

# Episode 3 - Two heads are better than one: Networking and mentors in academia

With Clare Stainthorp and Devina Sarwatay

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## Transcript

Welcome to Confessions of an Early Career Researcher, the show where we deep dive into the journeys, challenges and successes of ECRs. Whether you've just begun navigating the early stages of your research career or you're a seasoned ECR looking to upskill, this is the podcast for you. Join us as we speak with ECRs at varying stages of their careers to discuss their experiences and unpack their academia survival tips. I'm your host, Leonie Smith, a philosopher and lecturer at Lancaster University. In this episode, we're talking about networks and mentors.

So welcome to the podcast, both of you. I'm going to let you introduce yourselves before I go ahead.

So I'm Clare Stainthorp. I'm currently the research impact manager at the Royal College of Art. Up until last year, I was a Leverhulme Early Career Fellow at Queen Mary University of London, studying radical atheism in the 19th century.

Hi, thank you so much for having me. I am Devina, Devina Sarwatay, and I'm Presidential Fellow at City St George's University of London. I study young people and digital cultures, and I was really lucky, because the minute I landed in London for this job, that was also the same time when the British Academy London cluster launch was happening and I joined and I've been with them since forever.

Fantastic and very happy to have you here as well, both of you. So this episode is all about helping our listeners think about how to build networks, how to get mentors, all this kind of thing. But I wanted to start by asking both of you what made you want to come and talk about this today. So clearly, there's been some part that networks and or mentors have played in your experience to date. So maybe if I start with Clare first,

Yeah, so I guess I like the term seasoned ECR, which you had in your introduction. I feel like I'm a seasoned ECR. I've kind of moved across quite a lot of different places since I finished my PhD in 2017, I've taught and done research, I've done missions, I've done research impact and policy engagement. And I think a sort of light motif, almost, of the way that I've navigated myself through this early career journey has been the networks, the groups, the mentors that I've both relied upon, but also really just gained a huge amount of support and tried to also feed into as well. So yeah, for me, it's a really crucial part of the early career experience.

So that's really interesting, Clare. So you've had a range of what you might call academic and these more professional roles, and it sounds like you've flipped between them quite a bit as well. So what you're saying is networks have been a key part of you progressing through all of that. And I know you said you did an early career fellowship with Leverhulme scheme before that. How did you first start building any kind of network? Then in getting through this journey, what was the process for you?

I think even at PhD stage, networks were really important to me. So I joined the University of Birmingham, and I was told, oh, there had been an early career network in the department, but actually that had sort of faded a little bit and wasn't super active. So myself and a couple of other PhD students at the time put in a little bit of effort to get it going again, because we really felt that that was such an important way to make sure that everyone was supporting, connecting within the department, but also sort of cross disciplines, cross time periods. I think finding diversity in those networks has always been super important. At that point, I was working in the literature and science space, and it was really nice to kind of get involved with international networks like the [British Society for literature and science](#). So I was already starting to think about, okay, at the local, national and international scales of networks, how can I benefit from them, but also feed into them, and it's a really reciprocal thing. And I think that's just continued. I've always been someone who's interested in a range of ideas, a range of opportunities, and I think the only way that you can really find out about those opportunities is by seeking them out, having conversations with people, being curious. And so, for

example, the early career fellowship I tried, originally, to do a Leverhulme with KCL, and they were really supportive. I went through that whole process, was shortlisted, but didn't get funded that time round by Leverhulme, but got some good feedback, and then a couple of years later, when I wanted to try applying again, it was actually off chance conversation with someone down the pub, but as a result of an informal network that I'd built at UCL when I was doing professional service role there, who's told me that there was someone at Queen Mary who was doing something really related to me in atheism and the history of atheism, but actually in the 20th century, and I look at the 19th century, I wouldn't have come across her if I hadn't really been trying to develop those informal mentor networks to actually find out about that opportunity.

So there's a few things we might want to pick up on further in a bit, just this idea of formal, informal networks, and also this idea that the part of why you might want to network is just that, then these random happenstances can come apart. So clearly, networks have been really important to you, and you've been somebody who's sought them out throughout your career. Devina, you mentioned, when you landed here, you went straight into a welcome event with the British Academy. So what made you want to get involved in this discussion?

Right? So in a lot of ways, I echo the importance of things that Clare has already mentioned. I think in my experience, it was really important to be part of international associations within my discipline. I am a first-gen. Nobody in my family has done a PhD. So there's a lot of tacit knowledge within academia that you don't really know unless you reach out to people, unless you cultivate your own networks, sort of get into the formal networks and then make your own peer networks of informal associations. In my case, I did my PhD in India, and I've come from India to the UK simply because I got this job. So it's this concoction of being first gen, being a non-native English speaker, being someone who's not experienced UK HE (Higher Education) before, which is why it was important for me so my mentor, who was assigned to me during my probation year at City St George's, they are the one who brought to my attention that this thing is happening; why don't you go join see what kind of networks there are, there across disciplines, and maybe you could find ways in which you could engage with UK, actually a little bit more.

And that's been helpful to you?

Yes, it's sort of like an introduction to UK higher education, but also an introduction to the kind of people and the kind of questions that people have here across UK, and the kind of perhaps interdisciplinary collaborations that could emerge in these conversations.

This sort of also helps us think about, what are some of the values and benefits of networks. So maybe we can also come back to that, because there was something you

said that I thought was really interesting as well. It was about being first gen, or being new to a country and so on. It can be really important to build networks, but of course, you might therefore also be the people who know the least about how to build a network or how to do these kinds of things. So in your case, it sounds like a person that you started working with here sent you along to the first thing, yes. How do people find networks? Did it start with looking for associations in your discipline? Where did you go? What did you do?

Right? So in my case, I come from communication media studies, so there are some key associations, like [the International Association for media and communication research](#), [the International Communication Association](#). I also study young people in digital cultures, so the association of internet researchers, avenues like these, where there are options to go to their annual conferences, they have called for papers for other summer schools, winter schools, sometimes for publications of chapters, journals

Get on these lists. Yeah, that's the first thing. Get on this list, and I would echo that I'm in philosophy and just signing up to this list called [Philos-L](#), it's not even an association, starting to find out who exists out there and where can I go. That sounds like a really good starting point. Was it similar for you? Clare, were they known associations? You also mentioned this international community. How did it go for you?

Yeah, I think it's interesting you mentioned that more mailing list that isn't official association, in Victorian studies it's Victoria list. It's a something that has existed for decades. I think I first got on that when I was a masters student, because someone suggested they might answer a question, because sometimes its people put out questions, as well as sharing CFPs (Call for Papers), as well as sharing job opportunities. And the thing that's really struck me was just how generous people were and how much people interested, even if they were incredibly senior, you know, I recognised their name from, you know, a book that I really valued, but actually, I put a question out there, and people responded about something quite weird and esoteric that no one's written about. But that doesn't mean that people don't know about it, have those not that knowledge, and really want to share it. And I think that was one of the things that really gave me confidence to then reach out to people in other capacities to join international associations, like as a [British Association of Victorian studies](#), for example, has been very important to me. And also, I guess if we're switching towards the question of mentorship, potentially a little as well, historically, I've been maybe sometimes a bit awkward about asking people for help, because it's quite hard to, you know everyone's really busy in academia, it's sometimes really hard to say, do you have half an hour? Do you have time to read this over that kind of question. But actually, I think it's being part of the networks, part of these groups, that you realize that people do really want to help. And actually, they might sometimes be legitimately just far too

busy, and sometimes they might not respond to your email. And I'm not saying that this is absolutely everyone across the board, but in general, people are really generous with their time and their expertise.

This is so interesting. You've brought this up. This has come up now on more than one podcast. For those who are listening, if you listen to another one or two of our podcasts, this generosity in academia will come up and of course, we all know people are busy and so on, and it's a bit of advice, and just don't take it personally if somebody doesn't answer you. But what you're saying is people responded, and that gave you the confidence to start looking for other things as well. And I think that can be really important for people to hear, especially if you're not used to asking for help. It's a very isolated experience often being an ECR, whether you're an independent researcher, whether you're doing a postdoc, whether you're doing precarious teaching, whether you've got a permanent job, there might be things that you're doing on your own, quite a lot in the humanities area we're in. So would you say this is one of the main reasons for networking, just to find people to speak to, to get advice from all what do you get from it? Why do you advocate for this?

I don't want to instrumentalize it, and I don't want to say that, oh, it's because I got jobs out of it. I think there is a real sense that people want to pass it on. Everyone knows they've worked really hard for whatever job they have. But there's always an element of luck and chance and being in the right place at the right time, and also people generally have always benefited from reading someone else's application for that same scheme before, or reading someone else's CV. How do you do it? It's about passing it on, and obviously it's something that particularly first-generation academics can find particularly difficult. And so I think tapping into networks that exist give you that foot-in-the-door to feel confident to actually ask those questions. I know that I really benefited from reading other people's leaving human applications for my early career fellowship. And I've always been really open with anyone who's PhD or early career and said, If you want to look at my application, I'm really happy to share that I'm really happy to have a half hour zoom or a coffee. And then I know those, yeah, those Yeah, will do the same, yeah.

And I think that's really important, this idea that it's not an instrumental thing, like if you plug this in, you get this out, because that's probably not the way you want to really think about things. But it's both the sort of getting this professional advice, but also feeling like you are part of something a little bit bigger than yourself, when you're part of a network, when you're part of something like this. And Devina, what would you say, has been the main thing you've got out of this?

I think I echo what's been said already, and there's a relational aspect to it as well, right? Like the fact that lot of us have either done their PhD during the pandemic, or have just finished their PhD and the pandemic struck, and then the fact that you feel so

alone and isolated, and that you can perhaps lean on to this community and maybe use them as a sound board for your ideas. Or in case, in my case, for example, I finished my PhD in India, and I was supremely lucky to have an amazing, supportive supervising professor who was also quite international in their outlook, but at the end of the day, it was an Indian PhD. It wasn't a PhD from the Global North. So formal and informal networks and structures of mentorship helped me assess where I stood globally, and that gave me the confidence to apply for positions abroad.

And there's something in there as well. I think both of you have touched on this formal, informal. I said it earlier. It comes up quite a bit that there are potentially networks within your institution. There are networks International, big networks. There are networks like the British Academy Early Career Network, which obviously we're all part of and quite keen on and found very useful various things. So there are different networks for different things as well, aren't they? And I want to come back to that in a second, but I did just want to say, yes, let's talk about this pandemic thing that happened. Because I think for a lot of people, the pandemic, you know, we've got ECRs listening to this, who span a number of years, the more senior as you describe yourself, Clare and the newer ones, and many people were either doing PhDs or postdocs in that time. Do you think it's been harder or easier to develop networks? This might be an odd question during this online space that we had, or in person, what's been your experience? Maybe, Clare, you go first on that.

Yes, I was in a professional services role when the pandemic and lockdowns first hit, and then during that period, I got the Leverhulme fellowship, and then I started that in January 2021, so that was the third British lockdown. And so it was a very odd time to start a new institution that I hadn't worked at before. And I felt very keenly that, from seeing other people had early career fellows. Even in the best circumstances, it can be quite isolating to join a new department, but generally, you're not doing a lot of teaching. You're necessarily very embedded in those normal departmental networks, and so it can be quite isolating. So I thought, okay, well, this is even more tricky potentially, because we're also now not in physical spaces together at this stage. So for me, I reached out into a Facebook group that was mostly dormant that was for Leverhulme early career fellows that someone suggested pointed me towards, and I just put a word out saying, does anyone want to do co working? Would anyone like to meet via zoom a couple of times a week? It didn't have a very large response, but there were four or five of us who started meeting quite regularly, and it was partly about support and seeing how people were getting on sharing experience, even around the practicalities of something like, how are you doing things with the budget, with the Leverhulme, you know, how are you doing these practical things that can be quite tricky to get your head around, potentially, but also about sort of peer support, about, I think, peer mentorship as well, really understanding that other people who are a similar career stage to you can be really, really helpful, but also become very good friends. And

I don't want to sound twee about it, but there is also an element of, you know, of course, great for my well being, but it's great for my expanding a friend network and people I really, really value.

So you found social media and putting yourself out and saying, does anybody want to gather and be a network and then sort of do a specific thing? So again, this comes back to finding, maybe different networks, different groups of people, peers, sometimes seniors, for different things you want to achieve. So there it was like, let's have this working group where we can share practical experience and advice. And obviously it's evolved into more than that, which is wonderful. Has that continued in the real world that we're in now? Do you still meet online?

I think because we've all finished our Leverhulme fellowships at this point, and so that's sort of dissipated a bit, because people are generally in different kinds of roles now that they don't really have the capacity to do it so much. But we still sort of meet in person, if we find ourselves around the British Library, for example, at a similar time. But I think it also was a little bit of an element of proof of concept as well, so a bit later on, I became quite closely involved with the British Association for Victorian studies executive committee. I was on that as the communications and newsletter editor, and we were always talking about how to bring people together more informally, rather than just at the big conferences that happened annually. And one of the things that came out of that was a co-working online sessions thing. And I think because not everyone wants to be doing that right now, some people do not want one more second on Zoom than they need to. And I 100% understand that, but for others, having that almost shut up and write type scenario where you talk for a few minutes, you set some goals, you work consistently for a couple of hours. And actually that's something that can really motivate people.

I think this is really worth stressing, because there was a sense in which the pandemic was obviously very hard for lots of people, but it caused us to start a lot of these online networks. Just because we're not permanently online now doesn't mean that these can't be very effective things to set up for different needs. And these might be needs based around specifics, like, yeah, getting some writing done, getting specific advice, but presumably also, Devina, you sort of mentioned being first generation, first time working in the UK, all these kind of things, people who just might have things in common with you and can relate and share useful experience and advice. Has that been anything that's come up in your networks at all?

Yes, to a certain extent. But during the pandemic, I think, as with everything, there were pros and cons, and I don't think I would have done as many conferences if it weren't for the pandemic. So in some ways, the pandemic was beneficial, but of course, there was the problem of being away, being isolated, not being able to be at the intellectual hub where you're at, because in my case, I was just finishing my field work.

How did you sort of get around that, then sort of get into this?

Yes what we did was, a lot of us were missing our department and our university, and we did these research round-tables within the department. And then a couple of us PhD students just got together and said: Why don't we do those research roundtables online?

Brilliant. I love this. So why don't we start this? Why don't we do something? There's something there as well. If the particular network you're looking for with the particular people you have to doesn't exist, make it just make it. Maybe be the person to make it? Yes, and I know I've had experience of doing that, starting networks just because it wasn't there, and you don't have to wait for the group of people to find you, and that's what you found in that time.

Okay, there were a couple of things I wanted to come back to it. One of them was the whole mentor side of it. So we've mentioned about how you can have networks with peers. You can have them for different things, but sometimes it can be incredibly helpful to have the input of people who have maybe been there and done that. How do either of you go about finding mentors? How many mentors, whether formally, informally? How do you get them? Because I think that's one of the key things, like, how do you find these people? Maybe Devina?

In my case, I leaned on my PhD supervisor quite a bit, and I still lean on her like I've been doing since 2023 but I still call her and we have these monthly check ins built in, and she's just amazing. But then also one of the associations that I was part of, they launched a pilot mentorship program, and they put me with a senior fellow who is amazing, and that Professor works within children and media, which is pretty much my area as well. So that sort of helped me understand what my position is, and if I can go for global opportunities or not. Other ways in which I've found my own mentor networks is just getting in touch with slightly more senior, but still my peers. So maybe someone who's just finished their PhD while I'm still within the programme. Just emailing them or sometimes you meet them in conferences. Sometimes you find yourselves together, venting about something like deadlines, revise and resubmit challenges for example. it's important to reach out to people you might feel like your PhD so different from someone else's, but there are a lot of things that you still have in common.

And they've got this kind of broader experience that's useful. There's something interesting there, I think, as well. Because I think possibly when you're before being an ECR, you're quite in your little niche, and getting advice from a supervisor who's very much also in your niche, but what you're suggesting is look, bump into people, talk to them, and just get talking and then maybe keep talking to them. Yes, have you ever asked anyone formally to be a mentor to you?

Within peer networks, not so much. What ended up happening was, once you sort of build those relationships, create and build those relationships. It's all about sustaining them. So sometimes you end up motivating each other for, oh, well, how many presentations are you doing for that particular conference? And you know, like, really competitive stuff. But then also sharing stories about rejection and how you deal with rejection.

So for the peer stuff, just keep the conversations going with anyone you just connect with, that you just like and then for the people who are more senior to you, just don't be afraid to and this came up in what you both said, just don't be afraid to get in touch. And again, for people who are particularly first generation or new to studying in this context and working in this context, that can be really good advice. Clare, what about you? You've mentioned mentors, and how did you get them? Was it the same kind of thing?

Yes. So one of the things that's been really interesting in preparing for this podcast is that the networks and the groups felt very close to sort of what my experience has been. And there aren't necessarily people that I would really pin as mentors. So I had my actually about four different PhD supervisors between originally applying, getting funding, starting and finishing because of various institutional contexts, rather than myself, but all of them have been really wonderful in different ways. But maybe that started me off having a different relationship with the idea of one PhD supervisor and one mentor. And so I've always had different people to draw on for different things. And I think also the way that my career has also moved between different spaces and places has also meant that what Devina said, which was around maintaining them. And I think even if I haven't spoken to someone for a little while, knowing that I built a sort of strength of relationship when I was in closer proximity with them, maybe they were, for example, when I first worked in research impact role my manager there, we're now very good friends, and I know that if I'm applying for a job in the impact space or thinking around REF stuff at the moment with my current job, I might speak to her. But then if I'm moving into -so I've also done some policy research- and I'm still thinking about whether my career might move me out of universities into policy. I just had a wonderful conversation this morning with someone that I worked on a policy project five years ago with, who I just sent her an email saying: 'Would you have some time to have a bit of a conversation as I prep for an interview?' And she was, again, so generous, coming back to that word generosity, and I suppose I would never, sort of think specifically to call them my mentor, but maybe that's because it feels quite singular, and actually it's the difference between that sort of relationship of saying, Oh, I have a best friend, or I have some wonderful close friends. And I feel like my relationship with mentors is more that I have lots of wonderful close friends.

I think this is really useful again to think about sometimes the weirdness of what you go through can lead you to a new revelation. In your case, it's that revelation actually, find

different people for different bits of advice. And it sounds really obvious when you say out loud, I suppose that one person might be an expert in this and another in this, but it can be easy to sort of think, oh, I've got to find one size fits all. But presumably as well, that also helps people to be generous. If you're. Just talking to them about one kind of thing and not expecting them to solve all of your problems. But you did also mention the formal mentoring stuff as well. So there's opportunities out there. You talked about the association that you're part of having a scheme. Quite often, if you do get a role in an organisation, they'll have schemes. It sounds like it's really about making the most of whatever opportunities you can find or creating them. Yeah, when you think about networking and mentoring things like, are either of you mentoring anyone else, do you feel that you're in that capacity for anyone else?

Yeah, I think going back to what I was saying about sharing my own applications for things, and that's sort of following on. I know there are certain people that maybe I shared my Leverhulme application with quite a few years ago. They then got a Leverhulme, and then we've sort of had periodic check ins of where are you at this point in, how are you feeling one year in I'm nearly finishing, how are you feeling about that point in time? And I think when I reflect on the check ins that we have. It does have that kind of relationship, even though it's not been labelled as such.

Yeah, and where do you do it?

I don't know why I wouldn't!

I think it's one of those things. When you think about looking for a mentor for yourself, you think, Well, why would anyone want to help me? You might go through all this thought process that, why would I want to burden but then when someone asks you, Why do you help other people? Of course, you're going to help other people. Why wouldn't you help other people? And I think there are a lot of people in academia who generally feel the same way. I presume as well, you maybe find it fulfilling seeing them succeed. That might be part of it, but that would be just the nice thing that comes after Yeah, yeah.

Devina, what about you? Are you in that space yet?

I haven't been in that position where you know that there's stuff that you don't know and sort of trying to unearth the tacit knowledge of academia that you might not know because you're first gen or non-native, or because you're part of a different ecosystem, and now you're part of different ecosystem altogether. I'm actually really, really passionate about giving back to my community. So informally, whoever reaches out to me, I tend to make time get on a call with them to help them with either PhD applications or postdoc applications. Formally, what we did in IMCR was put together a presentation around how to write good abstracts and how to be a good reviewer. Because oftentimes a lot of people, especially from the global majority, they feel like,

'How can I submit an abstract to an international conference?' It sounds like such a mammoth task, so dramatic and huge, yeah. So we thought that it was demystifying the whole process. And now much more locally, we have an ECR community that we are kick starting at the school that I'm at currently. And, yeah, we're going to be launching the peer mentorship network soon.

So that's fantastic. Yeah. So basically, there's lots of opportunities, actually, to get involved and give things back, and we've had more time to think about but I guess I'll ask you the same thing, why do it?

I feel like what goes around comes around, I was very, very lucky to have received these networks, these associations, these mentors, formal, informal, both in my life. And I mean, of course, I'm supposed to give this back.

There's this sense that you're just part of this wider community and things, and I know that for me. So I'm involved in various things as well, in initiatives and so on. I've joined, as with some of you, sort of your own international organisations, become members. There's something quite fulfilling about recognising that you have something to contribute as well. Potentially. I don't know if that's something that you both feel, or maybe it's just me. I've got to get this validation some, you know, with all those rejection in academia and so on. But is that something that you also experience

Absolutely yeah, and I think something that we haven't actually touched on until, I guess because we've been because we've been thinking primarily in terms of navigating the career journeys, is it's also incredibly intellectually stimulating, especially for an international network where, yes, you might all be say, working on Victorian studies, but actually that's an incredibly broad thing, and actually ending up having conversations with people across different kinds of areas and disciplines within that is also incredibly intellectually fruitful and also sparks different kinds of conversations, and then might lead to, I don't know, sort of collaborative networks where you realise you're both thinking about history of emotions in a specific area, for example, where you hadn't realised and so it's not just about the kind of steps through a career, but also steps through how your research, yes, your intellectual network and flourishing, yeah.

So there's all these different dimensions to it, and quite often it sounds like it's not necessarily what you thought it was going to be. And what value do I get from being in there? What value do I get from mentoring something turns out to be what you didn't expect? And that's part of the joy of the discovery of it, I guess, as well. And it's an important part of the contemporary way of being. I think particularly in the humanities, you've got to build some connections, maybe outside your institution and so on. I remember talking, I think it was to you Devina before we started this podcast. But there's a sense in which building networks and finding mentors and being a mentor shouldn't be seen as an extra. It's kind of an investment. I think that was the phrase,

was it you that used that used that to me to be, well, yeah, since it's an investment in your career, I don't know if either of you want to elaborate on that, sure.

So I honestly feel like this whole thing is quite cyclical, because you learn from people, and then you pass on that knowledge as well. But also there's immense possibility for self-reflection and introspection of 'Okay, so what did I do during my postdoc application, and how did I position myself, and what kind of backward planning went into getting a particular publication out or putting together a special issue and things like those?' And I feel like that reflexivity not just helps others, but also helps yourself. And sometimes in academia, well, not sometimes, most of the time, we all suffer from imposter syndrome. And when you do these reflections, you sort of feel like, Oh, well, maybe I'm not so bad that, after all,

I'm pretty awesome. Yeah, I have a whole thing on that. I have a paper, and I don't think any of us are imposters. Basically. We're all amazing, adventurous, wonderful people. But yeah, so there's this kind of cyclical thing.

I think in some ways, I know that when you're a PhD or especially on something like a Leverhulme/British Academy early career fellowship, where you actually have a lot of time. And in some ways, it feels like it's rushing by and you're far too busy. You haven't got time for anything. But actually, especially compared to other kinds of points in either early career journeys where you're trying to say piece together lots of teaching, or later on, if you have a permanent more teaching and lectureship job, where suddenly admin and teaching becomes a lot of everything. So I think I've really talking about reflecting and sort of thinking back about what you've done and how things have fit together is sort of during the PhD and then during the early career fellowship, realising that time is quite flexible. You can spend it on different things. And yeah, this idea of investing it in the relate networks, investing it in the relationships, and that's actually a really good use of that time. And sometimes I think about it, it's like, oh, you know, I guess I was just having a coffee. Having a coffee with someone, and then I guess I just did a bit of work on this new planning for a network or something like that. And it can feel like, oh, but then that means that I wasn't working on my monograph, but actually, and we've all done this, yeah, but I don't think it's a bad thing. I think actually really valuing it and that they all have different parts to play in the career development.

You do get busy, and this has happened to me, I've definitely done it. You do get busy and you've got a coffee booked in one of these cafe coffees or something like that. Do it. It's an investment, okay? And that's true whether you've got, let's call it the luxury of the post doc situation, or the stress of the precarious and the independent research situation, or the admin workload of the permanent lecturer and so on. It's an investment.

At the least, you have someone to vent to. At best, you have a network that you can already tap into. Something awesome, maybe blurbs for your monograph.

So final bit of advice from you both, what would you say to anybody about how to get involved in the network, how to build a mentorship. What would be the one thing you would say to people?

I think it probably repeats somewhat some of the things we've already said. But I think the key thing is that not thinking about instrumentalising and that we're networking, I think is very different to investing in your networks and really thinking about these as sort of ecosystems, which you're not putting something in to get something out, but that you're really part of something that is important in and of itself, and can also be incredibly beneficial for developing your career, whether within or beyond academia,

I guess, actually making time and planning these things rather than leaving it to some sort of, 'Oh, I get to it when I get to it', because sometimes then that never really happens.

Yes, we're always so busy. We've always got so much on. So make time for investing in building a network. Okay. Thank you so much, both of you.

Thanks so much for having me. Thank you for having me.

Thank you for listening to this episode of Confessions of an Early Career Researcher. I've been your host, Leonie Smith. This podcast was brought to you by the British Academy in collaboration with the Leverhulme Trust, produced by Content is Queen, music sourced by Epidemic Sound.