WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

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Q. What, in your opinion, was the most pivotal moment (either a roadblock or an enabler) between your dissertation and today?

A. For me, the most important moment was realizing the value of taking psychological ownership. During my PhD program at URI, I tried to act like a professor, taking full responsibility for my research, teaching, and service, rather than waiting for direction. This helped me establish a learning mindset, which in turn made me much more productive.

While completing important milestones like comprehensive exams, I learned how stubborn I could become, especially in areas where I felt comfortable. I would get convinced that what I knew was the only "truth." However, taking ownership helped me "think again" and stay flexible, which made facing different challenges during the program much easier.

I believe this approach was possible under my advisor, Dr. Stephen Atlas's guidance, and this attitude continues to shape who I am as an educator and researcher.

Q. I'd love to know about a project you're working on right now that you're really excited about.

A. I'm fortunate to still be collaborating with my committee members on different research projects. One I'm especially excited about is with Drs. Stephen Atlas and Lauren Labrecque. We're developing guidelines for conducting AI behavioral experiments. This was inspired by my dissertation work, which examined how AI systems make decisions compared with human benchmarks, as well as other AI systems. There's growing research on AI behavior, but we don't yet have established methods for studying it the way we do for human decision-making. We're hoping to help fill that gap.

I am also excited about a scale development project led by Dr. Kevin Sample, my external committee member. We're trying to properly measure how consumers perceive "effort" from the providers, which eventually influences consumer judgment and purchase

decision-making. Both projects help me grow as a marketing scholar while actively interacting with my committee members.

Q. What separates a good dissertation from a great dissertation?

A. I believe making small progress consistently, with the thought that you can always go back and revise, is the best way to get closer to a great dissertation. Although I understood this in theory, perfectionism often made me feel overwhelmed and stuck. When it kicked in, I felt anxious and would sit in front of the monitor all day, feeling exhausted, only to realize I hadn't moved forward as much as I thought. That's the trap.

What matters is daily progress and transparency with your advisor. Even small progress adds up. You also have to be honest with yourself about whether you actually worked or just felt stressed and tired. My advisor, Dr. Atlas, helped me understand this and often told me, "Keep calm and make traction (everyday)."

In the end, I think what separates a good dissertation from a great dissertation is how many times you revisit the document to revise, not how much pressure you put on yourself during the process.

Q. What's one thing that surprised you most about the job market? Anything you would do differently?

A. Before going on the market, I thought it was all about publications, research pipelines, teaching competency, and timing. Of course, those matter. But in the end, departments hire someone they will see and work with every day for years. They want a good colleague, not just a strong CV.

Looking back, I realized how much I had underestimated the importance of a learning attitude and growth mindset. These help you position yourself as a colleague with humility and professional aspirations.

There are so many things you can't control in the job market (e.g., publication timing and types of open faculty positions). What you can control is the level of preparation and your attitude. Overselling doesn't work; your hiring committee will see through it.

Q. What's the best behavior you've specifically learned from a mentor?

A. My advisor, Dr. Atlas, taught me how important it is to be pragmatic and stay focused on what actually moves the work forward. When we were planning the dissertation, we debated a lot. Through this, we eventually and fortunately agreed on the current dissertation topic, which made both of us excited. Once the plan was set, it became my responsibility to execute it.

What I appreciate about him the most is how he helped me filter out distractions. When I brought up concerns that weren't central to the research question, he would quietly redirect me back to what mattered. This taught me to ask myself, "Does this actually help me move forward?" Whenever I was ready to discuss the real issue, he was always there with thoughtful feedback.

As I mentioned earlier, he often reminded me to "Keep calm and make traction." I still keep the note he drew for me in my office. That simple phrase captures his mentoring philosophy. Don't get overwhelmed by the big picture. Just focus on the next step. That ability to ask "What is the next step?" is something I still carry with me.

Q. Lightning Round. Favorite book, article, or podcast that you'd recommend to car PhD students?

A. Right now I'm reading Deep Work by Cal Newport. With so many new responsibilities as an assistant professor, this book has helped me stay focused on what really matters. I'd recommend it to anyone navigating a busy academic life.

Q. Can you describe your favorite method/analytical approach and why it speaks to you?

A. I'm most comfortable with experimental designs and surveys, but I try not to limit myself to one approach. I believe the research question should drive the method, not the other way around. Staying flexible has allowed me to explore different questions and collaborate with researchers who have different methodological strengths.

Q. You're allowed to go back in time and give one piece of advice to your past self as you start your PhD program. What is it?

A. Be more flexible and more curious.

Looking back, I sometimes resisted new things. For example, when AI first emerged as a research topic, I was hesitant. There were so many reasons not to learn it, but that defensiveness comes from wanting to stay safe in your comfort zone. Children don't have that; they're curious about everything.

I would tell my past self: try things first, judge later. When your advisor or committee member asks you to explore something you think isn't your expertise, don't reject it immediately. Once you try, you see it differently. Curiosity and flexibility will take you far.