

*The
Compleat*
Academic

A Career Guide
Second Edition

Edited by

**John M. Darley, Mark P. Zanna, and
Henry L. Roediger III**

American Psychological Association • Washington, DC

it does not make sense to pour yourself into making countless social contacts at the expense of work, only to find yourself moving again in a couple of years. After all, the primary goal is typically to accomplish as much work as possible within a short period of time and then move on.

CONCLUSION

Choosing the ideal next step after graduate school can be difficult. No single answer applies to everyone. In addition, there is probably no right or wrong answer for most individuals; productive, ambitious, bright people will succeed in the field regardless of where they begin their postgraduate career. We have tried to outline some of the factors that may enter into your decision with a focus on some of the advantages and disadvantages of postdoctoral fellowships. Regardless of how you spend your first few postgraduate years, we encourage you to make the most of whatever situation you enter.

REFERENCES

- Feibelman, P. J. (1993). *A Ph.D. is not enough! A guide to survival in science*. Reading, MA: Addison Wesley.
- Postdocs working for respect. (1999). *Science*, 285, 1513–1535.

3

THE HIRING PROCESS IN ACADEMIA

JOHN M. DARLEY AND MARK P. ZANNA

As faculty members whose university careers have spanned more years and more colleges than we care to remember, we have frequently been involved in the process of hiring new faculty members. One overwhelming discrepancy about the process strikes us: University and college departments of psychology have a set of procedures and rules by which new faculty members are hired, but these rules are rarely known or understood by the job applicants. As a result, we have seen excellent graduate students present themselves poorly and fail to get good jobs. Your task during the hiring process is to put yourself forward as an autonomous, self-organized, and self-starting individual; we hope this chapter will help you to do so.

We wish to thank numerous individuals who read and commented on previous drafts of the chapter, including Jo-Anne McDowell, Thane Pittman and Shelagh Towson. Special thanks go to Phil Zimbardo, whose graduate seminar on professional issues helped us frame many of the issues covered in this chapter. Earlier versions of this chapter appeared in Zanna and Darley (1979) and Darley and Zanna (1980).

THE BEGINNING: IDENTIFYING AND APPLYING FOR POSSIBLE JOBS

Since writing the version of this chapter that appeared in the first edition, we have noticed that in the intervening years it has become more common for a postdoctoral position to intervene between the PhD and taking the first job. Postdoctoral positions were originally common in the physical sciences and seem to us to have entered psychology first in the more physiologically oriented fields, then moving into cognition, and are now also common in social and personality psychology.

Where You Are Coming From

Increasingly, graduate students are taking a postdoctoral position before taking their first academic research and teaching position (see chapter 2, this volume). In much of what follows, we will use the generic phrase “student” or “graduate student” to refer to the job seeker. But we will often mark some considerations that are unique to the job seeker who is a postdoctoral fellow. For instance, we suggest a conversation that a job-seeking graduate student needs to have with his or her faculty advisor. Postdoctoral fellows need to have a similar conversation with their advisors, one that may have one more complexity to navigate. Postdoctoral positions often have a variable duration. That is, the position is funded and available for one, two, three, or even more years. The length of time that a person stays in the position needs to be carefully handled. The considerations are these: For the faculty member supervising the position, it is most useful if the postdoctoral fellow remains in the position for more than one year. Getting up to speed to function well in a new setting generally takes more than a year. Putting this another way, the postdoc, to leave in a year, would arrive in the new work setting just about the time it is necessary to apply for academic jobs for the next year! Certainly, the postdoctoral supervisor could not write an informed letter of reference, and no new lines of research would be anywhere near completion. For these reasons, we think that the minimum time to spend in a postdoctoral position is two years.

All of this, of course, should be a subject of conversation between the graduate student and the potential postdoctoral supervisor before their joint decision to work together to offer–take the position. One frequent arrangement involves two-year (three-year) postdocs applying for a few jobs that would be particularly desirable in the fall of their first (or second) year as a postdoctoral fellow, and applying for all relevant jobs in the fall of the second (third) year.

Your Faculty References

If you are a graduate student, in the summer of your last year of graduate school, decide which three or four faculty know you the best. In addition to your research advisor, consider faculty with whom you have done research or taught, or from whom you have taken sufficient course work so that they can give a confident estimate of the range of your skills and talents. If you have read chapter 1 in this volume and followed its advice, you will be in a good position to do this, because you have planfully had significant contact with those faculty members.

Next comes an extremely important step: Discuss with your advisor (and other faculty) the kind of job for which you are looking. What sort of balance of teaching, research, and practice are you seeking? Is your research likely to be basic or applied? Do you seek a college, university, or applied setting? Remind the faculty of those experiences that qualify you for various jobs so that they can comment on these experiences in their letters. Also, find out the faculty’s perception of your skills and talents; their verbal and written recommendations will be critical in determining your job possibilities. Out of this discussion will emerge some kind of definition of the appropriate job for you to seek.

If you are a postdoctoral fellow, then you have the more complex task of arranging for reference letters that document both your graduate career and your postdoctoral career. Some mix of letter writers from both institutions is expected by the letter readers, and it would be odd if the mix did not include both your graduate thesis advisor and your postdoctoral supervisor. In addition, it is useful if your thesis advisor can comment with some knowledge about your progress since leaving your graduate institution. Therefore, do keep your thesis advisor posted about your postdoctoral progress. While we are on the topic, we ought to mention that occasionally, given the pressing demands of the postdoctoral experience, the postdoc may not have been able to write up one or more research reports that are “owed” to the graduate advisor. Asking the graduate advisor for a reference, after a silence of some years, will not be a pleasant task, and the letter that the graduate advisor now drafts may refer to this failure. Do not put yourself in this position.

Finding Possible Jobs

It used to be that you would earnestly scan the *APA Monitor*, the *APS Observer*, the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, and the newsletters and publications of various American Psychological Association (APA) and Canadian Psychological Association (CPA) divisions and interest groups. This is still a good idea, but almost always now, the job listings are posted

on e-mail listservs that faculty and graduate students can receive. Ask your faculty to indicate the listservs on which your sorts of jobs will appear, and arrange for faculty to forward these to you or sign up for them yourself. These lists generally have the postings well in advance of their formal appearance in the publications noted.

Current job seekers perceive the job market as tight. As a consequence, you are not likely to find or get the Platonic perfect job that you have fantasized about in your more optimistic moments. This fact will affect your job search in various ways. First, although this chapter is mainly about getting an academic job in psychology, because that is what we know about, you should definitely explore nonacademic job possibilities. If you are clinically trained in a science-practitioner program, look carefully at the Bootzin chapter in this volume. Industry, the federal and state-provincial governments, and school systems all use psychologists. Talk to faculty members about these other job possibilities (and see chapter 4, this volume), but remember that they may not have as complete a network of contacts outside the academic community as they have within it. If any recent graduates from your PhD program have taken industrial or government jobs, learn what you can from them. (In fact, invite at least one PhD from your program who has taken a nonacademic job to the appropriate visiting speakers' series for your department. If there is a business or medical school at your institution, talk to any psychologists working there and find out what they do and how they got their jobs. Increasingly, psychology PhDs are finding their way into business and management schools.

Another job possibility is the postdoctoral position. It gives you a chance to do research relatively free from the teaching pressures of a normal beginning faculty member (although getting some teaching experience while on a postdoctoral fellowship is advisable) and for that research, perhaps, even to be published. Primarily for this reason, postdoctoral fellowships are an increasingly desirable alternative in all fields of psychology. Sources of support for postdoctoral work in Canada are available from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council and the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council and in the United States from the National Institutes of Health and the National Science Foundation. We have shared our thoughts on the length of the postdoctoral position already. For more detailed information concerning the postdoctoral option, see chapter 2, this volume.

HOW WIDELY AND HOW DEEPLY SHOULD YOU APPLY FOR POSITIONS

Our advice would be that when exploring any or all of these alternatives, do not let geographic or lifestyle preferences rule out otherwise excel-

lent jobs. Some about-to-be PhDs decide they have always wanted to live in a warm and benign climate and wish to limit their job search to California or British Columbia. Others feel that it would be impossible to live outside large urban environments. Still others feel they could not survive within those confines. It is perfectly reasonable to hope that you will get a good job in one of your favorite places, but it is totally unreasonable to refuse to look at jobs that do not match these preferences. Your lifestyle is important to you, but so is your career. Let us be explicit. Both authors of this chapter grew up in Minneapolis, a wonderful city that is often cold and always midwestern. When graduate students announce that they will only consider job prospects in some idiosyncratically desirable climate or setting, we have a silent but powerful reaction—they are not completely serious about their commitment to psychology, and we probably adjust our reference letters accordingly.

Of course, there are some real and valid reasons for geographic limitations on one's search. One very real limit to job-search flexibility is imposed by the career commitments of one's partner. Many married couples deal with this problem, at least for a year or so, by living geographically separated, but we also know a lot of divorces that have resulted from this sort of situation. If this is an issue for you, articles in the *American Psychologist* (e.g., Bryson, Bryson, Licht, & Licht, 1976; Madell & Madell, 1979; Matthews & Matthews, 1978) have presented several points of view on the problems of professional pairs that might be of interest (see chapter 17, this volume).

If your search is geographically restricted, consider writing a blanket letter to all the institutions that are geographically possible for you, even if they have not advertised a vacancy. They may discover one when the fall teaching term begins. Also, put a system in place to track the e-mails that departments circulate as the fall semester approaches and they discover that circumstances require adding faculty to cover teaching needs.

Another potential job-search restriction is imposed by the American-Canadian border. On the basis of his experience, Iacono (1981) has argued that it is easier for Americans to obtain jobs at Canadian universities than vice versa, because American universities will only bother with immigration procedure hassles for outstanding foreign candidates. Although following the passage of North American Free Trade Agreement, the border is less of a problem (in both directions), but we still have the feeling that the situation varies considerably depending on both the candidate and the institution. On balance, we would suggest that you apply for every job in which you are interested regardless of which side of the border it is on.

One final note: In this day of word processing and mail merging, it is easy to set up a system that seems efficient and that maximally distributes your letters. (And, as this implies, you can bring joy to the lives of both the departmental secretaries and your advisor if you do, in fact, supply

addresses and search committee titles in a form suitable for mail merging.) But pause for a minute. First, do not apply for a job that, when you stop to consider it, you know you would not accept. It is insulting to the institution that offers you the job, creates ill will for your advisor (and, possibly, future students in your program), and blocks offering the job to candidates who really want it. Second, it is useful for you to have marked for your advisor those jobs for which you are a perfect (or, at least, a close) fit, given the institution's actual description of the position. It will sometimes be the case that your advisor will add specific comments designed to demonstrate that fit to the general letter he or she writes for you. But if you have appeared with a list of 50 institutions to which you wish to apply (and we have seen students do this), it is going to be difficult for your advisor to add these specific comments. Here is a possible compromise. Target a few institutions that excite you and that have job descriptions that you fit. Draft your cover letter to those institutions in a way that makes it clear that your interests do, indeed, fit their job descriptions. Give your advisor the paragraphs that contain your ideas about your fit to these institutions. With this assistance, your advisor may be able to individuate the reference letter to those institutions.

What to do about other institutions that are attractive to you but have job descriptions that do not exactly fit what you do? Yes, it is possible that once they see what it is you do, and your productivity and documented teaching skills, they might be sufficiently dazzled to ask you to come for an interview. But let us face it: That is not likely. So your advisor's general letter and your individual letter is about all that is possible to expect these institutions will hear about you.

THE VITA

Your vita is an important document. With your reference letters, it determines the jobs for which you will be considered. There is no single, set format for the vita; start by listing everything you have done and then review your vita to make sure that it displays all your relevant skills (e.g., if you have been a teaching assistant, remember to include a summary of your teacher evaluations), interests, and talents. If some of these skills are not obviously documented, include paragraphs describing them. Also include paragraphs indicating your work "in progress," especially your thesis proposal, and your future research directions. Read chapter 1 in this volume and look at the vitas prepared by graduate students senior to you. This is important: Treat your vita as you would any other manuscript. Present your first draft to several faculty members, including your advisor, for comments and then revise.

You might also include a list of courses you could teach. Be neither parochial nor grandiose; do not suggest five courses that on examination prove to be variants on your thesis, but, on the other hand, do not claim to be able to teach every conceivable course in the university catalogue. Psychology departments are frequently looking for faculty to teach introductory psychology and various statistics courses. If you are capable of teaching such courses, and are interested in doing so, say so on your vita. However, this claim is to be regarded as a commitment. Do not make it lightly.

Your papers and publications will be a major element of your vita, and a frequent question is whether to send them. We think you should. Reprints are not bulky and are useful to committees making decisions about whom to invite. Also send preprints of papers in press. Do not send papers in preparation or under editorial review unless you are convinced that the write up adequately presents the research. First drafts rarely do so.

GETTING THE COMPLETE RECORD TO THE HIRING INSTITUTION

When hiring institutions are ready to make their decisions, they will choose from among those candidates with complete files. Make sure that you are one of them. Job advertisements often include application deadlines implying that you have several months to complete your file. Do not wait! Do not allow yourself to be seduced by fantasies about how much more impressive your vita will be tomorrow when you write up that old data, or when your three convention presentations are accepted, or when that journal editor finally gets around to accepting your manuscript. Some institutions will begin narrowing the field and issuing invitations long before the advertised deadline, so get your materials in early. (You can always send an "addendum" to your vita at a later point in time.)

A complete job application typically consists of your vita, whatever (p)reprints you think are appropriate, a letter from your advisor and two other faculty members, and a cover letter from you. More and more frequently, we now see a one- or two-page statement of research directions sketching the applicant's thoughts about a five-year research program and often a page about teaching philosophy.

Give your letter writers the necessary addresses and tactfully check back with them after a decent interval to see that they have actually mailed the letters. Faculty members recognize that these letters are critical to your career, but they are busy people and this kind of letter is difficult to write. Therefore, they need a good deal of lead time, especially for the first letter requested.

The Hiring System (Such As It Is)

Having sent off all your materials, you must now endure the discomfort of waiting for a reply. The wait may be a long one and the response, when it comes, may not be what you were expecting, so be prepared! The academic hiring system is not a model of efficiency. The people making the hiring decisions are faculty members who have backed into taking that responsibility. They are overloaded, they are not professionals at hiring, and they tend not to be completely organized. They are also probably somewhat embarrassed at having such great decision-making power over other people's lives. As a result, the communications you do receive may be somewhat unclear or even, if coming from several sources, apparently contradictory.

Obviously, the high ambiguity of the hiring situation will make you anxious or depressed. If you are not invited for an interview, you will feel anger at those who did not invite you and be suspicious that your faculty reference writers may not be pushing you hard enough. Simultaneously, you will feel despair about your own skills, abilities, and self-worth. Expect all this; it is easier if you are prepared for it.

BEFORE YOUR VISIT

Let us assume that the happy event has occurred and you have been invited for a job visit. Congratulations! You have already achieved a great deal. Universities receive hundreds of applications for every position they advertise, and typically do not invite more than three or four people for an interview. Jobs are scarce and to be considered for one is no mean feat. Let us now tell you some things that will increase your chances of getting the job.

1. Set up your travel plans in advance. Before you respond to the invitation, check your schedule and travel arrangements. When could you visit? How can you get there? The university or college website will often present this information. Do not fail to look it up. The only items of travel information you should expect your contact person to provide are local transportation details and accommodation arrangements. This is your first chance to present yourself as an organized and effective individual. Do not miss it.
2. Research the institution before you visit it. Read the catalogues on file at your university for background information. Check the institution's website. Is it rural or urban? What is its history? What are its strengths and sources of pride? Seek out the faculty members in your psychology department who know something about the institution and learn about it from them.

3. Research the department you will be visiting. When invited to give a talk, you might ask your contact person to send you the brochure(s) the department has prepared for prospective graduate students or simply get the faculty list from the department's website. (However, do not assume that all departments have actively updated websites.) For the people in your own immediate field, review what they have published. Look for some of their work by author searches in the *PsychInfo*. Read several abstracts and some articles. Faculty websites will often give you a sense of the person's general interests and current research directions, and may allow the downloading of in-press articles. Here is the point: If there are some individuals whose work is close to your own, know it well. And you should also have a sense of what faculty in areas adjacent to your own have done, particularly if they are distinguished scholars. An eminent colleague of ours, one with quite a good sense of humor, found nothing humorous about a job candidate who asked, "What exactly is your area of research?"
4. Find out before (or during the visit) as much as you can about the search process. Although we know of only two case studies of this process (Quereshi, 1980, 1983), you should be able to find informants who can answer questions about the search procedure of the institution you are visiting. Are several candidates usually interviewed or only a few? Do all faculty members get to vote on job candidates or are hiring decisions made solely by the search committee or the chair of the department? Regarding the job for which you are applying, is the department looking for an excellent general candidate or are skills specific to a particular area more important?
5. Find out about the talk. Most hiring institutions expect a candidate to give a talk, but *not* all hiring institutions convey these expectations clearly; some use quaint code words such as "say a few words to a few of us about your research." When you respond to the invitation, find out *exactly* what sort of talk is expected. At this time, you could also mention the kind of equipment you will need for your talk as well as your talk's title.

THE TALK THAT (POSSIBLY) GETS OR LOSES THE JOB

For better or worse, your talk may be the single most important determinant of whether you get the job offer. The way in which you present your

material is thought to tell a great deal about your research and teaching abilities, your ability to think on your feet, and your overall personal style. For many of the faculty, your talk is the only contact they will have with you, and so their impressions will be formed considerably by it. When preparing and practicing the talk, think of it as a performance, and remember that a performance works best when it has been carefully scripted and when the performer has total control of the material.

It is of course true that a job talk, like many brief samples of behavior, is not highly predictive of job performance, a finding from organizational psychology with which many social scientists are familiar. Knowing this, even if you do not give a great talk, those who think you would be a good person to hire will seek to make the case that you should be hired. But why give them that burden and require them to expend the social capital that arguing your case will require?

What to Talk About

Rather to our surprise, our comments on job talks in the first edition of this book created some controversy. This was so because we assumed that "the talk" was always going to be a talk on the candidate's research. Of course, and increasingly so, this is not always the case. Sometimes, often at an institution with a primary emphasis on teaching, the talk might be a simulation of a lecture that might be given in an introductory course. One of the most brilliant lectures we ever heard was given by Roger Brown on the question of what it would mean to say that primates comprehended speech. He reviewed research, but not his own research. However, he was a distinguished scientist with an international reputation when he did so. The target for this book is the beginning scientist, and we continue to think that the prototypical job talk that is expected is a presentation of the candidate's research. But it is well to get very clear—in advance—what sort of talk the institution that has invited you expects.

Assume that you are expected to give a talk about your research. Such a talk makes better narrative sense if it is on completed research; a feeling of anticlimax is inevitable if hypotheses are proposed, a method is described, but no data are presented. On the other hand, if you propose to follow your thesis up in future research, then you should talk about it, even if you do not have data. Because your thesis presumably reflects more of your own thinking than other research you may have done with your advisor, the presentation of your thesis may help to establish the independence of your work from that of your advisor. Ideally, you have at least some data and can tell a story in progress, bringing people along with you through the chapters. This approach can make for an extraordinarily exciting colloquium.

Who Will Be in the Audience?

You better begin by finding the answer to this question and think through what the composition of the audience implies about the composition of your talk. The key audience is likely to be faculty members and perhaps advanced graduate students. If the institution does not have a graduate program, undergraduate students will be an important segment of the audience. Psychologists from every area are often involved in the decision-making progress and are likely to attend your talk. The mixed nature of your audience means that although you can assume that everybody is familiar with general psychological language, you should explain more specialized terms. You also need to explain the context of your research in enough detail so that audience members outside your own research field can understand it. An all-too-frequent after-colloquium comment is, "It was technically OK, but *why* did he (or she) want to do it in the first place?"

Length and Structure of the Talk

Your talk should be approximately 45 minutes long, fitting into a normal class hour and somewhat shorter than a regular colloquium. Present your ideas in a less complex way than you would in a written paper; remember, oral comprehension is significantly poorer than reading comprehension.

Begin with an introduction that puts the work in a context understandable to psychologists in general and by implication makes clear the importance of the research. Refer to the historical background of your work and describe recent developments in the area, but do so succinctly. (Be sure to cite the individual who began the general research area and any researcher in that area who is likely to be in the audience!) After 10 minutes you should have finished the introduction and be talking about your own work.

After 10 minutes you should have finished the introduction and be talking about your own work. We have seen this advice quoted with some scorn, so we had better clarify it. The advice is not that in any kind of talk you are giving, you should be talking about yourself within 10 minutes! Instead the advice is that, if you are giving the standard research talk that needs to be completed within 45 minutes, about 10 or 15 minutes is all the time you can allocate to positioning your research into a scholarly context, although this is a topic that you can revisit at the conclusion of your talk. In any event, in our experience those job talks in which the candidate leaves only 15 to 20 minutes to talk about his or her own research have tended to be disasters!

Unless your most important research innovation is procedural, present just enough procedural detail in your method section so that the audience is

clear about what happened to your participants. Mingle results and discussion sections; present a relatively small block of data, comment on its meaning, and then move on to the next block. For instance, you might first present the results that make clear that your manipulations worked and come to that conclusion; then go on to the results that speak to your hypotheses.

Near the end of your talk make very clear that you know the limits to what you have shown. All research has limits. People will be more impressed if you show a mature awareness that such limitations exist. At the very end of your talk make a brief but explicit statement regarding future research directions and then conclude with a summary (or take home message) of what you have shown.

Mechanizing Your Talk

We may well call the 21st century the Century of PowerPoint. But we may not. We have heard about organizations that have now banned PowerPoint presentations because they are confining and brain deadening. Probably the best advice is to have some PowerPoint-like material, but to use it imaginatively. For instance, you could present pictures of apparatus, stimulus materials, and typical participants in action. When presenting the research, you can lay out your design on a first slide, fill in control group results on a second slide, and then move to a third slide that adds the data from the experimental groups bearing on your hypothesis. With this approach, you can build your own suspense.

It surprises us to have to say this, but make sure that whatever you present will be readable from the back of a good-sized room. (This is an advantage of PowerPoint; its standard font sizes are readable from a distance.)

Alternatives to computer-driven presentations are using overhead transparencies as you talk or handouts of the data that are passed out beforehand. We advise against handouts because people are likely to read a handout at inappropriate times. (We once saw a faculty member, who figured out the results while the speaker was still thrashing around in the introduction, cut in with a question about the interpretation of the results.) With overhead transparencies, you can control the rate at which it is presented, but it may be difficult for people to read and may give a slightly amateurish tone to your presentation.

We will say more about this later, but as you prepare your talk, remember that it may need to be given under rather different conditions than prevail at your home institution. Think ahead with defensive pessimism. What if, because of some mysterious computer glitch, your PowerPoint slides will not project on the host institution's system? (This happened to one of us while giving a rather major talk. Luckily, the speaker had thought to bring his own projector as well as his own computer, and the situation was

salvaged. This is what we mean by defensive pessimism and its utility.) Most experienced speakers we know who use PowerPoint also take along overhead transparencies just in case, and we have often seen them use these transparencies while other speakers, who placed their unconditional trust in the more sophisticated projection technologies, were seriously disrupted.

Of course, these and similar disasters have happened to many of us. So we should not be judgmental when they happen to a job candidate, right? Not quite. Although the audience may try to be nonjudgmental, the candidate has lost a chance to make a good impression, and this certainly will harm the candidate's case—even for psychologists, who ought to know about the fundamental attribution error!

While we are at it, here is a multiple-choice test. Which is better, option a or option b? (a) giving a good job talk in day-old clothes or (b) giving a slideless, halting job talk in fresh clothes? The answer is a, which means that everything necessary for your talk goes with you on the plane and not in the luggage compartment to be sent ahead to some exotic location that is not the destination of your interview. (We have seen the “lost-luggage colloquium,” and it is a painful sight.) One change of clothes, toiletries, and the talk manuscript will all fit into a carry-on bag!

We are being more than a little obsessive about this, and we know it (because all of our friends tell us so). What we are trying to do is model a state of mind that will get you to the job interview in a prepared state, with all that you need with you. We hope that if you achieve this state of mind, you can relax—a bit.

Practicing the Talk

Practice your talk not once but several times. You might even videotape one version, but probably not your first attempt, because that may depress you. Try it out on fellow graduate students, and then on faculty members, particularly those in other areas. Note what questions people ask, and begin to build some of the answers into the talk. You may not deal explicitly with all the questions that arise, but having heard them during a rehearsal, you will be ready to answer them at the actual performance. From rehearsals, you may get a version of your talk that goes well but that is 14 minutes too long. This is not solved by talking faster when you get to the real talk! Instead, decide which sections can be cut or omitted.

To Read or Not to Read the Talk

Knowing that they will be anxious initially and that it is important to set the context of the talk correctly, many speakers have the first few paragraphs of their talk written out in full. They also may have the last few

paragraphs of the talk written so that they can state their conclusions precisely. In between, they rely on an outline or a series of slides—overheads to cue them. Other speakers are able to give a successful talk from a series of notes written on one sheet of paper or even with no notes at all. Past experience suggests to us that job candidates are not among those speakers.

WHAT YOU WANT TO KNOW ABOUT THE PLACE WHERE YOU MIGHT LIVE AND WORK

Certainly, the department that is considering hiring you wants to know a good many things about you. However, it is wise not to forget that you want to know a good many things about them also. But what it is all too easy to forget is that, under the assumption that you will spend at least a few hours every once in a while doing what is called “having a life,” there is a good deal you want to know about the town that surrounds the academic institution and the sorts of lives that people in that town enjoy. Let us examine each of these questions in turn.

Information About the Department

Although you need the answers to quite a few questions, do not ask every question explicitly. During your visit, answers will frequently come unobtrusively, and much of the necessary information will be volunteered. At some point, get off in a corner by yourself and look over your list of questions to see what answers you have. Determine what else you need to know and then tactfully ask about it.

1. What is the teaching load? How is it distributed between graduate and undergraduate courses? Are you needed for specific courses? Can you teach a new course? What are the typical class sizes? Is there a reduced teaching load for first-year faculty members? At American universities, can one obtain a “summer salary” by teaching in the summer term?
2. What sorts of supports for teaching are available? Is there a well-stocked library with an organized reserve system? Is there a budget for photocopying? For films? Are there graduate student teaching assistants? What norms govern teaching at the institution?
3. What are the department’s expectations for faculty research? Does the department expect you to obtain a research grant and, if so, when? Some departments are structured so that

departmental members rarely publish. Others expect a continuing stream of research output. What are the department’s norms for research productivity?

4. What space is available for your research? Would the space be yours alone or shared with other faculty? What are the sharing rules? Is space relatively plentiful or in short supply?
5. What sorts of support and equipment are available for your research? What about shop and computer facilities—what are they like and how are they billed? Does the institution allot starter money to beginning faculty members for their research? Is money available for space modifications? Are travel funds available and, if so, what are the requirements for obtaining these funds? Is there a secretarial pool? Is it free or is it billed? What is its quality? (This is one area in which you can get faculty to talk freely and endlessly.)
6. How are research participants obtained? Is there a research participant pool associated with the Introductory Psychology courses? Has contact been made with various school settings? How are infrahuman animals obtained? What are the animal care facilities? Are animal caretakers available or do you need to build up this sort of staff? Who pays?
7. What are the odds on getting tenure? What criteria do the department use for tenure and promotion? How are these decisions made? When? Historically, what has been the promotion rate? Is the job, in fact, a tenure-track position? If not, what is the probability that it could become one? (Find out whether budget or enrollment projections exist for the institution as a whole and the psychology department in particular and check them out. Such figures may provide some indication of the tenure situation.) How does the situation “feel” to junior faculty? Are they anxious and concerned about tenure and promotion? Is the possibility of collaboration reduced because they regard themselves as being in competition with one another? Is there a sharp division between the junior and senior faculty?
8. What is the consulting policy within the university? What is the pattern of consulting within the department?
9. What is the quality of the undergraduate students? (Of course, this question is especially important at a solely undergraduate institution.) In at least the advanced undergraduate courses, are students bright and well-motivated? What is the reputation of psychology as a major? What sort of expectations do

the undergraduates have for contact with faculty members? Is there such a thing as an honors thesis? Who does it? Have any theses been published lately?

10. If the hiring institution has a graduate program, much of your research life will be spent with graduate students. Are they intelligent and motivated to do research? Do they help and support each other? Is there an active graduate student culture? What are their career aspirations? What sorts of placements have they received in the past few years? In what ways do they get involved in research? How are they supported? Do they have to spend unproductive time earning money to continue their graduate training? Are they full-time or part-time students? At some institutions, new faculty cannot immediately supervise PhD theses. If this is the case, ask junior faculty if it is difficult to supervise graduate students at any level.

Information About the University

Because much of this information is standard, universities frequently have booklets that include it, particularly the less controversial elements.

1. What is the beginning salary? What has been the pattern of increases over the past few years? How were the increases determined?
2. What is the standard initial contract period? What is the standard renewal contract period?
3. Does the university provide moving expenses?
4. What is the sabbatical leave policy? What is the maternity-paternity leave policy?
5. What are the university's retirement policies and what other benefits does it offer its faculty? Some universities have group health or life insurance plans, faculty medical and dental clinics, day care centers, and the like.
6. Every university has dimensions along which departmental contributions to the university are assessed. Determine the reward contingencies at this university. Is the department "paid off" for high national visibility of its faculty? Is teaching efficiency important to the university administration? If so, how is teaching efficiency measured?

In learning about a new department and university, keep an open mind. We have often encountered candidates whom we would label "almamater"

centric. That is, they tend to assume that our university operates just like theirs and, worse, they are offended to discover that this is not always true, even when the differences involve rather trivial bureaucratic details. Our simple advice is do not assume every university is exactly alike!

Information About the Community

Although as a junior faculty member, you will undoubtedly be spending most of your time at the university, you will need somewhere to live. Find out the living circumstances of the other junior faculty. Does the university offer any assistance in finding or financing housing? Stop in at a local real estate agent and get some feel for area rents and costs. Pick up a local newspaper and check on houses for sale and apartments for rent.

Find out what employment opportunities exist for your spouse. The department you are visiting may not be set up to answer these questions, but someone should be able to refer you to appropriate resource people. You should also check the general availability of day care centers and the quality of the schools your children would be attending.

Finally, find out as much as you can about the physical, cultural, and recreational climate of the community. Will you have to buy an entirely new wardrobe or develop a taste for country music? What are the shopping facilities and restaurants like? These issues may not be critical in determining whether you take the job, but they are important.

THINGS PEOPLE WILL WANT TO KNOW ABOUT YOU

We have already discussed what people seek to learn from your job talk, but there are other things that various people want to know about your professional self-definition, and we will consider a few of these topics next.

Your "Classification"

Faculty members, particularly those outside your own research area, will attempt to determine the general context of your psychological thinking. Within what research tradition are you working? Have you been affected by recent developments in psycholinguistics? Within social psychology, are you a cognitive social psychologist? You can describe yourself in a detailed way with faculty members in your own research area. But when questioned by other faculty members, you should be prepared to place yourself reasonably accurately within psychology in one or two well-chosen sentences.

The Five-Minute Drill

It is useful to be able to give one other sort of presentation. We have labeled it the five-minute drill. Perhaps one faculty member missed your job talk; perhaps for another you want to describe a line (or future line) of research you did not cover in your colloquium. We suggest that you be prepared to relate the theoretical context of your research, the specific hypotheses you are testing, the general procedures you are using to test them, and the outlines of the results you are getting (or would hope to get)—all in five minutes! Your major task is to convey the importance and excitement of this research succinctly so that you can, then, discuss your work with the person rather than lecture him or her during your time together.

To convey what you are up to without going into excessive detail is a surprisingly difficult task, and, at first, requires considerable thought and discipline. We suggest that you explicitly think through what you would say and practice it. When practicing, keep in mind that you may be relating your research to a colleague in another area who may need to know a bit more about some aspect (e.g., methods) of the research. Our advice is think through, in advance, modifications of your presentation as a function of a variety of possible audiences.

Although we believe the ability to present your research in capsule form will be useful on job interviews, we also want to point out that this form of presentation is, in fact, the way experienced psychologists communicate with one another about their research at conventions, conferences, or on colloquium visits. To be able to do this well indicates not only that you can communicate effectively about your research but also that you fit the prototype of the experienced psychologist.

Teaching

Think about what you want to teach. For those courses you want to teach and for those you will be expected to teach, have some ideas about what texts you will use and the general nature of the topics you would cover. Evidence that you have investigated the department's teaching needs and patterns shows your organization and your interest in the institution and suggests that you will be a good teacher.

Hidden Agendas

Inevitably, there will be some reservations concerning the merits of your candidacy. Typically, these reservations originate from two sources. First, concerns arise from a department's multiple needs, or from faculty members' various perceptions of the needs of the department. For example,

the undergraduate advisor may have been counting on you to teach introductory psychology. Someone else may have been planning on getting someone to help out with the undergraduate or graduate courses in statistics. Still others may have hoped that you would be able to teach and to do research that enriched their own graduate training program, and so on.

Second, many faculty members' most vivid impression of you will come from the job talk, and, of course, it is impossible to deal with everything that is on each individual's mind in that context. For instance, if you did not talk in detail about your statistical procedures, someone may be concerned about your sophistication in this area. If you did cover your statistics in great depth, someone else may wonder about your ability to teach the more theatrical, introductory lecture courses.

Given these possibilities, it makes sense to ask your host about possible reservations about your candidacy so that you can deal with them during your visit. Because this is a delicate matter, we suggest you frame your inquiry by asking your host to identify possible concerns that have been raised with respect to your candidacy as a result of the multiple needs of the department. Raising this question, of course, requires tact. Your task is to make clear that it is perfectly reasonable that there will be those concerns, and they are not to be taken personally. And as you will see in the section that follows about "Your Host and Your Schedule," there may be a person who will be willing to respond to a carefully worded question of this sort.

THE VISIT AND AFTER

Although departmental tribal customs for the visit vary widely, some similarities exist. Usually the visit will last at least one full day, perhaps a day and a half or two days. Try to arrive the night before your visit, get a map, and orient yourself to the campus and the town. This simple act of independence impresses faculty out of all proportion to its difficulty.

Your Host and Your Schedule

One faculty member, usually in a research area similar to your own, probably will be responsible for coordinating your visit. Your host will have your schedule, but do not be surprised if it is not yet complete. If free time has been left on the schedule so that you can have some input, take the initiative and ask to see people or facilities of particular interest to you.

This person may have a second and more important function to fulfill. This is to communicate to you how the department works from his or her own perspective. Particularly if this person is a junior faculty member, or if you can find a person who is, then you have what anthropologists call

an "informant." This person is often licensed to give you a reasonably candid picture of the way things really work. A department is wise to get this information to the candidate. It is not so much that the more senior faculty want to keep this information from you, but that it is just that they have trouble recreating the perspective of a younger faculty member.

Individual Meetings

There probably will be four or five individual meetings scheduled with those faculty members who have identified themselves as being nearest your interest areas, hopefully those you researched before your visit. Double-check on them; find out what they are likely to be talking to you about and whether they have any stylistic idiosyncrasies. Do any of them believe in high-stress interviewing, for instance? You know a great deal about most of the faculty members; do not be embarrassed to ask about any new names. In the actual visits you can expect to talk about faculty members' research and some aspects of your own research.

The Chair (And Perhaps the Dean)

At this meeting, you will probably be told about the more straightforward aspects of the job—starting salary, formal fringe benefits, and so on. Here, you might also ask about the time frame of the hiring decision—that is, how soon they will be able to make up their minds.

Talk Preparation

As soon after you arrive as possible, ask to see the room in which you are to give your talk. Do not be shocked. Frequently the room is a "temporary" one, without permanent projection equipment (but with a promise that portable equipment will arrive in time for your talk). There may not be a projection screen or shades for all the windows. There may not be a podium or pointer. Do not panic, but do test the actual equipment you will use in the actual room in which you will use it. Remember that if your talk is somehow botched by the apparatus, people will "understand." However, they will not have heard you give your best talk, and you are unlikely to have a second chance to do so.

Before your talk, arrange to be off by yourself for perhaps half an hour so you can think yourself into what you want to say. Some departments have a tradition of a coffee hour before the talk; in that case, do your preparation just before the coffee hour.

Find out about certain micro details and local customs. Will somebody introduce you? At the end of the talk, does someone call for questions or

close the talk at a particular time or are you expected to do so? Do people interrupt the talk with questions, or do they hold them until the end? If you have a relatively organized presentation, you could suggest that people hold questions until the end, unless they are unclear about some detail that would decrease their comprehension of the rest of the talk. Find out, perhaps from your host, the kind of comments to expect. Does this department have a tradition of general politeness, or do they believe in "grilling" the speaker? Be prepared to be grilled, and do not take it personally. Different traditions prevail at different institutions. Do not be surprised by them.

As an aside to our colleagues: We have found, through trial and error, that the entire job interview goes somewhat more smoothly when candidates give their talks in the morning rather than in the usual afternoon colloquium time slot. Not only are the individual meetings facilitated by having something concrete to talk about, but the candidates themselves are less fatigued. This is especially true when candidates have flown west through several time zones the night before.

"Social" Events

There may be a social hour after your talk or dinner with faculty members or a party after dinner. Do not be confused by the "social" nature of these events; you are still being evaluated. The faculty members are trying to discover what kind of human being you are on a wide variety of dimensions. But they are also giving you the chance to determine whether you would want to be their colleague. These are people with whom you are proposing to spend a lot of time. What would it feel like? Do graduate students come to these parties? What barriers seem to exist between graduate students and faculty and between junior and senior faculty? Do they seem comfortable with each other?

Drinking goes on at these events. If you drink, go ahead and join in. *But pace yourself.* Others may be able to go home early but you are the "birthday person," the guest of honor. Do know your limits, and leave in time to get enough sleep so that you are alert for the next day's activities.

After the Visit

You survived the visit and even enjoyed parts of it. Do not fall apart yet; there are still important details with which to deal.

1. Send a list of your expenses with attached receipts to the chair unless someone else was specifically mentioned. If at all possible, and even if it means taking out a short-term loan, try not to be importunate about money. You will thank better

if you cope with this problem yourself, rather than asking for special treatment. Everybody knows that graduate students are not rich. They will process the request for reimbursement as quickly as they can.

2. If you promised material to any faculty members during your visit, send it promptly.
3. Settle down to wait. Either the chair or your host might have told you when the university would probably reach a decision. In our experience, they are almost always too optimistic. If they say two weeks, do not be surprised to wait a month or more.

A Final Note on Practice Effects

In our experience whatever stress and anxiety that is experienced by job candidates is greatly reduced after their first job interview. In fact, after one or two interviews candidates are often as (if not more) calm and organized about the interviewing process than the departmental hiring committee!

NOT GETTING THE JOB OFFER: HEARING NO AND HEARING NOTHING

After your wait, one of three outcomes may occur. You may get the job, fail to get it, or not hear anything about it.

Hearing No

You may get a polite letter saying that the institution you visited is not going to offer you the job. Try not to be too depressed. In our experience it is rare that a candidate who has been interviewed does not get an offer because the hiring committee has a low opinion of the candidate. More likely the committee discovered some mismatch between the candidate's talents and interests and the job, which became apparent only at the interview. Take our word for it; we are generally impressed by the job candidates we invite, even those to whom we do not offer the job.

Hearing Nothing

As you must know by now, academic decision making always takes a long time. But you should face another possibility. Because you were invited for an interview, it is clear that you are one of the best candidates for the job. However, you are certainly not the *only* good candidate. So the university

may already have offered the job to another candidate. But that does not mean you are out of the running. If that person declines the job, it may be offered to you next—but the university did not want to explain that you are their second choice and resolved their dilemma by not communicating with you at all. Eventually, you will probably hear from them.

GETTING THE JOB OFFER: TAKING THE JOB

Although you may find this difficult to believe, for most students, after a certain number of cycles through the search and interview process, a job offer does materialize. Then what?

It Is a Job You Really Want

Let us assume you are generally enthusiastic about the institution and want to accept the job offer. Telephone them and say so. But before you finally commit yourself, resolve any questions that are important to you. Perhaps you and your spouse should make a second visit to the institution, so that you both can see where you may be spending the next few years. Determine whether the institution can cover this expense or not.

What about your contract? It will probably consist of a letter from the dean or chair offering you a job as an assistant professor at a certain salary. Respond with a letter accepting the job, and include a paragraph or two about issues important to you. You do this not to "sue the bastards" if they fail to live up to the contract but simply to remind them of your expectations so that they can facilitate your development. (See Bernstein, 1978, for a more complete discussion of items for contractual consideration.)

You may be able to negotiate some points with the institution, but as a person being offered your first position, you are in a poor bargaining position. Do state your needs clearly and strongly, but unless you really mean it, do not make your acceptance of the job conditional on these points. Because the department presumably wants you to be happy and productive, it may be flexible about those elements of the job that are under its control, although some aspects of the job offer, such as starting salary, tend to be set at a university-wide level. (There is one exception to this prototypical situation: If you have a second job offer in hand, you will have considerably more power with which to bargain.)

Juggling: Being Offered the Job You Might Want

Assume a slightly more complicated set of circumstances. You have received a job offer, but not one from your first-choice institution. You will probably be asked to reply within two weeks, so you had better move fast.

If you have already visited your preferred institution, you or your advisor can ask fairly directly if they want to make you a job offer. But be prepared for ambiguous responses, such as "yes, if the university approves this year's budget request" or "yes, if Candidate X turns the job down." Neither of these answers is helpful, given the time pressure, but you can ask the institution making the offer to give you a few extra days to resolve your conflict. They may be able to do so.

If you sent your vita to an institution in which you are terribly interested and have not been invited for a visit, your job chances are slim. But we know about closure; you may need to play this through until you find out this institution is not a realistic possibility. You or your advisor can call the institution and find out as much as possible about where you stand in their decision-making process. Again, the likeliest outcome is vagueness.

Given all this vagueness, it is our experience that people frequently take the first job they are offered. After pursuing all these possibilities, the bird in the hand proves considerably better than beating about bushes that may contain no birds at all.

Finishing

Congratulations! You have a job: Now retrieve your head and return to graduate school. Notice that pile of materials gathering dust in a corner? That is your thesis. *Finish it!* This may be the single most important piece of advice in this chapter. Our experience has clearly shown that the anguish associated with completing a thesis increases astronomically when students attempt to complete it in absentia. During your first teaching year, you will have little (and, perhaps, no) time to work on your thesis. Also, the role of faculty member is not well-matched with the essentially graduate student obligation of finishing a thesis. For these reasons, many students who leave with all but their degree never do get the degree. And not completing the thesis can cost you considerably. At some universities, your job will pay less and have a lesser title and you may actually lose the job if you go too long with your thesis uncompleted. At all institutions people notice. Failure to complete the degree is a real handicap.

In certain ways, we envy those starting out their careers in psychology in the 21st century. When we wrote the first edition of *The Compleat Academic*, there were only a few books giving career advice to people in psychology. Now, and we do hope that this is a trend that we had something to do with starting, there are a good many such books that give excellent advice on many aspects of one's career, from getting mentored in graduate school (Johnson & Howe, 2002), to careers in psychology (Sternberg, 1997), to elegant displays of data during your talks (Nicol & Pexman, 1999), to grant getting (Illes, 1999), and of course to teaching (Perlman, McCann,

& McFadden, 1997; Sternberg, 2000). You would be wise to find your way to the American Psychological Association's website and scan the list of books they publish, to the American Psychological Society's website and examine publications, and also to Lawrence Erlbaum Associates academic resource book list and see what you need to read at various stages of your career.

CONCLUSION

We have described the hiring process as we see it, but other people have other perspectives and you need to know about them. We hope you can use this chapter as a starting point for initiating more extensive discussions about the hiring process with your advisor and other relevant faculty members.

REFERENCES

- Bernstein, B. E. (1978). Points to ponder when seeking a new professional position. *Professional Psychology, 9*, 341-349.
- Bryson, R. B., Bryson, J. B., Licht, M. H., & Licht, B. G. (1976). The professional pair: Husband and wife psychologists. *American Psychologist, 31*, 10-17.
- Darley, J. M., & Zanna, M. (1980). An introduction to the hiring process in academic psychology. *Canadian Psychologist, 22*, 228-237.
- Iacono, W. G. (1981). The academic job interview: The experiences of a new Ph.D. in the job market. *Canadian Psychology, 22*, 217-227.
- Illes, J. (1999). *The strategic grant seeker*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Johnson, W. B., & Huwe, J. M. (2002). *Getting mentored in graduate school*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Madell, T. O., & Madell, C. M. (1979). A professional pair at the job market: A reply. *American Psychologist, 34*, 275-276.
- Matthews, J. R., & Matthews, L. H. (1978). A professional pair at the job market. *American Psychologist, 33*, 780-782.
- Nicol, A., & Pexman, P. M. (1999). *Presenting your findings: A practical guide for creating tables*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Perlman, B., McCann, L. I., & McFadden, S. H. (Eds.). (1997). *Lessons learned: Practical advice for the teaching of psychology*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Society.
- Quereschi, M. Y. (1980). *Correlates of the employability of college/university teachers of psychology*. Paper presented at the 88th Annual Convention of the American Psychological Association, Montreal, Quebec, Canada.

- Quereshi, M. Y. (1983). *Correlates of the employability of psychologists in academia: A cross-validation*. Paper presented at the 91st Annual Convention of the American Psychological Association, Anaheim, CA.
- Sternberg, R. J. (1997). *Career paths in psychology: Where your degree can take you*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Sternberg, R. J. (2000). *Teaching introductory psychology: Survival tips from the experts*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Zanna, M. P., & Darley, J. M. (1979). On getting your first job in academic psychology. *APA Journal Supplement Abstract Service*, 9, 45–46.