27 Career Possibilities with your Doctorate in Psychology: Stories from Inspiring Leaders

Antonio A. Morgan-López, Brett Major, Muniya Khanna, Katie Rosanbalm, Karen Gavin-Evans, & Ilyse Dobrow DiMarco

Editor's Note: As illustrated in this chapter, a doctorate in psychology is a remarkably versatile degree. Once a verboten in academic circles, graduate programs now routinely discuss non-academic careers with the knowledge that an education in psychological science can offer a terrific impact to improve human lives in so many ways that extend beyond traditional teaching and academic research. No chapter could cover the entire range of potential career paths, of course, but this chapter used an interview format to feature careers from doctorates in psychology that include a scientist at a research institute (Dr. Antonio A. Morgan-López); a researcher at Facebook (Dr. Brett Major); a private practitioner, researcher, and author (Dr. Muniya Khanna); a senior research scientist at a university-based policy center (Dr. Katie Rosanbalm); a scientific review officer at a federal funding agency (Dr. Karen Gavin-Evans); and a freelance author (Dr. Ilyse Dobrow DiMarco). Each interview is posted below.

1. Antonio A. Morgan-López, PhD, Scientist at a Research Institute

I earned my PhD in Quantitative Psychology from Arizona State University (ASU) in 2003 under the mentorship of Dr. David P. MacKinnon; I was originally admitted into the Clinical PhD program, receiving my MA in Clinical in 2000 and then formally reapplied/readmitted into the Quantitative program between my second and third years at ASU. My initial substantive interests were primarily in substance use etiology and prevention among racial and ethnic minority youth, while my interests in quantitative methods centered around parametric and non-parametric confidence interval estimation methods for conditional mediation models. I currently hold the position of Fellow in Quantitative Psychology in the Community Health Research Division (CoHRD) at RTI International, an appointment made by RTI President and CEO Dr. E. Wayne Holden in 2018. Prior to this appointment, I've held the positions of Senior Research Quantitative Psychologist (2003–2009) and Principal Scientist (2012–2018) at RTI. Between 2009 and 2012, I served as Associate Professor of Quantitative Psychology in the University of North Carolina at Chapel

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Hill Department of Psychology (now Psychology and Neuroscience). My current program of research, funded by NIAAA and NIMH as PI, centers around advances in within- and across-study variation in using advanced factor analysis and Item Response Theory (IRT) approaches to symptom weighting in psychiatric assessment.

1.1 What Are Your Primary Job Responsibilities?

My primary job responsibilities are twofold. First, my original position specifications were to serve as an in-house quantitative methods consultant and data analyst, focused on the application of advances in latent variable methods and random coefficient/multilevel modeling methods without the expectation that I develop my own program of research, lead papers of my own or secure my own grant funding or any criteria that are typically associated with independent investigatorship; this part of my job remains unchanged from when I originally began my career at RTI in 2003. The second part of my position has evolved into that of an independent investigator who leads my own grants (I've had five NIH grants as PI since 2006 including two currently active R01 grants), publishes in peer-reviewed journals, reviews grants for NIH study section, and all of the obligations (minus teaching) that are typically associated with a tenure-track or tenured professorship at a major Research I university.

1.2 What Does a Typical Day or Week Look Like – What Do You Work On and How Is It Different From a Traditional Academic Position?

A typical week would find me working on leading a new and/or revised manuscript, conducting data analysis for manuscripts I may be leading or are being led by co-I's on my grants, mentoring my co-I's postdocs virtually on training in advanced data analysis methods or supervising Masters-level data analysts on grant and/or contract projects that I am a co-I on. I also have service obligations such as manuscript reviews, study section review, etc. Much of my week looks very similar to an academic, but with mentoring loads of my choosing and no teaching or course prep. If you strip away what is common to academic and *grant*-focused research institute (RI) settings for a quantitative psychologist (e.g., publications, grants, service to the field), the primary difference boils down to trading teaching for internal statistical consulting. For prospective candidates in other areas (e.g., Clinical, Developmental) there would be the use of their skill sets in study design, study implementation and interpretation of study findings, etc. much like my quant skill set would be used for data analysis – not much different than what you may be doing as graduate students in your mentor's lab, just with a different salary structure.

1.3 What Are the Biggest Benefits to This Type of Position?

This type of position offers pretty good professional and personal flexibility. I've been able to move my schedule around at a moment's notice due to illness,

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appointments, etc., particularly necessary when raising small children. So long as the work I pursue funding for is under the general umbrella of Behavioral Health, I feel like I have sufficient freedom to pursue that work and submit that work for publication to the audiences I feel are most appropriate to my interests. This is in contrast to my experience in academic settings where there was considerably less "academic freedom" regarding what and where I published my work.

1.4 Any Drawbacks Compared to Academia?

Within RIs, both small and large, there is a pressure that comes with securing external funding that is literally existential in ways that are not as immediately salient in academia (although they, of course, exist in academia too). Often, when one begins their career outside of academia in a RI, the initial projects that they are brought in to work on can set the tone for what type of career trajectory a person will have. If someone begins their career on contract projects, particularly those that do not offer opportunities for publishing, it can make it virtually impossible to be competitive for grant-focused funding mechanisms at NIH, CDC, FDA, etc.; as an aside, contract projects do have a more immediate impact on policy than do grants. It can also make it impossible to move back into an academic setting if one is not careful to ensure their CV remains competitive; leveraging the work you may have been doing in graduate school into additional papers and small grant applications/funding will be key to that.

Doctoral students sometimes feel pressure to enter traditional academic positions, focusing on research productivity. When did you realize that you could have an impact in other important ways and what was that decision like for you?

My pursuit of a non-academic position was the cause of department-wide consternation among the plurality of faculty of my department, not only from the faculty in Quantitative and Clinical but from faculty housed in other areas of the Department (e.g., Social, Developmental). I speculate that this was because I had offers for one tenure-track position at major R1 universities and two advanced quantitative methods postdocs that I was essentially walking away from. My decision to take my original position at RTI was fairly easy despite external pressure: (a) my teaching experiences during my graduate training were not enjoyable, (b) I enjoyed statistical consulting and wanted to get credit for it at an RI in ways that a quantitative psychologist in academia never will (see discussion of this in Aiken et al., 2008), and (c) I still felt that, despite the "pitfalls" of taking a non-academic position and its potential negative impact on publication/grant productivity, I could develop a program of research that could resemble that of someone in an academic lab. I also had personal parameters coming into play, as my then wife was expecting twins when I was in the middle of my job market cycle.

In many ways, I can have my "impact" cake and eat it too. I'm still able to have an impact on science that may be equivalent to someone who would be going up for Full Professor at an R1 university in the not-too-distant-future, but I've also seen my work on projects that were never publishable have an impact on State and Federal policy, particularly on legislation in local educational settings and juvenile justice contexts.

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1.5 How Are You Using Your Education in Psychology? How Do Your Skills Apply in Important and Impactful Ways?

There has been a continual feedback loop between how my quantitative methods training influences the ways in which I ask questions regarding the diagnosis and treatment of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and other psychiatric disorders. That same feedback loop has used my clinical training to identify problems that have come up in noticing issues and problems with the way we think about psychiatric disorder measurement and how there may be solutions to those issues in other areas (e.g., survey methodology, educational testing). For example, PTSD – and every other DSM disorder for that matter – requires a count of symptoms to meet criteria for a disorder, with no regard to specificity of combination of symptoms that make up the symptom count. But this makes little sense clinically, nor does it make much sense psychometrically. Clinicians know that certain symptoms "matter more than others" in the manifestation of an underlying psychiatric disorder. Psychometrically, we generally find that "mattering" can manifest itself in variation in factor loadings/discrimination parameters across symptoms of a disorder in using advanced factor analysis (FA) or IRT methods. Generally, these scoring methods are generally eschewed for total scores or symptom counts that assume every symptom of a disorder has equal weight. So, much of my current work uses FA/IRT to illustrate the consequences for this disconnect on errors in assessing overall treatment outcomes, individual-level clinically significant change, and potential errors in making a psychiatric diagnosis in-and-of-itself – with the eventual goal of incorporating symptom weighting in diagnostic criteria within the DSM.

1.6 Any Resources or Advice You Have for Someone Who Would Like to Pursue a Career in This Employment Sector?

I'd encourage those interested in working in or hearing more about RIs, particularly early in their graduate training, to employ multiple strategies. For example, one can take notice of investigators who are doing work they are interested in during conference presentations/symposia who are not housed in academic departments. At many conferences, RIs will have recruitment tables that may be embedded among other tables for book sales, assessment tools, etc. that may not always be obvious. Many RIs will advertise for positions within society- or conference-specific listservs, so connecting with these early can help. Wikipedia has a pretty handy listing of RIs as well: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Research_institutes_in_the_United_States

2. Brett Major, PhD, UX Researcher at Facebook

I earned my MA in Psychology at Wake Forest University and my PhD in Social Psychology at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. In graduate school, my research focused primarily on topics like: how positive emotions facilitate emotion regulation after negative experiences and how moments of positive social

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connection promote health and well-being. Currently, I'm a User Experience (UX) Researcher at Facebook, where I've worked for the last two years.

2.1 What Are Your Primary Job Responsibilities?

My primary job responsibilities are designing and launching surveys to better understand the experiences (and problems) people have on Facebook. I analyze the data, write up results, and present insights to different teams.

2.2 What Does a Typical Day or Week Look Like – What Do You Work On and How Is It Different From a Traditional Academic Position?

In a typical week, a lot of the work I do is very similar to the types of things I did in grad school. I spend a lot of time writing up research plans, guiding projects through a process very similar to IRB review, conducting surveys, writing up results, and making presentations to different teams. Even the topic of my research is not too different from what I worked on in grad school. I work on a team called *Community Integrity*. The mission of our team is to minimize bad experiences for people on Facebook. We conduct rigorous, ethical research on the definition and application of our community standards to build safe, inclusive experiences on Facebook. Given the nature of this work, our team is actually filled with other academics, most of whom have MAs or PhDs in the social sciences (primarily psychology, survey methodology, or political science).

The thing that's different is the pace of the work. In grad school, I often got bored of my projects because it took so long to complete a project, especially the publication part. In my current position, the entire cycle of a project from beginning to end is usually closer to a month or two (or six months maximum) rather than a year or two. While that pace probably would have sounded stressful to me right out of grad school, I actually really like it. I love that I can move on from a project once I've reached the point of diminishing returns instead of getting into the weeds running a bunch of extra (and probably inconsequential) analyses to appease Reviewer 2.

2.3 What Are the Biggest Benefits to This Type of Position?

This may come as a surprise to some, but work–life balance is one of the biggest benefits of my position. In grad school, there is a culture where it's normal to work nights and weekends. Many grad students (myself included) felt like no matter how hard we worked, the work was never done. And many of us felt guilty if we weren't working overtime. In my current position, I almost never work on nights or weekends. I close my computer at the end of the day and I don't feel guilty about it. There is a misconception about working at a big tech company: that the reason they have snacks and ping pong tables is so you won't be as mad when you have to work nights and weekends. That has not at all been my experience or the experience of my colleagues.

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Another huge benefit of my job is the opportunity for collaboration. In grad school, collaboration always felt relatively asynchronous (e.g., you write up results, share a document with a colleague for feedback, the colleague makes updates to the document and sends it back to you, and so on). It often felt like everyone was working in a silo to advance their own separate body of work. That's not because we didn't care about each other (my peers and mentors in grad school offered an abundance of guidance, feedback, and support!), it's because academia rewards based on publishing your own papers and not much else. In my current position, the reason collaboration feels so different is because my teammates and I are all working together toward common goals. We set our goals together as a team each half and work together to achieve them. When we encounter problems, we brainstorm solutions together and each tackle different aspects of solving the problem. While this is sometimes also true in academia, it doesn't feel the same when only one person reaps the full benefit of first-authorship.

Last, I have to mention salary. Industry jobs often pay much better than academic jobs. It's not necessarily the most important benefit, but it's certainly something I appreciated after living for six years on a graduate stipend.

2.4 Any Drawbacks Compared to Academia?

A common thing you'll hear former academics say about industry jobs is that you don't have much freedom in setting your own research agenda. That's definitely a drawback depending on where you land in industry. For me personally, I've found that I still have quite a bit of freedom on what research projects I take on within the scope of the team. Thankfully, I found a team whose mission aligns with topics I care about so I've generally been pretty happy with the level of autonomy I have.

2.5 Doctoral Students Sometimes Feel Pressure to Enter Traditional Academic Positions, Focusing on Research Productivity. When Did You Realize That You Could Have an Impact in Other Important Ways and What Was That Decision Like For You?

The realization that I didn't want to go into academia was gradual for me. I think I was in my third year when I finally made the decision to talk with my advisor about my plan. The conversation went really well and my advisor was supportive. I was lucky to have other students in my program who were also interested in non-academic jobs and we were able to support each other in figuring it out. In my last couple years of grad school, my program also started inviting speakers who had transitioned to industry.

I think the realization that I could have an impact outside of academia came when I realized how many people I could reach by applying the things I learned to make change in the world. My first job outside of academia was with a small start-up non-profit with four employees, all with a psychology background. The organization worked with progressive organizations and start-up civic-tech companies to improve

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political participation through empirical research. We worked with organizations to experimentally test interventions designed to help people do things like vote, join a march, or call their elected officials. Realizing that I could have a tangible impact like that was really exciting to me and a big reason I left academia.

2.6 How Are You Using Your Education In Psychology? How Do Your Skills Apply in Important and Impactful Ways?

The most important things I learned from grad school are survey methodology, statistical analysis, and data visualization. I'd recommend investing heavily in these skills during your time in grad school because they're skills that will pay off regardless of whether you go into academia or industry.

2.7 Any Resources or Advice You Have For Someone Who Would Like to Pursue a Career In This Employment Sector?

Yes! I put together a document (https://docs.google.com/document/d/15IpwOnxmefzOQtaE4WAvWMKHqQpy633WoEMqxIGSKjc/edit) with some resources for psychology students who are interested in transitioning to the tech industry.

3. Muniya Khanna, PhD, Private Practice, Researcher, and Author

I received my PhD in clinical psychology from Temple University, where I worked under the mentorship of Dr. Phil Kendall and became focused on the study and treatment of childhood anxiety disorders with an interest in internet-based interventions. Following a T-32 postdoctoral fellowship at Columbia University with Dr. Anne Marie Albano, I served as faculty at the University of Pennsylvania working alongside Dr. Martin Franklin running the Child and Adolescent OCD, Tic, Trich, and Anxiety Group ("COTTAGe"). Together with Dr. Kendall, I developed and evaluated *Camp Cope-A-Lot* (Khanna & Kendall, 2010), the first internet-assisted CBT program for child anxiety and *Child Anxiety Tales* (Khanna et al., 2017), an internet-based parent-training program for parents of children with anxiety. These programs are now being used in homes and schools across the country and internationally. I feel privileged to also have been involved in some of the most important research trials in the field of child anxiety in the last 15 years, including the Pediatric OCD Treatment Study (Franklin et al., 2011), Family-based Treatment of Early Childhood OCD (Freeman et al., 2014), Child and Adolescent Anxiety Multimodal Treatment Study (Walkup et al., 2008) trials.

In 2013, my husband's decision to leave his job to start his own company led to my decision to leave academia and pursue my own private practice. I saw it as an opportunity to support my family financially while also being able to continue to pursue my career goals. I started The OCD & Anxiety Institute, a specialty clinic for children and adults with anxiety, OCD and related disorders. I was determined to continue my research, so I converted from a PI to a consultant role on all existing and

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upcoming grants. Together with Dr. Ricardo Eiraldi at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP), I have completed three, have two ongoing, and two upcoming large-scale clinical trials focused on the dissemination and implementation of evidence-based treatments for anxiety in urban public schools. I also serve as consultant to organizations and agencies looking to use technology as part of training and/or treatment. I have been focused heavily on writing these last two years, and am excited for my next book to be launched later this year. I continue to consult, train, write, conduct workshops, webinars, and serve on professional committees and boards to support training, study, and dissemination of evidence-based mental health care.

3.1 What Are Your Primary Job Responsibilities?

I wear many hats. I see patients in my private practice. I serve as part of the leadership team and provide guidance on study design and support training and supervision at CHOP on ongoing grants. I consult with private and public organizations. I continue my writing and blogging on CopingCatParents.com, Psychology Today, and Thriving Mind, now focusing primarily on finishing up my most recent book to help parents build resilience and enhance stress management in their children.

3.2 What Does a Typical Day or Week Look Like – What Do You Work On and How Is It Different From a Traditional Academic Position?

Every day and week is different as I juggle the many roles and responsibilities. I keep blocks of time dedicated to each role – clinical days, writing days, consulting days, etc. and try to shift as different deadlines approach. I am also a mother of two active tweens, so to say I'm always juggling is an understatement! Even though I stay very busy, I feel noticeably less stressed than when I was in an academic position because I know my "funding" is in my own hands and that I can turn on or off the flow at my own discretion.

3.3 What Are The Biggest Benefits to This Type of Position?

The biggest benefit to working in private practice is that I get to be my own boss. I don't have to attend meetings unless I choose, write grants unless I choose, see clients unless I choose, teach . . . you get the point. I also feel grateful for the financial stability and flexibility the practice offers that allows me to pursue a variety of interests as well as giving me peace of mind that I can be available for my family when things come up (as they do!). My husband is no longer in start-up mode, but I am very happy to stay on this "uncharted" career path I've chosen.

3.4 Any Drawbacks Compared to Academia?

I wouldn't be in the position I'm in if I hadn't started in academia. I love research and teaching. I think I would have missed it if I had gone straight to private practice.

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I also feel more confident in my expertise having learned from and worked alongside academic researchers and pioneers.

3.5 Doctoral Students Sometimes Feel Pressure to Enter Traditional Academic Positions, Focusing On Research Productivity. When Did You Realize That You Could Have an Impact in Other Important Ways and What Was That Decision Like For You?

I had been "raised" in a culture of research and academia and really intended to stay for my entire career. When it became a necessity for my family the choice was already made. Now seeing what can be done outside of academics makes me want to share with doctoral students the possibilities available to make an impact outside of research. In many ways research cycles hinder dissemination. Working with organizations, agencies, schools, hospitals, and the private sector directly to implement evidence-based programs has been highly rewarding and often comes with more immediate results.

3.6 How Are You Using Your Education in Psychology? How Do Your Skills Apply in Important and Impactful Ways?

My work, research, writing all are 100 percent based on the clinical and research training I received and continue to receive in psychology. I feel pride and fulfillment in seeing children, adults, and families improve the quality of their lives after having been in treatment or in a research trial. It also gives me immense joy and satisfaction to see my books, manuals, and online programs being used in schools, hospitals, clinics, and in homes and hearing about the benefits that people have felt from the content.

3.7 Any Resources or Advice You Have For Someone Who Would Like to Pursue a Career in This Employment Sector?

Become an expert – listen, watch, read, learn as much as you can to become an expert in your area. Once you have the skills and knowledge, many options become available to you.

4. Katie Rosanbalm, PhD, Senior Research Scientist at a University-Based Policy Center

I entered the doctoral program in child clinical psychology at Ohio University with the goal of studying child abuse prevention. I began by planning an evaluation of a school-based child sexual abuse prevention curriculum, but just as I was beginning my research, the program I was to study lost funding. Changing gears quickly to stay on track with my degree, I shifted to a meta-analysis of existing studies in the field. This shift proved fortuitous, as I discovered a love of methodology and statistics in the process of learning about and ultimately conducting three separate meta-analyses (without all the

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great software now available!). With an extra year of coursework, I added a quantitative psychology concentration to my PhD in child clinical psychology.

My clinical internship brought me to Duke University for an intense year of practice, but I quickly recognized that I preferred work at the systems and policy level to work as a child clinician. Happily, I discovered the Center for Child and Family Policy at Duke, where my interests in systems initiatives, methodology, and child welfare came together in the role of Research Scholar. I began this position assisting on an ambitious multi-pronged project to reduce child abuse rates in Durham, NC, serving primarily in the role of statistician. After a few years and considerable grant writing, I was able to transition to a Principal Investigator role, pursuing program development and evaluation for child-related interventions and policy initiatives. With more than 17 years at the Center for Child and Family Policy, I now serve as a Senior Research Scientist, leading four grant-funded initiatives in the areas of self-regulation development and trauma-informed care.

4.1 What Are Your Primary Job Responsibilities?

Similar to those in many academic positions, I am fortunate to have the freedom to pursue my own line of research – as long as I am able to procure 100 percent of the funding to cover my own salary, the salaries of my staff, and the related program and research expenses. As a result, grant writing is my constant companion. With that comes budget management, report writing for funders, and the many administrative tasks that are part of leading project implementation. These are the necessary parts of my work. The fun parts are all the rest! I focus on community engagement, so I always partner with community-level organizations and non-profits to define the needs, barriers, and questions that I seek to address. We work together to identify, implement, and evaluate solutions. I never stop learning, discussing new ideas with these colleagues, and collaboratively integrating cutting-edge findings into program development and improvement. With partners in early childhood, K-12 education, and child welfare, I work to develop training modules, coaching models, and intervention components that support the well-being of all children, but are particularly critical for those who have experienced significant adversity in their lives.

4.2 What Does a Typical Day or Week Look Like – What Do You Work On and How Is It Different From a Traditional Academic Position?

One of the best – and hardest – parts of my job is the unending variety of tasks across each day and week. I spend time reading, thinking, and planning for project improvements or future initiatives. In collaboration with community partners, I develop curricula, deliver interactive trainings, and spend time observing in schools and early childhood settings. I develop research plans, implement evaluations, supervise data collection and cleaning, and conduct analyses to assess outcomes and improve processes. I collaborate with community providers and state-level systems to

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integrate lessons learned into existing infrastructure. Finally, I deliver talks and write reports, policy briefs, and academic papers to share what we are doing and learning with a broad variety of stakeholder audiences. I believe that those in traditional academic positions also engage in many if not all of these tasks. The biggest difference lies in the task prioritization, or the proportion of time spent with this community-based participatory research. I have far fewer administrative or teaching responsibilities and more freedom to pursue action and dissemination at the stakeholder rather than purely academic level.

4.3 What Are the Biggest Benefits to This Type of Position?

For me, the largest benefit of this position has been the freedom to structure my time and work to focus on community-level engagement and action. My office is based in the community rather than on campus, and much of my time is spent traveling the state to visit schools, early childhood centers, and departments of social services. This immersion in the community has greatly improved not only my understanding of practical issues with implementation and evaluation, but also my ability to speak in plain English and translate science to practice. Perhaps more importantly, it has enhanced my ability to *listen* to the experiences and perspectives of those in the field. My academic assumptions are regularly challenged by those out there doing the work – and let's be clear, the on-the-ground professionals are the ones who know the real issues at hand! Without these constant reality checks, and the relationships that come with two-way discussions and respect for experience, I would certainly miss key elements of partnering with professionals to promote authentic and sustainable change for children and families. I have been greatly, and rightly, humbled by this work.

4.4 Any Drawbacks Compared to Academia?

The role of Research Scientist certainly comes with drawbacks as well. Foremost among them is funding: as I mentioned, 100 percent of my salary (and that of my staff) is based on soft money. This means that none of it is guaranteed or underwritten by the university. Funding relies on my continued ability to procure support from federal grants, state contracts, corporation philanthropy, and foundations. This means considerable investment in grant-writing and maintenance of relationships with funders of all types. In essence, I am an entrepreneur supporting a business, albeit with phenomenal access to university colleagues, infrastructure, and resources. I cannot downplay the importance of the university setting for providing accounting, grants management, administrative support, and a general atmosphere of multidisciplinary inquiry and scholarship. My colleagues keep me energized and focused, while always challenging me to think critically from new perspectives. And my relationships both within the university and across the state, along with my focus on answering questions important to the *community*, has kept the value of my team's work visible to funders.

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4.5 Doctoral Students Sometimes Feel Pressure to Enter Traditional Academic Positions, Focusing on Research Productivity. When Did You Realize That You Could Have an Impact in Other Important Ways and What Was That Decision Like For You?

I always knew that I wanted to focus on applied work rather than basic research. Although both are critical to progress in the field, I have always been driven to get my hands dirty and wallow in the nuances, uncertainty, and messiness of community-level research. I want to see what it is like to put the theoretical ideas into action, to see the changes in adults and children with my own eyes, and to wrestle with the challenges of promoting and sustaining change. Rather than doing this on a micro level as a clinician, I opted for working at the macro level with systems and organizations, but it is no less gratifying to watch the change in action. For me, the only question was, "where do jobs like this exist?" In graduate school, I had no exposure to positions or roles like the one I have ultimately adopted, but now I see them everywhere: research directors at non-profits or within school systems, investigators at child-focused research organizations, or employment with the many university-based policy centers. These roles are out there, and finding one was the perfect fit for me.

4.6 How Are You Using Your Education In Psychology? How Do Your Skills Apply in Important and Impactful Ways?

I am not sure I can even begin to list all the ways in which my education in psychology supports my current work. In brief, I see four key areas: content knowledge, clinical skills, research design, and statistical skills. In terms of content, I am constantly applying my understanding of developmental psychology, neurobiology, group dynamics, and behavior change to my work on self-regulation and trauma-informed care. My clinical focus taught me to listen, probe, communicate, read reactions, and prioritize relationships and empathy. My many courses on research design constantly guide my selection of sample, methodology, and measurement. Finally, my statistical training enables me to plan answerable questions and carry out analyses to answer them, as well as to interpret the findings of others in the field. The combined training I received in clinical and quantitative psychology has been invaluable in supporting my community partnerships and actionable research plans.

4.7 Any Resources or Advice You Have For Someone Who Would Like to Pursue a Career in This Employment Sector?

These jobs are out there, don't worry that academia is the only road available to you! First, carefully consider both your passions and your specific skills and strengths to decide both the topical area(s) you wish to pursue and the job tasks that you want to undertake. Then explore the groups doing this work now: are there state- or national-level non-profits pursuing this research and practice agenda, funders or think-tanks taking up this calling, independent consulting groups working on community-level change in this area? Find a few projects that excite you and talk to the people involved. Even if they don't have open positions, they very likely have ideas

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and connections that can guide you. Begin building relationships, share your enthusiasm and ideas, join task forces or local advisory groups. These are the connections that keep my projects and funding alive, and keep me both grounded and energized for the next big idea.

5. Karen Gavin-Evans, PhD, Scientific Review Officer, Federal Funding Agency

I earned my PhD in Clinical Psychology from the Child Clinical Program at the University of Miami at Coral Gables, Florida in 2000. Upon acceptance to the clinical program, my goal was to establish a private practice; however, the graduate program emphasized a heavily research-oriented career route. My research interests and research assistantship were born out of my desire to work with students of color struggling with low self-concept and academic challenges. The most pivotal graduate experiences took place in the public schools and communities where I worked for my assistantship. By the time I completed my master's degree in Clinical Psychology, I knew I no longer wanted to pursue private practice, and I was not wholly sure whether academia was the right fit for me. Later, the Child Clinical internship at Baylor College Medical Center allowed me to work with children, youth, and families in various service sectors. The training reinforced an interest in maternal and child health-related research and fostered a desire to pursue a postdoctoral position at the Juniper Gardens Children's Project at The University of Kansas, where I was committed to working with children with disabilities. Working in early childhood settings and schools ignited my research interest, but I was not as keen on the "publish or perish" pathway of my graduate school mentors. Unsure how to progress, I accepted a faculty position in the School of Education at Indiana University. Although I enjoyed working with graduate students and conducting school-based research projects, I quickly realized that academia was not for me.

In 2002, my husband and I moved to the Washington, DC area, thus providing me the opportunity to pursue new career path. I accepted a research scientist position at a private health communications company, which allowed me to conduct behavioral health and education research. My main job entailed writing research grants, engaging in business development activities, and supervising a staff of researchers, technical writers, and subject matter experts. After several years of conducting federally contracted research leading a research department, I needed a change from 80+ hour work weeks. Interested in returning to my clinical interests, I accepted a position as a Scientific Review Officer at the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), where I still work.

5.1 What Are Your Primary Job Responsibilities?

As a Scientific Review Officer, my responsibility entails organizing scientific peer review meetings to evaluate grant applications and contract proposals submitted to the NIMH. I identify and recruit scientific and technical experts, domestically and internationally, to evaluate applications and proposals submitted for review. In addition, as a federal official at the meeting, I am also responsible for generating summary statements, the official documentation of the discussion at the review meeting.

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5.2 What Does a Typical Day or Week Look Like – What Do You Work On and How Is It Different From a Traditional Academic Position?

I spend my time reading grant applications, reviewing current literature, and identifying scientists and industry stakeholders to participate in peer review meetings. In a four-month cycle, I facilitate two to three review meetings that may include up to 50 reviewers for a single review panel. Thus, in a year, I may reach out to more than 500 people worldwide to secure the expertise to cover all of the applications in my review meetings. In addition, to my daily and weekly duties, I attend professional conferences, symposia, and workshops to keep current on the field and identify potential reviewers.

5.3 What Are the Biggest Benefits to This Type of Position?

After leaving the 10+ hour-work-day of private industry, I needed more control over my time. The pace of my day and the scheduling of my review meetings are based on my calendar. I can plan review meetings around family demands and professional events. I especially enjoy being at the forefront of new ideas in the field. Review meetings allow me to listen to researchers and stakeholders discussing new ideas and approaches to significant public health issues facing children, youth, and families. Although federal positions are not as lucrative as private industry, financial stability and predictability are quite nice.

5.4 How are you using your education in psychology? How do your skills apply in important and impactful ways?

My education is in play, whether I am reading a journal article or grant application, identifying the expertise I need to build a solid review panel, or facilitating a "lively" discussion during a review meeting. Specifically, my breadth of knowledge in research methodology, quantitative and qualitative research, psychopathology, and clinical psychology are significant to my position. To ensure that I can build the most appropriate peer review panel, I must stay current with psychology literature and pursue trends in the field.

5.5 Any resources or advice you have for someone who would like to pursue a career in this employment sector?

The federal government has numerous careers opportunities for individuals with a psychology degree. While people may not consider the federal government exciting, it offers much. There are research, clinical, and administrative careers. Government positions abound, from bench science to field-based work in our Nation's communities and neighborhoods. The federal government is vast; so narrow your search to federal agencies aligned with your interests, skills, and personal mission. With any career pursuit, you should keep an open mind, seek guidance, and continue to explore.

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5.6 Doctoral Students Sometimes Feel Pressure to Enter Traditional Academic Positions, Focusing on Research Productivity. When Did You Realize That You Could Have an Impact in Other Important Ways and What Was That Decision Like For You?

It took a while to consider that there are multiple avenues to achieving my goals. However, once I was comfortable with my decision to leave academia, pursuing a career in a "non-traditional" psychology position was the obvious choice. In addition, the awareness of the versatility of my degree afforded me the push I needed to understand that my goals could be obtained through many different pathways.

6. Ilyse Dobrow DiMarco, PhD, Private Practice and Freelance Author

I graduated from Rutgers, which is a research-focused Clinical Psychology PhD program. Initially, I had hoped to work at an academic medical center, where I could contribute to others' research without having to be a PI myself. But after four years of hardcore academic writing (capped off by reading 200+ journal articles for my qualifying exams) I was burned out on academic work and turned to what I thought was my only other option, private practice psychology. Ten years ago, I started my own practice near my home, which made sense from a practical standpoint (I was also having/raising my two sons at the time). I marketed myself as a provider who specialized in CBT for anxiety but gradually (and somewhat accidentally) developed a sub-specialty: helping new moms like myself use evidence-based tools to help them manage the stresses of motherhood. I recognized that new moms benefited greatly from the use of these skills and decided to start writing about them in posts for popular parenting websites and my own blog. Writing short popular press pieces and blogging eventually became a "side hustle" for me, and led to me getting a deal to write a popular press book, *Mom Brain*, which was published in May 2021.

6.1 What Are Your Primary Job Responsibilities?

As a private practice psychologist, I provide individual CBT (and other evidence-based treatments) to adult patients, most of whom have anxiety, and many of whom are new parents. As a writer, I compose diverse types of pieces, including books/book chapters, articles for popular parenting websites and my personal blog, and social media posts. My aim is to translate evidence-based CBT/Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT)/Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) strategies for new parents who are struggling to cope with the myriad stressors of raising babies and small children.

6.2 What Does a Typical Day or Week Look Like – What Do You Work On and How Is It Different From a Traditional Academic Position?

I split my time evenly between clinical work and writing/speaking/media work. Three days per week, I work at my own private practice where I treat individual adults using

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CBT and other evidence-based approaches. I have an office in a town near my home. The other two days per week, I work on my own material – mostly writing, but also doing other tasks like preparing for talks, posting on social media, and making videos. Like a true CBT therapist, I set an agenda and goals for myself on the days I write.

This differs a great deal from what a typical academic does during the day. I don't teach or supervise/mentor or sit on any committees. While most academics carve time out to write, like I do, they write very different types of things (journal articles, treatment manuals, scholarly book chapters, grants). Also I am able set my own schedule, whereas academics' schedules are often dictated by their teaching times, meeting times, etc.

6.3 What Are the Biggest Benefits to This Type of Position?

Flexibility! As I mentioned, I make my own hours, and decide how much and when I want to work. This has been a godsend for me as a parent.

I also appreciate that the only work pressure I feel is self-imposed. I don't ever have to worry about whether I'm publishing enough to make tenure, or what senior faculty think of me, or whether I'm billing enough hours as a member of a group practice.

Related to not feeling pressured by others is the freedom I feel to do exactly the type of work I want to do. Many of my friends in academia are stuck doing some things they don't like – serving on committees, for example. But I have the freedom to choose what I do and do not want to do. For example, if a potential patient approaches me for treatment, and I do not feel they are a good fit for my practice based on my specific skills, I can refer them elsewhere.

6.4 Any Drawbacks Compared to Academia?

I don't feel this way now, but early in my career, after I'd decided to jump off the academic track, I struggled with the fact that I'd chosen the less-prestigious career route. My graduate program highly encouraged careers in academia, and for years I felt like somewhat of a failure because I didn't pursue a tenure-track job. Unfortunately, this also contributed to self-doubt early on in my writing career. I felt that because I wasn't on faculty at a prestigious university or hospital, no one would see me as an "expert" or care at all what I had to say. That turned out not to be true, but it took a number of years for me to realize it.

Another thing that frustrated me early in my career was that I didn't feel like I was putting many of my specialized skills (writing, extensive training in evidence-based treatments) to use. Once I started writing, this changed, but early on I was seeing "all comers" in my practice (as everyone who is trying to build a practice does) and didn't get the opportunity to flex clinical and writing muscles that I knew I had.

Also, being affiliated with a large research institution affords you instant "street cred." If someone sees that you work at a well-regarded hospital or university, they immediately view you as an expert. But if you're a private practitioner, you really have to earn that "street cred," by treating a number of people successfully and/or producing content that other people respond to. It takes time for this to happen. Because I attended a prestigious undergraduate university and graduate program, I grew used to the instant "street cred" that came with that. When I started my

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practice, I had to adjust to being just another one of the countless private practice therapists in my area. It took time for me to distinguish myself.

Also, starting your own practice is a far more risky financial proposition than working in academia. You alone are responsible for bringing in clients and therefore dictating your salary. Tenured faculty don't have to worry about that. Although there are also potentially greater rewards (i.e., a higher salary than you'd have in academia) if your business does well.

6.5 Doctoral students sometimes feel pressure to enter traditional academic positions, focusing on research productivity. When Did You Realize That You Could Have an Impact in Other Important Ways and What Was That Decision Like For You?

Honestly, the realization that I did not want to pursue a research career came before the realization that I could have an impact in other important ways. I had a phenomenal research mentor in graduate school who inspired me to craft a really interesting dissertation study. I felt like I could work on studies with him for the rest of my career. But I also realized that I didn't want to be the PI myself and didn't want to work on research projects without him as a mentor. I knew this by the time I was finished with graduate school.

As I mentioned earlier, I pursued private practice work because I believed that it was the only non-academic career option available to me. When I started my practice I felt like I was having an impact on my individual patients; however, I longed to have a larger impact. That desire to have a larger impact and reach more people was what inspired me to start writing about CBT for popular parenting websites. Once I started doing that, and getting responses from people all across the country, I realized that I could make an important contribution without having to be an academic.

6.6 How Are You Using Your Education in Psychology? How Do Your Skills Apply in Important and Impactful Ways?

I use it every day! In my clinical work and my writing I'm committed to evidence-based practices, which I first studied in graduate school and continue to study to the present day. I continue to consume psychology research, and it informs my clinical work and writing. I have remained active in professional organizations, like the Association for Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies (ABCT), which enables me to keep tabs on the groundbreaking work of the foremost clinical psychology researchers. I have always endeavored to be "research-adjacent," even though I no longer participate in research myself.

6.7 Any Resources or Advice You Have for Someone Who Would Like to Pursue a Career in This Employment Sector?

A few tips, in no particular order:

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1. Get yourself on social media, including Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Social media is a great way not only to promote your writing to your audience but also to connect with fellow psychologists and other people working in your space.
2. And speaking of connecting with other people working in your space, take time to see what other successful popular press psychology writers are doing. Don't hesitate to reach out directly to these people – if my experience is any indication they will be happy to help you and share advice.
3. Don't get discouraged! As I mentioned above, it takes some time to develop a career in popular press psychology writing and to develop your voice as a writer. The same is true of building a private practice – it's a process. Don't let early rejections stop you from putting things out there.
4. Try to put out a variety of content. So while you're writing longer pieces, consider writing super-short pieces (tweets, etc.) as well as making short videos about key concepts. And make sure to have a great website where you can house all of this content. Investing in a professional web designer is one of the smartest things I did when I was starting out.
5. I think it helps to view writing as a "side hustle," for two reasons. First, as I mentioned, it takes a while to build a career in popular press psychology writing. And second, there's very little money in writing! So you'll want to be doing something else to actually make a living wage.

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