

Chapter 11. Carving Out Pathways: Dear Doctor Gender & Sexuality Researcher

Tiffany Jones – Department of Educational Studies, Macquarie University, Australia.

Raewyn Connell – School of Sociology, University of Sydney, Australia.

Anne Mitchell – Australian Research Centre in Sex Health and Society, La Trobe University, Australia.

Victor Minichiello – School of Education, University of New England, Australia.

Carolyn D-Cruz – Gender Studies, La Trobe University, Australia.

Kerry Robinson – School of Social Sciences and Psychology, University of Western Sydney, Australia.

Yvette Taylor – School of Education, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, United Kingdom

Abstract

This chapter is about carving out a pathway in academia or related gender and sexuality (G&S) careers. A panel of academic experts on G&S – including Professor Emeriti and Associate Professors with highly successful careers – answer eight questions about career pathways in research and education. All experts have held or hold academic roles in research-only institutions and teaching faculty roles, professional research roles, related professional/ corporate/ government roles, and engaged in both theoretical and empirical studies. All questions were submitted by emerging and student researchers, and workers in sexuality and gender in education, from various countries around the world.

Key words

Career, Advice, Pathways, Planning, Options

Introduction

The new millennium has proven to be a complex time to start studying gender and sexuality (G&S) issues, especially in education, given the expansion of both protective policies around gender and sexual diversity and work, and policies against it in certain contexts. In this new era of backlash against work in G&S research, extremist opponents of the field have sometimes attacked researchers using their online social media profiles as sources for personal information about them, created challenges to their employment opportunities or tried to use complaints to human research ethics committees as a tactic to deter the production of research for example (1). Many G&S researchers have questions about their work in this fraught context, however they do not have access to somebody who can answer their questions, and instead a common trend is that early career researchers and students approaching academics outside of gender and sexualities are told by them to avoid this field of study altogether and that finding work in it is impossible. This is simply not the case; evidenced in the strong careers of a range of prominent Professors and Readers in the field.

In this chapter a panel of academic experts on G&S – including Professor Emeriti, Professors and Associate Professors with highly successful careers – answer key written-in questions about G&S careers in research and education. The experts have held or hold academic roles in research-only institutions and teaching faculty roles, professional research

roles, related professional/ corporate/ government roles, and engaged in both theoretical and empirical studies. The experts answer eight questions. The questions were submitted by early career and student researchers and workers in sexuality and gender in education. The questioners use pseudonyms they have directly negotiated with the editor. Experts were advised to try for around 100-200 words or so per answer, or use variable amounts depending on the question so that their overall contribution was around 700-1000 words or so. The eight questions follow, with responses from several experts on their varying topics: considering online profiles, changing career directions, gaining employment, collaboration, handling complaints, teaching, dealing with media and career travel.

Questions & Answers:

Q.1 PROFILE PREFERENCES

Dear Doctor,

Do you keep an online presence (e.g. social media, academic webpage or blog) given you work in gender & sexuality? Why or why not?

Curious, Kenya.

Dear Curious, I have always thought it was the responsibility of intellectual workers to share what they know, as widely as possible. That sounds a bit pompous, but it is important. Organised knowledge is a great social asset, but depends on communication. I'm appalled at the attempts to conceal knowledge behind walls, whether the walling-off is done by security police or profit-making corporations. Therefore, I've always tried to spread the good word, by writing for newspapers (when they were still a real forum) and magazines, speaking on radio, giving talks at union meetings and public forums, and so forth. The Web seemed to me another way to do this, and of course it has become increasingly important. I don't have Web skills (that's generational I'm afraid) so I asked younger colleagues for help. Together we designed and set up my website, www.raewynconnell.net, and then my Twitter account @raewynconnell. I use both to circulate texts, announcements, and information of other kinds, including passing on information I get from other people - the Web at work... I would like to be more systematic about it, the website especially, as I'm sure it can be improved. But of course, that competes with other work such as writing papers and books. When they are working well, the social media combine with print and other online media. My aim is to create a resource that's open to all and that people will feel comfortable about using. I am particularly proud of the downloadable booklet *Writing for Research* which is available free on my website at <http://www.raewynconnell.net/> (2) - Dr Connell.

Dear Curious, Yes, I do. Here is my online website: <http://victorminichiello.com.au/>. It clearly states that sexual health is one of my areas of research expertise, and throughout the site, you can find Information about studies on sexualities across the lifespan. Why is this important? The topic of gender and sexualities is of critical relevance and interest to all sort of people and organisations in our contemporary society. Policy makers, service providers, the media, academia, for example, are interested in your knowledge and expertise in this field. I use social media to promote my work. One of my academic career goals and personal belief is that through research you can inform and change public opinion and attitudes (see recent opinions poll on same sex marriage in Australia, for example). Without a doubt, research has made a difference in reducing the stigma around gender and sexualities (3). Technology also offers us the opportunity to be creative in how we disseminate our research beyond the academic or research audiences. Using Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn allows us to reach larger audiences for our work. For example, to further promote the decriminalisation of sex work and empower male escorts to access information relevant to their work, we created a blog on male escorting (4). This website received positive and mainstream media coverage, see article published in The Huffington Post, ‘New website wants to make the world a better place for male sex workers’ (5). As did our book about male sex work (6), see *The Sydney Morning Herald’s* ‘World of male sex workers explored in new book’ (7). One of our blogs was viewed by over 25,000 potential readers. Like all things, it is never that easy. There were technical difficulties that had to be overcome. Like getting advice on how to comply with University policy requirements on the use of censored words or content (male escorting, prostitution), or servers, like Telstra, that block content material related to using certain sex words, images and so on. The important lesson here is to be true to your beliefs! – Dr Minichiello.

Dear Curious, Having grown up doing my assignments on typewriters, I’m afraid I have been a little slow on maximising the benefits of the digital age for work and research. I do have an online presence and would encourage curious folk like yourself to develop your profile as you go. I wish I was disciplined enough to keep a blog, as it is a good way of keeping your thoughts on the page and showing the world how you organise your work. You can also create a following, which is handy for showing prospective employers and publishing agents your currency (if that is something you want to do). Academia.edu can work like an online CV and people do find you—bundles of work on G&S come through and you can form great networks from this. Twitter is a great platform for standing on your soapbox and saying what you think. It is also good practice for learning to speak in sound bites. G&S tweeters can get trolled, so beware and grow a thick skin. Tweeters need to also beware that universities have been known to discipline and sack academics who have allegedly damaged the workplace brand by using expletives or displaying contentious political allegiances. For G&S scholars, whose personal lives are entangled in their professional and political lives, navigating the public/private divide in social media is a minefield. While many of us think of Facebook as a more personal and social platform, there was a very public case in 2016, where a university staff member was suspended from her job for posting a remark about wanting to raise the red flag on top of the state of Victoria’s parliament (8, 9). Keeping that lengthy saga aside, the take home lesson is that social posts can easily find themselves in the public domain of culture wars. That ghastly incident,

however, has not stopped most of us from using Facebook as a platform for airing personal and political ‘rants’ about G&S issues to our virtual community of friends. The informal online presence of Facebook has the liberating effect of testing one’s hypotheses with friends before formalising thoughts in publications. So, dear curious, be cautious but not censorious of the slippage between the private, social, professional and public worlds that collide in virtual space as you navigate your online presence. My advice is to learn how to sharpen distinctions between the private and public, social and virtual, rather than collapse them into one another. – Dr Cruz.

Dear Curious, I separate my online profiles for ‘Dr Jones the researcher’ from the offline realities of ‘myself the private individual’. I work in highly contested international policy issues for LGBTI students: people can have extreme emotions for or against *the topic* easily confused for feelings for or against *me*. It may be useful for you too to carefully plan an online profile when working in a context like Kenya which can have strong social backlash for particular topics (like LGBTI themes); enhancing your employability and safety in such contexts. It is doubly a protective strategy during periods when our fields cyclically attract media beat-ups, discriminatory backlash, and internet stalking from extremist fans or trolling from opponents – this can happen anywhere in the world. I find professional pages which afford strong content control and security provisions most useful for the particular style of career I have: university profile pages, academic profile pages (e.g. academia.edu) or securely monitored websites with disabled comment sections. I use my public internet presence only as a CV or for work purposes; keeping offline anything excluded from CVs (private photos, social connections, weekend activities). My sites don’t afford a relationship with me, just with my work. – Dr. Jones.

Dear Curious, I now mostly use my institutional profile, updating and linking to twitter and blog postings etc. But if and when you move institutions be mindful of the work needed to transfer or re-enter this information – this can be quite time-consuming and it might be that you keep this information ‘banked’ in another website too. In a previous institution I had a Centre website that became very busy with bios, blogs, visiting fellow, seminar series, community info etc. – it took an enormous amount of work to sustain this. Now I try to be (more) mindful of this as labour rather than additional or outside of the ‘real work’... The different institutions that I’ve worked for have varied in how much control they give staff to update their personal websites/upload publications etc. It’s always worth seeing what people in and across institutions do in terms of format and content, borrowing or adapting from the best. I think my institutional website ‘outs’ me as a certain kind of academic; this feels important internally and externally where, for example, interviewees and community groups have been able to ‘check out’ my profile in advance of meeting or fieldwork. – Dr. Taylor.

Q.2 CAREER CHANGE

Dear Doctor,

What jobs can I do with my Masters Qualification, which included a project on gender & sexuality in schools?

Master of None, Germany.

Dear Master of None, This depends very much on whether or not you are a qualified teacher and so can work in a school. Any subject area in which you are an expert will benefit from a gender spin but the obvious teaching area would be in health education. If you are not a teacher but have some psychology in your background you would be an asset in the student welfare area. Outside a school it is much harder, there may be some public service roles administering relevant programs in schools but these will be rare. There are also academic jobs in this area but they too are rare and require a PhD. Try and think of the education you have had by doing a Master's degree as preparing you more broadly for jobs outside the content area. G&S intersect with almost any role that involves other human beings and you will always have something really important to offer wherever you work. – Dr. Mitchell.

Dear Master of None, Well it depends on your undergraduate degree. Here are a few ideas. If you are a qualified science teacher, you can now focus on teaching in the social science or social inclusion areas. If you are a family therapist, you can extend your practice to providing counselling services to young LGTBI clients, teachers and parents. Or work as a private consultant offering curriculum advice on the topic of gender, identity and sexualities to educational providers or government social service agencies. There are also a range of organisations that may be interested in employing you as a consultant to support their equity or social inclusion workplace offices. Within the higher education sector, you could be employed as a research fellow or assistant on a funded Australian Research Council or NHRMC project on the topic of gender or sexualities. There could also be casual or part time teaching job opportunities at universities or private colleges that offer units with content on this topic. Of course, pursuing a PhD creates further opportunities for more permanent and full time jobs and a career in academia. – Dr Minichiello.

Dear Master of None, a Masters Qualification enhances your qualifications in the professional field in which you were enrolled; whether in education, psychology or gender studies for example. So, you could have enhanced (any existing) qualifications now in teaching, counselling, gender clinic work or other professions. Gaining a Masters can, depending on your grade point average, also open the doors to further academic studies – PhD programs, PhD scholarships and academic work like research assistance and lecturing could be open to you. There are also plenty of other relevant jobs besides academic work in universities; there are research administration and service roles for example serving higher degree research students or supporting the development of grant applications. There are also professional research roles, government and project management roles which may be of interest. A key point here is to see yourself in terms of having a set of transferable skills:

- learning skills,
 - literature review skills,
 - project management skills,
 - education knowledge,
 - knowledge of G&S,
 - quantitative or qualitative research skills,
 - data management skills,
 - writing/ reporting skills and others...
- ...rather than as being fit for only one job or career. – Dr. Jones.

Dear Master of None, With a Masters that looks at G&S in schools, you can do almost anything! Who does not need to think about how kids are educated about such matters? In fact, we all need lifelong education around this stuff. So be bold and go for anything you want to, making it a selling point that every work place needs to think about how G&S operates in schools. Seriously, workplaces need people like you – make a gift of your work to wherever you think you would like to earn some money. – Dr Cruz.

Q.3 RESUME RESERVATIONS

Dear Doctor,

Should I take the detailed description of my PhD thesis project (a strongly feminist project on sexuality topics) off of my CV...is it scaring employers off?

Dr Unemployed, Israel.

Dear Dr Unemployed, Unfortunately I've heard this question many times – and across the career course too, when academics have been seeking promotion or mobility. I have also been on the 'other side' of defending and arguing for a broader conceptualisation and acknowledgement of the variation in feminism, gender studies, sexuality research, queer theory, as beyond 'niche'. This feels immediately uneasy, of course, but I've also seen staff come round and eventually reconsider their own initial instincts – sometimes we have to explain. The great thing about many feminist projects on sexuality topics is that they're likely to have an interdisciplinary orientation or knowledge base: I'm a Sociologist and have found myself working across disciplinary divides (as well as feeling them poking in my ribs), including in Geography, Social Policy and, most recently in Education. There are ways you can fit, and even extend, disciplines by also attending different inter-disciplinary conferences, showing the breadth of your knowledge and networks. – Dr Taylor.

Dear Dr Unemployed, I might respond immediately with the suggestion that any employer put off by your thesis description isn't worth working for, but that's hardly a practical solution. I think it's fair to say that it is standard practice to put a bit of 'spin' on your CV according to the particular job you are applying for and generally speaking a detailed description of your PhD would not be expected unless it was for an academic job in the area. My advice is to run with the title only and decide at an interview how interested or not prospective employers may be before going into more detail. Once you secure a job your feminist approach and the learnings from your PhD will be of great benefit in any work you do, but employers don't always see that in prospect. – Dr. Mitchell.

Dear Dr Unemployed, You have several options. Firstly, you could work only at organisations that embrace your topic. Secondly, you could remove your thesis topic from your CV and only describe its methods, and then work at a company that doesn't embrace your topic (there's no shame in paying the bills briefly, or long-term). Thirdly, you could use the same approach and work at a company that may or may not support your work; and then experiment with moving more openly into your preferred field over time. Finally, perhaps your thesis project topic was never the problem? It may simply be hard to get work in your current location in Israel... If you suspect this is so you can then focus on otherwise building your CV. For academic work, try increasing your:

- casual teaching experience;
- research assistant experience;
- and publications.

You can also move for work, as I have done several times. Or if you are actually looking for teaching, government or corporate work, try for work experience or casual hours in those areas to expand your opportunities. – Dr Jones.

Dear Dr Unemployed, Heavens, No! Would you want to work for an organisation that was scared off by feminism and people who research sexuality? Having said that, these are desperate times for finding stable work and sometimes we have to earn money any way we can to put food on the table. So, if you know that your admirable politics and exceptional research is going to stop you from getting money when you really need it, curtailing your CV may be the answer. Or, you may want to reword your thesis blurb to make it more digestible to a prospective employer. It would suck to have to remove all traces of your research in your CV, so my advice is to do so only if you need to work for an anti-feminist queer phobic organisation. – Dr Cruz.

Dr Unemployed, No, I would leave it on your CV and perhaps craft your expertise to fit the purpose. CVs are not fixed or static documents. For example, if you are applying for an academic position in gender studies at the University this is critical information as both theory and research experience are essential criteria for employment. If you are applying for a teaching position at a private school, you could craft your expertise to highlight your knowledge about social inclusion laws in the state and how you can contribute to their social science teaching. If you are applying for a government job with their domestic violence

department, you could emphasize your expertise in understanding the social context of domestic violence and gender. I hope you get my point here. It is all about fit for purpose while maintaining the integrity of your knowledge and expertise. – Dr Minichiello.

Q.4 PEOPLE POWER

Dear Doctor,

I'm under pressure from the faculty higher-ups to collaborate with big stars in G&S research: how do I even meet one, let alone convince them to co-write papers and grant applications?

Stands Solo, Norway.

Dear Stands Solo, by 'big stars' your supervisors meant academics who are highly cited, frequently funded, policy influencers, publication editors or event organisers. Show them you bring much to collaborations. Strategies include:

- Host an event and apply for internal funding from your organisation to pay for them to give a keynote or talk about their new book at your workplace, so that you offer opportunities for them too before expecting any back.
- Draft some ideas first. If potential collaborators can see you are already hard-working and full of plans and new concepts, they will consider collaboration more valuable.
- Invite them to collaborate on a publication on which you have already done the initial labour. You will need shared publications before you get shared grants, and you must share first (as they contribute significantly greater track records).

The bigger the star, the more likely they will be to offer management, conceptual, networking and problem-solving aid rather than other contribution types. Therefore, prepare teams combining big stars with earlier career academics, who like yourself, handle other tasks. Long-term, you will considerably benefit from the collaboration; so doing humbler labour in the short-term is often worth it. – Dr Jones.

Dear Stands Solo, There is a saying that goes, 'stretching your hand to reach the stars, you too often forget the flowers at your feet'. Ask yourself first, why? If there is a big star whose research fits well with yours and you think you want to make passionate work together, try emailing them. It is a bit like online dating. They can politely ignore, test the water with a few messages to and fro, and then maybe you meet for a coffee to see if there is a spark. If nothing comes from it, nothing is lost. Meanwhile you will always have many flowers at your feet and there is much to be enjoyed in standing solo. – Dr Cruz

Dear Stands Solo, You will absolutely need to get yourself to some conferences in the area. This is the way most young researchers meet potential collaborators and also identify those whose work is most relevant. If you can get some of your current work accepted for presentation at these conferences then there is a chance one of the ‘stars’ might notice it. Go up to someone whose presentation impresses you and compliment them, also asking for their card. You can then begin an email relationship with them and you are on your way. – Dr Mitchell.

Dear Stands Solo,

I have much sympathy – and scepticism – for the question about ‘big stars’. The ‘big stars’ in academia, as far as I’m concerned, are the people who do the heavy lifting often without recognition. I’ve certainly benefited from low-key everyday generosity: ranging from significant academics writing me letters of references; to kind unknown referees who have fed-back in great detail, recommending sources, offering tips. I think we are ever encouraged to ‘think big’ and ‘reach far’ but sometimes I feel that detracts from closer or more immediate connections and conversations. Which is perhaps to say, think about who you want to be in conversation with, and why? The ‘big star’ might be great at publishing but not so great at reference writing... Do you have a good working relationship already? If not, what might be smaller, longer-term ways to develop a conversation? Seminars and invitations are great starting points. Don’t be afraid to task the ‘big stars’ with work – and work that translates and matters locally – if you do invite them. Think, for example, who might also benefit from emerging connections such as postgraduate and undergraduate students (get them to do a guest lecture for undergraduates, often missed out, I feel, in ‘starry’ moments). And maybe ask your ‘faculty higher ups’ about their connections and how they can extend these more widely to include you and others. You might be interested in a 2018 *Gender and Education* piece that I co-authored with Dr Maddie Breeze, also at Strathclyde, in which we talk about cross-career collaborations: ‘Feminist collaborations in higher education: stretched across career stages’. – Dr Taylor.

Dear Stands Solo, Academia is about being part of a collective community. There are many structural moments to meet your peers and form meaningful collegial partnerships: conferences, meetings at the university, dialogues via social media, email exchanges, joining your professional associations etc. Having said this, some people find it easier to approach people than others. So, you need to develop your own style of how you approach colleagues while always being honest, respectful and realistic in what you are seeking from the relationship. Here are a few things that worked for me. First, I have always worked with peers in my field as opposed to within my University. When I think of who are my current collaborators, the numbers reveal that sometimes these colleagues are employed within my university, but often not. These days there is so much pressure to promote the organisation, locate grants within your university, and champion the flag of your organisation above all else. I understand that game, but who I decide to work with is dictated by the ‘meeting of the mind’ and genuine trust and sense of purpose between myself and the person I write a paper or conduct a piece of research. I give this value high priority. Second, I have used the policy of going to conferences where some of my senior colleagues have presented their work and

then tried to initiate a dialogue with them. Often that is all what occurs. In some situations, the dialogue moves to the development of a friendship or a work partnership on some commonly developed project. Third, in a few cases, I was approached by senior colleagues who took an interest in my work and invited me to join their team. Here I was always aware and respectful that I joined their team and used the opportunity as my lifelong learning journey. I did not engage in the politics of what order my name appeared on the paper or grant. There would be other opportunities to put my name first with the development of my career. These days I seldom put my name first as I have reached the peak of my academic career and do not need or particularly find these aspects of human behaviour all that meaningful or rewarding. I get more satisfaction in the art of mentoring or facilitating the career aspirations of emerging researchers. – Dr Minichiello.

Q.5 CREEPY COMPLAINTS

Dear Doctor,

What do I do if someone makes a formal antagonistic (disingenuous) ethics complaint about my work in G&S research?

Ethically Dubious, Taiwan.

Dear Ethically Dubious, I would write a formal sincere ethical response back. – Dr Cruz

Ethically Dubious, First, do not panic and overreact. It is everyone's right to lodge complaints as per your own information statement to participants. Of course, complaints need to be respectfully and constructively lodged and usually ethics committees understand this basic principles. So placing some trust in the personnel running ethics committee is important to remember, although I appreciate it could be a hard thing to do. Second, the topic of G&S will evoke a wide range of opinions, some complementary and empowering, others damning and moralistic in tone. As long as your research followed the protocol outlined in your approved ethics committee, I would simply acknowledge their concern and provide my justification and rationale for the research, findings or recommendations. Regarding dealing with personally abusive comments, I would seek advice from the ethics committee, equity office or other appropriate justice bodies on how I should respond. – Dr Minichiello.

Dear Ethically Dubious, Thanks for raising this important question. G&S research can be plagued by controversy due to a range of differing values in this area. There are a number of general foundational points pertinent to addressing this question. It is always important to

be prepared and have appropriate research ethical protocols in place. Before beginning to undertake research in this area (or in any research more generally) it is always wise to organise an advisory group who can support the project and researcher(s), including in the development of appropriate ethical protocols, and providing expert advice where necessary, in making important decisions about issues that may arise. Not only is it critical to build ethical research protocols to protect the integrity of the research and the safety and confidentiality of participants, but it is also crucial to develop protocols to protect the safety and wellbeing of researchers. It is also judicious to build mutual respect and trust with institutional Human Research Ethics Committees (HREC). Many HRECs often do not have specific expertise in G&S issues, which may result in queries about applications that may best be resolved through talking directly to committee members. Taking the time to attend a meeting or discussing the queries with the chair of the committee can be more effective time-wise and in fostering understandings of the issues in the committee. It is not always a smooth process and sometimes involves compromises, however it is worth the time and effort committed to this process. Having these foundations in place gives researchers more confidence in addressing complaints if/when they arise. In terms of this specific question, the initial step would be to reflect on and be reflexive about the nature of the complaint, making sure that the research protocols were followed appropriately by all those involved in the research. Including the advisory group in this process is critical. Speaking with the chair of the HREC, providing the researcher version of the event/situation and to get advice about options from the committee's perspective is the next significant step. Working with the chair / HREC committee to resolve the issue is essential. The researcher/s will require professional and personal support to work it through. -Dr Robinson.

Dear Ethically Dubious, If there is a complaint made in an academic institution it will be handled by the ethics committee and resolved by them, so the onus is not on you to deal with it. If you have had ethics approval for your work (which you must have of course) and if you have stuck to what the committee has agreed that you can do then you should not have a problem. The committee must defend their original decision and support you. Nevertheless it's a distressing eventuality and you need support ideally from those that supervise you. Go to them immediately and put your side of the case with as much evidence as you can muster. They should support you. It can be a controversial area to work in and so taking care to work within your ethics approval and document that you have done so is the best way to be confident complaints won't stick. – Dr Mitchell.

Q.6 TEACHING TARGET

Dear Doctor,

I want to introduce G&S topics into my teaching course... do I need to negotiate that with my boss or can I just do it?

Excited, Ireland.

Excited, If you are teaching a subject on sexuality, sexual health or gender studies it is only expected that the content will cover the topic of sex related material. I personally would not seek approval from my supervisor as this goes against the principle of academic freedom and what is allowed in a democracy. It is that simple. If I am teaching a subject on population ageing and I wanted to include content on G&S, that might not be seen to be obvious to others, I would discuss it with my team colleagues who teach in the course. I recall using a conference to discuss the relevance of teaching homophobia in gerontology courses in the 1980s when people held different views about same sex relationship rights as today. It was a good forum to open up the dialogue and seek peer and discipline support from gerontologists for my ideas. – Dr Minichiello.

Dear Excited,

Great to hear this! I've been in the lucky position of carving out new Masters programmes in Gender Studies across different institutional contexts and what's been useful is to construct a bit of a 'business case' to address any doubts upfront. For me, this has included information on the popularity of G&S courses, and teaching content, as well as taking a broader look around other institutions at what courses, and degrees, they are providing – you might call this 'market research'. Different institutions differ, of course, and subjects fall in and out of academic fashions but you may be able to link such provisioning to Equality and Diversity directives; in the UK context in which I work this includes the Athena Swan Award. Whatever we might think of such directives, they can afford us space to make claims on what we could and should be teaching as part of a diverse curriculum. I set up the Strathclyde Feminist Research Network using this exact logic, and I then argued for financial resources to support this, also now attracting and sustaining undergraduate and postgraduate teaching presences. Here's the website if of interest: <http://sufeministnetwork.blogspot.com/p/front-page.html>. – Dr Taylor.

Dear Excited, This depends largely on your institutional context in your organisation in Ireland, so I would run it by a direct supervisor. I recommend you carefully prepare your case first by researching how the work would tie in to the established education policies, institutional policies, program outline and curricula for your teaching course. There may be local G&S education and research networks and bodies who can help you make those links or provide other resources (in Ireland, this can include organisations like the National Women's Council of Ireland, BelongTo, Transgender Equality Network Ireland and others). There will also potentially be regional and global resources (from the EU, UN and UNESCO for example). If you can find legitimacy for this work in these national, regional or international resources then your supervisor is much more likely to feel comfortable supporting the idea. – Dr Jones.

Dear Excited, Whether you teach in a school or a University there will be an approved curriculum for the course and you need to stay within the broad edges of its prescription. If

you need to alter the curriculum then you will need your boss's support and it might be a long process. However, many curricula have areas where these topics might constitute a legitimate inclusion. Terms such as 'social factors', 'diversity' and 'personal decision making' are examples of the kind of gateways in which could legitimately allow you to get into this territory and justify your decision to do so. You are probably the best judge of whether this is likely to cause trouble and, if you feel that it may, then bite the bullet and negotiate before you teach. It might save you some heartache in the future. – Dr Mitchell.

Dear Excited, Just. Do. It. (but make sure you comply with all legal and workplace policies first). – Dr Cruz.

Q.7 MEDIA MESS

Dear Doctor,

How do I know whether a reporter or media outlet (proposing to interview me on G&S topics) genuinely supports my work or is setting me up for negative press?

Smelling the Covfefe, USA.

Dear Smelling the Covfefe, With media there are never any guarantees and if you want media publicity for your work (and that can be a really good thing) you always take some risks. Never get lured into an interview with a journalist when they ring you. Say you are busy and will ring back in half an hour. Then get on Google and do your homework. It should be easy to find some of their previous work and see who is publishing or using it. The second indication as to where they stand is the nature of the questions they ask. These will give you a very clear idea of where the interview is going and what 'spin' is being put on it. If you don't feel comfortable with the questions end the interview at once and request that none of the material you have given the journalist be used. If you can put this request in an email then do that too. The first encounter with the media might be scary but developing a partnership with journalists who support you will really help in getting your work known and used. – Dr Mitchell.

Dear Smelling the Covfefe, There are always risks when dealing with the media on any topic. Ask any politician or person who believes they have been misquoted... I am reading Hillary Clinton's book, *What Happened* (10), and she has a lot to say about the media. There are some safeguards that I use as part of my practice with the media. First, do some research on the journalist, reporter and/or media outlet that is contacting you. This will give you clues on what they have written or published in the past on the topic or related

topics. Second, try to strike a deal that in exchange for doing the interview you would like to see the draft story. Remember you cannot censor what is written but you can engage in a dialogue if there are serious errors that need correcting. Third, if appropriate and acceptable to all parties, ask that the interview or conversation be taped so that officially there is a record that parties can turn to if a dispute occurs. Fourth, keep your message simple and to the point. Usually the media focuses on two or three points to a story. Set your story points and stick to them. Fifth, you are an educator, so do a training program on working with the media if you lack skills in this area. Finally, ultimately it is your decision if you want to make a comment to the media or be interviewed. If you do not feel comfortable, don't do it. For good tips about how to prepare for the media, see the Brain Awareness Week online guide (11). – Dr Minichiello.

Dear Smelling the Covfefe, If they are working for a shock jock, it's always a set up. Otherwise, ask them a few preliminary questions to test the water. You'll know within a minute whether they genuinely want to learn about your work or want to lift their ratings through ridiculing the G&S scholar. – Dr Cruz

Dear Smelling the Covfefe, some types of media are reliable and some are fickle – attacking research for the purposes of creating scandals growing their readerships. Researchers and workers in G&S globally – especially in education – have been strategically attacked by extremist conservative media as Marxists, biased pro-LGBT feminists or paedophilia pushers (12). This is also true in your context in the USA, where evangelical and alt-right media backlash are significant. Whilst hack journalists can intentionally misinterpret your work even without your aid, it is helpful to not feed their efforts:

- Ensure YOU decide when you talk to the media, not the reverse. Issue press releases only when you launch reports or programs, with pre-determined accurate quotes; avoid unsolicited press engagements on random issues.
- Resist commenting on data you yourself have not directly collected or explored; and then discuss only that which you explored (to maintain 'expert' legitimacy, prevent inaccuracies and prevent falsely decrying others in your field).
- Disengage from media during periods of backlash against G&S work; starving those who do not genuinely engage with the research itself of the legitimacy your involvement offers – show to engage with you, is to engage with research.
- Avoid media and journalists previously attacking your field without basis, those linked to extremist groups or corrupt governments, and radio shock jocks. Get familiar over time with the media you may work with, and the individual journalists and their level of ability to engage with research objectively and accurately.
- Engage lawyers over legal breeches. – Dr Jones.

Dear Smelling the Covfefe,

I think pausing and taking stock is good advice here – especially in the context of social media presences urging us to go faster and be ever-visible, sometimes

sitting with the contradictory fact that findings can take a long time to find! Research findings are also complex and messy and can be resistant to neat one-liners. I've spent several hours talking to journalists who've used such brief snippets of what I've said and/or not included anything, which seems like unpaid labour, so be cautious about the terms of the conversation and what it might become or appear as. Remember too that there are different types of media outlets and you might find it more productive to engage with, for example, LGBTQ+ media than mainstream media. – Dr Taylor.

Q.8 WORLDLY WAGE-EARNER

Dear Doctor,

Which countries are best for working in G&S issues?

Will Travel4Work, Nepal.

Dear Will Travel4Work, Any country needs people to work in G&S issues in education and research. However local nuances (like variable legislative and policy protections for the work, cultural factors and the availability of direct vs. indirect roles in the area) mean the work done in one country or region can be quite different to the work done in others (1, 13, 14). The best contexts for you include those where you have or can access the appropriate work permits and language proficiency/ies; and those where you can achieve the sorts of contributions you would prefer to make... you can achieve a very open contribution in places like Canada, Sweden, Norway, New Zealand, the Netherlands or Finland which are generally quite supportive of G&S diversity in education. However perhaps the issues there will differ to those in some other nations where you may initially work more covertly or under enabling organisations, and you may feel more necessary to the work of some nations where less is currently being done in your field. It is easy to be captured by the melancholia of working in contested landscapes, forgetting that great creative diamonds can be forged given some pressure and purposefulness. Projects in Africa, Asia and the Pacific enriched my work with troves of G&S concepts that differed from European and American ideas. There is also work with civil society and rights organisations at the international, regional, national and state levels too. Weigh all possibilities by the ideals you most value: safety, ease, money, job security, challenge, the problems you hope to work on most, your own relative competitiveness by country, new networks and ideas or familiar ones? The question has no right answer; just a best answer for you personally. – Dr Jones.

Conclusion

The questions proffered to our expert panel suggested that key anxieties for those starting out might include the extent to which the internet can expand or restrict one's opportunities, the vast range of employment opportunities available and how to navigate and succeed in

employment, how to create noteworthy collaborations, ethical concerns in research and teaching, dealing with media and geography. The expert panel recommended a range of strategies for dealing with common academic problems in careers around G&S. Sometimes our Doctors showed evidence of taking quite different approaches, based on their contexts, experiences and personalities. Advice is not given in a vacuum, and so neither should it be received in one. The answers should be read in combination with understanding the way local issues may complicate their application in any given context. This range of answers shows early career researchers and students the importance of both seeking multiple sources of advice when making a key decision, and also of then assessing that advice according to which piece best addresses one's primary concerns, context or location, topic area and personality traits. Ultimately, the path to becoming a master or doctor of philosophy, is to get lots of second (third, fourth etc.) opinions but to make the final prescription of the proverbial medicine for one's own career.

References

1. Jones T. Researching & Working for Transgender Youth: Contexts, Problems and Solutions. *Social Sciences*. 2016;5(3).
2. Connell RW. Raewyn Connell Website 2018. Available from: <http://www.raewynconnell.net/>.
3. Minichiello V, Scott J, Cox C. Reversing the agenda of sex work stigmatisation and criminalization: signs of a progressive society. *Sexualities*. 2017;21(5-6):730-5. doi: 10.1.1177/1363460716684510.
4. Minichiello V, Scott J. Me, Us and Male Escorting. 2014 4.3.17. Available from: <https://research.qut.edu.au/aboutmaleescorting/about/>.
5. Nichols J. New website wants to make the world a better place for male sex workers. *Huffington Post*, [Internet]. 2016 4.3.18. Available from: https://www.huffingtonpost.com.au/entry/male-sex-work-website_us_57978d13e4b01180b5305087.
6. Minichiello V, Scott J. *Male sex work and society*. New York: Harrington Park Press/ Columbia University Press; 2014.
7. Power L. World of male sex workers explored in new book. *The Sydney Morning Herald*. 2014. Epub 18.11.14.
8. Law B. Moral Panic 101: Equality, Acceptance and the Safe Schools Scandal. *Quarterly Essay*. 2017;1(67):1-19.
9. Stark J. Exclusive: Safe Schools head Roz Ward speaks. *The Age*. 2016 05.11.16.
10. Clinton H. *What happened*. London: Simon & Schuster; 2017.
11. Brain Awareness Week. Tips for media interviews 2018 4.3.18. Available from: https://www.sfn.org/~media/SfN/Documents/Public%20Outreach/baw_General_Techniques_for_Media_Interviews.ashx.
12. Jones T. Trump, Trans Students and Trans-national education polity. *Sex Education*. 2017;18(4):1-16.
13. UNESCO. *Reaching Out vol 1: Preventing and Addressing School-related Gender-based Violence in Viet Nam*. Paris Ha Noi and Bangkok: UNESCO; 2016.
14. UNESCO. *Reaching Out vol 2: Preventing and Addressing SOGIE-related School Violence in Viet Nam*. Paris Ha Noi and Bangkok: UNESCO; 2016.