##### Researcher

Okay. So obviously I've had a look at your profile. So I've read a bit about you, but I guess kind of in your own words, could you just tell me about yourself in terms of your kind of career background and your current job role, please?

##### Participant 30

Yeah. So I am a [specialist from discipline] by training. My undergrad, master's and PhD were all in [subject] in [home region], and I had never stepped foot in a business school in my life until I showed up in [current institution] seven years ago. So I've always had sort of a dual persona, one as sort of coming from a very sort of strict social science discipline, very theoretical, very built on issues with agency, institutions, really grappling with deep theory in the [subject] context, and then having to transition to business and management and then also transition to the UK way of teaching. I'm still very confused by the grading system, the grades, the degree classification, just coming to terms with the fact that student grades matter here in a way they didn't in [home region]. So it's been sort of a process of translation and inculturation.

##### Researcher

Ok. That's really interesting. And I guess, obviously, so you said [specialist from discipline] by training. And you kind of ended up in a business school after coming to [current institution]. Was that kind of just an opportunity that presented itself that took your interest or was that something you kind of planned?

##### Participant 30

I was very lucky that I finished my PhD during a REF year. And so UK universities were buying papers. And frankly, there are three jobs a year in [home region] in [subject]. It just doesn't exist. So it's become increasingly regular for [specialist from discipline] to moved to business schools. And that's becoming quite a well known sort of migration point. And then also I didn't have sort of a family when I finished my PhD. So there's really nothing keeping me in [home region], and it was a very good opportunity at [current institution].

##### Researcher

Okay. That's interesting. Thank you. And I guess my next question would be, what was it that kind of drew you into an academic career? Like what was it that made you decide to do a PhD and kind of go down that route?

##### Participant 30

Frankly, I just kept on going to classes. I really do reflect on this, because I talk to new people thinking about doing their PhDs, and I did not think about my future at all. I just went in, I enjoyed going to university. So when I finished my undergrad, I didn't really think of any jobs I wanted to apply for. So I applied for a master's degree. Went there, really enjoyed it. Wanted to move back to [foreign city] where I did my undergrad and so applied for a PhD there and got in. And again, really at no time did I consider my career. I've been extraordinarily lucky and in a way that is not frankly possible now.

##### Researcher

Okay. That's really interesting. Thank you. And so in terms of, I guess, where you are now, what kind of responsibilities do you have in terms of your current working life, perhaps in a given academic year? What kind of activities are you engaging in?

##### Participant 30

So the biggest sort of admin job I have is I'm the director of the [subject] MSc programme. So I'm in the second year of a three years stint of that. Besides that, I teach two classes, one class for the MSc students and one class for undergraduates. I supervise dissertations. And frankly that's about it. There's some committee work, a few other things in there. But that's sort of my big job responsibilities outside of research.

##### Researcher

And so does the research take up the majority of your time?

##### Participant 30

Less than I'd like it to. But it does. And sorry, I forgot to add there, I'm also the principal investigator of an [research council] project looking at the impact of the [phenomenon] on [group]. So that's been the case since June, so that's sort of relatively new.

##### Researcher

Okay. And you said you would like to spend the majority of your time on research. Would you say that kind of the amount of time you spend on each of these different activities is kind of reflective of your sort of contractual obligations in terms of what was kind of set out in terms of hours and that kind of thing?

##### Participant 30

I mean, frankly, I work a lot more than my contractual hours. I mean, that's always been a fiction. I do what's necessary for each role, for each project. And again, I make decisions. So this year I decided not to overdo it in my class this term. So I've taught it for seven years now. I'm just, you know, not going all out to deliver it in the way I did last term. That is based on a lot of, you know, what I have time for, what my responsibilities are, and sort of balancing what I feel is my obligation as an educator versus how I want to progress my career.

##### Researcher

And so you mentioned you're a director of a programme, master's programme. So was that something that you kind of wanted to do as part of your career?

##### Participant 30

I hate it with a passion. I am not a good administrator. I do not make decisions decisively. I don't like telling my colleagues what to do. I don't like having responsibility for students' education and life experience. It is the worst part of my life.

##### Researcher

Okay. So was that something you kind of took on because you felt you needed to?

##### Participant 30

I got promoted and was thus punished.

##### Researcher

Okay, haha. That's fair enough. So would you say sort of that kind of aspect of the job then takes up as much time as the kind of teaching and teaching prep?

##### Participant 30

It depends on the season. At the beginning it's very intensive. So like this year I sort of spent 30 minutes with each student, talking with them, getting their life story and their background. So that's 15 hours because we're about 30, 33 students. Sort of going to meetings, discussions, but then also I need to give pep talks to them. Like, you know, I have students having freak outs. And so I need to sort of jump on and sort of talk them down and say that they're smart and all that other stuff. It's hard to judge because I really purposely don't keep track of how much time gets spent on what things. But it's certainly a heavier emotional burden than all of my other responsibilities.

##### Researcher

Okay, that's really interesting. Thank you. So I want to move on and talk less so much about kind of the responsibilities and more kind of the expectations of you. So I guess, I've got a bit of a two parter. A, what is kind of I guess your mid to long term goal in terms of where perhaps you see yourself in five to ten years time, like what sort of, what sort of place do you want to be in in terms of your career? And then the next part is what do you think is kind of expected of you to reach that, and that could be obviously in terms of research and teaching and perhaps taking on other kind of responsibilities as well?

##### Participant 30

So my ultimate goal is to go back to [home region] as a professor. And so my wife is also an academic, both from [home region], and we'd both like to move back. So my goal is to establish a research profile to an extent where I'm competitive at [home region] major business schools. And frankly, I'm not sure I could do that. As you know, there's a very big cultural divide between [home region] and Europe over what good research is. And so, you know, I'm a qualitative researcher, but I'm not qualitative in sense of how it is in [home region] with a very big preference for [sociologists]. So I'm approaching this from a different thing where my research is not as valued. Despite the fact that I publish very well, I have a major paper in [journal] that is approaching [number] citations and I have one in [journal], the big ones. But that's probably not what they're looking for in terms of the research profile. So that's always going to be a challenge. Realistically, I sort of see myself frankly, I mean, my wife is a lot smarter than me. So she'll probably get hired. But I'll follow. But, yeah, sort working in a [current discipline] centre in sort of a research capacity. I might move into public policy, I actually interviewed for jobs in public policy in [home region] before and didn't get them. But there may be an easier way, so maybe sort of going back towards [original discipline], things like that.

##### Researcher

So, in terms of I guess kind of the UK, the publications are seen as important. In [home region] you mentioned that perhaps wouldn't be seen as highly. So what kind of things are expected in [home region] in terms of that?

##### Participant 30

In [home region] it really is, if we're talking research business schools, you know, it is Administrative Science Quarterly, Academy of Management Review, Academy of Management Journal, the sort of big ones. Here, frankly, I got hired - and I will fully admit this - because [original discipline] journals are rated as four stars, even if they're not as hard to get in as management four star journals. So [original discipline] journals are all rated very highly. But frankly, they are a lot easier to get into than the equivalent sort of four star publications in management or economics. And so again, that's why there are a lot of [specialists from discipline] in business schools at the moment, because it's easier to buy their papers.

##### Researcher

Okay, that's interesting. I guess on the flip side, I guess looking back at, I guess, how you came from starting at [current institution] to where you are now, obviously as [role], what were the kind of important factors for you to kind of progress here and to get to where you are at the moment?

##### Participant 30

Four and four stars. That's the expectation, that's the goal. Very few people reach it. But the idea is that you at the very least go into the current, you know, research evaluation. For that, you know, you're bringing in four star, four and three stars together in addition to impact cases and all the other stuff. So it's very "here's what we need to achieve, you should achieve that".

##### Researcher

And have your kind of teaching responsibilities taken any kind of role in that in terms of your kind of progression so far?

##### Participant 30

I mean, the way it was described to me is that promotions at [current institution] and I'm sure everywhere else, it's the same, it's the triad. So its research, teaching and leadership slash admin. So you have to be excellent at one, pretty good at the other and you can let the third slide. And so the way I do it is excellent at research to the extent that I can, good at teaching, and I try to avoid any admin work that I can because it's not my passion. And, I'm lucky, I am white, I'm male, so I'm going to get good course evaluation just off the base. I baked my students cookies until this year. And that has been shown in a randomised control trial to increase student evaluation scores. And, you know, I could sort of fake teaching innovation where necessary. So that sort of, that's the way strategically we think about promotion in terms of you do one thing very, very well, do one thing decently enough and you can let the other one slide. And you can just look at my group, the university, the school, and you can see that no one gets fired for not being a great teacher.

##### Researcher

Okay, that's interesting. Thank you. So I guess what I want to ask is, why do you think that's the case? Based on your experience as an academic, why do you think that is the case that, you know, as you mentioned, four star or three star papers are absolutely of the utmost importance?

##### Participant 30

It's clear that's what the incentives are. It's very, very clear, the university has made clear how it's funding comes, it's made clear how it's ranked, how it's judged, how it's evaluated in this REF framework. And that gets translated down through promotions and tenure. So, it's a very similar thing anywhere. If you're in [home country], you wouldn't have this formal paper star system. You know, there is just the internal list of A journal and B journals, and sort of a general understanding of what the expectations are. So here in the UK it's much more systematised in business schools. It's the same sort of institutional incentive frameworks as anywhere else.

##### Researcher

Okay. That's interesting. So you mentioned a few times the REF, you mentioned impact case studies. Have you ever had to kind of be involved in an impact case study at all?

##### Participant 30

So I let it be known what I'm doing. And it does have impact. There is impact because I do things related to policy. And it's easy enough to achieve. But I don't push it forward enough it gets selected by the school. Because that requires a lot of work to write it up. And I went to a workshop on this, how to do this and just, it was so depressing because the basic idea was you need to write this in such a way that whatever, you know, person we get to sit on this committee can understand what you did in 500 words. So just the disassociation between the actual thing that you achieve and the evidence of impact is so severe that it is fairly demoralising. And again, I've been lucky and not just luck, but obviously, you know, the work I do, it's been well received in the academic community. It's spawned a lot of other work. It's highly cited. Its relevant policy-wise. So because of that, because of that success and its adoption and acceptance into that field, I have more latitude to ignore stuff I don't want to do. And I play that very specifically in terms of what I put my hand up for and what I don't.

##### Researcher

And so in general, then, do you feel as if there is kind of an expectation of you to engage in kind of impact work and have that at the forefront of your projects, or is it very much more, you know, the kind of publishing side?

##### Participant 30

So I mean, I feel there's the expectation, but there's, as far as I can see, absolutely no punishment for not doing it or sanction or anything else. So again, my view is that the business school here and the university as a whole is not so much dysfunctional as it is non functional. So stuff gets carried out out of habit. And, you know, if there's go getters like myself who want to build a prominent sort of profile outside the school, that's fine, they'll accept that. But if you don't, you could sort of really press on for a couple of decades without anyone really noticing.

##### Researcher

Okay. Thank you. That's interesting. I notice that you very recently, I think last year, published a book. What was the kind of, I guess, decision making process behind you publishing a book?

##### Participant 30

So, I had my four "four stars". So I could do what I wanted. And again, it very much was that, that I had this time before the end of the REF cycle where I had the publications I needed, and I could write a book. And that seemed like something I would want to do. I don't know. I probably shouldn't have done it, it probably wasn't worth the effort. Now I have a couple of papers that I really wish I had worked on instead, that I think would be more important. But it's a book, it's nice. And again, I was sort of advised by my head of group not to, but again, I had my publications in, so I could do it if I wanted to.

##### Researcher

Okay. And when you say you wish that you worked on some other papers instead, is that because you perhaps would've enjoyed that more or was it more of a thing, is it more of a thing for your kind of progression?

##### Participant 30

Yeah I think I would have enjoyed it more. The points that I want to make about where the literature is and what theories should be used to understand these phenomena could probably have been done better with an empirical paper that now I just don't have time for. Things always just get pushed back by something else. But on the other hand, the book, I was able to negotiate a lower price for it so that more people could buy it. So, I think it's a pretty good introduction to the concept, which is a very popular thing, so that may have some value in it, too.

##### Researcher

Right. Thank you. So the next thing I want to talk about is, you kind of mentioned it slightly, the Covid-19 pandemic changing things. So you mentioned your example of the cookies for your students - can't do that at the moment. So what I want to ask is, do you, have you seen any kind of change in priorities, I guess, sort of for the business school as a unit and also yourself since the pandemic came, or a kind of a change of activities and change of focus at all?

##### Participant 30

Yes. I mean, we've obviously had to put a lot more time, a lot more thought into teaching. And, that's not a bad thing. So I've been speaking mostly as a researcher in this conversation, but I really do identify as an educator, and I feel I do have a moral responsibility to students, to provide the best, the best education we can. And especially now, given the circumstances. And so over, really, from March, I've worked very hard with the people delivering the MSc programme, to rethink how we teach, we ran workshops with an innovator in residence to think about online teaching, we ran practice sessions. So we spent a lot of time doing that. So definitely a lot more time has been put into teaching and the teaching prep. And I provided more contact time for students. In fact, actually, one thing we found is that they wanted less contact time. It was very easy for us, you know, for all of us, to just add more video lectures. You're like, oh, the students will love more content - but no, they don't. And so we've experienced that, and, realistically, the reason I applied for this [research council] grant was that I wanted to make a job for a postdoc. I saw that what was happening now is going to be the same as 2008, which was terrible for PhD students. And so I wanted to create, essentially create a job, and you know, push money into various things. So we did this, it's a big project, it's like eight people, its sprawling. We just did our 174th interview today. So it's big. It's good for my career. Maybe we'll put some stuff out. I doubt it's that useful for the British society. But again, it was something to do. I don't have children, I don't have caring responsibilities. So I did feel I was a bit better positioned than a lot of my colleagues to take on some of this stuff.

##### Researcher

Okay. That's really interesting. And so you mentioned at the start there that there's been a, quite a big increase in the focus on teaching, moving things online and that kind of area - has that at all meant that you've had to sacrifice any other areas of your job or has it more been a case of just increasing your workload?

##### Participant 30

I mean, it's probably been increasing my workload. Stuff takes longer, papers are taking longer, it's still all happening. I do have to say my wife and I, we're both getting better at managing our time. We're both really not working past five and working on the weekends, like we did before. So again, it's really just figuring out what needs to be done, what does need to be done. And, you know, there is a lot of stuff that we're not getting done, because nobody is in the office, nobody can find me, I can ignore people this year.

##### Researcher

Okay. Thank you. That's very useful. Thank you. I want to talk about, so, you mentioned obviously your kind of future goal. You wants to move back to [home region] as a professor, and you kind of have in mind the kind of things that you need to do to kind of get to that stage - would you say you have a kind of particular strategy in mind of how you kind of are going to get to the kind of stages that you want to get to in the near future? Or are you more kind of thinking taking each day as it comes and doing it that way?

##### Participant 30

I mean, it's seeing opportunities. I mean, obviously one of the reasons I did this [research council] grant was now I can say I got a big grant. You know, that's the one thing I couldn't say before. And so, you know, that, that is something. And again, you know, hopefully there'll be publications out of that, that will get attention. But I'm very bad at attending conferences. I hate conferences. And so I've been very bad at extending my network the way I should. I should be doing more co-author papers, I should be engaging in more stuff again with people in [home country]. But again, I hate that part of the job. So I ignore it, and that will have impacts on my career development.

##### Researcher

And so you mentioned conferences there. Obviously, you know, as you've said, in the UK, publications are such a prominent currency in business schools and are obviously important. Conference papers and sort of attending conferences, is that given more emphasis and more importance in [home region] and that kind of academic environment?

##### Participant 30

I mean, I think for most things, the papers are the least important part of conferences. It is, again, it's all about the networking it's all about the connections you build. And so, it's very most focused on that. And as an outsider, someone who isn't from a business school discipline, you know, enculturating into that is difficult. So I still don't get Academy of Management, the conference makes no sense to me. But again, it's very important because you get the five minute conversation with the editor. Or you get the inside scoop on what people are looking for in different job roles. And it's well known. That's the point. But you know, it's travelling, the expense, just having to talk all day, it's not my favourite activity. So I don't do it when I don't have to. Which, again, is definitely going to impact my career development.

##### Researcher

Okay. So I've only really got one more thing I wanted to kind of cover. So this current project, the one that you got the grant for. That, obviously, is very interesting, very relevant, is that something that you had the kind of autonomy and flexibility to say "I'm going to work on this, this is what I'm going to do over the next X amount of months"? Or is that more something that was kind of put to you and you were like "OK, I'm going to get involved in this"?

##### Participant 30

I did it purely on spec. And in fact, actually, the research office didn't want me to do it because they are overwhelmed and they didn't want to take on the administrative load. But in fact, I mean, it's not even worked into my workload. Like in theory I'm currently working 120% of my allocated work time just because the only thing they could cut back on was my teaching and they couldn't cut back my teaching. So, that's something that will hopefully be negotiated in the future but probably not. But it really was just... there's the opportunity, there's these [topic] grants, and I felt that by moving fast on it, you know, I have a better chance and basically figured out who else was going to apply, got them on my project so they couldn't apply on their own, and went for that. We do have, institutionally, there was a need for more grant revenue. That was one of the things the school is very bad at. And once a year that gets presented to us in some meeting about how terrible we are at grants. So this was a way to buy me some time and buy me some space to do whatever I want. By having this, that set me up for next five years, so I could sort of ride on that.

##### Researcher

And something you mentioned there, you're working at about 120% of your workload. I mean, do you experience that in kind of a negative way? Do you find that particularly stressful? Do you think you're quite good at kind of dealing with that in this environment?

##### Participant 30

I mean, I think you pick and choose where the quality goes. So, like I said, I decided not overdo it with teaching this class I teach this term. So I'm letting some stuff slide. I'm not sort of giving it the attention that I would in a normal year or give it the attention I gave in the previous term. And there's other stuff where, again, I'm just not doing things. So yeah, just not contributing to different projects, not contributing to group activities. And if that gets noticed, it gets noticed. But generally it doesn't.

##### Researcher

Okay. Excellent. Thank you. I think that was pretty much everything I wanted to ask. We've covered everything on my guide.

##### Participant 30

I told my next meeting that I will be there at quarter past so if you do have anything else you want to ask, go for it. But if you're done now, that's totally fine.

##### Researcher

I guess, I'm just looking at everything we've covered, we have covered everything that I kind of wanted to ask. So I mean, that is kind of everything. I mean, I guess another thing I could ask, which might be a slightly selfish question for my own kind of personal interest, but I would be interested to know if you have any kind of specific tips for any kind of early career researchers who are looking to take on that academic trajectory within a business school and climb the ranks and be successful in publications. What kind of advice do you have in that sense?

##### Participant 30

I mean, it's publications. Well, it depends on where you going. So if you're going to a place like [current institution], publications, you know, they'll talk about teaching, but its not considered. So I could tell you from the last job committee I sat on. We are now required by university mandate to have a 15 minute teaching presentation and it doesn't get discussed. It's there, you know, sort of feeds our requirement. But again, that's not what the discussion is on, it's to on research quality. So having a three star publication is pretty much standard. It would be difficult to get on a shortlist without it. And so that is essentially the key, just being able to frame your research, get it out there at an early stage, submitted for publication. If you have that, that'll make it a lot easier. If you're going for other places, starting at a post-92 school, there's a much bigger focus on pedagogy. And so you can totally start there and then move your way up. We had someone join us this year from from that situation. But again, you really need to be thinking about the research profile and publications.

##### Researcher

Okay, that's interesting. And would you say that sort of the the ABS list is really kind of the one to focus on in terms of journals?

##### Participant 30

Oh, yeah. I mean, I was definitely told when I came here that the ABS was everything. And again, you know, I had the option of a publishing contract out of my PhD, taking my dissertation and turning it into a book. And I was straight up told "don't waste your time on that". Because it doesn't count.

##### Researcher

Okay. I mean, I guess, what I want to ask is does that kind of resonate with what you kind of envisaged out of an academic career? This kind of like you said, you were told the ABS was everything and you need to follow it.

##### Participant 30

I've never had a particular sort of romantic view of academia. Like, this is a job, I'm very lucky that people pay me to do this. I enjoy research, to a certain extent I enjoy teaching. And again, I feel that I'm very lucky that people are paying me to do it. But again, I don't have any romantic notions about the nature of the university. I studied at [university] as an undergrad and it was never some pristine ivory tower ideal. It's never been this great, you know, place of intellectual jousting. It's a place where people do jobs. They work, they exercise their egos. I do like the UK where I have a very specific target to meet. The target is stupid, but in some ways it's much superior to [home country] where you have to know what's in your chairs head. And there's much more political jockeying over that. And so I work so much less than my colleagues are in the [home region], you know, the people I did a PhD with, they have had to work so much harder and do so much more to get tenure than what I had to do to move to a permanent contract. I mean, even, not even in terms of just the publications, but even just the process. And the process here was nothing, I submitted a one page form. Versus sort of a tenure committee process in [home country], it's incredible. So again, I'm thankful for that. My hope is I could sort of be able to sneak tenure in the back door when I return to [home country]. But certainly, it's just, knowing that the measurements are stupid is, you know, a bit disheartening, but that's life.

##### Researcher

And, I've spoken some academics who mentioned kind of having PDRs, personal development reviews, every year, kind of like appraisal type things, where they have to speak to a line manager and set out some goals. Do you have that kind of thing as well?

##### Participant 30

Frankly, I told my head of group this year I wasn't going to do it because I didn't have time. Again, I have very good publications. I can be a jerk because I have the goods to deliver. It'd be a very different situation if I went through a very big dry spell. And so in this sense, I am a perfect Foucauldian subject in that, you know, there is a panopticon, but I'm able to see what levers of power I have in this that I could use to save time for what I want to do, and to avoid stuff I don't want to do, given the institutional structures that I'm in. And that is one thing I learnt during my PhD, in some way that was the biggest thing taken away, just knowing the role of power in society, to understand sort of it's different frameworks.

##### Researcher

Okay. That's really interesting. Thank you. Yeah, I'm pretty sure I've really covered everything. I have nothing else to ask. Unless there's anything else that you can think of.

##### Participant 30

Yeah, sounds good, been great talking with you. Good luck with the work.

##### Researcher

Thank you very much. Thank you. I really appreciate it. And thank you for your time and best of luck. And enjoy your meeting with your student. Bye.