ABSTRACT

Despite recent gains made by women in the U.S. labor market, gendered occupational segregation continues to be prevalent not only in the United States (Hegewisch, Liepmann, Hayes, & Hartmann, 2010), but across the world (Anker, 1998). Gendered occupational segregation has negative implications at the individual, employer, and societal levels. The present dissertation aimed to better understand the development and correlates of gendered occupational aspirations and initial occupational choices, including the role of children and parents’ attributes. The dissertation consists of three interrelated papers with the following goals: 1) To examine the consistency between gendered occupational aspirations in late childhood, adolescence, and initial occupational choices in young adulthood (including the role of children’s attributes in occupational aspirations and initial occupational choices); 2) To examine parents’ attitudes and behaviors when their children were in late childhood as predictors of the gender typicality of initial occupations acquired in young adulthood; and 3) To review past literature
examining parent and child occupational consistency, propose mechanisms that may account for this consistency (including the consistency in the gender typicality of parents and children’s occupations), and to make recommendations for future research. Results of the first paper suggest that for boys, gendered occupational aspirations in late childhood and adolescence are associated with initial occupational choices acquired in young adulthood. In contrast, girls desired less sex-typed occupations than they obtained in young adulthood. Sex-typed attributes in late childhood—including attitudes toward women’s roles, personal qualities, interests, and skills—predicted the gender typicality of occupational aspirations in late childhood and/or adolescence, but not initial occupational choices. Results of the second paper indicated that socialization experiences in late childhood—namely mothers’ attitudes towards women’s roles and mothers and fathers’ time spent with children—were associated with the gender typicality of initial occupations acquired 15 years later in young adulthood. However, many of the findings were moderated by child’s gender. Overall, the gender typicality of occupational aspirations and initial occupational choices were related to both children and parents’ attributes reported during late childhood, suggesting that the gendered distribution of the labor force may be, at least in part, the result of early socialization practices.