

A Guide on how to tackle Career Choices:

Hannah Bock reviews "Inspiring Conversations with Women Professors" by
Anna Garry

When I was a child, I was under the impression that a career is a straight line. You stay at university until you've received your degree and then you have the qualifications to do one specific job, that never changes again. No trying out different fields of study, no pausing the time at university to travel or do an internship. This view stayed with me for a long time and only recently, when I finished high school, I noticed how negatively it had affected me. I felt like the fact that I couldn't yet decide on a specific career was a failure on my side, and it was proof that I wasn't ready to lead my own independent life.

Subsequently, after graduation from high school, I was very discouraged by my inability to feel excited about the endless possibilities that faced me. I felt like no matter what I decided on, it wouldn't be the right choice. And so I started to look for ways to change my attitude towards the situation and to research different approaches to choosing and pursuing a career.

That's when I got the opportunity to read "Inspiring Conversations with Women Professors" by Anna Garry. And after having read it, I can definitely say that books such as this one should be mandatory in high school. It contains many, if not all of the things I was looking for.

First of all, it's evident that including a wide variety of careers was important to the author. This was very helpful to me, because the resulting diversity in views on how to choose a career is exactly what I needed to understand my own situation better. I also enjoyed reading about how education systems in different countries work and how they support young people in finding a field of study. But perhaps most enlightening for me was that I began to understand that many young people, like me, look to their parents when it comes to a career choice. And apparently, I'm not the only one who found that it's not always best to copy their same strategy, even if it did lead to a good outcome for them.

Secondly all of the women who were interviewed have different mentalities on how to move through your career. One might argue that at this point that doesn't concern me at all, but I have to disagree. I believe I learned a lot by reading about the different methods these women have. For example, it gives me reassurance to see that there's always a solution if I really want to make something work, which is something that many of the professors emphasised.

An added bonus for me was to learn about how an academical career is structured and what steps you have to take to reach the goal of being a tenured professor. When searching for my ideal

field of study, I found that most didn't offer many different jobs that interested me, and so I did, and still do, consider the option of staying at university to eventually teach a subject that I thoroughly enjoy.

I've established now that the book has inspired and helped me a lot with my post-graduation dilemma. But I very much believe that I'm not the only one struggling and so I'd highly recommend this book to anyone who's just finished their basic education. Especially here in Switzerland, where the pressure on young people is, from my point of view, outrageously high. Many of my friends hadn't yet figured out what they wanted to do with their lives, when we were handed our final report cards. And I believe some, like me, reacted by making rash choices.

My greatest problem however is this: Never throughout the whole process did someone teach me any strategies on how to cope with this overwhelming number of possibilities or how to go about choosing one. And so I encourage everybody who feels the same to read "Inspiring Conversations with Women Professors". A little guidance from women who have successfully found and established a career for themselves, is more than useful.

In conclusion, I think I can say that I've learned a great deal from this reading experience. But of particular significance to me was finally understanding that there are countless paths leading to a meaningful career. They don't have to be planned through from start to finish and most importantly: instead of being scared of the abundance of possibilities in front of me, I can let myself be motivated by it.

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