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(Not listed: the 200+ places that have rejected me for employment)

**NOTE: One’s CV only provides information about one’s successes. This is the opposite of that: it’s a running list of my failures.**

When talking to graduate and undergraduate students they often ask, despairingly, how they can be as successful as I have been. They see that I’ve had positions at prestigious universities, or that I have won awards and fellowships. I remember looking at a very famous senior person’s CV when I was an undergraduate and thought it’d be impossible to ever make it there. Looking back on it I have now won a lot of the same awards, and been to the same universities as that person (n.b.: alas, I can also report that this won’t necessitate in feeling like a success.) But students rarely get to see all of the excruciatingly large number of failures endured to get to top places. What follows bellows is an extremely pared down list of my failures. I promise you the list is actually much, much longer. Some of my failures are too embarrassing for me to mention in a public document but be sure, I have many, many more failures than listed here (Hat tip to Sara McLaughlin Mitchell for this idea, which I am just aping for philosophers). Also, worth checking out Wei Ji Ma’s article in *Science* on the same theme: http://science.sciencemag.org/content/357/6354/942

**Education:**

BA: I applied to two schools for college: Rutgers and Brown. Once I found out how much Brown cost, I withdrew. I am confident they would’ve rejected me anyway.

Ph.D.: I have taught at Harvard, Yale, Oxford, NYU, & CUNY. All of them rejected me for graduate school. So did almost every other program that ranked in the PGR top 20.

**Employment**

We can’t help but treat entities as if they are rational. The job market is not rational. The best advice I received on the market was from a senior psychologist. She convinced me that even though it’s an extremely noisy system, some signal gets through: good things happen for talented people, but you have to give it time (say 3-4 years; nb: this is *not* meant to imply that all talented people will get jobs! The system is still incredibly noisy).

It took me four attempts on the market to land at CUNY (and they had passed me over before I got my job). My first year out I got a postdoc at Oxford and otherwise was rejected from every place I applied. A quick accounting shows that I was rejected from over 200 jobs in that time. These include schools I’d never heard of before or since, places in countries I’d never thought about visiting, never mind moving to, community colleges, 4th tier schools, writing programs, and jobs in other departments. If we just whittled down this list to places where I interviewed and didn’t get the job that would probably be about 20 schools. I’ve since been rejected from more places! Fun stuff.

Even worse: I once had a fellowship that paid any school for taking me (only 50 or so schools could take it). That is, the school would get paid for hiring me, and for two years I’d teach a 2/1 for free for them. What happened? Well pretty much every school in the pool made me an offer. Why? Because they’d make money off of me! Then why didn’t every school make me an offer? Because some schools disliked me so much that even making ~100k off of me and having me leave after 2 years didn’t make them want to take me. Now that is some deep charm I must’ve exuded. (Btw, other schools promised me if I came they’d make me a permanent offer. Lolololol, that was a lie. And when time came they just shrugged! Remember “Simone’s Maxim” 1: Universities do not love you back. And the people who climb the ranks to be high ranking negotiators, bureaucrats, or whatever? They are much more adept at negotiation than you. Get it in writing or prepare to be suckered. I *hate* being suckered more than just about anything else and yet...)

**Publications**

This is probably the most painful category. One doesn’t just get rejected they also hear things like they are unoriginal, their project is stupid, or old hat, or a waste of time, or perhaps blissfully one receives no comments at all. These do not include all the articles I am currently circulating through the system, one rejection at a time.

**Selected Journal Article Rejections**

Papers just full on retired after being totally written and polished and ready to be publish: 5 (and counting!). (UPDATE: it will be 7 in another month or two. So many more are drafted and then…abandoned). If you don’t have papers in your paper graveyard, ask yourself why not? My one wish is that everyone buries more of their papers. There’s just no way every paper we write is deserving of people’s attention is there? Counterpoint: wtf do I know. Honestly, I am unsure, and am taking my cues from outside academia (not every track you record should be heard by other people, right? Why would it be different for papers? At least music can be listened to passively and quickly? Your freaking seminar paper from grad school that you get a glint in your eye for once a year is…a different sort of B-side.)

“Against Alief,” Rejected from *Journal of Philosophy, Mind and Language, Analysis, Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*

“Attitude, Inference, Association: On the Propositional Structure of Implicit Bias,” Rejected from *Behavioral and Brain Sciences, Perspectives on Psychological Science, Cognition, Personality and Social Psych Review, Phil Imprint*

“Explaining the Abstract/Concrete Paradoxes in Moral Psychology: NBAR Theory” Rejected from *British Journal of the Philosophy of Science, Mind and Language, the Monist*.

“Fragmentation of Belief” Rejected from *Phil Review, Analytic Philosophy, Phil Imprint*

“Inferential Transitions” (with Jake Quilty-Dunn), Rejected from *Mind, Nous, Phil Imprint, Philosophical Review, and the Sanders Prize*

*“*Modularist Explanations of Behavior and Other Illusions”. Rejected from *BJPS*, *Analysis, Thought, & Phil Psych.*

“The Automatic and the Ballistic”: Rejected from *Analysis and Thought*

“Thinking Is Believing,” Rejected from *Nous, Philosophers’ Imprint, Phil Review, Mind, Mind & Language*

“Troubles with Bayesianism: An Introduction to the Psychological Immune System.” Rejected from *Cognition and Philosophical Review*. This is about as good as it gets.

There is more to say about a lot of these. I had a coauthored paper with a grad student who needed the pubs to get a job. What did one of these journals do with our submission? It said it was sending it out to reviewers. Then my coauthor checked in every three months, never getting a response. I checked in at 9 months and I got a response in 1 day. What was the response? OOPS! They forgot to ever send the paper out & ignored the emails checking in about it from a grad student. Two of these papers were accepted for publication by refs and then rejected by the EIC because of fit. Happens to all of us.

What about my current publishing life? The good news: I have one paper that was accepted at the first place it was sent. Everybody gets lucky sometimes. But even after they accepted it, they wrote me back 5 months later to say whoooops, here’s another set of comments (which took me forever to deal with—like another 3 month). Otherwise, I’m currently shopping 5 journal articles. One of them is a doozy, which my coauthors and I have been working on for literally years. Another is a coauthored paper. It started w/ a grad student and collaborator, but the student left the field, after 4 years of research on the topic. 4 years is a long time, and we have a lot of data! It’s good data and fun and….ooooof. One paper has been rejected 10 times. 10! And it’s under review again. Why? Because it’s a good paper! It’s short, well-written, fun to read, and has new cool data. Sometimes you send the paper to the graveyard, but sometimes you also have to believe in your work.

I have 2 other empirical papers making the rounds. Both have a total between them of 3 rejections. Not bad yet! One has an R&R. and yet…it’s taken over a year for us to look at the R&R! We have had both papers finished before the pandemic and…didn’t matter they didn’t get sent out for some reason or another. Such is life, especially with coauthors (note: I am often –probably the majority of the time—the part that slows down the publication process).

(Oh also re experiments: almost none of them ever work. If they’re interesting, it’s hard to make it work. And then if you make it work, you gotta try to do it again to make sure it’s not a false positive. And…it’s sometimes a false positive. Not everyone can be Josh Knobe (he has the best nose for an effect I’ve ever seen—he’s like a human regression). Most of us just fail all the time.)

To be clear, these aren’t papers that I think are crap. And it’s not like I don’t think I write crap—my god do I write some crap (see, e.g., the current document). I have scrapped a full book and started over. I have a Very Florid paper graveyard (insect minds! Slurs! Psychopaths!). But these are good! I fully expect that they will be well- respected at some point in their life, and before that will be the bane of my existence.

**Fellowships, Grants, and Awards**

I’ve been lucky enough to win some stuff. But I’ve lost more than I won a hundred times over. Grants are a pain—they take forever to write and they tie you to a specific project for years to come. I write 2 or 3 a year. Almost always they get rejected. Every year. And I lose about 2 months of my work year writing them. I have lost 3 Templetons, 2 NSFs, 2 NEHs, 4 dissertation completion grants and countless small fellowships. I was the finalist for a very big Templeton, that I lost. I lost a bunch of other Templeton’s that I didn’t make it close to the finals for. I was also a finalist for the Carnegie Fellowship. Final round had 50 applicants and 15 winners. I lost. Also, winning one of these made me the target of a ridiculous right-wing attack from the blogosphere. That was a fun Christmas. (Pro-tip: if you’re being internet bullied: walk away from your computer! Don’t reply to anyone. Just be patient and in two weeks they’ll be all riled up about gay penguins or some other nonsense).

**Presentations**

The APA has rejected my proposal 6 times, having never accepted any blind submission from me. I have been humiliated in talks, had senior philosophers angrily storm out of them, had senior academics write me to tell me I'd never get a job in the field (and threaten lawsuit for a snarky review of their autobiography), and had their friends write me to say I'd be blackballed. Good times! Point is: sometimes we all get embarrassed in public, and bullied in private.

**Advice:**

Everyone is forced to eat shit all the time in jobs where success rates are paltry. People have too much pride to mention it. Hell, I have too much pride—I started this doc years ago and only posted it now because <huge shoulder shrug and sigh>. You are a million more times apt to see someone boasting about how much they read or publish or weightlift or about how much agita they have in their daily life or tragedies they are trying to overcome or whatever. What about me? My personal life is none of your business! This is all professional stuff—one’s personal life doesn’t matter. Just assume everyone is going through something, and try to be a decent person by giving people the benefit of the doubt. What to do about those annoying people on social media crowing or carping? Go walk away from your computer, and remind yourself about selection biases. Be kind to yourself. We all fail. If you don’t get that publication, you just gotta keep trying. Read the comments after taking a nap or getting a massage or just being chilled out so you’re not defensive. Are the comments good? Incorporate them. Are they not? Send it back out immediately. Not sure? Ask a friend. No friends will do it? Ask a prof. Will the prof not do it? Screw that—it’s our freaking job! Ask again.

All of us get rejections. And it always sucks. I’m not going to claim it doesn’t suck less now—it certainly does, as I have tenure. When I was looking for a job every rejection crushed me (I also kept a second job forever b/c I never thought I’d make it). But it gets better if you keep at it. Not that you have to—quitting is often smart too. If you decide that maybe you should leave academia? Rock on! Everyone I know who left academia is happier. But you should leave because you aren’t enjoying your time here—you don’t like the writing, reading, teaching—and not because of your failures. It might feel like you’re failing alone, but we’re all failing along with you. Dust yourself off, get back at it, and by god enjoy the successes when you get them. If we are going to get this many rejections than you must celebrate your successes. If you can’t, well, then that’s a reason to reconsider your choices.