"Your Skills Are Valuable and You Likely Have Many Options After Your PhD"

Simine Vazire

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Abstract In the interview with Simine Vazire, we discussed her early PhD experiences and the lessons she's learned along the way. Simine tells us that much of her role is meetings, particularly with trainees. She has also had a variety of journal-related roles, from reviewer to editor-in-chief, and describes the related decisions as part of the peer-review process. Simine's work to improve the field resulted in her co-founding the Society for the Improvement of Psychological Science (SIPS). Time management and mentoring are very much part of the job description at her career stage. Simine further provides a wealth of career advice for doing well in academia and shares her experience in moving between universities and internationally.

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Chris: Can you introduce yourself and tell me a bit about your current position?

Simine: I'm currently a professor in the psychology department, officially the "Melbourne School of Psychological Science," at the University of Melbourne. I moved there, from UC Davis, during the pandemic, so I actually don't yet have a physical office there and haven't actually moved to Melbourne yet – but I made it as far as Sydney (where my partner lives). My position there is a combination of research, teaching, and service. Within the department/school, I'm in the "Ethics and Wellbeing Hub," which is basically like the social/personality area. My teaching is focused on research methods and professional development. Most of the service I do right now is linked to journals and editing.

What was the focus of your PhD?

I did my PhD studies from 2001 to 2006 in the social/personality psychology area in the psychology department at the University of Texas at Austin, with Sam Gosling as my advisor. My research was mostly on self-knowledge, or the accuracy of

self-reports of personality and behavior. Do people know what they're like? How others see them? How they behave? It involved a lot of measurement/assessment work, like collecting self-reports and informant reports from many different kinds of informants and trying to figure out the best way to measure actual behavior. Then I'd triangulate those measures and try to figure out which ones are more accurate. It was very methodological, but it also was trying to get at some thorny philosophical/theoretical issues, like how well people know themselves, why self-deception happens, when can we be wrong about ourselves and when are we by definition the best expert or authority on ourselves, etc. Most of the time I used concepts and methods more common to personality psychology than social psychology (e.g., the Big Five), but I thought of my work as being at the intersection of personality and social psychology.

As you were finishing your PhD, what were you thinking about your career plans?

I knew that I would prefer to stay in academia if I could, but I also didn't want to take a job that would involve doing a lot of things I don't enjoy doing. At the time I don't remember a lot of awareness of non-academic jobs, so that wasn't really on my radar. In my mind, I would try for an academic job, and if I couldn't find one I liked, I would probably just pursue a totally different career path (something where I could be self-employed, probably – I really hated the jobs I'd had where I had a boss and a timecard etc. I really value my freedom and independence). I remember having lunch with a very senior person in my field and he asked me "why do you want to be an academic?" He was very scary and notorious for having – and expressing – strong opinions, so I knew there was a right answer. I panicked and just told the truth that I wanted it for the lifestyle (to be able to work when I want, from where I want, and often on the topics I want). Turned out he thought that was the right answer. I still don't know if it's true that academia is unique in that way (maybe now it's more common in other industries too to have that kind of freedom), but academia has certainly lived up to this particular promise for me. I've had incredible freedom to have unconventional hours, travel and move around a lot, and just generally not have to conform to strict rules or have someone looking over my shoulder all the time. The main things I was dreading about academia were having to write grant proposals and maybe not being able to choose where I live, though I was also pretty open to living in a lot of different places. There were just a few specific places *I really* didn't want to live (College Station, Texas, and anywhere in/near Minnesota, specifically. I did college in Minnesota and it was too cold for me). So I figured I'd apply for academic jobs and if I didn't get one in a place that seemed ok, or if I got one but ended up having to spend too much time trying to get grants, then I would leave academia and figure out what to do instead.

Can you tell us a bit about what day-to-day life is like in your current position?

In normal (non-COVID) times, my day-to-day life was very very different from one day, or at least one week, to the next. That was by choice. I don't really like routine, and contrary to all the (probably very good) advice out there, I've never been able to develop a routine. So some days/weeks, I would have almost a 9-to-5 schedule, which typically involved a lot of one-on-one meetings, mostly with grad and undergrad students. On a day like that, I could often have five or six back-to-back meetings. I would often meet with grad students at a coffee shop or restaurant, and we'd have a tea/coffee, or sometimes even a meal, while meeting (always on me, at least in recent years). Undergrad meetings are usually in my office or lab. Other days, I might be teaching, in which case I often won't schedule anything before (to prep) or after (to recover – I am wiped out after teaching). And then there are editing days – those are usually on the weekend. I settle in at a comfortable coffee shop and get in the zone and read/edit manuscripts for 4 or 5 h without stopping. I love those days, but I tend to put them off, almost as a kind of treat or reward (which isn't really a great way to do editing, because often I'll sit down and see that a few of the papers I've been sitting on are very easy to deal with – I can make a decision about whether to send them out for review or desk reject them within 20–30 min). And then there are travel days. I used to have *a lot* of those. I said yes to almost any opportunity to travel. So I probably spent about a third of my days on the road. These trips were mostly to give talks at other universities and occasionally for conferences, grant panel meetings, or other kinds of meetings. That covers about 80–90% of what I spent my time doing. The rest is mostly replying to email and having more meetings.

What sort of role do you have with respect to journals and editing? I feel that PhD students tend to only have limited experience with that side of academia. What led you to become more involved with those types of roles?

I've had a few different roles with journals. In addition to reviewing for journals, I have also been an editor (associate editor or editor-in-chief) at a few journals. Each of those roles – reviewer, associate editor, and editor-in-chief – comes with increasingly more decision-making responsibilities and is increasingly more rewarding (for me – some people hate editing). Editing definitely isn't for everyone, and anyone who doesn't like it should by no means feel obligated to do it. What I like about it is that each manuscript is like a puzzle, and I learn so much from evaluating it and reading others' evaluations of it. I love teaching research methods and critical thinking, and to me, editing feels like critical thinking in action. And I feel like critical thinking is maybe the most important skill we can work on, and

there is always more to learn. I've been editing for about 10 years, and I still love it and still feel like I learn so much. At the same time, seeing how journals work has made me very disillusioned about journals and peer review. It's weird to enjoy being part of a system that I think pretty much fails to achieve its objective – journals are supposed to be some kind of safeguard against bad science getting out there, but they are terrible at that. So I also spend a lot of my time and energy thinking about how to achieve that goal, probably outside of journals. There is no reason to do peer review the way journals do it – in private, through personal requests for favors, without much accountability or transparency.

How did I become involved in journals? I think probably just by accepting a lot of review requests as an assistant professor and then saying yes when I was asked to become an associate editor. The fact that there are very few tenured women in personality psych also meant that there were more opportunities for me earlier on than there might otherwise have been (as journals become more self-conscious about having diverse editorial teams). And then for the editor-in-chief positions, I applied and did not always get them! To be honest, I was pretty shocked to get as many opportunities as I've gotten and such good ones too. I think a lot of it was luck (as with many other things in my career).

Apart from luck, what are some factors that you think have helped you get more influence and opportunities in the field? You've mentioned both invited talks and editorial roles, and I'm sure those in tenure-track positions would appreciate your advice on getting out there.

It's hard to know for sure, but I'm happy to speculate! There are some factors that were out of my control (so maybe they count as luck), like having an advisor who made it a priority to give me opportunities to meet and work with other people and who talked me up to his colleagues and collaborators. That surely helped a lot. But in terms of things I had control over…. One is that even though I'm quite introverted in general, I have a habit of talking and asking questions in academic contexts. Asking questions at talks was probably one of the first ways I got to start having conversations with other people in my field. Then, the conversations started happening more informally, and even though I was pretty shy and quiet, I was able to have some really good exchanges with people at conferences, or when they would visit my department. Another factor is that I like to travel a lot and had the means to do so (including money and no dependents). For a while, as an assistant professor, I was in a long-distance relationship and would meet up with my partner in places where one of us had a conference or other work meeting, so I would find myself in random cities. If I knew someone in my field in that city, I'd sometimes reach out to them and ask if I could stop by their lab and say hi, and sometimes, that would turn into a talk (sometimes just to their lab, sometimes to the social/personality area).

I'm not sure, but I think those kinds of opportunities might have made a pretty big difference. In addition to strengthening my connections, it also gave me the opportunity to talk to and learn from lots of different people and get exposed to lots of different ideas. Then, later on in my career, I joined Twitter and some of the Facebook groups where discussions were happening, and that provided a completely different avenue for listening in on and participating in conversations. There are quite a few similarities between the kinds of opportunities I got from traveling around and the kinds of experiences I like having on Twitter, but of course, there are important differences too.

You recently co-founded the Society for the Improvement of Psychological Science (SIPS). Can you tell us about the responsibilities that went along with this and what was your motivation to be in this leadership position?

In 2015, I had been hearing and giving talks at conferences about the replicability crisis, open science, methodological reform, etc. Those conversations were starting to feel unproductive and circular – the same arguments and counterarguments coming up again and again, and it felt like allowing this to go on would mean giving up on making meaningful change. I was getting impatient and wanted a way for people who were ready to start working toward change to be able to get together and move forward, without having to go around and around debating whether or not things needed improving. So I reached out to Brian Nosek and asked if there was already a group or meeting like this, aimed at people who agreed things could be improved and were ready to start working toward improvement. That started our planning for what became SIPS. In 2016, Brian and I, together with a small group of researchers, put on the first SIPS conference and organized a formal society and executive committee. I became president of that society in 2017 and served as a member of the executive committee through 2020. To be honest, I didn't expect the little meeting we organized in 2016 to turn into anything nearly this big. There were 100 people at that first meeting, which already exceeded my expectations. At our last in-person meeting (in 2019), we had to cap registration at 525, and I think there was even more demand. I don't think I realized that I was taking on such a big leadership position when Brian and I started SIPS. Having served on other societies' executive committees, I really didn't want to create a society whose primary goal was self-promotion and self-preservation – I see too many decisions being made in order to bolster the financial health of a society, or increase its membership, etc. I really wanted to avoid SIPS becoming a society that makes decisions based on those kinds of considerations. So I've tried to maintain a pretty detached attitude toward it from the beginning – if it grows, great. If it becomes obsolete or gets taken over by a better society with similar goals, also totally fine. SIPS doesn't need to exist; it doesn't need to get ever bigger; it doesn't need to bring in money for the sake of

bringing in money. I think that took a lot of the pressure off for me – I wasn't trying to build something huge, and if everyone stopped coming to our little conference, that was ok. Even so, there was a lot of responsibility – if you're going to have a society, you have to take care to make sure it's inclusive and equitable, that you protect people (e.g., by enforcing certain standard of conduct at the meeting, by finding a way to give early-career researchers a voice without burdening them will bullshit service, etc.). Navigating those decisions was tough, but luckily the other people making those decisions with me were incredibly committed, thoughtful, bright people. I learned a lot about how to manage an organization and a bit about how to be a leader. I definitely developed thicker skin – I think that the unexpectedly fast rise in our popularity understandably led to a lot of scrutiny and high expectations. I had to learn how to listen to my own conscience and know when I was doing my best, when I was getting defensive, when to listen harder, and when to stop listening (I know that sounds bad, but I really think it's an important feature of many leadership positions). I've basically completely stepped back from SIPS now (as I write this in January 2021), except for being the editor-in-chief of the journal that SIPS is affiliated with. I am really happy that I was able to let go, and I feel confident that it's in good hands, though again, I don't really care if it ceases to exist, if that's what's best for psychology. Right now I think it's still doing a lot of good for the field. One of the other exciting developments is that I'm seeing several other fields build sister societies to SIPS, and I feel like they are taking advantage of the lessons we learned and building on them to create their own version of SIPS in their fields. It's fun talking to the people leading those efforts and also a bit like rewatching your favorite show, where you know exactly what obstacle the protagonist is going to come up against but there's not much you can do to prevent it. But I think all of us, across fields, benefit a lot from each other's experiences and from knowing that we're not alone – I was lucky when I started SIPS that there were at least a dozen people just as committed to (obsessed with?) making this happen in psychology. From what I see in other fields, some of the people leading similar efforts don't have as much support.

What do you like most about your work?

Getting to work with amazing people (mostly my grad students). I am completely flabbergasted at the quality of people I've gotten to work with, in terms of their brilliance, creativity, and work ethic, but also what they're like as people. It is mind boggling to me that these people want to work with me. I also really like the independence, as I mentioned above.

And what do you like least about your work?

How cutthroat it is to get a job in academia. It's depressing. I don't know what to tell graduate students because I don't want to make them cynical, but the reality is quite bleak in terms of the chances of getting an academic job (if that's what they want, or at least want the option). I'm also very cynical about journals and rewards/incentives more generally, but that doesn't get me down as much (though of course it's related to why the job market is so bleak – not only are there very few jobs, but who gets those jobs isn't very correlated with the things you'd want it to be correlated with).

Do you think that someone who just finished a PhD might not realize that some aspects of being a professor and running a research lab are parts of the job?

I don't think there's anything totally unpredictable, but I think it's easy to underestimate just how many meetings and emails there are. It becomes impossible to keep up pretty quickly, so devising a strategy for dealing with both is important. I still haven't quite figured it out myself, but keeping those things from completely taking over your schedule is a challenge. Your time becomes less and less yours, and you have to protect it if you ever want to get around to the stuff that doesn't have any deadlines or anyone pestering you about it.

Another aspect I underestimated is how much of a responsibility mentoring is. We've all been on the advisee side of the advisor-advisee relationship, but I didn't realize what being on the advisor side would be like, and that also took me a long time to fully appreciate. The most striking thing about it to me is the heavy responsibility. One of the things I don't like about academia is how much power/influence advisors have over their graduate students. I was lucky to have a fantastic advisor, and I now realize that even relatively small things an advisor does or doesn't do can have a huge impact on their grad students' careers, well-being, motivation, etc. I find that responsibility very heavy sometimes, and I don't know how others manage it. I think we should change the system so that grad students' fates don't rest so heavily in just one person's hands, mostly for the sake of grad students of course, but it would also make the role less overwhelming for advisors (though of course part of the problem is that some of them want that much power/control). For me, one of the consequences of this system is that I think I can only be a good advisor to two or maybe three students at a time. I believe that other people can manage more, but I don't know how they do it. It's kind of disappointing because mentoring grad students is one of my favorite parts of the job, so having to restrict myself to just a couple students can be disappointing, but I think it's the responsible thing for me to do. And even with just a few students, I often feel like I'm not doing enough, or I'm holding them back. I don't think that's just in my head – I think it's often

accurate, in part because many graduate students have such incredible skill and talent. It's a weird thing to live with day in and day out.

If someone currently finishing their PhD was considering a position similar to yours, how might they decide if it would be a good fit?

Luckily, I think that the grad school experience provides quite a bit of relevant info for people to decide if academia would be a good fit. There are some things that change when you become a prof, but a lot of the pros and cons are the same. I think for people who could imagine continuing doing similar things to what they were doing in grad school, pursuing a tenure-track position might be a good fit. I suspect in that case, the major new factor to consider is what the job market looks like and whether you'd have to make other sacrifices you don't want to make (e.g., living in a place you don't want to live, or having to make compromises with close others' careers, etc.). So if someone is finishing their PhD and thinks they would like a tenure-track position, my advice would be to apply (assuming the feedback you're getting suggests that your application would be competitive; if not, then consider applying for post-docs first), see what offers, if any, you get, and then decide if any of those offers are appealing enough to accept, all things (including personal life and preferences) considered.

If someone was interested in pursuing a similar career path, what would you suggest they do to better prepare themselves?

There are two ways to interpret this question. The first is what should someone do to have the strongest job application possible. The answer to that question, if they're interested in a faculty position at a research-intensive university (at least in the regions of the world I'm familiar with), is simple: submit papers for publication. Nothing else matters nearly as much as getting those manuscripts written up and submitted. In my second-to-last year of grad school, a few of my grad student friends and I realized that all of us were sitting on studies that we'd run, analyzed, and then hadn't written up. So we made a pact that we would try to submit one paper per month (of course, this is only semi-realistic if you're sitting on completed projects). I stuck to that goal for about 4 months, and that completely changed what my CV looked like when I went on the job market a year or so later. Those four papers made up a big chunk of my publications, and again, lots of luck was involved in getting those papers accepted in time for the job applications. One of them wasn't even a "real" paper – I wrote up a paper describing how I'd used a particular method (using the Internet to collect informant reports about participants' personalities – it

was a pretty new idea back in 2004). For many of us, by the end of grad school, if you make time for writing up papers, you find that there are actually quite a few papers that you're in a good position to write, if you're creative about it. Of course, writing up papers just for the sake of writing up papers is one of the ways our field got into the replication crisis mess that we're in, so hopefully you're in a position where you have useful things to write up and share. But if the question is what an advanced grad student who wants a research/teaching faculty position should do, the answer is pretty clear given our current incentive/reward structure: write and submit papers.

The second way to interpret this question is what experiences should a graduate student seek out in order to be better prepared if/when they get a tenure-track position doing research and teaching (not what will help them get the job, but what will help them be well-prepared to do the job). There I think the answer is less clear. For me, grad school was the last time I had the freedom, time, energy, patience, etc., to learn new skills from scratch, so I would say try to learn any skills you think you might need (e.g., R, GitHub, SEM, multilevel modeling, etc.). Also, if you think you will have less freedom to travel/visit with people later on, do it now (if you can). Take every meeting you can get with other people whose work sounds interesting to you (unless you have a good reason not to, for example, you have good reason to think they're a jerk). Seek out opportunities to chat with people who do interesting work or have shared interests. I would be reluctant to make commitments to collaborate with people – that doesn't have to be (and in my opinion should rarely be) the outcome of networking – but just talking and having a basis for future communication can be very valuable. I have a very high bar for starting new collaborations for a couple reasons. One is that it's too easy to spread yourself too thin. The other is that I think it takes a long time to know if both parties have compatible working styles, values, expertise, etc. (Compatible doesn't have to mean the same, but not clashing.) Collaboration is a very intense relationship (most of the time), so I want to be sure that everyone knows what they're getting into and is comfortable with it, which is hard to do without getting pretty well acquainted first. Also, I think most of the time, not having enough collaborators is not the limiting factor on productivity/contributing to science. I think most of us have a lot we could contribute just on our own or with the people we already know we work well with, if we had the time, resources, etc. My last piece of advice about how to better prepare yourself is not wasting a lot of time on long-shot grant proposals. This kind of goes along with prioritizing writing up papers, but I also think if we all reflected on the time we spend writing grant proposals, it would be pretty clear that the vast majority of those proposals were not worth writing up. This likely varies a bit by subdiscipline, but if you don't absolutely need a grant to do your research, I would say only apply for grants that (1) would allow you to propose almost exactly what you want to be doing anyway and (2) that you have a decent chance of getting (i.e., the funding rates are not insanely low, and/or you are an especially good fit for the call). For my subdiscipline of social/personality psych, I think it's fine and common for people not to apply for grants at all until they are in a faculty position and then to only apply to one or two mechanisms/agencies that are a very close match to their research.

At the start of the interview, you mentioned that you recently moved universities, as well as countries. Can you tell us a bit more about that process? For instance, how long had you been looking for a new position, reasons for the move, or considerations for how universities might work differently in different countries (e.g., funding). Students hear about people getting their first faculty position, but moving from one faculty position to another is much less discussed.

I've actually moved twice since getting my first faculty position, so I'll talk a bit about both. The first was from Wash U (in St. Louis, USA) to UC Davis (in California, USA). That was a few years after tenure (in 2014, I started in 2007 and got tenure in 2012). The second move was this year (2020) from UC Davis to the University of Melbourne (Australia). I'm not sure how much generalizable knowledge can be gleaned from either of these moves, so feel free to take or leave any of this info.

The first time, I wasn't looking to move. I was happy at Wash U. I was spending a sabbatical year in California (at Stanford), and during that time, UC Davis was doing a search for an assistant professor in my field. A colleague there asked me who I knew of who was on the job market, and we discussed who in our field might be looking for an assistant-professor level job. As a result of those conversations, the question came up (actually through a mutual friend, not directly with the UC Davis person) about whether I would ever consider a job at UC Davis. I responded honestly that it's possible that I would, if it was a tenured position (since I already had tenure and was happy at my job, but also love California and being near my mom). That info got back to people at UC Davis, and they looked into whether there was a mechanism at UC Davis for a targeted search (many universities have these kinds of mechanisms, sometimes linked to diversity initiatives or other priorities). I was lucky that there was, so they invited me out for an interview using that mechanism. I remember that up until the interview, I felt kind of bad because I thought there was a slim chance I would actually end up accepting an offer even if I got one (I told friends honestly that the probability was around 20%). But then I got the offer and really wanted to go. I don't know what changed in my mind, but it was clear to me after the interview and offer that I wanted to accept. It certainly wasn't any desire to leave Wash U, but by that point, I'd been living back in California for most of a year, and it was very salient to me how much I liked being back there and being near my mom. It was still a difficult transition because of everything and everyone I left behind in St. Louis and at Wash U, not least my graduate students (one moved with me, but several stayed at Wash U).

The second time is kind of a crazy story. I visited Australia for the first time in November 2018. I was very happy at UC Davis, and if you'd asked me if anything could make me leave, I would have said with 98% certainty that the answer was no – I could see myself staying there my whole career. Two days after I arrived in Australia for my 3-week visit, I met my now partner. We'd interacted quite a bit

before (online, via email, and almost but not quite at a happy hour at a conference), so we knew a bit about each other and had many mutual friends, which might help explain the next part, but really there is no good explanation. We got really serious really fast, so that when, 2 weeks later, after giving a talk at the University of Melbourne, I got an email from a headhunter asking if I'd be interested in applying for a professor position in their psych department, it felt not – 100% – crazy to consider it. I knew enough about psychology in Australia to know that, of all the universities in Australia, the University of Melbourne would be the best fit for what I do (both for personality psychology and for my metascience research). And this position sounded pretty perfect – it was a senior position they'd been trying to fill for a while, so it was a pretty cushy gig with a lot of freedom, great colleagues, etc. Still, I had to decide that week – the application deadline was a few days later. I decided to apply and see what happens. The rest is pretty typical job-interview stuff. I had a Skype interview first, then a fly-out (they also interviewed several other people), then another Skype interview, then the offer. By the time I had to decide whether to accept the offer, 6 months had passed and I had more confidence in my new relationship. I also was able to defer the start date for another year, which gave me time to wrap up some things in the USA and at Davis. Still, again, I was going to have to leave graduate students, colleagues, and friends behind, and that was not easy. I didn't and still don't know a lot about how the Australian system is similar to or different from the US system, so for that reason and many others, it was a bit of a leap of faith. However, through the interview and negotiation process, I got a sense of how the administrative side of things worked and also got a sense of the department culture, both of which seemed reasonable and kind of familiar. There are definitely some major differences (e.g., in Australia, academics rarely teach an entire course start to finish – almost everything is team taught, which is very strange to me, and grad school is only 3–4 years with no coursework, etc.), but many aspects of Australian culture and Australian academic culture seem quite similar to the USA. As much as I love my partner, I wouldn't have taken the leap if I didn't have a very good feeling about the move, and everything I saw in my visits and interactions with my future colleagues made me think it was a safe bet. In the end, I felt like I had two very good options: stay at UC Davis or move to the University of Melbourne, both of which were very appealing to me from a career standpoint and one of which – Melbourne – was much more appealing from a personal standpoint.

I don't know if I would have considered making the move earlier in my career. Factors that I think would have loomed large for me earlier in my career matter less to me now, like the prospect of being physically distant from so many of my colleagues and collaborators, of being overlooked for various roles I really want and enjoy, etc. I was lucky to get to do a lot of those things before my move, and I felt like I was in a good position to mitigate those negative consequences at this point in my career. It also helped a lot that I'd become active on Twitter and knew that I could stay connected and involved in global conversations that way. I still worried that no one would want to meet with me if it required doing so over videoconferencing rather than in person and that I'd miss all the conferences and invitations to visit other departments. Then the pandemic happened, and now everyone is

videoconferencing and no one is visiting each other's campuses. Maybe if/when things go back to normal, I'll feel those losses, but I don't know yet.

Based on your journey, what advice or suggestions do you want to pass on to someone who's currently finishing their PhD?

I think one of the toughest challenges is figuring out how much you have to play the game, versus stick to your own sense of integrity. I was lucky that I was pretty oblivious to a lot of the threats to my integrity when I was earlier in my career, though not all of them, in part because that was before the replicability crisis and open science movement in psychology. But even if it weren't for the open science stuff, there would be other decisions we each have to make that force the issue – do you do what's best for your job prospects or what you think is right? I've faced that decision over and over again. I know the answer seems simple: do the right thing. But it's not always clear – look at something like reporting sexual harassment. There are many valid reasons for people not to come forward. The same kinds of issues around power dynamics, feeling like our attempts are futile, etc., come up in many different areas of the job. So I think one thing I've learned is that you have to know where your line is – where will you compromise and what's a dealbreaker? The other thing to think about is that this line should move as you get more power. Too many people become less likely to speak out, and more likely to toe the line, as they get more and more power and job security, but we should all push ourselves to move in the opposite direction. It's much more ok to make compromises when we're in precarious positions than when we've got power, so think about what compromises you're willing to make now and what you want future you to be more outspoken about. For me, that means thinking about the people I admire, and asking myself why I don't behave more like them, and then pushing myself to challenge the excuses I come up with.

Related to this, I would tell someone finishing their PhD that your skills are valuable and you likely have many options after your PhD (including quitting before you finish your PhD). So if you know your own limits or dealbreakers, you should feel empowered to walk away or rock the boat if you reach those limits, and know that there are plenty of paths to having a good, happy work life.

Thank you for doing this interview. It was great to discuss these topics with you!