

## **Call for book chapter contributions:**

### **Doing Academic Careers Differently: Portraits of academic life**

**Editors: Sarah Robinson, University of Glasgow; Alexandra Bristow, The Open University; Olivier Ratle, University of the West of England.**

Academic career trajectories have for some time been becoming more normative and prescribed. Ideals of what makes a good or successful academic are increasingly seen through the achievement of various institutionally set targets such as publications in top journals and high teaching scores, and through performance management systems which routinely review individuals across a considerable number of pre-determined criteria. Academics are encouraged to carefully cultivate their 'research profiles' and digital presence, displaying their 'H index' scores, high-level publications and esteem factors and publicly showing allegiance to such externally set manifestations of 'excellence' (Butler and Spoelstra, 2012, 2014).

Anxiety to achieve such targets is high and academia is currently fundamentally unhealthy (Bristow et al., 2019), experiencing an 'epidemic of poor mental health' (Morrish, 2019) with widespread academic anxiety and insecurity (Bristow et al., 2017; Knights and Clarke, 2014; Smith and Ulus, 2019). A recent Twitter thread notoriously recounted that some successful academics regularly have 100-hour working weeks. How sustainable is such a model and at what costs does such success come? Perhaps implied in such expectations are views of the 'ideal' academic worker - maybe someone who is young, without caring commitments, without disability and prepared to engage with academia in very narrowly prescribed terms not of their own making. Perhaps also someone who is prepared and willing to identify a small research niche and to research and publish in this area for many years, targeting (only) the highest ranked journals in the field. Although this is a widespread phenomenon which talks to wider issues of Higher Education governance and management, it has been noted that business and management school academics have been particularly badly affected by the excesses of managerialism and control mechanisms (Huzzard et al., 2017; Kallio et al., 2016; Ratle et al., 2020).

In this climate, normative advice is given to prospective academics as to how to enter and survive academic life: you have to 'play the game', to have senior (often male) champions and mentors, you need to be well networked and 'known', you need to be visible both internationally at conferences and on social media. Such requirements imply global mobility and assume Western, masculinist interactive norms. How many of the current academic bodies fit, or wish to comply to such norms? The exclusionary nature of such expectations, practices and assumptions needs now to be critically interrogated.

The current Covid-19 crisis adds and will continue to add new levels of complexity to what it means to be an academic in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This includes the increasing blurring of home and work boundaries and the rapid digitalization and technologization of academic work. For some, the pandemic may offer time for reflection on their careers to date. For others, the pressing need to balance home and caring responsibilities within a 'working day' may bring into sharp focus the growing rigidity of academic workloads and the impossibility of doing everything well. The need to reskill and adapt to different ways of teaching and learning design as well as to respond to mixed institutional messages may also bring new levels of

anxiety and confusion. Tensions and contradictions concerning the nature of academic careers before and after the pandemic abound.

As such, this book aims to add to and develop critical academic career studies and critical university studies by challenging orthodoxies and power relations in academic career trajectories. Given the increased pressure to conform to norms and the potential challenges of the (post-)pandemic world, we wish to illustrate how alternative career trajectories can be possible and, in many cases, preferable and advantageous. We wish to do so by providing an outlet for those doing careers differently and/or not conforming to stereotypical academic norms and roles to tell their own stories on their own terms. In so doing we intend to disrupt the implicit discourse of the ideal academic type (e.g. male, Western, free of responsibilities, able-bodied, 100-hour per week working), thus questioning the sustainability of current 'required' trajectories and the system this supports.

Most importantly, through the contributions in this book we wish to advise and encourage those starting or considering an academic career in these challenging times, that there are many ways of acquiring and conducting such careers outside of the dominant discourses. Finally, we hope this compilation of insights into alternative academic lives will help to inspire and encourage current academics to re-think and take ownership of their careers according to their own terms.

In inviting contributions this book asks:

1. Are there more inclusive and less prescriptive ways of being an academic which play to individual strengths, motivations and vocations?
2. What lies behind the homogenised institutionalised masks (profiles) we show to the world? What tensions and contradictions have individual academics struggled with? What paths have not been taken or what stories lie hidden or untold?
3. What alternative academic trajectories have been taken that others can learn and take inspiration from?
4. How does the pandemic inform our understanding of academic careers, and how might ways of doing academia differently develop in the post-pandemic world?

In this book we would like to see these questions addressed through the stories of different academic authors from different stages of their careers and from different parts of the world who, through choice or circumstance, do not (fully) play the game/conform to the norms outlined above, thus challenging orthodoxies and inspiring ways of doing academic work differently. We encourage authors to come out from behind their official 'profiles' and instead to paint an individual or group self-portrait which reflects individual and/or shared struggles, contradictions and hidden stories. Provocatively, we encourage authors to choose and work with a **metaphor** or epithet for their self-portrait which in some way challenges current notions of the neoliberal academic. Some indicative suggestions are given below. These are

deliberately ambiguous and open to authors' interpretations however, so contributions are by no means confined to the following:

- The accidental academic
- The scatter-gun researcher
- The caring academic
- The non-institutionalised academic
- The public intellectual
- The part-time academic
- The hidden talents academic
- The activist academic/the academic activist
- The veiled academic
- The collective academic
- The vagabond/tourist academic
- The portfolio academic
- The naked academic
- The secret academic
- The refusenik academic
- The sustainable academic
- The pandemic/post-pandemic academic

It is envisaged that most contributions will come from Business School based academics/management and organisation scholars, however contributions from other related disciplines are also welcome.

We are currently under negotiations with the publisher Routledge and would envisage a publication date of 2022. It is anticipated that final chapter length will be between 6,000-8,000 words inclusive of references. However, shorter contributions will be considered. Contributions using non-traditional ways of academic writing (Gilmore et al., 2019) and expression are also welcome.

Please submit expressions of interest in the form of a 500-word abstract to:

[sarah.robinson.2@glasgow.ac.uk](mailto:sarah.robinson.2@glasgow.ac.uk)

[alexandra.bristow@open.ac.uk](mailto:alexandra.bristow@open.ac.uk)

[olivier.ratle@uwe.ac.uk](mailto:olivier.ratle@uwe.ac.uk)

**Abstract Deadline: 1<sup>st</sup> July 2020**

Provisional Timeline:

- Notifications of acceptance 28<sup>th</sup> August 2020
- Full chapters required by 7<sup>th</sup> January 2021

## References:

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