

RESEARCHER

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The Power and Potential of Research Careers for Women

*Women in Academia Support Network
(WIASN)*



United Kingdom – North America – Japan – India
Malaysia – China

Emerald Publishing Limited
Howard House, Wagon Lane, Bingley BD16 1WA, UK

First edition 2022

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(WIASN).

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-1-80382-734-6 (Print)

ISBN: 978-1-80382-731-5 (Online)

ISBN: 978-1-80382-733-9 (Epub)



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standard
ISO 14001:2004.

Certificate Number 1985
ISO 14001



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The WIASN team are:

Dr Amy Bonsall: Founder, Director and Editor of this book.

Dr Kelly Pickard-Smith: Co-founder, Director and Editor of this book.

Prof. Eleonora Belfiore: Co-founder, Director and Editor of this book.

Dr Maxine Horne: Co-founder and Director.

Catherine Beard: Co-founders and Director.

To the most important people – our children. We aren't sure how much you helped or hindered the book production process with demands for more juice and biscuits, the bouts of Covid and inevitable home-schooling during a global pandemic but the cuddles, the hugs, the fun and the laughter always get us through the difficult times and we know the work we do is to benefit you and the generations that come behind us.

This book wouldn't be possible without the care and support of all of the women in the WIASN network and this includes special mention to our moderators Nia Wearn and Peny Sotiropoulou, and to all the academics voluntarily running our 20+ special interest groups on topics such as mental health, working-class academics, academics on the move, beyond cancer, ECRs and writing support, to name just a few. Our members give their time with care and compassion and also keep each other in check with regard to our many

privileges. We thank each and every one for the humbling opportunity to showcase just a small part of the work that you do. Having you in research careers makes all our lives richer.

To our publishers Emerald Publishing, Emerald have been supporters of WIASN from our conception. They have a commitment to gender equity in research and really do put their money where their mouth is. When we came to them and said we want to produce a book in less than six months they said let's make this happen. Despite this book not being the usual academic publication. Their dedication to gender equity and the support they gave with the illustrations and marketing means so much to us, long may this partnership continue.

We were very grateful to be one of the 131 global communities, and one of only 10 from the UK (from over 40,000 applications) to have received Facebook Community Accelerator funding that enabled us to produce an initial print fund of 1,000 books to be distributed to 1,000 schools for free to reach a potential 1 million students through their school libraries.

Finally, with a fundraiser we hope to get more free books into more schools. If you contributed to the fundraiser or bought the book as a gift know you are also contributing to gifting this book to communities who are systematically blocked from participating in higher education and research and you have contributed to breaking down those barriers – even in some small way.

Thank you.

INTRODUCTION – WOMEN IN ACADEMIA SUPPORT NETWORK – WHO EVEN ARE WE AND WHAT DO WE DO?

Women in Academia Support Network (WIASN) began in 2017 when a group of strangers digitally met on an academic Facebook group for early career academics. Through engaging in that space it became obvious that there were very few platforms for female identifying academics to come together to network, learn and share experiences.

WIASN is a trans-inclusive, intersectional network for women and all people who have lived experience of misogyny in their role as academics.

These strangers (now colleagues and best friends) started the Facebook community group “WIASN” (pronounced Wise-un) with a vision that access to higher education and research can be changed from a grass roots collective and a mission to take the power and make radical action now! Shaping higher education and research from within – through online community activism.

Improving routes into higher education and research for women and then retaining those women was really important because society benefits from the expertise of diverse people. Unfortunately, it is still the case that careers in higher education and research are difficult to obtain and retain because of

stereotypes about who does research and what research is and keeping people out because of their gender, sexuality, race, religion and class. Only 1% of the global population have a Philosophy Doctorate (PhD) and more than half of those PhDs awarded are to women. Yet women remain more likely to be pushed out their careers after PhD and are woefully underrepresented in senior roles. We need women to stay in research and to excel because gender diversity benefits everyone through diverse perspectives.

WIASN now have over 12,000 members, from PhD to Vice Chancellor, in over 100 countries and different research sectors (because not all research happens in labs or in universities). Our aim is to encourage and keep women in research careers through the use of mutual support networks and advocacy/activism. We hope, through this book, that more women will embark on and remain in research careers.

Before we formally introduce ourselves as researchers and as the book editors we have a task for you. We want you to do some drawing. It's a simple instruction:

Draw a Scientist.



Finished? Now turn the page...

WHAT EVEN IS RESEARCH?

You've just participated in a famous research study called the Draw a Scientist Test (DAST). It was developed by David Wade Chamber in 1983 who wanted to find out when we started stereotyping what a scientist is and looks like. In the original research nearly 5,000 primary school children in three countries were asked to draw a scientist. Most of the drawings were pictures of white men in labs wearing white coats and glasses. While over the years the number of women drawn in the test has increased there is still a lack of representation in other ways such as disability, and the lab coat and glasses seem to remain. This study tells us that scientists are usually men, usually white, able bodied and that science (and therefore research) takes place in a lab.

But you've just participated in some science with your drawing. So we already know that not all science takes place in a lab and also not all science is about experiments and people in white coats.

This is where the book *ResearchER* comes in. We wanted to smash stereotypes of not only who does research but also what research is. You can research an infinite number of things in so many different ways. Take the Editors of this book, for example:

Dr Kelly Pickard-Smith: Kelly grew up in Wythenshawe, once of the most deprived areas in the UK. Kelly came to higher education as an adult through a six-year distance degree with the Open University sitting her final exams at 32 years old and two weeks before her first son was born. Two years later there was another baby and she studied her MA with two children under two years while working as a tutor to support disadvantaged young people into education and employment. Her PhD came soon after and she won a scholarship to the University of Manchester where she used improvisational drama

and film to explore people's experiences of mathematics education to understand inequality in mathematically demanding careers such as science. Then baby 3 arrived. Kelly is also disabled with chronic long-term illness (heart arrhythmia and pernicious anaemia) and an obsessive compulsive disorder plus as yet not professionally diagnosed probable attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). She is a strong advocate against disability discrimination.

Dr Amy Bonsall: Amy has researched how Shakespeare had been adapted in the African country of Malawi, working with local professional actors to put on a performance of Romeo and Juliet (Romeo and Juliet) translated in to Chichewa by renowned Malawian writer Stanley Onjezani Kenani and then adapted for performance by Amy and Misheck Mzumara. Amy is dyslexic and has obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) and achieving her PhD was a huge highlight for her, especially as she was not invited back to high school to do A-level as they said she didn't understand Shakespeare! Amy has won awards for her work on disability advocacy in higher education and research. Amy founded WIASN. As an international theatre director, Amy works with professional companies to bring theatre to life for public audiences.

Professor Eleonora Belfiore: Eleonora researches cultural politics and policy and the social impact of the arts on British culture and politics. Eleonora is internationally renowned in her field and is the Journal Editor for Cultural Trends. A Sicilian living in the UK, Eleonora has brought a unique perspective to the cultural sector and UK cultural arts policy and has received prestigious Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) research council funding to explore everyday participation and the connecting of communities through arts and culture. Eleonora is also a strong disability rights advocate sharing her lived experience of the process of ADHD diagnosis, since there is an under diagnosing of ADHD in women given

how differently symptoms can be displayed compared to the more widely understood male presentation.

As you can see from our short bios, there is diversity in research if we scratch the surface in respect of what is researched and who is doing the research. We developed the *ResearchHER* book to showcase amazing women researchers doing varied types of research to highlight that science and research doesn't just happen in a lab (it sometimes does) and that what can be researched is infinite. Through the book we explore vignettes (short stories and bios) of 28 fabulous researchers from different backgrounds, countries and research fields to get a sense of the importance of diverse voices in research and also to give some examples of short activities you can do to try out some research techniques of your own.

Because of diversity in research careers, researchers may also have different titles. Titles include: Dr (Doctor), Professor, Associate Professor, Lecturer, Senior Lecturer, Reader, Research Associate, Research Fellow and Independent Researcher – all are Researchers but not all will be Doctors/Dr.

Undertaking and passing a PhD entitles you to use the title Doctor/Dr but it is different to a medical doctorate (MD) – although some medics also have PhDs! Confused yet? A PhD is an intensive period of study where you create a research question then design how you will go about researching it and then analyse your results. As part of the research you usually produce a large written piece of work detailing the research question, literature about your topic, the methods you used, the data/information you collected, how you analysed that data and then what you found out – your results. This piece of written work is usually 70,000–100,000 words long and is called a thesis. But some PhD theses can be much shorter; for example, if you included science experiments or did a practice-based (Education or arts/performance, e.g.) PhD. When you finish your PhD you have to 'defend' it. In

many countries this is called a *viva voce*, where you have to speak to senior academics (researchers) who will question you about the research. In some countries, like Finland, you are even given a sword to hold during your 'defence'! The Dr title is awarded as a note to your educational achievement and only passing this process allows you to use that title. All other titles are professional so Professor, for example, is bestowed by whichever university hires you through their selection or promotion process and if you leave or retire you do not necessarily take that title with you.

However, not all researchers or lecturer are Doctors because industry and experience are also routes into higher education lecturing and research careers. Also, not all research careers happen in universities. Researchers work in many varied industries and sectors, such as health care, pharmaceuticals, aerospace, charities, government and even Facebook and Amazon have researchers. Research careers are, therefore, very varied.

A quick note on titles. Using the correct title for women researchers is very important. Women are more often introduced without their Dr or Professor title than men. However, to accommodate all these varied research careers and so you can get to know the researchers in a more informal way we won't be using titles like Dr or Prof. in the book unless the author has included it in their biography.

Finally, and most importantly, we must acknowledge that research remains biased to Western higher education and is heavily dominated by white male academics. While this book is to address gender equity in research and showcase amazing women researchers we need to point out that where there has been some progress in gender equity, it is mostly white women, able bodied, *cis*-gendered and heterosexual women who have benefitted and much, much more needs to be done to diversify women in higher education and research.

Research needs to be diverse because diversity of thought will help solve some of the world's most pressing problems and, importantly, innovate and be creative. In this book, you will find ResearchHERs who have written about their backgrounds, why they got into research and the types of varied research they do. They have even provided some small activities you can get involved with to encourage you to start thinking about science and research in different ways. We hope you enjoy the book. We really enjoyed working with so many different and fabulous women.

So come and draw your research, dance it, perform it, sing it, film it, interview for it, do an experiment for it, do it on the stage, in the supermarket, in a school, in the street, in space, out at sea, in a lab. Research whatever and wherever but come be a

ResearchHER



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