

27 October 2022

Short Paper 2: Informational Interviews

Road to success and Beyond – An Informational Interview with Communication Graduate Faculty Around Professional Journey and Tips

Giada Roberta Rossi

ODU Lifespan and Digital Communication Graduate Student



This article wants to explore the experienced challenges and consequent success of two current Communication graduate faculty and is aimed at receiving advice on how to achieve tangible results as a graduate student and beyond.

Separate interviews with Doctor Fran Hassencahl and Doctor Najmeh Moradiyan-Rizi were conducted using a compound approach of exploratory questions, serving as analysis of their

academic and professional career paths and meaningful advice, and a purposeful observation of their body language and words to determine how their own success was achieved. As a result, a brief discussion around the paramount focus of my research for this program is herein enclosed to ultimately demonstrate the importance of multilingualism in a globalized world.

Each professor started portraying their own professional journey, along with heartfelt interest towards their research. Dr. Hassencahl, although of German origins, has always lived in the US so, for the most part, she focused on her passion for history and debate, and how, thanks to the last one, she obtained a ticket to Communication; whereas Dr. Moradiyan-Rizi, who left Iran to relocate to America, discussed not only her experience as a master in Communication and her preferred topics surrounding film and women's studies, but also the challenges faced, especially as an Iranian woman, due to her relocation to a far western Country which, when related to a patriarchal Iran, is perceived distant physically and socially.

Dr. Hassencahl, consequently explored historical themes depicting a strong passion for the Progressive Era, Middle East female film directors, and metaphors within cartoons around the 2020 pandemic. Alternately, Dr. Moradiyan-Rizi exhibited an honest and relentless but contemporary just and deserved enthusiasm towards the importance of raising public awareness of the urgency of active narratives surrounding Iranian women's rights and their voices.

Dr. Hassencahl subsequently provided a detailed excursion of her passion for photography, which consists of eastern now-inexistent historical places and an imaginary exhibition of street animals. Dr. Moradiyan-Rizi, instead, briefly continued to present her passion for women's rights, with hesitance, I would appreciatively consider, as it was obvious to notice that she is actively involved in her studies even during her leisure time.

The final responses provided detailed guidance on which professions in Communication to consider and genuine mentorship on ways to determine the most effective decision of what to attain, which resulted in an insightful “Live with your research studies and continue despite the difficulties”. Not all dreams, per their saying, come true, but challenges lead to success when goals are followed fighting the absorption of a whirlpool of obstacles. Regardless of challenges, Dr. Hassencahl and Dr. Moradiyan-Rizi have satisfactorily reached their goals or, at least, they are on the right way. American Dr. Hassencahl was an active debater interested in law who, due to low income, was unable to start law school. However, double-majored in History and Communication, she accepted an offer of debate assistantship at Case Western, which represented her ticket into Communication. Dr. Moradiyan-Rizi, on the other side, initially medical student per her father’s desire, is an international Iranian researcher with a passion for movies and women’s studies, who left medical school to study on her own in order to pass an extremely difficult test at Tehran University of Art, where she graduated in Cinema. Although the patriarchal society of Iran and her status as Muslim female immigrant “who speaks with an accent”, as she controversially stated, she managed to relocate to US, where she completed a second master’s degree in Humanities Interdisciplinary, Film and Media Studies, a doctorate in Film and Media Studies, and a graduate certificate in Women’ Gender and Sexuality Studies.

Individuals “should analyze and take on challenges that are important to face if they want to move forward in life. These challenges provide opportunities to do better, to grow as a person and attempt something new” (<https://www.dawn.com/news/1657842/challenges-lead-to-success>). Like the two researchers proved, life is difficult and that is what it makes it enjoyable. What initially seems tough and time-consuming might result in pride, after all. Without

opportunities and challenges, we absolutely cannot succeed. I left my Country of birth with a young child and, despite the sacrifices of leaving a hostile family and my deep roots behind, most of my dreams are realized. As an international woman who speaks “broken English”, though, I have been denigrated in my fellow America, and that is because, sadly, “not all opportunities are created equal when it comes to ethnic families [...]. The dominance of Anglocentrism and the marginality of multilingual and multicultural education are seed forms of greater discrepancies and discriminatory practices in the education system” (Lerner, 2005, p. 145) and at work. However, the American dream is real and ideally “begins by achieving competence in school” (Lerner, 2005, p. 145). I had been told for years that my Italian bachelor’s was worth less than zero, and I painfully but interestedly concluded that I needed to proceed with an American degree of a level higher than those of who kept on discriminating; I decided to obtain not another undergraduate but, rather, a master’s and a doctorate for my own satisfaction and to demonstrate that we are all equal. Similarly to Dr. Hassencahl and Dr. Moradiyan-Rizi, I have always risen stronger than ever before. Regardless of the provocations and unfounded misconceptions, I designed and coached Business Writing Skills courses for native anglophones at that previous job and, today, I write, edit, and create content in the English language. Challenges do lead to success! According to Dr. Hassencahl, though, doing internship is paramount to any possible success: Not only does it help with networking but also serves to conceptualize the importance of discovering what a person does not want to do, and to dictate whether a particular field is the most indicated. After all, internships are professional learning experiences which offer practical work relevant to a scholar’s field of study and are inevitable for the overall experience. Dr. Moradiyan-Rizi, alternatively, due to her own experience, understands

the issue surrounding multilingualism and expressed her desire to be part of my journey. The lecturer suggested the necessity of mentorship while discussing the importance of following one's dream by navigating the academic system without never becoming accustomed to it. The goal, per her words, is to continually live with your own research, to focus on the topic no matter the multitude of barriers one might face.

It is evident that part of the obstacles we often experience comes from a hostile family and with it the society, which hinder the ability to follow our own path. That is particularly true when children and especially fathers have formed “a significant bond in which the positive involvement has resulted beneficial on both” (Lerner, 2005, pp. 179-180). Most parents do not want to let go; and it takes time and positive outcomes for them to realize how significant it is to have different perspectives –i.e., Dr. Moradiyan-Rizi and her father. Another frequent barrier is not being able to work within the field we admire due to economic factors. Dr. Hassencahl, for instance, could not attend law school. Equally important, as well, are the challenges faced due to language barrier, where achievements are “hampered by a system that does not treat all people as equal [...]” (Lerner, 2005, p. 145). In an effort to comprehend the significance and complexity of multilingualism, communication is the interchange of ideas between interlocutors, performed through verbal and non-verbal resources, and it is reciprocal and continuously distributed across time. It is the time that defines experience which helps speakers interpret and inter-comprehend each other, like Nussbaum discusses (Nussbaum, 2014, p. 53-70). In international meetings, though, it “represents a challenge for the participants, who need to make choices about the language(s) they use to co-construct meaning and guarantee the success of their work.” ([Co-](#)

Thanks to my polyglotism, I own a more complex visual and a better prospective around multiculturalism and multilingualism, which allowed me to easily conversate with and emotionally comprehend anglophone American Dr. Hassencahl, and Persian-speaking Iranian Dr. Moradiyan-Rizi. With the exchange of detailed information and a purposeful analysis of their body language, voice intonation, and pronunciation, I was able to identify and compare similarities and differences between the two professors and their accomplishments, an expectation which could not have been met if I had only been italophone. Furthermore, and this might be used as further proof, although the last faculty, contrary to the first lecturer, did not approve the interview recording due to her accent, I managed to annotate the most relevant sentences and conceptual ideas which not only do largely provide a great visual of how and what might be obtained as a graduate student in Communication and beyond but also have initiated possible future research, which requisite is “to illustrate communication practices across” (Nussbaum, 2014, p. 66) monolingual and plurilingual interlocutors. “Research with culturally collaborative studies [...], addressing the myriad contexts of multinational, multicultural, multireligious, and multimediality [...] is imperative [...] in our discipline” (Creedon, Al-Khaja). The results will lead to a more complex but simultaneously complete understanding of the development of human communication in an “increasingly diversified and globalized society” (Nussbaum, 2014, p. 66).

Interviewees

- Doctor Fran Hassencahl Ph.D (United States of America), Director of Minor in Middle Eastern Studies and Chief Advisor for Professional Communication Program, Master Advisor, Old Dominion University
- Doctor Najmeh Moradiyan-Rizi Ph.D (Isfahan, Iran), Assistant Professor of Film Studies, Old Dominion University

References

- <https://www.dawn.com/news/1657842/challenges-lead-to-success>
- [Iran Chamber Society: Iranian Society: Patriarchy and parental control in Iran](#)
- Carol A. Miller, Laura S. DeThorne, *Communication Development Distributed Across People, Resources, and Time* in Jon F. Nussbaum (2014), *The Handbook of Lifespan Communication*, Part Two Chapter Three. New York, New York: Peter Lang Publishing (pp. 53-70)
- Harriette P. McAdoo, Alan Martin, *Families and Ethnicity* in Richard M. Lerner (2005), *Applied Developmental Science: An Advanced Textbook*, Section II Chapter Six. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, Inc. (pp. 141-154)
- Michael E. Lamb, Susan S. Chuang, Natasha Cabrera, *Promoting Child Adjustment by Fostering Positive Paternal Involvement* in Richard M. Lerner (2005), *Applied Developmental Science: An Advanced Textbook*, Section II Chapter Eight. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, Inc. (pp. 179-200)
- Pam Creedon, Mai Al-Khaja, *An overview of Middle East public relations practice, education, and research from isolation to globalization.*
[An overview of Middle East public relations practice, education, and resear...: EBSCOhost \(odu.edu\)](#)
- Filomena Capucho, Maria da Piedade Silva, Antonio Chenoll, *Co-constructing meaning in international meetings - an approach to plurilingual interactions.*
[Co-constructing meaning in international meetings - an approach to plurilin...: EBSCOhost \(odu.edu\)](#)