



**FGS Seminar, 5 July 2017**

# **In Two Places at Once: Constructing Time and Subjectivity for Research on Academics with Caring Responsibilities**

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***Project website***

[www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/ces/research/current/twoplaces](http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/ces/research/current/twoplaces)

***Academic blog on conferences (Eds. Henderson & Burford)***

[conferenceinference.wordpress.com/](http://conferenceinference.wordpress.com/)

# This seminar...

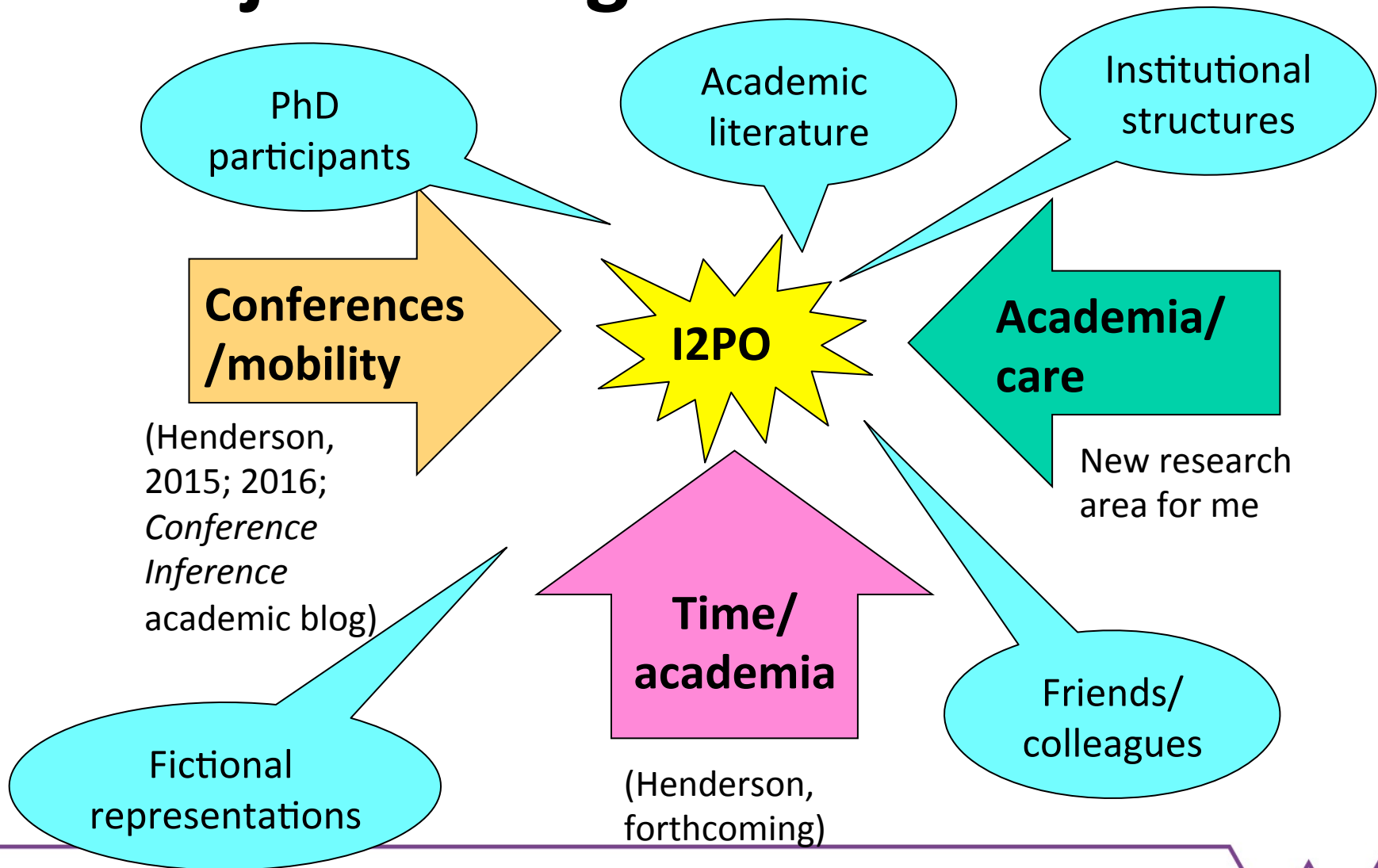
- ▶ 'In Two Places at Once' – project background
- ▶ Designing research to capture the experience of being in 'two places at once'
- ▶ Theoretical underpinnings – time and subjectivity
- ▶ Discussion/questions



# First thoughts

- ▶ Is there anything (work/leisure/family/social) that you could/should be doing instead of attending this seminar?
  - If so, how did you decide whether or not to attend?
  - Did you have to negotiate with anyone in order to attend?
- ▶ Will you try to get anything done while attending the seminar?

# Project Background





# Project Background 2

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- ▶ Lack of research on conferences, despite billion-dollar value of industry (Rowe, doctoral work)
  - ▶ Emphasis on longer term mobility in studies on academic mobility
  - ▶ Conferences represented as BOTH
    - pointless/boring/unnecessary AND
    - vital for disseminating research/making (international) networks/collaborations
  - ▶ Conferences as spaces of marked inequality of access: border politics, funding, employment status, disability...caring responsibilities...
  - ▶ **Access to** conferences v. **access within** conferences (from *Beyond Access*, Aikman & Unterhalter, 2005)

# Research questions

- ▶ **'How do academics' caring responsibilities affect their attendance of and participation in conferences?'**
  - What are the **specific factors** of caring responsibilities that impact upon academics' conference attendance/participation?
  - What are the **strategies** that academics employ to manage caring responsibilities while attending conferences? (Including support from the academic's institution or from the conference itself, as well as other sources of support).
  - Do these factors and strategies differ in relation to **international** travel for the purpose of attending conferences?



# Second thoughts

- ▶ **'How do academics' caring responsibilities affect their attendance of and participation in conferences?'**
  - What are the **specific factors** of caring responsibilities that impact upon academics' conference attendance/participation?
  - What are the **strategies** that academics employ to manage caring responsibilities while attending conferences? (Including support from the academic's institution or from the conference itself, as well as other sources of support).
  - Do these factors and strategies differ in relation to **international** travel for the purpose of attending conferences?
- ▶ ***Think of a recent conference/event you have attended (or not attended)***
  - ***What would you count as a caring responsibility?***
  - ***What would be your answers to the research questions?***

# Theoretical underpinnings

## “Academic”

- Self-identified
- Call for participants: ‘academic/researcher/teacher in Higher Education/student’
- Importance of including research students and those working in the ‘precariat’
- Gender/intersecting identity characteristics/wariness of identity categories

## Time/subjectivity

- Time as external
- Academics chasing time
- Academics managing time
- Subjectivity formed in relation to illusion of managing time

(Guzmán-Valenzuela & Barnett, 2013; Henderson, forthcoming; Lapping, 2016)

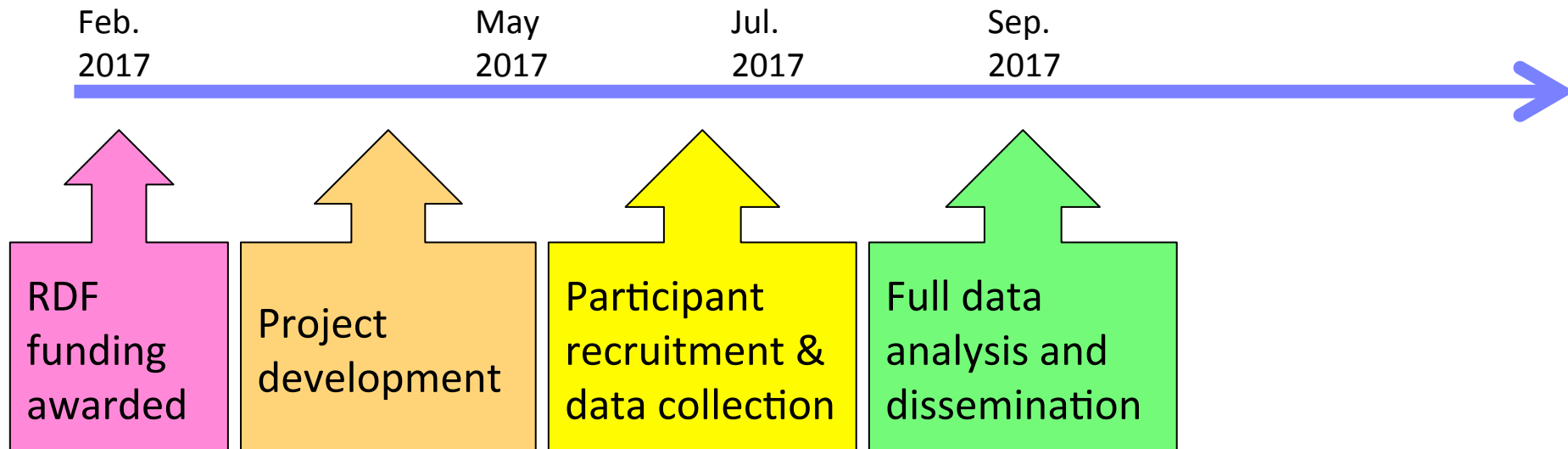
## Care

- Importance of conceptualising academics
  - **Not** unencumbered individuals
  - **But** nodes in a network of relationships
- Self-defined
- Inclusive definition: ‘including children, parents and other relatives, pets, friends and kin’

(Hook, 2016; Jöns, 2011; Leemann, 2010; Moreau & Robertson, forthcoming; Ralph, 2016)



# Project timeline



# Research design

## Stage 1: Pre-conference

- Determined conference travel dates/location/s
- Shared research instruments/consent

Why choose to focus on one conference?

## Stage 2: Conference

- Questionnaire about arrangements and caring responsibilities for and after the conference
- Time-log of (i) contact with/about CRs, (ii) conversations about CRs, (iii) thoughts relating to CRs (Sullivan & Gershuny, 2017; Wigley, 2017)

## Stage 3: Post-conference

- 1-hour interview
- Part I – questions on the time-log and about the conference
- Part II – questions about general conference attending practice/strategy

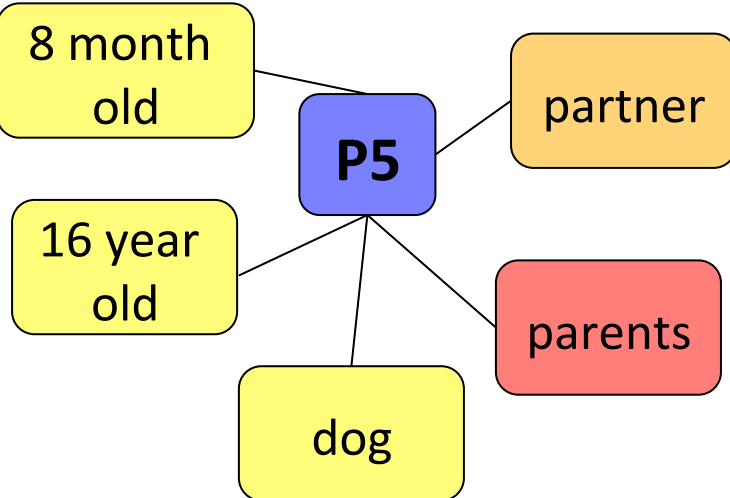
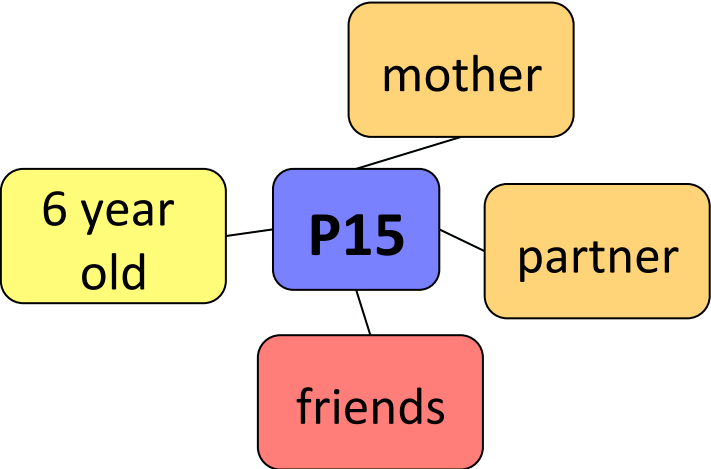
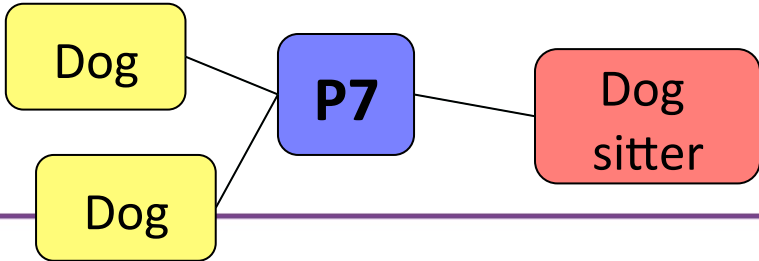
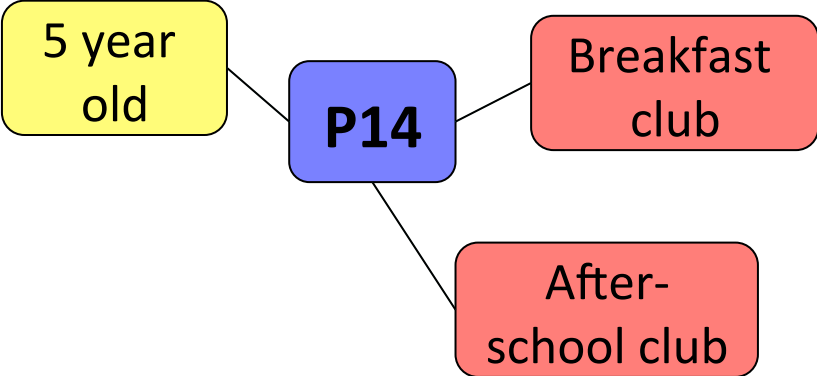
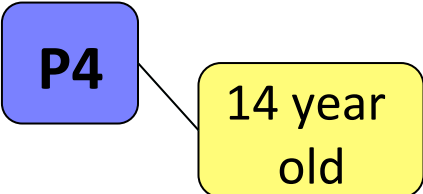
Did it affect participants' conference/care experience?



# Participants

- ▶ 20 interview participants (+some questionnaire-only participants)
- ▶ Mostly UK-based, also included Australia, Austria, US.
- ▶ Range of nationalities/mobility trajectories.
- ▶ Range of disciplines, mainly Social Sciences and Humanities.
- ▶ Range of institutions and academic positions.
- ▶ Different ethnicities, religions, relationship types; majority of participants are women.
- ▶ Conferences ranged from a 1-day event on campus to 1 week+ including international travel to other continents.
- ▶ Caring responsibilities varied hugely

# Care Constellations



# Time and academia - common discourses of 'speeding up'

- ▶ 'Individuals...must make decisions quickly in a **world which is fast moving and constantly changing**' (Harris, 2005, p. 421)
  - Harris uses sped-up time to frame her analysis of shifts in academic identities caused by neoliberal policies.
- ▶ Mountz et al.'s manifesto 'For slow scholarship' (2015), begins 'The neoliberal university requires high productivity in ***compressed time frames***' (p. 1236)
- ▶ Common to these accounts of the neoliberal university is a sense of time objectively speeding up, and subjects having to **speed up in order to 'keep up'** (Pereira, 2015).

-> Three understandings of **conference time/academic subjectivity**





# 1 – External time, passive subject

- ▶ ‘Clock time’ - ‘timetables, targets, production rates and deadlines’ (Adkins 2009 §3.1); ‘invariable hours’ (Adam, 2009, p. 123)
- ▶ ‘The continuous duration of time [is perceived] as a given’ (Lapping, 2016, p. 3)
- ▶ ‘Time presses on, regardless of the subjects that are living by it’ (Henderson, forthcoming)



## 2 – External time, active subject

- ▶ Time is still seen as external, but the subject tries to manage/manipulate time
- ▶ Time as ‘a given that is subjectively mediated through a consciousness that structures the subject’s experience of temporality’ (Lapping, 2016, p. 3)
- ▶ Compression, ‘steal[ing] time’, ‘trading periods of time’ (Guzmán-Valenzuela & Barnett, 2013, pp. 1127 & 1131)
- ▶ ‘Outsmarting time’ (Gonzales et al, 2013, p. 1107)
- ▶ ‘Self-governing technologies’ (Nikunen, 2014, p. 120)
- ▶ ‘Subjugation of time to human will’ (Clegg, 2010, p. 347)



# 3 – Time/subjectivity

- ▶ ‘Time and subjectivity are inextricably produced in and through each other’ (Henderson, forthcoming)
- ▶ ‘Event time’ – ‘time and phenomena are entirely entangled’ (Adkins, 2009, §4.1)
- ▶ Lapping (2016) – is temporality inherent to the possibility of the subject (and vice versa)?
  - Critique of ‘clock time’ as ‘a construction that supports the fantasy of unified identity’ (p. 3)



# Time/subjectivity in relation to caring responsibilities and conferences

## 1 – External time, passive subject

The schedule as an imperative to attend around a particular timetable

## 2 – External time, active subject

The schedule as a challenge to overcome – how to obtain maximum benefit from the conference whilst not compromising on care

## 3 – Time/subjectivity

The disjuncture between the passive and active relationship (with time perceived as external) is a state of ongoing carer-academic subject formation

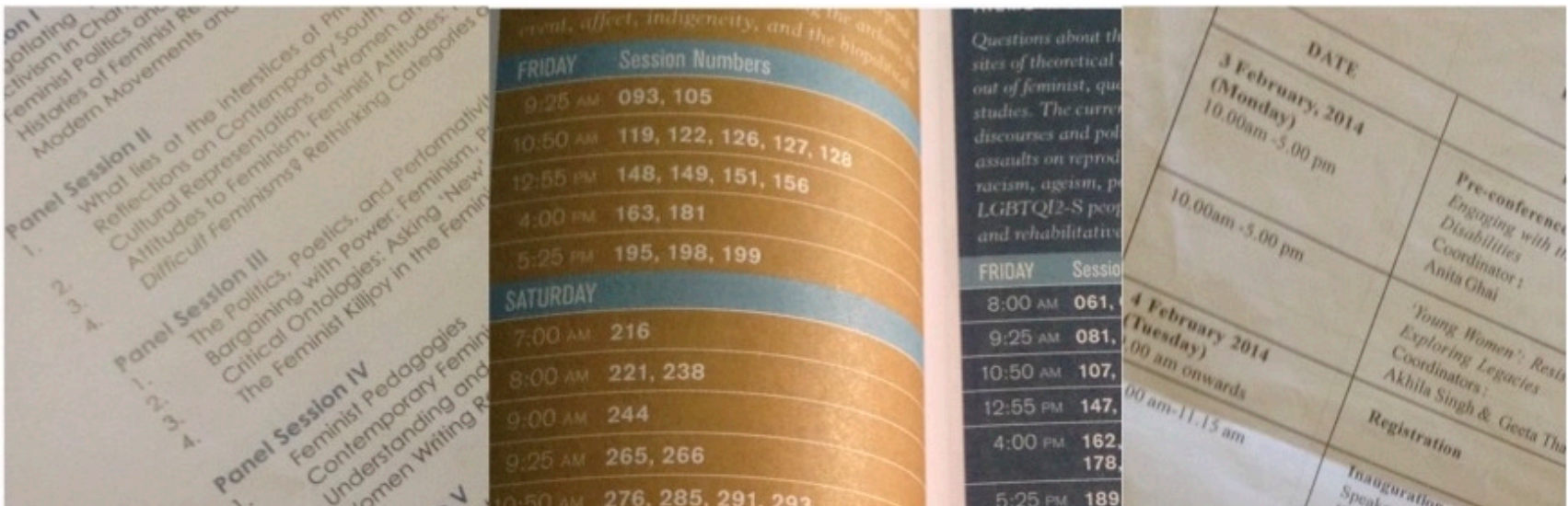


Photo: 'Conference schedules' by Emily F Henderson

# Conference time - more than just a few days

## Conference

### Weeks/months before:

- Negotiate with partner/other support about dates
- Includes previous conferences attended/missed

### Week/days before:

- Prepare for those staying behind
  - Food
  - Clothes
  - Instructions

### Week/days after:

- Tiredness + lack of time to recover
- Unpacking
- Repairing damage/mess
- Paying bills
- Taking on extra duties to make up for being away

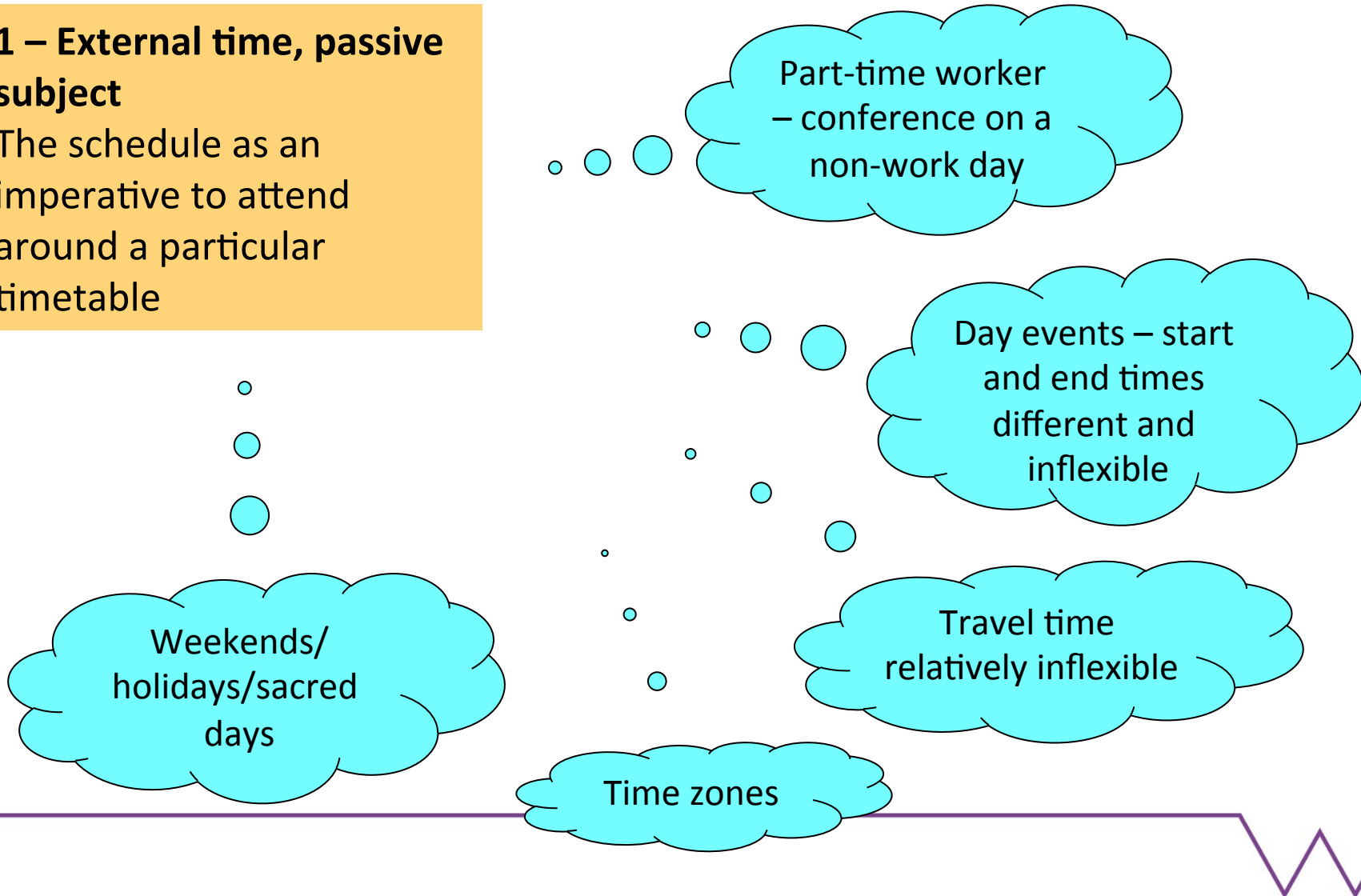
### Weeks/months after:

- Partner takes a trip/holiday (bargaining)
- Negotiations for next conferences to attend/miss

# Time/subjectivity in relation to caring responsibilities and conferences

## 1 – External time, passive subject

The schedule as an imperative to attend around a particular timetable





# Time/subjectivity in relation to caring responsibilities and conferences

## 2 – External time, active subject

The schedule as a challenge to overcome – how to obtain maximum benefit from the conference whilst not compromising on care

### Strategies

- Communication
  - Phone-checking
  - Regular emails
  - Scheduled/regular calls
  - Goodnight catch-up
  - Breakfast family call
  - Exchanging photos/videos
- Back-up support
  - Schedule cleaner to come more/different day
  - Schedule extra childcare

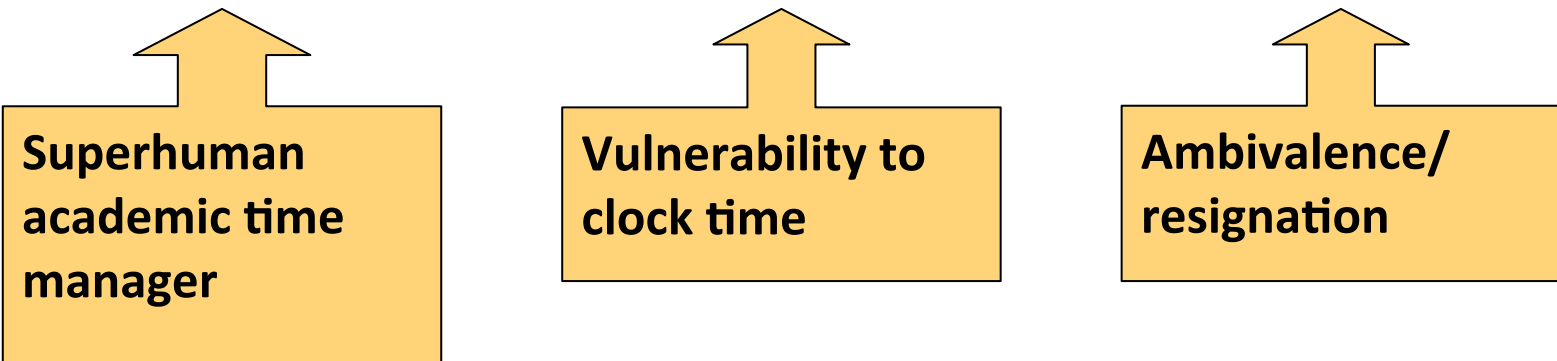
### Phone checking

- Keep in bag and check in breaks
- Keep on table but face down
- Keep on table, face up, on silent
- Keep in lap
- Observe others' level of phone use and emulate

# Time/subjectivity in relation to caring responsibilities and conferences

## 3 – Time/subjectivity

The disjuncture between the passive and active relationship (with time perceived as external) is a state of ongoing carer-academic subject formation.



**Superhuman  
academic time  
manager**

**Vulnerability to  
clock time**

**Ambivalence/  
resignation**

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