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Parents in Academia: Trials, Tribulations, and Tales from Life's Rush Hour

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Background: It is no secret that academia has a leaky pipeline (e.g., Gasser & Shaffer, 2014) that is traversed precariously by new parents. Academia has also been discussed as a career that fosters a “motherhood penalty” (Lutter & Schröder, 2019) and requires parents to regularly swim upstream (Hirakata & Daniluk, 2009). Despite this, many have navigated and successfully overcome trials and tribulations of being a parent and an academic. The aims of this panel are: 1) to normalize the conversation around the trials and tribulations of the parenthood-academia interplay, 2) to candidly share experiences of academics who are also parents, and 3) to stimulate future research and support.

Key points: Our panel members are Professors Susan Backhouse and Camilla Knight, Dr Louise Davis, Dr Christopher Wagstaff, and Dr James Rumbold. These members are chosen to represent experiences of mothers and fathers, and varied family, geographical, and career situations.

The discussion will comprise five sections before concluding with audience questions: 1) preparation for parenthood (e.g., timing, preparing for leave, coping with adversity), 2) the out-of-office period (e.g., keeping in touch days, identity changes), 3) return-to-work (e.g., working patterns, childcare, parental guilt, career momentum), 4) support for parents and 5) nuances in the parenting experience.

Conclusions: This session will provide a space for current or aspiring parent academicians to reflect and pose questions pertinent to their own journeys. We will consider collectively how

we can better support colleagues to navigate the trials and tribulations of the parenthood-academia dual.