

**Career Development Applied Theory Paper**

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**Abstract**

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Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) is the focus of this work. More specifically, SCCT applied to homeschool students. The tenets of SCCT will be demonstrated to be effective in helping the homeschool population consider these principles to help develop paths reasonably expected to lead them to a successful career path. Tenets, such as self-efficacy, outcome expectation, interest, and goals, will be discussed generally and with a focus on the homeschool population. A brief mention of Holland's RIASEC will be mentioned as a tool for use in conjunction with SCCT. It will be shown how the various tenets affect one another and how to put the tenets together to develop a plan for success.

*Key Words:* social cognitive career theory, self-efficacy, outcome expectation, interest, goals, homeschool

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Counselors work with individuals who vary in geographical location, cultural proclivities, education levels, parental dynamics, and on the list could go. When in the role of a career counselor, it is wise to factor in who you are talking to and the specifics of their life experiences. The unique population considered in this writing is homeschooled high school students. This time can be a precarious transitional period from high school educational pursuits to college or straight to a work environment. Either path is benefitted from learning about organizational support to help succeed (Burga et al., 2020). Homeschoolers as a group are underrepresented in the research field and need consideration as a unique group because of the differences that are typical to students who have been instructed in a home setting as opposed to students who have received a traditional public or private institutional type school (similar to the public-school setting but privately funded and attended). Here is a look at some of those differences.

Ray (2017) quoted Lines (1991), Ray (2016), Redford, Battle, & Bielick (2017) as saying there are some 2.4 million homeschoolers as of the time of his article. Ray (2017) further reviewed the research regarding homeschooling. Ray's findings indicated, "Overall, 78% (35) of the 45 peer-reviewed studies found that the homeschooled students or graduates performed significantly better than their conventional or institutional school peers in terms of academic achievement, social and emotional development, and success into adulthood (including at college/university)." Bolle et al., (2007) shared that "homeschooling families have more children than non-homeschooling families, and 80% of homeschoolers come from two-parent households, compared with 66% of students from non-homeschooling families." The many nuances as to why homeschoolers are performing better is a topic for future research. Now, the focus is on using a career theory to help this population continue to succeed.

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The focus presently is helping homeschoolers to consider careers through the assistance of Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT). Tenets of SCCT are covered here to help build a scope of how to help the homeschool population. Lent, Brown, and Hackett brought this career theory to life in the early 1990's. These researchers built on the foundation of Bandura, who created Social Cognitive theory in the early 1980's. Lent et al. (1994) indicated they were not trying to develop a theory with all the answers but were developing a model to help with career behaviors.

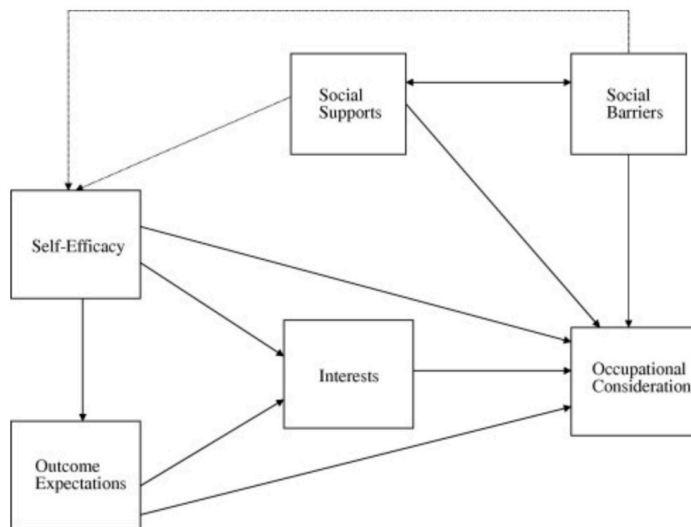
Further, they used the word "career" but intended for SCCT to cover the development process generally. The writers proposed three "social cognitive mechanisms" for career development: self-efficacy beliefs, outcome expectations, and goal representations. Self-efficacy affects what people do and where they go, the effort, follow through, and perseverance when challenges are presented, the "can I do this" aspect of a potential action or pathway of events. Outcome expectations ask, "If I do this, what will happen?" Morris et al. (2009) define self-efficacy and outcome expectation in the following ways. "Self-efficacy, a person's belief in his or her ability to accomplish a specific task or reach a specific goal, is central to SCCT." "Outcome expectations are the results anticipated if a particular course of action is chosen."

Lent et al. (1994) further quote Bandura (1986) as showing areas of outcome expectation as physical (e.g., monetary), social (e.g., approval), and self-evaluative (e.g., self-satisfaction) and state these could affect a person's career ideas and decisions. Goals help consider a desired destination and maintain momentum toward the target. Lent et al. (1994) share self-efficacy and outcome expectation as interrelating. High self-efficacy makes a person more likely to move towards a career. In contrast, an anticipated low outcome expectation would likely turn a person

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from the path or career option. The authors continue discussing social cognitive theory and four areas determining self-efficacy: how one has performed, vicarious learning, social influences, and personal health. "Personal success experiences with a given task tend to improve efficacy estimates, while repeated failures lower them" (Lent et al., 1994).

Lent et al. (2010) stated, "SCCT posits that, in addition to interests, occupational choices tend to reflect people's self-efficacy beliefs and anticipated outcomes, together with the environmental supports and barriers they expect to encounter, should they opt to pursue particular choice options." A chart Lent et al. (2010) provided helps clarify the basic tenets of SCCT.



This chart helps to clarify the dynamic of multiple factors involved in the act of deciding. The illustration helps see how self-efficacy and outcome expectations can lead to interest development. Interest can help direct a person to discover passion towards a career they would find fulfilling (Kaminsky & Behrend, 2015). Some similar charts add a box to the left of the Interest box labeled Goals. The idea of interest leading to goals that direct a person towards their

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future occupation is a significant step to include. This chart is specific to occupational considerations but could be used for various life decisions a person will have to make. The phrase "everything affects everything" is appropriate here. When discussing career ideas with clients, career counselors must remember this is a multidimensional equation, not one that basic math can conquer alone. It even gets more convoluted when trying to decide which area has more impact (e.g., self-efficacy or outcome expectation, what about the social supports or the lack of supports, or does interest trump an expectation to succeed financially, etc.). Career decisions do not typically occur on a simplistic linear trajectory but have varying factors with different value levels for each individual.

SCCT is interesting because it explains how people make decisions more than being an actual theory with definitive steps to promote a career path or destination. It does appear effective in helping a person to factor out the various ways they go about the decision-making journey. In a discussion regarding the role of a person having a calling, Kaminsky & Behrend said, "SCCT and other career choice theories do not successfully capture a sense of meaningfulness relevant in career decision making. Capturing this important motivational element will allow us to dramatically improve our understanding of how people make career decisions and potentially develop new programs and interventions to help people find meaning in their work." The discussion on calling was intriguing but a bit open-ended. However, it seems appropriate for the homeschool focus area due to many homeschool families having a spiritual motivation for their work as a homeschool family. The authors said the idea of calling was originally religious. Still, they were attempting to use it both as a spiritual idea and primarily as having a desire that led to a career choice.

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When looking at career paths, some students may understand that they are more suited for a career than their classmates and determine that said career path is unsuitable for their peers (Burga et al., 2020). This perception of self may help motivate students to excel due to their perception of self-efficacy. Self-efficacy can stem from many factors, one of which is seeing areas where a person believes themselves to be superior or effective in an area of interest.

Another work was discussing the retention of nurses and using the idea of interest as a motivating factor. Having a high interest in a field like nursing can help limit the amount of turnover. This work also shared some ideas regarding mentoring to help sustain interest in the field (Pham et al., 2019). The idea can be gleaned from this: not only does interest and mentoring promote limited turnover for the field, but also for the individual. A genuine interest can help lead to a career path with sustainability.

When a client becomes disenchanted concerning a career path, SCCT is an empirically grounded resource to help clarify the varying forces that are at work both internally and externally through psychoeducation to help get the client back on track and away from faulty cognitions regarding their career opportunities (Raque-Bogdan & Lucas, 2016). In addition to self-efficacy, outcome expectations, interests, and goals, Lent et al. (2010) included measures of contextual supports and barriers in their study. These researchers utilized Holland's RIASEC areas of career interest to ensure the students they worked with had considered a multifaceted thought process. RIASEC stands for Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional. A great resource is the O\*Net website, a tool provided by the U.S. Department of Labor that uses the Holland RIASEC. (<https://www.mynextmove.org/explore/ip>). Holland's

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assessment can help direct a person to some more refined area of interest based on a simple and free assessment. The focus will now shift to the application phase.

### **SCCT Applied to Homeschool Students**

Some distinguishing facts about homeschoolers as a group were shared earlier.

Regardless of the statistics of homeschoolers as a group, it is crucial to remember that each individual is just that, an individual with characteristics that differ from others, even those from within the same home. SCCT can help homeschooled students begin to consider areas where they feel a sense of self-efficacy. The career counselor can help these student ask, "Can I do it?" There are likely areas where each individual excels and has a positive outlook. Other areas may have consistently been areas of less than stellar performance and have developed a desire to avoid the putrid effects felt through such actions. It may be that a student has excelled in math and is fascinated with how things work to the level of researching and asking questions to understand the inner workings of objects better. There could be a variety of fields that may be a fit, but helping them to think about a path, such as engineering, could begin to shape the direction. Another factor is that a student may have a family support system that has either built or torn them up. These factors are necessary to consider. Their family could have persuaded them that even though they have made perfect grades, they are dumb and will choke when put out in the 'real world' or have convinced a mediocre performing student that you can do anything you put your mind to (this can be true to a certain extent but can set some up for failure).

The students will also need to consider where they are regarding outcome expectations. A career counselor must help the student ask, "If I do this, what will happen?" Following the same example, what does this student expect the outcome expectations to be because of becoming an

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engineer? Do they see the freedom to design and see things brought to life, or are they terrified by being responsible for outcomes that may directly affect many people? When you help a student to consider these thought processes and help them then factor in their lived experiences as a homeschooler and what impact, if any, that has on their anticipated outcome expectations.

This student would need to take the areas of self-efficacy and outcome expectation and develop a list of interests spawned from discussions around these tenets. Then, the student can be helped to consider goals and how these can all work together to build a career path that could be fulfilling to such a student. Questions include how specific career options will align with or against the student's self-efficacy areas, positive outcome expectation paths, interests, and goals. Does this career path seem most satisfying on all levels, or is there another path that would agree with all tenets in a better way? Holland's RIASEC can be used to narrow the search some, but all these thoughts need to be considered to have the affirmation that a particular career path could be enriching to the student's future. It is helpful to help a student to develop a plan. The Bible discusses a person who begins a building project without a plan, and not counting the cost is unwise and will be mocked when he cannot finish (ESV, Luke 14:28ff). Helping students have a plan to calculate the cost of a chosen path will equip them for success as they move forward.

SCCT is a valid tool for working with many populations, including homeschooled students. SCCT can help students through the tenets to consider career ideas by helping to develop a map to follow. It is helpful to know how to evaluate an individual's self-efficacy, outcome expectations, interest, and goal formation, and how to use these tenets (as tools) to refine a career search. The overarching goal of any career counselor is to set a person up for a

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reasonable path to success. SCCT can be a valid tool to assist the homeschool population in developing a plan that can lead to a fulfilling career path.

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