

A Postscript to “Finding Jobs in Political Science”: A Survey of 1996–97 Ph.D.s’ Employment Searches and Outcomes

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The American Political Science Association conducted a limited survey of 1996–97 political science Ph.D.s to conclude the work done for an NSF-funded project on the “Supply and Demand for New Science and Engineering Doctorates.” A report on the extensive survey of 1996 placement candidates, titled “Finding Jobs in Political Science,” appeared in the September 1998 issue of *PS* (Mann 1998). The design of the earlier survey was based on information about the specific attributes of doctoral training and professional employment in political science. Following completion of the original survey, the Commission on Professionals in Science and Technology (CPST) which is coordinating the contributions of science, engineering, and social science associations for the project, proposed that a set of core questions be asked of the respondents by each association. The APSA conducted this second survey in the spring of 1998. The 1998 survey was sent only to Ph.D.s, unlike the earlier survey which included ABDs. Surveying only Ph.D.s was necessary to permit comparisons among data collected by APSA and the other participating associations. Data from the surveys conducted by all of the professional associations can be found on the CPST web site (www.nextwave.org/survey13.htm).

The second survey was conducted over a six-week period. Ph.D. departments were contacted, by email, and asked to send the names and addresses of graduate students awarded a Ph.D. between July 1, 1996, and June 30, 1997. Over a two-week period, 44% of the departments submitted names, including 72% of the 25 departments having the largest average placement classes. In all, the names of 364

Ph.D.s were collected. We mailed questionnaires to these Ph.D.s, and 152 respondents returned completed questionnaires within four weeks (a 42% response rate). The surveys were processed and coded by Questar Data Systems, the research firm that also prepared the data files for the survey of the 1996 political science placement candidates.¹

In this article, we present a brief summary of the attributes and placement experiences of the 1996–97 political science Ph.D. respondents and, where there are comparable data, of how their experiences with those reported by respondents to the earlier survey. Table 1 contains a profile of respondents to the 1998 survey. The citizenship and identity attributes of these respondents are generally comparable to those of the respondents to the survey of the 1996 placement class, but the percentage of women doctorates is slightly higher: 32% compared to 26%. Eight percent of employed 1998 respondents held postdoctoral appointments, a proportion comparable to that reported by Ph.D. departments in 1997 (Yin 1998). Postdoctoral appointments are increasing in all science disciplines. The characteristics of these appointments and their impact on the careers of new Ph.D.s bear monitoring now in political science.

Table 2 compares the employment outcomes of the respondents in this survey with those of the respondents to the survey conducted in 1997. Overall, comparable proportions of Ph.D.s responding to both surveys held positions: 85% and 90%. Since the earlier survey collected responses throughout the summer, the higher percentage of employed Ph.D.s reflects a longer job-search period for respondents. Comparable

percentages of Ph.D.s reported securing academic positions—77% in the 1998 survey and 78% in the 1997 survey—and full-time permanent positions—57% and 58%, respectively. Also, the mean salaries are similar for the two groups of respondents. But, in this recent survey, fewer of the women were employed (73%) than were the women doctorates responding to the 1997 survey (91%). The length of the job search was also shorter for the 1996–97 women Ph.D.s—six months compared to nine months. Overall, the respondents to the 1998 survey spent less time looking for a position. And a lower percentage of the 1998 employed Ph.D.s reported actively seeking a different position than did employed 1997 Ph.D.s. The last two findings may also be artifacts of the brief timing of the 1998 survey and the satisfaction of placement candidates who locate jobs relatively soon.

Table 3 confirms that these recent placement candidates are, on the whole, quite satisfied with their new positions. Two-thirds or more strongly agree that their positions are “related to their field” and “commensurate with their education.” About half strongly agree that their position is “professionally challenging.” Their level of satisfaction is not strongly correlated with whether it is “similar to what I expected to be doing when I began my doctoral program,” the question that is used to indicate “expectation.” Their responses are consistent with the feelings about the match between their job search outcomes and expectations expressed by the 1996 doctoral candidates.

Table 3 includes data on the job search methods used. The *Personnel*

TABLE 1
Profile of the Respondents to the Survey of 1996–97 Ph.D.s

ALL RESPONDENTS, N = 152				
Personal Attributes				
Citizenship and Identity	<u>U.S. Citizens:</u>	138 (91%)	<u>Non U.S. Citizens*</u>	14 (9%)
	White:	121 (80%)	Permanent Resident:	4 (3%)
	African-American:	5 (3%)	Temporary Visa:	3 (2%)
	Latino:	3 (2%)	N/A	7 (5%)
	Asian-American:	2 (1%)		
	Native American:	0		
	Other:	3 (2%)		
	N/A	4 (3%)		
Gender	Women:	48 (32%)	Men:	103 (68%)
Age	Median:	33	Mean:	35
Date Ph.D. Granted	Before Dec. 1996:	69 (45%)	After Jan. 1997:	83 (55%)
APSA Member	Yes:	105 (69%)	No:	42 (28%)
Employment Attributes				
Employed	Yes: 129 (85%)		No: 13 (9%)	N/A: 10 (6%)
Placement Success	U.S. Citizens:	119 (86%)	Non U.S. Citizens:	10 (71%)
	Men:	93 (90%)	Women:	35 (73%)
	U.S. Men:	83 (90%)	U.S. Women:	35 (78%)
	APSA member:	93 (89%)	Non member:	31 (74%)
EMPLOYED RESPONDENTS, N = 129				
Type of Position	Full-Time Permanent:	74 (57%)	Full-Time Temporary Job**:	27 (21%)
	Part-Time Permanent:	2 (2%)	Part-Time Temporary Job**:	14 (11%)
Type of Primary Job	Educational Institution:	99 (77%)	Full-Time Postdoc:	9 (7%)
	Four-Year College/Univ.:	93% (72%)	Two-Year College:	4 (3%)
	Government:	10 (8%)	Other Non-Profit:	6 (5%)
	Self-Employed:	2 (2%)	Other:	2 (2%)
			Business/Industry:	5 (4%)
			N/A:	5 (4%)

*Country of origin of non-U.S. citizens: Korea (3), Japan (2), Belgium, Britain, China, India, Italy, Mexico, Poland, Taiwan (1 each).

**Does not include postdoctoral appointments.

Services Newsletter (PSN) was used by the highest percentage of respondents (73%). Faculty advisors and informal channels were also used in the job search by over half of the respondents. But, when respondents were asked to select the single most effective job search method, the *PSN* and informal channels were selected by more than twice as many recent doctoral graduates as chose their faculty advisors. The *Personnel Service Newsletter* and informal channels or networks among cohorts were also the top two job search methods used by the 1996 placement candidates.

Table 4 reports the job search methods and satisfaction of em-

ployed 1996–97 Ph.D.s by position. One-third of those with postdoctoral appointments, a higher percentage than among all other respondents, said their advisors were the most influential factor in their finding positions. There was little difference between male respondents in full-time permanent positions and those in full-time temporary positions across all variables. In contrast, job satisfaction among women differed by their type of position: many more of the women in full-time permanent positions than in full-time temporary positions are satisfied with their jobs. As expected, twice as many of those in temporary positions (48%) than in permanent posi-

tions (23%) are actively looking for another job. Only 12% of the women in full-time permanent positions are seeking another job. Table 5 confirms that fewer of the employed Ph.D.s who value their current job, in terms of its connection to their field, education, initial career expectations, and professional challenge, are seeking another job.

The 1998 survey asked the 1996–97 Ph.D.s to identify the primary and secondary work activities connected with their primary employment. Table 6 shows that teaching is their primary work activity, and that more men (45%) than women (34%) teach and more women (40%) than men (24%) do

TABLE 2

Employment Outcomes: A Comparison of the Employed Ph.D. Respondents to the 1997 and 1998 Surveys (%)

	1998 Survey			1997 Survey		
	All N = 129	Men N = 93	Women N = 35	All N = 299	Men N = 220	Women N = 78
Employment Outcomes						
Type of Position						
Full-Time Permanent	57	61	49	58	56	64
Full-Time Temporary**	28	24	40	28	30	22
Part-Time Permanent	2	1	3	1	1	3
Part-Time Temporary**	12	14	9	13	14	12
Total	99*	100	101	100	101	101
Type of Primary Job						
Educational Institution	77	81	69	78	79	78
Four-Year College/Univ.	72	76	66	78	79	78
Two-Year College	3	4	0	0	0	0
Other	2	1	3	0	0	0
Non-Academic or Other Position***	21	15	26	21	21	22
N/A	4	4	5	0	0	0
Total	102	100	100	99	100	100
Job Location						
U.S.	90	87	100	93	92	96
Non U.S.	10	13	0	7	8	4
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
Overall Salary						
Median	\$37,000	\$37,000	\$36,000	\$36,000	\$35,000	\$37,000
Range	\$2,500– 100,000	\$5,600– 100,000	\$2,500– 80,000	\$4,000– 825,000	\$4,000– 70,000	\$4,000– 825,000
Months Spent Looking for Job						
Median	8	8	6	10	11	9
Mean	9	10	7	13	13	12
Actively looking for another position						
Yes	39	41	31	51	52	48
No	58	57	63	49	48	42
N/A	3	2	6	0	0	0
Total	100	100	100	100	100	90

*Totals do not add up to 100% due to rounding.

**Postdoctoral appointments included.

***Including jobs in government, nonprofit organizations, business/industry, self-employed, and other positions in the 1998 survey.

research a majority of the time. The difference may be attributed, in part, to the lower percentage of women responding to this survey who were employed by colleges and universities. As the core questions designed by the CPST for this project do not ask about the type of department or educational institution, it is not possible to show the association between the employees' departments and primary work activity. Based on the survey of 1996 placement candidates, it is likely that more faculty in

graduate than undergraduate departments select research as their primary work activity. Since the majority of new Ph.D.s are not placed in doctoral institutions, the prominence of teaching is understandable.

The findings from this second direct survey of political science doctoral graduates are quite similar to those of the initial survey. The majority of Ph.D.s find professional jobs and the majority of these jobs are faculty positions in higher education. But a significant

portion of the faculty appointments are temporary and/or not the positions anticipated by the graduates. Consequently, there are many political science Ph.D.s whose search for a preferred, permanent position continues even while they are employed. APSA's Committee on Education and Professional Development is proposing an initiative to give doctoral students and their departments more guidance about the job search and job market.

TABLE 3
Job Search & Satisfaction of Employed 1996–97 Ph.D.s (%)

	All N = 129	Men N = 93	Women N = 35
Job Search			
Job Search Methods Used*			
Faculty advisor	59	62	51
Informal channel	56	55	60
Newspaper ad	24	25	20
Newsletter, magazine**	73	73	71
Placement service	36	32	46
Employment agency	2	3	0
Met employer via former job	9	5	20
Sent unsolicited <i>vita</i>	14	16	8
Received unsolicited offer	2	2	0
Electronic resource	17	18	14
Single Most Effective Job Search Method			
Faculty advisor	12	12	11
Informal channel	22	22	23
Newspaper ad	2	3	0
Newsletter, magazine	26	25	31
Placement service	1	1	0
Employment agency	1	1	0
Met employer via former job	5	2	14
Sent unsolicited <i>vita</i>	2	2	0
Received unsolicited offer	3	3	3
Electronic resource	2	3	0
Other	1	0	3
N/A	23	26	14
Total***	100	100	99
Job Satisfaction			
Position is Related to Field			
Strongly agree	71	72	69
Agree	13	11	20
Neutral	6	5	9
Disagree	3	4	0
Strongly disagree	6	8	3
Total***	99	100	101
Position is Commensurate with Education			
Strongly agree	66	66	66
Agree	12	9	20
Neutral	6	5	9
Disagree	8	10	3
Strongly disagree	8	10	3
Total***	100	100	101
Position is Similar to Expectation			
Strongly agree	39	40	37
Agree	21	22	20
Neutral	12	12	11
Disagree	8	3	20
Strongly disagree	20	23	11
Total***	100	100	99
Position is Professionally Challenging			
Strongly agree	50	49	51
Agree	26	26	26
Neutral	13	12	14
Disagree	6	8	3
Strongly disagree	5	5	6
Total	100	100	100

*Respondents could select all that apply.

**95% of those who selected this category specified APSA's *Personnel Service Newsletter*.

***Totals do not add up to 100% due to rounding.

TABLE 4
Employed 1996–97 Ph.D.s' Positions, Job Search and Job Satisfaction (%)

	Full Time Permanent			Full Time Temporary Job*			Full-Time Postdoc	Part-Time Temporary**
	All N = 74	Men N = 57	Women N = 17	All N = 27	Men N = 16	Women N = 11	All N = 9***	All N = 16***
Job Search								
Months Spent Looking for Job								
Median	8	8	8	8	9	6	7	10
Mean	10	10	10	8	10	6	6	10
Single Most Effective Job Search Method								
Faculty advisor	11	11	12	11	19	0	33	6
Informal channel	16	16	18	26	25	27	33	38
Newspaper ad	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	6
Newsletter, magazine	32	32	35	33	25	46	11	0
Placement service	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
Employment agency	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6
Met employer via former job	7	4	18	7	0	18	0	0
Sent unsolicited <i>vita</i>	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	6
Received unsolicited offer	3	3	0	4	6	0	0	6
Electronic resource	1	2	0	0	0	0	11	6
Other	1	0	6	0	0	0	0	0
N/A	23	26	12	19	25	9	11	25
Total****	99	101	101	100	100	100	99	99
Actively Looking for Another Position								
Yes	23	26	12	48	50	45	66	81
No	74	72	82	48	50	45	33	19
N/A	3	2	6	4	0	9	0	0
Total****	100	100	100	100	100	99	99	100
Job Satisfaction								
Position is Related to Field								
Strongly agree	77	75	82	63	75	46	89	44
Agree	8	7	12	22	13	36	0	31
Neutral	7	7	6	7	0	18	11	0
Disagree	5	7	0	0	0	0	0	0
Strongly disagree	3	4	0	7	12	0	0	25
Total****	100	100	100	99	100	100	100	100
Position is Commensurate with Education								
Strongly agree	73	72	76	71	75	55	89	19
Agree	11	8	18	15	6	27	0	19
Neutral	7	7	6	7	6	9	11	0
Disagree	7	9	0	0	0	0	0	25
Strongly disagree	3	4	0	7	13	9	0	38
Total****	101	100	100	100	100	100	100	101
Position is Similar to expectation								
Strongly agree	47	46	53	37	44	27	44	0
Agree	26	25	29	15	13	18	11	19
Neutral	8	10	0	22	25	18	22	6
Disagree	5	3	12	15	6	27	22	0
Strongly disagree	14	16	6	11	12	9	0	75
Total****	100	100	100	100	100	99	99	100
Position is Professionally Challenging								
Strongly agree	57	51	76	48	63	27	67	6
Agree	27	30	18	26	13	46	22	25
Neutral	10	10	6	7	6	9	11	38
Disagree	5	7	0	11	12	9	0	6
Strongly disagree	1	2	0	7	6	9	0	25
Total****	100	100	100	99	100	100	100	100

*Does not include Postdoctoral appointments.

**Postdoctoral appointments (N = 2) included.

***Both men and women are included, due to the small number of women (N = 3) in both categories.

****Totals do not add up to 100% due to rounding.

TABLE 5
Job Satisfaction of Employed 1996–97 Ph.D.s Seeking or Not Seeking Another Job (%)

	Seeking Another Job			Not Seeking Another Job		
	All N = 50	Men N = 38	Women N = 11	All N = 75	Men N = 53	Women N = 22
Position is Related to Field						
Strongly agree	52	50	64	84	88	73
Agree	16	16	18	9	6	18
Neutral	10	11	9	4	2	9
Disagree	4	5	0	3	4	0
Strongly disagree	18	19	9	0	0	0
Total**	100	101	100	100	100	100
Position is Commensurate with Education						
Strongly agree	42	47	27	81	81	81
Agree	18	8	55	8	9	5
Neutral	8	8	9	5	4	9
Disagree	12	16	0	4	4	0
Strongly disagree	20	21	9	2	2	5
Total**	100	100	100	100	100	100
Position is Similar to Expectation						
Strongly agree	12	13	9	57	60	50
Agree	22	24	18	21	21	23
Neutral	16	16	18	8	9	5
Disagree	10	5	27	5	0	18
Strongly disagree	40	42	27	8	9	5
Total**	100	100	99	99	99	101
Position is Professionally Challenging						
Strongly agree	22	24	18	68	68	68
Agree	32	34	27	21	21	23
Neutral	20	13	36	9	11	5
Disagree	14	16	9	0	0	0
Strongly disagree	12	13	9	1	0	5
Total**	100	100	99	99	100	101

TABLE 6
Primary and Secondary Work Activities of Employed 1996–97 Ph.D.s (%)

	All N = 129	Men N = 93	Women N = 35
Primary Work Activities in Primary Job			
Teaching	41	45	34
Management/administration	7	7	6
Research	28	24	40
Development/design	1	1	0
Professional services	3	3	3
Other	2	2	3
N/A	17	18	14
Total*	99	100	100
Secondary Work Activities in Primary Job			
Teaching	19	20	14
Management/administration	9	10	9
Research	36	37	34
Development/design	2	3	0
Professional services	5	4	9
Other	3	1	9
N/A	25	25	26
Total*	99	100	101

*Totals do not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Note

1. Polly Leonard compiled the names and addresses of the 1996-97 Ph.D.s from their departments and coordinated the preparation of the 1998 questionnaire with Questar Data Systems.

References

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