

Snow-called Productions Presents:

~~Thr~~ Surviving Your Dissertation ~~v~~ ~~w/~~

Kevin J. Krizek, University of Colorado Boulder

Contents

Forward, Acknowledgements, and Dedication	2
Managing The Phd Advisor/Advisee Relationship And Forming Committees	3
Your Charge In A Phd & The Importance Of Keeping Perspective	7
Comprehensive Exam Review Papers Vis--À-Vis The Dissertation And Its Proposal	8
Selecting The Perfect Dissertation Topic: What Is Too Big? Too Small? When? How?	9
What Do I Need To Know About My Dissertation Proposal	13
Wolf-Strong Research Design	14
Getting Published In Academic Journals	15
Research Monograph Vs. 3 Article Type Of Approach	18
Process For Getting A Tenure Track Job In Academia	19
What Is Necessary To Think About And Communicate As Part Of An Interview?	22

Dedication

To Raymond J. Krizek, who served as the chair/primary advisor for 61 dissertations.

Forward and Acknowledgements

Between isolating and bewildering lies life as a doctoral student. It's an emotionally draining period for many, even in the best of times. The period deserves to be inspiring as well. It might be when your finest intellectual and scholarly thinking gets done. It serves to narrate your path during the post-dissertation-life period.

I share the ruminations presented herein because far too many students have told me that they wish they knew the information that it contains sooner. The degree to which any of these perspectives are relevant to you depends on the type of training *you* are seeking in your doctoral program. And, sometimes you may realize the tenure-track is not right for you--this is a normal choice people make.

The good news is that there is an emerging market for a new type of urban professional. In recent years, there are many new research-oriented types of careers that are housed in academia. Statistical and spatial analysis skills, especially with open source software, are in demand with new mobility companies, banks, news organizations and other firms that are focused on urban issues. Advocacy groups and non-profit agencies seek talented scholars who combine analytic skills with a personal touch, and many PhD graduates find these types of careers extremely fulfilling. The tenure track is not your only option, and other career paths are just as worthy of someone with a PhD. Decision makers in city government are lacking strong, helpful and unbiased knowledge in charting their futures in uncertain times.

Most what is presented here reflects a pursuit for a university job at a major research university—and that process benefitted by following a known process and finding strong advisors along the way. Should you be aiming for employment at more of a teaching-oriented school, the relevance of the topics would be different. If you are angling for a consulting-gig or to lead a research arm of a non-profit, some points are less germane. What is important is that you seek the strongest doctoral training to do the dissertation in the way you want to...all while advancing the field of city planning (or whatever your field is) and the associated professions.

The perspectives were largely shaped by: getting interest in research while at Northwestern University, finishing a MRP at UNC-Chapel Hill, gaining a doctorate in Urban Design from the University of Washington, interviewing for far too many tenure-track jobs than one cares to remember, engaging in discussions to initiate a PhD Program at the University of Minnesota, directing the PhD Program at the University of Colorado-Denver, teaching PhD research design courses at the University of Colorado and serving as Director of the Program in Environmental Design at the University of Colorado Boulder.

The contents were strengthened by contributions from David Godschalk, Paul Waddell, Ann Markusen, Carissa Slotterback, Bruce Stiftel, Brian Taylor, Kelly Clifton, Gary Pivo, Daniel Rodriguez, Anne Vernez-Moudon, Paul Hess, David King, Joe Schofer, David Thoma, many PhD students (you know who you are), and other colleagues from within the communities of ACSP or the Transportation Research Board.

October 2020

Managing the PhD Advisor/Advisee Relationship and Forming Committees

"The adviser-student relationship in developing a dissertation is a complex one. Clearly, substantive intellectual interests should be well aligned in order for the relationship to offer substantive intellectual mentorship. But perhaps just as important is the matching of the mentoring style of the adviser to the stage of development and the tendencies of the student. Some students are strongly self-guided, disciplined, focused and have a clear vision for what they want their intellectual contribution to be. These are in many ways the easiest ones to advise and the relationship lends itself to a more coaching style of mentorship, while ensuring that hubris or some oversight on the part of the student does not trip them up as they pursue their research agenda.

At the other end of the spectrum, some students are less secure in their interests and direction, and their research skills may have gaps. Some might have a tendency to stall at key decision points, and at times just want their adviser to just tell them what to do. These are potentially more challenging advising relationships, but are actually quite common. My own inclination is to help these students find their confidence, not by telling them what to do, but by helping them think through issues, opportunities, and methods, and to develop their inner compass. Both types of students generate rich intellectual exchange and growth with their advisers. In the long run, the dissertation process is not just about completing a dissertation, notwithstanding the mantra that the best dissertation is a finished dissertation. It is about growing up as an independent scholar, able to transition confidently into the next phase of their career, independent from the adviser they worked with."

--Paul Waddell

So, you might be in the beginning phases of matriculating through a PhD program. Maybe you are not quite there yet, but will be headed that way. In either case, your intellectual journey will inevitably be shaped, informed, and excited by the individual (or collection of individuals) you agree will serve as your PhD advisor. The PhD student / PhD advisor relationship is a unique one.

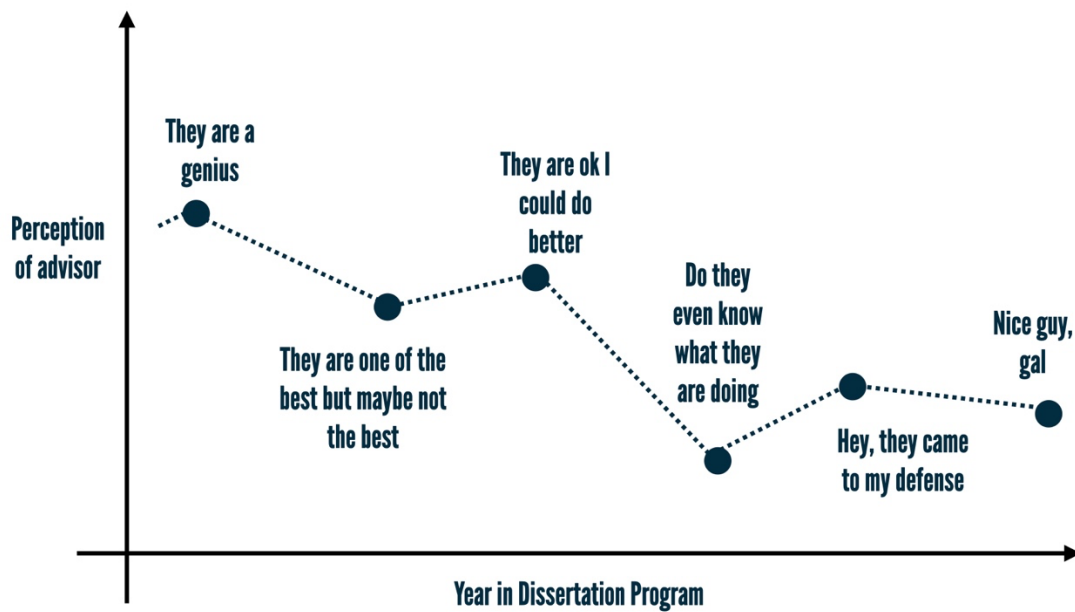
There are no formal rules, guidelines or other signposts to steer this process. Many ambiguous expectations are loosely set that are mostly defined by tradition, informal observations or personalities. These traditions also differ widely between North American and European schools.

Below, I first outline example advisor characteristics. I then follow with student expectations. Biases inevitably comes across in tone.

Advisor Characteristics

Generally speaking, adviser types fall into three types: authoritarian, coach, and laissez faire.

1. The **guiding** type of adviser is likely to set the goals and lay out tasks for the research, usually in some detail. They have expectations for their students and their perception of the student may be based on the student's ability to meet or exceed such expectations. Such advisers might welcome you challenge their thoughts, expect you to speak up, and are active throughout the research process.
2. The **coach** seeks to set goals jointly with the student. There may be a some general ideas thrown around in the beginning or planning phase, but not much during the research itself. Active in the planning stage, passive during the process, and active in the evaluation stage is how many would describe it.
3. **Laissez-faire** advisers are friendly and constantly supportive—yet it remains uncertain the means through which you will learn much from them. They will be relatively inactive on the research task unless you take the initiative but supportive throughout and generally available. Attractive as they may first appear, working with a laissez-faire adviser usually falls into the category of a high-risk strategy and is likely to work if you have strong research skills, are independent, and know what you want.



A spoof on advisor perceptions with time in program. Not drawn to scale or reflected through personal experience.

How can you discern the different types?

A student needs to talk to the students of potential advisers. Ask lots of questions. Do the students see the big picture? Are any of them doing compelling work? Do they have high expectations for themselves and others in the group? How often does the research group meet, if at all? Try to attend one or more of these meetings and pay attention to the interactions. Consider what your relationship will be with the other students in the group. Who will provide survival tips? Who will mentor you? Are there other students involved, and what is their relationship with the professor and graduate students? Where are recent graduates now working? Where have they been placed?

Which is best?

This totally depends on the student's individual learning style, etc.

Above all:

It is usually healthy for a student to have at least one adviser who will be demanding as "you want your anxiety level to go up a little when you get an e-mail message from your adviser."

By many reports, your advisor can be responsible for:

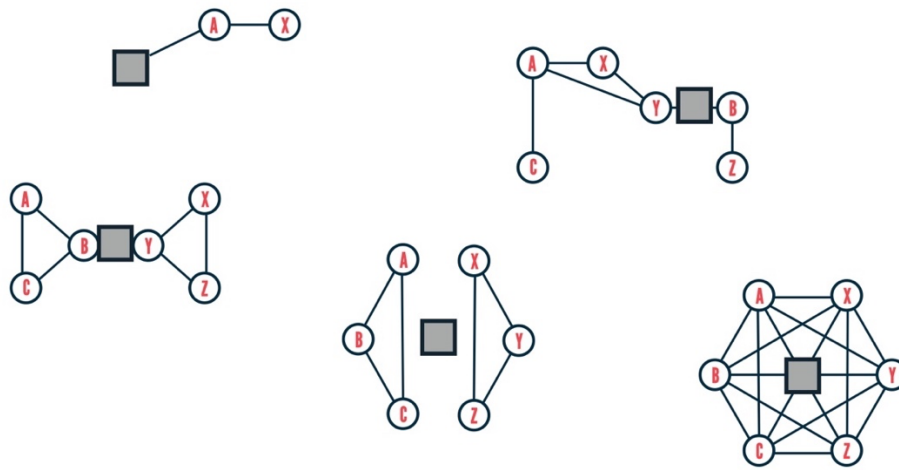
- By association, your success post graduation,
- Defending YOU in your exams,
- Preparing reference letters for your first (and second?) jobs,
- Affecting your emotional state in the program.

(some) Expectations of Students from (some) PhD advisors

- Graduate school is tough. It should be it is not a walk in the park. Advisors know this and expect this.
- Know your advisor's repertoire. Look up and read their work prior to speaking. Ask their graduate students for specific information regarding what it's like to work with that particular professor. Find out what their current research topics are. Based on a quick read of their publications, know what the advisor knows (e.g., methods, approaches, literature). Tap into that

knowledge when appropriate. Going outside the advisor's expertise is fine as well, but that leads to a different type of conversation.

- Approach faculty if you want to work with them. Don't expect them to come to you. However, realize they may not know you and will want to know your skills and interests. They may ask you a variety of questions about your prepared area of research. Be prepared to answer basic questions about your topics.
- Given that people operate in different ways, you will have to honestly ascertain whether being with someone famous will be worth the possible price, as they may not be available to you in the manner you seek. Some faculty are more hands on, requiring weekly meetings, some may only see you semi-regularly, some only a couple times a semester. Most faculty (at least those doing research) are exceptionally busy so you have to be organized when you do go to see them. Pointed and informed questions are a prerequisite.
- The Faculty member's belief and confidence in you can be important. In some respects, you are always on trial. This is one of the most significant components to a successful advisor relationship. Try to find this in your advisor. (Your belief in them is equally important.) Among other things this means:
 - Know about information on the Web that is easily discoverable prior to meeting with them.
 - Try to impress them with new or different skills that they may not embody. Always take initiative.
 - Don't expect them to repeat things or remind you of things.
 - If your advisor suggests that you read something, 'THEN READ IT', prior to meeting with him/her again. Better yet, incorporate it into future discussions and/or writings.
 - Don't ask your advisor to do trivial things.
 - Don't ask your advisor about what you should be doing. Prepare a plan of attack and ask for feedback.
 - Honor deadlines and priorities put forth by your advisor.
 - Do supplemental reading if you think it will help you. This is often expected.
- If applicable, begin writing up your results in conjunction with your advisor for publication in research journals. It is increasingly expected that you have multiple publications as a graduate student and this productivity used as an indicator of your future.
- Expect different types of advice at different stages of your tenure in the program. General information up front, perhaps less face time. More precise feedback downstream when you are dissertating.
- Keep your advisor up to date on your progress. Set realistic goals regarding what encompasses enough work for the Ph.D. If you're confused, try to work it out with your advisor. Get advice from others if necessary. Attend workshops.



There are many ways to structure your committee and how you engage with faculty that are formally or informally connected to your research. Pick what works for their style.

Other considerations

- New vs. Tenured vs. Near retirement. Newer faculty are under pressure since they are usually seeking tenure. They sometimes push students to work long hours, produce significant results, write grants, etc. Tenured faculty are usually busy keeping their research going, giving talks, etc. They are usually slightly easier to deal with regarding their expectations of you and your productivity. Faculty near retirement vary. Some remain active in research even after they retire. Some slow down considerably, so there may not be as strong a push from them to get you a job, publications, conference presentations, financial support. Try to politely inquire what their plans are if you're approaching a faculty member near retirement.
- Have friends/allies in your department and outside your department for advice, mentoring or fun. These contacts are important for dealing with an absent or difficult advisor and will make your graduate school experience more fulfilling.
- Don't isolate yourself from the department or program. Go to social functions, retreats, serve on committees, and so on. It's important to stay in the consciousness of faculty and other students in the department, etc. This may be difficult at times, but could help you in the long run.
- Find people you trust to give you advice & see them regularly. Your advisor may be too busy to give you all that you'll need (and want).

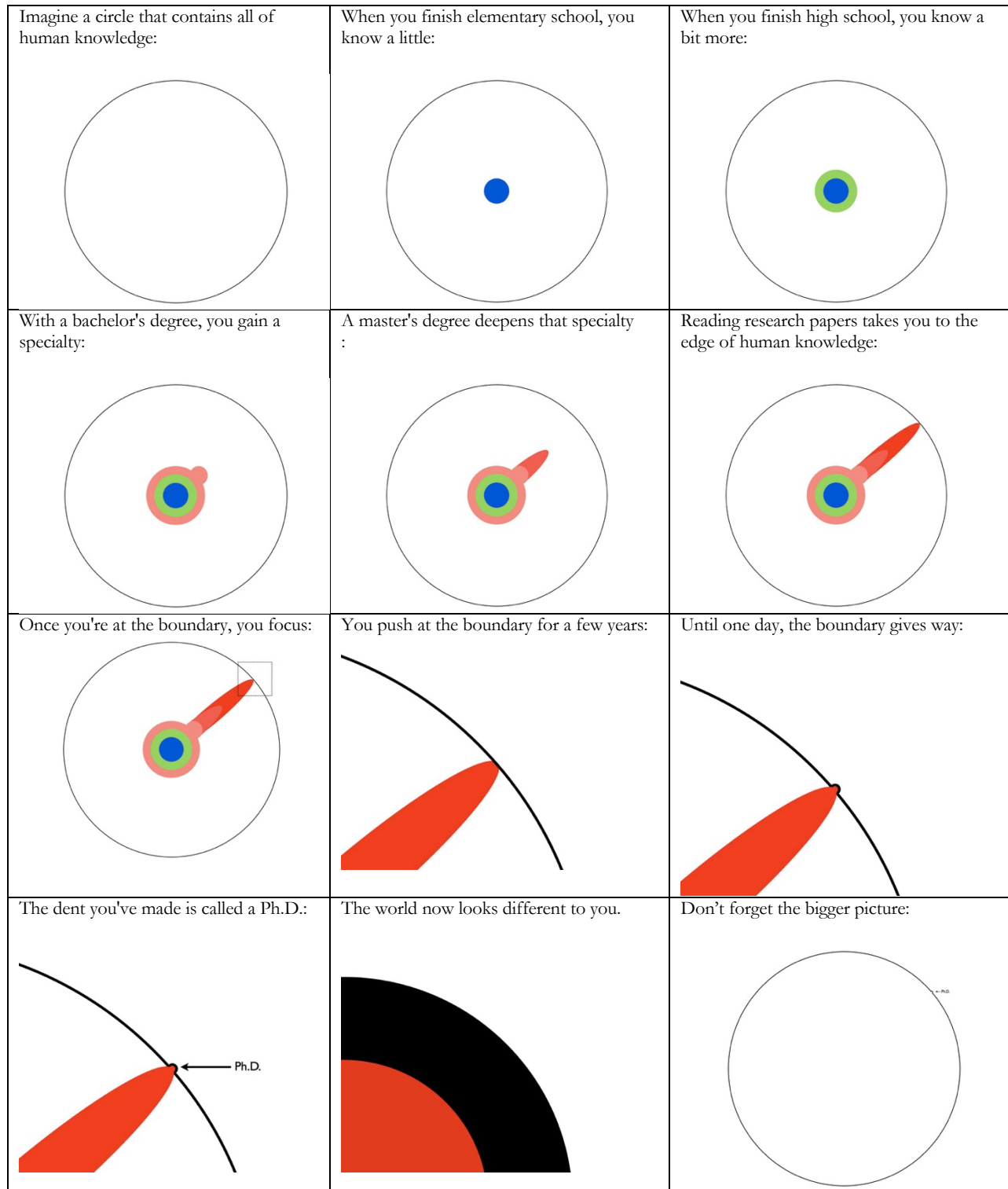
"The adviser is the primary gatekeeper for the professional self-esteem of the student, the rate of progress toward the degree, and access to future opportunities."

--- S. E. Widnall, past president of the American Association for the Advancement of Science

Your charge in a PhD & the importance of keeping perspective

(borrowed from <http://matt.might.net/>)

The scope of knowledge to “take-on” ranges by field and your ambition. It might take years to find the vector of your contribution. But always keep in perspective the larger whole.



Comprehensive Exam Review Papers vis-à-vis the Dissertation and its Proposal

"It's less important what school you go to for your PhD. What is most critical is the knowledge you gain while you are there and the progress you make toward high quality scholarship."

--David R. Godschalk

Receiving a PhD is more than preparing, writing, and completing a dissertation. It requires a mastery of concepts, methods, theories, and issues---each of which *then* serve to inform the specific dissertation research. Good dissertation research requires conceptualization, data collection, analysis, cogently positioning an argument, etc. Obtaining a PhD ensures that you have the tenacity to complete a specific and original project (i.e., the dissertation) *but it is also an indication* that you have mastered a body of literature, broadly speaking, and you know how and where your contribution specifically advances that broad-based literature. An important asset is the ability to be well-versed in the foundational body of knowledge.

Purpose of the review papers

Review papers are almost always required and they are intended to ensure that students possess the requisite background for the dissertation research to be undertaken. This effort is also serves to assist students in integrating the diverse disciplines and perspectives to which they have been exposed as these relate to their area(s) of specialization. They are to cover several subareas within the whole of "competency" areas as determined between the committee and the student; they are *not* to be restricted to the purview of the dissertation topic alone. Cumulatively, the papers should make it possible to assess how a dissertation proposal and the students' own research will form *original* and *important* contributions. Scoping them can be difficult and likely needs to be taken on collaboratively by your committee.

Rationale for papers prior to proposal

Many a dissertation have gone awry because of insufficient foundation and errant placement within the existing literature. This is precisely why it is preferred that the review papers are pursued, completed and defended prior to the dissertation. Otherwise, the student is crafting and working on a research question in an environment devoid of theory and context, without a strong foundation. The review papers serve as a "gateway of sorts" to ensure the students educational progress remains suitably broad and that the student does not prematurely fall victim to "tunnel vision."

What the review papers should do

The papers must demonstrate a thorough grasp of past research that forms the foundation and context for their proposed dissertation topic, broadly speaking. Both papers must entail an extensive review of the pertinent literature, describing and summarizing past research, critically evaluating its findings, and identifying remaining questions, while outlining appropriate approaches to address them. The specific nature of the papers is expected to vary by student, the student's specialty area, and/or research directions. For example, one paper may be theoretical or methodological in nature, whereas the other paper will focus on a substantive topic. Alternatively, one paper may center on a domain of design or planning theory (e.g., ecological theory, design theory, planning theory, environment and behavior, urban economics, human judgment, decision theory); the other will focus on a domain of design or planning application (e.g., architectural design, urban design, architectural history, planning history, housing, transportation, facilities programming and management, open space systems, growth management, and land use controls).

Selecting the Perfect Dissertation Topic: What is too big? Too small? When? How?

"There are three kinds of dissertation. There's what you are doing right now, which is garbage. There's what that student did before you, which is pretty good, unless something goes wrong with data collection. And something always goes wrong with data collection. Then, there's the way that builds the strongest argument in the time you've allotted to build your argument ...which is the only way to advise.

It costs a lot of thinking. It costs thinking because it saves thinking."
-ancient proverb

Primary criteria

- **Something you are passionate about** - This may be the most important criteria. You're going to be spending so much time with this project, and your quality of life will be much better if these hours are spent enjoyably. What's more, the quality of your research, writing, and arguments will be much better if you feel genuine passion for your work. Choose a topic you find both fascinating and socially significant. Never let someone pressure you into writing about a certain topic because of reasons X, Y or Z.

Most dissertations can be written and finished within a year, giving yourself a two year window is a good way to assess your interest level over the long haul. While your general topic area will often be in alignment with your advisor and committee, make sure that you choose a topic which allows you the freedom to explore areas of interest for you. In doing so, you'll feel more connected to your project and more motivated to see it through.

But not too much - The reason is that if you pick a topic you're "too interested" in, it can sometimes be difficult to find a way to narrow it appropriately for the scope of the dissertation. ...people become so attached to it that she's having trouble deciding where to narrow her focus (not so good). The goal of your dissertation is to pick one aspect or one area that you want to know more about. If you are looking to finish up quickly, aim to research one question or a series of closely related questions-and stay away from designs that will require a great deal of "pulling together" of unlinked ideas/concepts. If you pick a narrow focus in a topic you like, this can make it much easier to follow this topic through to the end- a finished dissertation.

- **Has the ability to make more than a "dent" in the existing literature** - Pick a topic that will be helpful to advance your career path. If your goal is an academic career, pick a topic that you can easily modify into journal articles or a book, and that will lend itself well to future research. If you want to work at a teaching oriented institution, consider a topic you can use in the classroom. If you are going into industry, choose a topic that will make you more marketable.
- **Has reliable data to analyze (or collect)** - it is "do-able" in 1-2 year's time - Pick a manageable topic. A dissertation is a significant project but not a life's work. A good advisor will help you narrow down your topic so that you don't remain in graduate school for many long years.

A topic that's too small will have you scrambling to repeat or increase your data collection. A topic that's too large will have you struggling to complete it all in the first place. A topic that is "just right" will be one that you can complete within a year or two (max)- anything bigger than this, and your topic would be better suited to your post-graduation efforts. The Goldilocks Test. To ascertain if your topic passes the "just right" test, use these three methods:

(1) Read previously published studies and compare/contrast those methods to the one(s) you're considering. You can make a contribution to the literature by taking an existing study and repeating it with a larger sample OR repeating it with a different sample and your own addition.

If you find a study that seems interesting, find a way to extend or replicate it so it's an original contribution. Building on a previous study will keep you from having to start from scratch.

(2) Draft a rough outline of what your proposed study would involve. If you have a set of hypothesis, ask yourself what it would take (most likely) to find the outcomes you seek. If the process of finding the outcomes feels workable and clear, this project might be just the right size.

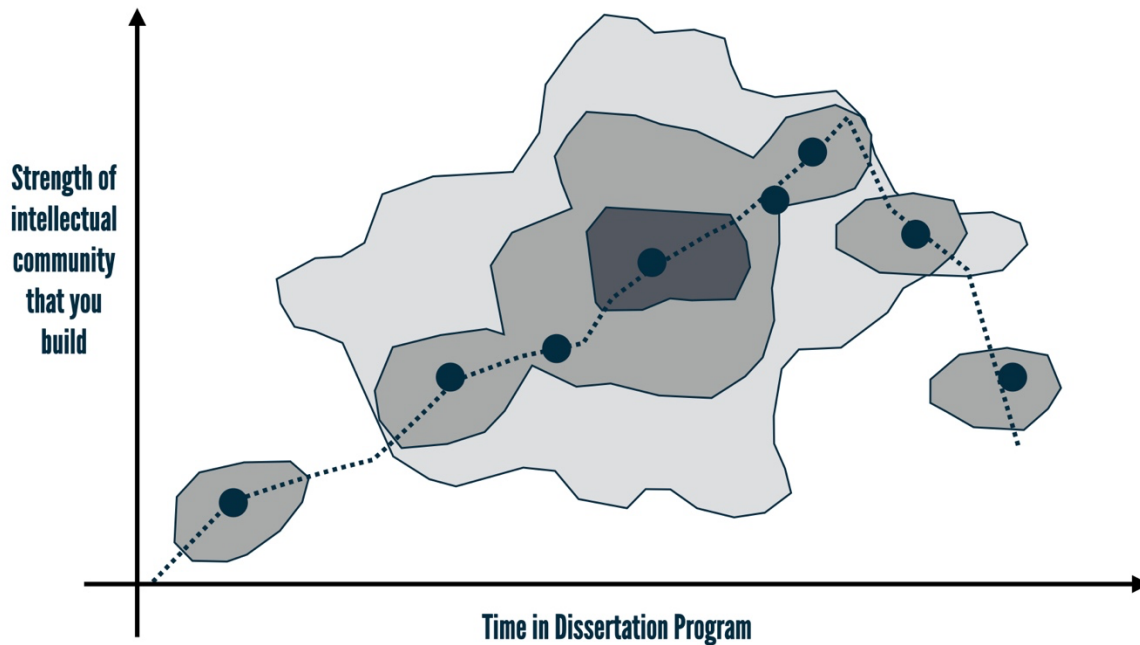
(3) Test how you feel when you think about the topic. Too often, graduate students ignore their felt/intuitive sense that a topic is too big. Here's a hint: your topic should feel good, manageable, and exciting to pursue. If you keep thinking that the topic doesn't feel good, isn't really manageable, but will impress the heck out of your advisor- this is probably not a reasonable dissertation topic to pursue...especially if your advisor expects you to work very independently.

- **Is important and cutting edge for policy purposes** - Find a topic that establishes your niche in your field. Do your research and find a topic that fits into existing bodies of literature, but that builds upon theory and expands it. Choose research that is unique. Do significant research to make sure this topic has not been done before. Be creative and choose an idea that stands out from the pack as original and innovative.

Think carefully before you choose a controversial topic. Academics are a sensitive lot, and in every field there are certain topics and positions that will send highly educated people into intellectual temper tantrums. This doesn't mean you should avoid topics that push people's buttons. However, if you choose a controversial topic, think carefully about whether it might restrict your employment, tenure, or publishing opportunities.

Secondary criteria

- **Overlaps well with research or analysis being pursued by your advisor** - Pick something your advisor finds interesting and is knowledgeable about. Of course, if this is not possible, you might want to change your advisor instead of changing your topic.
- **Weaves together different disciplines** ...is versatile and appealing on multiple fronts or lends itself to compelling research designs. Showcases topical, analytical, or other prowess.
- **Something you know about** - Pick a topic that you already have some expertise about. This will help preserve your sanity and get you out the door faster. This isn't the time to explore a brand new area. Along the way, take coursework and write class papers that will help you write your dissertation or thesis.
- **Read other dissertations on your chosen topic** - As you are clarifying your chosen dissertation topic, be sure to read other dissertations about your general topic area. This helps you accomplish two things. First, you better understand the questions being asked and research being completed in your topic area, which can help you define your questions and refine your research methodology. Second, you begin to develop a stronger understanding of the structural foundations of a dissertation and how it comes together. The more you know about other dissertations, the easier it will be to complete yours. Third, find out what other winners of the Barclay Gibbs Jones award did. You can read their papers to do this and don't need to track down their entire dissertation.



Surrounding yourself with a strong intellectual community should be expected. It hopefully builds to its height as you prepare for your dissertation, then it might tail off. That is natural.

- **Use previous work to guide you** - When deciding on a dissertation topic, you can build momentum and get ahead quickly by building up on your previous work. Hopefully, your graduate program was set up to provide you assignments which incrementally move you towards picking a dissertation topic. If so, you probably have a body of work that you can refer to for guidance. If not, you'll need to do some detective work on your own. Take each of your major papers and figure out what, if any, themes are in common or what you enjoyed about working on each one. Figure out what topics/themes you might like to explore further. You can take existing work and push it further- using, perhaps, a different study design, a different population or group, a different set of data, adding a longitudinal piece, using a different instrument, analyzing different parameters- all of these would provide a good basis for extending existing research/work into a new, original, contribution. If you're just starting the dissertation process, pick a topic that's right for you, the right size, and which feels doable in a year or two. If you pay attention to these factors at the start, you're more likely to finish when you plan to.

In sum: first, think about where your studies and interests have led you so far. Then you want to think about what you would really, really like to know about. Jot the answers to these questions down. Look to construct a topic based on your interests and previous work. Then start to craft a possible avenue for studying it. If it's too big, cut it down here. It's easier to make it manageable early on.

What is a dissertation?

- "expand rather than alter the thinking of a field"
- "leap into new territory"
- "transfer of ideas from place to place?"
- "solid and well written"
- "displays a richness of thought and insight and makes an important breakthrough?"

My own take is that a dissertation has the following characteristics:

1. is your own work

2. invokes and is placed in the context of existing theory on the topic
3. is an original analysis of data (though the data need not be original)
4. has a substantive literature review component
5. placed in the context of a research design
6. makes more than a dent in the existing literature and knowledge about a subject
7. addresses something important and is the right scope

What do I need to know about my defending my dissertation proposal

“Put the footnotes at the foot of the page, not at the end of the document. It helps your committee read them, thereby gaining confidence that you’ve thought through all the details.”

--Joe Schofer

1. The purpose of the proposal is to convince your committee (and a general academic audience) that there is a tractable question which is worth pursuing and that *you are now in position to do a good job of pursuing it*.
2. Therefore, the proposal should demonstrate that you:
 - have defined and delimited an interesting research question(s)
 - can explain the importance of the question to a reasonably bright “passerby” not intimately familiar with the topic
 - have data already assembled or a plan to collect data that will allow you to answer the research question.
 - have a detailed **plan** for testing the most promising hypotheses (either formal or informal)
3. You do not have to read everything that was ever written about anything that might conceivably be relevant to a full understanding of the phenomenon you are interested in addressing before you write the proposal, but you do need to be intimately familiar with material that you know is germane to your approach to the problem. You are expected to have already done this.
4. Whether your proposal contains a Literature Survey summarizing the history of relevant research on your topic, and if so, how extensive it must be, should be settled early between you and your advisor. In any case, you should **situate** your proposed dissertation within the context of what is known and/or generally believed about the phenomena you will investigate, and you should discuss both the lasting contributions and the shortcomings of previous research.
5. Do not attempt to satisfy (2a-d) by doing the dissertation research before you write the proposal. If you do, you will be treating your hypotheses like conclusions, and your prelim will turn into a defense of those propositions. Since that is the role of the dissertation defense, scheduled after a year or so of testing, writing, reviewing, revising, retesting, and rewriting, you can expect to fail if you try to do it at this point. A proposal is supposed to describe what you **propose** to do, and why and how you propose to do it (though, having proof of concept work already done is fully appropriate).
6. Questions your proposal should answer **directly**:
 - What **problem** are you going to tackle? ...and Why is it a problem?
 - Why is it important to solve it?
 - Where are you going to **look** for answers?
 - What type of research design is appropriate?
 - Why are you going to look there?
 - What type of analysis will allow you to answer the questions in a compelling manner?

Nothing in any of the above implies any particular structural format that a dissertation proposal must have. When you plan your proposal, it should be with the purpose of the proposal (as indicated above) in mind. For each section, it should be transparently clear what that section has to with which purpose.

It is not enough to say what you believe to be true. You need to be clear and explicit about how your (tentative) conclusions follow from the assumptions you make, and then make a big deal of them.

Wolf-strong Research Design

“Learn how to pose questions and fashion scholarly research. Make valid descriptive and causal inferences. Occupy a middle ground between abstract philosophical debates and the hands-on techniques of the researcher. Focus on the essential logic underlying all social scientific research.”

--Tony Gill and Peter May

In a traditional format, there are five core elements to an above-average city planning dissertation:

- (1) policy relevance,
- (2) quality data,
- (3) aptly constructed concepts,
- (4) carefully chosen and employed analytical methods,
- (5) strong (but not overreaching) conclusions, and
- (6) a well-thought through research design.

It is asking a lot to score exceptionally high on all categories. Yet, if some of the categories are “meh” there is high probability that a strategically constructed research design *can still* compensate to provide keen insights and both internal and external validity.

A weak research design can be likened to your inquiry not being able to withstand the blow of a wolf. It’s made of straw. A stronger research design possibly is made of sticks. It still can be blown over.

But how can a research design be made of brick, and therefore be able to withstand the strong blow of a wolf? Imagine that the wolf is always whispering in your ear, playing the devil’s advocate role. She is continually questioning your assertions. She is asking you whether your research design allows you to make those conclusions?

All research designs usually break down into four components: the research question, the theory, the data, and the use of the data. the elements in your research comport with one another (data, questions, design) to advance the social character of science? It’s a moving target, for sure, but there’s an opportunity to be mindful of your decisions affect the logic of inference.

These components are not usually developed separately and scholars do not attend to them in any preordained order. In fact, for qualitative researchers who begin their field work before choosing a precise research question, data comes first, followed by the others. The title, *Designing Social Inquiry* by KKV, provides valuable insights in this respect.

KKV suggests ways of laying out building blocks to further good causal theories—that can be falsifiable, have internal consistency (generate hypotheses that do not contradict each other), contain variation (explanatory variables should be exogenous and dependent variables should be endogenous), measure “concrete” concepts (concepts should be observable), and have “leverage” (the theory should explain much by little).

This means guarding against a tendency to “string” along assorted inquiries in ways that produce disparate results that lack the ability to draw stronger inference and therefore, stronger arguments. Why are you choosing those people to interview? Are you falling into a trap of selecting cases based on your dependent variable? Are there elements that can be borrowed from the lineage of quasi-experimental approaches? In particular, qualitative (i.e., process and why) questions can be bolstered by weaving in elements that creative thinking about research design allows.

Getting Published in Academic Journals -----

Getting Ready – Set up Paper Writing as a Routine Activity

- Establish a **daily writing schedule**, even if only 30 minutes a day, and stick to it. Avoid binge-writing. Research shows that regular writers are much more productive over the long term.
- **Present your research** at academic conferences or at campus venues. Such commitments help impose writing deadlines. Preparing an oral presentation forces you to distill arguments into key points and central narratives.
- Seek out multiple ways to **get critical comments** on your written drafts. Create or join a small writing group to exchange drafts and comments. Join a workshop on your topic. Get faculty to read and comment on papers. Follow-up with course instructors on class papers.
- **Rewriting is normal, and necessary.** Many papers are re-written three, four or more times.
- Encourage feedback from everyone, but also **learn to evaluate feedback.** Take suggestions that make sense seriously, put aside suggestions outside the scope of the project, and ignore advice with which you fundamentally disagree. (Do a reality check, though – is the advice really wrong, or do you just want to ignore it because it is dead-on, difficult or otherwise disconcerting?)

Deciding to Submit to a Journal, and Choosing a Journal

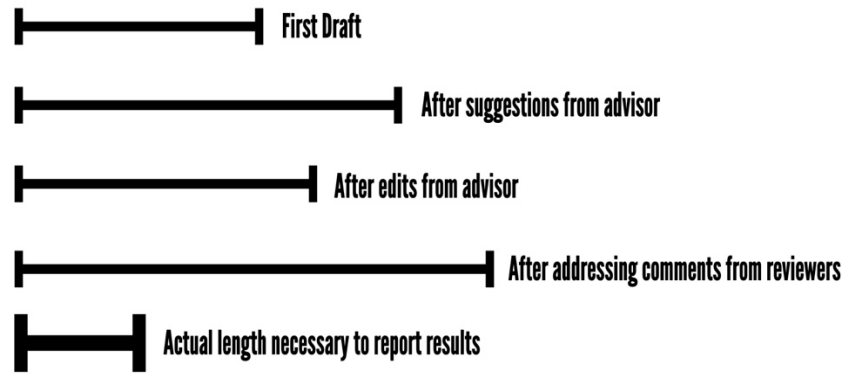
- By the third or fourth draft, if you think (or a faculty member thinks) that the paper is in decent shape, **send it off!** Don't wait for it to be "perfect" – it never will be.
- **Aim for a better journal**—a top one in your discipline or sub-field. Don't go with the "easy" lower-tier journal just to get a line in your CV. Placement matters—more people will read your work and 'rewards' (such as job offers and promotion) are better. Reviews tend to be of higher quality, too.
 - Look at the journals you cite to identify possible publication venues. Where do the top people in your field publish? Check with faculty and colleagues for ideas. Look at the "impact" scores of which journals get more citations.
- Pick up a recent copy of the journal or look online to **follow guidelines on how to submit** the article, e.g. number of copies, format (hardcopy or electronic), style guidelines, etc.
- Write a **short cover letter** with your submission indicating what sorts of people might be well-suited to review your work (e.g. specific sub-fields or methods). You can also indicate who should not review your work (and why). Editors can ignore or follow your recommendations.
- **Send it off and be prepared to wait 3 to 6 months.** Most journals will send a manuscript to 2-4 reviewers. Sometimes you can track the progress of the review electronically; other times you wait for a letter. If you hear nothing after four months, you can send a polite email asking about the status of your submission.

• **Understanding editors' letters and reviews can be an art form.** Get help.

- **Submissions can be:** (1) rejected outright; (2) rejected with an invitation to resubmit a substantially new version; (3) given a "revise and resubmit" at various levels of enthusiasm; (4) accepted, conditional on minor changes; or (5) accepted outright [this almost never happens].

- (1) **outright rejection** – the journal will not publish the article; you cannot resubmit it to the journal.
 - If this happens, take heart: most journals reject over half of all submission, and many reject 90% of everything sent to them; you are not alone.
 - Look at the reviews and evaluate them honestly. Ask for advice. Depending on your time line and investment in the project, decide how much to revise, and then send it to a new journal.
- (2) **reject, with invitation to resubmit** – the article is rejected, but you may resubmit a thorough revision (as a new submission) to the same journal.
 - Follow the same process as above. Depending on your time line and investment in the project, do a thorough overhaul and resubmit to the same journal, or send it elsewhere.
- (3) **"revise and re-submit" [R & R]** – the reviewers found merit in your submission, and feel it could be published, but only after revisions; publication is not guaranteed – your revised submission will be reviewed again by some of the original reviewers, new reviewers, or a mix of the two.
 - *Congratulations!* Outright acceptance is extremely rare – you have a chance to get published! Depending on the journal, about half of resubmitted articles get published. (Many are never re-submitted; don't let that happen to you!)
 - Evaluate the review, with help. Some editors will signal the extent of revisions needed (and chances of publication) by requesting "major revisions" or "modest changes." They might indicate which reviews they weigh more heavily. Pay attention to such signals.
 - Separate criticism into major, moderate and minor. Try to do all minor changes (e.g. adding references, modifying tables, etc.) Decide which major and moderate revisions make sense and which seem wrong or beside the point. Evaluate every suggestion.
 - Rewrite, taking into account all suggestions that have merit. (This might mean doing more data collection, new modeling and reading new literatures.)
 - Where you disagree with reviewers' suggestions, write out a short argument why. If reviewers are out to lunch or miss the point, how can you re-word or re-frame your work to avoid such confusion? If the reviewers contradict each other or you envision serious problems in addressing the reviews, you can contact the editor for clarification.
 - Write a response memo to the editor and reviewers outlining what you did for *each* comment from all reviewers. Get one or two experienced writers to look over the memo.
 - Resubmit the article, with the response to reviewers. Wait another 3-6 months.
 - If you are rejected after an "R&R," evaluate the reviews, make worthwhile, easy changes, and send it off again, perhaps to a more specialized journal or a slightly less prestigious one. However, if you think it is a good paper, try for a good journal again. *Remember, a lot of the review process is arbitrary*; much depends on the editor and the reviewers selected.
- (4) **accepted, conditional on minor changes** – the article will be published, as long as you do the minor change requested. Congratulations! Acceptance is extremely rare. This is great news.
 - Make any revisions, if suggested. If some can't be done, write a note to the editor explaining why. Send in the revised paper and a short "response to reviewers" memo outlining changes.
 - Depending on the journal, you will have one chance to check proofs for errors from the editorial process. Do this. The editors usually don't introduce errors, you do. But they don't catch all of yours from the first time around.

- Wait for publication – it could take 9-24 months (including copy and proof editing).



The paper review process can be tedious. Recognize this fact, publish useful science and move on.

Research Monograph vs. 3-Article Type of Approach

"Getting [your dissertation] finished is an important step on your path. Doing it as efficiently as possible will enable you to start making a difference in the world all the sooner."

--Ann Forsyth

Should it be available to you, the decision of research monograph or 3-articles, is a personal one. It feeds how you present yourself in an interview. It encourages certain types of questions over other ones.

Common themes of the 3-article approach:

Each essay is more tightly argued than the whole of a dissertation. Each essay could represent a potential journal article and is said to be a more efficient step to a scholarly career. (However, a well conceptualized and wholistic dissertation can provide just as much, if not more fodder; my own dissertation turned into 6 articles). The longer length and multiple chapters of a full dissertation enable more extended and multifaceted arguments.

Against the 3 article approach:

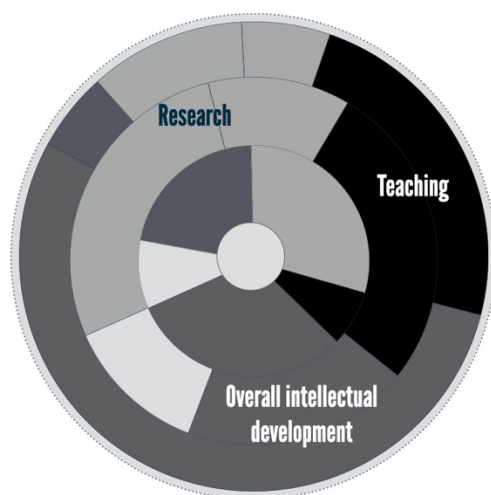
The essays are sometimes redundant (explaining the same data source or same theory). The total length of three essays is usually 2/3 or 1/2 a whole dissertation. The short length of essays is dictated by the length of journal requirements for article submissions and thus preclude in-depth exploration, although there is nothing to say that essays couldn't be required to be a minimum of, say, 70 pages.

Against the research monograph:

A traditional full-length dissertation is harder to do, provides more room to flounder, and sometimes ends up as a wasteful exercise

Students will seek an easier path and once precedent is set the 3-essay version can be contagious

Should there be merits to the 3-essay format (which I am sure there are), it is likely best to establish and reinforce guidelines to guard against the weaknesses that accompany the advantages.



Expect that skills in a PhD program will be learned and segmented in different years of the program. The start may be the center and the 4th year might be the outer ring, focusing more on overall development. Not drawn to scale.

Process for Getting a Tenure Track Job in Academia?

Initial Assumptions:

You want tenure-track faculty position

You are primarily interested in a research university

You are close (within < 1 year) to finishing your PhD

BROAD Process Outline:

Identify schools

Send applications (nov-jan)

Hopefully interview (feb-april)

Get an offer and hopefully decide

When Should You Finish Your Thesis?

Identify schools Jun - Nov

Send out applications Dec – Jan (Finish thesis?)

Interview Feb – Apr (Finish thesis?)

Decide, negotiate May – Jun (Finish thesis!!!)

Some Obvious Bits about Preparing a Strategy

Check dept web sites and standard locations for job postings; ask advisor

For planning: ACSP website

Make a list of target schools (5-20); check who is available

Make sure each target will consider your application

Cost of an application: time + your ego in getting rejected

Who is Hiring?

Lack of an ad DOES NOT EQUAL a lack hiring

How are ads written and prepared?

Probe around at conferences...esp ACSP

Hopefully sure someone at school is expecting your application (having a a champion is really helpful).

Which Schools to Target?

Reputation in your area counts

Unique opportunities (resources, collaborations, centers/big projects)

Are there colleagues in your area?

Will you be an “only child”? Is there an established program?

Is there someone senior in your area?

Department size and spirit of collegiality

Location: you, spouse/kids, students

State vs private school

Who controls the purse-strings?

How selective; student quality?

State-level initiatives, funding opportunities

What is going to be expected to apply?

curriculum vitae (CV)...your primary currency until the interview

research statement

teaching statement

3-5 letters of reference (or ID of them)

Research Statement

What do you care about? Why?

What have YOU accomplished?

What will you do next? (plans)

Why is this school the right place?

Hints on Research Stmt

Showcase your communication skills! Write this 15 times!

Be sure to describe in detail your ~3 yr plan.

2 pages is good. No one wants to read more than that.

Localization: show knowledge of target school

Indicate any prior contacts or relationship with faculty at target school

Teaching Statement

What do you expect to teach?

What type of teaching experience do you have. Be specific

Teaching philosophy...good to have ironed out

Plans for new or unusual courses

Teaching Statement FAQs

It matters a lot, especially if you are interviewing at a teaching oriented university. Mention interest in or experience with teaching online. This is growing. Also, mention teaching undergrads/grads and mentoring. At a research university, research counts more

What if I haven't taught before?

Mention TA or related experience, if any

Show ability to communicate, to plan curriculum and make assignments

Letters

Advisor

Other faculty (preferably well known; groom these in advance through networking)

External collaborators

What Matters

Letter-writers must evaluate your research contribution and potential

They must know you well (think *now*: who would they be?)

Ask early, remind often

Interview expectations (see next chapter)

Interview Mechanics

Get invited

Give colloquium about your work

Meet with individual faculty

Be wined and dined (socialize). But keep in mind, this experience may or may not be with faculty. I was left on the street corner in an interview, abandoned by the search committee, and ended up eating fast-food by myself.

Interview Logistics

Finances: likely need to float plane tickets, car rental, possibly hotel

Dates: don't put first choice first! Try to schedule strategically

Intelligence: who is there? (schedule usually given @ last minute...its ok)

The Talk (~50 min)

Practice a lot – delivery matters, see later.

Plan on practicing to an audience more than once. If a new talk, 3+ times with comments at a minimum.

Know your audience

Show you have a research program (imp. for grants, “trajectory”)

Have a 5-minute version of it and a 3 minute version and a 1 minute version of it.

Five Prepared Questions

What’s next project you’ll do after wrapping up your thesis work?

Who are your likely funding sources?

What do you want to teach?

Who are your potential collaborators?

Why did you apply here?

“Future Work”

How to deal with:

Second visits

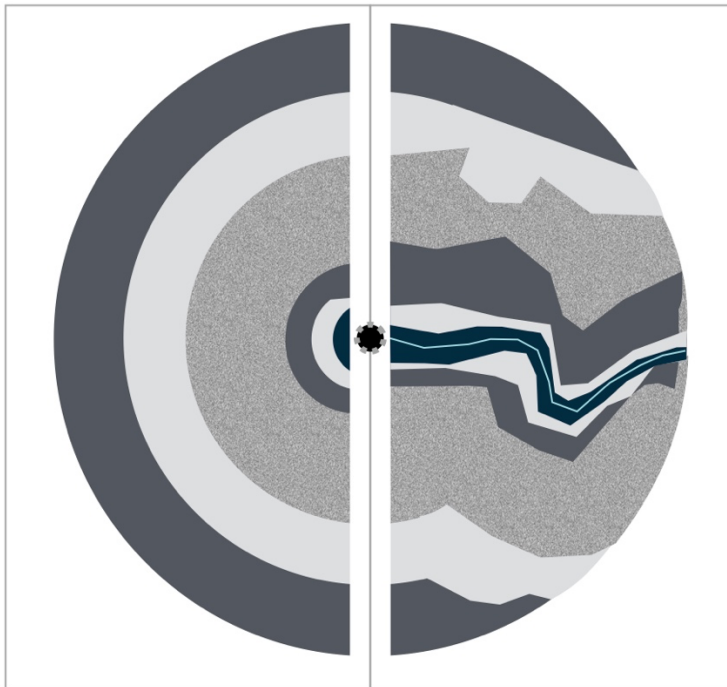
Making a decision

Negotiating an offer

Joint Appointments

Position may be offered by two departments (or a research institution)

What would be your responsibilities to each entity? Who would decide your tenure?



Your plan versus what hopefully results from your plan

What is necessary to think about and communicate as part of an interview?

“Know who you are going into the interview process. Know that you have much to offer. Be true to yourself, your identity, your methods, your expertise, and your passion for your work.”

--Carissa Schively Slotterback

Know thyself, know thy material, know thy audience

Communicate that you have a mission burning in your heart. Say how you will take valiant strides to address their mission, not yours. Know your brand. Build your brand (e.g., represent it on a website). Market your brand through all the elements of the interview. Knowing who you are and what is unique about how you see yourself as an academic is critical. It helps them see what you can uniquely contribute to the school.

Do you have a strong sense of your own work, both teaching and research, and how it fits into the urban planning profession? What is your marked advantage? Talk in terms for a general scholarly audience. Avoid sub-specialty jargon! Can you hold a conversation with someone outside of your research area?

Preparing

You’ve already had your CV and statements read by many before applying. They have to be perfect. Then, know your research elevator talk. Know your teaching repertoire. If you think you can teach everything, they will conclude that you can teach and research nothing. Get someone to coach you on questions that you will ask and will be asked of you. If a candidate doesn’t ask anything they look like a dud. Ask about tenure expectations, grad student support, what conferences faculty attend, work culture (e.g. are people around in the summer? Do people work at the office or from home?), and connections with practice/work in the field. Grad students can provide insights, here.

Be sure to have a clear sense as to what is expected at the talk—not just research, but also the teaching talk (if there is one). Describe well how you would teach, etc. Focus on your work, not the literature you read. Anticipate additional questions and have slides ready to make those points. The job talk is the only chance candidates have to show nearly all the faculty your work. Most faculty will not be part of the interview, dinners or individual meetings.

Have back-ups for everything--slides, power, computers, etc. Expect something will go wrong.

Managing your demeanor

Act like a colleague. Not like a supplicate. Do you know how to be comfortable within your skin? Do you know how to present yourself as being great without being arrogant? Do you have your own ideas? Are you able to express them as someone who knows what they think and is willing to do the work for, while recognizing the context. Don’t demean what they do. They know what their problems are. They don’t need you to remind them of such.

Gently inquire about support for teaching (stipends for guests, cash for field trips, etc.). The schools want the interviewees to work out; they are also trying to sell the school to you.

Learn something interesting about the school, the colleagues, their approach to research and teaching. Inventory it. Organize it. Share it. Be inspired by it.