Career Counseling with First-Generation College Students

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POPULATION
First Generation College Students
First generation college students are individuals from families where neither parent had more than a high-school education (Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak, & Terenzini, 2004).

Racial and Ethnic Disparities
First generation college students make up less of the college population than they did in previous generations, partially due to the increase in higher education for all citizens of the population than they did in previous generations, partially due to the increase in higher education for all citizens of the

FINANCIAL DISPARITIES
• 50% of first-generation students are from low-income families compared to 30% of students whose parents have some college experience (Horn & Nunez, 2000 as cited in Saenz, Hurtado, Barrera, Wolf, & Yeung, 2007).
• First generation college students were more likely to work 20+ hours a week in their last year of high school as compared to non-first generation students.
• Nearly half of first-generation college students report needing to get a job to help pay for college.
• (Saenz, Hurtado, Barrera, Wolf, & Yeung, 2007).

EDUCATIONAL DISPARITIES
First generation college students report:
• Less time studying and doing homework during their last year of high school than non-first-generation students
• Lower high school GPAs
• Lower expectations for college GPAs
• Lower self-ratings in writing and math ability
• Lower SAT scores
• (Saenz, Hurtado, Barrera, Wolf, & Yeung, 2007).

SOCIAL COGNITIVE CAREER THEORY
Theory
• Founded in Bandura’s social cognitive theory
• Three constructs:
  • Self-efficacy – beliefs about ability to successfully complete a task
  • Outcome expectations – beliefs related to consequences of a completed task
  • Goals – intention to engage in a particular task
• (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994)

Applications of SCCT with Prospective-First Generation College Students
Prospective First-generation college students reported:
• Lower college-going self-efficacy scores
• More perceived barriers to college
  • White participants perceive the fewest barriers to college and Hispanic/Latino participants perceived the most barriers to college
• Lower positive outcome expectations
  • Hispanic/Latino participants perceived more negative outcomes than did White or African American.
• (Gibbons & Borders, 2010).

Application of SCCT with First Generation College Students
First Generation College Student Career Development
• External influences on the career development process
  • Family influences
  • Lack of professional/career network
  • Participation in support programs
• Understanding of the career development process
  • Feeling marginalized and disadvantaged
  • Challenges and importance of building a professional network
• Self-concept as a first generation college student
  • Persistent and motivated
  • Appreciative and not entitled
  • Self-reliant and responsible
  • Adaptable
• (Tate, Caperton, Kaiser, Pruitt, White, & Hall, 2015)

IMPLICATIONS FOR CAREER COUNSELING
Interventions
• Help first generation college students develop a robust professional network in terms of quality and quantity. One way to achieve this is to reach out to first-generation college student alumni to act as mentors.
• First-generation college students cite family as important to their educational endeavors. Provide psychoeducation to family members about how to support their student.
• Help clients identify unique strengths they have as first-generation college students, such as persistence and responsibility.
• (Tate, Caperton, Kaiser, Pruitt, White, & Hall, 2015)

Assessments
• College-Going Self-Efficacy (Gibbons, 2005)
• Perceptions to Educational Barriers Scale (McWhirter, 2000)
• The College-Going Outcome Expectations Scale (Gibbons, 2005)
• (As cited in Gibbons & Borders 2010).

REFERENCES