Dr. Abigail Locke

**What is your current position?**

Reader in Applied Social Psychology, University of Huddersfield.

**Could you say a bit about your career trajectory so far? How did you get to be where you are today?**

Through very hard work! I got my PhD in 2001 from Loughborough and then held Lectureships at Coventry, Derby and Loughborough until getting to Huddersfield in 2008. I was initially a Principal Lecturer and then moved to Readership in 2010. I’ve also been a Visiting Professor in Social and Health Psychology at the University of Derby since July 2013. Currently, as well as my Readership, I am the institutional Athena SWAN champion at Huddersfield. I’m also the Chair of the British Psychological Society’s Social Psychology Section.

Throughout my PhD, I was also a University Teacher and so when I got my first full-time lectureship, I felt very experienced on the teaching and assessment angles, and was able to pursue my own research.

**When did you decide to be an academic? What was it that prompted this decision?**

I’m not altogether sure that I did! When I graduated from my Psychology degree, I wanted to be an educational psychologist so I spent a year or two gaining experience and then did a PGCE. However, I also knew at this point that teaching wasn’t going to be enough for me and I needed to be a researcher. Academia is the perfect job as you combine teaching and research. The topics have emerged as I’ve gone through my career. I’ve been working on parenting since 2005, just after I became a parent. As an academic, I notice things, and I saw my friends become parents and then it was my experience of negotiating the route to becoming a parent that sparked it all off. But I’ve always been into method too and was part of DARG (Discourse and Rhetoric Group) at Loughborough both for my PhD and then in my lectureship some years later.

**What have been the challenges so far in your career in academia?**

Combining work with parenting. Ill-health. The old boy’s network (yes it’s real!) and politics. But I’ve always managed to steer a way through it all. A quote I heard when I was a kid has always stayed with me. Apologies I can’t remember the author, but it says: “No bird soars too high if it soars with its own wings”.

**What advice would/do you give to other female academics?**

1. Don’t give up. I’ve always seen favoritism and a certain provincial attitude at institutions and whilst it’s hard, you have to rise above it and not let it get you down.
2. Never lose your integrity. It’s tempting to join the game being played but I would suggest that you always keep check on your own values as an academic, and keep to your own path.
3. Get a good, strong mentor. I mentor a lot of academics at Huddersfield and elsewhere, mostly early career researchers, but I also had a strong team of postgraduate students who I give informal mentorship too, as part of their supervision. I never received this guidance through my studies but having a mentor and critical friend is so valuable. I’ve set up a mentoring programme at Huddersfield to make sure that ECRs receive mentoring through the early stages and I give career advice to young women academics.