



Putting Your Professional Narrative to Work: Storytelling Your Career



John A. Vasquez
KCP FF Fellow
PhD Candidate

Today's Agenda



1 What is a professional narrative?

2 Why is it important?

3 How to start writing

1

What is a professional narrative?

ELEVATOR PITCH *ESSENTIALS*



GOING UP?

Floor 1

Who Are You?

Floor 2

What Do You Do?

Floor 3

What Makes You Unique?

Floor 4

How Do You Do It and
Who Does it Affect?

1 What is a professional narrative?

- Used to summarize who you are (e.g. as a researcher, co-worker, leader, etc.)
- Describes YOU in a way that people will understand (and want to know more!)
- Tailored for different audiences

Audience

WHO
do you want
to reach?



Message

WHAT
do you want
to say?

Bio

John Vasquez, PhD Candidate
King-Chávez-Parks Future Faculty Fellow



I study the *Arc of the Academic Narrative*. My research focuses on the explicit and implicit messages that affect the career trajectories of URM scientists in graduate school and during the postdoc. I'm especially interested in how messages from mentors, advisor, colleagues, friends, family and others influence career decisions.

As a practitioner and a scholar, my goal is to help institutions develop learner-centered experiences for graduate students & postdocs and better support their educational, scholarly, and professional goals.





2 Why is it important?

After the Postdoc: The Expectation Gap

Consistently about 50% - 70% of postdocs expect a tenure track position. However, in -

2008: 30% of postdocs ended up as professors in 2009

2010: 37%

2012: 21%

Powell, K (2012). *The Postdoc Experience: High Expectations, Grounded in Reality*. Science. <https://www.sciencemag.org/careers/features/2012/08/postdoc-experience-high-expectations-grounded-reality>

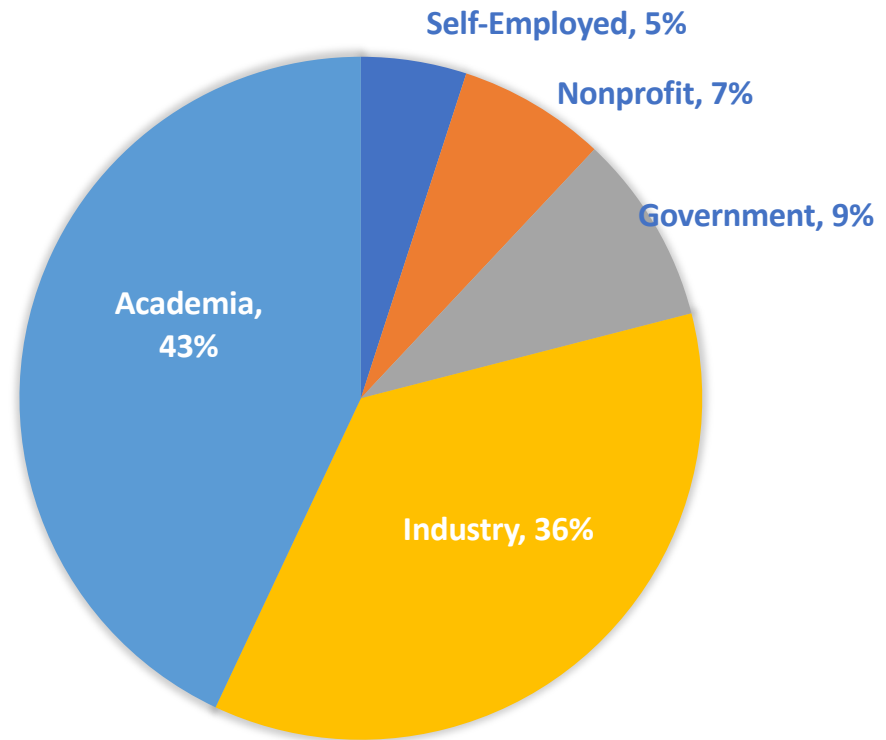


Courtesy of Phil Gardner, CERl & Career Services at MSU

2

Why is it important?

**Where do PhDs
end up...**

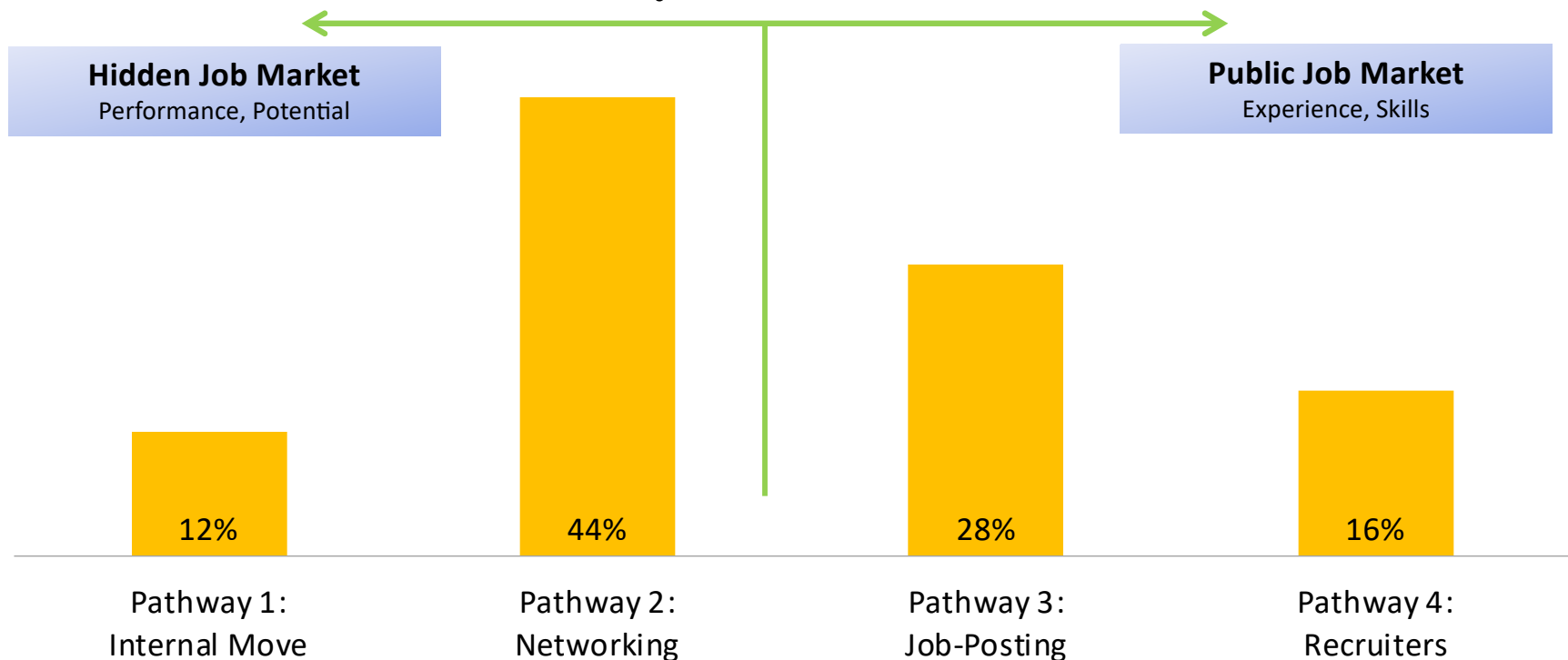


Source: National Science Foundation. (2016). *Science & Engineering Indicators 2015*. Washington, DC: Author.

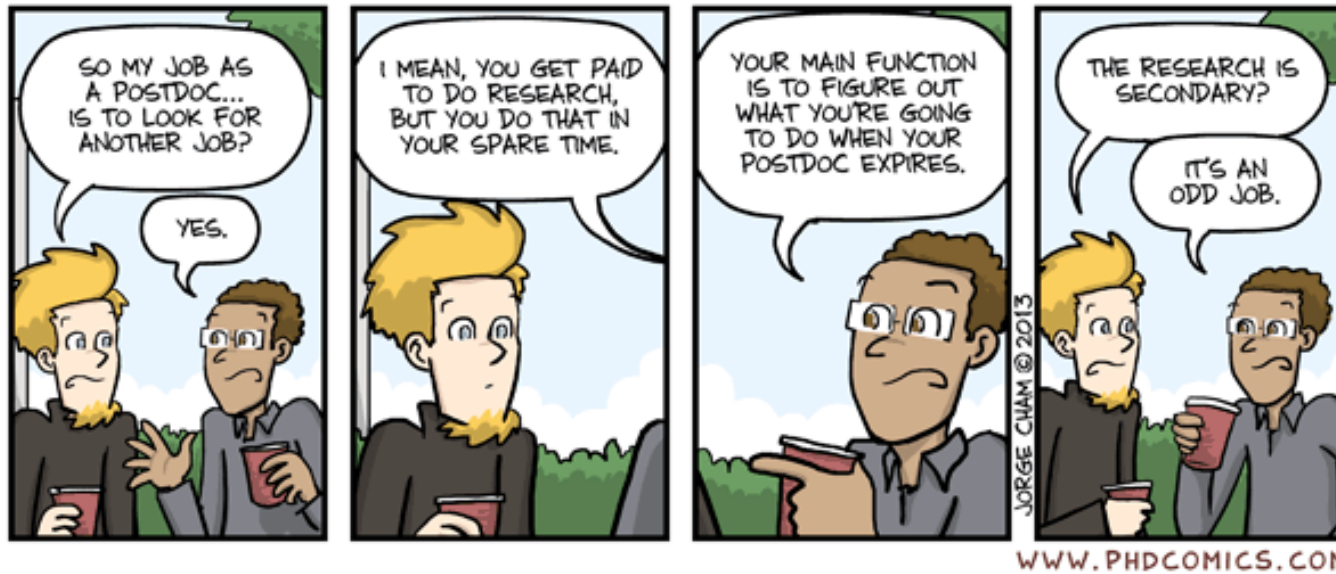
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Why is it important?

How Do They Find These Jobs?



Source: Adler, L. (2013). Source of Hire and the importance of networking (updated 2017). LinkedIn Pulse. <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/20130401172726-15454-the-importance-of-networking-the-hidden-job-market-and-recruiter-relevancy>. Accessed on 7/27/17



Developing a “New” Narrative (Identity)

3

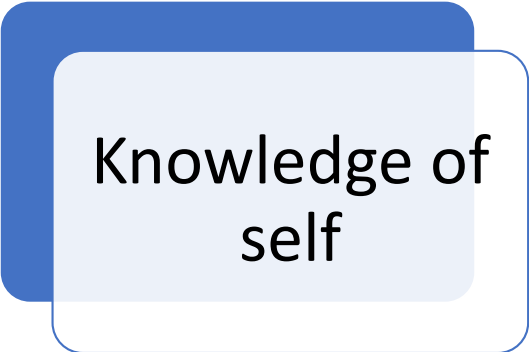
How to start writing

Being successful in putting together your narrative (and transitioning career) will require you to have some...

Knowledge of
self

Knowledge of
audience and
position

Knowledge of
the process



Knowledge of
self



Why did you decide to pursue *a PhD*?

Would you say you are a passionate person, a good researcher, a competent employee, ... a leader?

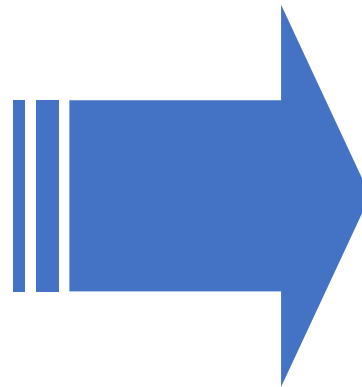
How would you incorporate what you learned in your postdoc into work outside the lab?

What are some of your fears about changing careers, in general?

Knowledge of
audience and
position

You

- Interests
- Values
- Skills
- Knowledge
- Personality
- Ambitions



Employer

- Mission
- Values
- Functions
- Expertise
- Environment
- Vision

Knowledge of the process



THE JOB HIRING PROCESS

When hiring or recruiting new employees, there are several stages to be expected and accounted for. Below are the 4 stages that make up the typical hiring process.

JOB POSTING

THE POSTING OPENS

A vacant position has been reported. A job description is prepared, several recruitment platforms are selected and the opening is posted on those platforms both online and offline.

THE POSTING CLOSES

The posting closes after a specified period of time. Depending on the number of applications received, a second period of posting may be required.

CANDIDATE SELECTION

THE REVIEW

All the applications are reviewed. A set of desirable candidates are identified, scrutinized and then short-listed upon closer examination.

TESTING

It may be necessary to provide a test to verify fundamental skills or knowledge requirements.

CANDIDATE INTERVIEW

INITIAL INTERVIEWS

Interviews may be scheduled for any short-listed candidates who performed well on the test.

ADDITIONAL ROUNDS

Interviews may consist of several rounds as different executives examine the potential candidates.

FORMAL JOB OFFER

SUCCESSFUL CANDIDATES

The successful candidate is informed, provides references and awaits a response.

THE OFFER

The successful candidate is selected and provided a formal employment offer.



STAGE 1



STAGE 2



STAGE 3



STAGE 4



Some
Examples of
Questions



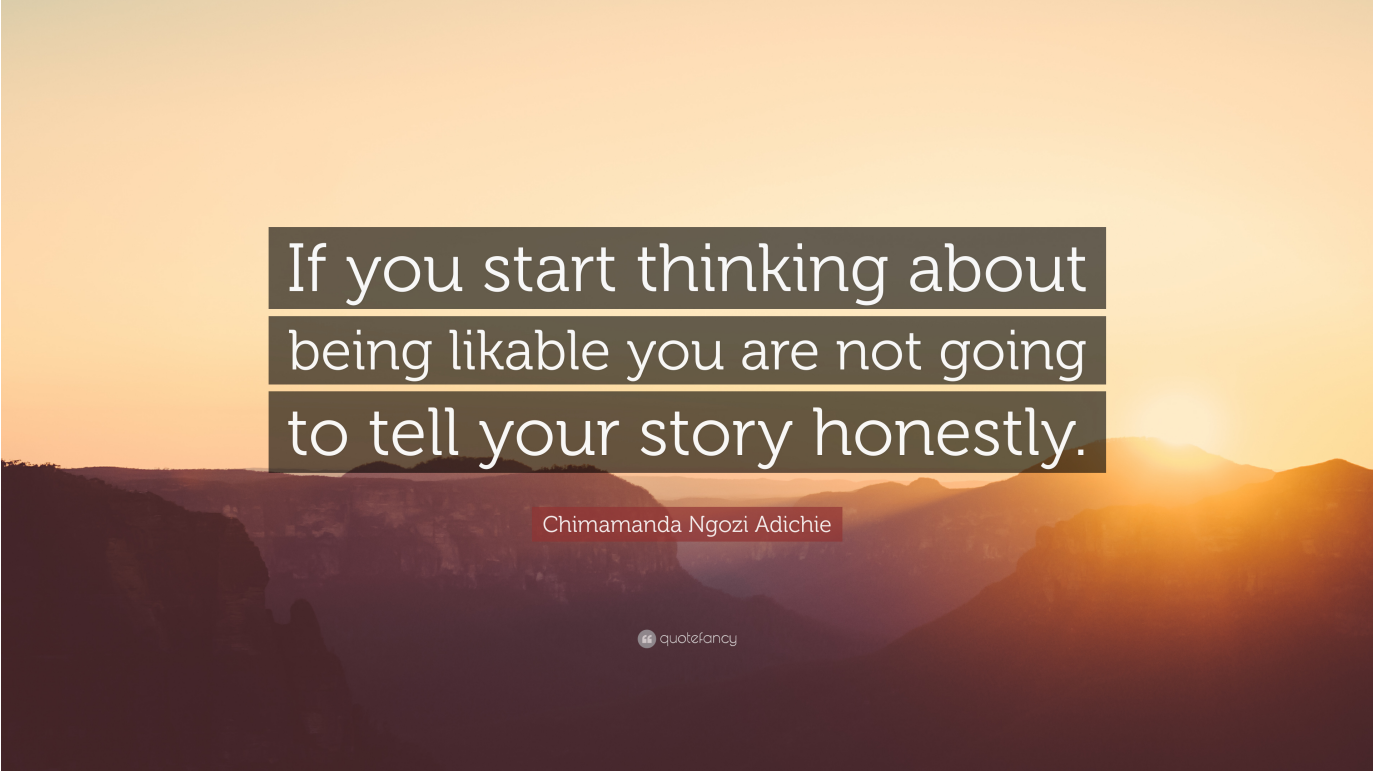
And this is only a small sample of questions they could ask!!!!





So I Get I Need To
Tell My Story...

But where do I Begin?



If you start thinking about
being likable you are not going
to tell your story honestly.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

THREE QUESTIONS



Who
are you?

What do
you do?

Why do
you do
it?

Who Are You?

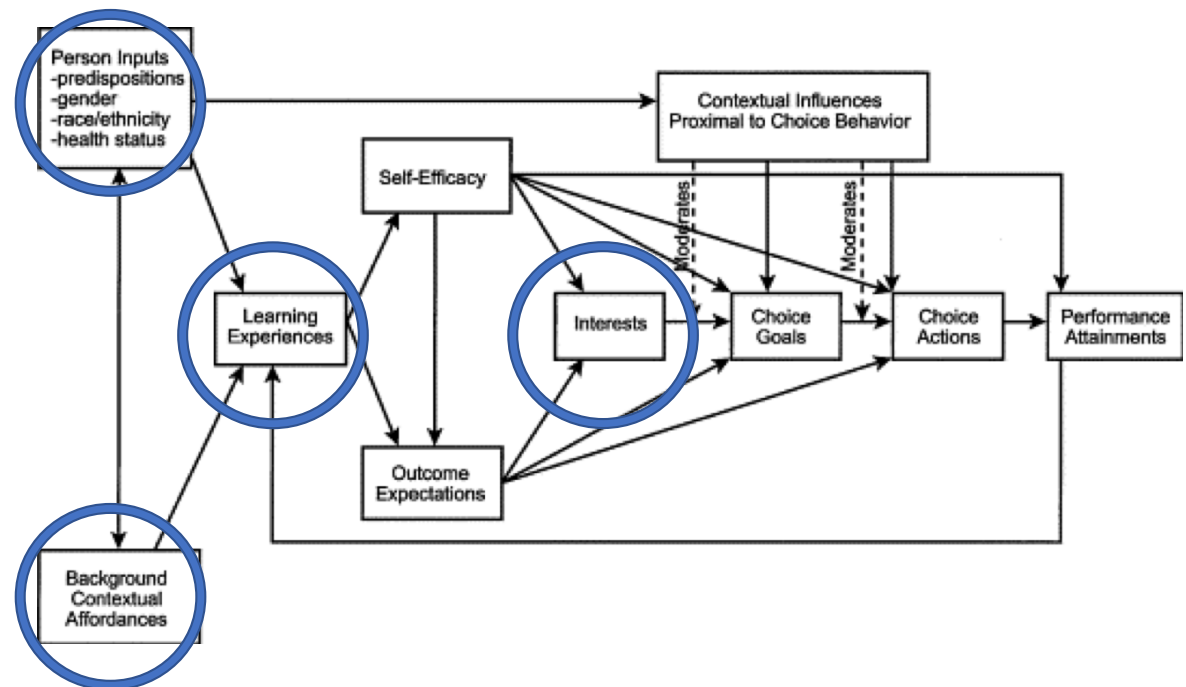




Knowledge of Self: Social Cognitive Career Theory

SCCT is a theory aimed at explaining three aspects of career development: how academic and career interest develops, how educational and career choices are made, and how academic career success is defined (Fouad, 2007)

This is the basis of
my research! 😊



What Do You Do?



“I’m postdoc working in physics”

””I work at FRIB at Michigan State University”



“Touring the world mainly talking about cosmology, quantum mechanics, black holes and the value of our civilization.” (Brian Cox)

What Do You Do?

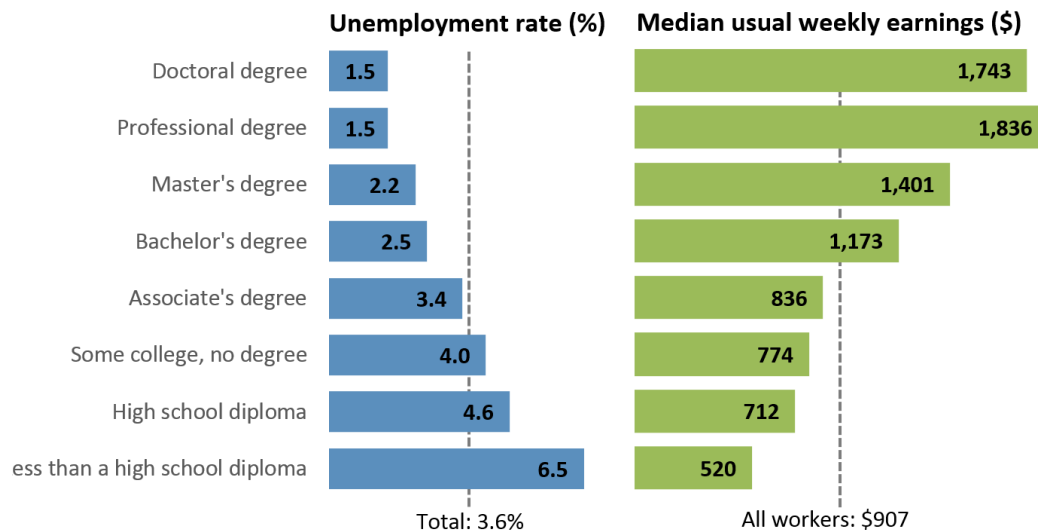
Develop innovative ideas to increase external funding (from foundations, state & national agencies, etc.) to support doctoral students & postdoc experiences, esp. URM.

Develop & promote Best Practices to Improve Graduate Program reviews and improve outcomes.

Develop programs and incentives for faculty to help expand professional development training for doctoral students & postdocs.

Why Do You Do It?

Unemployment rates and earnings by educational attainment, 2017



Note: Data are for persons age 25 and over. Earnings are for full-time wage and salary workers.
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey.

I ❤️
RESEARCH



Why Do You Do It?



Agnethe
@theSeimParticle

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[#IAmAScientistBecause](#) there's so much I don't understand... yet



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[#IAmAScientistBecause](#) you can still make discoveries every time you roll over a log. pic.twitter.com/D4WJfcRnX

10 4:00 PM - Apr 6, 2015



TELL ME ABOUT YOURSELF



A brief statement of who you are...

A brief sentence about what you do...

And why you do it...



By: Dr. Kate McDowell

Your Career Story

Hero's Journey

Enigma Code

Equilibrium

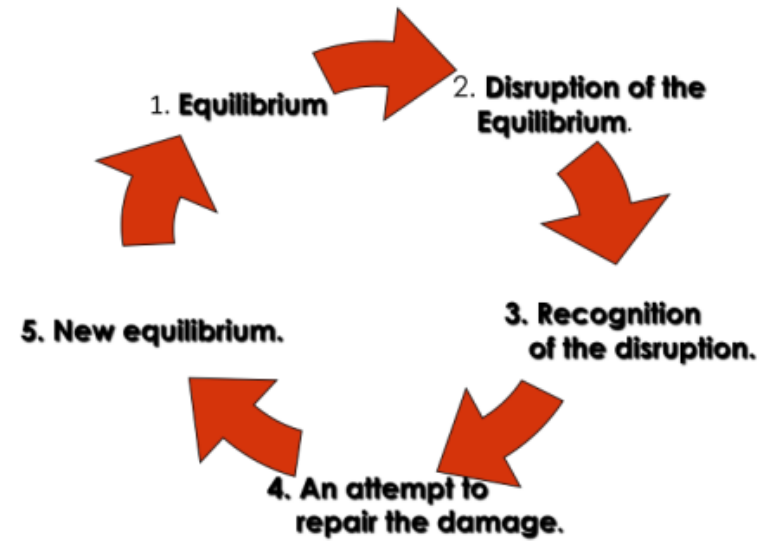


Hero Story

Enigma Code



Equilibrium Story



Examples of questions:

- What is a problem in your field that fascinates you and why?
- What would you say is one of your biggest accomplishments? (e.g. experiences, achievements, skills developed)
- Can you give an example of a complicated problem you had to solve and how you went about trying to solve it?
- Can you talk about a time you had to manage a big change or new project at work that you were not prepared for?

But what if I don't know
who I am or what I want to
do anymore?



For those of you changing careers:

- What got you interested in your field of research? What an experience or event that helped you realize a PhD (rather than something else) was right for you?
- Who encouraged you to go into your field and why?
- What was an experience you had that encouraged you to want to pursue research?
- Who you are at this stage of your transition).
 - (e.g. I'm transitioning from doing science in a lab to working more directly with people).
- Can you describe career so far as a path and where you see your career going?
 - (e.g. I've spent the past __ years learning how to do do ____ so I can now help people do _____.)



5 Step Process for Preparing a Range of Stories

Define

Find

Match

Construct

Practice

01

Be purposeful



Know the point of your story. This is not about sharing random stories that leave your interviewer thinking, 'What has this got to do with anything we're talking about?'

Be authentic



Never, ever make up stories – no matter how tempting it might be to land your dream job. Lying is not worth the damage it can cause to your credibility and you never know when it might come back and haunt you.

02

03

Be yourself



During an interview try to be yourself and make sure your stories reflect that. Don't say you live and breathe teamwork when you actually prefer to work in complete isolation.

Be Brief



Try to keep your stories no longer than a couple of minutes. This will allow the interviewer to ask follow up questions which can create a more conversational feel and help you build connection.

04



- Career Services
- Associations (NPA)
- Networking (Conferences, LinkedIn, etc.)
- Websites (Versatile PhD)

Books:

Working Identity by Herminia Ibarra

So What Are You Going to Do With That? By Susan Basalla & Maggie Debelius

The Professor is In by Karen Kelsky

Career Options for Biomedical Scientists by Janssen Sever



A Career is about choices...

We plan out of fear...



Questions???



Johnav@msu.edu

