##### Researcher

So obviously I've had a look at your profile and stuff and I've read a little bit about you. So I know a little bit about you in terms of that. But in your own words, could you just kind of tell me about yourself in terms of your background and your kind of career to date and what you're currently doing at the moment, please?

##### Participant 42

Okay. So to start off with, I am a [role] in [sub-disciplines]. It's important to highlight this at the start, that I tend to work across and teach across three sub-disciplines of this particular area of [discipline] in general. So of course, you know where I work. I've worked here for about [years]. So it was my first job straight out of my PhD. And before that, I did my PhD from [PhD institution] and my master's from [master's institution], all in kind of in [sub-disciplines] and just going back a little bit, my undergraduate degree was actually slightly different. So I did a double major in [alternative subjects] and then kind of moved into a business school for a master's. So the only reason I'm mentioning it is because that was a kind of defining career transition in some ways because obviously I had been in a very different discipline, I had thought of very different career choices, and then towards the end of my undergraduate degree, I thought, okay, I need to be a little bit more practical. And at that point, I hadn't envisaged an academic career. So I went into the master's and then after that, towards the end of that, I realised I really enjoyed the dissertation. So I took on a research associate post at [another university]. I talked to one of the professors and they were like, it's a good way of getting a sense of how business schools and universities run, in case you want to commit yourself to an academic career. So it was like a year which did give me a sense of, okay, this is something I do want to do. This is something I would enjoy as a career choice. So it was like a bit of a stepping stone to then doing a PhD and recognising that this is my calling in some ways.

##### Researcher

That's really interesting. And so you mentioned obviously your undergrad degree was in a completely different kind of area. And you said you wanted to sort of do the master's in a business school to get kind of practical experience, that kind of thing. So I guess before, obviously, you didn't envision an academic career. I guess at the time when you were doing your undergrad and before you ventured into business schools, did you have any idea what you kind of wanted to do that was maybe separate from academia?

##### Participant 42

Yeah. I had, like, two ideas. One was the more idealistic picture where I really wanted to do an MFA and go into writing, because that's what my kind of childhood dream had been. And then I recognised that childhood dreams potentially can't earn you money and I wanted to be financially independent and to have, like, a long lasting career. The second option, which is, because I'm from [foreign country], the second option, which is like a lucrative option, is that you get a degree from abroad, they call it like "getting a stamp from abroad" - so you become known as a really good kind of viable talent, and then you get a really good job in a multinational. So the idea was, do any kind of managerial or professional degree, and then go back home and get, like, a nice job in a multinational and then have a stable and relatively unexciting managerial career. So very different from what ended up happening. Which is why that kind of stopgap, that one year of being a research associate, was really important because it was like a very big transition from what I had imagined to what ended up being obviously a long term choice.

##### Researcher

That's really interesting. You mentioned that year as a research associate, really sort of persuaded you, I guess, to go down this path. What exactly was it about an academic career that sort of, I guess, brought you into it? What was it that kind of inspired that move?

##### Participant 42

I have to say it was more kind of, like, driven by life considerations. Because in that job, because I had not done, I had no work experience before this. So I was like a fresh graduate who did a master's, and so that was my official first job. Basically, the first time I actually earnt some money. And it was the high levels of flexibility where I was like, the super junior person in the group, the youngest and most junior person, and they would just tell me, this is your project, and they would just leave me. Nobody would ask me, what are you doing? When are you going to finish? There weren't even really any deadlines. It would just be like, this is what you have to do. And then I would go and I would come up with ideas and they'd be like, yeah, that sounds great. For a person who never had a job, there were such high levels of autonomy, such high levels of flexibility. I remember for the first three months, I used to turn up at work like, sharp on the dot, like, you know, dressed up. And then everybody was rocking in at different times, and sometimes people would just call in and say, I'm working from home. And for me, that really spoke to me and my personality. Maybe if I'd have gone down a more traditional path, like, I wouldn't even have recognised the joy of having such high levels of autonomy and flexibility in this profession. But because that was my first job, and I got a sense of that, so that really had a huge impact on my career decision making. I was potentially naïve, because now that I've actually had, like, a full time post, the reality is not what it was in that one year, but those things about autonomy and flexibility have continued. I'd say that in that particular year, I was working on projects which were interesting but the research itself, the research areas, did not really bring, like, a huge amount of joy to me. So I still really enjoyed that, despite that. But then it also was useful in highlighting that you need to work on projects and you need to do research that really speaks to you. So in that sense, that one year was also really good, and this is something that happened then in my PhD and later on as well, you know, sometimes I'm working on something and my heart's not in it. And that was an early lesson that if research is what you enjoy and why you've gone into a career then you need to be really enjoying it. And I think it's quite difficult to make that decision, because sometimes you go with the flow, you're on a project and you're helping colleagues and you can't say no. But that job was really good in helping me identify that. You can sometimes have research that is boring for you. It could be interesting for other people but it's boring for you.

##### Researcher

Yeah, absolutely. Back to kind of when you finished your PhD, you're obviously getting a job at [current institution], I'd be interested to know - was that kind of just an opportunity that arose that you saw and you thought "I'll apply for that, because that fits", or had [current institution] been an institution you'd been keeping an eye on that you maybe thought about as a future employer? How did that kind of play out, that move to where you are now?

##### Participant 42

No, I think as you'll recognise as well, it's a very utilitarian approach towards the end of your PhD. You just want to get like a good job. Obviously academic careers in my home country are very different, and I obviously wanted at least a little bit of experience abroad. So there was a priority that I could potentially find a job in the UK, and I had applied to a lot of other places. So I already had an interview at [PhD institution] and I didn't get the job. So I was the first reserve for that, and then [current institution] I think was my second interview, and then I was shortlisted at [two other institutions]. And then when I got the job offer, because it was a good institution, I always loved the city, so the city was a big draw for me to be honest with you. I'd always come here for holidays as a child, it was like a really, you know, once again, a life consideration that played a part. But I won't deny that if I got in a job offer from [the two other institutions] first, I probably would have said yes to them because, you know, you're a PhD, and when you're an international PhD, then you need, like, work VISAs. So whoever, like, if it's a decent university that offers you a job, you just take that.

##### Researcher

Yeah. And so it sounds like you were applying to the more kind of research intensive Russell group universities. Was that kind of a conscious thing to kind of go for those kinds of institutions?

##### Participant 42

Absolutely. I mean, that was like, even now as well, like in the future as well, that's what, if I consider career moves, that is a priority for me. For me, I enjoy teaching, and there are really rewarding aspects of teaching, but that's not why I went into this profession. I went into it for research. That's my main kind of interest. That's where my joy in this career lies. And so for me, it's really important that it's a good institution, that prioritises research and is a Russell group university. And beyond that as well, actually, within the Russell group as well, I'd like to stay within the top 15 niche, essentially. So in terms of a career path, that's my preferred trajectory. Who knows what will happen? But that's what the preference is.

##### Researcher

That's really interesting. Thank you. So in terms of what you're doing at the moment, obviously, you just said research really is kind of your passion in terms of the career. But there are good aspects of teaching as well. In terms of, I guess, your current role, what kind of responsibilities do you have in those kind of different areas? And I'd be interested to know what kind of admin responsibilities you have as well. And I know you're course director for, is it two MSc programmes?

##### Participant 42

At the moment, thankfully just one. I did like one year of directing two because I was covering for a colleague. But in terms of administrative responsibilities, over the years in [current institution], there's a huge emphasis, I think, probably the case for most universities, but since this was my first job, so I can only speak for this one, there is an emphasis on doing certain kind of citizenship roles. So taking on leadership, essentially. So over the years I've had, every couple of years, I get something new which is more demanding. And then I've actually been avoiding the programme director role. So I'm currently the programme director for the MSc [programme] which has been for almost two years, and I was pretty much avoiding it because it's like a pretty big role and especially, like, a couple of years ago, I was the main contender for it. I've always been the main contender for it, but wouldn't apply for it, mainly because I had had a couple of rejections on papers, so I felt like I was a little bit behind. There had been a big gap between my publications. So I felt like I needed to prioritise it. So to the surprise of everybody else I didn't actually apply for like a big role like that, because it takes up a lot of hours. And you want to make sure that your research is prioritised, especially when you have a little spate of bad luck. You need to have your priorities, right I think. So, for me, now was the time where I had a couple of publications and then I felt like I had a good pipeline. So I thought, okay, obviously you need a big leadership role like this in terms of promotion as well. So it was the right time to take it. But having said that, it's a very large time commitment, as you can imagine, during the pandemic, even more so because you have to do a lot more firefighting, whereas in normal circumstances you can just use existing best practices and just coast a little bit. But it hasn't been the case. So I am happy that I was relatively secure on the research side when I took this on, especially given how much more work it has turned out to be, thanks to the circumstances.

##### Researcher

And in terms of, I guess, teaching, what are you doing this academic year and is it different to previous academic years?

##### Participant 42

So, I'm currently doing basically about two courses, and this transition was mainly when I became the programme director. So obviously you get a lot of hours, the teaching goes down a little bit. So it was previously considerably more. So in previous years it has been quite a lot, actually, which I would say in part did feed into the whole research side of things and the gap in my kind of research trajectory a little bit, because there was significant amounts of teaching. But right now, given the programme directorship role, I'm basically doing two big courses, one is a core MSc course, and one is like a relatively big undergraduate course - it's roughly about 90 students at least. And then you have other responsibilities, like dissertations and marking, et cetera. Dissertation marking on undergraduates et cetera. So the main teaching is essentially two courses right now.

##### Researcher

Yeah. And in terms of I guess kind of the workload split, I know some places use the workload allocation model to sort of split time. Is that similar to your experience? And if so, what is the kind of formal split of hours for you in your contract, for example?

##### Participant 42

So there is a workload model and it's a source of somewhat contentious planning within the business school that I work in. And over the years I've had very differential experience with the workload model, so it has always theoretically existed. But I feel like it has in the past been used as an instrument to conveniently allocate differential workloads to different people. There were times when people exactly at my level, so [roles] as well, at the same career level as well, were teaching considerably less than me. And the workload model did exist with existing well published percentages on how much you are supposed to work basically. So I think the workload model does exist, and I think in principle it's a great idea because it's supposed to basically create equity and to help make sure that you have a certain amount of time dedicated to teaching and a certain amount of time dedicated to research. And so certainly we have hours allocated to that. I'm not 100% sure, but I think we have about approximately 900 hours of teaching, generally speaking. And that obviously will involve kind of like dissertation supervision and marking as well. And so the percentages are I think what is generally in the market in general, where, actually, I'm not 100% sure. Because the thing is, for me, the workload model, because I've had, like an interesting relationship with it, so I don't really engage with it as much. Because I think you can become obsessed with something when it's not working for you and you feel like a huge amount of resentment. So I moved away from the workload model. Now I don't obsess about it too much. I just created my own percentages of my own working hours and how much I would dedicate to teaching versus research. Which obviously becomes easier because when you've taught for a couple of years, the whole process takes a little bit less time than it does at the start, basically. But the workload model very much exists, and it has unfortunately not been successful in my case, at least for a good few years. I will say that there is, thanks to a lot of kind of contention within our group, it is now being used a little bit better now. It's a little bit more transparent. It's a little bit more equitable. Nothing's ever going to be perfect. And there are still inequalities. But not to the extent that they were when I started working here.

##### Researcher

That's really interesting. And I guess, you know, you talked about kind of the teaching aspect and the time you were kind of expected to sort of contribute to that. I guess what I want to know is kind of, in a perfect world, say, if you were allowed to completely choose your own sort of direction and what you were working on and whoever was sort of your line manager or whatever would be completely fine with however you want to use your time, would you just do kind of do research, or would you still kind of engage with that teaching and admin? Would you drop the admin if that was possible?

##### Participant 42

Yeah, absolutely. Yeah. I mean, before you even finished that sentence, no admin whatsoever. I would not touch an admin role with a bargepole, basically. I would never, ever do that. Universities are incredibly bureaucratic and slow moving machines, and it sucks the life out of you when you have to do admin. You also have to remember that academics are, I think, highly dysfunctional people. And obviously you and I are a part of this unfortunate categorization that I've made. So in admin roles and leadership roles, you have to engage with these dysfunctional people and make them work with you. And it's so much emotional labour above and beyond what you want out of life. I would absolutely, you know, a hard no on any kind of admin roles. I would say that probably if you'd ask me for an ideal case scenario, I would probably choose very a high percentage, like almost 80% of my time I would dedicate to research. It is possible that after a few years of research, I might... because I do enjoy certain aspects of teaching, I think it's just that when it is quite a lot, it doesn't feel fulfilling and it can be quite draining because there is emotion work - for me at least given my personality - there is emotion work involved in turning up and engaging with students. I enjoy it, but there is an element of a higher level of emotional intensity involved in it. So I would say that I would actually bring it down considerably and increase my research hours considerably more because that's what I enjoy more.

##### Researcher

Okay, that's really interesting. And in terms of the research side, that's your passion as you've said, you love doing research. In terms of, I guess, kind of what is expected of you, perhaps in terms of career progression and sort of moving up the ladder a bit, what are those expectations? Is there clearly defined sort of parameters for what you're kind of expected to achieve within a certain time period, or is it kind of more flexible but with guidance around what they're roughly expecting? How does that kind of play out?

##### Participant 42

Yeah, I would say that in my institution it's more of a rough approximation, and I don't think that they've made it deliberately mysterious. I think I'm basing this mainly, because there's no document out there that suggests that we need to have this many, exactly this many publications and how many need to be three star versus four star. So there's no kind of document around that. So what I'm saying is that, it's kind of like a rough approximation, based on people who got promoted. And obviously I can look at their web profiles and see how much they've published and there tends to be a slight differential across them a little bit. So you just have to make, like, an educated guess, you know... at what point are you potentially going to be ready based on all these people who got promoted. And also like stories of people who didn't get promoted mainly because it was highlighted that potentially their research wasn't enough. So a little bit of guesswork is involved. But in terms of general, like, I do think this is something that is potentially quite generalizable across business schools in the UK, at least, especially like a certain tier of business school that we're talking about, that, you know, you need to have quite a few four star publications, you know, you're going to have to be REF-able, so you need to be able to return outputs to the REF, basically. You know you need to have a certain amount of impact from your research as well. So these are criteria that are applied, not just in my institution, across business, all business schools. And actually, I do tend to think of it like that because I don't know what's going to happen, but it's highly unlikely that I'm going to be in the same place for, like, 30 years or basically my entire career. So you need to think in terms of what's the overall market picture. And that is basically, essentially, increasingly, you need to look at what the REF requirements are because that's what all universities, the pressure that they're working under. REF requirements are constantly changing with each REF cycle. So now we obviously have been told that there's a lot more emphasis on impact. So like, for example, some of my collaborators that I work with, we're kind of tweaking things a little bit to make sure that we kind of start thinking in that direction. Basically, I can say that my lens on this is slightly beyond my own institution, and I tend to look at... because that's a good rule of thumb if you're just looking at what the REF cycle is demanding, because that's what all universities are going to be catering to.

##### Researcher

And when you're sort of doing your research, thinking about dissemination, thinking about publishing, and perhaps the different kind of publishing outlets, book chapters, journals, conferences, that kind of thing... is it the REF what is really kind of at the forefront of your mind when you're thinking about these things?

##### Participant 42

Yeah, absolutely. This is why I don't do book chapters. Book chapters are amazing. They are such a great way of coming up with new kind of, you know, developing new teams and developing links. But it's not REF-able. And hence it's just not worth my time, basically. I basically had so many conversations with publishers, there were so many topics that I potentially could've written books on, but it's too expensive a time commitment, given the fact that it is not potentially going to be counted in the REF, basically. So I think I have just one book chapter, which was a part of a research project, so it was like an expected outcome, not something I actually actively bid for. And also, as I said, given the REF requirements, there is this balance you have to learn between three star versus four star. Four star is going to mean far more than a three star. Obviously now there are only so many four stars you can push out, because that's like, double or triple the work, basically. But now, three star journals often tend to aim for a four star status as well. They are often trying to improve their ranking, which means the review process is probably - even if they're still three star - is going to be quite difficult. So you need to make a judgement call - okay, do I want to spend this much time on a three star or actually just basically get my blood sucked by a four star, because the kind of advantages are going to be significantly higher. So it is like a risky game to play because you have to constantly balance the amount of work with the amount of success. Because I've had a couple of situations where I had four stars that failed after two R&Rs, basically. And that meant that, if you see my CV, there's like, a four year gap. Nobody can see that there were actually, like, two or three four star rejections that went quite far. So there's a lot of, there's four years worth of work that is not visible on the CV basically. But that's a risk you have to take. And that's a risk very much driven by REF conversations. So I will say that I think there are, unfortunately, some negatives of the fact that our lives are very much determined by the REF, because what that means is that you're constantly playing the game. It's almost not about doing research that has an impact on real life, or it's not about even pursuing your passion for research. I mean, I actually, in that time period that I'm mentioning, hit a real career low where I was a bit unlucky and had a couple of rejections, after a huge amount of work went into them. And I kind of lost the joy of research to be honest with you. I even considered moving out of academia at that point in time, because I thought, what is this rat race that I've gotten into? I'm no longer even enjoying research, which is why I went into this in the first place, and I've had to recalibrate my thinking a little bit, where I'm still very practical and focused on what needs to be done. But I don't let it push me to the point where I'm no longer enjoying it. It's been a difficult journey to get that balance between being strategic but also enjoying it.

##### Researcher

That's really interesting. I was going to ask, do you wish that it wasn't that way? But it kind of sounds from the end of that kind of answer that you do wish there was maybe a bit more freedom in terms of how you sort of disseminate research, that there wasn't such kind of strict quality criteria that kind of almost stifles your passion?

##### Participant 42

Don't get me wrong, there are positives to the REF. So I think it is important to have rankings. It is important to basically try and distinguish between different types of research in terms of quality. That's really important. We want, especially people who are working in kind of like top tier universities, they want that validation, right? Like you need a little bit of an ego trip. So I get that. I completely understand that's a way of distinguishing "talent in the market" - and I say that quote unquote. But I do think that REF has gone to a point where it's actually genuinely, as the phrase that you used, it is perhaps stifling creativity and innovation. And the REF itself as a body maybe wasn't envisaging doing this. But I do think that the implementation of the REF by universities - so this could be an institutional problem - has been quite almost draconian in some ways where it has stifled research. So now all our decisions, in terms of how long is the project going to be, how much time are we going to take to publish it, is this even worth it, do I want to work with this person who seems like they have really interesting ideas but might be really slow? These are not considerations that should be at the forefront of your mind if your passion is research. Like the passion and the project you're working on and are you going to come up with things that actually have an impact on real life people and real life organisations - that's almost lost in the narrative. Some of my papers, I mean, I love them because they're my babies, but I don't think that any manager is reading them and thinking, wow. I don't even think any manager has read them. They are basically read by a tiny niche audience. Tiny. It's becoming tinier because obviously the research gaps are becoming smaller and smaller. So you're just catering to, like, a tiny research audience, and it just reduces the opportunity to actually do things where your research has an impact. Like my supervisor has done research which has informed work and organisational debates at the EU level. She's genuinely, I mean, that's what I had hoped for, but I know that's not going to happen. In my lifetime I don't think that's going to happen. And so you accept what it is. But I do think there are negatives to the kind of pressure cooker that the REF has created. Alongside positives. But there are problems there.

##### Researcher

Thank you. That's really interesting. And you mentioned impact there, and you previously mentioned the kind of impact, the impact case study element of the REF. Is there kind of like an institutional push towards impact, sort of engaging with external stakeholders and that kind of thing from [current institution] and the business school? I'd be interested to know if there is that kind of push, and if so, do you think that is because of the REF, or do you think there might be other reasons why that might be the case?

##### Participant 42

I should add the caveat that because it's one of the largest employers in [region] - so the university is actually like a big kind of player in the local market, in the regional market, at least. So it does treat this position with a certain amount of responsibility. And there is, I think, an element of engagement with organisations, and we've always kind of had that engagement with managers and having kind of broader conversations. But I do think that here, like all other institutions, especially within the top 20, comparable institutions within the top 20, are predominantly driven by REF. It's almost like slightly like a bit of a black comedy, that as soon as the new REF rules come out, there's a new conversation that starts. So now in your annual performance reviews, like since the last REF kind of suggested that impact was becoming more important, now suddenly that's a really big part of the conversation. It does make you feel in that moment like there is no way that you can win this race, basically. Because you've just basically published and you've just given yourself a pat on the back thinking okay, I have returned enough REF output. And then that's not even almost mentioned. That's like one line of "great job" at the start the performance review, and then you start talking about new things, which, for example, right now, is impact. And "oh, would you bid for funds, and would you do an impact case study" - and then almost sometimes you're doing a project and you keep getting emails from the research office saying that this could be an interesting impact case study and you're thinking, yeah, it would be, but I don't have the time to actually publish and do an impact case study. Because that's additional work, basically. It's almost a shame because the impact element, I think, is actually really quite important. Our research having impact is quite important. It's actually really positive that the REF cycle is thinking in those terms as well, it's actually highlighting that as an important thing. But the problem is that as an individual, it almost seems like one more box you have to tick now. So I think once again, I feel maybe this is just idiosyncratic, but I feel like there is a disconnect between doing something because it is fun or it is right, and doing something because you have to do it. And unfortunately, the REF as like a "stick" that exists in the labour market means that a lot of really good things also end up just looking like things you have to do. And that creates a certain amount of resentment.

##### Researcher

And, obviously you've talked about the kind of research expectations placed upon you, which are fairly significant. And then since, like you said, this REF cycle was introduced, this impact case study element came in, and that is another sort of expectation placed upon business academics. What I want to know is, can you publish enough ABS four star journals, for example, to be sort of REF-able, and also dedicate time to creating impact? Like you said, it's another whole element of activity - are they sort of mutually exclusive? Can you do both and still sort of get to where you want to go? How does that kind of work? And then also, like we talked about earlier, with the added pressure of teaching and admin as well, which is a whole other kettle of fish, how does that work?

##### Participant 42

I mean, it can be done, obviously, because a lot of people around me are doing it and I've become better at it as well. I do think, I will acknowledge that I have taken a long time to understand. You know, it was my first job and I was quite naïve and I didn't 100% fully grasp the kind of importance of the REF. As a PhD student you're not exposed to it as much. I got a publication during my PhD, which had been a wonderful experience, and I was quite naïve basically. So I will say that part of my cynicism comes from the fact that I've had to learn it the hard way, basically. And I don't think that it is naturally something that is highlighted to PhD students, by nature of the fact that they are kind of in a different part of their life and career, where they're engaging with the academic career. They're not really talking about REF at that point in time. So you're suddenly, you go into the workplace and you hit fire. So a lot of my cynicism does stem from, I will take responsibility from the fact that I was naïve and not ready for it, and it took me a while to kind of get a sense of what kind of skills and abilities do I need to develop to become this person who can balance things appropriately. But I do think that we cannot deny that there are aspects of work intensification in academia which are there and are potentially higher with the higher the rank of the university as well basically. So once again, I said to you right at the start, I'm aiming to be in the top 15, so it's clearly a proactive choice that I've made. I've decided to make my life more difficult for myself. I could easily go on a teaching track. I could easily go into a university where there is less pressure, I know there are universities and business schools with slightly less pressure. So obviously I've made this choice. But I will say that there are very high levels of work intensification, and they are high because you're expected to do really good teaching, to have consistently high scores, and you can get called up if you're anything below a four. You obviously have to do like, you have to be REF-able, so you have to have a certain amount of outputs basically. And you also need to do admin because you need to show that you have citizenship and a sense of commitment to the organisation. Then, you need to do impact. Then, you are basically developing research projects for the future, because you are writing papers right now, but you need to collect data for the future. And then life can happen. And I think when life happens, i.e. you fall, you're unwell, or like a family member is unwell. For me, I don't have kids, but I can imagine that would just push you over the edge. I have been really unwell one time and it really pushed me over the edge, and that's the one time when I, it was too much. And it was not normal. That's the one time, that's the first time I woke up and realised this level of work is not normal. So, I mean, it can be done. And people are doing it successfully, and I am much better at it. But I've had to learn some hard lessons along the way. I've had a lot of lows in the process of figuring out how to balance this.

##### Researcher

Okay. Yeah. That's really interesting. Thank you for sharing that. So there is something else I want to ask about, kind of the environment... I noticed that you have a publication that I think is actually very interesting and quite relevant for me. I don't know if you can already guess which one I'm about to say, but it's about the sort of deinstitutionalisation in [journal]. I've looked at that and it really just sparked an interest and it is on my list, my reading list, because I think it would be super interesting and quite useful to me. I guess what I want to know from your perspective, because you are the expert on this little topic, do you feel like - and I might be barking up the completely wrong tree but I'd be interested to know your kind of perspective - do you think that the kind of integration of impact from the REF and the kind of impact case study and the kind of renewed focus by universities and business schools on impact, do you think that in a way could sort of deinstitutionalise the focus on research publications in academic outlets? Do you think that could cause kind of a culture shift to thinking it would actually be just as worthwhile to try and reach these practitioner audiences, society? I don't know if you think that kind of perspective of institutionalisation or deinstitutionalisation is kind of useful for that kind of area.

##### Participant 42

If there can be any deinstitutionalisation, it would be driven by the REF. Because I think unless something drastic happens in our lifetime, I feel like any kind of restructuring and breaking up of existing norms and arrangements is primarily, within academia, going to be driven by the REF. So that's definitely.... I accept that. I will say, though, that I have a very cynical view of deinstitutionalisation because deinstitutionalisation can lead to a breakdown of existing arrangements and the creation of a hybrid, potentially better new arrangement. I don't think that's going to happen in academia in the UK. I do, personally, and I feel slightly responsible for saying this to a fresh PhD who still has an academic career to look forward to, but I think we have to be realistic, that it is not going to be a deinstitutionalisation that benefits the employee. And I say this because you have to look at academia overall, and the fact that the employment relationship has deteriorated quite significantly. So the deterioration of the employment relationship in academia has been something that's been going on for a good two, three decades, and it has deteriorated to the point that any kind of these other deinstitutionalising kind of norms and power shifts are not going to benefit us. They are going to benefit the organisations, they are not going to benefit us. That's just a very cynical but practical view on this. If you look at it holistically, the overall trend has been, in terms of our working hours, in terms of our pay, in terms of collective bargaining structures, in terms of work intensification, work pressures, it's all been downhill for us. And I don't think that academics in particular have won any battles. There's far higher levels of managerialism and professionalisation in academia, which takes us away from this whole emphasis on research. So overall, I would say that any deinstitutionalisation is going to be not advantageous for us. We are going to be hamsters running on that wheel trying to catch up with whatever new trend comes up.

##### Researcher

Okay, that's really interesting. Thank you. I'm conscious we're sort of coming up to the end of our timeslot.

##### Participant 42

Do you have any specific questions that you might have missed? Because you don't want to go back to your interview schedule and think you might not have asked me something... or are you happy that you've gotten everything?

##### Researcher

Do you have time for one more question?

##### Participant 42

I do.

##### Researcher

Okay, wonderful. Thank you. I really appreciate that. So I will keep it to just one more question. We've talked about lots of things. The different areas of the job, bits that you prefer, bits that you don't like as much, the sort of admin side. I'd be interested to know, and you mentioned that your workload has become increasingly large, and you also mentioned that the past year as well has been particularly kind of different because of obviously the situation we find ourselves in. What I would like to ask is do you feel like you personally have a strategy for dealing with that kind of workload? Also with a view to progressing up the kind of trajectory that you're thinking about, say, if you wanted to eventually become a professor or a chair, if you've got that in mind, how do you manage your workload and your priorities based on the tasks that you have to do and also your goals for the future? I'd be interested to know.

##### Participant 42

Okay, so a couple of themes there. I think it's worth identifying that for me, personally, extrinsic motivators like promotion and pay rises are not especially predominant. So I want to do that, but for me the biggest motivator is publishing in top quality journals. That's what gives me the high. I'm not saying that I would forever want to be a [role], but for me the bigger achievement is getting published and people knowing that I'm publishing as opposed to getting promotions and getting promotions quite quickly, which tends to be like a bit of a motivator for normal people, I would say. It's a completely normal thing to want to progress. I do want to progress, but that's not my predominant goal. My goal is research and wanting to publish, especially in kind of four star journals and having that, what they call the unfortunate phrase, having the "research pedigree" basically on your CV, of where you've published. So that for me is my key motivator. So I would say that then obviously has an impact on career choices and how you balance work and life, et cetera, as well. Because I think I was part of the theme that you were mentioning, essentially. And I would say that I have learned some hard lessons and maybe become somebody that is not particularly nice. But I have learnt through my time that it is good to be supportive and collegial and a nice person, but not to the point that it compromises your mental health and compromises your career ambitions. Because I've been in both those situations, where not saying no and wanting to be a team player and being like this really naïve but good citizen of the organisation, I was taking on far more unacknowledged activities and tasks that have done nothing for my career frankly, or for my motivation, and was very much tied to my personality. So I do think that there's been a shift, and hence, I would say that in terms of management of that work and life balance, it is partly changing my behavioural patterns. Because where I was and how I was behaving does not work in this system. And you have to be realistic about it. You cannot be this naïve fool all your life, basically. So I'm much more brutal and upfront and direct now. I do not like people wasting my time, and that's very obvious in the workplace, which is obviously a particularly cutthroat approach, but something that needs to be implemented. I'm still like a polite person, and I haven't compromised on my main values as a person, but I have become a lot more upfront in terms of like, if somebody is wasting my time, I will let it be known that you wasted my time, which could have been spent in doing the many thousands of tasks that I could do. And also, I think just a more kind of intrinsic focus on... it's just a job. It's just publications. So calm down, basically. You have to remind yourself about that at the end of every day, especially when you've worked a couple of weekends and you're at the end of your tether. I really remind myself and I say "you know, you've got a PhD, even if things don't work out here, you will land on your feet elsewhere". And I think you need to give yourself that reality check constantly, because otherwise the pressure we put on ourselves probably then exceeds any pressure that the institution or the REF is putting on us. That's just the starting point. And then we take that ball and we run with it. Certainly I have. And I'm not sure, have I answered your question? Because I feel like I've waffled.

##### Researcher

Absolutely, definitely. Absolutely.

##### Participant 42

Because I feel like that was a multi layered question. Is there any part of it that I might not have touched on?

##### Researcher

No, you definitely touched on, you know, your ambitions in terms of publications, and how you view promotions, and your sort of strategy.

##### Participant 42

I feel like that's like a bit of a, I will say this, the way I described it is a bit of a kind of annoying way of saying things, because if you publish, you are going to get promoted. It's a fact of life. Having said that, I think for me, how much time I get promoted in, because that is like a source of ambition for people, how quickly they become a professor or a chair. That doesn't matter anything to me. And pay rises mean nothing to me, frankly, at all. We're earning enough, and I don't have family, so obviously, it's more than I need.

##### Researcher

Yeah, absolutely. It's interesting and I think that focus on trying to protect your time as much as possible by learning how to say no, I think is definitely a prominent theme. So that's really useful.

##### Participant 42

And it's really difficult to reach that point. I think you will probably also experience this. When you're a fresh PhD, your mindset is not as, thankfully, cynical as you are likely to become in a couple of years. Everybody has to go through that. And if you don't, then you're going to be in trouble unfortunately. Because you need to, there is a lot of time wasting. Universities are very bureaucratic, and there is a lot of time wasting, and that would be lovely if we had the time, but we're already really overstretched. So yeah, it's just a skill that you unfortunately have to learn in a relatively brutal way actually. There's no nice way of saying no, because people will come back when they know you're a nice person.

##### Researcher

Yeah.

##### Participant 42

You may get it as a PhD student. Especially if you're doing teaching, they push the TAs, they take advantage of you. They give you last minute stuff. You're getting a good glimpse into what's going to get ramped up when you actually become like a full time academic.

##### Researcher

Yeah, definitely. Well, in terms of the interview, I'm really happy that we've covered everything.

##### Participant 42

I was just going to say to you, I do have another four minutes, if you have any questions left, I can give it to you. But if you've covered everything, then we're good.

##### Researcher

No, I think we have covered everything. I've got a huge page of notes, which is always a really good sign of good interview. So yeah, I'm happy for us to finish there and I can let you go and prepare for your next engagement or whatever you have to do.

##### Participant 42

Thank you so much. It's always nice to meet new PhD students. I wish you luck. And of course, if you ever need any help, then, within reason, I will be more than happy to help you. But hopefully we'll run into each other in conferences in normal times anyway.

##### Researcher

Yeah, definitely. Well, thank you very much for your time. I really appreciate that. And I will let you go now, but, yeah, it's been lovely to chat to you. I've really enjoyed interviewing you. And thank you for your honesty and talking to me.

##### Participant 42

I was actually a lot more well behaved than I usually am. I usually swear quite a lot, so I must be in a relatively calm mood, haha. Good luck. And hopefully we'll run into each other.

##### Researcher

Haha, hopefully. Alright. Well it was great to meet you, thank you so much.

##### Participant 42

And you. Thank you. Bye.

##### Researcher

Nice to meet you. Bye.