

TO POSTDOC OR NOT TO POSTDOC? PERSONAL
PERSPECTIVES FROM A FEMALE POSTDOC IN
COGNITIVE SCIENCE

Andria Shimi
Postdoctoral Fellow, University of Oxford

Who I am

- 4-year PhD in Developmental Cognitive Neuroscience
- 3rd year of postdoctoral research (1-year postdoc in MRC CBU Cambridge, currently postdoc at University of Oxford)

BUT

- 3-year clinical training in School Psychology – Licence to practice

Disclaimer

“I love being a postdoc”

Should you postdoc? **CONS**

- Many postdocs – few academic job openings: *FIERCE* competition
- Postdoc projects usually last ~2 years each
- Usually more than 1 postdoc positions before finally getting a tenure-track faculty position
- Sometimes you can't be picky (cf. unemployment): the project topic might not be the same as your PhD and you might not like it as much
- Salary usually not as high as in industry
- If you are a married female postdoc and did not have children yet, you always feel that “right now is not a good time”...
- Might require moving to a new town or another country. This might affect your relationship with your significant other.

Should you postdoc? PROS

- If you want to become a PI one day, then YES
- Gain new research skills, enrich your CV with teaching, supervision etc.
- You are independent but still have the safety net of an advisor/mentor – smooth transition from the PhD nest to heading your own lab
- It's the period where you can consolidate your PhD knowledge
- Less administrative work and responsibilities than PIs – more time for research!

How to succeed as a postdoc

How do you define a successful postdoc?

Perhaps I am, perhaps I am not, depending on your definition!

How to succeed as a postdoc:

My take

- You need to be skilled and independent. Know your strengths and weaknesses.
- Publications matter. Dilemma: sacrifice quality for quantity?
- Choose your advisors/collaborators wisely, establish a support network
- Get your own funding
- Network
- Be patient and persistent