CHAPTER 1

Meet the New Workplace Realities (and Your Paperback Mentors)

Forewarned; forearmed. To be prepared is half the victory.

—Miguel de Cervantes (1547–1616), writer

Reality Check: Becoming a Freshman in the 21st Century Workplace

We believe that life is about transitions. We are in a constant state of change, and perhaps change is the only constant; we start over and reinvent ourselves all the time. Think about your transition from elementary school to middle school—it was a chance to start over. Or the transition from middle school to high school—you started over as a freshman. And then the transition from high school to college—you were a freshman (again). Starting over and starting fresh are not just recurring themes in the educational world but also in our personal lives, whether it be with friends, intimate relationships, and so on. Since there will be so many times in your life when you will become a freshman again, your abilities to adapt and be flexible are key for your future success.

You may not wish to admit that entering the "real world" after college is becoming a freshman again, but that is the case. You will begin *again* in a new organization at a low, perhaps the lowest, level of the hierarchy and in an organizational culture vastly different from college. You will be assigned new and different tasks and must master new skills. You will work with persons as coworkers (not classmates) and supervisors (not teachers), many of whom are older than you. You may have to move to a new location and establish new friendships. Life will be very different,

because the transition from college to workplace represents a demarcation—a break—far more drastic than your transition from high school to college. If you read this book carefully and take our advice seriously, you will know what you need to do to maximize your chances for success during your freshman year in the 21st century workplace.

What Does the 21st Century Workplace Look Like?

Your workplace in the 21st century may not resemble the typical scenario experienced in the latter half of the 20th century. Cappelli (2009) reminded us that before the 1980s, applicants were often hired based on their potential. Entry-level positions were just that—entry level—and employers expected to provide additional detailed training, sometimes following an apprenticeship model when it took years beyond the bachelor's degree to acquire the requisite skills and knowledge to be truly successful in the specialized workplace. However, there is less employer-based education and preparation today (Cappelli, 2009), and according to some employer surveys, fewer than half the employers surveyed provide any training at all.

So your future workplace may not even resemble the workplaces of your parents and grandparents, which is just another reason why students need mentoring to transition successfully from college to career. For some, that transition may include a stop-off in graduate school, but the master's or doctoral student in psychology typically also wants a career. Let this book serve as one of your mentors—specifically, your "paperback mentor" (more on this concept later).

So what does the future hold? Well, change is inevitable. According to a U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) longitudinal study currently underway (as cited in Bialik, 2010), workers from ages 18 to 42 in this particular study have averaged 10.8 different jobs. In the BLS study, changing jobs was defined as a change in job title, either within the same company or to a different company. If you think about how you might advance in your profession or career, changing jobs would be a good indicator because promotions ideally mean more responsibilities and benefits, and perhaps a new job title. What about changing careers? In the same article, Bialik also reported that no good data support the typical adage that you will have seven different careers in your lifetime.

The fact of the matter is that you probably will have a number of different jobs over the course of your work life, and your college degree is an essential ingredient for a successful future (of course, you'll need to define "successful" for yourself—more on this at the end of Chapter 2). The series of jobs you hold should build your skills, abilities, and credentials, or as Carnevale (2011) put it:

> People rarely leave jobs that require a college education because they have the best earnings, benefits and working conditions. There are many more brain surgeons who used to be cashiers than there are cashiers who used to be brain surgeons. A brain surgeon never starts as a brain surgeon, but would have likely had all types of jobs before entering college and medical school. Most jobs people hold in high school are in retail, food services, and other low-skill, low-wage jobs, and future brain surgeons are no exception. (para. 21)

Of course, you will occasionally hear the success story of someone who made it big without a college education. A few outliers will always pop up, but what do the general trends indicate? Carnevale (2011) reported that at the end of 2010, the unemployment rate for new college graduates (all majors, not just psychology majors) was 9.2%, while the unemployment rate for all U.S. workers was 9.8%. Looking at those two numbers together, it might appear that having a college degree is not much of an advantage compared with the general population, until you consider this—the unemployment rate for new high school graduates was 35%.

Unemployment rates are a function of the economy, and during the second decade of the 21st century the economy has been tough on job seekers. According to Newman (2010), our traditional assumptions about the relationship between education and work have been challenged not only by the American economic climate but also by our global economy. First, you cannot assume that a good education automatically leads to a good job and a satisfying lifestyle. College degrees are "a dime a dozen" in the workplace, given that America graduated 1.65 million baccalaureates during 2009–2010 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2011); an increasing number of desirable positions now require a graduate degree. Second, you cannot assume that working hard means your income will continue to increase. In some fields, average salaries have remained stagnant and even decline during a recession. Third, you cannot assume that devotion to your career will produce a comfortable retirement. Many jobs, including some that once required a baccalaureate, are being replaced by outsourcing to foreign countries or technology, or are simply eliminated and forced on other employees. Fourth, you cannot assume that each generation will be better off than its predecessor. View the news media and you will learn about our crushing national debt, burgeoning costs of Medicare, and the costly Social Security legacy later generations will inherit. In addition, student loan debt combined with a poor job market causes many graduates to move back home and to postpone marriage, children, and homeownership—traditional benchmarks of success and independence.

The Importance of Finishing What You Start: Do Become That Freshman Again

It seems the phrase "finishing what you start" has become a bit of a cliché in our culture, but it is nonetheless important that we encourage this goal. We believe there are direct and indirect benefits for you if you are able to complete your undergraduate training and earn your bachelor's degree (even if it turns out that psychology was not for you and you complete a different major). Even though each college student is different, many do share similarities—and we want you to think about how your accomplishment of degree completion could positively affect others in your life. For example, think about the message your earning a bachelor's degree would send if you are a first-generation college student in your family. Or think about how you might be an inspiration and role model to those in your life who might aspire to achieve what they saw you achieve, such as nieces and nephews, sons and daughters, your "significant other," and others close to you. When you

struggle, learn, work hard, and persevere, you provide a route that people watching may choose to follow. Of course, there are situations where college students need to drop out or stop out for any number of reasons, but if the capability to finish is within your grasp, we encourage you with our strongest voice to finish what you start.

It's only fair to also let you know about the financial advantages you can experience by finishing college. The overall results, presented in Table 1.1, are fascinating.

So what is the value of finishing what you start? Well, over the course of a typical work life of 40 years, a high school degree recipient would net about $1.5 million, an associate's degree recipient would net $1.7 million, and a bachelor's degree (all degrees considered, not just psychology) recipient would net about $2.2 million. Thus, the value of finishing what you start would be between $500,000 and $600,000. If all the intrinsic reasons to finish your undergraduate degree presented previously were not persuasive enough, perhaps this new information might sweeten the deal and add another positive layer of encouragement.

We opened with the theme of transitions and starting over—that is, becoming a freshman again at many points in our personal and professional lives. The importance of successfully navigating transitions from one life stage to another (in this case, from college to career) is the overarching goal of this book, and we want to give you an advantage in entering into and succeeding within the world of work. To be fair (and as you already know), you have competition. For instance, looking at the most recent data, National Center for Education Statistics (2011) reported that there were 97,216 psychology bachelor's degree recipients in the United States. Although precise estimates are difficult to acquire, about 20% to 25% of those graduates will continue their education in a psychology graduate program or enter

Table 1.1 Estimates of Average Annual Earnings and Work-Life Earnings in 2009 for Full-Time, Year-Round Workers by Educational Attainment

Educational Attainment	***Average Annual Earnings[1]***	***Work-Life Earnings Estimates[2]***
Doctoral degree	$ 99,697	$ 3,252,000
Professional degree	$ 125,019	$ 3,648,000
Master's degree	$ 70,856	$ 3,252,000
Bachelor's degree	$ 58,613	$ 2,268,000
Associate's degree	$ 39,506	$ 1,727,000
Some college	$ 32,555	Not available
High school graduate	$ 31,283	$ 1,547,000
Not high school graduate	$ 21,007	$ 1,304,000

Note: that professional degrees include MD (physician), JD (lawyer), DDS (dentist), and DVM (veterinarian).

1. U.S. Census Bureau (2009), *Current Population Survey.*
2. Carnevale, Rose, and Cheah (2011).

some postgraduate education program (e.g., medical school, law school). So that gives you some idea of the annual volume of students you will be competing with for the best jobs. Employers will be able to "cherry-pick" the best and brightest students from this large field of possible employees. We want to help you be the cream that rises to the top—we want to be your "paperback mentors."

Time Out: Exercise—The Importance of College

As you will see throughout each chapter of this book, we'll urge you to stop, think, and reflect on big ideas from time to time. You've read about what employers want from college graduates and what psychology wants its graduates to achieve, but what about your own goals? Using this list of items from Malin and Timmreck (1979), take a moment to think about each item and then rate each on a scale of 0 (*not at all important to me*) to 100 (*extremely important to me*). As you are thinking about your ratings, think about why you selected the value you did. When complete, compare the scores on the ideas with one another. Do these scores actually reflect the relative value you place on each of the concepts listed?

Items	***Importance Rating (0–100)***
1. Preparation for a career, occupation, or profession	_____
2. Preparation to be a good citizen; knowledgeable about community and world affairs	_____
3. Preparation to get along in society today	_____
4. Increased understanding of myself and the world and increased ability to make good judgments	_____
5. Grasp of the subject matter, ideas, and method in my major field	_____
6. Increased ability to enjoy and care about myself and others	_____

Meet Your "Paperback Mentors": Our Blueprint for Workplace Preparedness

A mentor is a type of advisor, teacher, or coach; we will talk about workplace mentors in a later chapter. The purposes of our "mentorship," however, are to advise you about the activities we created to involve you with the material, to summarize the organization and content of this book, and to preview the chapters ahead—we want you to get the most from your efforts (and ours). You may study this book as part of a course or on your own. Feel free to read chapters out of sequence. We addressed a variety of topics, including some not usually found in career guides or "what-to-do-with-your-psychology-major" books.

This text is not a cookbook listing of simple, silver-bullet solutions to complex issues about college-to-workplace preparedness and transition. We do, however, offer a great deal of practical advice in the form of clearly stated recommendations or suggestions that are often woven into the fabric of our narrative. Sometimes you encounter topics rich in concepts and important to know even though they do not yield much immediate practical advice; that's the nature of theory and research. But we will not bury you in abstract ideas or overwhelm you with endless research studies. Because you are college students and in the social sciences, we assume you respect the value of empirical studies, theoretical concepts, analytical thinking, and experience. The chapters are anchored to a combination of data, concepts, and personal experiences, a great deal of which can be applied to your college setting. Topics such as "Avoid False Expectations: Onboarding and Your First 90 Days" (Chapter 10) and "Your Personal Life Changes After College" (Chapter 11) provide a preview of experiences to come but are also issues you should contemplate as you approach graduation and in your current jobs.

As psychology students, you also understand the importance of becoming actively involved with the material to enhance your learning, so here are the techniques we employ to facilitate your efforts. First, within each chapter you will periodically encounter sections labeled "Time Out: Exercise" or "Time Out: Reflective Questions," where we interrupt the narrative by asking you to apply the material to your situation. When the exercise requires considerable time to complete, we place it at the end of the chapter so it doesn't distract you from the material. Second, we close each chapter with a section we call "Getting Involved," which consists of three types of activities: journal starters, projects, and additional resources.

- For the **journal starters**, create a file on your computer or locate a lined notebook. The purpose of keeping a journal is to encourage you (a) to connect and *apply* the specific concepts and recommendations to your activities and, for many of you, to your job; (b) to *reflect* thoughtfully on how ideas we introduce have a bearing on your present activities and future plans; and (c) to *critically evaluate* the material we address. View the journal starters as an ongoing conversation with yourself. As you progress through chapters, periodically review your journal entries to gain insights and to note actions you have taken that promote your workplace readiness and actions you should take.
- The **projects** are specific opportunities for you to survey the literature, test hypotheses, and/or collect data regarding particular topics as part of an individual or group project. Perhaps you want to know more about the topic, question our conclusions, or investigate a related issue.
- The **additional resources** consist of selected websites or print documents meant to pique your curiosity for additional information. We include websites sparingly, because many have a tendency to change; besides, we know you are experts at seeking information from Internet resources.

We hope the in-chapter ("Time Out: Exercise" and "Time Out: Reflective Questions") and end-of-chapter ("Getting Involved") activities increase your desire to interact with the material; nothing, of course, substitutes for your

intrinsic motivation to master and apply the material as you contemplate your transition to the workplace and other life transitions. Finally, we list the references cited in each chapter; we hope you find time to read one or two of those that spark an interest.

You should understand our rationale for presenting the material in this book, so here is our plan. We divide the book into four parts: "Get Ready for Your Transition to the Workplace," "Know Thyself—Better!," "Onboarding to Work," and "I Graduated and Got a Job: What's Next?"

Part I: Get Ready for Your Transition to the Workplace

The chapters in Part I promote workplace preparation by informing you of current occupational and economic situations, your career options with a baccalaureate degree, and opportunities you should pursue during college. In Chapter 1 (what you are reading now), we have painted with broad strokes a portrait of issues you will encounter in the changing landscape of the labor market where you will begin, once again, as a freshman. In our role as "paperback mentors" throughout this book, we describe the types of activities we embed in each chapter to encourage your active involvement with the material, and we conclude with a summary below of topics we believe can facilitate your transition.

Chapter 2 answers the critical question you hoped we would address when you opened this book: Yes! You can succeed in life with a bachelor's degree. You are introduced to career-exploration instruments, diverse career resources, and a long list of specific careers that use your psychology baccalaureate. We present studies that address career satisfaction with a bachelor's in psychology, cover basic concerns regarding graduate school, and conclude by exploring the meaning of success.

College offers numerous opportunities for promoting workplace readiness that augment your coursework, and employers will seek evidence that you actively pursued them. Chapter 3, "Make the Most of Your Opportunities—Now!," describes several major options. Because most employers seek applicants with work experience, your part-time jobs, internships, and departmental teaching and research assistant positions are essential opportunities to pursue. Your volunteer and extracurricular activities that help develop interpersonal and leadership skills are also valued. We strongly encourage coursework beyond the psychology major that develops work-related knowledge and skills.

Part II: Know Thyself—Better!

The four chapters that make up Part II exhort you to do just that—know who you are and who you are becoming even better than you do now. In Chapter 4, "What Is the Secret of Excellent Career Planning?," career and personal counselor Camille Helkowski encourages you to become aware of the people and events that have influenced your career beliefs. She stresses the importance of learning more

about yourself and the world around you and the capacity each has for influencing your beliefs and choices. Finding a guide is an important source of support for this journey.

We continue the theme of knowing yourself in Chapter 5, "Your Journey Through Psychosocial Development Continues Long After Graduation." We introduce elements of different developmental theories and the insights you can gain from thinking about your own development in the context of these theories. We conclude by reviewing the results of a survey that asks young people what they seek in a job.

In Chapter 6, "Know the *Skills* You Need to Succeed (Course Content is No Longer the Focus)," we revisit a central theme in this book: the acquisition and transfer of skills. We discuss several surveys of skills graduates should possess in the contemporary workplace and how they connect to college. We review studies of specific psychology-related skills and their connection to work, as well as studies of broad skill sets such as communications and statistics/numerical skills. Finally, you will learn about colleges' covert curriculum of those skills and behaviors performed daily and how they apply to class and work.

You are now poised to learn the tools that will help you get a job. Chapter 7, "Jump-Start Your Job Search," was written by John Jameson, a former psychology major with several years of experience in corporate recruiting and career counseling. In this highly practical, hands-on chapter, you are introduced to essential tools and procedures for preparing a résumé, searching for a job, networking, and interviewing.

Part III: Onboarding to Work

Because "attitude is everything," we begin Chapter 8 ("Why Are Attitudes, Motivation, and Work Centrality Important?") by considering job satisfaction and negative attitudes. Next, we summarize and apply two theories of work motivation and subsequently examine results of a survey of young adults' attitudes toward the centrality of work in their lives.

In Chapter 9 ("Your First Real Job? It's Primarily about Communicating"), we speak to several basic concepts of communications and group work that you can readily apply to college and jobs. We conclude by summarizing an emotional intelligence model and explaining how it applies to your workplace success.

For recent graduates with little or no work experience, their first encounter in the workplace often produces culture shock because of a mismatch between their expectations and reality. In Chapter 10, "Avoid False Expectations: Onboarding and Your First 90 Days," we discuss the disparate differences in organizational culture between college and the general workplace, onboarding procedures used by several organizations, first-day strategies, performance feedback, office politics, and mentoring.

Part IV: I Graduated and Got a Job: What's Next?

Relationships change after college. Former psychology major, author, and educational researcher Abby (Wilner) Miller discusses the changing landscape in relationships with family and friends after graduation in Chapter 11, "Your Personal Life Changes After College." She also provides pointers for relationships with coworkers, time management, and dealing with feelings such as loneliness, anxiety, and depression.

In Chapter 12, "From Know Thyself to Manage Thyself," we review the common stressors that current college students may face and strategies to cope with stress in college and in the workplace. Practical advice and tips are offered about time management, finances, and finding a balance between your personal life and your professional life.

In Chapter 13, "Prime Yourself for More Transitions," we acknowledge that your transition from college to workplace is one of many major journeys of change you will likely pursue in life. We present multiple perspectives on transitioning, and these perspectives include models used in business consulting, another used in counseling settings, a phenomenological view, and a fourth perspective that addresses workplace entry issues.

Finally, we close with Chapter 14 ("What Lies Ahead?"), addressing a variety of issues, including straight talk about the psychology major (and why you should carefully consider that choice), preparing for a workplace where you may not be "doing" psychology directly, Millennials in the workplace, becoming a valued employee, and job-search strategies if you lose your job.

We return to the quotation that opened this chapter: "Forewarned; forearmed. To be prepared is half the victory." This book intends to strengthen your transition to the workplace by forewarning you of the knowledge, skills, experiences, and attitudes you should acquire in order to succeed during those critical years.

Closing Comments

As we indicated, the 21st century workplace is different from what your parents experienced and, perhaps, different even from what older brothers and sisters encountered. Because change is inevitable and may be the only constant, we firmly support Cervantes' sentiment about being forewarned and prepared. That preparation is aided when you know what employers want and what undergraduate programs deliver to psychology majors.

One of our major themes is to place greater emphasis on *skills* and less on the *content* of your psychology coursework. In fact, unless you are applying for a specific job for which only a psychology or social science major is qualified, a recruiter is unlikely to ask about particular psychology courses you completed (statistics and

research methodology may be the exception). Recruiters know what a psychology major entails—that it provides a particular *perspective* on life different from that of biology and sociology. Most recruiters are not going to ask about the textbooks you used or your term paper topics; some may inquire about your GPA. Most likely, they will ask about specific skills you acquired and how you can apply them to the job for which you are interviewing.

Will you be able to translate coursework into transferable skills? This transition will become a challenge for you because traditional liberal arts disciplines focus explicitly on teaching content and only implicitly on articulating the skills you learn. Ultimately, you must assume ownership for your education and future, but this book will help you make informed decisions to pursue your goals. Finally, you must become *passionately* involved with your own transition to work, because, for most of you, it is a highly critical transition. Passiveness is not a marketable behavior, but passion is.

Getting Involved

Journal Starters

Try to respond to at least two journal starters for each chapter.

1. What are the most significant insights you gained from reading this chapter?
2. How well did you manage the transitions to the other levels of your education? Can you identify those behaviors or attitudes that helped you adjust to the next level of educational challenge?
3. Comment on the other transitions in your life, such as the death of a close relative, and how you handled the stresses associated with the events.
4. To what extent do you seek new situations that force you from your comfort zone?
5. What steps can you take to help make your next transition a positive event for you?

Projects

1. Create a "skills diary." Think about your in-class and out-of-class experiences in college to date. What skills do you think you are good at now? What leads you to this conclusion—that is, what experiences lead you to believe you are good at the skills you identified? What plan will you establish to remain good at what you are already good at and to improve in the areas you identified as needing

improvement? Don't forget to factor in outside-of-class activities—such as research assistantship, teaching assistantship, internship, service learning, study abroad, etc.—as methods of gaining skills. Since you won't have much control over how your remaining courses are structured, being planful with skills improvement may be more fruitful if you concentrate on outside-of-class opportunities rather than remaining coursework.

2. We maintain that most job recruiters will not ask you about specific courses, term paper topics, or grades. Survey the literature regarding questions interviewers ask and consult a career counselor for his or her opinion. What do you conclude? Can you transform this project into a report in one of your classes?

Additional Resources

URL	***Brief Website Description***
www.apa.org	Official website of the American Psychological Association
www.psychologicalscience.org	Official website of the Association for Psychological Science
http://www.quintcareers.com/college-to-career.html http://www.collegeaftermath.com/life-adventures-after-college/	Making the transition from college to career
http://www.p21.org/ http://www.careeronestop.org/ http://www.centerforpubliceducation.org/Learn-About/21st-Century/The-21st-century-job.html	Skills college graduates need for success

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