

## Symposium session 7

# The family context and the construction of career in adolescence: meaning, mattering, commitment and projects

Convenors: Inês Nascimento, Carlos Gonçalves & Joaquim Coimbra, University of Porto, Portugal

Discussant: Prof. Richard Young, University of British Columbia, Vancouver-Canada

This symposium intends to bring some evidence about the processes that take place in the family context, giving rise to certain trends in the way individuals define career goals and construct their vocational projects. More specifically, all the papers to be presented will shed light on work meanings as the basic structures that are developed in family interactions (through both intentional and unintentional joint-actions) and organize people commitments and behaviours in their ongoing relationship with the world of work. Beginning with the idea that meanings are the by-product of relationships and emerge from processes of social construction, the papers will adopt different views about the kind of influences that parents might have in adolescents' representations about work (Gonçalves & Coimbra), in adolescents future orientation and commitment to work (Nascimento, Menezes & Coimbra), and in the kind of activities parents and adolescents may be engaged together (Domene). Career development projects signify the medium- and long-term joint actions that families use as they construct and organize present and future education, work, employment, and other life choices and opportunities for their adolescents (Young, et al., 2001). Families are seen as sub-unities that reflect macro level influences of the socio-historical and cultural factors that participate in people's lives. That's why it is also useful to contextualize youth's projects in the larger social realm of vocational development and understand to what extent adolescents choices are a matter of interest for both families and society (Marshall, Young, Domene & Zaidman).

## To be high or low committed to work, that's the question. The answer that individuals can get from their own parents work commitment

Inês Nascimento, Isabel Menezes & Joaquim Coimbra

University of Porto, Portugal

The study to be present is part of a larger research project aimed at the exploration of the intergenerational transmission of meanings associated to work and parenting. It is focused in the analysis of the level of commitment to work (high commitment or low commitment), in dyads and triads of parents and their respective adult children. The similarities and differences between parents and children commitments to work are explored in its association with children's memories of the parents' commitment to work and children's retrospective accounts of the quality of parent-child relationship, with children adolescence (from 12 years old to the time they left parents' home) being defined as the focal period. The study involved a large sample of families (approximately, 350 families) with representatives of two consanguine generations. Data were collected from self-report questionnaires, some of them purposely constructed for this study, fulfilled by two or three family members. Findings are discussed in an effort to bring light to the role of the parent-child relationship in the continuities and discontinuities that can be observed in the way each generation commit itself to work. Some comments are made about the kind of messages related to work that may be communicated unintentionally from parents to children, and specifically, derived from individuals own experience respecting the implications of parents work to children's life.

## Consequences of differing levels of focus on the Joint Action of adolescents and their parents in the domain of career development

José F. Domene

University of British Columbia, Canada

Using Valach, Young and colleagues' action theory framework, this study explored the consequences of having focused versus diffuse projects on the action that adolescents and their parents engaged in together, within the domain of career development. Information concerning the career-related joint action of 20 parent-adolescent dyads was collected from interviews, observation of dyadic conversations, and self-report logs over a six-month period. Action-theoretical content analysis permitted the classification of the joint projects of parents and adolescents as being either "focused" (characterize by explicit, well-defined goals and a predominance of goal-congruent