11   'It's not only me doing things for me'

Conference participation for doctoral students with caring responsibilities

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Introduction

Conferences are recognised to be vital spaces for the development of doctoral students, providing access to networks and knowledge, as well as socialising researchers into academia (Chapman et al., 2009; Fakunle et al., 2019; Kuzhabekova and Temerbayeva, 2018). Conferences provide a fertile ground for analysing what is both considered essential to the academic profession and yet portrayed as luxurious and extraneous (Henderson, 2020a). The benefits of attending conferences are intangible (Edelheim et al., 2018), though for doctoral researchers there are more obvious pressures pertaining to employability and knowledge gain. At the same time, it is recognised that attending conferences for any academic with caring responsibilities is challenging (Henderson and Moreau, 2020), but also that there are particular challenges for doctoral students with caring responsibilities (Hook, 2016). This chapter therefore focuses specifically on the tension between the heightened importance of conferences for doctoral students and the heightened challenges of care which accompany the financial constraints and precarity often associated with doctoral study.

Drawing on the 'In Two Places at Once' project (Henderson et al., 2018), which focused on access to and participation in conferences for academics with caring responsibilities, this empirically oriented chapter is based on an in-depth analysis of five participants who were doctoral students. While the project itself spanned several country contexts (in terms of country of residence and location of conference), the five participants featured in this chapter were all based in the UK at the time of the study. The study involved diary-interview method (Zimmerman and Wieder, 1977). The analysis aims to showcase the diversity of ways in which care, conferences and doctoral student status combine to create different tensions and pressures. As such, the chapter argues that combining care and doctoral studies must be conceptualised as inherently heterogeneous. Moreover, by exploring the intersection between care and conferences, a core argument of the chapter is that care and conferences must be understood within a wider sociological frame that encompasses gendered social norms and negotiations beyond the workplace. This does not deny the need to develop care-sensitive strategies within higher education institutions – rather, the objective of this chapter is to provide a wider context

for the development of these strategies, in order to understand how the issues that doctoral carers face play out in their everyday lives.

Framing conference attendance for doctoral students who are carers

Many accounts of the benefits and motivations for conference attendance construct academics as purely or predominantly professional beings (Mair, 2010; Severt et al., 2007). The assumptions that underpin this construction of a professional academic are that academics make the decision to attend conferences as autonomous, unencumbered individuals. An increasing number of papers have appeared in recent years contesting this framing, and noting that access to and experiences of conferences are inflected by gender, race and ethnicity, caste, dis/ability and a range of these in their intersections with each other (Hodge, 2014; King et al., 2018; Mair and Frew, 2018; Sabharwal et al., 2020; Timperley et al., 2020). However, the dominant discourse of professionalism remains in place for conferences. This section of the chapter explores first how doctoral students are positioned in academic literature in relation to conferences. Second, the section explores how academic carers are positioned in relation to conferences. The section concludes by drawing together these two distinct constructs and laying out the terrain for an analysis of doctoral carers and conferences.

Conferences for doctoral students

When exploring the ways in which conferences and doctoral students are addressed in the literature, it is important to first establish how conferences are constructed as important sites of academic and career development for all academics, in order to identify where there are specificities for doctoral students. Conferences are considered to be valuable spaces for academics to access new knowledge, develop collaborations for publications and projects, network and enhance their reputations (Rowe, 2018; Wang et al., 2017). As such, conferences operate as catalysts for academic work, and have been studied in terms of their contribution to the internationalisation of research (Kyvik and Larsen, 1994; Smeby and Trondal, 2005). This discourse extends to doctoral students, where the tone shifts to emphasise the benefit of conferences for professional socialisation, development of doctoral work and professional development experience of presenting (Chapman et al., 2009; Fakunle et al., 2019; Kuzhabekova and Temerbayeva, 2018; Subramanian, 2020; Thompson et al., 2012). Though the discourse differs somewhat, the construction is the same – the assumption of an autonomous professional; indeed, the assumption of an individual who is freely mobile may be even more pronounced for doctoral students (Herschberg et al., 2018).

In addition to empirical studies of the motivations and benefits of conferences for doctoral students, there is also another set of literature which consists of doctoral students' accounts of attending conferences. Papers within this set of literature confirm, extend and challenge the motivations and benefits of conferences for doctoral students that are set out in the professional development-oriented

literature. For instance, a paper by Edelheim et al. (2018) on the 'intangible return on investment' from attending conferences includes doctoral students' reflections on the conference. In addition to established benefits such as socialisation, net-working or skill acquisition, the participants in this study also pointed to other critical considerations, such as the irony of a conference on care having the implication that 'care had to be shifted to others to perform at home' during the conference (p. 100). In a similar vein, French et al. (2021) analyse their experiences of attending the 2019 Annual Adult Education Research Conference. These authors discuss the motivations and benefits such as networking, gaining experience of presenting, receiving feedback on doctoral work, accessing new learning. However their account also includes a more critical discussion of power play at the association's business meeting which was held at the conference, as graduate students had experienced both 'inclusion and exclusion in the business meeting' (p. 77). De Picker (2020) sets out the ways in which conferences are important for doctoral student development, and then explicates how the normative practices involved in conference attendance are experienced as (in)surmountable obstacles for dis/abled doctoral students.

From this summary analysis of literature on doctoral students and conferences, a common discourse emerges, of the importance of conferences for doctoral students' professional development and socialisation to the academic career. At the same time, critical threads are discernible in doctoral students' analyses of attending conferences which disrupt the veneer of the dominant discourse. These critical threads are divergent in nature, but show that doctoral students are aware of the challenges of attending conferences as well as the imperative to attend these events. In the next section, care is explored as one such critical thread, which forms the central focus of this chapter.

Conferences for carers

There is a relatively substantial – and growing – literature on the ways in which academic careers and caring responsibilities intersect. This literature tends to focus on motherhood and the difficulty of balancing career ambition with pressures to conform to societal expectations of mothering (Amsler and Motta, 2019; Ollilainen, 2020; Thun, 2019; Ward and Wolf-Wendell, 2012). Common themes in this literature are the compromises that academic women make in both their careers and their care practices, the sacrifices to personal well-being and self-care that are necessary in order to maintain care and career, and the reduction of career ambitions. A smaller number of studies focus on other carers such as academic fathers (Sallee, 2014) and other caring responsibilities beyond – and in addition to – parenting (Moreau and Robertson, 2019). However, the dominant focus in this literature is on mothers caring for children. An underlying, but unspoken, assumption of many papers in this area or research is of a 'heterosexual dyadic partnership between two cisgendered individuals' (Henderson, 2020b, p. 4; see also Beddoes and Pawley, 2013), where the woman is the primary carer for children. Within this family formation, it is the primary carer who is less mobile due to the household's reliance on the primary carer for everyday tasks and overall household

management – a situation which I have discussed elsewhere as 'sticky care' (Henderson, 2020b). In a profession where mobility and motility (the potential to be mobile, see Dubois et al., 2015) are prized as career attributes, primary carers are highly disadvantaged (Henderson and Moreau, 2020). This disadvantage tends to fall on women within the dominant family formation outlined above, which means that a causal relationship is drawn between gender and care-related immobility (ibid.). While the association between gender and academic im/mobility has been researched (Jöns, 2011; Leemann, 2010), there is a need for more research that focuses on care and academic im/mobility, recognising that care as a gendered phenomenon is not limited to the abovementioned family formation. This chapter addresses care as an inclusive concept that encompasses care for partners, children, other family member, friends, pets and other kin (Henderson et al., 2018), and therefore seeks to validate different forms of care.

Conferences often enter into the discussion of care and academic careers, as an example of the impossibility of juggling care and work, in particular with reference to the additional challenge of engaging in work-related travel. For instance, in-passing references to conferences appear in some of the works cited in the above paragraph. Thun (2019) notes that 'planning for conferences abroad is a logistic puzzle' (p. 8); one of the authors of the paper by Amsler and Motta (2019) reflects 'It would be fine if I had a wife to look after the kids while I went to a conference' (p. 89); Ward and Wolf-Wendell's (2012) book includes numerous references to conferences, such as their use of conferences to exemplify the primary care status of academic mothers: 'it is difficult to travel as much for conferences and for conducting research' (p. 70). It is less common to find literature that focuses directly on conferences and care, and where this does exist it tends to focus on issues of caring for children while attending conferences (Bos et al., 2019; Lipton, 2019), though there is a separate focus on academics travelling to conferences accompanied by partners (Yoo and Wilson, 2020). Placing together the in-passing references to conferences and the few papers on conferences and care, it is possible to draw a picture of conferences as exclusionary, both in terms of managing to travel to conferences and in terms of managing care (on site or from a distance) while attending conferences.

Attending conferences is a valued, but challenging, practice for academics who are carers. For doctoral students who are carers, there are two additional considerations that exaggerate the complexity of attending conferences. First, being a doctoral student often means an increased emphasis on participating in conferences as these events are characterised as valuable spaces for entry into the academic profession. Second, the challenge of managing care and conferences may be exaggerated by the added financial pressures and precarity of being a doctoral student. Exploring these considerations, and the extent to which they hold, is the focus of the analysis in this chapter.

The 'In Two Places at Once' study

The empirical study that underpins this chapter was an in-depth, exploratory qualitative study entitled 'In Two Places at Once: the Impact of Caring

Responsibilities on Academics' Conference Participation' (Henderson et al., 2018). The study focused on academics who both self-identified as academics and as having caring responsibilities. For this chapter, five participants who were doctoral students have been selected for analysis. Participants were specifically selected for this chapter who discussed both their doctoral status and their caring responsibilities. In the study, care was defined widely in order to capture the ways in which different caring responsibilities affect academics' conference attendance. The study used diary-interview method (Zimmerman and Wieder, 1977), where participants completed a care diary for one conference they attended during the research period (Henderson, 2021). To qualify for the study, participants had to be attending an in-person conference, but to be as inclusive as possible, the definition of a conference included one-day events which could be on participants' own university campus. The care diary included: preparation tasks before the conference; interactions with and thoughts about caring responsibilities and/or co-carers while at the conference as well as catch-up tasks (Henderson, 2019). In the follow-up interview, the diary formed the basis for discussion both of the specific conference and of participants' conference attendance in general. This approach yielded rich detail on the lived experiences of managing conferences and care.

Participants for the study were recruited via social media calls and messages on academic mailing lists, and were recruited on a first-come, first-served basis. Participants could be from or based in any country. The sample yielded a great deal of variety in relation to caring responsibilities, but almost exclusively women were included. This was in part because, interestingly, some of my messages were passed on to potential participants to volunteer for a study about *women* and conference attendance. The five participants included in this chapter were all women, all based in the UK, though not all were British. No participants were accompanied by any caring responsibilities or co-carers to the conference. Further detail is included about these five participants in Table 11.1, but more detailed information cannot be given due to anonymity concerns.

The interviews were transcribed verbatim, and initially read with the care diaries so as to match the information in the diaries with the more detailed elaboration contained in the interviews. Participants' accounts were then thematically read according to: (i) where they mentioned their motivations for attending the conference, (ii) where they mentioned issues specifically related to being a doctoral student and carer and attending conferences. I then read the transcripts again to make sense of these remarks within the context of participants' full accounts, in order to capture the nuances. The analysis sections therefore seek to capture how the participants represented themselves as both doctoral students and carers, and how these two aspects of their lives intertwined in similar and different ways.

Doctoral students attending conferences

An important first step for the analysis presented in this chapter is to show how the participants in the study accorded with common discourses of the motivations for and benefits from attending conferences for doctoral students. This is a significant analytical move because, in addressing the challenges of managing care

Table 11.1 Information about the Doctoral Status and Care Situation of Doctoral Participants from the 'In Two Places at Once' Project

Participant	Place of Residence	Location and Duration of Conference	PhD Status	Care Situation at the Time of the Conference
P2	UK (Midlands)	Denmark 4 days (trip 5 days)	Full-time PhD student, funded	*Partner (man)*: works freelance, some flexibility for childcare; *Children*: 9 years, 6 years, 8 months; *Childcare (regular)*: nursery, school, after school clubs
P7	UK (Midlands)	UK (South Wales) 3 days (trip 3 days)	Full-time PhD student, funded	*Partner (woman)*: an academic; *Mother*: diagnosed with breast cancer the week before the conference; *Sister*: struggling with her own caring responsibilities as well as mother's diagnosis
P11	UK (North)	UK (North) 3 days (trip 3 days)	Part-time PhD student; full-time senior lecturer	*Partner (woman)*: works at home in a less pressured job, is the primary carer; *Children*: 16 years, 13 years; *Pet*: dog; *Elderly aunt*: she was like a parent to P11 after her parents died, now seriously ill; *Cousin and cousin's partner*: caring for elderly aunt and in touch with P11 with updates; *Voluntary work*: P11 has volunteering commitments on some weekends
P12	UK (Midlands)	UK (Midlands) 1 day (trip 1 day)	Full-time PhD student (started as part-time PhD student), funded	*Partner (man)*: has relatively flexible job in terms of hours but also an expectation of presence at the office; *Children*: 5 years, 2 years; *Childcare (regular)*: school, nursery
P14	UK (Midlands)	UK (Midlands) 1 day (trip 1 day)	Full-time PhD student, funded	*Ex-partner (man)*: father of P14's child, looks after child on alternate weekends; *Child*: 5 years; *Childcare (regular)*: school, breakfast club, after school club

in relation to conferences, it is possible to elide the fact that academic carers are still academics with academic motivations and professional desires. Contrary to some accounts of academic mobility which chart a reduced desire for mobility as a result of caring responsibilities (Nielsen, 2017), this study found that mobility was couched in strong contradictory desires to both go and stay. In order to lay the foundation for the subsequent analysis of how doctoral status and care intersect in relation to conference attendance, this first section outlines the ways in which study participants echoed common motivation/benefit discourses, and therefore also shows that doctoral students with caring responsibilities are doctoral students in their own right, as well as carers.

In the five participants' accounts, motivations and benefits included all of the aspects referred to in the literature section. For instance, P2, who was in the final stage of her doctorate, emphasised the importance of presenting, stating, 'now I wouldn't go to a conference where I don't have a paper to present' (P2, interview). She also referred to a supplementary role she took at the conference in terms of gaining experience and instrumentally adding to her CV: 'I was convening as well so I played a bigger role than usual … it was a good experience and it looks good on the CV I guess' (P2, interview). Being at a conference at this stage of her doctorate fed directly into P2's career objectives, which she recorded in her diary prior to attending the conference: 'going to the conference is also increasing my chances to find a job in Academia (maybe?)' (P2, diary). The '(maybe?)' recorded in this excerpt, however, recognises the intangible and indirect return on investment from conferences (Edelheim et al., 2018). P14 situated her rationale for attending conferences in a similar frame of career planning:

> I see it [attending conferences] as part of something that's important to do for my career, I see it as part of my PhD and, you know, I have quite a clear career path so I understand that part of getting where I want to go is, you know, getting out, getting my research out there and presenting and meeting other people, networking, all of the things that conferences involve.
>
> (P14, interview)

Unlike P2, who was close to finishing her PhD, P14 was in the initial stages, but as a career changer (she had been a teacher for eight years) she was already planning ahead for her doctorate and beyond. In this account of attending conferences, the practice is normalised a 'part of my PhD' and couched in terms of the direct and indirect benefits of 'getting my research out there' as part of 'getting where I want to go'. Networking as a beneficial practice of conference attendance is also reflected in Fakunle et al.'s (2019) study of doctoral students' motivations to attend conferences, and this rationale was equally emphasised in this study by P2, P14 and P11.

In addition to considerations of how conferences would feed into career development, participants laid out other motivations relating to the intellectual work of conferences. For instance, P7 stated, 'I always find that a conference … somehow kind of reinforce[s] why I'm interested in something – or that I am interested in something' (P7, interview), and P12 noted, 'this one was particularly useful to really

help my thinking in terms of analysis…I think in terms of moving my thinking forward, that's quite an important purpose' (P12, interview). As a more tangible outcome, P7 added that the conference 'was also really useful because my paper was connected to the writing I'd been doing so to … kind of get that across, made it clearer to me what it had been about' (P7, interview). As discussed in the literature section, conferences for doctoral students are important sites for professional socialisation. This rationale appeared strongly in P14's account:

> I really enjoy listening to other people present about their research and look-ing at their presentations and just seeing how people interact really, and it gives me ideas about things I can do in the future.
>
> (P14, interview)

Finally, P11 drew an important distinction between conferences she attends in her role as Senior Lecturer and those she attends as a PhD student. As an academic in a discipline where she delivers an accredited professional qualification, she attends conferences specifically for this role, which included the conference she recorded for this study. The purpose of this conference was 'networking and updating', as opposed to conferences she attends for her PhD, which are 'more about that aca-demic stimulus so that I would go if I've got a paper to present' (P11, interview).

The summary analysis presented in this section clearly demonstrates that the doctoral students in the 'In Two Places at Once' study held motivations for confer-ence attendance that are common to doctoral students irrespective of care status. This is an important reminder that, while attending conferences may be more challenging for doctoral students with caring responsibilities, doctoral students' aims and desires for conference attendance are not in themselves different from doctoral students in general.

Doctoral students with caring responsibilities attending conferences

The second phase of analysis reintroduces participants' caring responsibilities, show-ing how caring responsibilities intersected with experiences of trying to attend and participate in conferences, and specifically how this intersection was influenced by participants' status as doctoral researchers. As discussed in the introduction, a core aim of this chapter is to show the heterogeneity of doctoral researchers with car-ing responsibilities, in order to argue for a wide conceptualisation of this 'group' in both research-based and institutional framings. As such, in this section the par-ticipants are presented individually, with each portrait depicting a particular focus that emerged in each participant's account. The accounts are then brought together in the final analysis section, which reads across the accounts and situates them in a wider discussion of doctoral researchers' conference attendance.

Account 1: working from home or home-bound?

When I designed the 'In Two Places at Once' study, as noted above I included one-day conferences on participants' own university campuses as potential conferences to

record. Two of the doctoral participants attended events of this kind, and it is important to note that even these conferences presented significant challenges for doctoral students with caring responsibilities. The event that P12 attended was specifically for doctoral students and was free to attend, so there were no financial constraints from this point of view. However, P12 pointed out that the training support grant which is associated with her scholarship does not cover childcare expenses, meaning that she had to personally fund the £45 nursery fee for an extra day of childcare. This additional expense was 'annoying' and P12 noted that this was 'absorbable, but … on a regular basis it wouldn't be' (P12, interview). This financial consideration combined with a second consideration relating to P12's household schedule. As she explained, 'I only tend to attend events that are on the days when I do have childcare, just because it's simpler'. This second consideration was a common concern across the four full-time funded doctoral participants in the study – namely that being a full-time doctoral student resulted in perceived schedule flexibility. P12's account included several discussions of work patterns and covering care. She even noted in the basic details section of the diary form about the conference location: '[My university] campus, however I usually work at home so it is unusual for me to travel to campus'. She rationalised working from home: 'it makes more sense for me to stay at home', 'it's a bit of a faff travelling you know in rush hour and stuff, and it means that I can pick up the children' (P12, interview). While the enhanced flexibility meant that P12 could manage her caring responsibilities on a daily basis, this flexibility also resulted in P12 being *less motile* because the care routine was set up around P12 being the primary carer with high levels of availability. For instance, although her husband's work was relatively flexible, he left home each morning at 6:45. Nursery did not open until 7:45. The morning routine was entirely dependent on P12's morning availability – and she tried to avoid having to ask her mother to step in as she had to then have her to stay the night before, which also incurred extra care work for P12.

> P12's doctoral status intersected with her caring responsibilities in two ways: she tried to avoid paying for extra days of childcare which could not be reimbursed using her doctoral funding, and she tried to avoid attending events that exceeded her usual care schedule, which was itself heavily dependent on her availability and flexibility as a full-time funded doctoral student.

Account 2: Available to drop everything?

The expectation of availability and flexibility extended to other forms of caring responsibility. 'In Two Places at Once' included forms of care that were not dependents – these forms of care are the most invisible from an institutional perspective (Moreau and Robertson, 2019), as they are often managed on an ad hoc basis. P7's care situation involved her sister, who was struggling with her own caring responsibilities, and her mother, who had just been diagnosed with cancer. As P7 narrated,

> she [sister] suggested that I might like to come, she was going up to visit my mum, and she suggested that I might like to come with her rather than going

to the conference, and so I had to kind of say quite clearly that it was impor-
tant to go to the conference.

<div align="right">(P7, interview)</div>

For P7, the situation of a conference coinciding with a care-related incident
encapsulated a wider issue relating to how she managed professional recognition
from her family for her doctoral studies as a full-time funded student. As a career
changer, she was already managing the change of pace and responsibility, where her
stated strategy was that 'I try and think about it like a job where I'm expected to
go in every day'. She felt she had to justify her ongoing studies to her family more
than 'you might have to justify a more conventional, traditional job'. This confer-
ence became a symbolic moment where P7 felt she should establish boundaries
and priorities for her ongoing management of her mother's condition, and was
guarding against being seen as available to 'drop everything'. P7 saw this as hav-
ing 'made some kind of statement … to my family … that somehow I have said
that "the conference and my work was important" by going [to the conference]'.
However, having made this statement, she then felt obliged to maintain virtual care
support with her sister and mother throughout the conference, and as a result 'took
in less' and 'felt … half present'. After the conference, her mother and sister both
asked how it had gone, and P7 stated that 'I wasn't sure there was anything I could
say that would justify me not having gone [to her mother's house]'.

> P7's example shows how full-time doctoral students can be seen as an available
> resource to be physically present for managing family crises in amongst situa-
> tions of ongoing caring responsibilities, and how asserting a professional iden-
> tity as a doctoral student can be both challenging and difficult to sustain.

Account 3: Time and money running out

For P2, flexibility appeared in similar ways to P12, in that P2 and her partner man-
aged childcare for their three young children on an ongoing basis by booking reg-
ular days at nursery, which meant that P2's motility was affected by the challenge
of adding extra childcare into both the family budget and schedule. Moreover, P2
and her husband were both originally from another country and could not call
upon grandparents to assist with childcare, so, as P2 stated, 'I have no replacement'
(P2 interview). P2's husband was a freelance worker, which meant they could share
childcare more equally due to his enhanced flexibility, but also resulted in periods
of intense activity with less flexibility. Finally, there were ongoing financial con-
cerns due to his freelance work status and her status as a doctoral student in the
final stage of her studies.

The fact that P2 was in the final stages of her doctoral studies had two related
financial implications. First, she had no conference funding remaining. Second, her
doctoral stipend was coming to an end. As such, she urgently needed to locate pos-
sibilities for her career to alleviate the family's financial concerns, and saw this
conference as an important venue to improve her career prospects. She therefore
decided to self-fund attending the conference in Denmark. This involved a serious

financial discussion with her husband, with implications for family activities resulting from using these funds from the communal budget for her expenses and extra days at nursery. Some aspects of the conference were unaffordable, such as the conference dinner, and other expenses were reduced by sharing an Air BnB property with other doctoral students. The principal challenge of attending this conference was the huge pressure on the conference to deliver results for her career. Referring to the intangible benefits of conferences (Edelheim et al., 2018), P2 was aware that the conference was unlikely to lead directly to future employment. However, the family investment in the conference meant that her husband had expectations of concrete outcomes from the conference, and this pressure was even enhanced by questions from her husband's sister. While at the conference, P2 frenetically engaged in all possible activities, stating, 'I sort of forced myself to do all these things'. At the end of the conference, there were no direct outcomes. P2 'changed [her] discourse a little bit to raise some hope' when reporting on the conference to her husband.

> Overall P2's example is characterised by two eventualities related to her doctoral status: her conference funding being exhausted at the time that her stipend was also coming to an end. The conference became a site of shared family investment where unrealistic expectations were placed on the conference. As P2 noted, 'it's not only me doing things for me' (P2, interview); this conference was a family affair.

Account 4: Enhanced constraints as a sole parent/doctoral researcher

P14's account was characterised by her status as a sole parent, which was accompanied by serious financial constraints and challenges of managing the care of her five-year-old child. Her ex-partner was not used to being called upon to manage irregular or emergency care situations. He cared for their child on alternate weekends, but otherwise she had full care responsibility. Her parents lived in the same city but were only available to assist with childcare on weekends or to cover pick-up time if arranged in advance. P14 also had a limited network of other parents to call upon because she used wrap-around care – i.e. before- and after-school clubs – for her daughter, so said that she never experienced the school–gates conversations (seen in this way as a potential space for bonding with other parents and carers). P14 attended a conference on her university campus for this study. Even attending the one-day event on campus had been challenging, as at that time she could not own a car, so used multiple forms of public transport with unreliable connections to reach campus. This meant that she had to get the timing right to pick up her child from after school club, including contingency time for the transport connections, because she had no emergency back-up. She left early, missed the end of the conference and the post-conference drinks. Due to the nature of her commute, she had no opportunity to write down her reflections from the day, and then had to move directly into childcare; she forgot the ideas she had developed at the event before she could write them down.

P14's financial concerns were related to both her doctoral funding and the availability of conference funding. Her doctoral status meant that she had no access to benefits for childcare assistance, and her stipend limited the amount of childcare she could afford. She saw this interim financial insecurity as a means of moving towards a better job and more secure financial conditions for her and her child. This resonates with P2's comment 'it's not only me doing things for me'. P14's specific doctoral funding meant that she had no access to conference funding in her first year. Yet, as shown in the excerpt from P14's interview in the previous section, she saw conferences as a compulsory part of her PhD. As such, at that time, she was only attending events which were free and/or which were 'worth it'. She was aware that, if she wanted to self-fund attending a conference, she may have to forego a holiday that year; she had already made this choice prior to starting her doctorate.

> P14 shows how doctoral funding conditions are challenging for sole parents due to the lack of officially recognised income and the resultant lack of access to childcare support – as well as the issue of the doctoral stipend being designed to support an individual, not a family unit.
>
> (Hook, 2016)

Account 5: Full-time academic, part-time doctoral student…and carer

The final account presents a contrast with the other full-time funded doctoral researchers in the study. P11 was a full-time senior lecturer and a part-time PhD student. She and her partner had intended to share care of their two children equally, but P11 had moved into academia from another profession 13 years earlier and her request for a job share had been turned down. She was a reluctant full-time academic, and her account was threaded through with emotional guilt; she reflected in her conference diary that she sent texts to her partner due to 'Guilt re not being there' (P11, diary). She already felt that she did so little in the house that going away from home was an unacceptable added burden on her partner. She asked her partner to leave all the washing up for her to do when she returned home. P11 worked for six hours on her PhD for one day each weekend. As noted in the above section, P11 felt obliged to attend two sets of conferences: one for her lecturer role (delivering an accredited professional qualification) and one as a doctoral student. In this case, the conference she had attended was for her lecturer role. However, upon returning from the conference, she decided not to study for her PhD that weekend, with the professional conference replacing her doctoral time. It was clear that these (her academic job and PhD student status) were competing priorities along with caring responsibilities. After the conference, P11 opted to carry out chores in the house and also make herself available in the communal areas of the house to catch up with her partner and children. On top of the ongoing management of job, doctorate and nuclear family was the situation where P11's elderly aunt was approaching the end of her life. Communicating about these developments dominated the conference, as P11 discussed her aunt's condition with her cousin and partner, and her own partner in relation to planning a visit

to see her aunt the following weekend, thus adding another kind of trip to the aftermath of attending the conference. A further knock-on effect was managing P11's volunteering responsibilities, where there was also a care issue relating to an unwell colleague and the resultant requirement for P11 to sustain the volunteering activities.

> While the other doctoral researchers' accounts portrayed in this chapter were all marked by financial constraints and reliance on their flexibility/availability in terms of managing everyday care (with low motility), this contrasting account is important as a reminder of the variation of ways in which doctoral studies combine with caring responsibilities. Financial concerns were not mentioned in this account – the concerns were relating to time pressure and the emotional guilt of managing the competing priorities of doctoral studies with academic work and family responsibility.

Discussion

The analysis in this chapter has shown that doctoral students with caring responsibilities share the same expectations of attending conferences as doctoral students in general, and that gaining professional experience via conferences may even be more important for doctoral students with caring responsibilities, due to enhanced pressure to provide for dependents. Three of the five accounts of doctoral student participants from the 'In Two Places at Once' study revealed issues relating to financial constraints. These related to conditions of doctoral funding, where the stipend is relatively low, and the stipend is also not counted as official taxable income (meaning that it is often not counted as income for credit schemes, national insurance contributions, mortgages or tenancy agreements). Operating with a reduced income meant that doctoral students were less able to fund extra costs such as conference attendance – and were less able to fund the extra childcare necessitated by attending conferences. A second set of financial constraints was directly tied to conditions for conference funding. One participant had exhausted her conference allowance at the time that she most needed to attend conferences; another did not have access to conference funding when she was eager to start going to conferences – conference funding did not seem to align with doctoral stage, and, importantly, did not cover childcare.

In addition to financial constraints, a second consideration emerged for four of the participants, in relation to schedule flexibility and availability. As full-time funded doctoral students, family members relied on these participants both to cover everyday care and to provide crisis support. For three of these participants, their motility was impacted by their ongoing caring responsibilities due to the difficulty of replacing these participants' significant role in the family care routine. A previous paper emerging from this study (Henderson, 2020b), which used Hochschild and Machung's (2012) work on gendered care and household management, theorised 'sticky care' as a way of recognising the logistical and emotional attachments that result in gendered, care-related reduction of motility for academics with caring responsibilities. In this chapter, the analysis has added a

layer to this formulation, in that being a full-time funded doctoral student seems to reinforce the 'sticky' conditions of being a primary carer by legitimising a stay-at-home parental role. Conversely, the contrasting case of P11, who was a full-time academic as well as a part-time doctoral student, presents a case where being a doctoral student as well as an academic instead reinforces the breadwinner role (Hochschild and Machung, 2012), where the added professional responsibility of the doctorate leads to further reliance on the primary carer to manage the household. In either case, arguably doctoral studies enter into household and family management in a way that reinforces binarised care roles of breadwinner and primary carer. The consolidation of these roles was revealed through the exploration of conference attendance, as attending a conference constitutes a break in the care routine, an added burden in terms of finance and care, thus exposing everyday roles and expectations within doctoral students' care situations.

Conclusion

This chapter set out to explore how doctoral students who have caring responsibilities manage attending conferences – and what marks out their negotiations of conference attendance from other doctoral students and from academics with caring responsibilities. It has shown that doctoral students' motivations for attending conferences align with the expectations of doctoral students in general, with the added expectation of participating in conferences as an action that will assist with future career success for the benefit of the whole family. While the challenges of negotiating conference attendance as a carer were similar to the challenges faced by all academics who have caring responsibilities (Henderson et al., 2018), there were some specific facets that were specific to doctoral students. In particular, this related (i) to financial constraints relating to doctoral studentships and to conference funding for doctoral students, and (ii) to expectations of doctoral student availability/flexibility in relation to ongoing everyday care (with resultant reduced motility) and family crisis management. In relation to (i), there are considerations to bear in mind for doctoral research funders and institutions who disburse studentships and conference funding, in relation to the possibility of claiming care bursaries, and also paying up front for conferences rather than via reimbursement. In relation to (ii), the connection between availability/flexibility, care and motility is a wider sociological concern which is important to be aware of in structuring doctoral programmes (including making them more structured and therefore legitimising doctoral studies as a professional role) and also making allowances for doctoral students with caring responsibilities. Three of the participants in the study referred to feeling different and excluded on the basis of having already established a family before embarking on doctoral studies.

Finally, this chapter demonstrates the heterogeneity of the category of doctoral student with caring responsibilities. The chapter presented participant accounts from heterosexual couples with children, a lesbian couple with and without children, and a sole parent; the chapter also included ongoing, dependent caring responsibilities (children, pets) as well as other forms of care (aunt, sister, mother, volunteering activities). For each participant, care and doctoral studies played out

differently in relation to the circumstances they were living in – and these circumstances determined how conference attendance was negotiated. Future work in this area will need to consider how doctoral students with caring responsibilities manage attending virtual conferences; we know that online spaces have been important for academics with caring responsibilities before the COVID-19 pandemic (Black et al., 2020), but this will certainly be a new direction to explore in relation to the findings presented in this chapter.

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