Career paths and working conditions for gender studies PhD graduates and gender researchers

SWEDISH SECRETARIAT FOR GENDER RESEARCH

UNIVERSITY OF GOTHENBURG

Career paths and working conditions for gender studies
PhD gradates and gender researchers
Kajsa Widegren and Susanna Young Håkansson
Photo: p. 1 Efe Kurnaz, p. 17 Joyce McCown, p. 41 Susan Q Yin
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1958

KVINNOHISTORISKT ARKIV
KvinnSam started as a private initiative, then under the name Kvinnohistoriskt arkiv (Women's history archive). Today, KvinnSam, also known as the women's history collections, is a national library for women's, men's and gender research, and a university-wide research infrastructure at the University of Gothenburg.

1960

FIRST THESIS IN WOMEN'S HISTORY
Gunnar Qvist defended his doctoral thesis at the University of Gothenburg; this was the first thesis in women's history.

1980

KVINNOVETENSKAPLIG TIDSKRIFT, KVT
This journal was founded by the Forum for women researchers and women's studies at Lund University.

1982

CONFERENCE "KVINNOUNIVERSITETET - VETENSKAP, PATRIARKAT, MAKT" (WOMEN'S UNIVERSITY – SCIENCE, PATRIARCHY, POWER)
The first major academic conference on women's studies in Sweden was held at Umeå University.

1995

"VILJAN ATT VETA OCH VILJAN ATT FÖRSTÅ - KÖN, MAKT OCH DEN KVINNOVETENSKAPLIGA UTMANINGEN I HÖGRE UTBILDNING" (SOU 1995:110)
A Swedish Government inquiry into the organisation of women's studies led by the women's literature researcher Ebba Witt-Brattström.

1996

GENDER RESEARCH PROFESSORS
The Swedish Government's Research Bill in 1996 presented the special focus on Professorships specialising in gender research. It was decided to establish six new Professorships within the subject areas of didactics of physics instruction, public health, information technology, literary studies, man–machine interaction, and sociology. It was not until 2001 that all of these were appointed.

1997

SWEDEN'S FIRST PROFESSORSHIP IN GENDER STUDIES
Britt-Marie Thurén is appointed Professor of gender studies at Umeå University.

1998

SWEDISH SECRETARIAT FOR GENDER RESEARCH ESTABLISHED
The Secretariat is established and tasked with disseminating and promoting gender research. Its first director was intellectual historian Eva Gothlin.

1999

TEMA GENUS STARTS
The interdisciplinary Gender Studies environment (Tema Genus) starts up at Linköping University.

2002

GENDER STUDIES GRADUATE SCHOOL STARTS
The Gender Studies Graduate School starts PhD programme in gender research at Umeå University.

2004

GENDER STUDIES COMMITTEE ESTABLISHED BY THE SWEDISH RESEARCH COUNCIL
The purpose of the committee was to support gender research and to promote the inclusion of the gender dimension in research.

2004

THE GENDER CHECKBOX INTRODUCED BY THE SWEDISH RESEARCH COUNCIL
In applications for research grants, applicants could tick a particular box to indicate that the project "concerns questions related to gender/gender perspective".

2006

CALL FOR EXCELLENCE GRANT APPLICATIONS IN GENDER STUDIES RESEARCH BY THE SWEDISH RESEARCH COUNCIL
The call resulted in the establishment of three centres at Uppsala University, Linköping University and Umeå University.

2006

KVINNOVETENSKAPLIG TIDSKRIFT CHANGES ITS NAME TO TIDSKRIFT FÖR GENUSVETENSKAP
This journal is one of the oldest and largest peer-reviewed journals in the Nordic region for current interdisciplinary research across the entire field of gender studies. The editorial team rotates between different gender studies environments every four years.

2006

SWEDISH GENDER RESEARCH CONFEDERATION (SGF) IS ESTABLISHED
One of the aims of this confederation of gender researchers is to ensure a diversity of perspectives and potentials within gender research and to highlight their importance for gender research and the development of the discipline.

2007

SUBJECT AREA OF GENDER STUDIES EVALUATED FOR THE FIRST TIME
Courses and study programmes in gender studies at under and post graduate levels are evaluated by the Swedish National Agency for Higher Education.

2016

SEX/GENDER IN RESEARCH APPLICATIONS TO THE SWEDISH RESEARCH COUNCIL
Sex/gender perspective must be included in all applications for research funding to the Swedish Research Council.

2016

SWEDISH HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS GET SWEDISH GOVERNMENT TASK TO WORK WITH GENDER MAINSTREAMING
The Swedish Secretariat for Gender Research is also tasked with supporting higher education institutions to carry out this task.

2018

SWEDISH GENDER EQUALITY AGENCY ESTABLISHED
The Swedish Gender Equality Agency is established and takes over the task of supporting higher education institutions in their work with gender mainstreaming from the Swedish Secretariat for Gender Research.

2018

GENDER STUDIES STOPPED IN HUNGARY
The subject area of gender studies is removed by Viktor Orbán's government from the list of the country's approved Master's programmes. Central European University – which has a Master's programme in gender studies – moves from Budapest to Vienna.

2018

FAKE BOMB AT THE SWEDISH SECRETARIAT FOR GENDER RESEARCH
In 2018, an employee at the Swedish Secretariat for Gender Research find a suspicious-looking object outside the Secretariat's premises. The police assess the situation and find that it could be an explosive device. But it turns out to be fake. A preliminary investigation into the crime of making an unlawful threat is initiated. The investigation is later dropped.

2019

ÄMNESFÖRENINGEN FÖR GENUSVETENSKAP (ÄG) STARTS
This association for gender studies brings together representatives from all Sweden's gender studies environments. It has its first general meeting in conjunction with g19, the national gender studies conference in Gothenburg.

2020

GENUSDOKTRINEN BY IVAR ARPI AND ANNA-KARIN WYNDHAMN PUBLISHED
The book Genusdoktrinen ('The gender doctrine') criticises how Swedish higher education institutions' work with their gender mainstreaming task is based on theories of gender and power.

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Summary

The interdisciplinary subject area of gender studies has emerged from engagement with integrated gender research. In a discipline-oriented higher education sector, this poses particular challenges for both gender researchers and gender studies PhD graduates (*genusvetare*) educated in Sweden, especially when it comes to planning their postdoctoral careers. In addition, the institutionalisation of gender studies has occurred during a period marked by structural changes in the higher education sector. A starting point for this report is that the concept of career paths in research policy must be understood in light of the working conditions in the higher education sector. The aim of this report is to examine how individual gender studies PhD graduates and gender researchers educated in Sweden acquire qualifications in accordance with a normative career structure after graduation.

1. Where do gender studies PhD graduates and gender researchers work after graduation?
2. What are the career paths like for these two groups in terms of access to career development positions, permanent employment, and mobility opportunities?
3. What kind of institutional support is there for gender studies PhD graduates' career development?
4. What is the working environment like for gender studies PhD graduates and gender researchers?
5. How do gender studies PhD graduates and gender researchers relate to the sector's disciplinary structure?

The analyses in this report are based on data from two surveys: one sent to gender studies PhD graduates, and one sent to a sample of gender researchers, in December 2021; and two focus group interviews with researchers from these two groups, held in autumn 2022.

Main findings of the report

- Gender studies PhD graduates have a high rate of employment and many who have continued to work in the higher education sector have work in gender studies departments/centres.
- The majority of the gender studies PhD graduates source their main income from work in higher education, the largest group being employed as senior lecturers.
- Almost half of all the gender studies PhD graduates who are employed to teach have no research hours in their positions. The number of research hours in a position varies greatly between 10% and 70% of full-time employment.
  The majority of gender studies PhD graduates who have remained in the higher education sector have had many insecure jobs, and many have also had multiple, back-to-back, fixed-term positions.
- Of gender studies PhD graduates who work in the higher education sector, 57% have permanent positions.

- While 27% work in organisations other than higher education institutions. They work in central government, local government, voluntary organisations, private companies and foundations, or are self-employed. A large proportion of them have jobs where they utilise their gender studies expertise to a high degree.
- The majority of the gender studies PhD graduates are satisfied with their doctoral education, but a few are not. Those who are critical identify difficulties related to structure and predictability. Almost half of the gender studies PhD graduates did not had any career preparation elements in their doctoral education.
- Many managers initiated discussions about career development, which is necessary where there are no given structures for career development. However, informal networks seem to be the most important for career development.
- Many gender studies PhD graduates spent time abroad during their doctoral studies, and about a third had applied for international positions after graduating. Swedish and Swedish-educated gender studies PhD graduates orient themselves primarily towards European countries and to some extent the USA.
- The first few years after gaining their doctorate is the period when most gender studies PhD graduates experience anxiety, stress and a very high workload. Many have experienced anxiety, mainly due to insecure jobs, and stress due to an excessive workload. Many reported that stress, anxiety and a high workload have had negative consequences for their health.
- Gender studies can still be said to be interdisciplinary, despite its institutionalisation. Many orient themselves towards gender studies journals and conferences, but also other subject areas. Gender studies PhD graduates very often get assignments in the subject area's peer review structures.
- Gender researchers also have a high rate of employment. The largest group works as senior lecturers.
- The share with fixed-term employment is relatively high for gender researchers (71%).
- Gender researchers have a long road to permanent employment in the higher education sector. Many say that their previous positions have mainly been temporary.
- During the period from graduation to the position they have now, most have been employed at one time or another at a department for the subject area of their thesis.
- A small group of graduate gender researchers work outside the higher education sector. They are employed in voluntary organisations and central government. They work as inquiry chairs, analysts, advisers and strategists.
- International exchange among gender researchers is limited. Few have experience of international exchanges from their doctoral education, and few have applied for a job abroad after graduation, but of those who have done so, many were successful in getting these positions. Internationalisation is strongly oriented towards English-speaking countries.
- Most gender researchers who have continued to work in the higher education sector are employed by the department in the subject area of their thesis, but many

are not: 43% work in a different subject area than that of their thesis. On the other hand it is unusual for gender researchers to move on to a position in gender studies.

- A majority of the gender researchers stated that they had a supervisor with expertise in gender research and that they participated in gender research seminar activities during their doctoral studies.
- Many stated that gender research was controversial at the department where they completed their doctoral education, but this does not apply across the board for all their thesis subject areas.
- 62% stated that they had mainly published in journals specialising in the subject area of their thesis. A smaller group have mainly published in journals specialising in other subject areas. A few have mainly published in gender studies journals.
- Relatively few of the gender researchers have been involved in formal networks with a gender research theme.
- It is clear that informal networks are important for continuing to work in higher education. Many stated that without informal networks, they would not have been able to continue working in the higher education sector.

About the report

This report has been written by Kajsa Widegren, PhD in gender studies, and Susanna Young Håkansson, both analysts at the Swedish Secretariat for Gender Research. The initiative for this investigation came from the doctoral student and postdoctor network within the Swedish Gender Research Confederation (SGF). During the course of the project, a reference group consisting of representatives from SGF, *Ämnesföreningen för genusvetenskap* (ÄG) and *Kilden*, the Norwegian knowledge centre for gender perspectives and gender balance in research, has been consulted. Warm thanks for their important input during the course of this work.

- Lovise Haj Brade, SGF
- Johanna Jers, SGF
- Anna Olovsdotter Lööv, SGF
- Trine Rogg Korsvik, Kilden
- Olga Sasunkevich, ÄG
- Ann Werner, ÄG

CHAPTER 1:
Career paths and working conditions in the higher education sector

Introduction

The interdisciplinary subject area of gender studies has emerged from engagement with integrated gender research. In a discipline-oriented higher education sector, interdisciplinary research poses particular challenges for both gender researchers and gender studies PhD graduates, especially when it comes to planning their postdoctoral careers. In addition, the institutionalisation of gender studies has happened during a period marked by structural changes in the higher education sector. A starting point for this report is that the concept of career paths in research policy must be understood in light of the working conditions in the higher education sector.

The aim of this report is to examine how individual gender studies PhD graduates and gender researchers educated in Sweden acquire qualifications in accordance with a normative career structure after graduation.

- Where do gender studies PhD graduates and gender researchers work after graduation?
- What are the career paths like for these two groups in terms of access to career development positions, permanent employment, and mobility opportunities?
- What is the institutional support for career development like for gender studies graduates?
- What is the work environment like for gender studies PhD graduates and gender researchers?
- How do gender studies PhD graduates and gender researchers relate to the sector's disciplinary structure?

Gender studies and gender research

In the early 2000s, the main field of study of gender studies gained the power to grant the Degree of Doctor at multiple Swedish universities. The first thesis in this main field of study was defended in 2005 in *Tema Genus* at Linköping University. In 2021, when we started working on this study, 61 people had graduated with a PhD in gender studies. The establishment of doctoral education in gender studies may be seen as an important endpoint in the process of institutionalising gender studies which began in the 1980s and 1990s (Liinason 2011; Lykke 2004). Today, doctoral education in gender studies is offered at the universities in Lund, Gothenburg, Linköping, Stockholm, Örebro, Uppsala, Umeå and Södertörn.

On the other hand, the interdisciplinary field of gender research has existed in Sweden since the 1960s, initially called women's studies. The field has grown in scope since then and was brought together under the name *gender research* from the mid-1990s (SOU 1995: 110). Gender research is now a large academic field that has representatives in all research fields (Olsson 2007; Alnebratt 2009; Thurén 2004). Gender research and gender studies are sometimes referred to as the 'two pillars' on which the field stands (Manns 2006). Since 2002, the Gender Studies Graduate School at Umeå University has brought together doctoral students exploring the gender perspective in various main fields of study, and in recent years also doctoral students in gender studies, which has been a way of organising gender research across disciplinary boundaries. Co-affiliation for doctoral students also occurs at some universities. This means that the doctoral student defends their thesis in another main field of study, but that the gender perspective is secured through cooperation with the gender studies department/centre, and that both fund the doctoral studentship. These are two examples of how gender studies as an institutionalised subject area, and gender research as a broad and diverse field, are finding various ways of collaborating organisationally in a higher education sector that is still strongly focused on disciplines. In spite of the different forms of collaboration between these two pillars, the relationship has not always been straightforward, and scepticism about the value of institutionalising gender studies as a subject area at times has been quite explicit – just as gender studies as a subject area has also been called into question (Smirthwaite 2005).

Historically, the two concepts have been used in different ways and given different content. Gender research as a collective term gained much of its legitimacy as a result of the research policy initiatives launched in the field in the 1990s (Thurén 2004). In the Inquiry *Viljan att veta och viljan att förstå - kön, makt och den kvinnovetenskapliga utmaningen i högre utbildning* (SOU 1995:110) ('The will to know and the will to understand – gender, power and the women's studies challenge in higher education') chaired by women's literature researcher Ebba Witt-Brattström and completed in 1995, the term *women's studies* was used throughout. In the terms of reference for the Inquiry, however, the terms used were *women's, gender equality*, or *gender research*. However, when the subsequent Government Bill *Jämställdhet mellan kvinnor och män i utbildningssektorn* (Riksdagen 1994/95:164) ('Equality between women and men in the education sector') was presented, the term *gender research* was established.

In the field of gender studies/gender research too, these terms are used in a variety of ways. In 2010 when the Swedish Secretariat for Gender Research initiated a survey of institutionalisation in the field of gender research, it was not just the subject area of gender studies that was being referred to, but also other departments established in various subject area departments, and the report was entitled *Genusforskningens läge och institutionella situation våren 2010 – en nulägesöversikt* (Liinason 2010) ('The status of gender research and the institutional situation in spring 2010 – an overview of the current situation'). However subsequently, the term institutionalisation appears not to have been used when describing gender research. When the first in a series of publications on gender studies (*En skriftserie om genusvetenskap)* was published in 2012, the link between institutionalisation and the subject area name *gender studies* was established (Lundberg and Werner 2012), to the extent that when the next publication in the series – a national alumni survey – came out in 2013, the history of the subject

area of gender studies was described as a continuum from the 1970s onwards. The new subject area of gender studies was used to retroactively refer to courses given under titles such as "women's studies, power and gender, feminist studies" (Lundberg and Werner 2013).

The subject area of gender studies understands itself as interdisciplinary, and by definition the field of gender research entails crossing between subject areas, which poses particular challenges for individual researchers who are active within gender studies and gender research when it comes to questions of employment and subject area affiliation (Pulkkinen 2015; Lykke 2009; Woodward and Woodward 2015). There is now a group of gender studies PhD graduates whose postgraduate professional careers have been relatively long, as well as a steady stream of new gender studies PhD graduates. This changes the relationship between gender research, and gender studies as an institutionalised subject area. Traditionally, it was gender researchers who built up these gender studies centres but what is the situation now that the subject area of gender studies is producing its own PhDs, and a generation of PhD graduates in the subject area have now become relatively senior?

Institutionalisation and career paths

Certain factors are often pointed to when it comes to defining the institutionalisation of a subject area. Professor of Gender Studies, Gabriele Griffin, assigns the greatest importance to the following factors: 1) that there are Professorships in the subject area; 2) the existence of autonomous departments and/or centres 3) that other staff are academically qualified; 4) the existence of degrees on under- and post graduate levels, and 5) continuous funding (Griffin 2004). Nina Lykke adds another important factor: that as a subject area, it can independently assess what qualifications are required for appointment as a senior lecturer or Professor (Lykke 2004). In order to create stability over time, a subject area needs to reproduce itself, for example through new PhD graduates in the subject area who contribute new knowledge but also manage and develop the knowledge that has already been produced (Liinason, 2011). For this survey, institutionalisation is of crucial importance. In addition to stability and visibility through departments, centres, Professorships and senior lectureships in gender studies, PhD programmes in gender studies produces new, qualified researchers. However, the institutional structure is *not* by definition the same as a 'career path', especially when there are qualifications for career development that explicitly point to mobility, such as international mobility, mobility between higher education institutions, and the ideal of interdisciplinary mobility between subject areas.

The term career path is usually used to describe the individual's development within a career system, with steps that must be completed in order to progress in the career. In research policy, the term is given a clear individual-centred meaning. Research policy talks about 'unclear' career paths, which create anxiety. But also about 'slow' career paths, meaning a normative period of time between the stages of PhD and Associate Professor, and between Associate Professor and Professor (Swedish Research Council 2015). 'Broadened' career paths are seen as more positive, referring to the expertise of PhD graduates being in demand in a broader section of the labour market than the higher education sector alone (Swedish Higher Education Authority 2020a).

We use the term career path when seeking out the structural patterns that stipulate the conditions for working in academia and allocating different types of resources to individual researchers (Angervall and Gustafsson 2014). Progression from PhD to Associate Professor and to Professor constitutes the system's normative framework. The criteria and procedures for recruitment and promotion to Professor are set out in the Higher Education Ordinance and specified locally at each higher education institution. The system is assumed to have a high degree of transparency. It should be possible to plan for the next step in your career development based on what will qualify you for the next step. But these qualifying acts are performed within a context conditioned by multiple factors. Being employed is perhaps the most important one. Without employment, no qualifications can be accumulated, no matter how transparent the steps on the career ladder are. But other factors also play a role, most obviously norms of performance, the actual workload, and the work environment (Swedish Association of University Teachers and Researchers 2021), including that the career ladder is based on qualifications that are assessed on the basis of their disciplinary content. In order to understand these processes, we use the feminist philosopher Sara Ahmed's (Ahmed 2006) concept of orientation. Orientation is about direction and intention: about organising one's own efforts and initiatives in order to be accepted and integrated into a particular context. The concept captures intentions as well as opportunities and constraints of a structure. However, not all orientations are possible to all subjects. The context sets various kinds of boundaries on the individual's movement. In the process, inclusion and exclusion occur, while the subject area of gender studies, integrated gender research and the interdisciplinary field of gender research are all reproduced in these orientating movements.

Research policy context

The Swedish higher education sector has undergone major changes over the past 30 years in terms of research policy's influence over the sector and thus the way in which its activities are conducted. The 'autonomy reform' in 2011 has been of great significance for how academic work is organised since then, but the reform itself was the result of a longer process (Boberg and Ahlbäck Öberg 2022). The key change lies in the transition from research conducted in relation to specific needs, where needs are defined primarily within the policy field, to research whose benefit and quality are determined within and by the research community (Fridlund, Sandström and Benner 2000). Research projects compete for funding in grant applications and the assessment of which projects are to be funded is made with the help of experts from the sector. The autonomy reform should be seen in light of concepts such as 'excellence' and 'internationalisation' having gained great attention in research policy during the 1990s and in the early 2000s (Sandström et al. 2010). The reform gave the higher education institutions very far-reaching freedoms to organise their own research, education and decision-making structures, while the regulations in Sweden's Higher Education Act and higher education ordinances were revised. The reform was intended to explicitly focus on the higher education institution and its activities rather than the individual employee's development opportunities (Swedish Higher Education Authority 2022a). During the same period, a higher proportion of central

government funding for the sector has also been shifted from floor allocations for higher education institutions to the research councils established in the early 2000s (Swedish Association of University Teachers and Researchers 2021). Demands for higher productivity and a greater share of floor locations based on inter-institutional competition have led to analyses of the neoliberalisation of the higher education sector (Pereira 2017; Sullivan and Simon 2014). To be able to measure competitiveness, the higher education sector has developed a variety of evaluation and auditing systems based on 'new public management' – new governance models that focus on efficiency and the rate of production. In parallel with this, the education targets have increased throughout the entire sector.

In the Inquiry *Trygghet och attraktivitet* (Government Offices of Sweden 2016) ('Security and attractiveness') a certain shift in perspective can be noted in the policy. The individual employee and the university as a workplace are positioned more centrally. Discussions about the 'precarisation' of the universities (as in other parts of the labour market and society in general) and pressure from unions concerning the need for more secure employment, predictability and clearer career paths for PhD graduates, led the Swedish Government to appoint the *Forskarkarriärutredningen* ('Researcher career inquiry') and thus to retreat from its earlier, more neoliberal governance of the sector. However, the motivation for doing so is still about the quality of research and education – making universities more attractive places to work, so that individuals will want to and risk investing in doctoral studies and be persuaded to stay in the sector. In 2016, the Government introduced a new career development position, with precisely the aim of making career paths in the higher education sector clearer. The associate senior lectureship was intended to structure the acquisition of career development qualifications by offering a mix of research and teaching. Such positions are subject to competition and give the employee the right to be assessed for a tenured position (permanent employment) when the associate senior lectureship contract expires (Government Offices of Sweden 2016). It can thus be seen as a compromise between the needs of higher education institutions and the needs of employees, leaning somewhat towards focusing on the transparency of individual career paths and acknowledging the need for permanent employment in the sector.

The period investigated in this report – that is, the period 2005–2021 – coincides with both the general neoliberalisation of academia, the effects of the autonomy reform, the increased funding agreement targets for Swedish higher education institutions, and in more recent years, a greater focus on individual job security.

Method, selection and response rate

This report presents the findings from two different surveys: one that was sent to all gender studies PhD graduates, and one that was sent to a selection of gender researchers. So, in the case of gender studies PhD graduates, we attempted to reach the entire group. We collected names and e-mail addresses by contacting the departments that had examined the individuals in the group. The response rate for this group was high. Out of the 61 gender studies PhD graduates contacted, 40 responded to the survey, a response rate of 67%.

The GENA database was used to select a sample of gender researchers to send the

survey to. This database lists Swedish theses with a gender perspective, both as they are completed and retrospectively, and it currently has 1895 records. GENA is managed by Kvinnsam and is based on keywords and titles. This means that the researchers listed there do not necessarily self-identify as 'gender researchers' at present. 'Gender research' can also be assumed to mean different things in different disciplinary domains and may also have shifted in meaning over time. The sample from GENA was randomly selected and the survey was sent to 80 people who had defended their doctoral thesis during the same period of time as the gender studies PhD graduates, i.e. between 2005 and 2021. Here too, we manually searched for e-mail addresses. 29 people responded, a response rate of 36%.[1]

The analyses are largely based on the compiled report generated when the surveys were closed. The majority of the questions were Yes/No questions, questions with graded scales, or multiple choice questions, but we have also asked for more information by including free text response fields. However, we performed some analyses manually because the system did not permit them to be generated automatically, such as calculating academic age, meaning the average time span from thesis to appointment to Associate Professor/Professor.

In addition to the surveys, we also conducted two focus group interviews to supplement the survey data with the kind of more nuanced narratives that focus group interviews can generate (Tursunovic 2002; Wibeck 2010). Each survey concluded with a question to all respondents asking whether they were interested in participating in the focus groups and if so, to enter their e-mail address. Technically speaking, this last question was asked in a separate survey, so that the e-mail addresses that the respondents provided could not be linked to their other responses. All respondents who provided their e-mail addresses were then invited to join the focus groups. One focus group interview was held at Karlstad University in conjunction with the g22 national gender research conference, and the other was held at the Swedish Secretariat for Gender Research at the University of Gothenburg. The majority of the participants were gender studies PhD graduates. The focus group interviews were semi-structured and lasted about one hour. The aim was to get more detail and supplement our understanding of the themes of career paths and working conditions contained in the survey. In many ways, the interviews indicated consensus among the participants, who talked about similar experiences. Often, but not always, these experiences were also in line with the survey's results. In this report, we have used direct quotes or summaries of the focus group conversations. In some of the quotes reproduced, colloquial elements, such as repetitions and complex sentence structures that are difficult to render in text, have been removed to aid readability.

Structure of the report

The two surveys are presented each in their own chapters: Chapter 2, *Career paths and working conditions for gender studies PhD graduates*; and Chapter 3, *Career paths and working conditions for gender researchers.* They have somewhat different structures since

1 We received a few e-mails from individual researchers who expressed surprise and even anger at being addressed as a 'gender researcher'. This indicates that a random sample was not the best sampling principle, especially given that the response rate was relatively low.

they are based on different circumstances: the institutionalised subject area of gender studies and the broad field of gender research.

Chapter 2 begins with a description and analysis of the current employment situation for the whole group of gender studies PhD graduates regardless of the time since graduation. This is followed by a cohort-based analysis of past employment, access to research funding, and terms and conditions of employment; in other words, the career paths of the cohorts up to the present. The chapter then analyses efforts to acquire further qualifications and institutional support, as well as mobility, internationalisation and the work environment. Finally, the interdisciplinary orientation of PhD graduates in gender studies is analysed.

Chapter 3 begins by describing the current situation of the group *gender researchers*: current employment, access to career development positions, and employment outside the higher education sector. Efforts to acquire further qualifications, as well as mobility and internationalisation are then analysed. This chapter analyses the gender researcher's relationships with the subject area of their thesis, with other subject areas, and with gender studies, as well as formal and informal networks and, lastly, their work environment.

Chapter 4 is a concluding discussion that mainly looks at the findings concerning the relationship between career paths and interdisciplinarity, and what this means for the two different groups (gender studies PhD graduates and gender researchers). But it also discusses how conditions generally in the higher education sector affect their career development after graduation.

CHAPTER 2:
Career paths and working conditions for gender studies PhD graduates

"Where do gender studies PhD graduates work? Who stays in academia? Who leaves it, and where do they go?" (Hoffart, Jers, and Olovsdotter Lööv 2020). According to their article '*Den postdoktorala situationen för genusdoktorer – vad händer efter festen?*' (The postdoctoral situation for graduates in gender studies – what happens after the graduation party?), around the time when they defended their theses, many PhD graduates were often assured by more senior colleagues that while the first few years after graduation could be tough, it would all work out with time; a way of describing the situation as 'it gets better', in line with queer theorist Jasbir Puar's analysis of neoliberal future-oriented narratives (Puar 2012). Accounts of working in academia in general are marked by anxiety about an insecure labour market, difficulties in getting research grants, and long periods of insecure employment. In a report, the Swedish Higher Education Authority shows that PhD graduates may have multiple, back-to-back, fixed-term positions for up to eight years after graduation (Swedish Higher Education Authority 2022b). In 2018, 33% of all research and teaching staff in Sweden were fixed-term employees, while the corresponding proportion in the labour market as a whole was scarcely 17% (Swedish Higher Education Authority 2022b). Gender studies being a new, small subject area, and PhD graduates sometimes experiencing that in some parts of the sector it still lacks legitimacy, reinforces the rather gloomy picture of structural conditions operating in the higher education sector.

Presentation of the respondent group

Of those who responded to the gender studies PhD graduates survey, 32 people (80%) chose the option 'Woman' and five people (12.5%) chose the option 'Man'. Three people (7.5%) chose the 'Other' option and two of them chose to specify this. Their free text responses were 'non-binary person'. Both the preponderance of women and the presence of self-identified non-binary persons in gender studies in particular can of course be understood from the history of the subject area. Courses and study programmes in gender studies at all levels have and have had a majority of women students, which is reflected in the PhD graduate group in this subject area (Swedish National Agency for Higher Education 2007). In the alumni survey conducted in 2013, which was answered by more than 600 former students of gender studies, 83% chose to define themselves as women , 2% as both women and men , and 5% as other. The alumni survey did not comment on the findings beyond binary gender norms, but the preponderance of women studying gender studies can be explained by the fact that "women have greater experience of inequality in society and this experience motivates them to take courses in gender studies" (Lundberg and Werner 2013).

Teaching and research environments in gender studies can be assumed to be, and have been, inclusive of trans persons, or have moved in that direction, for quite a long

period of time, while groups of feminists have at times chosen to dismiss and sometimes succeeded in excluding trans persons from various feminist contexts. Gender studies courses have continuously included trans studies in their teaching, and although there have certainly been differences at the different universities, administrative efforts have been made to avoid misgendering students. Some of Swedish historical, cultural and social sciences (and perhaps to a lesser degree medical or psychological) transgender research has also developed in gender studies environments.

The respondents were born between 1964 and 1991. Both the average age and the median age at the time of graduation was 34 years, which is also the same median age as for the whole country's PhD graduates in all subject areas (Statistics Sweden 2021).

Half of the respondents answered the question about their country of birth, of which 14 stated Sweden, five gave the names of other countries, and one person answered, 'not Sweden'. The fact that the majority of the gender studies PhD graduates were born in Sweden is not unexpected. That so many did not want to answer this question may, however, be related to how we asked it. One respondent wrote that they did not want to state their country of birth because it would de-anonymise them. We asked this and other questions about international mobility to be able to investigate whether conditions differ significantly between graduates born abroad and those born in Sweden. However, we assessed that the foreign-born group was too small for any deeper analysis while still assuring the respondents' anonymity.

Current situation

Of the entire group, 29 people (72%), i.e. a majority, responded that their main source of income is currently from work in a higher education institution. Those working in academia hold a variety of positions, but the largest group are employed as senior lecturers. However, there are some who are employed as lecturers and researchers. One group have career development positions such as postdoctoral appointments, associate senior lectureships or postdoctoral research fellowships. The smallest group was 'Other research or teaching staff with a doctorate' (Figure 1).

Positions among employees in the higher education sector

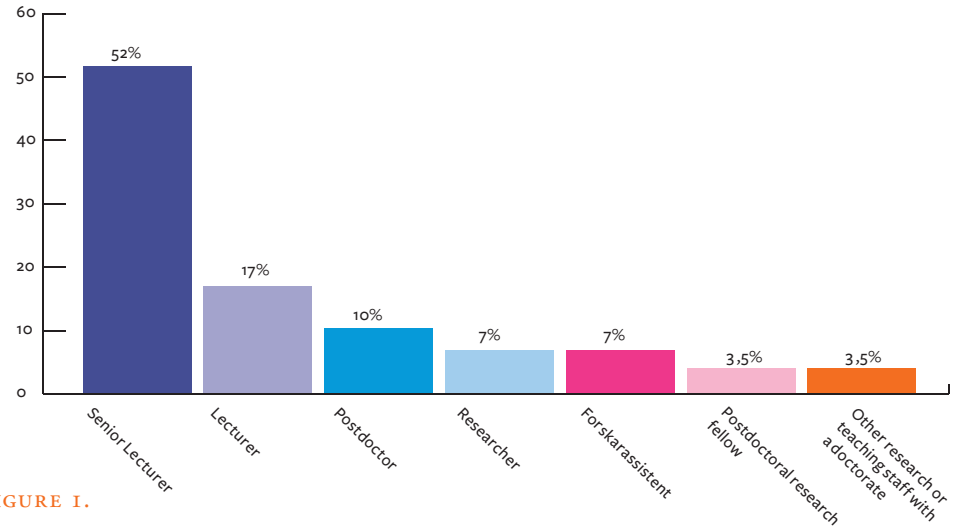


FIGURE 1.

Of the group working in academia, 17 people (59%) currently have permanent employment and 12 people (41%) have fixed-term/temporary employment. This is explained by the fact that career development positions are always temporary positions. The breadth of positions and forms of employment reflects the fact that the respondent group are at different stages in their professional lives. For example, a postdoctoral appointment is conditional on being a relatively recent PhD graduate.

The respondents work at the universities in Gothenburg, Karlstad, Linköping, Lund, Stockholm, Örebro, Uppsala, Umeå, and Malmö, and at Linnaeus University, Mid-Sweden University and Södertörn University, but also at universities abroad in Denmark, the UK and the Netherlands. Of those employed in the higher education sector, most – 23 people or 79% – are employed at a gender studies department. Six people (21%) are employed at departments for other subject areas. All gender studies, institutionalised departments are represented in the survey, which can be seen as gender studies having been institutionalised in that it reproduces itself, i.e. the researchers produced through completion of their PhD's largely continue to work in gender studies, and these centres/departments largely employ 'their' own PhD graduates. The fact that a small group have jobs in other subject areas and departments can be seen as a sign that the interdisciplinary nature of the subject area also provides opportunities for gender studies PhD graduates to seek positions in other subject areas. These six people all applied for their positions in competition, and were thus assessed outside of gender studies review structures and found to be qualified for their positions by peer reviewers in other subject areas.

The largest group – senior lecturers and lecturers – can be taken as an example of how working conditions differ between different higher education institutions. When we asked whether these people have 'research as part of their job' we got a wide variety of responses. For almost half of those employed as teaching staff, i.e. senior lecturers and lecturers, research is not part of their job. Those who answered Yes to this question stated that they can conduct research for between 10% and 70% of their working hours. The fact that there is so much variation between universities is an effect of the autonomy reform in higher education. The research hours that are part of a teaching position are usually seen as a guarantee that the teaching is grounded in research. When a senior lecturer is given time to carry out their own research in addition to teaching, it is partly about assuring the quality of the teaching, but is also intended as a career development opportunity for the senior lecturer. In addition to this, the Swedish Association of University Teachers and Researchers' study shows that research hours in a position reduce the risk of work-related ill-health (Swedish Association of University Teachers and Researchers 2021).

Research on the emergence of gender studies and its prehistory often emphasises the relationship of gender studies and gender research to society and to political change (Manns 2006; Pulkkinen 2016; Liinason 2011). Gender studies is grounded in contemporary society, often with the ideal of also being able to change the situations of groups that are stigmatised, discriminated against, or rendered invisible. This was also the intention of some of the research policy initiatives concerning gender research in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s (Alnebratt 2009). It is also in line with research policy's ideas about broader career paths – efforts to make PhD graduates attractive across the labour market. But of course there are many other reasons – especially

Employed outside the higher education sector – sectors

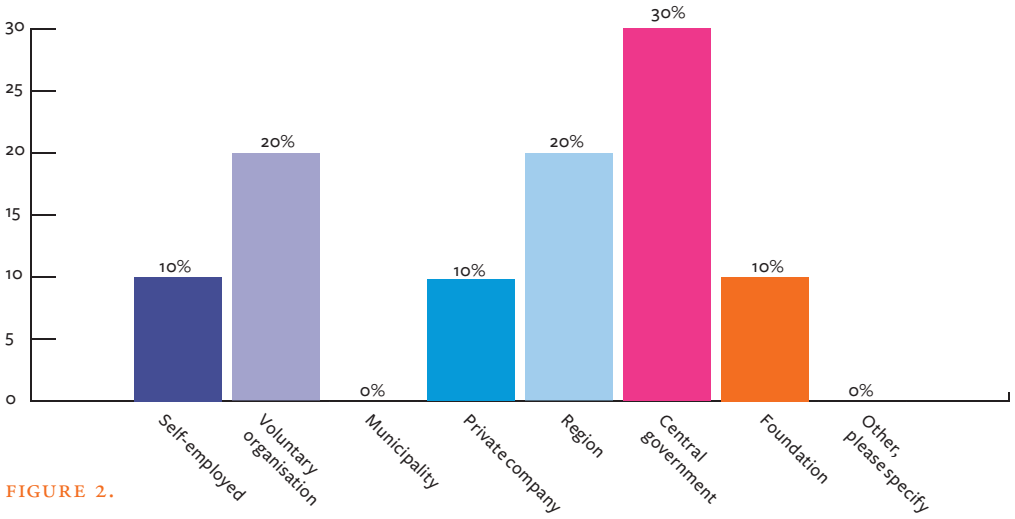


FIGURE 2.

those related to one's work situation and work environment – for seeking work outside academia.

The group currently working in organisations other than higher education institutions consisted of eleven people (27%). Those who do not work in the higher education sector are employed in many different types of organisations. They work in the public sector, local government, voluntary organisations, private companies and foundations, or are self-employed.

They have titles ranging from inquiry chair, analyst, research manager, administrative manager, policy secretary, consultant, adviser and business developer (the order is not related to the type of organisation). When asked about the extent to which they get to use their research expertise and skills in their current positions, 50% responded 'to a very high degree'.

We asked those who no longer work in the higher education sector why they have left it. Three people selected the predefined answer that they had applied for the position they have today because they did not get continued employment in higher education and/or research funding. Three people chose the option 'Interesting job in line with my expertise'. Five people chose the option 'Other' which they specified in a free text response field. The responses show the breadth of motivations for seeking work outside academia. Some stated that they were forced to due to unemployment i.e. they did not get continued employment or more research funding. It also emerged that changing family circumstances may make it necessary to look for jobs in parts of the labour market with greater job security. It is clear from these responses that the higher education sector places high demands on those who work there, both in terms of funding their own positions with research grants, and in terms of living up to fantasies of infinite work capacity and not allowing other considerations to stand in the way of academic work. Others responded that dissatisfaction with the higher education institution as a workplace was what led them to apply for jobs in other activities.

Other respondents had different stories to tell. They wrote that they wanted to broaden their skills and expertise and saw work outside academia as (at least) as interesting as work within academia. One person wrote that they had been recruited

rather than applied for their position, which is in line with responses indicating how their gender studies skills and expertise had been useful in their jobs outside academia. Many answered Yes to the question, which also demonstrates that there is a labour market for gender studies PhD graduates in other sectors.

The question of seeking work or career paths outside the higher education sector also came up in our focus group interviews. The focus group included both relatively junior and senior researchers, where the vast majority had continued to work in academia.

> It feels like the train has left the station. Now the only thing I can do is research.

Most of the focus group participants agreed that they had thought about looking for a job outside academia in the period directly after defending their thesis, as a Plan B if their applications for a career development position or project funding were not successful. However, they also agreed that it would have required some effort to really start mapping which of their qualifications could be transferable to other types of jobs. They also seem relieved that they had not had to do so. Some of them now have associate senior lectureships with good prospects of getting permanent positions within a few years. In one of the groups, the participants talk about the norm of staying in academia and the idea that if you leave, there is no way back.

> You can't be outside for a few years and then come back in. There is an element of panic in relation to trying something else.

But not everyone agreed with this view. A participant who is no longer working in academia, but who identifies as an independent scholar, thinks that it is a very good way of doing intellectual work, while not being bound by the conditions and high administrative workload in academia.

> I almost never have to be up late at night anymore. As an independent scholar, I define what I want to write and research about to a much greater extent. For example, I would rather write for book projects than write journal articles. It's fabulous not having the pressure that comes with working in academia, the freedom from it. But I also have a network from my time in academia, and I receive many requests from former colleagues, such as to be a member of a board, reviewer, doctoral supervisor, etc. I have actually been surprised by that. I thought it would end when I left academia, but it hasn't. That's really nice. I would not be able to do what I do today without my doctoral education.

Discussion

All in all, the responses show that gender studies PhD graduates have a high rate of employment and that many have work in gender studies departments or equivalent units in academia. A high percentage have or have had positions that match their skills and expertise. We can also assume that those who work in other subject area departments have jobs that match their individual skills and expertise. Among respondents who work outside the higher education sector, a large proportion have jobs where they have great use of their gender studies skills and expertise.

The results of this compilation show that there are jobs where the expertise of gender studies PhD graduates can also be used outside the higher education sector and that employers such as NGOs, central government agencies and local government are

interested in this expertise. However, if we compare with national statistics, gender studies PhD graduates are much more often still in the higher education sector. Only 38% of all PhD graduates work in the in the higher education sector (Swedish Higher Education Authority 2020a).

Career paths

What are the career paths open to gender studies PhD graduates? One way to analyse these in more detail is to divide the respondent group into cohorts – smaller groups that bring together people who graduated during roughly the same period of time. The Current situation section gives a rather fragmented picture which has to do with different respondents being at different stages in their professional life – some being recent graduates, while others are more than ten years past graduation. With a cohort-based analysis, one can relate the group's experiences to a certain period in time and changes in the research policy context and, in comparisons between groups, to see differences and continuities. The disadvantage is, of course, that the smaller the groups are, the more difficult they are to anonymise effectively. Generalisations allow us to analyse certain patterns in these career paths.

Group one is the group who graduated between 2005–2010, i.e. between 18 and 13 years ago. It is in this group that the findings can most clearly say something about career development after graduating with a PhD in gender studies, since there is the greatest amount of data about this group. The group consists of ten individuals, half of whom are currently employed outside the higher education sector and half of whom are still in the higher education sector. Those who have stayed in academia have had career paths involving many different temporary positions: some career development positions, and some temporary replacement positions or other types of project-based employment. On average, those in this group have had six different jobs since graduation and before the job they have today. Two people had experienced multiple, back-to-back, fixed-term positions, with the same employer and with roughly the same duties and rate of employment in each position. This is quite a typical picture of a career path in the higher education sector – many different fixed-term positions and sometimes back-to-back. In most cases, back-to-back, fixed-term positions are teaching positions that do not provide career development opportunities for the individual concerned (Swedish Association of University Teachers and Researchers 2018; Swedish Higher Education Authority 2022b).

Group one is a small group, but is marked by stark contrasts. Some individuals have successfully applied for many research grants, while some did not state any externally funded projects at all. Two respondents in this group stated that they had had postdoctoral appointments – applied for in competition, and financed by external funding – but most of them had started their respective careers by being co-applicants for grants for external projects. These respondents have then been the main applicant in their next project – showing progress in pursuing their careers independently. All those who have stayed in academia are now Associate Professors and of these one is also a Professor. The average time from doctorate to Associate Professor was 7.8 years and 9 years from doctorate to Professor. With this information in focus, the picture becomes more optimistic. Everyone in this group today has permanent employment and applied for

their current positions in competition, and all but one have worked at several universities since graduation.

This group is characterised by differences. It is the group where the most respondents have left academia. But within the group that stayed in academia, there are also stark contrasts, such as streaming into teaching or research at the individual level, which usually stems from the 'Matthew effect': that those who have already had successful applications for research funding in a competitive environment are more often successful in getting funding for future projects (Swedish Association of University Teachers and Researchers 2021; Bol and de Vaan et al. 2018; Sandström and Van den Besselaar 2018).

Group one could perhaps be called the pioneers in their subject area as the first PhD graduates in gender studies. This group has had few other gender studies PhD graduates to compete with. But at the same time, the environments in which they were doctoral students were small and in a delicate situation, with an older generation of gender researchers who had built up the subject area but were soon to retire. In its evaluation of gender studies in 2007, the Swedish National Agency for Higher Education noted that the environments had few teaching staff with permanent positions and in some universities, temporary replacement staff and teaching staff paid on an hourly rate basis were responsible for practically all undergraduate teaching. Teaching staff on loan from other departments contributed substantial knowledge from their respective areas of specialisation, but this also posed a risk of a lack of continuity and stability (2007). Mia Liinason's report *Genusforskningens läge och institutionella situation våren 2010 – en nulägesöversikt* ('The state of gender research and institutional situation in spring 2010 – overview of the current situation') identified a number of uncertainty factors, such as impending retirements and concerns that retired Professors' positions would not be advertised anew (Liinason, 2010). This was also a period when many universities were taking advantage of the opportunity to organise themselves freely according to their needs, and mergers into larger departments were common. In relation to these changes, concern was also expressed both in Liinason's report (2010) and in the Swedish National Agency for Higher Education's evaluation (Swedish National Agency for Higher Education 2007). Would gender studies end up being marginalised in these bigger departments? There are, of course, many ways to answer (and investigate) that question, but if a measure of continued autonomy for the subject area is its ability to employ gender studies PhD graduates, we would say that those fears did not realised.

Group two consists of those who graduated with their PhD between 2011 and 2016, i.e. between twelve and seven years ago and who thus also have a relatively long working life behind them. *Group two* comprised thirteen individuals. Of these, nine have permanent positions and two have fixed-term positions in the higher education sector at present. Two are employed outside academia.

For a majority, the path to their current work situation was paved with many temporary positions, but the picture is fragmented. While a few have not had any other positions between graduation and their current position at all, several have had between three and five. The average number of positions from graduation to their current position was two. Roughly half of the respondents in this group had experienced multiple, back-to-back, fixed-term positions. During this period, gender studies had larger student cohorts and a great need for teaching staff to teach them. 2014 stands

out in particular. (Department of Cultural Sciences 2014). That year was an election year and the political party Feminist Initiative was successful in the elections to the European Parliament. Many had also hoped that they would also win representation in the Riksdag (the Swedish parliament). In political terms, feminists were contrasted with the Sweden Democrats, and it can be assumed that interest in feminism and antiracism had direct repercussions on prospective students' interest in the subject area. Perhaps the great interest in courses in gender studies during the period led to many people getting temporary replacement teaching positions during that period? The announced retirement of more senior teaching staff and researchers in gender studies also created a labour market for more recent PhD graduates in teaching (Liinason, 2010).

The vast majority of those working in the higher education sector had applied for their current positions in competition, but two people had been transitioned to permanent employment under provisions in Sweden's Employment Protection Act. Two people had only worked at the same higher education institution where they took their doctoral degree.

A more extensive range of opportunities to acquire the research qualifications for permanent positions was open to this group than for *Group one*. Seven people had had career development positions and in addition two people had had at least one project with external funding. In total, three people in the group had had at least one project with external funding.

Three people did not list projects with external funding, while three people had been very successful in their grant applications with between two and six different projects being funded in the period after graduating with their PhD. Only one person started their academic career by being the main applicant for a project grant. The most common pattern is initially having a postdoctoral appointment or starting out as a project grant co-applicant, and then going on to become the main applicant. In general, those with postdoctoral appointments had a higher rate of employment (between 20% and 100% of full-time employment) than those who were the main or a co-applicant in a project grant application.

In *Group two*, three people are Associate Professors. The average time for this group to acquire the qualifications required for an Associate Professorship was 6.6 years, which is somewhat faster than for *Group one*.

Group three consists of those who graduated with their PhD between 2017 and 2021, i.e. those who graduated the same year as the survey was sent out and up to six years ago. The group comprised of 17 individuals. Of these, thirteen are currently employed in the higher education sector and four are employed in other sectors. In this group, the absolute majority have temporary positions – for example, postdoctoral appointments – but three are permanent employees. The majority had applied for their current position in competition.

Group three did not have much experience of previous positions but on average had had one position before their current one. Of those who have had several positions (between two and three), all had experience of multiple, back-to-back, fixed-term positions. Seven people had only worked at the same higher education institution where they took their doctoral degree. No one in this group has yet become an Associate Professor.

In *Group three* there were a few who had not been granted any external funding at all – neither in the form of project funding nor postdoctoral appointments – but the majority of the individuals in this group had or have had one or two projects or postdoctoral appointments financed with external funding. Without exception, those who have been involved in projects with external funding have been co-applicants.

Discussion

> The worst thing about academia is the precarious situation, that it is difficult to get permanent jobs. Some people have been in insecure employment for over 15 years. That is really very bad for people. That is destructive for people. And the ill-health that ensues from it; there are many who are on sick leave – or should be.

The cohort-based analysis shows that many people who have stayed in academia have had multiple, insecure positions, but that even the group that has experienced multiple, back-to-back, fixed-term positions ultimately do get permanent employment. If permanent employment is the goal for – and the means of achieving – a decent, working life in academia, then the cohort-based analysis shows that 'it gets better'. But the path to that better place is uncertain and fragmented. The individual is vulnerable to the employer's general reluctance to give permanent employment and power to bypass the provisions in Sweden's Employment Protection Act. Compared to many other sectors, the road to permanent employment in the higher education sector is long.

By analysing respondents' answers in cohort groups, we were able to reveal how career development positions are distributed over time among the new generations of gender studies PhD graduates. The higher education reform policy – here on a small scale – is having an impact. Compared to *Group one*, considerably more respondents in *Group three* had career development positions, which may reduce the risk of short-term teaching positions standing in the way of acquiring further research qualifications. Even if the free text responses provided include many examples of how collaboration with senior colleagues has been seen as crucial, important and positive, a career development position means a greater degree of independence than being a co-applicant in a colleague's project grant application. In the broader research policy context, we can see that the issue of, and concern about, unclear career paths was lively and topical around 2015. This led to both an inquiry and concrete proposals for making career paths for PhD graduates smoother by investing in career development positions – primarily associate senior lectureships. This coincides with the period of time when *Group two* were at the beginning of their postdoctoral careers. Postdoctoral appointments became more common throughout the period investigated.

For earlier cohorts of gender studies PhD graduates, a lot has been written about the structural conditions for the subject area and/or the field in general. Liinason's report is one such example, while the reports from the two evaluations of the subject area by the Swedish National Agency for Higher Education, first in 2007 and then in 2011, are others. Between 2012 and 2016, the gender studies publication series also came out and contributed meta-reflection on teaching, alumni and key concepts in gender studies (Lundberg and Werner 2014a; 2014b; 2016).

This type of investigation is not available for the last cohort, which could otherwise have provided a contextual understanding. However, something else has become more

prominent in this context, and part of the discourse on gender studies: political attacks on the gender studies and the field in general, the closing down of gender studies in Hungary, and threats and hatred targeting individual researchers and teaching staff (Ericson 2019; Clabough 2018).

Conditions for career development

What institutional support is there for career development? In this section, we bring together results from parts of the survey relating to experiences from doctoral education, networks, and institutional support for career development.

In the focus groups, it emerged that many of the participants thought about their first few years after graduation with their PhD as important for their careers moving forward, and especially how their departments dealt with doctoral students directly before and after defending their thesis. Some of the participants told us that there were support structures in their departments, for example, that they were given one month's employment in order to apply for positions and grants at the end of their doctoral studies. Some felt a more generally caring attitude from their department, a concern that they as a doctoral student should not just disappear. Others felt that there had been no support structures or care. One person mentioned these particular factors as the most important and as how they would like to see academia working.

> Having structures and networks that continue to guide you forward. So that it doesn't end up being just 'Yep, now you're a researcher. Good luck!' and then you're thrown out.

Support for career planning during doctoral education

Concerning doctoral education, we asked questions about how satisfied the researchers were with their education, their experiences of internationalisation, the degree to which their education had elements of career preparation, and what these were; and whether they had been useful for their career development after graduation. Doctoral education in gender studies should assist the doctoral student in achieving the national objectives, but is also governed by local syllabuses where the higher education institution (department/centre/faculty) can specify local objectives.

Access to career guidance and preparations for future working life in doctoral education is a theme in the survey, with Yes/No questions about access to such, and questions about whether these elements were compulsory, and the option to provide more detail in free text response fields. 16 people (41%) answered Yes to the question of whether there have been elements in their doctoral education aimed at 'acquiring knowledge about the planning, management and implementation of research projects' and 23 people (59%) answered No. When we asked whether their doctoral education had other elements aimed at preparing them for a future research career, 23 people (57%) responded Yes and 17 people (43%) No. From the free text responses provided, it is apparent that this was not an easy question to interpret and answer. Many were of the opinion that their thesis work itself was a way of 'acquiring knowledge of the planning, management and implementation of research projects'. Roughly half stated that opportunities had been provided to get insights into and feedback on writing project grant applications in more or less structured forms, at seminars and in dialogue with

their supervisors. To the question of whether these elements were compulsory, 7 people (32%) answered Yes and 15 people (68%) answered No.

The career preparation elements described varied quite widely, from compulsory elements (courses, seminars) to voluntary participation in the department's funding application seminars and informal support from former supervisors and colleagues. 42% of the entire respondent group stated that they had not undergone any career preparation activities at all within the framework of their doctoral education – neither structured and compulsory nor informal and voluntary.

35 of the respondents (87%) answered Yes to the question 'Are you satisfied overall with your doctoral education' and 5 people (13%) answered No. Of those who answered Yes, 20 went on to provide a free text response to the question 'What are you most satisfied with?'. A summary of these positive opinions is that the respondents highlighted their development into independent researchers, with the support of supervisors and doctoral student colleagues, in intellectually stimulating environments with many international contacts. In some responses, intensifiers and double exclamation marks were used to emphasise this. The learning, the experience of satisfaction with oneself and the opportunity to specialise in a subject area of interest to the doctoral student were also prominent in the responses. Some emphasised courses and the freedom to choose them. One respondent mentions the courses of a specific graduate school.

The five people who responded that they were in general not satisfied with their doctoral education primarily emphasised a lack of communication with or between supervisors, internal conflicts in the workplace and something that we interpret as a lack of structure, for example that their doctoral education did not contain much 'education'; the courses were perceived as 'randomly chosen', and there was a lack of career guidance and support in acquiring concrete skills such as how to write successful grant applications.

Formal and informal networks

On questions about networks, we differentiated between formal networks on the one hand, which have a structured form, for example by having a steering group and/or formal membership, and thus perhaps also funding; and informal networks on the other hand. Out of the 20 people who answered the question 'What formal networks have been important to your career since your graduation?' 10 people, i.e. 50%, respond with variants of 'none'. A slightly greater number responded to the graded question 'To what degree have they provided support to you in your career development?' (Figure 3).

In the next free text response question, the responses varied greatly. We asked 'In what contexts have these networks played the most important role?' and received responses that concerned collaborations, co-publication, visibility in one's field and assignments, as well as seven responses that formal networks had not been important at all for their career development.

Regarding informal networks, about half responded that they had played a very important role in their career development. Many provided free text responses stating that former supervisors, doctoral student colleagues and other more senior colleagues, as well as people in the same field, had been important when it came to opportunities for continuing their careers in academia (Heffernan 2021). Many emphasised that these are often also personal contacts. But there were also responses where the respond-

Networks: To what degree have they provided support to you in your career development?

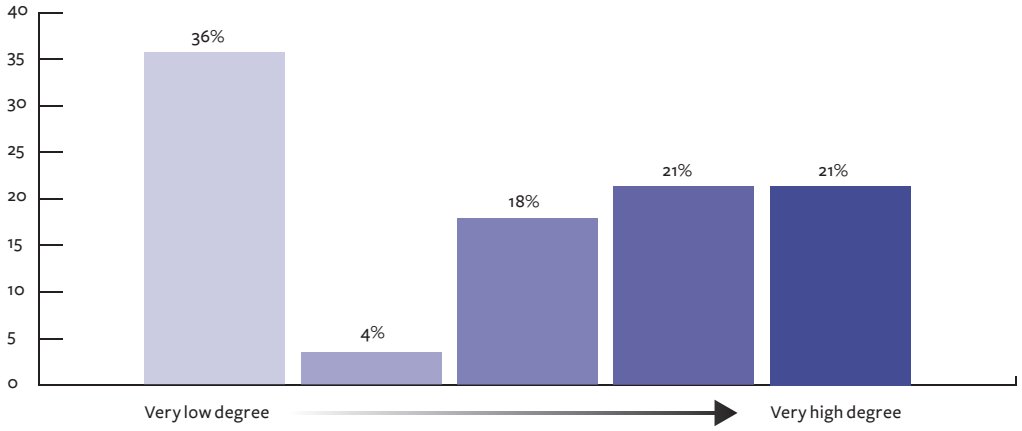


FIGURE 3.

ent indicated that career development is not primarily about networks, but about jobs and that there is a lack of advertised positions.

Institutional support for career development

Becoming an Associate Professor and/or Professor are the expressed goals of academia's career paths. There are specific differences here, since Professorships are regulated nationally, while universities themselves choose to appoint Associate Professors and thus also set the requirements for being appointed as an Associate Professor. In the survey, we ask a number of questions that intended to give an idea of what institutional support the respondents had had for the next step of their careers. We thus assume that an Associate Professorship is achieved by the PhD graduate broadening and deepening their research since their thesis, and that in various other ways, the researcher has shown how they have contributed to their field. This can include teaching, supervision, collaboration, managerial roles, leading research projects, assignments as an external reviewer/member of an examining committee, or as a peer reviewer or editor for a scholarly journal.

Most respondents who had had teaching positions – in gender studies or other subject areas – usually have no difficulty in meeting the minimum requirements in terms of teaching expertise. On the other hand, for those who had had a postdoctoral appointment or a position as a researcher, becoming qualified in the area of teaching expertise can be complicated. Departments do not have to offer researchers teaching hours, nor do department managements in fact have any responsibility for providing opportunities for career development to individual researchers. This is why we asked whether the respondents had been given the opportunity to become qualified in the area of teaching expertise since they graduated with their PhD. 29 people answered Yes to that question, while ten people answered No (Figure 4). 24 people responded that they themselves had taken the initiative to qualify themselves in the area of teaching expertise and 5 people answered No to that question (Figure 5). In response to the question of whether any manager they have or have had had taken the initiative to allow the respondent to qualify themselves in the area of teaching expertise, 20 answered Yes and nine answered No (Figure 6).

Although the largest group here responded positively to questions that indicate institu-

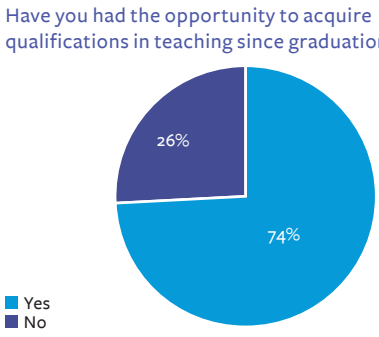


Figure 4.

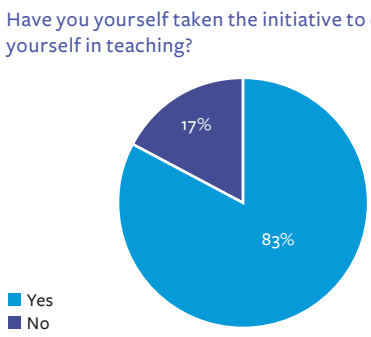


Figure 5.

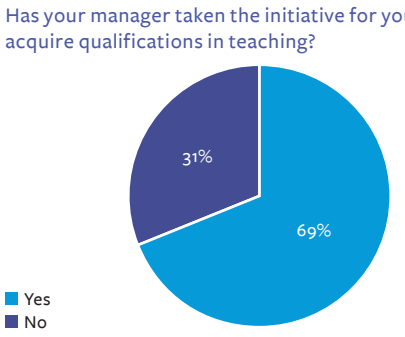


Figure 6.

Figure 7.

tional support, it is clear that this support is not comprehensive and that opportunities to access various qualifying activities can be very much conditional on the person's own initiative. In response to the question of whether they have had the opportunity to gain experience of managerial roles, 14 people answered Yes and 25 people answered No (Figure 7).

The last group is quite large, but we have to weigh this against the fact that the largest group of respondents graduated with their PhDs relatively recently. Furthermore, not everyone is interested in managerial roles or judges that these carry low weight as qualifications, in the same way as teaching expertise in relation to research, and have instead chosen to spend their time on publishing in scholarly journals to increase their qualifications.

Discussion

The findings show that most were satisfied with their doctoral education, but a few were not. Those few but critical responses identify difficulties related to structure and predictability. The frameworks for each PhD programme concerning career preparation appear to be very different at different universities. Combined with a lack of communication with supervisors and workplace problems, some doctoral students may end up not being sufficiently well prepared for a future career in the higher education sector. For the individual, it is important that career paths are transparent so that they *can* initiate various activities that will enable them to acquire the requisite qualifications to progress. The findings show that many managers initiate discussions about career development, which is necessary when there are no given structures for how the indi-

vidual should proceed in order to advance along their career path. The most important thing, however, seems to be informal networks, judging by the free text responses. But also the more predictable system that a few of the focus group interviewees talked about: having the opportunity to stay for a short period after graduation in order to have time to write applications and to continue receive the support and be part of the context of a well-known department.

Mobility and internationalisation

Moving to a higher education institution or a country other than the one where you completed your doctoral education is a strong norm in academia. Both mobility between universities and international mobility are seen as desirable and a plus in a PhD graduate's CV. Postdoctoral appointments are usually only available to researchers who have not defended their doctoral theses at the higher education institution/faculty where the appointment is located. But it is often at that higher education institution/faculty that PhD graduates have their networks, which can be important both for the development of projects and for temporary positions. However, as we have seen earlier in this study, many go from one fixed-term position to another, and this can also be seen as a kind of mobility. This mobility should be called involuntary and it is doubtful whether it would be regarded as a plus in itself in future applications for positions (Swedish Higher Education Authority 2020b). At some point, a majority of the respondents have been employed at the same higher education institution as the one where they defended their doctoral thesis, even after they received their Degree of Doctor (Figure 8). Having a shorter temporary position after graduation in the environment where you have your main contact networks is probably quite common for example. A small proportion have only ever been employed at the higher education institution where they defended their thesis (Figure 9).

Mobility in Swedish universities is generally low and one way of understanding this is that the median age of PhD graduates at graduation in the respondent group is high. Many have already established themselves in one location and want or need to stay there. In the interviews, the mobility norm was also called into question in gender studies. They wrote that they experienced the norm of geographical mobility in gender studies environments, but that it is weaker there than in other subject areas, because in gender studies many are critical of this norm. Some mentioned more senior colleagues in their vicinity who had taken active decisions not to be mobile, and that this estab-

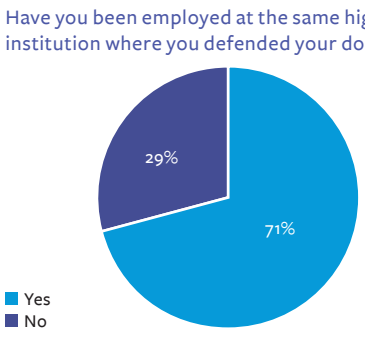


FIGURE 8.

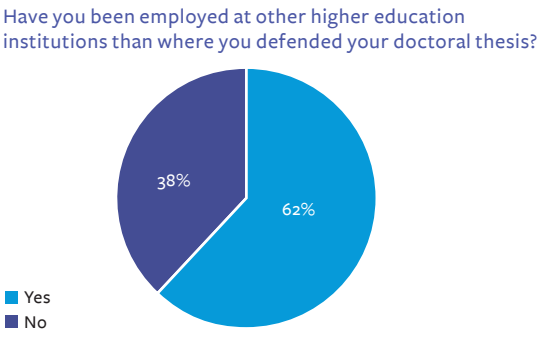


FIGURE 9.

lishes a norm that it is okay not to be mobile. Many of the participants have experience of commuting and living far away from the city they work in but emphasise that they would prefer to be living and working in the same city.

> I have a more senior colleague who made the decision to refuse to be completely mobile, who made a strong decision not to move and sacrifice their entire private life, but who has done so at the expense of working conditions. Instead, I've been highly mobile, which has meant that I have postponed private matters. I have only now decided that some things in my private life must also be able to set boundaries.

In itself, international mobility can be seen as part of the umbrella term internationalisation – activities with high status, whether they be publishing in international journals or being a visiting scholar at universities abroad.

A small section of the respondent group (15 people, or 37% of respondents) stated that they had completed part of their doctoral education abroad. 14 of these also answered the question concerning in which country they had been visiting doctoral students or had participated in international graduate school courses. Of these, 11 people (79%) had this experience in an English-speaking country, three people (21%) in other European countries, and only one person (7%) in a non-European country. The entire respondent group was also asked whether they had ever applied for jobs outside Sweden after their PhD graduation, of which 12 (30%) answered Yes and 28 (70%) answered No. Nine people answered Yes to the question of whether they had got the positions abroad that they had applied for and, in free text responses, it appears that the positions applied for were primarily senior lecturer positions, postdoctoral appointments and positions as Associate Professor. In this respect, too, European countries predominated; only one person had applied for a job in non-European country. Three people stated that they are currently working at universities outside Sweden, in different places in Europe. International mobility between gender studies in Sweden and the rest of the world is primarily to Europe.

Many of the participants also talk about mobility as an opportunity. They have worked abroad for periods of time, and believe that the opportunity to do so is important for them and one of the best things about working in academia:

> The fact that this opportunity exists in academia is extremely important to me. I don't want to move abroad forever, but I would like to spend shorter periods abroad. I can do that in academia, but not as a bureaucrat.

Another aspect of internationalisation is the international recruitment of doctoral students, which in itself implies the internationalisation of a whole research environment and the availability of doctoral courses in English, for example. Nine people (22%) report that they had moved to Sweden for their doctoral education from a large number of countries in the Nordic region, Europe and the Middle East. Of these nine, four have stayed in Sweden after graduating, and five people stated that they had moved. These five people stated a mix of professional and personal reasons for moving from Sweden after completing their studies. Three people wrote that they had got jobs at universities in other countries, and two that they had moved from Sweden for family reasons. The fact that three of the PhD graduates who had moved to Sweden for their doctoral education had since moved on to other countries for professional reasons may have to do with the mobility norm. No one specifically stated that they had moved

from Sweden after graduating with their PhD because they had been discriminated against in the Swedish higher education system, although we cannot rule out that such reasons may exist. In a free text response, one respondent pointed out that it seem to be easier to benefit from networks if you were born in Sweden. This picture is confirmed in one of the focus group interviews:

> There was no support at the department [to stay there after graduating], but I knew that beforehand. The only one who got a position directly after defending their thesis was the only Swedish-born doctoral student.

Discussion

Mobility in the Swedish higher education sector is generally low according to a survey conducted by the Swedish Higher Education Authority (2020). In gender studies, there are tendencies to both stay at the higher education institution where you have defended your doctoral thesis and to move away, but also explicit forms of resistance to these tendencies. Many of the respondents had spent time abroad during their PhD studies, and roughly a third had applied for positions abroad after defending their doctoral thesis. But relatively few had been successful in getting the positions they had applied for.

Swedish and Swedish-educated gender studies PhD graduates have oriented themselves primarily towards European countries and to some extent the USA. Historically, there have been various student exchanges in Europe in the subject area via EU-funded networks such as ATHENA and later AtGender, which could explain this orientation (Braidotti, Vonk and Wichelen 2000). It is also mainly in European countries and in the USA that gender studies is institutionalised and where PhD graduates can apply for positions, even though these environments also do exist in other parts of the world. The rather small group of gender studies PhD graduates who came to Sweden for their doctoral education is proportionally more mobile than the group that did not move to Sweden, but it is difficult to draw any general conclusions from the limited data.

Health and safety – the work environment

The majority of the participants in the focus group could not feel assured of getting a job, or being able to support themselves as researchers at the time of defending their doctoral theses, but the time it took to get their first job after graduating was less than they had thought it would be. Most of the participants had experience of working in short, fixed-term positions involving mostly teaching and often no research and generally a very high workload after graduating, which led to them experiencing a high level of stress.

In order to collect data on the work environment and occupational health of gender studies PhD graduates, we asked questions about anxiety, stress, workload and work-related ill-health. A large majority stated that they had experienced periods marked by anxiety (Figure 10).

When asked which periods had featured anxiety, the respondents could identify more than one two-year period. Many stated that the first period after graduation was marked by anxiety. In addition, even the periods thereafter, 2–3 and 4–5 years after graduating, were marked by anxiety for relatively many of the respondents. Some respondents selected the response option for the period five years after graduation (Figure 13).

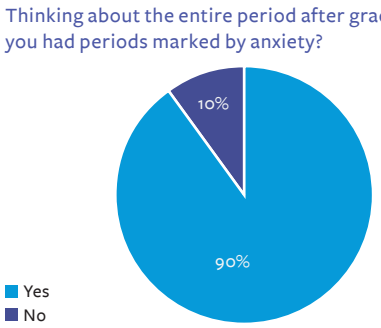


Figure 10.

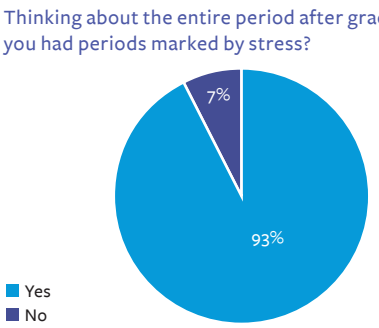
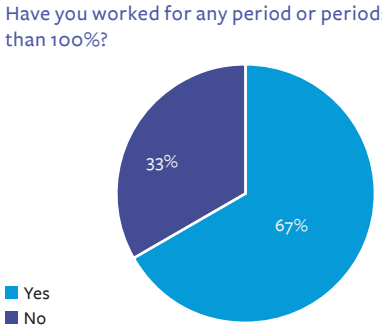


Figure 11.



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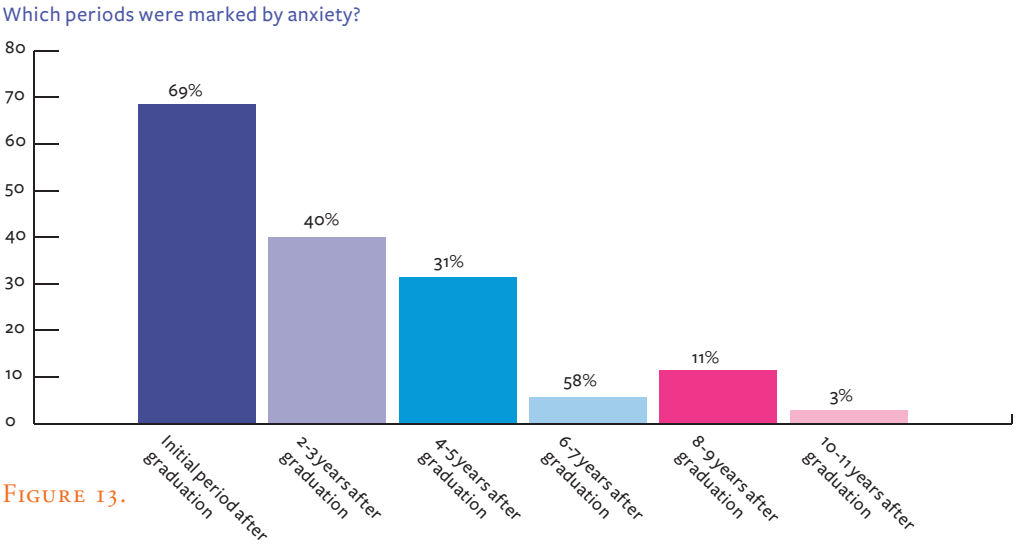


Figure 13.

An overwhelming majority stated that insecure employment has been or is the main cause of this anxiety (Figure 14). Many responded that this anxiety concerns an excessive workload, and some that it concerns a poor work environment or not having a job. A small group responded 'Other', elaborated on in free text responses. These responses can be summarised as relating to excessive workload, a poor work environment and specific events and conditions in the workplace.

A majority answered Yes to the question: 'Looking at the whole period after having graduated with your PhD, have you had periods marked by stress? Even in the responses to the follow-up question, whose response options were structured in the same

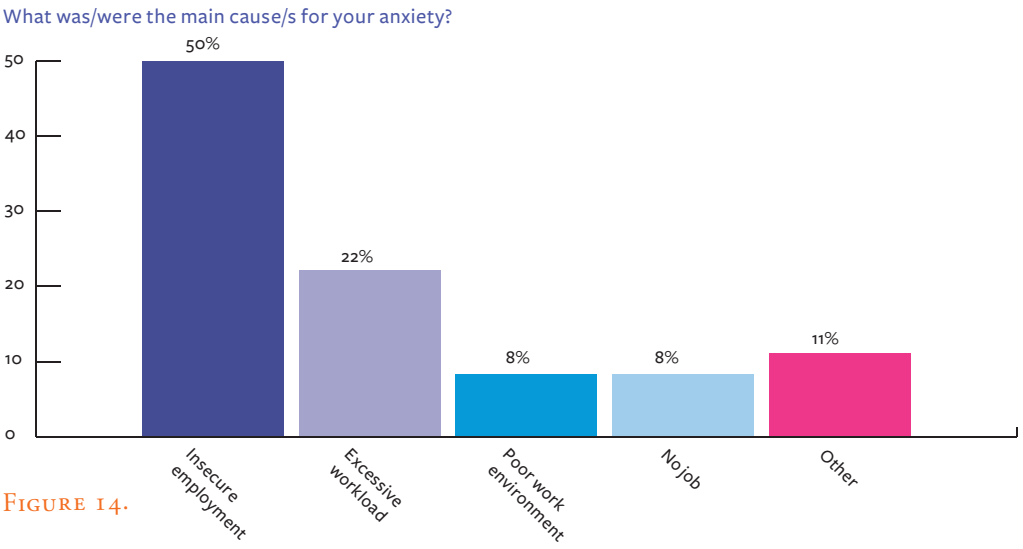


FIGURE 14.

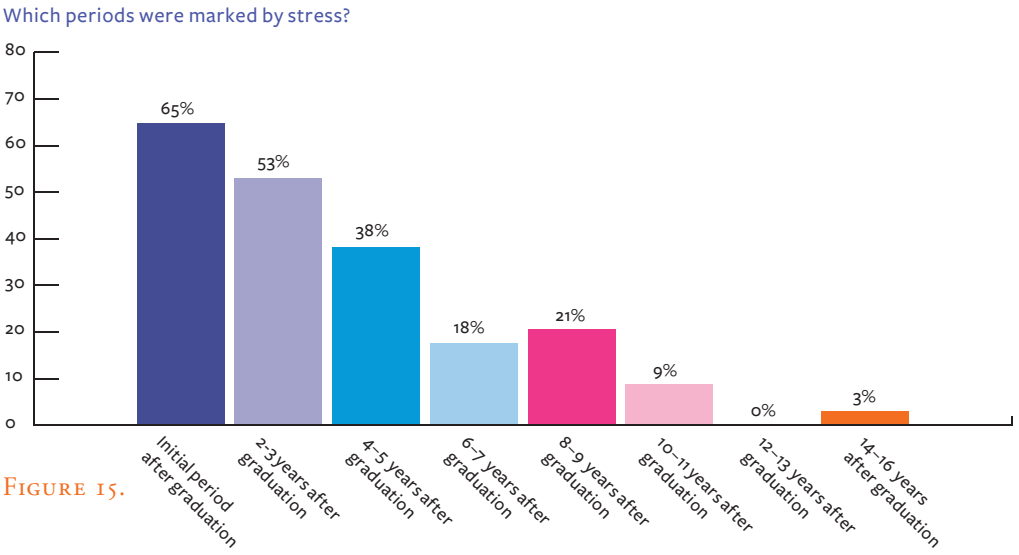


FIGURE 15.

way as the previous question about anxiety, it is clear that it is the first five years after graduation that are marked by stress for many (Figure 15).

The great majority of gender studies PhD graduates responded that an excessive workload was the main reason for stress. Some selected the option 'Insecure employment' and some 'Poor work environment' (Figure 16). Among those who selected 'Other' and elaborated in free text responses, the responses can be summed up as being about a combination of insecure employment and excessive workload. Fixed-term employment and thus an insecure livelihood led to an excessive workload due to the need to keep acquiring qualifications to be able to get a new position. Some also wrote of a feeling of stress about the need to produce and publish in combination with a heavy teaching workload.

This is also reflected in the responses to the question 'Have you worked less than full-time for any period(s)?' to which a majority also answered Yes (Figure 12). We also asked here for the relevant periods of time, in the same way as for the questions about anxiety and stress. It is clear that even here it was in the first few years after graduating with their PhDs that many had such a high workload, but even at later stages in their

career many stated that they had had a workload that exceeded 100% of full-time (Figure 17).

Finally, in this part of the survey, we asked whether stress, anxiety and/or a high workload had had negative effects on their health. 77% of respondents answered Yes (Figure 18).

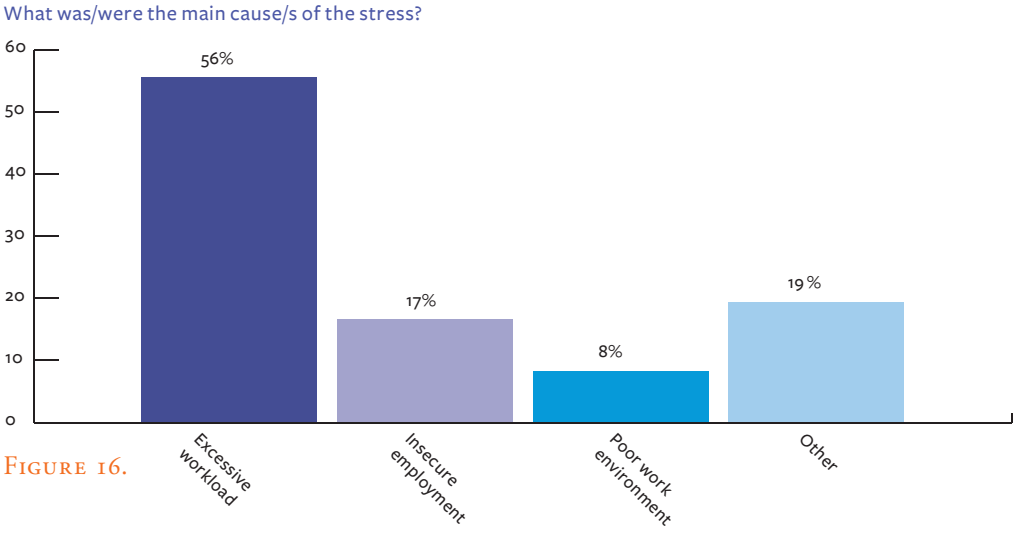


Figure 16.

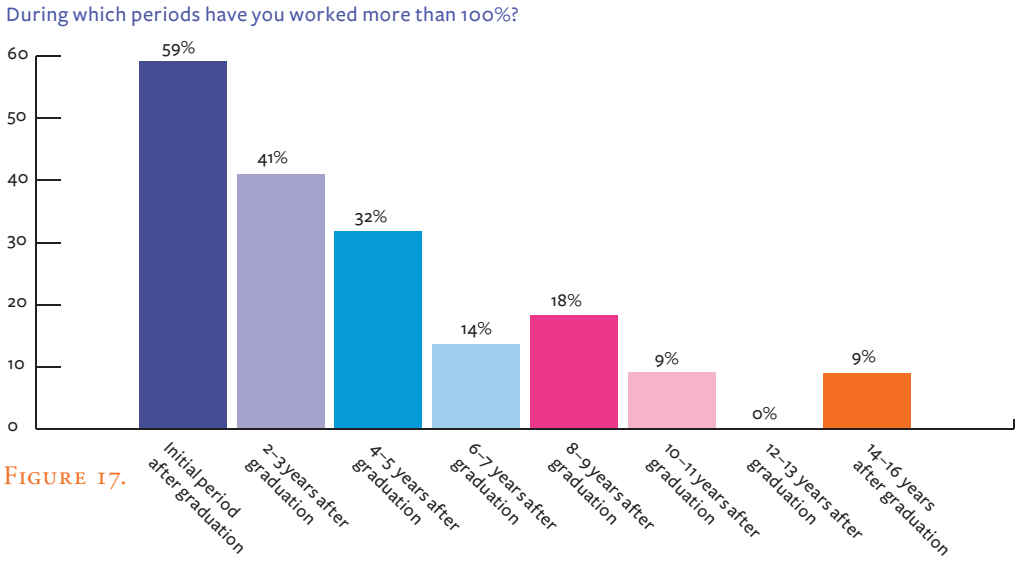


Figure 17.

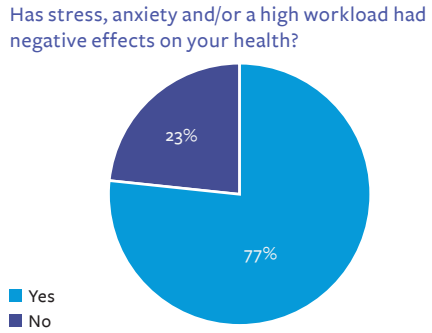


Figure 18.

Discussion

> I think it's such an incredible waste that recent PhD graduates do not get to do research directly after graduation. It should be included in the position in some way, at least 30%. Because it's cost the state a hell of a lot of money for me to get this damned doctoral education. The money could have been better spent, so that it didn't turn out that some people taught a great deal and did zero research. It is not good for the students, not good for anyone that this divide exists. A better distribution would be better in every way, both in terms of stress and career opportunities.

> I really agree that you should be able to do research after defending your thesis. Everyone I know who has managed well, in relation to stress and so on, has had research hours after defending their thesis. Those who haven't have not coped as well.

The participants in the focus group interviews saw a link between time for research and well-being and that the system that streams PhD graduates into those who carry out research and those who teach is problematic in several ways. The analysis shows that there are plenty of jobs for gender studies PhD graduates. It is not the lack of jobs that is the problem; it is this division of labour as part of the conditions for staying in academia that is a burden (Santiago and Carvalho 2008; Swedish Association of University Teachers and Researchers 2021).

It is clear from these responses that the higher education sector places high demands on those who work there, both in terms of funding their own positions with research grants, and in terms of living up to fantasies of infinite work capacity and not allowing other considerations to stand in the way of academic work. In other responses, it is apparent that dissatisfaction with the higher education institution as a workplace was what led the respondents to apply for jobs in other sectors.

In summary, we can see that the first few years after graduating, in particular the first three years, is the period when most gender studies PhD graduates experience anxiety, stress and a very high workload. A large majority have experienced anxiety, mainly due to insecure employment, and stress due to an excessive workload. The survey was sent to researchers of different academic ages and only relatively few have had more than 12 active years after defending their thesis. But generally we can see that the first few years after graduating are problematic from an occupational health perspective. The conflict between teaching and research and the requirement to keep acquiring qualifications creates many occupational health problems. Anxiety about one's livelihood is high, despite the fact that the overall rate of employment is high in the group. In the focus groups, most people shared this view, where the participants talked about anxiety and stress during the initial period after defending their theses, mainly due to high workload and insecure employment, and thus anxiety about the future.

Gender studies: interdisciplinarity and research orientation

How do gender studies PhD graduates orient themselves in relation to this interdisciplinary subject area and gender research as a broad, interdisciplinary field? How do they

view their own skills and expertise in a competitive structure and in competition, not just with other gender studies PhD graduates, but also with other gender researchers?

Institutionalisation is of course not just a matter of employment, but also of roles and of the contexts that these graduates seek out to publish their research, for example. As more people gain a doctorate in gender studies, there will be more assessment by individuals with the same interdisciplinary background as the person being assessed, who will thus be participating in the reproduction of disciplinary norms. It is this important step that Nina Lykke also points out as part of an independent institutionalisation – to control the assessment of candidates prior to appointment (Lykke, 2009). As we have previously argued, researchers must orient themselves at the point of intersection between the individual's intention, the structure's opportunities and constraints, and the scholarly field's interpellation of the gender studies scholars PhD (Ahmed, 2006).

Concerning being included in gender studies' own review structures, which adds to one's qualifications for promotion in itself, four people had had assignments as reviewers for the appointment of positions in gender studies. Six respondents had had assignments as external reviewer for the examination of a doctoral student in gender studies. 31 respondents stated that they had had assignments as peer reviewers of manuscripts for gender studies scholarly journals. Eight people (20%) responded that they had not had any assignments of this kind. This should probably be understood in the context of many of the respondents only recently having defended their theses, rather than thinking that 20% are completely disengaged from the gender studies review structure.

Concerning assignments in other main fields of study, subject areas and/or fields, 14 people responded No, which means that 25 people had had one or more of the identified review assignments (of manuscripts, as reviewers for appointments, or as external reviewer at the defence of a student's doctoral thesis). We interpret this as many in the group of gender studies PhD graduates being well integrated into the structures in which they contribute as experts in their own subject area. In this respect too, gender studies is institutionalised. In addition, many gender studies PhD graduates are in demand as external reviewers in other disciplines.

Scholarly publication can be seen as how the researcher orients themself in contexts where they want to make a research contribution. But it is also a way of capturing interdisciplinary tendencies. Roughly half of the respondents stated that they have primarily been published in gender studies journals since graduating. Fewer, but still a considerable proportion, responded that they had primarily published in journals with other subject area specialisations (Figure 19). Roughly the same distribution was found regarding specialisation among the conferences at which they made presentations. (Figure 20). Thus, many seek publication in journals and attend conferences outside of gender studies contexts. This is in line with the fact that 35 people (87%) – thus a majority – themselves identify their research as interdisciplinary. When the respondents were asked to name which journals and/or conferences they contributed to, the breadth is striking. In practice, gender studies still seem to be highly interdisciplinary, both at the individual level and as a subject area.

Roughly half of the respondents stated that they are concerned that their interdisciplinary skills will not be utilised in their future careers. When asked to provide detail in a free text response, a fairly clear picture emerges that the structure of academia is disciplinary and there is a great deal of concern that assessment of their qualifications

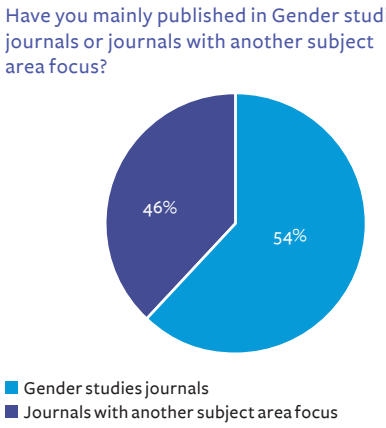


Figure 19.

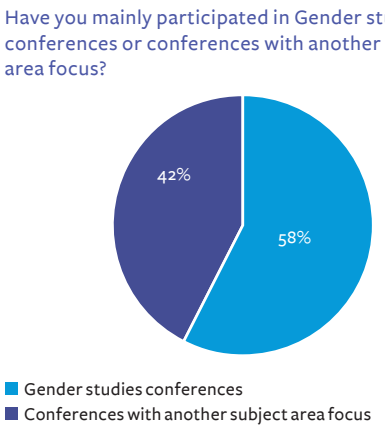


Figure 20.

for appointment to positions in other subject areas will be marked by a lack of understanding – even that their research will be seen as "incomprehensible". Not just in relation to other subject areas, but quite generally, the respondents described their research as narrow, queer, and that gender studies is not counted as a subject area like other subject areas. Some of this concern is about the lack of positions and some express very strong views that gender studies continues to employ researchers who have taken their doctorate in other subject areas, while the reverse does not apply. The labour market is perceived to be very narrow.

Another concern is not about how others view gender studies or even their own research, but about their own experience that interdisciplinarity leads to a lack of specialisation, superficiality and that their knowledge becomes fragmentary. This is a common concern within interdisciplinary research subject areas and includes insecurity about one's own skills and expertise, as well as concern about the narrowness of the niche within which one can apply for positions (Mobjörk et al. 2020).

When it comes to the issue of whether their skills and expertise will be utilised in their future working lives, roughly one third expressed concerns about this. In their free text responses, those who have this concern describe how gender studies seems to lack legitimacy in a broader societal context and is seen as politically motivated and dogmatic. One person writes that they are worried about being vilified in the media and that this negativity will lead to greater difficulties in getting research grants. Many also mention difficulties in getting positions. Even those who believe they can get positions in other subject areas see it as less positive for the development of their research. Thus, in the responses to both these questions, there are analyses of the conditions operating in the higher education sector, in terms of both its organisation into disciplines, and the threat that gender studies does not have legitimacy (Pereira 2012).

Discussion

When it comes to the structural conditions for work in and outside academia after graduation, the conditions for gender studies PhD graduates are not different from those for PhD graduates in other subject areas. However, there are factors that are significant for both working conditions and career paths that are specific to gender studies. One such factor is the interdisciplinary nature of the subject area. The respondents

showed ambivalent attitudes to the interdisciplinarity of gender studies, particularly in academia, which is organised in disciplines. However, this disciplinarity – or institutional structure – is also a prerequisite for creating longevity, jobs and the reproduction of the organisation through education. We can also see that individual researchers orient themselves to a large extent towards gender studies journals and conferences and that their expertise is utilised in the review structures of the subject area. But many orient themselves towards other subject areas through publication and conference presentations. In other words, gender studies continues to operate in an interdisciplinary way and is integrated into fields, scholarly journals and conferences other than those purely devoted to gender studies.

CHAPTER 3:
Career paths and working conditions for gender researchers

What is the work situation like for gender researchers? How does this group relate to that name, to development within each discipline, and to gender studies as its own subject area? In this chapter, we analyse the state of the working conditions for individuals within what has come to be called the gender research field. As we have already mentioned in the report's introduction, the relationship between gender studies and gender research has shifted over time. One way to say something about how relevant it is to name a field is to look at its incidence in publications about the field's development. Following the intense political interest in gender research in the 1990s, the Swedish National Agency for Higher Education at the time published a popular science series on gender research within a long list of disciplines, from engineering to economics (Ah-King 2012; Boschini 2005; Eriksson-Zetterquist 2012; Hammarström 2004; Nordenstam 2003; Wernersson 2006; Öhman 2009). Relating gender research to existing disciplines in this way speaks against seeing it as a field. In a report by Annika Olsson, *Genusforskning pågår* (2007) ('*Gender research in progress*'), Swedish gender research was mapped through, for example, the GENA database. The findings showed that gender research was in principle being carried out in all disciplinary domains and thus complemented the disciplinary orientation of the Swedish National Agency for Higher Education.

During a period in the 2010s, interest in gender research seems to have waned – there were no publications or reports published in Sweden with the word gender research in the title – but as the global anti-gender movement gained greater visibility, the need to describe a broader field seems to have returned. In *Tidskrift för genusvetenskap* (Journal of Gender Studies) a number of columns were published, authored by the Swedish Gender Research Confederation, which dealt with gender research in relation to a new antagonistic and challenging context (see, for example, Ericson 2019; Mulinari and Martinsson 2018). An exception to this trend was an article by Helena Wahlström Henriksson and Annika Olsson. The article entitled "I vetenskapandets vardagsrum: Representationer av genusforskning och genusvetenskap i KVT/TGV 1980–2017" ('The everyday practices of scholarship. Representations of gender studies as research field and discipline in KVT/TGV 1980–2017') analyses the content of the journal's 40-year history based on questions about the authors' disciplinary affiliations (Wahlström Henriksson and Olsson 2022). The analysis is based on the demarcations that occur in academia's daily procedures, some of which also appear as themes in this report:

> What is the field and how do we relate to it when we plan courses, write articles, examine students, admit doctoral students, assess research, advertise positions? What is gender research and what is gender studies? Are they the same thing or parts of the same thing? (Wahlström Henriksson and Olsson, 2022: 8)

The article shows that *Kvinnovetenskapligt tidskrift/Tidskrift för genusvetenskap* had shifted from clear links to disciplines such as literary studies, history and sociology, to – from the 2000s – having a predominance of authors from gender studies, and themed numbers with names that did not point as specifically to certain disciplines.

In our investigation of gender researchers' career paths and working conditions, our focus is not, therefore, first and foremost on institutionalisation. The researchers work in a very wide range of departments each with their own historical and contemporary conditions, which we have not been able examine in any depth in this study. For the same reason, we have not analysed the experiences of individual researchers during their doctoral studies beyond the questions we have asked about supervision and seminars with a gender research focus during doctoral studies. We were interested in how gender researchers orient themselves to the subject areas in which they defended their theses and asked questions about identification with, contributions to and assignments within their own subject area, other subject areas and specifically gender studies.

Presentation of the respondent group

Of the 29 people who responded to the survey distributed to gender researchers, 23 people (80%) chose the option 'Woman' and five people (17%) chose the option 'Man'. One person (3%) selected the option 'Other' but did not specify their gender identity. The preponderance of women in gender research is common and has historical reasons. The lack of a women's perspective in research and education was first identified by women researchers and students and has historically gone hand-in-glove with efforts to make academia more gender-equal and to challenge patriarchal ideas, norms and discrimination in the sector.

The respondents were born between 1944 and 1990. The average age at graduation with their PhD was 38 years, while the median age was 35 years, which lies close to the median age for all PhD graduates in Sweden, which is 34 years (Statistics Sweden 2021).

20 people answered the question about their country of birth. Of these 20, 16 people (80%) specified 'Sweden', three people gave the names of other countries, and one did not want to state their country of birth for reasons of maintaining anonymity. The fact that the majority of gender researchers were born in Sweden is not unexpected, since we have sought out researchers who defended their theses up to sixteen years ago and generally speaking, the internationalisation of Swedish doctoral education has occurred in recent years.

Working conditions and career development

Where do gender researchers work after their PhD graduation? Of the respondents, 25 (89%) answered that they currently have their main source of income from work at a higher education institution. Three people (11%) answered that they do not, and that they have their main source of income from work in an organisation outside higher education.

In the same way as for gender studies PhD graduates, it is most common to stay in the higher education sector after graduation. Neither of these groups (gender studies PhD graduates nor gender researchers) are large, but that is in line with the situation generally in humanities and social sciences. In a national comparison that includes

all those who have defended a thesis, this is a high figure (Swedish Higher Education Authority 2020a). The fact that those who work in academia are mostly employed as senior lecturers is not either unusual in the humanities and social sciences. However, there are also other categories of employment represented. Four of the respondents are employed as researchers, three as postdoctors, two as postdoctoral research fellows, two as administrative staff, and one in the category 'Other research or teaching staff with a doctorate' (Figure 21).

That there are quite significant differences between different categories of employment has to do with the respondents being at different stages in their professional lives, but the proportion with permanent employment is relatively high. Compared to gender studies PhD graduates, where 57% have permanent employment, the share for gender researchers is 71%. This difference can be understood in several ways. Many, more established disciplines have more permanent positions than gender studies has overall, which is in line with the fact that most gender researchers work in departments/centres other than gender studies departments/centres. Many of the respondents selected 3 or 4 on a five-point scale in answer to the question to what extent they get to use their gender research skills and expertise in their current job (Figure 22).

Positions among employees in the higher education sector

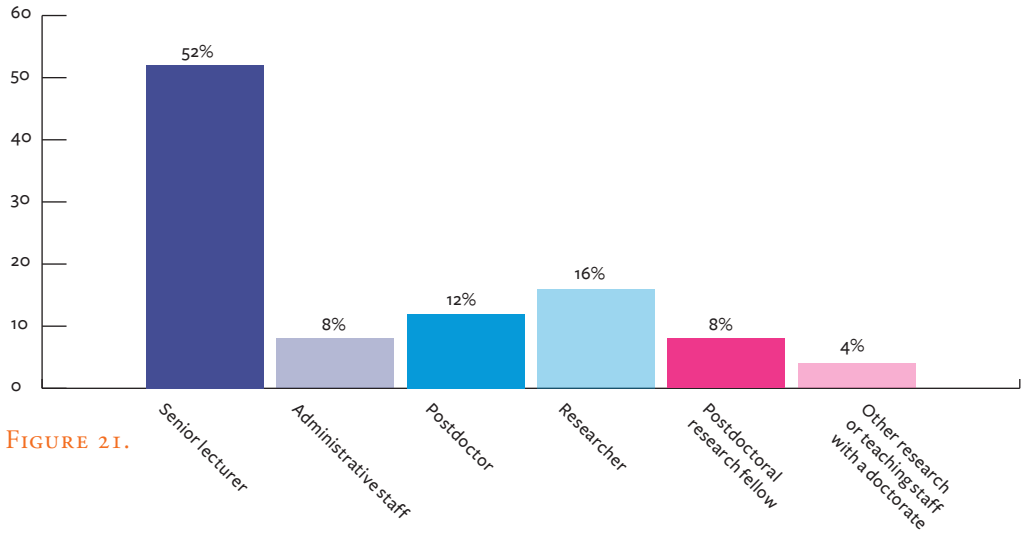


Figure 21.

To what extent do you feel that you get to utilise your gender research skills and expertise in this position?

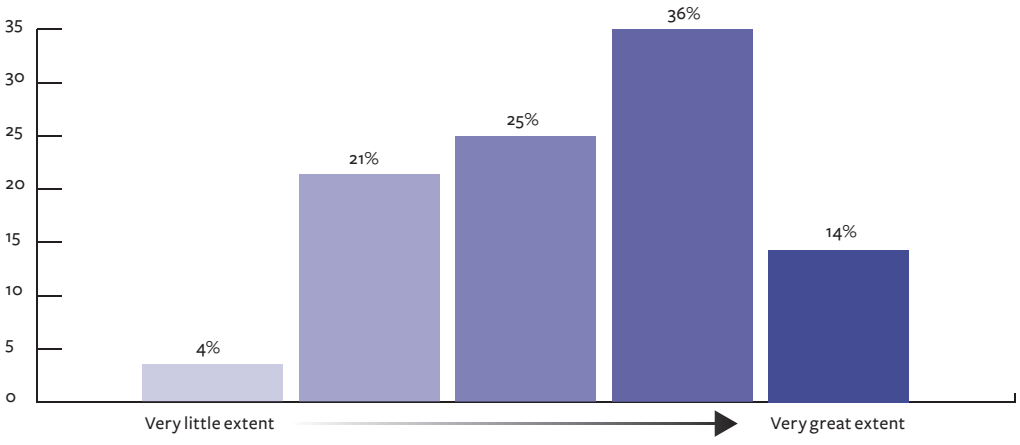


Figure 22.

One informant in the focus group interviews argued that it was obvious to them that it was easier to get a position in a subject area other than gender studies:

> I switched because it was easier to get jobs, and actually I'm doing the same thing. I just switched to another interdisciplinary field.

Twenty respondents (71%) stated that they have permanent employment. In addition, three respondents stated that they have fixed-term/temporary employment (11%), one has project-based employment (4%) and four selected the 'Other' option (14%) which they specified as a postdoctoral appointment or employment linked to external funding. None stated that they were self-employed or are employed on an hourly basis. 25 people (92%) stated that they work full-time. A small proportion, two people (8%), stated that they work part-time.

Career development positions

> Went in [after graduation] and started teaching full-time – then I got a postdoc. Probably wouldn't have continued if it had been just teaching, it was too tough.

As we have already mentioned, research policy's primary contribution to clear and transparent career paths is the development and support of career development positions. In the statistics of the Swedish Higher Education Authority from 2018, we can follow the rise in career development positions in the 2000s.

> The number of career development positions was relatively small in 2007, but since then the number of postdoctors has increased significantly, from 380 to 2,340 full-time equivalents, i.e. by nearly 1960 full-time equivalents. (…) The number of newly employed postdoctors in 2017 was 1,260, which corresponds to just over 40% of a cohort of PhD graduates (Swedish Higher Education Authority 2018).

We have not divided our sample here into cohorts, but have a group that has graduated at different times between 2005 and 2021. This is a very interesting quote, since it indicates a high level of ambition to provide possible career paths within the higher education system. One respondent chose the option 'some form of career development position' in answer to the question about their current employment. On the question of previous employment, it emerged that 13 people (48%) have had a career development position (postdoctoral appointment, associate senior lectureship or postdoctoral research fellowship), while 14 responded No (52%).

Previous employment

Concerning previous employment, most respondents had been employed mainly in the higher education sector (82%) and many stated that their previous positions have mainly been temporary (85%). A relatively large proportion (41%) responded that they had had a number of fixed-term, back-to-back positions with the same employer and with roughly the same duties and scope referred to in Swedish as *stapling*/stacking.

The main occupation for approximately half of the respondents during their careers was research (13 people, 48%), while the other half had mainly taught (14 people, 52%) (Figure 23).

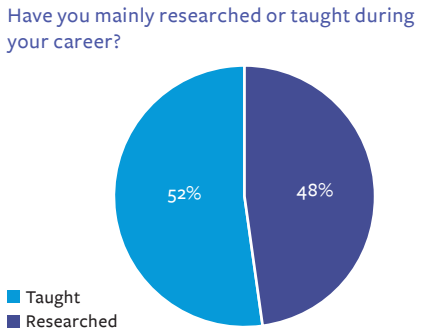


Figure 23.

Of those who had mainly taught during their working lives, most had taught the most hours at undergraduate level (14 people, 52%) or equal hours of teaching at undergraduate and post graduate levels (11 people, 41%). At some point during the period from their PhD graduation to the position they have now, most (24 people, 89%) had been employed (had projects or positions) at a department for the subject area in which they defended their thesis.

Employment outside higher education

> If I were to work outside academia, I think it would be a job where I can do research but outside academia, perhaps a think tank, or whatever. But I don't think about that anymore. The door that I thought was open five years ago isn't now; I'm not that interested any more. Now it also feels like it would be too restrictive, I would lack freedom. Clocking on at an office, which was normal before, would feel strange now.

None of those who were interviewed have chosen a career path entirely without research. The above quote is representative of in principle how all the participants talked about the advantages and disadvantages of staying in the higher education sector. Freedom is what matters, although many also talked about situations that were anything but free.

On the other hand, a small group of PhD graduate gender researchers work outside the higher education sector. They are employed in voluntary organisations and central government. They work as inquiry chairs, analysts, advisers and strategists. When asked about the extent to which they get to use their research skills in their current positions, all responded with either 2 or 3 on a five-point scale, where 5 was 'To a very great extent'. They responded that they had applied for their current position because it was an interesting job in line with their expertise, because it is an important activity, or because it was an interesting position. As with gender studies PhD graduates, gender researchers may be endeavouring to not only study power relationships but also change various power relationships. Going outside academia can be part of such an endeavour. Most of the responses are in line with the idea that it is important to include the knowledge acquired from gender research in other sectors. A couple of respondents however indicated that they felt that the conditions in academia were insecure and difficult to combine with their family situations.

Discussion

The majority of the gender researchers are still working in the higher education sector after getting their doctorates, which is common among PhD graduates in social sciences and humanities. During the period investigated, the number of postdoctoral appointments has increased throughout the sector, thus enabling new PhD graduates to continue to acquire research qualifications. About half of the gender researchers have had a career development position. A similar general division between those who have mainly researched in their careers and those who have mainly taught also applies to the gender researcher group: about half responded 'research' and half 'teaching'.

A small proportion have sought employment outside academia in jobs that in part align with their research skills acquired within academia. A few responded that it was instead the uncertainty in the sector that led them to leave it. Many respondents had experience of fixed-term, back-to-back positions, which is just such an example of poor working conditions in the higher education sector that can motivate individuals to leave it.

Mobility and internationalisation

> There is a strong mobility norm, but it is not as strong in gender studies, because many are critical of it. That's what it looks like in the discourse anyway but maybe it doesn't in practice. In [the subject area of the PhD thesis], the mobility norm was much stronger.

In the focus groups, there was agreement that it may be worth moving or commuting to another city for a job, but in most cases this was involuntary mobility because of the lack of positions in the city considered to be home. Mobility is an umbrella term in research policy and has become the term for activities that are seen as good for one's career and also important for research. Mobility between higher education institutions is also an academic ideal, which also manifests itself in practice in, for example, postdoctoral appointments financed by a university usually only being available to researchers who have defended their thesis at another higher education institution. But it is often at the higher education institution/faculty where a person has defended their doctoral thesis that they have their networks, which are important both for the development of projects and for temporary positions. Most respondents had worked at the higher education institution where they had defended their PhD thesis at some time after graduation, but a majority had also changed to another higher education institution at some time (Figures 24 and 25).

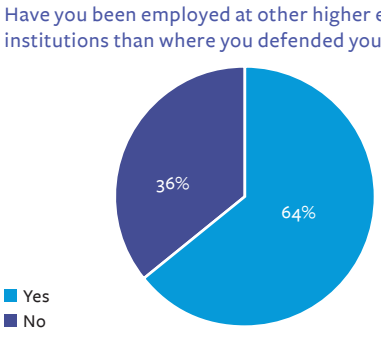


Figure 24.

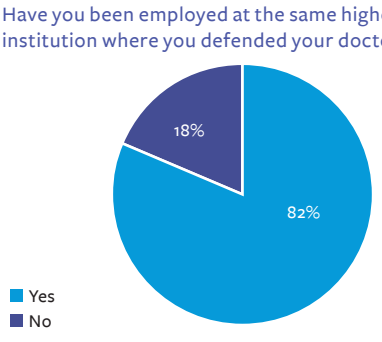


Figure 25.

Internationalisation is an umbrella term for activities that enable the accumulation of qualifications and is driven by strong positive values. International collaborations, exchanges, publication in international journals and visits to international universities have high status. The term is used to describe how Swedish-born researchers generate contacts at universities abroad as well as the recruitment of foreign doctoral students (and researchers) to Swedish higher education institutions.
Five respondents (17%) stated that they had completed parts of their doctoral education abroad. Of these five, three have been in the USA and two in European countries. The entire respondent group was asked whether they had ever applied for jobs outside Sweden after graduation, of which 6 (21%) answered Yes and 22 (79%) answered No. Five of those who stated that they had applied for positions abroad were successful in their applications. It is clear from the free text responses that the positions applied for were mainly senior lectureships, postdoctoral appointments and international projects. They applied for these positions mainly in European countries. Only one person applied for a job in a non-European country. International mobility between gender researchers in Sweden and the rest of the world is geographically limited primarily to Europe.

International recruitment of doctoral students among gender researchers was small in our sample: only two respondents stated that they had moved to Sweden for their doctoral education. These people both come from non-European countries. Of the two who came to Sweden for their doctoral education, one has stayed in Sweden and one has moved after being offered employment in another Nordic country.

Discussion

Mobility in the Swedish higher education sector is generally low, as we have described above. The median age for PhD graduation is 35 years in the respondent group, so it is reasonable to assume that many are established in one place by that time in their lives and are not willing to move permanently. International exchanges for gender researchers are also quite limited, both incoming and outgoing. Few have experience of international exchanges from their doctoral education, and few have applied for positions abroad after graduation with their PhD, but of those who have done so, many were successful in getting these positions. Again, it is difficult to interpret the results because we cannot know the specific disciplinary contexts, although we can assume that mobility norms are stronger or weaker in different contexts and even explicitly resisted in some contexts. What we can see is that internationalisation in the limited sense we have investigated here is strongly oriented towards English-speaking countries.

Gender research, disciplinary domains and scholarly orientation

22 people (76%) responded Yes to the question of whether they identify as gender researchers. The remaining 24% responded No. Nevertheless we will continue to call this group 'gender researchers' on the basis that the term is linked to GENA's selection, based on the title and keywords of each thesis.

The fact that such a large proportion do not identify as gender researchers may

have many explanations. Research with a gender dimension can be carried out without identifying with a broader field. The term 'gender researcher' can be perceived as too general, as not saying anything about a person's research focus; or too narrow if a person has many different research focuses. We also think that it is very much due to whether or not – in the specific environment in which the respondent completed their doctoral education, or their current context – people talk about gender research. Researchers develop and change their subject area focuses over time, and might have identified themselves with the field of gender research as a doctoral student, but not now.

The group's disciplinary backgrounds are diverse, but for reasons of anonymity, we have not reported all their main fields of study. In general – and not surprisingly – all are found in the social sciences or humanities disciplinary domains, with a slight tendency towards the social sciences. Although gender research exists in all disciplinary domains, it is generally in the humanities and social sciences domains that these perspectives have been developed and there are therefore scholarly traditions in these domains on which to build further.

Most gender researchers who have continued to work in the higher education sector (16 people or 57%) are employed by the department in the subject area in which they defended their thesis but many are not: twelve people (43%) work in a different discipline. The second largest group is thus those who are employed in another subject area, but not gender studies (Figures 26 and 27).

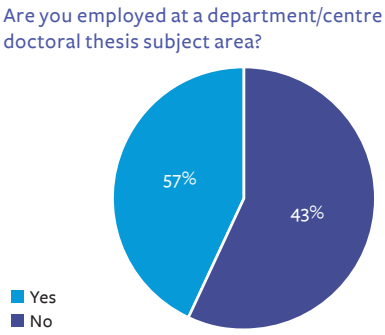


Figure 26.

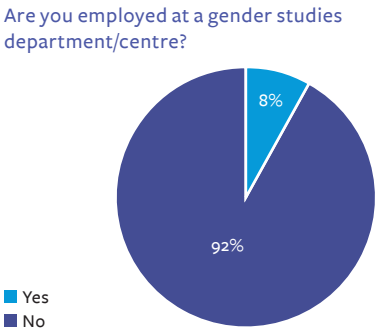


Figure 27.

Only two people (8%) of the respondents currently work in a gender studies department/centre, while 92% responded No to that question. Asked whether at any time from graduation to the present they had been employed or had placed external grants at a gender studies department/centre, nine people (32%) responded Yes, while 19 people (68%) responded No. Asked whether they had been employed or had a project at the department/centre for their PhD thesis subject area, 19 (89%) responded Yes and 8 people (11%) responded No.

Thus it is not unusual for the gender researcher group to move on to employment in another subject area. It is rare, howev, that they move on to a job in gender studies. This can, of course, be due to many different things, for example, not all universities have gender studies departments, and those that exist have few employees.

Since our sample selection was based on doctoral theses, questions related to the re-

spondents' doctoral education and conditions for pursuing gender research within the frameworks of these PhD programmes are important. 21 people (72%) stated that they had a supervisor or assistant supervisor with gender research expertise and eight people (28%) answered No to that question. Slightly more than 22 respondents (76%) stated that they participated in seminars with a gender research focus during their doctoral studies, while seven (24%) stated that they did not participate in or did not have access to such seminars. This information aligns with the question of self-identification as a gender researcher or not.

We get a more in-depth picture if we analyse the free-text responses asking respondents how they 'felt that the gender perspective was valued in the research environment in which you completed your doctoral education'. Most who responded talked about gender research being controversial at their departments when they were pursuing their doctoral studies. Some parts of the departments were positive and others had a negative attitude to gender research. Four respondents stated that the environment had an unequivocally negative attitude or did not value the gender dimension very highly, were resistant to it, or saw it as a threat, or as a problematic element. Four others described only a positive attitude where the gender dimension was valued highly, and described their doctoral education environments as open and transparent, and that there were gender researcher groups and contexts within that environment. One person described gender research as fundamental to the subject area. Other responses described ambivalent situations where there was an element of invisibility, while others described individual colleagues or research groups as being supportive and interested. Some described progression in embracing the gender perspective during the course of their doctoral education or that the gender dimension suffered a backlash. Gender research in some environments was described as being seen as new and exciting, or as valid but not central.

Despite the ambivalence in these narratives, a majority persist in calling themselves gender researchers, and we can also see that many have had institutional support in pursuing gender research within their subject areas during their doctoral studies. However, for career development after graduating with a PhD, a researcher needs to take account of their own interests as well as institutional recognition and recognition in their field. We return to Sara Ahmed's understanding of the concept of orientation, influenced by queer phenomenology (2006). Orientation is about direction and intention: about organising one's own efforts and initiatives in order to be accepted and integrated into a particular context. However, not all orientations are possible. The context sets various kinds of boundaries on the individual's movement. As we described previously, career path is a a normative term for a system with clear goals. In order to progress through the different stages, the individual needs to acquire qualifications, but the value of these qualifications is assessed by external experts within the discipline in which you find yourself. When we think of it in terms of this idea of orientation, gender research is a place where the individual may need to negotiate their intentions and their research interests in relation to an environment that will decide whether or not their work qualifies as progression in their career.

We specifically looked at the respondents' orientation in relation to the subject area in which they defended their thesis, and in relation to gender studies; and in relation to other subject areas in the areas that qualify them for progression to higher academic

rank: publications and conference contributions. Other qualifying areas, such as assignments as peer reviewers, are more concerned with how the environment interprets a person's expertise and generates orientation because the individual researcher's specific expertise is in demand.

Concerning publications, 18 respondents (62%) stated that, after graduating with their PhD, they have mainly published in journals specialising in the subject area of their doctoral thesis; while three respondents (10%) have mainly published in gender studies journals and eight respondents (28%) in journals with other subject area focuses. For conference presentations, the figures look similar: 21 respondents (75%) stated that they had mainly presented papers at conferences within the subject area of their doctoral thesis, four respondents (14%) had presented papers at gender studies conferences, and three (11%) at conferences in other subject areas (Figures 28 and 29).

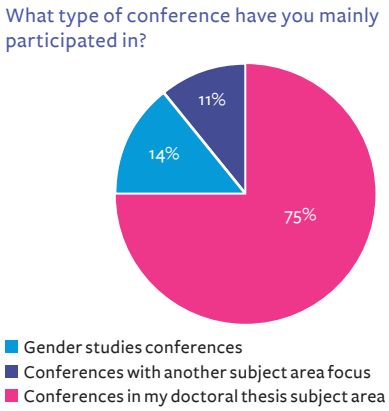


Figure 28.

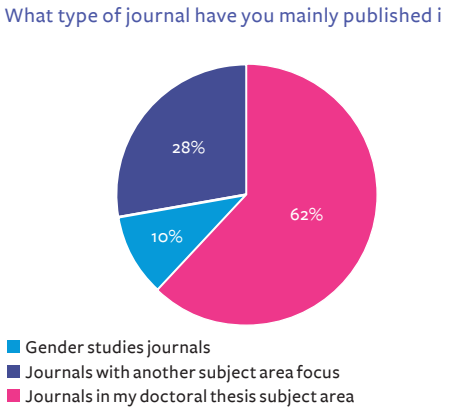


Figure 29.

The question about assignments and roles within academia concerns demand for a researcher's expertise and how it is interpellated by the research community. This is, of course, a consequence of the focus of a person's research, but is not as strongly influenced by intention and interests. Rather, it can be seen as an institutional response to individual efforts within a subject area. Since graduating with their PhD, 22 respondents (82%) have had various kinds of assignments – as reviewers in academic appointment cases, as external reviewer or as peer reviewer within the subject area of their thesis. One person had had a reviewer assignment for an academic appointment in gender studies, and 10 people responded that they had acted as peer reviewers of manuscripts for gender studies journals. None had had assignments as an external reviewer at the public defence of a doctoral thesis in gender studies.

When we asked where the respondents had done the majority of their teaching, their responses also showed that it was primarily within the subject area of their doctoral thesis. Three people (11%) had mainly taught in gender studies. 16 people (59%) had mainly taught in the subject area of their doctoral thesis, and eight people (30%) in some other subject area.

It is clear that most people in the respondent group orient themselves to the subject area in which they defended their thesis either through employment, activities in that subject area's own infrastructure, or through teaching. Their research identity can be oriented towards gender studies, as is the case for a few, or towards other disciplines.

At some point, one third had a position or project grant with placement at a gender studies department, but very few are employed in gender studies departments at present. Gender researchers' expertise is in demand for peer review assignments for gender studies journals, which shows that journals take a broad approach to the utilisation of skills and the available workforce. But there are far more peer review assignments for journal articles than positions advertised, for example, or gender studies PhD graduates, so involvement in this activity does not necessarily lead to employment in gender studies. Nevertheless, the trend seems to be that (some) gender researchers have close ties with gender studies, and relatively many have skills that are in demand in the new subject area of gender studies. Despite some resistance, it generally seems to work well to identify oneself as a gender researcher in these subject areas even after completion of doctoral education. In a free text response, one person described having contributed to the development of the subject area of their thesis, and thus having influenced the direction of the subject area, which is roughly what the hopes were when gender research was consolidated under this umbrella term.

Other free text responses show how gender research is valued or undervalued; someone even referred to it as a 'stigma'. In free text responses, the respondents talked about resistance to the gender perspective, and expressed concern about being isolated in environments where the gender dimension is seen as not interesting and having no important defenders. But at the same time this person noted that their skills are in demand, perhaps precisely because they are one of the few in their field with gender research expertise. But with the addendum that their skills are 'never in demand at my own department'.

Others also express anxiety that does not concern the subject area of their thesis, but is about their research not being seen as 'proper' gender studies either. They mention suspicions that positions in gender studies are not openly advertised, and those that are advertised have too narrow a profile. Another anxiety-provoking effect is the view of gender as 'political', and that it should be denied scholarly legitimacy.

A large proportion of the respondents answered Yes to the question of whether they see their research as interdisciplinary. Those who answered Yes received supplementary questions about whether they had felt concern about how this interdisciplinary expertise should be utilised within the academic system. Here, nine people (40%) answered Yes, and the whole of that group ranked their concern between 3 and 5 on a scale where 5 stood for 'To a very high degree'. Eight of these people expanded on what they felt concern about in free text responses, where it turns out that interdisciplinarity is often in fact equated with the gender dimension. One respondent talked about the lack of interest in the gender dimension in the subject area in which they had defended their doctoral thesis. That there are difficulties in establishing oneself in gender studies centres/departments is cause for concern. This can also be about experiencing that your research interests are narrow and fit well in an interdisciplinary environment, but that these environments are also more diversified and therefore leave the individual researcher more alone and vulnerable. Another set of problems concerns the crossover of gender research between the humanities and social sciences, such as the fact that it is easier to get external funding for social sciences projects, but that this would mean abandoning interesting aspects of one's research interests. The research boards' definition of interdisciplinarity is seen as 'conventional' and limiting. Difficulties in finding

suitable journals to publish in are also raised as a problem. Some also mentioned that advertised senior lectureships have descriptions that are too narrow in relation to interdisciplinary focuses of gender research.

Discussion

For those who regard themselves as gender researchers, this appears to mean a rather clear interdisciplinary stand that is open to movement between the individual's doctoral thesis subject area and appointments and engagement with many other proximate subject areas. It is not uncommon for those who have stayed in the higher education sector to have changed their subject area affiliation after the defence of their thesis. However, for this group this movement does not appear to go towards gender studies. Besides being a peer reviewer for manuscripts for gender studies journals – as well as for a few individuals where there is a stronger relationship – interfaces are limited. Their orientation is towards their own thesis subject area and towards other subject areas, which can be interpreted as meaning that the interdisciplinary nature of gender research in itself makes researchers more inclined to move between disciplines.

Suspicion, repudiation and being ignored as gender researchers in traditional disciplines appears to be common in some places, but some gender researchers also speak of their gender research having influenced the subject area and being integrated as a self-evident aspect.

Interdisciplinary or disciplinary-oriented career paths

> I haven't thought very much about mobility between disciplines, but rather as different workplaces. I have applied for jobs where they've existed in what suits my subject areas.

The only one of the informants in our focus groups who is a gender researcher is an example of how career development positions with thematic calls can create mobility between subject areas. This informant has a career development position at a gender studies department/centre but defended their thesis in another subject area in the social sciences. This person reflected on certain differences in workplace culture but on the other hand had not considered what the change of department would mean in terms of belonging to another discipline. It is the subject area for the research that is their focus.

In addition to our findings concerning the varied status of gender research but also on the degree of permanent appointments in higher education, we can ask ourselves whether gender research qualifications and an orientation towards gender research and away from gender studies contexts have an impact on who gets appointed within disciplines. Here, we analysed a specific group within the sample of gender researcher respondents, namely those who currently have permanent employment in the subject area in which they defended their thesis. Can we see that their orientation is in line with adapting their qualifications to their thesis subject area, so that they have a greater chance of being found qualified as belonging in this discipline?

This group consisted of 12 respondents who all defined themselves as gender researchers but have permanent positions in the subject area in which they defended their thesis (either at the university where they defended their thesis or at another

university). All applied for their current position in competition, so their qualifications have been assessed by reviewers in the subject area of their thesis.

In the course of their doctoral studies, all had either a supervisor/assistant supervisor who was a gender researcher and/or a gender research seminar where they could discuss gender research and get feedback on their own manuscripts. After graduation with their PhD, these researchers have mainly published in journals with a focus on a particular discipline. Exceptionally, there was one case of someone who had mainly presented their research at gender studies conferences, but had not been published in gender studies journals. Most had felt anxiety about whether their expertise as gender researchers would be utilised, but at the same time many responded with 3 or 4 on a five-point scale when asked to rate how much their gender research skills and expertise is being utilised in their current position.

Three people in this group at some point have had a position, for example a fixed-term position or project grant, with placement at a gender studies department/centre, but none in the group had taught gender studies. One of these individuals had worked in gender studies and also had significant peer review assignments in gender studies, but still felt that they were always identified with their thesis subject area, as 'not enough' of a gender studies academic.

Orientating oneself towards one's thesis subject area is a successful strategy for getting permanent employment. But in a free text response, frustration emerges in relation to the subject area in which one person defended their thesis: it is not friction-free to continue working as a gender researcher in some traditional disciplines.

Formal and informal networks

It could be assumed that gender researchers, due to frustrations with the boundaries of their thesis subject areas, would seek out different types of interdisciplinary networks or gender research networks in order to experience that sense of subject area commonality which seems to exist to a small extent within many traditional disciplines. But of the 20 who responded to the question of whether they have engaged in formal networks, only five gave the names of networks that point to gender research themes.

Of course, more responded with the names of other types of networks linked to a discipline or the specific focus that the respondent has in their research. But a small group of respondents stated that they have not participated in any networks at all. One wrote about trying to set up a network but that it was difficult to get others involved, and one went into detail on the issue of having an odd research interest that does not really seem to belong anywhere. Concerning the question of the extent to which formal networks have been supportive in their career development, relatively many responded 'To a very small degree' (Figure 30).

However it is clear that informal networks are an important – if not decisive – factor for continuing to work in academia. To the corresponding graded question, 36% responded 'To a very high degree'. Informal friendships with colleagues as well as actual invitations to participate in projects, support, critical reading and collegial development of project ideas were described in the free text responses (Heffernan 2021). Many stated that without informal networks, they would not have been able to continue working in the higher education sector at all.

Networks: To what degree have they provided support to you in your career development?

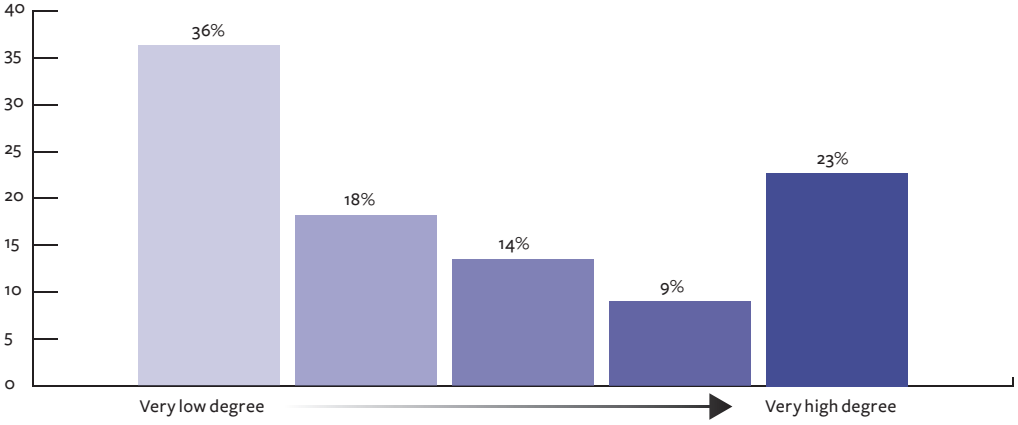


Figure 30.

Discussion

Given that there seems to be a belief that gender researchers do not get (permanent) positions in gender studies, it is rational that gender researchers continue to orient themselves towards the subject area of their doctoral thesis in their efforts to acquire qualifications for permanent employment – and that this is also a successful strategy if permanent employment is the goal. One interpretation of the finding that few gender researchers seek out gender studies networks is that, due to this orientation, they need to stay relatively close to their thesis subject area even in contexts where research is developed and shared.

Health and safety – the work environment

> The norm of the intellectual genius independent of all else also existed at my old department, extremely clearly. I found it very strange and surprising that within such a department certain conventional academic norms were reproduced. But it is clear that such things are reproduced in feminist departments as well. Many who didn't have children worked around the clock.

Just like in the survey sent to gender studies PhD graduates, we also asked this group questions about their work environment. We asked about anxiety, stress, workload and work-related ill-health to collect data on how the workplace has affected the occupational health and well-being of gender researchers.

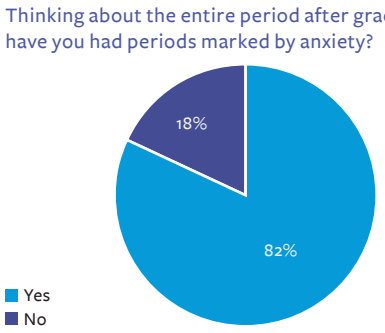


Figure 31.

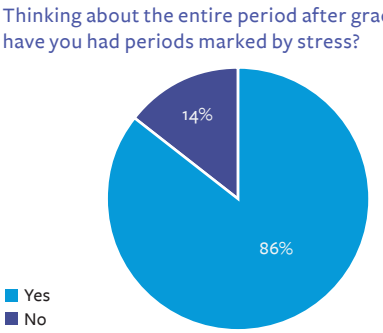
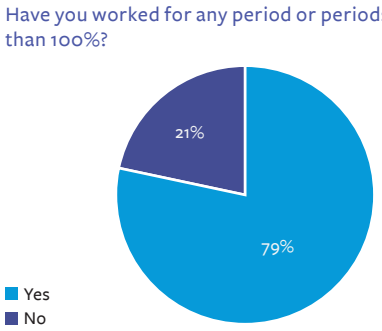


Figure 32.



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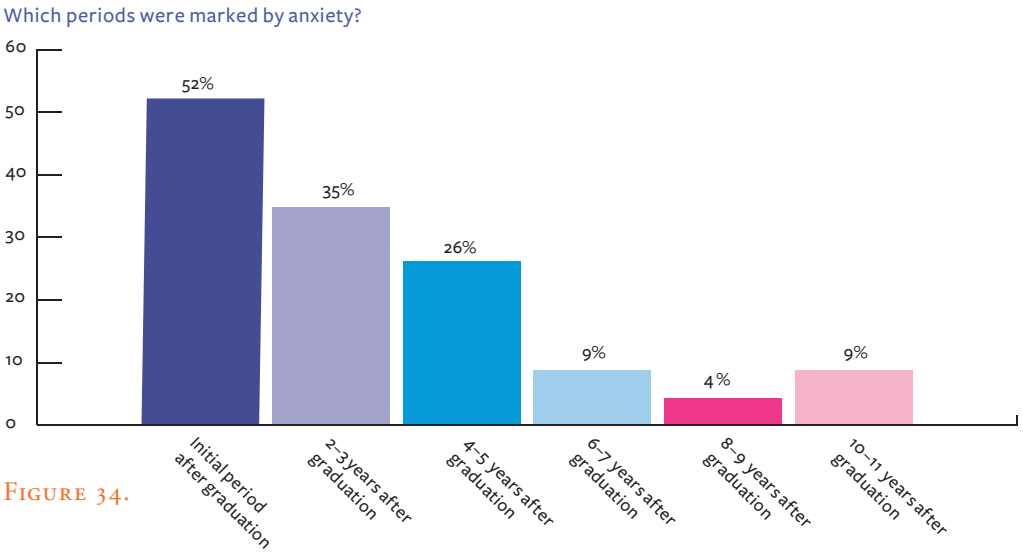

Figure 34.

A majority of gender researchers responded that they had experienced periods marked by anxiety (Figure 31). The question that followed was which periods were marked by anxiety. Several periods, broken down into two-year periods after PhD graduation, could be specified in the survey response. It was possible to select several response options. More than half of the respondents indicated that the initial period after defending their doctoral thesis was marked by anxiety (Figure 34).

Like the gender studies PhD graduates, an overwhelming proportion of the respondents in this group stated that insecure employment had been the main reason for

What was/were the main cause/s for your anxiety?

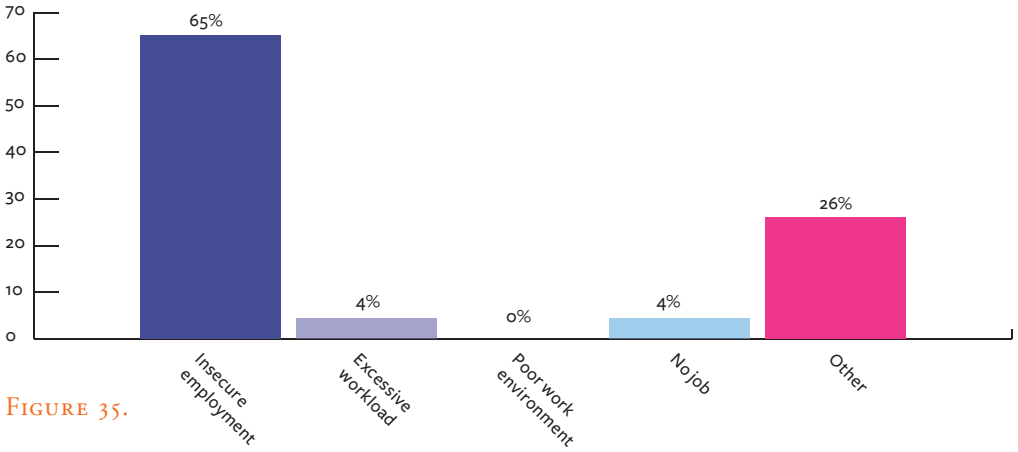

Figure 35.

Which periods were marked by stress?

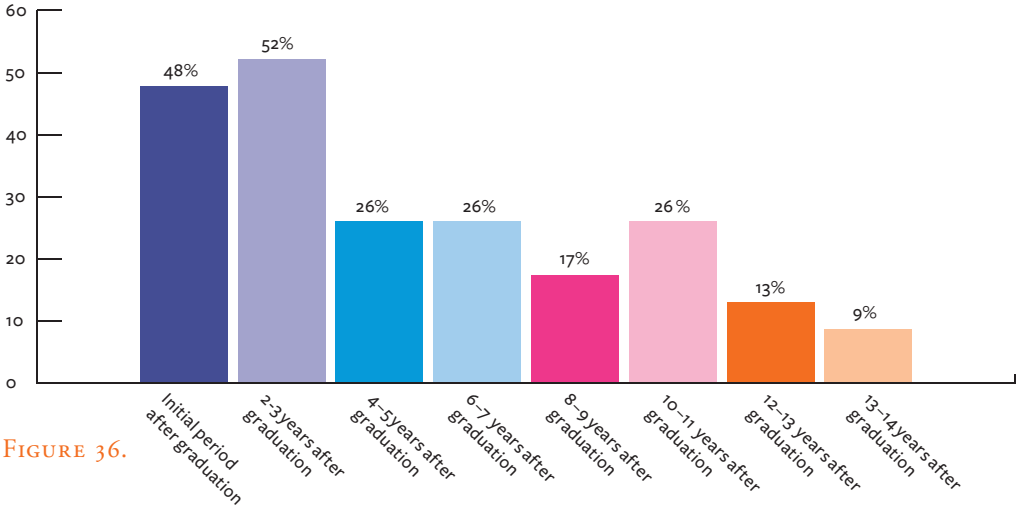

Figure 36.

this anxiety (Figure 35). A small proportion responded that the anxiety had been provoked by an excessive workload or that they had not had a job. Those who chose the 'Other' option and provided free text responses gave reasons that can be summarised as relating to insecure employment and an excessive workload or poor work environment combined with personal reasons, as well as the pressure to publish.

A majority also responded that they had experienced periods marked by stress (Figure 32). The questions about stress were structured in a similar way. On this question too, it is clear that it is the first few years after PhD graduation that are marked by stress for many (Figure 36). Fewer experienced periods marked by stress after that, even if a relatively large group responded that they had had periods marked by stress even later in their careers.

When asked what is or has been the main cause of stress, most responded that it is/was an excessive workload (Figure 37). A small proportion responded that the main reason was insecure employment, and a few that it was due to no employment or a poor work environment. The free text responses of the group chose the 'Other' option can be summed up, as in the gender studies PhD graduates survey, as a combination of insecure employment and excessive workload.

What was/were the main cause/s of the stress?

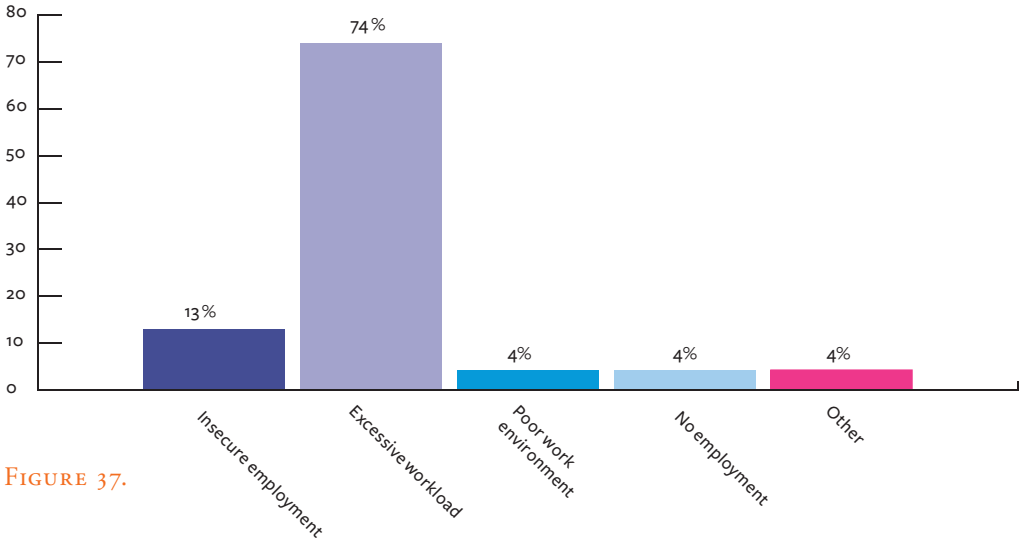

Figure 37.

During which periods have you worked more than 100%?

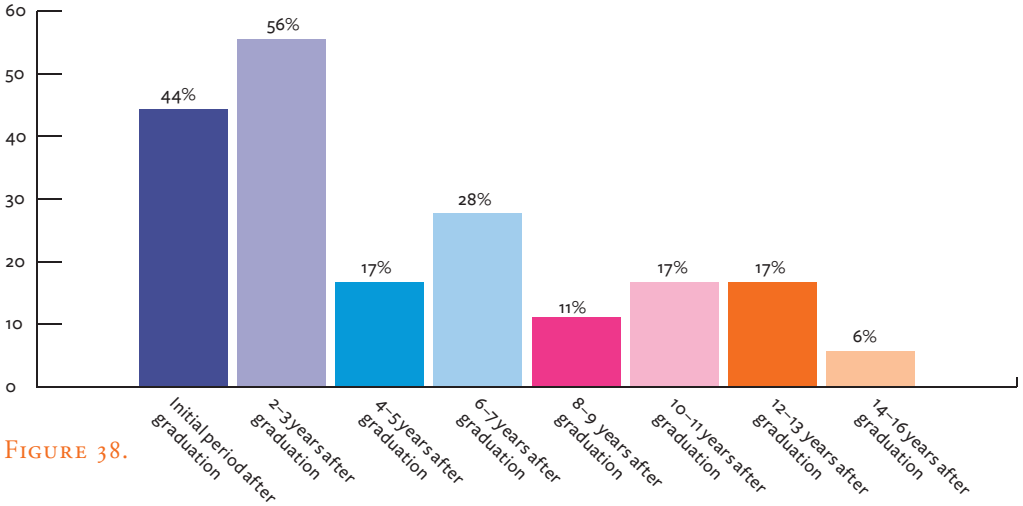

Figure 38.

In response to the question 'Have you worked more than full-time for any period(s)?', a majority also answered Yes (Figure 33). Here too, it is clear that many had a high workload during the first few years after graduating with their PhDs, but a number also indicated that even in later stages in their careers, they had had a workload that exceeded 100% of full-time (Figure 38).

A large majority of the gender researchers stated that stress, anxiety and/or an excessive workload have had negative effects on their health (Figure 39).

Discussion

Norms of a virtually unlimited capacity for work and giving priority to academic work over all other aspects of life are common in academia. The first few years after graduating, in particular the first three years, is the period when most gender studies PhD graduates experience anxiety, stress and a very high workload. The survey was sent to researchers of different academic ages. Relatively few have had more than 12 active years after defending their thesis. But generally we can see that the first few years after

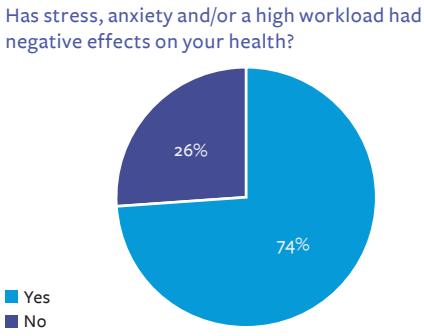

Figure 39.

graduating are problematic from an occupational health perspective. On the whole, a great majority have experienced anxiety mainly due to insecure employment and stress due to an excessive workload (Swedish Association of University Teachers and Researchers 2021). Anxiety about one's livelihood and what the future will hold, as well as stress due to an excessive workload, are obvious occupational health problems.

CHAPTER 4: Concluding discussion

In this report we aimed to study the specific conditions for continuing to work in academia after PhD graduation for gender researchers and gender studies PhD graduates. We believe that it is important to study what in research policy is termed career paths in light of the structural and general working conditions in the higher education sector.

One of these conditions is how the sector is organised into disciplines. For gender studies PhD graduates, this means orienting themselves towards a relatively new institutional situation where career development per se is also a reproduction of gender studies or an orientation towards other related subject areas. The majority of the gender studies PhD graduates get their main income from work in higher education. Institutionalisation's reproduction of itself seems to be working well, and for many, this institutionalisation is actually the same thing as a career path structure. Many gender studies PhD graduates orient themselves to a large extent towards gender studies journals and conferences and their expertise is utilised in the review structures of the subject area. The largest group were employed as senior lecturers, and thus in turn they are contributing to reproducing gender studies by teaching new generations of students in gender studies.

In the scholarly debate within the gender research field, non-institutionalised gender research has generally been stressed as a field with potential for critical perspectives on epistemological questions. For example, Robyn Wiegman argues that the critical potential of feminist research in relation to the traditional disciplines – a 'counter-tradition' – cannot be reproduced within institutionalised gender studies. The discipline cannot 'go back' to interdisciplinarity (Wiegman 2002). But gender studies PhD graduates generally seem not to agree. Many identify their research as interdisciplinary, but point out that it is still difficult to be understood outside of gender studies. Many express concern that their research ends up being narrow or shallow. The generally positive view of interdisciplinarity, both in the subject area and in society as a whole, is difficult to live up to in a discipline-based higher education sector.

At some point during the period after graduation, most respondents in both groups – gender studies PhD graduates and gender researchers – have been employed by a department in the subject area in which they defended their thesis. Thus, on a structural level, in terms of employment opportunities, the system of disciplines remains intact. But a large group of gender studies PhD graduates also orient themselves towards other subject areas through publication and conference presentations. In other words, gender studies continues to operate in an interdisciplinary way and gender studies research is integrated into contexts other than those purely devoted to gender studies. But among gender researchers, it is more common to actually work in another discipline. Roughly one third of gender researchers work in a different subject area than their thesis subject area. On the other hand, it is unusual for gender researchers to move to a position in gender studies.

Job mobility thus appears to be somewhat greater for gender researchers than for

gender studies PhD graduates. Here, it is difficult to draw any general conclusions as to why. There may be many reasons. While still doctoral students, gender researchers may already have challenged the starting points in their doctoral theses that are taken for granted in a more traditional discipline. The respondents report various types of conflicts within their thesis subject areas. It might then seem obvious that they would seek to orient themselves towards other subject areas. The more limited movement to other disciplines among gender studies PhD graduates may have to do with the fact that their individual research focuses are accepted in gender studies. A very few gender studies PhD graduates stated that they did not want to move to other subject areas, that it would not be as positive for their career development, but there are also claims in the material that gender studies PhD graduates would not be seen as qualified if they applied for positions in other subject areas. However, this is not true. Six people in the material had positions in other subject areas; they all applied for these positions in competition and have thus been assessed as qualified by peer reviewers from other disciplines.

These processes of inclusion and exclusion in both gender studies and integrated gender research are well worth investigating further, for example, by studying the reviewer reports.

Among respondents who work outside the higher education sector, a large proportion have jobs where their gender studies skills and expertise are greatly utilised. The small group of gender researchers working outside the higher education sector stated that they get to use their expertise and skills as researchers in their current positions to some extent. And the question about where PhD graduates work, asked in order to follow the career paths that lead out of academia, turns out to be an important one to ask. Stories of broader career paths as well as criticism of a system that fails to provide any security for the future emerged from this question. The first few years after gaining their doctorate is the period when most of the respondents experience anxiety, stress and a very high workload. Many have experienced anxiety, mainly due to insecure jobs, and stress due to an excessive workload. The conflict between teaching and research and the requirement to keep acquiring qualifications creates occupational health problems. Many reported that stress, anxiety and a high workload have had negative consequences for their health.

Through the focus groups we have been able to capture some criticism and some institutional and individual acts of resistance, but also a lot of adjustment, especially in terms of performance demands. Here, we found an interesting complexity. While both the surveys and the focus groups described a high workload, great anxiety about the future, and their own work-related ill-health, the informants stress that what they value the most highly about working in academia is the great freedom that they have. Especially in comparison with ideas about other jobs, such as 'bureaucrat', for example, the freedom in academia seems virtually unlimited. One way of looking at this complex picture is to follow the findings that relate to how the groups are divided into those who mainly teach and those who mainly research. The research funding systems tend to reward those who have already been successful in securing research grants (Sandström and Van den Besselaar 2018; Bol and De Vaan et al. 2018). Those who make a living by teaching rarely have time to write equally successful grant applications. The divide between teaching and research is actually fostered. For almost half of all those

employed as teaching staff, i.e. senior lecturers and lecturers, research is not part of their job. It may in fact not be a 'complex' situation at all, but merely a simple fact: those who have the opportunity to do research work a lot, but have great freedom and that is greatly appreciated. On the other hand, teaching a lot does not give the same experience of freedom. This is a problem found throughout the higher education sector but also in gender studies – or as the respondent from the focus group interview calls them – feminist environments.

Nearly half of all those who had completed doctoral education in gender studies stated that they had not undergone any career preparation activities at all within the framework of their doctoral education – neither structured and compulsory nor informal and voluntary. Obviously, many have managed to carve out career paths that in most cases have led to satisfying employment. Most respondents were also satisfied with the doctoral education they received, but the criticism expressed by a few former doctoral students suggests that a discussion about structures and predictability is needed. It is a heavy burden of responsibility for the individual to orient themselves without assistance in a complex academic system – a system that despite its endeavour to be transparent is based on the ability to orient oneself in universities that have different types of organisational structures – or to be dependent on informal contact networks to assist in one's career development.

Working conditions for these two groups are similar to those in the rest of the higher education sector. It has become normalised to work more than 100% of full-time, despite the fact that many people suffer negative health effects from this. The stark differences between those who are mainly engaged in teaching and those mainly engaged in research are repeated in both the groups. 'Ending up' in teaching and having such a heavy workload that there is no time to formulate sufficiently successful research grant applications means that teaching becomes the only way to support oneself in academia. On the other hand, those who successfully apply for funding, who have been postdoctoral appointments or have been invited by more senior colleagues to participate in their projects, can immediately acquire qualifications in ways that make them more likely to be successful in their next research grant application. However, regardless of whether they are primarily engaged in teaching or research, most of the respondents were stressed and anxious about their livelihood, especially in the first two years after defending their theses. After this – as the neoliberal narratives for the future promises – it gets better.

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