29 The Job Search

Robert J. Sternberg

Just a few years ago, one could obtain almost any product or service one could imagine through the Internet. One could buy pets or pet food, order food to be delivered to one's house, buy clothing from an astonishing array of manufacturers, and much, much more. Today, some of these Internet services remain, but many others are gone. New products and services have replaced some of the old ones. At any given time, it is difficult to imagine which products and services will last and which will be barely remembered, or even entirely forgotten, almost as though they never existed. No doubt there are many lessons to be learned from this transformation of society through the Internet, but certainly one of the most powerful is that, before investing in the creation of a product or service, one needs to ensure a market will be there, ready to buy, and that the market will be there for enough time to make the investment in the product or service worthwhile.

This lesson is perhaps the fundamental lesson that aspiring psychologists need to keep in mind, whether they plan to pursue an academic job, a practice job, or any other kind of job: You need to establish a durable market for your skills. Who will want what you provide? And for how long? Will you be flexible in the future, realizing that what works in your career at one point in time may not work at another?

I recommend to my own students that they start thinking about job prospects pretty much from the very beginning of their graduate-school career. Graduate school training is qualitatively different from undergraduate school training. Unlike college, graduate school is pre-professional in character. It is designed, of course, to enrich students' knowledge, understanding, and application of psychology; but most of all, it is designed to prepare students for a career. Because a career largely begins with one's first job, getting that job can be one of the most important steps a psychologist ever takes. And because one's first job often contributes substantially toward shaping both one's professional possibilities and even the future jobs one may obtain, it is important to devote substantial resources to getting the best job one can. At the same time, it is important to remember that a first job is just that – a first job.

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If your first job is not the job you ideally wanted, you still have plenty of time to seek out something more desirable in the future. I had a friend some years back who applied for academic jobs only at what he believed were the "top places." He did not want to bother working at a place he would consider second-rate. He did not get any of the jobs he applied for. And he ended up especially throwing away his doctoral training. He never quite found himself. He set an unreasonable goal and paid for it his whole life, never finding anything that was quite good enough for him.

1. What is the "Best Job"?

Before talking about how to get the "best job," it is important to talk about just what the "best job" is. People have different priorities in searching for jobs. Among the characteristics they look for are (a) geographic location, (b) prestige, (c) salary, (d) benefits, (e) teaching load, (f) research opportunities, (g) congeniality of colleagues, (h) opportunities for advancement, (i) levels and kinds of expectations of employer, and (j) general working conditions, such as the condition of the building or office where one will spend much of one's time. These things all matter, but they beg the question of what is most important of all.

In my experience, by far the most important consideration in targeting that first job is "fit" – the extent to which the institution or people with whom you will work match your own system of values, motivations, and expectations. The more their expectations are congruent with what you wish to offer, on average, the happier you will be. That is true for your first job and it will be true for all the others as well.

I have seen students take jobs that, on paper, looked wonderful, only to find that, when they arrived, what they had to offer was a poor fit to what the institution wanted to gain from them. So, in my experience, the most important question to ask is the same as that you would ask in any kind of marriage, that of compatibility. If you and the institution in which you go to work are not compatible, you may find that little else matters: You will be miserable despite everything else. For example, you could be the best teacher in the world, but if you take a job at an institution that values research, but, at best, pays lip service to teaching, you may find all of your best-developed skills unappreciated by the people in your environment. Or you might be a wonderful researcher, but if you are required to teach four or five classes a semester, you can expect to have relatively little time to exercise those wonderful research skills.

I know about the importance of fit from personal experience. I have worked in five universities throughout the course of my career. One job, I felt, was a perfect fit for me. I was happy there and being there made my whole life happy. At the other extreme, another job was about as terrible a fit as I possibly could have found. I was professionally miserable and it made my whole life miserable. It probably also made the lives of others miserable as well. I got out as quickly as I could. A wise decision. If you don't fit, little else matters. You need to find somewhere else to work, as soon as you can.

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2. The Variety of Jobs

A doctorate in psychology can lead you to a wide range of jobs (Sternberg, 2016, 2017a, 2017b). Among these jobs are (a) teaching and research in a college or university psychology department, (b) teaching and research in a university school of education, (c) teaching and research in a university business school, (d) teaching and research in a medical school, (e) teaching and research in a school of public policy, (f) teaching and research in a department of human development, (g) academic administration, (h) psychotherapy administered in private practice, (i) counseling in a clinic or private practice, (j) outreach through community services, (k) psychotherapy administered in a hospital setting, (l) government service, (m) service in a school setting, (n) service as an industrial/organizational psychologist, (o) work in a consulting firm, (p) work in the military, or (q) work in product design, where you specifically deal with consumer acceptability and perhaps safety of new products. Of course, this is not a complete list. What it shows, however, is the wide range of careers available to people who specialize in psychology.

More and more jobs these days are adjunct positions. One is employed on a fixed contract to teach particular courses. Typically (but certainly not always), one is paid by the course. These jobs are not tenure-track and may have limited or no benefits. The question some job applicants have is whether to take an adjunct position or, if it is possible, to wait until a future time and then start applying all over again.

There is no one answer to this question that is right for everyone. The advantage of taking an adjunct position is that you gain teaching experience, some money, and a possible "in" for future tenure-track positions. The disadvantage is that some people look down on adjunct jobs, and if you are in one too long, it may be hard to get out, especially because opportunities for research typically are very limited or non-existent. If an adjunct job is what you want, so as to have more flexibility for the rest of your time, you are in luck. But if such a job is not what you want, keep in mind that as the years go by, it becomes harder and harder to get out of these positions and to enter any kind of tenure track.

3. Preparing from "Day 1"

You may not literally start preparing for your job search on Day 1 of graduate school, but the sooner you do so, the better. By the time you are nearing the end of graduate school, you should already have set much of the scaffolding in place upon which you will construct your job search. I include in the job search postdoctoral positions, because these are jobs, much like any other, where you have certain expectations you must meet and are paid to meet those expectations.

Some postdoctoral positions can lead to higher research positions, such as associate research scientist, research scientist, senior research scientist, research professor, and so on. Such jobs are usually soft-money jobs, so keep in mind that they typically last only as long as the grant-funding does. In medical schools, even regular tenure-track positions may be partly or even fully funded by soft money.

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What kinds of preparations do you need to be making?

- *Courses.* There are many reasons to take courses. For example, you may wish to learn how a particular professor sees the world, or you may wish to acquire specific statistical, laboratory, or therapy techniques. In a clinical or counseling program, your courses may be largely prescribed. But whatever program you are in, be sure to take courses that you will need to get employed in the kind of position you will seek. The appropriate courses will differ as a function of the kind of job you want, so you need to consult with your advisor, other faculty, and advanced students regarding what courses will serve you best.
- *Research.* Most graduate programs have a major research component (although some PsyD programs may not particularly emphasize research). Doing research that will distinguish you from others applying for similar jobs can be one of the best ways to prepare yourself for the job search. In academia, the expectations for research relevant to first jobs have increased greatly in recent years. Many doctoral students apply for postdocs because they will not only be competing with postdocs for first jobs, but also with assistant professors who want to move, and with adjunct faculty who want to get on a tenure track.
- *Teaching experience.* If you are interested in a teaching position after your studies, make an effort to get teaching experience during your graduate training or possibly even during postdoctoral study (which may or may not fit with the expectations of your research supervisor – you need to check). Academic institutions would rather hire someone who can get a running start teaching than someone who has no clue as to what teaching entails.
- *Service.* Many graduate students do not think of service to their advisor's lab group, or the department, or the university, as an important aspect of graduate training. Indeed, it probably is not the most important. But when it comes to hiring people, many institutions would rather have someone who will be willing to help others than someone who cares only about him- or herself. Showing you are willing to contribute to others is an important step in getting yourself hired. At the same time, you do not want to drown yourself in service activities so that you have little time for everything else.
- *Letters of recommendation.* You probably will need three or even possibly four letters of recommendation. You therefore have to start thinking early about ensuring that at least three, and possibly four, individuals (usually, faculty members) know you and your work well. One of these recommenders will almost certainly have to be your main advisor. Another might be a secondary dissertation advisor, and a third, someone for whom you have been a teaching assistant. Or, if you are going into practice, you will probably want to have a clinical supervisor write you a letter. Do *not* wait until near the end of your graduate career to start thinking about recommenders. It will be too late. Start thinking about them early, and then get to know them sooner rather than later.
- *What not to do.* In current times, there is a focus as perhaps never before not only on what to do, but also on what not to do. Of course, there are so many not-to-dos

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that no list could be complete. But here are three critical no-nos. First, don't blow it in your research. Show unquestionable integrity in your research conduct. Scholars are paying much more attention than they once did to issues of transparency and ethics in research. Make sure that what you claim matches what you did. Second, be extremely careful about issues of personal conduct. A sexual or other harassment claim against you can be a surefire career killer, and many people today do not wait for adjudication to shy away from hiring someone who merely is accused of harassment. This may be unfortunate, but it seems to be the way things are – institutions are understandably risk-averse and do not want to risk their reputation for someone who later will turn out to be problematical. Similarly, stay out of trouble with the law. Most legal claims can be found on the Internet. Third, be very careful of what you post on social media and do not assume that anything you write is undiscoverable. A lot of job candidates have learned too late that their "undiscoverable" postings were anything but.

4. Preparing your Materials

Different institutions require different kinds of materials. But, on average, there is a core of stuff that most institutions require, regardless of the kind of job for which you apply.

4.1 The Vita

The vita, also called the "curriculum vitae" or "CV," is a summary of your main accomplishments. Often, it is the document that hiring institutions look at first. If your vita does not fit the profile of the person they wish to hire, they may look no further. Hence, a strong vita is essential to your success.

The most basic elements of a vita are your (a) name; (b) contact information (postal address, phone number, e-mail address, fax if you have one); (c) present status (e.g., graduate student, postdoctoral fellow); (d) degrees (including anticipated ones), listing what they are, where they are from, and when they were conferred; (e) job experience, including consulting; (f) honors and awards, including scholarships and fellowships, if any; (g) publications, if any; (h) talks you have given and where you have given them; (i) teaching experience, if any; (j) special skills, such as in foreign or computer languages or in specialized techniques of laboratory work; (k) clinical experience, if any; (l) relevant volunteer experience; (m) reviewing you have done for journals, if any; (n) teaching interests; and (o) research interests (where relevant). Many people also list family information (such as whether they have a spouse and/or children), although this information is optional.

Do not list your social security number or birth date. Such information can be stolen and used against you. Also, do not list recognitions from before your college years, such as that you were valedictorian of your high school class or that you won a prize for an essay you wrote in middle school. Do not list irrelevant skills, such as

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that you sail or ski. Such listings might suggest you are less than serious. If you want, bring up such skills in the interview, perhaps in passing during the course of a conversation at dinner.

When you list publications, you should list both published and in-press articles. If an article is submitted for publication you may wish to list it, but do not say to where it has been submitted, as you may later be embarrassed if the article is rejected. Make sure that anything you list you can produce. Listing a paper that you cannot provide on demand marks you as deceptive. And listing things on your vita that are not true (e.g., phony degrees, papers as accepted that are not accepted, and so forth) can be grounds for you to be terminated from a job if the falsifications later are discovered. Hence, put yourself in the most favorable light, but *never* fabricate.

A strong vita is an important basis for getting a job. Hence, you should start building up the vita as soon as possible. Keep in mind the categories above, and try to fill them in. But remember that quality will usually be more important than quantity. A few good publications often are worth more than a smattering of not so good ones. Hiring institutions look at the quality of the journal in which the articles are published and are likely to be less impressed with publications that appear in weak or non-peer-reviewed journals. At the same time, not all your publications have to be in top journals. Sometimes, specialized journals are simply more appropriate for a given line of work.

Google analytics publishes statistical information on scholars, such as (a) total number of scholarly citations; (b) *h*-index – the number of publications, *h*, that have been cited at least *h* times; and (c) *i10* index – the number of publications that have been cited at least 10 times. Normally, for a first job, such statistics would be of little relevance. If you are significantly past the date of conferral of your PhD, however, you might want to consider setting up a Google Scholar page and listing the three statistics above (number of citations, *h*, *i10*). It is an unfortunate fact of contemporary life in academia that some search committees are paying more attention to statistics than they are to reading the publications on which the statistics are based.

4.2 The Personal Statement

Although some job candidates integrate the personal statement with the vita, I recommend keeping them separate, as they serve somewhat different functions. For academic jobs, one generally should have separate teaching and research statements. For clinical jobs, one may wish to prepare a statement regarding one's clinical experience and aspirations.

The personal statement is important, because it helps define who you are both as a professional and as a person. A good statement tells a story. It might tell about how your teaching or research interests developed, or it might tell how your various projects tie together. It is worth putting a lot of time into the statement and getting feedback on it from multiple faculty members and other colleagues. Be sure the statement shows a sense of purpose and represents a coherent research program.

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Although there is much to be said in many respects for being a dilettante, academic institutions tend to prefer candidates who have a clear, focused, and scientifically important research program.

Whereas a strong statement can generate interest in you, a weak statement can kill that interest. Statements may be weak for several reasons. Probably the most foolish thing you can do is not proofread what you write. Who wants to hire someone who turns in a statement with spelling, grammatical, or capitalization errors? An unfocused statement is also not likely to help you. Hiring institutions like to see focus, clarity, and coherence, not a stream-of-consciousness approach that seems incoherent to the reader, however coherent it may seem to you. Also, do not just say what you are interested in. Say what you have done about your interests. Make clear, to the extent you can, what is special about you. Why should the institution hire you and not someone else? What do you uniquely have to offer?

When and if you write a research statement, keep in mind that a major factor in hiring for a research-oriented institution is that you will have a research program that will keep you busy for the next several years, not just one that kept you busy in graduate school. So be sure to spell out in some detail not just what you have done, but also, what you plan to do. It also helps if you can show how the research you are doing does indeed form a coherent program rather than consisting of isolated bits with little relation to each other. Professionals making hiring decisions want to see that you have both a set of goals for where your research is going and a sense of how you are going to reach those goals.

It is especially helpful if you can draw connections between your research and the research currently being done at the potential hiring institution. How do you fit in with the people and programs of research already at the institution?

When and if you write a teaching statement, keep in mind not only your own interests, but also the needs of the institution. Almost all teaching institutions expect new faculty to teach some service courses, such as Introductory Psychology or Introductory Statistics. You are also more desirable to an institution if you can teach lower-division courses. So, when writing about your teaching plans, be sure to list lower-division (basic) courses as well as more specialized seminars. Also, I recommend you mention that you make clear that you are flexible with regard to teaching responsibilities – that the courses you are listing are only examples of what you would be willing to teach. You generally do not know when you write your teaching statement exactly what the hiring institution's teaching needs will be. They may not yet know either!

4.3 Letters of Recommendation

Letters of recommendation are required for almost all jobs. You cannot directly control what your recommenders say, of course. What you can do, however, is choose your recommenders carefully. Choose people who know you well and who, to the best of your knowledge, have a positive view of you – the more positive, the better, of course.

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In the real world, it also matters who the recommenders are. Chances are that a recommendation from a person of distinction will carry more weight than a recommendation from someone who is unknown or, worse, who has a bad reputation. Sometimes, in choosing recommenders, you have to trade off how well known the person is with what you think the person will say. But given the choice between a more well-known recommender and a better letter, I would advise you to go for what you believe will be the better letter.

Most important is that the person really knows you. No one is impressed to read a letter, even from a well-known person, when it is obvious that the person writing the letter has only the faintest idea of who the person is for whom he or she is writing the letter of recommendation. Also, people who knew you a long time ago but have not kept up with you tend to be poor choices as recommenders. It usually is obvious from their letters, even if they do not explicitly say so, that their knowledge of you is not up-to-date.

If you are more advanced, perhaps a postdoctoral fellow, you may want to include recommenders who know your work even if they do not know you well personally. Later in your career, many recommenders will know you only through your work.

Sometimes job applicants wonder whether they should include "political letters." Such letters might be from actual politicians (e.g., a Senator or a member of the House of Representatives) or might be from people who are supposedly "connected," such as a member of a Board of Trustees or a major donor. In my experience, such letters are much more likely to backfire than to have a positive effect. Unless you absolutely know that such a letter will be received warmly, do not arrange to have it sent. It sends a message about the kind of person you are, and probably not the message you want to send.

Also, do not send letters from people who are experts but in irrelevant fields. For example, if you took a course in a far-flung topic, perhaps just out of interest, and did exceptionally well in it, avoid the temptation to seek out a recommender whose professional expertise is far away from that of the area in which you work. For example, it may be great that you excelled in an art or English-literature class, but ask yourself whether the expertise of the letter-writer would have any relevance to the job you seek.

Sometimes, letters from people not directly in the field but whose work is relevant can be helpful. For example, if you are applying for a job in cognitive psychology, letters from professors in allied fields such as philosophy, computer science, neuroscience, or linguistics may be viewed with great interest.

4.4 Publications

For academic and even many non-academic jobs, you may be asked to provide sample publications. If you do not have any, of course, publications are not at issue. These days, it is increasingly difficult to get hired for serious academic jobs with no publications; it is not impossible, however, especially for jobs that

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emphasize teaching. If you do include publications, be sure to include them with appropriate citations. If you have the luxury of having produced a number of publications, you may wish to select only those you and your advisors consider to represent your best work. You can also send in-press and submitted or even to-be-submitted papers with your credentials. But do not send anything that seems half-baked.

A question of contemporary interest is whether to send material that is Internet-based, such as blog posts or articles that have been published by online outlets, such as medium.com. In general, I would use as a principal criterion whether the material has been professionally refereed. Many psychologists are active on social media these days. Probably, no hiring institution will tell you completely to stay away from social media. But hiring institutions may be reluctant to hire candidates who believe that social media postings are a substitute for publication in rigorously refereed journals. When applying for a first job, you want to show that you understand the coin of the realm in the hiring institution, whatever it is. Of course, if you are seeking a job at a company that specializes in social media (such as Facebook or Twitter), your Internet work may seem extremely relevant. You have to judge what to include, based on the hiring institution.

5. Finding out about Job Openings

How do you even find what jobs are available in the first place? In my experience, there are several major options:

- *APA Monitor on Psychology.* This monthly magazine, published by the American Psychological Association, publishes a list of almost every job opening in psychology in the United States, and some abroad. It lists jobs by universities within states.
- *APS Observer.* This monthly magazine, published by the American Psychological Society, contains a somewhat more limited selection of jobs. It specializes in academic jobs.
- *Chronicle of Higher Education.* This weekly newspaper contains a number of academic jobs but is especially useful in finding administrative jobs.
- *Electronic bulletin boards.* There are many electronic bulletin boards that post job listings. For example, many of the divisions of the American Psychological Association have listservs that post selected jobs. A popular source of jobs is Psych Wiki: http://psychjobsearch.wikidot.com/.
- *Newsletters of specialized organizations.* Many specialized organizations have newsletters that occasionally post jobs. You should therefore look at newsletters of special interest organizations that are relevant to your own professional interests.
- *Letters and phone calls to advisors.* Sometimes, faculty members receive letters or phone calls advising them of the availability of jobs. Thus, it is always a good idea to check with faculty members regarding possible job listings.

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- *Word of mouth at meetings and elsewhere.* Sometimes news about jobs is passed by word of mouth. For this reason, networking can be an excellent way of finding out about jobs. Think about all the possible contacts you have and use them. Talking to others on the job market or individuals who work for organizations that you might be interested in working for may inform you about jobs that are not yet posted, or even that will not be posted.
- *Creating jobs.* It doesn't happen much, but it happens. Three times in my life I had an idea for a job and spoke to high-level managers in the relevant organizations about what I thought I could do for them. In two cases, the jobs were summer jobs, and in one case, a part-time job. In all three cases, it worked: A job was created for me. You cannot count on jobs being made to order for you, but you never know until you try.

Today, many jobs for psychologists are outside of mainstream psychology departments. Therefore, be sure to check out relevant listings in the particular area in which you hope to work.

There is one thing you should be aware of. It is more a problem in academic administration than in teaching/research jobs, but it can happen anywhere. Some jobs are what I would call chimeras – essentially, they are fakes. They can be fakes for different reasons.

One reason a job proves to be fake is that the funding for the job is expected but never comes through. The institution posted the job for fear of not having applicants, lest the funding indeed came through. Sometimes institutions are transparent in saying that funding is pending, but other times they are not. Some jobs will never come through.

A second reason for a chimera is that the job *was* real but then gets pulled. A dean or other higher administrator may change their mind, perhaps deciding to reallocate the job or cancel it altogether. In these cases, people may even come for interviews and receive various kinds of feedback, only to find out afterward that the job has been deauthorized.

A third reason for a fake job is that the job is real but not for you – it is already filled or promised but the job ad "forgets" to mention it. Usually, that means there is an internal candidate who already has the job or the promise of the job, but sometimes it can be an external candidate who has been pre-screened. It may be that, legally, the institution is required to advertise the job, but they are merely going through the motions. Applying for such a job is literally a waste of time, unless you are the inside candidate. The problem is that usually the other applicants do not know that the opening is phony unless they have an inside source.

6. Kinds of Jobs

A degree in psychology opens up many different kinds of jobs – so many, it is not possible to list all of them in one short book chapter (but see Sternberg, 2017a).

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Different kinds of careers require different kinds of preparation, so the earlier you can decide on the kind of career you are interested in pursuing, the better off you are likely to be in preparing yourself appropriately. For example, if you wish to become a practicing psychologist, you will need to prepare for an internship. If you wish to prepare for an assistant professorship, you will need to get your publication record in order. You also may wish to consider a postdoctoral fellowship before going on the market for assistant professorships. These days, many jobs are filled by candidates at the postdoctoral rather than the doctoral level.

The best thing you can do to prepare is to be flexible. Many graduate students do not know exactly what they want to do when they start. Therefore, acquiring a broad range of skills will serve you well later on. For example, courses on statistics or on research methods will probably serve you well in almost any career. Many psychologists, even those in practice, teach at least part-time, so gaining teaching experience also will be useful for a wide variety of jobs. Acquiring experiences that will be useful in a variety of jobs can enable you to delay a bit your zeroing in on exactly what kind of job you want.

A good source of information on different kinds of jobs is *Career Paths in Psychology* (Sternberg, 2017a), which describes different kinds of careers, including (a) what the career is, (b) how to prepare for the career, (c) typical activities people pursue while they engage in the career, (d) the approximate range of financial compensation for people in the job, (e) the advantages and disadvantages to the career perceived by people in the job, (f) personal and professional attributes desirable for success in the career, and (g) opportunities for employment and advancement in the career. The book covers academic careers (in a psychology department, a school of education, a business school, a school of public policy, a medical school); careers in clinical, counseling, and community psychology, both within and outside hospitals; careers in diverse organizations (government, schools, organizations, consulting, etc.); and careers in diverse areas of psychology (human factors, military, and health, etc.). Social media providers are opening up new sources of jobs that many graduate students never would have thought of when they were starting out. The book also contains references suggesting other places one can seek information about careers.

7. The Job Interview

Regardless of the type of job you pursue, one of the most important events in getting a job is the job interview. If you are fortunate enough to be called for a job interview, the chances are that your performance in the interview will determine, to a large extent, whether you become merely one of a number of candidates who are interviewed or, instead, the candidate who is (first) offered the job. Thus, you wish to prepare assiduously for the job interview.

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7.1 The Job Talk

The job interview may have many elements, but the central element almost always is the job talk. There is no one formula for a successful job talk, but there are elements that are common to many successful job talks.

- *The job talk is a performance.* Remember that when you speak you are performing. Good performances always require a great deal of preparation. If you give the talk off the cuff, it will show. And you most likely will not get the job. Some professionals appear very spontaneous. In fact, it is their enormous amount of practice that enables them to *appear* to be spontaneous.
- *Keep your audience in mind.* You may know the meanings of all the jargon-words you use in the talk. Typically, though, the audience for a talk is quite broad, including many people who have only a vague knowledge of the area in which you work. Therefore, prepare for a general audience. Usually, the audience will have good background in general psychology, but not necessarily in your specialty. On the one hand, you don't want to insult the audience by being too elementary. But you are much more likely to lose the audience than to insult it. Therefore, explain all terms that are not generally known and make sure the talk is comprehensible to almost everyone.
- *Motivate the talk.* Don't expect your audience to know why your work is interesting or important. You need to motivate your talk up front by explaining why you are doing what you are doing and why anyone in his or her right mind should want to learn about it! Starting off your talk with a concrete example of the phenomenon about which you will be talking often helps. Often, speakers get or lose their audience in the first minute or so. Therefore, start strong.
- *Be clear on what question or questions you are addressing.* Always be clear about what question or questions you are addressing. If you are not, your audience is likely to be confused about what you are trying to do, and why.
- *Rehearse, rehearse, rehearse.* I generally encourage job candidates to give the job talk at least three times before presenting it for real. Virtually no one gives their best presentation the first time they present. The more similar your audience is to the audience to which you will present your job talk, the better. Often, lab groups scheduled research meetings provide a forum for practice talks.
- *Time yourself.* It is embarrassing to finish a job talk with too much time to spare. You look underprepared. It is no better to have much too much material, and either to stop in the middle of the talk or to start rushing at the end. Rushing does not work. And remember to allow time for interruptions.
- *Organize.* A good talk is like a story, with a beginning, a middle, and an end (at least, the end up to wherever you are in the story). Say what you are going to say, say it, and then, at the end, say it again. Make sure that anyone in the audience can follow your talk. Disorganized talks often bespeak disorganized minds, and given the choice, most institutions would prefer to hire people who think in an organized way.

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- *Be enthusiastic.* Enthusiasm often is contagious. If you are enthusiastic about your work, others may well be. But if you sound bored, others are likely to be bored, no matter how intrinsically interesting the work may be.
- *Cite relevant work, especially of people in the audience.* Audiences expect you to be aware of the relevant literature in your field, and of the intellectual antecedents of the work you have done. Therefore, be sure to cite near the beginning of the talk past work that led up to yours. If someone in the audience has done work that is relevant, it is essential that you cite that work. It makes no sense to insult someone who might have a potential say in your being hired!
- *Be prepared for questions.* Sometimes, job candidates give a good talk, only to blow their chances of getting the job during the question period. By rehearsing your talk, you can get a sense of what kinds of questions you are likely to get. Have answers prepared to the tough ones. But there may always be questions that are unexpected. Therefore, you need to be prepared for the unexpected. It is very rare that a question demolishes a talk. (It has happened to me once in my career, and it was truly a drag.) Chances are no one will demolish you. But some people may try. Never respond defensively; it makes you, not the questioner, look bad. But do not feel like you have to agree with everything everyone says, just because you are on a job interview. People who capitulate too easily appear to lack spine. Give an honest, constructive response. If you just cannot answer a question, tell the truth. People usually can tell if you are faking it. You may be able to think of an answer later, and then respond. I often start off my talks by saying that, during the talk, I welcome questions of clarification, but prefer that questions that go beyond clarification wait until the end. If people ask whatever comes to mind during the talk, the risk is that you will finish very little of what you prepared, no matter how well you timed the talk in advance.
- *Never demean or insult a questioner or give a flip answer.* Inevitably, you will sometimes receive questions that undermine your faith in humankind. How could anyone ask a question that stupid? Never, ever demean or insult a questioner. There are several reasons for this. First, you probably do not know who the questioner is. I'm sorry to say that when I applied for my first job, I got a question from a member of the audience – who looked like a graduate student – that I thought was quite silly. I gave a flip answer. Unfortunately, the questioner was a senior faculty member in the area to which I was applying for a job. I didn't get the job. Second, what for you may seem like a stupid question may not seem to be a stupid question to the questioner or others in the audience. A flip or insulting answer may therefore be viewed as quite inappropriate. Third, you portray yourself in an unflattering light when you react in a flip or insulting way.
- *Do not be a slave to your audiovisuals.* Over the course of a career, almost everything that can go wrong will. There will be PowerPoint projectors that do not work. There will be problems with lighting and microphones. There will be rooms that are too small or too large. You need to be prepared for all eventualities. I usually try to make sure I have backup. So, if PowerPoint does not work,

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I have handouts in reserve. Or I can manage with no audiovisuals at all. One would like to believe that major screw-ups never happen during job talks because the talks are so important, but they happen with some frequency. You can lose valuable time if you are not prepared. So be ready for the unexpected and don't be totally reliant on one source of audiovisual aids.

- *Get the level of detail right.* The right level of detail for a talk is a sometimes hard-to-find middle ground. When you go into great levels of detail about your participants, materials, procedures, and so forth, you bore people; but when you give insufficient details, you lose them. In a talk, it is important to distinguish the forest from the trees, but to make sure that you tell enough about the trees so that people can understand the nature of forest.
- *Have a clear take-home message.* Make sure that, at the end of the talk, people leave with a clear take-home message regarding what you tried to show, what you did show, what it means, and why they should care.

What are the principal mistakes candidates make in their talks? There are many possible mistakes, but I would highlight five:

1. *Too much content.* The candidate wants to show everything he or she has ever thought of and done. The talk is over-packed. People can't follow it. Usually, the talk ends up being rushed, ensuring no one will understand it. They are not impressed. You need to be selective in what you present.
2. *Lack of motivation for the work.* The candidate does not make clear why he or she did the research, and why anyone should care about it. They think the research will sell itself. It doesn't.
3. *Too technical.* The speaker wants to show how expert or technically sophisticated they are. They are talking only to the most technically sophisticated in the audience. The rest have no clue what is going on.
4. *The candidate gives irrelevant, incoherent, or nonsensical answers to questions.* The result is that the talk seems to have been written by an advisor rather than by the candidate.
5. *The candidate does not say and show where the work is going.* The audience is unclear as to what follow-ups there will be, if any.
6. *The candidate is boring.* They read, or speak in a monotone, or speak too softly so people can't hear, or don't seem interested in the work, so the audience isn't either.
7. *The candidate can't admit to a mistake or to not knowing something.* It happens during talks that the speakers make mistakes or show that they cannot answer a question. If you make a mistake, admit it and say you will look into it and correct it as necessary. If you can't answer a question, say you will look into it and get back to the questioner if they would like.
8. *The talk is too narrow or too broad.* If the talk is too narrow, it just does not appeal to people outside the field of the work. If the talk is too broad, it may sound like the candidate knows a little about a lot but a lot only about a little.

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Sometimes, especially at institutions that emphasize teaching, there will be two separate job talks, one a research talk and the other a teaching talk. In these cases, you must prepare appropriately, making sure that each talk is geared to satisfy the purpose for which it is given.

7.2 Informal Conversations

Although the center of the job interview is the job talk, another important aspect of it is the series of informal conversations one typically has with potential future colleagues, such as faculty members or practicing psychologists, sometimes with graduate students, and sometimes, with administrators outside the unit in which one is to work. These conversations, almost as much as a job interview, can make or break a job offer. Therefore, keep in mind some important tips about the conversations:

- *Find out about your potential future colleagues in advance.* People almost inevitably are flattered when you know about them and their work; some people, especially more senior ones, may be insulted when you do not. Before you go to the interview, learn as much as you can about the people you are likely to talk to, and then show your knowledge (unobtrusively) in your conversations with them.
- *Show your interest in the work of the people with whom you speak.* One of the worst but most frequent errors of job candidates is to appear self-preoccupied and interested only in their own work. Egocentric people make bad colleagues and are not prime candidates to be hired. By showing an interest in the work of others and in what you can contribute to it, you not only paint a flattering portrait of yourself, but you also open yourself up to learning experiences you might otherwise never have.
- *Show your interest in the institution.* You want to show that you know the institution to which you are applying, and that you would be thrilled to receive a job offer. Communicating the message that you do not really want to go to a place is a pretty good way of not getting a job: No institution wants to be turned down!
- *Be modest but not self-effacing.* No one likes a show-off. So maintaining an appropriate level of modesty helps show that you have a perspective on yourself and your work. But do not belittle yourself: If you do not have confidence in yourself, you may find that others will not either.
- *Disagree if you must, but don't lose your cool.* Most likely, one or more of your conversational partners will challenge some of your work, especially if you talk to people after the job talk. Conversations during job interviews are terrible places to lose your temper. You do not have to be disingenuous and pretend to agree with others when you do not.
- *Be yourself.* People can tell when you are faking it.
- *Watch out for your non-verbal signals.* When you are in a job interview situation, you are likely to be nervous. You also are likely to leak non-verbal signals

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showing how you really feel, regardless of what you say. Be wary, therefore, of any non-verbal signals you may leak.

- *Do not speak negatively of others.* People who interview you may dump on their colleagues, administrators, or others. They also may ask you about colleagues in your own institution about whom they are curious. People often share gossip, particularly negative gossip, in order to strengthen connections with others. But, even if you are invited to speak negatively, a job interview is not the place to tell what you really think either about your colleagues back in your own department or in the hiring department. You simply never know what will get back to whom. Negative comments are far more likely to hurt you than to help you.
- *Do not be defensive.* If your meetings are after your talk, or even perhaps if they are before, some interviewers may use the opportunity of a personal conversation to see how you take criticism. A job interview is definitely not the place to be defensive. Accept feedback gladly, even if it is negative, and show you value the feedback you get.
- *If there is a cocktail hour or a dinner, minimize your drinking of alcohol or don't drink any at all.* The interviewers may actually want to see what you are like when you have had a few drinks. It's up to you, regardless of what you are like after drinking, not to let them find out. You cannot afford to lose normal inhibitions and perhaps say or do something you later will regret.

8. The Perspectives of the Search Committee

It would be nice if there were secrets that would crack open the deliberation process of the search committee. There are no such secrets, because different search committees value different things. Moreover, hiring decisions typically go to a faculty vote, at which point anything can happen. However, I think the main issues are these, with different weights for different search committees.

- *General fit to department.* Departments want someone who will fit in – who shares their values, who meets their teaching and research needs, who will be a good colleague. A candidate could be strong on many dimensions, but if the individual does not seem to fit with the department, the candidate is likely not to get hired. If you want to know what people are looking for, you might try simply asking them what is important to them. If what they value is not what you value, you probably are in the wrong place!
- *Specific fit to job.* Beyond general fit, departments typically have a search image in mind. It might be limited to an area (such as social psychology) or even to a particular specialty within an area (such as social cognition). If you do not do what the department is looking for, you have a tougher sell ahead of you.
- *Potential for research.* Especially at the entry levels of the academic job market, you are selling not so much who you have been but who you will be. You need to convince the committee that you are someone with a wonderful future in front of you.

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- *Teaching.* Departments vary greatly in how much they value teaching, but almost all departments want someone who is at least a good teacher, if not necessarily a great one. Typically, your job talk and letters of reference are the main information departments get regarding your teaching.
- *Willingness to give as well as to take.* It is surprising how many candidates appear to be focused only on themselves and their own research. Showing interest in the work of others and in other people, more generally, can make a big difference to a final outcome.
- *Professional charisma.* Departments want people who will make them proud – who will make them stand out from the pack. Professional charisma is different from personal charisma – the department is not hiring a future political leader. They want someone who will stand out from the pack professionally – as a teacher, researcher, or clinician.
- *Professional ethics.* Departments want people who will not get into trouble.

9. Questions to Ask on a Job Interview

The questions you ask on a job interview will vary with the issues that concern you. You should consult the department's web site for general information. However, here are some questions that candidates often ask (see Table 29.1). Often, the most appropriate person to ask is the Chair or Dean, although it sometimes is interesting to obtain a variety of perspectives.

10. Negotiations

If you are fortunate enough to get a job offer, there is room for negotiation! Here are the things that are most commonly negotiated:

- *Salary.* At the junior level, there is often some but not much room for negotiation. Sometimes having a competitive offer helps. But you should be very low-key in such negotiations.
- *Start-up funds.* Many universities will give start-up funds. You should find out the range of start-up funds available, if any are available at all. Then you may wish to prepare a budget.
- *Employment opportunities for significant others.* Many, but not all universities are willing to help find employment for significant others.
- *Lab space.* Many universities will provide lab space if you wish it.
- *Teaching load.* Some universities will negotiate a reduced teaching load in the first year. But they will generally not make a special arrangement beyond that.

My advice is to keep demands modest. When you are senior scholar, you will have more negotiating room. For a first job, asking for too much can put off the people you most need to support you later on. I also would not ask about the university policy on consulting when you are seeking a first job. The message you

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Table 29.1 *Sample questions to ask on a job interview*

General Questions

- What is the size of the department?
- What is the structure of the department (different tracks, disciplines, etc.)?
- What is the number of faculty at each rank?
- What are the department's future expansion (or contraction) plans?
- What is the department's standing within the university?
- How are graduate students matched with faculty?
- How are graduate admissions handled, in general?
- How long does it typically take for graduate students to finish the program?
- Does the graduate program have both masters and doctoral students, or just one or the other?
- For clinical psychologists, what is the relative emphasis on research versus clinical work?
- What is the relationship between subdisciplines or areas within the department?
- What is the relationship between psychology and other departments?
- Are any of the faculty in private practice? Are there any guidelines with respect to private practice or consulting?

Responsibilities

- What is the teaching load?
- Is there any reduction in teaching load during the first year?
- Is there any reduction in teaching load for departmental service? For grants?
- Can you buy out of teaching with grants?
- Is summer teaching expected?
- What is the proportion of junior faculty that is tenured?
- What are the expectations for tenure?
- What are the expectations with regard to committee work?

Resources

- How much lab space can you expect? Where will it be?
- How are research assistants and teaching assistants assigned?
- How are resources like secretaries, photocopying, postage, long-distance calling, and parking handled?
- What kinds of computer equipment and support can one expect?
- What library services are available?
- What kinds of mentorship are available for junior faculty?

Benefits

- What kinds of travel funds are available from the department?
- What kinds of medical, dental, and retirement plans are offered by the university?
- Are there opportunities for summer funding?
- What is a typical starting salary?

Grants/Research

- What are the university's expectations with regard to obtaining outside grant funding?
- What kinds of internal grant funding are available?
- What kinds of participant populations are available? Is there a subject pool?
- Is there an office of sponsored research in the university or college?
- How much time is typically available for research?
- What is the quality of the students, and might they reasonably become involved in research?

(continued)

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Table 29.1 *(continued)*

Location
• What are the real-estate opportunities available?
• What is the cost of living?
• Is there any university assistance with mortgages?
Faculty Relations
• Are relations between junior faculty and senior faculty cordial?
• Is collaboration among faculty encouraged (or discouraged)?
• Why do people decide to come to the university? Why do some people not decide to come?

send may be that you are not serious about the job but rather care about using it as a springboard to earn extra money on the side. This is not the message you want to send.

11. Conclusions

You cannot guarantee yourself the job you want, or even a good job. But there is a lot you can do to improve your chances of getting the job you want. Preparing early for your eventual foray into the job market will improve your chances of effectively marketing yourself. By following the suggestions in this chapter, you will find yourself a step ahead in getting your ideal job. But if you do not get that job, all is not lost. Many people start off with jobs that were not what they hoped for, and either find that they are much happier than they expected they would be, or that, within a few years, they can move to a job that represents a better match to what they want. So, if you are patient, chances are quite good that sooner or later, you will end up in a position that makes you happy.

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