

Discussion Transcript for Webinar: Qualitative Research Careers Outside of Academia

17 February, 2021

SLIDE 1

Nicole Malette:

Welcome everyone. Thank you for joining us for the first digital panel of 2021.

Today's webinar is titled *Qualitative Research Careers Outside of Academia*. This panel is intended to provide students with an overview of how their qualitative research experience can best be leveraged into postgraduate career options.

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But before we get into the content, I would like to make a land acknowledgement. The Canadian Sociological Association Students Concerns Subcommittee wishes to situate its presence as an uninvited guest on the traditional territories of First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples, across so-called Canada. This acknowledgement recognizes the enduring relationship that exists between Indigenous nations and their territories that the CSA and its constituents work and live on.

As a committee and organization we strive to understand our role within Canada's ongoing settler colonial project that subjects Indigenous peoples to dispossession and genocide. We recognize our participation and complacency in colonial modalities and knowledge systems and are committed to decolonial praxis that centres and affirms the contributions of Indigenous elders and scholars to the field of sociology.

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Before we get started, I should let everyone know that the audience members are muted to limit background noise. If you have any questions during the panel, we encourage you to submit those through the Q and A function, which you can find at the bottom of your screen. Your questions will be visible to all attendees and panelists and audience members. You can also upvote questions to prioritize them. The panelists will address questions during the open Q and A period following the discussion.

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So maybe you'd like to get to know a bit about us on the sociology students concerns subcommittee. So my name is Nicole Malette and I am the western rep for the CSA student's subcommittee. Our subcommittee also includes our chair and central rep Awish Aslam, Eastern rep Finbar Hefferon and a cross-appointment Equity subcommittee rep Carieta Thomas.

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Our committee is also supported by the work of volunteers Molly Harper and Kieran Maingot. And of course, this session would not be possible without the Canadian Sociological Association. So we would like to thank the CSA for sponsoring this initiative. And a huge thank you to Sherry Fox, the executive director of the CSA for working with us to plan and organize this series. We'd also like to thank everyone in the audience who submitted feedback when registering for this panel. Your questions and comments were used to guide today's discussion. So thank you so much.

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Today we are very fortunate to be joined by three wonderful panelists. Our first panelist is Dr. Heather Holroyd. Dr. Holroyd is the community-based research coordinator at the UBC learning exchange, where she supports research and knowledge exchange related to connections between members of the UBC community and residents and organizations of an inner-city neighborhood in Vancouver, Canada. Prior to taking this position in 2018, Heather worked in a policy-focused role as a research associate at the Social Research and Demonstration Corporation, and as the Evaluation and Community-based Research Coordinator at Pacific Aids Network. Beyond research and evaluation, Heather is passionate about nonprofit governance and enjoys time with her partner and her dog Stanley.

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Our next panelist is Dr. Judith Mintz. Dr. Mintz holds a PhD in Gender and Women's Studies from York University in Toronto and is a Research and Program Evaluator for Native Child and Family Services Toronto. She is also an instructor within York University's Academic Bridging for Women program. A visiting Scholar with York University's City Institute, Dr. Mintz has published with Global Labour Research Center, Demeter Press, Athabasca University Press and Canadian Woman Studies. Her research focuses on decoloniality, intergenerational trauma, interculturalism, allyship, and the intersections of the body to improve equity, inclusion and well-being. She is also the mother of two daughters. So thank you, Judith, for joining us.

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Our third panelist is Meghan Miller. She is a Research Consultant with MQO Research, Atlantic Canada's leading market insights company, and a graduate of the University of Western Ontario with a master's degree in Sociology. With a strong background in both academia and industry, Megan approaches social research with an eye toward participant experience on the micro level and broader insights on the macro level. Meghan leaps at any opportunity to share her enthusiasm for research, and how it can tell us about the world in which we live. Born and raised on the East Coast, she is currently living in beautiful Halifax, Nova Scotia.

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And our final panelist is Allison Laing. Allison is a Research Coordinator at the British Columbia Centre on Substance Use and is a PhD student in the Department of Sociology at the University of British Columbia. Her research centers on economic participation and financial management practices among marginalized people who use drugs, including informal credit structures within social networks, and alternative financial service use, and how these practices impact drug use patterns, social connections, institutional engagement, and exposure to risk. Before returning to academia, Allison worked for many years with people who use drugs in housing and harm reduction service provision, and community-based research using both qualitative and quantitative methods. Outside of work, she enjoys rain-soaked hikes in the mountains and trivia nights on zoom.

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Thank you all for taking part in this panel. Just before we start our discussion, I would like to give our panelists the opportunity to give a brief description of how you found yourself in the current

work role that you have, focusing on the pathway that you took from academia into the job market.

So I have a very strong suspicion that some of the participants here would like to learn how you navigated that road from academia into the workforce. **So maybe starting with Meghan, if you can, let us know how you made that transition?**

Oh you are muted.

Meghan Miller:

That's a very typical zoom thing to be doing. Thank you so much, Nicole, for the introduction. Very, very excited to be here this evening.

Yeah, so I guess my background is in sociology at Western. I completed my master's sort of toward the tail end of 2018. And I kind of started to explore, okay, what am I going to do with this? And I was really, really fortunate to have some mentors who kind of pointed me in the direction of market research and working for professional research firms, kind of saying, you know, have you thought about this? Is this something that you would be interested in using your research skills in this kind of area?

And so I was really fortunate to have the opportunity to work on a contract basis for a research firm for a number of months. And then kind of made the decision to move into that field full-time, came on with MQO research, late 2019. And I've been super happy to be working there ever since.

At MQO, we do a huge variety of different types of research, both qualitative and quantitative. You know, labor market studies, needs assessment studies and feasibility studies, as well as public opinion polling, you know, client satisfaction surveys, all kinds of really interesting things. And there is a lot of qualitative research that we do and a lot of really interesting and dynamic ways to use that qualitative research. So you know, I can do a lot of in-depth interviewing, I get to do a lot of, you know, we do a lot of focus group moderation, community engagement sessions. Recently, we've been doing online bulletin boards and the time of COVID. And as I said, there are a lot of really exciting ways to use qualitative research and those skills kind of in the market research industry.

Nicole Malette:

So we're looking forward to unpacking some of those skills that you've developed.

Next. Heather, would you like to speak to how you transitioned out of academia and into the job market?

Heather Holroyd:

Thanks, Nicole. It's such a pleasure to join you all here today. I'm coming to you from the unseeded territories of the Musqueam, Skwxwú7mesh and Tsleil-Waututh in East Vancouver.

So I finished my PhD at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver in 2016. At that time, I was working as a graduate research assistant at the UBC learning exchange, which is the

University of British Columbia Vancouver's community engagement initiative in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. So that's an inner-city neighborhood, for those of you who are not so familiar with Vancouver.

So I've kind of come full-circle into my role that I've been now, I was at a variety of different other organizations that I'd be happy to chat about during the discussion. But when this position was posted as a pilot role actually it was only posted as a six-month pilot position in October 2018, I jumped on the chance to go back to the UBC learning exchange and work there. And so I kind of took a leap and I feel fortunate that we're now going into the third year of this role.

Nicole Malette:

That's really exciting, and it's nice to hear that you were able to draw on some of those experiences that you had during grad school to come back and help you in post grad work.

Judith if you would like to be to explain how you transitioned into some of the work that you're doing now as well?

Judith Mintz:

Sure, hi everyone. I'm zooming in from Toronto, also known as Treaty of the Toronto purchase, and which was a surrender of the land from the Mississaugas of New Credit.

For me, my journey was a little bit torturous. I finished my PhD at the end of 2018. And I have been doing a lot of ethnographic methodologies for my dissertation. And while I was finishing up, I had been thinking about doing commercial ethnographic work, which is translated as market research. I had interviewed for a job in doing market research, and I thought that I was going to do it. And in the winter of 2019, I did have a contract doing some market research stuff, it was kind of fun. I was doing work with mothers, mostly mothers, about food and how they wanted to feed their kids for an organic veggie company.

That was okay. But it was just really a gig. So by this summer, I was out of work again. I was doing a little bit of contract teaching, which was wonderful, in the academic bridging for women program at York. Any folks out there from York - holla. And then I didn't know what was going to happen. And I was trying to network network network network network, I was connecting with post-PhD networking groups, I was learning about different things you can do to figure out what kinds of transferable skills you should be capitalizing on and, you know, playing around with what are the jobs that that interest me.

And so I was really thinking about how I can kind of crystallize the skills so that they transfer outside of academia. One of my friends said to me, like a month or so after I defended, she said, the first thing I did was, I said it to let go of my PhD. Well, of course, that thought horrified me. And it's really painful, right, like where we spent all this time formulating identity as academics, and I don't know, I still haven't let go.

So, I networked myself into the position I am in right now. I had one other contract, with a startup that was still in development. And that lasted like, two or three months before I realized it was a poor fit for me. I needed to use my research skills towards supporting social problems rather than

business development. And now where I'm at with Native Child and Family Services of Toronto, I have to say, it's a dream job. And I'm doing like qualitative research interviews, and I'm doing literature reviews, and environmental scans on all things urban indigenous in Toronto. And because of my background, as a gender studies scholar, my Master's in Canadian and Indigenous Studies, it makes a lot of sense to be kind of integrating my skills here, looking at all sorts of topics on in the child welfare space, and homelessness spaces, and also thinking about healing and land.

So it's a lot of fun, and really, really interesting interpersonal work. So I am really happy and I kind of networked myself into this position.

Nicole Malette:

Right, and there are a few points in there that hopefully we can draw out in conversations around networking. Also, how do we hold on to this idea around our academic identity when we transitioned out of academia and into maybe more private or NGO settings? How would we use those degrees? And then also about what are some of the pitfalls and benefits of the work? So thanks for bringing those things up.

And let's move on to Allison. How did you transition into some of the work that you're doing too, even though now you've gone back to school?

Allison Laing:

Yeah, my transition has been back to academia, from many years, decades, actually, of being out of academia. So that identity of the academic that you're speaking of Judith, I have fought hard to put that mantle on. And so it also kind of makes me feel a bit like an interloper as well on this panel, because I am so involved in academia currently, but also the work that I have done in qualitative work and also quantitative work has been academic-adjacent, if you will. And so I'm sort of doing it. I'm the picture of the person who's doing it all ass backwards, as my mother would say.

Yeah, so I worked for, well, you already heard this, because of the introduction that Nicole read out, which was, you know, very grad student, I'm realizing compared to you, which is funny. I'm defining myself by my research interests, but I worked in community in the downtown east side, which is the inner city in Vancouver. Sounds very similar to what Heather's been doing, and also what you've been doing Judith. And so I was working in service provision, and then moved on to a lot of public health, randomized control, trial type, quantitative-based public health kind of research and really was drawn to the qualitative work because it kind of filled in those gaps. It filled in those spaces between the numbers, it was more explanatory, rather than exploratory qualitative research that I was engaged in, but it felt like a really good fit. I really enjoyed that kind of connecting that interpersonal element that other people have spoken to.

Yeah, I think that might cover everything. I'm not sure exactly what's going to happen after I leave this academic space. I've got a few years to think about it and torture myself with it. But yeah, I'm looking forward to hearing what other people in the panel have to say and take their advice. Thank you.

Nicole Malette:

Great. Thanks, Allison. So I'm now going to open it up to questions. I won't go one by one you can just answer based on who would like to address it first.

So the first question is, what are some of the benefits and challenges of transitioning out of academia into your current role? So whoever would like to go first, you can unmute yourself.

Heather Holroyd:

Thanks, I can go first. So thanks, Nicole. So I did some reflecting on this question before joining the panel. And so kind of picking up a little bit on my introduction, I work at the UBC learning exchange – we are the universities community engagement initiative in the downtown Eastside and so my role really focuses on brokering connections between organizations and neighborhood residents and our campus community. So students, staff, faculty.

And so the benefits of my role are that I get to work with and learn from a range of diverse groups with a range of diverse life experiences and perspectives and try to foster connections between those different groups to kind of have mutually beneficial and ethical engagement and relationships. So that's obviously a beautiful thing. And you know, just the opportunity to learn every day from people is like, I can't, I can't even explain to you what that's like. That's just, it's just so wonderful. And then our own internal team, we are a pretty small team at the learning exchange, we have about 12 people on staff, and then we're supported at any given time by nine to 12 students, so undergraduate students and graduate students in volunteer roles, work learning positions, co-op positions, and GRA positions.

So again, a really great opportunity to learn from students as well. And our team is really wonderful. They come from a variety of backgrounds with different skills, we all have a shared value. So one of the reasons why I love this work so much is that it is meaningful, like, I do feel like I get the opportunity in my role to use the skills that I gained during graduate school to make a positive impact. And I'm happy to talk about the projects that I've worked on. But that's not the purpose of today's panel. So I'll leave that for the discussion if people are interested.

But the challenges are exactly the same things as the benefits, you know, working between diverse groups and trying to bridge those capacities. A lot of my time is just spent translating across a range of expertise and finding ways for people to work together in productive ways from very different situations and from very different levels of privilege, equitability and just opportunity.

And so that I think, is some of the challenges that we face in the work that we do.

Nicole Malette:

And I think that this is a really important point that sometimes in academia these challenges that are faced by people working outside of the university setting are very different. Thinking about how to translate knowledge and incorporate different perspectives is not always something that's done by professors and academics. They get to work in a bit more of a contained setting.

Does anybody else want to speak to the benefits challenges that they've experienced in transitioning?

Meghan Miller

I'd love to jump off of that, actually, because it speaks to a lot of the things kind of in a different way that I wanted to bring up about, you know, the benefits and challenges of working in sort of the market research industry.

So, you know, the benefits are that I'm always learning something new, it's never a dull moment, you know, we do not only just a lot of different types of research, but we do research across so many different industries, contacts, public, private. So I've worked on projects in the construction industry, aquaculture, health care, you know, for the government, public opinion polling on, you know, hot topic events. And I have learned so much about so many things in the time that I've been working with them, just because I get to have my fingers on all kinds of different topics. So it's, it's never a dull moment.

And in terms of qualitative work, too, because a lot of those involve things like, in-depth interviewing with people on the ground in different industries, or within organizations who are experiencing challenges or any kind of thing that the research aims to address, I get to talk to so many different people that I'd normally never encounter. So having like these in-depth conversations, doing, you know, 20 interviews on this given topic, and really getting to engage with people super closely is really, really rewarding.

In terms of challenges, though, it's a challenge in the sense that it's something that I had to adapt to. It's never a dull moment in the sense that the environment tends to be quite fast-paced. So the timelines are a little bit shorter than what I was used to in academia. And so not only are you adapting to projects, kind of having a life cycle of a couple of months, but also making sure that you're working on multiple different projects at the same time, too. So it's like, you know, that you have X amount of time to get this facet of the research done, kind of managing that. And working on a skill set that allows me to think with a little bit more agility and work with a little bit more - work smarter, I guess, is what I'm getting at, just to kind of adapt to the requirements of delivering really quality research within the timelines that that are required, as I said. But yeah, that was something that I think I had to kind of learn the ropes of when I when I first got into this type of work, but I think it's super rewarding to kind of get to learn about so many different kinds of things.

Nicole Malette:

Thanks, Megan.

Allison, or Judith, do you have anything that you want to add to those conversations?

Judith Mintz:

I still have one foot in the door, because I've got an article and a book chapter that's coming out in a textbook soon and another article I'm currently revising. But I love not having to be in that siloed academic space. You know, the grad student space, that kind of precariousness of sessional teaching. I'm really glad to not have to do that anymore. I like being able to close my computer and let work go actually. As grad students, we are made to feel like our value is contingent on our ability to be working 24 seven and answering emails and always having like, kind of crappy boundaries. And we're expected to do that.

Having, work that you love that you're really interested in doing so that you don't mind looking at an email on the weekend is great. But it's really lovely to be able to say I'm done for the day or for the weekend. I'm not looking at my email. And I actually have like, since we're all working from home, and that was the funny thing is, I was ...three weeks working at Native Child before COVID. So I was like, yes, I'm in an office. This is so great. I'm going to work every day. And then I'm at home. Oh, back where I started. But one thing I did was I made sure I have my work laptop and I have my personal laptop. So on the weekend, I don't open my work laptop. It's amazing. So then on the weekend, if I want to look at a writing project, I can you know, and I don't have my work stuff coming up so those boundaries are really nice to be able to have.

Nicole Malette:

When you said that noticed a lot of people on the panel smiling and nodding along. The idea of boundaries sounds great right now.

Allison, did you have anything that you wanted to add?

Allison Laing:

Yeah, what are boundaries? Can you just clarify? I'm kidding. I used to have them. They disintegrated. But I feel like it'll be like riding a bicycle, I'll be able to get right back into asserting those boundaries again, after all this is over. Yeah. Yeah, I have to keep reminding myself that weekends don't exist anymore.

I don't believe I don't have much to add to this particularly. Except that I'm also, you know, working toward the eventuality of doing dissertation research. And so COVID is a huge challenge, of course, especially when you're working with vulnerable populations, you have to be very conscious of not being a super spreader event and other ethics concerns on top of everything else that's happening. Yeah, so just trying to navigate, but be flexible to be able to navigate those ever-changing situations and circumstances and being a responsible citizen in the midst of all of your own very pressing needs, and those deadlines and everything else like that, like that's definitely something that's top of mind, shall we say. Not a new challenge, I don't think it's new for me, but it's definitely top of mind.

Yeah, that's all I'll say, because I haven't transitioned out yet. So there we go.

Nicole Malette:

I appreciate the perspective that you're giving up working in it while also being in academia. I think that it's a really unique point that I think each person on this panel has also expressed that at one point during their academic career they were working both outside of academia, and while they were doing their studies, so I think that you can speak to that a little bit.

So the next question that I have, and is starting to get at some of the questions that the panelists or that the participants are posing, is, **what advice would you give a current graduate student who is looking to go into work outside of academia?**

Again, I can open it to whoever wants to go first.

Heather Holroyd:

I thought about this question a lot, actually. So yeah, and I see some questions coming up in the Q and A, too, about, there's a question about academic writing and keeping up academic writing. And I think the biggest piece of advice that I often give to graduate school colleagues that come looking for advice is, *search your own soul*. Like I cannot emphasize that enough, determine what you want for yourself, and follow that. Along the path of graduate school, there are going to be so many compelling, articulate people who are going to try to convince you to do the things that they think are best for you. And unless you have taken the time to know who you are, and what you want, and the reasons why you want those things, you will be easily persuaded to go in a million different pathways.

So for me, I mean, I really connected to the kind of life that I wanted to build for myself after graduate school. So much to what Judith was saying, I've had two parents that were very ill, one is now passed away, one was chronically like very ill during my PhD. And I saw like, the very essence of life sort of flashed before my eyes. And that helped me to really get clear on what I wanted for myself. And I was listening to somebody speak today about how they were on a plane, and they read in a book, to write your own eulogy. And what do you want to be remembered for is your legacy? And I think that if you can get clear on what your goals are for yourself, the pathway that you will need to determine for yourself out of graduate school and after graduate school will become much more clear and you will be less persuaded.

And then the other thing is also find opportunities to share skills and learn new skills. So you already have a lot of skills within yourself that you've developed from your training up until this point. So there is an opportunity for you to share some of those skills and also develop or grow the skills that you know that you're going to need to create that legacy for yourself on your pathway out of and after graduate school.

Nicole Malette:

Thank you, Heather.

Anyone else have something that they would like to add?

Meghan Miller:

Yeah, I mean, it echoes a lot of what I think on this topic to kind of thinking about getting down to that what your why is when it comes to let's say specifically qualitative research. What methodologies do you like? Why do you like them? So say, if you do if you're interested in in depth interviewing, why do you like that? Do you like to engage with people really closely? Engage with text really closely, you know, find the story kind of figure out, what are people experiencing, and then figuring out kind of the story of what's going on. Getting down to that level and starting there I think illuminates a lot about what you want your life to look like, what you want to be doing, what's going to engage you.

Yeah, just thinking in terms of like, what is it you like? How do you want to feel? What kinds of activities? How do you want to use your skills? I think something that I heard once that really stuck with me again is how do you want to feel? And then kind of going from there. And a lot will kind of sort itself out in terms of where you're going to go with that.

Judith Mintz:

I love that how do you want to feel question because you know what, that's actually how I decided that market research wasn't for me. It felt too corporate for me. I didn't feel like I fit into a corporate space. For me, I was wanting to figure out how can I be more in a policy space. And so like, when you think about, like, research, research shows up in so many different ways. And like Megan said, like, do you like working with people? Or do you like, you know, examining texts really closely. Sometimes those are like two really different skills. Do you like managing relationships or do you like managing spreadsheets, which, you know, like in mixed methods, context, that can be a lot of different things.

And full disclosure, I'm a single parent, and I finished my PhD as a single parent of two. And I started at 40. So I'm a little different than some of you. And I pounded a picket line for five months while going through some heavy family stuff and trying to finish my dissertation and thinking about what do I want to do. And one of the things that was so amazing was talking to my colleagues on the picket line who were coming from different departments. And so like, talking to people from different areas and finding out different things. You know, my PhD supervisor, she kept saying the wrong things to me, but it took me like until my last year to figure out how wrong she was. So only talking to your PhD supervisor or your committee, you might be really limited. And, you know, she would say oh, because a lot of my like, I did help sociology, I did medical anthropology kind of theorizing in my work. So when I started thinking she would, she would say things like, "Oh, you should examine health". But I don't have a public health background. I don't have any staff. And the psych people on the picket line, were saying to me, you know, you really should learn SPSS if possible. I still actually haven't learned it, because my agency that I work for, doesn't have it yet. So I would recommend exploring that because quantitative skills are important and have more currency at the moment than qualitative research, unfortunately.

And this question was, what advice would you give to someone there, I would have liked to have done more work, like exploring knowledge mobilization and program evaluation. And you can do like, four courses, either through Coursera, or like Ryerson, the Chang school. I didn't know what a logic model was when I started and I use them quite a bit now.

So, also get good at Microsoft Word and Excel, if you're a Mac person figure those things out. Because there's some they're like, they're like, it's like a little slightly different language. And, yeah, talk to people outside of your field.

Nicole Malette:

Great, thanks Judith.

It sounds like one of the main take home messages so far is figure out the type of lifestyle that you want and what resonates with you and the type of life that you want to have post-graduation. And also thinking about the types of skills and techniques and methodologies that are really going to be important when you go on to pursue different career opportunities.

Allison, do you have anything else that you would like to add to that?

Allison Laing:

Sorry, my mouse went...stray mouse! No, just underscoring that networking is really important. And to me, I mean, before many, many years ago I worked in the film industry. And so networking meant something very different. Usually involved a glass of wine in your hand. And so I was a little bit afraid of that term, until I realized that all of these positions in the downtown east side that I landed, either in service provision or in research, were all sort of serendipitous or accidental, and then I realized, wait a second, it's because of networking. It's because of the social connections that I've made and fostered. And I suppose a little bit of like the reputation that I was careful to protect in terms of being a good worker, shall we say. Yeah, so, you know, networking is gold, networking is your that's your ticket.

Nicole Malette:

So networking seems to be a thing that keeps coming up. And something that I think that you touched on, and maybe you all have this experience, too, is, there's this push from people in academia, people decide that you should be networking, and you sometimes feel really uncomfortable doing it. But the best way that I think about networking is, if you feel like if you go into a networking situation, thinking I need to network, you're doing it wrong, you should be going in just trying to make friends and be friendly and be a human being. Because how many situations have you been in that's supposed to be this networking thing, and this person comes in and just starts blurbing their expertise and their position to you. And you know, sometimes that's not always the best way to make an impression or make connections. And honestly, networking is a lot easier and more informal than we make it out to be. So hopefully we get to that conversation to build on that.

But this seems to be something that is also coming up is, **what are any extracurricular activities that graduate students should be aware of when they're thinking about pursuing a qualitative-based work? So were there any volunteer positions that you took on or workshops, that kind of ties into that networking aspect?**

Judith Mintz:

One thing that I wished I had had time to do was volunteering. It wasn't something I had time to do, because I was a single mother. And I was also like, working in addition to being a TA I had, I was teaching yoga, through my PhD. I didn't have time to volunteer, but if I did, I would have volunteered for my union, I have a very strong interest in labor politics. And there's some really interesting work in the labor world, and so there were really interesting things like on organizing and like change management theory, like stuff that you learn working in the union, labor relations, industrial relations, that I think I really would have liked to have gotten a chance to do more of. I mean, I did do some stuff, but not as much as I would have liked.

Nicole Malette:

Thanks, anybody else care to address that, as well as any orienteering or extracurricular programs that you did in grad school, or maybe would have liked to do that you think would help you in the job market?

Heather Holroyd:

I can take this question too Nicole.

So I did quite a bit of volunteering during graduate school. And I was actually quite pleased when I looked at the list of participants, and I saw Awish on here and Sarah from the Pathways to Prosperity student engagement committee. So hi. So that was one of the national volunteering opportunities that I did, I was a co-chair of that committee for quite a number of years. And that was really great, just kind of back to that point around networking, is like finding opportunities to do the things that you want to do, right. So kind of back to the point you made earlier about, find opportunities to share the skills that you have, and to learn new skills. So I went to the Pathways to Prosperity partnership conference, I was super amazed at the content that was there. And then I was like, I want to get more involved in this in this partnership. And that's when I joined the student engagement committee. And that was like a huge, wonderful opportunity for me to meet other graduate students across the country.

I also realized very early on in my PhD that I definitely was interested in careers outside of academia and had no interest in becoming an academic. So I never thought about doing a postdoc I saw a question about that. That was not something that ever crossed my mind. If I didn't want to become an academic, why would I go into a postdoc where I'm going to focus on publishing and becoming an academic wasn't for me. So I wanted to learn more about nonprofit organizations. I realized when I came out of my master's and wanted to do work, I had no idea I really admired the work that nonprofits did, had no idea how they did it, had no idea what it was like. So I joined a board, I became on a board of directors and I was on a board for like, four years, five years. And that role on the board eventually led to a contract position. And that led to my full-time employment at Pacific Aids network.

So for people who are asking about contract employment in the question and answer too, I would say yes, like a contract employment is a way for an employer to test you out before they actually make a commitment. And if you are not great at the role, or you're not a fit with the team, then they don't have a human resources concern, to have to get rid of you because you're on a contract. So yes, that is a very common way to get in, especially when you don't have dedicated human resources to kind of vet people and, and to process situations that don't work out in easy ways. That's an easy way to kind of bring somebody on test the waters and continue.

So I would say, like, kind of that networking thing is finding those opportunities for you to share and to learn. And I can't emphasize that enough, and just the power of your network. And I think if we are sociologists here, like Mark Granovetter, the strength of weak ties was also how I got my next job. I saw somebody working policy, like Judith I was very interested in that world. So I asked somebody out for coffee who was a former graduate student in our department, and I was like, Miriam, how did you get this job. And then when Mary left her job, she put my name forward for that job, you know, just simply on the basis of that coffee conversation that we had. So I came from a network, like the idea of networking was sold to me in graduate school, like, go to CSA, go to ASA, have a business card, walk around, eat cheese, talk about your research interests, and it was like, stressful, it was fun, it was like, also very stressful. And this is not the kind of networking that I do now. Like, now I'm looking for opportunities to learn from people, and to provide value to people. And I think that those are the two important things.

So you know, like, having a network is not like a pie, like, it's not like you have a finite number of connections. And once you give those connections away, there's less pie for you. The more you offer to connect people and be a connector, the more people are going to come to you for connections and to get connected and for you to find new ways to be a connector. So I really can't emphasize that enough.

Nicole Malette:

Thanks, Heather. And I think that you have built on that idea of what networking is in a really lovely way.

Allison, you have your hand up, go ahead.

Allison Laing

Just to say too that it's important to pay it forward. As you hinted at, because sometimes that paying it forward that comes around again. And just to add on to what you're talking about contract work. Yes, sometimes it is an HR issue. And it's sort of an easy way to vet you. But also, it's because of the funding structure for so many nonprofits and other kinds of organizations. So I haven't had a contract that lasts more than a year for a decade now. So yeah, it just seems to be the way that work is. And that's not all necessarily it's all nonprofit and some academic adjacent work, but I'm sure it's also in other areas as well. Maybe Meghan you could speak to that.

Meghan Miller:

Yeah, absolutely. It's not uncommon within kind of the market research world as well to have sort of this first six-month contract and then reassessing after that.

And, you know, jumping back on the idea of networking, something that I think I wish I had done a little bit more of when I was in school was getting to know other people in other departments, other social scientific fields, but even just in economics or psychology. A lot of my colleagues are organizational, and industrial psychologists. So learning from them has been fantastic. And I think if I had sort of gotten to know networked with or gotten engaged with other fields while focusing on my sociology education, I think it would have expanded my understanding of what was possible for me after graduation, and helped me learn from so many different perspectives, so many different approaches to research and to research questions and looking at the ways that it's done and how to think about it. So I think networking, more expansively in terms of topic area would be super helpful to me.

Nicole Malette:

Great, thank you, that was all really helpful information.

So the next question, I want to focus on maybe beefing up some of our participants' egos a little bit or their confidence in themselves. Because one thing that I think that a lot of grads, maybe are feeling is insecure about their prospects on the job market.

So what are some qualitative job market related skills that you think that students probably already have, but they might not be aware of them?

Judith Mintz

So, you know, I spent a lot of time thinking about that when I was in that kind of resume building phase and networking phase. And just to say one other thing about networking is I thought of my networking meetings, my little coffee chats. And some of them were online. And some of them that I offer now to other people are online, of course, is to listen to them and their story. I like to do. And so when I think about what those skills are, relationship, building, stakeholder relationships, research management, project management. Now, project management is a bit of a tricky one, especially like in some corporate fields, on because there's like this PMP certification thing that I don't know what it is, but it's really big and really technical, and it tends to show up in the IT world a lot. And I don't think we need to do that. But we are project managers. And, you know, we PhD people, we're managing so many different pieces, and so you're already good at that, you're already really awesome at managing being a TA, managing volunteer work, managing extra employment, managing your writing, you know, managing writing five different chapters all at once, or whatever, however, your methods are, navigating a family, taking care of parents, you know, all of those pieces. So project management, put that on your list of skills

And also research ethics. I actually manage, I'm a research manager in my job as well, like, we're developing research ethics policy. And so that's something that for me, like, I suppose that without, you know, that academic adjacent kind of world, but yeah, so those, those three, I mean, the writing, of course, you're going to be excellent writers and editors, and, you know, attention to detail, that might be you.

And so, you know, think of those things that you love doing, and you can capitalize them and put that into, you know, on the top of your resume that section, that little profile piece about who you are, and pick all the ones you know, that you really resonate with, that you can speak to, that if you're applying to a specific job that the job asks for to you there's like, you know, you're so good at playing with words.

Oh, and the other one. Like translating knowledge, you know, we can absorb huge amounts of text in a short period of time. And my colleagues are often amazed at how fast I process information. So you know, you we PhD people are good at that, we forget that we are.

Nicole Malette:

Great, anybody else have anything else to add?

Meghan Miller:

I think all those things, I think it's, you know being able to take large volumes of information, like Judith mentioned, and the experiences of others, and figuring out the best way to convey that to a larger audience, to stakeholders, to policymakers, to the people who want to know how to improve the situation. So the people who are going through challenges or, you know, finding out what the key issues are, from people's own words.

And one of the things that's really important in my work that I think, you know, qualitative sociologists are super at, being able to synthesize those perspectives without losing that integrity of the individual respondent. So paying attention to you know, how that person is experiencing their situation, their life, in sort of that macro level to say, okay, well, what does that look like?

What's the context? What are the factors at play? But also, what is this one person telling me? And how do I engage with that person and understand their stories and ask questions if I need to.

So it's all of those kinds of public-facing things that you can really play up when you're applying for work to say, you know, it's the relationship building, it's, it's that I really can listen to people and understand what they're going through, and maybe figure out kind of what that means. But yeah, everything Judith said, like, you'd be fantastic writers, editors. finding out that big picture idea, you know, it seems like a lot of employment and a lot of industry settings they're looking for the big picture idea, what they're looking for, what's really going on, how do we distill this? So being able to do that and say that you can really effectively do that I think is a really good way to market yourself.

Nicole Malette:

Awesome. Thank you, Megan.

Heather, did you have anything that you wanted to add?

Heather Holroyd

Yeah, really strong process thinking skills, which I think having been in the workforce now for, like five years, process thinking is a serious skill. And it kind of gets at what Judith was saying about the project management, you have found your way out of so many holes, like deep dug down in the ground holes already like, I have a research question, what are the methods? Who do I talk to? How do I write it up? How do I find information? Who do I need? How do I apply for graduation? So just like the process thinking of like moving through all those different steps is really great problem-solving skills. And I think that also helps with thematic analysis. So I think beefing up your skills with what Judith is recommending program evaluations and learning how to do logic models. Like logic models stump so many people. But if you have strong process thinking, which you do, because of all the work that you do, a logic model I don't think is as complicated for sociology graduates as it might be for other people, but it like stumps people, and it takes a long time for many people to do them. But I feel like if you have that really strong process thinking and you know, the questions to ask to get the answers that you need, a logic model is going to be very quick for you to put together.

And then yeah, I think the thematic analysis and being able to do cross tabs really fast. And like distill information like Megan is saying, and then present it really quickly in like a very basic kind of like format is going to be very, wow, it's going to have a wow factor for a lot of people.

And then this is kind of a unique one that's not really my own experience. But I've seen one of the people whose currently in the master's program, is moonlighting doing social media marketing as a sociologist, because she knows exactly what like what it takes to get the message to sell the product that the person is interested in doing. And so she just has an awareness of like the structures of society and like kind of can identify trends really quickly and distill that information in really compelling formats, also helps that she's quite a talented photographer. But I think that there's a lot of talent there for sociologists as well for kind of like a side hustle.

Nicole Malette:

Allison, did you have anything else that you wanted to add to that?

Allison Laing:

No, I'm just really looking forward to getting all these skills.

Nicole Malette:

I'm sure that you already have a lot of them.

So we have one more question before we continue on to answer some of the Q and A that all of our participants have so eagerly put on the question board and the chat forum.

So the last question is, **where was a good place, I know this is pretty general, but where would be a really great place for people who are thinking of transitioning into non-academic work to look for jobs, because man, job market is not great right now. But are there any areas that we might not have been thinking about?**

Meghan Miller:

I mean, I don't want to say indeed and career weekend, because everyone knows about those. But I mean, going through avenues of cold emailing organizations that you're interested in, it's that networking piece, cold emailing people to say, "Hey, I'm really interested in what you're doing. Do you have time to talk to me about it?" And just being, not giving up. I know, it's tough, being persistent. You know, I think exploring, as I said, organizations that you're interested in and going down the rabbit hole of, okay, well, if it's not this one, what area do they work in? So being a little bit creative, like about where your search ends up, rather than a specific website or a specific place to look for posting say.

Nicole Malette:

Great, Does anybody else have any additional avenues that you might want to pursue?

Judith Mintz

So I know that this is maybe a bit of a contestable topic, but LinkedIn has offered me some really interesting opportunities. I know my organization actually posts a lot of its jobs on LinkedIn. The thing about LinkedIn that is kind of interesting is you can put in, like job search criteria and under, you know, qualitative research. And lots of things come up. And because all you folks are all really good researchers, so you can actually use LinkedIn as a research tool. So it can be a little bit of a rabbit hole that you like, find one thing and then you're like what does that lead to, and then you like research that company and then you find out a little bit more. Or an agency for example. In Toronto, we have policy jobs. to if you're interested in policy work. And so like, a lot of the jobs like with the City of Toronto and I'm sure other like larger municipalities have similar networking things.

And also, like institutes like and that was, again, that sort of like research, academic adjacent, but like different policy think tanks. And then like, you know, if you're looking in the marketing world, in a market research world, there's different like, market research shops, they sometimes call them, these really interesting ones. So those are a few ways.

Also, if you take courses, I'm sorry, I'm so Ontario Toronto based, but the Chang school at Ryerson, if you were to take one of those kinds of certificate programs, there's one in publishing, by the way. And so, you know, if you needed the publishing certificate, or like, if you're interested in labour relationships, like an HR certificate. They connect you to different spaces, corporate spaces. And so a lot of the time, you can find really interesting areas that you didn't think through networking interviews, where you hear people's stories, and then you learn more and more. So it can be a really interesting little rabbit hole, like, check out someone that you like, and then look to see if they have a blog. And then you can, you can have fun with it.

Nicole Malette:

I really like the idea of having fun with the job search. I think that that takes a little bit of stress out of it.

Heather, did you have something that you wanted to add?

Heather Holroyd:

Yeah, so I think all of these are great suggestions. And just kind of picking up on that idea, informational interviews, I think are like the most under recognized opportunity for finding jobs, I think, you know, and so if you don't know what an informational interview is, spend some time, do a Google search, figure that out.

And then I think, I would say, this might sound cheesy, but where are the people that you admire? And whose work you would like to be doing? Where are they working? And you know, what are they doing? How did they get that work? Just kind of like what Judith was alluding to. And, you know, and pick up the keyboard and send them an email and ask them like, hey, do you have 5, 10 15, it's probably going to be 30 minutes to chat about how you got to the role that you are at, and just really like come prepared with those questions that you know. So an informational interview is basically like reverse questioning, you actually ask them, like, how did you get to this job, what you know, all those kinds of questions, and take that opportunity to talk to them and, and to kind of position yourself in their mind as somebody who might be a person to work with. And I guess the power dynamic of an informational interview is you're actually coming to them and asking them questions. So you're kind of setting yourself up to get a job before you're actually looking for a job. And then in the future, they'll maybe keep you in mind when opportunities cross their desk.

And so, you know, another thing is, look at people who have recently graduated from the PhD program that you're currently in, where are they working, reach out to them do a similar thing, let them know you're looking. I am always like super happy to forward on role opportunities that come across my desk to people that I work with, and that I can vouch for their skills, people that I've been in graduate school with.

And I guess the thing is, is that it can be hard to do those things. But it's easier to do those things when you're not actually looking for a job in the immediate future. So if you're kind of putting those feelers out there early on your program, you're going to be well set up to have lots of things coming to you throughout, and you're going to get a feel for the kind of work that's out there, and the kind of things that you could maybe see yourself doing.

And I guess the thing I just want to say is when I defended my PhD, I had like, nothing lined up, I was absolutely terrified. But now I can say that if you kind of take that initiative to do those things, there are so many opportunities out there. They might be short term opportunities, but they will likely lead to longer term opportunities. If you are reliable, you deliver things quickly. And you can be a person that people enjoy working with. So if you actually hold up your end of the bargain, I think that all those little opportunities will often lead to bigger opportunities.

Nicole Malette:

I think that's some really great advice. And the big thing about informational interviews is, I've always found that people are usually pretty eager to do it, because people sometimes like talking about themselves, and it's pretty low prep on their behalf. So it's a really good way for you to learn about a company or a corporation or an organization and also learn about the steps that you might want to be taking early on, as Heather said, that will help you later on. That's awesome information.

Allison, go ahead.

Allison Laing

Also, we tend to forget what it's like for people on the hiring side of the equation. And I certainly haven't hired at, like this level, but I've certainly hired as a coordinator of various studies and other places, I've hired people. And it's really hard to find good people. And so those informational interviews are beneficial to the hire, as well, because now they have even their rolodex, if that word still means anything. And so now they know that there's somebody out there, that might not be a good fit for anything that's coming up now. But you can keep them in future in mind for future. And so don't underestimate the value that you could bring to them as well. During that time. It's not taking 30 minutes at a time; it's also giving of yourself. So remember your own value.

Nicole Malette:

Great thank you everyone.

Okay, so now what we're going to do is switch over to some of the questions that some of our participants have posted. So I'm going to switch back and forth between the Q and A and some of the chat that you've posted on the side here.

So the first question that got a lot of thumbs up in the Q and A section is, **as a new graduate, do you find that when you're in the jobs when you're going through some job searches that there's an overabundance of contract work rather than salary positions? And how do you think you should navigate some of those?** I see a lot of nodding of heads.

Meghan Miller:

I mean, I think it's a bit of reality to deal with, that there is a lot of that contract work that we've already talked about, you know, it's a way to kind of get your foot in the door. And maybe if, you know, they don't have the funding to keep you on, they might know other people who do. So not necessarily being afraid to go for those opportunities, because like we said, they do lead into really good places.

Judith Mintz:

I totally agree with what Megan is saying about contract work, don't be scared of it. You know, it's funny, like, our parents' generation were a generation of people that could, you know, graduate from school back in the days when an undergraduate degree held enough currency. And you know, they'd be in their job for 25 or 30 years, and then they could retire. And that's just not the reality anymore. But you can make contract work work for you, too. You know, I'm trying you guys out as much as you're trying me out, and, and the opportunity to make connections while you're in that role and learn things in a way that it's like, yeah, you know what, this is six months, I can try it out. And I can learn how to do some really good things and learn, make more connections and develop more relationships. And find out, oh, I actually don't like this, or I really do. And I'm actually in a contract that was first three months, then extended to a year. And tomorrow is my one-year anniversary. And I know that my contracts being extended. And because it's a nonprofit, I know that they tell me that they would like to hire me permanent. It's a funding juggle. And so it's knowing that you're developing the skills and you're developing the relationships. You can try it out. And I think it is good.

Nicole Malette:

Heather, did you have anything to add? I noticed you're strongly nodding your head.

Heather Holroyd:

Yes, like I was on a call earlier today with somebody in an organization who's interested in finding somebody to do a contract and they were coming to find somebody that possibly we could refer to that contract. So I think a lot of the work is contract based and it is great. You get a deliverable at the end of it, but then you know, they give you permission, you might be able to share that as something in your portfolio. I think one of the big challenges even I face, I feel like I still face this on-the-job market is the PhD people feel like it can be somebody who's not going to deliver on deadline, somebody who's going to always want their deadlines extended, somebody who's going to ask a lot of questions is going to think they're smarter than everybody else on the team, think they're better than everybody else on the team, etc, etc, etc. There's a lot of negative stereotypes that go along with having an advanced degree. And so I think that the contract also gives an opportunity to, for them to test that out. And for you to dispel some of those myths in the way that you work with those organizations as well.

Nicole Malette:

That's great. Alison, did you have anything that you wanted to add?

Allison Laing:

I had a glitch so I missed a bit of what Heather was saying. But I think I already talked a little bit about contract work and how it's affected my personal life for the last decade or so. So I'm not afraid of it in the same way that my mother would be. Yeah, because often that's just the way that they have to structure for funding reasons and other reasons as well. So take them, and like worst case scenario is that you don't like it. And, and they, you get some connections there or you love it, and you still get connections there and you have to move on to something else. But it's always an opportunity for something.

Nicole Malette:

Awesome. Well, it sounds like that contract work is now a fact of life, and that we should clearly be jumping into those opportunities, not just for employment, but also for the networking and the advantages that will come with it.

I'm going to try to combine two questions, one from the chat and one from the Q and A section. So this one is a shout out to Judith. Hi, Judith. **I love the idea of post PhD networking groups. Are there any groups that you would recommend to recent PhD grads, or where they are more informal POS huge thanks to all the panelists and organizers?** This is wonderful. Thank you, we are so glad that you could join us.

I would also like to sort of smoosh on one of the chat questions, which is **what are some networking opportunities that we could maybe also be thinking about during COVID, because networking from your living room, which is mine is sometimes a little challenging?**

Judith Mintz:

So I get to shout out to Jennifer Polk right now, who I know is here. So Jennifer has a fabulous networking group, and she's doing right now called from PhD to life. And she started that group, I think actually after, or right around the time that I found my current role. So I haven't really spent too much time in that space. But there was another group that Jennifer had been organizing with, as well. And I learned a lot about people and my LinkedIn network really expanded and feel free to hit me up on LinkedIn, if you want to find me, you know, I love making new friends and I, I had a lot of folks do little coffee chats with me and you can do them online. And it's true. I think, as Heather said, you know, informational interviews, like it's fun to pay it forward to someone. And help kind of tell your story in hopes that it might help someone else. And so LinkedIn can be really cool. And you can use LinkedIn as a as a networking group strategy.

The other thing that I did and that's some of my friends are doing is they have little scrums. So they encourage each other at the beginning of the day, they might meet again at noon, they might meet again at five or have like a combination of those options. And folks get together online on zoom. And, you know, what are you working on today? And so you kind of give each other a pep talk sort of like when you're working on your dissertation, and you might have a writing group. And actually, so some of my some of the people from my writing group when I was working on my dissertation, we still keep in touch and we've you know, kind of been each other's little cheerleaders and done things together. So when I think about that writing group that you have, or that you were thinking about joining because there's lots of them, there's a Facebook group, or two or three, called qualitative research sociology type groups. I wish I could think of it right now I forget I'm so sorry. But again, you can hit me up on LinkedIn and asked me but there are some great groups on Facebook as well that you can connect to and have conversations with.

Nicole Malette:

Anybody else have any other options that they can think of? If not, we'll just carry on to the next question we got a few to get through. So I'm going to also acknowledge that we're not likely going to get through all of them. But if you would like, you can email your questions to me and I can forward them on.

The next question is **it sounds like Judith is doing some academic writing on the weekends. Is it hard to keep that side of things going while you're maybe doing work outside of academia? So maybe some of us that want to transition into work outside of academia, kind of have some publications that they've been working on through and you'd like to see them go to fruition at the end. Is it hard to balance those two roles?**

Judith Mintz:

So, the book chapter that is actually going to press this, like, I think it's coming out in July. And have a co-authored article for we're making revisions on for peer review three years ago. And my co-author and I have actually shopped it around for a long time. So, the fact that it's finally coming together, and we're just like, on the weekend, I was just finishing up some revisions, it's been accepted to the Journal of feminist scholarship. They've both taken a really long time. And so, it's not, it's the long deadlines, you know, they're kind of like its chip away at it. But if you don't want to do it, you don't have to do it. I mean, I just do it, because my identity likes to write and read, and I haven't quite let go. And, you know, like, I just kind of haven't decided, and like, I, I don't think I want to turn my dissertation into a book. But I know that there's, there's still a lot of interest on the topic. And so, some days, though, like, there's been moments where I'm like, Oh, the last thing I want to do is look at that article again, I'm so tired from working full time. So you really have to kind of decide like, how much you want to do it. Why? You know, it's because it's like free labor. Like, I might get a little tiny little bit of royalties on the textbook that I got the chapter in, but it's certainly it's mostly just because I like it, it's a, it's a line on a CV, that's not really going to do much for me. So, I'm not doing it because it's going to get any further in my career, I don't think. But at the same time as like, as an educator, and like, I, I still feel kind of, I don't know, maybe it's an emotional attachment. It's still work, I need to figure out why I'm even doing it. But it can be really nice to just kind of hold on to a part of you like a hobby.

Nicole Malette:

I love the idea of academic writing being hobby.

Anyone else trying to sort of balance that still holding on to that academic writing on the side? Or have you all let it go?

Meghan Miller:

I have not done any of it. But I will say the people that I know who continued to work full-time and also publish. It's a passion project. And I think that would be the key and kind of keeping that momentum going. The people that I know were doing what they love, they love what they're working on. And I think that would make all the difference.

Nicole Malette:

Great. I have another question that didn't get a lot of upvotes. But I actually think it's a really important question that I've heard echoed around in grad school.

Is there hope for master's students going out without pursuing a PhD into the job market?

And so maybe Allison and Meghan, you can speak to this a little bit.

Meghan Miller:

Definitely is absolutely is. I mean, I think the skills are there, I think, you know, going out into the world and gaining experience that way, is always available to you. And going back to do a PhD is always available too. I think you know being confident that being you know, you got through a graduate program, you have those skills, you're extremely capable. People are going to want you. Yeah, there's there's totally hope, it's completely doable.

Nicole Malette:

Allison what do you think?

Allison Laing:

Yeah, I might even go further and say that perhaps Master's, there's more value gained like the net benefit. Leaving with a master's degree rather than sticking around for their five years, or however long it's going to take to get a PhD. Spoken like a PhD student. It almost feels like at this point, maybe narrowing my possibility, but you should take what I say with a grain of salt, because I don't really know what I'm talking about. But there's definitely that argument to be made that if you leave with a master's degree, it's been spent a year or two years doing it, you leave with a lot of skills, and a lot of experience and a lot of connections, like all the things that we've been talking about up to this point. And you're almost more hireable, because you haven't sort of over educated yourself for all the positions in a way. I hope this makes sense. And I'm not making people doubt, except for myself, their choice to continue and do a PhD.

Nicole Malette:

But it makes a lot of sense, because I think some people look at the PhD and the PhD can be deceptive. They say four years, some of us took longer, I took seven. And so there's a serious cost benefit in that and that you're willing to invest that much time and that much money, let's be honest, goes into that process. So if you are concerned with or have outside influences that mean that you want to get into the job market sooner. I think that it's really reasonable to have confidence in yourself and competence in your abilities after your master's program. I think that this is maybe what you both of you are getting at is that we maybe downplay the skills that master's graduates have.

Meghan Miller:

Yeah, and just add one final point on that. I think, if you know that you want to pursue careers outside of academia, you can take that and use it to gain the workplace experience that you will need to enter into those roles. And that's, you know, what a lot of employers will be looking for.

Nicole Malette:

And, Judith, you just had your hand up?

Judith Mintz

Yeah, I was going to say that there's new people from my master's cohort, who are in very cool jobs now. One of them is doing like community-based education and engagement work. Another one who was working in provincial government and now is doing more nonprofit work, also, in an Indigenous space, and another person working in the CBC, there's a few people from my PhD program, who dropped their PhDs, and were doing really cool work as well.

So, and there was a point when I thought I was going to drop my PhD, and then I didn't. I interviewed for a very cool job and they told me that I didn't have on the ground policy experience. And so you know, like, what if I had dropped my PhD and done the certificate in public policy, you know, that might have been another thing. So, and actually, I talked to a guy at, at the Chang school in that program in the policy program. And he, he was like, yeah, the master's people, they're the ones who are going to get the jobs because the PhD people are, you know, they're over educated. I don't go for that. I don't think that's true at all. But the program that he's directing, you know, like, it's kind of, you can, you can totally just do your masters and get a very wonderful job, because it's really, like, super specific, and you're going to be great.

Nicole Malette:

Thanks for that.

One last question before we have to tie everything up.

So we talked about different skills, but is there a course that you think or a couple courses that you think would really help students, especially if they want to do masters? Or if they do the PhD that will help them when they go out into the job market after?

Heather Holroyd:

I would say no, I would say that there are 67 different people on this call with 67 different exciting career paths ahead of them. So I think it would be a grand overstatement of my experience and knowledge to recommend one thing for them to think about. But I think thinking back to some of those points you made earlier about finding what your why is how you want to feel, who do you admire that's doing that work, what paths that they take. But I will say that I think getting some experience on program evaluation, so you can do some of those short-term contracts and understand like how to do a project quickly, would be helpful.

Nicole Malette:

Anyone else with ideas about coursework or sort of programs, that would be really helpful?

I think Heather summed it up really nicely. It's really dependent on what avenue that you want to pursue after graduation. So if you want to do analytics or anything like that, maybe beefing up your methods.

There's also I don't want to underplay any of the other coursework that might be available to you and thinking about some of the certificate programs that are also available to you postgraduate that will really hone some of those skills that would make you a better fit in the job market. So I think that this is a really good point is that we maybe underplay some of the courses that are available and how well they already do link up to the job market.

So we're just about ready to sum everything up. And I'd like to take this opportunity to go around to all the panelists. I'm thinking back, this is a little bit of a I don't know if anybody watches RuPaul's drag race, but they take a moment where they ask each person to go around and say what advice would you give graduate school you who is wanting to go into the job market?

So what would you give previous you as sort of inspiration? Maybe you're telling yourself you know, you hang in there you got it. Or just like what you wish you had known back then. So what do you wish you would know, and I'll start with Meghan,

Meghan Miller:

Aside from I think what a lot of people would be thinking - you can do it, you're stronger than you think. I think don't doubt how adaptable you can be, don't doubt how quick you can think how, you know, you get to that the pyramid of knowledge where you get to the top where you can sort of reproduce knowledge and create new knowledge. Don't doubt what a value that is to you as a person and your ability to thrive in your career, you know.

You know, through my work I touch a lot of different areas. And I think I owe that to the ability to move to those different areas to look at different industries, to what I gained in grad school, thinking laterally. The same core skills can apply in a lot of different areas. So don't doubt how well you can move into those spaces. And what you really bring to the table as a researcher, which I think you know, everybody here can agree with and hopefully identify with because I'm sure you know, it's, you bring something really special to the table. And you know, going through grad school is awful hard. It's very hard. So having that tenacity to say oh, I'm tough I can do it you want I mean it's remembering those things about yourself when things are tough or a little bit uncertain.

Nicole Malette:

Thank you, Meghan.

Heather, what would you say to past you?

Heather Holroyd:

I would say don't be so scared, like I was so scared that there's going to be nothing for me afterwards. And then I feel like there's also been there's been way more than I ever could have anticipated or dreamed of. So many opportunities are out there for you to do something that's meaningful to you that will make a difference to you and make a difference to others. Find that thing that makes you tick and chase it. Find out how to do it. There's one other piece of advice. Can you come back to me?

Nicole Malette:

Judith, what would you say to previous you?

Judith Mintz:

Give yourself permission to let go of imposter syndrome. You are enough. You are enough and you are versatile. And give yourself lots of time to look for that. The opportunities six to 12 months I applied to 80 things. It takes a long time and be gentle with yourself.

Nicole Malette:

I think that's great advice. Great advice for anybody in grad school.

Allison?

Allison Laing:

Um, well I can I can speak to master's graduate Allison as opposed to, I mean, it's it's still sort of a retroactive communication, I suppose. Yeah, the imposter syndrome is huge. I think that that. I mean, I even said it coming onto this panel that I'm an interloper. So it's so much a part of how we frame ourselves, I think. And because we're in that little bubble, right, like we're, we're, we're guided along through the process and having to burst out of that bubble and now, make your own path. And think for yourself and set your own agenda. That something is terrifying. Yeah, but stick with it. Keep going. I'm going to be dad. I'm hoping Heather has her jewel ready?

Nicole Malette:

Do you have it ready?

Heather Holroyd:

Yeah, I do. I don't know if it's a jewel for anybody else. But it was a jewel for me. It's like, take you down little memory lane of like, the wild ways in which my mind worked when I was a graduate student. I had this like, super weird impression that if I chose to do one thing, that was the only door that would open and then all the other doors would be closed. Like I remember like sitting at a full restaurant, eating noodle soup thinking if I accepted this one opportunity to do this, like immigration-related student project that then I would never get to go and work with, I was also involved in HIV stuff at that time. And I was like, if I go into immigration, that's it. That door will close for me forever. And like that is absolutely untrue, and not at all factually accurate.

And I continue to span like many different worlds in my career. Like life doesn't work like that. Whatever you choose to do today doesn't close many other doors for you in the future. If anything, it may open doors you could have never imagined so.

And then I guess the other thing I want to say too, is I remember walking out of panels like this feeling very overwhelmed at all the to do's that people told me I had to do and feeling like I had to execute them that moment. And that led to a lot of unpleasant situations for me, like in bathrooms being like, "how am I going to do all these things?" You don't have to do all the things now they're like some suggestions of things that have worked for me and other people on this channel, you may have different things. But what you are doing is great. And I think what you are doing is going to prepare you for the future world, I think that is going to have more remote working.

One thing I really realized during COVID is that I'm used to working at home by myself for eight hours a day, and many other people on my team, were not equipped to do that. And so my work has kind of continued, whereas like not to say that my colleagues work hasn't continued. But it hasn't been as much of a struggle for me. So I think also, even though we've given you a lot of things that you could consider doing, also recognize the things you're already doing are already setting you up to be successful. And so it's not so much that there's going to be other things for you to do, but you're already doing all the things.

SLIDE 11

Nicole Malette:

Great. Thank you, everyone. So thank you very, very much for taking part in this panel today. This is a really great discussion. And I think that we had a lot of really great and insightful comments. I also want to thank our audience members for attending and for sharing your questions as well. We'll be sending back around a feedback survey to all our audience members. And we would very greatly appreciate it if you could fill it out.

In addition to that, this webinar will be posted on YouTube. So you can go back and you can watch it again if there's any information that you missed. And we will also be making some graphics that we will be posting on our Twitter page for some of the information that our panelists shared to make it a bit more easy for you. But again, thank you all for joining us and we hope you found this series helpful and we look forward to chatting with you again in the future. Bye everyone.