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Learn about Academic Culture Early, Patiently

How best can you learn about so secretive a culture as academe? I suggest beginning with books written by professors about academic life. These writers entertain; they are, after all, like us. Better yet, they inform novice academics of what to expect in unusually candid fashion.

Consider how Professor Jane Smiley (1995), in her best-selling book *Moo*, pictures a typical provost savoring his large midwestern institution (provosts actually run campuses; presidents are more for display and fund raising):

While a state university, unlike an Ivy League institution, did not promise membership in the ruling class (Wasn't that the only real reason, Ivar thought, that four years at Harvard could cost \$100,000?), Ivar's university, over the years, had made serious noises to all sorts of constituencies: Students could find jobs, the state would see a return on its educational investment, business could harvest enthusiastic and well-trained workers by the hundreds. . . . At the very least, students could expect to slip the parental traces, get drunk, get high, have sex, seek passion, taste freedom and irresponsibility surrounded by the best facilities money could buy.

What, besides Smiley's delightful cynicism, is worth noticing here? For one thing, that higher administrators take a far more optimistic view of how well trained most students are than do their faculty. Second, that we can too easily forget what matters more to undergraduates than the things we hope to teach them.

Michael Moffat's (1989) direct-observational account of dorm life at Rutgers University is even more informative. Here, for example, he summarizes what freshmen most need to learn as students and where they typically get it:

The crunch often came after the first midterms. C's and D's?! So, sitting around in the lounge with a book open was not really studying. Reading something through quickly did not make it stick. Listening to lectures without taking good notes was not enough. Most freshmen made adjustments. Sometimes friends helped, but more often the novices figured out new study routines for themselves.

Moffat's inside information can help you understand your own students, even to fathom your own struggles as a freshman in the professoriate. At the least, it is good reading.

Then, for the ultimate in succinctly useful books, look at Burton R. Clark's classic, *The Academic Life* (1987). In this excerpt, he uses his extensive studies to point out the four pivotal determinants of most professorial careers:

First, and most important, is the obvious divide between research and teaching, redefined as specialist and generalist careers. The second is the distinction between full- and part-time appointments. . . . The third divide lies between tenured [or tenurable] personnel, an important matter for the stability of academic employment and the fundamental beliefs of the profession. Last is the pure-applied distinction.

Put simply, Clark says that your probability of career satisfaction, as measured traditionally, depends on situating yourself in the first position for each of those dualities. Why, for instance, is it true that teaching counts less than research? On campuses where teaching is the true emphasis of faculty work, the institution is client driven. That means less administrative valuing of faculty as individuals, less individual freedom, less time and support for individual scholarship, more likelihood of faculty becoming professionally obsolete and immovable. No, I don't always like this reality either, but I believe we do better to face it than ignore it.

In Burton Clark's surveys of which professors were most valued by colleagues at a variety of campuses, a consistent pattern emerged: Those of us who matter most in the professoriate teach and research well, but with clear emphasis on the latter in ways that are elegant, individualistic, and entrepreneurial. Moreover, professors with esteem as researchers report the most career excitement and happiness; in contrast, those of us at "teaching campuses" are most likely to report feeling mismatched and intellectually understimulated. My own studies of new faculty replicate Clark's findings.

Another key revelation in his book on academic culture shows how nonobvious some unwritten rules are. Those of us in "upward-tilting" disciplines, such as the hard sciences (with tilt defined in terms of proportionately how many departmental courses are offered at upperclassmen versus underclassmen levels), reap the highest status and pay. Those of us in "downward-tilting" disciplines, such as English Composition, where the bulk of teaching occurs at freshman level, have the lowest salaries, security, and caste. Why point this out, given that you've probably already committed yourself to one tilt or the other? Because it helps prepare you for realities that often upset new faculty in the humanities and some social sciences—too often, in my experience, to the point of distraction and demoralization.

If we are wise, let us prepare for the worst.—GEORGE WASHINGTON

He is a man of sense who does not grieve for what he has not, but rejoices in what he has.—EPICTETUS

If, as I hope, I've stimulated your interest in a brief but systematic enquiry into academic culture, how, exactly, should you proceed? The following strategy proved most palatable and useful for the new faculty in my programs:

- Begin by finding informative excerpts and general principles about academic cultures; this sets a useful backdrop for appreciating the generalities and learning the specifics of the culture you are joining.
- Learn about colleagues at your new campus before you meet them (e.g., scan their publications; talk to mutual acquaintances). Sometimes this step comes as early as preparing to apply for professorial positions.
- Anticipate some of the eccentricities of your new colleagues, or take a closer look at your graduate campus and imagine its faculty as your colleagues.
- Begin early to practice ways of working with particular relevance to the jobs you hope to be offered (e.g., fluent ways of writing grant proposals or course plans).

That is, do these things instead of rushing ahead without noticing how your new culture differs from (and resembles) what you've known. Specifically, prepare early for unpleasant realities that may confront you, by (1) discovering, well before you feel the inclination or need to, the predictable disappointments connected to your discipline, your campus, your background, and your racial/ethnic/social class status; (2) understanding potential "fault lines" in your career, such as a dysfunctional relationship with your departmental chairperson (no one else, in all likelihood, will prove more crucial to your initial survival and success than this person); and (3) uncovering the reasons why faculty at a certain campus like their setting enough to stay. In addition, do the exercises that follow.

Rule 1: Wait.**Rule 2: Begin Early.****Exercises for Rules 1 and 2**

In the case of writing (Chapters 9 and 10), these rules meant holding back from impetuous starts to figure out what needed saying and doing. Here, it amounts to early discovery of effective ways to make reasonable first impressions and good starts as a colleague. And here, the waiting and beginning early may be easier: They start with the simple act of reading the summaries ahead about the nature of academic culture.

But before you set off on these exercises, beware of the length of text that accompanies them. Here, as just above, I abstract and explain suggested readings while assuming your ability to skim or scour them as you wish. (But here, alas, I cannot threaten you with the prospect of tests down the road, as I might if I were a mean-spirited teacher. Or can I?)

Exercise 1. Peruse the Literature on Academic Culture, the Earlier the Better.

We've already seen examples of the sorts of readings that can be helpful—information about the real interests of provosts and undergraduates, about some of the predictors of high status and disabling disappointment in academic careers, even a clue about why freshmen often struggle. Here, I present some related excerpts from readings, arranged this time in more systematic fashion. I begin with ways of anticipating the eccentricities of your colleagues and knowing the unwritten rules of conduct before you need them. Some of the best information lies in 'fictional' accounts of professorial life.

a. Humorous Fiction about Professors. Following are excerpts from David Lodge's classic comedy—*Changing Places* (1975)—about professorial life in Britain and the United States. It takes the perspective of exchange professors who've crossed the Atlantic to experience new settings in their work: the realities are much the same in the old country and the new, then and now. This first excerpt depicts an all-too-typical senior faculty member, someone whom many new faculty don't quite expect as a colleague (or expect they could eventually resemble):

There was one respect in which Philip was recognized as a man of distinction, though only within the confines of his own Department. He was a superlative examiner of undergraduates. . . . In the Department meetings that discussed draft question papers he was much feared by his colleagues because of his keen eye for the ambiguous rubric, the repetition of questions from previous year's papers, the careless oversight that would allow candidates to duplicate material in two answers. . . . A col-

league had once declared that Philip ought to publish his examination papers. The suggestion had been intended as a sneer, but Philip had been rather taken with the idea—seeing in it, for a few dizzy hours, a heaven-sent solution to his professional barrenness.

Next, Lodge provides a devastatingly realistic indication of how we, once in the professoriate, might overrespond to a book reviewer's comments about our published writing:

I skimmed through the columns to see whether there was any comment on my contribution, and sure enough there it is: "Turning to Professor Zapp's essay. . . and I can see at a glance that my piece is honored with extensive discussion. [But then, on closer reading] Imagine receiving a poison-pen letter, or an obscene telephone call, or discovering that a hired assassin has been following you about the streets all day with a gun aimed at the middle of your back. . . . This guy really wanted to hurt. I mean, he wasn't content merely to pour scorn on my arguments and my evidence and accuracy and my style, to make my article [i.e., a chapter in an edited book] seem to be some kind of monument to imbecility and perversity in scholarship, no, he wanted my blood and my balls too, he wanted to beat my ego to pulp.

These excerpts come from David Lodge's *Small World* (1984/1995), an insightful and irreverent account of faculty behaviors at conferences:

The MLA (Modern Language Association of America) is the Big Daddy of conferences. A megaconference. A three-ring circus of the literary intelligentsia. . . . Imagine ten thousand highly-educated, articulate, ambitious, competitive men and women converging on mid-Manhattan on the 27th of December to meet and to lecture and to question and to discuss and to gossip and to philander and to party and to hire or be hired. For the MLA is a market as well as circus, it is a place where young scholars fresh from graduate school look hopefully for their first jobs, and more seasoned academics sniff the air for better ones. The bedrooms of the Hilton and the Americana are the scene not only of rest and dalliance but of hard bargaining and rigorous interviewing.

The next selection portrays the sort of position many successful professors actually aspire to, one with a magnificent and unparalleled salary, with a support staff always at the ready, and—most important among status considerations—with no teaching requirements. Here, too, Lodge captures the usual and politicized result for serious aspirants (in this case, Professor Zapp, waiting expectantly at a conference meeting for his name to be announced as the winner of just such a position):

"As most of you know," Jacques Textel was saying, "UNESCO intends to found a new chair of literary criticism tenable anywhere in the world, and I think it's no secret that we've been seeking the advice of the doyen of the subject, Arthur Kingfisher, as to how to fill this post. Well, ladies and gentlemen, I have news for you." Textel paused, teasingly... "Arthur has just told me," said Jacques Textel, "that he is prepared to come out of retirement and allow his own name to go forward for the chair." ... "Of course," said Textel, "I can't speak for the appointing committee, of which I merely am the chairman. But I should be surprised if there is any serious rival candidate to Arthur."

I'd like to go on with quotes from David Lodge, Jane Smiley, and other writers on academic culture, but I hope you'll read them yourself. There is also a plenitude of murder mysteries set in academe (including, as you might expect, clues about fatally interpersonal tensions therein), but little of worth, tellingly, in science-fiction/fantasy or in romance novels.

b. Systematic Studies of Academic Culture. There are surprisingly few of these studies, and, woe on you, many are mine. I'll present just two:

Obligatory dinners for new faculty. This first study is small and concerns ways in which exemplars managed the seemingly trivial ritual of dinner invitations during their first year on campus. The invitations always came from a few senior colleagues and attendance seemed obligatory. All such dinners occurred at the homes of seniors and all were a bit stiff and boring, at least in my studies. Most important, all were, or could have been, occasions for faux pas early in professorial careers.

Exemplars avoided memorable mistakes because they (1) ingested and imbibed moderately, no matter what others did; (2) listened more than talked, even attended, in moderation, to spouses/companions; and, (3) wrote thank-you notes to their hosts afterward, no matter how old-fashioned and unnecessary it seemed. In sum, exemplars exercised social moderation, especially in not underestimating the power of offending their hosts—at least one of whom would be reencountered for a long time. If all this sounds like common sense, I assure you it is not in actual practice.

Another of my studies carries an even more somber message, one I almost hesitate to present here, among our earliest looks at the obstacles facing new faculty. But with the words of George Washington still ringing in my ears, I press on.

A systematic inquiry into middle-aged, disillusioned colleagues. This second study is far lengthier to read and far more informative.

Rationale. Once they are hired and settled into campus routine, few things, in my experience, astomish new faculty more than the burned-out and angry departmental colleagues they encounter. Usually, newcomers find only one or two in

their departments, sometimes more. But always these middle-aged, disillusioned colleagues (MADCs) have an impact far beyond their numbers. These most unso- ciable sorts usually go unmentioned and unseen during the hiring process and interviews. And, because academe still tries to ignore these discomforting mem- bers, they have been little studied. When I noticed how these peculiar professors often distract and demoralize new faculty, I decided to learn more about them. Once I saw that they had much to teach about the long-term effects of poor starts in professorial careers, I studied them more systematically (e.g., Boice, 1986, 1993).

First look at MADCs. I began my study with a goal you might have antici- pated: I needed to convince most academics, including higher administrators, that MADCs were common and problematic. Those who already believed were the department chairpeople who most often had to deal with MADCs, usually as qui- etly as possible. I interviewed 88 individuals to discover if they, too, had noticed MADCs. Table 19.1 depicts the most common kinds of chairs' descriptors of least-valued faculty, in the modal order they were mentioned to me.

A methodological aside: I took pains *not* to lead chairs into saying what I expected. First, I simply asked them to list and briefly describe their faculty in two groups with regard to experience levels—those within their early years and those at midcareer and beyond. Then I asked them to detail those colleagues whom they saw as most or least valued and valuable. The most valued faculty almost always resembled the exemplary pattern depicted throughout this book. Their opposites, faculty listed as least valued, elicited far more description.

TABLE 19.1 Estimates by Chairs of Their Faculty Who Qualified as Salient on These Dimensions

Dimension	Seniority Levels of Faculty Rated	
	< 12 years as faculty member	> 12 years as faculty member
1. Socially isolated from colleagues	16%	34%
2. Regularly unfriendly to chair	5%	24%
3. Disrupts departmental meetings	11%	32%
4. Inactive as scholars/researchers	42%	71%
5. Frequent source of student complaints	16%	22%
6. Shirks student advising	32%	49%
7. Explosive with students and colleagues	11%	22%
8. Commonly suspicious/paranoid	5%	12%
9. Qualifies (in 5 of 8 prior categories) as disillusioned	16%	24%

Three things surprised me while collecting and analyzing these ratings and descriptions:

1. Departmental chairs were eager to talk about their problematic faculty, especially about the individuals they rated so difficult that they met what became a broad criterion for MADCs (see the ninth dimension in Table 19.1). Chairpeople were so expansive, they told me, because they had virtually no one else with whom to commiserate about these puzzling colleagues. Two chairs, as soon as they mentioned an especially difficult colleague, pulled an impressively large container from under their desks (one an enormously fat leather valise, the other a large squarish case) to show the extent of materials they had collected about just one MADC; these were displayed with the kind of reverence usually reserved for battle wounds. Virtually every chairperson I queried in this study showed me or told me about an especially thick file on a difficult colleague.

Chairpeople talked most about MADCs who made emotional phone calls to their homes late in the evening (often after apparently having obsessed until impelled to call in a maddened frenzy), who sent barrages of memos and letters (many were copies of letters of complaints about chairs sent to the authorities), and whose threats were litigious or worse. Most such files shown me (in strict confidence) included an accumulation of student complaints and notes from proceedings of campus hearings. The great majority of these chairs told me that their MADCs constituted the most stressful part of chairing—and their prime temptation to quit the position.

2. Ratings by chairs of faculty misbehaviors were generally far more common and problematic than I or almost anyone else I had consulted beforehand imagined. All but 25 of the 88 chairs I interviewed (and followed up within a month or two later to see if they had changed their first impressions) specified at least one highly problematic colleague. All but 2 of the rest designated someone closely approaching that level. The chairs and I (in retrospect and with the data summarized) were also shocked to see how many truly serious problems, such as paranoia and explosiveness, were commonly cited. For example, 3 MADCs had been formally cited for pushing or striking students in classrooms, 2 others for intimidating and shouting students out of their offices. Most such cases, chairs supposed, went unreported to campus administrations.

Many chairs recognized a likely reason why they had overlooked the wider reality of MADCs; prior, they had supposed MADCs were more common in their own department than in others; and they had worried that bringing attention to MADCs under their aegis might reflect poorly on their skills as chairpeople.

Chairs expressed especial alarm and disappointment about the numbers of relatively junior faculty depicted in Table 19.1 (see column for less than 12 years on campus). Too many of them already displayed patterns as unsociable, unhappy, unproductive, and oppositional. Indeed, like most other well-meaning administrators I interviewed over my decades of studies in academe, these chairs

had seemed blissfully unaware that their newer faculty struggled with much more than slow starts at writing and teaching. “I guess the psychological side needs more of my attention,” said one of the most compassionate chairs among those 88.

3. I now more clearly saw that the roots of dramatic displays of MADCs might be discernible well before midcareer. To explicate that point, I abstract a study of MADCs designated to me as extreme cases.

Follow-up study. I looked for signs in the early careers of extreme MADCs ($N = 22$) that distinguished them, in retrospect, from a sample of peers now nominated as most valued/exemplary at midcareer ($N = 22$). Each of the 44 interviewees was told that he or she was part of my program of interviewing colleagues about the academic experience to collect ideas on how better to treat new faculty. None of these 44 were told they had been nominated as abnormal and none seemed to suspect it.

I first asked each of the 44 to remember their starts on that same campus, particularly what helped or hindered during their first few years. Because MADCs specified few helpful influences during their career starts, I focus here on factors these midcareer faculty recalled as most handicapping. A summary of those data appears in Table 19.2. Even a quick glance at these data suggests that MADCs put heavier blame on early experiences for any disillusionment they now felt. Given that they began at the same campus as did their matched controls, can we dismiss the MADCs as whiners from whom we have little to learn?

TABLE 19.2 Midcareer Faculty Who Agreed Strongly That an Early Experience Handicapped Their Careers

Early Scenario Strongly Endorsed at Midcareer	MACF	Value
1. Not knowing R/P/T expectations for publishing, etc.	86%	41%
2. No useful information/help from colleagues/campus about publishing enough	55%	45%
3. No useful resources/help from colleagues/campus about teaching well enough	91%	18%
4. No useful direction/information about sufficient or appropriate service	95%	14%
5. Supposing R/P/T information as especially withheld from them	100%	5%
6. Experiencing R/P/T process as politically biased	100%	5%
7. Seeing themselves helpless regarding early survival	91%	0%
8. Experiencing self as only marginally accepted in R/P/T process	100%	0%
9. Being too busy, too overscheduled to do the expected	100%	18%

Not, I trust, after reading the first two sections of this book. Recall that new faculty I observed as unlikely to meet R/P/T expectations complained of nearly identical problems (e.g., busyness) most vigorously and angrily. Those slow starters were apparently on their ways to either leaving academe or staying on amidst disillusionment and oppositionalism. MADCs, then, provide a valuable second sight about the nature of early career fault lines.

Put simply, MADCs (and those on their way to becoming so) exhibit a contradictory mix of high ideals/intentions with helplessness and pessimism about meeting them under conditions common to the professoriate. They usually:

- Direct blame outward, with a small sense of self-responsibility.
- Perceive suggestions for change as criticisms of their person (and as coming from someone unqualified to give them advice).
- Express volatility toward others who might question or evaluate them, including students, peers, and supervisors.
- Display growing social isolation.
- Obsess about wrongdoings, real and imaginary.

What, in contrast, are the typical ways that newcomers on their way to success perceive their experience? Table 19.3 draws the comparison.

The information suggests adaptive and maladaptive ways of experiencing career starts. The next exercise admonishes you to take a more active and involved step.

Exercise 2. Learn What New Faculty (after 4 to 7 years) Would Do Differently if Starting Over.

This is something I urge you to do on your own or with another new hire on campus, largely by way of interviewing junior faculty who will reflect on their own starts. I illustrate what can be learned by summarizing inquiries I've carried out.

TABLE 19.3 Predictive, Dominant Early Experiences of New Faculty

<i>New Faculty en Route to Disillusionment</i>	<i>New Faculty Making Good Starts</i>
1. Experiencing collegial isolation/neglect	1. Finding useful social supports/networks
2. Perceiving general collegial disapproval	2. Finding ways to admire and enjoy colleagues
3. Self-doubts about own competence	3. Acceptance from students
4. Feeling victimized beyond long-term repair	4. Getting outside requests for reviewing/consulting/travel

The following are the most common regrets (restated in general ways by me) volunteered by "slow starters" nearing the final decision about reappointment (and already resigned to rejection). They represent diverse study campuses:

"If I could start over again, I would . . ."

1. Finish essential tasks in more timely fashion at my graduate campus, before leaving, especially the dissertation and sending it off for publication.
2. Start sooner, immediately after arriving on campus, to work at things like writing regularly, instead of waiting until in the mood.
3. Make more effort to find out about unwritten expectations for new faculty like me, early. I would start, even before leaving my graduate campus (or, later, by calling back), to learn what to expect at my new campus by talking with the younger faculty where I was, and with people I knew who were just starting professorial careers.
4. Read more about early experiences of new faculty (added one to me, humorously, "Maybe even your books").
5. Keep my early interactions/questions with colleagues light-hearted and non-anxious, nonobsessive.
6. Make more effort to know and get help from my chairperson. I'd want to learn what sorts of mistakes or oversights distinguish newcomers who are not reappointed.

Are you surprised that slow starters knew so much, albeit so late? Don't be. New faculty are smart, very smart. Too many just don't learn early how to work and socialize with constancy and moderation. The usually tacit knowledge about how to *work* in academe is intelligence of a different sort, a kind of problem-solving uncommonly taught in schools. When you're in touch with how this oversight penalizes people with great potential, you may be more compassionate toward yourself, your colleagues, and your students.

While you're interviewing a small sample of experienced junior faculty, try to include some quick starters. They, in my experience, do start early at the things just listed. Once they near the tenure decision, though, quick starters in my inquiries usually say that if they could begin anew, they would work with even more moderation, less hurriedly at writing and teaching, more regularly at seeing what matters broadly.

One thing you may not find readily on your own is a sense of how best to conduct these inquiries/interviews. My observations of new faculty carrying out this assignment suggest the following methods and cautions:

1. Engage in small talk and show genuine interest in the other person's expertise and interests. That is, prime the conversation, then wait and listen patiently and compassionately. Expect some of your colleagues to be surprised if you ask process questions—about how to work. Expect, too, that they may be vague at first

academics are more accustomed to discussing products than processes, more comfortable asking than answering questions.

2. Calmly point out your understandable interest in wanting to do well, for yourself and for your new department/campus. But make it seem that your concerns amount to more than generalized anxiety.

3. Know what questions to ask and what challenges to expect in return (e.g., when you ask what vision your interviewers have in mind for you in your professional role, they will likely ask you for your own vision of what you hope to accomplish in the next three to six years). When you've replied, ask for opinions about how realistic and on track your plans are. Odds are you will hope to do more than any mortal can.

4. Hold back and don't insult the person you're questioning with many trivialities (e.g., "Is Santa Barbara a nice place to live?"). Avoid obvious ingratiations—a cardinal sin in academe—and, similarly, hold back from bragging or arrogance.

5. Don't actively solicit or reinforce criticism and despair in discussions about your department and campus (but do make note of what your prospective/new colleague seems dissatisfied with and look for patterns across interviews while considering the success and happiness levels of your informers). Why should you seem neutral and only mildly interested in hearing complaints? Because otherwise, interviewers will tend to see you as negative, even if they do most of the complaining while you listen eagerly.

6. Let go of your questioning in timely fashion, earlier than you might like. Stop as soon as the other person persists in stonewalling or awkward rambling, before he or she seems fully annoyed or distracted. Walk away without annoyance. Realize, for example, that your chosen informer may never before have thought of such matters in systematic fashion—and, too, that many professors expect you to ask the questions they, as new faculty, once asked others.

7. Finally, be careful about what kind of curiosity you display:

There are two sorts of curiosity: one is from interest, which makes us desire to know what may be useful to us; another which is from pride, and arises from a desire of knowing what others are ignorant of.

—LA ROCHEFOUCAULD

Next, I overview my own findings about a particularly crucial new faculty experience and I put them in terms of exemplary correctives.

Exercise 3. Consider Reasons for Holding Back from Assuming Collegial Rejection.

Once you're interacting with new colleagues on campus (or even beginning to correspond with prospective colleagues at campuses where you plan to apply), anticipate one of the hardest realities of academic life. People you might suppose will encourage you may seem oddly distant and indifferent.

Pause to reflect mindfully on the probable reasons why: First, most academics are as shy as you are and they do not excel at making small talk with strangers. (If they talked to you with ease at the departmental party after your job talk, you now know why such alcohol-aided events are necessary in academe.) Second, many professors are caught up in busyness, so much so that they unwittingly seem impatient and abrupt with your inquiries. And third, professors are potentially sociable but often prefer isolation and near invisibility, except, perhaps, with their graduate students. If you were to ask them why, they would tell you it is the only way they get any work done. Remember, finally, that introverts find social contacts distracting and wearing—and that they need others to take the initiative in collegiality.

This shock of social isolation is a key source of stress and disillusionment for brand new faculty; seismic overreactions to colleagues who seem uncaring and indifferent create major fault lines in the careers of newcomers. If you find yourself nearing this experience, amid broken promises and shattered spirits, review the common reasons why new faculty often feel abandoned *and* why the stimuli are usually not personal to the new faculty who experience isolation. Consider, too, the following, exemplary ways of responding:

- During prehiring rituals, such as lunches or individual meetings with interviewers, professors are often uncharacteristically friendly; in the euphoric spirit of recruiting, some of them give misleading appearances that they will be close friends and collaborators.
 - Quick starters, in particular, noted that they had made useful adjustments to this scenario by stopping, soon after arrival, to reflect on the likely reasons for feeling abandoned. Said one, "These people probably feel pressured to help recruit candidates, and during interviews they probably get carried away with appearances and promises. Sort of like being rushed by a fraternity."
 - Candidates given obvious priority by the department often experience interviews and departmental parties at levels of intensity usually reserved for courtship rituals—including the bobbing and so nodding well known amongst prospective mates in the bird world. The problem is that once such a candidate is hired and on campus, most of those former courtiers return to customary ways of working, largely in an isolating nest all their own.
 - Prospective hirers do this, some new faculty decided, because tradition in academe leads them to expect that you will, once hired, be self-starting, much as they had to be: "Yes, they are cordial but they also keep their distance. I think they're waiting to see if I can manage by myself."
 - Many new hires first come to campus in temporary or adjunctive positions. Tradition excludes these newcomers from even the most cursory of amenities—private offices, clear welcomes to faculty meetings, and class assignments at times regular faculty are present.
 - The most successful of academics subjected to this ordeal do four things:

that set them apart: First, they take advantage of their freedom from committee work and other departmental responsibilities to get the sort of work done that will enhance their attractiveness on the job market; indeed, new adjuncts are often more productive as writers and teachers than new faculty. Second, they find someone on the full-time faculty with whom to collaborate, someone who can become a champion for them in the department. Third, they make sure they do not remain invisible or aloof. And fourth, they face their ordeal of uncertain status/continuation with the same serene but productive mindfulness that all the other quick starters do.

Problems of acceptance once on campus are clearest where they are most extreme, often among new hires of color. Campuses I studied made special efforts to find such individuals, often before they applied. Select committees with famous members swept them away with warmth and flattery during calls and interviews. The kinds of things not usually arranged for new faculty were provided, even housing arrangements and jobs for spouses. But rarely did these search and capture groups persist beyond the recruitment. After that, it was business as usual: Departments were generally dilatory about providing needed information beforehand or at hand (e.g., where resources and services were located, sometimes at so simple a level as the location of the mailroom). And new colleagues, while friendly, seemed rushed and distracted. Moreover, promised facilities such as an office with a window or a usable lab space were generally not ready, often not even likely. While special new hires might have noticed that other, more traditional new hires were treated with similarly benign neglect, they had a much harder adjustment to make, given the contrast between pre- and posthiring experiences. Moreover, they themselves came to campus with academic histories of expecting but resenting marginalization. So it was that they often accepted indifference and isolation with a sense of resignation. No wonder, I thought, that several such new hires soon opted for corporate careers with established programs of support with labels such as *fast-tracking* for all newcomers.

Traditional new hires felt almost as astonished and discouraged over their campus welcomes and made these usual comments to me during their first few months on campus:

"I realize now, more than ever, what made my start in graduate school so hard. No one paid me much attention when I arrived and I had to figure out almost everything for myself. It's the same deal here. But at _____, at least, there were other students eager to do things with me. We worked in the same lab and on the same projects. Here, there isn't even that. Why?"

"I've never felt so alone in my life. In graduate school I had friends but I don't know if I will here. Sometimes I get very depressed."

"I wonder if I've chosen the wrong career."

I urge you to notice a commonly overlooked problem in these reactions: The change from student to professor is far larger than most new faculty anticipate. Indeed, it may surpass the transition from living with your family and near life-long friends to independent life at college. In either situation, the adjustment is unlikely to be painless or easy. But in both, the same simple predictor of success applies (e.g., Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991): Constant but moderate involvement in campus activities (e.g., attending cultural and sporting events; participating in campus organizations), in productive interactions with teachers or senior colleagues, and in identification with the institution (i.e., pride of membership). Said another way, effective ways of socializing prove as important at first as do hard work and sacrifice. Socialized work is, after all, the theme of this final section of the book.

The difficulty of that transition, incidentally, is not limited to young new faculty. Consider the scenario where experienced and accomplished people (e.g., conductors/composers, writers/editors, former congress people, civil-rights leaders) were hired as new faculty, usually as full professors, ostensibly to meet specific departmental needs for expertise and collaboration. Imagine how magnificently they were courted and how amazed they were once on campus and left alone (sometimes even targets for resentment from insecure colleagues).

Does this general phenomenon of cold starts mean that they and you should avoid professorial careers? Not at all, I say. It simply shows the benefit of understanding academic culture and how to moderate its perils. Disruptive feelings of isolation can be avoided, most directly by involvement, but also by remembrance of an old maxim:

Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.
—PROVERBS XVI. 18

Exercise 4. Take the Initiative in Collegial Matters.

You've just seen ways of doing this *vis-à-vis* inquiries and initial contacts with colleagues. But those strategies may seem insufficient in a setting where almost everyone seems remote, indifferent, or worse. The immediate problem of coping with isolation often overwhelms and demobilizes new faculty, so much so that I'll be redundant in restating the common ways that exemplars manage:

1. They soon realize that almost all professors, even though introverted, will gladly offer help if asked. And they know that tradition discourages more experienced colleagues from seeming intrusive or manipulative; concerns about academic freedom often come first. They hope, too, that their compatriots have chosen professorial careers because they enjoy helping others; while professors may readily initiate help with students, they feel more reluctant with peers. The point: You'll need to reach out and ask for help (the brief bouts of inquiries in Exercise 2 may be a good beginning), even if you've felt slighted.

2. They begin early, well before feeling ready, to establish supportive relationships with some colleagues. Preferably they start to communicate and bond before applying for the job, as early as getting their dissertations underway. You'll have little to lose by getting to know outside people in your interest area, perhaps at first as informal readers of your dissertation proposal.

I could list other kinds of specific kinds of advice almost indefinitely, but I want to economize with just two more to keep the scope simple and general.

Exercise 5. Set Inquiry/Work Routines Early, within an Increasingly Sociable Context.

Remember, from the first two sections of this book, why failing new faculty in my studies hadn't put this action first, as they wished they had later: They felt they needed to settle in and wait until large, undisturbed blocks of time appeared before they could work properly at writing. Almost as often, they didn't want regimentation or rules. Recollect, too, some of the other mindless processes that put off their important work unnecessarily:

- Habits of rushing and bingeing that made delayable work seem better put off until there was nothing else that needed doing immediately
- Notions that creative work, like writing and teaching, needs suffering for excellence
- Inquiries not made about how new faculty manage to thrive, including facts to the effect that writers who work with constancy and moderation produce the most and best product over the long run, with the most health
- Entrenched habits of trying to live and work in either the future or the past, not in the present moment

How—early on—can you help prevent this wasteful procrastination? In particular, by consulting Section II and its *nihil nimus* methods for finding time and motivation for writing. But also by making yourself a scholar of sorts about advice for scholarly writers. By at least perusing books besides mine, you broaden your base of advice. That small but important act of socialization is also a kind of service to yourself and your institution; if you help yourself thrive as a newcomer to the professoriate, you ease the lives of colleagues; if you learn enough to help yourself, you can impart that knowledge to other new faculty.

Some new faculty I've known wanted to supplement my *nihil nimus* approach with books that focus more on mechanics and specifics; most other books of advice do.

The first step in Exercise 5 is this: Find at least one other useful guidebook about writing for publication and/or for grants. There are many, many books of advice for scholarly writers, from how to write dissertations to writing for publication in academic outlets, even some about writing while you sleep or dream; I

have a large bookcase full of them. But few readings, according to my tracking studies, have proven so useful as the two I overview here and abstract in more detail in the Appendix at the end of this book. I hope to induce you to read them for yourself but I've tried to depict enough of their essential themes to make the appended abstracts useful.

The first is the most useful and confidence-building book I know for imparting detailed information about how to write for publication and fare well in the editorial process (its assigned number helps locate its abstract in the Appendix at the end of the book):

- #1. Sternberg, R. (1993). *The psychologist's companion: A guide to scientific writing for students and researchers*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Ignore the apparent specificity of the Sternberg book to psychology. It works nicely for new faculty in all disciplines where writing and publishing are de rigueur. Moreover, it is written by a professor with unquestioned success as an academic writer and esteem as a teacher and editor. His highly scientific style of writing may make his book a welcome change from mine. Another reason to read Robert Sternberg is to broaden your perspective on how successful professors work at the most elite level. The best reason, in the view of new faculty in my projects, is that no one excels him at succinct directives on avoiding fatal errors in manuscripts and on what editors want to see from submitting authors.

But know too that Robert Sternberg is stern and seemingly snobbish; he represents high-stakes players with the highest success at the most aristocratic universities. He broadens our scope with anecdotal information about what may distinguish the elite of scientific writers, and he conveys the sense that few new faculty will ever meet his standards. Still, he provides just the kinds of high ideals that many new faculty have told me they value (e.g., "Why not try to be the best?" said one).

Robert Lucas, author of the second guidebook for writers mentioned here and reviewed in the Appendix is more relaxed and democratic in his approach. He, too, models his own pattern of success, one very different from Sternberg's. Lucas made a disappointing start in the professoriate but recovered to learn exemplary ways of working and socializing. Now he travels widely, from his home in remote San Luis Obispo (CA), to coach faculty who want ease and confidence as writers, particularly in the domain of preparing effective grant proposals.

- #2. Lucas, R. (1992). *The grants world inside out*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

No one, according to new faculty I've queried, puts novice grant writers more at ease and in possession of smart first moves in the grants world than Bob Lucas.

No one in this chilly context even approaches his sense of humanity and humor. And no one, in my own studies of new faculty, has proven as helpful to new faculty applying for external funding.

The second step in Exercise 5 is: Find another useful guidebook for preparation as a new faculty member. This suggestion of a reading represents a striking alternative to my own manual: Richard Reis coaches students, as early as undergraduates, about ways to prepare and apply for professorial careers.

#3. Reis, R. (1997). *Tomorrow's professor*. New York: Institute of Electric and Electronic Engineers.

Reis's text is a far more detailed and specific guidebook than mine; it conveys essential concepts by way of lengthy vignettes—case studies based on recalled or ongoing experiences of individuals. Its material about thriving in graduate school and about wise ways of applying for academic positions should prove especially informative (and not just those of you in engineering).

The third step in Exercise 5 is: Find other guidebooks more exclusively concerned about teaching than mine. I end this introductory representation of readings abstracted in the Appendix of this book with three suggested readings more specific to teaching well. These were most clearly rated by new faculty as most useful. The first, oddly, gives no direct advice for new teachers, nor is its research based on college teachers.

#4. Bullough, R. V., Knowles, J. G., & Crow, N. (1991). *Emerging as a teacher*. New York: Routledge.

Still, it provides unusually practical insights into what factors typically make beginnings as teachers difficult. In their close and empirically based study of how novice teachers experience starts, Bullough and his colleagues detail usual surprises for school teachers that generalize completely to the college teaching level (e.g., struggling between the moderate stance of making a safe haven for students and the extreme position of becoming their rescuer).

I follow the clear-seeing book of Bullough and colleagues with another reading about the problem of balance in teaching. It, like many other useful writings on balance, prescribes a recursive process of nearly equal time for generating and evaluating.

#5. Elbow, P. (1983). Embracing contraries in the teaching process. *College Teaching*, 45, 327–339.

Peter Elbow is primarily revered for his books on writing; he wrote the contemporary classic on how to freewrite. He has also written one of the best ever articles on teaching—this one. His premise is intriguing: An essential struggle in teaching

well comes from conflicting loyalties, on the one hand to maintaining standards and on the other to nurturing students.

I'll tempt you to glance at just one more abstract in the Appendix to this book by mentioning it here. (I'll add a few more abstracts in the remaining two chapters with direct pertinence to challenges of belonging to special groups—e.g., cooperative teachers, adjunctive faculty, and women and minorities in academe.) This last reading not only teems with broad wisdom and practical specifics but it addresses that most fearsome of teaching assignments for new faculty.

#6. Erickson, B. L., & Stommer, D. W. (1991). *Teaching college freshmen*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Erickson and Stommer's pioneering and oft-praised guidebook is absolutely essential for new faculty teaching large introductory classes. It also proves invaluable for anyone teaching large numbers of students. (I know whereof I speak; as a first-year assistant professor, I was suddenly assigned to teach well over a thousand freshmen in a generally required survey course that met in two successive sessions per day, in a huge and poorly lighted auditorium.)

Even if you find these six sources worth a closer look, you might continue to wonder why I consider this sort of reading-for-action a useful step in socialization. One reason, again, is that it takes you beyond the exercises of this book, into experiences of gathering more advice and insight from others. Second, it acquaints you with the real voices of experts giving advice—a useful comparison for advice you collect on your own from colleagues. And third, the varied perspective I model in suggesting those readings (e.g., one from psychology, English, science and engineering, higher education, and administration) can only broaden your own. The exemplary way to implement these advantages, finally, is in the Baconian sense: Learn which specifics from readings are helpful to you by putting them outward for public testing, in the public view of others, including peers and students. Better yet, begin to synthesize those specifics across experts and with the *nihil nimis* approaches of this book in order to draw more general but simple principles for working.

Exercise 6. *Begin to Find Colleagues for Ongoing Advice and Support.*

Because I have already specified the entry skills for getting to know colleagues, I'll be brief about what comes next. None of it, I suspect, would surprise you. This, for instance, is the compilation of what one program participant noted from her initial chats with a colleague who agreed to spend more and regular sessions listening to concerns and offering advice. This more senior colleague was, herself, a near exemplar—a nice qualification if you can manage it in your advisor. So, here is a sample of what one participant valued most from her notes of advice sessions:

- Get to your essential work *immediately* now, not at some later point when you must because you're running out of time. If you don't, you'll find yourself a whole lot less productive over this period than you had imagined. And you *will* be at risk of a rejection for permanent appointment, believe me, and you'll fail in an astonishingly miserable way. I've seen it happen.
- Soon, very soon, establish your plans of where you want your work to take you and then share it with someone who has been there, like me. You need to be certain that what you want to do will fit in here, at least in some general ways.
- Don't isolate yourself and don't suppose that meeting with me alone is enough.
- Get ready to share your written plans, while they're tentative, to a few others here who know the ropes. I can suggest some and I could even arrange a meeting where we give you a friendly evaluation.

None of that was new to the novice listening to her mentor but all of it was reinforcing and indicative of what you, too, can elicit from an regular advisor.

Next is a brief sampling of this newcomer's notes from just such a first meeting with her informal steering committee of three more senior colleagues:

[her] Q: How much is enough here?

[their] A: Usually at least four publications in the next four to six years in refereed journals, depending on their quality.

Q: How will I know about quality?

A: You let us see what you're doing as you do it and submit it. In a way, we [will] steer [direct] you on that by looking over your plans for research and publishing now.

Q: Am I likely to have to or want to change my plans?

A: Some junior faculty do, but they probably don't do it wisely unless they work it out with good advice from the department or a good representation of colleagues

Q: When are you likely to advise a change?

A: If we see you're overloaded. If you're working hard with too few satisfying results. But we are most concerned about your changing in a fickle and impulsive way. It happens and the result usually isn't good.

And this, finally, depicts advice from a subsequent meeting with just her mentor:

- Get visitors to your office to leave in timely fashion (i.e., within a reasonable period, especially when there are others waiting to see you) by mentioning that you worry about keeping the next person waiting or that you have a phone call to make. If necessary, walk your present visitor to the door, and wish him or her a pleasant farewell. Then, ask the person waiting to give you a minute to rest before entering.
- Don't socialize too much with old friends from former lives at first. Don't invite them for weekends or longer, not during this probationary period. Just explain your temporary situation and they'll understand if they are friends. Whatever, don't get into such things out of a need for escape. A brief rest? Fine. A long escape? Not good.
- Resist temptations to visit, call, or mail your old schools. You need to be here, at least for now.

Exercise 7. Accompany and Observe Your Advisor(s).

This is a natural step, but one you might suppose an imposition on one of the colleagues you've picked as advisors. If you're brave enough to take it, you will almost surely find that he or she will regard your "shadowing" a compliment, so long as it is kept occasional and moderate.

This exercise produces too much valued information to list in a book that I've tried to keep brief enough to entrap busy readers. Here, too, I've chosen examples from notes taken by shadowers—new faculty following and observing their advisors. None of their records seemed more important than having seen how the most experienced and successful professors avoid unnecessary affronts to colleagues:

- They wait and listen in faculty meetings, at least until something needs saying. They suggest that emotional interchanges be put off for calmer times.
- They notice norms of dress codes and stay within broad boundaries of acceptability (as opposed to constantly dressing up from colleagues in a casually attired department).
- They never criticize colleagues in classes/offices, even in retribution; they know that the same people who encourage them to gossip are most likely to repeat (and probably distort) their offhand comments.
- They don't shrink away from an administrator who has broken a promise (e.g., about teaching load). Instead, they react calmly but firmly by negotiating for some sort of useful compensation (e.g., an extra research assistant for the semester). They show compassion for administrators who must make such thankless decisions.
- They keep up with colleagues' accomplishments/interests, even enough to comment in brief but meaningful ways on their new publications and media appearances (but without being ingratiating).

- They talk aloud the costs of intimacy/harassment with students, colleagues, and staff. They constantly but moderately remind students and others of their attachment to a significant other—often by displaying photos of that person in their office or by mentioning her or him in their anecdotes during classes and discussions.
- They remain aware of faculty power groups and how they operate. In a traditional department, that group may operate as a poker-playing, cigar-smoking, private club of sorts [it is still so at my final campus] and as the setting for secretive decisions about departmental matters.
- And, not least, these advisors had found good mentors in their own career beginnings.

Your early advisor(s) may be ideal as a mentor; remember to do the following things before you make a binding decision: Ask your advisor for her or his opinion of where you should turn for mentoring (and don't assume that your advisor wants to take on that larger role). Look around you to see which more experienced colleagues, in or out of the department, might best meet your needs. For example, some offer possible advantages of taking you along in projects of grant writing, researching, publishing, and service. Some excel at promoting you behind the scenes. And some are excellent teachers of simple survival skills.

Most important, first read about the proven benefits of mentoring, and about the specific acts of effective mentoring. Where? In the next chapter.