



### Project Update

I hope this newsletter finds you well! Thank you for participating in the original STEPS research between 2006 to 2009, during your undergraduate studies, exploring your career motivations and aspirations.

So far, the research has provided valuable insights into why people choose particular career pathways and what motivates them to do so. 697 of you participated in the first stage of the research from 2006 to 2009 - from Monash University, University of Melbourne, University of New South Wales, and Macquarie University.

I am contacting you to fill you in on the main findings from the first studies, and, to inform you about the “next steps” the research is heading towards.

STEPS recently received Federal funding, to continue to follow your career plans, through University and beyond. I am hoping that you may be willing to receive a future invitation to participate in a follow-up survey. If you are willing to receive this later invitation, could you email your current contact details to: STEPS@monash.edu ?

This will tell us how career plans and motivations change, or remain the same, throughout University studies. And, how these translate into actual occupational choices.

We know little about how career plans develop in response to University experiences, and alongside other life choices. We know even less about how career motivations differ across diverse occupational choices. There is no longitudinal research in Australia which encompasses this time-span.

You are welcome to visit our website, and to join us on Facebook if you would like. I hope you enjoy this newsletter and welcome your comments anytime,

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### Influential Career Motivations

The questionnaire that you completed previously, explored the importance of the following factors in your career choice:

- AI: Abilities and interests
- PM: Personal mobility
- CC: Cognitive challenge
- SC: Social contribution
- CK: Content knowledge
- ECC: Extrinsic career characteristics
- TW: Team work
- TR: Travel
- TF: Time for family
- EC: Expert career
- JF: Job flexibility
- SS: Social status
- ES: Enhance social status
- WW: Work with children to shape future / “people” for Law participants
- AU: Autonomy
- SI: Social influences
- BL: Bludging

The 3 graphs below display the importance of each of the 17 factors, across three groups:

- undergraduates from diverse disciplines (e.g., Arts, Medicine, Commerce, Education, Engineering, Law, Music, Science, Veterinary Science) in 2006 and 2007;
- 1st year Engineering students in 2008; and
- 1st year Law students in 2009.

Highest rated career motivations across all the disciplines included:

- wanting a career which matched one's abilities and interests;
- which was cognitively challenging; and
- provided for personal mobility.

Lowest rated factors were “bludging”, and social influences. Working with other people was noticeably lower for Engineers than the other groups. In general, the order of influential career motivations was strikingly similar across three different groups. This suggests that people make their quite different career decisions for very similar reasons.

### Would you Consider a Career in Teaching?

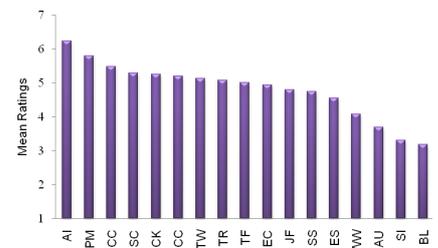
One part of our research explored whether students from a range of degrees (e.g., Medicine, Commerce, Engineering, Arts) were interested in pursuing a career in teaching.

Interestingly, about 40% of you stated that you may consider teaching in the future. Here's what some of you had to say about the teaching profession:

- “I am not satisfied with the way maths is being taught in the uni., so if possible I would like to prove to students and encourage them to study maths and show them that the subject is actually easy, and I'd like to make students enjoy doing maths rather than dread it as is the case!”
- “It's an easy alternative if all else fails.”
- “There seems to be a higher workload on teachers with marking and reports etc, pay does not seem to be worth the trouble.”
- “Because both my parents are teachers and I NEVER want to have to put up with what they have to put up with.”
- “Low pay, bad working conditions, lack of resources in classrooms, low career development and growth potential.”
- “After I've worked in the industry it would be good to pass on my knowledge”

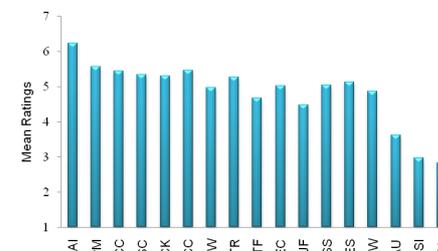
#### 1. Undergraduates from diverse disciplines: 2006-2007

N = 253



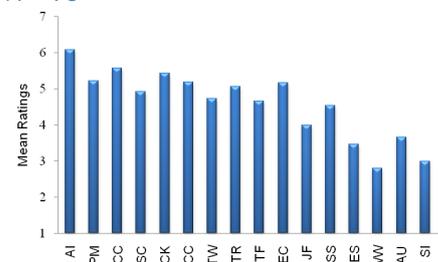
#### 2. 1st Year Law Students: 2009

N = 371



#### 3. 1st Year Engineering Students: 2008

N = 73



## Research Contributors



Amy Brown

Amy Brown's Postgraduate Diploma of Psychology research involved exploring the attitudes of university students towards pursuing a career in teaching. She is currently finishing a Masters in Clinical Psychology and hopes to work with young people in the future.



Nilusha De Alwis

As a part of her Postgraduate Diploma of Psychology thesis in 2008, Nilusha explored the career motivations of Engineering students and their attitudes towards a career in teaching. Since then she completed her Masters in Educational and Developmental Psychology, and plans to work as a School Psychologist. Nilusha works as a Research Assistant for STEPS, and another project examining teachers' motivations and wellbeing: [www.fitchoice.org](http://www.fitchoice.org)



Amy Young

In 2007, Amy Young undertook a research project which investigated factors that influence career choice among diverse university students. Since finishing her Postgraduate Diploma of Psychology and Masters degrees she has been working as a Researcher for the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.

Helen Watt coordinates the **STEM Educational and Occupational Pathways and Participation Network**, with VHTO in the Netherlands. This Network was developed to gain better insight into the various, closely connected aspects of career choices and pathways in STEM fields (Science, Technology, Engineering, & Mathematics).

Members are leading researchers from around the world. There is surplus value to interrelate our research results, to gain a coherent view from childhood to labour market.

### Collaborators from the United States, Canada and Germany



Jacque Eccles



Dan Keating



Jenna Shapka



Anne Frenzel



Reinhard Pekrun

## Publications

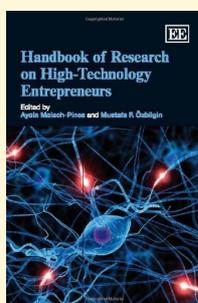
Below are the publications from the project so far. We are continuing to write from the data you have already generously provided, and will publish further from the upcoming new data. Thank you for your valuable time and responses which make the STEPS study possible!

Brown, A. (2007). *Attitudes of university students towards teaching as a career*. Unpublished Postgraduate Diploma of Psychology thesis, Monash University.

Castan, M., Paterson, J., Richardson, P. W., Watt, H. M. G., & Dever, M. (2011). Early optimism? First year Law students' expectations and aspirations. *Legal Education Review*, 20 (1&2).

De Alwis, N. (2008). *Identifying factors that deter Engineering students from pursuing a STEM teaching career*. Unpublished Postgraduate Diploma of Psychology thesis, Monash University.

De Alwis, N. & Watt, H. M. G. (2009, July). *What makes teaching a less appealing career choice among Engineering students?* Australasian Human Development Association Biennial Conference, Adelaide, July 6-8.



De Alwis, N. & Watt, H. M. G. (2010). Entrepreneurial and other career motivations among Engineering students (Ch. 15, pp. 267- 280). In A. Malach-Pines & M. F. Özbilgin (Eds.), *Handbook of Research on High-Technology Entrepreneurs*. Cheltenham, U.K.: Edward Elgar Publishing.

Dever, M., Watt, H. M. G., Richardson, P. W., Paterson, J., & Castan, M. (2010). *Legal Futures: Aspirations, motivations, family*. Paper presented at the Gender, Work and Organization Conference, Staffordshire, June 21-23.

Young, A. (2007). *Teachers - the next generation: Issues in teacher recruitment*. Unpublished Postgraduate Diploma of Psychology thesis, Monash University.

## Funding Acknowledgements

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- Australian Research Council, 2011-2015
- Australian Research Fellowship, 2011-2015
- Monash University, 2006-2010

## Why Choose Law as a Career?

In 2009, 1st Year Law students were asked about why they decided to study Law. Here's what some of you said:

- "Law attracts some of the best thinkers and provides an opportunity to compete with them; I like to challenge myself and am very competitive."
- "Strong sense of justice."
- "It pays well/prestige."
- "Because the Law blood runs in the family."
- "It's fun and interesting."
- "The opportunity to help people."
- "Intellectually stimulating, career security, financial security, interesting, diverse career outcomes."

## What Are You Doing Now?

Much research has focused on people's future career intentions, but, we lack reliable information about later actual outcomes.

I would like to conduct a follow-up study involving you, and the other 696 participants, to explore your current career plans. You would receive a summary newsletter of those findings, which should be very interesting across such a large sample, and, to compare with your earlier motivations.

Are you willing to receive the research invitation? Agreeing to receive does not mean that you necessarily agree to participate in the future survey.

So that I can correctly send you the future research invitation, I would be grateful if you could email your current contact details to: [STEPS@monash.edu](mailto:STEPS@monash.edu)

You may also be interested to check out STEPS on Facebook - you are welcome to add STEPS to your profile if you would like! [www.facebook.com/steps.university](http://www.facebook.com/steps.university)

With high appreciation, and I hope to hear from you soon! Helen Watt

**"Take us with you" if you move house, please send STEPS an update!**