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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Study Objectives

While a large body of literature exists on the career experiences of PhDs employed in traditional academic faculty positions and a smaller related literature is developing on the experiences of those employed outside the academy, little systematic, transdisciplinary research on the experiences of PhDs employed in higher education careers beyond the professoriate (HECBP) exists, despite the growing number of PhDs employed in these fields. This study seeks to address that gap by providing a comprehensive starting point for future research into the career experiences and paths of PhDs employed in HECBP.

Research Questions:

▪ What factors influence entrance to higher ed careers beyond the professoriate?
▪ To what extent do PhDs employed in HECBP experience satisfaction in their careers?

Data for this study are drawn from 45 semi-structured, in-depth interviews with PhDs in a wide range of disciplines employed in diverse career fields at higher education institutions in the U.S.

Key Findings

➢ PhDs receive little explicit training or support for HECBP, with only moderate improvement in more recent cohorts in comparison with older cohorts

➢ A diverse range of both professional and personal factors influence entrance to HECBP paths, a pattern which holds across disciplines and career fields
  ▪ Key professional factors: desire for intellectual engagement beyond hyper-specialization required by doctoral program and faculty career, desire for collaborative work settings over autonomy and isolation
  ▪ Key personal factors: desire for work-life balance, family and relationship constraints, geographic limitations, mental and physical health concerns

➢ PhDs employed in HECBP experience overall high levels of career satisfaction, yet also report common frustrations across career fields
BACKGROUND AND STUDY OBJECTIVES

An increasing number of PhDs are employed in higher ed careers beyond the professoriate (HECBP). Yet despite the increase in non-faculty college and university positions available to and occupied by PhDs, we know relatively little about the career paths, professional experiences, and professional identity development processes of PhDs employed in these fields, particularly in comparison with their counterparts employed in faculty positions or in positions outside the academy. While there have been a small handful of articles on the experiences of PhDs employed in HECBP within specific disciplines (e.g. Austen and Burnham 2013; Kansa and Kansa 2015; Lesiuk 2013), paths to HECBP have not been studied in a systematic fashion or across disciplinary backgrounds. This study aims to create a conceptual map of factors leading to HECBP paths. Based on existing literature on workplace experiences of PhDs who enter traditional faculty positions, it is reasonable to think that factors such as type of PhD-granting institution attended, gender, socioeconomic status, race/ethnicity, and non-academic professional experiences may influence entrance to HECBP career paths (Aitken 2010; Archer 2008a; Archer 2008b; Cannizzo 2018; Henkel 2005; Hermanowicz 2016; Kensington-Miller, Sneddon and Stewart 2014; Lea and Stierer 2011; Osbaldiston, Cannizzo and Mauri 2016; Reybold 2003).

This study provides the first systematic, transdisciplinary evaluation of how individuals enter HECBP career paths. It examines how factors such as the type of institution where PhD-holding individuals are employed and higher ed career field influence their workplace satisfaction. This study also provides a comprehensive starting point for future research into HECBP professional experiences and provides an original framework for examining HECBP career paths and outcomes.

<table>
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<th>RESEARCH QUESTIONS</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. What factors influence entrance to higher ed careers beyond the professoriate?</td>
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<td>2. What role do professional development and mentoring opportunities play in entrance to HECBP?</td>
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<td>3. What kinds of interactions do PhDs employed in HECBP have with their PhD counterparts employed in faculty positions and how do they interpret these interactions?</td>
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<td>4. To what extent do PhDs employed in HECBP experience satisfaction their current employment?</td>
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<td>5. What challenges do PhDs employed in HECBP face in their careers?</td>
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METHODS AND DATA

STUDY DESIGN

The data for this study are drawn from 45 semi-structured, in-depth qualitative interviews\(^1\) with PhDs working in higher ed positions beyond the professoriate in American colleges and universities. Qualitative methods and data are useful for understanding processes and patterns but cannot be used to make reliable generalizations to larger populations about frequencies (Denzin 2007; Lofland et al. 2006; Maxwell 2005).

Anyone holding a PhD in an academic\(^2\) discipline who was currently employed in or retired from a higher ed position that was not a faculty-track position at an American college or university was eligible to participate. Participants were recruited through professional organizations for areas of specialization within higher ed career (e.g. the National Association of Fellowships Advisors, the National Organization of Research Development Professionals), through a search of higher ed career blogs on sites such as *the Chronicle* and *Inside Higher Ed*, through the author’s professional network, and through referrals from previous interviewees. Interviews took place in person, over the phone, or by video call. The interviews lasted between 45 minutes and two-and-a-half hours, with most lasting approximately an hour-and-a-half. Interview questions focused on topics including doctoral training and experiences, entrance into a higher ed career beyond the professoriate, professional experiences and training, and career satisfaction.

DATA

\textit{n.b.} Throughout, percentages may not sum evenly to 100% due to rounding.

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\(^{1}\) Semi-structured, in-depth interviews provide an opportunity to thoroughly explore themes and topics. Semi-structured interviews follow an interview guide with questions related to the areas of focus of the study that are asked of all interviewees, but the interview conversation unfolds organically, with movement between topics following the natural flow of the conversation rather than proceeding in a pre-determined order. While the same questions are asked of all interviewees, the interviewer parallels the language used by the interviewee in phrasing the questions. For instance, the question “Did you have any conversations with your dissertation advisor about your career interests or decisions?” may be rephrased “Did you have any conversations with your PI about your career interests or decisions?” or “Did you have any conversations with your faculty advisor about your career interests or decisions?” depending on the terminology used by the interviewee.

\(^{2}\) Because the study examines how PhDs navigate messages and expectations that equate career success with securing a tenure-track job, PhDs in professional fields (e.g. counseling, higher ed administration) whose programs have a different orientation to career paths were not eligible for the study.
PhD Characteristics of Sample

Of the 45 interviewees, 27 (60%) received their PhD from a public institution, while 18 (40%) received their PhD from a private institution. Among the interviewees, 18 (40%) received their PhD from an institution in the Southeast, 13 (29%) from an institution in the Midwest, 6 (13%) from an institution in the Southwest, 4 (9%) from an institution in the Northeast, 3 (7%) from an institution in the Northwest, and 1 (2%) from an institution outside the United States. A complete list of PhD-granting institutions is available in Appendix A. The year in which interviewees received their PhD ranged from 1982–2018. The median year of PhD receipt was 2010. Interviewees earned PhDs in diverse disciplinary fields. Of the 45 interviewees, 22 (49%) earned a PhD in a humanities field, 18 (40%) in a STEM field, and 5 (11%) in a social science field. A complete list of PhD disciplines of the interview sample is available in Appendix B.

Current Employing Institution Characteristics of Sample

The vast majority, 43 of 45 interviewees, were employed in a doctoral institution; one interviewee was employed in a master’s-granting institution, and one interviewee was employed at a community college. Among the interviewees, 26 (58%) were employed at a public institution, 18 (40%) at a public institution, and 1 (2%) was employed in a center that jointly serves both a public and private university. In this sample, 14 (31%) were employed at an institution in the Southeast, 13 (29%) at an institution in the Midwest, 11 (24%) at an institution in the Southwest, 5 (11%) at an institution in the Northeast, and 2 (4%) at an institution in the Northwest. A full list of employing institutions of study participants is available in Appendix C.
Study participants were employed in diverse career fields within higher ed ranging across academic, student, and institutional affairs. Interviewees were employed in positions in programs and offices such as sponsored research, graduate and postdoc offices, fellowship advising, teaching and learning centers, libraries, digital humanities centers, campus life, multicultural and identity-focused centers and offices, career centers, intuitional research, research laboratories, study abroad, disciplinary and disciplinary-cluster initiatives and programs, sexual violence and Title IX, science writing and editing, and executive administration.

At the time of the interview (interviews were conducted in 2018 and 2019), interviewees had been employed in a higher ed position beyond the professoriate from less than 1 to 23 years, with a median of 6 years. Study participants were employed at diverse levels in institutional hierarchies. Interviewees were employed in positions from the program coordinator to senior associate dean level. Interviewees held positions in various rungs of program administration from assistant director to associate director to senior director to executive director, as well as specialized positions such as senior research methodologist, proposal development specialist, scientific editor, research liaison officer, learning design specialist, and others.

Demographic Characteristics of Sample

All demographic questions were open-ended; participants created their own response categories rather than selecting from a pre-defined set of possible choices. Of the 45 interviewees, 36 (80%) identified as female or a woman, 8 (18%) as male or a man, and 1 (2%) as genderqueer. In terms of race/ethnicity, 32 (71%) identified as white, 4 (9%) identified as African-American or black, 3 (7%) identified as Latinx, Hispanic, or Chicano/a, 2 (4%) identified as Asian-American, 1 (2%) identified as biracial, 1 (2%) identified as white and Native American, 1 (2%) identified as white Chicana, and 1 (2%) identified as Puerto Rican. Participants ranged in age from their thirties to their sixties; 20 (44%) participants were in their forties, 19 (42%) were in their thirties, 4 (9%) were in their 50s, and 2 (6%) were in their 60s. In terms of educational attainment of the parent or caregiver with the highest educational attainment, most interviewees, 26 (58%), had one or more parent or caregiver with the highest educational attainment, most interviewees, 26 (58%), had one or more parent or caregiver who held an advanced degree, 13 (29%) had parents and/or caregivers for whom college was the highest educational level, and 6 (13%) had parents and/or caregivers for whom high school was the highest educational level.

Analysis Procedures

All interviews were de-identified and fully transcribed. Data were analyzed through a systematic, iterative qualitative coding process (Miles, Huberman and Saldaña 2014; Morgan 2018; Srivastava and Hopwood 2009), facilitated by the qualitative software MaxQDA. Iterative thematic analysis involves identifying, organizing, and synthesizing key themes that emerge in the data (Nowell, Norris and White 2017). Initial codes were generated from concepts relevant to the research questions and the coding scheme was
revised as new codes were generated from the data throughout the analysis. Open and focused coding of the interviews centered on interviewees’ graduate school experiences, career paths, professional identities, interactions with colleagues, and career experiences.

**KEY FINDINGS**

**GRADUATE SCHOOL EXPERIENCES AND PREPARATION FOR CAREER PATHS**

**Career Path Expectations and Advising**

The experiences of interviewees with support from their graduate programs and advisors for diverse careers was mixed. While a small number of interviewees reported that their advisors encouraged them to explore career options and were supportive of careers beyond the professoriate, the majority of interviewees reported either that their advisor and/or department was hostile towards diverse careers or never mentioned any possibility other than a faculty path. Importantly, this pattern held consistently across the range of years of completion; interviewees who completed their PhDs in the last decade were not more likely than those who completed their PhDs in earlier decades to report that their advisor supported diverse career paths. The strong majority of interviewees reported that in their departments or programs, entrance into the tenure track was the expectation.

“My PI [principal investigator] didn’t really know what to do with that group of people [PhD students and postdocs interested in careers beyond the professoriate]. He knew that his postdocs had gone on to lots of variety of things and would happily give you the list and their contact information but really didn’t have a clue what else to do. And in a couple of ways, he gave more support to the people that intended to go into faculty positions—he would be willing to give you students to mentor which were a sparse resource in the government lab, and was willing to maybe try to keep you on past the five-year contract termination date that we were all facing if you were going for faculty positions. So, there were a couple of things where it was clear that those people were valued more”

- Professional Developer, Employed at Public Doctoral Institution in the Southeast

“The overall message from the department I saw was like, ‘You know, if you want to be legit, you follow a faculty track and that’s that.’ Like if you look at their website, that’s what they brag about. Like no mention of the fact that there were people who took what I consider being prestigious alt-ac jobs and we’re making a real difference in our work.”

- Digital Scholarship Center, Employed at Private Doctoral Institution in the Southwest

**Preparation and Training for Diverse Careers**

In terms of preparation for their careers and developing the specialized skills and knowledge base for their first and subsequent positions beyond the professoriate, interviewees overwhelmingly reported that they had “learned on the fly” and self-taught.
If interviewees had had previous experience or training related to their first or subsequent positions beyond the professoriate, that training had come through work they had done before or during their graduate programs outside of their research and teaching.

“[Interviewer: What kinds of experience did you have that prepared you to do the kind of work you’re doing right now?] (laughs) None is the short answer. Coming in, I hadn’t done budgets before, I hadn’t done, you know, just meeting schedules. Just even sort of formal managing of people, you know, that’s something there’s absolutely no training in in chemistry.”

- Laboratory Manager, Employed at Private Doctoral Institution in the Southeast

“I never had any formal training. And then I got here and I’ve you know learned a lot as I go and I mean I read a lot of books and stuff about writing and I try to read a lot of stuff that’s well-written and kind of learn by osmosis. So most of my training has been learning by doing really.”

- Science Editor, Employed at Private Doctoral Institution in the Midwest

Interviewees overwhelmingly reported enjoying the process of learning new skills and knowledge bases. While a small number of interviewees reported stress, frustration, or anxiety about “flying blind” in their positions, most interviewees described the opportunity to learn new areas as one of the reward of their career paths, a point addressed in more depth in subsequent sections.

**Routes to Career Paths**

**Career Path Intentions**

Participants in the study had extremely diverse paths into higher ed careers beyond the professoriate. Some intended to pursue traditional faculty positions at the time they entered their graduate program but decided against pursuing a faculty position before completing their program. Some entered their graduate programs not yet having thought about what they wanted to do after completing their programs. Some entered their programs being open to a range of career paths. And some entered their programs intending to pursue a traditional faculty path, went on the academic job market, and were unable to secure a faculty position that met their needs. Still others began their careers in faculty positions, and subsequently left those positions, including tenure-track and tenured positions, to move into higher ed careers beyond the professoriate.
Of the 45 interviewees, 24 (55%) never went on the traditional faculty job market and 20 (45%) were on the traditional faculty job market for at least one year; one interviewee did not answer this question.

**Faculty Job Market Experiences**

- **Went on Faculty Market**: 45%
- **Never Went on Faculty Market**: 55%

*n.b. Data is missing for one interviewee.*
Career Path Decision Factors
Interviewees identified a diverse range of factors that influenced their entrance to HECBP including: being recruited for a position beyond the professoriate, concerns about work-life balance in faculty careers, geographic limitations, desire for variety in day-to-day work experiences, opportunities to engage in work beyond the interviewee’s narrow area of academic specialization, distaste for the publication and/or grant requirements of faculty careers, preference to avoid teaching, dislike of the academic writing process, concerns about the toll of a faculty path on their physical and/or mental health, being unable to secure a faculty position, and being a trailing spouse or partner.

Career Path Factors

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<th>BEING RECRUITED INTO HECBP</th>
<th>WORK-LIFE BALANCE CONCERNS</th>
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<td>DESIRE FOR WORK VARIETY</td>
<td>GEOGRAPHIC LIMITATIONS</td>
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<td>DISLIKE OF RESEARCH</td>
<td>DISLIKE OF TEACHING</td>
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<tr>
<td>HEALTH CONCERNS</td>
<td>FAMILY/ RELATIONSHIP FACTORS</td>
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<tr>
<td>MOVING BEYOND HYPER-SPECIALIZATION</td>
<td>UNABLE TO OBTAIN FACUTY POSITION</td>
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Three factors emerged as having significant weight in the career decisions of interviewees. First, many interviewees reported frustration and/or boredom with the extremely narrow focus and hyper-specialization of their graduate training and work. Interviewees frequently reported a desire to find a career path that cultivated intellectual engagement and provided opportunities to engage with a broader range of topics and build a more diverse set of skills than participants perceived was available in a faculty career. Participants repeatedly used the phrase “fear of boredom” to describe their decisions to pursue careers beyond the professoriate.

Second, interviewees also prioritized work-life balance in their career decisions, perceiving faculty careers as often requiring significant sacrifices of time, as well as mental and physical health. Participants sought out career paths that they felt would be intellectually engaging and rewarding while also allowing them time to prioritize aspects of their lives beyond their careers, such as pursuing other interests, hobbies, and service to their communities, spending time with their families, and maintaining or rebuilding their mental and physical health.

Third, many interviewees reported geographic limitations that limited their interest in and ability to pursue a faculty path. Geographic limitations were most commonly related to family, caregiving responsibilities, and a partner or spouse’s career, but also stemmed from interviewees’ desire to remain in locations where they had built strong social
support networks and communities, and where the cost of living was comparatively affordable.

In comparison with faculty career paths, in which remaining at one’s PhD-granting institution is extremely rare, many interviewees in HECBP remained during their careers at the same institution where they earned their doctorate.

Eighteen of 45 interviewees (40%) were employed at their PhD-granting institution at the time of the interview. Twenty-six of 45 (58%) were employed at an institution in the same geographic region as their PhD-granting institution at the time of the interview.

**Entrance Path to First HECBP Position**

Interviewees had similarly diverse entrances into their first higher ed position beyond the professoriate and to subsequent positions in their career paths. This is an important finding of the study, because the extremely wide variation in career paths stands in sharp contrast to the highly structured faculty career paths that many doctoral students continue to be socialized to expect. Indeed, interviewees frequently brought up this contrast in the course of our interviews. While some interviewees secured their first higher ed position beyond the professoriate through applying for a posted job opening, a strong minority of interviewees obtained their first position through less traditional routes: converting part-time or temporary positions (often that they had held as graduate students) to full-time positions, advocating for a college or university to address a specific need and subsequently being recruited to a position the institution created in response to their advocacy, and leveraging professional connections and
networks developed through positions they held as graduate students to secure positions for which a formal search process did not take place.

While participants frequently described securing their first higher ed position beyond the professoriate as “luck,” several common themes emerged in participants’ career entrance paths. First, participants thought creatively and open-mindedly about their career paths, leading them to be open to non-traditional and newly created positions. Second, participants leveraged their professional networks to help identify career opportunities; some participants also had one or more advocates working on their behalf to create a position for them, convert a part-time or temporary position to a full-time position for them, or help them secure a position for which there was an opening. Participants frequently reported that the work they did as a graduate student outside of their teaching and research and the connections they built through that work played an important role in securing a full-time, permanent position. Third, participants were able to identify their “transferrable skills” and build on previous work experience to support their applications. The majority of interviewees in the study worked either part-time or full-time during or before their graduate program in work beyond the traditional teaching assistantships and research assistantships that support graduate students. While not all of these participants had worked in higher ed settings, having had professional experience and developed skills beyond research and teaching helped interviewees secure higher ed positions beyond the faculty track.

CAREER EXPERIENCES

Perceived Value of PhD
While most interviewees felt that their PhD was useful in their career path, interviewees felt the primary utility of their PhDs was to legitimate them and confer status in their interactions with faculty (and sometimes with students and other staff) and to provide them with general skills seeking out information. Very few interviewees reported using the specialized knowledge or skills they had developed through their doctoral education in their current positions.

Career Satisfaction
Interviewees commonly reported moderate to high satisfaction with their current employment. Across career fields and career stages, interviewees reported experiencing high levels of fulfillment in the professional work. The strong majority of interviewees emphasized feeling that their work is meaningful because it allows them to help others.

“Ttry to do all I can to relieve as much burden as possible from the faculty members, so they can concentrate on the one part I can’t write, and that’s their actual research. I am a research liaison officer, so I do liaison a lot. That’s part of something I enjoy. Someone calls, and they—and it doesn’t matter whether a faculty or student—I try to find them the person they need. And that’s something I find very rewarding about my position. I like helping.”

- Research Office, Public Doctoral Institution in the Southwest
Interviewees also reported that their satisfaction in their work was related to: strong and frequent opportunities for intellectual engagement; opportunities to engage in a variety of tasks rather than engaging primarily in hyper-specialized or repetitive work; the work-life balance they were able to cultivate in their positions and the ways that work-life balance facilitated family life; time for non-work interests and engagements; work schedules and responsibilities that supported rather than damaged mental and physical health; opportunities to work in collaboration with colleagues and other offices and programs; and work that allowed them to be creative in a variety of ways.

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<tr>
<th>Career Satisfaction Themes</th>
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<tr>
<td>HELPING OTHERS</td>
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<td>INTELLECTUAL ENGAGEMENT</td>
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<tr>
<td>VARIETY OF WORK</td>
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<tr>
<td>WORK-LIFE BALANCE</td>
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<td>COLLABORATIVE NATURE OF WORK</td>
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<td>CREATIVITY OF WORK</td>
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Many interviewees commented on having felt frustrated at the hyper-specialization and narrow focus of their doctoral training and found the ability to constantly learn new areas and skills available through HECBP to be among the most rewarding aspects of their work.

“I love learning new things. And I get to learn new things every single day, and I actually am given resources to play with, so I have a budget that I manage, and I can use that budget to help teach myself new things, or go to conferences and learn new things, go to trainings and learn new things, or to send my staff members to do that and have them come and teach me.”

- Educational Technology Center, Private Doctoral Institution in the Southwest

Additionally, across institution types, career stages, and career fields, interviewees also frequently emphasized that their positions provided much greater opportunities for work-life balance and maintaining physical and mental health than they perceived were available to their PhD colleagues in faculty positions.

“Choosing to not be tenure-track, the quality of my life is so much better, and I’m – I mean, it may be why I’m like I’m alive today – I don’t know if it would have been quite that serious, but still, like I’m a much happier person.”

- Teaching and Learning Center, Employed at Private Doctoral Institution in the Southeast
Career Challenges
While most interviewees were moderately to highly satisfied in their current position and in their careers overall, two primary themes emerged in terms of career dissatisfaction. First, interviewees reported relatively few opportunities for advancement or promotion. Several interviewees explicitly drew comparisons between the faculty promotion path and the paths to promotion available for PhDs employed in positions beyond the professoriate at the same institution, noting that faculty promotions are based on the accomplishments of the individual faculty member, while promotions for PhDs employed in staff positions are commonly dependent upon a more senior position coming open, and thus require both achievement by the individual and an opening in another position. Many interviewees also commented on what they perceive as truncated career ladders, with very few opportunities for advancement and promotion, particularly if they wish to remain at the same institution. Unlike their faculty PhD counterparts, who are commonly able to move up in the career ladder while remaining at the same institution, interviewees reported that career advancement and raises were often only available to those who were willing to move institutions.

Second, interviewees frequently commented on having to navigate status differences with their PhD colleagues employed in faculty positions. The overwhelming majority of interviewees in this study proactively took steps to manage these interactions, including explicitly signaling their PhD status. For example, every interviewee in this study included “PhD” in their email signature line. Interviewees were intentional in this decision, reporting that doing so helped earn them respect and legitimacy among the faculty with whom they interact—and, in some cases, with students and other staff.

“I pull out my PhD more than I would like to. I shouldn’t have to, but like there are certain people I make sure to include my like e-mail signature or like I put that conversation in a way that I shouldn’t have to. But to be taken seriously, and then the environment, I need it.”
- Digital Humanities Center, Employed at Public Institution in the Southeast
Even when interviewees intentionally signaled their PhD-holding status, many interviewees reported being treated as “second class citizens” by their faculty colleagues. Relatedly, while many interviewees felt that being able to help and be of service to others was among the most rewarding aspects of their work (as described in the preceding section), there commonly existed a tension in that many interviewees also experienced being treated as “just a helper” rather than as a colleague with intellectual and scholarly skills and expertise of their own.

“When I worked in special collections, I felt like my work was not valued because they really thought of me as just pulling books and like giving them what they needed. Like, my job was like “to get the book, bitch.” (laughs) So I didn’t think it [my work] was valuable or at all appreciated.”
– Librarian, Public Doctoral Institution in the Midwest

“I operate in an environment where I know that the simple fact that I have a PhD is not enough to earn me respect in the community. My lack of publications and my choice to not follow an academic path creates a de facto class differentiation. And it is infuriating to me that I have built this program that has changed cultures. And when we’re in a meeting where the PIs [principal investigators] on the grant that funds my position and other PIs are in the room, my faculty PIs have no compunction about claiming it as theirs. Because that is a faculty strategy. I mean, they claim anything in their lab as theirs. It’s the culture. So it’s hard for me to blame them for it because they’ve grown up in it and it’s how they understand. But I take great offense to being treated that way because administrators are treated as second-class citizens, even though administrators are the people who make the whole system work.”
– Professional Developer, Employed at Private Doctoral Institution in the Midwest

**CONCLUSION**

While interviewees in this study had diverse routes to their careers in higher education positions beyond the professoriate and held positions in diverse career fields and at diverse career stages, several common themes nonetheless emerged in both their career paths and career outcomes.

First, across PhD disciplines and cohorts, interviewees reported relatively little support for, advising or mentoring on, and/or training for HECBP. Instead, interviewees reported strong expectations that they pursue a traditional faculty path and career training and professional development that assumed a traditional academic faculty career. Many interviewees reported experiences of explicit hostility toward careers beyond the professoriate and some interviewees reported that hostility was accompanied by
resource disadvantage (being less likely than peers intending faculty careers to receive funding, intensive mentoring, invitations to co-author, etc.). When interviewees did experience support for or openness to diverse career paths from their mentors/advisors or other faculty, that support came primarily in a general openness to their exploring diverse careers, rather than in concrete advising on or development support for preparing for those careers.

Second, across PhD disciplines, cohorts, and eventual career fields, interviewees reported similar factors that influenced their entrance to HECBP career paths, including both professional (e.g. intellectual engagement, desire to work collaboratively versus in isolation, inability to secure a faculty position) and personal (e.g. family and relationship commitments, health concerns, work-life balance priorities) factors. While many interviewees intentionally sought out HECBP, some interviewees entered HECBP career paths only after having been unsuccessful in obtaining the traditional faculty position they preferred, while still others left faculty positions to enter HECBP career paths.

Third, across PhD disciplines, cohorts, career fields, and employing institution types and regions, interviewees reported relatively strong career satisfaction. Interviewees explicitly (and without prompting) drew frequent positive comparisons between their career experiences and those they perceived their PhD colleagues in faculty positions to have. Interviewees most frequently identified helping others, work-life balance, and intellectual engagement and opportunities to learn outside their hyper-specialized doctoral emphasis as the most rewarding aspects of their work. However, interviewees also reported challenges and frustrations in their career experiences. In particular, interviewees identified being treated as “second class citizens” by some faculty colleagues and the lack of opportunities for promotion and career advancement as frustrating aspects of their careers. The finding that most interviewees experienced moderate to high career satisfaction is particularly important, given that it holds across the kinds of preparation and support for these careers interviewees experienced during graduate school. Even when interviewees faced explicit hostility to HECBP, the majority went on to experience moderate to high levels of career satisfaction.

**Future Research**

Future research should investigate whether and how demographic factors such as gender, race/ethnicity, parental status, and others influenced HECBP career paths and outcomes. Given that a large body of literature documents the ways in which faculty career paths and expectations disadvantage women and people of color (e.g. Ahmad 2017; Dade et al. 2015; Hirshfield and Joseph 2012; Huq 2017; Jr. and Garvey 2015; Renzulli et al. 2013; Tuner, González and Wong (Lau) 2011; Zhang and Kmec 2018), it
may be that women PhDs and PhDs of color choose to avoid that hostility by pursuing other career paths. Additionally, findings from this study indicate that work-life balance and working around family and relationship commitments were key factors leading to HECBP career paths for many participants. Because women continue to be expected to do the majority of primary caregiving for both children and elder dependents in the U.S. (e.g. Ahmad 2017; Fox 2005; Fox, Fonseca and Bao 2011; O’Laughlin and Bischoff 2005; Sallee 2013; Zhang and Kme 2018), gendered caregiving expectations may make women PhDs more likely than men PhDs to consider and/or enter into HECBP.

Gender also likely plays a role in the double-edged sword of “helping” among PhDs employed in HECBP. On the one hand, helping others was the most commonly identified aspect of professional fulfillment among interviewees in this study, and a significant component of career satisfaction. On the other hand, being treated as (just) a “helper” rather than as a colleague with significant expertise in her/his own right was a significant source of frustration for many PhDs in this study. The gendering of administrative roles and of helping work more generally as feminine labor (England 1992) likely shapes the professional experiences of PhDs employed in HECBP, regardless of their gender identification. Those effects may be even more pronounced for PhDs who identify as women.

Future research should also further investigate the opportunities for career advancement among PhDs employed in HECBP. Future research could identify factors that help PhDs employed in these career fields successfully negotiate promotions. It would also be useful to better understand how PhDs employed in these fields decide whether to remain at or leave their institution to pursue promotion, and the factors that go into those decisions.

Additionally, future research should explicitly investigate the compensation satisfaction of PhDs employed in these positions, as well as the student loan debt burdens among this population. It would be useful to know, for instance, whether PhDs employed in HECBP earn on average more or less than their PhD colleagues employed in faculty positions and whether the student loan debts of these populations are similar or dissimilar.

Finally, future research should explore in more depth the ways in which PhDs employed in HECBP navigate the tensions that arise from receiving professional fulfillment through helping while simultaneously having their status in academic institutional hierarchies lowered because they are perceived as “helpers.” Examining how individuals navigate these social processes and interactions can help us better understand their professional identity development processes and career outcomes.
IMPLICATIONS
The findings of this study underscore the urgent need for training and mentoring for diverse careers. While some PhDs in this study received support and/ or training for diverse careers, they were in the small minority of all participants. Particularly alarmingly, PhDs in more recent cohorts were not more likely than those in older cohorts to have received support or mentoring for diverse careers.

At the departmental, programmatic, and university-level, more professional development and training opportunities are urgently needed. Training programs and certifications in skills commonly utilized in HECBP fields—such as budgeting, event planning, people management, and communications—would help prepare PhDs to pursue and succeed in HECBP. That most interviewees relied heavily on their non-academic work experience to both obtain and succeed in their career fields suggests that such work experience and skills are important aspects of success in HECBP.

At the faculty advisor level, it is crucial that advisors explicitly communicate support for diverse careers. Many interviewees reported never having had career-related conversations with their advisors, in part because of the assumption that their advisor would not support them in exploring or pursuing careers beyond the professoriate. Given that doctoral students and postdocs are aware of the potentially high cost of indicating interest in non-faculty careers to their relationship with their advisor, advisors must work to combat those fears by explicating voicing support for diverse careers.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: PHD-GRANTING INSTITUTIONS OF INTERVIEW SAMPLE
Brown
Duke
Emory
Florida State
Ohio State
Penn State
Princeton
Syracuse University
University of California- Davis
University of California- Irvine
University of California- Santa Cruz
University of Chicago
University of Cincinnati
University of Colorado- Boulder
University of East Anglia
University of Illinois- Urbana Champaign
University of Kansas
University of Miami
University of Michigan
University of Minnesota
University of North Carolina- Chapel Hill
University of Oregon
University of Texas- Southwestern
University of Virginia
University of Washington
Vanderbilt
Washington University in St Louis

**APPENDIX B: PhD DISCIPLINES REPRESENTED IN INTERVIEW SAMPLE**

*n.b.* General rather than specialized PhD fields are included here (e.g. “Molecular Biology” falls under “Biology,” “Cultural Anthropology” falls under “Anthropology”, etc.).

American Studies
Anthropology
Biochemistry
Chemistry
Comparative Literature
Cultural Studies
Ecology
Economics
Educational Technology
English
Genetics
Geography
Health Education
History
Human Design and Engineering
Humanities
Interdisciplinary Studies
International Affairs
Linguistics
Literature
Neuroscience
Political Science
Psychology
Religious Studies
APPENDIX C: EMPLOYING INSTITUTIONS OF INTERVIEW SAMPLE

Boston University
Chapman
CUNY- Graduate Center
DePaul
Duke
Emory
Georgia State
Georgia Tech
Lehigh University
Ohio State
Providence College
Rice
Stanford
Tacoma Community College
University of California- Davis
University of California- Irvine
University of Chicago
University of Georgia
University of Houston
University of Iowa
University of Kansas
University of Michigan
University of North Carolina- Chapel Hill
University of Virginia
University of Washington
Utah State
Washington University in St. Louis

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