

THE FIND YOUR GRIND LOGIC MODEL

Part 2: Social Cognitive Career Theory and Career Exploration

The American School Counseling Association (2003) recommends that schools promote programs to enhance students' academic, career, social, and personal domains. Students must be given opportunities to increase their awareness of potential careers, identify their career goals, and apply new knowledge and skills to achieve these goals. To this end, all students need to understand the connection between their interests, talents, and abilities, and the world of work, along with how to identify and act on information relevant to furthering their education and careers (Barker & Satcher, 2000). Career preparation is even more crucial for first-generation college students, who have unique needs as compared to their continuing-generation counterparts. As of 2016, over half of all college students nationwide identified as first-generation; an approach that addresses the needs of this and other diverse populations is central to achieving equity in career and higher education opportunities.

Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) is one approach that may address the personal and career development needs of diverse populations of adolescents while keeping in mind the rapidly changing economic and career landscape ahead of us. First-generation college students in particular may be well-served by programming that incorporates SCCT into its theoretical framework (Lent et al., 1996). SCCT as a framework considers how a student's academic interests and career choices mature and how these choices are turned into action (Gibbons & Shoffner, 2004). Lent et al. (1994) have identified three main tenets of SCCT that help educators support students through their career exploration journeys: self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and goal-setting.

Self-efficacy refers to the beliefs an individual has about their ability to be successful in a given task, while outcome expectations are the beliefs one has about the consequences of taking a certain action or completing a task (Bandura, 1977). A student with a wealth of positive personal and vicarious experiences and good task understanding is likely to have high self-efficacy and positive outcome expectations, though this is not always the case. A student with high self-efficacy may still experience low outcome expectations if societal messaging communicates achieving a goal is unlikely. For example, a female student who is interested in welding and believes she is personally capable of success may still abandon this potential career path if she has been told repeatedly that "welding is a man's job". If, on the other hand, this same student sees many examples of successful female welders and receives sufficient verbal encouragement to enter the field, she is likely to begin setting and pursuing goals related to this task.

Taken together, the relationship between self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and goal-setting is ongoing, complex, and ever-changing, and sociocultural factors such as gender, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, sexuality, and (dis)ability are integral to this process. With each new stimuli, change in environment, or personal experience, an individual is likely to adjust their perception of

themselves, and this, in turn, influences their pursuit of goals. Practice efforts may reinforce or change the previous self-efficacy and outcome beliefs as individuals engage in a process of progressive learning and expertise development. Over time, career interests typically stabilize as new goals are set and beliefs continue to form.