



APA DIVISION 15 PRESENTS

▶ **ONE TIP**

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"AN ANTI-SCHMOOZER'S GUIDE TO SCHMOOZING"

By Prof. Paul A. Schutz

When I was first asked to write about this topic, I literally chuckled out loud and for good reason. It is no secret that I have been referred to by colleagues as the "anti-schmooser". At conference receptions, I am much more likely to be the person in the corner talking with one or two people the whole night than the one who casually moves from group to group seeking out all sorts of "interesting" conversations.

But trust me; this is good news for you. If I can navigate professional life with my limited social skills set, just imagine how good you could be at it!

Here are a few suggestions to help:

Do your homework before the conference. Use the conference program and university websites to locate who you want to talk to. Read their most recent work and know when and where they will be presenting.

Develop your “elevator speech.” Make sure you are able to clearly articulate your research interest in less than a minute, but also be ready for any follow-up questions.

Set realistic conference goals. In the long run, one or two helpful connections will probably be more useful than trying to meet all the people you cited in your dissertation. Truthfully, your best long-term connection might be a graduate student or early-career scholar you met at a conference breakfast or lunch – so don’t look past the person you are sitting or standing next to while yearning to meet “the big name”.

It is important to be in the room. Take advantage of what the organization offers. For example, APA Division 15 has a number of activities for graduate students and early-career scholars (e.g., Graduate Student Affairs Committee, Committee on the Development of Early Career Educational Psychologists, Graduate Student Ambassadors, Claire Ellen Weinstein Graduate Student Seminar, graduate student breakfasts, lunches with scholars). Get involved with these committees and activities. For example, many of the people who eventually end up on the APA Division 15 Executive Committee were once participants in the Claire Ellen Weinstein Graduate Student Seminar. So, get in the room!

When you are at conference events wear your badge. This is a little thing, but it will help during introductions—you probably know your name—but others

don’t, so help them. However, take it off when you are walking the streets (you don’t want to be THAT person).

Find yourself at least one “running buddy.” Find another graduate student or early-career scholar who has similar interests and who you can go with you to sessions and events. Remember, if this person knows three people and you know three people, you now know six people. If those six people know three people... However, the goal here is not to find someone you can hide in the corner with, but to find a relationship that will help both of you make connections and, if need be, help you out of the awkward situations.

Learn to read the room. Use social cues to navigate situational contexts. For example, attempting to engage a person right after their session can be tricky. Generally, sessions run late, other people may be attempting to talk to the person, and they might be involved in the next session. Try getting to the session early and see if they are potentially available before the session.

Be astute and professional. As a word of caution, keep in mind that, though I am not sure you can build a long-term academic relationship in a few minutes, I am fairly certain you can hinder the start of that relationship in a short conversation. So, although many of these conference events are informal (e.g., receptions), consider them as a professional work activity.

Pay it forward. Finally, in a few years when you’re an experienced Associate Professor and living the high life, make sure you look out for graduate students and early-career scholars who are trying to get started and “pay it forward,” Introduce yourself, your colleagues, and your own students and see if you can be that important connection that will help them along in their careers.



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