

Prof. Karen Douglas

What is your current position?

Professor of Social Psychology at the University of Kent

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

I completed my PhD in social psychology at the Australian National University in 2000 and worked briefly as a postdoctoral fellow at Massey University in New Zealand. I then moved to Keele University in 2001 where I was appointed as a lecturer. I then moved to the University of Kent as a lecturer in 2005. I was promoted to senior lecturer in 2007, reader in 2010 and professor in 2014.

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

After my degree, I decided that I wanted to pursue a PhD. I worked for a while outside academia to make sure, and then I started applying for a place and a scholarship and was successful. What really prompted me to be an academic was just a general love of learning and psychology, and enjoyment of being at university.

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

My husband is also a psychology professor and we have progressed in our careers together. However, one major challenge for us was to find work at the same time in the same place. We've been very lucky in this respect. I find that time-management is a big challenge for me. I also have two children and find that juggling a career and family life can be tricky. I also think that the job of the academic has become more difficult in recent years. There are so many more demands on our time (i.e., to teach more, do more administrative work, publish more, get more grant money) and the pressure is ever increasing.

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

Say 'no' sometimes. Often I see women asked to undertake the most time-consuming and least rewarding teaching and administrative positions whereas men tend to be chosen (or put themselves forward) for the more prestigious positions that facilitate their chances of promotion. However, it is possible to say 'no' and to ask for a better alternative. Also, take advantage of mentoring schemes and make sure that you make adequate time in your schedule for research. Also, if you feel like you are ready for promotion, don't delay. Many women seem to hold off until they feel that they are a guaranteed case but men tend not to have the same reservations. Most of all though, enjoy what you do!