

Early Career

Mary Main

Buoyed by what I can best describe as a substantial optimism, I applied for an assistant professorship at UC Berkeley's Department of Psychology to begin July 1973. I was a new PhD and—my thesis advisor at Johns Hopkins, Mary Ainsworth, having herself “made” it in a masculine setting—I was fully expectant of a positive outcome.

My first meeting with Berkeley's then-chair, Geoff Keppel, was positive, but also somewhat daunting. He told me that although I had obtained a prospectively positive vote as a new faculty hire, there were, however, two important male faculty members who did not like the idea of adding women to Berkeley's faculty. And, they were being substantially vocal about it.

My actual try-out talk at Berkeley was, unfortunately, more “exciting” than I could have imagined. A distressed young man who quite evidently was not a student at Berkeley entered and continually waved a knife at me as I began to speak. This aroused a general alarm, and the police were about to be called in for my protection when I intervened, having suddenly had the thought that he was suffering from schizophrenia and was not, in fact, a danger.

He was let go, and some months later, in far better condition, he came to my office to thank me. And, although I don't remember the grades he obtained, he also came to my classes.

Happily, and not long following my “job” talk, I learned that that I was indeed being offered an assistant professor position at Berkeley. This offer took place (and was accepted) despite the protests of Professors X and Y, who were—unfortunately for me—members of my own sub-area of (developmental psychology). I don't remember their exact wording, but I heard that in general they considered that I would be found uncreative and unproductive.

This could have made my first years at Berkeley less than fully enjoyable, but—fortunately—help was directly ahead. This was in the person of Professor Steve Glickman, my forthcoming chair and who, I was told, was widely known for his studies in animal behavior. Steve was perhaps especially well-known for his focus on the hyena, a fairly large animal with notable teeth, and not widely known for its friendly attitude to humans. On my first visit to Steve's hyena colony, I decided the way to favorably impress Steve would certainly be to quickly climb over the fence and walk among the hyenas (!!!). I carried out this thought to its fullest in that I climbed the fence and walked a bit among the quiet but toothy herd, albeit recognizing, as I looked back at

Steve, that the impression I was making at that moment was not, perhaps, entirely positive.

Nonetheless, I passed to tenure, and did so largely because Steve actively supported me during my tenure meeting (even though his doing so was illegal for a Chair, he cheerfully informed me later).

As time went on, both Steve and his wife Krista became good friends, and we came to share a graduate student, who is now herself a professor at a major university. And Steve is widely missed and widely mourned following his still fairly recent death from pancreatic cancer.

Although some predicted, upon my hire, that I would be uncreative and unproductive, my work on attachment at Berkeley continues to be well-cited. The entirety of my papers is to be forwarded to London's Wellcome Trust, which has already collected the work of the founder of my field, John Bowlby, as well as only one or two women, including Madame Curie. I am told it is to be studied by scholars of my field in England and has been described by a young historian of science, Robbie Duschinsky, at Cambridge University (England). The 2020 book, entitled "*Cornerstones of Attachment Research*", illustrates the work of John Bowlby, Mary Ainsworth, myself with Erik Hesse, and Alan Sroufe.