

Reflection on Surviving the Academic Job Market – A Primer for Public Affairs Grads¹

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Be sure to (a) review the slide show and (b) take a look at the documents in the electronic reserves that associated with this handbook. Links to the slides, reserves, and other materials are available at:

<http://www.albany.edu/rockefeller/jobmarket.shtml>

Introduction

During the 2001-2002 academic year I went on the job market seeking a position in a:

- Public administration department
- Public policy department
- Sociology department
- Political science department

Thus my impressions and ideas are probably particular to these markets and may not be applicable to others – the economics market especially. Many of the ideas and impressions were also informed by suggestions and hints given to me by my dissertation chair, Jane Fountain (Harvard; now UMass) and a long-time advisor, Vivian Gadsden (Penn). However, the presentation and the spin I put on those suggestions and ideas are mine.

Since then, I have served on six search committees and have been chair of my department for five years, so the materials below reflect these experiences as well.

Do you really want to be a professor?

Are you sure you want to go into this market, when starting salaries in public administration tops out at about \$85,000 and where the average is between \$55,000 and \$65,000?

Here is data on new assistant faculty salaries going bac to 2000-2001 (not all years are available as my library did not buy the source each year). As you can see, the average has floated up in public administration (though not monotonically) at an annualized rate of about 2.3% - which, of course, does not cover inflation. Political scientists have seen their salary increase somewhat faster – 2.9% per annum. Only the economists are doing substantially better, enjoying an increase of over 4% per annum.

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		Public (low – avg – high)	Private (low – avg – high)
Public Admin (44.04)	00-01	36,000 – 48,093 – 62,500	40,000 – 51,696 – 75,000
	02-03	36,500 – 51,539 – 73,946	45,408 – 51,776 – 62,000
	04-05	28,964 – 48,781 – 80,000	30,000 – 49,388 – 64,000
	06-07	38,000 – 55,751 – 72,500	N/A – N/A – N/A
	07-08	41,227 – 57,300 – 72,500	N/A – N/A – N/A
	09-10	41,358 – 59,775 – 92,500	34,364 – 53,616 – 85,000
	11-12	43,789 – 58,587 – 95,000	36,819 – 55,998 – 118,065
	12-13	45,000 – 57,089 – 67,036	50,000 – 60,388 – 75,500
	13-14	45,000 – 67,533 – 88,000	N/A – N/A – N/A
Political Sci (45.10)	00-01	26,374 – 42,092 – 73,023	30,000 – 41,974 – 71,993
	02-03	32,000 – 45,646 – 63,577	31,000 – 44,713 – 64,000
	04-05	32,500 – 48,037 – 80,000	32,000 – 47,496 – 67,263
	06-07	28,503 – 50,053 – 70,000	35,000 – 50,475 – 70,000
	07-08	38,502 – 51,302 – 83,748	34,000 – 52,527 – 84,000
	09-10	36,092 – 53,463 – 78,000	41,400 – 57,125 – 83,000
	11-12	40,000 – 55,000 – 94,000	39,702 – 58,497 – 82,000
	12-13	38,500 – 57,961 – 83,000	21,700 – 56,256 – 84,667
	13-14	39,200 – 59,093 – 88,000	43,500 – 59,985 – 84,667
Sociology (45.11)	00-01	35,202 – 42,533 – 52,248	29,449 – 39,467 – 53,000
	02-03	34,000 – 44,935 – 67,008	26,176 – 43,904 – 62,489
	04-05	35,000 – 47,057 – 65,004	32,000 – 46,784 – 65,000
	06-07	34,690 – 49,590 – 70,000	35,000 – 48,450 – 68,000
	07-08	38,000 – 52,075 – 80,000	37,500 – 51,367 – 79,346
	09-10	40,000 – 54,591 – 75,000	41,000 – 54,591 – 72,000
	11-12	35,100 – 56,154 – 82,193	36,194 – 56,369 – 80,032
	12-13	43,000 – 57,606 – 78,000	42,000 – 57,059 – 79,482
	13-14	43,000 – 58,626 – 83,000	45,500 – 60,129 – 82,000
Economics (45.06)	00-01	33,000 – 51,636 – 66,000	29,448 – 50,109 – 77,000
	02-03	31,185 – 59,090 – 83,304	35,891 – 54,910 – 82,000
	04-05	50,000 – 65,755 – 90,000	28,500 – 57,797 – 89,000
	06-07	43,000 – 68,951 – 105,000	43,000 – 58,984 – 86,000
	07-08	40,000 – 71,120 – 103,400	46,920 – 66,655 – 118,333
	09-10	N/A – N/A – N/A	N/A – N/A – N/A
	11-12	55,000 – 81,480 – 138,519	40,400 – 74,167 – 120,000
	12-13	54,000 – 83,601 – 125,000	45,000 – 83,792 – 130,000
	13-14	50,657 – 85,161 – 125,000	54,500 – 84,874 – 125,500

There is also another reality: Business schools pay more:

		Public (low – avg – high)	Private (low – avg – high)
Management All fields (52.01)	04-05	38,000 – 81,242 – 148,000	32,493 – 72,157 – 140,000
	06-07	38,930 – 86,200 – 171,875	30,000 – 74,572 – 157,000
	07-08	46,000 – 88,750 – 145,500	39,400 – 69,515 – 165,000
	11-12	43,000 – 104,386 – 200,000	31,583 – 87,848 – 197,000
	12-13	45,000 – 98,038 – 177,000	45,000 – 78,786 – 160,000
	13-14	45,000 – 97,004 – 174,000	31,350 – 70,000 – 130,000
Mgmt, Business Admin, Ops (52.02)	04-05	38,000 – 79,010 – 140,000	33,370 – 70,995 – 123,000
	06-07	43,000 – 81,667 – 137,000	32,300 – 65,379 – 116,000
	07-08	30,124 – 82,278 – 137,750	37,268 – 76,870 – 148,750
	11-12	43,000 – 98,341 – 160,000	33,583 – 77,697 – 147,000
	12-13	48,750 – 99,307 – 160,000	34,000 – 87,718 – 150,000
	13-14	50,000 – 101,946 – 185,000	44,371 – 92,720 – 165,000
Finance / Fin. Mgmt (52.08)	04-05	45,000 – 93,818 – 148,000	42,600 – 86,417 – 130,000
	06-07	65,000 – 100,958 – 171,875	47,070 – 98,876 – 154,500
	07-08	66,897 – 110,455 – 170,000	31,902 – 72,041 – 152,500
	11-12	56,448 – 123,787 – 198,333	53,040 – 121,395 – 197,000
	12-13	69,492 – 128,274 – 200,000	48,000 – 123,649 – 202,000
	13-14	82,000 – 131,266 – 215,000	63,000 – 131,719 – 205,000
Human resources (52.10)	04-05	48,000 – 77,643 – 94,000	N/A – N/A – N/A
	06-07	49,000 – 75,408 – 110,382	49,250 – 82,719 – 103,000
	07-08	45,000 – 80,949 – 127,250	33,750 – 61,394 – 88,000
	11-12	51,856 – 77,220 – 125,000	52,250 – 74,747 – 126,000
	12-13	52,000 – 94,721 – 145,000	N/A – N/A – N/A
	13-14	56,000 – 88,370 – 135,000	60,000 – 100,500 – 140,000
MIS (52.12)	04-05	41,920 – 81,155 – 142,000	45,000 – 78,250 – 103,000
	06-07	66,000 – 88,943 – 118,000	80,000 – 94,250 – 122,000
	07-08	57,538 – 91,452 – 120,000	38,570 – 88,327 – 127,200
	11-12	55,000 – 91,887 – 150,000	51,000 – 74,900 – 100,500
	12-13	66,600 – 102,291 – 150,000	90,000 – 111,929 – 152,000
	13-14	68,000 – 111,096 – 157,333	36,952 – 102,065 – 159,250

Sources: College and University Personnel Association. 2001, 2003, 2005, 2007, 2010, 2012, 2013, 2014. *National faculty salary survey by discipline and rank in colleges and universities.*

Academic salaries are usually negotiated on a 9-month contract. As you may know, most schools allow faculty to augment their salary with “summer” months at the rate of 1/9 of the base salary per month. With sharp negotiating (see below) and successful grant-making, you can increase your effective salary.

Example: A \$65,000 base salary can be supplemented with three summer months which brings the yearly salary to \$86,667. However, this usually requires finding grants on a regular basis.

Or you can choose to leave the summer unencumbered. The ability to control three months of your life is a major, major advantage of academic life — remembering, of course, that the college or university effectively owns those three months through the “publish or perish” phenomenon if you choose to teach at a research university. Summer is the time to do research and write.

Where do interdisciplinary grads fit?

Most public affairs graduates are products of an interdisciplinary program. Interdisciplinary training in public affairs may allow graduates to have success in multiple markets — economics, sociology, public policy/public administration, political science, business, etc. However, unless you have a strong disciplinary background, you may not look sufficiently like a disciplinary grad to be competitive for a job in a “traditional” disciplinary department.

Conversely, the public administration/public policy and business schools often want people who can teach across one or more of the core disciplines these schools draw upon. If you are too focused in one area, it makes them wonder if you can teach in others, and teaching really matters to the professional schools. In many public policy program and business schools, the faculty is relatively small. For this reason, the division of labor is not very elaborate. Every school that interviewed me wanted to know if I could teach in at least two core areas.

The upshot is that if you want to have the broadest possible market, it is necessary to have both a disciplinary home (identifiable by the courses that appear on your transcripts and the theories & methods that you use in your dissertation) and a breath of coursework across the disciplines traditionally drawn upon in professional schools. If you want to be in a disciplinary department, take all the core courses of the chosen discipline. If you want to only look at professional schools, develop a disciplinary focus but also seek breath of exposure.

What can you do in your first, second, and third years to help prepare for the job market?

With the preceding discussion in mind, I would recommend some mix of the following. I've listed them roughly in the order of importance.

1. Begin developing a relationship with an advisor. Advisors are essential for both successful completion of the dissertation and a job search. My dissertation chair, Jane Fountain, guided much of my job search. We were in contact several times a week for over six months. During the interviews and negotiation phase, we often spoke several times a day. I felt comfortable relying on her judgment because we had worked together for several years before I went on the market. Moreover, job openings are often an inside game – you need an insider who you trust will spread your name widely.
2. Get a publication record started. Over the years, this seems to have grown in importance. In my department's last three searches no candidate invited for a “fly-out” had fewer than one publication and most had two or three either published or under review. Most students should have at least one publication accepted and one or two in the “pipeline” before they go on the market. Ideally, the publications should be a single-authored or a piece where you are the

first author. Recent searches at the Rockefeller College have caused the faculty to wonder how much we can infer from publications where a senior faculty member is the first author and the student is second or third. The “signal” such publications provide may not be very reliable.

When you publish, you should seek placement in a peer-reviewed outlet. In public administration and policy, the most prestigious generalist outlets are the *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, *International Public Management Journal*, *Public Administration Review*, *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, and *American Review of Public Administration*. Equally impressive are publications in disciplinary journals – *Academy of Management Review*, *Academy of Management Journal*, *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *American Sociological Review*, *American Political Science Review*, *Journal of Politics*, *American Economic Review*, and so forth. There are also several highly regarded subfield journals like the *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, *Public Personnel Management*, and so forth (there are too many to list here). A single-authored piece in any of these outlets will substantially help your chances of employment, but pieces in other peer-reviewed publications are definitely a plus. If you are unsure how widely a journal is read or valued, ask your advisors and/or consult that ISI Citations Ranking indices or the reputational rankings found in some journals. See the Appendix to this guide for a list of high impact factor journals.

3. Choose courses that build on one of the three strategies outlined above. If in doubt, I think disciplinary depth may be more important. How many policy and public administration grads are there teaching at top policy and public administration schools? The answer is relatively few. Most professional schools are filled with disciplinary graduates who specialize in an area relevant to that profession.
4. Get experience teaching at least two courses in some capacity. While at Harvard I taught both a statistics course and a sociology course on social network methods that had some relationship to my theoretical focus (organizational theory). Thus, I could reasonably argue that I could teach in two different types of core courses – statistical methods and organizational theory. Not everyone will have a chance to be primary instructor, but you can seek experience as a course assistant, teaching fellow, or tutor for two or more courses.
5. Seek a teaching experience where you have some responsibility for the syllabus and primary instruction. I had the good fortune to get an adjunct job at the Kennedy School. This helped convince people that I could really teach. Some schools – for instance, the Maxwell School at Syracuse – require students to complete an instructional practicum. Such independent teaching experience matters on the job market. If you plan to seek a job in a liberal arts college or professional school, I would recommend trying to find at least one independent teaching opportunity – at another school as adjunct faculty, during the summer, or on a contract basis for some other organization. Such experience can sometimes be gotten at community colleges, smaller state or private schools, or even through for-profit universities like University of Phoenix.

6. Get your name out by making conference presentations. Dr. Fountain pressed me to do this; I had other high-priority obligations and could not attend many conferences, so my resume looked somewhat light in this area – and schools noticed.
7. Apply for outside research support. The ability to write and get grants is highly valued. Some colleges now list external support as a tenure and promotion criteria. Having grant-writing experience and a track record can sometimes matter nearly as much as your publication record — grants provide money for everyone else to live off.

The application and interview process

When should I go on the market?

This is a very difficult question to answer. It is also one you should not answer by yourself. Talk extensively with your advisor and committee members before testing the market. Most candidates go on the market at the beginning of the academic year in which they intend to defend their dissertation.

That said, I always discourage people from going on the market too early— and certainly not before one reaches candidacy. Why delay? First, the application process is very time-consuming. You are unlikely to get much work done on your dissertation while you are chasing job interviews.

Second, until your dissertation is substantially finished, you may not be sufficiently trained and experienced as a researcher to handle tough questions in a job market interview. The dissertation will teach you a great deal about methods, design, and theory. Your learning will only be partially finished if you leave, say, at the beginning of your dissertation work.

Third, if you find a job, you then have two jobs: PhD student or candidate and junior faculty member. At some institutions, your tenure clock will start ticking away while you are still struggling to complete your dissertation project. You will probably not be able to do either job very well if you are time-sharing your brain. Remember, you will be trying to develop two to four new courses, learn a new department, new city, and new institution; established a research program; get to know new friends; and move a household and family (if you have one)...while also writing a credible piece of research. Only the most organized and indefatigable person can manage all of that concurrently.

Fourth, you will be under enormous pressure to finish. Most institutions will give you a short time-line for completion of your PhD – usually one year. If you miss that deadline, you will at least lose salary; often you will lose your job, with serious repercussions for later re-entry to the academic job market.

I have witnessed two train-wrecks that occurred because students went on the market against the advice of their advisors. Leaving too soon can ruin your career: Seek a job only when you are almost done. ***DON'T LEAVE TOO EARLY; YOU WILL LIVE TO REGRET IT!!!!***

That said...

Don't wait too long, which is another way of saying do not let your PhD program drag out. If you've been in your program for 8, 9, or 10 years without finishing, institutions will wonder if you have serious productivity problems, unless you have compelling reasons for taking longer (health problems, untimely death in the family, etc.). Try to finish in six or fewer years.

Applying for jobs: An overview

The process of applying for academic jobs is very long and time-consuming. During the Fall 2002 term I sent out 44 packets, which meant creating 44 individualized cover letters, chasing reference letters from faculty 44 times, etc. And it is expensive — I spent around \$2,500 on my job search — even though the colleges and universities paid all the travel costs. (Some departments pay for students to submit their job packets; Harvard and UAlbany do not.) These expenses are related to copying, shipping, and travel to conferences or meetings that my program did not cover. However, in the intervening ten years more and more of the application process has gone online, netting substantial savings on the shipping and reproduction costs.

There are several primary sources for job announcements:

- (1) *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (<http://chronicle.com/jobs>)
- (2) The APPAM, NASPAA, ASPA joint site, PublicServiceCareers.org (<http://www.publicservicecareers.org>)
- (3) APSA (political science) (http://www.apsanet.org/section_226.cfm)
- (4) ASA (sociology) (<http://jobbank.asanet.org/jobbank/index.cfm>);
- (5) High Ed Jobs.com (<http://www.higheredjobs.com>).

The Chronicle is probably the most comprehensive source – it seems to be the source of record for EEOC purposes. However, postings on *The Chronicle* site seem to come and go for random reasons. I found it important to visit every two or three days to look for new announcements between September and December. *The Chronicle* now offers an e-mail alert service which makes this process less cumbersome. Be sure to wade through the listings in the “Other” category in both the professional and social/behavioral science listings – I found a few gems hidden in these lists. PublicServiceCareers.org is also very comprehensive in the field of public affairs but carries very few disciplinary announcements. The listings on this site include faculty slots, government positions, and positions in what I think of as the “quasi-academy” – major think tanks and research units like MDRC and the Urban Institute.

In addition, I downloaded the (however flawed) *U.S. News and World Report* rankings (http://www.usnews.com/usnews/edu/grad/rankings/rankindex_brief.php) of public affairs schools. Using this as a guide, I sent unsolicited e-mail to whatever contact I could find at highly-ranked schools to see if they were expecting to hire. I sent e-mail to about fifty such contacts.

It is highly advisable to attend the major fall conferences – for instance APPAM, APSA, AoM, ASA, etc. – because many schools have “pre-interviews” at the conferences. It will also give you a feel for the school, what they are looking for, etc. In recent years, APPAM – which has the broadest public affairs institutional membership – has become more organized in terms of its facilitation of job market interviews, but the Fall Research Conference is now coming late in the process.

The Academy of Management has a well-organized Placement Service that has two sessions – Summer and Fall. The Summer session coincides with the Annual Meeting. The service includes an opportunity for applicants and institutions to meet one another at interview tables. There is a small fee to participate – \$25 for an applicant. However, the AoM service is heavily dominated by business schools and business school graduates. To learn more about the AoM Placement Service, visit <http://careers.aomonline.org/placement/main.asp>.

Remember, though, that faculty slots are often allocated through a relatively closed network. By law, the slots must be advertised (usually in *The Chronicle*), but the announcements may be in obscure places for short periods of time. For example, the 2001-2002 public management search at the Kennedy School was only advertised once – in *The Chronicle during the week of Thanksgiving*. I only knew to apply for the position because my adviser kept me in the loop. Harvard is far from the only place to have similarly closed processes. Check with your advisors and other faculty members regularly to see if they have heard about new positions.

Portfolio

It is never too early to start on a job market portfolio. With respect to portfolios, I have a particular view about how they should be constructed and what they should contain. You may wish to consult with your advisor to get another opinion.

Karl's cynical view of the process. Here is a dirty little secret: Many search committees do not have time to read your job market paper (or papers), at least during the first stage of review. A search committee member is confronted with a pile of 40 – 100 applications that must be whittled down to maybe 10 or 15 finalists. This is a huge cognitive load, so how do rational humans deal with it? By relying on summaries, like your CV and cover letter. However, my advisor, Jane Fountain, was adamant that the CV alone was insufficient as a summary of one's teaching experience and dissertation. You need a good CV, but you also need other short pieces to help the committee see you fully when they are scanning packets for potential finalists.

Her solution – one that I strongly advocate – is to help the search committee deal with its cognitive overload by (a) drawing them in through a good cover letter, (b) providing them with a well-organized CV, and then (c) letting them get a good sense of you from short (1 or 2 page) summaries of your teaching, research interests, and dissertation. These short pieces give the search committee members a synopsis of your qualifications without having to wade through a 30 page research paper. Creating them will also help you hone your answers to inevitable questions like “what is your dissertation about”, “what do you want to teach”, and “where is your research going after the dissertation?”

Thus from my perspective, there are eight components to a job market portfolio: (1) a cover letter, (2) your CV, (3) a statement of research interests, (4) a statement of teaching interests and philosophy, (5) a dissertation summary, (6) your transcripts, (7) three or more letters of recommendation, and (8) 1-3 “job market” papers. Each component needs attention.

Cover letters. Once you are ready to start sending out materials, the first piece is the cover letter. If you send out 20-40 packets, you will have to create boilerplate that can be fitted into any letter. However, both Jane Fountain and my reference from Penn, Vivian Gadsden, impressed upon me the importance of creating customized letters for each position. Some committees will gauge your level of interest by whether they think your letter actually speaks to their needs, their program, and their job announcement. For the positions and schools that I really liked, I went to their web site and tried to figure out what need the advertised position might fill by looking at the faculty and the course catalog. I particularly looked for gaps in coverage of basic topics and for courses that had not been offered in several years.

The cover letter needs to make you look unique and interesting; it also needs to highlight the most impressive parts of your CV. I noted a “revise and resubmit” I had on a submission to *Administrative Science Quarterly*, my teaching award, my dissertation topic, and the foundations from which I had received grants. For the disciplinary positions, I tried to explain why my public policy degree had prepared me well for their position. One page is supposedly better than two, but I was also told that if the story on the first page is interesting enough, the committee will read on. (My subsequent experience on committees suggests that most committee members will read a longer letter if the first page “hooks” them.) I also expected that most people were uninterested in what my signature looked like, so I pushed a short conclusion onto the second page in order to free space on the first page for stuff I wanted noticed during the initial scan. *Make sure to have someone proof your cover letters before they go out.* I had a near disaster when one letter was addressed to a “College of Pubic Policy.”

Curriculum vitae. Your CV needs to highlight both teaching and research fully – especially if you plan to seek a slot in a professional school. I asked my advisor for a copy of her CV; she also let me look at CVs sent in by senior faculty seeking positions at the Kennedy School. It was useful to see how people who were successful in their field structured their CV. You can often find CVs from successful academics on their personal or institutional websites. If you have experience with grant writing, make sure to highlight it in the CV and possibly summarize it separately. If you are bringing grant money with you, note that fact prominently in the CV and in the cover letter. *Be sure to have someone proof your CV before sending it out.* (You might be sensing a theme here.)

One strong piece of advice having now sat on several hiring committees: Move the summary of your publications to the section directly after you summarize your training and degrees. Also, it is VERY helpful to see what you have in progress, meaning any manuscripts that are substantially complete (i.e., you could hand to an interested faculty member without embarrassment), in submission, or in revision. These pieces are your “pipeline” and a measure of what you may produce in your first year or two on the faculty.

Teaching, research, and dissertation summaries. Each of these should be absolutely no more than two pages long and be very pithy and to the point. What do you want to teach and how do you prefer to teach – what is your teaching philosophy? What are your long-term research interests? What is your dissertation about? Answer these questions in your summaries. Writing these up has an added bonus in that you will have answers to these questions for the interviews. You can rest assured that you will be asked each of these questions during an interview – you now have a well-thought out answer months in advance!

Transcripts, teaching evaluations, and other support materials. Next, think about supporting materials. I sent my graduate transcripts, whether they were requested or not, because they helped to show both the scope of my coursework and the number of courses I accumulated in my field of specialization. If your GPA is high, sending your transcript can help to highlight and confirm your achievements during your coursework. If your transcript is not that stellar, only send it if requested. You might wish to request a number of sealed transcripts over the summer so that you don't have to wait for your institution to mail them out.

I also sent my KSG teaching evaluations. If your work as a teaching fellow or course assistant is not formally evaluated, you might ask a student or professor to write an assessment. I also created my own evaluation form; I sent summary statistics from that form with the application packets.

References. From a timeline perspective, getting good letters of reference may be the first thing you need to do. Start asking for letters of recommendation as early as May or June of the year in which you plan to go on the market. All four of my references found it difficult to get a letter together in September – because everyone else was asking for a letter, the term was starting, etc. Make sure you have at least three good recommendations; you may wish to get four or five. There are many strategies for getting a good mix of letters. I sought to have letters that could speak to four areas of my preparation and experience: teaching, substantive research focus / dissertation, methodology, and experience with contract and grant-sponsored research. I wanted the letters to provide a multi-dimensional picture of my research and skills. I also wanted at least two letters from people who knew me personally and professionally. In this case, I asked a long-time advisor and collaborator from Penn to write for me in addition to my dissertation chair.

Choose your references carefully. You want referees who will write a thoughtful letter that will help to place your dissertation and research agenda into a context. When I write letters I try to explain how the student's work contributes to a particular literature; I point out journals in which the work may be published; I suggest what long-term contribution the student might make. You want to give your referees time to think about this. A one-page reference with boiler plate about your qualifications may do you more harm than good, so get started on this early. You may wish to talk about the content of the letters with your references, but referees normally do not share the final product with the student. Finally, be sure your recommenders are going to be positive! A negative letter – one that is even a little negative – is often fatal.

Job market papers. Despite my earlier comment, the job market paper is still very important – especially once you get past the “weed-out” phase of search committee review. I got two contradictory pieces of advice on how to select job market papers. One line of thinking says that the only real measure of research potential and the direction of your research program is the dis-

sertation, so you should include one or more finished chapters. A second line of thinking started from the assumption that anything longer than 20-25 pages will probably not get read, so chapters are too long. Moreover, any given chapter may seem disjointed without the surrounding materials. So a second strategy is to submit one to papers – preferable published. If the committee is going to scan, this gives them one to three abstracts and conclusions to scan rather than relying on one chapter (which may not have an abstract) to convey what you can do and what you want to study in the future. I decided to go with the later approach, though some schools wanted only dissertation chapters.

My recent experience with search committees strongly suggests that sending published papers is a much better strategy than sending dissertation chapters – unless the job announcement explicitly requests chapters.

My portfolio is available from the URL listed at the beginning of this document. If I had to do it over again, I would shorten my research, teaching, and dissertation summaries.

Interviews – aka “Fly-outs”

In the public administration, public policy, and sociology markets, finalists are named as early as late September, with interviews starting as early as the first week of October. Over the course of the economic downturn the process has become extremely elongated, with some job announcements dropping in January, February, or even March.

For reasons that have to do with both the decision and negotiation process, it is in your interest to schedule your interviews as close to the end of each school's process as possible. You want to leave the last impression. You also want the offers to come in as close together as possible. One way to compress the offers into one time period is to request a late visit date – use whatever *truthful* excuses you have at your disposal.

Overview. Interviewing is very hard work. Each visit will kill 2-4 days: I usually needed at least half a day to prepare. Most visits last at least 36 and sometimes as much as 72 hours. Each school will usually have you interview with at least 6 faculty members and administrators; one place had me meet with *14 different people over 8 hours!!* It is also quite common to meet with graduate students and possibly even the administrative staff. Each faculty interview will last from 30 to 60 minutes. You will usually have breakfast, lunch, and dinner with faculty and administrators. Two schools also had a “party” with faculty and graduate students in the evening. Many schools had a one-hour “exit” interview with some or all of the search committee members. These interviews will often tell you whether the committee is really interested. These interviews are also used to try to tell whether you are really interested in them. Some universities have regulations that allow them to make offers to their top one, two, or three candidates at the end of a search process. If the offer is rejected, they must restart the process – thus the high priority on knowing whether you want to come.

Plan to be busy for at least twelve hours straight the first day and at least 6 to 8 hours the next day. You may have to travel part (or all) of two days to get to and from the interview. I can't imagine doing more than two interviews in one week; I was completely exhausted after each one.

I interviewed at seven universities. I got very little done over those seven weeks, except preparing for interviews.

Interviewing is hard on the ego – every school seems to have one faculty member whose job is to make you sweat during the job talk or interview.

Preparation. It is important to know the institution before you go. If the job announcement does not list the chair of the search committee's name, call and get it. In fact, it is useful to find out the entire membership of the committee. I tried to know something about the research agenda of the school generally and of the search committee members specifically. The goal is to pitch oneself as adding complementary skills and knowledge to the school – you don't want to look like everyone else and you don't want to look too unique. Most schools wanted to know what I would teach, so I tried to be very familiar with the course offerings in the department or school so that I could rattle off the course names and numbers I thought I could teach. Other materials I found useful included department or school strategic plans (to see where the institution thinks it is going) and school or university newspapers.

As you might realize, the “graying” of the academy is beginning to occur as boomers age and retire. One thing I tried to determine from the faculty web pages was what the overall age and rank distribution was within the school or department. There are some schools (mostly public) that have developed bi-modal age/rank distributions – lots of full professors, lots of junior faculty, but few associates. This age structure can cause several problems. First, it often means more service work for junior faculty than at a place where balance exists. Second, it sometimes leads to less clout within the university for the department or school because those with seniority and institutional memory retire. The demographic crunch creates opportunities, too: one school noted that *all* their full professors would probably retire before I got tenure, leaving my cohort in charge. However, I have also seen disastrous consequences in other situations.

Job Talk. Unfortunately, the job talk matters even more than I thought before I began my search, because *many – maybe most – faculty members don't read the job market paper(s)* – or at least they don't read them thoroughly. Thus, most of their impression of your ability to teach AND to do research will be set in the job talk. During recent searches our department has had candidates visit who looked very promising on paper, but gave disastrous job talks. Their candidacies were dead literally ten minutes into their talk. You must be prepared to give a crisp, interesting, competent job talk. Thus...

It is imperative to give practice job talks before going “live” on the market.

Practice, practice, and more practice. Start on your own, preferably in front of a mirror. Next, gather your study group or sympathetic members of your cohort and do the talk for them. Tell them to ask tough questions and to be supportive but critical – better they point out the flaws than a prospective employer. Be sure that you have built competent, professional slides. There is NOTHING worse than sitting through a presentation where the candidate has 57 slides for 45 minutes, has wild transitions, too many links to websites that may or may not be available, and fonts that are smaller than 20 or 24 point. Keep the number of bullets on a slide as small as possible; use charts and graphs to make points if you can; and be sure to have back-up slides in case your computer or flash drive dies.

Work with your advisor on the content of your presentation. Students seem to have a difficult time finding the right mix of story, theory, methods, results, and implications. There needs to be some of all five. Most of the audience will not know your topic or your area of theoretical interest. Try to provide a reason for them to be interested in your work – a story about how you got interested in the topic, a key example, a puzzle that piqued your interest. Some students seem to breeze completely by the theory and the method – or dwell forever on one or both to the exclusion of the findings. A good presentation has to lay the theoretical foundations of your topic and the methodological foundations that make your findings valid. But also remember that most of the audience may be unfamiliar with your theory, your methods, or both. Do not talk down to the audience, but don't assume everyone knows what an exponential random graph model of 2-mode data network data is.

The largest section should probably be devoted to analysis and findings – people want to know what you learned. They will also want to know why and how it matters. Public affairs is a far more current and practical field – answer the “so what” question. Every person and every project is different and will require a slightly different balance between these five components. But I would wager that every successful job talk dwells on each of these components to some degree. Don't be afraid to ask your contact with the school about expectations for the talk – length, coverage, key issues that should be addressed, etc.

Finally, be sure you have prepared to answer questions. This is your chance to demonstrate your ability to think on your feet. In essence, the faculty will want to see if you could stand up in front of a class or a conference panel and weather criticism. *Don't BS*. Someone will know the answer and find your temporizing distasteful, if not indicative of poor training. Better to say, “That is an interesting question. Here are my initial thoughts...I would be happy to get back to you with a more thorough answer by e-mail.” If your project is not done, it is perfectly acceptable to say that these answers will arise as you finish your analysis and write-up. In some cases, you will be challenged because some faculty members do not like your method or your theory. Do not hesitate to defend your work, so long as you have defensible grounds upon which to make a stand. If you realize the questioner has pointed out a true flaw in your work, acknowledge the flaw and suggest ways you could remediate – with a new model, new tests, new data, a second coder/rater, etc. There is nothing worse than seeing a candidate caught in an error trying to wriggle free on minor technicalities. Face up to the questions and criticism.

You need to engage questioners; provide answers where you can; provide a promise of future answers when you can't give them immediately; and defend your research if the questions/attacks are not based in fact, theory, or your understanding of the methods involved.

Scheduling. When you get an invitation, try to schedule your least interesting job talk earliest – use the first job talk as practice for the ones that matter most. However, I always tell students to be fair to the institution. Don't attend a job talk simply to practice. If there is absolutely, positively no way you would ever teach at an institution that invited you, politely tell them you have other plans at this point. A fly-out is hugely expensive in terms of money and faculty time. This isn't to say you can't have a preference order or that you can't be persuaded while you visit, but if there are real impediments to accepting *any* offer from a given institution, don't take the visit.

Although it isn't required, you might consider having printouts of your slides and supporting materials to hand out before the presentation. Several of the schools remarked on how "professional" my presentation seemed because I took the extra (though expensive) step of having handouts. (Some schools offered to do the reproduction for me.)

Other things to consider. I had a small college call to ask me very directly whether I planned to stay for more than a year or two. Because schools make a large investment in training and acclimating new faculty (by one estimate, between \$300,000 and \$500,000 in the first two years), they want reassurance that you won't leave for greener pastures. If you really do plan to stay (because, for instance, you don't want to relocate your family again), tell them.

The process of interviewing is as much social as intellectual. Faculty members may stay for 10 to 20 years. The faculty wants to make sure that you will fit in. Part of the evaluation is an attempt to answer the following questions: Will this person be a good colleague? Will this person be a willing collaborator? Will this person contribute with service? Can I stand to see and hear this person for the next 15-20 years? Is this person a jerk? True story: when my Department outlined factors to consider as part of our strategic hiring plan, the first principle was "No Jerks!!"

You probably expect a big payoff after years of work – and rightly so. However, if your salary expectations are out of line for your potential employer, its geographic location, its type (public versus private), and its ranking, then the search committee may not bother making an offer. I tried to reassure people that I knew the market and had reasonable (though high) expectations. I never told anyone a specific number I expected. I did tell them what I had on offer from other schools once a good offer came in.

Questions. There seem to be stock questions in this process:

- What is your research agenda for the next two to four years?
- What do you want to teach?
- Where would you publish your work?
- What associations do you belong to? What conferences do you attend?
- What courses would you like to develop and why?
- What are the major theoretical trends/contributions to your area/specialty of the last decade?
- Are you prepared to teach at night/on weekends/graduates/undergraduates/older students?
- Have you thought about how our students' needs might be different than those of students at your institution? How will you need to change your teaching style to meet those needs?
- What will you bring to this program? This school? This university?
- Why do you want to come west/north/south/east when you have studied out east/south/north/west)?
- Why do you want to teach at _____ ?
- Do you plan to stay here more than a year or two?
- What do you think are important components of advising undergraduate/Masters/Ph.D. students?
- What discipline do you place yourself in?
- Do you have funders in mind for the projects you would like to pursue after the Ph.D.?
- What salary are you expecting?

Now the bad news...

In some cases, hiring decisions have relatively little to do with qualifications – provided, of course, that you are qualified. The number of job announcements in “public management” or “public policy” can be very deceptive. The announcements are often very general. In part this reflects the fact that search committees or whole departments won’t really know what they are looking for until the process is well under way. For instance, during the 2006-2007 cycle, my department began a search for a “Human Resources” person that might also have some interest in IT, nonprofits, or organizational behavior and theory. We ended up hiring a sociologists who specializes in nonprofits in Hungary. While we got some expertise in nonprofits and OBT from this person, her specialty is not HR. What the Department sought to hire morphed as we saw who was on the market and listened to the job talks.

Once the narrowing/redefining process begins, the number of truly relevant positions goes down dramatically. Unfortunately, there is no way to know *a priori* which committee process will result in a position that fits you. It is quite possible to see 35 position announcements that seem to fit and get no invitations to visit. Realistically, there are probably no more than three to nine positions around the country in any given year that will fit any given candidate. In some years, there won’t be any at all. For this reason, you need to have Plan B.

There are many ways for a position to morph from a good to a poor fit. I wasn’t interviewed at one place because they assumed they couldn’t afford a Harvard grad. I thought I would get interviews at two large mid-western universities, but they decided they needed an internationalist and an economist, respectively, after the search was well under way. At another school, the Dean was very interested in my work and left me with the impression that an invitation would be forthcoming. It turned out that the faculty had one agenda and the Dean another; the faculty won. At another school, the committee was preparing to invite me to visit, but then the development department landed a large donation, which made it possible to convert the position into an endowed chair for a tenured faculty member. A joint position I really coveted was offered to no one because the policy and information science schools could not come to a meeting of the minds on what they really wanted. Two schools suffered reductions in state funding and thus called off their searches.

Even if the fit is right, other processes can intervene. I had two tendered offers revoked because of state budget cutbacks. Another place canceled their search because a new dean announced a new set of priorities.

The process might actually be random...OK, not really, but it may feel like it at times.

I have an offer. Now what?

An offer usually comes in the form of a faxed, mailed, or express-mailed letter. Don't rely on oral "commitments." In the last year I know of two oral "commitments" to students that never became real offers. A written offer is the only enforceable document. Offers usually are time-limited – a week or two at most, though extensions can sometimes be negotiated.

Elements of an offer. The process of negotiating an offer is also very time-consuming and stressful. However, this is also your time of maximum leverage. Packages almost always include the following:

- Base salary (nine or 10 month contract with an option to earn up to 1/3 more during the summer – so-called "summer months")
- Terms of appointment if your Ph.D. is not completed in time for the Fall term
- Base course load (usually at least four courses per academic year)
- Course buy-outs during the first year or two (if any)
- Course preparations (how many new courses you must prepare to teach in the first year or two)
- Package of benefits (health, dental, vision, retirement, life insurance, etc.)
- In rare cases: expectations for external grant funding

If your offer letter does not spell these things out, ask for clarifications in writing.

Offers may also include:

- Computer equipment and software
- Relocation allowance
- Summer salary support (often one or two summer months in the first year or two)
- Research support (a slush fund used to pay for a project or get a grant)
- Administrative and course support
- A travel allowance for conferences
- Office space and furniture
- Spousal job placement
- Spousal and dependent tuition support
- Dependent care (day care, adult day care)
- Housing or home purchase support
- Parking
- Travel for a family visit
- Limits on service and advising loads
- Budgets for supplies, materials, and telephone
- Arrangements for mentoring
- Deferral of start date
- Offer to advance one month's salary during relocation
- Consulting opportunities
- Family leave outside usual policy

If any of these supports/benefits are offered, make sure to get the offer in writing. If you don't have it in writing, there is no obligation for the institution to perform.

Comparing offers. These factors, coupled with the school's rank and prestige of course, create the most basic parts of an offer comparison. You may also want to consider:

- Presence/absence of potential collaborators in the department, school, or university.
- Age/rank distribution, as I discussed before.
- Relationship with foundations/government agencies that already fund research like that you wish to do in the future
- City and state tax rates. Offers in New York City or Philadelphia do not go nearly as far because of city wage tax.
- Housing costs (one useful site for comparisons is <http://www.bestplaces.net/col/>).
- Child care costs. When I was on the market, my day care bill was larger than my mortgage payment; subsidized child care can make a very big difference.
- How soon your health benefits kick in. Many schools have a waiting period before health benefits start. In my case, the waiting period was 42 days. This means you may have to pay for COBRA to maintain health coverage for two or more months, an expense that can exceed \$800/month for family coverage. In retrospect, I should have negotiated a one-time subsidy to cover this cost.
- Spousal willingness to relocate to this area.
- Other costs – travel to visit friends and relatives; auto insurance. (Don't underestimate how much insurance costs can go up when moving to Philadelphia, New York, or other major metropolitan areas. I found this out in reverse when we moved from Philadelphia to the Boston suburb of Watertown, MA – my auto insurance dropped by \$1,000/year.)

Rank of school and your estimation of how the school's rank will change over the next 5 – 10 years may be the most important non-compensation issue to consider. Many faculty members warned that taking a job at a "Tier 2" school means you cannot move up to "Tier 1" later in your career. (I wish they would have defined what constituted these "tiers.") At this stage, you compete as a "_____ graduate" – with the program's name and your advisor's name working for you. If you wish to move to a different school a few years later, you will compete primarily as an assistant professor at _____, who has published _____, and who graduated (a while ago) from _____. Your alma mater will mean much less, according to this line of thinking. I think publications can trump almost anything, but mine was a minority opinion among those who were advising me during my job search. Their view was that the quality of the school at which one taught first would matter a great deal to future mobility.

The ideal situation is to have two or more offers so that a bidding war starts. In the absence of this, many schools and departments will assume that a grad from a highly ranked program may have multiple offers – never do anything to disturb this assumption if you come from such an institution.

Gamesmanship. Because the market for public administration/public policy, sociology, and political science is less organized than that for economics, there is great deal of gamesmanship

related to the offers. Once an offer was made, the schools immediately pressured me to respond. However, the offers came in separated by one or two weeks. Thus, it is often not possible to evaluate each in light of the others. To minimize the pressure, it is imperative to schedule late in the process and to use whatever leverage you have to get departments to decide in temporal proximity to one another. Clearly though, the schools control this process – as does the law. Failure to complete an interview series could cause a university to face legal sanctions.

There are a variety of stalls that can be used:

- Ask directly for more time to evaluate.
- Appeal to the difficulty of evaluating an offer while still giving job talks.
- Note the unfairness of canceling a visit when the invitee has already paid for airfare, hotel, etc.
- Ask for a second visit, preferably one which includes support for a spouse/significant other to visit – note the importance of having “family buy-in” to the decision.
- Begin negotiation where you raise issues sequentially rather than as a package.
- Refuse to answer definitively yes or no until some date certain; this forces the school to make the decision for you – but at your peril.

These negotiation techniques only work for a while. In the end, I let two offers expire in the hope that a better one would be forthcoming. This was a dangerous game. Two schools ended their searches because of state budget cuts. I was down to the last offer by the end (thank you, Rockefeller College!!). Because one may gamble and lose, it is imperative to have a backup plan in case you lose all the offers that are available.

Uh-oh: I don't have an offer. Now what?

At least hundreds and maybe thousands of talented PhDs finish their degree every year and are unable to find a faculty position immediately. The Academy of Management's Placement Service finds that 20% of their student participants get no offers during the Summer or Fall sessions of their Service. You can reach the end of the season and have no job, especially in hard economic times like I experience in 2001-2002 and recent grads experienced until recently.

Most departments suggest a number of backup strategies:

- Adjunct faculty positions
- Post-doctoral work (which is the norm in most hard sciences anyway)
- Staff research work
- Consulting
- Deferral of graduation
- Choose to be a stay-at-home dad or mom for a year

Most faculty advisors will tell you that the backup strategy must keep you firmly ensconced in the academy. If you leave to do outside consulting work you may be “branded” as not serious about a faculty position. I have a friend who was a year ahead of me at the Kennedy School. He

decided to try consulting for a while after he graduated. He hated it. So he tried to get back into the academy after three years in the private sector. To date, the best he has been able to do is a non-tenure track research faculty job at Yale. His recent publications will probably let him re-enter the market, but his difficulties have been very painful.

If you don't have a tenure-track job right away, your goal must be to continue building a publication and research record. Thus, an adjunct position that allows for nothing but teaching may not be the best option, unless you supplement this with either diligent efforts to get your dissertation published or other research work. Many students simply defer graduation for a term or a year in order to "look" like a recently completed PhD rather than one that has "been on the shelf" for a year.

The exception to this rule seems to be if you choose to have or take care of children for a year after you finish, though two advisors suggested that this course of action for men may be viewed with disfavor, depending on the age distribution of the departments to which you apply later. Recent discussions with female faculty at the 2006 Academy of Management meeting also raised questions about the safety of this strategy for women. However, I do know of some female colleagues who have taken a year off to have a child and then found a tenure-track position without too much difficulty the next year.

In most cases, choose a strategy that keep you research-active while you wait for a job to materialize.

For more information...

Mine is not the only opinion on these matters. *The Chronicle of Higher Education* occasionally publishes pieces on the academic job market, as do some field journals (for instance, *PS: Political Science and Politics*). I and some of my students (primarily Hyun Hee Park and Dongchul Shim) have accumulated an archive of materials on the job market, published and unpublished. To access these materials, visit:

<http://www.albany.edu/rockefeller/jobmarket.shtml>

On that page you will find my job market portfolio, manuals from other institutions, links to job listings, and a link to an electronic reserves site with published articles in PDF form. To retrieve the published materials you will need the following password: ROCKjob.

If you found this primer helpful – or better still, if you find something that should be added – drop me a line at kretheme@albany.edu. I like to know if this stuff is helpful.

Good Luck!!

Appendix

What are the “best” journals in public administration and policy?

One of the primary measures of an academic journal's status is the determination of its “citation impact factor.” The acknowledged leader in the determination of academic journal status is ISI Thompson Scientific (ISI). Here are the Impact Factors for public affairs journals.

Rank	Abbreviated Journal Title	Total Cites	Impact Factor	5-Year Impact Factor	Immediacy Index	Articles	Cited Half-life
1	PHILOS PUBLIC AFF	1186	1.958	2.762	0	10	>10.0
2	J PUBL ADM RES THEOR	1816	1.951	3.337	0.486	35	7.6
3	J POLICY ANAL MANAG	1276	1.781	2.281	0.27	37	8.7
4	J EUR SOC POLICY	703	1.644	2.042	0.581	31	6.6
5	REGUL GOV	241	1.625	1.779	1.219	32	3.1
6	GOVERNANCE	838	1.604	2.129	0.167	30	8.4
7	CLIM POLICY	776	1.536	1.679	1.038	52	5.7
8	INT PUBLIC MANAG J	217	1.2		0	14	5.4
9	J EUR PUBLIC POLICY	1545	1.197	1.667	0.833	78	7
10	REV POLICY RES	315	1.113		0.605	38	5
11	J SOC POLICY	641	1.075	1.195	0.263	38	8.9
12	PUBLIC ADMIN	1372	1.062	1.583	0.14	57	8.1
13	POLICY SCI	794	1.059	1.779	0.118	17	>10.0
14	J PUBLIC POLICY	454	1.033		0	11	>10.0
15	ENVIRON PLANN C	872	1.016	1.386	0.651	63	5.8
16	POLICY STUD J	679	1.014	1.177	0.5	36	6.9
17	PUBLIC MANAG REV	575	0.989	1.291	0.073	55	6.6
18	SCI PUBL POLICY	707	0.983		0.565	69	6.5
19	SOC POLICY ADMIN	622	0.976	1.157	0.122	41	7.3
20	PUBLIC ADMIN REV	3250	0.9	1.546	0.308	78	9.9
20	REV PUBLIC PERS ADM	243	0.9		0.1	20	7.1
22	AM REV PUBLIC ADM	474	0.781	1.257	0.114	35	6.7
22	PUBLIC MONEY MANAGE	445	0.781	0.817	0.125	56	6.6
24	J ACCOUNT PUBLIC POL	582	0.77		0.129	31	8.3
25	POLICY POLIT	425	0.758	0.91	0.194	31	7.6
26	LOCAL GOV STUD	260	0.69	0.912	0.075	40	5.5
27	CONTEMP ECON POLICY	516	0.671	0.673	0.075	40	9.3
28	PUBLIC ADMIN DEVELOP	420	0.655	0.815	0.562	32	8.1
29	CAN PUBLIC POL	262	0.577	0.705	0.105	19	8.2
30	ADMIN SOC WORK	285	0.566	0.824	0.038	26	7.7
31	INT REV ADM SCI	307	0.559	0.94	0.229	35	5.8

Rank	Abbreviated Journal Title	Total Cites	Impact Factor	5-Year Impact Factor	Immediacy Index	Articles	Cited Half-life
32	AUST J PUBL ADMIN	313	0.537	0.824	0.026	39	7.2
33	PUBLIC PERFORM MANAG	184	0.536		0.053	38	7.2
34	J COMP POLICY ANAL	233	0.509		0.083	24	4.9
35	ADMIN SOC	621	0.468	1.091	0.27	37	8.2
36	POLICY STUD-UK	192	0.452		0.061	33	5.1
37	NONPROFIT MANAG LEAD	439	0.449		0.074	27	9.9
38	J HOMEL SECUR EMERG	140	0.422	0.566	0.053	38	3.8
39	LEX LOCALIS	27	0.4		0.1	20	
40	TRANSYLV REV ADM SCI	81	0.38		0.111	54	
41	PUBLIC PERS MANAGE	308	0.326	0.355	0.111	18	>10.0
42	CAN PUBLIC ADMIN	148	0.283	0.389	0.074	27	9.7
43	CIV SZLE	17	0.149	0.102	0	30	
44	REV CLAD REFORMA DEM	31	0.119		0	14	
45	GEST POLIT PUBLICA	34	0.1	0.115	0	21	
46	INNOVAR-REV CIENC AD	28	0.058		0.028	36	
47	AMME IDARESI DERG	23	0.042	0.024	0	27	

Here are field journals in which public affairs work is sometimes published. The moral of the story: Field journals are read more widely, so their impact factor is higher. Starred journals list the 2010 Impact Factor

Journal Title	2012 Impact Factor
Academy of Management Review	7.895
Journal of Economic Literature	6.667
Academy of Management Journal	5.906
Quarterly Journal of Economics	5.278
Administrative Science Quarterly	4.182
American Sociological Review	4.077
American Political Science Review	3.933
Journal of Organizational Behavior	3.626
Journal of Political Economy	3.483
Journal of Financial Economics	3.424
American Journal of Sociology	3.414
Social Networks	3.381

Strategic Management Journal	3.367
Organization Science	3.351
Review of Economic Studies	2.860
American Journal of Political Science	2.811
American Economic Review	2.792
Journal of Economic Geography	2.600
Organizations Studies	2.190
Management Science	1.859
British Journal of Sociology	1.684
Journal of Politics	1.577