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## Memoirs and Manifestos for Early Career Researchers in Gender and Sexuality Education Research

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## Introduction

Constitutions of gender and sexuality (G&S) studies in education and research as ‘risky’, ‘difficult’ and ‘dangerous’ are pervasive and enduring [1–7]. A number of established scholars have outlined the negative repercussions of these labels and engaged in persistent efforts to deconstruct this labelling [8–10]. Contributions such as these have engaged with and interrogated the discursive and material constraints which are often idiosyncratic to G&S educational research [2, 11], including institutional forms of risk management and ethical obstacles to getting research off the ground [12, 13]; the methodological politics of researching G&S in schools [14, 15]; and the precarious nature of doing G&S differently in education [16, 17].

The negative impact that this ‘difficult terrain’ can have on career development, identities and practices in academia is well documented [2, 7, 18–22]. This body of literature includes stories of isolation and the emotional labour of navigating the denial of and assault on one’s work [23–26]. Most recently, Professor Jessica Ringrose [27] shares her experiences of being trolled and lambasted online for her research on young people’s experience of gender diversity and the forms of public pedagogies that are central to becoming a feminist academic. Ringrose issues an important reminder that the ‘dynamics of mediated misogyny, racism and hate also travel back in and through our teaching and learning as feminists in the material spaces of work and home’ (654). Scholars have also offered strategies of resistance and have alerted early career researchers to various challenges so that they may prepare for them [28–32]. While these stories depict a troubling and difficult terrain, there remains a certain determinacy and vibrancy from scholars to keep G&S firmly on educational

and research agendas. As Allen and colleagues [2] suggest ‘the regulatory effects of school-based sexualities research may be stifling, but they are hard pressed to extinguish creativity in this field’ [33].

Our experiences as early career academics and co-conveners of the Gender, Sexualities and Cultural Studies Special Interest Group (GS & CS SIG) of the Australian Association for Research in Education (AARE) form the impetus for this chapter. Co-convening the SIG together has offered us invaluable opportunities to work with scholars (both early and established) whose work we admire, and to discuss, debate and reflect on career trajectories in the area of G&S educational research. Above all, we would agree that our relationship as co-conveners has been a necessary opening in our academic journeys. Our engagements as collaborators, colleagues, confidants and friends have been significant sources of support, patience and kindness as we navigate our professional identities within and beyond the university.

In 2017, with the support of funding from the AARE, we organised a one-day GS & CS SIG mini summer school event in Canberra. The focus of the event was capacity building and support for professionals/academics, at various stages of their career trajectories, in the fields of gender, sexualities and cultural studies in education. Through workshops and panel discussions we aimed to provide strategies to enable SIG members to respond critically, creatively and constructively to the demands and requirements of academia. This included workshops and panels on developing partnerships with relevant community members and organisations to reconsider the role of impact and engagement; grant and funding pathways and writing successful grant pitches. One of the most interesting, inspiring and useful aspects of the day was a session in which established academics shared their ‘tips and tricks’ for early career researchers. The sharing of experiences, navigating political and contextual circumstances, personal and professional challenges and strategies for overcoming obstacles were valuable aspects of the day for all. Hence, the inspiration for this chapter.

Despite the volume of research devoted to the many ills that beset the field, insufficient attention has been given to stories of success and appreciative forms of inquiry [34, 35]. In response, this chapter offers a collection of career memoirs and manifestos written by established G&S scholars for early career researchers. These memoirs and manifestos highlight some

of the creative strategies, defining moments, inspirations, unique turning points and positive stories that have kept this necessary research in motion. Part of the function of this chapter, then, is to look beyond what is broken and to diversify the stories we hear about academic lives in G&S studies in research and education. We hope by shifting the focus towards a 'queer thrival' we might captivate readers to consider the possibilities of what might be [36].

As will be seen from the range of contributions in this chapter, we have given creative license to established scholars in how they interpret our call for 'memoirs and manifestos'. We have been overwhelmed by the positive response and generosity of each of our contributors. The task of sharing 'memoirs and manifestos' seemed to resonate. As the contributions started coming in, we were heartened by how differently the invitation was taken up. Scholars described how their lives exceed the very discourses that tried to contain them. They wrote about how their experiences of encountering complexities and uncertainties provided openings for what their research might be/become. They focused on the textures of the everyday, material and familiar, suggesting that in uncertainty there is room to manoeuvre and act.

They made explicit the relationships and bonds that often go unseen; the important intimacies of the communities, communications and practices in which their academic work is embedded and enmeshed. Accounts were shared from scholars who have had, at one point and possibly many points, to rethink everything but who have nonetheless persisted. A shared feeling that something was amiss in how their work was recognised and feelings that their way of being/becoming academic was at odds with dominant discourses of risk, danger and difficulty. They shared candidly the strategic forms of visibility and care that they engaged in for professional (and personal) survival. Some also shared and recognised the failures of their own practices, and the productive potential of the ambivalence, contradiction and perpetual displacement that their work entailed.

Collectively these contributions blur the lines between the personal and the professional through recounted moments of success, frustration, disturbance, tragedy and triumph. A call for early career scholars to value the everyday encounters with colleagues, research participants, community members, young people and students as potential points of 'queer thrival'

[36]. These memoirs and manifestos raise interesting broader questions about what activism, engagement and community means for this important field of research and education. Most interestingly, a question of what to learn from these experiences provides an opportunity for early career academics to consider their own pathway through G&S related studies in education.

## **Memoirs and Manifestos**

We present the contributions below in no particular order. We anticipate that this collection will inspire different ways of being, becoming and encountering. We hope the stories shared provoke early career academics to consider the critical and creative capacities of established scholars who have carved possibilities for future inquiry in the field.

### **PROFESSOR JESSICA FIELDS, San Francisco State University, San Francisco, USA**

As part of my dissertation research, I observed a semester's worth of sex education classes at Southern Middle School. I sat at the back of the classroom near a white, big-boned, sixth-grade girl I call "Cassie." In my last week of fieldwork, Cassie stopped me as I walked into class to ask to speak to me in the hallway. Once the hallway was quiet, Cassie explained some grade-six girls were making fun of her body and clothes and shunning her. She and I brainstormed some resources at school, and I talked briefly about my girlhood experiences of conflict. After a few minutes, Cassie turned to enter the classroom. The room erupted: "Surprise!" Charged with keeping me out of the room so the class could finish decorating for a surprise party in my honour, this grade-six girl told me a story of suffering in mean girl culture. She rightly trusted I would be transfixed.

Another afternoon, I met Tammy Reynolds, a white conservative Christian mother, at her single-family Southern County home on a cul de sac littered with bicycles, balls, and other children's toys. Once we were seated with glasses of lemonade, Reynolds and I began talking about abstinence-

only education. She alluded to a group of young people destined to irresponsible, promiscuous sexual behaviour. “They’re gonna do it no matter what you tell ‘em. And that’s true. I mean, you know those kids. I know those kids.” In a racialised setting like Southern County, “those kids” are usually understood to be low-income and African American. Middle-class whiteness allowed Reynolds to trust that she and I could talk easily about the sexual fates of “those kids.”

We learn as qualitative researchers to connect with our participants, to become trustworthy in their eyes, to lay the ground for them to share intimate stories with us. I learned in these exchanges that I could not establish rapport without also engaging feminist fantasies of connection, categories of difference, and racialised inequalities. The stories of adolescent girls’ struggles that compelled my research became the grounds of connection. My analysis may have focused on racialised discourses of youth and sexuality, but in the field my whiteness suggested I would be a sympathetic ear for racist and classist ideas. The troubling experiences of the world that I wanted most to challenge also eased my efforts toward rapport.

### **PROFESSOR KERRY ROBINSON, University of Western Sydney, Sydney, Australia**

It was never really my intention to become an academic. In fact, it feels a bit like I fell into this position out of a passion for social justice and for doing research that had equity at its core. As a secondary teacher, a crisis worker in a young women’s refuge, and a researcher in schools in an earlier lifetime, I experienced first-hand the social, economic and health and wellbeing impact of systemic and individual discriminatory practices on young people (and adults) who were different, especially in terms of being gender and sexuality diverse.

As an early career academic, I was taken aside by a well-meaning professor who gave me some ‘friendly advice’ informing me that I wouldn’t go anywhere in academia if I focused too much on LGBTQ issues and that it was a career ‘stopper’! I have reflexively considered this advice throughout my career and, ironically, it has been an impetus, among many, to continue working in the field despite the obvious and numerous ups and

downs. Has it been a career stopper? Quite the contrary. I have had a successful academic career, with some recent highlights including: leading a flourishing research team, Sexualities and Genders Research (SaGR), supported by the university; receiving, along with several colleagues, a Vice Chancellor's Research Excellence Award for the 'Growing Up Queer' research; was invited to present on LGBT equity issues to Federal Parliament; advising on LGBT issues as part of the University's Respect Now Always committee; contributed to national inquiries; receiving state and university teaching awards based on addressing difference, homophobia and transphobia; and supervising numerous Higher Degree Research students from around the world who strive to make a difference in their academics careers, addressing social justice issues in the fields of sexuality and gender.

So, as a professor, what 'friendly advice' would I give an early career academic wishing to pursue research in gender and sexuality: follow your passion; seek out mentors throughout your career—choose wisely; and surround yourself with a supportive community of gender and sexuality scholars—for both the good times and the difficult.

### **PROFESSOR JANE KENWAY, Monash University, Melbourne, Australia**

My book shelves are an archive of me. The rows and piles of books are rows and piles of memories. They are the stuff of my lives, my loves, my family. My mother breathed through her books—poetry, literary fiction and criticism, history. She cherished their company and conversed with them in her journals. She often read aloud for she also relished the sound of books—their dialogues, rhythms and tones. As children, we too breathed books. And, as adults, when we wept and packed up our mother's library, we kept what books we could. It felt like keeping her with us—re-animating her through reading.

Parts of her archive are now a part of mine. They have joined my daughter's childhood books, the school and university texts I soaked up and tried to elegantly restate in exams, those captivating paperbacks I took to bed, or the beach, and which I could not relinquish when shifting

homes. Each book offers an intimate memory of a room, a desk, a place, a teacher, a relationship—a moment, a mood. Many remind me of the bookshop they came from and the person who shared, with me, the tactile pleasures of leisurely browsing. As I glance at a cover or reread a paragraph I relive these miniature histories. Then and now are united in a breath of time.

My library is an intellectual as well as an emotional archive. It holds Special Collections dedicated to particular research quests. Each includes the fascinating and infuriating thinkers who helped me to get under the skin of my questions. Each contains books I laboured to understand, those I struggled to put down and those I did not, in the end, decide to read. Each conjures memories of voluptuous conversations amongst different research teams. And the traces of each Collection, can be found in our writing.

But not all my Special Collections revolve around my research. Some consist of books by people who I follow—those whose thinking always seems to oblige me to rearrange my own. Their books invariably enchant, provoke and enliven me. They make me wonder. And then there are my favourite Collections. One consists of all the fiction of Australian novelist Gail Jones. Her exquisite poetic prose and probing intelligence leave me breathless with delight and envy. The other consists of the story-telling and agitating of Arundhati Roy. She stands out because of her fierce and unrelenting opposition to injustice and tyranny in India, and beyond, and because of her tender recognition of those who suffer but who persist and insist on making meaningful lives. Roy contends “Another world is not only possible, she is on her way. On a quiet day, I can hear her breathing.”

On a quiet day I can hear my books breathing.

## **ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR NELSON RODRIGUEZ, The College of New Jersey, New Jersey, USA**

A turning point in my academic career occurred in 2004. It was then that I made a conscious decision to focus on LGBTQ+ studies in my teaching and scholarship. I sometimes describe this moment to myself as “making a sharp queer turn.” Part of the broader sociocultural context for



this turning point was the marriage equality debate that had picked up steam at the time, especially in the US. I knew this issue was important in terms of its history-making possibilities, and the debates that it tapped into—debates that certainly would matter to those of us in the field of gender and sexuality studies and that I knew would impact my teaching and scholarship. In short, the marriage equality fight grounded my own decision to make that sharp queer turn in my career and seemed to provide a rationale and sense of urgency to myself and to others for focusing on LGBTQ studies.

As for my teaching, the process of taking up queer content in my courses started out gradually, incorporating such content at first into other courses (e.g., as a unit in a course on the cultural foundations of education). From there, I eventually journeyed to teaching primarily queer studies courses and now I find myself happily creating new LGBTQ+ studies courses as well as creating new curricula. This journey of course was not without its detractors, including some well-intentioned liberal faculty and administrators. But on this point, I have learned two things: if the historical time is ripe, take advantage of it, and if the students you teach are interested, you will be supported institutionally. In terms of scholarship: I was at first worried about how my work would be understood and received by my colleagues, but ironically, I have found that doing queer theory/studies work in the academy provides a certain level of cultural capital.

Akin to my teaching, my scholarship has been a journey from one queer studies article in graduate school to becoming an editor for one of the first queer studies and education series. I share this brief memoir not to celebrate my accomplishments but rather to remind upcoming generations of academics in gender and sexuality studies in education of this: be respectful and mindful of others, toe the line when you need to, but stay the course, because in a heteronormative academic environment you have to be strategically and visibly fierce.

**PROFESSOR HELEN SAUNTON, York St John University, York, UK**

Be strong, be brave, be loving, but most of all, believe in and be true to yourself. (Susan Beech, 1947–1999)

My mum wrote these words in a book given to me for my 18th birthday, and they have inspired me in every aspect of my life, including my academic career. There have been times when I have been explicitly advised not to research gender and sexuality, and times when I have been denigrated for pursuing social justice research. I have experienced environments characterised by hyper-competitiveness, aggression and fear. Rather than seeing these experiences as damaging, my mum's words have encouraged me to use them as a turning point and model for the kind of academic I don't want to be. And this has been a good starting point for figuring out who I do want to be. My mum's words have reminded me that what I do is right and good. For anyone who works for social justice against a backdrop of oppression and discrimination, please use these words to inspire you.

**ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR GEORGIANN DAVIS, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, USA**

If you told me 15 years ago that I would someday be writing and speaking around the world about intersex people and the way we are inhumanely treated by medical professionals, I would not have believed you.

I first found out I was intersex in a parking lot outside of my gynecologist's office. It was the year 2000 and I was 19-years-old. I had just picked up a copy of my medical records because I was transferring my medical care to a provider closer to my new home. More than 50 pages of my lab results, surgical reports, and other medical information was neatly stuffed in a sealed manila envelope that contained the truth about my body—I was born with a vagina, but inside, instead of XX chromosomes, ovaries, a uterus, and fallopian tubes, I had XY chromosomes and testes. For years, doctors lied to me about my body and encouraged my parents to do the

same. When I was 17-years-old, I even had a medically unnecessary surgery to remove what doctors told me were premalignant ovaries. But what the doctors really did was remove two healthy testes, and, in the process, they filled my mind with their lies. I remember being in disbelief as I read my medical records. I also felt ashamed, angry, and confused—complicated emotions I would alternate through for years.

In the fall of 2007, my relationship with my intersex body would forever be changed. I was a sociology doctoral student at the University of Illinois at Chicago, and I was taking a feminist theory class. One of the topics we studied was intersex. I learned more about intersex in that feminist theory class than I did from the doctors who surgically altered my body. I felt so empowered in that feminist classroom that I openly shared my experience with intersex. A huge weight was lifted.

Later, on the heels of that liberatory experience, I made a commitment to bridge my personal experience with intersex with my professional passion in understanding inequalities so that we can dismantle them. I will forever be a proud and unapologetic feminist scholar-activist.

## **PROFESSOR BECKY FRANCIS, Director of the UCL Institute of Education, London, UK**

There are two observations I want to mention in relation to my work and career.

The first is the ontological challenge that has galvanised all my work on gender—the incredible, problematic and wonderful complexity of human behaviour. On the one hand, in spite of the very rapid social change of gender roles in the last half century, gender still strongly predicts and characterises our life experiences and outcomes. Nowhere is this more evident than in my own sector/discipline of education, where, in spite of women comprising a significant majority of the workforce, top jobs and positions of influence remain largely populated by men. A feminist motivation to document and analyse such patterns (in order to better understand and challenge them) has motivated my work.

Yet, at a micro level, human interaction is characterised by diversity, disruption and contradiction, as well as by patterns, habits and compliance.

The ways in which we all exhibit behaviours which could be characterised as masculine or feminine fascinated me, and I realised that if feminist researchers *only* document the gender-typical patterns and behaviours, we risk reifying and cementing these. Hence an energising challenge for me has been to analyse and theorise gender disruption in everyday behaviour, as well as the ongoing traditional patterns.

And the second observation is a brief reflection. My academic career has been driven by my feminism. Yet when head-hunters approached me about my present role, I laughed, and deleted the email. I had to be approached several times, and (when I finally spoke to a recruiter on the phone) told how many people had suggested my name, before I finally became convinced it might not be too ludicrous to submit an application. Then I was surprised when told my application had been enthusiastically taken to the second round. And so on. My point is, in spite of my politics and knowledge, I too was an unknowing sufferer of imposter syndrome.

So, my conclusion is, we need to maintain our rich research and analysis, to enable us to challenge taken-for-granted gendered assumptions—to challenge ourselves, as well as others.

### **ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR SUSAN STRYKER, University of Arizona, Arizona, USA**

While I take great satisfaction in the career I've actually managed to have, I always remember that the only reason I've had it in the first place is that because of my transness I was denied the career I initially set out to have. Back when I was finishing my dissertation in US religious history and coming out as trans in the early 90s, I was not coming out into an identity that was considered viable for academic employment in that field. So, I threw myself into using the only skill-set I had—researching, thinking, writing, talking, teaching—to tackle the only topics on which I could get taken seriously: transgender topics. It worked out for me. I had a wonderful career in community-based archives, documentary filmmaking, and popular nonfiction writing, with just enough scholarship on the side to keep my hand in the game, until the kind of knowledge I'd been making became, decades later, something the academy valued enough to finally

let me in. I'm pleased with whatever success I've enjoyed, but I never lose sight of the fact that it was built on the denial of opportunity. That's why as a person who now works in higher education, I feel such a strong commitment to supporting all student to pursue whatever subject inflames their intellectual curiosity and passion, and to making higher education available to anyone who desires it.

### **ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR LYNNE HILLIER, La Trobe University, Melbourne, Australia**

My research with same sex attracted and gender diverse young Australians spanned almost two decades [33, 37–42]. It has charted changes in Australian school (and wider) culture, specifically shifts in the production of knowledge around gender and sexuality for young people. It emphasised the ways young people take up these shifts and use them to position themselves in more positive ways.

The first lesson I would offer is about hope and persistence. For me and my colleagues, the beginnings of data collection took place in the context of a conservative federal government that would last for many years. We quickly learned that when facing a rock of resistance, there is always a crack in the surface that can be used to generate the seeds of change. We fought hard for the inclusion of the same sex attracted question in all national research regardless and this produced data that justified funding for our research. We were politic, navigating how and when we to 'be quiet' or 'outspoken' about our research.

The second lesson I would share centres on the importance of translating research into practice. Sharing our findings with teachers and school leaders helped them to justify and lead policy changes in their own schools and value added our research many times over. Taking the research back to young people was another important step—students could relate to the findings and used other student's stories to rethink their own experiences and recreate care of themselves.

The third lesson would be to emphasise how research with stigmatised groups becomes stigmatised. Researchers who carry out research with stigmatised groups also become stigmatised. The emotional wellbeing of

researchers in this field will be tested. We received a great deal of hate mail over the time and pressure was put on our heads of departments to stop the research. Through this experience we learned the importance of trusted allies and colleagues who watch your back and believe in the work. These forms of collective solidarity are important both personally and professionally.

Finally, and perhaps unexpectedly—I have learned the importance of passion and persistence in long term work. Passion maintains and replenishes researchers and gives social justice research its special edge.

### **PROFESSOR YVETTE TAYLOR, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, UK**

When I took the train from Glasgow to Edinburgh to go to University, it was the first time I'd been there—with a less than 50-mile distance between cities, it still seemed a long way to go. Other students had travelled much further and I became acquainted with the jokes and comments—from tutors—about the 'wee quiet Scottish lassies' in seminar groups. From a working-class background, and the first person in my family to go to University, I've never had the automatic sense of Higher Education as an entitlement; this may be felt as problematic when feminism insists on our presences and entitlements (but where Beverly Skeggs' has nicely captured the problematic 'entitlement cultures' within gender studies: 'Women's Studies in Britain in the 1990s: Entitlement Cultures and Institutional Constraints', *Women's Studies International Forum*, Vol. 18 [4]: 475–485).

I have felt like an 'imposter' and 'fraud' in moving through University, often felt in interpersonal exchanges and intersecting class, gender and age—and as someone who was promoted to Professor at the age of 32 years (when I was still being mistaken for a student!). In occupying management positions I've wondered about what constitutes 'feminist leadership' or 'feminist success' when inhabiting such roles—how the emotional labour and expectations may be heightened when done in, by, for 'feminism'. Like Prof. Kerry Robinson, I didn't expect to 'become' an academic: we now exist in a time where 'becoming' is perhaps always rendered out of reach—once the permanent contract is received, promotion must be pursued, one

the Professorship is attained, questions will be asked about what kind of professor you are, and what kind of institution you inhabit, and whether, for example, you've arrived 'too soon', or whether, with maternity leave, you're now 'out of time'.

In these questions, I've learned to be sceptical about career recognition, recognising its material rewards, and instead framing the resourcing of academic becoming and belonging around other questions such as 'what research and teaching do I want to do?', 'who am I accountable to?', 'what can I do?', 'how do I take a break?!'. The story of becoming academic is never a singular story; I have good networks and colleague who connect and sustain me as I hope to do for them.

**RINGOLD, E. J. (The Collaboration of Professor Emma Renold, Cardiff University, Cardiff, Wales; and Professor Jessica Ringrose, UCL Institute of Education, London, UK)**

For over 10 years RINGOLD has been experimenting with crafting research-activist assemblages as feminist and queer qualitative researchers. With each assemblage we continue to learn that the ways our research-activisms take shape and come to matter are never known in advance. Indeed, research practices, at their most promising, are speculative, inventive and always 'on the turn' (Seventeenth Century definition of 'jar') (Fig. 12.1).

This realisation came to force both painfully and productively in a recent project (see [43]) where our research 'findings' on how gender matters to young people became troubling to the point of being buried [44, 45] and we became troublesome in our refusal for this research to be ignored, silenced and contained. It was during this project that our evolving jar(ring) methodology became 'more-than' [46]. It re-oriented us and others as we became entangled with a becoming-JAR assemblage across different research and engagement projects and events.



Fig. 12.1 Jar/ring

## Making Jars

In the ‘How gender matters’ project, we developed a participatory creative method using glass jars, sticky-notes and sharpies. We invited young people to consider, in any way they wanted, how “gender jars”. We experimented with how jar as a discursive expressive verb (e.g., jar as unsettling, vibrating and jolting) intra-acted with the physical object of a small glass jar (e.g., as a vessel that historically has played its part as a carrier of difficult to control, difficult to contain substances and objects, see [47]). The task took off and over 100 jars were created in the jar/jarring’s initial inception as socially engaged arts based research methodology [48, 49] (Fig. 12.2).

Engaged with in multiple ways, at its most urgent, we noticed the jarring method’s power for enabling private and unspeakable expressions to materialise in written or symbolic form, especially from minority and marginalised young people. For instance, in one research site in an inner-city school in area of high deprivation a Black Caribbean young women, Monique (age 14) spoke very little during a paired friendship interview on gender issues in schools, although she hinted that she struggled with her





Fig. 12.2 Gender Jars

body shape and size, her anger and rage, her depression, her on–off tortuous relationship with social media (where she bounced between extremes of disconnection and total immersion). When we introduced the jar activity she spent the full 15 minutes engrossed, furiously scribbling on her pad, stuffing her jar with over 20 messages, addressing gang violence and racism, longing to and refusing to fit in and belong, not wanting to be defined by success or failure, her battle with mental health, and girls’ experiences of sexual objectification and sexual violence. In another setting, a youth-centre this time, one young person (age 16) chose not to insert any messages in the jar, decorating only the outside. They talked about wanting to communicate the importance of not being categorised through gender binaries, and their resentment at being labelled, consumed or contained. During this project, we quickly became attuned to the expressive affective haptic-material-discursive qualities of jarring as creative method—and its potential ‘thing power’ to affect and be affected [50].

## Jar Gifting

Six months later our Jar/ring practices morphed into an explicitly activist mode (see Fig. 12.3), inside the AGENDA resource (see <http://agenda.wales>)—an interactive tool-kit designed to support young people to raise awareness on issues relating to gender-based and sexual violence. Over 40 young people participated in this activity during the launch of the resource and over 80 jars were decorated and crammed with personalised change-making messages that were gifted, collectively (see Fig. 12.3) to the policy



Fig. 12.3 What Jars Us

makers and practitioners arriving that afternoon on what they should be focusing on to better support these issues in schools and communities. Indeed, because the conference delegates knew that the jars had been created that morning for them by the young people who were still in the room, their connection to felt experience (i.e., their affective quality) seemed to take on an extra-charge in their ‘extra-beingness’ (see [16]). ‘Politicality’ argues Massumi ([51], p. 173), ‘is always on its leading edge, affective’.

## Making Jar(ring) Matter

A 1520s definition of jar is “bird-screeching”. This resonates with our private and public experiences of becoming-jar. Sometimes our research-beaks peck quietly away at the status quo in a slow and steady rhythm.



Fig. 12.4 What Jars You?

Sometimes, they become Sara Ahmed's (see [19]) feminist hammer—beaks wide open, sirens in full voice, shrill and piercing. All too frequently however, in calling out the problem, we become the problem—and sometimes we reach snapping point (see also Ahmed's 'feminist snap'). But over the last few years, our jarring methodology, inside the wider onto-epistemological jar assemblage of what it means to engage in feminist and queer research-activism, is one apparatus [52] beginning to enable us to productively work with becoming more-than the problem.

As the chapters in this volume evidence, when it comes to gender and sexuality research where participatory methods and youth voice are foregrounded there will always be trouble. This research will always JAR.

We hope that by briefly sharing some salient moments from our journey, the potentially generative affordances of JAR's discursive-affective-materiality as creative method and/or process (Fig. 12.4) might support your own research process/practices, if, as and when your research JARS and you need to find a way to stay with the trouble.

## An Open Ending<sup>1</sup>

For us, this collection of memoirs and manifestos emphasises how complex, arduous, necessary and possible G&S education research is. The moments shared provide an important rupture and reformation of dominant narratives and tropes of our work as being ‘dangerous’, ‘risky’ and ‘difficult’. An affective vibrancy supersedes the collection, which we have found particularly inspiring as early career academic readers. We take pause at the emotions evoked, the humility, humour, intimacy, hope, passion, urgency, creativity and vulnerability; all aspects of academia that are too often ignored or sidelined from conversations of what might be possible. These affective resonances are an important reminder that we care about our work and are invested in what we do. The memoirs and manifestos shared are also suggestions for how we might strategically navigate academia and be strategically ‘visible and fierce’ as academics so that we become ‘more than the problem’. We take comfort in the various calls to embrace the speculative and inventive aspects of our work.

We are encouraged by what established scholars make and continue to make possible. Equally heartening has been the resonance between our own entry points, hesitations and conflicts when things don’t proceed along anticipated lines. As academics, we too can accept ways of being and working that silence, denigrate and limit. We too are fallible to re-establishing certain hierarchies even as we seek to undo them, and must work hard to queer, question and trouble even our most well-intentioned endeavours. We are reminded that we can never know in advance how our research-activisms-teaching comes to matter. Most importantly, for us, these contributions and the shift in focus towards a ‘queer thrival’ have reminded us how the process of becoming an academic isn’t just about getting by or getting on. It is also an informed choice about what kind of scholar we want to be.

## Note

1. Heading inspired by [53].

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