reynolds, 2006; Kohn & Schooler, 1983; Lueptow, McClendon, & McKeon, 1979; Mortimer & Kumka, 1982). The second form of the model provides a means to explain how youth are socialized to school within the family setting (Gonida, Voulala, & Kiosseoglou, 2009; Schickendanz, 1995; Taylor, Clayton, & Rowley, 2004). These streams of literature suggest that youth are socialized to both work and school roles in the family (Porfeli, Hartung, & Vondracek, 2008; Porfeli, Wang, & Hartung, 2008). However, studies examining the socialization process in one model by connecting the relationship between youths' work-related attitudes and school outcomes are relatively limited. The present study unifies these two models of socialization to inform our understanding of how youth are socialized to school and worker roles in the family setting over time particularly in the U.S. context.

Youths' Socialization to School and Work in the Family Setting

Research finds that parents are highly influential in promoting their offspring's development in school and work domains. Reviews of the parenting literature suggest that youth exhibit more positive development in school and work domains when their parents hold high aspirations and expectations, are engaged with their offspring, and have an authoritative parenting style (Park & Bauer, 2002; Christenson, Rounds, & Gorney, 1992). Youth are more likely to be engaged in school and work when parents (a) encourage their offspring to be autonomous, (b) offer emotional support in times of need, (c) foster an academically enriching family setting that fosters a link between youth's life and learning, (d) are engaged in their offspring's school activities, and (e) demonstrate a motivation to succeed at work (Bryant, et al., 2006; Crosnoe, 2004; Rosenzweig, 2001; Taylor, et al., 2004; Watson & McMahon, 2005). Parents' socialization efforts, therefore, play a vital role in youths' success and orientations toward school and work (Schulenberg, Vondracek, & Crouter, 1984; Whiston & Keller, 2004; Porfeli, Ferrari & Nota, 2013).

Youths' perceptions of their parent's work experience may affect the youths' own motivation to work. Families are one of the most proximal contexts for child development (Bronfenbrenner, 1986) and parents serve as role models as youth develop beliefs about their future life roles (Bandura, 1971). The implicit and explicit messages parents transmit about their experiences in the world of work constitute an influential source of information for their offspring. Some research indicates that youth have a reasonably accurate understanding of the general aspects of their parents' work life, the hierarchical position of their parents' jobs, their job satisfaction, and whether or not their parents are struggling with work (Abramovitch & Johnson, 1992; Barling, Dupre, & Hepburn, 1998; Neblett & Cortina, 2006; Piotrkowski & Stark, 1987). Youth learn about adults' work lives through their parents' experiences and this learning translates into youths' motivation to work (Porfeli et al., 2008).

Other research suggests, however, that parents' reports of the emotional and experiential aspects of their work may be misaligned with their offspring's beliefs about parents' work emotions and experiences (Porfeli et al., 2013). This misalignment may result from deliberate efforts by parents to depict their work in more favorable terms to suit their desire to favorably shape youths' views of work. Alternatively, they may present a more negative view to their offspring to deflect blame for their limited time at home by over-representing pressing work demands that may or may not be an accurate reflection of their actual work circumstances (Galinsky, 1999). Despite this apparent misalignment between parents' actual work experiences and youths' perceptions of them, youths' views of their parents' work are strongly correlated with youths' expectations about their own future work (Porfeli et al., 2008; Porfeli et al., 2013). That is, when youth view their parents as being satisfied and fulfilled at work they also anticipate their own work experiences to be positive. Thus, youth are active agents generating their own beliefs regarding work through the lens of their perceptions, which may be colored and contorted by various social psychological forces and are seemingly more independent from their parents' actual work experiences than some research suggests.

Research also suggests that socialization to work and school may be moderated by peoples' perceptions of how their parents perform within the family setting. More than two-thirds of mothers work outside the home and more than 90% of fathers are in the labor force (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012, 2014); thus, a majority of parents are concurrently navigating work and family responsibilities. Youth, therefore, may conceive of the work and family domains as closely connected, even inseparable. Youths' interaction with the world of work is largely vicarious as it occurs primarily through the lenses of significant adults in their lives and depictions in the media (i.e., the exosystem as described by Bronfenbrenner, 1986, and Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006; Levine & Hoffner, 2006). Work and family roles may be so closely intertwined in the wholeness of being a parent that youth may have a limited understanding of parents' work life as separate from their family life (Corder & Stephan, 1984).

Youths' beliefs may, therefore, develop in relation to perceptions regarding how parents interact at home and what they share about their work lives. Research shows that parents experiencing pressing demands of work and family are less likely to feel efficacious in their parenting and to perceive positive interactions with their offspring (Cinamon, Weisel, & Tzuk, 2007). These findings imply that the interconnectedness of work and family roles can also affect their behaviors toward their offspring, which, in turn, may influence the youths' appraisal of their parents. Thus, we expect that the way children conceive of parents' work and their future personal work may be moderated by their appraisal of the quality of their parents' parenting skills.

The Connection between Youths' School and Work Motivation

Scholars and educators have identified factors that may promote or inhibit academic motivation: parental involvement (Gonzalez-DeHass, Willems, & Holbein, 2005), social support within the classroom (Legault, Green-Demers, & Pelletier, 2006; Wentzel, Battle, Russell, & Looney, 2010), and perceived competence and self-efficacy (Fortier, Vallerand, Guay, 1995; Schunk & Pajares, 2005) generally strengthen academic motivation. Relatively little attention has been directed to youths' work beliefs as possible levers influencing academic motivation. Some research, however, suggests that such levers may hold promise. Historically, de Volder and Lens (1982) found that high school students, who assessed their distant future goals (e.g., an interesting career, a happy family life) as favorable and expected their schoolwork to be instrumental in achieving these goals, showed greater persistence in completing their coursework. With an ethnically diverse sample, Steinberg and colleagues (1992) found that students who believed that schoolwork would pay off with regard to their future jobs exerted greater effort in school. They also reported that being aware of the negative consequences of failing school was a strong predictor of school performance and engagement (Steinberg et al., 1992). More recently, Phalet, Andreiessen, and Lens (2004), based on their review of research on the role of future goals in the school setting, argued that using future career goals as a motivator for students to engage in schoolwork might be useful. Based on past studies, it seems that youths' beliefs about the instrumentality of their academic progress to promote their career progress can enhance youths' academic motivation.

Porfeli and colleagues (2012) developed the concept of work valence to understand how youth become attuned to the world of work years before setting work goals and making work-related choices. The authors defined work valences as subjective appraisals of anticipated outcomes, which consist of affective and cognitive aspects. Positive and negative work valences develop early in life and affirm approach and avoidance motivations that are believed to concurrently advance and impede vocational development. Holding a strong positive valence towards work is likely to be associated with a stronger motivation to approach work, whereas maintaining a strong negative work valence is predicted to be correlated with a stronger tendency to avoid work. Importantly, children's work motivation was associated with their school motivation (Porfeli, Wang, & Hartung, 2008). According to the model of work valences, positive and negative forms are independent but correlated dimensions; each may be high, moderate or low and mixed combinations can also occur. Empirical research shows that they are inversely correlated (Porfeli et al., 2008; Porfeli et al., 2012).

Combining the concept of work valences with previous research findings regarding the connection between future goals and school motivation, we predict that work valences will be associated with school engagement. The model predicts that youth who hold a more positive work valence and a less negative work valence will be more strongly engaged in schoolwork than those who hold the reverse pattern. Recent literature on school engagement suggests that school engagement consists of multiple dimensions, namely behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004). Empirical evidence support such contention (Wang, Willett, & Eccles, 2011) so we also used the sub-dimensions of the construct to disentangle the effect of work valence on school engagement.

The Role of Parent Gender and Youth Gender

As parent-youth relationships change and develop, parents' gender may interact with youths' gender to yield variability in relationship outcomes. Russell and Saebel (1997) reviewed studies that examined the four distinct parent-offspring gender pairs and concluded that some developmental outcomes may differ by the interplay between parent and youth gender. Another literature review provided further support for this conclusion by showing that parents tend to spend more time with their same-sex offspring (McHale, Crouter, & Whiteman, 2003). These findings suggest that parents may exert more influence over their same-sex offspring in terms of socialization to adult roles like *worker* and *parent* than they do with their opposite-sex offspring. Also, because adult work roles are intertwined with family roles (Bianchi & Milkie, 2010) and a solid majority of youth anticipate occupying both roles as adults (Gerson, 2010), youth may identify more closely with parents who are the same-sex (Raley & Bianchi, 2006). Sons may knowingly or unknowingly be more inclined to imagine living in a manner akin to their fathers' and daughters in a way that is more similar to their mothers' as they anticipate their work and family futures. Further, most childrearing and housework continues to be done by women (Bianchi, Sayer, Milkie, & Robinson, 2012) despite the increasing number of working women (Blau, Ferber, & Winkler, 2005). Observing mothers managing work and family roles as compared to fathers may be interpreted differently for girls and boys. In fact, some early studies found that, in families with working mothers, daughters tended to do more housework than sons (Medrich,

Roizen, Rubin, and Buckley, 1982; White & Brinkerhoff, 1981). Thus, girls, observing their own mothers' greater contributions to family work, do more housework perhaps anticipating their own efforts in their future family roles. Youths' perception of their parents' work and family experiences and how they translate into youths' views of their future work and family lives may differ on the basis of the sex composition of the parent-youth dyad under focus. By logical extension, the socialization to work and family roles may vary on the basis of systematic differences in perceptions rooted in sex composition. In other words, we expected that the transmission of parent work and family experiences into youths' work valences may be stronger in same-sex dyads (i.e., father-son or mother-daughter) than cross-sex dyads (i.e., father-daughter or mother-son).

The Present Study

In this study, we constructed and tested a model of socialization to work in the family context and its implications as a lever for school engagement using a sample of parents and youth living in the United States. First, largely taken from an ecological perspective (Bronfenbrenner, 1986; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006), we examined how parents' work and family experiences are linked to youths' perceptions of their parents' work and family lives. We hypothesized that the link would be positive but not strong in magnitude as some research suggests a misalignment of parents' experience and youths' perceptions of work. Second, drawing from the literature regarding work motivation and work valences (Porfeli et al., 2008; Porfeli et al., 2012), we also examined whether youths' perceptions of their parents influenced youths' work valences. It was hypothesized that when youth perceive their parents to be successful in the work domain that they would express greater positive valence and less negative valence. We further tested the hypothesis that youths' views of parents' work and family lives may be linked. Interactions between the two were tested as on how they translate into youths' views of their future work lives. Third, we tested whether work valences were linked to their school engagement. Building upon findings showing that youth may be more strongly motivated in schoolwork when they see work as favorable (Phalet, et al., 2004; Steinberg et al., 1992), we hypothesized that higher positive valence and lower negative valence would be associated with greater school engagement. Fourth, based on literature regarding the possible role of the gender composition of the parent-youth dyad in family dynamics (Russell & Saebel, 1997; McHale, Crouter, & Whiteman, 2003), we also examined the possibility that differences in socialization within gender specific parent-youth dyads, as it pertains to work, may appreciably moderate the linkage between parents' work and youths' perceptions of work. We expected that the associations would be stronger among same-sex dyads than among opposite-sex dyad. To our knowledge, no study has examined the influence of parents' work *and* family experiences on youths' work beliefs and their academic engagement in one model at least in the United States, and, thus, we believe that the present study fills an important gap in the work and family literatures and the emerging field devoted to youths' vocational development.

Methods

Sample

The data for the present study were collected by the Youth Development Study (YDS; Mortimer, 2003). The YDS is an ongoing longitudinal study that started in 1988 with adolescents in the ninth grade living in a Midwestern state in the United States. The original sample has been followed until they entered into adulthood and a subgroup of them now has children. The offspring of the original cohort were also surveyed since 2009 (when the original cohort was 35–36 years old). All of the parents' responses for the present study were collected in 2009 and their offspring's responses were collected one year later in 2010. A total of 311 second-generation individuals consented to participate and 87.1% ($n = 277$) responded to the survey.

Youths and parents who did not have data for the variables used in the present study were excluded, because the primary focus of the present study was to focus on dyads by examining the link between parents' experiences and their offspring's views of their work and family lives. Also, we removed those youths who were not attending school. The final sample for the present study included 154 parent-youth dyads, where 58 of them were mother-daughter, 62 were mother-son, 22 were father-daughter, and 12 were father-son dyads. Due to mothers' greater tendency to consent to their offspring's participation, there were more mothers than fathers among the first generation (78% versus 22%). The gender distribution was less skewed among the second generation (52% and 48% girls and boys, respectively). In terms of race, 80% of the youth ($n = 123$) identified themselves to be White. The age of the youth ranged from 12 to 21 ($M = 15.3$, $SD = 2.2$).

Measures

Youth Responses

Perceived Parents' Work and Family Success: To measure parents' work success, youth responded to a single question "How successful do you feel your [parent] has been in his work life?" and for family success they responded to "How successful do you feel your [mother/father] has been in [her/his] family life?" using a scale of 1 (*not successful at all*) to 4 (*extremely successful*). When the youth's parent who participated in the study was the mother, only the questions pertaining to mothers were used, and when it was the youth's father who was included in the study, then the questions focused on fathers. Although the definition of success is subjective and depends on one's value system and goal priorities, we expected this construct to capture the *overall rating* of youths' perception of their parents' performance in work and family domains.

Positive and Negative Work Valences: The list of items measuring work valences was a condensed version of the Work Valence Scale developed by Porfeli, Lee, and Weigold (2012). The constructs were measured by asking participants about what they expect to feel and experience when they work as an adult. Youth responded to questions, such as "When you are an adult doing your job, how often do you think you will: Get really interested in your work?" (positive valence) and "[identical stem]: Be treated as an unimportant person?" (negative valence), using a scale of 1(*never*) to 5 (*always*). A set of ten items were used to

measure each positive and negative work valence constructs, and they both revealed acceptable reliability ($\alpha = .88$ and $.81$ for positive and negative valence, respectively).

School Engagement: Two dimensions of school engagements were measured (Fredricks, et al., 2004): emotional and cognitive. Two items were averaged to capture the degree to which youth thought school to be fun and enjoyable, namely emotional engagement: “I really like going to school”, “I work hard in school because it is so interesting” ($\alpha = .68$). One item asking “School helps me to improve my ability to think and to solve problems” assessed cognitive engagement. Participants were given a scale of 1(*not at all true*) to 4 (*very true*) to respond.

Parent Responses

Positive Work Experience: Parents were asked about how much they felt rewarded through their work experience. We followed the method used by Johnson (2005) to measure this construct. Five items were used. One set of questions measured how often parents felt work was meaningful and important, they felt bored at work and time is dragging (reverse-coded), and how often they felt interested in doing more work than was required. A response scale of 1 (*almost never*) to 5 (*always*) was used. Another set of two items asked about the degree to which the job offered a chance to learn new things and whether the job used the respondents’ skills and abilities. Participants used a scale of 1 (*not true at all*) to 4 (*very true*) for these two items. A one-factor confirmatory factor analysis yielded moderate fit, $\chi^2(5) = 15.8, p = .007$; NFI = .913, CFI = .935, RMSEA = .099. Because the five items were measured on different scales, all of the items were standardized and then averaged. Cronbach’s alpha was .73.

Positive Family Experience: A set of items asked about parent’s subjective evaluation of their relationship with their offspring. These included the extent to which the parent felt s/he was doing a good job as a parent and whether the parent felt good about the opportunities that s/he could provide for the offspring. The response could range from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 4 (*strongly agree*). The mean value of the two items was used and the reliability was .72.

Dyad Type—We created an indicator representing the nature of the parent-youth dyad, as either same-sex or opposite-sex. Thus, we compared same-sex (either mother-daughter or father-son) and cross-sex (either mother-son or father-daughter) dyads. Limited sample size, particularly the small number of fathers, precluded a more refined analysis of all four dyad types.

Analysis

To test the conceptual model, a path model (see Figure 1) was fitted to the data. A few steps were taken prior to fitting the model. All the variables were centered except for the endogenous variable (i.e., cognitive and emotional school engagement). Two-way interaction terms, considered exogenous in the model, were created from those constructs predicted to serve as moderators (e.g., parent’s work success and parent’s family success). To examine the three-way interactions (Perceived work success $\times$ Perceived Family Success

× Gender composition of dyad), we conducted a multi-group analysis. To do this, we fitted the same path model to data using dyad type as the grouping variable. We compared the fit indices of a totally unconstrained model (i.e., all parameters are allowed to be freely estimated in the two groups) to models with further constraints (e.g., a model where all path coefficients are constrained to be equal between the two groups). If the fit of the constrained model is not significantly different from that of the fully unconstrained model, then this suggests that the more parsimonious model (i.e., fewer parameters to estimate) is a better fit to the data and that there is no statistically detectable moderation effect. If the constrained model is significantly different from the fully unconstrained model, then this suggests the existence of a statistically significant moderation effect.

In the resulting path model (see Figure 1), all exogenous variables were specified to be correlated with each other. Age was controlled in predicting all youth variables, given previously reported differences in academic motivation and attitudes toward work by youths' age (e.g., Gottfried, Fleming, & Gottfried, 2001; Goldstein & Oldham, 1979). The analyses were conducted using AMOS 20.0.

Results

Bivariate correlations among variables are presented in Table 1. Parents' positive work experience was marginally correlated with the extent to which the youth perceived their parents to be successful at work ($r = .17, p < .05$). Further, when parents reported having favorable relationships with their offspring, youth had a tendency to perceive that their parents were successful in their work lives ($r = .13, p < .10$). These relations suggest that parents' perceived experiences a year prior are only marginally related to youths' perceptions of these experiences; the small magnitude of these correlations signals an interesting disconnect between parents and youth.

As expected, youths' perception of their parents' work success and family success were significantly correlated. This finding suggests that youth evaluate their parents' work and family roles as being interdependent to a certain degree. Negative and positive work valences of youth were negatively correlated ($r = -.38, p < .001$), which is generally consistent with the conceptualizations of the constructs as being distinct, but related constructs (Porfeli et al., 2012). Positive and negative work valences were also correlated with the level of cognitive and emotional school engagement, suggesting that youths' expected work lives might leverage their motivation for schoolwork (e.g., de Volder & Lens, 1982; Steinberg et al., 1992).

The estimated parameters of the fitted path model are presented in Table 2. The overall fit of the model was satisfactory ($\chi^2(22) = 26.07, p = .25$; NFI = .890, CFI = .978, RMSEA = .035). Consistent with the bivariate correlational patterns, when parents reported increasingly rewarding work, their offspring were slightly more likely to perceive their parents to be successful in work ($B = .182, S.E. = .068, p < .01$). However, no systematic linkage was found between the parents' positive family experience and youths' perception of their parents' family lives. Given that the parents' and youths' data were collected separately across and the collection efforts were spaced one year apart, the associations, albeit weak,

suggest that parents' and youths' reports are interconnected particularly when it comes to the work domain.

With regard to the linkage between youths' perceptions of their parents' work and family experience and youths' work valences, youth who perceived their parents as having a successful family life were less likely to exhibit negative work valences ($B = -.168$, $S.E. = .063$, $p < .01$) and more likely to exhibit positive work valences ($B = .221$, $S.E. = .072$, $p < .01$). There was no interaction found between perceived work success and family success in the effects on work valences.

With regard to the link between work and school, holding greater positive work valences was associated with increased level of cognitive ($B = .432$, $S.E. = .125$, $p < .001$) and emotional engagement in school ($B = .249$, $S.E. = .098$, $p < .05$). Youth exhibiting positive emotions and cognitions towards future work roles found schoolwork to be more useful and interesting.

We further examined whether these parameter estimates differed depending on the nature of the dyad. The multi-group analysis revealed that a model with constraints on paths between the two groups was no different from a model that was fully unconstrained ($\chi^2 = 8.78$, $df = 16$, $p = .92$). This result indicates that there was no significant difference in the strength of the associations between same-sex and cross-sex parent-youth dyads. Gender did not play an influential role in the linkage between parents' reports of their work and family lives and youths' perceptions of them.

Discussion

The present study examined how parents' work and family experiences are transmitted to their offspring within the family setting, how youths' work valences partly spring from this process, and how these valences may serve as levers in youths' school engagement using a sample of parent-youth dyads living in the United States. We also examined the belief that youth view parents' work and family roles in an interdependent fashion and whether the parent-youth socialization process was moderated by parent-youth gender composition in a manner suggesting that the quality of the dyadic relationship may serve to tune the socialization process into greater or less alignment.

Results revealed that a parent's reported experiences were aligned to youth's perception of their parents' success only in the work domain. The linkage found within the work domain fits with the ecological framework (Bronfenbrenner, 1986), showing that youth learn about adults' work lives through their parents' work experiences (Abramovitch & Johnson, 1992; Barling, Dupre, & Hepburn, 1998; Neblett & Cortina, 2006). The fairly weak associations suggest that parents' experiences are not wholly transmitted to youth (Porfeli et al., 2013; Galinsky, 2010). The modest associations also suggest that there are likely to be additional factors that contribute to the development of youths' perception of their parents' work-family success.

Parents' reported family experience, which is a metric of parent-child relationship quality, did not moderate the linkage between parents' work experience and youths' perception of

their parents' performance in the work and family domain. These findings suggest that relationship quality is not functioning as a tuning mechanism strengthening or weakening the socialization "signal" interconnecting parents and children in terms of work and family perceptions.

Youths' perceptions of their parents' lives, in turn, had a significant and more sizeable effect on youths' own emotional and experiential conceptualizations of work, namely work valences. Interestingly, the degree to which youth perceive their parents to be successful in *family* life was related to their anticipated future work, and the degree to which youth perceive their parents to be successful in work life was not a significant factor in their work valences. This finding was somewhat unexpected because past research demonstrated a systematic transmission of a parent's work-related emotions and experiences to their offspring's work valences (Porfeli et al., 2008), but that research did not account for family functioning. This may suggest that youth perceive the family domain and the work domain to be non-independent and may even struggle to differentiate them well. This study demonstrates that when youth believe that their parents are doing well in the family context, they tend to believe that their parents are also doing well at work (note that the correlation was moderate in strength at about $r = .49$). Because youth observe their parents most often in the family setting and they are not directly involved in the workplace setting (Bronfenbrenner, 1986), their perceptions of parents' behaviors at home may function as a barometer for an overall evaluation of the parents' behaviors in all domains, including the work domain, thereby stimulating their thoughts and feelings about the world of work. Therefore, when youths' evaluation of their parents' work and family success are *both* considered in one model, only the youths' perception of their parents' success in the family life emerge as the key driver of work valences. This finding was also robust to tests of moderation suggesting that the association from family success to work valences did not change as a function of perceived work success. These assertions deserve further testing given the novelty of them.

Finally, consistent with past research (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000; de Volder & Lens, 1982; Steinberg et al., 1992), youth who viewed work as a positive experience were more likely to be engaged cognitively and emotionally in schoolwork, but there was no negative effect on school engagement when youth held more negative views regarding work. This pattern may be due to the character of the measure of school engagement that aligns with an inclination to approach school work. Previous research has shown that negative valence tends to be associated with constructs conveying the avoidance of such activities (Porfeli et al., 2008). The present research, as one of the few studies to consider the connection between work valence and school engagement, supports the proposed conceptual model relating school and work motivational dimensions. Moreover, the significant link between positive work valence and school engagement is consistent with prior research indicating the efficacy of a work-related goal to enhance school motivation among students (Steinberg et al., 1992; Phalet et al., 2004). Further studies are warranted, however, to replicate the validity of this link. Using different samples with longitudinal study designs to examine variation in the direction and strength of the link between work and school motivational spheres could help

us better understand how youth are motivated to achieve in educational and academic domains.

No differences in the patterns of associations were observed on the basis of the gender composition of the parent-youth dyad. This null effect could be partly due to the small sample size, which limits statistical power (Russell & Saebel, 1997). However, taking the null finding at face value, it suggests that there are no systematic differences in how youth are socialized to school and work through the lens of their parents by the gender composition of the parent-child dyad. The youth in the current sample grew up in the late 90s and 2000s when working mothers were quite common. Presumably, youth may have imagined themselves as *workers* and *parents* regardless of their gender.

On a larger level, the findings of the current study reflect fairly weak linkages in the dynamic socialization process linking parents' and offspring's work and family perceptions. The work-related linkages were not moderated by the quality of the parent-child relationship. Previous research suggested that higher quality parent-child relationships might serve as a possible tuning mechanism yielding more alignment between parents' and children's perceptions of work (Porfeli et al., 2013). Given the longitudinal divide of one year between the parent and child data and the measures of family functioning in the current study, this possible tuning mechanism deserves further attention. As this literature awaits this work, the current study joins a constellation of studies suggesting a loose coupling between parents and their children's perceptions of work life.

Limitations

The findings should be interpreted with caution. First of all, the sample of the present study was drawn from a specific region in the United States. Youth and families living in other cultural contexts may yield different observations. For example, Germany has a unique educational system of tracking students into differing educational and vocational pathways. As a result, more adolescents in Germany are exposed to a structured work context earlier than those in the United States. These differences may impact the development of work-related beliefs and attitudes among youth differently. Second, although the study used longitudinal data, the analysis was correlational in nature. Cause-effect relations between variables cannot be concluded from our findings. The one-year divide between parents' and children's responses may have also introduced a bias leading to weak associations given that work life in the 21st century is highly dynamic. Future research could narrow the time gap and re-test these associations to gauge the impact that it had in the current study. Further, the parental work and family success measures we used were based upon a limited number of items, thereby weakening their reliability. What youth perceive as "success" in family and work domains can be widely variable among youth and can also be subjective. Future studies may benefit from refining this measure with more items revolving around the varying concepts tied to "success" to identify what kind of parental behavior constitutes as being successful in the two domains.

Implications for Career Guidance and Interventions

These results, in support of a socialization model with loose couplings between parents and children, serve as evidence for the role of the family context, and specifically parents' work and family experiences, in mildly shaping their offspring's vocational development and academic progress. This study challenges vocational guidance professionals to broaden their focus on the person to include the person-in-context and to consider the family as a potential asset in advancing vocational and academic development (Vondracek, Lerner, & Schulenberg, 1986; Vondracek & Porfeli, 2002; Whiston & Keller, 2004). This study also affirms the power of youth to construct conceptions of work that exist fairly independently of their parents' experience. Such independence may serve a protective function for youth whose parents are facing difficult work lives and for those youth who, for whatever reason, aim to chart a life course that varies from the one that their parents' traveled.

This study also demonstrates the potential value of vocational guidance efforts in promoting academic engagement. This study shows that favorable perceptions of future work life encourage youth to engage in their schoolwork, and these orientations toward future employment may weakly source from the family context. Presumably, efforts to bolster positive work concepts may be used in tandem with other more academically-oriented interventions to further engage students in their school work.

This study suggests that some of these guidance and counseling efforts should be directed to at least consider the family context to help children and parents apprehend the role the family can play in partnership with vocational guidance professionals to enable offspring to become vital adults enjoying successful school, work, and family lives. Uniquely, this research points to family functioning as being a possible contributor to youths' work perceptions. The results also add to a growing literature showing that offspring can and do chart work futures that are fairly independent of those traveled by their parents. Future career guidance innovations, particularly focusing on youth living in jobless and economically distressed families, could seek to capitalize on this capacity for youth to develop favorable work perceptions independent of their family circumstances.

References

- Abramovitch R, Johnson LC. Children's perceptions of parental work. *Canadian Journal of Behavioral Science*. 1992; 24(3):319–332.
- Bandura, A. *Social learning theory*. Morristown, NJ: General Learning Press; 1971.
- Barling J, Dupre KE, Hepburn CG. Effects of parents' job insecurity on children's work beliefs and attitudes. *Journal of Applied Psychology*. 1998; 83(1):112–118. [PubMed: 9494443]
- Bianchi SM, Milkie MA. Work and family research in the first decade of the 21st century. *Journal of Marriage and Family*. 2010; 72(3):705–725.10.1111/j.1741-3737.2010.00726.x
- Bianchi SM, Sayer LC, Milkie MA, Robinson JP. Housework: Who did, does or will do it, and how much does it matter? *Social Forces*. 2012; 91(1):55–63.
- Bronfenbrenner U. Ecology of the family as a context for human development: Research perspectives. *Developmental Psychology*. 1986; 22:723–742.
- Bronfenbrenner, U.; Morris, PA. The bioecological model of human development. In: Damon, W.; Lerner, RM., editors. *Handbook of child psychology: Vol. 1. Theoretical models of human Development*. 6. New York: Wiley; 2006. p. 793-828.(Series Eds.) R. M. Lerner (Vol. Ed.)

- Bryant BK, Zvonkovic AM, Reynolds P. Parenting in relation to child and adolescent vocational development. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*. 2006; 69(1):149–175.
- Blau, F.; Ferber, M.; Winkler, A. *The Economics of Women, Men, and Work*. 4. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall; 2005. The allocation of time between the household and the labor market; p. 85–122.
- Christenson SL, Rounds R, Gorney D. Family factors and student achievement: An avenue to increase students' success. *School Psychology Quarterly*. 1992; 7(3):178–206.
- Cinamon RG, Weisel A, Tzuk K. Work-family conflict within the family: Crossover effects, perceived parent-child interaction quality, parental self-efficacy, and life role attributions. *Journal of Career Development*. 2007; 34(1):79–100.
- Corder J, Stephan CW. Female's combination of work and family roles: Adolescents' aspirations. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*. 1984; 46(2):391–402.
- Crosnoe R. Social capital and the interplay of families and schools. *Journal of Marriage and Family*. 2004; 66(2):267–280.
- De Volder ML, Lens W. Academic achievement and future time perspective as a cognitive-motivational concept. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. 1982; 42(3):566–571.
- Fortier MS, Vallerand RJ, Guay F. Academic motivation and school performance: Toward a structural model. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*. 1995; 20(3):257–274.
- Fredricks JA, Blumenfeld PC, Paris AH. School engagement: Potential of the concept, state of the evidence. *Review of Educational Research*. 2014; 74:59–109.
- Galinsky, E. *Ask the children: What America's children really think about working parents*. New York, NY: Quill; 1999.
- Gerson, K. *The unfinished revolution*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press; 2010.
- Goldstein, B.; Oldham, J. *Children and work: A study of socialization*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction; Books: 1979.
- Gonida EN, Voulala K, Kiosseoglou G. Students' achievement goal orientations and their behavioral and emotional engagement: Co-examining the role of perceived school goal structures and parent goals during adolescence. *Learning and Individual Differences*. 2009; 19(1):53–60.10.1016/j.lindif.2008.04.002
- Gonzalez-DeHass AR, Willems PP, Holbein MFD. Examining the relationship between parental involvement and student motivation. *Educational Psychology Review*. 2005; 17(2):99–123.
- Greenhoot AF, Tsethlikai M, Wagoner BJ. The relations between children's past experiences, social knowledge, and memories for social situations. *Journal of Cognition and Development*. 2006; 7:313–340.10.1207/s15327647jcd0703_6
- Johnson MK. Family roles and work values: Processes of selection and change. *Journal of Marriage and Family*. 2005; 67:352–369.10.1111/j.0022-2445.2005.00121.x
- Kohn, ML.; Schooler, C. *Work and personality: An inquiry into the impact of social stratification*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex; 1983.
- Legault L, Green-Demers I, Pelletier L. Why do high school students lack motivation in the classroom? Toward an understanding of academic amotivation and the role of social support. *Journal of Educational Psychology*. 2006; 98(3):567–582.
- Lueptow LB, McClendon MJ, McKeon JW. Father's occupation and son's personality: Findings and questions for the emerging linkage hypothesis. *The Sociological Quarterly*. 1979; 20:463–475.10.1111/j.1533-8525.1979.tb01229.x
- Medrich, E.; Roizen, J.; Rubin, V.; Buckley, S. *The serious business of growing up*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press; 1982.
- McHale SM, Crouter AC, Whiteman SD. The family contexts of gender development in childhood and adolescence. *Social Development*. 2003; 12(1):125–148.
- Mortimer, JT. *Working and growing up in America*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; 2003.
- Mortimer JT, Kumka D. A further examination of the "Occupational Linkage Hypothesis. *The Sociological Quarterly*. 1982; 23:3–16.10.1111/j.1533-8525.1982.tb02216.x
- Neblett NG, Cortina KS. Adolescents' thoughts about parents' jobs and their importance for adolescents' future orientation. *Journal of Adolescence*. 2006; 29:795–811. [PubMed: 16427693]

- Park HS, Bauer S. Parenting practices, ethnicity, socioeconomic status and academic achievement in adolescents. *School Psychology International*. 2002; 23(4):386–396.
- Phalet K, Andriessen I, Lens W. How future goals enhance motivation and learning in multicultural classroom. *Educational Psychology Review*. 2004; 16(1):59–89.
- Piotrkowski, CS.; Stark, E. Children and adolescents look at their parents' jobs. In: Lewko, JH., editor. *New Directions for Child Development*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass; 1987.
- Porfeli E, Ferrari L, Nota L. Work valence as a predictor of academic achievement in the family context. *Journal of Career Development*. 2013; 40(5):371–389.
- Porfeli EJ, Lee B, Weigold I. A multidimensional measure of work valences. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*. 2012; 80(2):340–350.10.1016/j.jvb.2011.09.004
- Porfeli EJ, Hartung PJ, Vondracek FW. Children's vocational development: A research rationale. *Career Development Quarterly*. 2008; 57(1):25–37.
- Porfeli EJ, Wang C, Hartung PJ. Family transmission of work affectivity and experiences to children. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*. 2008; 73:278–286.
- Putney NM, Bengtson VL. Socialization and the family revisited. *Advances in Life Course Research*. 2002; 7:165–194.
- Raley S, Bianchi S. Sons, daughters, and family processes: Does gender of children matter? *Annual Review of Sociology*. 2006; 32:401–421.
- Rosenzweig, C. A meta-analysis of parenting and school success: The role of parents in promoting students' academic performance. Paper presented at Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association; Seattle, WA. 2001 Apr.
- Russell A, Saebel J. Mother-son, mother-daughter, father-son, and father-daughter: Are they distinct relationships? *Developmental Review*. 1997; 17:111–147.
- Schickendanz JA. Family socialization and academic achievement. *Journal of Education*. 1995; 177(1):17–38.
- Schulenberg JE, Vondracek FW, Crouter AC. The influence of the family on vocational development. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*. 1984; 46:129–143.
- Schunk, DH.; Pajares, F. Competence perceptions and academic functioning. In: Elliot, AJ.; Dweck, CS., editors. *Handbook of Competence and Motivation*. New York, NY: Guilford Press; 2005.
- Steinberg L, Dornbusch SM, Brown BB. Ethnic differences in adolescent achievement: An ecological perspective. *American Psychologist*. 1992; 47(6):723–729. [PubMed: 1616171]
- Taylor LC, Clayton JD, Rowley SJ. Academic socialization: Understanding parental influences on children's school-related development in the early years. *Review of General Psychology*. 2004; 8(3):163–178.
- U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. *Women in the Labor Force: A Databook 2012 edition*. 2012. Retrieved from <http://www.bls.gov/cps/wlf-databook-2012.pdf>
- U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. *Employment Characteristics of Families*. 2014. Retrieved from <http://www.bls.gov>
- Vondracek, FW.; Lerner, RM.; Schulenberg, JE. *Career development: A life-span developmental approach*. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum Associates; 1986.
- Vondracek FW, Porfeli EJ. Counseling psychologists and schools: Toward a sharper conceptual focus. *The Counseling Psychologist*. 2002; 30:749–756.
- Wang MT, Willett JB, Eccles JS. The assessment of school engagement: Examining dimensionality and measurement invariance by gender and race/ethnicity. *Journal of School Psychology*. 2011; 49:465–480. [PubMed: 21724001]
- Watson M, McMahon M. Children's career development: A research review from a learning perspective. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*. 2005; 67(2):119–132.
- Wentzel KR, Battle A, Russell SL, Looney LB. Social supports from teachers and peers as predictors of academic and social motivation. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*. 2010; 35(3):193–202.
- Whiston SC, Keller BK. The influences of the family of origin on career development: A review and analysis. *The Counseling Psychologist*. 2004; 33:493–568.10.1177/0011000004265660
- White L, Brinkerhoff D. The sexual division of labor: Evidence from childhood. *Social Forces*. 1981; 60:170–181.

Figure 1.
The conceptual model fitted to data.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics and Bivariate Correlations among Variables (N=154)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Parent report								
1. Positive Work Experience	–							
2. Positive Family Experience	–.03	–						
Child report								
3. Parent's Work Success	.17*	.13 [†]	–					
4. Parent's Family Success	–.01	.06	.49***	–				
5. Positive Work Valence	.02	.04	.05	.24**	–			
6. Negative Work Valence	.06	–.17*	–.07	–.24**	–.38***	–		
7. Cognitive engagement	.02	.06	–.04	.14 [†]	.32***	–.15 [†]	–	
8. Emotional engagement	.12	.12	–.03	.09	.28***	–.22**	.47***	–
Mean (SD)	3.17 (0.54)	0.00 (0.71)	3.40 (0.64)	3.40 (0.74)	3.85 (0.58)	2.12 (0.51)	3.15 (0.87)	2.66 (0.68)

[†] $p < .10$ * $p < .05$ *** $p < .001$

Table 2

Parameter Estimates of the Path Models

Paths	Estimate [S.E.]	Standardized coefficients
<i>Parents' experience to youths' perception</i>		
Work experience → Work success	.182 [.068]	.200**
Work experience → Family success	.015 [.078]	.015
Family experience → Work success	.117 [.090]	.098
Family experience → Family success	.000 [.103]	.000
Work exp. × Family exp. → Work success	-.090 [.142]	-.048
Work exp. × Family exp. → Family success	.048 [.162]	.022
<i>Youths' perception of work to their work valence</i>		
Work Success → Positive Valence	-.078 [.080]	-.086
Family Success → Positive Valence	.221 [.072]	.282**
Work scs. × Family scs. → Positive Valence	.126 [.088]	.119
Work Success → Negative Valence	.069 [.070]	.086
Family Success → Negative Valence	-.168 [.063]	-.243**
Work scs. × Family scs. → Negative Valence	-.043 [.078]	-.046
<i>Youths' work valence to school engagement</i>		
Positive Valence → Cognitive Engagement	.432 [.125]	.286***
Negative Valence → Cognitive Engagement	-.018 [.143]	-.011
Positive Valence → Emotional Engagement	.249 [.098]	.211*
Negative Valence → Emotional Engagement	-.138 [.112]	-.104 [†]
<i>Control</i>		
Age → Family Success	-.067 [.025]	-.201**
Age → Work Success	-.042 [.022]	-.144 [†]
Age → Negative Valence	.054 [.018]	.234**
Age → Positive Valence	-.043 [.021]	-.165*
Age → Cognitive Engagement	-.051 [.031]	-.129
Age → Emotional Engagement	-.042 [.025]	-.135
Chi-square (df)	26.07 (22), $p = .249$	
Normative Fit Index	.890	
Comparative Fit Index	.978	
Root Mean Squared Error of Approximation	.035	

Note. exp. = experience, scs. = success

[†]
 $p < .10$

*
 $p < .05$

**
 $p < .01$

 $p < .001$.

Author Manuscript

Author Manuscript

Author Manuscript

Author Manuscript