

Career Paths in Psychology

**WHERE YOUR DEGREE
CAN TAKE YOU**

THIRD EDITION

Edited by

ROBERT J. STERNBERG

American Psychological Association • *Washington, DC*

Copyright © 2017 by the American Psychological Association. All rights reserved. Except as permitted under the United States Copyright Act of 1976, no part of this publication may be reproduced or distributed in any form or by any means, including, but not limited to, the process of scanning and digitization, or stored in a database or retrieval system, without the prior written permission of the publisher.

Chapters 27 and 30 were authored by employees of the United States government as part of official duty and are considered to be in the public domain.

Published by
American Psychological Association
750 First Street, NE
Washington, DC 20002
www.apa.org

To order
APA Order Department
P.O. Box 92984
Washington, DC 20090-2984
Tel: (800) 374-2721; Direct: (202) 336-5510
Fax: (202) 336-5502; TDD/TTY: (202) 336-6123
Online: www.apa.org/pubs/books
E-mail: order@apa.org

In the U.K., Europe, Africa, and the Middle East, copies may be ordered from
American Psychological Association
3 Henrietta Street
Covent Garden, London
WC2E 8LU England

Typeset in Meridien by Circle Graphics, Inc., Columbia, MD

Printer: Edwards Brothers, Inc., Lillington, NC
Cover Designer: Naylor Design, Washington, DC

The opinions and statements published are the responsibility of the authors, and such opinions and statements do not necessarily represent the policies of the American Psychological Association. Any views expressed in Chapters 27 and 30 do not necessarily represent the views of the United States government, and the authors' participation in the work is not meant to serve as an official endorsement.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Sternberg, Robert J., editor.
Title: Career paths in psychology : where your degree can take you / edited
by Robert J. Sternberg.
Description: Third edition. | Washington, DC : American Psychological
Association, [2017] | Includes bibliographical references and index.
Identifiers: LCCN 2016011718 | ISBN 9781433823107 | ISBN 1433823101
Subjects: LCSH: Psychology--Vocational guidance.
Classification: LCC BF76 .C38 2017 | DDC 150.23/73--dc23
LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2016011718>

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

A CIP record is available from the British Library.

Printed in the United States of America
Third Edition

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/15960-000>

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2

Psychologists in Schools of Public Policy

7

What is government itself, but the greatest of all reflections
on human nature?

—James Madison, *The Federalist Papers*, Number 51

As James Madison foreshadowed, a career as a psychologist in a school of public policy provides magnificent opportunities to develop fundamental knowledge about human nature. Moreover, it provides opportunities to use such knowledge when informing solutions to challenging public problems, and when teaching a diverse set of well-intentioned students.

Jennifer S. Lerner, PhD, is professor of management, leadership, and decision science at Harvard University in the Harvard Kennedy School of Government. She received her BA from the University of Michigan (Highest Honors in Psychology), and then her master's and doctoral degrees in psychology from the University of California at Berkeley. After completing an NIH postdoctoral fellowship in the Psychology Department at UCLA (emphasizing psychoneuroendocrine systems), she was assistant professor and later the Estella Loomis McCandless Associate Professor in the Department of Social and Decision Sciences at Carnegie Mellon University. In 2007 she became the first psychologist in the history of the Harvard Kennedy School to receive tenure.

I thank Susan Fiske for providing helpful comments on this chapter. I also thank Dacher Keltner, Phil Tetlock, and Shelley Taylor—three brilliant mentors, with whom I have been so fortunate to work.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/15960-008>

Career Paths in Psychology: Where Your Degree Can Take You, Third Edition,
R. J. Sternberg (Editor)

Copyright © 2017 by the American Psychological Association. All rights reserved.

Specifically, I teach four kinds of students: undergraduate¹ and master's students, who idealistically seek to understand psychological science so they can (at least in some small way) make the world a better place; doctoral students who seek to become scholars of public policy; and executive-level students who come for short stints to find new ideas (yours!) for solving pressing public problems. Contrary to my expectations, my favorite students fall in the last category, for two reasons. First, I learn the most from them. Considering myself a student of decision theory, high-stakes decision makers have much to teach me. A second reason I especially love teaching executive-level students is that they often directly translate what they learn in our classes into institutionalized practices. Jumping to the bottom line, I adore this job and daily feel grateful to hold it.

The Nature of the Career

The job as a psychologist in public policy is not without pressure, however. Despite the supposed comfort of having tenure, I feel more compelled than ever to ensure that our science is accurate, reliable, novel, and meaningful. Global leaders act on what they learn in our classes. In the past 8 years, my executive students have included such participants as three-star army generals, members of royalty, U.S. Navy Seals, mayors, police chiefs, members of parliament, city council members, private sector chief executives officers (CEOs), presidents of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), intelligence agents, counterterrorism agents, pharmaceutical executives, attorneys, physicians, and more professionals whose work intersects in some way with public purposes.² This job is not for the meek. One needs to love the challenge of proving that psychology is useful and not just interesting, even when audiences are skeptical about the value of psychology.

This last point highlights a contrast between teaching in a school of public policy and teaching in a psychology department or even in an interdisciplinary undergraduate department like the Department of Social and Decision Sciences at Carnegie Mellon. Whereas students in my psychology sections at UC Berkeley and students in my Decision

¹My own university does not offer a full undergraduate major or concentration in public policy, but a few schools do (e.g., Princeton's Woodrow Wilson School and Carnegie Mellon's College of Humanities and Social Sciences). I teach advanced undergraduates when they enroll, with special permission, in my master's level courses.

²Of course, such experiences reflect my own career, and each career will be somewhat different. Part of the excitement is that one never knows whom one will meet next.

Science classes at Carnegie Mellon all entered my classes with a reasonably positive expectation about learning psychology, the students who enter my classes at the Kennedy School of Government tend to enter with some skepticism about whether someone with a psychology PhD has anything useful to teach them. More often than I would like, students' only concept of psychology revolves around therapy for mental illness. I myself interpret this narrow understanding as a positive challenge and I believe that psychological science can deliver on its promise to improve human health and well-being, ranging from individual to global levels of analysis. I love it when executive-level students in class say variations on "This is cool—why haven't I ever heard of this before?" or "I had no idea that psychology included this stuff." Indeed, at the executive level, most students have not taken a psychology class in the past 15 years, if at all. They are astounded to know that modern academic psychology uses an experimental method for hypothesis testing akin to the randomized-control-trial paradigms with which they are familiar from medication trials. Such aha moments come frequently among students in this environment, triggering transient states of professorial heaven for me. Beyond these transient states, I carry with me a sense of hope that through a classroom of emerging global leaders I might make a contribution, albeit a small one, to the quality and stability of democratic governments around the world. To quote the Kennedy School's outgoing dean, David Ellwood, the Scott M. Black Professor of Political Economy,

We live in times of great cynicism regarding the ability of our public institutions to perform, but the best antidote to that cynicism is our inspirational students and our astonishing graduates. The best source of hope for the future is these remarkable individuals and the ideas that they carry forward. (personal communication, June 30, 2015)

You may wonder why, if this is such a wonderful career path, you have not heard of it before. The answer may lie in the fact that having tenure-track positions for psychologists in schools of public policy is a relatively new phenomenon.³ The major prevailing disciplines in both policy research and practice have been economics, political science, sociology, physics, and history. Take the executive branch of government as an example. Notice that U.S. presidents have long consulted their key

³To the best of my knowledge, Princeton's Woodrow Wilson School ranks first in tenure-track positions for psychologists. They presently have seven jointly appointed tenure track faculty who split time between the psychology department and the Woodrow Wilson School. At other schools, like the Harvard Kennedy School and Berkeley's Goldman School of Public Policy, a small number of tenure-track appointments for psychologists reside fully in the policy school and the faculty holding them sometimes also hold courtesy appointments in the psychology department at their respective institution.

advisors from these disciplines. Presidents routinely draw insights from academic economists who serve as the secretary of the U.S. Treasury, chairs of the Federal Reserve, or as members of the Council of Economic Advisors. They may draw on academic political scientists to serve as secretaries of state or political advisors. They may draw on academic physicists who serve as science advisor to the president and members of the White House Office of Science and Technology, and so on. U.S. presidents have rarely if ever appointed an academic psychologist to an inner-circle position. Presently, the congressional branch of government hardly provides a brighter picture for these roles, and nor does the judicial branch.

But times are changing. Several U.S. universities now actively recruit psychologists to their schools of public policy. Leading the path in terms of numbers appears to be Harvard, Princeton, and UC Berkeley. Although I cannot isolate the impetus for this change without dates, I believe it arises from two interrelated factors. First, the field of economics—the historically dominant field in public policy—has witnessed the growth of a hybrid field called behavioral economics. This new hybrid field combines traditional neoclassical microeconomic theory, which provides prescriptions about how one should make judgments and decisions, with modern scientific psychology, which provides descriptions about how people actually make judgments and decisions. Thus, behavioral economics draws on psychology to provide a more realistic portrait of human behavior, which can make economic models more accurate. It is possible, for example, that the economic crash of 2008 might have been lessened or even prevented if economic models used in financial markets allowed for more behaviorally realistic assumptions to be incorporated.

The second factor responsible for opening the field of public policy to psychologists may simply be a tipping point in recognizing that society's most pressing goals—enhancing physical and mental health, lengthening life, reducing illness and disability, reducing violence, increasing economic growth, and increasing social harmony domestically and internationally—all involve psychology. In this age of exponential technological growth, human beings may become either the key limiting factor or the key catalyst depending on how well we understand and leverage human capacity.

Times may be changing even faster abroad. Opportunities in Europe and in Australia arise from the key role behavioral sciences as a whole (e.g., psychology, economics, sociology, anthropology) play in government. In the United Kingdom, members of a Behavioural Insights Team (also known as the Nudge Unit)—composed of academic psychologists, behavioral economists, and social anthropologists—were the first to hold cabinet-level positions, reporting directly to the prime minister. In this capacity, they conducted numerous randomized controlled trials

in social innovation that resulted in such successes as increasing the rate of income tax payments, reducing energy use, and increasing rates of organ donation. A useful summary of this approach and a vision for how psychology might inform policy in the future appears in Cass Sunstein's *Annual Review of Psychology* paper, entitled "The Council of Psychological Advisors" (2016). This review does not represent the full set of possible futures for psychology and public policy, but it is one exciting example of success.

The Kinds of Activities in Which Professionals in the Career Engage

Psychologists in public policy participate in most of the same activities outlined in the chapters on being a professor in a psychology department or in a business school. That is, these psychologists design courses, teach, create and grade exams, meet with students during office hours, conduct research and supervise students who are conducting research within their research group, maintain a research lab, write letters of reference for students and colleagues, attend faculty meetings and committee meetings at both the school and at the university level, communicate with other scholars who share similar research or teaching interests, attend and present research at professional conferences, write scholarly papers for psychology journals, painstakingly revise scholarly papers, review and evaluate submissions to scholarly journals for potential publication, consult with outside organizations when their expertise is requested, disseminate research findings through major media outlets (television, radio, etc.), and perform pro bono community service. For efficiency, I will not duplicate descriptions of what all these activities involve.

Instead, I will elaborate on some of the additional activities that are relatively unique to conducting research and teaching in a policy school. First, as mentioned, I regularly engage with practitioners—that is, professionals involved in promoting the public good—and the public outside of normal teaching and research settings. For example, I occasionally write an op-ed column for a newspaper on a matter of public interest. I occasionally consult for the United Nations about how to institutionalize better decision environments within their global workforce. I also occasionally consult for or teach in a variety of other public and private sector organizations whose objectives serve the public good. For example, I have consulted for the U.S. Army's Special Forces Airborne

Units (Green Berets), who requested that I provide training on the science of judgment and decision making. I asked for clarification when I first received the call requesting *science* and learned that science was indeed what they wanted. Approximately 90 Green Berets, all of whom can swim the length of an Olympic pool in full combat gear and boots while carrying out, say, a hostage rescue mission sat still for an entire day of classroom-based decision exercises and participatory lectures involving complex graphs, diagrams, and discussion. They asked intelligent questions and offered key insights, which I have learned to expect from interactions with elite-level government and military individuals around the world.

An additional difference between working in a business school and working in a policy school is that policy schools lack funding and therefore require their faculty to write grant proposals to fund research. Our alumni do not typically become investment bankers or CEOs. They become researchers in nonprofit organizations, civil servants, heads of NGOs, elected politicians, foreign diplomats, military officers, and so on. Few of these occupations pay at a level that would allow for million dollar donations to the school. In fact, the Kennedy School receives most of its donations from citizens who never attended the school but simply see us as a source for growing the leaders needed to build smart democratic institutions around the world. The upside is that I can point to individual alumni around the world, such as the head of the United Nations, the president of Liberia, the former president of Mexico, mayors, and members of congress, and know that they all received their respective educations at the Kennedy School. The downside is that I had to spend a large amount of time writing grant proposals to the National Science Foundation, the National Institutes of Health, and to a few select foundations. In a school of business, research funding often is provided without the need to find this outside support.

A Typical Day in the Career

I first note that it is indeed possible to have a productive, joyful life outside of work if you make strategic choices, outsource tasks, and streamline strategically. Thus, before I arrive at the office, I have had breakfast with my husband, my daughter, and even my dog. On good days, I have gone to the gym. To find time for this, I delegate as much as I can, typically by using federal grant funding to hire inexpensive help from undergraduates. They are resourceful, smart, and eager to learn skills they do not yet possess. They play large roles in my laboratory research and in my teaching.

Having a chronic disease (Systemic Lupus Erythematosus) since I was a child, I also spend a lot of time seeking medical care and figuring out novel ways to work when I experience such conditions as spinal fractures and nerve inflammation. I add this personal information so that readers will know that you do not have to be a super person with unusual levels of energy to pursue this career.

Once at the office, my typical day begins with reading e-mail, catching up with messages from students, collaborators, committees, journals who would like me to review a paper, administrative deadlines, and so forth. On a good day, at least one novel message appears. Recently, for example, one of my former executive-level students wrote to say that he has been promoted from his former position in the National Center for Counterterrorism (the primary organization in the U.S. government for integrating and analyzing all intelligence pertaining to terrorism possessed or acquired by the U.S. government) to a new position in which he directs a program that specializes in interpreting foreign attempts to deceive the U.S. government. His message indicated that he would like to infuse their work with rigorous scholarly and scientific approaches to judgment and decision analysis, and he wondered whether I could help him do so. He asked if I would meet with his deputy in my office, if he dispatched his deputy from Washington, DC. I suggested that we set up a phone call to discuss the matter, wondering why I would not first talk with him by phone. It turned out that we would be discussing content that cannot be discussed via phone. Interesting. I wonder what it is, but I forge on to the next message. A student needs help on her term paper. And so it goes.

I reserve a few hours in the morning for reading, writing, and preparing to teach. Noontime always brings either a research seminar (typically with lunch provided) or a meeting with a colleague about a research or teaching matter. My days are so packed that I have a free lunch hour to myself about once per month. Running to the restroom is a luxury. After lunch, I typically hold back-to-back meetings, including lab meetings (in which we discuss current research projects, meetings with students, or other appointments around campus) and other research meetings. I teach at least two afternoons per week and hold office hours with students. One afternoon per week is devoted to faculty meetings. Being tenured means, among other responsibilities, that I need to become informed about, and vote on, key decisions the school makes. One afternoon per month, I serve on the university-wide Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects. The job of this committee is to ensure that any research involving humans protects human rights and upholds the highest ethical standards. In preparation, I review a set of difficult proposals that have been submitted—ones that the staff cannot handle without faculty insight. I then gather with other faculty around campus to discuss and vote on the proposals.

After dinner at home with my family, I often work in my office at home. This is a good time to write, much like first thing in the morning. Often I will write things that require less systematic thought than do scientific journal articles, such as letters of reference. I do not necessarily recommend the way I do things. I intend for this summary to provide description and not prescription. I continually wish I could find more time to write and often fail to do so.

Advantages and Disadvantages of the Career

Advantages of a career in public policy far outweigh disadvantages. Some are obvious. It is enormously fun to teach world leaders in executive education who negotiate more effectively, interpret probabilistic evidence more accurately, or enact policies more effectively based on what you have taught them. I frequently receive invitations to teach these leaders not only at Harvard but also at government agencies, at field sites for Special Forces, and at international locations. It is also enormously fun to teach idealistic master's level students whose goal in life is to make the world a better place, not necessarily to earn as much money as possible. It is enormously fun to work with colleagues who share such noble goals. I may even earn a bit more salary than if I were in a psychology department (averages suggest this may be the case).

Other advantages are more subtle. First, I find it enormously rewarding to convert a skeptical student to an eager student. I love, even crave, intellectual challenges. As mentioned, many students come to my class skeptical about learning from a psychologist. This is especially true when a male, senior military official and combat veteran comes in to find that a relatively young Berkeley graduate and female psychologist (i.e., me) is going to teach them about decision making. You can imagine the dynamics of the situation. I need to be on top of my game, making psychology useful, to earn their respect. It is never given automatically.

Another subtle advantage is the diversity of the faculty. Faculty members in a school of public policy come from all walks of life. Some are *professors of practice*, meaning that they earned their credential to teach not by scholarly studies but by practicing public policy. For example, the former U.S. Ambassador to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is a professor of practice on our faculty. So, too, is the current U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations (presently on leave from our faculty). Occasionally, I coteach a session or two with some of these professors, allowing us to unite science and practice. This keeps my science in line with reality, and it helps generate new research ideas.

The faculty members are also diverse in other ways. Whereas most psychology departments lean exclusively to the left side of the political spectrum, policy schools (if they aim to be good ones) must include scholarly thinkers from all perspectives. I find it useful to hear ideas from all perspectives across the political spectrum.

Disadvantages are real, too. In my case, the largest disadvantage has been that finding fellow psychologists in my immediate vicinity who speak the same academic language is difficult. For example, if I mentioned a core concept from psychology like the fundamental attribution error (FAE) in a faculty meeting, only a handful of people out of several hundred would know what I meant. This can create loneliness. The antidote would be to head over to Harvard's psychology department and attend their seminars. I hold a formal affiliation with the department and, theoretically, could show up there whenever I wish, oversee student projects, and so on. But the great social psychologist Kurt Lewin was correct about the power of channel factors—that is, situational factors that appear unimportant on the surface but that actually exert great influence on behavior. Actually spending time in the psychology department turns out to be far more difficult than I expected because of a demanding schedule and the necessity of a 25-minute walk in both directions (sometimes in rain, snow, and ice) to get from my office to the psychology department. To date, I have made far less use of this important connection than I intended—not only because of the difficult channel factors but also because I learned it was necessary to first establish deep roots at the Kennedy School. I hope to establish deeper connections with the psychology department in the future. And I hope that any junior people reading this can take more seriously than I naively did how difficult it is to manage appointments in multiple locations. Ironically, it is sometimes easier to collaborate with psychologists at other schools in the Boston area and around the world (which I often do) because one expects to talk by phone in such cases. In sum, because I love the core of psychology as much as I love to push its outer boundaries, the absence of many fellow psychologists in the same hallway is a real disadvantage but not one that outweighs the advantages.

Preparation Is Needed for the Career

Because so few of us teach in the field, a clear set of norms and criteria do not exist. To become a tenure-track professor who teaches and conducts research with a great deal of (near-total) intellectual freedom, it is critical to have a PhD and a trajectory of research. Moreover, it

is important to have published research that can be applied to solving public problems and to be able to design courses that students of public policy would benefit from taking.

I never set out to work in a school of public policy. I had no idea that such an option existed. Without having a career objective in mind, I did engage, however, in numerous activities in which I learned political science and public policy. Some of my so-called preparation may sound silly, because it was in no way intended as career preparation at the time. Only hindsight reveals ways that my past contributes to what I now do.

As a high school student, I served in the model United Nations, I was vice president of the student government, and I served as a congressional intern to Congressman Barney Frank (D-MA). As a college student, I devoted myself to an honors sequence of psychology courses and to the conduct of an original honors thesis in psychology, but I also took numerous courses in political science and graduated one course short of a double major in political science. I was politically active, participated in a multiweek foreign policy crisis simulation, read a lot of political science and political philosophy, and followed national politics. As a graduate student in psychology, I departed from the standard psychology curriculum and took a course in the Goldman School of Public Policy at UC Berkeley. There I crystallized an understanding of the fact that societal problems do not unfold according to disciplinary boundaries. No societal problem can be solved by psychology alone. If I wanted to tackle some of the biggest problems, I had to learn to understand key aspects of adjacent disciplines like economics. I also participated in a summer institute in political psychology, which included intensive lectures from political scientists (half) and from psychologists (half). Once again, I read literature in political science and public policy while concentrating mainly on psychology.

As a young assistant professor, I worked in an interdisciplinary department inhabited by psychologists, economists, political scientists, and historians. Following the Carnegie Mellon tradition, largely shaped by Nobel Laureate Herbert Simon, the goal was to bring all relevant scholarly disciplines to bear on problems that mattered. The faculty held the highest possible standards for excellence in research, and they paired that with a strong mandate to conduct research that mattered. Thus, my preparation included attending two seminars per week, often by economists or political scientists, and trying to grapple with what psychology could bring to the table. I learned that doing studies simply because they represent the next step in a research program was not good enough to attract the attention of scholars in other fields. I had to conduct research that would matter to multiple disciplines and, better yet, to society as well.

It came as a complete surprise when a faculty member from Harvard called and asked if they could put my name into a search for a tenured position at the Harvard Kennedy School. The chance that such a search would select me seemed close to zero. When I visited Harvard, gave a talk, met the deans and faculty, and toured the campus, I was immediately enthralled. I also met with faculty from psychology, and their faculty voted to offer me a courtesy appointment.

As I understand the tenure process, a committee considers whether a candidate has made fundamental contributions to his or her field as well as whether such contributions would position him or her well to teach and conduct meaningful research in a school of public policy. Now that I am at the Kennedy School, it is clear that the faculty fall at various places along a continuum that ranges from basic to applied. In terms of my research, I fall near the end point on basic, but in terms of teaching, I am much closer to the middle. This may change over time or it may not; either way is okay.

It should be clear at this point that one could be much better prepared than I was. To best strategically position yourself to be a psychology PhD who works in a school of public policy, I recommend the following approach.

As an undergraduate, find a program like one at the University of Michigan where you can attend a summer institute or internship in a school of public policy. The Ford School at Michigan regularly hosts a Public Policy and International Affairs Junior Summer Institute—an intensive program that helps prepare undergraduate students from all over the United States for graduate programs in public policy and international affairs. Students take classes in statistics, economics, and related fields in preparation for graduate school. An ideal option is to find a university that offers an undergraduate major in public policy. As mentioned, such options exist at Princeton and Carnegie Mellon, and other options may exist as well. Independent of any particular program, identify a faculty mentor in a policy school while you are in college or in graduate school. Conduct research or serve as a research assistant for that faculty member. Complete an internship at a state, local, or federal government organization to see what the real-world experience is like. Take courses in microeconomics and in political science or public policy (as well as in psychology, of course) and conduct research in a hybrid field like behavioral economics (psychology and economics) or political psychology (political science and psychology). Consider becoming an intern with an organization like the Behavioral Insights Team in the United Kingdom (described earlier) or with a public policy research organization (e.g., Ideas42, RAND, Mathematica, Brookings, or The Tobin Project). When you design a study to test a psychological mechanism about how the brain works, also think about what (if

anything) the results might mean for designing policies that promote human health and well-being. Learn to teach negotiation. All policy schools (and business schools) recruit people with this skill. Above all else, do top-notch work in whatever you do. That is the most important thing.

Attributes Needed for Success in the Career

First and foremost, a career in public policy requires one to have curiosity about academic work outside of psychology—curiosity about the world of ideas, about economics, about policy, and about politics. If you lack this curiosity, then many seminars will bore you. Academia is replete with opportunities to make trade-offs between depth and breadth. If you choose depth over breadth every time, then this is not the right place for you.

This job also requires being capable of doing research one way, even if most others around you do it in different ways. In other words, you need to be reasonably independent in your abilities, not requiring a cadre of similar others around you. This situation hopefully will change as policy schools begin to recruit more psychologists.

The job requires open-mindedness about methodology and theory. This has been the largest challenge for me. I occasionally have slipped into biased, closed-minded thought when it comes to judging research methodology and theory. I was trained to think that the randomized controlled experiment is the most superior method. I occasionally cast doubt on qualitative methods, most especially on case studies, which seemed to me to encourage unjustifiable post hoc reasoning from a sample size of one. This view has been politically problematic, to say the least. Case studies are the dominant mode of teaching at the Harvard Kennedy School and the Harvard Business School. I have learned that having a healthy skepticism of any method is useful but looking down upon others is not. I have learned that each method provides a different perspective, creating the prismatic whole.

In addition to curiosity and open-mindedness, one needs to think in (what E. O. Wilson calls) *consilient* ways. Consilience is based on the unity-of-knowledge principle, which holds that measuring the same state of nature by several different methods should lead to the same answer. For example, it should not matter whether one measures the height of the Empire State Building with a yardstick, a metric measuring tape, or with a string. In all three cases, the answer should be approximately the same. Thus, studying political behavior using discourse analysis, economic modeling, patterns of neural activation, or Likert ratings scales should all reveal similar truths about political behavior. Wilson argues

for “a conviction, far deeper than a mere working proposition, that the world is orderly and can be explained by a small number of natural laws” (1999, pp. 4–5). I ascribe to this view and practice it in my work. My own research methods range from brain imaging to conducting nationwide field surveys, from micro to macro—all aimed at uncovering similar truths about states of human nature.

I noted earlier in this chapter that this line of work is not for the meek. As the proverbial new kid on the block in public policy, psychologists must prove themselves before being welcomed into the pack. I need to prove myself in every class I teach unless it is a doctoral seminar. (Such seminars attract highly specialized students who already know the instructor’s credentials and know that they want to take a class from that person.) Thus, doing this work requires a degree of willingness to deal with criticism and challenges. I was used to receiving high teaching evaluations when I taught undergraduates at Carnegie Mellon. When I first came to Harvard Kennedy School, I received mediocre teaching evaluations at best. I have had to work hard on improving my teaching to figure out new strategies for connecting with policy students. Compared with psychology students at UC Berkeley or to decision science students at Carnegie Mellon, the policy students at Harvard are less willing to tolerate learning knowledge purely for knowledge sake. They require me to figure out a meaningful policy or practice implication for most ideas. This is not such a bad thing, especially because they accept conclusions like, “It is too early to know whether this way or that way is better” or “The effect of X depends on the nature of Y” or “No one-size fits all solutions, and here is why.”

Finally, one needs to welcome spending considerable time and effort on teaching. Our students are not undergraduates who occasionally sleep through lectures. They are professional students paying large sums of money to Harvard to further their respective capabilities. If you do not like teaching, this would not be a happy place. I used to be only mildly positive about teaching, while I adored research. Having been here for eight years, I still adore research, but I also have come to adore teaching, for the reasons described earlier.

Pay Range for the Career

No aggregate data for faculty holding psychology PhDs in schools of public policy are available. There are too few of us. That said, personal experience tells me that the salaries fall above what psychology departments pay and below what marketing departments in business schools pay. Salaries may be comparable to what an organizational behavior department in a business school would pay, but this is speculation based on a limited sample.

This chapter explicitly provides a description of the faculty role. There are other tracks to consider, however. For example, someone with a PhD in psychology can work in a public policy think tank like RAND, Mathematica, or Brookings. Without access to datasets (again, small numbers), my sense is that those salaries also fall between what one would earn in a psychology department and what one would earn in a policy school.

Future Prospects for the Career

These are early days for psychologists in schools of public policy. We first-generation folks may mess things up for future generations, or we may lay down wide pathways on which future generations will walk smoothly. There are many bumps in the road. When I arrived at the Harvard Kennedy School, the school did not need me to teach any specific course and that remains the case. I have created from scratch all the courses I teach (which has been fun) but all remain elective courses, not required courses, for the degree.

Looking nationwide at this early point, progress is good. In the past 10 years, some number (less than 10) of psychology PhDs received tenured faculty positions in schools of public policy. We will continue to mentor and hopefully recruit additional psychologists, although the latter is slow going. It appears that psychologists will not soon achieve equal representation with, say, economists or political scientists.

Two key developments in government suggest that progress will continue to improve. One, already described, is the rise of behavioral insight teams around the globe, each powerfully placed in government. They have promoted what they call a “test, learn, adapt” approach to government, all based around the use of randomized controlled trials. For discussion, see Halpern (2014). Their success in the United Kingdom, Australia, and in the Netherlands suggests that a new U.S. team also should meet with success. In 2014, the White House launched the first-ever social and behavioral sciences team (SBST), whose mandate is to make government programs more effective and efficient. SBST includes experts from psychology, economics, political science, and beyond who seek “to harness behavioral science insights to help Federal government programs better serve the nation while saving taxpayer dollars” (Shankar, 2015). This recognition at the highest levels of government that psychologists have a role to play in the policy forum may bode well for faculty composition changes in schools of public policy.

Another key development is somewhat similar, but it goes by a different name. Specifically, it is a growing *Moneyball* approach to government, as described in a new book edited by bipartisan government officials Jim Nussle, former head, Office of Management and Budget under President George W. Bush; and Peter Orszag, former head, Office of Management and Budget under President Barack Obama (Nussle & Orszag, 2014). *Moneyball* is a term coined in Michael Lewis's 2003 book of the same name to characterize how the Oakland A's baseball team increased their prospects of success by taking a data-driven, rather than intuition-driven, approach to hiring players. The approach, as translated to government policy making, argues that government needs to dramatically increase data-driven decision making based on rigorous evaluations of program effectiveness. The overall approach is nicely described by the following quote, excerpted from a chapter by Glenn Hubbard (Hubbard is the former chair of the Council of Economy Advisers under Bush):

There is no doubt that gathering and evaluating evidence of impact in a complex world is challenging. At the same time, researchers and policy makers across government are already hard at work applying these approaches to build evidence for what works and what doesn't. They're coming to conclusions that are reducing homelessness and improving hospice care. They're simplifying financial-aid forms and boosting college enrollment for disadvantaged students. And they're showing that—with the right resources and a changing landscape that puts evidence-based policy front and center—it's possible to do more than talk about making government work better; we can evaluate the data and marshal the evidence to make it happen. (2014, pp. 21–22)

Presumably, teams of behavioral scientists, including policy school faculty members with psychology PhDs, will conduct such evaluations.

A key development evidenced in academic administration and in federal funding patterns also suggests that progress will continue to improve. Universities and federal funding agencies are increasingly welcoming interdisciplinary work—even while maintaining the highest standards for theory and evidence. The more they do so, the more this career path should open.

References

- Halpern, D. (2014, January). Applying psychology to public policy. *APS Observer*, 27. Retrieved from <http://www.psychologicalscience.org/index.php/publications/observer/2014/january-14/applying-psychology-to-public-policy.html>

- Hubbard, G. (2014). The pursuit of evidence. In J. Nussle & P. Orszag (Eds.), *Moneyball for government* (pp. 21–22). Washington, DC: Disruption Books.
- Lewis, M. (2003). *Moneyball: The art of winning an unfair game*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton.
- Nussle, J., & Orszag, P. (Eds.). (2014). *Moneyball for government*. New York, NY: Disruption Books.
- Shankar, M. (2015, February 9). *Using behavioral science insights to make government more effective, simpler, and more people-friendly*. Retrieved from <https://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2015/02/09/behavioral-science-insights-make-government-more-effective-simpler-and-more-user-friendly>
- Sunstein, C. (2016). The council of psychological advisors. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 67, 713–737.
- Wilson, E. O. (1999). *Consilience: the unity of knowledge*. New York, NY: Vintage.