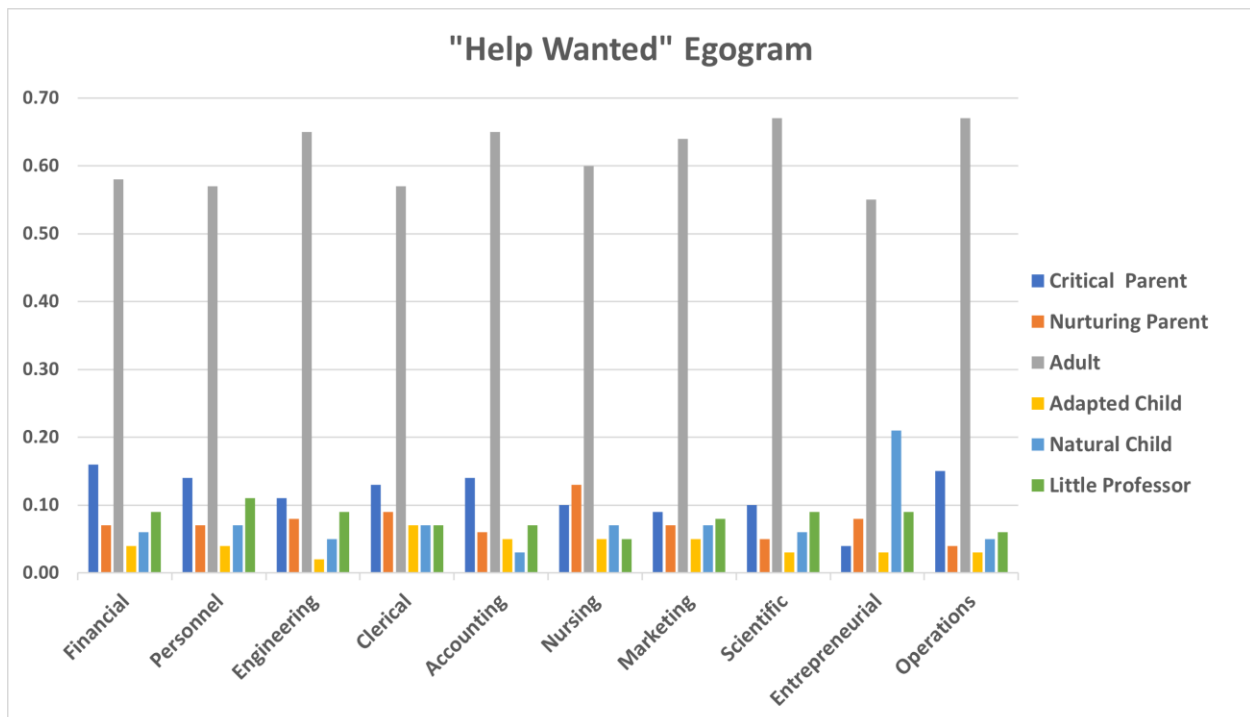# Help Wanted Ads: "Back to the Future"

Most job ads are bland at best and downright unappealing at worst. *That can be a tough message to hear, but a majority of HR and recruiting executives do understand the reality that recruiting messages need to get better."*

"How to Use ChatGPT to Drastically Improve Your Job Ads"
Leadership IQ, Mark Murphy, 9/13/2023

If the messages of the experts in the recruiting profession as cited are accurate, the need for more descriptive job information and information concerning working environment, supervisory style and organizational climate are necessary.

"Deciphering Messages in Recruitment Ads,"
Personnel Administrator, James W. Schreier, March, 1983

"Help Wanted" Egogram

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…in today' labor market, where increasing demands are being made for job relevance, quality of work life, and other job satisfaction factors, should more of the information pertaining to the working environment and job duties be portrayed in the recruitment campaign? If the messages of the experts in the recruiting profession as cited are accurate, the need for more descriptive job information and information concerning working environment, supervisory style and organizational climate are necessary.

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"Back to the Future?" A blog post in 2023 and a magazine article in 1983 – certainly very different but essentially saying the same things: recruiting messages are boring *and* can be changed!

In 1983, I analyzed 200 classified display ads representing ten job categories (Financial, Personnel, Engineering, Clerical, Accounting, Nursing, Marketing, Scientific, Entrepreneurial, Operations). The analysis was based on the principles of Transactional Analysis, which looks at the content of the messages based on the definition of "ego states."

Ego State	Subcategory	Characteristics
Parent	Nurturing Parent	Caring, protective, understanding, and nurturing behavior.
	Critical Parent	Control-oriented, moralistic, and judgmental behavior based on a set of preconceived rules.
Adult		Rational, objective, here-and-now focused, grounded in current facts and reality.
Child	Natural Child	Spontaneous, emotional, focused on natural needs and desires, the 'free spirit'.
	Adapted Child	Focused on complying with rules and expectations, avoiding criticism, and seeking approval.
	Little Professor	Curious, intuitive, exploratory, capable of manipulation, and creative problem-solving.

The research revealed that the classified ads:

- Included primarily "Adult" factual information, averaging 62% of the content, followed by "Critical Parent," i.e., judgmental information, averaging 12%.

- Significant differences were found in the comparisons of all ten categories analyzed.

- Differences in categories, e.g., higher "Nurturing Parent" in Nursing, were in predicted directions.

The following chart offers a sample of these differences for three of the job categories. The categories, Personnel, Nursing, and Entrepreneurial, were selected because the differences in the "Adult" and "Child" ego states are clearly seen – and easily explained.

"Help Wanted" Egogram
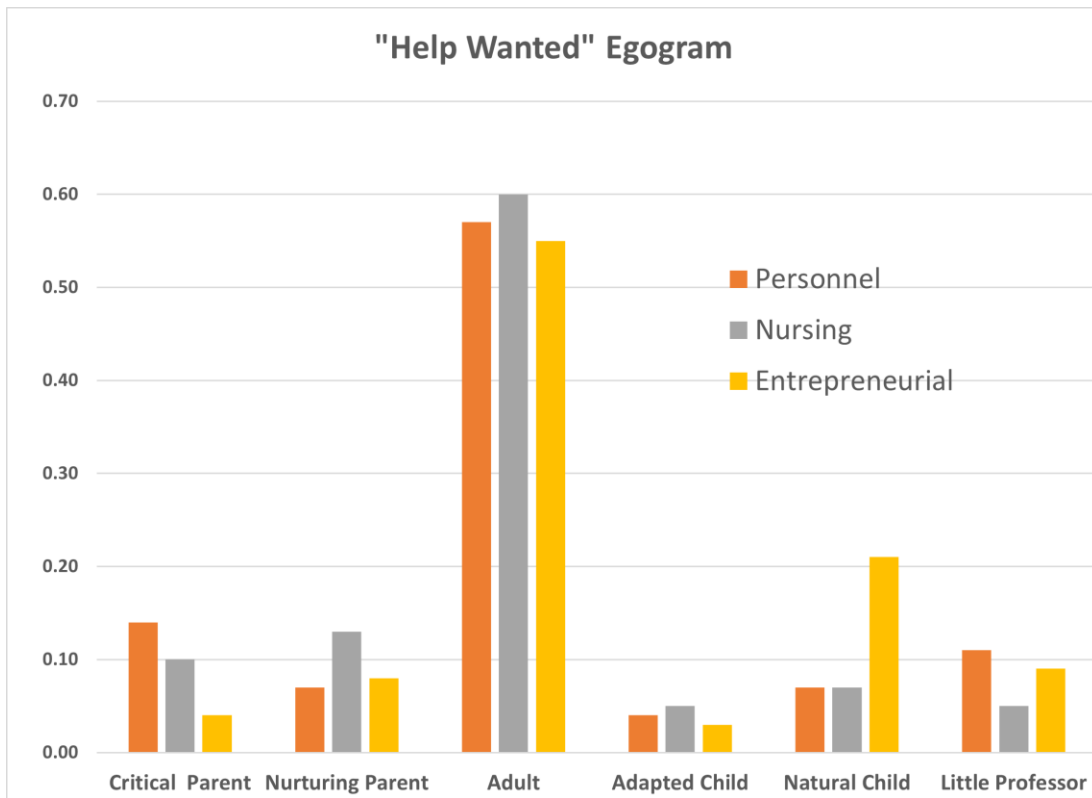
The Personnel Administrator article, including updated charts, can be downloaded here. A more "researched-focused" version of the project, "Ego State Components in Help Wanted Advertising," was published in the Transactional Analysis Journal.

Back to the Future

An interesting possibility arose from this forty-year connection – asking ChatGPT to propose applying the Transactional Analysis "ego states" to help wanted ads in a positive way.

Ego State	Subcategory	Characteristics	Potential "Help Wanted" Ad Focus
Parent	Nurturing Parent	Caring, protective, understanding, and nurturing behavior.	Highlight a supportive and mentoring work environment, opportunities for personal growth.
	Critical Parent	Control-oriented, moralistic, and judgmental behavior based on a set of preconceived rules.	Emphasize high standards, strict adherence to rules, and expectations for excellence.
Adult		Rational, objective, here-and-now focused, grounded in current facts and reality.	Mention rational decision-making processes, a respectful environment, and problem-solving opportunities.
Child	Natural Child	Spontaneous, emotional, focused on natural needs and desires, the 'free spirit.'	Highlight a dynamic, creative, and joyful working environment with room for spontaneity and innovation.
	Adapted Child	Focused on complying with rules and expectations, avoiding criticism, and seeking approval.	Describe a structured work environment with clear guidelines and expectations, emphasizing team collaboration.
	Little Professor	Curious, intuitive, exploratory, capable of manipulation, and creative problem-solving.	Encourage innovative thinking, curiosity, and the freedom to explore and pioneer new projects.

Significant Less	Ego States – Significant Differences	Significantly More
	Significant Less ~~	**Significantly More**
Engineering Nursing Marketing Scientific Entrepreneurial	**Critical Parent**	Financial Operational Personnel Accounting Clerical
All Others	**Nurturing Parent**	Nursing
Entrepreneurial Engineering Personnel Clerical Scientific	**Adult**	Accounting Financial
Financial Personnel Engineering Scientific Entrepreneurial Operations	**Adapted Child**	Clerical Accounting Nursing Marketing
All Others	**Natural Child**	Entrepreneurial
Nursing Clerical Accounting Operations	**Little Professor**	Personnel Entrepreneurial Financial