Chapter Six

Careerering in a Changing World

In Chapters 1 to 5, we focused on the idea of “career” and how the Pyramid of Information-Processing Domains and the CASVE Cycle could help us understand and improve our thinking about career problem solving and decision making, our Personal Career Theory (PCT). The goal was to learn how to become better career problem solvers and decision makers and to improve the ways we think about and use career information. We have been examining the person and how the person thinks about career.

In Part Two, we examine some of the forces—outside the person—that affect our careers: (a) technology and global economic markets, (b) organizational culture, (c) alternative ways of working, and (d) the relationships between men and women at home and at work.

Jeffrey Sachs (2011), a distinguished economist at Columbia University, noted that the United States and the world have been “buffeted by three global changes: the technological revolution of computers, the Internet, and mobile telephone ushered in by the digital electronic age; the history-changing rise of Asia within the world economy; and the newly emerging global ecological crises. These three changes are the cause of massive and ongoing shifts of incomes, jobs, and investments all over the world, including the United States” (p. 85).

Chapters 6 to 10 will help us refine our thinking about the part of the pyramid that deals with understanding our options: the occupational knowledge domain. We will examine large, powerful forces in terms of how they may limit or increase our options. Stated another way, these macrolevel forces—meaning large, high-level forces—affect all areas of our PCT, the Pyramid of Information-Processing Domains, and the CASVE Cycle.

Our individual perception and interpretation of these macrolevel forces is related to our metacognitions, which, we have already learned, influence how we solve career problems and make career decisions.

The Role of General Education Courses

The liberal studies courses taken in college should influence your thinking about careers. White (2005), writing in the Wall Street Journal, noted that future chief executives may require a broader liberal-arts education and wider international experience. Paraphrasing comments by a former corporate recruiter, White suggested that, for future CEOs, it’s about maturity and leadership rather than how many accounting courses they took. Furthermore, international experience is a “big deal.”
As a college student, you have taken (or will take) courses in general education or liberal studies. What role do these courses play in career planning? Are they simply courses you need to get out of the way before you get into your major? General education courses, apart from those in your major, are intended to broaden your appreciation of what is happening in the world that affects the way we work and live.

Such knowledge directly affects the way we learn to think about our careers. For example, courses in the social sciences provide opportunities to learn about ethnic groups, communities, organizations, and human behavior. Courses in the humanities help us learn about cultures, languages, and the communication of ideas and values, and courses in the sciences help us learn about technology and problem solving. “Clearly students need to have emphasized the intrinsic value of studying history and culture, mathematics and science—*learning broadly about those things that make us what we are and the world about us what it is*” [italics added] (Johnston, Reardon, Kramer, Lenz, Maduros, & Sampson, 1991, p. 192).

The Collegiate Employment Research Institute (CERI) at Michigan State University surveys thousands of employers annually, and it reported that organizations are looking for students who demonstrate global understanding, even when it does not appear in a position description. Global knowledge will be essential in organizations doing business and providing services in a worldwide economy. Moreover, employers view candidates’ ability to build and sustain professional, working relationships as essential, the highest-rated ability for new hires (CERI, 2010). We believe the skills in this area draw upon general knowledge obtained in liberal arts courses.

In terms of the Pyramid of Information-Processing Domains, general education courses provide knowledge about work options, such as labor market trends, social changes, and work styles. In terms of the CASVE Cycle, these courses help you learn about and clarify the societal gaps to which you might want to dedicate your career or prioritize the values on which you will base your career decisions. Such courses might help you understand an issue that motivates you to commit to a particular career objective (e.g., global warming, homeless children, family entertainment).

General education/liberal studies courses can enable students to develop more complex and accurate ways of thinking about careers in many ways, including the following:

- A course in *world history* can increase understanding of the decline of nationalism, the rise of tribalism, and the increase in global economic power in relation to geography, culture, technology, and population; such historical interpretations can be helpful in developing schema regarding strategic career planning.
- A course in *sociology* or *economics* can increase understanding of the ways that organizations develop and function, particularly work-related organizations; such knowledge can be helpful in developing career schema regarding work attitudes and organizational culture, because most work is done in organizational settings.
- A course in the *sciences* or *humanities* can increase understanding of the ways that technology has affected work organizations and jobs, which has resulted in new ways of working; such knowledge can be helpful in developing schema regarding work and leisure, unemployment, occupational change, part-time work, and job hunting.
- A course in *communication, sociology, or psychology* could increase understanding of gender and interpersonal relationships in relation to work and family life; such knowledge can be helpful in developing and negotiating successful work and family relationships, which are now more complex in the modern world.

**Needed: New Career Metacognitions**

Jerry Hage (1995), an industrial and organizational psychologist, has studied issues associated with modern work for many years. He made the case that we must develop more complex ways of thinking about life in the modern world:
People must learn to live in complex role-sets, each with a large number of role-relationships in which negotiations about role expectations or behavior become one of the major capacities for successful role performance. Furthermore, to adjust to the constant changes in society that provide the context for both the family and the workplace, people in post-industrial society need to have complex and creative minds, be adaptive and flexible, and know how to understand symbolic communications (p. 487).

If Hage is correct, we have no choice but to think in more complex ways about our careers. In our view, the cognitive information-processing approach provides ways to help us do this.

As you read Part Two, you should be constantly thinking about your metacognitions (your thoughts, beliefs, and attitudes) regarding your PCT, how you think about yourself and your career, and whether the information in these five chapters requires you to reframe or modify your thinking. Remember, metacognitions refer to the process of thinking about thinking. Here are some thought-provoking questions to ask yourself:

- How can I fully use this information about the sociology of work, economic changes, diversity in the workplace, and alternative work styles to sharpen my PCT career metacognitions, and become a more effective career decision maker?
- How does this information relate to my gender? My cultural or ethnic group? My religious preferences? My spirituality? My identification with my community?
- How will this information affect my “careering” as I finish school, look for a good job, make plans for a significant personal relationship or family, and undertake job changes (voluntary or forced)?
- How can I develop a strategic plan for my career in light of the powerful, rapidly changing socioeconomic forces affecting people today?

Two metaphors are useful as we begin Chapter 6. First, think of your career as a ship sailing on the sea. These macrolevel forces are like the tides, the wind, the ocean currents, and the temperature—they are the forces that may require you to make adjustments to your ship as you go “careering” over the horizon. They will directly cause you to make changes in the way you sail your “career ship.”

Second, in Chapter 1 we examined Roe’s formula (see Table 1.1) explaining “occupational choice.” Roe observed that the general state of the economy (E); family background (B); chance factors (C), such as technological inventions and new laws; and one’s friends, peers (F) and marital situation (M) all combine to shape a person’s career options. These are the conditions affecting career behavior that we will explore in Part Two.

The Vision: “To Have a Successful Career”

Almost every college student working through a career problem or decision is really pursuing the vision of “having a successful career.” Webster’s defines vision as “a thought, concept, or object formed by the imagination” (Mish, 1997). In a real sense, we are each charged with imagining our career; we have the potential to develop an idea, a dream, of what we want and where we will end up.

As we learned in Chapter 1, a career is not something that a person has or possesses. As the cover of our text suggests, it is better to think of career as a course, a journey, or a path, rather than a destination. If we substitute the word life for the word career, we come closer to the meaning of career. Therefore, a career is something we pursue, not something we possess. This is an important re-framing of the career metacognition and changes the common understanding of a “successful career.” Make sure you fully grasp this thought.

The word successful is vague because to be a success in something is truly an individual matter. The runner Mary Decker Slaney set 36 national records and 17 official and unofficial world records at various distances, but after four tries she never won an Olympic medal. However, we can still say she had a successful running career. Our vision of having a successful career may be a frustrating journey if we are not clear and specific about what success means to us.
Elizabeth McKenna (1997), in *When Work Doesn’t Work Anymore*, suggested that men and women (especially women) “have to figure out who they are and what their own definitions of success are (apart from business achievements) in order to negotiate the emotional contract they have made with their careers. And no matter what the decision, there are trade-offs” (p. 38). McKenna made the case that future generations will “have a different definition of success than we have” (p. 21) and a very different way of working.

### Reframing Career Metacognitions

*Figure 6.1* provides a graphic image to illustrate the point we want to make, and we are indebted to the psychologist Kurt Lewin (1951) for presenting this idea. He noted that it is important to distinguish between the “world out there” and what we actually see (or perceive). The larger circle shows the broader environment (the “real world”) in which our careers unfold. This real world or force field includes technology and the global economy (Chapter 7), organizational culture (Chapter 8), alternative ways of working (Chapter 9), and family-career adjustments (Chapter 10). You might think of this as a stage with all kinds of varied sets and props where actors do their work.

The smaller shaded circle indicates that we each view the broader environment in our own unique ways using our metacognitions. We can learn to view this “real world,” this force field, in new ways.

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**Real World Social & Physical Events**: Constantly changing social and physical events experienced by the person; the nonpsychological forces affecting a person (e.g., technology and the global economy, organizational culture, alternative ways of working, changing career and family roles).

**Psychological World**: The person’s psychological world, or “life space”; the person’s perception of the social and physical events as either positive (supporting) or negative (restraining) forces having an impact on the person’s goal achievement.

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**Career Metacognitions in a Force Field**
and different ways, depending on our goals, aspirations, interests, values, and skills. You are the principal actor in your career. The chapters in Part Two are intended to help us to learn more about “the real world” and to improve the quality of our “psychological world” in relation to career problem solving and decision making.

**Technology and the Global Economy**

Changes are taking place that will continue to affect the way we “career” in the future. Here are some examples of events that have affected even the way we work, including career counselors.

Technology has changed the way many organizations conduct business. For example, in the banking industry, computers are set to automatically move money to and from accounts when certain preset conditions exist. This occurs throughout the world, 24 hours a day. While you sleep, your money is moving around various world exchanges, searching for the highest interest-bearing accounts. The Internet makes it possible for individuals and organizations to have instant contact with one another, at little cost. Financial experts were shocked several years ago when one bank employee, working alone at a computer, was responsible for financial transactions that caused the collapse of one of the largest banks in the United Kingdom.

Trade agreements between nations can dramatically change the way products and services are sold. For example, the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) between Canada, Mexico, and the United States eliminated many barriers to economic exchanges. In effect, this means that there are no economic borders between these countries, although there are still political ones. As a result of NAFTA, some U.S. companies sell their products or services, such as computer parts or software training, to businesses and organizations in new places that were inaccessible before. Products are manufactured in one country and packaged in another.

Even the authors of this text, who are college faculty and staff in a southeastern university, have been affected by international economic developments. One consulted with people in Turkey about how to improve job training and employment of Turkish citizens. This text has been translated into Chinese and is being used in the People’s Republic. In the past 10 years, visitors from more than 40 foreign nations have come to observe how our career center designs and delivers services. It turns out that even the field of career counseling knows no borders in a global economy.

**Organizational Culture**

Work organizations, including businesses, government agencies, schools, and community centers, are changing the way they function. Increasingly, they are organized differently, they communicate internally and externally in new ways, they treat employees differently, and they think about their customers and products in new ways. These organizational changes are having a dramatic impact on the ways in which we “career,” and we will examine them in more detail in Chapter 8.

One example is when organizations significantly cut personnel and then purchase the same services from an outside organization. This is typically called outsourcing. For example, Company A, a medical supply service, decides to eliminate its human resources (HR) department (for example, to maintain employee leave records, advertise positions, screen resumes, keep payroll records) and contract with Company B, a firm that specializes in HR services, to do this work for Company A. Company A has reduced the number of employees, which saves Company A some money, but the work still gets done by Company B.

**Alternative Ways of Working**

Many people have grown up with the idea of working a 40-hour week in a professional job—that just seemed to be the natural order of things. Of course people in certain jobs (e.g., physicians, nurses, plumbers, police officers) work odd schedules, but most of us assumed we would have “regular” weekday jobs. Perhaps nothing else in the career world has changed as much as the way we work. Work patterns include options such as flextime, part-time, job sharing, temporary, and home-
part two: Social conditions affecting career development

based work/telecommuting patterns. We will examine these issues and others in detail in Chapter 9 and focus on how they affect our career planning.

One example of this is job sharing. This occurs when one job is shared between two people. Each person typically works 20 hours per week at separate times, although they probably share two or three hours of time on the job each week for joint meetings with supervisors and other staff members. This arrangement is ideal for someone with child care or elder care responsibilities, for whom a 40-hour job might be difficult or impossible. A person completing an educational degree might find it impossible to work full time and attend classes full time. A person might have leisure or entrepreneurial interests that make it difficult to work full time and still pursue these outside interests. A job share typically carries one-half the insurance and other benefits available with the position. This arrangement provides extra support that might not be otherwise available to the part-time worker.

As you contemplate your career journey, be mindful that alternative work arrangements might give you options regarding when and how you work as well as how you engage in other important life activities.

Career and Family Roles

Sociologists have noted that the patterns of work for men and women common today in the United States are only about 100 years old. Before the industrial revolution, both men and women worked on the farm or in the shop and shared childcare and housekeeping duties. With the rise of manufacturing and industry in the late 1800s, men increasingly left the farm to pursue higher-paying jobs in city factories. Women were left at home to care for children and manage the domestic responsibilities. In the past 50 years, beginning during World War II in the 1940s, women have increasingly taken jobs outside the home. The dual-career family, or in some cases the dual-earner family, where both individuals in a relationship are working outside the home, has had a huge impact on the way most of us work today and will work in the future. We will explore these topics in more detail in Chapter 10.

Relocation is an example of a critical issue that may add complexity in career planning for a dual-career couple. When both partners are engaged in career, and relocation opportunities affect one career, the trailing spouse or partner can face considerable difficulties. The same kinds of opportunities may not be present in the new location. Successful relocation in dual-career situations requires considerable skill in negotiation and compromise. In cognitive terms, it means that both people are able to perceive a “win” no matter which option is selected.

The Four Macrolevel Factors

In Part Two, we will look at the “market economy” and how things are changing in this regard. A market is created when one person's wants or needs create a demand for a product or service that another person can satisfy. The market involves the exchange of goods and services between people, typically involving money. In a market economy, jobs are created because one person is willing to spend money for goods or services. Jobs follow from what someone wants, needs, or is willing to pay for.

In the present day, market economies—also known as capitalism—are springing up throughout the world. Moreover, there are markets for everything: baseball cards, money, hamburgers, steel, and knowledge. Someone once joked that we could become a nation of hamburger sellers because that's how many of us like to spend our money. Historically, markets have been the largest source of career opportunities for individuals across the globe.

In our analysis, we have emphasized the distinct nature of the four macrolevel changes affecting work today: (a) global economic markets, (b) organizational culture, (c) alternative ways of working, and (d) the relationships between men and women at home and at work. In reality, however, these four influences are impossible to separate, and they have all been affected by technology. Altogether, they function as a complex system where each factor affects the others and vice versa. The phrase
“everything affects everything” applies here. Focusing on the independent nature of these four factors in Part Two will make it easier to analyze and understand them.

You might notice that the progression of these four factors is from the most broad and distant to the most specific and immediate. We will begin by looking at global economic events and trends and then examining how these factors are affecting work organizations and the way individuals work now and in the future. We will conclude with the impact of these changes on the lives of men and women in contemporary America.

Finally, the perspective we will take in Part Two is one of change, how things about career and work are changing in the modern world. This reflects some age bias (the authors are all old enough to have experienced many of these changes in their work lives), but many college students born after 1994 may not see these macrolevel factors as changes because they haven’t experienced anything else. The present-day world with its technological advances, global economy, instant communication, and changing social roles is all they know.

Strategic Career Thinking

The term strategic thinking may not be a familiar one, so we should define it. Years ago, business organizations began to use the concepts of strategic thinking and strategic planning to ensure that their organization was headed in the right direction (Cope, 1987; Omahe, 1982). When “thinking strategically,” an organization asks itself the following questions:

- Where does our organization want to go?
- Are we in the right business relative to other businesses we could be in?

Cope (1987) defined strategic thinking for an organization as “the process of developing a vision of where the institution wants to go, and then developing managing strategies (plans) on how to get there” (quoted in Hoadly & Zimmer, 1982, p. 16). Note that strategic thinking begins with the process of developing a vision. Put another way, strategic thinking is doing the right things (effectiveness), whereas operational planning is doing things right (efficiency).

Sometimes organizations get so caught up in being efficient and doing things right that they lose sight of doing the right things, of being effective. In other words, effectiveness is doing the right things and thinking strategically, and efficiency is doing things right and operational planning. Organizations can fail for being either ineffective or inefficient.

The process of strategic thinking applied to organizations can also be applied to individuals. By thinking strategically about your career, you can (a) formulate a vision of what being “successful” means for you, (b) get yourself organized and prepared to do the “right things,” and (c) implement a plan to do “things right.” Strategic career thinking means setting your course and charting your way through important social issues, such as the global economy, changing organizational cultures, alternative ways of working, and changing roles of men and women.

Thinking and planning your career in a strategic way means that you can set your career direction in light of the internal forces, such as your interests, values, and skills, in relation to the external forces existing in society.

Your task is to develop a vision of your career, based partly on your intuitive, subjective judgment about where the four social forces we examined are taking us as individuals and a society.

As you read the next four chapters, interpret the facts presented in light of your own experience and the other things that you know or have learned about the future. Critically analyze the information in light of your strategic career plan. How does it change how you think about your life/career in the future? Be proactive and forward-thinking in light of the facts that are presented in these chapters about work organizations and work roles, especially with reference to your Personal Career Theory.
A Case Application: From College to Becoming a Manager

Many college graduates find themselves in positions leading an organization and managing projects, programs, or people. Indeed, you may find yourself on this career path in the future. Given this fact, let’s examine how the social conditions we have briefly described in this chapter might affect a college student’s career thinking.

With respect to the global economy, a college student might do the following:

- Consider getting educational and work experiences in multicultural settings
- Take courses in world history, sociology, economics, and languages to learn more about worldwide changes and issues
- Travel to different countries and learn about cultural traditions
- Develop friendships with people from other countries
- Learn about how management is done in other countries
- Look for work opportunities in multinational organizations
- Use the Internet to communicate directly with people around the world

These activities will help you develop a better vision of the existence of worldwide problems and opportunities for working as a manager in your field of interest.

With respect to organizational culture, a college student might do the following:

- Interview managers to learn about their actual work histories and experiences in different kinds of organizations
- Reflect on personal work experiences in various organizations with respect to the culture of the organization
- Research the advantages and disadvantages of being a manager in different kinds of organizations and agencies
- Study the occupations and organizations that employ managers, and learn about the laws, inventions, and policies that are affecting those areas
- Learn about the characteristics of family-friendly organizations and other employee-centered practices

These things will help you develop a better understanding of how the culture of an organization affects the way people work together and the overall climate of the place.

With respect to alternative ways of working, a college student might do the following:

- Develop a vision of how the roles of parent, spouse/partner, worker, student, child, leisurite, and citizen will be incorporated into one’s life over the next 10 or more years
- Examine how significant people in one’s life will be involved in shaping a career
- Understand the importance of leisure activities in one’s life and how these activities may be selected in relation to work activities and organizational policies
- Learn about alternative work-style patterns and employer benefit options, and set priorities on when and how these would be incorporated into one’s career plan

These things might help you develop a vision of a time-extended plan for balancing work and other life roles in one’s career.

With respect to changing roles of men and women, a college student might do the following:

- Develop a shared career vision of life roles with a partner or significant other
- Learn about successful patterns of balancing work and family life given different kinds of career options and organizational characteristics
- Learn about effective child care options
- Learn about alternative work styles within different kinds of industries
• Study the kinds of stressors—for example, eldercare, relocation, childcare—that affect relationships in dual-career situations
• Study the trends and issues in work and family life for single parents

These things might help you develop a vision of how work and family life might be balanced in a career.

Summary
In this chapter, we introduced four external, social forces that affect the ways individual careers are developing now and in the future. We began with a review of general education/liberal studies courses in relation to strategic career planning and suggested the need for new career metacognitions in this information age.

“Having a successful career” is the vision that many people bring to the career-planning process. The vision of a successful career can be framed within four social conditions: (a) technology and the changing global economy, (b) changing organizational cultures, (c) alternative ways of working, and (d) changing roles of men and women.

The idea of strategic career thinking is one way to project your career vision into the future, accounting for the changing social conditions that will affect future career behavior. The process of career visioning and strategic thinking was illustrated by examining the thinking processes of a college student becoming a manager. The next four chapters will help you improve the part of your Personal Career Theory having to do with occupational knowledge. This, in turn, will enable you to develop new metacognitions for solving career problems and making career decisions.

References
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