

Trudi, age 36 on joining the UK study, came from Australasia and had migrated to work in a professional position. Later she returned to study, completing her Master's and then a PhD when aged 33. Her partner remained overseas due to his work commitments. When she joined the study Trudi was working in a researcher post in a university research institute; she was interested in pursuing an academic career, yet was concerned about job insecurity. By the end of the study she had secured a permanent academic position: however, she had become less certain about the academy as a long-term career. What struck us about Trudi's story was:

Work-life balance, relationships and location (personal)

Taking on management responsibilities, Commitment to academia, job security research funding and publications (work experience)

and strategic career planning (career thinking)

Year _	Personal	Work experience	Career Thinking
Post-PhD Year 3	Partner and close family overseas. Saw isolation from family as a trade- off against working at a recognised research intensive university. Saw work-life balance as important, so appreciated the flexibility of academia; would like to have children in the future.	Worked in a researcher position in a university research institute. Enthusiastic about her research, and recognised her privilege in having secured five-year funding. Lamented the lack of teaching in her role, but was co-supervising a doctoral candidate. Focused on writing for publication and writing grant applications.	Long fixed term contract provided some security, yet saw academia as insecure; 'everyone is insecure because you're only as good as your last article'. Saw PhD supervision as an important part of becoming a full academic.
Post-PhD Year 4	Continued to miss family; although she had a strong crcle of UK friends. Partner still overseas and they had become engaged to be married. Partner's work travel commitments were significant. So, living together full-time was not a practical option no matter where she was based.	Continued to work in the research institute with increased responsibilities. She had sought out teaching – for both enjoyment and career enhancement. She was collaborating with a colleague to apply for external funding.	An academic career was uncertain, as her appointment was fixed term. Previously her career was unplanned, though now she was being strategic. She had begun to coneciously gain skills as experiences to fill perceived gaps in her CV.
Post-PhD Year 5	Partner still overseas and wedding preparations in progress.	Secured external funding for a research project; took on a management role in the research institute. Additional responsibilities meant an increase in hours worked each week. Time management became a major issue. Despite the long hours she had trouble finding time to write. Despite successes her employment was still for the original fixed period.	Thought of her career to date as an apprenticeship, with success hard won. Uncertain about staying in academe long term; even so, she was seeking an engoing job contract at the university.
Post-PhD Year 6	Newly married with her partner still away for work; buying a house near the university. Was considering whether to start a family. Had taken up a craft hobby as a way to introduce a better work-life balance.	Took on extra management responsibilities. This meant that she reduced her teaching load and felt her ability to conduct research was compromised. Spent a lot of time seeking external research funding. Had experienced some success, which generated extra workload. Although still very busy, placed stricter boundaries on her working hours.	Sought a permanent university job, yet ambivalent about an academic career. Still concerned about her fixed term employment status, which she saw as typical of the UK university sector. Attracted to the idea of pursuing craft-based work coupled with consultancy.
Post-PhD Year 7	Current high pressure lifestyle unsustainable; death of a friend prompted reconsideration of priorities. Continued to pursue craft work part-time. Relationship was going well; renovating a house and trying to start a family.	Additional management responsibilities left no time for her research. Although she helped others pursue their research and develop careers. Seeking research funding a major time commitment. Success was necessary to continue the viability of the research institute. Most of her publications reports rather than academic journals, therefore her research had high impact but low academic status.	Her recent career was driven by the desire to secure a permanent job. This meant strategic decisions to take on important roles and a commitment to long work hours. Uncertain about continuing as an academic and still attracted to craft.
Post-PhD Year 8		Secured a permanent academic position at the university.	
What struck us	Work-life balance. Relationships and location.	Research funding and publications. Taking on management responsibilities.	Job security and strategic career planning. Commitment to academia.





