CHAPTER 2.

INTRODUCTION TO CAREER DEVELOPMENT

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> This chapter was originally written by Keates and Hahn (2019) for the Canadian version of this handbook. We've updated the chapter to ensure the information reflects the Australian context and is therefore relevant to psychology students in Australia. The chapter introduces you to career development. It provides information about career paths and options for students with psychology degrees, along with some ways you might think about your career and make career decisions.

INTRODUCTION

Charting your career path beyond university can be a surprisingly complex experience – potentially both exciting and daunting at times. It can be all too easy to put off thinking about your future until some other time. To ease potential stress and help find your way in an unknown terrain, it can be helpful to have a map to make more informed choices. In this chapter, we will help you to start building your own map of your future as we look at the topic of careers from several different perspectives.

We will examine common questions from psychology students, look at some key labour market trends and information, and learn about leading career development theories. Then we'll boil this all down to look at how you can use it to make the most of your time studying psychology, learn about yourself, and make good career decisions. From this broad foundation perspective on career development, you'll be better positioned to make sense of the various career paths you'll be exploring throughout the remainder of this text.

PSYCHOLOGY DEGREES + CAREER PATHS

As a student, you may be used to linear relationships between steps in your education – you complete high school and then go to university and study a range of psychology courses. It's easy to expect to keep moving on a predictable track to eventually gain employment. The reality is that students who study psychology can head in many directions, some highly-related to their psychology studies, and some less obviously so. This handbook will shed some light on some of the more common pathways for psychology graduates, as well as a few destinations you might not have anticipated.

Before you dive into the wealth of information in this text about all the exciting career possibilities that lay ahead, and ideas about how to navigate your career in this chapter, we want to address a few key questions and concerns that we hear from psychology students about career options, and highlight the value of the transferrable skills you're learning in your study program.

Students study psychology for a variety of reasons. Some students want to become a registered psychologist, so they'll pursue the pathway to full registration. Other students may want to work in a job – not necessarily a psychology job – where they can help others. Some students are curious about people and why we behave the way we do. Some students study psychology to gain a better understanding of themselves. Other students are really interested in psychological research. First, we'll look at the pathway to full registration as a psychologist, and then we'll explore other options for students who graduate with a three-year psychology degree.

REGISTRATION AS A PSYCHOLOGIST

To legally call yourself a psychologist, you need to have general registration with the Psychology Board of Australia, which is part of the Australian Health Professional Regulation Agency (AHPRA). In Australia, there is a National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (NRAS) for registered health practitioners, which was established by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) in 2008 to keep the public safe by ensuring that only suitably trained and qualified health practitioners who practice in a competent and ethical manner can become registered (AHPRA, 2015).

The NRAS has a variety of other objectives, such as:

- facilitating workforce mobility and the continuous development of a flexible health workforce

- facilitating the provision of high-quality education and training for practitioners

- facilitating access to services provided by health practitioners (AHPRA, 2015).

AHPRA is responsible for implementing the NRAS and there are a range of National Boards that regulate the 15 health professions (e.g., psychologists, medical practitioners, nurses and midwives, chiropractors, dental practitioners, optometrists, pharmacists, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioners, occupational therapists, etc.) which currently fall under the NRAS. The key role of the Psychology Board of Australia is to protect the Australian public by making sure only practitioners who have the relevant skills and qualifications to provide ethical and safe psychological services are registered to practice in the psychology profession (Psychology Board of Australia, 2019). The Australian Psychology Accreditation Council (APAC) is responsible for accrediting psychology study programs, which must meet the Accreditation Standards for Psychology Programs established by the Psychology Board of Australia (Psychology Board, 2021). The latest APAC Accreditation Standards for Psychology Programs came into effect on January 1 2019 and are available online (APAC, 2019).

Education and Training Pathways to General Registration as a Psychologist

It takes a minimum of six years of education and training to become eligible for general registration as a psychologist in Australia (Australian Psychological Society, 2021). The same registration requirements apply across all states and territories in Australia. The Australian Psychological Society (APS) is the professional association for psychologists in Australia. You will find a wealth of information about psychology careers and study pathways on the APS website. The APS breaks the 6-year sequence into three steps:

Step 1:	Successfully complete a three-year accredited undergraduate psychology sequence, such as a bachelor degree. People who have previously completed a non-psychology bachelor degree can complete an APAC-accredited graduate diploma in psychology.
Step 2:	Successfully complete a fourth year of accredited psychology studies (e.g., a psychology honours degree or postgraduate diploma in psychology). You must have completed Step 1 before you can apply to undertake Step 2.
Step 3:	Successfully complete postgraduate study required for general registration (e.g., a Master of Psychology). You must have completed Step 2 before you're eligible to undertake Step 3.

There's a fourth step for registered psychologists who want to obtain an Area of Practice Endorsement (AoPE) from the PsyBA in one of the seven specialised areas. These areas include:

- clinical neuropsychology
- clinical psychology
- community psychology
- counselling psychology
- educational and developmental psychology
- forensic psychology
- health psychology
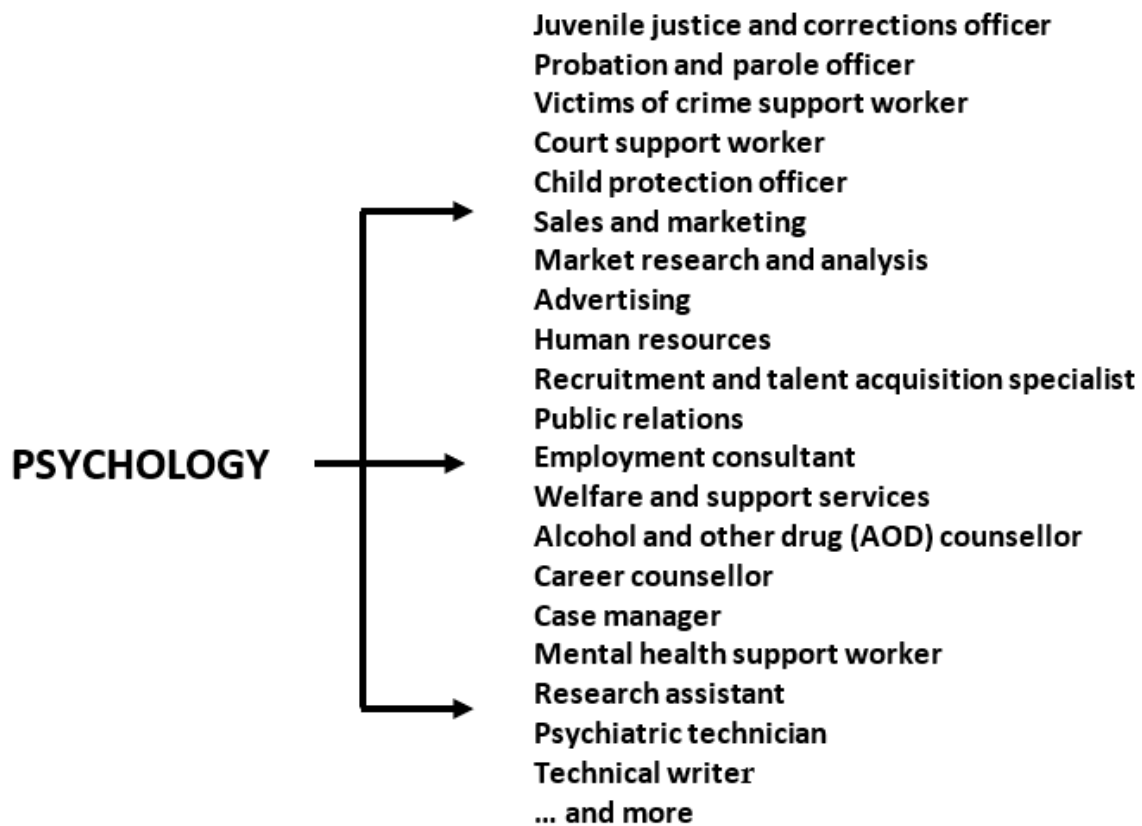- organisational psychology
- sport and exercise psychology.

Obtaining an Area of Practice Endorsement involves completing a registrar program, which is an additional period of supervision and professional development.

Many students enrolled in psychology undergraduate programs will go on to further study to become fully-registered as a psychologist. Some students want to go even further and pursue an area of practice endorsement (such as clinical psychology), some want to complete a PhD, and others want to complete both a masters and a PhD.

While becoming a fully-registered psychologist can certainly be a rewarding path, it may not be desired or possible for all psychology graduates. Entry into psychology honours and masters programs is extremely competitive. It usually requires a high Grade Point Average (GPA) and universities typically have a cap on the number of students they can offer places to in these programs. Therefore, the majority of psychology students enter the labour market after graduating with a bachelor degree, and some will take on further study in a non-psychology area.

WHAT CAN I DO WITH A THREE-YEAR PSYCHOLOGY DEGREE? – COMMON CAREER PATHWAYS

Because some students may not want to take the pathway to registration as a psychologist, or they may not get into honours, one of the most common questions asked by students in psychology is – 'What can I do with a three-year psychology degree?'. This is an excellent question and students might be hoping for a clear answer to provide future direction. The truth is, however, a bit murkier than the predictability you might be expecting. The simple answer is – there are a lot of options. Psychology is such a versatile degree that it can open numerous possibilities. Sometimes having so many options can be stressful or confusing. **Figure 2.1** provides examples of some of the common types of jobs that students with a three-year bachelor degree in psychology work in. Keep in mind that this is not an exhaustive list, but it will give you some idea of the variety of different options available.

PSYCHOLOGY

- Juvenile justice and corrections officer
- Probation and parole officer
- Victims of crime support worker
- Court support worker
- Child protection officer
- Sales and marketing
- Market research and analysis
- Advertising
- Human resources
- Recruitment and talent acquisition specialist
- Public relations
- Employment consultant
- Welfare and support services
- Alcohol and other drug (AOD) counsellor
- Career counsellor
- Case manager
- Mental health support worker
- Research assistant
- Psychiatric technician
- Technical writer
- ... and more

Figure 2.1: Example of Common Jobs for Three-Year Psychology Graduates

Some psychology graduates who do not go on to complete the pathway to registration as a psychologist may work in related roles, such as counsellors, support workers, welfare workers, or research assistants, or they may work in other areas, such as marketing, human resources, public relations, and a multitude of other professional fields. What does this mean for you? It means that you have options. You can continue to move in directions more explicitly related to psychology, but you can also give yourself permission to explore other destinations. In fact, in 2020, 28.1 per cent of Australian undergraduates stated that they were working in roles outside of their main study discipline (QILT, 2020), so if you're studying psychology, but do not go on to full registration, you're among the majority.

Why is this the case? There are several factors that influence the steps someone takes in their career. Although the fact that you've chosen to study psychology might tell us something about some of your aptitudes and interests, you'll still find a wide degree of variety in the make-up of students in your psychology classes. Not all psychology students are the same – each person in your class has their own life experiences, personality, interests, skills, abilities, and values – and these will strongly influence the directions they're inspired to pursue. Beyond the internal factors, there are a host of external variables that will affect this as well – such as parental and peer influences, networking connections, chance opportunities, barriers encountered, labour market forces, finances, geographic location, and more – which will all alter your career trajectory in complex ways. We'll go into a deeper analysis of career development later in this chapter, looking at the labour market and helpful career theories and models that have been refined over the last century to help us to grasp this complex dynamic.

SHOULD I GO ON TO FURTHER STUDIES AFTER I COMPLETE MY BACHELOR'S DEGREE?

Another common question psychology students ask is – 'Should I go on to further studies after I complete my bachelor's degree?'. Where do you go from an undergraduate degree? Approximately 61 per cent of psychology students are in full-time employment four months after graduating, and almost 32 per cent are pursuing further study, which may be in psychology or in other non-psychology fields (QILT, 2020). Just as there're a variety of career directions, there are just as many routes you can take to get to those destinations. Once you start exploring your options after completing a bachelor degree, you'll come across programs ranging from short certificates and courses to postgraduate programs in a variety of different discipline areas. These can be in psychology or in other areas. A degree in psychology can be stepping stone to a range of different occupations – such as counsellor, social worker, teacher, medical practitioner, police officer, and lawyer – and a range of different discipline areas – such as arts, business, human services, and science. It can be very easy to get overwhelmed trying to sort through all of these possibilities.

How can you make an informed decision? Getting a clearer sense of your career direction and long-term plans can help keep you grounded while considering your next steps. As you work through this text you'll be refining your own sense of direction in terms of what fits you and your life, and learning about developing the necessary qualifications and experience to be a competitive candidate in your field of interest.

WHAT AM I LEARNING STUDYING PSYCHOLOGY? THE VALUE OF YOUR DEGREE

Even though you spend so much time in your courses, learning the content and working on your assessments, many students struggle to articulate what they've been learning – especially when it comes time to apply for jobs or further education. The good news is that your studies in psychology are providing you with valuable knowledge and skills that employers want – not only your knowledge about human behaviour, but also your skills in critical thinking, scientific reasoning, communication, research methods, and many more. Throughout your undergraduate degree, you'll be developing skills in psychological literacy (see the section on **Psychological Literacy** in **Chapter 1** for more details). These skills can be applied in a range of different careers – not just in psychology. You'll also be developing a range of transferrable or generic employability skills that employers are typically looking for in university graduates. The section **What do Employers Want?** in **Chapter 1** outlines a list of attributes that were highly-rated by employers. These are the types of generic skills or graduate attributes that universities embed in their study programs.

Each Australian university will have a list of 'graduate attributes' – or generic skills and personal qualities that you're expected to be able to demonstrate after you've completed your university program. Oliver and Jorre de St Jorre (2018, p. 824) provide the following examples of these graduate attributes:
  (1) written and oral communication
  (2) critical and analytical (and sometimes creative and reflective) thinking
  (3) problem-solving (including generating ideas and innovative solutions)
  (4) information literacy – often associated with technology
  (5) learning and working independently
  (6) learning and working collaboratively
  (7) ethical and inclusive engagement with communities, cultures and nations.

If you're currently studying at university, have a look at your university's graduate attributes. For a more specific outline of what you can expect to learn from your university psychology

program, you can consult the learning outcomes associated with your university program, individual courses, or course materials.

While universities' graduate attributes outline a range of generic employability skills and attributes, there are specific skills and learning outcomes associated with studying psychology at various levels. The Australian Psychology Accreditation Council (APAC, 2019) presents detailed information outlining the expectations for graduates from undergraduate through to postgraduate psychology programs in the 2019 Accreditation Standards for Psychology Programs. Please refer to pages 10–11 of this handbook for the Foundational Competencies expected for graduates from a psychology bachelor degree. APAC also outlines the pre-professional and professional competencies expected for graduates at the fourth year (e.g., psychology honours degree) and postgraduate (e.g., coursework masters degree), respectively. There are also professional competencies expected for graduates of programs focused on specialised areas of practice within the field (e.g., counselling psychology, clinical psychology, health psychology, etc.), such as masters degree (coursework) or a doctoral degree (professional).

If you compare the professional competencies and generic skills you can get from your psychology degree with what employers are looking for, you can quickly see that you're well-positioned with a solid foundation for future success. With ongoing shifts in both education and labour markets, the need to strengthen your employability involves more than just acquiring generic skills and professional competencies. Bridgestock (2009) highlights that employability (which includes optimal economic and social outcomes) must not just focus on the discipline-specific competencies or graduate skills gained through university study, but must also include self-management skills in career-building and a proactive approach to navigating the world of work.

There're a range of other core skills that are important for navigating the world of work, interacting with others, and getting the work done. These skills are outlined in the Australian Government's (2015) Core Skills for Work (CSfW) Developmental Framework. The CSfW framework outlines a set of non-technical skills that have been identified as important to employers and to a person's successful participation in work. The CSfW also acknowledges that work performance is not only skills dependent, but also is impacted by a range of personal factors that can affect a person's approach to tasks. Contextual factors such as performance in a work situation is not only dependent on the skills and knowledge that an individual brings to it, but on a range of factors that may affect how well they can apply these to different tasks. Contextual factors such as cultural, value-based, motivation, level of autonomy, self-belief and resilience are examples of what can affect an individual's capacity to demonstrate certain skills or to develop them further (Commonwealth of Australia, 2013). These skills are grouped under three clusters. There are several skill areas within these three clusters, which each have a specific focus, as shown in **Table 2.1**.

Cluster 1 - Navigate the world of work	Focus
• Manage career and work life	Identifying work options, gaining work, and developing relevant skills and knowledge.
• Work with roles, rights, and protocols	Working with roles and responsibilities, operating within legal rights and responsibilities, and recognising and responding to protocols.

Cluster 2 – Interact with others	Focus
• Communicate for work	Recognising communication systems, practices, and protocols, speaking, and listening, understanding, interpreting, and acting, and getting the message across.
• Connect and work with others	Understanding self, building rapport, cooperating, and collaborating.
• Recognise and utilise diverse perspectives	Recognising different perspectives, responding to, and utilising diverse perspectives, and managing conflict.

Cluster 3 – Get the work done	Focus
• Plan and organise	Planning and organising workload and commitments, and planning and implementing tasks.
• Make decisions	Establishing the scope of decision-making, applying decision-making processes, and reviewing impact.
• Identify and solve problems	Identifying problems, applying problem-solving processes, and reviewing outcomes.
• Create and innovate	Recognising opportunities to develop and apply new ideas, generating ideas, and selecting ideas for implementation.
• Work in a digital world	Using digitally based technologies and systems, connecting with others, accessing, organising, and presenting information, and managing risk.

Table 2.1: Core Skills for Work (CSfW): Clusters, Skills, and Skills Focus. Adapted from Commonwealth of Australia. (2013). Core skills for work developmental framework: Overview. Used under a CC-By licence.

Reflect on Your Core Work Skills

Take a moment to reflect on your core skills for work:

- Where are your current strengths?
- What evidence do you have that will help you to demonstrate these strengths?
- How can you use that evidence when you're applying for jobs?
- Which areas do you think need further development?
- What are some strategies you could use to strengthen those areas?

In the next section, we'll take our investigations further by looking at labour market information and how it can help you navigate your career development.

Previous generations might have experienced periods of relative stability and predictable career progression, but in our modern society, change is the new normal. With significant technological advancements transforming the

**The future ain't what it used to be.
– Yogi Berra**

ways we work, information technology transforming our cultures, and political, ecological and cultural changes affecting every aspect of our lives, it can be hard enough to predict the weather a month from now, let alone make informed career plans for years into the future. 'Chaotic systems display … a lack of predictability at the micro level, while at the same time appearing to have a degree of stability at the macro level' (Bright & Prior, 2005, pp. 292–293). There is no one answer to 'Where are the jobs?' because there is too much change to predict the future at that micro level. However, there are some broad changes at the macro level that we can explore.

Broad Trends Affecting World of Work

With the nature of working rapidly changing, understanding the future of the labour market can prove difficult. Here we'll look at key forces that will influence the way work is viewed in the future. A report by PwC (2018, pp. 6–7) on the workforce of the future outlines five 'megatrends' that are shaping society and the future of work, which include:

1. technological breakthroughs: rapid advances in technological innovation

2. demographic shifts: the changing size, distribution and age profile of the world's population

3. rapid urbanisation: significant increase in the world's population moving to live in cities

4. shifts in global economic power: power-shifting between developed and developing countries

5. resource scarcity and climate change: depleted fossil fuels, extreme weather, rising sea levels and water shortages.

The influence of technology and globalisation across the world is perhaps the most obvious. Technology has consistently driven long-term economic growth, resulting in continuous productivity gains since the mid-nineties – a narrative that is expected to continue as the world's knowledge becomes increasingly digitised. The rapid advances in automation, robotics, and artificial intelligence are also significantly changing the nature and number of available jobs (PwC, 2018).

According to PwC (2018), technology has many economic advantages and other benefits, such as improving our lives, enhancing our living standards, increasing the average life span, enhancing productivity, and freeing people to focus on personal fulfilment. Technological advances have also enhanced global connectivity, with globalisation affecting countries in different ways. Increased competition and trade have allowed certain countries to benefit as it becomes more cost-effective to move both goods and information. However, this has also resulted in markets that are arguably more unstable in comparison to markets in the twentieth century. With the development of global financial markets, undesirable market effects can spread very quickly on a global scale. This is particularly evident with the global COVID-19 pandemic, which according to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2020) has '…triggered the most severe

economic recession in nearly a century and is causing enormous damage to people's health, jobs and wellbeing'.

With this increasing global connectivity, societal mindsets are shifting as consumers are exposed to more choices and are faced with an evolving definition of what it means to meet their needs (Gratton, 2011). This is further influenced by changes in the world's demographic and societal structure. Developed countries are facing a rapidly aging population concurrent with a low birthrate. While increasing longevity means that people are able to contribute to the labour market for a longer period of time, governments are also faced with restructuring their policies to better support the population.

The final restructuring that will inevitably occur concerns the use of energy resources and their related contribution to climate change. A reorganisation appears inescapable in the future – whether it's a reluctant adaptation of the present energy framework as resources become increasingly strained, or a construction of a new energy framework that would integrate networks both locally and globally to create a new system of sustainability.

All of the aforementioned trends combined will continue to reshape the future of work – how we work, with who, and where. Psychology is involved in all of these areas. For example, some psychologists focus on helping people navigate the challenges they face in the world of work, and many psychologists use technology to provide telehealth services to clients – particularly since the impact of COVID-19. Some psychologists are working in the area of climate change and sustainability to help us better understand the psychological dimensions of global climate change. The American Psychological Association Task Force on the Interface Between Psychology and Global Climate Change (APA, 2009) report describes how psychological research is contributing to this understanding. In its Psychology and Climate Change: Position Statement (APS, 2020), the Australian Psychological Society highlights the important contribution psychology can make to climate change, and recognises the need for urgent action at all levels of society.

WHERE PEOPLE WORK

Shifting from a global perspective to a national perspective, it can be enlightening to see where people in Australia work. A common assumption is that most people work in large companies, but in fact large companies only employ a small percentage of the population, with most people working in small businesses of less than 20 people, and over 60 per cent of Australian businesses operating as sole traders (ABS, 2019).
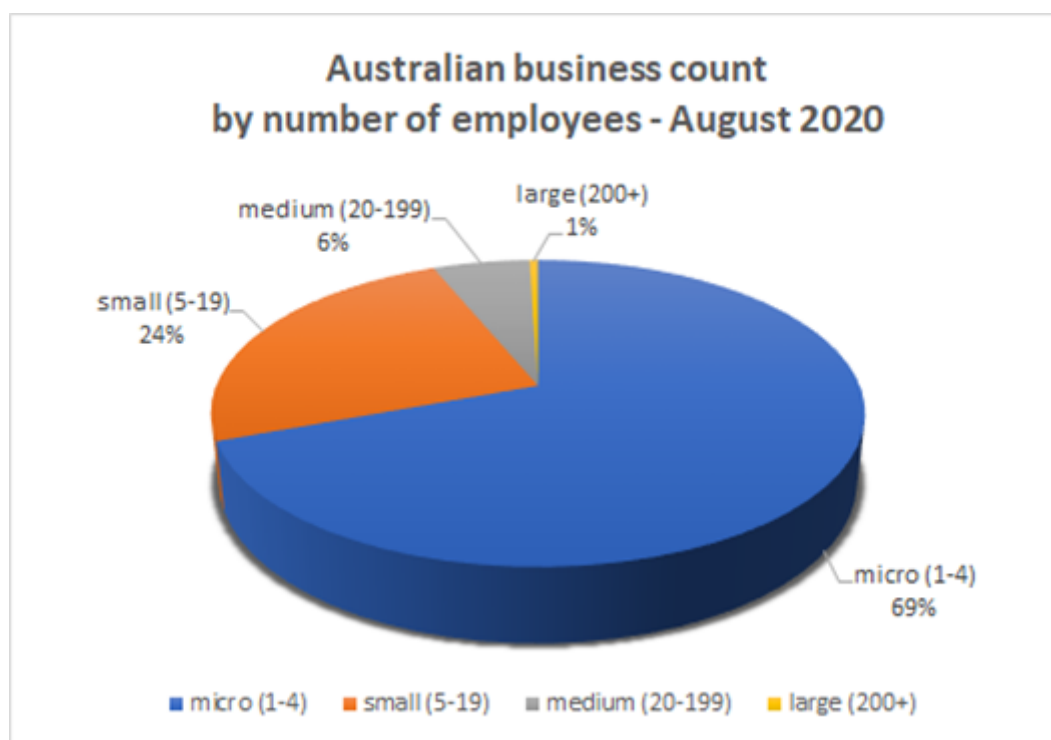
Figure 2.2: Percentage of Employees in Micro, Small, Medium, and Large Businesses in Australia. Source: Australia Bureau of Statistics (2020). Used under CC-By licence.

While registered psychologists in private practice would be in included among the high percentage of small businesses in Australia, there're a range of other contexts within which registered psychologists work. These can include public hospitals and health services, private hospitals, community mental health services, non-government mental health services, government departments (e.g., Social Services, Defence, Health, Veterans Affairs, Foreign Affairs and Trade, etc.), educational institutions (e.g., schools and universities), prisons and correctional facilities, child protective services, non-government organisations (e.g., drug and alcohol services, migrant and refugee support services, welfare service, youth services), private corporations, and a whole host of other contexts.

Many undergraduate psychology students decide not to go on to further study. According to the 2020 Quality Indicators for Learning and Teaching (QILT) Graduate Outcomes Survey (GOS), which gathers data four months after students graduate from university, 88 per cent of psychology undergraduates were in some form of employment (e.g., full-time, part-time) four months after graduating. There were 61.4 per cent of undergraduate psychology graduates in full-time employment, and 32 per cent had gone on to further study. The QILT data also show the median annual salary for undergraduate psychology graduates in full-time employment in 2020 was $63,000. Of the students who had gone on to complete postgraduate coursework in psychology, 96.3 per cent were employed, and the median yearly salary was $95,000 (QILT, 2020).

Occupational outlooks can be a valuable source of information in trying to predict future demand for careers of interest. Using resources like the Australian Government's Job Outlook website, you can search by occupation to access information projecting demand 10 years into the future, as well as wage information, skills, job postings, and more. For example, according to the Job Outlook website, employment in the Health Care and Social Assistance industry has grown strongly in recent years, and workers in this industry – including psychologists – have been required to support the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) (Commonwealth of Australia, n.d.; National Disability Insurance Agency, n.d.). Below (**Table 2.2**) is a quick sampling

of some of the kinds of information you may find on the Job Outlook website about different occupations:

Occupation	Number of workers	% full-time	Weekly pay	Future growth	Average hours week	% Female	Average age
Psychologist and Psychotherapist	36,100	52%	$1877	Very strong	43	80%	44
Clinical psychologist	13,500	52%	$1857	Very strong	43	80%	43
Counsellor	33,000	51%	$1584	Strong	41	77%	45
Social worker	30,000	64%	$1829	Very strong	41	84%	42
Registered nurse	298,400	50%	$1909	Very strong	41	62%	43
Secondary school teacher	148,300	76%	$1914	Moderate	46	62%	43
Primary school teacher	168,900	65%	$1801	Moderate	45	85%	41
Student counsellor	2,700	55%	$1584	Strong	42	78%	43
Occupational therapist	22,700	58%	$1569	Very strong	41	92%	34
Advertising and marketing	87,100	78%	$1737	Very strong	44	61%	34
Welfare support worker	62,200	63%	$1328	Very strong	41	74%	43
Youth worker	12,300	63%	$1328	Very strong	42	59%	35
Police officer	48,200	93%	$2036	Moderate	43	27%	40
Training and development professional	17,400	77%	$1742	Decline	44	58%	43

Table 2.2: Job Outlook Information for a Sample of Occupations. Used under a CC-BY licence.

So What Does All of This Data Mean for You?

Getting information about future trends, salary surveys, and occupational outlooks can give you a sense of what's going on in the world of work to help you make informed decisions. Knowing, for example, that roughly 61 per cent of graduates of psychology end up working after they've completed their undergraduate studies might encourage you to consider a range of possibilities, or seeing the higher salary and employment rates of graduates with postgraduate degrees (e.g., master of psychology) might lead you to think that further education could be a good investment.

While potentially quite useful, this information should be used with caution. In the dynamic modern workplace, changes can happen quite quickly. Much of the information included in job futures projections may be based on census information or graduate surveys that could be already a few years old. Most importantly, the information speaks to general patterns and averages, but not to individuals. Although there may be broader trends or pathways that others follow, they need to be considered in the context of your specific life circumstances and particular needs. It can be tempting to follow the money or seek out the hot jobs, but this is not a guaranteed road to success.

A balanced approach to decision-making that considers environmental conditions together with personal factors is more likely to lead to good decisions than a strategy based on either aspect alone. To help you form your own grounded perspective of looking at careers, we'll look at some of the most prominent models and thinkers influencing career development theory today in the next section.

MODELS AND WAYS OF LOOKING AT CAREERS – HOW DO I THINK ABOUT CAREERS?

Much like the other topics you've studied in your degree so far, the topic of 'career development' has had a lot of academic study – with years of theory development and research looking at how people develop careers. The central questions of career development theories have been:

- How do individuals make decisions about what career to pursue?

- How do career paths develop over time?

This chapter will be useful to you if you're interested in 'career development' from an academic perspective, but you don't need to be to derive value from it. As we review theories of career development, we'll extract information and strategies that you can use as you map out your own future career path(s). We'll review several approaches to career development, focusing on those theorists and topics that may be most helpful to you as you think about your own career decisions.

Person-Environment Fit

A foundational theory and concept in career development is person-environment fit, credited to Frank Parsons work from the early 1900s (Neault, 2014). The central idea of person-environment fit is that the better the match between a person (namely their traits such as skills, personality, interests, and values) and the environment (such as the needs and demands of a specific occupation and workplace), the greater likelihood of success and happiness for that person (see **Figure 2.3**).

Figure 2.3 Person-Environment Fit Model. Adapted from Keates and Hahn. Used under a CC-BY-NC licence.

In practical terms, following the person-environment fit model to make a career decision would lead to activities such as first assessing your skills, personality, interests, and values, then gathering data about occupations, and then comparing you (the person) and the occupations (environment) and looking for the 'best fit' career choices.

This simple idea of person-environment fit continues to be the foundation of most career development activity (and in the next section we'll present some activities you can use to learn more about yourself and about potential occupations as you look for fits). However, while useful as a foundation, this approach is too one-dimensional. Simply looking at fit between an individual person's needs and an occupation's needs is not representative of the actual complexity of career decisions and career development over one's life span. In addition, it leaves out significant other variables that impact on what options are available to many people.

Constraints on Person-Environment Fit

While person-environment fit is a useful starting point, a key criticism is that it assumes that all individuals are choosing from all possible environments (jobs, organisations) and doesn't consider lifelong career development. Theorists such as Gottfredson (1996) argued that choosing a career is not just about your psychological self but also your social self. Through your career choice, you are '…placing [yourself] in the broader social order' (Gottfredson, 1996, p. 181). This draws attention to the impact of social aspects such as gender and social class. Gottfredson's (1996) theory of circumscription and compromise asserts that your self-concept and your images of occupations are impacted by social factors. Circumscription is a narrowing of perceived options – '…the progressive elimination of unacceptable alternatives' to those that are considered socially-acceptable (Gottfredson, 1996, p. 187). Compromise is then the process of editing your preferred career options based not just on what is most compatible with you, but what you perceive as most acceptable. For example, some might believe that certain careers are only appropriate for certain genders – such as nursing only being appropriate for females, or engineering only being appropriate for males.

> ## Consider Career Circumspection and Compromise
>
> - Are there career options that you think aren't 'acceptable' for you? Based on your gender identity? Based on your social class? Based on other social variables?
>
> - Are any of those career options that you feel are compatible with your skills and interest, but you've eliminated them as options because of perceived 'unacceptability'?

Gottfredson's concepts of circumscription and compromise illuminate how there is more to a career decision than assessing the fit between a person and the environment – there can be internal reactions to external factors, and these internal reactions change perceptions of what careers might be possible and acceptable as you plan your career options.

LIFELONG CAREER DEVELOPMENT

While person-environment fit still plays an important role in our career development, our sense of self is constantly evolving, and we need to adapt to the ever-changing world of work. The whole process is a dynamic interaction of a variety of influences – intrapersonal, interpersonal, contextual, and developmental. The Systems Theory Framework (STF) (STF; McMahon & Patton, 1995; Patton & McMahon, 2006) for career development incorporates the variety of influences on our career development and provides a very useful model to think about careers. As you can see in **Figure 2.4**, individual factors – such as our interests, skills, gender, age, ability, personality, and values – are at the centre of our system and are influenced by social, environmental, time, and chance factors. The social influences are not just the people close to us, such as our family and friends, but also others who influence our careers in direct or indirect ways, such as our teachers, bosses, co-workers, sports coaches, the media, and so on. The STF also takes into account the environmental influences, such as the job market, the political climate, the economy, where we live, how much money we have, and a range of other broader influences. Many of these factors are outside of our control but can affect us at different stages of our lives. The STF also incorporates the random or chance factors that we haven't planned for, but that can influence

our careers. You can see from the model that all of these factors interact dynamically with one another and are influenced by time. The STF provides us with a very useful lens through which to view our careers. It's an overarching framework that readily allows the incorporation of a range of theoretical approaches. Through the integration of elements from the social system and the environmental-societal system with the individual system, more recent contextualist approaches – informed by constructivism and social constructivism – have been put forward. This includes the development of the Psychology of Working Framework (PWF) (PWF; Blustein, 2013) and the Theory of Career Construction (Savickas, 2020), which we'll cover later.
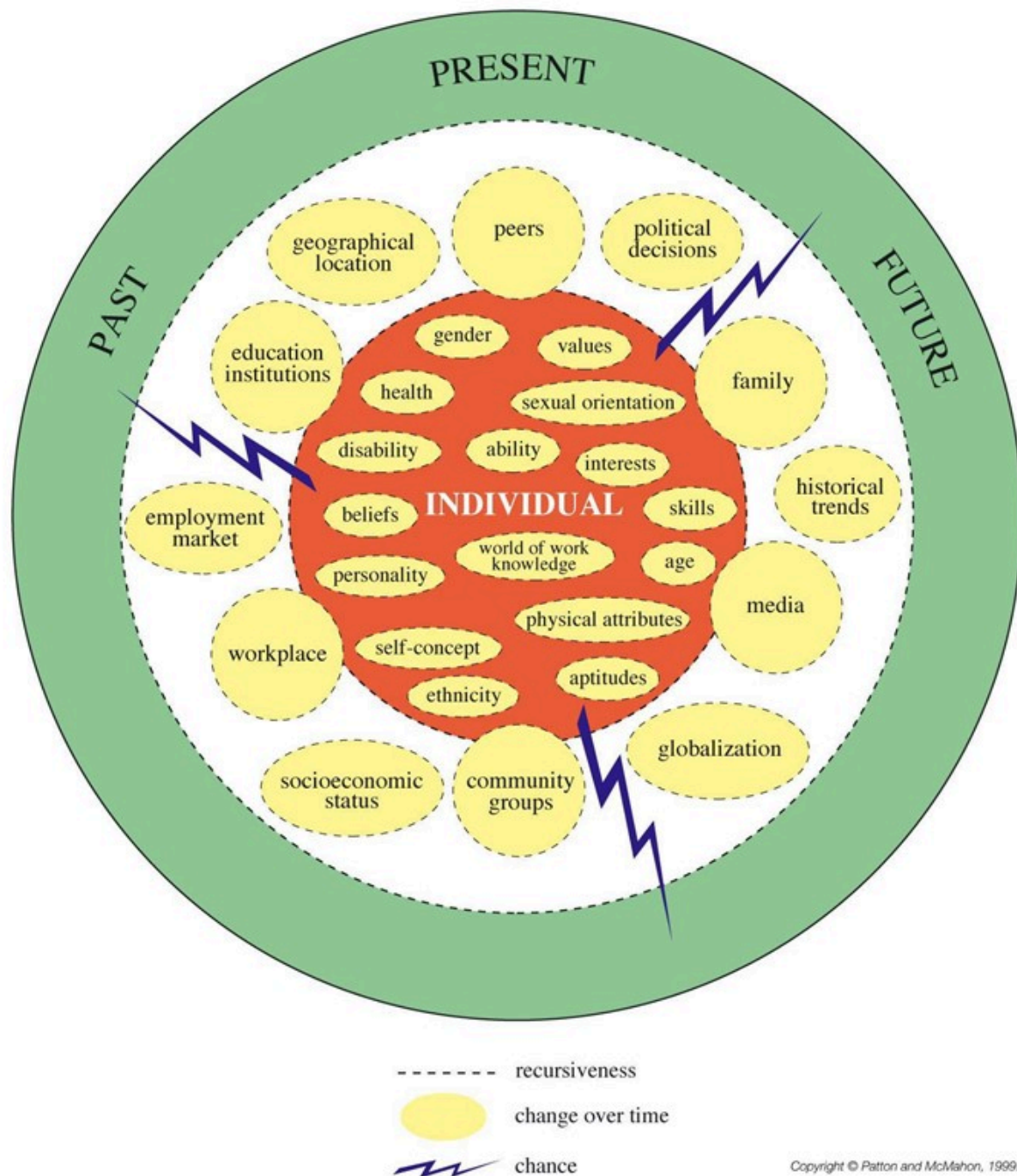
Figure 2.4: Systems Theory Framework for Career Development. Source: Patton, W., & McMahon, M. (1999). Career development and systems theory: A new relationship. Brooks/Cole. Reproduced with permission from Dr Mary McMahon. This image is excluded from the Creative Commons licence of the book and cannot be reproduced without permission from the copyright holder.

Career Paths are Rarely Linear

While it's helpful to think about how to plan your career path, planning doesn't represent the full experience of how careers actually unfold. Many people think of career development as a ladder – a series of planned steps leading up to greater and greater things. In reality, people's career trajectories are far more disordered, as can be seen in **Figure 2.5**.
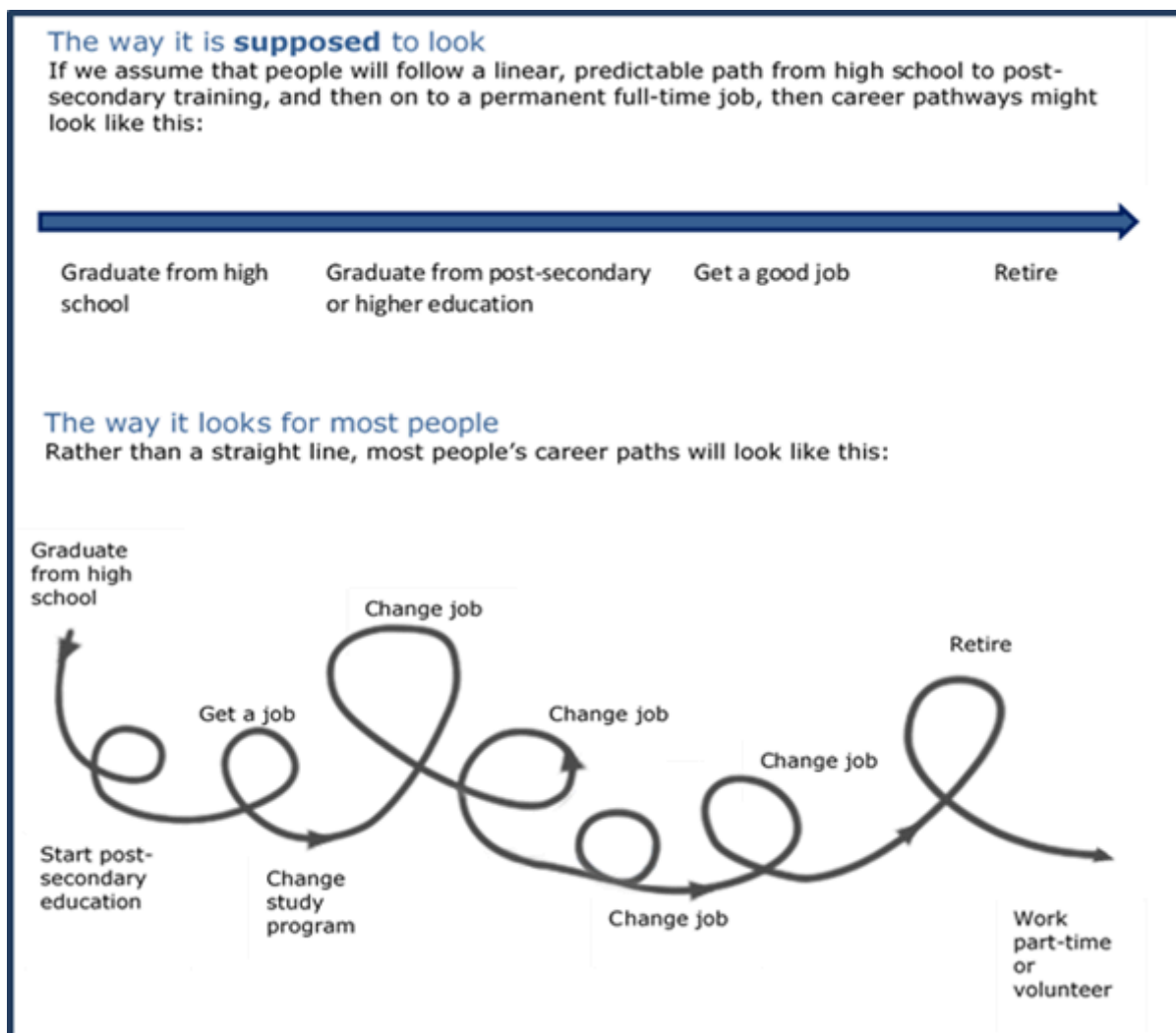

Figure 2.5: Typical Career Trajectories. Adapted from Keates and Hahn (2019). Used under a CC-BY-NC licence.

Understand Your Career Trajectory

- What has your career experience been?

- Do you feel pressure to have an answer and a clearly laid out path?

- When someone asks you 'What are you going to do after graduation?' or 'What are you going to do with your degree?' or 'What do you want to be when you grow up?', do you feel pressure to have an answer?

Planned Happenstance

Mitchell et al. (1999) argue that unexpected events play a significant role in most careers, and their Planned Happenstance model (an intentional oxymoron) is a good way to conceptualise how careers actually unfold. If you ask people 'How did you get to be where you are today?', you might find 'luck' plays a role in many people's careers. That is the 'happenstance' part of planned happenstance. But what about the 'planned'? If you were to ask follow-up questions about the luck, such as 'When that lucky situation happened, how did you respond?', you might find that people actively took advantage of the luck to turn it into a career move. And when you ask questions like 'And what had you done previously that put you in the situation where the luck was able to happen?' you might find that people had to have been actively engaged in a network and in exploration in order to be somewhere where luck found them. Although the lucky happenstance may have been a key occurrence, each person may have created the conditions for the luck, and then acted on the luck rather than ignore it.

There are two key tenets of planned happenstance theory (Mitchell et al., 1999, p. 118): 'a) exploration generates change opportunities for increasing quality of life; and b) skills enable people to seize opportunities'. The first – that exploration creates opportunities – draws our attention to how we're not just passive recipients of chance events, but that we can increase the likelihood of positive happenstances through exploration and engagement. For example, individuals who have little to no interaction with the larger world are unlikely to experience a lot of exciting chance events that will bring new career opportunities. However, if we're engaged and connected, are building a strong network and attending events, speaking with colleagues, are part of an online community, and so on, then we're more likely to bump into new opportunities. Our own behaviours can generate greater likelihood for lucky opportunities. Then, when there is a lucky opportunity, we can choose to ignore it, or we can choose to take advantage of it. If there 's a knock on the door we have to open it to see if it's a visit that might lead to something exciting.

Mitchell et al. (1999) lay out five skills they believe help us generate and take advantage of happenstances, listed in the left-hand column below. The interplay of these skills helps us to make it more likely that we'll have positive happenstances, and that we'll then act on them in a way that leads to the most positive impact for our own lives.

Think of your own career path so far, that has led you to where you are today. What role has planning played and what role has happenstance played? **Table 2.3** has some questions to help you reflect on your happenstance skills.

Happenstance Skills	Reflective Questions
Curiosity: exploring new learning opportunities	How has curiosity led you to new opportunities in your past?
Persistence: exerting effort despite setbacks	What is an example of a time when you persisted and that meant that you were able to move forward despite facing challenges?
Flexibility: changing attitudes and circumstances	When in the past have you been flexible and that allowed you to take advantage of an opportunity you might not have had?
Optimism: viewing new opportunities as possible and attainable	How would you describe your own level of optimism and how much you believe new opportunities will appear and be things you can act on?
Risk-taking: taking action in the face of uncertain outcomes	How would you describe your risk-taking approach? What is an example of a time in the past when you took a risk on a new opportunity, and it led to good things?

Table 2.3 Reflecting on Your Happenstance Skills. Adapted from Mitchell et al., 1999, p. 118.

The Chaos Theory of Careers

The Chaos Theory of Careers (Bright & Pryor, 2005; Pryor & Bright, 2014) has some commonality with Planned Happenstance (in particular the role of unexpected events), but is an attempt at a much broader new conceptualisation of career development. The authors wanted a theory that would not just address how an individual makes a career decision, but one that also incorporates the complexity of variables – both personal and contextual – that impact career trajectories. They asked a fundamental, and very big, question: 'Why should the influences on career development be different from those that brought about life or which shape our cosmos?' (Pryor & Bright, 2014, p. 4). They looked beyond the career development literature to general science and its attempts to explain the overall function of the natural world.

Careers, like other parts of nature, are part of a chaotic system: 'An individual's career development therefore is the interaction of one complex dynamical system (the person) with a series of more or less generalised other complex dynamical systems including other individuals, organisations, cultures, legislations and social contexts (Pryor & Bright, 2014, p. 5).

The Chaos Theory of Careers

The Chaos Theory of Careers uses terms from general Chaos Theory (such as complexity, non-linearity, chance and change), and applies them to career development.

Complexity – There are so many variables, linked in so many ways, that complexity is a reality of systems, including the systems within which we work and manage our careers. As covered in the labour market section, many authors are arguing that complexity is increasing and will continue to.

Non-linearity – Perhaps the most well-known component of general chaos theory is the butterfly effect, in which a butterfly flaps its wings in one part of the world and impacts the weather somewhere on the other side of the globe. This is an example of non-linearity and, applied to careers as we have covered already, this emphasises how most people's careers don't follow a direct line, and that a small change can cause disproportionately significant impacts.

Chance – This theory reinforces the importance of recognising how we can't focus on predictability, but should recognise and even embrace the role of chance in our careers.

Change – The authors argue not only that there's constant change in the larger world, but that people themselves change. A criticism of the person-environment fit model (that we explored at the beginning of the section) is that it assumes little change in both the person and the environment. If people themselves are continually changing, how does that impact how people make career decisions?

The Chaos Theory of Careers draws our attention to the complexity of career development and to the multiple and often unpredictable influences on our options and opportunities.

How Has the Chaos Theory of Careers Affected Your Career?

- How well do you think chaos describes the natural world?
- How well do you think a chaos theory can describe your career so far?
- If careers are chaotic, how does that make you feel? Are you excited by the possibilities, concerned about the lack of predictability, intrigued by the complexity, or a combination of those

Constructivist Approaches

Much recent work on career development uses a constructive approach, emphasising that reality, and how we experience it, are individually and socially constructed. There isn't one objective reality, nor one story of who we are and our career path. A subset of constructivist theories, narrative approaches specifically highlight the role of story and argue that we narrate our own lives – '…we are the stories that we live' (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2013, p. 113). As we tell the story of ourselves and our careers, we're designing our own reality.

Although overall the world may be chaotic (should we ascribe to a Chaos Theory conceptualisation), the narrative approach allows a look at how individuals have agency in impacting the stories they narrate for their own careers. It's '…by constructing personal career narratives, we can come to see our movement through life more clearly and can understand our specific decisions with a greater life context that has meaning and coherence' (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2013, p. 112).

As an illustration of one constructivist approach, Savickas (1997) uses a 'career story' process to help people narrate their own development. He asks clients five key questions about themselves – asking them to name role models, favorite magazines, favorite book, mottos, and early recollections. Then, working together, the counsellor and client draw themes out of these reflections, and the client constructs a story of their career – identifying central themes that have guided them in the past, and that they may choose to use to guide them into the future. Having these themes then informs decision-making about next steps.

Another example of a constructivist approach is the use of metaphor as a way for individuals to understand their own careers (Amundson, 2010). 'People actively seek to make meaning of life events and this process is ongoing' and metaphors are a common way humans make meaning (Amundson, 2010, p. 7). Using metaphors is helpful because by 'referring to parallel examples where similar dynamics are in play' we're better able to understand a new experience by relating to the familiar metaphor (Amundson, 2010, p. 2).

Consider the metaphors in the box below that might be used to describe your career. If you use this metaphor for your career:

- What does it bring to mind?

- What limits does it have – what does it miss in your experience?

- How might it be helpful to organise your thoughts?

- Does it make you feel more or less optimistic about your future?

> **Career Metaphors**
>
> - Career as journey, which can include getting a call, responding to the call, facing obstacles
> - Career/life as book – with chapters and difficult challenges
> - Climbing the ladder of success

Limitations: Ethnocentricism

We've reviewed a few examples of how career development theory has evolved over time. During this evolution, there has been a growing conversation about diversity and the limitations of existing theories in an increasingly diverse community. Ethnocentrism is the assumption that one's own 'value system is superior and preferable to another' (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2013, p. 135). Historically most of the career development literature has been produced in North America, and primarily by members of dominant groups (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2013). Much of the research on career development stems from vocational psychology, and the data used in psychological research has been dominated by samples drawn from Western, Educated, Industrialised, Rich, and Democratic (WEIRD) nations, with the majority being from the United States (Muthukrishna et al., 2020). Therefore, it's important to note that the theories we've covered don't reflect a universal value system.

Arthur and Collins (2014) draw attention to several cultural assumptions that have been made in career development literature reflecting a European-American perspective:

- Individualism and autonomy – assuming that individuals make their own choices that create their futures

- Affluence – assuming that individuals have access to affluence, or the resources needed

- Structure of opportunity open to all – assuming that all individuals have access to opportunities

- Centrality of work in people's live – assuming that work is a central part of people's lives

- Linearity, progressiveness, and rationality – assuming that individuals' careers progress in a linear and rational way.

Cultural Assumptions

- What messages about 'career' have you learned from your family, and what messages are rooted in your family's history and experiences?

- Are there any structural or systemic obstacles you believe you may (or have) experience(d) as you pursue your career path?

- What privileges have you benefited from that have made your life easier?

- Which (if any) of the assumptions listed above have you made when you think about careers and opportunities?

The assumptions listed above are based on a 'Western' worldview and limit the applicability of the

career theories we've reviewed so far. Even the term 'career' itself may have different meanings for different people, depending on historical and cultural influences (Arthur & Collins, 2014). Although the theories we're reviewing in this chapter all have useful ideas to offer, we should examine them through a lens of diversity and social justice, considering how each theory may be limited within a particular worldview, and consider limits, biases, and gaps.

In addition to limitations within career theories, there are also limitations and structural barriers that people from marginalised groups may experience in the labour market. Niles and Harris-Bowlsbey (2013, p. 130) argue that 'there is also ample evidence to suggest that women, people of colour, persons with disabilities, gay men, lesbian women, and transgender persons continue to encounter tremendous obstacles in their career development'.

Fortunately, there are increasingly more diverse voices in career development writings. For example, the Psychology of Working Framework (PWF; Blustein, 2013) places a strong emphasis on the role that sociocultural factors – such as social class, social capital, marginalisation, and freedom of choice – play in career choice, work experiences, and career fulfilment. Duffy et al. (2016) developed a testable theory based on the PWF – the Psychology of Working Theory (PWT) – which helps to explain the process of securing decent work and how this leads to need satisfaction, work fulfilment, and wellbeing. According to the University of Florida's Dr Ryan Duffy, a person will experience decent work when they are provided safe working conditions (physical and mental), the provision of adequate rest, healthcare, and compensation, as well as organisational values that reciprocate employee social and family values. The PWT model includes predictors of decent work – such as marginalisation – which Duffy et al. (2016, p. 132) describe as 'the relegation of people (or groups of people) to a less powerful or included position within society' (p. 132), economic constraints (e.g., limited income), work volition, which refers to a person's perception that they can make career choices despite constraints, and career adaptability. Career adaptability encompasses four elements, including being *concerned* about one's career, feeing in *control* of one's career, being *curious* about oneself and one's career opportunities, and having *confidence* in being able to complete career-related tasks and overcome barriers (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). Being adaptable involves being ready and having the resources to cope with current and anticipated career tasks (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012).

Career Adaptability

- How adaptable do you feel in relation to your career?
- How much in *control* of your career do you feel?
- How *curious* are you about yourself and your career?
- How *concerned* are you about your career?
- How *confident* are you in your ability to complete career-related tasks and overcome any barriers that stand in the way of achieving your career goals?

FINDING YOUR WAY– MOVING TOWARDS YOUR CAREER GOALS

In the previous section we reviewed the evolution of career development theory. We're now going to present some more concrete processes and tools that you can use as you seek to develop your own career path and a meaningful sense of direction.

The Value of Purpose

Research from Harackiewicz et al. (2002) and Snyder et al. (2002) shows that students are more successful academically when they are motivated in pursuing career goals, with a desire to learn and embrace necessary challenges for growth, while students with undefined goals tend to put in minimal effort. Does this mean you have to have all the answers right now? Most definitely not – as we have said before, only some of us are in a position to be navigating directly towards a clear goal. However, taking active steps in exploring potential directions can give a sense of purpose to your time at university, help keep you motivated during challenging times, and position you for success during and after your studies.

This sense of purpose is different to a specific short-term goal. It's longer-term and broader – a direction we're always working towards that motivates and guides our decisions, often with a service component. Damon writes that purpose is '…a part of one's personal search for meaning, but also has an external component, the desire to make a difference in the world, to contribute to matters larger than the self' (Damon et al. 2003, p. 121).

Living purposefully requires knowing yourself well enough to get clarity about what unique purpose is suited to you based on your unique personal make-up and identity. Having a sense of your values and interests is fundamental in terms of making decisions that align with who you are, but it's also important to factor in your strengths (Smith, 2017). In fact, research shows that when we use our strengths at work, we're more likely to find meaning in our work, and to perform at a higher level (Dubreuil et al., 2014). In this section, we'll look at decision-making strategies, self-assessment strategies, key resources, and activities to help you get clarity as you think about your future options.

Career Decision-Making Styles

Everyone has their own style of making decisions – and the role of data plays a different role in each style. Dinklage (1968) found eight decision-making styles:

- **Planful** – Systematic process with goals, options, and actions
- **Agonising** – Try to be planful, but end up excessively focusing on data and information to their detriment and struggle to make a perfect decision
- **Impulsive** – Select alternative quickly, minimal use of data
- **Intuitive** – Use experience and judgment to decide on path with little use for data
- **Compliant** – Highly influenced by other opinions or social norms
- **Delaying** – Sees a decision to be made but avoids it, lacking motivation or information
- **Fatalistic** – Feels their actions don't matter, that decision is out of their hands
- **Paralytic** – Sees decision, but is paralysed by fear of process or outcome.

Your Decision-Making Style

Having a sense of your own decision-making style can help you to navigate your own ongoing career decision:

Decision-Making Processes

The Cognitive Information Processing (CIP) Approach examines how we make effective career decisions (Sampson et al., 1992). It posits that decisions involve both cognitive and affective elements, and that career decisions are ongoing, with our knowledge evolving over time. In their information processing pyramid (see **Figure 2.6**), they describe three foundational components: self-knowledge, occupational knowledge, and decision-making skills, capped by metacognition (awareness of our thoughts and processes). We'll work through these pieces in the coming sections, exploring self-assessment, exploring options, and decision-making.
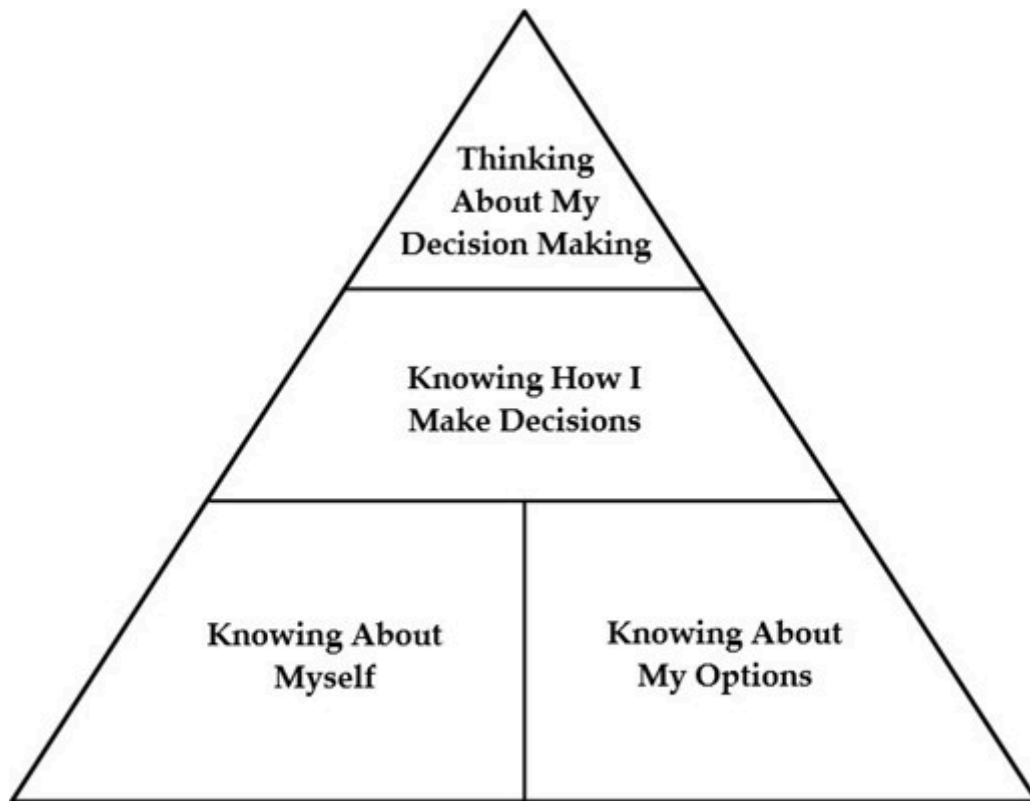

Figure 2.6: Cognitive Information Processing Pyramid (Sampson et al., 1992). Source: Keates and Hahn. Used under a CC-BY-NC licence.

The Cognitive Information Processing Approach (Samson et al., 1992) also includes the CASVE process (named after the phases of Communication, Analysis, Synthesis, Valuing, and Execution), featured in **Figure 2.7**, which explains the phases we go through in making a decision. The first two components from the pyramid are incorporated into the analysis phase, while the metacognition and decision-making skills apply throughout. The process reflects the cyclical nature of navigating career decisions, as we incorporate new learning and experiences into future decisions.
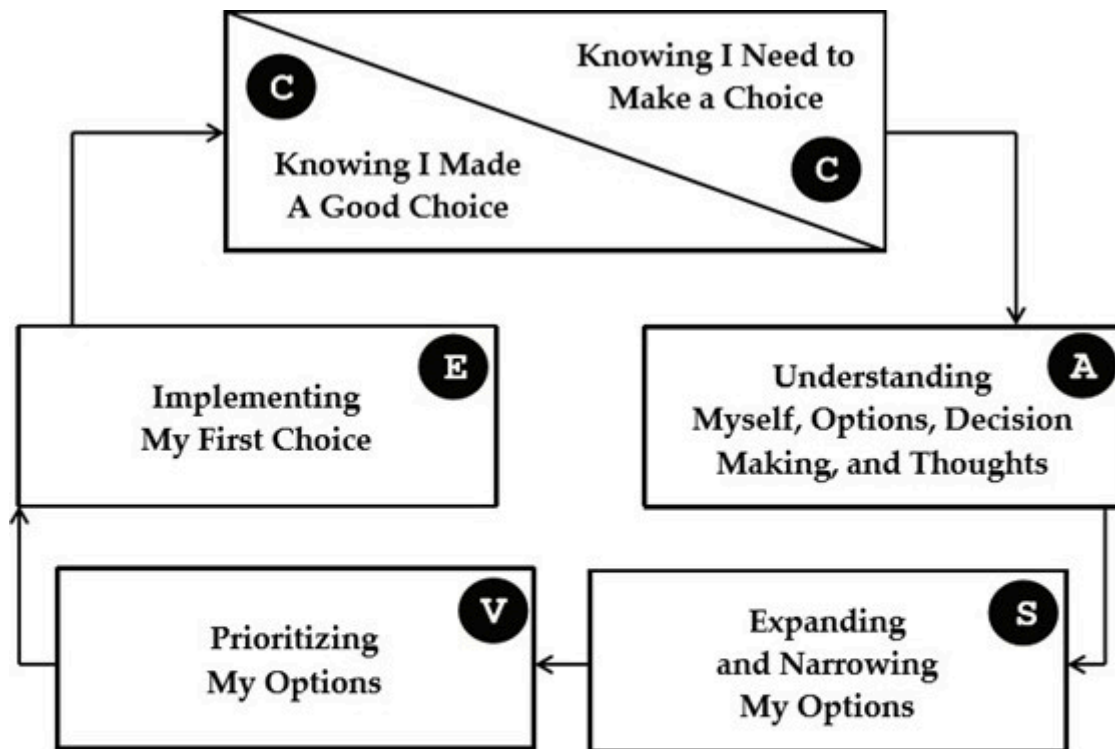
The CASVE Cycle

Figure 2.7: CASVE Model (Sampson et al., 1992). Source: Keates and Hahn. Used under a CC-BY-NC licence.

By paying attention to your own thought process, you can monitor your progress. Are you in need of more information or options? Or do you need to move ahead with evaluation and execution and learning from your experiences? Although not everyone is in the same place, it's very common for university students to benefit from attention to all aspects of this process – starting with analysis of self and options. In the coming sections we'll look at the various phases of the CASVE model of decision-making to help you make informed career decisions. While most students want to start with the question 'What can I do with my degree?', most career counsellors will try to shift the initial conversation to learning more about you as a person. Your unique make-up in terms of personality, skills, values, interests, experiences, connections, and your environment will all greatly influence career directions that you might choose to pursue. As students of psychology, you're well aware there are many ways to try to measure and assess people – from complex formal assessment tools, to mind mapping, journaling, and reflective conversation – and they can all contribute different pieces to your evolving self-understanding.

Using Assessment Tools

Australia has an online National Career Information Service called myfuture (Education Services Australia, 2021), which is a government-funded resource that can be used by students, teachers, career practitioners, parents, and carers. This online service can help people create a personal profile based on a range of different self-assessment tools (e.g., interests, skills, values, work preferences), and explore a range of different study areas and occupations of interest that align with their profile. There are 358 occupation profiles that describe the tasks and skills involved in each occupation, and incorporate a wealth of current labour market information about those

occupations. The myfuture website also has information about over 15,000 higher education and vocational education and training (VET) courses. Other freely-available career assessments are included in **Table 2.5**.

Table 2.5 Free Online Personality and Career Assessments

Assessment	Description	Link
IPIP-NEO Personality Assessment	Based on Big Five research, the International Personality Item Pool (IPIP)-NEO measures the personality traits of Agreeableness, Neuroticism (Emotional Stability), Openness to Experience, Extraversion, and Conscientiousness	http://www.personal.psu.edu/~j5j/IPIP/
O*NET Career Interest Profiler	O*NET Interest Profiler is sponsored by the U.S. Department of Labor, Employment & Training Administration and and developed by the National Center for O*NET Development.	https://www.mynextmove.org/explore/ip
Life Values Inventory	Helps you clarify your personal values to make more effective decisions	https://www.lifevaluesinventory.org/
VIA Character Strengths	Based on Positive Psychology and the work of Christopher Peterson and Martin Seligman. It focuses on assessing character strengths.	https://www.viacharacter.org/

Assessment by Self-Reflection

A number of popular career books outline reflection activities that can help you make sense of your current career situation, often partly involving looking backwards at past experiences, or collecting data from current experiences. In our work with students, we've found the reflective activities listed in **Table 2.6** to be particularly useful.

Table 2.6 Career-Related Reflective Activities

Activity	Instructions
Mind mapping – a creative open-ended way of pouring out ideas to mine your experience for insights	Start with a large blank piece of paper and write your name in the middle. Then, radiating outwards, write out any idea that comes into your head as potentially relevant for your future – it could include past jobs, hobbies, mentors, strengths, fears, dreams, etc...
Journaling – to track daily experiences of engagement	Start paying attention to your daily experiences and record how each activity went in terms of your subjective experience – what you enjoyed, did well, or disliked.
Experience reflections – a variety of exercises for personal clarification	Write down key career stories from your past where things were going well – and reflecting on the meaning in terms of skills, interests, or values for you personally.

For more ideas and reflective activities, you may want to consult a career planning book like some of these popular titles students have enjoyed in the past:

- *You Majored in What?* by Katharine Brooks, Ed. D.(2010)

- *Designing Your Life* by Bill Burnett & Dave Evans (2018)

- *What Colour is Your Parachute?* by Richard Nelson Bolles (2018)

- *Business Model You: A One-Page Method for Reinventing Your Career* by Tim Clark, Alexander Osterwalder, and Yves Pigneur (2012)

Assessment Through Other's Perspectives and Support

Another rich source of information about ourselves can be other people around us. Family, friends, coworkers, supervisors or teachers could all offer perspectives that can complement your own internal reflection or results from formal assessments. You can ask important people (between 5 and 10) who know you well for their perspective on your key strengths, weaknesses, or personal

qualities. Finally, you may want to consider getting help with the self-assessment process by talking to a professional career development practitioner. Many universities have some form of careers centre on campus that provides career advising or counselling to students and you can also seek out private career practitioners via the Career Development Association of Australia (CDAA). Career counsellors and practitioners are trained to guide you through the process of reflecting on yourself, exploring possibilities, and making plans to move towards your goals. Often, having a conversation with an unbiased person who does not know you personally can help you get clarity and perspective on your situation to help you feel more confident in knowing what directions are personally meaningful to you. Talking to a qualified career development practitioner can be very helpful if you're not sure which direction you'd like to take or if you're weighing up different options.

In our Case Study podcasts for this chapter, we discuss some typical career questions that prospective or current students may have about studying psychology. The people in the case studies are fictitious and all names are pseudonyms, but the issues are drawn from real issues that have been presented by people who have sought careers counselling. An overview of the case studies are found below, along with an audio recording for you to listen to.

Case Study 2.1: Diana

Diana is a 43-year-old who graduated with a Bachelor of Science (Psychology) 10 years ago. Diana has worked in community services as a project officer and now wants to continue her psychology studies to become a clinical psychologist. Listen to Diana's case study below.

> 🎵 One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://usq.pressbooks.pub/psychologycareers/?p=63#audio-63-1

Case Study 2.2: Carly

Carly is 19 years of age. She has just returned from a gap year of travel after high school and now wants to apply for a university degree. As a trained musician, she has known many professional musicians who have struggled with mental health and this has led to Carly wanting to focus on this area in her career. She is unsure if she should focus on psychology or counselling. Listen to Carly's case study below.

> 🎵 One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://usq.pressbooks.pub/psychologycareers/?p=63#audio-63-2

Case Study 2.3: Jim

Jim is 49 years of age. He has been a qualified mechanic for over 30 years and wants a career change. He is interested in psychology, but he is worried about not having strong maths knowledge. Listen to Jim's case study below.

> ♫ One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://usq.pressbooks.pub/psychologycareers/?p=63#audio-63-3

Case Study 2.4: Ben

Ben is 32 years old. He graduated with a Bachelor of Education (Secondary) five years ago and has since been teaching maths and history in a high school. Ben has become very aware of the psychological support needed by many of his students and their families and wants to find out more about studying psychology or counselling. Listen to Ben's case study below.

> ♫ One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://usq.pressbooks.pub/psychologycareers/?p=63#audio-63-4

Learning about oneself is not a one-time event, but rather an ongoing process that unfolds over our lifetime. Not only do we come to understand ourselves in deeper ways, but we also continue to change and evolve from our experiences – meaning that a situation that might be a good fit for us in our twenties, may no longer be a good fit in our thirties or forties.

EXPLORING CAREER OPTIONS

This book is an excellent starting point for exploring your career options related to psychology – it will provide a solid overview of some of the most common pathways you might want to consider, as well as some new ideas you hadn't thought of before.

Formal Sources of Information

To take this research further, and explore possibilities not covered here, you may want to consult other sources of career information such as:

- Job Outlook – To access information on wages, outlooks, education, skills, and more.
- Myfuture – To access information about occupations and study options.

- LinkedIn – Similar to Facebook in terms of profiles and newsfeed, but offers a powerful search tool including the ability to search alumni by institution to see what others have done with your degree.

- Professional Associations – Most occupations have a professional association. For example, the Australian Psychological Society (APS) is the professional association for psychologists in Australia and is a source of valuable information about careers in psychology

- The Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) – Has lots of information about the registration requirements for psychologists and a range of other health professions.

- Career books – Your campus careers centre may have a resource library featuring books with occupational information that can help you go more in-depth in areas of interest.

Informal Sources of Information

Speaking to professionals working in areas of interest can be a valuable source of insight (known as information interviewing). Conducting an informal career-related interview with someone who works (or has worked) within and understands the industry sector or occupation you are pursuing can provide you with valuable insights. An informational interview can provide you with:

- information about work and industry sector trends

- employment opportunities and the different roles available

- a strong understanding of skills, experience or qualifications required for various occupations

- new professional connections to both people and industry-related associations or agencies.

Questions You Could Ask in an Information Interview

1. What interests keep you going in your work?

2. What skills are essential in doing your work?

3. What are your work/life fit preferences (values and needs) that are met in this work?

4. If you were going to start again in this field of work today, what would you do to be really ready? (What training and experience would you need to have? What would be some great ways to get it?)

5. What professional associations do you rely on to keep up-to-date? What publications, organisations, or people do you suggest I contact for more information?

Synthesis and Valuing

As you collect information on yourself and possible careers, you'll be moving into the next phase of the CASVE model – of synthesising options and valuing potential directions based on the information you found which helps you move into the execution phase of testing out your ideas. If

your research doesn't provide an obvious career direction to explore, it may help to work through more systematic analyses of your findings. This can be as simple as a chart of pros and cons for each career of interest to help you get a more holistic view of each option. For a more in-depth analysis, consider using a matrix to rank the options against a set of important criteria. For example, someone might analyse three career paths of psychologist, marketing professional, and lawyer, and explore them in terms of pay, satisfaction, creativity, status, and investment required in training. Alternatively, you might benefit from talking through your various options with family and friends, or seeking professional help from an impartial career counsellor to help you clarify your thoughts and feelings.

Execution and Taking Action

Although collecting and analysing information is very useful, it's important to balance research with action and experience. By testing out your career ideas, you can get very important firsthand experience that can tell you more about your potential career directions. Planned Happenstance and Chaos Theory tell us of the impossibility of knowing the future in great detail, and the value of taking action despite this. As you move forward gaining various experiences from coursework, extracurricular activities, part-time work, volunteering, and otherwise, you'll likely learn new information about yourself and the world of work that could inform and alter your career direction. As you move forward learning from your coursework and other experiences, you'll also be developing marketable experience that will be valuable in future applications to work or graduate school. While initially pursuing a broad range of experiences can be beneficial, at a certain point, starting to focus on a few specific directions will likely help you be more strategic in your involvement. Considering what you've learned in the research stage about careers of interest can help you prioritise the development of key skills to help you pursue the well-rounded education needed to be successful in your next step.

The Value of Ongoing Reflection

To get the most of your time at university, it's important to complement your education and experiences with ongoing reflection. In fact, a recent study showed that employees who reflected for 15 minutes daily performed 23 per cent better at their work after 10 days than employees who did not participate in the reflection (Di Stefano, Gino, Pisano, & Staats, 2014). Not only does ongoing reflection reinforce your learning and inform decisions, but it will also help you when it comes time to apply to jobs or school as it will help you to articulate the value of your experience and skills to potential employers or graduate programs. You may want to consider some key questions after or during new learning experiences such as courses, extracurricular activities, or work:

- What was challenging about this experience? How did I overcome it? What results did I achieve?

- What impact did I have on those around me, on my environment, or on myself?

- How did this change me? What do I do or see differently now?

- What is most significant about this experience for me? For a potential employer?

- What areas of growth does it show for me? What skills did I develop?

Likewise, we encourage you to reflect on your learning throughout this course. As you learn about various possible career paths, connect them back to your personal experiences and what you're

learning about yourself. Are they a good fit? Why or why not? What is this telling you about what you want or where you want to go?

Conclusion

In this chapter we've covered the following key ideas as you think about how to make sense of the information of this book and apply it to your own career decision-making:

The value of your degree – Your psychology degree can help to prepare you to head in many potential career directions. To position yourself for success, be able to articulate the value of your degree to future employers and postgraduate programs with a clear sense of the skills and knowledge you have gained, and add to this with experience outside of the classroom.

Making sense of labour market information –Integrating knowledge of opportunities and labour market trends with an understanding of yourself can help you make more informed decisions now and in the future.

Consider person-environment fit – But remember it is only part of the equation.

Accept and embrace chance and chaos – Chance and unpredictability are normal. In addition to planning, embrace happenstance – success derives from a combination of planning, preparedness, and taking advantage of luck. Use the five skills outlined by Mitchell et al. (1999):

- Curiosity: exploring new learning opportunities
- Persistence: exerting effort despite setbacks
- Flexibility: changing attitudes and circumstances
- Optimism: viewing new opportunities as possible and attainable
- Risk-taking: taking action in the face of uncertain outcomes

Actively explore possibilities – Proactively exploring careers of interest can give you a sense of direction, ease anxiety, and motivate you to do your best academically.

Get to know yourself – Through formal and informal means, developing a sense of who you are in terms of strengths, values, interests, and personality can help you make better decisions and articulate your value to potential employers or education institutions.

Access resources – Gather information and support with online tools, people in your network, and resources at your university careers centre.

We hope this chapter helps you with your understanding of career development and how to explore your options. The other chapters in this book will provide you with information about a diverse range of career options within the field of psychological science.

This chapter has been adapted by Nancey Hoare, School of Psychology and Counselling, University of Southern Queensland, and Jennifer Luke, School of Education, University of Southern Queensland. It has been adapted from Keates, C., & Hahn M. (2019). Introduction to career development. In M. E. Norris (Ed.), *The Canadian Handbook for Careers in Psychological Science*. Kingston, ON: eCampus Ontario. Licensed under CC BY NC 4.0. Retrieved from https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/psychologycareers/chapter/career-development/

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