# Interviewing for Internships

Peter M. Monti, Brown University

Although internship training sites vary with respect to their policy as to whether or not an interview is a necessary part of the application process, most training sites as well as applicants would agree that an interview is important. Many of the interesting points made in contributions to this series by Linehan (1983), Rohsenow (1985), and Levendusky (1986) are appropriate for the internship interview as well. However, there are some features about the internship interview that make it worthy of discussion apart from other interviews.

Although it has been known for some time that the characteristics of predoctoral internship sites vary a great deal (Kurz, Fuchs, Dabek, Kurtz, & Helfrich, 1982; Monti, Wallander, & De Laney, 1983), it has become increasingly clear that it is impossible to predict characteristics of internships on the basis of aspects such as APA approval status or type of clinical setting (e.g. medical school vs. college counseling center, Kurz et al.). Internship brochures, if they are accurate and detailed, can be helpful to the internship applicant; however, both applicants and internships sites have usually relied on the personal interview for first-hand information about each other.

Survey studies have suggested that both internships and applicants realize the importance of the internship interview. In a survey of APA and non-APA-approved internship programs, Drummond, Rodolfa, and Smith (1981) found that internship directors rated the personal interview highly as a criterion for selection. Both APA-approved and non-APA-approved programs weighted the interview equally. Interestingly, letters of recommendation and practicum experiences were also weighted most heavily by both types of programs. From the graduate students' perspective, Tedesco (1979) found that internship applicants rated whether or not a personal interview was required as being of moderate importance with respect to their decision to apply for an internship at a particular institution. While I know of no data that speak to the importance of the interview from the intern applicant's perspective regarding final selection, my experience in talking with interns over the past 20 years suggests that they consider the interview to be very significant.

Given the apparent importance of the internship interview, what aspects of the interview process make it different from the job interview? The remainder of this article will discuss such distinctions as well as give some tips for internship interviewing. One important characteristic that sets apart getting a good internship from other application processes is the fact that most training sites have many training positions to offer - up to 15-20 in some instances - not just one job. This can make the interview process very cumbersome. Therefore, most centers interview only those candidates who have made it through an initial screening process. An applicant who is seriously interested in a particular site should first determine the interview policy of that site. This is important

since some programs choose to interview only those whom they invite, and some may negatively evaluate drop-in visitors (Blear & Orgel, 1980). Determining an interview policy can be most easily accomplished by a telephone call to the Internship Director's office. Do not hesitate to call if you are in doubt. Be sure to call relatively early in the academic year, perhaps around Thanksgiving.

Another related point is that you should not assume anything since admissions policies and procedures may change. For example, at the Brown University Internship Consortium, we always attempted to interview anyone who requested an interview. However, we did not solicit interviews. This policy was misinterpreted by some applicants who assumed a lack of interest on our part since they were not invited for an interview. Beginning in 1985, we adopted a screening process. Even with this mechanism in place, we still conduct approximately 250 interviews during the first three weeks of January.

Once you have been granted an interview, be prepared for it! Although this point may seem obvious, for many internship applicants, the internship interview may be their first professional employment interview. It would be useful for applicants to start by familiarizing themselves with the Association of Psychology Postdoctoral and Internship Centers (APPIC) Guidelines and the Directory of Internship and Postdoctoral Programs in Professional Psychology (APPIC, 1996-1997). The Directory provides descriptions of internship and programs of interest, outlines the details of the admissions procedure, and provides such useful information as stipend amounts. Another publication that should be of interest is the Directory of Psychology Internships: Programs Offering Behavioral Training (AABT, 1997). This directory focuses on self-defined behavioral programs. It features information on the specialty areas of faculty, seminars offered, stipend amounts, and estimates of the cost of housing in the vicinity of the training program.

Role playing your responses to some of the questions that follow may be especially helpful. Getting feedback from a friend or faculty member can further enhance your style. Since most interviewers will be conducting many interviews during a relatively short period, the format and state of consciousness of the interviewer will vary greatly (not to mention your state of consciousness if you're lucky enough to get 5 to 6 interviews back-to-back!). The interviewer may start with a series of questions addressed to you, or you may be asked if you have questions. Many of the suggested questions published in A Proposed Interviewing Guide for Internship Applicants (Hersh & Poey, 1984) are likely to come up. Typical examples of general requests are "What interests you in our internship program?" and "Describe your formulation and treatment of a current case." More specific questions may focus on assessment ("What do you think about the Rorchach?"), supervision, and work with spe-

cialized populations. As Hersh and Poey suggest, questions on your future plans and goals are usually saved for the end of the interview. We recommend that you give these questions some thought in advance. Your style is as important as the content of your responses. For example, an applicant who shows internal consistency in his/her plans, goals, and so forth, is more likely to impress the interviewer.

In addition to preparing for specific questions, another important preparatory step is to know your interviewers. Most centers will inform prospective applicants who will be interviewing them several weeks prior to the visit. If you do not recognize the names of your interviewers, try to obtain some information about them. A publication that might prove helpful in this regard is the Directory of Research Opportunities for Clinical Psychology Interns (Curran, 1982). This directory consists of a compilation of questionnaires focusing on research opportunities in internships. Over 200 centers responded to the survey, which contains data on internship centers as well as on individual faculty members. Other sources on information include your current professors, your peers, and former graduate students from your program who have completed internships at programs where you intend to apply. You can also telephone an internship site and ask to talk with a current intern about the internship program. Once you have obtained information about your interviewer, use it with care! Faculty become suspicious when 75% of the applicants state an interest in their research area.

During the interview you will no doubt be given the opportunity to ask questions. It is recommended that you have some prepared. A lack of questions on your part may be interpreted (correctly or otherwise) as lack of interest. Your questions should reflect the fact that you have read the internship brochure and have given it some thought. For example, you may ask for clarification of points made in the brochure, about apparent inconsistencies between what is published in the brochure and what you hear from a current intern, or where interns have found employment. In general, it would be best to avoid questions that reflect less than optimal motivation or a sense of entitlement - even if you feel that you deserve it! For example, asking for full-time secretarial support to type your dissertation may be a little bit out of line. A comprehensive list of suggested questions is provided by Hersh and Poey (1984).

As well as avoiding communicating a sense of entitlement, you should also avoid coming across as a wimp. Remember, your interviewer is likely to be someone highly trained in the art of interviewing. I recall a story told by a colleague who, during an interview, asked whether a married applicant had any children. The applicant was so taken aback by the question he spontaneously responded, "No, but I could have some." While one might take issue with the legitimacy of the question, few would argue that the applicant's response was not in his best interest.

Finally, it is obvious that the interview and selection process can be highly charged for both applicants and interviewers. This is especially so given the increased competition for APA-approved internship training placements. As Hersh and Poey (1984) point out, sometimes the pressure is handled by attempting to make arrangements contrary to the APPIC guidelines (APPIC, 1996). "A potentially problematic area is when an intern is asked to rank order the internship among his or her potential choices" (Hersh & Poey, p.5). Such questions are most inappropriate and contrary to APPIC guidelines. Indeed, APPIC policy specifically indicates that "internship programs may not solicit information regarding an applicant's ranking of programs or his/her intention to accept or decline an offer of admission until after that offer is officially tendered" (p. 11). Nevertheless, I personally feel that prospective interns have nothing to lose by letting their first choice know their preference. Other choices are probably better presented in a range. For example, I sometimes hear, "Brown is one of my top three choices." Telling more than one site that they are your first choice can be risky for both you and your graduate program. Applicants are encouraged by me as well as by APPIC to discuss any procedural and/or ethical concerns with their respective Directors of Clinical Training.

In closing, I would like to invite readers of this article to a forum on internship training sites that has been sponsored by AABT for the past 15 or so years. The forum is usually designed in question-and-answer format with a panel of Directors of Internship Training, each responding in turn to questions solicited from a large audience consisting of students, faculty members, and sometimes Directors of Clinical Training. The forum has become one of the most well-attended events at AABT, and it is usually interesting and informative for both prospective interns and training sites. Immediately following the forum, various stations are set up around a large lecture room so that prospective interns can touch base with programs that might be of interest. Faculty members and current interns are usually available to answer questions. This may be a good opportunity to "break the ice" with programs that you may not have been in contact with previously.

Good luck on your interviews!

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# Locating the Job

## Sheridan Phillips, University of Maryland School of Medicine

Locating a good position is a relatively straightforward process for the graduate student with a strong record and mentor, particularly if she or he is unattached and thus geographically mobile. However, finding the first job or making subsequent moves can be complicated by geographic constraints. Marwell, Rosenfeld, and Spilerman (1979) have suggested that such restrictions hamper women's academic careers more often than men's careers. Given current social changes in sex roles, though, the problem of geographic constraints is becoming increasingly relevant for both sexes. Virtually all two-career couples must, at some point, confront the conflicting job offer dilemma. Even if their long term strategy is to take turns regarding who may accept their first choice, one member or the other will be in the position of job hunting within a given geographic area. Further, this location may be at some distance and also be unfamiliar territory. Finally, an irresistible offer may materialize suddenly for one member of the couple and necessitate moving quickly. This article is addressed to the other member of the couple, who needs to locate a desirable position in an unfamiliar area.

#### Preparation for the Job Search

1. Getting your head together: The first stage often involves coping with the sudden shock of imminent unemployment. Even highly productive professionals who have maintained their marketability can find this surprisingly traumatic, particularly if they have previously always been in control of their career decisions. There may be a strong temptation to reduce this anxiety by accepting the first position which is offered, whatever it might be. Coping skills must thus be utilized throughout the job-hunting process. It can be helpful, for example, to set a deadline which one will contract not to accept any offer unless it is extremely appealing.

Following anxiety management, the next step is goal setting. It is crucial to identify what general type of professional activity is desired, in what settings, and to designate clear priorities or preferences (see example in Table 1). Most positions tend to involve predominantly one activity, so if a variety of activities is desired, one option would be to combine two half-time jobs. The appeal of a mixture of activities would

then have to be weighed against the disadvantages of part-time positions, which generally offer less money, fringe benefits, and prestige.

Attractive positions exist in addition to those in academic departments of psychology. Federal, state, and local agencies employ psychologists, largely for administrative or program development work, though some offer research or clinical positions as well. Private industry and corporations also employ psychologists. In addition to the traditional personnel positions, many organizations review and conduct research, some of which is contracted from the federal government. Finally, especially with the current surge of interest in behavioral aspects of health care, schools of medicine offer exciting possibilities (Nathan, Lubin, Matarazzo, & Persely, 1979). An even more recent development has been the inclusion of psychologists in private practices of medicine (e.g., working with a group of pediatricians). Individuals who are interested in nontraditional jobs may do well to read Professional Psychology. This journal reports research in a variety of applied areas, including surveys of job prospects, and discusses the hot issues in different settings. For example, issues contain articles related to the role of psychology in industry (Wolf & Ozehosky, 1978), forensics (Kurke, 1980), correctional institutions (Pallone, Hennessy, & LaRosa, 1980), police departments (Parisher, Rios, & Reilley, 1979), government (Paquin, 1977), health maintenance organizations (Budman & Del Gaudio, 1979), and medical school (Johnson & Williams, 1979; Lubin et al., 1979).

2. Getting the first contacts. Clear identification of goals will greatly facilitate the next step: finding the initial contacts. This is best accomplished by speaking with relatively senior individuals who are familiar with you and your work (e.g., professors in graduate school, job supervisors). Telling them what general type of position is desired and in what location will provide a beginning list of individuals to contact. It is crucial to have permission to say Dr. X suggested I might call you. Note that personal contact is the key to this process (for example, see Habinek & Zehmeister, 1978).

At this point, it also is wise to consult the *Monitor* and other publications that advertise positions (e.g., the Sunday *New York Times* and the

#### Table 1

An Example of Setting Priorities Regarding Professional Positions Desired

ACTIVITY SETTING

First Choice Teaching/research academic psychology

academic medicine

Second Choice Clinical Service (part-time) reputable clinic

and

Teaching (part-time) academic department

Administration/Program development academic/research orientation

Third Choice Clinical service reputable clinic or group practice, solo

Residential unit academic orientation

Administration/Program development federal, state, local government

#### Table 2

## Sample Outline of a Beginning C.V. and a Mature C.V.

BEGINNING C.V.

Personal
Education
Professional Organizations (membership)
Teaching Experience (includes teaching assistantships)

Formal Research Experience & Honors (Includes grants, awards, research assistantships)

Clinical Experience
(Includes placements during graduate training, internship, & consulting experience)
Publications

Presentations at Scientific Meetings
Works in Progress (or areas of interest)
 (includes brief description of projects &
 manuscripts submitted or in preparation)
Areas of Clinical Specialization
References (Name, title, address of three to five individuals)

Chronicle of Higher Education). It is true that some of these positions have already been targeted for a particular individual, and the notice may merely represent pro forma advertising to conform to governmental or institutional requirements. However, many ads represent true vacancies. Also, even if there is already a favored contender, a new applicant who is even better qualified for the position may well be considered seriously.

3. The cover letter and C.V. The next step is to prepare a curriculum vitae (C.V.) and a basic cover letter (no longer than one page) to send with it. It generally is desirable to prepare several versions, particularly of the cover letter, each of which emphasizes different aspects of your training, experience, and interests. Both the letter and the C.V. should be extremely well written, succinct, and to the point. They should also be neatly typed and carefully proofread (typographical errors may be seen as being symptomatic of carelessness). If not an excellent typist yourself, seriously consider paying for professional assistance.

The cover letter is crucial. Keep in mind that most C.V.s are not read (generally because the employer is not enticed to do so). The function of the cover letter is to get the potential employer into the tent. Only then can the C.V. perform its function: selling the product (you). In preparing the C.V., it is useful to read, as samples, the C.V.s of other colleagues. It also is advisable to invite review of your own draft by a senior colleague who has good judgment and who is honest. Probably the most frequent mistake made by young professionals is to pad their C.V. Do not insult the intelligence of your prospective employer by including the following under Publications: manuscripts submitted, manuscripts in progress, papers presented at conferences (unless published in Proceedings of X Conference), or references to your work in a newspaper or magazine. It is appropriate for a new Ph.D. to describe areas of interest or work in progress, but this should be clearly labeled as such in a separate section. In time, your C.V. will evolve and it will no longer be necessary, or appropriate, to include some sections (see Table 2 for a sample outline of a beginning C.V.) and a mature C.V.). In general, remember: three pages of pure gold is infinitely preferable to seven pages that require a prospector to detect actual accomplishments. Consider that the employer, generally a busy individual, may have to review between 50 and 200 C.V.s and cover letters to locate a few qualified candidates to interview.

MATURE C.V.

Personal Education

Professional Organizations (membership, committees, offices)

Academic or Research Positions

Research Support Honors & Awards Editorial Assignments

Consultantships, Advisory Boards, Special Committees

Clinical Positions

Publications
Journal Articles
Books & Chapters in Books
Book Reviews & Comments
Other (tests, pamphlets, tapes)

#### **Initiating the Search**

1. Making the contacts. After preparing the C.V. and a basic letter, arrange for a time (preferably three consecutive days), during working hours, with uninterrupted access to a phone. Begin with initial contacts identified, and say something like "My name is \_\_\_\_, and I'm a psychologist. I trained at \_\_\_\_, and have worked for years at \_\_\_\_. Dr. \_\_\_ suggested that I call you since I expect to be moving to \_\_\_ in \_\_\_ months. I'd very much appreciate your advice regarding the job situation in your area, and any suggestions you may have regarding possibilities I might explore." DO NOT ask if they have a job available. This will generally make the individual uneasy, and the easiest response is a quick no, whereas being asked for advice results in most of us being expansive. If there is a job opening in this person's department or agency, this is almost certain to be mentioned. Most individuals who are contacted will be friendly and helpful, probably will not have an opening themselves, but will contribute useful information regarding the general job market in their area. Also, they will usually suggest several other individuals to contact. For each new contact, it is important to provide the name of the individual who suggested this contact. This process functions like a chain letter. Beginning with six initial contacts will quickly generate 30 to 60 further contacts, the actual number depending upon one's perseverance.

The logistics of this phone marathon are challenging. It is preferable to initiate a phone call, rather than to receive a return call, since it is easier to remember the appropriate names and agency or department. Repeated calls can be avoided, however, if you can identify when the individual will be in his or her office. Some return calls cannot be avoided, though, so it is useful to specify a convenient time during which you will wait for incoming calls (it also is courteous to suggest that these be made collect). If at all possible, do not be unavailable or on another line when calls are returned. Finally, do not have your secretary place these calls: do it yourself.

2. Following up. It is important to follow up any possibility, however tenuous, which appears potentially desirable by sending the appropriate cover letter and C.V. Do not wait to be asked—take an active, though tactful, stance. Send your C.V. to all contacts, with a thank you

cover letter. Having previously identified priorities will assist in eliminating many leads, enabling you to invest time and energy in pursuing those opportunities that are most desired. It is extremely advantageous to visit in person, even prior to an official interview. The expense can be offset by scheduling several meetings during a single trip.

In conclusion, this process is not easy. The approach suggested above requires stamina, a good memory, assertion, appropriate insensitivity to rejection, avoidance of paranoid feelings, and tolerance of ambiguity. It also necessitates the willingness to pay staggering phone bills, and a moderate amount for secretarial assistance, duplicating fees, and postage. However, most psychologists have the requisite social, cognitive, and coping skills, and having obtained a doctorate virtually guarantees that an individual is persevering. Locating a satisfying job certainly warrants the financial investment, which is tax deductible and will recede into perspective after several months on the new job. The personal experiences of the author and her colleagues and friends indicate that this general approach will be useful in locating an exciting position in a geographic area that is initially totally unfamiliar.

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# Interviewing to Get the Job

## Marsha M. Linehan, University of Washington

Getting a job in psychology, or in practically any area, inevitably requires one to successfully negotiate one or more in-person interviews. An important area of concern to job applicants, therefore, is the question of what one should expect during these interviews and how one should conduct oneself to maximize the chances of success. The purpose of this paper is to present a set of interview guidelines for job applicants. The comments are based on my own reactions to job applicants, discussion with colleagues about their reactions (as well as listening to numerous faculty discussions about job applicants), my own experiences (both successful and unsuccessful) in job interviewing, and analysis with my students of their experiences in the job market. By necessity, the guidelines are subjective and surely will not apply to all situations. To a certain extent, they are slanted towards interviewing for academic jobs, although efforts have been made to include criteria for other jobs markets as well.

## Types of Interviews: What to Expect

Depending on the type of job you are applying for, anywhere from two to eight interviews may be required before the job is actually offered. Interviews may be spaced out over several occasions or all of them may be scheduled in a single day. If you are coming in from out of town, it is not unusual for the employer to schedule activities for you during almost your entire stay, including meals and evening parties There are several types of interviews and "interpersonal events" with which you might be confronted.

- 1. Screening interviews. These may be conducted with personnel office staff (companies) or a designated staff or faculty person and are designed to briefly determine whether you fit the criteria being sought. Major job skills or interpersonal deficiencies may ruin your chances here. Screening interviews are often held at conventions; these offer an excellent opportunity to present a favorable, personal impression on potential employers. At a later point in the job search, it may be just this impression that will give you the edge in being considered further.
- 2. Formal interviews. Most employers get far more applicants than they can possibly interview. A common procedure is to review a number of candidates' written applications files (vita, letters, reprints, etc.) and select three to five for further consideration In these situations, it is extremely important for you to note that the very fact that you are being asked for the interview is a favorable sign, indicating that the employer believes that you are capable, bright, and probably appropriate for the specific job being offered.
- 3. *Colloquium*. In interviewing for academic positions, you will usually be asked to present a formal colloquium. These often last for an hour during which you are expected to present your research to an audience of faculty and students.

#### Preparing for Interviews: Before You Get There

1. Be sure the potential employer has a copy of your vita ahead of time. Send it along with your letter expressing interest in the job. Just in case, carry several extra copies with you.

- 2. Know your own skills and vita! Be prepared to discuss them. It may be helpful to role-play an interview with a friend who does not know what you do. You might also want to write a list of your skills and assets—what you have to offer a prospective employer. Different lists targeted for particular jobs are often needed.
- 3. Obtain as much information ahead of time as you can on people's interest and research, the university, company, or agency, the city, etc.
- 4. Find out if you are expected to present a colloquium. If so, think through the type of colloquium that would be most impressive to the particular setting and try to orient yours in that direction. Practice in front of an audience.
- 5. Be sure of your travel arrangements and do not overschedule yourself. Give yourself plenty of time. Have flight number, etc., handy in case they call regarding meeting you.
- 6. Get the appropriate clothes cleaned, shoes repaired, hair washed, etc. In general, plan to dress conservatively and take clothes comparable to what a person interviewing you would wear on an important day. (If your clothes sense is poor, get advice and feedback from your advisor or a friend.) Be sure your clothes are comfortable and take shoes that are good for walking.

#### When You Arrive: First Impressions Count

1 Arrive on time. 2 Assume that whoever picks you up or meets you first is an important person. (If coming in on a plane, dress for travel as you would for an interview.) 3. Be positive! Say your flight was nice, you found parking, the city is lovely, etc. Now is not the time to be critical, not even honestly so. You can appear savvy and sophisticated by asking good questions and making intelligent observations.

#### **Interpersonal Tips on Interviewing**

- 1.One of the worst mistakes that individuals make is trying too hard to prove that they are smart. The effect of this is that others often feel threatened or simply "turned off." It is important to realize that if you have been invited for an interview, the prospective employer already knows you are smart. Would they have invited your otherwise? Your job is to show that you will fit in, both interpersonally and because of the specific interests which you have.
- 2. Attend fully to everyone: students, staff (including secretaries), faculty. Assume that all are loyal to each other and anything you say will likely be shared after you leave.
- 3. Ask questions about them, their research, etc. Act interested in the person interviewing you. (Full professors and agency directors can be threatened!) Be impressed with them!
- 4. Be prepared to talk about yourself, your goals, what you want to do if your get the job. (Try to figure out what they want and show how you can meet their needs.)

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- 5. Answer questions in simple and direct ways. Do not go on and on; do not focus on impression management; do hold up your end of the conversation.
- 6. Be prepared with some questions relevant to the job (even if you already know the answers). Good questions include those about the professional community in the city (or state), about the "typical" student or customer, whether the interviewer likes working there and, if so, why, and general questions about how well the people on the staff or faculty get along with each other. Topics to avoid are extremely specific questions about your duties and money (you do not want to appear presumptuous or greedy), personal questions, and gossip-oriented questions.
- 7. Observe very carefully what resources other people have, asking questions where necessary about secretaries, space, research assistants, computers, clinical loads, time to write, etc.
- 8. Be prepared with a good reason for leaving where you are, one that says good things about you and nothing bad about where you are leaving.
- 9. As suggested previously, have your colloquium down pat. Know the flaws in your research or ideas ahead of time. If they are trivial, downplay them; if important, discuss how you would improve next time. Most important, do not come across as defensive; accept any criticisms gracefully and note a good idea if you hear one. No one expects a perfect piece of research. They do expect a sophisticated presentation of what you actually did.

#### Things That Needn't Be Said, but...

- 1. If given a written schedule, do not lose it. Look organized. 2. Act energetic, ready to go, to walk, etc. Be a good sport. 3. Remember that parties and meals are work for you. Do not drink too much liquor (one drink is plenty). Brush up on your table manners and superficial social skills. 4. Be aware of the effects of any unusual things you do (e.g., smoking cigars) or need (e.g., special diet). Be as flexible as possible.
- 5. Go to the bathroom before your first interview and then do not drink too much coffee, etc. Often, you will be given only infrequent breaks.

## **Don'ts That Need Restating**

- 1. Don't negotiate salary, benefits, perks, space, etc., before the job offer. Do it afterwards, by phone or in person.
- 2. Don't gossip about anyone. Assume everyone is best friends with everyone, both locally and nationally.

- 3. Don't presume you will get the job before you actually get it. Stay humble.
  - 4. Don't complain, make negative comments, etc, Don't criticize.
- 5. Don't be judgmental or too opinionated. You never know what the other person thinks or feels.

#### After the Offer: Tips on Negotiating

- 1. Information on the following topics can be gathered either during your initial interviews with the department chairperson, agency director, or major supervisor, or after the job offer. Where appropriate, get specific information regarding salary, fringes, space, secretaries, equipment, research assistants, teaching/clinical loads, authorships (on grants), parking, time to do our own writing/research, work hour expectations, housing, convention travel money, probability of tenure, job responsibilities, graduate students, etc. Most of these will be negotiable.
- 2. Do not accept a job offer immediately. Generally, you will do better if you ask for time to think about it and clarify the deadline for your answer. If a deadline for a less preferred job offer is set before you get a definite offer from a more preferred job, you have several options. First, stay cool and do not panic. You can both ask the less preferable location to extend the deadline (they usually will by at least a few days) and you can tell the most preferable job that: (1) you have another offer but (2) like them better and, therefore, (3)could they make a decision in time, please. The general rule of thumb is that you can be more direct in communicating with the more preferable job location. It is not acceptable to accept a less preferred job and then go back on your decision for a better offer.
- 3. Consult with your advisor/mentors on how to negotiate for the job. You do not want to ask for too much (it creates bad feelings if you ask for or demand more than other people have), nor do you want to accept too little. With respect to salary, it is important to realize that, in most cases, all future raises will be based on a percentage of your salary; thus, your first salary can determine your earning power for years to come
- 4. Remember, once a job offer is made, it won't be retracted just because you negotiate.

Requests for reprints should be addressed to Marsha M. Linehan, Department of Psychology, University of Washington, Seattle, WA 98195.

# Bungling the Academic Job Interview

## Damaris J. Rohsenow, Brown University

How many time have we walked away from an interview or a colloquium given by a job candidate, shaking our heads and wondering how someone could behave that way and why no one ever warned the candidate about it. When reading Linehan's (1983) advice for conducting a job interview, I was impressed both with the sound good sense conveyed and surprised that such advice had never been published before. Moreover, it would also be useful for prospective job candidates and their advisors to learn from the fatal blunders committed by job candidates in order to prevent recurrences of these less common problematic job candidate behavior.

One candidate was apparently highly impressed with his own background as a star student of a renowned researcher. He carried himself with cold aloofness and bestowed his knowledge by expressing considerable criticism of everyone's research and training methods. He was not seen as a potentially helpful colleague, as he seemed more interested in tearing people's ideas down than providing encouragement and new ideas. His attitude may have stemmed from a wish to demonstrate that he was competent and intelligent but he came across as abrasive. It is better to remember Linehan's (1983) statement, "...the prospective employer already knows you are smart... Your job is to show that you fit in." Another candidate even told the Dean everything she thought was wrong about his allocation of resources, expectations from faculty, and plans for the future of the college. Strong criticism from an applicant just alienates people. Wait until you are hired before you try to change the college, or refuse the offer if the program is too unattractive.

A senior candidate was similarly impressed with his own worth as an excellent researcher with a strong reputation. Everyone was favorably impressed with him until his colloquium when the slide projector had mechanical difficulties and operated erratically. He began yelling at the assistant professor who was operating the projector, accusing her of incompetence or willful obstruction. This behavior caused him to lose the offer. The department was not willing to hire someone who would ride roughshod over powerless people as they assumed it represented the manner in which he would tend to treat nontenured colleagues, students, and staff.

Another candidate had quite favorably impressed a department and they were planning to make him an offer. Then he presented a detailed list of requirements he would want filled before he would consider an offer. The inflexible manner with which he presented these indicated he would be an inflexible and demanding colleague in general, and the department was one that valued cooperative helpfulness. You can present your list of needs after you receive a job offer, not before, and even then be prepared to negotiate rather than demand what you want.

Some candidates err in the opposite direction, expressing so much subservience and anxiety that it is very unpleasant to interact with them. One young candidate was clearly in awe of the faculty at the prestigious university to which he had been invited. He bobbed his head repeatedly while telling each person at length how kind he or she was to him and how much he appreciated their goodness. He rarely expressed any opinion of his own during the interviews, being too busy trying to praise all his interviewers' opinions. At dinner with two of the faculty, he would

not answer any question with more than one or two words, leading to a very trying experience for his dinner companions. My informant said it was the longest dinner he ever sat through. If you have a low evaluation of yourself, the interviewers are likely to come to share it. Again, the faculty invited you because they respect your thinking and now want to see if you will fit in with them. If they are uncomfortable interacting with you, you will not receive an offer.

One candidate expressed no opinions at all about anything other than his own narrow research tiopic. At his colloquium he seemed like a politician in that he twisted every question back to his own specific project. On any other topic he expressed no opinions at all. To questions about which every clinical psychologist should have an opinions such as, "What directions do you think clinical psychology training should take: should it continue with the scientist practitioner model or is Psy.D. training more useful?" the candidate responded, "I don't know; we didn't discuss that in my program." This kind of response leads one to conclude that one of two processes is occurring: (a) The candidate may have opinions but is afraid to express them. The problem is that it is important at find out if a candidate's opinions do not match the program's before he or she is hired. If the candidate's training and research objectives do not match the program's, this will be bad for the students, the program, and the candidate's own career. A program does not want to take this risk with someone who refuses to disclose his or her opinions. (b) The candidate may be an unthinking dolt who can only memorize material but can not think about it and will only do what is necessary to get by. In this case, the candidate will be judged to be unable to aid the direction of the program or to advise students. The same candidate had no answers to other more general questions: "What other hobbies and interests do have?" "None." "Who were your professional heroes?" "What do you mean?" "People you would like to emulate?" "I never thought about it. I don't know." If you you have no answer to a question, or no opinion, at least try to answer it, show you are giving it serious thought, engage in a dialogue rather than appear to be completely uninteresting or unwilling to think.

Occasionally a candidate will make the mistake of treating the colloquium audience as more ignorant than it is. For example, explaining at length what the MMPI is or what locus of control means is generally a mistake, as those are widely known concepts. One candidate carried this to an extreme in her colloquium on "A Social Learning Theory Explanation of Smoking." After reiterating slowly the title of her talk, she started the colloquium by stating, "Now, I bet you all are wondering just what social learning theory is." She proceeded to give a detailed description of social learning theory at a content level suitable for freshmen and with a speaking style suitable to grade school children. The faculty were bored with the material and irritated at being treated in such a condescending manner. Remember that you are talking to professional colleagues and treat them accordingly.

It is always a mistake to talk overtime during one's presentation in any setting, but especially during a job colloquium. One candidate erred not only in going overtime but also in his subsequent reaction to it. The colloquium was to last an hour but the candidate talked for an hour and a half. To make it worse, all the time was spent presenting a single study,

which meant he went into far more detail than the audience wanted about each individual measure and each result. Many of the audience began leaving when the hour was over, and the candidate became visibly perturbed. The next day he complained during each interview that people did not like his talk because faculty at this university do not respect treatment outcome research. Explanations that he had simply gone overtime had no effect on his conclusion. His conviction that the faculty did not like him was a primary factor in his not receiving the job offer even though he was a promising researcher who might otherwise have been hired.

The way one responds to questions at the end of the colloquium is important. A clear, direct attempt to answer is better than a long-winded sidetrack. It is better to say that you do not know an answer than to attempt to fake the knowledge: the latter will be obvious to at least part of the audience. One man was unusually defensive when questions were asked of him. He appeared to become so angry that his work would be questioned that he attacked each questioner, disparaging the questioner's intelligence, competence, right to ask such a question, and so forth. Needless to say, he was not hired.

A candidate appeared in casual clothes that were wrinkled, saying that people should judge only his abilities, not his attire. That ignores reality, as people expect a candidate to show socially appropriate behavior at an interview and the candidate was clearly unresponsive to social norms and was attempting to impose his own opinion about normative behavior on others.

Another mistake is to treat students as if they do not matter in the evaluation process. Several candidates apparently did not realize this. When one met with the students, he told the students exactly what he thought of the faculty. Naturally, the students shared this with their mentors, resulting in his not obtaining an offer. Another candidate, friendly with faculty, was cold and disparaging to the students in his meeting with them. Faculty do not want someone who will treat their students this way, so they refused to hire him.

Behavior that can been seen as indicating sexual interest toward faculty or students is also a bad sign. One candidate repeatedly touched younger feamle faculty on the arms and shoulders throughout both his presentation and luncheon. Although the arms and shoulders are not sexual areas, the fact that he kept touching the women, and only attractive junior women, raised concerns about how he would treat students and faculty junior to him if hired. After he met with an attractive woman graduate student, she reported feeling very threatened by his touching. The fact that he did not know how inappropriate this looked on a job interview raised questions and concerns about how much worse his behavior might become on a daily basis. A second candidate, a married man, told a woman interviewer that he hoped to go out with her, without his wife, after he was hired.

One of the most useful ways to prepare for the interview process is to attend every colloquium you can, evaluating for yourself the strengths and errors in the speaker's style and discussing with faculty their perceptions. Another way to prepare is to give your colloquium presentation in your own department and to ask for critical feedback. After you have gone on a few job interviews, you may ask your advisor to solicit critical feedback from places that did not offer you a position. Of course, it is important to listen to the critical feedback without explaining it away or objecting to it if you are to correct your errors.

Details of the incidents have been changed to protect the anonymity of the candidates and the sources. Grateful appreciation is expressed to the various faculty (who shall remain nameless) who shared these incidents with me.

Requests form reprints should be addressed to Damaris J. Rohsenow, Ph.D., Brown University, Box G, Providence, RI, 02912.

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# The Clinical Job Interview: From the Ivory Tower to the Real World

Philip G. Levendusky, McLean's Hospital, Belmont, MA

Ironically, although clinical psychology graduate training is usually seen as an opportunity to acquire basic professional skills that should allow the student to become meaningfully employed in a financially self-sufficient manner, little attention is paid to the actual process of achieving such a career berth: the job interview. Linehan (1983) offers the potential job applicant invaluable suggestions on how to deal with this important aspect of one's career. Whether seeking academic or applied employment, the suggestions offered in her article should become part of every applicant's interview repertoire. The purpose of the current paper is to focus attention on additional factors that the applicant should consider and that may be particularly relevant to interviews for clinical positions.

In the not-so-distant past, most new graduates of APA-approved psychology programs had the opportunity to apply for a relatively large number of academic positions; in fact, these positions were considered the only "right" professional choice for the new Ph.D. A career choice in a primarily or purely clinical direction was often seen as a sign that the individual was of inferior professional caliber. It never ceases to amaze this writer that even today, facing numerous economic realities, many graduate students continue to see academia as the only legitimate career direction. In fact, the only softening of this position that I have witnessed over the last ten years is an increase in the number of applicants who will report that a position in a hospital or medical school setting where teaching and research is available would be the equivalent of an APA-approved assistant professor position.

In spite of this academic snobbery, the vast majority of clinical psychology job applicants will be seeking positions that are primarily applied in nature. A perusal of the APA *Monitor* classified section indicates quickly the economic reality that the vast majority of positions available for the new graduate or more senior psychologists seeking to change jobs are in service-providing agencies. Hence, the importance of considering the particular characteristics of job interviews for these positions.

First, and related to the above, applicants should come to terms with the fact that they are applying for legitimate career opportunities that, although somewhat different from those of their mentors in graduate school, will allow for professional growth and accomplishment. Most potential employers can immediately identify the candidate who is looking at a clinical job as a second-class substitute for a "real" job in academia. Such an attitude is an immediate turnoff for those who have cast their own career lots in an applied direction. In short, approach the clinical job interview with the serious preparedness consistent with any major career decision.

In addition, it is important to keep in mind that, in today's job market, all positions are highly competitive with far more applicants than openings. One candidate for an applied position was told by his graduate advisor that clinical positions of the type that he was applying for were a dime a dozen. As a result of such sage advice, the interview was handled in a somewhat blase manner and the applicant did not receive an offer. He later found the agency had received more than 120 applications

for the position, and while initially quite interested in him, ended up making an offer to another candidate who seemed "hungry for the job."

In contrast to the usual academic interview, where the candidate is most likely to meet with other psychologists, applicants for applied positions should be prepared to meet with interviewers from other professional disciplines. (Yes, there are mental health professionals besides psychologists.) Oddly, this appears to be a revelation for some applicants. I have witnessed candidates, who are quite articulate with their psychology colleagues, become tongue-tied when interviewing with a nurse, a social worker, or a physician. As often as not, the decision-making positions in a clinical agency are held by a nonpsychologist, and it would be wise for the applicant to such an agency to become as familiar with multidisciplinary issues as possible. Questions showing understanding of professional role differences and similarities and asking about the quality of interactions among the various professions at the agency are much more useful than comments such as, "Some of my best friends are social workers," or, "I used to date a nurse." Unfortunately both of these comments are direct quotations from recent job applicants!

Remember that, in most applied settings, the interview emphasis is likely to be on "interpersonal fit." Professionals in other disciplines will frequently take for granted, or leave for others to determine, the degree of specific professional skill that a job applicant has. Instead, they try to assess how well the candidate would fit into a treatment team on an interpersonal level. Therefore, blowing the dust off of one's social skill repertoire is a prerequisite for any serious candidate, Such basics as a firm hand shake, good eye contact, good listening skills, and the ability to paraphrase can go a long way towards demonstrating that a candidate would probably fit in.

One faux pas is demonstrated by candidates who attempt to "psyche out" the interviewer. In such a circumstance, the candidate appears to be trying to second-guess the interviewer rather than behaving in an authentic fashion. While tricks may occasionally work, most clinical interviews seem to be marked by the relatively straightforward agenda of getting to know the applicant. Following a series of interviews for a clinical position, a candidate reported that "he was on guard and felt good about how adept he had been at knowing what each interviewer was really asking." Paradoxically, this candidate did not receive an offer because the people who interviewed him felt they "did not know who he was, that he seemed to be responding to questions other than what he was being asked." Ideally, an interview should be viewed as a real opportunity to give and receive direct information about the candidate and the position. The more open and straightforward the candidate's communication the better. Remember that the employer often will make assumptions about clinical skills based on an applicant's interview style. Most job applicants would be greatly served by role-playing a job interview in advance.

A poll of colleagues (most of whom were not psychologists) who often hire psychologists for clinical positions revealed several pet peeves about interview behavior, some of which result from applying behaviors that are appropriate in an academic setting inappropriately to an applied setting:

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- 1. Psychologists too often talk in citations; listening to someone answer a question by citing several references in a literature does little to foster a sense of friendly informal communication.
- 2. Frequent reference to a need to do research as part of a professional identity makes it hard to believe that the psychologist is truly comfortable in a clinical setting.
- 3. Lack of familiarity with psychotropic medication makes the psychologist seem clinically naïve.
- 4. Continual reference to having trained with this or that "superstar" makes one think that psychology graduate programs have faculties made up of Frank Sinatra, Wayne Newton, and Johnny Carson.

Although engaging in any to the above behaviors may not eliminate a candidate from consideration for a job, all polled colleagues indicated their absence would make a candidate more attractive.

Keep in mind that for most applied positions the employer will be evaluating clinical skills by the breadth of practical experience that the candidate has. Hence, a real familiarity with one's practicum and internship experiences should be demonstrated. Employers want to see that the candidate has had real clinical experience and not just "read it in books." More than an emphasis on a particular theoretical orientation, range of clinical experiences is relevant, particularly in agencies that have large numbers of nonspychologists, many of whom consider their own professional training to be more practical and clinically oriented than most graduate psychology programs. For these reasons, one's vitae should emphasize one's clinical background and not just list publications and teaching. Be sure your vitae emphasizes the nature of your clinical experiences and any specialized training with particular clinical skills or special populations.

Although the comments above are meant to be generic in nature, the suggestion that follows is specific to the reader of the Behavior Therapist. In many applied settings, a background in clinical behavior therapy is viewed as a highly valuable and marketable skill. However, there continues to be a significant bias about and stereotype of behavior therapists. Keep in mind that, although most of your peers and mentors in graduate school share your theoretical orientation, such is not necessarily the case in many applied settings. Few nonpsychological professional training programs familiarize their students with behavior therapy. As a result, while you may be hired for your expertise in this area, you are also being stereotyped by it. A doctrinaire stance vis-a-vis one's theoretical position will only further foster a potential employer's notion of an applicant's clinical naivete. Demonstrating the interpersonal skills described above and emphasizing a clinical and theoretical flexibility will go a long way towards dispelling the bias that might make an employer reluctant to hire a "behavior therapist."

In summary, the pursuit of an applied job should be undertaken in a serious and thoughtful fashion. Coming to terms with the legitimacy of a clinical career is the requisite first step. After taking that step, being aware of the importance of demonstrating strong interpersonal skills, being aware of interdisciplinary factors, emphasizing the breadth of one's clinical experience, and showing a flexibility in theoretical orientation will help the candidate achieve a position that will allow for meaningful professions accomplishment.

The author wishes to acknowledge the useful suggestions offered in the preparation of this paper by Martha A. Stout, Ph.D. Requests for reprints should be sent to Philip B. Levendusky, Department of Psychology, McLean Hospital, 115 Mills Street, Bellmont, MA 02178.

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# Keeping Your Job and Keeping Mobile

Lisa Serbin, Concordia University

People married to other professionals frequently have to make difficult choices during their careers between jobs they like and locations where their spouses would like (or are able) to work. Women, of course, have typically had to make difficult and often recurring decisions of "career versus family." As women increasingly expect to have full, uninterrupted professional careers, the men married to them may also have to consider moving to another location, and thus require mobility throughout their careers as well. The professional couple, thus, ideally should be in a position where they are each maximally flexible and "employable." The strategies for doing well in an academic environment and for remaining "mobile" overlap to a considerable degree. What follows are ideas about how to function well in a new job, both to do well and to be in a position to change jobs if this becomes necessary or desirable. Because my own experience is primarily in university departments of psychology, most of my remarks are most relevant to such settings.

First, it has been very important to me to remember, and to remind myself if necessary, that I am doing what I do, primarily research, teaching, and clinical supervision, because I enjoy those activities. I promised myself when I started my first academic job that if I found myself working out of fear, "publish or perish," I would leave academia. This perspective is sometimes hard to maintain. Academia sometimes seems designed to prevent assistant professors from being able to pursue research in an uninterrupted and concentrated fashion. Initial appointments often involve heavy teaching loads, committee work, and, frequently, a larger group of graduate students to supervise on thesis research than a young professor can effectively direct. Often, too, research facilities and contacts are not initially adequate. Setting up a lab, and getting access to subjects, takes much more time and effort than I ever imagined as a graduate student working in my major professor's established research laboratory! It may take several years to establish a laboratory, set up a viable research program, and obtain adequate funding. In this period, although I knew I was working very hard, there was very little sense of accomplishment. It seemed to take forever to run a study, analyze it, write it up, have it accepted...Many ideas just did not work out. Grant agencies took long periods for review, and often rejected proposals that had taken months of work, or put them on hold to await funding. Undergraduate teaching was unbelievably time consuming, much more than I had expected from my experience as a T.A., and a class of 400 was more like a circus show than a learning interchange. Most of us are trained to be clinicians and researchers; not, to any extent, to administer, prepare undergraduate courses, or write grant applications.

I found that it was possible to do everything, but that priorities were imperative. In particular, I had to protect my time, so that I could do research and write. Otherwise, administrative chores, students' requests, and teaching took up most or all of my week. Using a "please do not disturb" sign for a portion of each day is not always easy. Do it anyway. If it does not work, go to the library, or hide in a cubby hole somewhere. You have a right to some time for uninterrupted work! That sounds quite obvious, but many assistant professors have qualms about limiting their accessibility. Students do occasionally complain. Having set office hours, and keeping them, alleviates most of this.

Another major problem is handling committee work. Graduate students generally have no anticipation of the enormous chore running an academic department actually is! They are thus quite surprised in their new job by the number of meetings, memos to prepare and respond to, etc., they have as faculty. My advice is that young faculty should avoid chairing departmental committees, or serving as academic advisor to large numbers of students. I realize they are often quite good at these things and that it is often hard to say no to a department chairman asking you to take on a particular task. Some committee work is inevitable and also good experience. I just suggest that the new assistant professor monitor quite carefully the amount of such work, and avoid taking on major administrative tasks that will interfere with time for setting up research activities. People are not promoted or hired by other institutions on the strength of their committee or advising work, however excellent.

After priorities, I think the most important aspect of an academic job is balancing time to meet all the demands. Teaching, research, and administrative tasks must all be handled competently and given the attention they require. Devoting all one's time and attention to research can be a serious mistake. The university, on the bottom line, has hired you as a teacher. You may prefer to regard yourself primarily as a researcher and/or clinician. But you must teach your classes, and do so responsibly, with lectures prepared, readings ready, etc, or, quite simply, you will not have a job. At *any* college. The pressure to publish often tempts young faculty into forgetting this obvious point at stressful, pressured moments. You really cannot afford to neglect your teaching, even briefly.

Finally, it is important to demonstrate that you can successfully seek outside funding for research. This will help convince the department you are an asset, rather than a drain. Of course, it will also make research much easier to carry out. Young faculty can successfully compete for research funds at many levels. Make it your business to explore seed grants within the university, local private and public sources, and state or provincial agencies, as well as federal ones. Get to know the university's grants officer. This person should be very helpful to you in seeking research support.

Essentially, to do well, and to keep yourself "marketable," you must be active in research, and you must publish in recognized journals. You must be a competent-to-excellent teacher, and you must be a competent administrator. You must be viewed by colleagues as a "good citizen" who supports the department both with time and by bringing in external funds. Obviously, people develop particular strengths. Especially if you anticipate having or wanting to move, you really must have all of these strengths. In particular, having a research program, as opposed to carrying out a series of "one shot studies" in many areas, will improve your chances of developing a research career.

Many people do not, of course, succeed initially in finding a position where they can pursue their chosen activities to the extent they would ideally like. "Teaching colleges" may provide few apparent opportunities for research of clinical work. Clinical settings may not provide much opportunity for research or clinical work. In each case, there is probably some flexibility, if you are willing to put in "extra" time and

work without much institutional support. Undergraduates can effectively participate in research activities through honors theses or course projects, They require a lot of assistance, but the results can be as gratifying as those produced by working with graduate students. Opportunities for research, teaching, and practice may also be found outside your department or university. Most of us do pursure such outside activities out of interest, to have different types of professional experiences, to have access to subjects or to students, and, of course, as an income supplement. I would caution against too much of this outside consulting activity. Your main job and career cannot afford to be neglected. My solution is to confine consultations to those that enhance or contribute to my research and clinical supervision activities.

As I think about these remarks, most of them seem quite obvious. I feel this discussion might be useful, nevertheless, in the context of my

own experiences of difficulties in determining priorities, and with a dreary awareness of the number of bright, enthusiastic colleagues who somehow failed to get tenure, were "panicked" by moves necessitated by family needs, or were unable to deal with career-related stress in a manner they found satisfying. My feeling is that professional success is largely a function of motivation, Support systems—helpful colleagues, family encouragement, good models among senior colleagues—are probably also critical. In this light, I feel a responsibility to pass on any information and encouragement I can to those beginning their professional careers, and I would encourage colleagues to seek out and share their career experiences are widely as possible

Reprints requests should be sent to Lisa Serbin, Human Development Center, Concordia University, Montreal Quebec, Canada H3G 1M8.

# Getting Ahead

# Rosemery O. Nelson-Gray, University of North Carolina at Greensboro

Getting ahead professionally can be operationally defined in terms of suitable vita entries. Evidence of "getting ahead" includes promotions and/or increased administrative duties within one's job; consultantships; editorial activity; reviewing of grant proposals; participation in site visits (accreditation or grant review); election to association offices; appointment to association positions; acquisition of special status (licensing, Fellow, ABEPP); and invitations to give colloquia, to present at professional meetings, to write letters of recommendation, to apply for other jobs, and to author books, chapters, or articles. A final single sign for professional advancement is when the balance of one's work activities helps advance the careers of others rather than one's own career. (As a new assistant professor, it was difficult to be sympathetic toward full professors whose scholarships dwindled. To be sure, "dead wood" and "professional burn-out" exist. But so do full professors who spend many hours chairing committees, writing letters of recommendation, reviewing grants, editing manuscripts, making site visits, etc.). If these signs of professional advancement appeal to you, read on. "Getting ahead," of course, does not happen overnight. Careers evolve at slower or faster rates, with more or less quality. What follows are tips that may enhance the rate and quality of that evolution.

- 1. Careers are built on content areas. Individuals become known for their expertise in particular content areas. Academicians are recognized for their research areas; clinicians are recognized for their skills with particular disorders. Individuals are invited to review manuscripts on grants or to present colloquia or to write chapters because of their recognized expertise in a particular content area. In other words, specialization is important. Programmatic research is more effective than "shotgun" research; specialized clinical skills are more effective than generalist skills. In the words of a famous lady whose own career was highly advanced: "You've got to have gimmick."
- 2. Proactive stances are more effective than reactive. Careers develop faster when the individual takes the initiative. Let people who are in positions to advance your career know that you are interested in serving on committees or reviewing manuscripts. Write letters, make telephone calls, and use convention time to contact people who can help you. Associations, journals, and publishers are not abstractions—they are

comprised of people. These people are looking for committee workers, reviewers, and authors; but they cannot extend invitations until you assume an identity. By the same token, it is helpful to react to associations, journals and publishers as if they were comprised of people. You might win occasional battles by verbal attacks and threatened lawsuits, but you also might lose the war. As the sayings go, "Biggies help those who help themselves" and "You'll get further with a spoonful of M&Ms."

- 3. Professional skills can be learned. It is not too productive to envy people who write well, who chair meetings effectively, and who speak with clarity and authority, and to bemoan the fact that you do not have those skills. It is much more productive to remediate one's deficiencies. Instead of merely envying the skills of others, use them as models. Identify what it is that they do to make them effective and practice doing it yourself. The topics of self-help books include the acquisition of professional skill (for example, Renton's Getting Better Results from the Meetings You Run). The professional world is not necessarily divided into the haves an the have-nots, but rather into those who have learned and those who have not.
- 4. Careers aren't everything. To be successful, the individual must be reasonably healthy and happy. People cannot concentrate with a fever of 102 or with a broken heart. Therefore, time management (another skill that can be learned) becomes essential. Sufficient time must also be invested in one's career, but sufficient time must also be invested in one's health and happiness. "Early to bed and early to rise (or some other form of time management) makes a professional healthy, happy and wise."

Reprints requests should be sent to Rosemery O. Nelson-Gray, Department of Psychology, University of North Carolina, Greensboro, NC 27412.

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