

STUDIO SESSION

AltAc 101 &

Ask Me Anything

Today's Jam Topics:

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DCS ALTERNATIVE ACADEMIC
CAREERS WORKSHOP SERIES

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#RockAltAc



TODAY!

- AltAc 101:
- → Why “Alternative Academia”
- → Myth Busting
- → Overview of AltAc Spaces
- → Reminder on Skill Translation
- Ask Me Anything!

 **DISCLAIMER** 

WHY Alternative Academic... not “non-Ac”?

ALTERNATIVE Academia not non-Academic...



this was a DELIBERATE action we took to
CENTER the **WORK** itself, rather than the
LOCATION where the work occurs



... methodologically rigorous ... theoretically informed ... concerned with measurement & operationalization ... situates findings within context of literature and practice ...

HALMARKS OF RIGOROUS SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH AND EVALUATION ACTIVITIES

Time for some **MYTH BUSTING!**

- 1.Myth: “In those careers you can't design your own research”
- 2.Myth: “In those careers you don't publish so you can't stay relevant”
- 3.Myth: “If it doesn't require a PhD it's not a real research position”
- 4.Myth: “If it doesn't require a PhD it's not worth applying to”
- 5.Myth: “If you start in an alt-ac career you can't teach or later have a tenure-track position at a university”
- 6.Myth: “You won't be competitive for grants”
- 7.Myth: “Those are vocational careers”
- 8.Myth: “You won't be able to mentor or work with graduate students”
- 9.Myth: “Those careers aren't as prestigious
- 10.Myth: “Those careers are not academic”

	Government & Agencies	Non-profit Research Firms and Think Tanks	For-profit Research & Consulting Companies	Non-profit - Other	Technology	Corporate America
Examples	Federal, state, local government entities; CJS agencies (police, courts, corrections); NIJ/BJA/BJS; Legislative analyst/advisor	CJS sector: Vera, RAND, RTI; Weststat Public interest/policy research centers (, AIR, CSG) University-adjacent research centers (the Policing Project at NYU Law; NORC)	CJS sector specific consulting (commonly [prior] CJS professionals/professors) Public interest/policy shops: Deloit; PWC; BAH; etc. “Beltway Bandits” Professional associations (PERF, APPA, ACA, etc.)	Advocacy: the Sentencing Project; Prison Policy Initiative; The Marshall Project; ACLU International: UN, International Bank;	Big Data projects: Recidiviz, BJA – Justice Counts, NACJD/ICPSR – CJARS; Fin-tech/cyber security Social Media companies	Examples abound! Rockstar examples: Walgreens
Roles/positions	<u>Key words:</u> research, data, program, operations & policy, etc., positions; <u>Roles:</u> data/research analyst, scientist, policy advisor; <u>Positions</u> can range in level (1, 2, 3; Jr – Sr., etc.) and required qualifications	<u>Key words:</u> research, policy and program evaluation; <u>Positions</u> can range in level and required qualifications; Senior positions: “Partner”, “Principal”	<u>Key words:</u> research, policy and program evaluation; <u>Positions</u> can range in level and required qualifications; Senior positions: “Partner”, “Principal”	Wide range!	<u>Quantitative:</u> Data scientist (analyst → data engineer level); <u>Qualitative:</u> UXR; “trust & safety” professionals; people scientist/behavioral health scientist	Wide range!
Rockstar Reference** **(not exhaustive)	Jen Weintraub Dr. Marie Garcia	Maureen McGough Dr. J. Conway-Turner Dr. Clark-Moorman Dr. Brian Lovins	Zach Drake Dr. Brian Lovins (consulting)	Dr. Jason Wilks Dr. Sarah Desmarais	Zach Drake (10/2022)	Dr. James Dunlea



“Traditional” AltAc Spaces

“Emerging” AltAc Spaces

⚠️ DISCLAIMER ⚠️

	Government & Agencies	Non-profit Research Firms and Think Tanks	For-profit Research & Consulting Companies	Non-profit - Other	Technology	Corporate America
Job Security	Hard money; Can be budget driven (government)	Depends, but largely funded by soft money	Contract, grant, foundation funding/award hustle territory!	Depends Can be soft-money at some research centers	Solid	Solid
SME v. Methodologist (v. else?)	Depends	Depends → usually generalist/analyst at lower levels, specialist/SME at higher/adviser levels but some shops have topic-specific differentiation/divisions across positions	Depends, leans towards generalist (with exception of personal consulting LLC's/companies)	Depends	Methodologist	Generalist
Compensation** (* * from what we know/google)	\$ → \$\$\$\$\$* *mostly time-based	\$ → \$\$\$\$\$	\$\$\$ → \$\$\$\$\$	\$ → \$\$\$\$\$	\$\$\$\$\$	\$\$\$\$\$
Benefits	Less flexibility and/or room for negotiation, but good benefits packages with public service work	Depends...	Negotiate away! (e.g., relocation expenses, home office/office share, keep company credit card points, etc.)	Depends...	Negotiate away! (e.g., relocation expenses, home office/office share, keep company credit card points, etc.)	Negotiate away! (e.g., relocation expenses, home office/office share, keep company credit card points, etc.)
Job Market	Almost always hiring	Inconsistent but commonly open positions	Period of growth in sector	Period of growth in sector	Expansive market!	Expansive market!



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Audience & Deliverables	Agency executive teams; Legislature/politicians; Policy makers and program stakeholders; General public	Agency executive teams; Legislature/politicians; Policy makers and program stakeholders; General public	Variable	General public; Legislature/politicians; Policy makers and program stakeholders	Variable	Audience is company/employer → Proprietary findings a lot of the time
Pace of Work	Variable Commonly a big rush during legislative sessions	Variable (Commonly) Soft money chasing!	Fast turnover! Soft money chasing!	Timely provision of information associated with current events	Commonly fast, but also large projects	Fast turnover!
Autonomy of Ideas	Depends... Commonly freedom of questions and methods, within framework of larger initiatives	Flexible	Questions are commonly specified by customer and/or funding solicitations, methods can be flexible (within limitations of customer resources/needs)	Mission driven questions;	Questions are specified by needs of customer, methods are flexible	Questions are specified by needs of company, methods are flexible
“Culture”	Government	Mixed	Mixed	Mixed	More relaxed	Corporate America (depends)



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TRANSLATING your previous work experiences into AltAc spaces

IMPORTANTLY! You have the experiences for the work

When **TRANSLATING** your work into a resume or talking about it, think about:

Breaking down the process

Describing individual steps

SOME EXAMPLES...

TRANSLATING your previous work experiences into AltAc spaces

Your **TEACHING** Experience

Developed syllabus

Delivered content/taught the class

Developed assessments to gauge understanding

Translating the experience for **training & technical assistance work**

Identified critical topics, collated relevant materials, and designed curriculum

Transferred knowledge and information through multiple formats (presentation, development of deliverables)

Gauged understanding of topics and modified materials to reinforce important materials and lessons

TRANSLATING your previous work experiences into AltAc spaces

RESEARCHING with faculty

Conducted Literature Reviews

Managed Data & Conducted Analysis

Assisted with report and manuscript writing, and conference presentation

Translating the experience for research & project-based work

Collated existing research on various topics, identified research gaps in the knowledge base, helped develop critical questions to answer gaps, wrote summaries of research within quick deadlines

Managed primary and secondary quantitative data, and qualitative data adhering to confidentiality and security protocols, conducted mixed-methods analysis using SPSS and Atlas.ti, respectively

Developed materials for various audiences in various formats including, technical reports, peer-reviewed publications, conference presentations, and podcasts

TRANSLATING your previous work experiences into AltAc spaces

Your **DISSERTATION**

Identified important research area to fill specific need

Developed methodology and executed research project

Translating the experience for **any place, really**

Identified critically important problem and described scope of the problem, developed necessary research question grounded in theory and policy context to help answer problem. Authored all IRB paperwork and worked with agency for data use agreement.

Developed mixed-methodology to answer research question. Worked with agency research department to understand administrative data available, collected needed data and built additional variables, as necessary. Developed numerous interview instruments for incarcerated persons and prison staff. Served as liaison to prison staff to coordinate site visits and data collection protocols. Trained and managed 12 young researchers on data collection. Developed rapport with prison officials to conduct 100 semi-structured interviews inside restricted housing units

TRANSLATING your previous work experiences into AltAc spaces

Your **DISSERTATION**

Interpreted findings to address previously identified need and contribute to larger body of research

Translating the experience for **any place, really**

Organized and managed quantitative and qualitative data. Used various statistical software to conduct iterative analyses.

Presented findings directly to agency staff and provided important practical recommendations. Authored agency final report.

Authored three peer-reviewed publications situating the findings from the work into the larger policy and practice context to provide meaningful answers to important questions.

TRANSLATING your previous work experiences into AltAc spaces



PROTIPS!

MIMIC the language of the position positing!

DETAIL areas of responsibility and role centrality

DRAW ATTENTION to areas of skill refinement

HIGHLIGHT unexpected skills

Graphic Design → Development of Infographics

Audio & Video Editing → Training videos & podcasts

“Alternative” project management and applied work

Experience with budgeting and/or cost estimation

**Important for
getting you in
the door and
salary
negotiations!**

Now...

ANY QUESTIONS/AMA?