

WOMEN THRIVING IN ACADEMIA

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WOMEN THRIVING IN ACADEMIA

EDITED BY

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The University of Melbourne, Australia



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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Praise for *Women Thriving in Academia*

“This is a book every early career woman in academia needs to read. The higher education landscape has been reformed in the last few decades; however, there are still hostilities, subtle and not so subtle, that need to be understood to navigate a career in this field. The book uses personal reflective narratives of women in academia to provide an account of intersecting roles of race, gender, and class. The journey to the top is full of obstacles and needs strategies such as those that are provided in the book. This book underscores the value and the importance of networks and support structures that women need to succeed in their academic careers.”

–*Professor Teboho Moja, New York
University, USA*

“This little book is a veritable treasure chest, complete with a compelling foreword written by Dr Jane den Hollander, AO. The contributors show that there is no academic fairy tale for women (spoiler alert!). Instead they draw on their collective wealth of knowledge and experience to offer relatable accounts of what flourishing in academia entails and how to transform some of the gritty realities of academic life into success. Read it and learn how to navigate the snakes and ladders of academic life with nous.”

–*Dr Sarah Healy, The University of
Melbourne, Australia*

“An empowering book that deeply reflects on gender challenges and opportunities in the contemporary academy around the world. The international, real-life examples were fascinating and serve as an inspiring read.”

*–Dr Maryam Aldossari, University of
Edinburgh, UK*

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Elizabeth Hartnell-Young has designed many leadership programs for women and is the co-author of *Digital Portfolios: Powerful Tools for Promoting Professional Growth and Reflection* (Corwin Press, 2007). She has written numerous journal articles on portfolios and technology for learning. In 2017, she co-founded Honour a Woman (www.honourawoman.com).

Jane den Hollander AO was the Vice-Chancellor of Deakin University from 2010 until retirement in July 2019 and the Interim Vice-Chancellor of the University of Western

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Emily Yarrow is a Lecturer in International Human Resource Management at Portsmouth Business School. Emily's research focuses on the impact of research evaluation on female academics' careers, gendered networks, and inequality regimes. Her work contributes to understandings of gendered organizational behavior and women's lived experiences of organizational life.

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PREFACE

I am a first-generation university graduate. My mother made sure my application to Wits in Johannesburg was correct and sent. I got a place and left a small mining town for a new life and a new world. I am what I am because of her determination that her three daughters would have better opportunities than she ever did. Many women in academia are just like me, standing on the shoulders of our mothers and grandmothers, who got us through school and to the door of a university somewhere in our world. *Women Thriving in Academia* is about the journey and experience after stepping through the door, with hope and optimism, to join the global academy.

The joy of this collection is the personal truth telling of the authors, all different, most experiences are instantly recognizable and unsurprising to most of us. Progress has been made and we celebrate that progress, but here is the testament to the glacial pace of change in the deeper parts of our global academy, especially to the upper echelons of the ivory towers.

This collection is in two sections:

Part One has a range of ruthlessly truthful Personal Reflections from women across our global community – Singapore, United Kingdom, Hong Kong, South Africa, and Australia – describing their journeys through and up the system as academic staff. The issues raised in this section include

PhD topic selection and supervisor support as well promotion strategies and, for many, especially women of color, having to repeatedly explain and justify their right to be present and to be heard.

Part Two is focused on Support Structures and Strategies and due mention is given to Athena SWAN and the progress that has been enabled under its umbrella. The focus on the nexus of equity and excellence – they are not mutually exclusive and indeed the evidence is that equitable practice begets excellence – who knew? All the essentials – how to cope with patronization, exclusion and belonging; how to gain sponsorship; and how to connect with good interested mentors – are discussed coherently and sensibly.

These chapters were written on the eve of the COVID-19 pandemic. We must take care that women in academia do not pay a higher price than our men as we progress back to normality – there is danger that much of the progress of past decades could be undone. Insecurity is a theme through the collection, and the pandemic will add a layer of intensity for the next period, probably for some years. Casualization is a current and increasing threat. Reduced funding for research in Australia and most other countries means many will lose early career positions and will have nascent research careers stalled and, in many cases, ended. We must pay attention, find solutions, look for strategies, learn from the experiences we have here, and speak up so that the other side of this pandemic sees women still thriving and surviving.

This book is a good read, relevant, personal, and optimistic. Marian Mahat deserves special mention, and congratulations to the authors who have contributed their experiences and views at this critical time in our history. I commend all women who have ambition for their futures to take note.

Thriving in academia matters – perhaps more now than it ever has as our daughters and granddaughters take their tentative steps to the door of a career and life in a university somewhere. We must not let them down.

Dr Jane den Hollander AO

Hon Doc (Deakin), PhD (Wales), MSc/BSc Hons (Wits)

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For the women contributors in this book. My understanding of thriving in academia has benefitted from a wide network of voices from around the world. Thank you.

For our families who have stood behind us cheering on every deadline, every late night, and every time away from home, so that we can continue to thrive. Thank you.

For the two women in my life – my mum who inspires me to thrive regardless of what life throws at me and my daughter who moves me to thrive not only as a mum and as an academic but also as a person. Thank you.

Marian Mahat