



## STILL A DOWN MARKET:

### FINDINGS FROM THE 2009/2010 JOB BANK SURVEY

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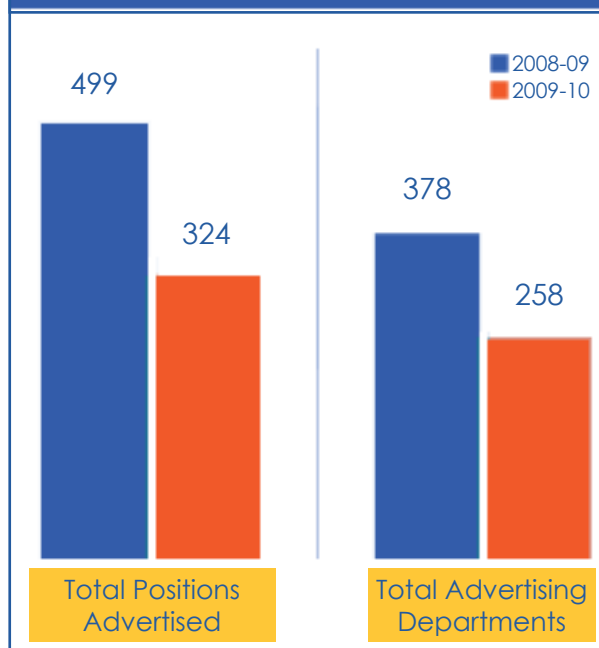
#### INTRODUCTION

The academic job market over the last year shrank considerably from the previous year, when the number of openings was already small by historical standards. There was a 35 percent decline in the number of positions advertised for assistant professor or open-rank academic jobs in the American Sociological Association's (ASA) Job Bank between 2008 and 2009 and a 32 percent decline in the number of academic units doing the advertising (see Figure 1). This comes on the heels of a big decline in advertised jobs between 2006 and 2008 (see Jacobs and Spalter-Roth 2008). Fewer academic positions for new PhDs were advertised in calendar year 2009 than there were new PhDs. An estimated 68 percent of the 2008 cohort of sociology PhDs would find academic jobs as assistant professors if there was a perfect match between jobs and candidates and if no positions were cancelled.<sup>2</sup>

The decline in the percentage of academic positions advertised in the ASA Job Bank is in line with the losses reported in the limited number of humanities, behavioral, and social science disciplines that make such information public. This fact offers small consolation for those who have been unable to find the kind of position for which they spent an average of eight years training. For example, the job market for PhDs in languages and literature is projected to drop by 37 percent on top of a 24 percent drop in the previous year (Williams June 2009). The American Historical Association re-

ported that 2008/2009 was the worst year for jobs since the academic job slump in the mid-1990s. In contrast to these two disciplines characterized by PhDs searching for elusive tenure track jobs for a decade, the number of PhDs in sociology and the number of academic jobs available have been in

**FIGURE 1.** Assistant and Open Rank Faculty Positions Advertised in 2008-09 and 2009-10.<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Excludes positions advertised by foreign institutions.

<sup>2</sup> Includes advertisements hiring exclusively and non-exclusively at the rank of assistant professor.

Source: ASA Job Bank Survey, 2009 and 2010.

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<sup>2</sup> This estimate is based on the need for 477 jobs, one for each of the new sociology PhDs in 2008 (the latest year for which data is available) compared to the 324 jobs that were advertised.

balance until 2007. A recent internal audit of the American Political Science Association's (APSA) employment database, eJobs, in 2010 showed a decline in the number of advertisements placed for academic positions, with a 32 percent decline in the number of advertisements for assistant professors. There was also a 25 percent decline in non-academic jobs. In contrast, the decline in posted jobs for psychologists was only 20 percent. Given the importance of counseling in psychology many of these jobs may not have been for academic PhDs.

One piece of positive news for new sociology PhDs is that the number of jobs advertised for PhDs in applied, research, and policy positions outside the academy increased by 18 percent (see Appendix Table 1). This is just posted jobs; it is hard to estimate the total number of such openings. Along with academic jobs there were 251 additional positions advertised in applied, research, and policy fields or as post doctoral fellows. Most, if not all of these 251 positions were probably available to new PhDs. If these jobs and postdoctoral positions are added to the academic jobs available to assistant professors then there would be at least more than one job available for every PhD who obtained their degree in 2008. Nonetheless, this brief will focus on academic jobs available to new PhDs, since these are the kinds of positions for which most sociology PhDs are trained (Spalter-Roth, Thomas, and Levine 2000; Spalter-Roth 2007).

### THE JOB MARKET SURVEY

This is the second survey of the job market done by the ASA research department (see Spalter-Roth, Jacobs, and Scelza 2009 for the results from the first survey). The intent of the survey is to determine whether departments carried out searches, whether positions were cancelled, whether the position was ultimately filled, how this varied by institutional characteristics, and whether temporary faculty will be used to fill cancelled and unfilled positions. We employed the previous year's short questionnaire and sent it to contacts at each of the 258 departments or schools that posted an advertisement for at least one assistant professor or open rank position with the ASA Job Bank in calendar year 2009.

Most of these advertisements were for jobs that began in the fall of 2010. The survey was administered through Qualtrics, which allows respondents to complete the questionnaire on-line. We sent the survey to two contact people in each department, usually the chair and the person who had placed the job advertisement. We followed up with three reminders, and then we attempted to contact non-responding schools twice via telephone. The result was a 91 percent response rate for all departments. The tables presented in this research brief limit counts and outcomes to those jobs that exist in the United States.

### JOB COUNTS

Table 1 shows the types of positions advertised by U.S. Institutions in the Job Bank in 2009. The 324 academic jobs that new PhDs could potentially fill (including assistant, open rank and unspecified rank) constituted more than 9 out of 10 of all academic positions advertised in the ASA Job Bank during 2009. It may be that assistant professors are more attractive to departments

**TABLE 1. Fewer Positions Were Advertised by U.S. Institutions in 2009-10.<sup>1</sup>**

Type of Position	2009-10
<b>Academic</b>	<b>351</b>
Instructor/Lecturer	22
Assistant Professor	214
Associate Professor	4
Full Professor	1
Open/Multiple Rank	89
Rank Unspecified	21
<b>Nonacademic</b>	<b>251</b>
Sociological Practice	117
Post-doc/Fellowship	83
Other Academic (Admin)	51
<b>Total Positions Advertised</b>	<b>602</b>

<sup>1</sup> Excludes positions advertised by foreign institutions. Source: ASA Job Bank Survey, 2010.

because of their lower salaries and career potential or, alternatively, higher ranked faculty members are not found through open searches. As noted above, the number of academic jobs potentially available to new PhDs decreased by 35 percent compared to those advertised in 2008. If, however we subtract the number of jobs not filled due

to cancellation or other reasons there were about 100 fewer jobs this year than last year. Appendix Table 1 shows the full count of jobs for 2008 and 2009 in the U.S. and abroad. If we count non-U.S. advertisements for assistant professors, open rank, and unspecified rank academic positions (including those in Canada) there are an additional 67 positions advertised. When these advertisements are added, there is an even larger percentage decline in 2009 in all academic positions compared to U.S. academic jobs.

**TABLE 2.** Assistant and Open Rank Faculty Positions Advertised in 2009.<sup>1, 2</sup>

	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Total Jobs Advertised by 258 Departments	324	100.0%
Total Jobs Advertised by 236 Responding Departments	286	88.3%
Total Jobs Advertised by 22 Non-Responding Departments	38	11.7%

<sup>1</sup> Excludes positions advertised by foreign institutions.

<sup>2</sup> Includes advertisements hiring exclusively and non-exclusively at the rank of assistant professor.

Source: ASA Job Bank Survey, 2010.

Table 2 shows the number of assistant and open rank faculty positions advertised in 2009 by responding and non-responding departments or schools. Almost 90 percent (88.3) percent of jobs advertised were found in departments or schools that responded to the survey. Table 3 includes two units of analyses, departments and jobs. It shows the number of freestanding sociology departments, joint sociology departments (with another discipline, typically anthropology and criminology), and the number of non-sociology departments and schools. These include criminal justice, women's studies, and ethnic and cultural studies. They also include business schools, in which sociologists are often hired to teach courses such as organizational analysis.

Table 3 also shows the number of jobs advertised in each type of department or school. Non-sociology departments or schools likely advertised their jobs in other disciplinary job banks along with the

**TABLE 3.** Assistant and Open Rank Faculty Positions Advertised in 2009 by Type of Department.<sup>1, 2</sup>

<i>Type of Department</i>	<i>Number of Departments</i>	<i>Percent Responding</i>	<i>Number of Jobs Advertised</i>	<i>Percent Advertised by Responding Departments</i>
Freestanding Sociology	107	93.5%	134	93.3%
Joint Sociology	56	96.4%	63	96.8%
Non-Sociology	95	85.3%	127	77.2%
All Departments	258	91.1%	324	88.0%

<sup>1</sup> Excludes positions advertised by foreign institutions.

<sup>2</sup> Includes advertisements hiring exclusively and non-exclusively at the rank of assistant professor.

Source: ASA Job Bank Survey, 2010.

ASA Job Bank. These departments had a significantly lower response rate than did sociology or joint departments (although the response rate was still high at 85.3 percent). Some refused to provide any information. Sociologists who are recruited for jobs in these schools or departments may be isolated from the discipline, if willingness to provide information for new PhDs and directors of graduate studies is any indicator.

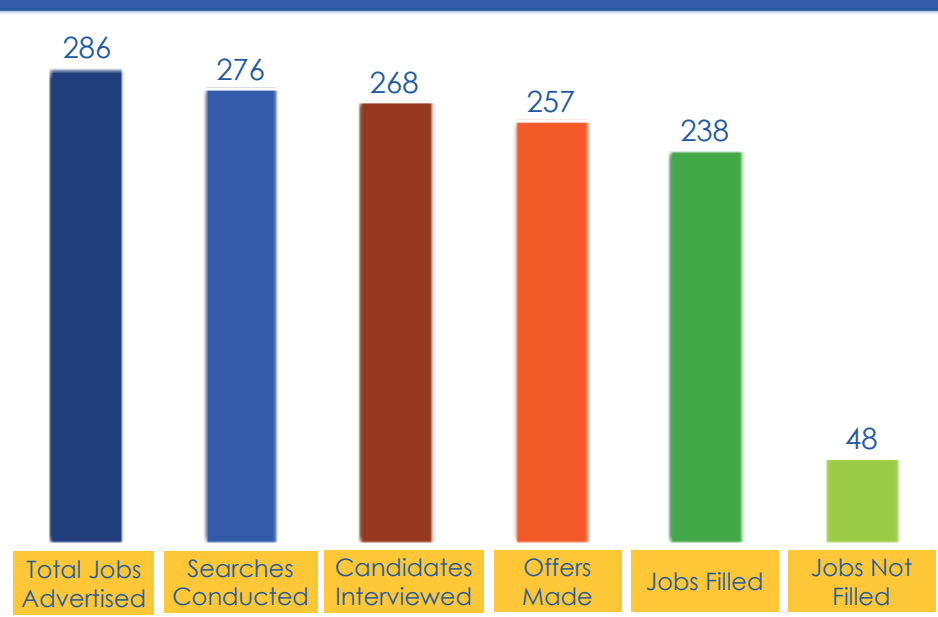
### THE JOB SEARCH PROCESS

Searches were conducted for 96.5 percent of the assistant and open rank positions that responded to the survey for a total of 276 searches that we know about. Not all of these searches reached the goal of hiring a candidate. This percentage is somewhat higher when compared to percent of searches conducted for positions advertised in 2008, even though there were more searches conducted by responding departments in 2008 (for a total of 378 searches). The most notable finding is that a significantly higher percentage of searches were successful in 2009 than in 2008 (86.2 percent compared to 69.2 percent) with a smaller percent of searches cancelled before the search began or cancelled while the search was on-going (see Table 4 for the 2009 figures). This finding suggests that when departments were allowed to conduct searches, they found a candidate to hire, possibly because there was a greater choice of candidates than in the previous year. It may also be the case that departments that did have openings were especially determined to capitalize on these opportunities. This is the only silver lining in an otherwise down market.

### JOBS FILLED

Figure 2 depicts the academic job market as multi-step search process including searches begun, candidates being brought in, offers being made,

**FIGURE 2.** The Hiring Process for Assistant and Open Rank Positions Advertised Through the ASA Job Bank. (Responding Departments Only)



<sup>1</sup> Excludes positions advertised by foreign institutions.

<sup>2</sup> Includes advertisements for positions exclusively and non-exclusively at the rank of assistant professor.

Source: ASA Job Bank Survey, 2010.

**TABLE 4.** Searches Conducted for Assistant and Open Rank Faculty Positions Advertised in 2009 (Responding Departments Only).<sup>1,2</sup>

	Number	Percent
<b>Total Jobs Advertised by Responding Departments</b>	<b>286</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
<b>Searches Conducted</b>	<b>276</b>	<b>96.5%</b>
Successful Searches	238	83.2%
Searches Conducted, but Job Later Canceled or Suspended	12	4.4%
Searches Conducted for Jobs Not Filled for Other Reasons	26	9.5%
<b>Searches Not Conducted</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>3.5%</b>

<sup>1</sup> Excludes positions advertised by foreign institutions.

<sup>2</sup> Includes advertisements for positions exclusively and non-exclusively at the rank of assistant professor.

Source: ASA Job Bank Survey, 2010.

**TABLE 5.** Reasons Why Assistant and Open Rank Faculty Positions Were Not Filled (Responding Departments Only).<sup>1, 2</sup>

	<b>Number of Jobs</b>	<b>Percent Not Filled</b>
<b>Total Jobs Not Filled</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
Cancelled	7	14.6%
Suspended	15	31.3%
Candidate Declined Offer	10	20.8%
Offer Still in Negotiation	8	16.7%
No Agreement as to a Candidate	6	12.5%
Other <sup>3</sup>	1	2.1%
Reason Not Given	1	2.1%

<sup>1</sup> Excludes positions advertised by foreign institutions.

<sup>2</sup> Includes advertisements hiring exclusively and non-exclusively at the rank of assistant professor.

<sup>3</sup> A department that advertised two positions interviewed a candidate for one job, but hired him for the other. One job remained unfilled.

Source: ASA Job Bank Survey, 2010.

and jobs accepted and filled. There is attrition at each stage: not all schools that responded to the survey conduct searches for advertised positions primarily because of cancellation or suspension of these positions, not all searches yield a consensus candidate, and not all candidates accept the position. Given the multiplicity of stages that take place before a hire is made, it is unrealistic to expect that 100 percent of advertisements will translate into hires. During the 2009 calendar year, the overall yield rate (hires/ advertisements) for assistant professor or open hire positions was approximately 8 out of 10 and the yield for job searches (hires/ searches) was almost 9 out of 10. This is a higher yield than in the previous year, when approximately 2 out of 3 postings yielded a new hire.

Once a search commenced, almost all schools were able to bring in candidates for interviews, agree on a first choice, and make an offer, but at each stage of the process, there was some slippage. The highest rate of slippage was between the job offer and the job acceptance, although the percentage accepting was about 93 percent. A lower percentage of candidates were brought in and offers made in 2008 compared to 2009. This is additional evidence that in 2009 departments were more likely to act on available lines that they were granted.

**TABLE 6.** Assistant and Open Rank Faculty Positions Advertised in 2009 by Type of Department.<sup>1</sup>

<b>Type of Department (2005 Carnegie Code)</b>	<b>Total Responding Departments</b>		<b>Total Jobs Advertised by Responding Departments</b>		<b>Searches Conducted</b>	<b>Candidates Brought In</b>	<b>Offers Made</b>	<b>Jobs Filled</b>
Very High Research	74	92.5%	98	84.5%	93.9%	88.8%	82.7%	76.5%
High Research/ Doctorate	45	100.0%	55	100.0%	96.4%	92.7%	90.9%	83.6%
Masters	71	88.8%	83	89.2%	97.6%	97.6%	94.0%	86.7%
Baccalaureate	39	92.9%	43	91.5%	100.0%	97.7%	95.3%	90.7%
Associates and Special Focus	7	63.6%	7	53.8%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	85.7%
All Departments	236	91.5%	286	88.3%	96.5%	93.7%	89.9%	83.2%

<sup>1</sup> Excludes positions advertised by foreign institutions.

<sup>2</sup> Includes advertisements hiring exclusively and non-exclusively at the rank of assistant professor.

Source: ASA Job Bank Survey, 2010.



## JOBS NOT FILLED

A lower percentage of advertised jobs that responded to the survey in 2009 went unfilled than in 2008 (16.8 percent compared with 28.6 percent). Table 5 details the main reasons that responding departments did not fill positions. In 2009, the most common reason for unfilled positions was that the search was cancelled or suspended; close to one-half (45.9 percent) of the 48 unfilled positions resulted from these reasons. In 2008, more than half of unfilled jobs (56.3 percent) were cancelled or suspended. The greater number of unfilled jobs in 2008 may have been due to the fact that the impact of economic losses didn't occur until after positions were granted. Other reasons that jobs were not filled included candidates refusing offers, lack of agreement about a candidate, or that the offer was still being negotiated at the time of the survey (see Table 5). Therefore, the decline in jobs filled was smaller than the decline in jobs posted.

## VARIATION ACROSS INSTITUTIONS

We have seen the average results of the hiring process incorporating all types of academic institutions. In Table 6 we examine the diversity among different types of institutions, using the 2005 Carnegie classification system to categorize these institutions. Associate and special focus schools advertise the fewest jobs probably because these institutions are less likely than others to advertise in a nationally-oriented job bank. Some of the jobs were advertised on regional and aligned societies' listservs. We find that baccalaureate-only institutions advertised the next fewest jobs (43). Although they advertised only 43 jobs, baccalaureate-only schools conducted a search for every job that they advertised and filled the highest percentage of jobs (90.7 percent). In contrast, very high research schools advertised the highest number of jobs, but those who responded to the survey conducted the lowest percentage of searches (93.9 percent) and filled the lowest percentage of jobs (76.5 percent). This is the same pattern we saw in 2008. We do not know if research-intensive universities are more selective than the other types of institutions, if their hiring needs are more specialized, or if they have more latitude to let a search lapse, perhaps

because of their larger size or access to adjuncts and graduate students who can assist in fulfilling teaching needs over the short term.

## TEMPORARY HIRES

When schools did not fill their advertised position because of cancelled or suspended searches, were they authorized to hire someone else in an adjunct position? The answer appears to be "no" for the majority of these cancelled positions. Table 7 shows that 35.4 percent of responding departments either intends to fill the job with a temporary faculty member or is considering this option. This is a smaller percentage than in the previous year (41.2 percent). However, the largest share of respondents did not answer this question. Perhaps this is because they did not know at the time if they would be granted permission to hire in this capacity.

**TABLE 7.** Jobs To Be Filled by Temporary Faculty.

	Number	Percent of Jobs Not Filled
<b>Total Jobs Not Filled</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
Temporary Faculty Will Be Brought In	13	27.1%
Department is Considering the Option	4	8.3%
Temporary Faculty Will Not Be Used to Fill the Gap	13	27.1%
No Response	18	37.5%

<sup>1</sup> Excludes positions advertised by foreign institutions.

<sup>2</sup> Includes advertisements for positions exclusively and non-exclusively at the rank of assistant professor.

Source: ASA Job Bank Survey, 2010.

## CONCLUSIONS

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### WHAT DOES THE FUTURE HOLD?

We have seen that there was a 35 percent dip in the number of U.S. academic positions advertised in the ASA Job Bank in 2009 that could be filled by new PhDs compared to the previous year, 2008. These new PhDs undoubtedly have been frustrated by the tight academic job market. They may need to broaden their searches to research, applied and policy positions outside the academy. This research brief reports that the job market in these areas appears to be expanding. As we learned in a previous survey of sociology PhDs employed in applied, research, and policy positions, these sociologists earn more than academics, and they find their jobs to be connected to what they learned in graduate school. Their biggest complaints were that they received too little information about non-academic jobs, and that they wished there would be a reduction of snobbery about such jobs (Spalter-Roth 2007). As noted in this brief, if new PhDs considered positions outside the academy that are related to their sociology training, and if their faculty advisors did not discount the value of these jobs, there might be enough advertised jobs to go around.

### WHAT CAN WE EXPECT IN THE FUTURE?

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Fewer PhDs? The debate about whether the U.S. is producing “too many PhDs” has been on an on-going basis for at least a decade. In 1995 a study by Goldman and Massey concluded that there was a 25 percent over-production of PhDs (Hodges 1995). Others argue that this is not the case. Currently, universities appear to be acting on this claim. According to a non-random survey by Inside Higher Education, research universities such as Princeton, Northwestern, and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology are decreasing the size of their PhD programs, especially in the social sciences and in the humanities. Whether as a result of department policy, student supply, or an effort to stay in school longer so as not to face a difficult job market, the number of sociologists who received their PhDs in 2008 (the last year for which data was available) was the lowest since 1990 (see <http://www.asanet.org/research/SocxLevel66-08.XLS>).

While the job market in the most recent years has been difficult for new PhDs, we do not believe that a significant reduction in the size of doctoral programs in sociology is warranted. Even in the face of the most challenging job market in memory, the total number of positions advertised – including post-doctoral fellowships and applied positions – exceeds the number of new PhDs. These figures undoubtedly UNDERSTATE the number of openings, especially in applied positions which often do not post their positions with the ASA Job Bank. We plan to re-survey the state of non-academic positions more systematically in coming years.

Changes in the Curriculum. Given the decline in academic positions for new PhDs, some disciplines are considering restructuring the training of PhDs to make them stronger candidates in the academic job market. For example, political science departments discussed their intentions to restructure programs to meet the needs of PhDs entering the job market, including making revisions to curriculum, running seminars on the job market, providing opportunities to enhance teaching skills, and placing stronger focus on getting students involved in research and writing. Another strategy, based on findings from the ASA’s study *Beyond the Ivory Tower* (Spalter-Roth 2007), is to augment the curriculum to include additional skills desired by PhDs in applied, research, and policy positions. These include grant writing, program evaluation, and policy analysis.

Finally, it is possible that the sociology job market hit bottom in 2009 and we can expect some recovery in 2010 and 2011. If there is an increase in positions, will more of these jobs for sociologists be in schools or departments outside of the discipline, or can we expect a melting of the freeze that has affected many sociology departments? We expect that after the recession universities will open lines that have been cancelled and senior faculty members that are deferring their retirements may retire from the academy. Additional lines and senior faculty departures should create hiring needs that will expand the number of full-time academic positions open to new PhDs.

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**APPENDIX TABLE 1.** Fewer Positions Were Advertised by U.S. and Foreign Institutions in 2009-10.<sup>1</sup>

Type of Position	2008-09	2009-10	Percent Change
<b>Academic</b>	<b>646</b>	<b>426</b>	<b>-34.1%</b>
Instructor/Lecturer	35	43	22.9%
Assistant Professor	389	227	-41.6%
Associate Professor	13	5	-61.5%
Full Professor	14	3	-78.6%
Open/Multiple Rank	188	117	-37.8%
Rank Unspecified	7	31	342.9%
<b>Nonacademic</b>	<b>239</b>	<b>282</b>	<b>18.0%</b>
Sociological Practice	62	121	95.2%
Post-doc/Fellowship	66	103	56.1%
Other Academic (Admin)	111	58	-47.7%
<b>Total Positions Advertised</b>	<b>885</b>	<b>708</b>	<b>-20%</b>

<sup>1</sup> Includes advertisements for positions exclusively and non-exclusively at the rank of assistant professor. Source: *ASA Job Bank Survey*, 2010.





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