

***Thinking strategically about  
an academic research  
career:  
a necessary evil ?***

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# *Outline of the presentation*

- An observation
- A few beliefs
- Challenging beliefs: about the survey
- Who are you ?
- How well are you doing ?
- What kind of researchers do you want to be ?
- How strategic are you to get there?
- Conclusions

## *An observation*

- In my experience, most graduate students at the doctoral and post-doctoral levels are politically naive about their survival in the academic world and on how to develop a research career which is self-satisfying on the long run.

## *A few beliefs*

- The academic world in Canada (notably under the pressure of granting agencies) is driven by:
  - Globalization and an industrial model of knowledge production
  - Consequences
    - Emphasis on research of a certain type vs teaching
    - Certain career paths are privileged
    - Certain outputs are THE measure: peer-reviewed articles
- The academic world is paradoxically very good but as bad, if not worse, than most working environments.
  - Unclear rules
  - Surprising to content oriented people

## *A few beliefs (end)*

- The strategic planner will survive better even if a bad researcher
- You will be better off if you have a bit of strategic thinking about:
  - What kind of researcher you want to be
  - How you manage to get there

# *About the survey*

- Wanted to test some of these beliefs with you, as a significant sample from across Canada (about 50 students either late in their PhD's or at the post-doc level).
- Administrative info (anonymous) on 50 people
- Survey: answer rate after one reminder: 42/52 (80,76%)
- Thanks to you for completing the questionnaire and to Isabelle Tardif for her help in compiling the data

# *Who are you ?*

- Province of origin
- Level of studies
- Discipline
- Studies funded by granting agency

## Who are you ?

Province	People N (%)	Universities N
Québec	25 (50)	5
Ontario	17 (34)	3
BC	4 (8)	2
Manitoba	2 (4)	1
Alberta	1 (2)	1
Nova Scotia	1 (2)	1
Total	50 (100)	13

## Who are you ?

Level of studies	N (%)
PhD	37 (74)
Post-doc	13 (26)
Total	50 (100)

## Who are you ?

Discipline	N (%)
Health sciences	25 (50)
Social sciences	12 (24)
Interdisciplinary or more than one	10 (20)
Natural sciences	3 (6)
Total	50 (100)

## Who are you ?

Funded by granting agency ?	N (%)
Yes	31 (62)
No	19 (38)
Total	50 (100)

# *How well are you doing ?*

- Publications
- Conflicts over intellectual property and/or publications

# *Why publish the results of your research ?*

- Advance knowledge ?
- Allow the others to benefit of it ?
- Test the value of one's production ?
- Survive ?

## *A bit of old academic lore ...*

- "Publish or perish"
- " If it aint published, it aint research"

How many papers in refereed  
journals have you now ?

Answers	N (%)
0	4 (10)
1 to 5	27 (64)
6 to 10	8 (19)
11 to 15	2 (5)
> 15	1 (2)
Total	42 (100)
Mean	4.07
Range	0 to 17

Among those publications, on how many  
are you the first author ?

$$89 / 170 = 52,35 \%$$

Range

0 to 7

Have you ever in your career personally experienced conflicts with colleagues or directors in relation to the intellectual property or the publication of your work ?

Answers	N (%)
Never	30 (71)
Occasionally	10 (24)
Frequently	2 (5)
Total	42 (100)

# *What kind of researcher do you want to be ?*

- Public/Community/Population Health, health services and policy research: at the junction of various disciplines and research cultures
- *TGV vs Mongolfière ?*
- TGV (out of natural and health sciences) as the dominant model
- If TGV, engine, wagon or caboose ?
- The *aérostier* (out of the humanities and social sciences): an endangered species ?

On the long run, which statement below describes best what you want to do in your career ?

Answers	N (%)
Two answers	11 (26)
Member/Inter.	10 (23)
Leader/Nat.	4 (10)
Member/Nat.	4 (10)
Leader/Inter	4 (10)
Solo	2 (5)
Others (practices, consultant)	6 (14)
N/A	1 (2)
Total	42 (100)

On the long run, which statement below describes best what you want to do in your career (two answers)

Two answers	N
Leaders Int. + nat.	3
Members Int. + nat.	2
International Leader + member	2
Other combinations	4
Total	11

# *How strategic are you ?*

- Career plan ?
- Written one ?
- Image in five years from now ?
- Negotiated publication of your thesis ?

Do you have a precise plan for your career ?

Answers	%
Yes	23 (55)
No	17 (40)
N/A	2 (5)
Total	42 (100)

If yes, is it in writing ?

Answers	%
Yes	7 (30) (16%/42)
No	16 (70)
Total	23 (100)

Do you have a precise image about where  
you want to be in five years time ?

Answers	N (%)
Yes	29 (69)
No	12 (29)
N/A	1 (2)
Total	42 (100)

Have you formally negotiated with your doctoral advisor the modalities of publication of your doctoral dissertation ?

Answers	N (%)
Yes, beginning of studies	11 (27)
Yes, during studies	14 (33)
No	14 (33)
N/A	3 (7)
Total	42 (100)

# *Conclusions*

- Decide what you want to be: a plea for a wide biodiversity for a healthy academic ecosystem
- Think about how to get there
- Find out the rules of your environment
- Plan your moves accordingly (especially partnerships with others and publications)
- Disseminate your knowledge
- Do not let yourself taken advantage of and do not take advantage of others: negotiate !
- Begin now