##### Researcher

Right, so, just to kick things off, I want to ask you to sort of tell me a bit about yourself in your own words and your career, your current job role and your background.

##### Participant 12

OK, well, I'll just whizz through. I started in [year] as a lecturer without a PhD at [other institution]. I spent five years there, started a PhD. I then emigrated and then went to [foreign institution], where I spent four years completing my PhD. I then went back to the UK as a [position] at the [other institution]. All in business schools or equivalents. Yeah, they were all in business schools. So I spent 8 years in [other institution]. I then moved to [other institution] as a [position]. And I was the director of a research institute, so I sort of stepped into a management role. And then I stepped higher into a management role becoming [senior role]. And after a while, yeah, I didn't enjoy that very much and, but it was alright. But anyway, salary was good. And then a year or so ago I got a job as a regular teaching and research [position] at the [university]. I'm [years] years old. I started in [year] so that would have been [years], I guess, something, something like that, yeah.

##### Researcher

Right. OK, wonderful. And at the moment in your current job role, how much of your time do you dedicate to research and teaching and other things?

##### Participant 12

Well, you know, at the moment, it's a particularly unusual period of time for myself and indeed all my colleagues. But I would normally be allocated 40 percent of my weekly time to research. But that at [university] has been reduced to 20 percent as a result of the Covid-19 resilience, bimodal, et cetera, et cetera, response of the university. So my teaching loads have gone up a lot. And so I did a short calculation the other day, just to put it into context, I suppose, because, I mean, the workload models that we all work under are a little bit... well they tell you what you're doing that doesn't really tell you anything. So I would've expected probably to have about 20 hours this semester face to face, but I've actually got around about 60 hours.

##### Researcher

Right.

##### Participant 12

So, I mean, I'd have to go back to my [previous institution] days, that is [year] as a lecturer to get anywhere near having that degree of teaching. So you can imagine, you know, here I am after eight years of hard graft as a university manager and, you know, sort of doing really interesting and good things at a post-1992. And you can imagine I come to [current institution], the first year was fine. You know, what I would expect to be doing, but doing my bit in all areas. I'm not, I wasn't volunteering for any roles or admin or whatever. I just wanted to focus on the stuff I wanted to do, which was about writing books. And that was actually what I pitched in my, you know, I pitched that in my interview, it was about, you know, pushing on with research, deepening my research and writing a couple of books I've got in mind. And Covid-19 comes along - or rather, [the university's] response to Covid-19, because other universities have not made the same response or rather not made the same response to the same degree. I think everybody right now is probably working more, been doing more teaching than they would normally be doing. There's clearly going to be more teaching because of this bimodal stuff that they've gone on about, which is mostly nonsense anyway. But anyway. So, yes, I mean, I'm not, I'm not unhappy. I have been angry about it all because I'm sort of thinking, "well, towards the end of my career there were a few things I really wanted to get stuck into". But as we know, times are very unprecedented. And I'm sort of, yeah, I don't really fully buy the whole "unprecedented" - I think that having been a manager for many years, there's nothing like a good crisis for which to sort of realise your strategic managerial objectives. In places like [university], because they're so fuddy-duddy and old fashioned, you know, and there's been high degrees of fuddy-duddy resistance, which, if I was a manager at [university] I would probably, you know, I probably would agree with the managers and say "yeah, it's all a bit old". And they need, they need, all these heads in the sky academically need to get a life, get real, you know. But nevertheless, having now been the target of such a management expansionism or managerialism as I think it's called. Yeah, it doesn't feel so good. It is pretty extreme to go from 20 hours to over 60, as a sort of research [position]. They recruited me because I publish in journals like [4\* journals], etc, etc. And I mean, it's just our bad luck that the Covid-19 thing happened when the REF had sort of basically finished. If it hadn't there would have been different, different things going on, so. Yeah, but having said that, at the same time, I'm irritated by the university’s response, but nevertheless, I mean, I can, I can see that some response was necessary. I mean, there are lots of detail about the sort of, all this rubbish about resilience and bimodal. I mean, some of it is, sort of, bonkers. And I don't know how interested you are in the detail of that. But then, you know, a lot of what's going on in the whole country or the world is totally bonkers as well. So, you know, people are not clear about how best to respond to these things. And, yeah, you know, I think that, on balance, what I've tried to tell myself, and what my partner tells me and my colleague tells me, is that "they're paying you loads of money to do a job that usually earns about 35, 40 thousand pounds per year". So my job, which is a six figure salary, because that's what you get if you publish in the [highly ranked] journal, etc, etc. And you do all that stuff, and the sort of experience I've got, it's a very, it's a really good job. It's absolutely bonkers that my job, now, is actually essentially a 40 thousand pounds a year lecturer, currently. And I'm not very happy about it. But, you know, in the scheme of [decades] of a career, I suppose we've got to go with it, I suppose. You know, I've had angry days, angry mornings, and various bits of craziness. I mean, really angry. I'm not angry person, but I actually lost my temper once or twice. But then that's also partly I guess to do with the whole Covid-19, you know, we're not as connected as we were. And all that sort of stuff. So on balance, I'm not particularly happy. But then, you know, things, things will improve, I'm sure.

##### Researcher

Hmm. So when you, when you say bimodal, is that like the sort of blended learning, blended approach, sort of thing?

##### Participant 12

You get this perverse situation where, so, I have, I contribute to first year management modules, two of them. So I do some lectures on those. We will do three online live interactive lectures, three of them, repeated in the week. We record one of them, and then we do two more live ones because, you know, the students have to have that interactive experience. And, and, I don't know, somebody told me that either the university feels that they have to have that interactive experience, or there is a limit on the technology. I'm not sure that there is a limit on the technology of Zoom, but that's the explanation being given. I think it's bonkers personally. You know, I just don't, it's all part and parcel of this, I don't know if you're specifically interested in this, but it's, you know, universities are scared. They are scared of the government, they're scared of the government's henchmen, they're scared of all of this stuff. So essentially, you know, universities are becoming more and more like schools. There is, you know, handholding. We're all being encouraged to do more and more handholding, more and more of this, more and more of that. And the notion of independent learning is becoming, well, I mean, I don't want to say, there are lots of different teaching practices. But clearly the "best practice" - that was a scare quotes for your tape - the best practice is now seen as essentially, you know, stepping students through everything, you know. But of course, you know, students, these days, there is more and more students going to university. I think it's 40, 45 percent of all young people now go to university. And, you know, that is mass higher education. It's a very different thing to even when I started. And even then, it was, you know, still a mass. And therefore, you know, the degrees to which things like attention span, willingness to read and write, and indeed ability to read and write are, you know. There are still really high standards, don't get me wrong. I mean, [university], they've got some great students. But the overall level of willingness of people is declining because that's what's happening in society. And obviously we're getting more and more students as a proportion of the population. So there's going to be, and particularly now, with Covid-19, you know, we were expecting 350 business school students in the first year. We've ended up with 500. You know, so much for the lack of money, you know, that the university was facing when it comes to all this rubbish that we're having to do. So I think, you know, that's another reason why myself and some other staff feel rather irritated and annoyed. Because the university, the business school in particular, their budget has been 35% extra. Alright, take 10 percent extra away for all of the Covid-19 related stuff. But come on, please. We're not, we're not, we're not stupid, you know. Sorry, I've forgotten what your question was.

##### Researcher

Haha. It was about the blended learning.

##### Participant 12

Ah, I see. So the duplication and repetition, in ways that are, well, in my mind, I mean, I think that they're are about, yeah, you know, trying to do the best for the student. But in a way that, you know, on the back foot. You know, I mean, you know, we've seen, you know, the newspapers out there, all the right-wing newspapers or even The Guardian, they're all out there ready and waiting to pounce. There was something in The Guardian that I noticed the other day, you know, "are you a student? Please come and talk to us about your experience". It was like everybody out there, you know, is after getting at the university. And the BBC, and any other decent institution in the rapidly declining country that is Britain, you know. Yeah, I mean, I think if you're a manager in a higher education institution now, you must feel really between a rock and a hard place. It must be very difficult. However, I also think that they are, you know, as managers do, they're using this crisis to break the back of the, you know, what they see as outmoded practices and what academics generally see as, you know, their right to do what they think academics should be doing.

##### Researcher

Mm hmm. So, yeah, obviously on the, on the topic of what academics should be doing, why did you sort of choose to go into academia in the first place? What was it that made you want a career in academia?

##### Participant 12

Oh, right. That's an interesting question. Well, I'm just trying to think of a way of telling you this without going on too much. I left school without A-levels and I then went on and did lots of other stuff, including running a [business] in my early 20s. And anyway, my go at being an entrepreneur, a cultural entrepreneur didn't work out and, and I wasn't able to get to work. I mean, I didn't have a job. I tried, I didn't get a job. So I went to university at [late 20s] to study [subject]. Then I realised that in order to get a job, I needed a more vocational type of higher education degree. I then went and did a master's in [business-related area], thinking I might become consultant or something like that. And then realised during my studies that, yeah, I mean, I wasn't interested in that. But then it was a sort of, I mean, you know, I was [in my 30s] and I was getting a bit desperate, I had a mortgage, you know, it was fingers crossed time. I was applying for jobs, as a [role] in local government, that was one thing. But I applied for other things, I remember getting a job as a [manager] at graduate level, but still working night shifts, working for [company]. You know, that sort of thing. I thought "fair enough, if that's what it amounts to, that's fine". But I was also applying to lectureships. And at that time, [the 1990s], such was the expansion of higher education. Universities, I think even Russell Group universities, because I've met some since, they would say they were taking on people that didn't have PhDs. I had a master's from [institution] and an undergraduate degree from [institution], you know, pretty blue-chip education. And I was good. And so [previous employer] took me on so I was extremely lucky. So you asked why I wanted to become an academic. I think by that time, this is something I tell my students, I mean, I was a good student. I was by no means outstanding. But given my general background, which is sort of fairly working class and, you know, I didn't, I didn't finish school. As in, I didn't do A-levels. So, yeah, I mean, I, what I tell my students is, you know, academics in essence are professional students. They're just people are really good at being students. And I was pretty good at it. And I realised that I had a lot of intellectual enthusiasm essentially. I was really fired up over the possibility of that sort of career. And you know, I've done OK. You know, I mean, I sort of kept myself going, lots of interest, books, articles galore, you know, that sort of thing, you know. So, yeah, I, it was a job that I was interested in because it seemed like a really, really interesting thing to do.

##### Researcher

Wonderful. Thank you. So I want to talk a little bit about the business school. So obviously you've been working there for a short time now and you've been to a few other business schools. So how would you sort of describe the environment of the business school and maybe sort of compared to other places like [previous institutions]? And it will be interesting to hear as well, because you said you were in [other country] for a while finishing off your PhD, so it would be interesting to know if there's a kind of a difference between the [other country] business school environment and the UK?

##### Participant 12

Yeah, I mean, the, yeah, I mean, I was a lecturer during the whole time I was doing my PhD, so I wasn't a PhD student in that sense. So my PhD took five years which is pretty good going I guess given I was a young lecturer. And that eventually became a book which has had some impact. So, yeah, so comparing business schools. [Current institution] I mean, I think, you know, I've been a little bit unlucky in terms of the timing. I mean, I wasn't, I've been in, my previous role at [previous institution], which is a post-1992, was as a senior manager and because I was a [director of activity] and then [senior position], and because of the way I approached the roles, those roles were extremely social. You know, I have a fairly non-hierarchical sort of attitude to people and therefore, you know, it was a very social environment. In a sense, as well as having enough of being a manager, I was also a little bit tired of the constant sociability and interactions with colleagues, you know, which is, yeah it's fine, but eight years of really intensive mentoring and being responsible for people and, you know, building relationships. So I was, I was pretty predisposed to having a quiet and semi-detached time at [current institution]. And so, yeah, I haven't been, even when I started I wasn't going out of my way to engage and to join in. Because my professional objectives have been quite focused on myself and my networks outside the university as it were. So, you know, obviously then Covid-19 comes along and then I don't get a choice anyway. And I'm building good relations with people at the business school, but I suppose the reason I'm talking about this is because I can't, you know, I can't really say with any great certainty, except what others have told me, you know, what [current institution] is like. I mean, it's something I find difficult, in all honesty, to sort of grasp. It's a very large, large business school. It's [hundreds] of staff. Yeah, it's big. And in many ways, my impressions are, it's a place like every other business school I've worked at, you know. You've got, they often, what is interesting is that you, you know, you've got Russell groups and post-1992s, and [current institution] is ranked, I don't know, really quite high, up there, one of the top in Britain, that sort of thing, I guess, you know, something like that. But, you know, you get there and in the business school there are just as many clowns working there as there are in a post-1992, you know. People are not publishing very much, people are fairly not particularly competent in what they're doing. It never seems to make much difference to me. The Russell group universities, they just seem to have the same arc of achievement, the bell curve that you'd expect of any organisation. And Russell group universities seem to have just as much need for sort of, teaching grunts, or admin grunts or, you know, looking after student grunts. And yeah. They're not all full of people churning out four star research, that's for sure. And none of the universities I've worked at were like that. The proportions clearly differ, but not, not as greatly as you'd imagine, because, I don't know, it's just sort of, you know, I don't get, I can't hand on heart say to you "oh, yes, people working in [Russell groups] are so much brighter than the people working at all these teaching universities". It's not true, it's just not true. I mean, I suppose if you do a statistical analysis of it based on the REF, clearly they would have to be better generally. Because that's what the REF does. But I'm not as convinced in terms of the general level of intelligence and engagement. And yeah, you get clowns at Russell groups as well. You know. That's not a technical term, by the way, but you know what I mean. So comparing, in [foreign country], yeah, it's a long time ago now, [early 2000s]. No, the only thing, the only observation I would have is how absolutely bloody similar it is to the UK. It's hardly any different. I mean, half of the people there are actually British anyway. So, yeah, not that much difference, that's my general memory. Similar culture in the universities.

##### Researcher

So you mentioned about publishing in four star journals. Is the pressure or the kind of expectation to do things like that at [university], is that the same, do you think, as previous places you've worked, such as [teaching-focused institutions]?

##### Participant 12

Well, currently right now, no, because the university told us to not worry about the REF or research. And so there has been a sort of cessation of hostilities in our department. You know, it's quite possible and it would be an interesting - somebody like yourself will have to be the judge of it - but it's quite possible that Britain will not see another REF and in that case, people like you, at your stage of your career, early in your career, you know, the sort of current culture of productivity - what to produce - may be totally overturned. For instance, if the government decided not to have a REF, university managers would be relieved about that. They would think "we can get these academics to do so much more work and teaching". Because 90 percent of all the income comes from teaching anyway. And managers suddenly, you know, all these people like you, you know, say you're three years into your first lectureship, you know, and then they suddenly turn around and say to you not to worry. Now for some that's great, "I don't like it anyway, I'm not very good at it, I can only seem to get two and three stars, I'll not bother". And for others they are thinking "you know, that's the only thing I was good at, I mean, I'm international, I do maths, and all I do is number crunching, and that's the only thing I can do at a university in Britain, you know, so what am I going to do if the REF isn't important?" So, to be honest, I don't think, yeah, I mean, apart from the Covid-19 stuff, the actual, you know, the juggernaut that is, you know, REF production, is still uppermost on everybody's mind and you may well be quite surprised to hear me say, "well, in the future, it may not be thing at all". So I'm sure that most people are feeling the pressure and, you know, overworking and doing themselves a lot of harm. I'm sure they are. Personally, I won't see another REF, my pipeline is such that even if I, well, even if I drop dead tomorrow, there will still probably be a few articles that pop out after my death. And, you know, if I was, if I was having to demonstrate to [university] that I was worth the investment, you know, there would be papers coming out even if I dropped dead tomorrow. I mean, literally. In other words, I mean, I just, yeah, for your information, because of all this Covid-19 nonsense I'm certainly planning probably to retire earlier than I had planned, and I have actively, and I mean actively, I have actively reduced the number of commitments I have in producing papers that I don't personally need. I mean, I was part of a few writing groups, you know, author groups on papers. And I went to some of those groups and said, "well, you know, I find it very unlikely that I'll ever get to this, so I'm bailing out". And indeed other colleagues of mine had told me that they are doing the same as well, at my sort of age. So, you know, I won't see another REF. So then, you know, the performance management of staff in universities is so polite and middle class and without much teeth, that, you know, essentially, you know, you know, you'd have to do a lot of hard work to annoy them enough to lose your job. So, yeah, personally, I'm not worried because I'm at a particular point of my career where I don't really have any great interest in producing more publications, as in journal articles. My pipeline is such that they're sort of coming out anyway. You know, whatever. So I've got various papers that I am working on, but I'm not, I won't ever start a new one, lets put it that way. So lucky me.

##### Researcher

So obviously, you've mentioned the REF a few times, and obviously the REF has the sort of impact case study assessment element to it. Is that something that you've ever been involved in before in terms of writing impact case studies?

##### Participant 12

Yeah, well I've sort of won grants, I've won [research council] grants and the like. So certainly impact has been a feature of my thinking in terms of designing research and all of that. And not only as a box ticking, cynical box ticking thing, I mean, I, I wouldn't say I'm a true believer, but I do think that research should have some practical value in some way. Unfortunately the, the big grant that I got, which could have had impact and indeed might have been an impact case study, but unfortunately because I'm new to the institution, because of the rules or however people interpreted the rules, my, my, my case, my potential case study was lost to the REF. I mean, essentially there wasn't any point. So that story never got told in a way, which is a bit of a shame. But, so, but it's pretty low down on my general perspective. I mean, I'm, I'm sort of, personally, I'm a fairly scholarly type of academic, you know. I mean, not that I don't think it should have practical impact. It's just that in my experience, you know, most people don't really give a toss anyway, so. You try, you try to include people and I have done, but the impact isn't that much, you know, people are not that interested. And there was a time, I think, where I was interested in public engagement, more like writing journalistic type stuff, and I did, I did a bit of that. But again, you don't really get rewarded for it. There's no trigger for it. And I, I'm, you know, I've been very successful in my career. I think it comes down to my working class background, in essence. I, I've never worked late nights or weekends in my whole career. Never. And that seems to be quite unusual from what people tell me. And my reasoning is, well, I think, you know, I just, I get paid for what I do, I do it, you know, I don't want to bust a gut, you know. Because that makes you ill. I've seen it, lots and lots of people. So a lot of extra stuff you can do, I don't think, it can, yeah sure, I could have been [high-profile scholar] by now or, you know, somebody else famous. But, you know, I just sort of think, well, you know, that's never been my bag. I'm not really, I mean, my ego is big enough as it is. I think if, if, my wife, my wife would reject me if I suddenly become some sort of, you know, [high-profile scholar], who is a big deal in [discipline], you know, I'm sure you've got people that you look to like that and you wonder how they do so much. But I always took the view that I wanted a balanced life.

##### Researcher

Mm hmm. Mm hmm. And do you think [university] places much emphasis on impact in terms of the way that performance is measured of academics? Or is it much more focused on just publishing in academic journals?

##### Participant 12

Well, I think that the, as I said, you know, I mean, universities are so polite and middle class as institutions in that way that performance management of staff, you know, is pretty toothless. I mean, overall. Much of the stuff on, much of the impetus for staff to produce is to do with self-discipline. Because if they want to get a salary, it's the reward system that does it. If you want to be a senior lecturer you have to publish around about 10 two, three, four star papers in the next seven or eight years. You know, if you don't think that, you know, you're going to be on the 45,000 for the rest of your career, you know. If you want 60,000, you're going to have to, it's all about self-discipline based on the reward that does much of the work. And impact is, yeah, I think there's a lot of differentiated models now and I think lots more... universities are working hard, I think, to create differentiated models of career progression. And I, and I, so you're getting more teaching professors, you're getting more fluidity in the interpretation of what a professor is, for instance. So, I mean, I know some people that, well, still publications is really key. I think in [university], even if you are like a impact tsar type person, what people tend to have to do if they're like that and they're not really academics, they buddy up with people who are academics and still get the publications. I mean, there's a particular person at [previous institution] that I have in mind and, I mean, he couldn't write his way out of a paper bag, but, you know, he got four star publications because the opportunities he creates in terms of the funds he wins for research projects and stuff - and I mean, some people look at him and will say, "crook" or whatever. But I look at it slightly different. I say, "look, you know, the products that we produce are complex and pluralistic" and he's very, very good at all the networking and fund-winning and all that impact stuff. You know, but he's not very good at writing. So, why should he stay as a senior lecturer for all of his career just because the university's promotion and reward systems are antiquated? So I'm sort of in favour - I mean, the broader problems in business school and universities generally are they are very, they are very slow at updating things - like reward systems. So why, you know, they've sort of got all these sort of systems which are fixated on particular aspects of, you know, the institution. And then, you know, they, and they, and then they wonder why academics behave in weird ways and fixate on things, you know. Lots of that. Lots of it. You know, I mean, just as an aside, you know, this personal tutor system, you know, because back in the day, it was about eight students and you all went down the pub together and, you know, and they persist at all this sort of stuff. Anyway. But I do think that, yeah, it would be nice if universities were more pluralistic in their appreciation of what staff can do. They are getting better, and business schools are leading that, because business schools have, you know, they need, you know, professors of internationalisation, otherwise known as building markets of students, because that's what the purpose of a business school is. They're not an academic department in Russell group universities. They are a cash cow.

##### Researcher

Mm hmm.

##### Participant 12

You know - this might end up in one of your papers - so for instance, I was absolutely stunned and appalled to find out that 40 per cent of undergraduates in [university] - that's undergraduates - 40 per cent are Chinese. And I don't know whether that's the same where you are. But this is absolutely bonkers. It's like going to Nigeria and saying 40 percent of the students there are English. It's just unbelievably crazy that, you know, the university puts up with having business schools because that's what they're producing. They're producing income. It's very unsustainable. And I could go on, but I won't. I mean, it fundamentally comes down to, you know, successive government underfunding of British universities. I mean, what choice do they have? What choice do they have? Anyway. It's very, very sad and extremely humiliating to have so many, you know, really, really bright international scholars who are sort of forced with this sort of... and they dress it up, you know, the senior managers, with this sort of ideology of internationalisation. You know, "globalisation, isn't it all wonderful". You know, I mean, and of course, it's utter nonsense when you've got 80 percent from one country in postgraduate, and 40 percent from one country in undergraduate. That's not internationalisation, that's just commerce, that's profit, or keeping the university going. It's obscene. It is really, really upsetting. I, you know, again, it's one of the things that is pushing me to an earlier retirement that I had planned. Because I just find it so humiliating that all these people have to, I don't know. It is, it is extremely sad. And I have to say, not that I would like to be a regular professor at somewhere like [teaching-focused institution], but having said that, actually, at least the student, the student population is actually genuinely diverse. [Teaching-focused institution], for instance, has been singularly unsuccessful at attracting Chinese students. And I mean, it made the campus so much more, you know, enjoyable. I mean, the other problem there was that I would be teaching even more there because they've got less money basically. But anyway, that's neither here nor there. Yeah.

##### Researcher

So obviously, going back to, you talked about publishing and four star journals, those kind of pressures, are they like expectations and pressures or are they something that you're kind of required to do? Like is, is it written down somewhere that you have to publish a certain amount of papers in a certain year, or is it more of an unwritten rule, but if you don't do it, this isn't going to look good kind of thing?

##### Participant 12

I mean, I mean, I. you know, from my perspective, from what I've seen and heard, it's the self-discipline, I mean, there may well be some expectations that are written down, but they wouldn't, they wouldn't be so impolite as to sort of say, you know, "we expect you, and if you don't, you know, we'll retire you", you know. And so I think that this is mostly about self-discipline, self-motivation. You know, as I say, I think if you... I'm trying to think now about not me, more like... if I was a lecturer and I had started off in three years I hadn't published more than, you know, like a book chapter or something, you know, I think my line manager would probably be onto me. Yeah, as in what's happening, why haven't you been publishing, blah blah blah. For me, you know, I mean, my, my, the mechanism that, as I say, controls me in that regard, is the so called appraisal. And I mean, last year I did my appraisal with a colleague, you know, filled in a form, you know, fine, whatever. So I mean, as I say, my response to this question is that, you know, it's because I'm sort of fully internalised, but I also do, it's all been fully internalised for years and my performance is at a really high level. Whereby, you know, if they notice in three years time, if I'm still around in three years time and if anybody noticed - and they probably wouldn't - that I haven't published anything in three years, let's say, you know, I'm sure they'd just be very polite and say, "oh, well, maybe he's got a big book coming out". It just, you know, the the reputational, yeah, I think that once you get to a certain level, there's a sort of a sense in which you've earned some dues as it were. Well, you know, I mean, you can imagine the conversation between the head of group and the line manager if they did notice it with somebody like me. They'd say something like "have you noticed that [participant] hasn't produced anything in three years now?", "yeah, I have noticed that, that's interesting isn't it?" And, and then they'd turn around and say, one of them would say to the other "ah, but he did produce that [four-star journal] article in 2019, didn't he?" And they'd say "ah, yeah, oh, well don't worry about it". I cannot believe that anybody would ever even delve around with somebody like me. If I, if I stopped, and I mean, I mean, I'm confessing to you now that I am indeed stopping. But to actually slow it down, that would take a couple of years anyway. And I'm hoping to be retired within a couple of years anyway. I'm not prepared to sort of retire in post. I think that's disgraceful behaviour. But please believe me, you know, that you can. My advice to you as a young scholar is to work extremely hard, get somewhere, get to be a professor, and then, and then manage your decline slowly.

##### Researcher

So what is "retiring in post", is that when you stay as a professor?

##### Participant 12

Well you stick around, getting your salary, and just do the minimum.

##### Researcher

Right.

##### Participant 12

In other words, yeah, you sort of, the situation I've described would be that, you know, yeah, instead of having four or five research projects bubbling along at any one time which has been typical. I mean, over the last seven or eight years I've probably had, at any one time, I've probably had about ten papers bubbling along on different things, you know. Instead of that, you know, you might have one or two, and I mean, it would take them years to realise that I just published, you know, all I've done in three years is written three chapters in a book or something, you know, or a couple of conference papers. It would just take them years to actually do something about it.

##### Researcher

Mm hmm.

##### Participant 12

And that's what I need. This is why you have clowns in Russell group universities. Because it is so terribly polite and middle class.

##### Researcher

So on the topic of kind of expectations and and pressures, is there anything similar to the kind of publishing pressure when it comes to education? Is there any kind of pressure to, I don't know, teach in a certain way or achieve certain scores in student evaluations and that kind of thing? Is that held with the same level of importance?

##### Participant 12

A general answer to that is no. But we've had, the thing that has now changed, is technology. The university are eminently panoptic in their, in their technological prowess, you know. But I mean, what you're doing is transparent. And I mean, I was talking with a colleague, one of the modules I've got is a first year module, and it's run by this very happy-clappy lady who loves pedagogy. I mean, she might be professor one day, I guess, but she loves the students. She likes holding their hands. And I mean, I like her as well. And I think, you know, but there is a word that a colleague used - rate-busting - where you get the very best worker, you know, works far too hard and shows all the other people up, like me, who works, you know, perfectly well enough. But it shows that, you know, so on her learning management system she'll have 20 things today for the students to look at or whatever, you know, whereas I'll have ten and a manager will look at that and they'll say, "well, she must be doing better, why isn't he doing this?" It's this sort of, rate inflation, rate, rate of work-busting. The university's learning management system can provide a lot of transparency with that. But more generally, no. I mean, that is the future more than it is the present overall. But I mean, certainly, I think that right now, because of the Covid-19 bimodal stuff and the extra hours, the transparency of what we do, we just cannot escape from the technology. I'll give you an example. So, this is the thing that got me very angry recently. So last year they decided, or recently this year because of Covid-19, they decided to have personal tutor group meetings. So academic staff - and that's in the business school and the university as a whole, but the business school has got thousands more students than anybody else - so I have, overall, I think it's 36 personal tutees. So, and I worked out, if I'm supposed to see students once a semester individually, and now they've decided that I've got two personal tutor groups and I'm supposed to meet them once a week, I now, and I have to do this myself, I had to, I was told that this is what's happening and I had to do a "doodle poll" to find out what the best hours were. I had to organise the students into the two groups. Technology, technology. So I sit here like I am with you in groups of around 14 or 15 students talking about nonsense. And actually, it's quite pleasant, you know, in a really weird sort of way. Because, you know, I'm a human being. Whether I think it's of any great value, I don't know. The students seem to like it, but then young students do like this sort of stuff now because they don't like reading books, do they? They want to be chatting to people and, you know, doing stuff in groups. And this is in addition to the personal tutor role, which in itself is an anachronistic concept. So I was incensed by all this, I couldn't believe it, so I worked out, so, yeah, I think eight meetings in the first semester and ten in the second semester, so that's a huge amount of extra hours of contact that I have. Most of my career, I've had less teaching than that, in most of my academic career. So it's absolutely bonkers. So your question was, sorry, I lost track of it there.

##### Researcher

It was about whether teaching is held to the same regard as research.

##### Participant 12

No, but I think Covid-19 has enabled... this friend of mine has got this notion, and it's true to a large extent, but there are a lot of people in offices in university administrative places that hate academics. And I have sat with HR managers, quite senior HR managers, because I was a manager, and I have seen this attitude first hand. And I recognise it from my own time working for [previous non-academic employer]. You know, we used to say things like "if it wasn't for all these customers this place would be great". Now, people that manage universities, they sit around talking about academics like that. "If it wasn't for these academics, we could really run this place wonderfully for our students". Believe me, this is the truth. And these people in the university, they hate academics. They really hate them. I don't know why, but it's true. And there is, there is a sort of war going on. And at the moment, because of Covid-19, they've won. The future, unfortunately, your future in higher education, you know, that your autonomy and your freedom to do the job is going to be massively curtailed. And the instrument of that reduction in your future freedom is technology. Sorry if I'm making you depressed, but it is going to be a much, much harder job in the future. And it will be driven by technology, but also, yeah, the whole teaching thing. Universities will be much, much, much more about teaching in the future. And that's probably good for society. But it depends what you've got in it for. If you're somebody like yourself. Well, you tell me, what are you in it for?

##### Researcher

Well, I mean, one of the main things that sort of attracted me to higher education is the flexibility and the autonomy.

##### Participant 12

Right. Well, my advice is, because British scholars are rather good at the whole publishing thing, and if you were to do a - very crudely, it's probably because we write English and the journals are in English - if you did a really big scale research on it that's probably the reason. But my advice certainly would be to go and live and work in Europe, mainland Europe. Because they don't have under-funding, they've not had under-funding for the last 30 years, and they haven't therefore developed this whole battery of ideological or rhetorical justification for what are essentially under-funding reasons. Yeah, there are similar sorts of pressures in mainland Europe, but they generally look at us with their jaws dropped. You know, with how much and how quickly things are changing. If you go to anywhere on mainland Europe, the notion of the university is very much different from, you know, what we, or certainly I - I don't know, yours and mine might be quite different - but you'll pick up what I think, it's, yeah, it's what a university should be. But it's going to be very different in Britain. And the Tory party now as well have got their sights on universities and, you know, I don't know the ins and outs. But one thing they want is to reinstate elitism, which is good for [university]. But that's probably a good thing for you and your career. But nevertheless, there'll be lots of other things that go along with it, I'm sure. Because I think it's probably the policy to not have so many people go to university. I mean, I'm pretty radical left, but I mean, I still think, I would rather have universities being universities, than have them, you know, teaching plumbers to be not plumbers, if you know what I mean. I mean, there's something wrong. People should be going to further education colleges and learning to be really good plumbers, because we don't have that either. Anyway.

##### Researcher

OK, wonderful. So I want to ask, obviously, we've talked about lots of different stuff. We've talked about research and student-focused activities and a bit about impact. So this is a lot of different aspects, a lot of different kind of missions of the business school. Do you think it is always - obviously taking Covid-19 out of the equation because at the moment, as you said, it's all very much teaching, teaching, teaching is very important - but outside of that context, do you think the priorities of the business school are always kind of clear and you always know kind of what you need to do?

##### Participant 12

Me personally?

##### Researcher

Yeah.

##### Participant 12

Okay. Yeah, yeah, I mean, I've always sort of... there's quite a lot of guff that goes on in, you know, any working environment. I mean, you know, it is said that being an academic is a little bit like being your own boss. And I mean, ultimately, you know, it's the academics that know best ultimately, because they're the people that are doing, they provide the content. Because I've been a manager, a senior manager, I mean, managers generally, and their colleagues, you know, they don't care anything about the content. You know, one of the things I did a few years ago, I went on this [senior leadership course] and it was awful, awful. I mean, I had already decided that, I had a few interviews for [senior leadership] positions and didn't get them. Because I thought that's what I wanted to do at one point. But thankfully, I didn't get those jobs, thankfully. And, you know, I was already locked into doing this course so my mind really wasn't with it. But I mean, the attitude of the managers, you know, which might have been bravado a bit but by and large... because business schools are such magpie institutions, they're like sort of, their microcosms of the university. So, you know, what I have, you know, I don't have anything in common with some accountant or economist, you know, and there might only be a small bunch of people that I get on with. So there is very little that keeps people in common in a business school. And elsewhere in universities, you know, in a way the departments are bigger. You know, if you're an archaeologist, you're in a department with archaeologists. And, you know, so what was the question? The question was, is it clear. Yes, it's very, very clear what I needed to do over my career to get on and have a fulfilling career and having a rewarding career. It's always been extremely clear and that has been very simplified by the REF. I could do it. So then I did it. And I've been very lucky to have the rewards. As for all the other guff that universities do, or business schools do rather, well yeah, you know, they have to say lots of different things in order to meet all these missions and visions and things that they say that they need to do. I mean, your average academic, you know, particularly if you've got such a clarifying instrument of terror that is the REF, it is, it is, it is, I mean, I've spoken with my colleagues about this. It is a massively terrifying instrument. You succeed in that, you produce these goods for your employer, you are essentially, it's like having a really good turnover in a small business. You know, the taxman isn't going to be after you, your debtors are never going to be after you. That's the meal ticket. Now, other people, there are other meal tickets to be sought in business schools, but they are a lot harder, you know, to navigate. And the people who have careers where they're, you know, director of internationalisation or director of accreditation or, you know, community engagement or innovation, and all that stuff, I mean, they're like wafting around on the winds of change, you know, I mean, I would hate to be in their position. And the teaching lot, their hand has been strengthening recently. But again, post Covid-19, it's going to be like they've made five steps forward, we'll go three steps back. So, there will be a legacy which probably will be quite good for students, but for the likes of people like me, who've done extremely well by the REF, all that will mean is just more teaching, more engagement with students, which, by the way, I like, I enjoy, but it's not what's got me the salary that I earn. I always get really, really high module evaluation. As I said earlier, it's easy, it's easy, not challenging, not particularly interesting. Therefore, you know, I never wanted to be a teacher. It didn't, didn't excite me. Yeah. Although it can be fun, you know, I mean, have you been in front of students teaching?

##### Researcher

I've done, I've done small group seminars with undergraduates.

##### Participant 12

Yeah. Russell group universities are now employing teaching professors, but that normally means that they would still have to have published, you know. I mean, they have to, they have to publish pedagogy rubbish, you know, as well as whatever else. I mean, they still have to be, they still have to hit the criteria. That's the main thing. The other thing that I think is worth mentioning is if you bring in money that's the best thing you can do, basically. If you can bring in serious amount of money you become untouchable in two senses of the word. One, obviously all of your time gets bought out of the workload model, so you literally are not on that, which is great, and two, there is this sort of cultural attitude to "ooh, he can win money!" Because it's so short, it's in such short supply. I mean, my career totally changed - not totally, but it changed very significantly for the good - once I got my [large bid]. You know, literally people look at you like, "wow", and that is nice. Yeah, but that certainly, you know, my advice to a young scholar like you is to get yourself onto teams that are doing that sort of stuff, then claim that you were really the driving force behind it. Haha.

##### Researcher

Haha. So I'm just conscious that we've gone over the hour, so I don't want to take too much time. So I've just got one sort of final discussion point. So we've talked about all the different areas of your job and the different requirements. And obviously you said recently Covid-19 has changed things a bit in that you are very sort of stuck into teaching at the moment, which isn't necessarily what you want to be doing. Do you feel like you kind of have a strategy for coping with that, like a coping mechanism or some sort of response, or is it just a case of just getting on with it and doing it and gritting your teeth kind of thing?

##### Participant 12

Is this specifically a Covid-19 question or is this more about coping generally?

##### Researcher

Could be generally as well, I was just using Covid-19 as an example.

##### Participant 12

Coping generally, my answer to it is just to get on with stuff. I mean, that's my general response. And practically, even though Covid-19 is different, practically I just get on with things. But equally, revenge is sweet. And one of the things you can do, and indeed I have done, is leave institutions. So I've certainly left institutions with a slight sense of revenge in mind, you know, screw you, if you're gonna screw me over, I'll leave. So there is that side of it. But also, yeah, I mean, practically, you know, I've made a decision recently, because I want to maintain my wellbeing, I mean, I've stopped reviewing papers. I don't do that now, currently. And that is sort of Covid-19 related, I mean, it's my teaching. Yeah. I mean, I just, there are things that I have to stop doing. If I'm asked to do anything now by the business school or indeed externally, I think my, yeah, basically, I mean, if it doesn't pay me in time or actual money, I won't do it now. I, you know, my threshold for being a good citizen is reduced massively. I mean really. I mean, I'm a very, generally I'm a very conscientious person, you know, I'm very helpful. You know, I am. And I'm bloody answering student emails and, you know what I mean. I can't sort of, be rude. Some people are rude, you know, I mean, I'm sure you've experienced that already. But I'm not, I'm much less willing to do extra, extra stuff now. I mean, just as a matter of survival, really. But most of that is to do with Covid-19, I think. I've been working since I was 18. So, I mean, that is a long time. And you, you know, I'm tired of work, you know, really, I want the freedom, total freedom, you know, that being retired brings, I guess. And it is very, very difficult to suddenly become somebody that is not, that work is not at the heart of what you're doing. You know, and I'm working really hard at it, and I'm definitely trying to skive and, you know. Because I, I really don't need to write these bloody articles. I don't need to do it. And yet I still sit down and work on them and I'm trying really, really hard not to and to go out and walk the dog. So I'm sort of, I'm actively working at trying to create more general space in my life. And I mean, to redress, a little bit, what I see as something of an injustice. Not against me personally, but you sort of, yeah, I've been working so hard for the last sort of three months, you know, working on teaching preparation and, you know, I won't go into details, but it is really intense. All the time it's been intense. And I haven't been able to do the things that I really want to do. It has been, yeah, it has been difficult. I think, I think that, you know, yeah, you're interested in if people are coping and all the rest of it, and I mean, I mean, I've given you the impression that, yeah, I don't really have a problem with any of it. But I have to be honest and say I do a little bit. Yeah, you know, I got really, really angry, and anger is a really bad sign. I've never, ever lost my temper, ever, because of work, but I did recently. And that horrible sense of stress and, you know, like when people, when you are not in control of something, you know, and literally, you know, most of my career I've had massive degrees of control. Now the job sort of feels like all those rubbish jobs I used to do. Little bits of that feeling started creeping back into my life again after 25 years of feeling like I was immune from all of that, like it wasn't work at all. So yeah, I shouldn't leave you with the sense that it hasn't had quite a personal impact. But I mean, it's been in Covid-19, not normal times. So, yeah, you've got my slant on it, and as I say, you know, I am a soon to retire, high-performing academic - that will be me.

##### Researcher

Haha, yeah.

##### Participant 12

But certainly your, I don't know what you're intending to do with your work, you know, as and when, but certainly you have a really strong, I can well imagine there will be a conversation in Times Higher type articles, you know, quite powerful ones, that you could write. So, down the road, you know, or even maybe before you finish your PhD, you should almost certainly think about writing a sort of, a piece, you know, based on, because I think there's a lot of interest in it, not least because people's lives are quite isolated at the moment.

##### Researcher

Mm hmm.

##### Participant 12

You know, I mean, there's a lot of anger, certainly. I mean, amongst colleagues I've spoken to, there's a lot of anger about this. It's sort of, some of it is justified, some of it isn't. It's just the sense of helplessness that people have, that when their jobs get totally redefined, you know, why? That is underlying a lot of my - and indeed some of my colleagues - feelings. It's been awful. But, obviously, you know, I haven't lost my job. I'm still getting paid and all the rest of it. So, it doesn't, it doesn't, it's not a good look to be moaning in the way that you have allowed me to - but thank you for that. And in your thesis, I think you should you should have a bit on the reflexivity side of it. It may not come up in all your interviews, but certainly... have you ever read the article by [authors]? Write this down, this is important. [Authors], and it's called [name of article], and it's all about the interview as a, we are, we are all rehearsed in interviewing. And not because we're academics, but in life we, you know, we, we grow up with Terry Wogan and all this, and so therefore we sort of know how to behave in interviews and therefore, yeah, I think that you should think quite carefully about the cathartic aspect of your engagement with academics at a time where, you know, factually, this is probably one of the worst periods - the last few months. I mean, literally the last couple of months, in many people's careers, even if they don't say it, I think that you should, you know, your methodology and in your analysis, think really carefully about the implications of the particular moment that you engage with people. I will send you the journal link, it's a methodological classic in business studies - well, sociology. It's a big, well-known article. But, you know, if you were, if you were to read anything on interviewing, this is the most interesting and most thought-provoking thing that you will read. And it will help you a lot in terms of, sort of, just scratching below the surface a bit, between what people are saying. Because I know that, I know what I'd write, about what I've just been saying. You know, this person, you know, he's been damaged, he's been, he's been hurt by this, sort of, you know, breaking of the contract. You know, he thought he was, you know, doing something in his career, and he's been cast asunder. And I am hurt. I am hurt, basically, by it, you know. And I think that, you know, other people may not be hurt, they may be hurt, I mean, I think hurt is... yeah, you know, it's not much fun because most people who work in universities, I mean, we live charmed lives, you know. And you, you're absolutely right to go down this path, you know, in the next 30 years of your life, if you stick with it, you know, by and large, you will be free to do whatever you want. By and large, you know, in a world that is turning to rubbish, you know, you will be really very well protected. And you won't know how good it was 20 years ago either.

##### Researcher

Haha, nothing to compare it to.

##### Participant 12

Yeah, absolutely. But anyway, I think you're done, aren't you?

##### Researcher

Yeah, yeah. I'll stop the recording.